

Unmaking and Remaking Policy Response to SDG-4

A Comparative Foresight Report for Nigeria



About BBYDI



Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative (BBYDI) is a nonpartisan and not-for-profit civic organisation dedicated to fostering socio-political change and community development in Nigeria. Our primary focus is on equipping and empowering young people and local communities to drive sustainable development from the grassroots level.

Committed to promoting good governance, youth entrepreneurship, civic engagement, and advancing civic liberties, we champion the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within Nigerian communities. As a gender-inclusive youth advocacy group, BBYDI provides a platform for women to contribute to various socio-political spheres through social engagements, girl-child education, women's rights campaigns, and technology advocacy.

Over the past decade, we have earned a reputation as a leading civic engagement organisation, advocating for inclusive policies prioritising women and youth. Our work includes advocacy campaigns, social interventions, and collaborative projects with other civil society organisations. We rely on data-driven and evidence-based analyses to monitor government performance, demand transparency, and hold public officials accountable.

Unmaking and Remaking Policy Response to SDG-4

A Comparative Foresight Report for Nigeria

FUNDED BY:



Disclaimer:

This report was prepared by Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative (BBYDI) as part of its commitment to advancing youth development and educational progress in Nigeria. The content and opinions expressed herein are based on research conducted by BBYDI and are intended for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information presented, BBYDI makes no representations or warranties regarding the completeness or suitability of the information for any purpose. The findings and recommendations are provided as a general guide and do not constitute professional advice. BBYDI shall not be held liable for any direct or indirect damages resulting from the use or reliance on the content of this report. The views and opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the organizations, individuals, or stakeholders referenced or involved in the research. Users of this report are encouraged to conduct their own assessments and seek independent advice where necessary.

Content

List of Figures
List of Tables
List of Abbreviations
Foreword
Executive Summary

Part I: Introduction	12
Problematism of SDG 4	19
Policy Areas	32
Part II: Conceptual Analysis	39
Conceptual Understanding	41
Conceptual-Analytical Framework	41
SDG 4 in the Context of High Level Political Forum	47
Part III: Research Strategy	49
Analytical Framework	50
Design	53
Data Sources and Description	54
Operationalisation of Assemblages and Unit of Analysis	59
Data Collection, Normalisation and Analysis Approaches	62
Part IV: Comparative Analysis	64
Policy Arena	66
Policy Struggles	82
Côte D'Ivoire in Nigeria and Nigeria in Côte D'Ivoire	84
The Gambia in Nigeria and Nigeria in the Gambia	94
Senegal in Nigeria and Nigeria in Senegal	103
Nigeria: Intercontextuality and Interoutcome	113
Part V: Strategic Hindsight and Foresight	120
Issues or Needs Fixing	121
Policy Instrument by Different Objectives	125
Policy Instrument by Strength of Government	128
Policy Instrument by Influence of the Policy	132
Final Thoughts	135

List of Figures

Figure 1	SDG 2023 index rank
Figure 2	Progress impediment by level of challenges in select 45 sub-Saharan Africa's countries
Figure 3	Progress impediment by level of challenges in select 45 sub-Saharan Africa's countries
Figure 4	Policy areas in national, regional and global documents
Figure 5	Conceptual-evidence analytical framework
Figure 6	Key policy constructs from regional and global documents
Figure 7	Interconnectivity of the keywords and top words in assemblage corpus
Figure 8	Percolation of SDGs related keywords in the assemblage corpus
Figure 9	Polarity of SDG-4 related keywords in the assemblage corpus
Figure 10	Material-knots in intertwined form in the assemblages
Figure 11	Material-knots in circlic form in the assemblages
Figure 12	Most trending words in ECOWAS' assemblage corpus
Figure 13	Most trending words in African Union's assemblage corpus
Figure 14	Contested and negotiated policy arenas
Figure 15	Most trending words in Côte D'Ivoire's assemblage corpus
Figure 16	Labour force and job engagement in Côte D'Ivoire
Figure 17	Côte D'Ivoire's policy rhetorical words link with select education indicators
Figure 18	Côte D'Ivoire's policy rhetorical words link with select lifelong learning and employment
Figure 19	Most trending words in the Gambia's assemblage corpus
Figure 20	The Gambia's policy rhetorical words link with select education indicators
Figure 21	The Gambia's policy rhetorical words link with select lifelong learning and employment
Figure 22	Most trending words in Senegal's assemblage corpus
Figure 23	Labour force and job engagement in Senegal
Figure 24	Senegal's policy rhetorical words link with select education indicators
Figure 25	Senegal's policy rhetorical words link with select lifelong learning and employment
Figure 26	Most trending words in Nigeria's assemblage corpus
Figure 27	Labour force and job engagement in Nigeria
Figure 28	Nigeria's policy rhetorical words link with select education indicators
Figure 29	Nigeria's policy rhetorical words link with select lifelong learning and employment
Figure 30	Policy instrument affordances for the remaining years of attaining SDG 4

List of Tables

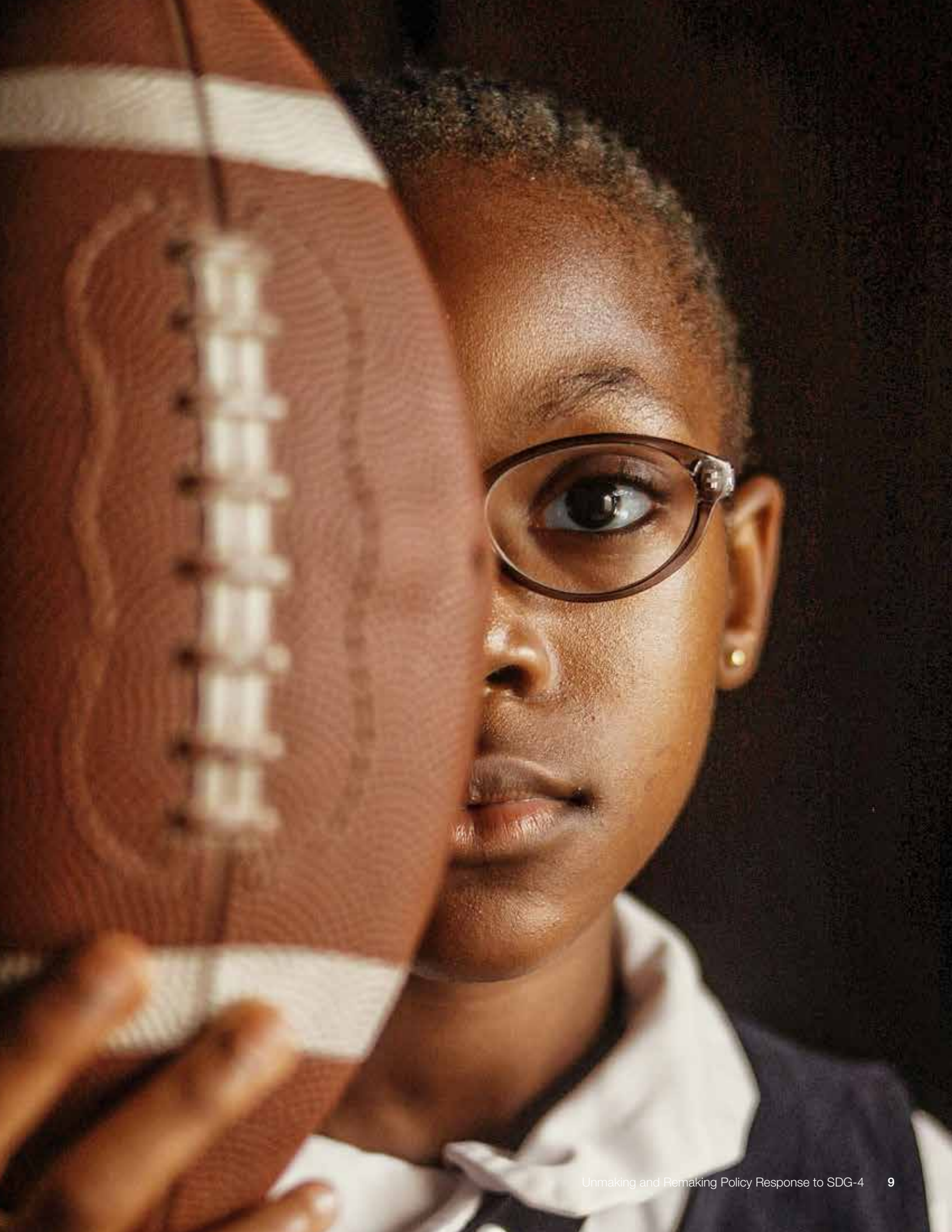
Table 1	SDG 4 problematisation
Table 2	Start and end years in the policy areas
Table 3	Policy responses to SDG 4 problematisation from ECOWAS' documents using goals and/pillars perspective
Table 4	Policy responses to SDG 4 problematization from AU's and UNESCO's documents using goals and/pillars perspective
Table 5	Cumulative policy constructs from national, regional and global documents
Table 6	Top 20 most frequent words in assemblage corpus
Table 7	Top 10 most frequent words in ECOWAS's assemblage corpus
Table 8	Top 10 most frequent words in AU's assemblage corpus
Table 9	Top 10 most frequent words in Côte D'Ivoire's assemblage corpus
Table 10	Education spending and knowledge acquisition in Côte D'Ivoire
Table 11	Top 10 most frequent words in the Gambia's assemblage corpus
Table 12	Education spending and knowledge acquisition in the Gambia
Table 13	Labour force and job engagement in the Gambia
Table 14	Top 10 most frequent words in Senegal's assemblage corpus
Table 15	Education spending and knowledge acquisition in Senegal
Table 16	Top 10 most frequent words in Nigeria's assemblage corpus
Table 17	Education spending and knowledge acquisition in Nigeria
Table 18	Issues or needs fixing by start and end year
Table 19	Policy instrument type: Different objectives by start and end year
Table 20	Policy instrument type: Strength of government administrative intervention by start and end year
Table 21	Policy instrument type: Influence of the policy by start and end year

List of Abbreviations

AU	African Union
BBYDI	Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West Africa States
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
NPF	Narrative Policy Framework
PAQUET	Quality, Equity and Transparency Improvement Programme
PIA	Policy Instrument Affordance
QQ-DAF	Qualitative-Quantitative Data Analytic Framework
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDG 4	Sustainable Development Goal 4
SNDES	National Economic and Social Development Strategy
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WPR	What is the Problem Represented to be

Foreword





Executive Summary

This report examines the policy responses and challenges facing Nigeria in its quest to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The analysis utilises the NWG-Assemblage Thinking Analytical Framework, encompassing the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), "What is the Problem Represented to be?" (WPR), and Goal Means Tree analysis. These methodologies provide a comprehensive understanding of policy narratives, problem representations, and the alignment between policy goals and means. It is a comparative report that collectively highlights policy responses of four selected West African countries including Cote D'ivoire, the Gambia and Senegal spotlighting Nigeria as a lead case. The combined research methodologies afforded us the opportunity to critically probe into the policy arena and narratives in the selected countries with the aim of understanding what is the problem; the assumptions that underpin the problem representation and how has the problem representation affected efforts made by each country on the attainment of quality, affordable and inclusive education for all is concerned.

Our findings revealed that within the context of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) and youth development in the West African sub region, Nigeria's performance reveals both strengths and areas needing improvement when

compared to other countries in the region. The country demonstrated a strong emphasis on policy objectives, outperforming Senegal in this area. This indicates a strategic focus on setting clear goals to enhance educational and youth development initiatives. With her National Youth Policy, Nigeria shows a significant commitment with 11.16% of the total objectives outlined, reflecting an active engagement in policy planning aimed at youth empowerment. However, despite having robust objectives, Nigeria lags behind in the area of policy means, which includes the strategies and resources necessary to achieve these objectives. This shortfall was evident when compared to Senegal, which displayed superior performance in implementing effective policy means.

Furthermore, the report also noted that Nigeria, like many of its regional counterparts, has faced significant policy struggles in aligning its educational and youth development strategies with SDG 4 targets. Though the country's policy documents contain numerous goals, objectives, and means, yet the sufficiency of these policy instruments remains below the desired threshold for achieving the SDG targets by 2030. Nigeria's

insufficiency in means (4.16%) for realising the targets is more pronounced compared to Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal. Findings also showed that Nigeria faces significant safety and security challenges within its educational system, impacting school enrollment and job creation. Despite these challenges, progress has been noted. This situation is comparable to Côte d'Ivoire, where educational access and quality are also major concerns. Nigerian policies frequently mention education, youth, and school, reflecting a strong focus on addressing these issues.

In a cross country analysis of countries on the basis of educational infrastructure; access to quality and inclusive education; teacher training and professional development; and enrolment and literacy rates, varied results were found across the countries. We observed that Nigeria struggles with significant disparities in educational infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. Funding gaps and inefficiencies hinder the development of sufficient educational facilities. The country's investment in education is insufficient compared to the Gambia and Senegal, affecting the overall development of its educational system. On access to quality and inclusive education, Nigeria lags behind its peers, marked by inadequate infrastructure and teacher training. The country has a large number of out-of-school children unlike the Gambia which has made better progress in increasing enrollment with targeted initiatives to improve girls' education. On teacher training and professional development, Nigeria is struggling to provide adequate teacher training and professional development opportunities to improve educational outcomes. This is unlike Senegal that invests more significantly in teacher training and professional development with structured programmes that reach a larger proportion of educators. The literacy and enrollment rates in Nigeria, Côte D'ivoire, the Gambia,

and Senegal show varying trends. Nigeria and Cote D'ivoire both struggle with inadequate education investment, but Cote D'ivoire has shown significant improvement in literacy rates, increasing from 34.14% in 1988 to 89.89% in 2019. Also, the Gambia has seen a steady increase in literacy rates, from 50.78% in 2015 to 58.67% in 2022. Senegal has also made progress in enrollment rates, with primary school completion rates ranging from 59% to 63.56%, and pre-primary enrollment increasing from 15.38% in 2012 to 17.58% in 2021. Overall, while there are differences in the trends and rates, all four countries have made progress in improving literacy and enrollment rates.

We suggest a number of recommendations to address the gaps in policy especially for Nigeria. One, we recommend that Nigeria should have a policy shift that would prioritise and secure adequate funding for education to meet the target by 2030. By this, we mean the government should establish dedicated funds and increase budget allocations to address financial gaps that could hinder the achievement of the SDG 4. Two, it is further suggested that the government should strengthen capacity-building initiatives to enhance institutional skills and establish robust regulatory frameworks. Third, initiatives that focus on improving the quality of education and increase access for all students as well capacity enhancing teacher training programmes should be prioritised. This implies that the government should use targeted interventions instead of deploying multiple policy instruments simultaneously. Finally, we recommend that there should be emphasis on long-term planning with clear objectives set for 2030 and beyond. This points to designing policies and interventions with a long-term vision and ensuring they address complex educational challenges comprehensively to create a cohesive and sustainable strategy for achieving SDG 4.

Part I

Introduction





Education is typically discussed in any small forum and at any time throughout the world. Using various narratives and perspectives, it has been and continues to be examined.

This has mostly been predicated on the assumption that without it, society, people, and nations would be meaningless in terms of important ideas turning into goods and services that meet needs for everyone's present and future development or alleviate a variety of problems. In other words, education enhances or sustains the socioeconomic and political well-being of a community, individuals, and nations. Again, this has been the primary incentive for governments to constantly strive for better education through policies and programmes.

Prior to the Sustainable Development Goals, the world had the Millennium Development Goals. Unfortunately, not all of the specified goals and targets were met by the end of 2015, the year designated for their achievement. Education was one of the goals, and its different ambitions were partially fulfilled around the world, particularly in developing countries. Like the education goal of the MDGs, the attainment of SDG 4- Quality

Education- is critical to the West African sub region. With its plethora of issues and problems confronting the region, quality, inclusive education could serve as a way out. With 60 to 75 percent of the population being youths, the region needs quality education to provide knowledge, skills and competencies that could address the rising unemployment and underemployment in the region. These two monsters aggravate poverty, violent extremism and political violence which could threaten the stabilising democratic culture noticed in the region and lead to other consequences such as drug abuse, human trafficking, terrorism and insecurity. Youth, with abundance of energy, but with no significant jobs or opportunities could become cannon fodder in the hands of those intending to cause mayhem and destabilise the region. This could also further heighten the level of poverty, cause more unrest and plunge the region into further poverty and economic woes. The statistics have been staggering across the countries in the region.

- With 60 to 75 percent of the population being youths, the region needs quality education to provide knowledge, skills and competencies that could address the rising unemployment and underemployment in the region.

Amidst the pursuit of inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all in West Africa, are numerous challenges with inadequate funding, teacher shortages, curriculum gaps, and cultural barriers posing significant obstacles. The World Bank, in its regional document on SDG 4 for West and Central Africa in 2020 painted a frightening picture of the slow progress of the region in the attainment of the targets

of the goal concluding that achieving the goal as the target year races closer would be a mirage as 70% of 10-year-old children in the region are unable to read and 32 million are out of school contributing the largest out-of-school population in the world. The World Bank report further noted that the issues have varying degrees or burden of impact on ensuring inclusive quality education.

Out of School Children

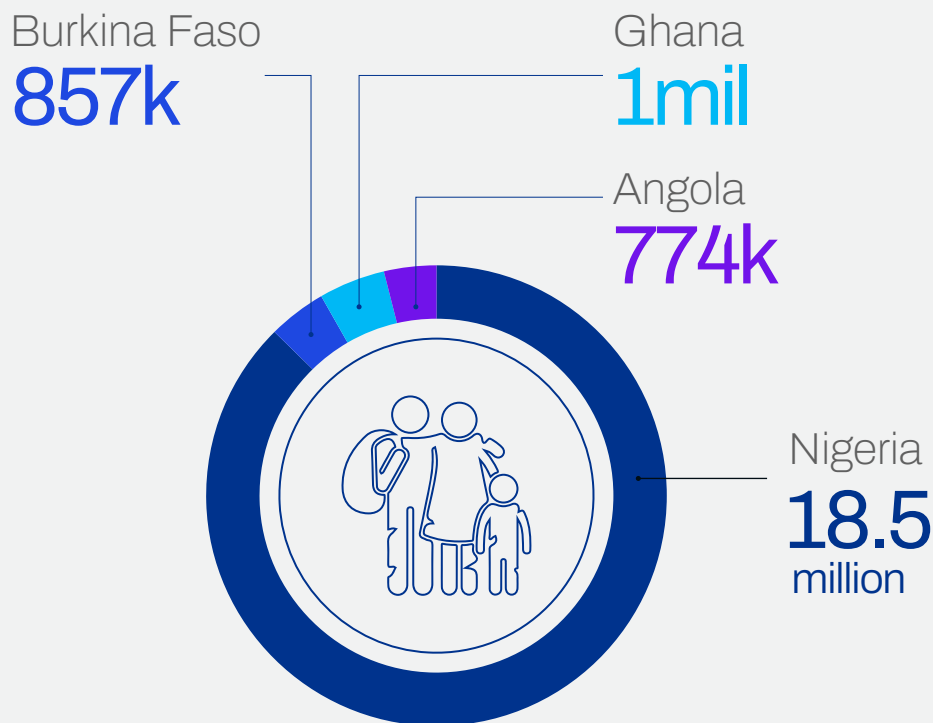


ILLUSTRATION 1: Out of school children in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Angola and Nigeria

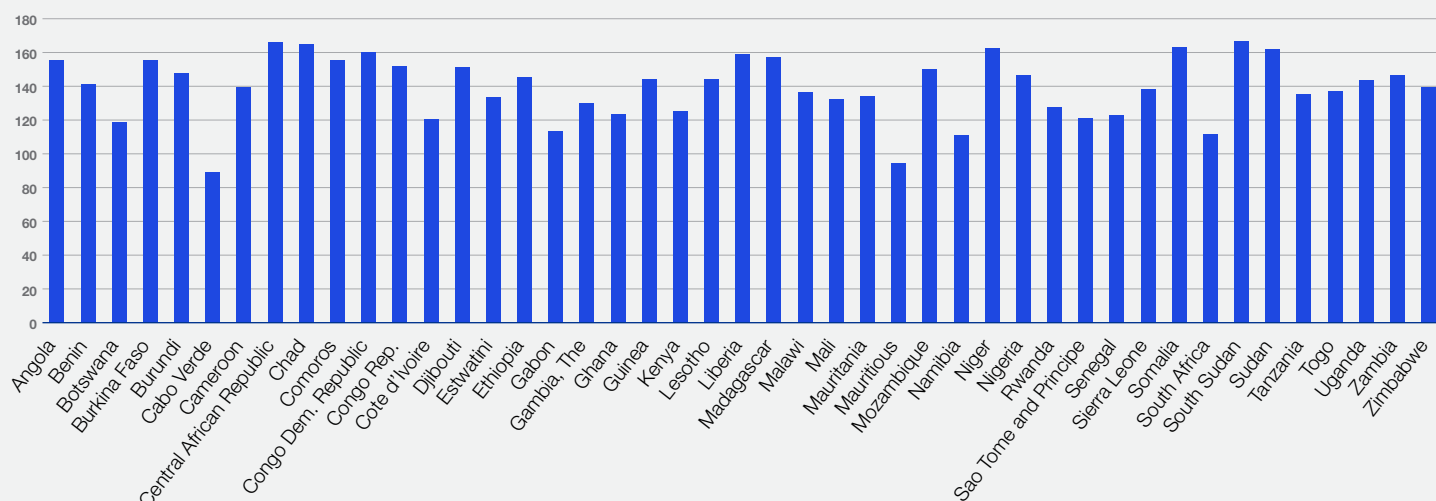


FIGURE 1: SDG 2023 index rank

Source: Sachs, Lafortune, Fuller, Drumm, 2023; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

→ ...while Nigeria has 18.5 million children out of school, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Angola have 857,221, 1 Million and 773,837 children without access to basic education.

As shown in Figure 1, it appears that Nigeria and other countries with a poor index score of progress made since 2015, when the Sustainable Development Goals were agreed upon by political and corporate leaders, will find it challenging to achieve the goals. The country and the Gambia, which were considered as cases in this report, did poorly. Though Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, also used as cases in this report, got lower scores than Nigeria

and the Gambia, it appears that all countries are failing to achieve their goals and targets. Côte d'Ivoire is presumed to be on track or maintaining achievement with major challenges¹. Senegal is described to be stagnating with major challenges. Likewise the Gambia and Nigeria. The rank further shows that of 45 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, 35 are still experiencing major challenges in actualising the Goal (see Figures 2 and 3).

¹ Sachs, J.D., Lafortune, G., Fuller, G., Drumm, E. (2023). Implementing the SDG stimulus. Sustainable Development Report 2023. Paris: SDSN, Dublin: Dublin University Press, 2023. 10.25546/102924

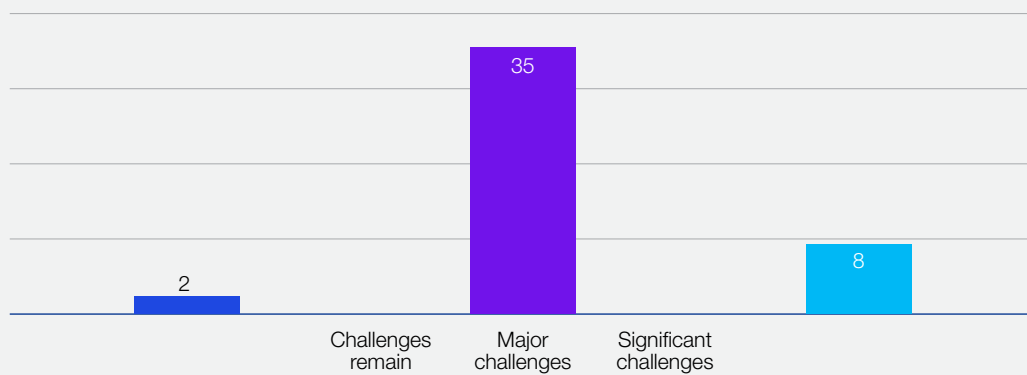


FIGURE 2: Progress impediment by level of challenges in select 45 sub-Saharan Africa's countries

Source: Sachs, Lafortune, Fuller & Drumm, 2023; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

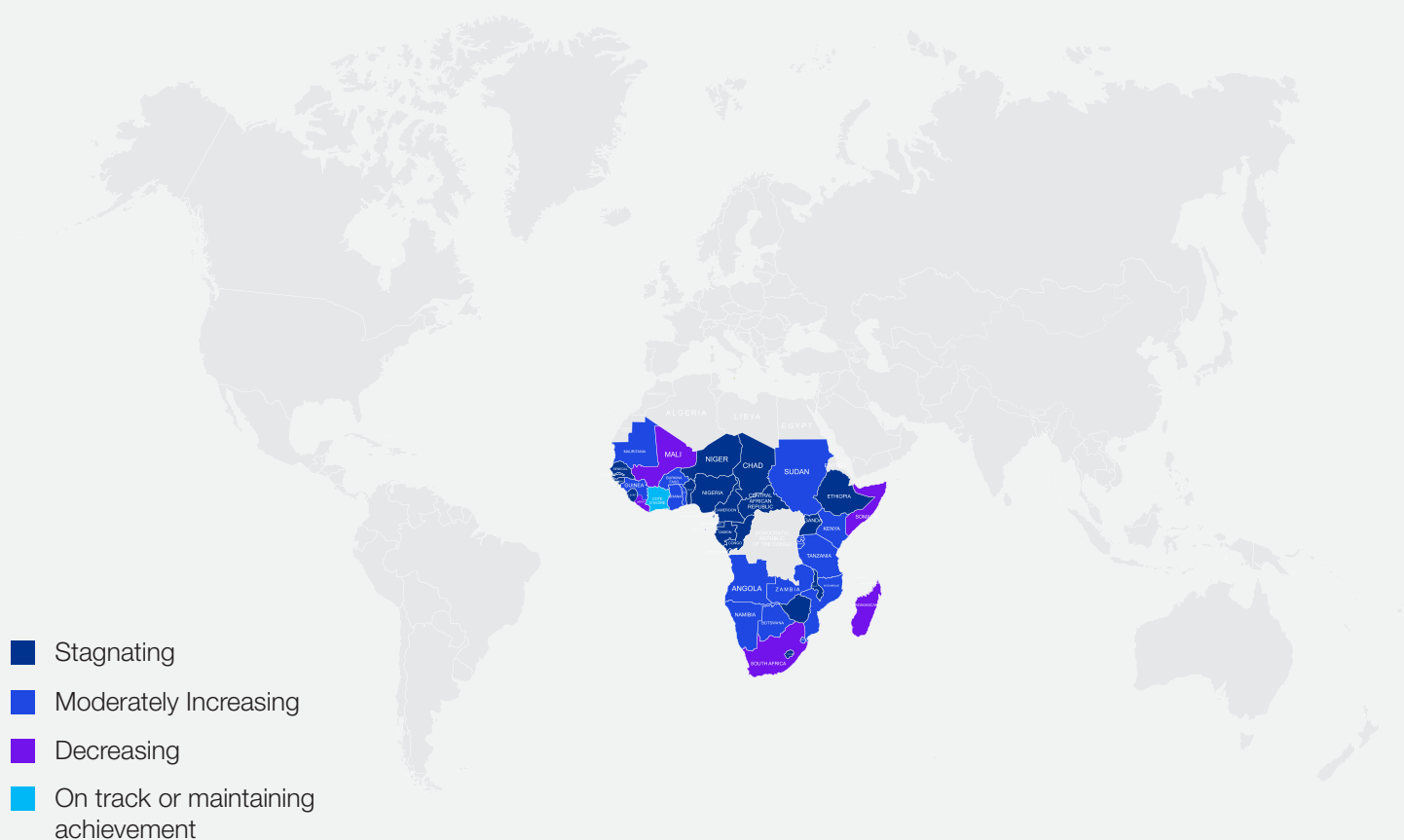


FIGURE 3: Progress impediment by level of challenges in select 45 sub-Saharan Africa's countries

Source: Sachs, Lafortune, Fuller & Drumm, 2023; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

Since policies and initiatives are required for implementing the goals and their targets, we believe that examining existing issues as countries around the world, particularly those considered as cases, have 5 years to complete the SDGs will lead to understanding what is working and what is not across the four countries from their policy choice strategic game. As previously said, this is critical since the countries cannot afford not to provide inclusive and fair quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for their population. Our analysis is also based on the fact that political and business leaders, as well as members of civil society organisations from around the world, have been meeting in various locations since 2016 to discuss and evaluate each country's progress. According to existing data, 105 voluntary assessments were conducted at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development between 2016 and 2023 on various thematic concerns or needs related to the implementation of the SDGs.

A year after the 2030 Agenda and SDGs were conceptualised and accepted, leaders gathered in New York City for the High-Level Political Forum, where 22 countries reported on their progress and individuals from many walks of life debated it. Cross-cutting issues were considered under the theme of ensuring that no one falls behind. The topics covered ranged from people to the processes and finances required to ensure an inclusive world in 2030 by pulling people out of poverty and meeting basic requirements. With the subject, almost all 17 Goals and their targets were discussed². According to our analysts, this was due to the fact that the world was eager to learn what had been accomplished within a year of the new agendas and SDGs being implemented, taking into account previously achieved MDG goals and targets. The 2017 edition of the Forum focused on the ideas and

tactics that countries used in past years to eradicate poverty and promote prosperity in a changing world. Despite multiple attempts by governmental and non-political parties, the poverty rate in Sub-Saharan Africa and other developing continents remained high during the year³.

In 2018, attention was shifted to proper understanding of what policies and initiatives have impacted societies in terms of building imaginaries and physical structures for people to live. The theme for the year was “transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies”, which afforded participating stakeholders the opportunity to conduct in-depth reviews of six of the 17 SDGs: water and sanitation for all (SDG 6); sustainable and modern energy for all (SDG 7); cities and human settlements (SDG 11); sustainable consumption and production patterns (SDG 12); sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss (SDG 15); and global partnership for sustainable development (SDG 17)⁴.

In what appears as the reintroduction of the concept of eradicating poverty after the Forum meeting of 2017, the Forum was held in 2019 under the theme “empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.” During the engagement, SDG 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17 were reviewed, mostly from 47 countries that volunteered to present their national voluntary reviews to the HLPF⁵. The 2020 edition focused on understanding the accelerated action and transformative routes taken by countries that volunteered to participate in discussing progress of the prior years, 47 countries discussed positions on the SDGs in light of the COVID-19 pandemic's consequences⁶. This pandemic trajectory persisted until 2023, during which time various themes that connected to the difficulties faced in

the wake of the pandemic were explored. For instance, the theme for 2021 was a robust and sustainable COVID-19 pandemic recovery that supports the consequences on the economy, society, and environment. This was advanced in 2022 with the theme “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” and consolidated in 2023 with the theme “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels.”

Like the previous events of the Forum, the 2024 edition will take place from 8 to 17 July 2024, under the Economic and Social Council's auspices. The forum will focus on reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty during times of multiple crises. It will review the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goals 1 and 2, Goals 3 and 4, Goals 13 and 14, Goals 16 and 17⁷. Our researchers note that all the themes from 2016 to 2023, were not

formed and discussed without directly or indirectly incorporating education as a major element. This is unsurprising when considering the importance of education in personal, societal, and global growth. Therefore, conducting a thorough and integrative examination of chosen West African educational and youth-focused policies to understand what works and what does not, even after years of implementation, is relevant to the Forum's discussion of SDG 4. Through our analysis, we seek answers to three important questions: What are the current policy frameworks and initiatives related to SDG 4 and inclusive education in West Africa, and how are they addressing the needs of youth, especially marginalised groups? What are the key challenges and barriers hindering the achievement of SDG 4 targets, particularly regarding inclusivity and youth empowerment in West Africa? What are the existing gaps and shortcomings in policy responses to SDG 4 in West Africa, particularly in terms of inclusivity, equity, and relevance to youth needs?

→ ...conducting a thorough and integrative examination of chosen West African educational and youth-focused policies to understand what works and what does not, even after years of implementation, is relevant to the High-Level Political Forum's discussion of SDG 4.

² SDG Knowledge Platform (2016). High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2016 - Ensuring that no one is left behind. Available from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2016>

³ Ferreira, F., Lakner, C., & Sanchez-Paramo, C., (2017). The 2017 global poverty update from the World Bank. Available from: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/developmenttalk/2017-global-poverty-update-world-bank>

⁴ SDG Knowledge Platform (2018). High-Level Political Forum 2018. Available from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2018>

⁵ SDG Knowledge Platform (2019). High-Level Political Forum 2019 Under the auspices of ECOSOC. Available from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2019>

⁶ SDG Knowledge Platform (2020). High-Level Political Forum 2020 Under the auspices of ECOSOC. Available from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2020>

⁷ United Nations (2024). High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Available from: <https://hlpf.un.org/2024>

We responded to these questions utilising a multimethod study methodology. We used a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods to examine data from many sources, particularly global, regional, and national policy texts

on education and youth development in all its ramifications. Overall, we used a comparative-narrative approach to present our findings, beginning with the conceptual and progressing to the evidence-based sections of the analysis.

