

HOW DOES SDG4 CONNECT TO THE POST-2015 EFA AGENDA? A REVIEW ON THE EFFORTS FOR THE POST -2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA LED BY UN AND UNESCO

By

SOH, Ki-Joon

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

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Before the international community adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the international educational community agreed on the Muscat Agreement, with some similar but ultimately different goal and targets. Based on a stakeholder analysis on accountability developed by Romzek and Dubnick (1987), this paper argues that while political accountability was primary and professional accountability was secondary in developing the post-2015 agendas for both UN and UNESCO, there was a stronger professional accountability for UNESCO, which resulted difference in input targets and the scope of the post-2015 educational agenda. The author argues this was possible due to the combination of both representatives of member states and international organizations participating in the discussion process as equal members, as well as an atmosphere where active debate was allowed during the consultation process.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS OR ABBREVIATIONS

CSO	civil society organizations
EFA	Education for All
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
GEM	Global EFA Meeting
MDG	Millenniums Development Goals
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OWG	Open Working Group
SC	EFA Steering Committee
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDG4	4 th Sustainable Development Goal (Education)
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WEF	World Education Forum

Introduction

2015 was an important year for international education cooperation. In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly formally adopted the Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs), setting the global agenda for Post-2015 development. In parallel, UNESCO organized the World Education Forum 2015 in May, a milestone event for setting the Post-2015 educational development agenda. Both these agendas follow the vision “*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*”, and aim to achieve this goal by the year 2030.

Although UN and UNESCO formally adopted this educational agenda, there was another educational agenda that was proposed by the international community. In the aftermath of the 2014 Global EFA Meeting (held in Muscat, Oman), UNESCO member states, intergovernmental organizations and other participants adopted the Muscat Agreement, which suggested a partially similar but ultimately different set of proposed targets. After its adoption, the Muscat targets were strongly advocated as a proposal for the post-2015 educational agenda, until it was agreed upon that discussions for the educational agenda at the WEF would be based on the SDG4 goal.

This paper aims to study how two UN bureaucracies can produce such different proposals, and thus to better understand the decision-making of international organizations. How different are the two resulting agendas, and why did the discussions led by the two organizations provide different results? Were there any differences in the discussion processes?

The post-2015 educational agenda of UN and UNESCO is a good subject to study these questions as they have a lot of similarities. UN and UNESCO have practically the same member statesⁱ that actively participate in policy discussions as constituencies of international governmental organizations. Both had previous educational development agendas that were formally adopted by member states in the year 2000 that aimed to achieve

them by 2015 (the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All movement respectively). Both agencies held a series of consultative meetings attended by constituencies that formally proposed an educational agenda including targets, which was to be later officially adopted by its principal governing bodies. In the bureaucratic level, UNESCO and UN both had permanent secretariats that had a formal working relationship with each other, allowing flow of technical expertise and coordination among UN agencies. This would ensure that both agencies were fully aware of the discussions made by the other party and were able to consider them within their decision-making framework. Finally, both organizations also allowed the collective input of other international agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs) and experts through a series of external consultations.

In an attempt to answer this question, I will analyze each of the contents of the UNESCO-led education agenda (henceforth the “Muscat agenda”), and the UN-led development agenda (henceforth the “OWG4 agenda”). I will then provide an overview of the two decision-making processes and based on these observations, analyze the accountability of major stakeholders, using the Accountability Framework by Romzek and Dubnick (1987). Finally, I will derive a connection between the contents and accountability of the each two agendas and come up with a conclusion.

Research Literature on the Accountability of International Organizations

Research on the decision-making process of the post-2015 educational agenda was far from being thorough. While there was much research on the post-2015 development agenda, it was mostly focused the contents of the agenda itself. Any research on stakeholders was mostly focused on the New York-based UN-led development process, rather than education. For the few that were able to focus on the educational agenda, these mainly discussed the contents of the education agenda itself (Sayed and Ahmed 2015; Barrett *et al* 2015; Rose 2015), rather

than the decision-making process and its actors. Studies on UNESCO as a separate entity were also minor compared to the UN office based in New York or the United Nations in general. For instance, in the international journal *International Organization*, less than 10 peer-reviewed articles are about UNESCO, excluding entries summarizing the recent activities of the organization. This is a strong comparison to the hundreds of articles about the United Nations – despite they have the same length of history.

Studies on the accountability relationships and mechanisms at the international level used to receive limited consideration (Held and Koenig-Archibugi 2005), but as research on global governance increased (Aprea 2014), it received increasing attention (Karns and Mingst 2010; Barnett and Finnemore 2004; McCann 2007; Bovens 2006). However, further study is required to provide a broader viewpoint of accountability. The inter-organizational and intergovernmental accountability relationships are complex (Romzek 2000; Held and Koenig-Archibugi 2005; Radin and Romzek 1996), as stakeholders may carry out multiple roles (Aprea 2014) and the number of actors has increased (Malone *et al* 2014).

Since intergovernmental organizations are public domains with a bureaucratic structure, there was a considerable demand of connecting public administration theory with that of international relations and global governance (Malone *et al* 2014). A lot of academic research was largely focused on connecting it to principle-agent theory, namely highlighting the importance of two actors: the member states and the international organization secretariat (Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Reinalda and Verbeek 2004). Explaining the leeway of the agent has been a major subject of study (Finer 1941; Reinalda and Verbeek 2004). For instance, some argue that influence of the agent may increase when it has an informational advantage, a larger number of principals to address, and if the decision rules made by the member states are favorable to them (Reinalda and Verbeek 2004).

