New Visions for Higher Education towards 2030

A stepping stone for the GUNi International Call for Action (2022–2025): "Rethinking HEIs for Sustainable and Inclusive Societies"

GLOBAL UNIVERSITY NETWORK FOR INNOVATION

Contents

1. About GUNi

The Global University Network for Innovation (GUNi) is one of the world's leading think tanks on higher education policy and management, and a reference institution in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in higher education.

It is an international network that currently gathers 250 members from 80 countries, including higher education institutions, UNESCO Chairs and research centres. GUNi was created in 1999 after the first UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education. It is supported by UNESCO and the Catalan Association of Public Universities (ACUP), which has hosted its secretariat and presidency since 2014.

GUNi's mission is to foster the role of higher education in society by supporting the renewal of its visions and policies worldwide in terms of public service, relevance, social responsibility and innovation.

Its objectives include:

• generate and share knowledge on higher education policy and management around the world

• promote the knowledge society by strengthening higher education systems and institutions for the sake of progress, culture and wellbeing

• support institutions and governments around the world for the advancement of higher education, scientific research and innovation

• promote the development of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within higher education systems and institutions worldwide

• encourage academic and scientific diplomacy to promote multilateralism and international cooperation.

GUNi defends the following values:

• defence and promotion of education, culture and science as decisive tools for human and social progress

• sustainable development

• international collaboration, multilateralism and democratization of education and science

• university autonomy and academic freedom

• responsibility and social commitment of higher education institutions

• promotion of the diversity of higher education institutions

• equity, equal opportunities and the defence of human dignity

• multidisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity

www.guninetwork.org

2. About the GUNi International Call for Action (2022–2025): "Rethinking HEIs for Sustainable and Inclusive Societies"

The "GUNi International Call for Action (2022–2025): Rethinking HEIs for Sustainable and Inclusive Societies" seeks to open up the debate on the future of higher education institutions in the current decade, provide new and inspiring visions for HEIs, and guide and support them in their transformation to become more relevant, inclusive, sustainable, innovative and socially responsible.

The project has a mid-term vision and will run, initially, from 2022 to 2025. Its stepping stone will be the coordination, preparation and edition of a special issue of the GUNi Higher Education in the World Report series, GUNi's flagship project, under the title "GUNi World Report – Special Issue – New Visions for Higher Education Institutions towards 2030". The report will be presented in the framework of the 3rd World Conference on Higher Education in 2022 and will be the basis for the following GUNi activities and initiatives to foster debate around the globe, support HEIs and promote capacity building.

3. The Higher Education in the World Report series

GUNi's flagship project is the edition and publication of the Higher Education in the World Report (HEIW). This group effort is the result of global and regional analyses of higher education. Published every two to three years, with a specific subject chosen for each edition, the report reflects on the key issues and challenges facing higher education and its institutions in the twenty-first century. More than 510 internationally renowned authors from 97 countries have contributed to the GUNi reports so far and 19,000 copies have been distributed in 130 countries. The report is essential reading for university leaders, academics, administrators and policymakers who are concerned about all matters relating to the role of higher education, with a special focus on social responsibility. Until now, GUNi has published seven issues and a synthesis (2009) commissioned by UNESCO for the World Conference on Higher Education (Paris, 2009). The series includes the following titles:

1. The Financing of Universities
2. Accreditation for Quality Assurance: What's at Stake?
3. Higher Education: New Challenges and Emerging Goals for Human and Social Development
4. Synthesis 1–3: Higher Education at a Time of Transformation: New Dynamics for Social Transformation
5. Higher Education's Commitment to Sustainability: From Understanding to Action
6. Knowledge, Engagement and Higher Education: Contributing to Social Change
7. Towards a Socially Responsible University: Balancing the Global with the Local
8. Humanities and Higher Education: Synergies between Science, Technology and Humanities

For further information, see:
http://www.guninetwork.org/guni-reports

4. The GUNi World Report Special Issue

As explained in the previous section, GUNi's flagship project is the edition of the GUNi Higher Education in the World Series, a project that has become a benchmark in the higher education sector, after seven editions plus a synthesis for the 2nd UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education.

However, we believe that the current context and situation deserves a special issue of our flagship project that is not focused on a single topic like the previous reports, but covers a broader view of higher education globally and provides a renewed vision towards 2030. In the following subsections, the reasons for this choice and the context and rationale of this special issue are further explained.

4.1. Why is it time for a special edition of the series?

There are three main reasons why we believe it is time for a special edition of our series.