1 Problematisation of SDG 4

While numerous sources have documented the state of nations around the world in terms of achieving SDG 4, it is vital to revisit the difficulties or needs that led to the Goal. In this context, we investigated the goal with the intention of demonstrating which problems the world leaders genuinely represent. In this regard, we attempt to establish the representation of education within the Goal while keeping in mind the linkages between the targets and the goal. SDG 4 seeks to ensure access for all to quality education through all stages of life, as well as to increase the number of young people and adults who have the relevant skills for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship. This

goal is expected to be attained by 2030, using eight targets. The targets include free primary and secondary education, equal access to quality pre-primary education, and equal access to affordable technical, vocational, and higher education. The number of people with relevant skills for financial success is also expected to increase, while eliminating all discrimination in education should also be attained. Global political and business leaders are also expected to work together for the realisation of universal literacy and numeracy, education for sustainable development and global citizenship, and building and upgrading inclusive and safe schools.



If these are the targets, what is the problem actually represented to be? This is important because merely looking at the words that promise a better future for the beneficiaries and critical stakeholders in the public and private sectors is not enough to understand the real problem in education, which has been described as a strategic tool for rapid personal and societal growth. Therefore, we leveraged “what is the problem represented to be” as an analytical framework for understanding the manifest and hidden problems in the goal and targets. Our results are presented in Table 1, where we analysed the 8 targets through the lenses of “what is the problem represented to be” that consider problem, assumption, subject, object, heroes, victims, and villains.

Our analysis shows that essential education is not being completed at all levels, particularly in basic and secondary schools. We also discovered weak and unequal education, most especially at the childhood and basic school levels. The goal emphasises the high expense of education as a major contributor to failure to get technical, vocational, and higher education. Technical skills, gender imbalance, and poor facilities in educational settings have all been cited as issues with qualitative and universal education around the world. These problems are based on the assumption that if the world truly aims to eliminate illiteracy and ensure sustainable development by 2030 and beyond, education should be accessible to all children, regardless of socio-economic status or background. The goal was also developed on the basis that quality early childhood education is crucial for academic success and economic empowerment. According to the goal, inclusive, free from discrimination, universal literacy and numeracy are essential for personal development and societal participation, while education should equip

individuals with knowledge and skills for global challenges.

To truly address educational issues and improve the world in all aspects, the goal defines individuals with disabilities, indigenous peoples, children, learners, and facilities as ideological subjects that must be fixed through collective and individualistic means. According to the goal, these approaches should be mutually inclusive, with education viewed as an object that includes a variety of aspects such as child development, skills, employment, entrepreneurship, equal access, literacy and numeracy, knowledge and skills, disability, gender equality, security, and a learning environment. Our analysts believe that each of these cases should be tackled systematically, utilising strategies and tactics for delivering quality and equal education that are consistent with the specified ideological subjects. This is based on the fact that the heroes, who are advocates from non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, and some state actors, will not accept anything less than free, equitable, and high-quality education for early childhood development, affordable higher education, skill development for employment, gender equality, literacy and numeracy, sustainable development, and curriculum integration of global citizenship.

Therefore, policymakers, governments, and other critical stakeholders appear to have no options other than to address financial constraints, discrimination, and a lack of quality education that impede children's readiness for primary school, particularly those from marginalised communities. It is also important to address unemployment, underemployment, and a lack of literacy and numeracy skills that limit prospects for long-term personal and societal growth. To enable significant contributions of ideological subjects, especially human

type, the goal expects concerned stakeholders to address lack of funding, discriminatory policies, inadequate resources, high tuition fees, limited access to training programmes, gender disparities, inadequate educational resources, ineffective teaching methods, curriculum gaps, lack of emphasis on sustainable development, and unsafe learning environments due to inadequate infrastructure and insecurity.

From all indications, the goal is to work on people, processes, technology, and

finance being used for teaching and learning at various educational levels. This is expected of political and business leaders as well as individuals who are concerned about the skills and knowledge development of the identified subjects and others in pursuit of education. Since the goal is an international mandate, we anticipate that national and regional policies and intervention programmes will consistently give priority to issues and underlying presumptions while carrying out diverse actions to achieve universal and equitable education for everyone by 2030.



ILLUSTRATION 2: Eight (8) targets through the lenses of "what is the problem represented to be"

TABLE 1: SDG 4 problematisation

Target Description	Problem	Assumption	Subject	Object	Heroes	Victims	Villains
By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.	Incomplete free, poor and unequal education	Education should be accessible to all children, regardless of socio-economic status or other factors	Girls and boys	Education	Those advocating for free, equitable, and quality education	Children who are deprived of quality education due to financial constraints or discrimination	Factors contributing to incomplete, poor, and unequal education, such as lack of funding or discriminatory policies
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.	Poor early childhood development, care and pre-primary education	Quality early childhood education is essential for children's readiness for primary education and subsequent academic success	Girls and boys	Childhood development; education	Advocates for quality early childhood development and pre-primary education.	Children who lack access to quality early childhood education, impacting their readiness for primary education.	Factors contributing to poor quality early childhood education, such as lack of resources or infrastructure.
By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.	Poor and high cost of technical, vocational and higher education	Education should be accessible to everyone regardless of gender or socio-economic background	Women and men	Education	Advocates for equal access to affordable and quality higher education.	Individuals, especially from marginalised communities, are unable to afford higher education.	Factors such as high tuition fees or lack of scholarships hinder equal access to higher education.

TABLE 1: SDG 4 problematisation

Target Description	Problem	Assumption	Subject	Object	Heroes	Victims	Villains
By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship.	Lack of technical and vocational skills	Acquiring relevant skills is crucial for economic empowerment and financial stability	Youth and adults	Skills, employment, jobs, entrepreneurship	Initiative promoting skill development for employment and entrepreneurship.	Youth and adults face unemployment or underemployment due to inadequate skills.	Factors like limited access to training programmes or outdated curriculum affect skill development.
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.	Gender imbalance in education attainment for the vulnerable	Education should be inclusive and free from discrimination	Persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children	Education, equal access	Advocates for eliminating gender disparities and ensuring equal access to education for all vulnerable groups.	Vulnerable groups face discrimination in accessing education.	Factors contributing to gender disparities and discrimination, such as societal norms or lack of inclusive policies.
By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.	Poor literacy and numeracy skills	Achieving universal literacy and numeracy is fundamental for personal development and participation in society	Youth and adults	Literacy and numeracy	Initiative promoting literacy and numeracy skills among youth and adults.	Individuals lacking basic literacy and numeracy skills, hindering their opportunities.	Factors like inadequate educational resources or ineffective teaching methods impacting literacy and numeracy rates.

TABLE 1: SDG 4 problematisation

Target Description	Problem	Assumption	Subject	Object	Heroes	Victims	Villains
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 non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development	Lack of knowledge and skills for sustainable development.	Education should equip individuals with the knowledge and skills to address global challenges and foster a culture of peace and sustainability.	Learners	Knowledge and skills	Efforts to integrate education for sustainable development and global citizenship into curricula.	Individuals lacking awareness and skills needed for sustainable development.	Factors like curriculum gaps or lack of emphasis on sustainable development education
Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.	Absence and low standards of education facilities, lack of disability and gender sensitive support facilities, unsecure and violent free learning environments.	Education facilities should be inclusive, safe, and conducive to learning for all children, regardless of their background or abilities.	Facilities and children	Disability, gender equality, security and learning environment.	Efforts to build and upgrade inclusive and safe education facilities.	Children face unsafe and non-inclusive learning environments.	Factors like inadequate infrastructure, lack of safety measures, or discriminatory practices contributing to unsafe and non-inclusive learning environments.

Source: Sustainable Development Goals, 2015; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

Problems

The nature and patterns of the problems described in the goal are recontextualised in a variety of ways in the global, regional and national policy documents, as well as the plans we examined. This is mostly due to the diverse circumstances in which the policies and plans were developed. The policies and plans are filled with numerous examples of how children, youth, and adult learners have been denied the opportunity to have better education for a lifetime and make significant contributions to national, regional, and global development due to a lack of infrastructure, qualified teachers, a secure environment, and adequate funding. In terms of infrastructure, the authors of the plans and policy documents emphasised how, over time, a lack of political will and

inadequate finance have been major obstacles to the creation of sustainable facilities at different educational levels and access to education products as well as services. For instance, in its continental education strategy for Africa, the African Union states that “Although there has been improvement in this sub-sector in the last decade, pre-primary enrollments in Africa are far below than those in other regions. Enrollment is about 20% on average in SSA for the age-cohort. However, it is much higher in Northern African countries such as Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Although policies and strategies in some cases exist, implementation in forms of infrastructure, teacher development and materials has been generally very slow.”

→ The policies and plans are filled with numerous examples of how children, youth, and adult learners have been denied the opportunity to have better education for a lifetime and make significant contributions to national, regional, and global development due to a lack of infrastructure, qualified teachers, a secure environment, and adequate funding.

Inadequate supervision systems and a dearth of student- or learner-oriented learning materials are linked to the poor teaching and learning outcomes, which have contributed significantly to underemployment and the growing literacy gap, in addition to the previously

mentioned factors. It has also been determined that one of the main factors influencing the provision of inclusive and sustainable education is gender inequality, which plays a significant role in the learning gaps that exist between the male and female populations. Notably,

ECOWAS Vision 2050, which its implementation starts in 2022, notes that “The empowerment of women and the fight against gender-based discrimination must be at the heart of actions that are designed to address inequalities between men and women and to promote gender equality.” Youth involvement in violent crime, the state of their mental health and inadequate health facilities to address their challenges are also stressed in the documents and plans. One of the education focused policy documents points out the place of having health education in school curriculum. In another document, we discovered the need for environmental education for the youth without neglecting their safety while in school and addressing violence or abuse orchestrated by them or against them. According to the documents and plans, poor partnership and collaboration in implementing higher

education products and services has also led to the failure to develop and execute lifelong education products and services across educational levels. In some cases, the documents and plans reveal how governments and other concerned stakeholders have underdeveloped educational institutions due to poor governance, weak political systems, and a lack of sustained investment and coordination. For instance, in Côte d'Ivoire's National Development Plan for 2016 to 2020, an extract which our analysts consider as a means towards addressing the challenge states that “The framework of professional training governance is improved through: partnerships with the private sector, organising concessions of training leading to the Brevet de Technicien Supérieur [Senior Technician Certificate] in the private sector, and will foster a culture of quality professional training.”

Assumptions

Many assumptions exist about what would happen if the listed concerns are not addressed. Poor educational outcomes, ineffective methods, and insufficient representation of women all contribute to youth violence and vulnerability. STEM education's expansion is hampered by poor infrastructure, curriculum, and implementation. Insecurity at school, a lack of lifelong learning opportunities, and age prejudice all impede youth growth. Public and government spending have an impact on education. Discrimination, poverty, and high costs all have an impact on access to school, while inadequate training and oversight mechanisms contribute to underprepared graduates.

Major difficulties to sustainable development include a lack of lifelong learning, ineffective governmental management, and insufficient educational collaboration. These concerns include gender disparities, inadequate adult education provision, a lack of environmental and development education, child violence and abuse, poor curriculum development, unfair school distribution, and a lack of government financial resources. Furthermore, poor civic education, insufficient human resources, and inadequate data collection and processing all contribute to these problems. Furthermore, the government's failure to allocate its own financial resources impedes educational

progress. Additionally, a lack of lifelong learning might impede young people's health development and contribute to poverty. As a result, resolving these difficulties is critical to guaranteeing long-term development and improving the learning environment. The documents emphasise the need for increased education expenditure, digitalisation, collaboration among

ministries, adequate infrastructure, security, and affordable higher education. The importance of inclusiveness, equal access, effective learning strategies, efficient supervision, and healthcare services was also stressed. The call for effective coordination, adequate funding, adequate resources, and a strong system supporting research and development was also made.

→ Insecurity at school, a lack of lifelong learning opportunities, and age prejudice all impede youth growth.

Ideological subjects, objects and representations

Who are the subjects of these problems and assumptions about the probable consequences of not addressing them? What are the objects of these webs of understanding SDG 4, as well as youth-focused programmes and initiatives? What frames do policymakers use to depict subjects in relation to problems and assumptions? In our analysis, the answers to these critical questions are mixed. Human and non-human subjects are found in the documents. Firstly, students at basic, secondary, tertiary, and vocational educational levels are identified as subjects who are likely to be negatively impacted by poor educational outcomes. Adults, especially women and those from poor family backgrounds, are

identified as subjects. Higher education boards, ministries, teachers, and other relevant government entities are also seen as subjects, playing critical roles in the teaching and learning system. Our analysis indicates that the private sector is also called upon to actively participate in high-quality, sustainable education. For instance, the focus was on how non-governmental organisations, curriculum designers, and school administrators should support governments in promoting high-quality, long-lasting education. As a result, cooperation and partnerships are crucial for improving the learning environment and guaranteeing long-term results for students at all educational levels.

→ Various organisations, including UNESCO, UNICEF, AU, ECOWAS, Higher Education Board, Education Committee, Education Committee, Ministries of Education and Youth Development are the heroes working towards the realisation of SDG 4.

The objects of narratives in the documents centre on the need to create appropriate processes and enable people's abilities and capabilities to make significant contributions to the attainment of SDG 4 and other programmes proposed for youth development. It also emerged that policymakers focused on the pace of infrastructure to ensure quality learning environments and outcomes without neglecting the need to ensure adequate financial support for educational institutions. Implementation, gender issues, violence, health challenges (such as HIV/AIDS), poverty, underemployment, strategies, resources, research, empowerment, governance structure, curriculum development, data management, post-graduate programmes, gender unit functions, vocational education, teaching processes, learning difficulties, supervision systems, child abuse, leadership, teaching, skills, pre-primary education, and education access were also significant objects in the documents.

Various organisations, including UNESCO, UNICEF, AU, ECOWAS, Higher Education Board, Education Committee, Education Committee, Ministries of Education and Youth Development were seen as heroes working towards the realisation of SDG 4. Socio-economic development and policy creation as well as implementation advocates were also identified as heroes.

These advocates deploy their resources towards advancing discussions on inclusive education, equal access to education, gender equality, adult education, environmental protection, child abuse prevention, effective leadership, skills development, safe schools, quality education, and better economic development. They also focus on youth participation in politics, improved human capital, and quality education. Our analysts note, as the documents revealed, that their advocacy for inclusive education, effective learning processes, and good governance and accountability in education is crucial for achieving targets of SDG 4. Also, constant engagement with various stakeholders on accessible education, equal job opportunities, universal basic education, youth health development, public education funding, sustainable development, new public institutions, research and development, private-public partnerships, adult education and empowerment, non-state actors, and violence-free school environments are also crucial to SDG 4. They also advocate for civic education and political participation, increasing educationists or teachers in rural areas, adequate funding of education, and curriculum development. They also advocate for agricultural sector development for job creation and equal access to education.

According to the documents, the victims of the problems and assumptions

provided are multifaceted. From learners to teachers and school administrators to industries and sectors, the problems represented and the assumptions provided are highly connected to those provided in the targets of SDG 4. For example, students are described as victims of a poor educational system. At the same time, staff are seen as the victims of weak monitoring and evaluation systems. Parents and guardians who cannot afford to send their children to school are the victims of failure to adequately fund education and

provide needed infrastructure. Employers are the victims of poor educational outcomes in terms of producing poor and incompetent graduates into the labour market. Rural communities and neighbourhoods with a lack of sufficient and well-equipped educational institutions are the victims of the stakeholders' inability to ensure equal distribution of educational institutions and resources. Female students are the victims of gender violence, while male students are the victims of ideologically driven terrorism and other crimes.

→ **Staff are the victims of weak monitoring and evaluation systems. Parents and guardians are the victims of failure to adequately fund education and provide needed infrastructure. Employers are the victims of poor educational outcomes. Rural communities and neighbourhoods are the victims of the stakeholders' inability to ensure equal distribution of educational institutions and resources. Female students are the victims of gender violence, while male students are the victims of ideologically driven terrorism and other crimes.**

As was previously mentioned, problems with people, money, technology, and processes play a major role in impeding the realisation of quality education in Africa, particularly in the nations we researched. Poor funding, poor participation, and inadequate attention from the government contribute to the lack of quality education and skills. Inadequate infrastructure, security, and personnel are also issues. The non-digital educational system, a lack of inclusive policies, and ineffective

supervisory mechanisms exacerbate these problems. Inequality in access to education, insufficient resources, and insufficient monitoring and coordination aggravate these problems. Furthermore, insufficient financing and investment in youth reform and employment compounds these problems. Overall, our analysis reveals that the education system's insufficiency is due to a lack of political will and public-private cooperation.



2 Policy Areas

To support our position that national and regional policy agendas must match with SDG 4 and its targets if the goal is to be achieved by 2030, we investigated the policy areas of our case countries' policy documents, as well as regional and international bodies. In our study, the policy area includes a set of objectives, precise directions indicated for immediate

activities towards the speedy realisation of SDG 4 targets, and situations provided that required the formulation of objectives, as well as means to attain them in line with the goals or policy pillars. We gleaned valuable information from 1, 421 assemblages⁸ derived from selected policy documents.

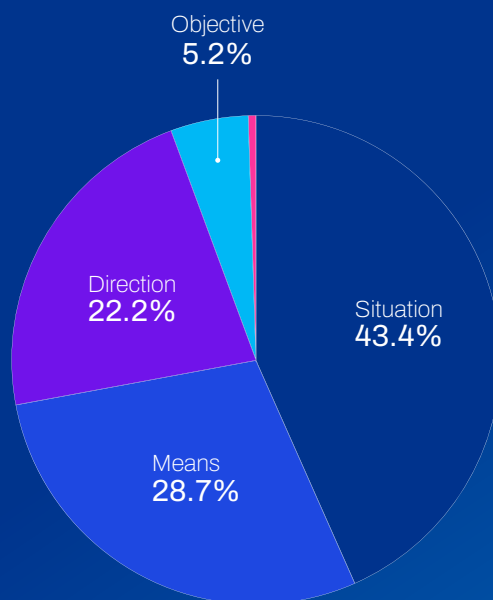


FIGURE 4: Policy areas in national, regional and global documents

Source: UNESCO, AU, ECOWAS, Countries' Case, multiple years; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

According to our data, more than forty-three percent of the assemblages originated from the policy documents' situation area. Means was found to closely follow the situation area with over

28% of the assemblages, while the direction area accounted for 22.2% of the assemblages. Our researchers believe that these results show that policymakers considered the

⁸ Assemblage means a series of extracts from the policy documents, collected based on their relevance to SDG 4 and its targets as well as youth development.

assumptions and problematising issues related to SDG 4 and youth development. It also suggests that practical approaches or strategies for addressing various challenges in the education sector and youth development are important to the stakeholders. While the goal appeared less

prominent in the assemblages, it does not necessarily mean that policymakers do not consider this policy area important. It only indicates our resolute selection of what is relevant to the analysis and the number of times goals and pillars are created by policymakers.

TABLE 2: Start and end years in the policy areas

Start Year	Direction	Goal	Means	Objective	Situation	Total
1990	80.68%	0.00%	3.40%	11.36%	4.54%	88(100%)
2010	11.11%	1.85%	68.51%	5.55%	18.51%	54(100%)
2013	15.55%	0.00%	41.66%	13.88%	28.88%	180(100%)
2015	54.79%	0.00%	0.00%	4.10%	41.09%	73(100%)
2016	33.67%	1.36%	5.78%	0.00%	59.18%	294(100%)
2018	6.25%	0.00%	71.25%	6.87%	15.62%	160(100%)
2019	10.44%	0.00%	39.30%	0.00%	50.24%	201(100%)
2020	2.50%	0.00%	10.83%	3.33%	83.33%	120(100%)
2021	15.71%	0.00%	33.33%	8.09%	42.85%	210(100%)
2022	13.15%	5.26%	0.00%	2.63%	78.94%	38(100%)
End Year	Direction	Goal	Means	Objective	Situation	Total
2015	80.68%	0.00%	3.40%	11.36%	4.54%	88(100%)
2020	0.00%	5.19%	22.07%	0.00%	72.72%	77(100%)
2023	22.91%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%	52.08%	48(100%)
2024	6.52%	0.00%	8.69%	8.69%	76.08%	46(100%)
2025	21.70%	0.00%	27.85%	7.33%	43.10%	341(100%)
2028	7.89%	0.00%	56.57%	0.00%	35.52%	76(100%)
2030	31.87%	0.00%	29.19%	4.86%	34.06%	411(100%)
2050	13.15%	5.26%	0.00%	2.63%	78.94%	38(100%)

Source: UNESCO, AU, ECOWAS, Countries' Case, multiple years; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

Table 2 shows the starting and ending years of the policy documents we examined, as well as how each of the policy areas evolved over time. In the early years, notably between 1990 to 2016, the primary focus was on creating a basic policy direction. For example, in 1990, Direction received an overwhelming 80.68% of the policy emphasis, indicating the early efforts to establish a clear path for reaching educational goals and youth employment. However, the emphasis on Direction progressively faded, giving place to other areas. By 2010, there had been a considerable shift, with 68.51% of the emphasis on Goals, indicating a movement toward setting explicit targets. This tendency persisted, increasing substantially in 2018 with Goals accounting for 71.25% of the emphasis. This transition highlights an era in which policymakers stressed identifying explicit objectives to guide their actions.

The relevance of Means, or ways for achieving these aims, has shifted over time. Means accounted for 41.66% of the focus in 2013, and peaked alongside Goals in 2018. These spikes represent periods in which strategic planning and implementation tools were critical. Objectives, which indicate defined, measurable outcomes, showed varying importance, peaking in 2013 at 28.88%. However, the Situation - examining present conditions and outcomes - showed a large increase over time. By 2016, Situation accounted for 59.18% of the emphasis, and this tendency maintained, reaching 83.33% in 2020. This increased emphasis reflects a change away from simply planning and setting goals and toward actively evaluating and understanding the current condition and impact of policies.

Examining the end years from 2015 to 2050, we see a different tendency. Initially, Direction dominated, as it had in 2015, with 80.68%. However, things suddenly changed. By 2020, Situation had acquired

precedence, accounting for 72.72% of the focus, showing a shift toward assessing the success of policy. Longer term, Goals peaked in 2028, accounting for 56.57% of the attention. This suggests a period of revised objective setting, possibly in reaction to interim evaluations and new problems. Means, while normally lower in priority, experienced a considerable increase in 2028, indicating a holistic planning strategy that included both goals and procedures. Objectives remained relatively modest in the latter years, but Situation became increasingly important, particularly in 2024 (76.08%) and 2050 (78.94%). This steady increase emphasises a mature policy phase centred on constant evaluation and adjustment depending on outcomes.

The data from these policy documents reveal a considerable shift in policy areas over time. Initially, there was a strong emphasis on establishing direction, but this was eventually superseded by setting specific goals and objectives. The most notable difference is an increasing emphasis on Situation, which reflects a shift toward a better awareness of concerns and needs related to education and youth development. This shift from planning and goal-setting to an evaluation-focused approach demonstrates stakeholders' readiness to align with existing socioeconomic and political realities that are relevant to education and youth development, as well as a growing need to understand and respond to real-world outcomes, ensuring that SDG 4 and youth development goals are met effectively.

If the SDG 4 targets and youth development goals are to be met, it is necessary to understand how policymakers, consciously or unconsciously, considered the targets in their attempt to formulate goals or create pillars that would address the difficulties and assumptions discussed previously.

From Tables 3 to 4, we basically investigated this by merging policy areas with SDG 4 aims. In this situation, we looked at how the targets were mirrored in the aims or pillars of the policies. Based on the data presented in Table 3, our analysis suggests that ECOWAS ensured that target 7 of the SDG 4, which focuses on education for sustainable development and global citizenship and states that: “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 non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development” reflected predominantly in almost all the goals or pillars embedded in its policy documents.

→ **The inclusion of goals focused on young women stresses the importance of gender-specific policies in achieving educational equity and addressing gender disparities.**

According to our analysis, it arose that the regional organisation believes in a holistic approach to education as it is interconnected with broader socio-economic, health, and environmental issues. Analysis further shows that achieving educational goals requires a comprehensive strategy that incorporates governance, economic stability, health, social inclusion, and environmental awareness. This could be gleaned from the number of objectives and means, as well as the targets of SDG 4, that align with the goals or pillars for educational and youth development in the region. Our analysis further indicates that, in the areas of gender-specific health and well-being

goals or pillars, the regional organisation seems to have prepared for the attainment of SDG 4. For example, many goals or pillars specifically target youth development, emphasising the region's commitment to empowering its young population through education and related initiatives. The inclusion of goals focused on young women stresses the importance of gender-specific policies in achieving educational equity and addressing gender disparities. The emphasis on health programmes and HIV/AIDS reduction strategies underscores the recognition that education cannot be isolated from health and well-being.

TABLE 3: Policy responses to SDG 4 problematisation from ECOWAS' documents using goals and/pillars perspective

S/N	Abridged and retained version of goals and/pillars	SDG 4 target alignments	Objective	Means
1	Peace, security, and stability	7	1	3
2	Governance and rule of law	1, 2 and 5	1	3
3	Economic integration and interconnectivity	4, 6 and 7	1	3
4	Transformation, inclusive and sustainable development	2, 3, 6 and 7	1	4
5	Social inclusion	1, 2, 3 and 5	1	3
6	Equal access	2 and 3	2	4
7	Regional youth development	7	4	10
8	Designing health programmes for youth	7	4	6
9	Region's environmental awareness increase	7	2	2
10	Implementing drug control strategies	7	3	5
11	Promoting community-based preventive measures to youth crimes	7	1	7
12	Raising ECOWAS youth awareness on science and education opportunities	7	3	3
13	Region's young women improvement	1, 2 and 7	3	6
14	Regional HIV/AIDS reduction strategy	7	3	11
15	Broadening participation in leisure activities	7	1	1
16	Promoting youth behaviour and views	7	2	3
17	Promoting youth involvement in peace building	7	2	3
18	Promoting youth participation in arts and culture	7	2	2
19	Promoting young participation in ECOWAS agriculture sub-sector	7	1	5
20	ECOWAS region's ICT awareness raise	7	1	2
21	Re-engaging families for youth protection	7	1	2
22	Reversing migration crisis in ECOWAS region	7	1	4
23	Implementing mechanisms to eliminate absolute poverty	7	1	3

Source: ECOWAS, 2010; ECOWAS, 2022; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

While ECOWAS is mostly aligned with target 7, our analysis shows that the African Union and UNESCO's policies are largely embedded with goals or pillars that connect with targets 6, 7, and 8. In our analysis, we understand that the two organisations prioritise walking policy implementers through building and upgrading inclusive and safe schools and ensuring sustainable education for development and global citizenship without neglecting the elimination of all forms of discrimination that have over the years served as stumbling blocks to equal access to education. Like ECOWAS, the two organisations also believe in the holistic development of education and youth by addressing educational challenges, integrating infrastructure, technology, professional development, and policy harmonisation. According to their

policy documents, focusing on equity and inclusion, collaboration, and building strong coalitions against all forms of challenges that impede sustainable education remain the duties of every stakeholder. For example, according to the data presented in Table 4, the two organisations consider gender parity as a strategic need for female education pursuits and disparity in literacy as well as vocational training as critical factors. In other words, necessary support should be given to the marginalised groups and the silent majority, that is, citizens living in rural and semi-urban areas. Our analysis also suggests that UNESCO's emphasis on sustainable development and public awareness indicates the need for education systems to adapt to global challenges and engage communities.

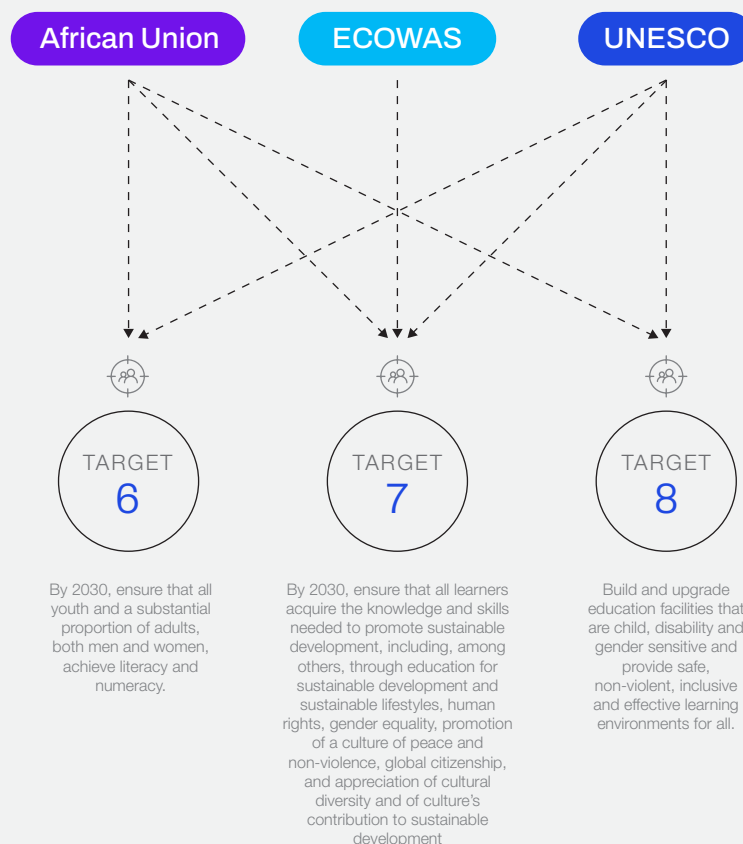


ILLUSTRATION 3: ECOWAS, African Union and UNESCO alignments with different targets

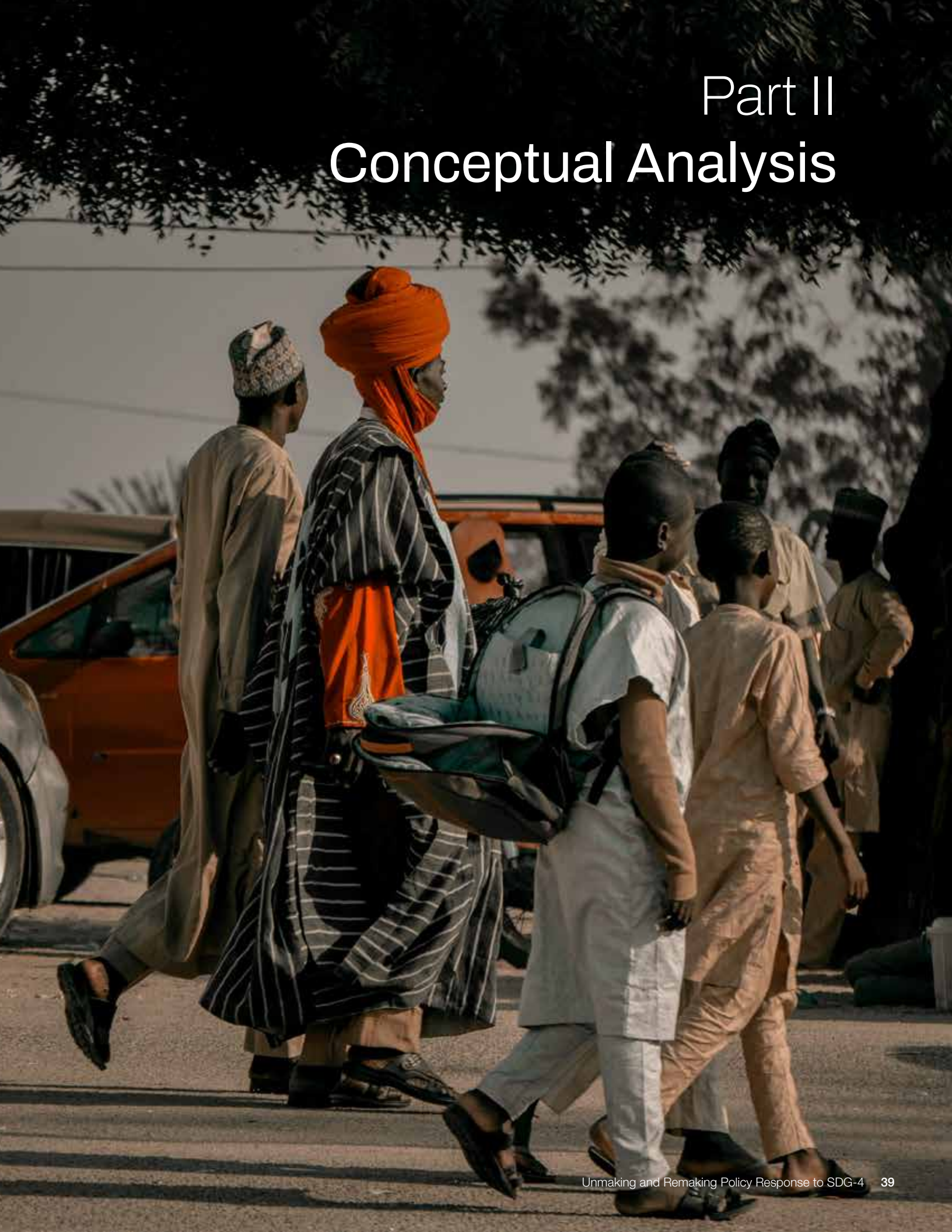
TABLE 4: Policy responses to SDG 4 problematisation from AU's and UNESCO's documents using goals and/pillars perspective

S/N	Abridged and retained version of goals and/pillars	SDG 4 target alignments	Objective	Means
African Union				
1	Revitalising teaching profession	7 and 8	1	6
2	Education infrastructure development	8	1	7
3	ICT enhances education and training systems	8	1	6
4	Harmonisation processes for national and regional integration	6 and 8	1	5
5	Accelerate processes for gender parity and equity	1, 2, 3 and 5	1	4
6	Eliminate illiteracy	1, 4 and 6	1	8
7	Strengthening youth training	4 and 8	1	6
8	Expand TVET opportunities	4, 7 and 8	1	6
9	Reviving tertiary education for global competitiveness	4 and 7	1	8
10	Promoting peace and education	7	1	5
11	Enhancing education management system	6 and 8	1	4
12	Coalition formation for CESA 16-25 implementation	7	1	4
UNESCO				
13	Reorienting education for sustainable development	6 and 7	4	9
14	Increasing public awareness	6 and 7	1	1
15	Promoting training	6 and 7	4	1
16	Upgrade education facilities	8	2	5
17	Global scholarship expansion goals	3, 4, 6 and 7	2	4
18	Boost qualified teacher supply through international cooperation	7	4	8

Source: UNESCO, 1990; UNESCO, 2015; African Union, 2016; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

Part II

Conceptual Analysis







Conceptual-Analytical Framework

Education is still crucial to society and its growth in all its aspects, as demonstrated by SDG 4 and national, regional, and international policy initiatives.