Looking at the decision-making process of the post-2015 educational agenda in a view of

public administration theory will be a rare opportunity to understand its mechanism and the influence of its stakeholders, especially by comparing two international organizations within the UN system. Among the 17 SDG targets, Education is the only agenda that had an independent, formal international process by the international community to discuss a separate post-2015 agenda, including a specific goal and targets. Health and environmental protection followed the OWG process without a separate debate (WHO and UNEP), agriculture and water had proposed targets from the UN agencies but were not formally adopted by the member states (FAO/WFP/IFAD and UN-Water), and some meetings did not have specific targets that corresponded with the OWG proposal (2nd International Conference on Nutrition by FAO/WHO). Through this rare occasion, we should be able to better understand how various international mechanisms make their decisions.

Comparison of the UN and UNESCO Post-2015 Education Agenda

In preparation for the post-2015 agenda, many international organizations and research institutes have been discussing the educational development agenda, including their proposals of targets. In UN-led consultations, among the most prominent was the Report of the Global Thematic Consultation on Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, jointly prepared by UNESCO and UNICEF (2013). This paper not only introduced major principles for setting the agenda, but also four focus points for developing an overarching goal (minimal 1 year of pre-primary education, primary education, lower secondary/secondary education, and post-secondary learning opportunities relevant to work, life and peaceful societies). In other consultations, former agendas such as early childhood development, primary and secondary education, and skills for life and work (including literacy) were mostly mentioned, with some minor mentioning of issues such as attention to school facilities and social parity (SDSN 2014; UN 2014c; UNGC 2013; UN 2013).

There were some notable changes in the discussions for the post-2015 education agenda compared to its predecessors. First, the agenda has changed from a development-based agenda focused on developing countries (basic education, literacy, vocational training) to a holistic, life-long learning agenda that is applicable to all countries (Kim *et al*, 2014). This would include not only ‘basic’ educational requirements (literacy, primary schooling, etc), but also tertiary education and adult education, as well as additional subject matters (Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development, for example). It also highlighted previous shortcomings of the EFA and MDG frameworks, such as adding learning outcomes to the previously accessibility-based targets, or the lack of sufficient indicators (Winthrop *et al* 2015). Lack of development finance was also acknowledged as a major obstacle in achieving the post-2015 education agenda (Winthrop *et al* 2015; UNESCO 2014e; UN 2015a). Finally, there was an argument that due to the lack of alignment of the EFA and MDG agendas, where non-MDG EFA targets (i.e. literacy) relatively received less attention and thus less funding (Ito 2013).

In order to better analyze the contents of the Muscat agreement and the SDG4, I will compare the Muscat and OWG4 agendas. Considering that consultations for adopting the two agendas were simultaneous until 2014 July, that further discussions regarding the Muscat agenda were obsolete after early 2015, and that the UN General Assembly adopted a revised version after major events such as the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the submission of the UNSG Synthesis report, I will limit my research material mostly to the resulting documents of those two agendas (Muscat Agreement and the Open Working Group report) and their related documents, such as the Joint Proposal of the EFA Steering Committee on Education Post-2015, which came out in conjunction with the Muscat Agreement. Thus, the final SDGs report adopted in September 2015 will not be considered. However, I will use policy reports and technical reviews from the respective UN

agencies if such information could not have been found otherwise.

Documents explaining the Muscat and OWG4 agendas largely have 5 common elements: rationale, fundamental principles, overarching goal, topics and scope. The *rationale* provides the background and justification why the international community intends to achieve the agenda. *Fundamental principles* explain critical values and standards that are to be emphasized for carrying out the development agenda. The *overarching goal* is the overall ‘slogan’ that explains in a single sentence what the educational development agenda aims to achieve by 2030. The other two parts (topics and scope) comprise the contents of each target. *Topics* are the main theme or objective that each individual target specifies on, and can be divided into input, output, and outcome-based concepts (UNESCO 2014f). *Input*-based topics (implementation targets) focused on the investment toward learners. It includes providing access to education (such as increasing the enrollment of students) or providing services such as educational facilities or teachers. *Output*-based topics are focused on ensuring a certain level of educational results, such as finishing primary education or passing an exam. *Outcome*-based targets focuses on certain attributes that people should attain, regardless of what education or training they have received. This will include basic capacities such as literacy and numeracy or specific skills such as vocational and life skills. Finally, *scope* is the targeted social group (specific age or X% of a population) that the target is aiming to implement the topic, or the scope of a certain concept that is discussed, such as the education level (elementary, middle, high school, etc.) that would comprise basic and compulsory education.

The Muscat and SDG4 agendas have both similarities and differences in each of the elements noted above. First, in terms of rationale, the contents are largely similar and do not contradict each other. They both underline the importance of poverty eradication through social development and understand that the past agendas (EFA and MDG respectfully) were

not fully achieved and thus the international community should address this ‘unfinished business’. They also emphasize a human rights-based approach on the development agenda, the need to address inequality issues and emphasize the role of governments and global partnerships. Some minor notes would be that SDG4 also includes other issues that were mentioned in since the Rio+20 sustainable development agenda, such as “common but different responsibilities (CBDR)” where all member states had a responsibility for sustainable development but emphasis should be shifted to the developed countries.

Second, in terms of fundamental principles, both agendas are very similar, and reflect the trends of recent discussions of international development mentioned above. They both take emphasis on a human rights based approach to development, and stress that eradicating poverty is an agenda that needs to be accomplished. Equity and inclusiveness are also emphasized so no person is left behind (including vulnerable social groups such as people with disabilities).