First, GUNi celebrated its 20th anniversary very recently. Two decades have passed since the network was created after the 1st UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education. Although higher education systems and institutions and our societies have changed considerably in this period, we believe our **mission** and **values** are now **more important than ever**: to foster the role of higher education in society and support the renewal of its visions and policies worldwide in terms of public service, relevance, social responsibility and innovation. More than ever, we believe in the need to reaffirm the social value, role and contribution of higher education institutions, and the need for these institutions to build a new vision and strategy for the future.

Second, in recent years, we have witnessed major **transformations and crises**, including climate change and environmental degradation, demographic pressures, forced migrations, rising inequalities, political pressures and the transformation of the labour market. Some of these transformations might have a devastating effect on our societies and our planet, and in some way become irreversible if clear action is not taken urgently. In any case, they have crucial implications for HEIs and their role in society and it is of utmost importance to address them.

In some way, the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed pressing issues in higher education and society, and revealed rapid, undeniable transformations such as digitalization. As mentioned by UNESCO (2020) in its *report Education in a post-COVID world. Nine ideas for public action*: "We would be wise to seize the moment: history has taught us that transformational change can happen suddenly and often in the immediate aftermath of crisis" (UNESCO, 2020).

In recent years, we have witnessed an unprecedented need and willingness to connect and cooperate. However, we have also seen narrow-minded conceptions, based on nationalism and "we first" policies. We believe the context requires us to think about and develop new visions for higher education and its institutions, missions and values with regard to public good and social responsibility.

We feel there is a need to rethink the role of higher education institutions and their contributions to society, in light of the trends and major transformations that are occurring. These may have specific characteristics in different parts of the world but they are still global changes to a global, interconnected system that follows similar patterns.

Third, in addition to this period of changes and transformations, UNESCO is set to hold the **3rd World Conference on Higher Education** in Barcelona in mid-2022, in partnership with GUNi. This will present a unique opportunity for the higher education sector and beyond because it will result in a new roadmap for the global higher education community. The conference will set new guidelines for policy, capacity building, regional and international conventions and commitments. It will involve a broad range of stakeholders, including policymakers, rectors and presidents of universities, UNESCO Chairs, professors, students, staff, organizations, NGOs, civil society groups, businesses and network representatives. We believe the conference is perfectly timed. The special issue of the report will be officially launched and presented in its framework.

4.2. What is the rationale of the special issue?

For all the reasons mentioned above, we believe it is only natural to ask ourselves what kind of higher education institutions we want. What kind of societies and what kind of people? How should higher education institutions respond to current developments? How can we guide the need for change and transformation? What should be taught and learnt at HEIs?

Most importantly, in this special issue we would like to reflect on three main guiding questions:

- If we were to create a HEI from scratch today, what would it be like?

- If we were to reform HEIs, what changes should we put in place and most importantly how would we implement them?

- What should higher education institutions look like in the near future?

The first question helps us to be imaginative and creative, the second one grounds us in reality and the third makes us think about new visions, always considering the great, necessary diversity of HEIs around the world.

We intend to depart from classical approaches and approaches to higher education that only highlight its benefits. We want to provide the community with the opportunity to think creatively on a series of trends that we believe to be key in the current context and in relation to the overarching guiding questions stated above. However, we are aware of the positive endeavours of HEIs and the great effort they are making to improve and adapt to changes in society. In this report, we will showcase some examples of these.

Additionally, the analyses and ideas in the special issue of the report will put the spotlight on the institution instead of the system or policy level. The reason for this focus is the desire to shift from a purely theoretical approach to a practical one by achieving the maximum applicability of our findings. We would like to imagine, think and design what higher education institutions should be like, because we believe them to be key agents in the necessary transformation, and we believe in the need for them to be autonomous, have the capacity to make decisions, and manage and organize themselves. In this report, we talk about higher education institutions

(HEIs) instead of universities, to include the wide variety of tertiary education providers. We focus on the institution, although we acknowledge the crucial role of the system. We believe our approach will be of interest to policymakers and other stakeholders who traditionally pay more attention to the system or policy level per se.

Note that when we consider a new vision for HEIs, we are not trying to formalize one specific model of institution. We believe in the need for diversity. In the vision we will build, there will be space for many types of HEIs.

In fact, types of higher education institutions vary according to the geographical and historical context, and in terms of missions, objectives, modes of delivery and models in general.