Then, how does education help people acquire knowledge and skills, and how does it impact their ability to support society? This question serves as the centrepiece of our argument in this section, where we look at ideas that help us comprehend how the issues were portrayed and how the presumptions that were previously mentioned were established as a means of helping stakeholders see the seriousness of ignoring various issues related to delivering high-quality, sustainable education by 2030. Scholars, independent think tanks, and public affairs analysts have characterised education from several angles, each with its own social, political, and economic context. In all situations, as long as society faces a variety of socioeconomic and political difficulties, education will remain an important tool for tackling them⁹. As a result, education is an important independent variable in determining personal and societal outcomes. While education may not yield instant financial rewards, it does provide

lifelong prospects that transcend economic power. Education enables individuals to participate in political and civic life. Education enables people to become more cosmopolitan, content, and supportive of civil liberties. At the same time, education can help people comprehend why they should not participate in behaviours that are harmful to the collective well-being of society.

Traditionally, knowledge and skills are important wide fields of education. To be educated means to be knowledgeable, to have some information, and to be prepared with techniques and procedures for doing specific autonomous and collective tasks or duties. As a result, we anticipate that policies will address knowledge and skill gaps holistically in order to better prepare citizens for employment, entrepreneurial endeavours, and civic participation¹⁰. It has also been stated that lifelong learning must be positioned within the framework of learning entitlement in order for everyone to

⁹ Appleby, Y., & Bathmaker, A. M. (2006). The new skills agenda: increased lifelong learning or new sites of inequality?. *British Educational Research Journal*, 32(5), 703-717; Greenhill, V. (2010). 21st Century Knowledge and Skills in Educator Preparation. Partnership for 21st century skills; Hilton, M. L., & Pellegrino, J. W. (Eds.). (2012). *Education for life and work: Developing transferable knowledge and skills in the 21st century*. National Academies Press.

¹⁰ Greenhill, V. (2010). 21st Century Knowledge and Skills in Educator Preparation. Partnership for 21st century skills

effectively achieve their educational goals . This suggests that stakeholders should place a high value on children, adults, and other individuals who want to acquire knowledge and skills. Therefore, they should receive substantial support.

While providing and acquiring knowledge, researchers have emphasised the importance of scientific, religious, and moral knowledge for personal and societal development. When people acquire scientific knowledge, they are able to follow particular techniques for gathering and verifying information before making conclusions. It is also a form of knowledge that aids society's development by producing tools, machines, and other equipment required to carry out various tasks or duties at home, at work, and in other aspects of human existence. Religious knowledge focuses on giving people the ability to be spiritual by following specific religious ideas, norms, traditions, and values. It is a type that exists within the social component of every society. Moral knowledge is also part of the social component, which allows people to grasp what is good and wrong. Meanwhile, religious and moral knowledge are inextricably linked within the social component, as one cannot be religious without engaging in moral behaviour. However, if people are morally corrupt, it is possible to claim that they have not permitted religious ethics to materialise in

their life.

One of the scholars in the knowledge management field stated that propositional and ability knowledge are important components of acquiring education . Learners should be able to use their brain's cognitive domain to recognise and retain information in order to acquire propositional knowledge. In other words, they must be aware of the objects and people around them. On the other hand, ability knowledge depicts them as persons who can do specific activities or duties using a variety of know-how techniques. This is consistent with the preceding position that citizens should be prepared and equipped with education to assist them pursue numerous opportunities. Based on the nature of ability knowledge, one could link it with skills that people need to acquire before performing certain tasks or duties. This is premised on the fact that gaining know-how techniques is a matter of being aware of the techniques in the first instance. Therefore, ability-based knowledge depends on awareness, and generally, knowledge depends on skill. For example, a scientist knows that one theory is better than another because of her skill at assessing it¹³. In Figure 5, we provide a summary of our analysis, where we establish how education, which is divided into knowledge and skill acquisition, connects with critical aspects of society.

¹¹ Appleby, Y., & Bathmaker, A. M. (2006). The new skills agenda: increased lifelong learning or new sites of inequality?. *British Educational Research Journal*, 32(5), 703-717

¹² Pritchard, D. (2013). *What is this thing called knowledge?*. Routledge.

¹³ Stanley, J., & Williamson, T. (2017). Skill. *Noûs*, 51(4), 713-726.

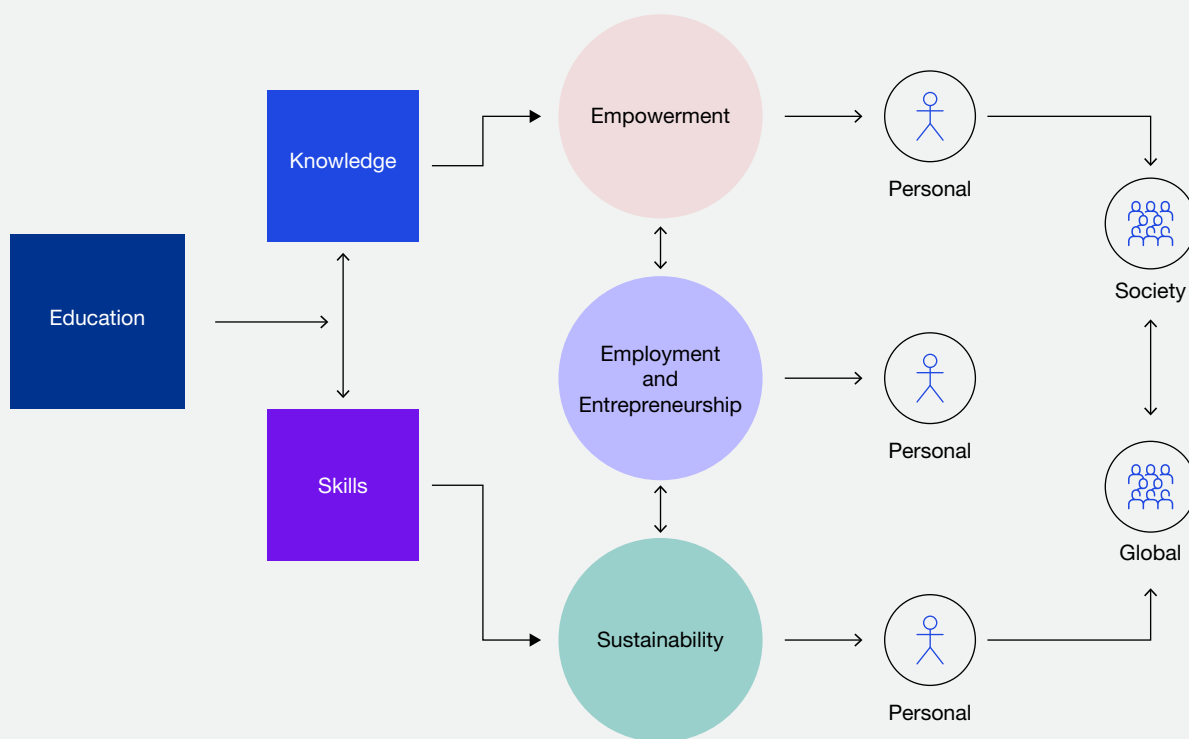


FIGURE 5: Conceptual-Evidence Analytical Framework

Source: Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative's Conceptualisation, 2024

A

Interconnectedness of education and outcomes

Education is fundamental to the framework; it contributes to both knowledge and skill development. It represents formal and informal educational systems designed to improve young capabilities. This interdependence implies that policies should include both cognitive and

practical components in order to generate well-rounded persons. The distinction between knowledge and skills highlights the importance of a balanced approach in educational curricula that values both academic learning and practical training.

B

Integration of knowledge and skills

These are the immediate outcomes of education. Knowledge is linked to cognitive understanding, theoretical insights, and information assimilation. Skills pertain to practical abilities, technical competencies, and hands-on expertise. By emphasising the interconnection of knowledge, skills, empowerment, employment, entrepreneurship, and sustainability, the framework promotes holistic educational policies that target immediate human advantages while also taking into account broader societal and global implications. Our findings highlight the importance of balanced curricula, teacher development, inclusive

education, and strong partnerships in developing empowered, employable, and sustainable persons who can make meaningful contributions to society and global development goals. The framework demonstrates that while knowledge and skills are interconnected, they are separate educational outcomes. This emphasises the need of blending theoretical learning with practical application in educational curriculum. Policies should encourage experiential learning opportunities such as internships, apprenticeships, and project-based learning in order to strengthen this integration.

C

Long-term impacts of empowerment, employment, entrepreneurship, and sustainability

Empowerment, employment, entrepreneurship, and sustainability are intermediary outcomes of knowledge and skills. Empowerment is linked to personal progress and society effect, implying that educated and competent young become more powerful persons capable of influencing their personal lives and communities. Employment and entrepreneurship are direct pathways for education to translate into economic opportunities, reducing unemployment and fostering innovation and business creation, whereas sustainability implies that education and skill acquisition lead

to sustainable practices and behaviours that promote long-term societal and environmental well-being.

The intermediary outcomes have broader consequences at the personal, societal, and global levels. Personal means that empowerment, employment, entrepreneurship, and sustainability provide direct personal benefits such as higher quality of life, personal development, and economic stability. Society emphasises the societal impact, in which educated and empowered individuals contribute to social cohesion,

community development, and societal progress, whereas global broadens the impact to a global scale, implying that education promotes global citizenship,

international cooperation, and contributes to the achievement of global SDGs.

D

Entrepreneurship and innovation

The link between employment and entrepreneurship emphasises the importance of educational institutions in cultivating entrepreneurial mindsets and innovation. This includes fostering a supportive environment for start-ups, offering mentorship programmes, and implementing entrepreneurial education. Governments and educational institutions can work together to establish incubation centres and innovation hubs to support young entrepreneurs. Employment and

entrepreneurship as outcomes demonstrate the importance of education in economic development. This stresses the need for vocational training, career advising, and support for entrepreneurial initiatives in educational policy. The direct link between skills and employment and entrepreneurship demonstrates education's practical application, indicating the importance of work preparation and creativity in educational programmes.

E

Sustainability as a multi-Dimensional Outcome

Sustainability is positioned as the result of both knowledge and skills, implying that education should impart sustainable attitudes and practices. This is consistent with global educational goals aimed at sustainability and environmental stewardship. The framework assumes

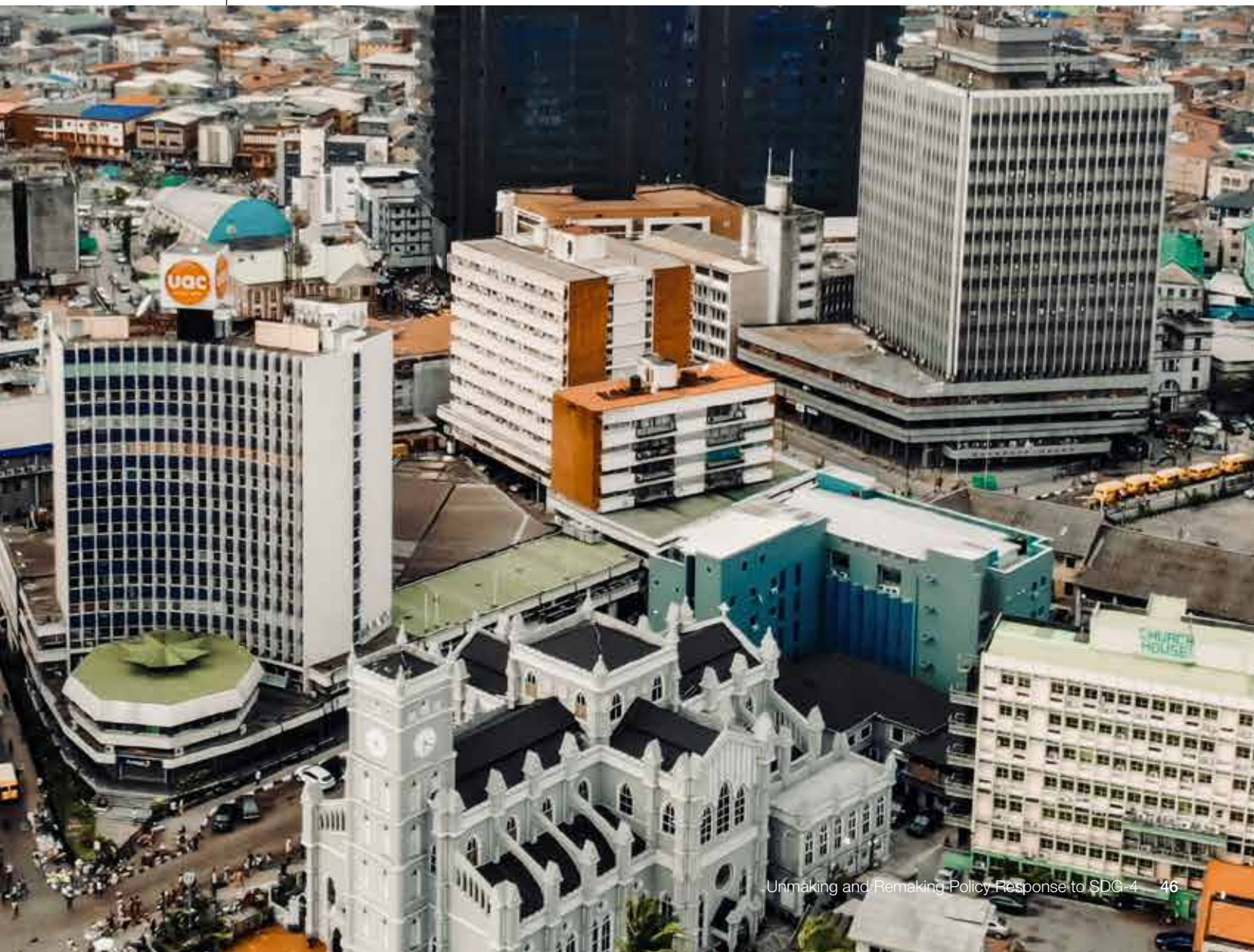
that sustainability encompasses personal, societal, and global dimensions, and advocates for educational policies that incorporate environmental education, sustainable practices, and ethical considerations at all levels of education.

F

Multi-level impact

The multi-tiered impact from personal to global levels suggests that education and youth development policies should be comprehensive, addressing immediate personal advantages while also taking into account long-term social and global implications. The projected personal impact includes increased self-esteem, greater professional opportunities, and a higher quality of life. Greater social cohesiveness, lower disparities, and increased community

engagement are projected social consequences, whereas contributions to global goals such as climate action, poverty reduction, and international collaboration are considered global impacts. Our analysts note that the many effects reinforce the notion that education is a critical driver for reaching broader developmental goals such as social fairness, economic growth, and environmental sustainability.





SDG 4 in the Context of High-Level Political Forum

From how the problems and assumptions in SDG 4 are represented to the representation of certain subjects, one can argue that all countries have been interpellated by the global agenda as developing in the area of education and youth development¹⁴.

This is particularly visible in how national, regional, and global policies have evolved in response to the difficulties posed by the targets¹⁵. For example, the Education 2030 Agenda is a universal agenda that aims to ensure equitable opportunities to education in a holistic and lifelong learning perspective. This agenda is framed by five key objectives, including the end of poverty and hunger, protection of the planet, and fostering peaceful and inclusive societies. This broad scope ensures that all countries, regardless of their income level or development status, are committed to achieving these objectives through education. Therefore, it would not be an overstatement to say that countries,

especially those in the Global South with moderate attainment of the targets of the Goal and significant challenges, need to work assiduously before 2030. In terms of data and indicators, many studies and think tank reports have found that targets are being met slowly, as well as a lack of suitable data to measure success¹⁶. The data and research available on SDG 4 indicators, such as the proportion of schools offering basic services, participation rates in formal and non-formal education, and ICT skills, provide a comprehensive picture of the progress countries are making in these areas. This data is used to track and compare the performance of countries, which further

¹¹ Tichenor, M., Merry, S. E., Grek, S., & Bandola-Gill, J. (2022). Global public policy in a quantified world: Sustainable Development Goals as epistemic infrastructures. *Policy and Society*, 41(4), 431-444.

¹² See earlier analyses and discussions on how the problems are represented and stakeholders framed in policy documents and plans.

¹³ Dang, H. A. H., & Serajuddin, U. (2020). Tracking the sustainable development goals: Emerging measurement challenges and further reflections. *World Development*, 127, 104570; Unterhalter, E. (2019). The many meanings of quality education: Politics of targets and indicators in SDG 4. *Global Policy*, 10, 39-51.

reinforces the idea that all countries are expected to be actively involved in improving education and youth development. This has primarily been addressed in many forums, networks, and communities, which has resulted in some innovative ways of doing and executing policy.

The HLPF, as previously noted, is one of the forums that has invited many stakeholders to participate in a series of discussions on the progress made on each

of the 17 SDGs¹⁷. The forum addressed critical linkages between Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, and 14, as well as other SDG targets¹⁸. Scholars undertook a critical review of the forum's efficacy in discussing various targets and goals. According to the scholars, experts at the forum argued that between 2016 and 2019, the forum served as an orchestrator, indicating a potential reliance on indirect and non-hierarchical governance¹⁹.

¹⁷ Kettunen, M., Charveriat, C., Farmer, A., Gionfra, S., Schweitzer, J. P., & Stainforth, T. (2018). Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF), New York, 16-18 July 2018; Evans, B. (2020). UN High Level Political Forum 2020: Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways: Realising the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development. Theme 6: Bolstering local action to accelerate implementation. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform.

¹⁸ Nilsson, M. (2017). Important interactions among the sustainable development goals under review at the high-level political forum 2017 (Vol. 6). Working Paper No. 2017-06. Stockholm Environment Institute

¹⁹ Beisheim, M., & Fritzsche, F. (2022). The UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: An orchestrator, more or less?. *Global Policy*, 13(5), 683-693.

Part III

Research Strategy



1

Analytical Framework

Aside from employing a conceptual-analytical framework to lay out and emphasise our ideas on education and youth development, we also approach our analysis using three analytical frameworks that have been grouped together as the NWG-Assemblage Thinking Analytical Framework.

NWG-Assemblage Thinking involves a narrative policy framework; what is the problem represented to be? and Goal Means Tree analysis. These methods were chosen for our analysis because they are effective at uncovering fundamental insights into policy creation and contexts, as well as patterns in results. The narrative policy framework, as an analytical tool, assists policy scholars in building policy settings and identifying characters in the forms of victims, villains, and heroes²⁰. It is also effective for questioning plots and morals surrounding policy concerns or needs. Using the narrative policy framework, we were able to uncover several stories about education and youth development, most of which were told within the context of policy situations and means. Specifically, we used this framework to expose dominant narratives that affected policy discourses and processes to create goals, objectives, and methods to address recognised needs and difficulties in the education sector, as well

as those inhibiting youth development. With the NPF, we addressed two critical questions: How do narratives influence policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation at local, national, regional and global levels? What role do key actors, including government officials, educators, and NGOs play in shaping and contesting these narratives?

What difficulties or demands are discussed if narratives may be identified by paying attention to settings, plots, characters, and themes? In this regard, we used what is the Problem Represented to be? WPR is mostly associated with the means in which “problems” are produced, created and enacted as particular sorts of problems. It facilitates the critical examination of public policies to analyse ‘how the “problem” is represented within them and to subject this problem representation to critical scrutiny’²¹. We followed this operationalisation by reading extracted parts of policy documents several times.

²⁰ Shanahan, E. A., Jones, M. D., McBeth, M. K., & Radaelli, C. M. (2018). The narrative policy framework. In *Theories of the policy process* (pp. 173-213). Routledge.

²¹ Bacchi, C. (2012). Introducing the ‘What’s the Problem Represented to be?’ approach. *Engaging with Carol Bacchi: Strategic interventions and exchanges*, 21-24.

This task is accomplished through a set of six questions and an accompanying undertaking to apply the questions to one's own proposals for change:

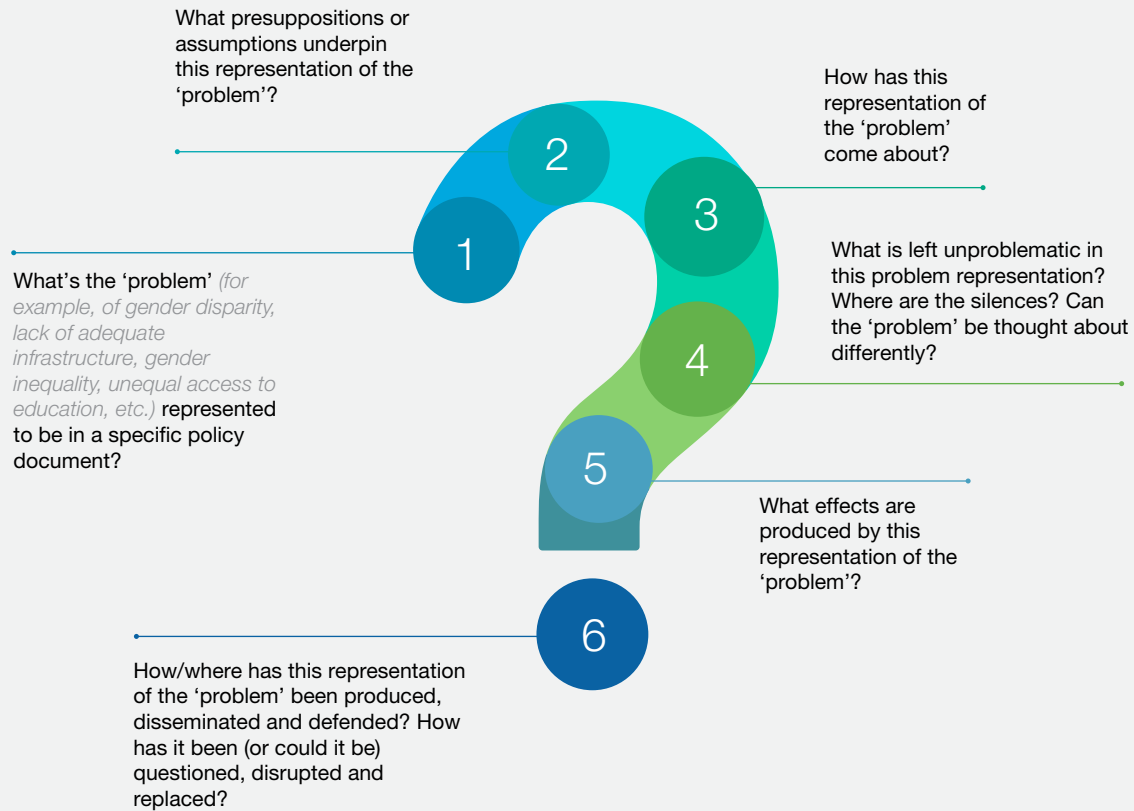


ILLUSTRATION 4: A set of six questions and an accompanying undertaking to apply the questions to one's own proposals for change

The third component of the framework is Goal Means Tree analysis²², which is a qualitative document analysis method used by policy researchers to assess the relationship between policymakers' stated ambitions and actual means advanced to meet these objectives. We approached its use with a quantitative strategy, quantifying the number of times goals or pillars, means, and objectives appeared in the analysed policy documents. This was done with the intention of measuring the degree to which goals are created and generating means to enhance their realisation during the policy's implementation. To further enhance critical understanding of identified policy documents, we employed assemblage thinking as an additional framework. It helped us to think through the extracted parts of the documents using four principles or commitments associated with using assemblage thinking in policy analysis²³.

The first principle is multiplicity which states that the causes of policy outcomes in any given circumstance are not linear, cannot be predetermined, and are an empirical question, resolved contingently in specific situations, when assemblages of varied actants cohere and their qualities and capacities are differentially deployed. This approach was specifically followed by

paying attention to how subjects (victims, heroes, and villains) are represented in relation to problems and assumptions, rather than fixating on the meanings connected with their presence and policy environment. The second principle, processuality, focuses on recognising structure and agency with the goal of collapsing them into a process that determines policy concerns and the path to resolution. The third principle requires policy researchers to understand how actors work by analysing how they are advantaged or disadvantaged in certain situations, as well as marshaling resources, skills, and relationships to trigger actions. In this context, we looked at how subjects were positioned in terms of authority and knowledge while making crucial decisions or engaging in the attainment of educational goals and youth development. However, the fourth principle warns us not to be tempted to 'know too much' and seek to avert the imposition of rigid explanatory frameworks in favour of an uncertain and flexible approach. In other words, we did not see assemblage thinking as a one-off method for isolating, organising and generating fixed meanings from the extracted parts. Instead, we allowed meanings to emerge continuously in the process of understanding actors, agencies, institutions, and networks embedded in an assemblage (an extract)²⁴.

²² Vanhaeght, A. S. (2019). Assessing Policy IV: Goal-Means Tree Analysis. *The Palgrave Handbook of Methods for Media Policy Research*, 595-608.

²³ Baker, T., & McGuirk, P. (2016). Assemblage thinking as methodology: commitments and practices for critical policy research. *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 5(4), 425-442. doi:10.1080/21622671.2016.1231631

²⁴ Ibid.

2 Design

By using the NWG-Analytical Framework, we have followed one of the existing views on employing a system-dynamic approach to understanding the complexity of achieving the SDGs²⁵.

As explained earlier, our analytical framework gives us the opportunity to examine causal relationships between goals, objectives, and means in relation to situations established in the policy documents and existing socioeconomic and political realities. Specifically, we studied the behavioural patterns of national, regional, and global policy systems using qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative approach entailed the collection of relevant texts

from the policy documents, which we called assemblages, and in some cases, we transformed them into numbers, which assisted us in constructing socioeconomic and political realities associated with realising targets of SDG 4 and various youth development goals. Our quantitative strategy also included the collection of relevant educational and youth development secondary data from the World Bank database, in line with the key constructs of our analysis.

²⁵ Collste, D., Pedercini, M., & Cornell, S. E. (2017). Policy coherence to achieve the SDGs: Using integrated simulation models to assess effective policies. *Sustainability science*, 12, 921-931.

3

Data Sources and Description

As noted previously, secondary data were sourced from the World Bank, while national, regional and global policy documents or reports constituted primary data sources.

We also drew on existing scholarly and critical perspectives from think tanks on education and youth development to construct our conceptual and analytical framework. For the purpose of establishing policy settings, plots, and characters and exploring specific themes, we selected policy documents (report in the case of Cote d'Ivoire). The global educational policy context was determined using Education for All (EFA)²⁶ and *Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning*²⁷ for all policy documents. In the 1990s, EFA was designed to serve as a framework for the design and implementation of education policies around the world, particularly in the field of basic education. Based on its core mandate, we believed that it would continue to interpellate policy designers across the world in their quest to develop various educational policies. Education 2030 is an incheon declaration and framework for action for the implementation of SDG 4, with specific attention given to the means of

implementing the goal and its targets by 2030. Like EFA, Education 2030 has also been hailing policymakers and non-state actors, especially members of civil society and non-governmental organisations, on the need to ensure robust implementation of formulated policies. It acknowledged the significant contributions of CSOs and NGOs working in the field of education. As a result, we anticipated CSOs and NGOs to act as advocates for learners' and youths' needs in order for them to obtain a sufficient education and contribute significantly to their immediate society and the world at large.

We chose ECOWAS Youth Policy and Strategic Plan of Action 2016–2025²⁸ and ECOWAS Vision 2050²⁹ to understand the policy context of the West Africa sub-region. The ECOWAS Youth Policy and Strategic Plan of Action aim to address the challenges faced by young people in the region, including unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion. The policy and plan are

²⁶ Education for All (EFA), The Earth Summit Agenda 21 Available

from: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/dsd/agenda21/res_agenda21_36.shtml

²⁷ Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning for all Available

from: <https://uis.unesco.org/en/files/education-2030-incheon-framework-action-implementation-sdg4-2016-en-pdf-1>

²⁸ ECOWAS Youth Policy and Strategic Plan of Action 2016 to 2025. Available from: <https://ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Youth-Policy.pdf>

²⁹ ECOWAS vision 2050. Available from: https://ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Vision2050_EN_Web.pdf

designed to provide a comprehensive framework for the development and empowerment of young people in West Africa. It is appropriate for our analysis because education, employment, health and well-being, and skill development for youth are parts of its key objectives and strategies. Through the policy, the region intends to enhance access to quality education and vocational training, develop skills relevant to the labour market, and promote lifelong learning. Nigeria, the Gambia, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire, as members of the Economic Community of the West African States, are expected to design their educational and youth policies according to these aims. Thus, various settings, plots, characters, and themes are expected to emerge from the ways policy designers in the countries describe current situations and challenges in the education and youth sectors. The second policy document from the region is ECOWAS Vision 2050, which is developed with the intent of creating "a fully integrated community of peoples, living in a peaceful and prosperous region with strong institutions and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, striving for inclusive and sustainable development." One of the key thrusts of ECOWAS Vision 2050 is to build a community of people fully inclusive of women, youth, and children, emphasising their importance in the development process. The AU Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–2025³⁰ is a continental strategy that matches the 2016–2025 framework of the African Union 2063 Agenda, meets the Common African Position (CAP) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and draws lessons from previous continental plans and strategies with regard to the role and place of the African Union Commission of the

African Union. One of the key goals of the strategy is to reorient Africa's education and training systems to meet the knowledge, competencies, skills, innovation, and creativity required to nurture African core values and promote sustainable development at the national, sub-regional, and continental levels. Therefore, like policy documents from ECOWAS, this strategy also serves as an ideological document for the case countries, from which they need to draw insights for creating their own objectives and strategies relevant to education and youth development.

For country-specific policy situations, we chose various policy documents. The majority of the documents focused on education. We also have documents that largely address youth development. Meanwhile, we found that education is covered throughout all of the documents. As a result, whether a policy document is education-related or not is irrelevant when considering education and youth development in terms of employment, empowerment, and other support for long-term progress. Our first policy document from the Gambia is the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016–2030³¹, which was designed with the aim of ensuring access, equity in education, and quality education for sustainable development realisation. Though its starting year of implementation was 2016, it was delayed until 2017. While the education sector strategic plan has the main mandate for ensuring education growth between 2016 and 2030, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Roadmap 2020–2024³² was also developed to cater for special education needs with reference to 8 years in between

³⁰ AU Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–2025. Available from:

<https://cieffa.au.int/sites/default/files/files/2021-09/continental-strategy-education-africa-english.pdf>

³¹ The Gambia Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016–2030. Available from:

<https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2018-09-the-gambia-essp-2016-30.pdf>

³² Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Roadmap 2020–2024. Available from:

<https://nyc.gm/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Youth-and-Trade-Road-Map-TVET-Sector-2020-2024.pdf>

the years of achieving the education sector strategic plan. This also applies to the Gambia TVET Policy 2021-2030³³, which has the vision of building “a quality, relevant, and well-resourced TVET system that is accessible, equitable, and inclusive to deliver, through lifelong learning, a skilled, competitive, and employable workforce for sustained socioeconomic development.” With this approach, our analysts observe that the Gambia seems to be deploying its strategic resources where substantial returns would be received.

Our earlier position that SDG 4 and its targets, regional and global policy documents, or frameworks are meant to hail countries by suggesting directions and areas of policy making is confirmed through the TVET Policy 2021–2030. Policywriters copiously referenced the National Development Plan (2018-2021), the Education Sector Plan (2016-2030), the Sustainable Development Goals (especially Goal 4), the UNESCO Recommendation on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and the recommendations on Technical and Vocational Skills Development of the African Union (AU) as the development strategic plans considered while developing the TVET policy plan. In addition to the two policy documents, we also considered the National Youth Policy of the Gambia³⁴, whose vision is to empower and render the Gambian youth capable and willing to make sustainable life choices and its mission is to establish a holistic and harmonious youth cohort imbued with adequate knowledge and competencies, strong professional ethics, spiritual and moral values; and a level of

independence, patriotism and commitment that give them life options to choose development and progress in keeping-up with the national vision.