In terms of overarching goal, both agendas are also similar. The Muscat overarching goal is “Ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030”, while that of SDG4 is “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”, with the end date (2030) being specifically mentioned separately. The only notable difference would be that the Muscat agenda *ensures* lifelong learning, while SDG4 merely *promotes* such opportunities. However, in actual practice this can be interpreted to have small difference, lifelong learning has a very broad concept and is not generally compulsory.

In terms of topics, there are strong similarities for output and outcome-based targets, but have some differences in input-based targets. Both agendas mention all possible levels of education (pre-primary, primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational, lifelong-learning), as well as specific subjects such as literacy and numeracy, as well as more generic concepts such as

knowledge and skills for sustainable development and peaceful societies. Output-based targets are focused on educational levels that are requested to be compulsory (pre-primary and primary and secondary education), and other topics such as achieving vocational/life skills and literacy were outcome-based.

However, there are some differences in input-based targets. Although both agendas include teachers, the Muscat agenda has a more holistic criterion for the topic as it underlines the qualification, professionalism, motivation and support of teachers, while the OWG4 agenda only mentions qualification among those attributes. It also has an emphasis on providing teacher training to developing countries. The Muscat agenda also includes finance, in terms of increasing the allocation of national budget to education and also increasing ODA provided for education in developing countries, while the OWG4 agenda mentions safe educational facilities and scholarships, with the latter for developing countries in particular.

In regard of scope, there were some differences in between the OWG4 and Muscat agendas, namely basic education. In basic education, UN had agreed that it should include primary and secondary education (usually a 12-year cycle), while UNESCO only agreed on 9 years. This results in a major difference in education policies, as that will require a massive investment in terms of finance and time to achieve universal upper-secondary education (typically high school education). According to UNESCO, it will take an average of over 200 billion US dollars per year during 2015-2030 to provide primary and lower secondary education to low and lower middle income countries, and an additional 97 billion per year to provide upper secondary education (UNESCO 2015e). It also predicts that upper secondary education for low and middle income countries will not be achieved within this century if current efforts are unchanged (UNESCO 2015f).

Regarding targeted population, the two agendas also had differences. For pre-primary and technical/vocational education, the OWG4 agenda aimed to provide such services to all

people, compared to the Muscat agenda which had decided to target a certain undecided proportion (X%). For providing teachers, the Muscat agenda is more ambitious, in which it aims in providing teachers to all learners opposing to the OWG4 target, opposed to the undecided proportion (X%) that was to be decided later.

The differences between both agendas show a certain pattern. First, both agendas are very similar in fundamental values ('high-level' contents) such as the rational, principles and goal for implementing the post-2015 educational agenda. They were mostly similar in outcome and output-based targets, with some notable differences in scope. However, there was a strong difference in the input based targets, with the Muscat agenda emphasizing on the importance in increasing financial budget and the OWG4 agenda mentioning educational facilities and scholarships. Furthermore, sometimes the input target of one organization did not receive the support of another. For instance, UNESCO had shown concern of the SDG4 target 4.b (scholarships), questioning whether a target focused on a specific group should be included in a universal agenda, and suggested that its impact be further discussed (UNESCO 2015d). These input-targets are strongly connected to the implementation strategy of achieving the post-2015 education agenda, as they show which aspects in national education policies should receive investment.

In conclusion, both agendas are very much similar in more 'high-level' contents, such as justification or purpose of carrying out an agenda, but have differences on the 'low-level' contents such as means of implementation, namely scope and input targets. To fully understand the influence of the stakeholders within the UN and UNESCO processes, first I will take a walkthrough of each process and introduce the major stakeholders, and then analyze their influence both in a general sense and also in terms of scope and input targets, where they have shown the most difference.

Overall Process of Setting the Post-2015 Educational Agenda

In order to understand the process of how the two post-2015 education agendas were decided, I will provide a walkthrough on the process of the two education agendas. My research material is primarily based on related UN and UNESCO documents and literature reviews. For the actual discussions during UN meetings, I have reviewed the recorded videos of the UN OWG meeting discussions related to education (provided via webtv.un.org) and documented summaries of the discussions. For that of the UNESCO meetings, it is based on my observations of attending related UNESCO meetings from early 2014 to the actual World Education Forum in 2015 May. I have also considered related research publications and secondary sources, and interviews with UN officials when possible.

The discussions on the Post-2015 educational agenda can be largely divided into two simultaneous consultations, namely the UN-led development agenda (post-MDG) and the UNESCO-led educational agenda (post-EFA). Although they were independent consultations, the participants of both processes were constantly updated on the discussions made from the other processes.

The UN and UNESCO processes each have their own history, as they originate from meetings and declarations attended and adopted from member states from the end of the 20th century. In 1990, UNESCO first held the World Conference on Education for All at Jomtien, Thailand, where the global community initiated the EFA movement. In 2000, UNESCO adopted the 6 EFA goals for educational development at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal. In parallel, the UN General Assembly adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) the same year, with adopting universal primary education as one of its 8 goals.

For the post-EFA process, the final goal was the World Education Forum (WEF), which was held in Incheon, Korea. This would be the 3rd global educational conference so far, following the World Conference on Education for All (1990, Jomtien) and the World Education Forum

(2000, Dakar). The objectives of WEF was to discuss and agree on a joint position for the education goal and targets in the post-2015 development agenda, and agree on a comprehensive Framework for Action to guide and support the implementation of the future education agenda. For the process for the OWG4 agenda, the final goal was at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015, held as a high-level meeting of the 70th UN General Assembly, where 17 Sustainable Development Goals (education as a stand-alone goal among them) were adopted.

