



Goal 4:

QUALITY EDUCATION

Being able to go to school, to learn, to develop and grow together with others, to see and be seen, are fundamentally important for all children, both here and now and in terms of their opportunities for the rest of their lives. For many girls, schooling also represents an alternative to early marriage and pregnancy. The right to education is enshrined in the 1948 text of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in a number of human rights conventions. Millennium Development Goal 2 stated: "Ensure that children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling." Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 sets an even more ambitious goal by stating that we should "ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education".

Quality is an important keyword here. The fact that many children don't have the opportunity to go to school is a big problem. But the fact that many children complete years of schooling without learning basic skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic is also a problem. In many countries, the quality of the schools can vary widely, and good schools are largely reserved for children from financially well-off families. Education cannot stop at the primary school level either. Both vocational education and higher education are important for good social development. In order to achieve the goal of good education for all, the principle that no one should be left behind is crucial: Everyone should have the opportunity to go to school and receive an education regardless of gender, functional ability, group affiliation and social status.

SDG 4 also implies that pupils and students should be able to have a sustainable lifestyle, enjoy human rights and experience peace and democracy, so that they have the best possible foundation for living as responsible citizens who protect the earth and human rights.

Biblical reflection

The Bible does not use the terms "school" and "education" as we use them today. However, it frequently talks about learning, guidance and growing in wisdom; the Book of Proverbs, for instance, may serve as a textbook in the "the school of life". It begins with the following statement: "For learning about wisdom and instruction, for understanding words of insight, for gaining instruction in wise dealing, righteousness, justice, and equity; to teach shrewdness to the simple, knowledge and prudence to the young—let the wise also hear and gain in learning, and the discerning acquire skill" (1:2-5).

That passage provides a solid point of departure for quality education and lifelong learning! Firstly, because it brings together knowledge and wisdom. Secondly, it highlights ethical insight and responsible conduct. From this perspective, education is learning to do what is good – for the benefit of society.

According to the Bible's understanding of being human, everyone has the right to education – independent of gender, social status, economy or ethnicity. To prevent children from receiving an education implies denying them their human dignity and condemning them to a life in poverty and exclusion. We are all created in God's image and capacitated with gifts to be unfolded. This is how active citizenship is built; this is how sustainable societies are constructed!

Questions

- Does the Bible give us any basis for saying what good education is?
- Discuss the claim that denying children access to education is the same as denying them social benefits.

Challenge

How can you help raise awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? Can you, for example, help spread information about these goals in your church, in organisations, or in your local community?

Prayer

*Father, you are the source of wisdom,
Let us share our knowledge.
Give all children the opportunity to
play and learn
With open eyes and an open heart,
So we can find our way in this frightening
yet wonderful world.*

*We commit everything and everyone,
into your hands, Lord. Amen.*