A number of educational and youth development projects and programmes in Nigeria are also incorporated into several policy texts. Nigeria has acquired a strong interest in improving education and the lives of her teeming youths, as evidenced by national development plans and specific policy documents. Nigeria created the National Development Plan 2021-2025³⁵ with education and human resource development in mind, not just for national growth. A portion of the plan intends to improve access to basic and skill-based educational services, reduce the number of out-of-school children, and improve the quality of higher education. It was also developed with the goal of promoting youth development through job creation. Similar to the TVET policy of the Gambia, Nigeria also has specific policy documents: the National Policy on Special Needs Education³⁶ and the National Policy on Safety, Security, and Violence-Free Schools in Nigeria. Like the national development plan, these policies are expected to help Nigeria actualise its educational and youth development goals. For instance, the vision of the National Policy on Special Needs Education, whose implementation started in 2015, is to enhance the potential of people with special needs, irrespective of social, economic, political, religious, or language barriers, by providing equal opportunities and access. On the other hand, the National Policy on Safety, Security, and Violence-Free Schools³⁷ aims at fostering a secure learning environment, prohibiting

³³ The Gambia TVET Policy 2021-2030. Available from: https://unevoc.unesco.org/up/Gambia_TVET_strategy.pdf

³⁴ National Youth Policy of the Gambia. Available from: <https://nyc.gm/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/National-Youth-Policy-of-The-Gambia-2019-2028-Final.pdf>

³⁵ National Development Plan in Nigeria 2021-2025. Available from: https://nationalplanning.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/NDP-2021-2025_AA_FINAL_PRINTING.pdf

³⁶ National Policy on Special Needs Education in Nigeria 2015. Available from: <http://rodra.co.za/images/countries/nigeria/policy/National%20Policy%20on%20Special%20Needs%20Education.pdf>

³⁷ National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools in Nigeria. Available from: <https://education.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/National-Policy-on-SSVFSN.pdf>

violence against children, and ensuring continuity of education despite conflicts. To realise her youth developmental goals, Nigeria also developed the National Youth Policy: Enhancing Youth Development and Participation in the Context of Sustainable Development³⁸ with the vision to provide Nigerian youth with equal opportunities, regardless of their background, to realise their dreams and contribute to national development and the mission to create a safe environment, protect fundamental human rights, and enhance participation in national development processes. This policy strategically targets youth inclusion in development processes by considering them as critical stakeholders. Our analysts further state that the inclusion of safety reinforces the need to protect youths within and outside schools.

For Senegal, our data also included national development and specific policies on education. The Emerging Senegal Priority Plan 2019–2023³⁹ is one of the plans the Senegalese government has developed in recent times with a view to making the country an emerging economy by 2035, focusing on building a united society based on the rule of law. In the plan, the structural transformation of the economy and growth, human capital, social protection and sustainable development, governance, institutions, peace, and security are all prioritised. However, we only focused on parts that established the government's attention on education and those that indirectly connected with youth development. Quality, Equity and Transparency Improvement Programme (PAQUET). Education Training Sector 2013–2025⁴⁰ is another policy document from Senegal that we considered in our analysis.

Through this policy, Senegal aims to deepen and consolidate the achievements of the previous decade, but also to readjust educational options by articulating this program to the dynamics observed at the national and international level. In this regard, the educational policy has integrated the objectives pursued through EFA, the MDGs, the national economic and social development strategy (SNDES), which aim, among other things, to achieve universal primary schooling, access equitable between girls and boys, poverty reduction, skills training for young people and adults, etc. The policy speaks more about access, quality, and governance. Senegal established a similar policy and began implementing it in 2018 (PAQUET 2018–2030)⁴¹, which appears to be a proactive tactic as the final year of implementing PAQUET 2013–2025 approaches. Our analysts note that the Senegalese government, like the Gambia, developed a new policy while implementing an existing one with a view of addressing identified loopholes in the implementation of the existing one.

We also extracted relevant policy texts from the National Development Plans of Cote d'Ivoire. The first plan was developed, and its implementation started in 2016 and ended in 2020. Suffice it to say that the plan for 2016–2020 was sourced from a report titled “Ivory Coast Education Sector,” with a specific reference to dissecting education in the country. Another development plan was immediately rolled out in 2021, and its last year of implementation is 2025. We also sourced relevant extracts from the 2020 States of Skills produced by the International Labour Organisation. Overall, needs and challenges in the country's

³⁸ National Youth Policy: Enhancing Youth Development and Participation in the context of Sustainable Development. Available from: <https://www.prb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Nigeria-National-Youth-Policy-2019-2023.pdf>

³⁹ Emerging Senegal Priority Plan 2019–2023. Available from: <https://www.presidence.sn/en/pse/emerging-senegal>

⁴⁰ Quality, Equity and Transparency Improvement Programme (PAQUET). Education Training Sector 2013–2025. Available from: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/es/176681527996626963/pdf/SENEGAL-PAD-05112018.pdf>

⁴¹ Quality, Equity and Transparency Improvement Programme (PAQUET). Education Training Sector 2018–2030. Available from: <https://scolaplan.com/sv/post/dt?up=0&lg=en&pi=32&sl=Senegals-Education-Partners-endorse-the-2018-2030-Education-Sector-Plan>

education sector are discussed, and various subjects are identified and represented within varied problems and assumptions related to SDG 4 and youth development. The 2016–2020 and 2021–2025 plans were created with the aim of achieving the economic and social transformation needed to enable Côte

d'Ivoire to become an upper middle-income country by 2030. In developing the plans, the country capitalises on the SDGs and the African Union's 2063 vision. This reaffirms the earlier position that countries are being interpellated by regional and global policy templates.



4

Operationalisation of Assemblages and Unit of Analysis

Our assemblage thinking, as stated previously, led us to consider the extraction of relevant parts of all the documents described in Section 3.

The extracts were arranged and fitted with the intention of generating plots and themes within policy settings. The extracts also constituted the corpus and unit of analysis. As a corpus, a total of 40,723 words formed the assemblages. Education is the most frequently occurring word, appearing 590 times. With 307 times of appearance, training closely followed education, while school (243), development (290), and schools (166) were in third, fourth, and fifth positions, respectively. We interrogated the extracts using conceptual-analytical frameworks related to policy analysis and determining problems, as well as assumptions

embedded in the policy documents. For the purpose of analysing the extracts from the perspective of policy instruments, we adopted the existing definition, which states that policy instruments are the methods, paths, or certain measures and mechanisms adopted by policymakers and executors to achieve one or more policy objectives⁴². We followed this by specifically reading each extract several times to pinpoint how policymakers and executors intend to address the identified challenges and needs presented in the policy areas (situations, goals, objectives, and means) within the education and youth development sectors.

⁴² Rochefort, D. A., Rosenberg, M., & White, D. (1998). Community as a policy instrument: A comparative analysis. *Policy Studies Journal*, 26(3), 548-568; Duff, C. (2016). Assemblages, territories, contexts. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 33, 15-20. doi:10.1016/j.drugpo.2015.10.003; Xie, H., Wen, J., & Choi, Y. (2021). How the SDGs are implemented in China—A comparative study based on the perspective of policy instruments. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 291, 125937. doi:10.1016/j.jclepro.2021.125937

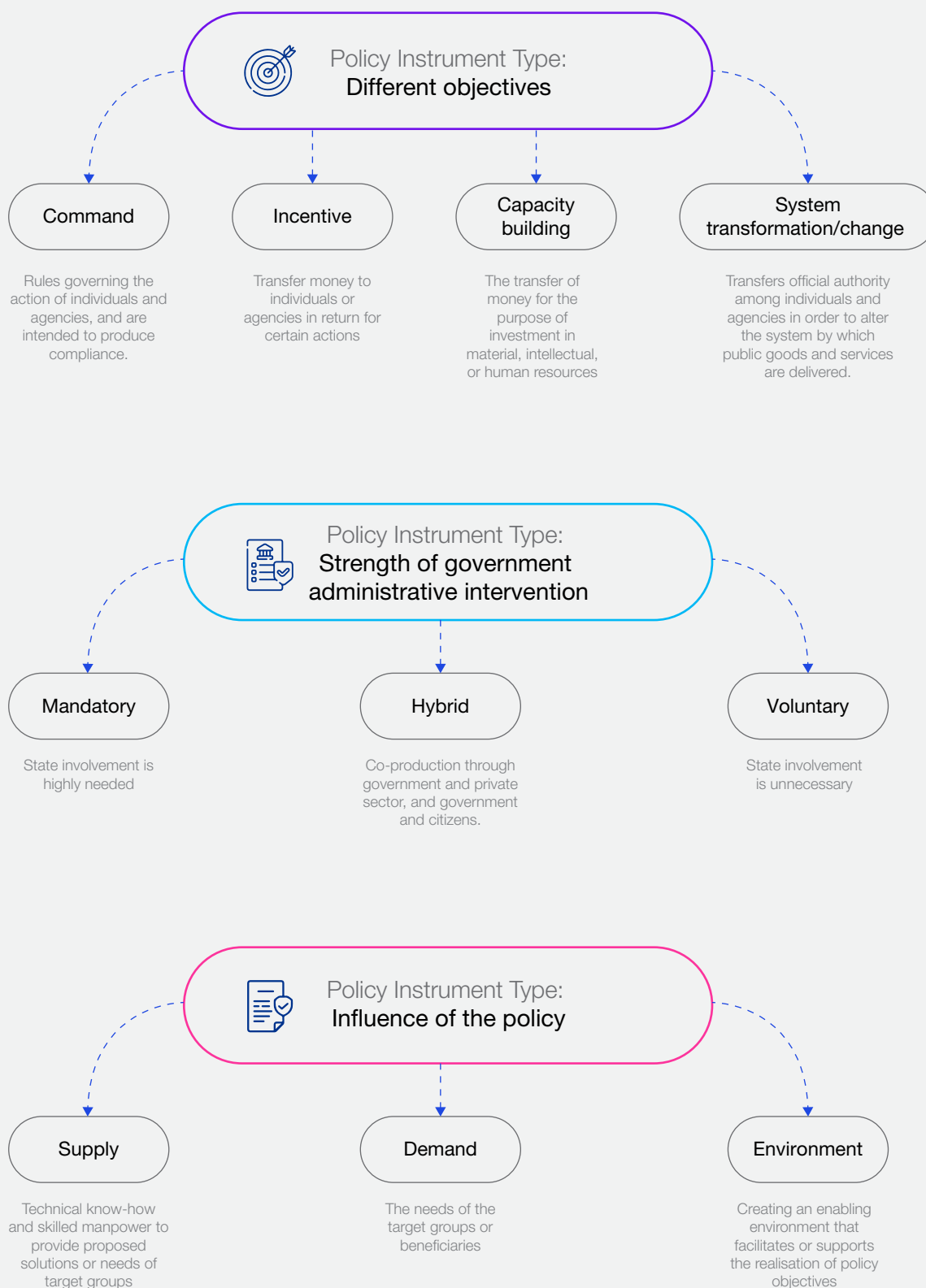


ILLUSTRATION 5: Policy Instrument Type

We created categories to help quantify the problems and assumptions represented in the assemblages. Problem is the first category, and it represents the issues or needs discussed in an assemblage. Assumption is the second category, which signifies what the assemblage portends around or for the issue(s) or needs. Object signifies living or non-living concepts mentioned directly or indirectly in the assemblage, while subject represents humans and non-humans, especially organisations mentioned in the assemblage. We developed five categories for interrogating issues or needs that policy instruments intend to fix. Product as a category indicates an assemblage that focuses on fixing a particular outcome. Process entails assemblage that indicates fixing a particular clog or difficulty in a process that impedes the realisation of certain outcomes. Fixing an individual's

inefficiency or lack of skills in making significant contributions to processes, technology, and finance needed for actualising certain outcomes is measured using people as a category. The technology category indicates assemblage that focuses on fixing a particular technological issue or providing technologies for enhancing processes, people, and available financial resources, while finance represents assemblage that highlights provided financial resources or calls for it towards realisation of certain outcomes. Each assemblage served as a unit of analysis because we wanted to show how the contexts and subjectivities expressed in the policy documents fit together while remaining consistent with current social and political realities⁴³.

⁴³ Duff, C. (2016). Assemblages, territories, contexts. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 33, 15–20. doi:10.1016/j.drugpo.2015.10.003



Data Collection, Normalisation and Analysis Approaches

We employed keywords and search string techniques for data collection from the policy documents. Education, unemployment, employment...

We employed keywords and search string techniques for data collection from the policy documents. Education, unemployment, employment, literacy, gender, discrimination, youth, women, girls, boys, equity, and equality, among others, were used as keywords. The use of these keywords led to 1,421 extracts collected from all the documents, constituting assemblages. Out of the total extracts, AU and ECOWAS had 95 extracts each, while 137 extracts came from the UNESCO document. A total of 151 and 231 extracts emerged from Ivorian and Nigerian policy documents, respectively. Out of the national, regional, and global policy documents we examined, a large number of extracts came from Senegalese ($n = 388$) and the Gambian ($n = 324$) policy documents. In the context of the start years of implementing the documents, our data indicates that 2016 had the highest number of extracts ($n = 294$), followed by 2021 ($n = 210$). With 201 extracts, 2019 closely followed 2021. A total of 180 extracts are associated with 2013. The year 2018 followed with a total of 160 extracts, while 2020 had 120 extracts. Eighty-eight extracts came from 1990 and

73 extracts from 2015. The years 2010 ($n = 57$) and 2022 ($n = 38$) had the fewest extracts. These frequencies are not quite different for the end years, where the highest extracts came from 2030 ($n = 411$) and 2025 ($n = 341$), while the least are from 2015 ($n = 88$), 2020 ($n = 77$), 2028 ($n = 76$), 2023 ($n = 48$), 2024 ($n = 46$), and 2050 ($n = 38$). The end years of some policy documents and strategic plans were not indicated by the governments of the case countries and organisations we considered. Therefore, a total of 296 assemblages were without ending years. In terms of policy-making components, 616 assemblages were within the situation component: 408 for means, 316 for direction, 74 for objectives, and 7 for goal components.

An inter-coder reliability analysis was conducted to ensure the quality of the extracts. We selected 5% of the total assemblages ($n = 1,421$) using the Table of Random Numbers by following the selection of the first four digits on the table vertically across columns. This led to the coding of a total of 71 assemblages by two members of the research team, who understood the problem area and also

conducted a series of content analysis studies in the last few years. People, command, capacity building, system change, mandatory, hybrid, supply, and environment categories were moderately reliable. The product, incentive, and demand categories were substantially reliable. Almost perfect was the reliability status of the technology, finance, and voluntary categories, while the process category had a fair reliability status (see appendix for details).

Our analysis approach is grounded in the qualitative-quantitative data analytic framework (QQ-DAF) we formulated, which contains four key components (dataset, pre-processing, text mining, and visualisation)⁴⁴. Dataset as the first component has been extensively explained earlier under the data description and operationalisation of the assemblage corpus. The pre-processing component assisted us in removing inconsistencies in the ways some texts were produced by policymakers or writers⁴⁵. At the text mining stage, we looked for qualitative and quantitative patterns that produced

needed narratives around educational goals and youth development in the corpus, with the goal of mining valuable insights that are appropriate for visualisation⁴⁶. Specifically, QQ-DAF helped us capture the relationship between SDG 4 targets and public policies and their realisation using correlation and regression analyses. We first employed Voyant-Tool, a qualitative data analysis software, for extracting the frequency of words and phrases relevant to SDG 4 targets and youth development in the corpus. We then transferred the numbers into JAMOVI and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), which afforded us the opportunity to run correlation and regression analyses. For example, for the purpose of finding the link between the most frequent words and existing educational and youth-related outcomes, we employed correlation analysis. Predicting the words from the outcomes led us to adopt regression analysis. Therefore, we produced evidence using the two data analysis methods dialectically⁴⁷.

⁴⁴ Scherp, H. Å. (2013). Quantifying qualitative data using cognitive maps. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 36(1), 67-81.

⁴⁵ The pre-processing was done before conducting inter-coder reliability.

⁴⁶ Rasid, N., Nohuddin, P. N., Alias, H., Hamzah, I., & Nordin, A. I. (2017). Using data mining strategy in qualitative research. In *Advances in Visual Informatics: 5th International Visual Informatics Conference, IVIC 2017, Bangi, Malaysia, November 28–30, 2017, Proceedings 5* (pp. 100-111). Springer International Publishing.

⁴⁷ Carus, A. W., & Ogilvie, S. (2009). Turning qualitative into quantitative evidence: a well-used method made explicit 1. *The Economic History Review*, 62(4), 893-925.

Part IV

Comparative Analysis



...a one-size-fits-all approach cannot produce the necessary results given the world's short time to achieve the Goal.

Everyone wishes to live in a society in which everything works. Everyone believes that organisations and individuals exist to improve people's lives. However, these ideas are often accompanied with a poor application of plans, tactics, or processes designed to transform illusion into reality. In light of this, in this section, we look at the numerous assumptions and insights mentioned earlier. We suggest that policies and programmes are required to improve education for all and ensure sustainable societies around the world, not only in the studied West African region. We look at how governments in the region are responding to SDG 4 and youth development by implementing coercive and voluntary compliance methods to meet the Goal's targets and youth-focused programmes. We also discuss how direct and indirect learning from national, regional, and global policy formulation and

implementation techniques could help to achieve universal education by 2030 and promote inclusive youth development. We based this on the reality that a one-size-fits-all approach cannot produce the necessary results given the world's short time to achieve the Goal. For example, a government dominated by a single party may prioritise policies that are consistent with that party's platform, even if they are not always the most effective or efficient answers. On the other side, a coalition administration may be more likely to implement policies that are more balanced and inclusive. Specifically, by comparing policies from various contexts (national, regional, and global) and administrations, we were able to uncover similar difficulties and possibilities, as well as unique characteristics that influence education and youth development policy outcomes.

1

Policy Arena

We have stated that regional and global policy templates and organisations are pressuring countries to reach SDG 4 commitments and youth development by 2030.

We also maintained that existing African policies, both national and regional, have responded intentionally or unconsciously to global calls. In this section, we will dig deeper into these arguments, paying special attention to the context in which the identified policy texts were written and

implemented. We discovered a dynamic and complicated policy arena, which is consistent with past policy comparison research. In this regard, numerous parties, institutions, and procedures contribute to the formation and outcomes of the policy document we analysed.

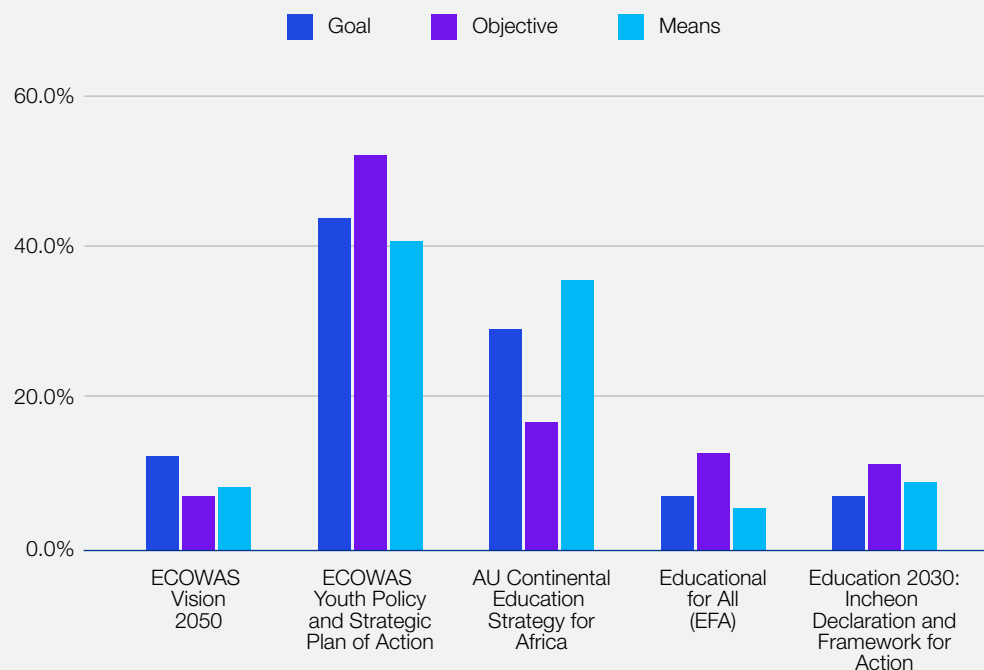


FIGURE 6: Key policy constructs from regional and global documents

Source: AU, ECOWAS, UNESCO, multiple years; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

The data in Figure 6 focus on the key policy areas and establish how regional and global organisations have responded to SDG 4 and its targets. Looking at the data, it appears that ECOWAS and AU

have responded more to the call on ensuring quality education and rapid youth development. For example, one of the goals of ECOWAS is:

...the improvement of the living conditions of the population through the optimisation of the benefits of the demographic dividend, the quality of the education and knowledge building systems, the creation of decent jobs for young people and women as well as the strengthening of resilience to public health.

(Culled from ECOWAS Vision 2050)

According to the extract, the regional organisation expects its members to view rapid youth population growth as an asset and a strategic tool for spurring growth and development by prioritising quality education and creating enabling environments that allow youths to find decent jobs while also exploring entrepreneurial opportunities. Aside from these, a solid health-care system is required for the youth's resilience to public health threats. It could also be inferred that UNESCO has equally responded well to the call. In terms of developing goals that could help in realising better education and sustained youth development, analysis reveals ECOWAS and AU are much better than UNESCO. This also applies to creating means or strategies for achieving goals and objectives.

These results are further explored with data in Table 5, where we reported cumulative responses of countries, regional and global organisations' response to SDG 4's implementation calls. Our analysts note that each document represents a strategic framework or plan that contributes to the broader aim of achieving quality education and related developmental goals. The examination of each document indicates a strategic

choice of words in writing titles and other parts. For example, some policy documents prioritise youth while others stress the place of long term strategic planning, regional and continental coordination, quality and equity in acquiring education and distributing educational and non-educational resources. We also discovered a focus on technical and vocational education and training.

The high percentages linked with youth initiatives, such as those from ECOWAS and Nigeria, demonstrate a regional and national priority for young empowerment and development. This approach is critical because it confronts the demographic realities of a young population in many West African countries, emphasising the importance of focused educational and employment measures to capitalise on this demographic dividend. The ECOWAS Vision 2050 and other national development plans place an emphasis on long-term goals and ambitions. This strategic vision is critical for long-term development, ensuring that current educational achievements are consistent with larger socio economic goals. The AU Continental Education Strategy for Africa and ECOWAS policies emphasise the

significance of regional and continental cooperation in tackling educational difficulties. Such alignment can result in more coherent and synergistic activities, as resources and knowledge are pooled to address similar concerns.

Senegal's quality, equity and transparency improvement policy indicates a strong commitment to not just expanding access to education, but also improving its quality and ensuring equity. These efforts are critical in addressing disparities and providing a more inclusive educational landscape. The focus on TVET policies, as seen in the Gambia and Nigeria, reflects a

recognition of the importance of vocational training in equipping youth with practical skills that meet labour market demands. This emphasis on TVET can significantly reduce unemployment rates and foster economic growth. The diverse means employed across various policies highlight the multifaceted nature of educational reform, involving infrastructure development, ICT integration, teacher training, and policy harmonisation. Adequate resource allocation to these areas is crucial for the effective implementation of educational strategies.

→ ...countries with fewer goals, objectives, and means have not responded to the global call as expected. This has the tendency to slow the realisation of SDG 4 targets and various youth development initiatives or programmes.



TABLE 5: Cumulative policy constructs from national, regional and global documents

Document Name	Goal	Objective	Means
ECOWAS Vision 2050	4.50%	2.42%	2.21%
ECOWAS Youth Policy and Strategic Plan of Action	16.21%	17.96%	10.95%
AU Continental Education Strategy for Africa	10.81%	5.82%	9.57%
Educational for All (EFA)	2.70%	4.36%	1.52%
Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action	2.70%	3.88%	2.35%
Gambia TVET Policy	8.10%	4.36%	7.21%
Gambia's Education Sector Strategic Plan	4.50%	5.82%	6.10%
National Youth Policy of the Gambia	0.90%	4.36%	1.38%
Gambia Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Roadmap	3.60%	7.28%	4.71%
National Youth Policy of Nigeria	9.90%	11.16%	3.32%
National Policy on Special Needs Education in Nigeria	1.80%	1.45%	0.69%
National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools in Nigeria	3.60%	3.88%	5.96%
Nigeria's National Development Plan	2.70%	4.36%	4.43%
Quality, Equity and Transparency Improvement Programme in Senegal's Education Sector 2013-2018	5.40%	15.53%	21.22%
Emerging Senegal Priority Plan-Senegal	1.80%	0.97%	2.35%
Quality, Equity and Transparency Improvement Programme in Senegal's Education Sector 2018-2030	11.71%	6.31%	12.34%
National Development Plan -Ivory Coast 2016-2020	3.60%	0.00%	2.35%
National Development Plan -Ivory Coast 2021-2025	5.40%	0.00%	0.00%
State of Skills -Ivory Coast	0.00%	0.00%	1.24%
Total	111(100%)	206(100%)	721(100%)

Source: Case Countries' Documents, multiple years; ECOWAS, African Union, UNESCO, multiple years; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

The data in Table 5 indicates that ECOWAS, Senegal, and the African Union have more goals than other stakeholders. Nigeria and the Gambia followed the two organisations and the country. In terms of setting measurable objectives, the regional organisation (ECOWAS) still has the highest percentage of the traces of objectives in the corpus. However, Nigeria overtakes Senegal and AU in the policy objective arena, while it (Nigeria) failed to replicate the same performance in the policy means area. In this area, once again, Senegal seems to prove its superiority in the arena by having the highest percentage of the total means (n =

721) from two policy documents. One can argue that countries with fewer goals, objectives, and means have not responded to the global call as expected. This has the tendency to slow the realisation of SDG 4 targets and various youth development initiatives or programmes. This is premised on the fact that having adequate goals, objectives, and means is synonymous with having a better understanding of situations associated with factors preventing people's inability to solve challenges and address personal as well as societal needs through proportional and ability-based knowledge and skills.

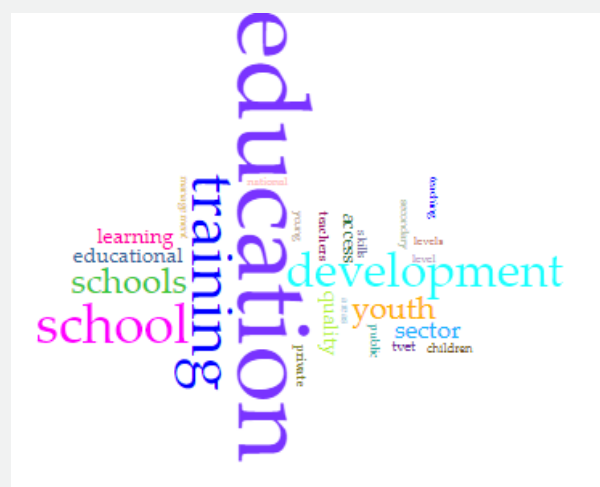
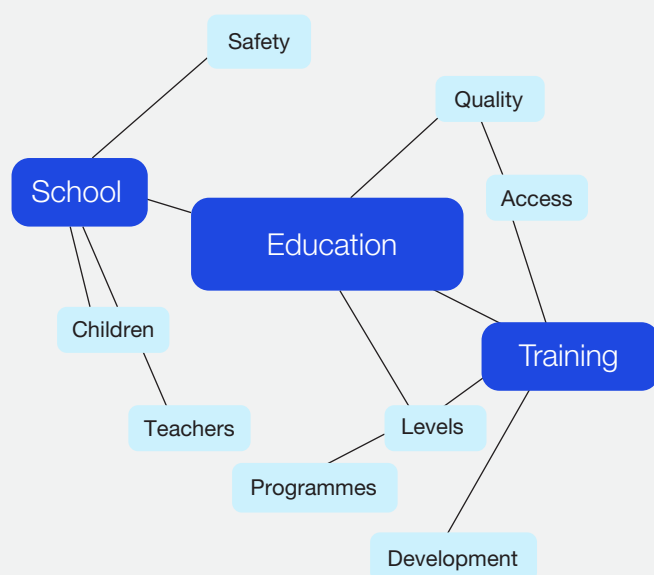


FIGURE 7: Interconnectivity of the keywords and top words in assemblage corpus

Source: ECOWAS, African Union, UNESCO, Case Countries' documents, multiple years; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

As the data in Figure 7 show, policymakers and writers feel that gaining an education entails going to school and receiving the necessary training in the form of skills and knowledge. This is impossible to do when schools are unsafe for both students and staff, as evidenced by the data. Our analysts observe that the corpus implies that policymakers or writers value the school environment and quality education as essential tools for achieving sustainable development. This is consistent with SDG 4 targets, particularly those focusing on secure school settings and universal numeracy and literacy for all citizens of any country.

We examine the previous results and insights further by looking at the patterns that exist between and among the key words employed for revealing educational and youth developmental needs as well as challenges. Table 6 contains the top 20 words that suggest priority areas or concerns in educational and youth developmental discourse. Our analysis reveals that training, access, levels, and quality frequently co-occur in the corpus. This stresses earlier positions that policies are responding to the SDG 4 interpellation of political and business leaders and civil society organisations. Analysis further shows that the constant link between training and education, programmes and development suggests an emphasis on skill development and capacity building. As noted previously, school connectivity with children, education, and safety highlight

concerns about the school environment and its impact on children. This, according to our analysts, reinforces a call for ensuring the safety of teachers and learners in educational institutions at various levels.

Overall, the connection between development, education, environment, and training reflects a broad developmental agenda that includes educational and environmental aspects. Our analysis reveals the broad characterisation of education and its deserving focus in policy and development. The policy discourse emphasises the importance of student success, which is defined as achieving academic and personal goals. This includes factors such as academic performance, attendance, and engagement. The discourse highlights the roles of institutions in supporting student success, including the provision of resources, services, and support systems that help students overcome challenges and achieve their goals. The discourse also addresses concerns about the upkeep and challenges faced by schools, including issues such as funding, infrastructure, and staffing. These challenges can impact the ability of schools to provide high-quality education and support student success. Specifically, the need to understand the thematic priorities in educational and youth developmental discourse nationally, regionally, and globally are the primary problems represented in the corpus.

TABLE 6: Top 20 most frequent words in assemblage corpus

Top 20	Words	n	Co-occurrence ⁴⁸	Correlations ⁴⁹
1	Education	590	Training (84), Access (48), Education (42), Levels (35), Quality (30)	Characterised (6), Broad (3), Deserve (3), Dynamic (4), Define (4)
2	Training	307	Education (77), Training (32), Programmes (26), Quality (21), Development (19)	Student (19), Completed (4), Institution (6), Component (4), Goods (2)
3	School	243	School (32), Children (20), Education (19), Safety (16), Teachers (14)	Maintenance (9), Brought (2), Cause (2), Commission (2), Conflicts (2)
4	Development	209	Education (23), Environment (22), Training (20), Environmental (11), Sector (10)	Building (19), Conference (8), Activities (35), Africa (29), Awareness (29)
5	Schools	166	Schools (38), Education (12), Universities (10), Safety (10), Areas (10)	Maintenance (9), Fair (3), Fulfilling (3), Models (3), Brought (2)
6	Youth	154	Development (17), Youth (15), Rate (12), Organisations (10), Population (9)	Harmful (6), Census (3), Counterparts (3), Programming (3), Serve (3)
7	Sector	138	Education (12), Development (10), Training (7), Society (6), Civil (6)	Date (11), Planned (6), Fairly (3), Latrines (3), Contrast (5)
8	Quality	126	Education (45), Training (22), Learning (15), Access (14), Improve (13)	Offers (6), Demand (20), Decentralised (8), Model (4), Favour (12)
9	Learning	125	Teaching (21), Education (17), Learning (16), Quality (14), Environment (14)	Involve (6), Interactive (3), Absenteeism (3), Equality (20), Action (6)
10	Educational	122	Establishment (10), Development (10), Needs (9), Schools (8), Quality (7)	Define (4), Education (590), Dynamic (4), Constitutes (3), Characterised (6)
11	Access	116	Education (48), Quality (14), Training (13), Women (8), Health (8)	Academic (4), 2025 (7), 2021 (2), 300,000 (2), Abidjan (3)
12	TVET	109	Institutions (19), Tvet (13), Education (12), Training (9), Policy (8)	Newly (4), Spread (7), Centres (22), Mechanism (13), Gambia (41)
13	Private	108	Sector (49), Education (19), Public (13), Schools (12), Training (10)	Comes (3), Depending (3), Earned (3), Hours (6), Signed (4)

⁴⁸ Co-occurrence represents the words that frequently appear alongside the primary word in the corpus.⁴⁹ Correlation signifies the words that have a statistical relationship with the primary word.

14	Teachers	107	Training (12), Staff (7), School (7), Number (7), Teacher (6)	Country (3), Practical (4), Efficiency (14), Backgrounds (5), Absenteeism (3)
15	Skills	105	Development (22), Training (18), Education (11), Knowledge (6), Centres (6)	Developed (23), Gambia Training Institute (6), Accredited (4), Kanifing (4), LGAS (4)
16	Children	105	School (15), Violence (10), Education (10), Youth (8), Learning (7)	Basic (67), Childhood (19), Bold (2), Caring (2), Certainly (2)
17	Public	104	Education (24), Private (18), School (11), Sector (10), Schools (9)	Budget (23), Private (108), Explained (5), BTS (2), Cameroon (2)
18	Levels	103	Education (32), Training (9), Learning (7), Educational (7), Secondary (6)	Achieved (8), Adoption (5), Incentives (8), Adverse (3), Financed (5)
19	Level	102	Education (19), School (7), Training (6), Particularly (5), Increased (5)	Budgets (2), Causes (3), Exception (3), Contributions (6), Enrollment (15)
20	Area	101	Education (15), Rural (11), Urban (10), School (10), Especially (9)	Afford (2), Ages (2), Advocacy (5)

Source: ECOWAS, African Union, UNESCO, Case Countries' documents, multiple years; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

Beyond understanding the problem of education and youth development through the key words and their interconnectivity, we also examined the corpus from the percolation perceptive using corpus segmentation strategy. According to the data in Figure 8, analysis of the corpus using the corpus segmentation strategy provides a comprehensive understanding of the keywords that are relevant to the problem of education and youth development. The dominance of the word education across the 10 segments suggests that it is a critical component in

discussing challenges and needs, and the high frequency of the words children and access in the first and seventh segments highlights the importance of ensuring that children have access to education. The prominence of the word development in the first, second, third, fifth, and ninth segments emphasises the connection between education and sustainable development. Our analysis also highlights the importance of ensuring that education is accessible to all, regardless of hindrances, which is a critical component of achieving sustainable development.