UNESCO's preparation of setting the post-2015 educational agenda started to take full-scale when the EFA Steering Committee (SC) was established in early 2012, which put it in the focus of major discussions. This was clearly indicated in its terms of reference and UNESCO's reports to the Executive Board, with its mandate focusing on discussing and making recommendations on the post-2015 agenda (UNESCO 2012). Meeting 2-4 times a year and conducting multiple on-line consultations via email, it discussed major post-2015 agendas, including a draft position paper and on the post-2015 education agenda, which was discussed during the 2014 Global EFA Meeting. Much of its efforts in early 2014 were focused on discussing a list of proposed targets for the post-2015 agenda.

During the 2014 Global EFA Meeting, 50 member states, participants from international and non-governmental organizations met at Muscat, Oman to discuss the post-2015 agenda, and most importantly the proposed targets that were discussed in detail by the SC. Shortly after, the EFA Steering Committee also produced a Joint Proposal on education post-2015, which was consistent with the contents of the Muscat Agreement, but with much more description on the targets and governance for education.

It is clear these documents became the main documents for advocating UNESCO's position on the post-2015 agenda. UNESCO has reported that its Director-General had "strongly promoted the education agenda as proposed in the Muscat Agreement" in various multilateral

meetings such as with the G-77 or ECOSOC's High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (UNESCO 2014c). UNESCO has mentioned that its overarching goal and 7 targets was a "key milestone", and will be the "basis of a Framework for Action to be developed by UNESCO, in consultation with all EFA partners" (UNESCO 2014d).

The SC was the prominent group in setting the post-EFA agenda. While the Terms of Reference states that it has an advisory rather than executive role, in reality, it served more than an advisory role as it decided the final seven targets in the Muscat Agreement, drafted the early versions of the Incheon Declaration and the Framework for Action. Also, there was no other mechanism that served an executive role except the UNESCO Executive Board, which did not directly discuss the contents of post-EFA agenda but instead mainly accepted reports submitted from the secretariat and gave procedural requests for discussing the educational agendaⁱⁱ.

Based on their discussions and consultations with their regional constituencies, the SC also drafted proposed targets for the post-EFA agenda, which were used as a working document to be discussed at the GEM. Afterwards, it produced a Joint Proposal for the post-2015 agenda and used that proposal to advocate UNESCO's position on education to other stakeholders. The chair of the SC also actively engaged in the New York-based UN process, appealing to member states to adjust the proposed SDG targets to be streamlined with the Muscat targets.

A major characteristic was that the SC was composed of a mixture of member states, international organizations, NGOs, as well as some other participants as representatives of the teaching profession and the private sector. Among the 18 initial members, 7 were from member states (representatives each of the 6 regions and one from E-9 countries), not forming a simple majority. 5 were from EFA co-convening agencies (UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, World Bank), and additional members from OECD, Education International, Global Partnership for Education, Global Campaign for Education, 2 civil society

organizations, and 1 private sector organization. This membership of mixed entities implies not only UNESCO's intention to listen to the opinion of various representatives, but more importantly endorse UNESCO secretariat as an equal contributor alongside member states. Other members have been later added in a *de-facto* status, such as the Host Country (Republic of Korea) and UN-Women. Equal distribution was emphasized also in the "chair group", where a member state would act as chair, one member state and one civil society organization would act as co-vice-chairs, and UNESCO and UNICEF also participated as members.

For the process of the OWG4 agenda, the most of the discussions were concentrated through the Open Working Group (OWG) established by the UN General Assembly as the intergovernmental process of discussing the SDGs, with technical support from a group of UN agencies. Since its establishment in January 2013, the OWG had 13 formal sessions discussing all issues related to sustainable development, from thematic development agendas (health, education, climate change, etc.), to underprivileged countries (Least Developed Countries, Land Locked Developing Countries, etc.), as well as other overarching subjects such as population dynamics and global governance. During the process, the Division of Sustainable Development of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA/DSD) served as the secretariat. Also, the UN Secretariat formed the UN System Task Team (comprised of about 60 agencies) for the post-2015 agenda, to support preparations for establishing the discussions for the post-2015 agenda. One of its components was the Technical Support Team (TST) that provided technical advice on the draft targets that were in discussion, in which it was co-chaired by UNDESA and UNDP and was comprised of over 40 UN agencies. UNESCO and UNICEF co-led the consultations for SDG4 within the TST, thus formalizing the communication process between UNESCO and UNDESA. The discussions between the TST and OWG were so-called a "back and forth" process, where a

UN official mentioned that “the work of the TST was supposed to be technical in nature, the work of the OWG political, even though the process has shown that it is not possible to separate the two dimensions entirely”. After the final proposal of the OWG was reported (UN 2014d), minor tweaks were made based on the proposal of the OWG co-chairs before it was finally adopted at the UN General Assembly.

Accountability Analysis of Stakeholders

As mentioned above, the two items that differed between the UN and UNESCO educational agendas were input topics, and to a lesser scale, scope. Thus, I will analyze which stakeholders within the UN and UNESCO processes had influence on the adoption of these two items.