In recent decades, we have seen two parallel trends. One is growth in the rate of higher education participation around the world and the consequent diversification in societies' and students' needs and profiles. The other is the quest for a research-intensive model of university praised by the global knowledge economy and by international rankings. This has sometimes had the undesired effect of creating uniformity. We believe in the need for diversity to accommodate societies' and students' needs around the world.

Despite the sometimes bleak outlook for the future, GUNi wishes to provide an optimistic view. Although some developments may be out of our control, many others are consequences of our direct actions (or inaction). We need relevant analyses and bold ideas to make the best decisions, those that will help us to create the kind of societies and higher education institutions that we want for the future on the basis of lessons learnt. Higher education institutions are gaining increasing prominence in terms of social and technological advances. They are becoming key institutions for our societies' progress and advancement.

On this note, the special issue of the GUNi report will seek to include input from all stakeholders in society: experts, academics, professors, students, policymakers, civil society and businesses, among others. As stated in the 2030 Agenda, multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaborations are crucial in the twenty-first century if we want to solve our common challenges and achieve our common goals.

Finally, and most importantly, the special issue of the GUNi report will be the stepping stone towards a wider and more ambitious project titled "GUNi International Call for Action (2020–2025): Rethinking HEIs for Sustainable and Inclusive Societies". This project will be one of GUNi's key strategic lines of action for 2020–2025 and will seek to encourage and help HEIs around the world to deploy the actions and changes that are needed to adapt and become more relevant, inclusive, effective, innovative and socially responsible. We believe in the need to **frame our analysis within the 2020–2030 decade**, to be as relevant as possible. Otherwise, the risk of the report and the project becoming obsolete fast is too high.

For the above reasons, it is only natural for GUNi to publish a special issue of our world report. The specificities of the current context, the overarching values, structure, main topics and production process will be discussed in the following sections.

4.3. What is the context in which this special issue is conceived?

Changes are happening faster in society than in higher education. We are in a period of rapid, abrupt transformations for which international coordination is increasingly relevant. The new decade has been upended by the COVID-19 pandemic that has completely altered the global panorama around the 2030 Agenda. It has exacerbated existing problems, made them more visible and generated new challenges. How and to what extent can higher education institutions respond to this new context?

Today's challenges are highly diverse and complex. Significant changes in the economic, social, political, technological and environmental fields are putting pressure on higher education institutions and demanding answers to societies' needs. Globalization, climate change, pandemics, inequality, the crisis of liberal democracy, the rise of the far right, youth unemployment, technological changes, digitalization, new education providers and knowledge concentration are just some of the current issues of concern.

In a globalized world that fosters cooperative education endeavours, multilateral programmes and common projects among countries, some are still pushing for a political agenda that encourages isolationism, enclosure, xenophobia and extreme nationalism, while liberal democracies are suffering from political instability. Cooperative research, open science and the free flow of academic knowledge are threatened by retrograde political values that view these advances in society as menaces.

Moreover, the same leaders have created their own regimes of truth in which altering the planet's climate and the destruction of biodiversity is nothing more than a fallacy and a conspiracy. Negationist views of climate change have pervaded in the last few years, with some leaders claiming there is no need to move towards a sustainable life. The world of higher education needs to strive to achieve totally sustainable HEIs that are transparent, reliable and socially responsible in their policies of fossil fuel divestment or renewable energy.

Undoubtedly, inequality has become one of the most worrying issues globally. While it is true that economic globalization has succeeded in reducing poverty, it has also increased inequality within individual countries and between countries and regions. It is also true that despite the growth of enrolment in higher education in recent decades, with an increase from 17.1% in 1998 to 27% in 2008 and 38% in 2018, this growth has been very unequal among regions of the world. Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest participation in higher education (5%) and Latin American enrolment represents less than half that of high-income countries (Altbach et al., 2016).

Inequality also affects knowledge. The trend shows that the richest countries allocate large amounts of resources to research. Their universities have achieved a certain prestige and position at world level, with the capacity to attract academics and researchers from all over the world. As the former Executive Director of the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean Ana Lucia Gazzola (2010) said, "Knowledge today is the chief currency of development. It is through access to knowledge that countries and nations are able to build their future, participate in a productively competitive manner, develop themselves and become modern."