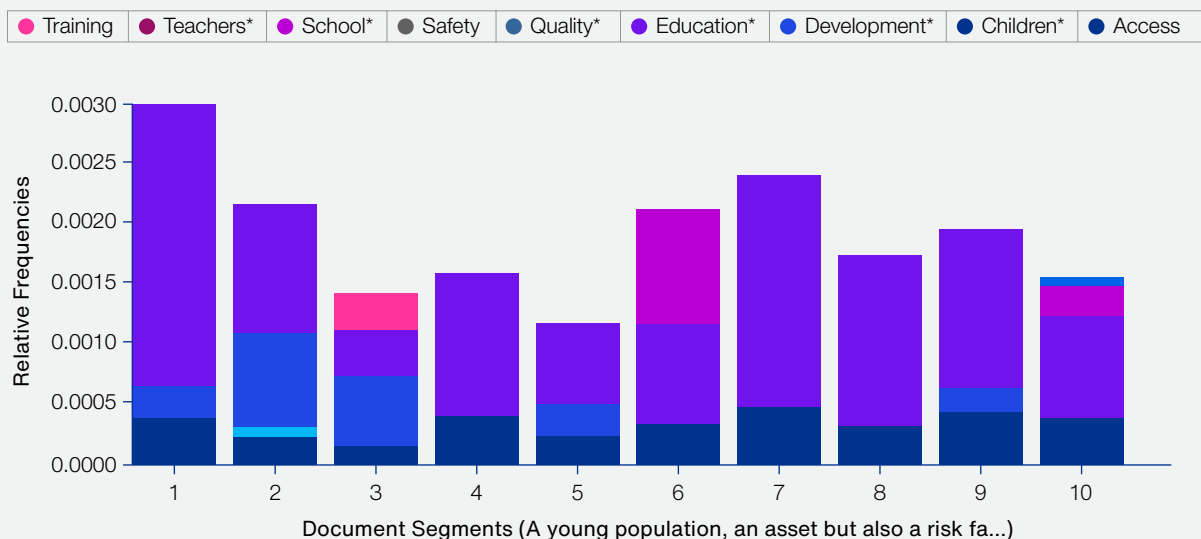


FIGURE 8: Percolation of SDGs related keywords in the assemblage corpus

Source: ECOWAS, African Union, UNESCO, Case Countries' documents, multiple years; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

The data in Figure 9 further enhanced the results of those in Figure 8 by revealing the polarity status of the keywords in line with the segmentation strategy used previously. Analysis reveals that each of the words was positioned differently within segments. For example, children are positioned in the positive part of 50% of the corpus. This could be discerned from the appearance of children as a keyword in 5 of the 10 segments and indicates the need to prioritise their safety in schools and ensure equal access to quality education. Within the negative part of the corpus, analysis suggests that school development in terms of adequate infrastructure and teachers is highly necessary if national governments,

regional and international organisations are truly serious about realising SDG 4 and various youth development initiatives embedded in the selected policy documents. Our analysis further indicates that training was positively represented in the second segment of the corpus, suggesting its importance in ensuring quality teachers and other personnel for quality education provision at various educational institutions. Meanwhile, as the data demonstrated, quality education and training, as well as rapid development, cannot occur in environments with different security challenges. This is evident in 50% of the 10 segments where safety was negatively positioned.

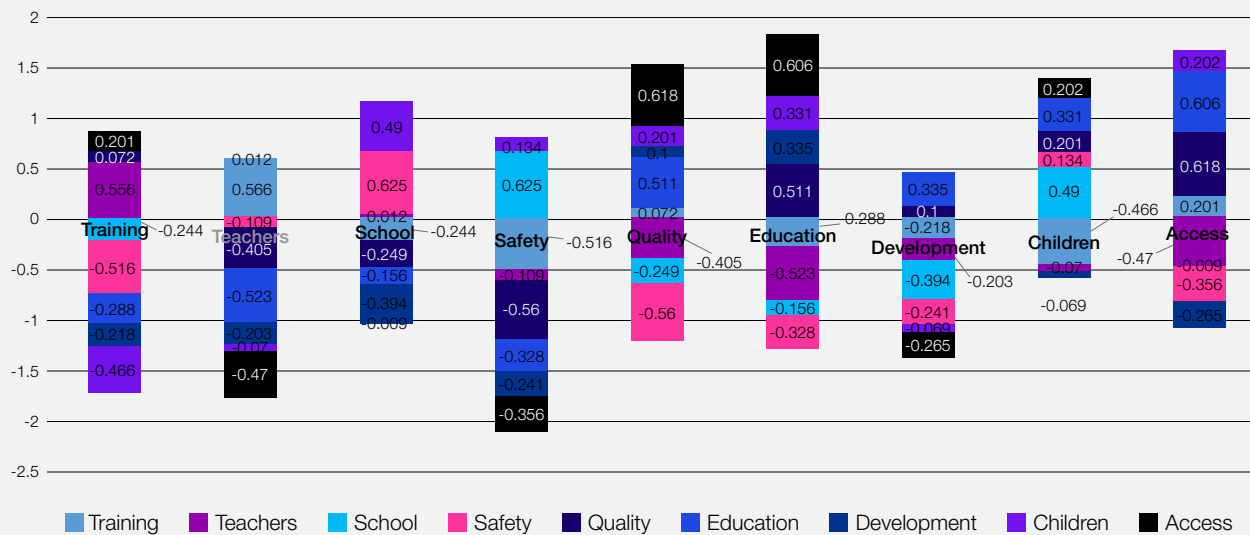


FIGURE 9: Polarity of SDG-4 related keywords in the assemblage corpus

Source: ECOWAS, African Union, UNESCO, Case Countries' documents, multiple years;
Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

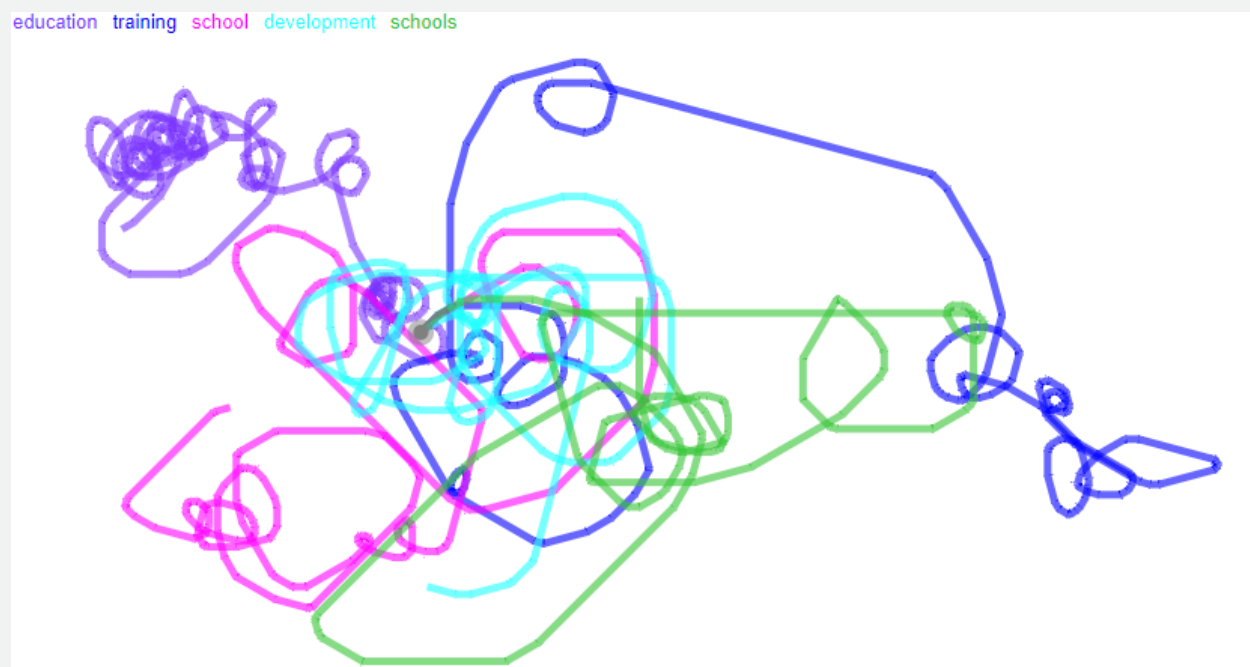


FIGURE 10: Material-knots in intertwined form in the assemblages

Source: ECOWAS, African Union, UNESCO, Case Countries' documents, multiple years;
Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

To achieve sustainable development through education, all of the barriers to providing quality education for students and staff must be addressed holistically.

Figures 10 and 11 show this more clearly, since youths face a variety of problems related to both immediate and long-term learning.

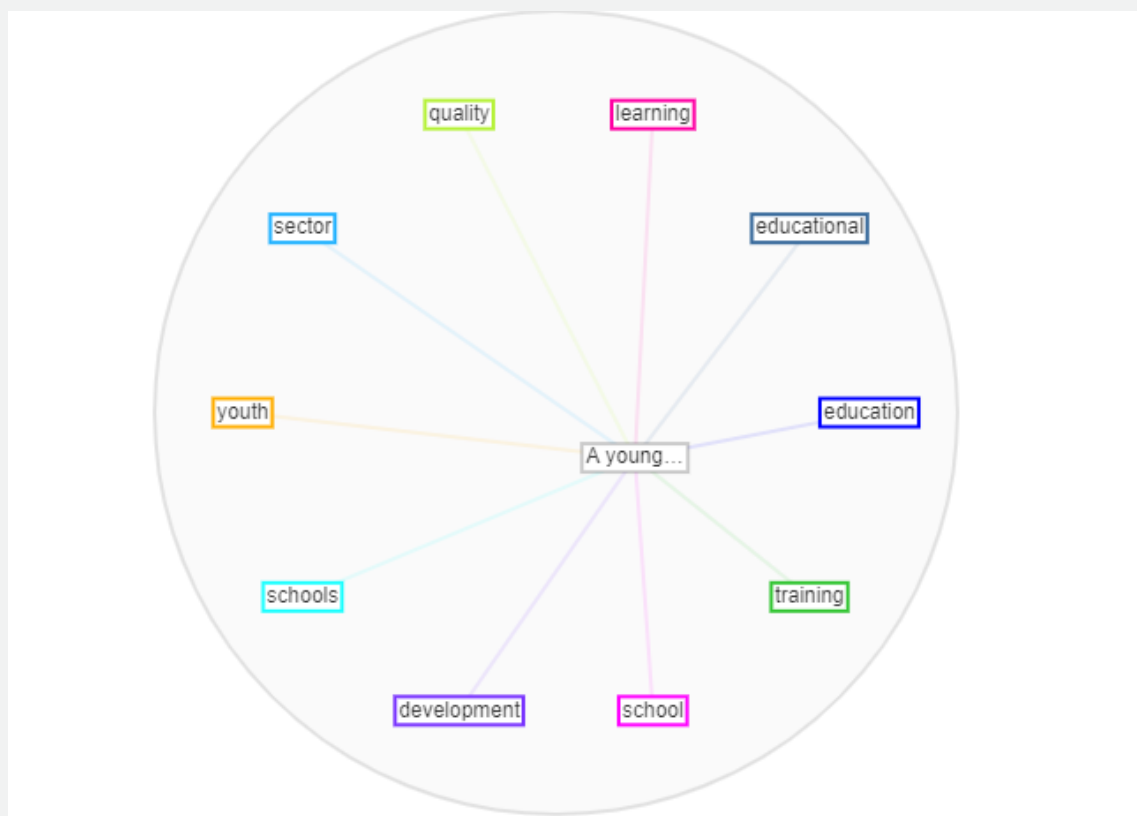


FIGURE 11 : Material-knots in circlic form in the assemblages⁵⁰

Source: ECOWAS, African Union, UNESCO, Case Countries' documents, multiple years; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

⁵⁰ Centred extract: A young population, an asset but also a risk factor for the stability of the region and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (Culled from ECOWAS Vision 2050)

This led us to examine ECOWAS' policy documents specifically with a view to discerning how national governments in the region might align with the representation of problems and needs associated with education and youth development. In the ECOWAS corpus, a total of 2,953 words were found, with education (61), young (32), region (29), educational (23), and women (22) being the most used words. Our analysis reveals the constant appearance of access, young, training, quality, and health, along with education. This indicates potential interest in addressing educational issues such as accessibility due to financial constraints and the unequal distribution of educational institutions. The words like circumstance, dropped, and distance further enhanced our understanding of how accessing educational products and services is difficult in the region.

Our data also shows the relationship between people—women, men, education, and girl—and the young, indicating a concentration on the young population across genders. The appearance of words such as free, involvement, and barriers, which our analysts considered themes related to

youth involvement in civic engagement and political participation, as well as the challenges faced by young people. As shown in Table 7, several words also suggest discussion of social issues, educational infrastructure and opportunities, educational support systems and career guidance, women's economic roles, and gender inclusion in the region. Specifically, ECOWAS' policy documents stress the importance of addressing education, youth, and regional development issues to ensure the attainment of SDG 4 and its targets.

The results of our overall analysis of the most trending words in the ECOWAS corpus are shown in Figure 12, where the three categories with the highest trends in our ten divisions of the corpus were education, youth, and region. This supported and reinforced previous views that the regional policy documents address people's educational requirements, particularly those of youth, and the region's overall growth. In order to achieve SDG 4 and its targets, through the policy documents, national governments have been urged by the regional documents to create policy documents that address these issues and implement them.

TABLE 7: Top 10 most frequent words in ECOWAS's assemblage corpus

Top 10	Words	n	Co-occurrence	Correlations
1	Education	61	Access (12), Young (7), Training (7), Quality (6), Health (6)	Circumstance (2), Dropped (2), African (3), At all (2), Distance (2)
2	Young	32	People (15), Women (12), Men (7), Education (7), Girl (4)	Free (2), Involvement (2), Activities (4), Barriers (2), Leisure (2)
3	Religion	29	Countries (5), Efforts (4), Young (3), People (3), Youth (3)	Citizens (2), Continue (2), Discrimination (2), Dividend (2), Inequality (2)
4	Educational	23	Institutions (5), Provide (3), Opportunities (3), Levels (3), Efforts (3)	Civil (3), Career (5), Counselling (3), Attending (2), Drug (3)
5	Women	22	Men (9), Young (7), Girls (4), Youth (3), Education (3)	Particularly (3), Economic (7), Policies (3), Meant (2), Percent (2)
6	People	18	Region (3), Education (3), Rates (2), Providing (2), People (2)	Economic (7), Employment (11), Achievements (2), Barriers (2), General (3)
7	Youth	17	Women (5), Youth (4), Organisations (4), Vulnerable (2), Relevant (2)	Work (2), Policies (3), Meant (2), Percent (2), Sectorial (2)
8	Efforts	17	Promote (4), Educational (3), Strengthen (2), Social (2), School (2)	Aids (3), Curriculum (3), Activities (4), Communication (4), Cooperation (4)
9	Development	17	Human (3), Transformation (2), Policies (2), Meant (2), Inclusive (2)	Capital (6), Children (5), Achievement (2), Countries (11), Appropriate (2)
10	School	16	Programmes (4), Education (4), School (2), Potential (2), Levels (2)	Programmes (13), Parents (3), Create (2), Mutual (2), Promoting (2)

Source: ECOWAS, multiple years; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

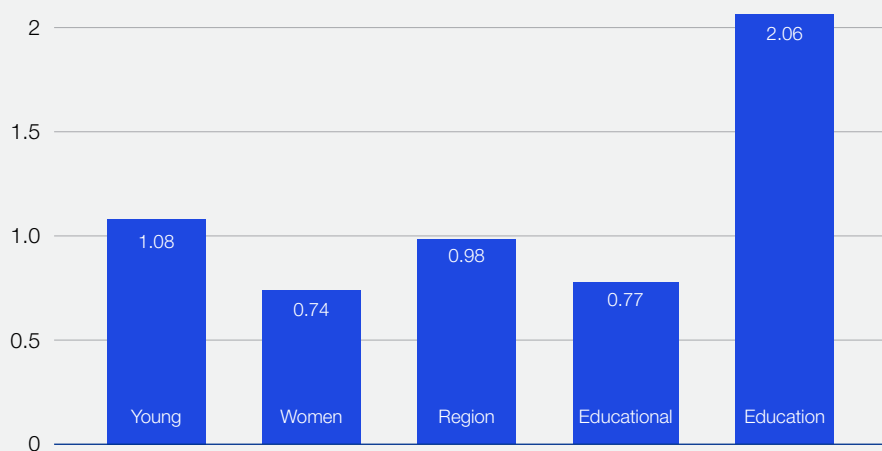


FIGURE 12: Most trending words in ECOWAS' assemblage corpus

Source: Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

With 3,128 total words in the African Union's corpus and education (69), Africa (23), African (22), training (20), and learning (17) as the dominant keywords, the regional organisation also thinks along with ECOWAS, which also emphasises education and regional development (see Table 8 and Figure 13). The idea of improving education across Africa could be deduced from education, which appeared as the most used word in the corpus. The regional development discourse is easily discerned from Africa and African as parts of the keywords. Using these words led the Union to discuss several issues and needs that

affect education and youth development. According to the data in Table 8, there are indications that education is associated with training, non, informal, African, and Africa. This suggests a broad focus on different types of education (formal and informal) and regional specifics. There are narratives around the value of education and its quality, challenges faced by learners and educators, inclusivity, training youths, and economic implications. These, if not all, are expected to be highlighted in national governments' policy documents for education and youth development initiatives that resonate with SDG 4 and its targets.

TABLE 8: Top 10 most frequent words in AU's assemblage corpus

Top 10	Words	n	Co-occurrence	Correlations
1	Education	69	Training (14), Non(7), Informal (7), African (7), Africa (6)	Deserve (2), Attacks (3), Economic (2), CESA (3), Coherence (3)
2	Africa	23	Education (6), Development (3), Quality (2), Primary (2), Educational (2)	Accommodate (2), Address (2), According (2), Absorb (2), Additional (2)
3	African	22	Education (9), Countries (5), Training (4), Children (4), Governments (3)	Adults (2), Address (2), Africa (23), According (2), Accessing (4)
4	Training	20	Education (12), African (4), Learning (3), Youths (2), Terms (2)	Dynamic (2), Good (2), Initiative (2), Invests (2), Deserve (2)
5	Learning	17	Training (3), Teaching (3), Quality (3), Using (2), Outcomes (2)	According (2), Enrolled (2), Equity (2), Children (15), Africa (23)
6	Development	17	Non(3), Africa (3), Informal (2), Formal (2), Human (2)	Adult (2), Carried (2), Community (2), Characterised (4), African (22)
7	Secondary	15	Education (11), Level (5), Lower (4), Systems (2), Respectively (2)	Enrolment (6), Respectively (3), Demand (2)
8	Quality	15	Education (4), Teaching (3), Learning (3), Training (2), Sub (2)	Age (4), Materials (4), Define (2), Enrolled (2), Outcomes (2)
9	Children	15	Youth (3), School (3), Primarily (3), Schooling (2), Highest (2)	Africa (23), auspices (2), 79 (2), Accommodate (2), Challenges (2)
10	School	14	School (6), Children (4), Health (3), Feeding (3), Administration (3)	Progress (3), Learning (17), According (2), Accountability (2), Become (2)

Source: African Union, multiple years; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

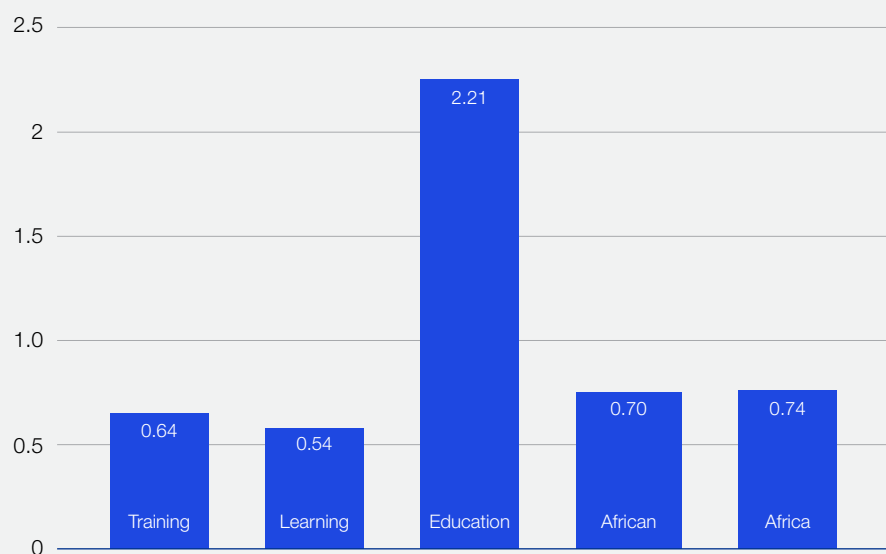
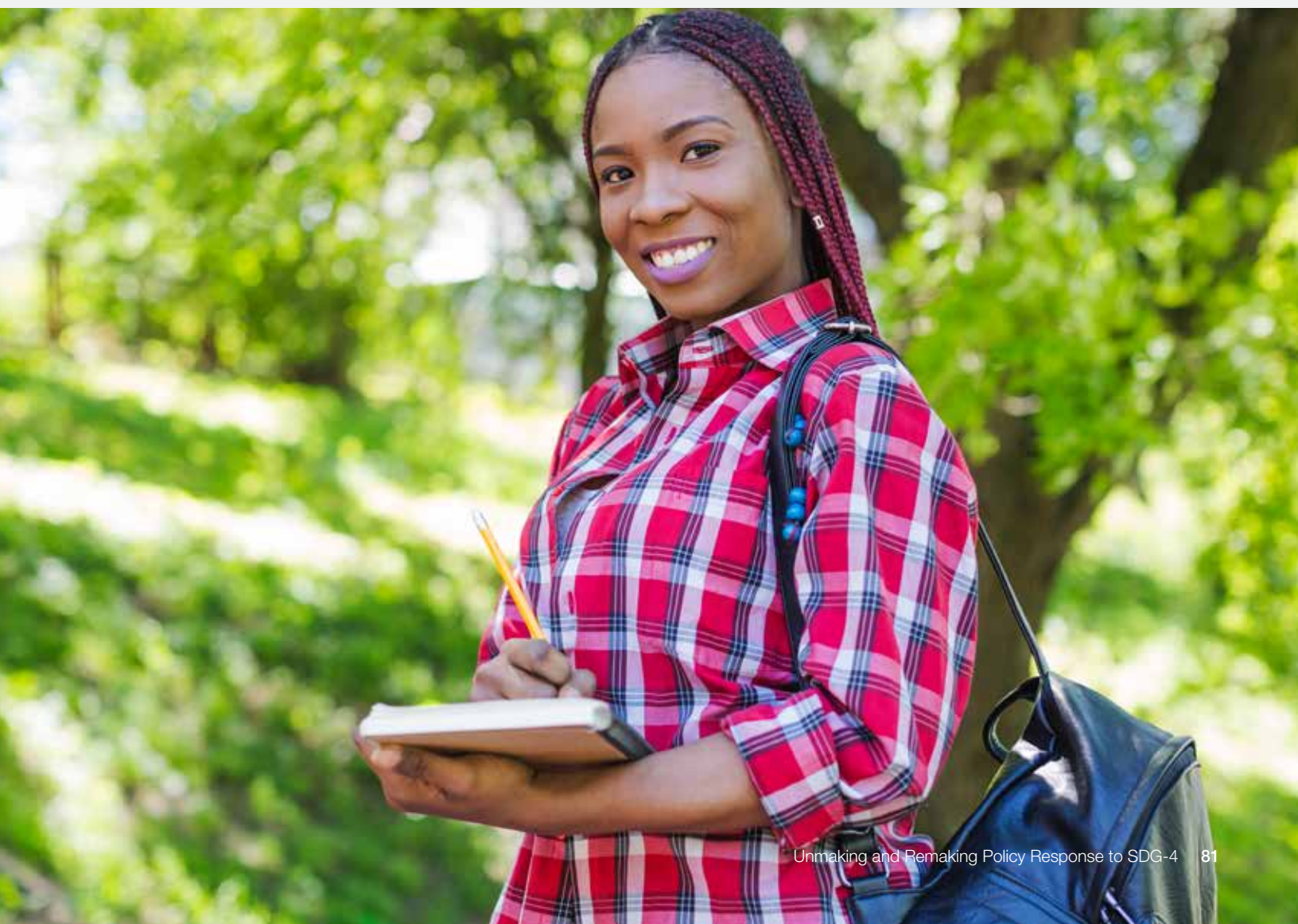


FIGURE 13: Most trending words in African Union's assemblage corpus

Source: Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024



2 Policy Struggles

From our previous analyses, we have understood that the interest in attaining SDG 4 and its targets, as well as youth development, has forced policymakers and other stakeholders to engage in various representations of issues and needs rooted in socio-political and economic contexts.

We have observed how policymakers engaged and contributed to the urgency of policy domains and forums that defined what the problem is and what should be done to help the victims and villains, from the global to the regional and national contexts. In this section, we looked more closely at the contexts and examined how policymakers discussed the needs and concerns that had been discovered. Whether on purpose or accidentally, using institutional processes to bring children and youth to life. We also looked at the relationships between the SDG-related keywords and the idea of development in order to analyse the settings. Our data indicates that the complete assemblage corpus has 192 means, 71 objectives, and 41 goals. This suggests that governmental and organisational stakeholders are addressing educational and youth development with 304 policy instruments⁵¹.

Are these sufficient for realising SDG 4 and its targets? We answered this question by briefly conducting Sufficiency Ratio

Analysis (SRA) for goals, objectives, and means in relation to the eight targets of SDG 4. Goals, objectives, and means in the policy documents are considered as intended. The eight targets are desired outcomes. In this context, we calculated the sufficiency of the goals, objectives, and means for attaining the 8 targets by dividing the targets by the goals, objectives, and means in the policy documents and multiplying them by 100. Analysis reveals that, with 19.51% for goals and 11.26% for objectives, the two policy instruments are relatively insufficient for meeting the eight targets due to their inability to achieve at least 50%, which should have been the basis for stating that the policy documents have averagely developed goals and objectives. Meanwhile, 4.16% recorded for means in the policy documents indicates even more insufficient means for realising the targets. This indicates that more means, like the one presented below, are needed for actualising the targets by 2030.

⁵¹ We considered goals, means and objectives as policy instruments in this report because they serve as springboards for understanding stakeholders' commitment to ensure and sustain change.

→ Priority should be given to achieving the goal of ensuring basic education for all (beginning with literacy), mobilising for that purpose all channels, agents and forms of education and training, in line with the concept of lifelong education.

(ECOWAS' Youth Policy and Strategic Plan of Action 2010-)

These outcomes align with the contested and negotiated policy arenas presented in Figure 14, where a complex view of various policy elements and their role in achieving development goals related to teachers, education, safety, children and youth, access, training, school quality, and overall education is depicted. In the contested and debated policy arena 1 (see Figure 14), analysis reveals that the discussion of quality teachers and education is insignificant in the context of development. However, with a 20.9% correlation between education and development, education is thought to

improve development. Development and school safety are key priorities. The second policy arena focuses on education for children and youth. This suggests that children and youth of all ages should attend a variety of educational institutions. In the final segment of the arena, access to education is a critical tool for development. Generally, education development receives continual attention, reinforcing its critical role in development strategies while demonstrating that additional efforts are required to increase its profile in policy discussions.

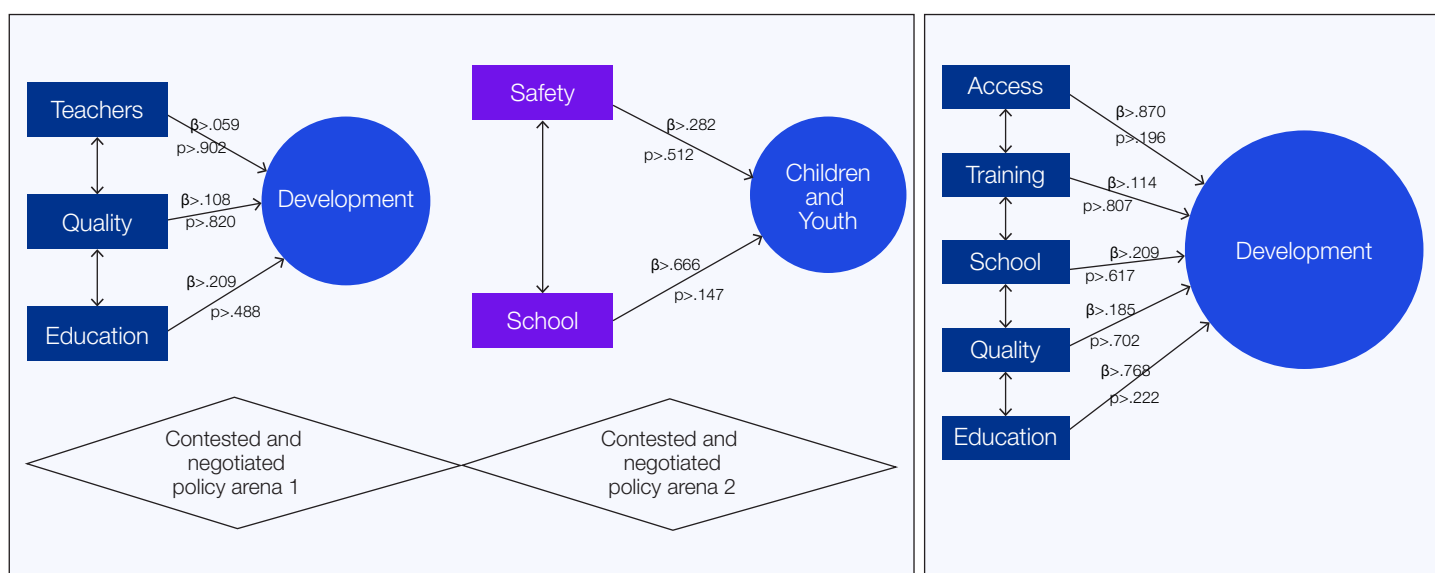


FIGURE 14: Contested and negotiated policy arenas

Source: ECOWAS, African Union, UNESCO, multiple years; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

Côte D'Ivoire in Nigeria and Nigeria in Côte D'Ivoire

...complex specialised knowledge, which is expected to be gained through formal or informal schooling, remains elusive in Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria.

Côte d'Ivoire is a French-colonised country in West Africa. The country has a diversified socioeconomic and political landscape. Like Nigeria, where Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba are the largest ethnic groups. The primary ethnic groups in Côte d'Ivoire include Akan, Mande, and Gur. According to recent data on the complexity of economies throughout the world, Nigeria is ranked 127, whereas Cote d'Ivoire is ranked 117⁵². Though Cote d'Ivoire has a lower rank score, which suggests it is better than Nigeria, the organisation behind the ranking claims that both countries did not have a wide range of productive know-how due to their high scores. This suggests that complex specialised knowledge, which is expected to be gained through formal or informal schooling, remains elusive in both countries. On human development, Ivory Coast has a higher HDI score (72) compared to Nigeria (45), indicating better overall development and competitiveness.

In the area of Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), Ivory Coast has a more developed EMIS compared to Nigeria, which is essential for effective education management and policy-making⁵³. It would be interesting to learn how these findings have influenced how the two countries have responded to global requests to achieve SDG 4 through policy pronouncements over time. What are the primary problems and strengths of each country's policy-driven educational and youth development goals? What have been the outcomes over the years?

A total of 4,398 words were found in Cote d'Ivoire's assemblage corpus. Training (63), education (53), school (43), private (40), and sector (31) are the most frequent words used for narrating education and youth development. While youth does not appear as one of the most used words, the consideration of training, education, and school as the first three dominant

⁵² OEC (2024). Nigeria versus Ivory Coast. Available from: <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/nga/partner/civ>

words suggests the prioritisation of children and youth in the development agenda in the country (see Table 9). Analysis reveals that training is associated with quality, offered, and institutions. This indicates the representation of education as a need for improved and accessible training programmes. Our analysts observe that the concept of training could also be interpreted to represent the training of the trainers, that is, equipping teachers and other educators with the necessary skills and knowledge. This emphasises the government's readiness to address issues of teacher qualification and professional development in order to improve learners' ability and capacity to make significant contributions to Ivorian society. However, the co-occurrence of training with "fairly" and "outside" hints at concerns about the equitable distribution and external provision of training opportunities.