To approach this topic, I attempt to review the accountability of the UN and UNESCO development agenda decision-making process using the Accountability Framework by Romzek and Dubnick (1987). This tool has a wide application (Malone *et al* 2014), not only on the national level but also past examples of it being used in the bilateral (Baker and Rubin 2011) and intergovernmental level (Radin and Romzek 1996). The Accountability Framework divides the sources of accountability of a public agency into four types (legal, political, bureaucratic, and professional) according to the source of agency control (external/internal) and the degree of control over actions of that agency (high/low). While all four sources influence the organization at any given time, one or two sources are usually dominant (Baker and Rubin 2011). Using this tool will help us to better understand which actor has given bigger influence on setting the post-2015 development agenda.

Source of Control

		<i>Internal</i>	<i>External</i>
Degree of Autonomy	<i>Low</i>	Bureaucratic	Legal
	<i>High</i>	Professional	Political

Accountability Framework by Romzek and Dubnick (1987).

Sources of Accountability for the UNESCO Muscat agenda

Based on the Accountability Framework, political accountability was the prominent factor in setting the UNESCO-led Muscat agenda, with professional accountability closely following as second. Throughout the consultation process, member states and other various stakeholders (international organizations, civil society organizations, private sector/foundations, research institutions, etc.) were able to contribute their items of interest into the agenda, mainly through the SC but also through other meetings, such as the GEM and the regional ministerial meetings. Although Member States may have been given a priority in speech, non-state actors were still entitled to participate and present their opinion, including drafting group meetings such as in the GEM and regional meetings.

Although member states also constitute the legal governing bodies of UNESCO (i.e. General Conference and Executive Board), in these meetings I have categorized them as political accountability as they did not participate in the capacity of representatives of governing bodies, and thus did not have judiciary authority against UNESCO secretariat. Rather, they either represented the citizens that would be subject to the global education policy, or represent the political position of their government, or a mixture of both.

Within the Secretariat, there were a number of departments that deeply contributed to the agenda. The main office was the ‘EFA and Global Partnerships Team’ that was primary in charge of preparing WEF and the post-2015 educational agenda. In terms of technical support

on global education, the GMR team and the UNESCO Institute of Statistics each provided technical information on the progress of educational development and indicator research, respectively. Other desks in education also contributed, such as sections for specific themes such as Global Citizenship Education or Education for Sustainable Development. During the meetings, the Assistant Director-General for Education (ADG) – who is the head of the education sector of UNESCO – was able to actively raise voice these meetings and advocate issues that UNESCO had interest in, such as the need for increasing financial support to education (UNESCO 2014e).

On the other hand, legal and bureaucratic accountability were relatively dormant. The General Conference and Executive Board (each consisted by 195 and 58 Member States respectively), are the legal governing bodies of UNESCO and are the source of legal accountability. The main functions of these bodies are to determine the policies and main lines of work including programs. The Executive Board also prepares the agendas for the General Conference and is responsible for executing the program approved by the latter (UNESCO 2014a). While the post-2015 education agenda was a constant agenda that was discussed in these meetings (UNESCO 2014c), the decisions show that their main activities were receiving reports of the proceedings of the EFA Steering Committee and other meetings, and requesting the Director-General of UNESCO to follow up on the recommendations of the SC. The Director-General (head of the organization and the source for bureaucratic accountability) also restricted her activities to ceremonial and diplomatic roles, such as advocating UNESCO's Muscat agenda to other international organizations, and delegated most of the agenda setting to the ADG. All these show that the governing bodies and the Director-General had a limited role in setting the Education 2030 agenda.

As mentioned earlier, UNESCO's agenda was mainly different with the UN agenda in scope and targets. Regarding scope and input targets of the educational agenda, the positions of the

UNESCO secretariat was mainly accepted in the process for the Muscat agenda. UNESCO had initially set out a proposal for 10 years of basic education including one year of pre-primary education, which did not receive much objection from the member states as UNESCO constantly mentioned the need to set an educational goal that is ambitious yet achievable (Kim *et al* 2014). To support this claim, UNESCO also provided a data analysis in May 2015, showing projections that low income countries will achieve a 95% completion rate of primary education by 2073, and will not achieve 95% completion of upper secondary education after the year 2100. The same report also indicates that upper middle income countries will not achieve 95% completion of upper secondary education after the year 2094 – well exceeding 2030, the deadline of the post-2015 agenda (UNESCO 2015f).

Regarding input targets, UNESCO's position was also mostly accepted, with additional support from teacher representatives (Education International) and developing countries (Kim *et al* 2014). UNESCO was a strong advocate of the need of ensuring educational finance. Although finance was not an EFA goal, UNESCO has been including finance in its Global Monitoring Report (GMR) since 2012, with specific benchmarks of 6% Gross National Product or 20% public expenditure (UNESCO 2012e). This earned the support of developing countries and civil society organizations, despite the strong objection of one country in the EFA Steering Committee that finance should be discussed through the SDGs framework (Kim *et al* 2014).

UNESCO also mentioned the importance of a collective policy to effectively recruit, train, allocate, and retain teachers – which requires motivation such as sufficient payment, a component not included in UN's OWG4 agenda. Education International, an international association of teachers' unions worldwide, also was able to stress the importance of supporting teachers to motivate them to maintain their jobs during the EFA Steering Committee and the Global EFA Meeting (Kim *et al* 2014).

However in response to the UN agenda, UNESCO did not provide positive support. UNESCO had a negative opinion toward target 4.b of the UN-led agenda (scholarships to developing countries) noting it is ‘questionable’ that a global target be focused on a specific group of countries, and that its potential impact should be further discussed (UNESCO 2015d). Educational facilities were also mentioned, as a part of UNESCO's initial report on post-2015 education (UNESCO 2014g), however it was omitted in later proposals after UNESCO mentioned the need to reduce the number of targets (Kim *et al* 2014). Although the topic was mentioned later in the Global EFA Meeting, it was not included in the final Muscat Agreement.

