UN SDG 4: When Access to Education is *NOT* Enough

Christine M. Chiarelli-Helminiak

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wcupa.edu/srca_sp

Part of the Sustainability Commons
UN SDG 4: When Access to Education Is Not Enough

Tina Chiarelli-Helminiak, MSW, PhD
Graduate Social Work
West Chester University

Agenda

• Discuss intentions of Sustainable Development Goal #4

• Present challenges and limitations of only addressing access to higher education

• Provide recommendations for improvement

• Q&A
https://www.wcupa.edu/universityCollege/asp/journalsManuscripts.aspx

The fourth United Nations Sustainable Development Goal "ensure[s] inclusive and quality education for all and promote[s] lifelong learning" which aspires that by 2030, all women and men will have equal access to affordable and quality education, including at the university level. This critical policy analysis questions whether access is enough in the United States’ (U.S.) system of post-secondary education; as social injustices and human rights violations affect students’ access and degree completion at colleges and universities in the U.S. The evidence suggests that socio-economic disparities may have a significant negative impact on the academic success of students who are from underrepresented and marginalized populations, even when access has been gained.

---

**Higher Education as a Right**

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26)

- International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (Article 13)

- Covenant on the Rights of the Child (Article 28)

- Not included in the Millennium Development Goals
• By 2030, all women and men will have equal access to affordable and quality education, including at the university level
• BUT is access to education is enough?

Human Rights & the United States

• “Exceptionalism”: nationalism and assumption of global supremacy – as well as failure to recognize domestic social problems as human rights concerns
• Intersections of race, class, and gender in relation to quality education and success are often ignored
  • Extends to other economic and social rights
• U.S. is the only member state that has yet to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child
Social injustices and human rights violations impact access to college and graduation rates

- Child abuse & neglect
- Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Socioeconomic disparities
- Achievement and resource gaps
- Varying quality of primary and secondary education
- Frequent school changes

Access to education is not enough.
Why are some students unable to graduate?

• Increasing Tuition and Declining Financial Aid
  • Public universities cost increased by 34% (from 2003 to 2013)
  • Increased student debt and use of privatized loans
  • Decrease in public funds

Why are some students unable to graduate?

• Failed policy proposals: America’s College Promise
• Poor academic and psychosocial preparation
• Advisement strategies that favor traditional students
Why are some students unable to graduate?

- Caregiver responsibilities
- Inadequate support on campus
- Financial fragility
- Underpaying jobs
- Healthcare fragility

How do we do better?
Promote a Human Rights Culture

- Interdisciplinary Collaboration
- Faculty and Staff Development
- Teach Human Rights

Teaching Resource

- http://teachinghumanrights.uconn.edu/
Critical Approach to Teaching Human Rights

- Takes into account history
- Intersectionality of inequalities
- Connects to the local context
- Application to lived experience
- Forges relationships
- Self-determination
- Challenges the academy
  - Teaching by example
  (Linde & Arthur, 2015)

The promotion of one human right, such as education, is an immediate investment in the promotion of other rights