The frequent mention of education in relation to access, training, and secondary suggests that the problem is framed around accessibility and the continuum of educational levels. Emphasising access and transitions between educational stages (e.g., secondary education) highlights a systemic approach to educational reform. The repeated link to access underscores ongoing challenges in ensuring inclusive education for all children. The word school frequently co-occurs with teachers, teaching, and education, indicating that schools are seen as central nodes in addressing educational quality. This suggests a policy focus on improving the conditions within schools, possibly through better teacher training and resource allocation. The link to early childhood implies a recognition of the

importance of foundational education.

The association of private with sector, schools, and education points to a significant role for private entities in the educational landscape. Highlighting the private sector's involvement suggests a dual approach to education involving both public and private partnerships. The co-occurrence with government and opposed indicates potential tensions or debates over the roles and effectiveness of private versus public education. The term sector frequently links with training, education, and strengthening, which portrays the education sector as needing robust structural support. Emphasis on strengthening the sector implies comprehensive reforms aimed at systemic improvements rather than isolated interventions. This can lead to more sustainable and integrated development within the educational system.

The repetition of schools with secondary, located, and education emphasises the institutional aspect of education. This suggests a geographic and infrastructural focus, indicating that where schools are located and how they are equipped are seen as critical issues. The linkage with boarding and elementary points to considerations around different types of schooling environments and stages. Public co-occurring with school, private, and teachers frames the problem around public education quality and access. There is likely a comparative analysis of public versus private educational effectiveness, with potential policy implications aimed at boosting public education standards to match or exceed those of private institutions.

⁵³ UNESCO (2024). Côte d'Ivoire: Education Country Brief. Available from: <https://www.icba.unesco.org/en/node/78>

- While the commitment to education spending seems fluctuating in Côte d'Ivoire, due to lack of data and inconsistency in reporting education spending, Nigeria has no significant commitment to education through allocation of a certain percentage of GDP to the sector.

The term secondary in connection with education, schools, and cycle underscores the critical transition phase from primary to higher education. This reflects policy efforts targeting the crucial middle stages of education, potentially addressing dropout rates and preparing students for higher education or vocational training. TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) associated with institutional, funding, and strengthen indicates a focus on vocational training as a key solution. Prioritising TVET suggests a policy

direction aimed at equipping students with practical skills for the job market, which could address youth unemployment and skills gaps in the economy. The term lack related to infrastructure, access, and education frames the problem as one of deficiencies and shortages. This highlights critical gaps that need to be addressed, such as inadequate infrastructure and limited access to education, which are fundamental barriers to achieving SDG 4 goals.



TABLE 9: Top 10 most frequent words in Côte D'Ivoire's assemblage corpus

Top 10	Words	n	Co-occurrence	Correlations
1	Training	63	Training (18), Sector (6), Quality (6), Offered (6), Institutions (6)	Anticipation (2), Continuing (2), Credentials (2), Fairly (2), Outside (2)
2	Education	53	Access (7), Training (6), Secondary (6), School (6), Sector (5)	Country (2), Admission (5), Certificate (4), Access (18), Child (5)
3	School	43	Teachers (7), Teaching (5), Education (5), Teach (4), Secondary (4)	Childhood (3), Early (3), Number (6), Old (2), Degree (3)
4	Private	40	Sector (14), Schools (7), Training (6), Education (6), School (4)	Government (11), Compared (6), Neighbouring (2), Opposed (6), Nonetheless (4)
5	Sectors	31	Training (5), Education (3), Strengthening (2), Share (2), Paid (2)	Effective (3), Information (3), Cote (4), d'ivoire (4), 63.4 (2)
6	Schools	28	Schools (8), Secondary (6), School (3), Located (3), Education (3)	Boarding (2), Priorities (2), Elementary (10), Children (11), Education (53)
7	Public	26	School (9), Private (6), Schools (5), Ones (5), Teachers (4)	Opposed (6), Experience (2), Neighbouring (2), High (5), Hours (4)
8	Secondary	21	Education (12), Schools (9), School (7), Cycle (5), Technical (4)	General (7), Equitable (2), Brevet (3), Competencies (3), Certifying (2)
9	TVET	20	Institutional (3), Funding (3), Côte D'Ivoire (3), Strengthen (2), Remains (2)	Providers (4), Requirements (3), Effective (3), Information (3), Côte D'Ivoire (4)
10	Lack	20	Infrastructure (6), Access (4), Education (3), Training (2)	Higher (9), Agriculture (4), Depending (2), inadequate (2), Abidjan (3)

Source: Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

Generally, Côte D'Ivoire's SDG 4 policy documents primarily frame the educational challenges in terms of accessibility, quality, and structural improvements. Aside from being the most often used word, training is also the most trending word in the corpus,

according to the data in Figure 15. Education and school also trended the most. Again, this demonstrates the country's dedication to education and, by extension, young development through educational objectives.

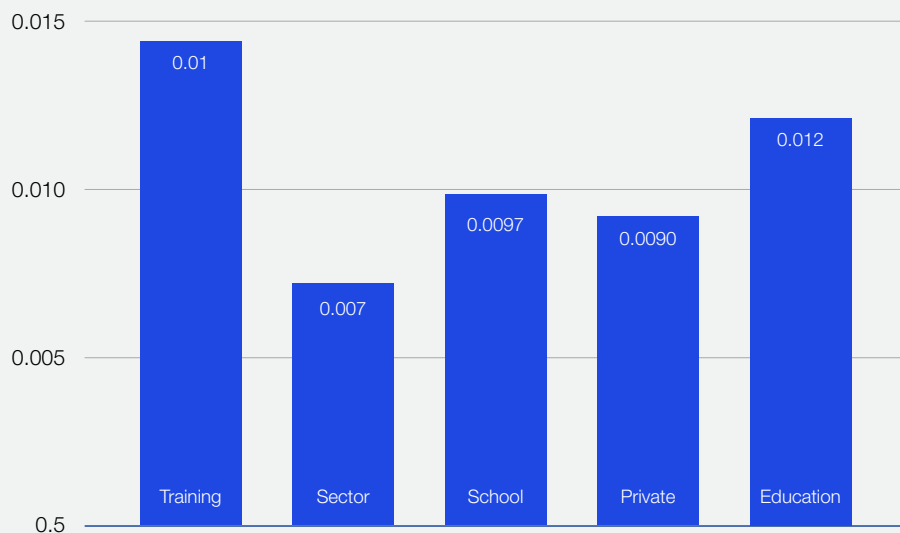


FIGURE 15: Most trending words in Côte D'Ivoire's assemblage corpus

Source: Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

Meanwhile, data in Table 10 indicates that Côte d'Ivoire's commitment to education is reflected in the fluctuating yet substantial education spending as a percentage of both GDP and government spending. Over the years, this investment has ranged from 3.21% to 3.79% of GDP and 16.58% to 22.39% of government spending, indicating a consistent prioritisation of education. While the commitment to education spending seems fluctuating in Côte d'Ivoire, due to lack of data and inconsistency in reporting education spending, Nigeria has no significant commitment to education through allocation of a certain percentage of GDP to the sector.

The literacy rates in Côte d'Ivoire have shown remarkable improvement over time. The overall literacy rate has increased from 34.14% in 1988 to 89.89% in 2019, demonstrating a significant expansion of knowledge and skills among the

population. This trend is particularly encouraging when examining the literacy rates among the youth (ages 15-24), which have grown from 37.85% in 1988 to 76.41% in 2019. The gender gap in literacy has also narrowed, with female youth literacy rates rising from 37.85% in 1988 to 76.41% in 2019, and male youth literacy rates increasing from 59.93% in 1988 to 92.82% in 2019. Enrollment rates across different education levels have also seen positive developments. Primary school completion rates have increased from 58.07% in 2015 to 75.59% in 2020. Pre-Primary school enrollment has risen from 7.06% in 2015 to 10.72% in 2022. Primary school enrollment has remained relatively stable, ranging from 85.89% to 94.65% during the observed period. Secondary school enrollment has increased from 41.66% in 1999 to 57.28% in 2021. Tertiary school enrollment has also shown growth, rising from 8.9% in 1999 to 9.91% in 2012.

TABLE 10: Education spending and knowledge acquisition in Côte D'Ivoire⁵⁴

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Education spending (% of GDP)	3.49	3.94	3.74	3.21	3.44	3.79	3.37	3.52
Education spending (% of Government spending)	21.17	22.39	20.63	18.29	20.32	18.94	16.58	16.39
	1988	1998	2000	2012	2014	2019		
Literacy rate	34.14	36.35	48.74	40.98	43.91	89.89	-	
	1988	1998	2000	2006	2012	2014	2019	
Female literacy rate, ages 15-24	37.85	39.85	52.13	38.57	38.75	47.04	76.41	
Male literacy rate, ages 15-24	59.93	54.4	70.84	-	58.33	59.12	92.82	
Youth literacy rate, ages 15-24	48.51	47.06	60.72	-	48.31	53.02	83.63	
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Primary school completion rate	58.07	61.37	67.68	70.03	73.49	75.59	73.71	68.59
Pre Primary school enrollment	7.06	7.76	8.15	8.2	8.35	10.62	10.44	10.72
Primary school enrollment	85.89	90.13	91.82	92.9	93.55	94.16	92.72	94.65
	1999	2008	2009	2010	2019	2020	2021	2022
Secondary school enrollment	41.66	43.89	46.85	49.05	52.21	54.65	57.28	55.07
	1999	2004	2010	2011	2012	2020	2021	2022
Tertiary school enrollment	8.9	9.09	9.47	-	9.91	9.78	-	

Source: World Bank, 2015-2023; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

This commitment to education and the resulting literacy rates can lead to a quality labour force and employment generation. A well-educated workforce is better equipped to contribute to the economy, innovate, and adapt to changing circumstances. Higher literacy rates also indicate a more skilled and knowledgeable population, which can drive productivity and competitiveness. This, in turn, can

lead to increased employment opportunities and better job prospects, ultimately contributing to poverty reduction and sustainable growth. Based on the data shown in Figure 16, it could be concluded that Ivorian policy documents resulted in higher labour force participation rates and employment in agriculture and services than in the industry between 2015 and 2022.

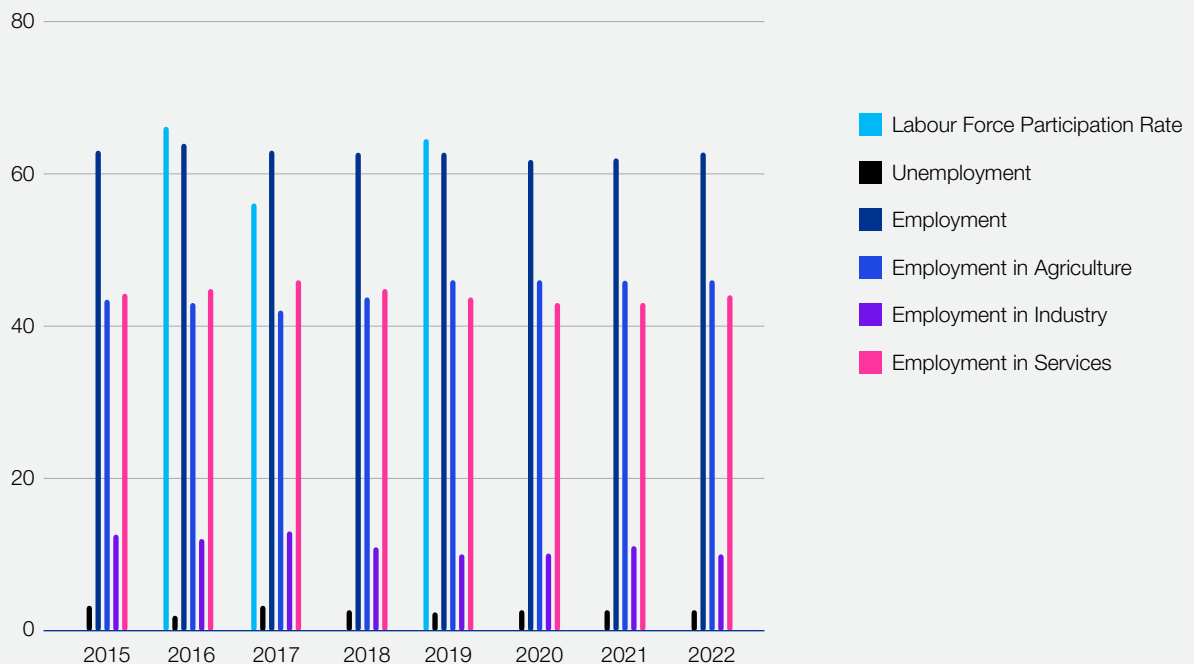


FIGURE 16: Labour force and job engagement in Côte D'Ivoire⁵⁵

Source: World Bank, 2015-2023; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

⁵⁵ Employment in agriculture, industry and services are percentages from total employment percentage for each year

We investigated this position further in Figures 17 and 18, where we established the connection between the most frequent words, the trending of education as a dominant word, and selected education performance indicators. Our analysis reveals that the most frequently used words (training, education, school, private, sector, schools, public, secondary, TVET, and Lack) associated are with education spending by 29.4% (% of GDP), implying that one unit of using the words to narrate issues and needs related to education and youth development could potentially increase education spending percentages of GDP presented in Table 10. However, considering education as the most frequently used word alongside spending reveals a negative connection. It was

discovered that utilising the word education in various policy documents resulted in -22.4% of education spending as a percentage of GDP. The results suggest that education as a keyword is insufficient to drive narratives that could persuade state actors to prioritise spending a portion of GDP on education. Meanwhile, the data show that education as a keyword is positively associated with literacy rate, implying that policy rhetoric can be translated into qualitative outcomes that boost the country's literacy rate. This is also seen in secondary school enrollment. According to the data, the policy rhetoric included in the most frequently used terms has not resulted in consistent practical outcomes in literacy and school enrollment.

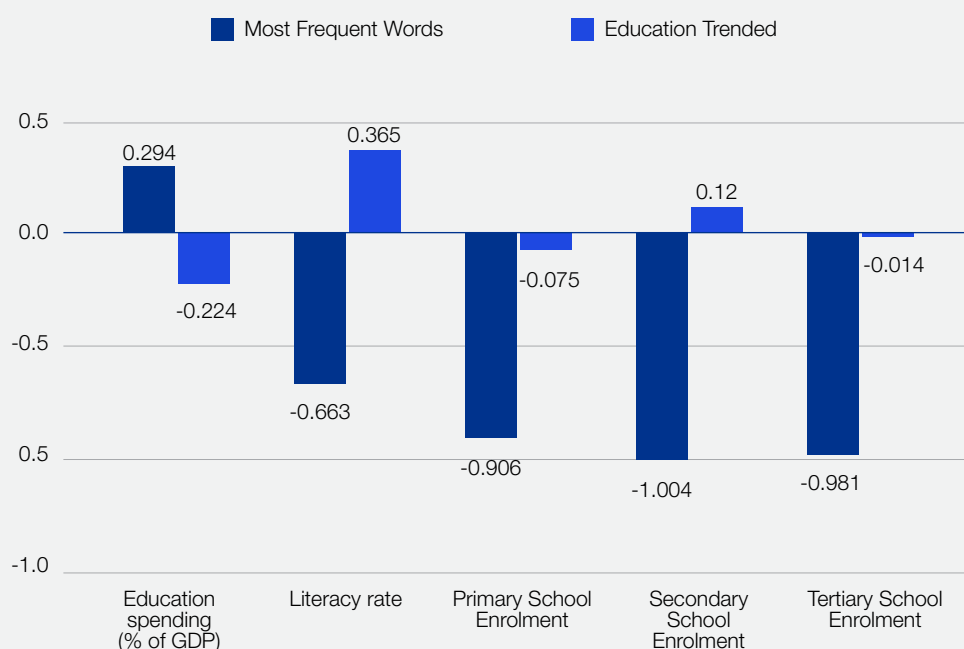


FIGURE 17: Côte D'Ivoire's policy rhetorical words link with select education indicators

Source: World Bank, 2015-2023; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

Nigeria, like Côte D'Ivoire, may struggle with inadequate education investment. Nigeria's education policy discourse may be favourably connected with literacy rates, as is the case in Côte D'Ivoire,

where education is a watchword. Nigeria's education policy, like that of Côte D'Ivoire, may not always translate into consistent practical outcomes in literacy rates and school enrollment.

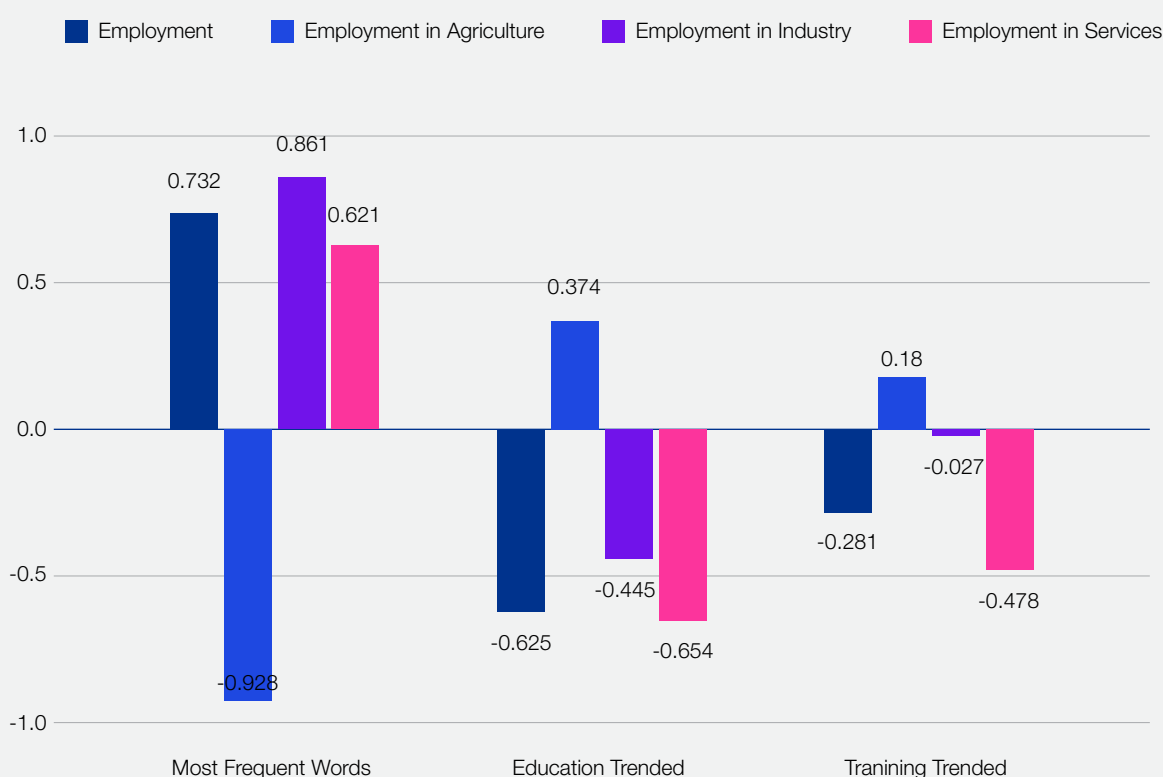


FIGURE 18: Côte D'Ivoire's policy rhetorical words link with select lifelong learning and employment

Source: World Bank, 2015-2023; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

Similar to the data in Figure 17, the data in Figure 18 establish potential connections between policy rhetoric and employment performance according to sectors. According to the data, the most commonly used words are associated with employment creation across all industries. Analysis suggests that narratives associated with the words are more important in delivering educated citizens

that take up jobs in industry and services than in the agriculture sector. Surprisingly, education and training as trending words are linked with the agriculture sector rather than industry and services, showing the embedment of narratives and discourses that have the potential to boost the sector's labour force. This could be further understood from the below excerpt:

- The significant place of agriculture in the country's development strategy requires substantial skilled labour for its continued performance. However, the current vocational training system in agriculture lacks sufficient resources to ensure the development of skills in a sector that accounts for almost 50 per cent of jobs.

(State of Skills, 2020)



The Gambia in Nigeria and Nigeria in The Gambia

Despite their differences in child and youth population growth, the Gambia and Nigeria have shared some similarities in the areas of education and youth development over time.

The two West African countries, like others, have been hailed by various policy documents and political messages from global to regional organisations on the need to address the challenges associated with education and youth development in terms of being equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge for long-term opportunity exploration and value creation. At the same time, the two countries have been urged to address underlying structural imbalances that affect the effective distribution of educational institutions and the allocation of resources to schools in both urban and rural areas.

Like Côte d'Ivoire, we found 9,411 words in the Gambia's assemblage corpus. Education (114), TVET (78), training (75), youth (58), and skills (54) are the most frequent words (see Table 11). This shows that the country prioritises narratives around general skills and knowledge acquisition, along with specialised training for the youth. Our analysis further reveals different connections between these words and less frequently used words. For

example, education, which appears often and suggests a central focus on formal educational processes, is linked with levels and basic. This indicates concerns about the quality and accessibility of education. Its resonance with committed and constrained also suggests policy intentions and challenges. Technical and vocational education and training, the second most used word, is connected with institutions and policy. This hints at the institutional framework and policy interventions in TVET. Its further connection with integrate and graduates implies efforts to incorporate TVET into mainstream education and concerns about the outcomes of TVET programmes.

Training connected with centres and programmes suggests that infrastructure and programmes are necessary in delivering training products and services to the learners. Its connection with data and captured is a testament that the Gambian government is making efforts to collect and analyse training-related data for policy formulation and probably for

implementation. Focus on youth suggests recognition of their specific educational and skill development needs while the word youth linkage with employment and training reflect concerns about youth unemployment and the role of training in enhancing employability. The different narratives that link the word youth with assistance and encouragement also suggest the need for policy measures aimed at supporting youth.

The attention on skills represents a recognition of the importance of skill development for personal growth and economic success. Development and centres signify initiatives to cultivate and disseminate specific skills. Limited suggests difficulty in obtaining and increasing skills, maybe due to resource constraints or structural problems. The focus on development indicates a stronger emphasis on socioeconomic betterment through education and skills. The co-occurrence of private and sector demonstrates the importance of the private sector in skills development. Abuse and assistance indicate worries about overcoming hurdles and providing support during the development process. The link of percent with educational levels and

youth indicate a need to quantify educational attainment and youth-related indicators. Compete and learning refer to the competitiveness and learning outcomes connected with the indicators. Areas refers to specific domains of education and training and its connection with urban and rural indicate a focus on differences between urban and rural areas. Achievement and adapt express concern about obtaining equitable educational outcomes across multiple domains.

The emphasis on institutions implies that organisational structures play an important role in providing education and training. Its co-occurrences with the government and higher indicate the engagement of multiple institutional players. Accreditation and the GSQF raise concerns about quality assurance and uniformity in education and training. The association of Gambia with framework and technical suggests efforts to build special policies and frameworks customised to the Gambian situation. For example, the country's name appears to be associated with agriculture, implying a concentration on skill development pertinent to the country's agriculture sector.



TABLE 11: Top 10 most frequent words in the Gambia's assemblage corpus

Top 10	Words	n	Co-occurrence	Correlations
1	Education	114	Levels (22), Training (15), Percent (15), Education (14), Tertiary (8)	Basic (18), Committed (8), Behind (2), Constrained (2), Complete (2)
2	TVET	78	Institutions (18), TVET (12), Training (7), Policy (7), Education (6)	Integrate (5), Graduates (5), Entities (3), Establish (3), Newly (3)
3	Training	75	Education (13), Centres (12), Institutions (9), TVET (7), Programmes (7)	Data (11), Captured (3), Centre (4), Apprenticeship (8), Systems (4)
4	Youth	58	Rate (7), Percent (7), Employment (7), Training (6), Population (6)	Assistance (2), Become (2), Cutting (2), Encouragement (2), Enforcement (2)
5	Skills	54	Development (13), Training (11), Education (7), Centres (6), Levels (4)	Apprenticeship (8), Limited (13), Acquire (2), Covers (2), Evaluating (2)
6	Percent	49	Education (15), Secondary (8), Youth (7), Basic (7), Percent (6)	Living (8), Compete (3), Learning (31), Example (2), GC (2)
7	Areas	47	Areas (8), Urban (7), Youth (5), Training (5), Rural (5)	Aged (3), Achievement (2), Adapt (2), According (4)
8	Institutions	43	Government (6), Training (5), Education (4), TVET (4), Higher (4)	Apprenticeships (3), Accreditation (2), Businesses (2), Companies (2), GSQF (2)
9	Gambia	41	TVET (5), Training (4), Framework (4), Technical (3), Survey (3)	Agricultural (3), Acquire (2), Covers (2), Evaluating (2), Furthermore (5)
10	Development	40	Skills (5), Sector (5), Training (4), Private (4), Centres (4)	Continuum (2), Activities (4), Abuse (3), Coordinate (3), Assistance (2)

Source: Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

The analysis revealed that education and skill-related concerns are more prominent in the Gambian policy documents, encouraging critical reflection on how to solve them. As the data in Figure 19 show, this is critical for boosting quality education and training in the country, particularly among citizens seeking knowledge in various technical and vocational education and training colleges around the country.

The question is, what are the results of problematising and portraying the challenges in the country's vital economic sectors? Is the policy rhetoric primarily intended to strengthen the labour force and create jobs in diverse sectors? We answered this question using the data presented in Tables 12 and 13, as well as Figures 20 and 21.

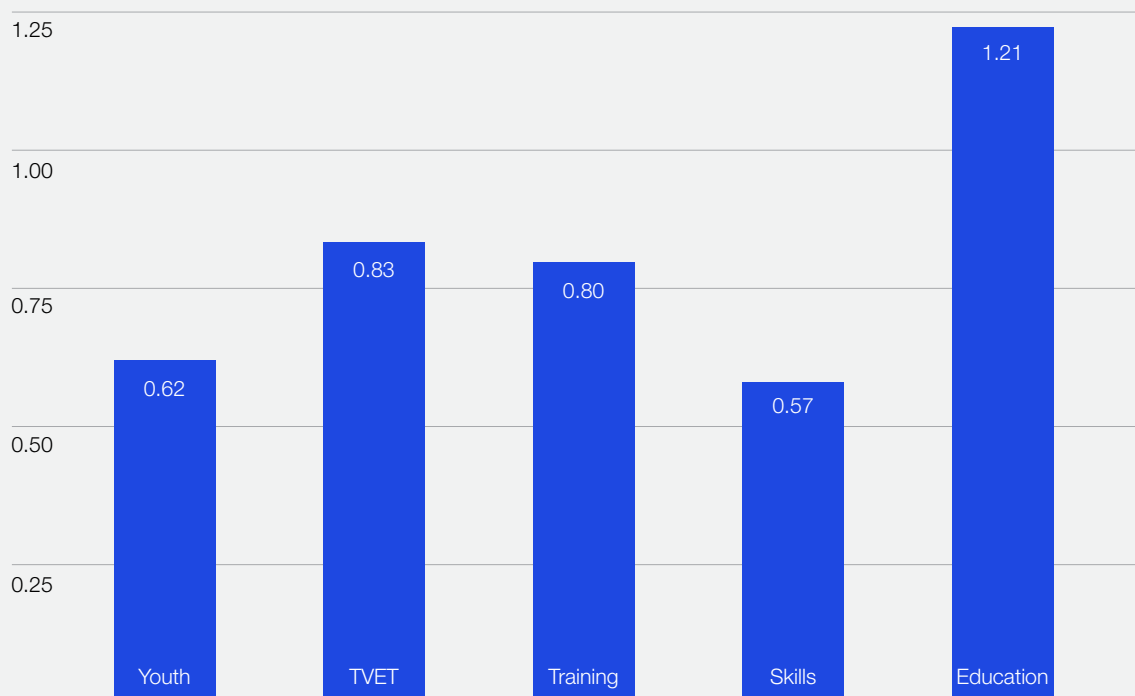


FIGURE 19: Most trending words in the Gambia's assemblage corpus

Source: Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

Similar to Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia has allocated a portion of its GDP for education. This is demonstrated by the data shown in Table 12, which shows the education spending as a percentage of GDP and government spending. Data from 2015 to 2022 demonstrate that the nation's financial commitment to the education sector ranged from 11.03% to 14.48% of government spending, while the country's spending as a percentage of GDP as of 2022 was 14.01%, demonstrating the nation's priority for the education sector. The Gambia's literacy rates have shown promising gains. The overall literacy rate has climbed from 50.78% in 2015 to 58.67% in 2022, demonstrating that the population's knowledge and abilities have grown

significantly. This trend is especially positive when looking at literacy rates among young people (ages 15 to 24), which have increased from 67.16% in 2015 to 74.7% in 2022. The gender literacy gap has also closed, with female youth literacy rates rising from 64.45% in 2015 to 79.86% in 2022, while male youth literacy rates fell from 70.74% to 69.64% over the same period.

Enrollment rates at all educational levels have also improved. Primary school completion rates have progressively increased from 60.71% in 2012 to 75.22% in 2022, with pre-primary school enrollment rising from 37.6% in 2012 to 41.94% in 2022. Primary school enrollment has also increased, from

79.21% in 2012 to 92.32% by 2022. Secondary school enrollment has grown significantly, from 19.78% in 1999 to 101.4% in 2021. However, data on tertiary education attendance is sparse, with the most recent accessible figure of 2.66% in 2012. These patterns imply that the Gambia has achieved significant strides in expanding its inhabitants' access to education and boosting their acquisition of

knowledge. The nation's educational landscape is headed in the right direction because of the steady investment in education as well as the gains in enrollment and literacy rates. To guarantee a diverse and competitive workforce, there is a need for ongoing monitoring and investment in higher education, which is highlighted by the paucity of recent data on tertiary education enrollment.



TABLE 12: Education spending and knowledge acquisition in the Gambia ⁵⁶

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Education spending (% of GDP)	11.03	10.45	15.44	11.36	14.09	13.76	13.97	14.01
Education spending (% of Government spending)	11.03	10.45	13.31	11.36	14.10	14.28	15.62	14.48
Literacy rate	50.78	-	-	-	-	-	-	58.67
Female literacy rate, ages 15-24	64.45	-	-	-	-	-	-	79.86
Male literacy rate, ages 15-24	70.74	-	-	-	-	-	-	69.64
Youth literacy rate, ages 15-24	67.16	-	-	-	-	-	-	74.7
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2019	2020	2021	2022
Primary school completion rate	60.71	60.91	63.19	65.50	68.61	71.67	74.41	75.22
Pre-Primary school enrollment	37.60	37.58	37.68	41.67	43.25	43.67	41.52	41.94
Primary school enrollment	79.21	8.52	83.37	85.96	89.37	91.41	91.21	92.32
	1999	2008	2009	2010	2019	2020	2021	2022
Secondary school enrollment	19.78	48.27	49.37	48.53	-	-	101.4	-
	1999	2004	2010	2011	2012	2020	2021	2022
Tertiary school enrollment	0.92	1.02	1.87	2.94	2.66	-	-	-

Source: World Bank, 2015-2023; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

⁵⁶ Numbers are in percentages.

We delve deeper into the data presented earlier, focusing on labour force and job engagement in the Gambia. Unfortunately, there is limited data on labour force participation in the country. However, available data indicate that labour force participation rates have significantly

decreased from 60.9% in 2018 to 47.5% in 2023. This decline may be attributed to difficulties in transitioning citizens into the labour market due to limited job opportunities, inadequate skills, or economic challenges.

TABLE 13: Labour force and job engagement in the Gambia⁵⁷

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Labour Force Participation Rate	-	-	-	60.9	-	-	-	-	47.5
Unemployment	7.3	6.3	5.2	4.1	4.0	4.8	4.7	4.3	-
Employment	56	57	58	58	58	57	58	58	-
Employment in Agriculture	52	51	50	50	49	49	48	48	-
Employment in Industry	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	8	-
Employment in Services	42	42	43	44	44	44	44	45	-

Source: World Bank, 2015-2023; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

However, available data show that the unemployment rate decreased between 2015 and 2022, from 7.3% to 4.3%. This shows that initiatives to eliminate unemployment, particularly among youth, are producing the expected results. This could be linked to some of the earlier discussions on establishing strong educational systems. Employment rates have been generally consistent, with a minor increase in industry employment

from 7% in 2015 to 8% by 2020. Employment in agriculture and services has fluctuated but has consistently remained between 48-52% and 42-45%. In the following figures, we elaborated on these observations by presenting and interpreting data that show how narratives and most commonly used words in the Gambian policy documents correlate with specific education and employment indicators.