Sources of Accountability for the UN OWG4 agenda

Based on the Accountability Framework, political accountability was the prominent factor in setting the UN-led OWG4 agenda, with professional accountability following as second, although not as strong as that of UNESCO. Within the UN framework, the Open Working Group (OWG) was the most prominent entity that contributed to the drafting of the SDGs. From March 2013 to July 2014, the OWG had 13 formal sessions alone, with each constituting 4 to 10 meetings. Although there were 30 member states represented, many of these member states formed a troika so 57 member states in total can be represented (UN 2014a), with also conveying comments from like-minded groups such as Group of 77 and China, LDCs, AOSIS, and CARICOM (UN 2014b).

As for the UN Secretariat, UN Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA-DSD) served as the secretariat of the UN intergovernmental processes on sustainable development and inter-agency coordination. To provide a collective agenda from UN agencies, the DSD formed the UN System Task Team (STT) consisted of over 60 UN agencies, with a mandate to support system-wide preparations

for the post-2015 development agenda. However, while the DSD being present during OWG sessions, most of the OWG sessions were dominated by member states and other major stakeholders (mostly civil society) presenting their positions (IISD 2013; IISD 2014). Throughout the consultation process, although representatives from UN-DESA was present in the podium next to the co-chairs (which were elected among member states), they were mostly silent throughout the meetings and discussions were mostly led by the co-chair present during that session.

As for legal and bureaucratic accountability, both were relatively dormant as well. The General Assembly is the main legal body of the UN, comprising all members of UN. As the UNGA delegated most of the discussions and drafting of the SDGs to the OWG, its role was largely limited to mostly receiving reports of the OWG. The Secretary-General also respected the report of the OWG without much contest, as he officially supported the OWG proposal without contest in his synthesis report.

In regard to discussions on scope and input targets, most of the evidence focuses on the influence of member states and other stakeholders. While the UN Technical Support Team mentioned lower secondary education in its report (UN-DESA 2014), 17 member states have supported universal primary and secondary education during the 11th session of the OWG (UN 2014e). Other major groups and stakeholders (NGOs, representatives of specific groups, etc.) have also supported free secondary education, such as NGOs or groups of youth, women and indigenous peoples (UN 2014f). Afterwards, completion of universal primary and secondary education were included in the final versions of the targets.

Regarding topics, member states and other stakeholders were the prominently accountable for the input targets of the OWG4 agenda. In the early versions of the OWG4 drafts, there were no mentioning of educational facilities, teachers, or scholarships (Kim *et al* 2014), however during following discussions 4 member states have supported the importance of

educational facilities (UN 2014e). The group of least developed countries, consisted of about 48 countries, also strongly supported these input targets (UN 2014b). Consequently, topics of educational facilities, teachers, and scholarships were progressively included in the later versions of the OWG targets and eventually in the final draft (Kim *et al* 2014).

Analysis of the Accountability Structure of the UN and UNESCO Processes

Based on comparing the accountability framework of both the UN and UNESCO processes, we can derive the following conclusions: In regard to the overall general UN and UNESCO processes for each post-2015 educational agenda, 1) in both processes political accountability and professional accountability were primarily and secondarily dominant respectively, 2) in the UNESCO process, professional accountability was comparably more dominant than that of the UN process, although not as dominant as the political accountability.

Regarding the contents that were different (scope and input targets), in the UNESCO-led process, professional accountability was dominant by providing data analysis on the current status of international education, and providing guidance on policies to implement international goals related to education. On the other hand, in the UN-led process, political accountability was dominant by accepting the requests of constituencies and various stakeholders in the agenda.

Observations on these two series of meetings (the EFA SC and the OWG) may provide some suggestions on why this difference occurred. First, there was a difference in membership of the meetings for each agenda. The UNESCO-led meetings (EFA SC and 2014 GEM) both had a mixture of government officials, officials from international organizations, representatives from civil society organizations, research institutions and foundations, where they were able to participate in equal capacity. The ‘chair group’ was a mixture as well, with two member states (one being the chair), one CSO and UNESCO and UNICEF as members.

This allowed CSO and special interest groups to raise their voice in issues as the same level as member states. For instance, Education International was able to help reinforce the Muscat target related to teachers (target 6) to better address teachers in terms of motivation and support. During the SC, the chair frequently asked the UNESCO representative (the Assistant Director-General for Education) for his comments and explanations. On the other hand, the OWG was consisted only of member states, with the two co-chairs (both member states) taking turns moderating the meeting. Chances for non-state actors to speak during the meeting were seldom allowed or provided during a separate session, providing importance to the voice of the member-states rather than the non-state actors. The UN-DESA representative was mostly silent during meeting sessions and the co-chairs dominated the meeting.

Second, there was a difference in the expertise of the personnel that comprised each delegation. In UNESCO meetings, most of the participants had significant experience in education, such as officials of the Ministry of Education either visiting from their respective capitals or working as attaches seconded to their permanent delegation to UNESCO. For some member states, the Ambassador to UNESCO attending the meeting was an official from their Ministry of Education and not the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Chair of the SC was a career public servant from the Ministry of Education, and has served before in the Permanent Delegation to UNESCO as an official in charge of education. This level of expertise allowed them to discuss in debate during setting the educational agenda. For instance, during discussions on overlapping or related topics - such as lifelong learning and vocational/higher education, or early childhood care and early childhood education – the SC was able to discuss the contents of each target and revise accordingly. The SC also was able to discuss various roles of non-state actors, such as the Global Partnership for Education (a global educational funding mechanism) or the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, and imply those discussions in the outcomes of the meetings. However in UN meetings, most of the

participants were diplomats from the permanent missions to the United Nations. The co-chairs of the OWG were diplomats who were appointed as Ambassadors from their capitals. Considering that the OWG process discussed all aspects of the post-2015 development agenda, it would be difficult to expect that the representatives of member states would have detailed expertise in all 17 goals of the SDGs, or that diplomats would be able to contact their capitals to receive opinion from their other ministries during every discussion.

Third, there was a difference in the level of active debate occurring during the meetings. The UNESCO-led process was a meeting where participants engaged in active debate and arrive to an agreement. An example would be the finance target of the Muscat targets (target 7). Adding a finance target was often the subject of a heated debate, as some developed countries thought this would bring confusion in financial cooperation, while other developing countries and CSOs thought ensuring financial support was essential to achieving the educational agenda. The EFA SC also used significant time in discussing and revising the wording of texts such as the proposed targets or draft declaration for the World Education Forum. On the other hand, in the UN-led process as member states had to discuss multiple agendas within the same meeting, time for discussion and debate was minimal, and constituencies did little other than reading out written interventions, often within a limited time - such as three minutes. An excerpt of a summarized analysis may best describe the meeting (IISD 2013):

“Three days did not seem to be enough to do justice to the agenda and the discussions felt over-packed at times, with one delegate describing the meeting as a “laundry list of goal proposals.” Most recognized that it is not feasible to have a goal for every issue, but this did not prevent speakers from proposing as many as seven different goals in a single speech. Delegates privately expressed frustration at the paucity of true interactive dialogue on the issues, and were impatient for potential areas of consensus to be identified.”

Conclusion

Through this paper I have compared the UN-led and UNESCO-led post-2015 education agenda, in terms of their contents and the accountability framework of their decision-making processes. I have argued that the difference of the two agendas originated from the difference of accountability, and that this difference originated from the different types of members during major decision-making meetings, expertise of participants, and methods of discussion.

The comparison of the process of deciding the Muscat agenda and the OWG4 agenda have shown that that political accountability was dominant, followed by professional accountability. This can imply that the post-2015 educational agenda primary interest was to respond to the concerns of key stakeholders (member states and other major stakeholder groups), and secondary interest was the need to fulfill the values and norms that were given to them as international public officials – which in this case was setting a post-2015 educational agenda that can successfully achieve the fundamental principles and interests requested by the international educational community. The comparison also provides an example of how professional accountability can be strengthened, given that professionals are allowed within the decision-making process and actively engage in debate to discuss and agree upon possible solutions during meeting sessions, opposing to having representatives (usually diplomats) to simply present pre-written scripts without debate. Likewise, if international meetings wish to include the special skills or experience of individuals that actually implement the given task, these specialists should not only be present in the meeting but be ensured with sufficient opportunities to discuss the agenda at hand and come up with solutions.

Determining the accountability within an organization is an important yet complex issue. Even if we determine the accountability relationships according to Romzek and Dubnick's Accountability Framework, there can be shifts in dominance, influence, or even conflict

between different types of accountability (Romzek 2000). While usually one or two accountability relationships are dominant, all four types of accountability would be present and needed in an organization (Romzek and Dubnick 1987). The decision-making mechanisms for the post-2015 educational agenda are no exception. Political accountability is needed to identify and respond to the various constituencies and stakeholders that represent the various needs of the global population and to make sure no social group is excluded or discriminated. Professional accountability is needed for international development agencies provide expertise to carry out the tasks given to them. Legal accountability such as international conventions or agreements are needed to pressure member states in case they do not carry out the required actions to achieve the educational agenda. Bureaucratic accountability is needed to coordinate actions between various stakeholders at the management level and hold an executive responsible if the agenda is not properly executed.

Applying this to the international arena, we can say that the influence of non-state actors (and in this case international organizations) is increasing. Although some would say that states will dominate world politics (Verbeek 1998), the increased participation of non-state actors can pressurize the policies of member states (Reinalda and Verbeek 2004). We have reviewed a case that where the contribution of non-state actors, and its method of debate in international decision-making processes has made a difference. Yet continuous studies on the combined discussions between there is not sufficient research in the decision-making processes conducted by the combination of state and non-state actors. As the representation and format of discussions in international conferences are changing, studies on international organizations should follow accordingly.