⁵⁷ Employment in agriculture, industry and services are percentages from total employment percentage for each year

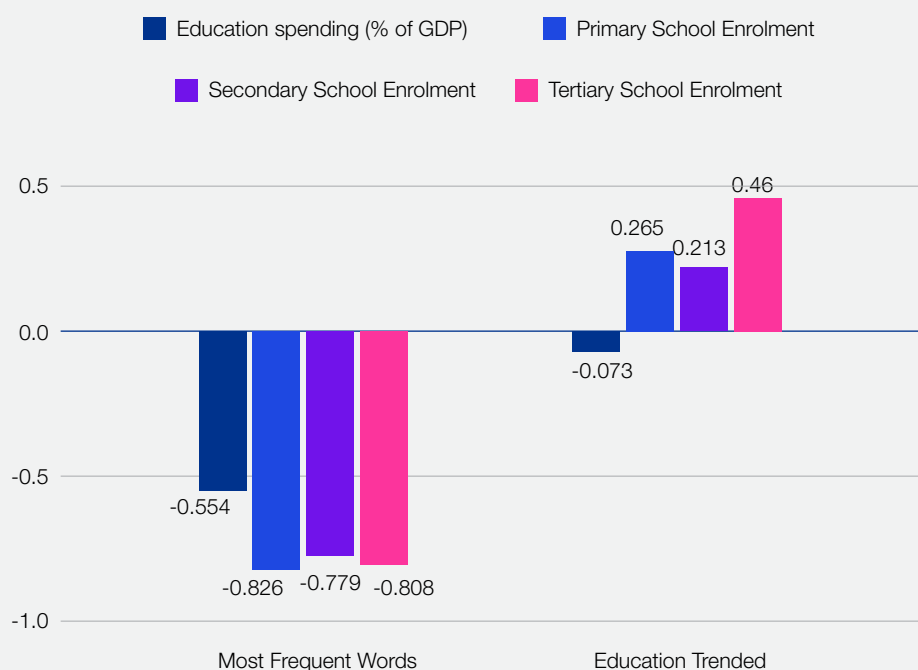


FIGURE 20: The Gambia's policy rhetorical words link with select education indicators

Source: World Bank, 2015-2023; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

Our analysis reveals that, in contrast to Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia has negative resonances with select education indicators for the most words used in its policy narratives (see Figure 20). The data in Figure 20 indicates that the top 10 most frequently occurring words in Table 11 did not correspond with a proper evaluation of raising primary, secondary, and postsecondary education spending and

enrollment. However, data shows that discussing challenges and needs related to education with the consistent usage of education as a keyword results in better school enrollment outcomes than spending on education. So, the question remains: what have these outcomes meant for the country's employment position over time? Figure 21's data contains answers.

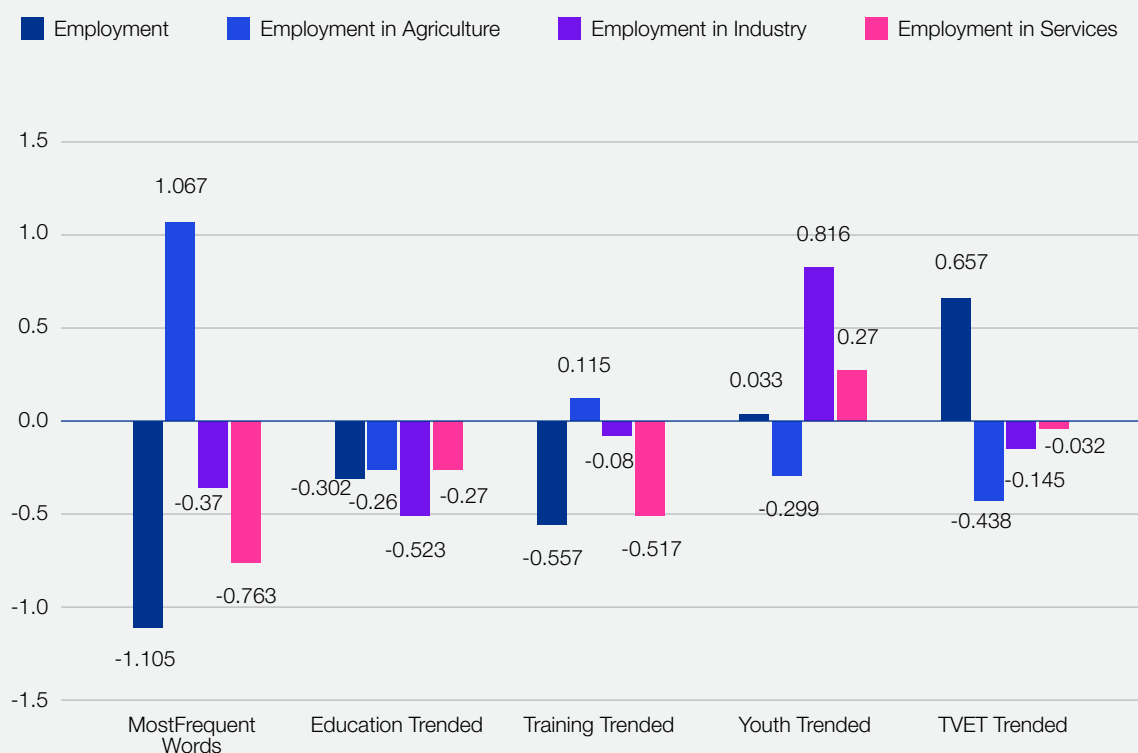


FIGURE 21: The Gambia's policy rhetorical words link with select lifelong learning and employment

Source: World Bank, 2015-2022; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

Figure 21 shows that the relationship between the frequency of using various words and sectoral employment rates is both positive and negative. According to the data, the overall employment rate correlates with word usage. Education, TVET, training, youth, skills, percent, areas, institutions, Gambia, and development, which were the top ten dominant words, did not have the intended impact on employment generation. As a result, our analysis reveals that they are merely rhetorical words rather than actual tools for influencing the government's and other stakeholders' actions.

Despite this, with more than 100% of the words associated with employment rates

in the agriculture sector, analysis suggests some level of impact that discussions about TVET and training have had on youth in various regions of the country in terms of sector development. Analysis also demonstrates a positive correlation between training and youth as trending words in the agriculture and industry sectors, respectively. This underscores the notion that, through various narratives buried in policy texts, the government has primarily focused on strengthening sectors by providing youth with the essential skills and knowledge through TVET colleges. One of the assemblages reads thus:

→ “A system that integrates modern dynamics of TVET operations to meet the growing socio-economic challenges, at both local and global levels,”

(Gambia’s Technical, Vocational Education and Training Policy, 2021-2030)

However, our analysis shows that the majority of frequently used words are also adversely correlated with employment, suggesting some underlying structural and individual problems or needs that need to be addressed. When one considers that training and education are associated with

overall employment rate and rates in the services sector and industry, respectively, the importance of this becomes even more apparent. When youth and TVET are linked to the agriculture sector on the same connection type (negative), this becomes even more important to consider.

5 Senegal in Nigeria and Nigeria in Senegal

Senegal, like Cote d'Ivoire and the Gambia, has struggled to provide equal access to education for all citizens.⁵⁸

It has also dealt with issues affecting the young people over the years. All of these have garnered policy and non-policy attention, most notably when global and regional political platforms, as well as civic spaces, remind it of its social compact with people to generate education and employment by creating an environment in

which every actor or participant can function. Under these circumstances, we leveraged our assemblage corpus for the country as we did for the previous countries. A total of 10,177 words were found for the country’s assemblage corpus, which has education (154), training (90), school (61), schools (51), and

⁵⁸ Unicef (2022) Country Office Annual Report 2022 [unicef.org/media/136361/file/Senegal-2022-COAR.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/136361/file/Senegal-2022-COAR.pdf)

management (46) as the most frequently used words. From the first to the last most used words, our analysts note that the Senegalese government seems to prioritise process and people management towards quality education. This is evident from the indirect linkage that occurs between terms. For example, education, which is a broad idea for developing ability, proportional knowledge, and skills, is immediately followed by training, which provides a more particular definition of knowledge and skill acquisition. The use of the word school in both singular and plural forms demonstrates the government's commitment to improving education through effective resource management.

It is crucial to understand these words well. Thus, it was necessary to present several ways in which the words were employed in relation to one another in order to identify issues and requirements pertaining to youth development and education. Four themes emerged, broadly speaking, from the data in Table 14, which lists the top ten dominant words in the nation's assemblage corpus. These themes demonstrate how the government portrayed the demands and concerns. Simultaneously, we also identified certain issues and requirements that the policy designers failed to address. From the education and training theme, we have realised that the two words are crucial components of Senegal's policy focus. Their connection with access, basic, management, and cycle further suggests the government's commitment to equal

access to quality education and training opportunities.

Quality and management as the key components of the quality and management theme demonstrate the need for high-quality education and effective management structures. They are connected with learning, technical, and scientific, which reinforces the government's intention of ensuring quality education and training programmes through effective management systems. With the school and community theme, which has school and schools as dominant components and is also related to school and community, it suggests that the government is also concerned with engaging local communities in education initiatives. This seems to be necessary for the government, as the last theme, development and youth, has development and students as its critical components, implying the commitment to overall development goals without leaving the youth development and the well-being of students behind. This is better understood by looking at the extra data in Figure 22, which shows that education and training are the top trending words, followed by school. While there are specific differences in the policy responses of Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia and Senegal, the three countries share common challenges and needs in their approaches to SDG 4 and youth development. Our expectation is that Nigeria would have similar experiences and strategies to address these challenges effectively.

TABLE 14: Top 10 most frequent words in Senegal's assemblage corpus

Top 10	Words	n	Co-occurrence	Correlations
1	Education	154	Training (37), Access (11), Basic (10), Management (9), Cycle (9)	Create (6), Administration (4), Careers (2), Characterised (2), Average (7)
2	Training	90	Education (36), Training (8), Technical (8), Quality (8), Offer (8)	Imbalance (5), Technology (13), Distribution (5), Conditions (6), Offers (5)
3	School	61	Year (6), School (6), Dropout (5), Children (5), Access (5)	Acceleration (3), Frameworks (3), Dropouts (6), Implementation (22), Development (45)
4	Schools	51	Schools (22), Establishment (9), Community (6), Number (4), Middle (4)	Policy (9), Disciplines (8), Middle (17), New (12), Establishments (29)
5	Management	46	Education (9), Staff (5), Training (4), Structures (4), Strengthen (4)	Integrated (8), Approach (11), Emphasis (5), Levels (29), Difficulties (9)
6	Quality	45	Learning (10), Training (9), Education (9), Improve (7), Management (6)	Information (9), Integration (13), Initial (7), Qualification (4), Languages (3)
7	Development	45	Education (7), Training (4), Scientific (4), Establishments (4), Technical (3)	Academy (3), Availability (2), Building (2), Combat (2), Activities (2)
8	Students	41	Training (5), Support (5), Public (4), Number (4)	Significantly (3), Bodies (6), Parents (3), Secondary (23), Alternative (2)
9	Educational	40	Establishments (9), Needs (7), Quality (4), Management (4), Continuity (4)	Alternative (2), Bodies (6), Development (45), Attention (3), Dropout (5)
10	Learning	37	Quality (10), Environment (7), Difficulties (7), Education (6), Levels (5)	Activities (2), Consolidation (2), Coordinating (2), Harmonisation (2), IEF (2)

Source: Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

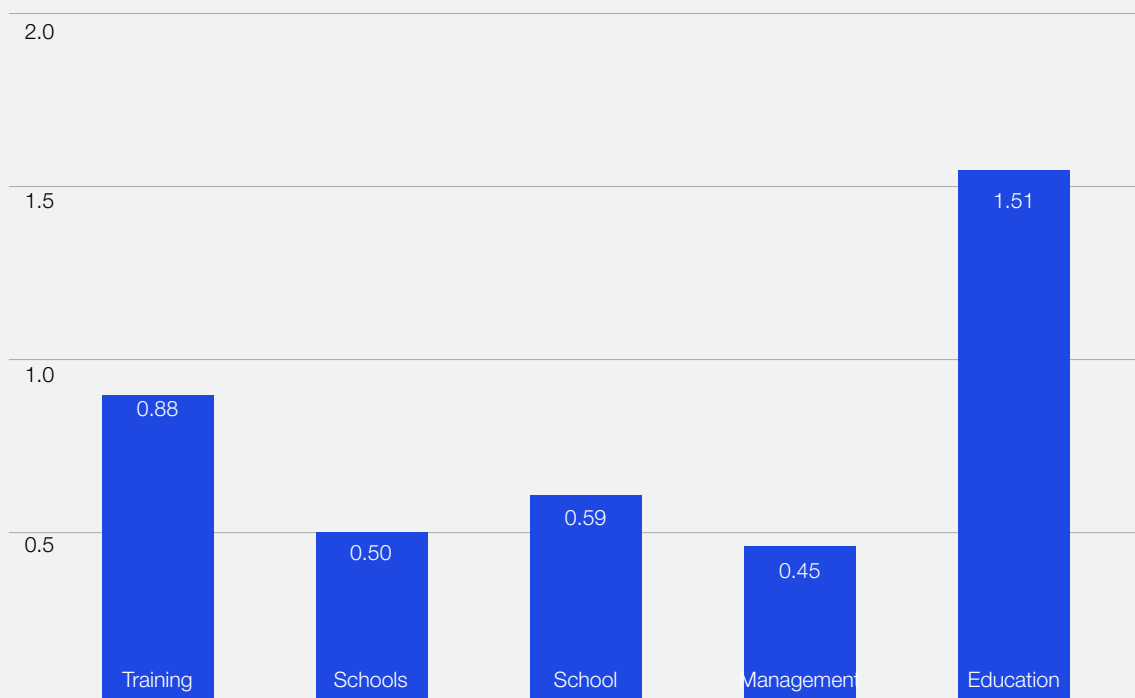


FIGURE 22: Most trending words in Senegal's assemblage corpus

Source: Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

From education spending by percentage of GDP to percentage of government spending, Senegal's spending between 2015 and 2022 revolved around 23.78% and 22.17%, respectively. While it shows the country's prioritisation of education, it also suggests a lack of stability in allocating financial resources to the sector. The Senegalese government's policy response to SDG 4 produced results between 2015 and 2022 (see Table 15), based on literacy rates observed at the time. Specifically, the policy responses led to an expansion of knowledge and skills among the population. This trend is particularly encouraging when examining the literacy rates among the youth (ages 15–24), which have grown from 50.85% in 2006 to 78.14% in 2022. The gender gap

in literacy has also narrowed, with female youth literacy rates rising from 44.54% in 2006 to 75.22% in 2022, and male youth literacy rates increasing from 58.13% to 81.01% during the same period. However, the variation in the percentages could be attributed to a lack of uniformity in the implementation of the policies.

Enrollment rates have also improved at all educational levels. Primary school completion rates have ranged between 59% and 63.56%, while pre-primary enrollment has increased from 15.38% in 2012 to 17.58% in 2021. Primary school enrollment has remained reasonably consistent, ranging from 83.36% to 83.28% across the observation period. Secondary school enrollment rose from

45.94% in 2019 to 46.95% in 2022, while higher school attendance increased from 10.93% in 2012 to 16.81% in 2022. The enrolment outcomes could be attributed to policy narratives around increasing educational institution distribution across the country, especially in regions where

fewer schools are located. This is depicted in one of the two policy documents produced under the name Quality, Equity, and Transparency Improvement Programme for the education sector. Extracts from the two documents read thus:

→ There is a large imbalance in the distribution of students in public universities. If Dakar only has one university, UCAD, this, with an enrollment of 72,300 students in 2010-2011, accounts for more than 3 out of 5 students.

(Quality, Equity and Transparency Improvement Programme, 2013-2025)

→ Furthermore, this cycle will also involve reducing geographical disparities through the following strategies: i) strengthening interventions in the 5 regions lagging behind in school enrollment and which constitute the priority regions of PAQUET (Diourbel, Kaffrine, Matam , Tambacounda and Louga) through favourable decisions and the implementation of programs to accelerate schooling

(Quality, Equity and Transparency Improvement Programme, 2018-2030)

TABLE 15: Education spending and knowledge acquisition in Senegal⁵⁹

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Education spending (% of GDP)	23.78	21.33	20.60	21.54	18.31	22.06	21.08	22.17
Education spending (% of Government spending)	23.78	21.34	20.59	21.54	18.73	22.48	21.52	22.17
	1988	2002	2006	2009	2011	2013	2017	2022
Literacy rate	26.87	39.28	41.89	48.04	51.81	43.53	51.9	57.67
	2006	2009	2011	2013	2014	2017	2019	2022
Female literacy rate, ages 15-24	44.54	54.62	58.74	51.15	51.06	63.5	64.74	75.22
Male literacy rate, ages 15-24	58.13	75.5	73.73	62.83	63.45	75.58	75.56	81.01
Youth literacy rate, ages 15-24	50.85	63.35	65.78	56.94	57.29	69.48	68.28	78.14
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2019	2020	2021	2022
Primary school completion rate	60.1	60.47	60.91	59.0	61.6	61.46	63.56	57.23
Pre-primary school enrollment	15.38	16.14	16.52	16.88	16.92	16.92	17.58	-
Primary school enrollment	84.87	83.9	84.46	84.31	83.36	84.58	82.93	83.28
Secondary school enrollment	51.28	-	-	-	45.94	46.35	46.81	46.95
Tertiary school enrollment	10.93	11.13	11.77	13.06	13.38	14.23	15.73	16.81

Source: World Bank, 2015-2023; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

⁵⁹ Numbers are in percentages.

What have been the outcomes of the narratives and increase in school enrolment on labour market and employment generation across sectors? We used data in Figure 23 to generate needed answers to this question. More citizens were employed in 2016 and 2019 than in previous years (2015, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2021, and 2022). The data also show that

the narrative only translated to a significant fraction of the population working in the services and agriculture sectors rather than the industry sector. Relatively, the data appear to imply that knowledge and skill expansion through the achievement of the goals and objectives indicated in the country's policy papers resulted in a drop in the unemployment rate.



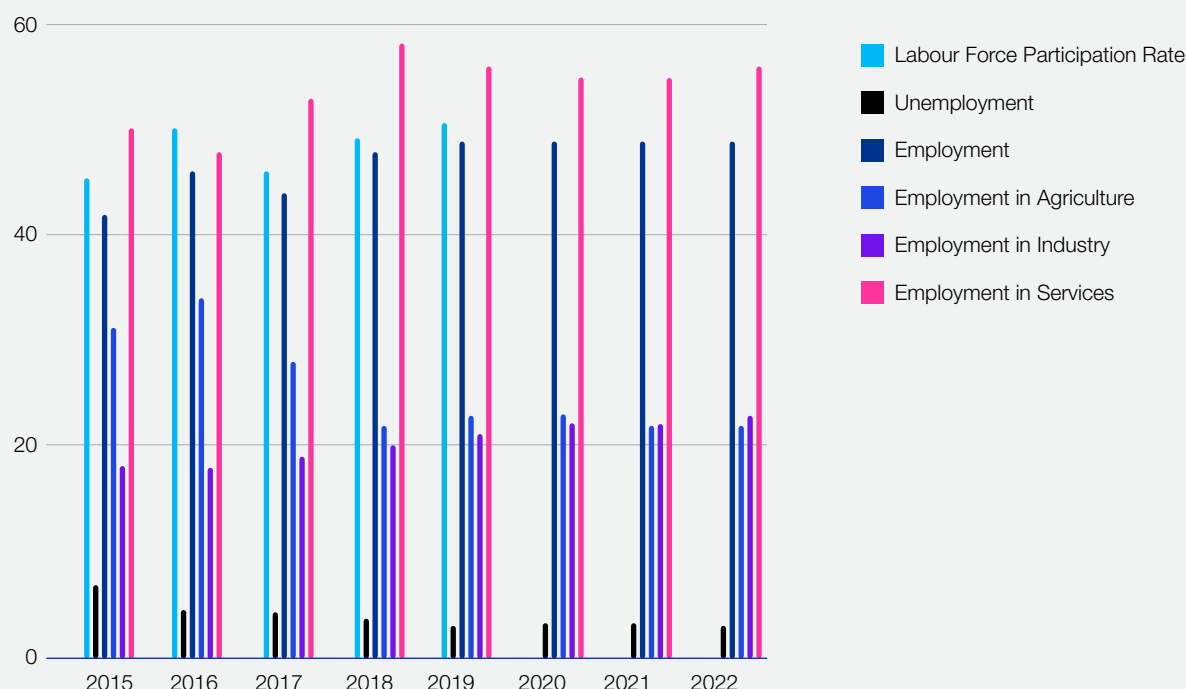


FIGURE 23: Labour force and job engagement in Senegal⁶⁰

Source: World Bank, 2015-2023; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

Could an increase in enrolment and some observable job outcomes be linked to commonly used narrative words? This is what we investigated using the data in Figures 24-25, which revealed that the most commonly used words are more positively related to education spending and school enrollment at the basic, secondary, and higher levels than education as a distinct word in the aggregate corpus. At the same time, examine the impact of the two (most commonly used words and education as a distinct word) on employment indexes. According to our data, the most commonly used words are education, training, school,

schools, management, quality, development, students, educational, and learning, all of which have a positive correlation with secondary school enrollment, education spending, and primary school enrollment. In contrast, they were adversely associated with most frequently used words and education as a distinct word. This means that narratives linked with the most commonly used words appear to be game changers in shaping decisions made by the government and other critical players in the implementation of SDG 4 targets, which highlight universal education and literacy for all citizens.

⁶⁰ Employment in agriculture, industry and services are percentages from total employment percentage for each year

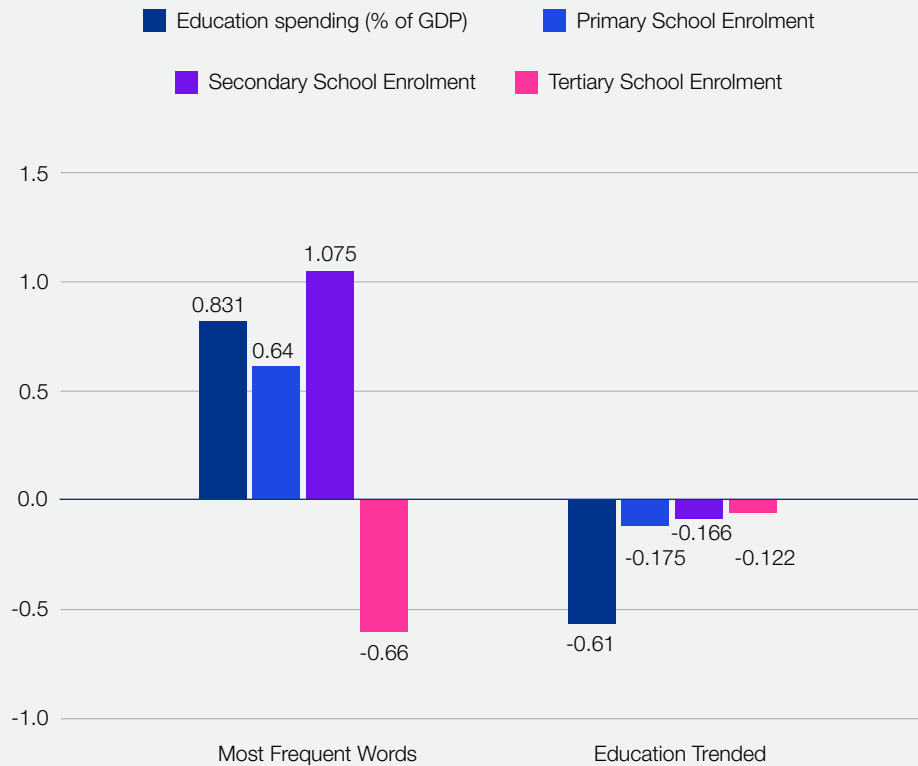


FIGURE 24: Senegal's policy rhetorical words link with select education indicators

Source: World Bank, 2015-2023; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

In terms of the most frequently used words, and education as well as training as distinct words, resonate with employment indicators, our analysis establishes that the identified 10 most frequently used words are connected with employment rates in the agriculture sector positively. In contrast, education and training as distinct

words are related to the rates in the services sector. These results suggest that education and training-related narratives shaped the realisation of goals and objectives associated with professional services through the stated means more effectively than all the most often used words.

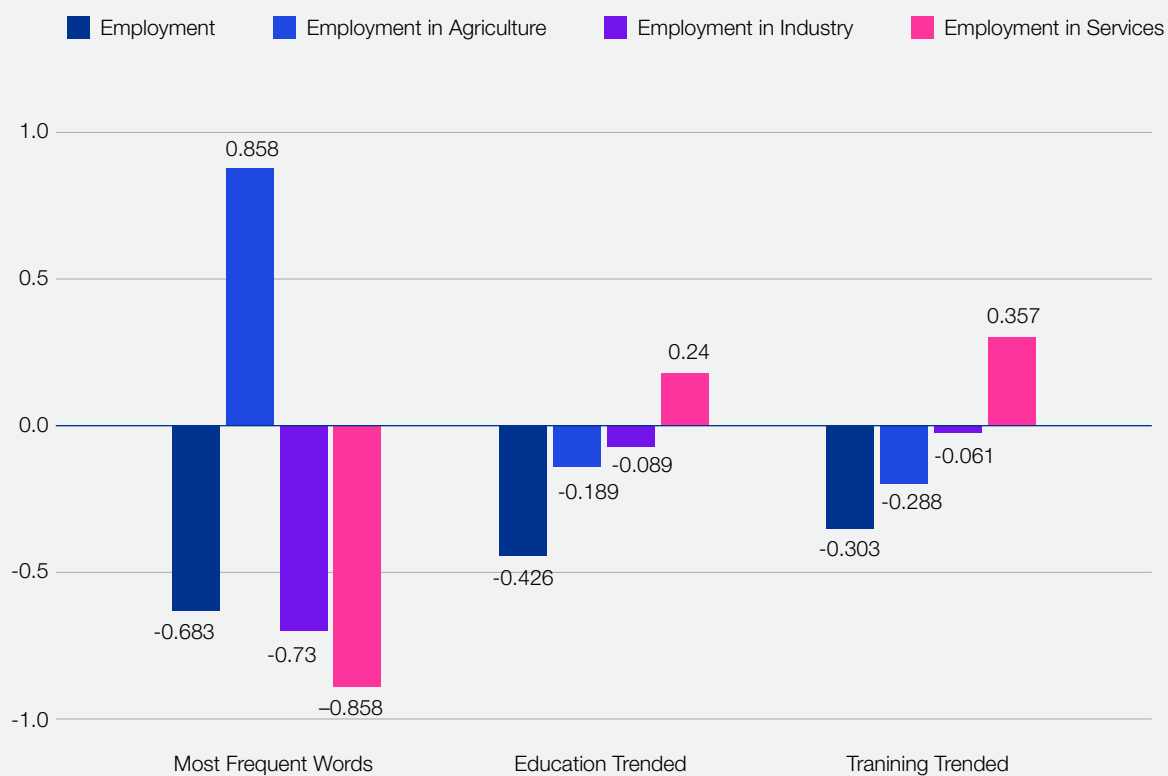


FIGURE 25: Senegal's policy rhetorical words link with select lifelong learning and employment

Source: World Bank, 2015-2023; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024



Nigeria: Intercontextuality and Interoutcome

Generally, the outcomes of various analyses have shown that all the four countries have been hailed by global and regional policy templates.

And they have equally responded on differential and similarity levels. Meanwhile, like other countries, Nigeria also has a total of 6,098 words in its assemblage corpus, where education (80), youth (68), school (61), Nigeria (43), and schools (36) are the most frequent words (see Table 16). The single most striking observation to emerge from the data is the emphasis on education, with words like education, school, and schools appearing frequently in their policy documents. This suggests that education is a shared priority among these nations.

Training is another area of emphasis, with Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, and Senegal all using the word training frequently in their policy texts. This pinpoints the value of skill development and vocational training in these countries. TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) is also a priority in the Gambia and Côte d'Ivoire, demonstrating the relevance of practical skills and vocational training in these countries. Côte d'Ivoire's documents frequently use words related to the private

and public sectors, secondary education, and a lack of certain resources. This suggests that the country is grappling with issues related to the balance between the public and private sectors, as well as the availability of resources for education. The Gambia's policy documents, on the other hand, use words related to skills, areas, institutions, and percentages. This may indicate a focus on measuring the effectiveness of education initiatives and identifying areas for improvement. Senegal's policy documents highlight words related to management, quality, students, educational, and learning. This suggests that the country is prioritising the quality of education and the management of educational institutions. Nigeria's policy documents, in contrast, place emphasis on words related to safety, violence, health, and security (see Table 16). This indicates the significant challenges faced by the country in the course of ensuring a safe and secure environment for its citizens in the context of education. This stance has been reinforced by a recent national assessment of SDG 4, which

demonstrates that every state has taken steps to address issues like insecurity that impede students from enrolling in schools and promote education quality⁶¹. Like other countries, the data in Figure 26

reinforces earlier insights that Nigeria prioritises education, youth, and school as dominant words for setting up various challenges and needs related to education and youth development.

TABLE 16: Top 10 most frequent words in Nigeria's assemblage corpus

Top 10	Words	n	Co-occurrence	Correlations
1	Education	80	Special (12), Access (11), Nigeria (9), Education (8), Ministry (6)	Curriculum (9), Achieve (2), Campaigns (2), Construction (2), Coordination (4)
2	Youth	68	Youth (10), Development (9), Nigeria (8), Health (6), Rate (5)	Participation (4), Political (11), Opportunities (18), Young (9), Active (2)
3	School	61	Safety (16), Security (11), School (10), Nigeria (5), School (4)	Safe (6), Safety (35), Ministries (4), Focal (3), Point (3)
4	Nigeria	43	Youth (10), Education (9), Special (5), School (4), Challenge (4)	Graduates (3), Lacking (3), Needs (15), Increasing (9), Hand (5)
5	Schools	36	Safety (10), Standards (6), Security (5), Schools (4), School (4)	School (61), Safety (35), Provision (6), Safe (6), Awareness (4)
6	Safety	35	Security (21), School (10), School (6), Education (6), Standards (5)	Awareness (4), Integrate (4), Officials (4), Certify (2), Committees (2)
7	Violence	27	Children (7), Including (5), Forms (4), Abuse (4), Rate (3)	Form (2), Sexual (2), Service (5), Environment (4), Attacks (3)
8	Health	27	Youth (6), Social (5), Services (5), Care (5), Sector (4)	Active (2), Affecting (2), Coverage (2), Encourage (2), Expand (2)
9	Development	26	Youth (6), Opportunities (4), Education (3), Circumstances (3), Agenda (3)	Achievement (2), Attainment (2), Become (2), Ability (2), Address (2)
10	Security	25	Safety (21), School (8), Schools (5), Education (5), Standards (3)	Emergency (4), Functions (4), Roles (4), Minimum (5), Ministries (4)

Source: African Union, multiple years; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

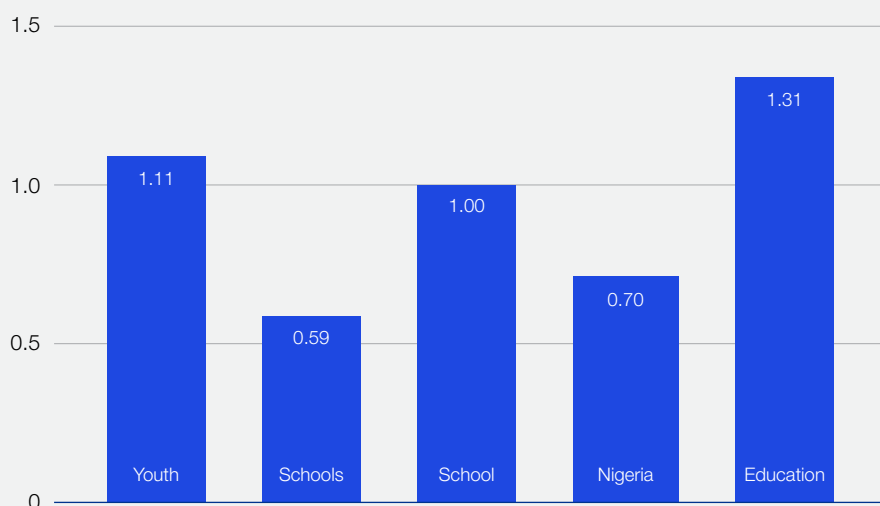


FIGURE 26: Most trending words in Nigeria's assemblage corpus

Source: Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

The data in Table 17 provides a snapshot of the education spending and knowledge acquisition in Nigeria over the years. One of the most striking trends is the decline in education spending as a percentage of GDP. From 9.25% in 2015 to 5.14% in 2022, the government's investment in the education sector has significantly decreased. This is concerning, as the international benchmark for developing countries recommends allocating 4-6% of GDP to education. The literacy rate for youth aged 15-24 is another area of concern. In 2018, the overall literacy rate was 75.03%, with a significant gender gap. Female literacy rates were lower, at 68.26%, compared to 81.58% for males. This suggests that young women are less likely to have access to education, which can have long-term implications for their economic and social opportunities, despite the narratives on gender balance and equal access to education in the policy documents.

Enrollment in primary schools varied from 76.46% in 2017 to 87.37% in 2020. Although this is a step in the right direction, universal primary education remains the ultimate objective. Enrollment in secondary schools has likewise been low over this time, ranging from 40.91% to 47.24%. Due to their low enrolment rates, many students are not finishing their secondary school, which may limit their options in the future. The enrollment data for higher schools is restricted to the years 2021 and 2022, indicating a rise from 45.61% to 47.24%. In contrast to international norms, this percent of postsecondary enrolment is still quite low. This shows that Nigeria is not producing enough educated and skilled workers to support development and economic progress.

TABLE 17: Education spending and knowledge acquisition in Nigeria⁶²

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Education spending (% of GDP)	9.25	6.65	6.12	5.94	5.85	5.13	5.14	
Education spending (% of Government spending)								
Literacy rate				62.02				
Female literacy rate, ages 15-24				68.26				
Male literacy rate, ages 15-24				81.58				
Youth literacy rate, ages 15-24				75.03				
Primary school completion rate								
Pre-primary school enrollment	23.99	15.88	19.65	23.46				
Primary school enrollment	83.75	81.92	76.46	84.68	83.26	87.37	86.72	
Secondary school enrollment	45.61	40.91	42.17			45.89	47.24	
Tertiary school enrollment								

Source: World Bank, 2015-2023; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

⁶² Numbers are in percentages.