APPENDIX

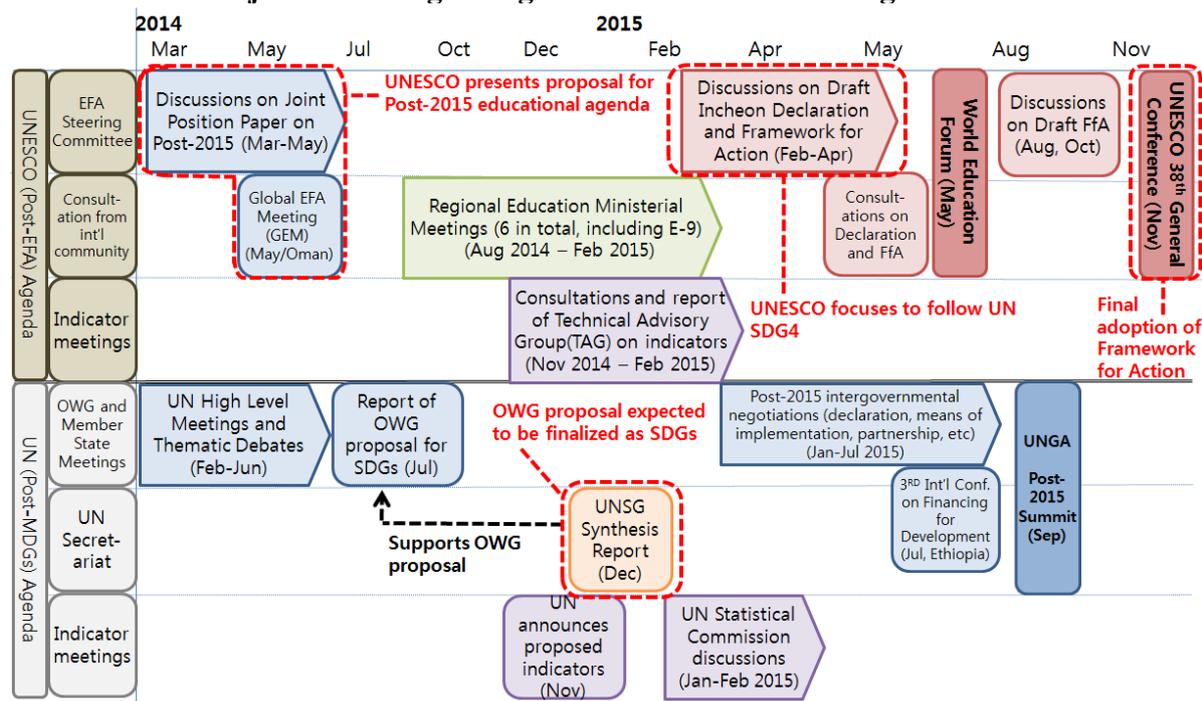
1. Comparison of SDG4 OWG proposal and Muscat Agreement

	SDG4 OWG proposal	Muscat Agreement
<Overarching Goal>	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	Ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030
primary and secondary education	4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes	2, By 2030, all girls and boys complete free and compulsory quality basic education of at least 9 years and achieve relevant learning outcomes, with particular attention to gender equality and the most marginalized.
pre-primary education	4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education	1. By 2030, at least x% of girls and boys are ready for primary school through participation in quality early childhood care and education, including at least one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education, with particular attention to gender equality and the most marginalized.
Technical and Vocational Education, Higher education, lifelong learning	4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university	4. By 2030, at least x% of youth and y% of adults have the knowledge and skills for decent work and life through technical and vocational, upper secondary and tertiary education and training, with particular attention to gender equality and the most marginalized.
	4.4 By 2030, increase by [x] per cent the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship	
Gender equity and vulnerable groups	4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations	-

adult literacy	4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and at least [x] per cent of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy	3. By 2030, all youth and at least x% of adults reach a proficiency level in literacy and numeracy sufficient to fully participate in society, with particular attention to girls and women and the most marginalized.
sustainable development education	4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development	By 2030, all learners acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to establish sustainable and peaceful societies, including through global citizenship education and education for sustainable development.
learning facilities	4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all	-
scholarships	4.b By 2020, expand by [x] per cent globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries	-
teachers	4.c By 2030, increase by [x] per cent the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States	By 2030, all governments ensure that all learners are taught by qualified, professionally-trained, motivated and well-supported teachers.

finance	-	By 2030, all countries allocate at least 4-6% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or at least 15-20% of their public expenditure to education, prioritizing groups most in need; and strengthen financial cooperation for education, prioritizing countries most in need.
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2. Timeline of Major Events regarding Post-2015 Educational Agenda



3. Comparison of UNESCO/UN meetings related to establishing the post-2015 education agenda

Conference	hosted by	function	participants	frequency
2014 Global Education Meeting	UNESCO	Advisory	50 UNESCO Member States, also IOs and INGOs	once every 2-3 years
EFA Steering Committee		Advisory	18-20 members from Member States, IOs, NGOs	3-4 times a year
UNESCO Executive Board		Executive	48 UNESCO Member States	2 times a year
Regional education conferences		Advisory	UNESCO Member States per region, IOs and INGOs	undecided
World Education Forum 2015		Executive	All UNESCO Member States, IOs and INGOs	15 years
Open Working Group	UN (New York)	Advisory	30 UN Member States	constant (including informal meetings)
UN General Assembly		Executive	All UN Member States	once every year

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ⁱUN has 193 and UNESCO has 195 member states respectively, not including associate members or observers. Among UN member states, Liechtenstein is not a UNESCO member. Among UNESCO member states, Cook Islands, Niue and Palestine are not UN members.

ⁱⁱBefore the World Education Forum, three Executive Board meetings (194th-196th) had the post-2015 educational agenda as an item for discussion. In the 194th meeting, Member States requested that UNESCO continue consultations with member states and other partners, transmit a joint proposal consisting of the recommendation by the Steering Committee, and distribute the outcomes of the 2014 Global EFA Meeting to the UN and member states. In the 195th meeting, Member States requested that UNESCO continue the debate on the agenda, provide information and advice to member states in relation to lessons learned from EFA, and work with UN to have one integrated education agenda. In the 196th meeting, Member States requested that UNESCO hold a meeting for permanent delegations to discuss the agenda, to include the outcomes of previous UNESCO meetings in the Framework for Action, to ensure that the framework for action will be UNESCO's guiding instrument in implementing the post-2015 education agenda, and high-level meeting during the period of the 38th session of the General Conference to formally launch the framework for action.