→ ...the implementation of goals and objectives that resonate with increasing lifelong learning toward decent work and jobs for citizens, especially the youth, was not influenced by patterns of problematising issues surrounding the education sector and representation of the needs.

Meanwhile, looking at the employment data in Figure 27, it is striking that the country has a relative percentage of population in the labour market. This is surprising because earlier insights have suggested the country is making minimal progress in the areas of enrolment and education spending. Therefore, our submission is that it might be that Nigerians are acquiring knowledge and skills not only through a formal system supported by the government but also

through alternative means such as self-learning and schooling in other countries. The data also indicates that between 2015 and 2022, more jobs were created in the services and agriculture sectors than in the industry sector. These outcomes are not quite different from what we earlier found for other countries, where their implementation of the policies seems to be enabling employment generation in the services and agriculture sectors rather than the industry sector.

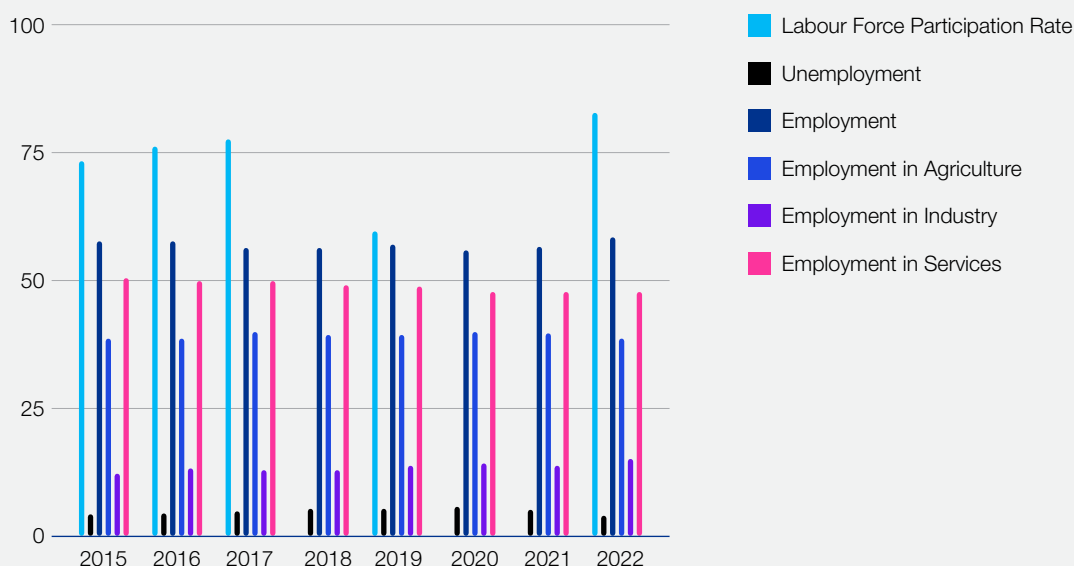


FIGURE 27: Labour force and job engagement in Nigeria⁶³

Source: World Bank, 2015-2023; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

⁶³ Employment in agriculture, industry and services are percentages from total employment percentage for each year

Figure 28 provides more context for the previous insights. According to the data, narratives based on the most frequently used words appear to have influenced the decision to spend a specific proportion of GDP on education rather than aiding the successful implementation of goals and objectives related to SDG targets aimed at increasing school enrollment. Meanwhile,

education as a distinct trending word was positively associated with school enrollment. This may be seen in narratives about the frequent use of education in terms of access, campaigns, construction, and coordination, all of which are directly or indirectly related to having more students in school.

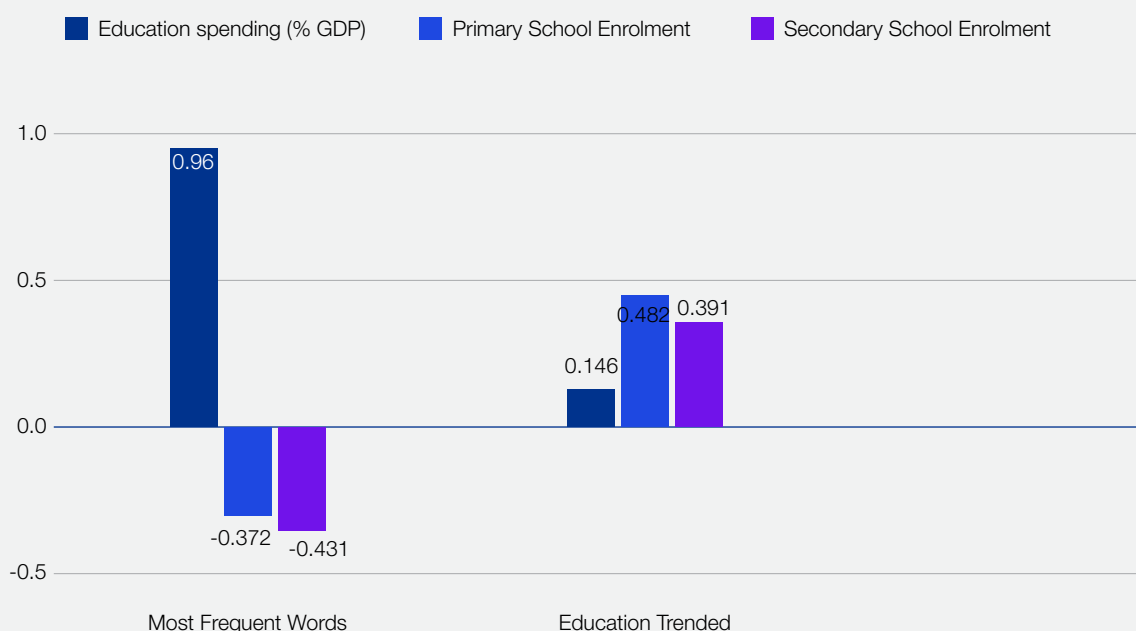


FIGURE 28: Nigeria's policy rhetorical words link with select education indicators

Source: World Bank, 2015-2023; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

While youth is a unique trending word that is associated with both employment generation in general and employment in the services sector specifically, the most frequent words are only related to employment in the services sector. Remarkably, the first most often used word—education—did not have any correlation with the creation of jobs in

general or particular industries. This suggests that decision-making about the implementation of goals and objectives that resonate with increasing lifelong learning toward decent work and jobs for citizens, especially the youth, was not influenced by patterns of problematising issues surrounding the education sector and representation of the needs.

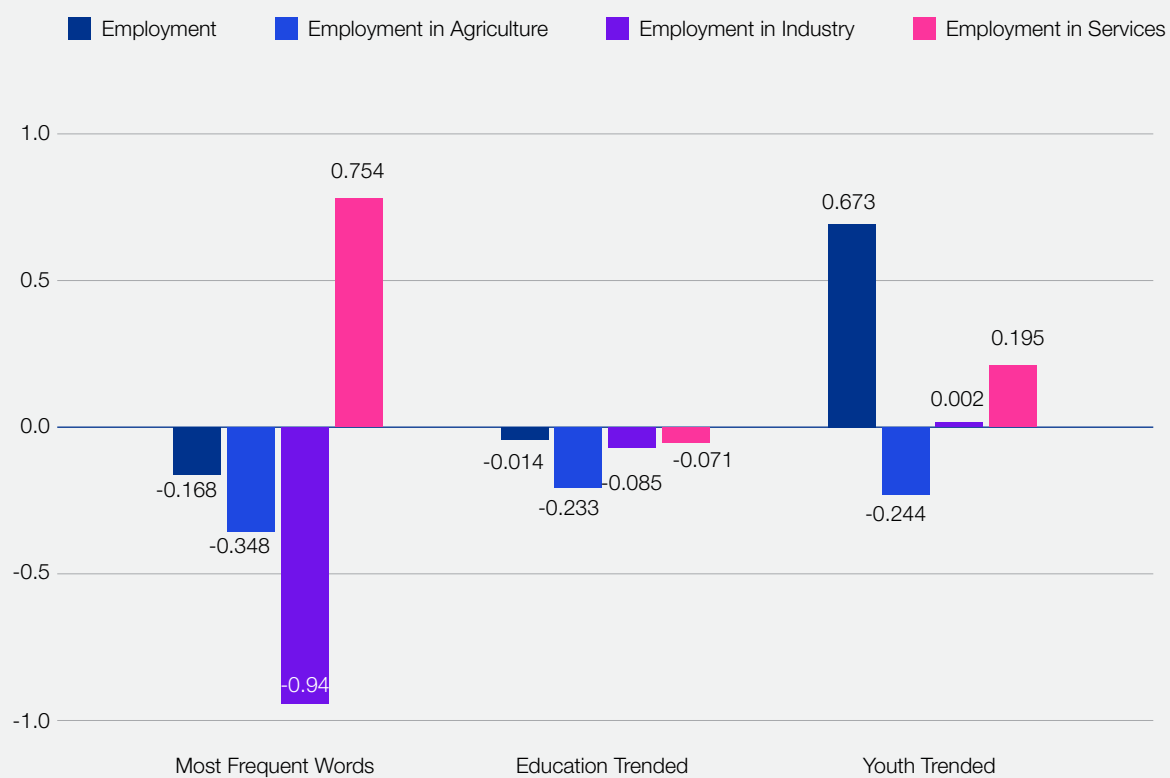


FIGURE 29: Nigeria's policy rhetorical words link with select lifelong learning and employment

Source: World Bank, 2015-2022; Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024



Part V

Hindsight and Foresight

We have previously reported various insights from global, regional, and national policy responses to SDG 4 and its targets, as well as youth development goals. It is interesting to note that the responses are mixed, with different narratives and discourses on the challenges and the appropriate ways of addressing them towards inclusive education and sustainable development. We have also learned that policy designers, who represent governments, choose different linguistic devices for communicating and negotiating policy issues and needs. In line with this background, in this section, we examine what policy instruments have been employed directly or indirectly by the policy

designers, indicating how goals, objectives, and means would be actualized. In this regard, the 71 assemblages used for data normalisation explained earlier become our data for understanding the choice of instruments for the effective realisation of SDG 4 and youth development goals. Our intention is to use these insights based on the starting years of implementing analysed policy documents to understand what has happened previously and the ending years to discern what would be done or should be adjusted based on our current understanding of the existing outcomes of implementing various goals, objectives, and means stated in the documents.



1

Issues or Needs Fixing

Since issues and needs are central to the realisation of any development agenda...

Since issues and needs are central to the realisation of any development agenda, in this section, we focused on the process of addressing and resolving the gaps or challenges that arise between the policy documents we analysed and their actual execution. We consider people, process, product, finance, and technology as critical components of effective execution of the goals, objectives, and means in the documents. Our data reveals that addressing people, process, product, and

finance issues are more prominent during the start years, particularly in 2018 and 2020. For the end year, our analysis indicates that addressing people, process, and product issues at the early stage of announcing the Agenda 2030 is crucial. According to our assemblage corpus (n=71), addressing people, process, and finance issues is highly necessary for realising expected products (education and youth development outcomes) in 2025 and 2030.



TABLE 18: Issues or needs fixing by start and end year

Start Year	People	Process	Product	Technology	Finance
1990	4(8.51%)	6(9.67%)	3(8.33%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)
2010	6(12.76%)	6(9.67%)	2(5.55%)	0(0.00%)	2(11.11%)
2015	2(4.25%)	3(4.83%)	3(8.33%)	0(0.00%)	1(5.55%)
2016	3(6.38%)	2(3.22%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	1(5.55%)
2018	7(14.89%)	14(22.58%)	10(27.77%)	0(0.00%)	8(44.44%)
2019	4(8.51%)	8(12.90%)	5(13.88%)	0(0.00%)	1(5.55%)
2020	12(25.53%)	10(16.12%)	6(16.66%)	0(0.00%)	1(5.55%)
2021	2(4.25%)	4(6.45%)	1(2.77%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)
2022	6(12.76%)	7(11.29%)	4(11.11%)	1(0.00%)	2(11.11%)
Total	47(100%)	62(100%)	4(11.11%)	1(100%)	18(100%)
End Year	People	Process	Product	Technology	Finance
2015	4(12.90%)	6(11.76%)	3(9.67%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)
2020	0(0.00%)	1(1.96%)	1(3.22%)	0(0.00%)	1(6.66%)
2023	2(6.45%)	3(5.88%)	3(9.67%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)
2024	1(3.22%)	2(3.92%)	1(3.22%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)
2025	5(16.12%)	8(15.68%)	6(19.35%)	0(0.00%)	4(26.66%)
2028	4(12.90%)	5(9.80%)	1(3.22%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)
2030	14(45.16%)	24(47.05%)	14(45.16%)	0(0.00%)	8(53.33%)
2050	1(3.22%)	2(3.92%)	2(6.45%)	1(100%)	2(13.33%)
Total	31(100%)	51(100%)	31(100%)	1(100%)	15(100%)

Source: Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

According to the data in Table 18, from the start year to end year, the policy designers focused on fixing processes, products, and people rather than considering technology and finance. As we note subsequently, neglecting technology and finance has several implications for the realisation of SDG 4 and youth development goals. Table 18 shows that policy documents with the end of their implementation in 2015 aimed at addressing issues or needs associated with people for the attainment of the Goal and youth development are more than those focused on doing the same at the start of the implementation year (2015). This suggests a continual emphasis on people's difficulties or needs. The continued emphasis on this, with 2020 (25.53%) and 2030 (45.16%) having the highest frequency, demonstrates the governments' strong recognition of the need to address the specific needs of those expected to carry out goals, objectives, and means that will aid in the

achievement of SDG 4 and youth development goals.

The highest frequency of focus on process-related issues or needs in 2018 (22.58%) and 2030 (47.05%) indicates the importance of improving systems and practices that enable quality education delivery, as evidenced by the presence of fixing educational outcomes in 2018 (27.77%) more than in previous years. According to our assemblage corpus (n=71), technological and financial issues and needs have not appeared as significant components that must be addressed. As previously stated, there is a possible gap in attaining SDG 4 and its targets, particularly youth development goals. Failure to emphasise finance would also result in a lack of enough funds for education and the implementation of various development plans or initiatives for youth. Below excerpts from the assemblage corpus shed more lights on the results:

Fixing processes, products and finance

→ Ivory Coast schools lack infrastructure and their students lack textbooks. In fact, even though expenditures on educational goods and equipment represent around 20% in efficient countries such as Cape Verde and Thailand, this figure only amount to 5% in Ivory Coast, even though it remains above the sub-Saharan average.

(extracted from situation segment of Cote d'ivoire's National Development Plan 2016-2020)

Fixing processes and products

- The Sector will promote a gradual paradigm shift from teacher-centered and textbook based teaching towards interactive learner-centered approach that will include digitising teaching and learning materials across all levels and types.

(extracted from situation segment of the Gambia's Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016-2030)

To build capacity of learners, teachers, school personnel and government officials for child protection, school safety and security

(extracted from objective segment of Nigeria's National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools in Nigeria 2021-)



2

Policy Instrument by Different Objectives

According to the results and insights provided in the fixing issues or needs section, making the components work for the realisation of SDG 4 and youth development goals necessitates a strategic policy instrument by objectives, in which implementers are expected to be called up using various tactics. Our data in 19 elaborates on this, examining tactical types such as command, incentive, capacity building, and system change. The data reveal a distinct shift in policy focus between 1990 and 2022. During the early

years (1990-2015), the emphasis was on command and capacity building instruments, showing a desire to establish regulatory frameworks and strengthen institutional skills. However, since 2018, there has been a larger emphasis on system change and capacity building instruments, indicating a shift toward more transformative and holistic approaches to education and youth development. Our insights could be more understood from the below excerpts:

Command and capacity building

- The creation of new higher education establishments oriented towards Science, Technology and Engineering and Mathematics...

(Culled from situation segment of the Senegal's Quality, Equity and Transparency Improvement Programme 2018-2030)

System change

- The governance of the TVET system in the Gambia involves a number of different public entities, which have been known to lack coordination among each other and collaboration on ongoing initiatives.

(Culled from situation segment of the Gambia's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Roadmap 2020-2024)

TABLE 19: Policy instrument type: Different objectives by start and end year

Start Year	Command	Incentive	Capacity building	System change
1990	2(9.52%)	2(18.18%)	4(10.52%)	3(6.12%)
2010	1(4.76%)	0(0.00%)	5(13.15%)	4(8.16%)
2015	1(4.76%)	1(9.09%)	1(2.63%)	3(6.12%)
2016	2(9.52%)	1(9.09%)	1(2.63%)	1(2.04%)
2018	2(9.52%)	3(27.27%)	9(23.68%)	12(24.48%)
2019	6(28.57%)	1(9.09%)	2(5.26%)	5(10.20%)
2020	2(9.52%)	2(18.18%)	9(23.68%)	8(16.32%)
2021	1(4.76%)	0(0.00%)	2(5.26%)	3(6.12%)
2022	4(19.04%)	1(9.09%)	4(10.52%)	8(16.32%)
Total	21(100%)	11(100%)	38(100%)	49(100%)
End Year	Command	Incentive	Capacity building	System change
2015	2(11.11%)	2(20.00%)	4(15.38%)	3(7.69%)
2020	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	1(3.84%)	1(2.56%)
2023	1(5.55%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	2(5.12%)
2024	1(5.55%)	0(0.00%)	1(3.84%)	1(2.56%)
2025	2(11.11%)	0(0.00%)	4(15.38%)	9(23.07%)
2028	1(5.55%)	1(10.00%)	4(15.38%)	4(10.25%)
2030	11(61.11%)	1(10.00%)	11(42.30%)	17(43.58%)
2050	0(0.00%)	6(60.00%)	1(3.84%)	2(5.12%)
Total	18(100%)	10(100%)	26(100%)	39(100%)

Source: Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

While incentive tactics were initially limited, their application has risen dramatically, particularly in recent years (2019-2022). This demonstrates a rising appreciation of the importance of providing targeted incentives to achieve desired outcomes in education and youth development. The data reveal a steady concentration on system change instruments across time, with a notable increase in their use starting in 2018. This implies a persistent commitment to solving structural obstacles and constraints in education and youth development in order to achieve more transformative and long-term outcomes.

The greater emphasis on capacity building and system change instruments in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2022 is consistent with

the SDGs' comprehensive and integrated approach, particularly SDG 4 on excellent education and SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, which requires a coordinated effort to address the various difficulties of education and youth development in a more comprehensive way. The examination of the policy instruments' end years suggests a growing emphasis on longer-term goals, with a large share of policies intending to complete their objectives by 2030 and even 2050. This demonstrates an understanding of the importance of long-term interventions to solve complex difficulties in education and youth development using capacity building and system change tactics.



3

Policy Instrument by Strength of Government Administrative Intervention

Achieving SDG 4 and its targets requires a holistic approach, encompassing various aspects such as education, youth development, and inclusive policies.

Achieving SDG 4 and its targets requires a holistic approach, encompassing various aspects such as education, youth development, and inclusive policies. This section delves into the strength of government administrative intervention tactics, which involve mandatory, hybrid, and voluntary approaches to communicate policy goals, objectives, and means. We analysed our corpus with the understanding that governments and stakeholders identified as implementers of

policies would use their authority to shape processes leading to achieving quality and inclusive education for all citizens by 2030, as well as ensuring sustained youth development. Our analysis establishes a shift towards stronger government intervention, increasing use of mandatory, declining voluntary and hybrid instruments with a focus on long-term attainment of SDG 4 and its targets, without leaving youth development behind.

TABLE 20: Policy instrument type: Strength of government administrative intervention by start and end year

Start Year	Mandatory	Hybrid	Voluntary
1990	1(3.57%)	5(13.51%)	0(0.00%)
2010	2(7.14%)	5(13.51%)	0(0.00%)
2015	2(7.14%)	0(0.00%)	2(25.00%)
2016	1(3.57%)	2(5.26%)	0(0.00%)
2018	7(25.00%)	7(18.42%)	2(25.00%)
2019	4(14.28%)	4(10.52%)	0(0.00%)
2020	4(14.28%)	8(21.05%)	3(37.50%)
2021	3(10.71%)	1(2.63%)	0(0.00%)
2022	4(14.28%)	4(10.52%)	1(12.50%)
Total	28(100%)	38(100%)	8(100%)
End Year	Mandatory	Hybrid	Voluntary
2015	1(4.16%)	5(17.85%)	0(0.00%)
2020	1(4.16%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)
2023	1(4.16%)	2(7.14%)	0(0.00%)
2024	2(8.33%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)
2025	5(20.83%)	2(7.14%)	3(75.00%)
2028	3(12.50%)	3(10.71%)	0(0.00%)
2030	11(45.83%)	14(50.00%)	1(25.00%)
2050	0(0.00%)	2(7.14%)	0(0.00%)
Total	24(100%)	28(100%)	4(100%)

Source: Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

The data in Table 20 establish the three approaches within the strength of government intervention policy instruments that were deployed in the narratives and discourse from 1990 to 2024 and are also expected to be used from 2025 to 2050. According to our data, a total of 28 extracts established that goals, objectives, means, and some narratives as well as discourses were embedded with mandatory approach in relation to the start years of implementing policy documents that we analysed. From this total, analysis suggests that the approach has been used mostly in 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2022. The hybrid approach, which has the highest number of extracts ($n = 38$), has been deployed in 2020 more than in 2018. Our analysis also suggests that the voluntary approach ($n = 8$) has been mostly used in 2020, 2015, and 2018. Similar patterns occurred for the end years of implementing identified policy documents. For example, with 28 extracts, the hybrid approach is expected to be more adopted in 2030, while it has been previously used in 2015, and is expected to be one of the key approaches to communicating policy goals, objectives, means, and directions. Our analysis

indicates that with the highest percentage of the total 24 extracts for the mandatory approach, it would be more employed in 2030, 2025, and 2028. This is similar to the use of the voluntary approach ($n = 4$), which will be put to use in 2025 and 2030.

While there are fluctuations in the use of the approaches, it is interesting to note that their deployment suggests that governments of the case countries are taking a more direct and prescriptive approach to implementing SDG 4 and youth development policies. The less reliance on voluntary approaches in some start and end years indicates a shift away from more flexible and self-directed paths to attaining inclusive education and youth development. Our analysts note that this means that the governments are taking responsibilities rather than abandoning their social contracts with the citizens. This is better understood from the frequency at which they have deployed and hoped to use a hybrid approach, leveraging both strong administrative direction and voluntary participation. Below excerpts from the policy documents shed more lights to the insights:

Mandatory

→ **Ensure adequate access for learners and teachers to textbooks and teaching materials consistent with current curricula in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning at all levels.**

(Culled from situation segment of Senegal's Quality, Equity and Transparency Improvement Programme 2018-2030)

Hybrid

- Each year, more than 100,000 young job seekers enter the labour market and by 2030, this number should reach the threshold of 300,000 individuals, who are increasingly better trained. These trends, perceived as challenges for economic development, can, however, become real opportunities for having quality human resources, subject to a controlled decline in fertility in the medium and long term, the implementation of institutional reforms and investments in favour of young people, particularly in health, in education, and especially in the creation of decent and sustainable jobs.

(Culled from general segment of Senegal's Emerging Senegal Priority Plan 2019-2023)

Policy Instrument by Influence of the Policy

We have previously argued, based on emerging insights from analysed data, that addressing issues and meeting needs related to people, processes, products, finance, and technology components necessary for realising SDG 4 and youth development is crucial. We have also emphasised that the governments of the case countries have chosen certain strategies based on the need to effectively respond to SDG 4 targets and youth development goals. Moreover, we have stressed that these governments will continue to make strategic choices in this regard, as there are still several years to achieve the targets and goals of advancing youth in all aspects of their lives. In this section, we leveraged this background and further explored three approaches to creating and implementing various programs and initiatives aimed at improving education and youth development, as presented in Table 21.

Our analysis reveals that the supply approach has been mostly used in the start years of 2019, 2018, 2022, and 2020, implying a focus on ensuring the availability of technical expertise and skilled labour to develop and implement programmes that are aligned with policy objectives. In the end years, the approach

would be used more in 2030 and 2025, indicating a continuous emphasis on developing the competencies required to sustain policy execution. Similar to the supply approach, our analysis also shows that the demand approach has been used in 2020, 2018, and 2022. This reinforces the necessity of understanding the target beneficiaries' needs and requirements, as well as devising actions that meet their expectations. In the latter years of implementing the analysed policy documents, the demand approach would be predominantly adopted in 2030, 2028, and 2025, reflecting a continued emphasis on meeting the changing demands of the target groups.

According to the data, the environment approach was used most frequently in the start years of 2018, 2020, and 1990. This indicates an understanding of the importance of the enabling environment, which includes social, economic, and political variables, in facilitating successful policy implementation. Though the environment approach was also used in 2015, the data suggests it is expected to be utilised more extensively in 2030 and 2025. This reflects a continuous emphasis on establishing a supportive environment for policy implementation.

TABLE 21: Policy instrument type: Influence of the policy by start and end year

Start Year	Supply	Demand	Environment
1990	4(10.81%)	3(7.14%)	5(14.70%)
2010	4(10.81%)	4(9.52%)	3(8.82%)
2015	2(5.40%)	1(2.38%)	2(5.88%)
2016	0(0.00%)	3(7.14%)	3(8.82%)
2018	7(18.91%)	8(19.04%)	8(23.52%)
2019	8(21.62%)	3(7.14%)	4(11.76%)
2020	5(13.51%)	11(26.19%)	6(17.64%)
2021	0(0.00%)	2(4.76%)	2(5.88%)
2022	7(18.91%)	5(11.90%)	1(2.94%)
Total	37(100%)	42(100%)	34(100%)
End Year	Supply	Demand	Environment
2015	4(13.33%)	3(10.00%)	5(17.85%)
2020	0(0.00%)	1(3.33%)	0(0.00%)
2023	1(3.33%)	2(6.66%)	1(3.57%)
2024	0(0.00%)	1(3.33%)	2(7.14%)
2025	5(16.66%)	3(10.00%)	4(14.28%)
2028	2(6.66%)	4(13.33%)	2(7.14%)
2030	18(60.00%)	14(46.66%)	14(50.00%)
2050	0(0.00%)	2(6.66%)	0(0.00%)
Total	30(100%)	30(100%)	28(100%)

Source: Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

Our analysis and insights have shown that the governments of the case countries have responded to global calls on education and youth development, aligning their efforts with their respective contexts. We have found that the policy instruments chosen, either consciously or unconsciously, have had certain impacts on programmes and initiatives already executed. This can be discerned from the previous outcomes explained earlier, where each country had a different path to deliver knowledge and skills to citizens, as well as enabling their ability and capacity to work in agriculture, industry, and services sectors. For the remainder of this section, we examined policy instrument affordances, defined as the means through which an instrument exerts influence on its intended target audience⁶⁵. We used correlation analysis outcomes of start year and end year deployments of policy instrument approaches to determine future policy instrument affordances. We believe that this will enable policymakers and implementers to understand the consequences of further using the identified instruments for the total realisation of targets of SDG 4 and youth development. Specifically, this analysis focuses on understanding how these instruments would contribute to the realisation of SDG 4 by 2030, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, and youth development.

For the issues or needs fixing, our analysis reveals that 12.52% of policy instrument

affordances remain for achieving SDG 4 and its targets in the remaining years. Given its low percentage, our analysts note that the governments of the case countries still need to identify and address immediate problems within the people, process, product, technology, and finance components. These problems, such as infrastructural deficiencies, lack of resources, and specific gaps in educational provision, must be addressed. This approach is crucial for immediate improvements but may need to be balanced with long-term strategic planning. With 12.10%, policy instrument type through different objectives already embedded in the analysed policy documents still need to be reexamined. Here, the focus should be on improving educational quality, increasing access, and enhancing teacher training using specific objectives instead of simultaneously deploying command, incentive, capacity building, and system change policy instruments.

With 13.57% and 14.89%, the influence of the policy and strength of government administrative intervention seem to be better for realising SDG 4 and its targets by 2030. This is because these percentages are higher than those of other approaches. Their use and intent to apply them during the remaining years of implementing analysed policy documents establish that the policies are designed to have a significant impact on educational reforms and leverage governmental authority and administrative capacity to drive educational reforms.

⁶⁵ Hellström, T., & Jacob, M. (2017). Policy instrument affordances: a framework for analysis. *Policy Studies*, 38(6), 604-621.

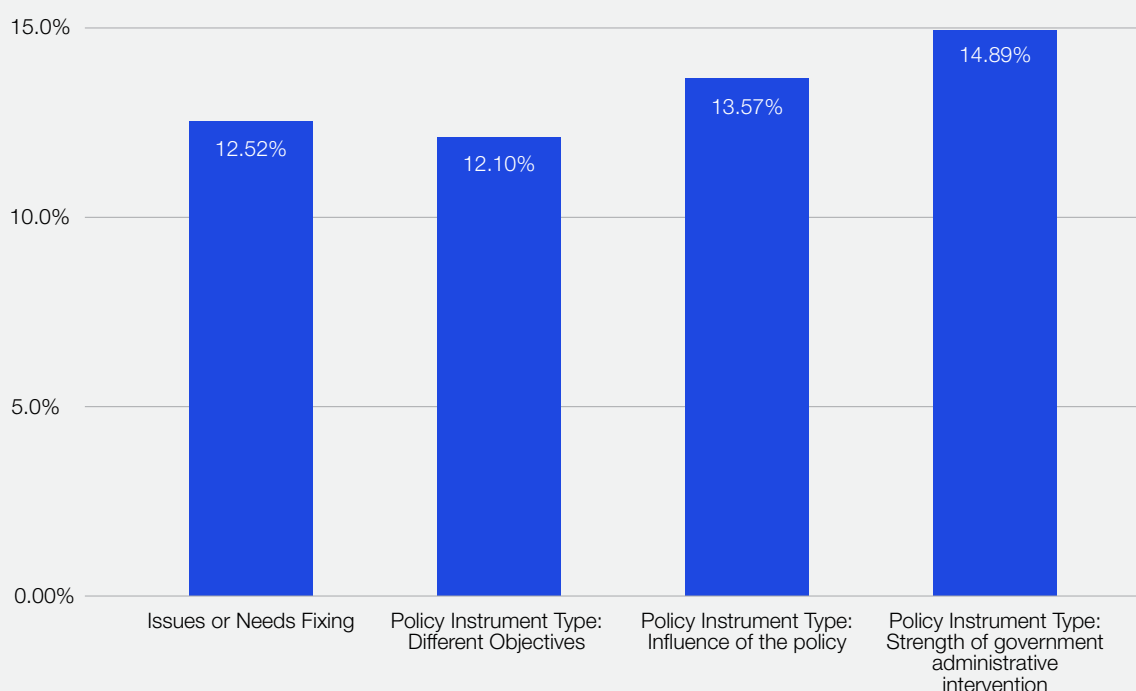


FIGURE 30: Policy instrument affordances for the remaining years of attaining SDG 4

Source: Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2024

5 Final Thoughts

The HLPF on Sustainable Development has consistently emphasised education as a key driver for progress across multiple SDGs, from poverty reduction to climate action. Policymakers, governments, and other stakeholders must address the manifold challenges facing education systems, including financial constraints, discrimination, lack of quality, and inadequate infrastructure and safety. Addressing these issues is not only essential for individual empowerment and social mobility, but also for building more sustainable, equitable, and prosperous societies. Stakeholders must take a comprehensive, multi-level approach to education and youth development policies. This means not only ensuring access to

free, equitable, and quality education at all levels, but also developing curricula and programs that foster sustainable attitudes, skills, and practices. Strengthening partnerships between the public and private sectors, as well as civil society, will be crucial for aligning educational outcomes with the needs of the labour market and broader sustainable development goals. By prioritising education and youth empowerment, stakeholders can unlock the transformative potential of the next generation to drive progress on the SDGs and build a more just, prosperous, and environmentally sustainable future.

Appendix I

Data normalisation results

Issues or Needs Fixing	Percent Agreement	N Agreements	N Disagreements	Decision ¹
People	57.7	41	30	Moderate
Process	32.4	23	48	Fair
Product	60.6	43	28	Substantial
Technology	95.8	68	3	Almost perfect
Finance	85.9	61	10	Almost perfect
Policy Instrument Type: Different objectives				
Command	56.3	40	31	Moderate
Incentive	78.9	56	15	Substantial
Capacity building	47.9	34	37	Moderate
System change	43.7	31	40	Moderate
Policy Instrument Type: Strength of government administrative intervention				
Mandatory	59.2	42	29	Moderate
Hybrid	52.1	37	34	Moderate
Voluntary	88.7	63	8	Almost perfect
Policy Instrument Type: Influence of the policy				
Supply	47.9	34	37	Moderate
Demand	66.2	47	24	Substantial
Environment	56.3	40	31	Moderate

¹ Decision was in line with Cohen's suggestion about the interpretation of Kappa's result. Accessed from: McHugh, M. L., (2012). Interrater reliability: the kappa statistic. Biochem Med (Zagreb), 22(3): pp. 276-82. PMID: 23092060; PMCID: PMC390005

Appendix II

Policy instrument affordance formula

Policy Instrument
Affordance

=

Correlation
of start year of cumulative categories
of policy instrument choice by end year of cumulative
categories of policy instrument choice

Remaining years of SDG 4
attainment

X

100



Unmaking and Remaking Policy Response to SDG-4

A Comparative Foresight
Report for Nigeria