Moreover, the increase of enrolment in higher education has not been able to mend the growing problem of youth unemployment. The entire economic development model needs to be rethought, which also presents an opportunity to reconsider the relationship between education and work. We must include and recognize the importance of learning beyond formal education, such as self-learning, peer-learning, internships and traineeships. The intensification of globalization is producing patterns of low growth in employment, while youth unemployment and unstable employment are increasing, affecting societies in the Global South and the Global North. Although youth unemployment suggests that there is a disconnection between education, training and employment, it is also linked to economic policies, choices and political responsibilities. In addition, high levels of education among young people and workers lead to increased competition for jobs. The reality of the labour market generates frustration and discouragement among young people, who are beginning to question the "return on investment" of traditional "high status" education routes. We must attend to this issue without falling into the trap of educational commodification and we must consider that education should train citizens, not just employees (UNESCO, 2015).

Paradoxically, even education systems contribute to inequalities by ignoring the needs of disadvantaged students and those living in poverty. Indeed, higher education opportunities in general have become the heritage of the privileged classes. The tendency to privatize higher education contributes to the exclusivity of training (UNESCO, 2015) and thus disregards its status as a public good.

In line with the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda, work must be done to ensure equal access to higher education. The gap will widen as existing inequalities grow and new ones are generated. The pedagogical, economic, social and emotional needs of the students who are finding it hardest to continue their education in this new scenario should be addressed. Problems such as access to computers, connectivity and housing conditions, among others, lead to student dropouts. In addition, the post-pandemic scenario will be marked by serious financial consequences such as unemployment and impoverishment of families. This situation will be more pronounced in less developed countries and regions and in vulnerable sectors of the population such as female students, rural communities,

poor people, disabled people and migrants. Therefore, institutions and academic establishments will need to find solutions, such as individualized monitoring and support of students to prevent them from dropping out (Pedró, 2020).

Another victim of the pandemic is the quality of higher education. Most academic hours are designed in a face-to-face format, so learning and evaluation have had to be redesigned to make them viable in an online setting due to post-pandemic mobility restrictions. The value of university education is not only access to knowledge but also to question and interact with other students and share opinions. Therefore, the new learning methods require technologies that facilitate digital interaction, teacher training in these skills, and meeting the emotional and mental needs of students.

The role of corporations is an issue related to the boom in digital education in recent decades, and is even more relevant in the pandemic and post-pandemic context. Corporations have increased their investment, relevance and involvement in the education sector at all levels. However, some consider that this expansion threatens the educational policy practices of each country. Doubts have emerged about which authority corporations should be accountable to: their shareholders or the state authorities (Informe de Seguimiento de la Educación en el Mundo, 2018).

Most universities in developed countries have established advanced digitalization and have been able to respond more satisfactorily to the crisis. Meanwhile, universities in developing countries that have less experience of digitalization face serious difficulties in meeting their students' needs, which has had a negative impact on their education. If the international community continues to fail to act in response to this situation, the former will survive while the latter may not. It is in these situations that international cooperation is so relevant, for example in sharing computer tools, platforms and digital teaching experiences, and collaborating with teacher training. The longer they are left without concrete answers, the more likely millions of students are to leave their studies forever. This would lead to a wider gap between developed and developing countries, the consequences of which will be seen in the coming years and decades.

On the subject of advanced digitalization and higher education quality, we should mention the new trend of micro-credentials. Digital technologies are creating new opportunities for skills development and continuous learning, in a context of increasing mobility. Digital

learning records complement traditional qualifications and challenge current credential evaluation systems. These changes are introducing new challenges in terms of learning standards, pedagogies and forms of assessment and certification that must be analysed and improved. Although the trend already existed, it has intensified significantly since the pandemic started (UNESCO, 2018).

We believe it is necessary and timely to include this issue, given the growing number of migrants and refugees in recent decades, coupled with the fact that never before in history have there been so many migrants in an irregular situation that affects their access to education. Moreover, the migration crisis is interrelated with issues such as the climate change in coming decades. The pandemic will eventually fade, but climate change will continue to pose an impending challenge for all societies. Especially in developing countries, mass migration flows are expected to result from deteriorating living conditions provoked by climate change.

Access to education for refugees or irregular migrants is essential and a right. Host countries must adapt their legislation and educational system at all levels to ensure that this right is guaranteed. Unfortunately, only 1% of refugees have access to higher education, compared to 36% of the world's youth. Ensuring access to university will benefit migrants' social integration, freedom and quality of life in the future. It will also generate a strong incentive for primary and secondary students to complete their studies (UNESCO, 2018).

In this area, UNESCO works to strengthen policy design to implement and support inclusive refugee policies in host countries. This assistance includes supporting the recognition of previous studies and qualifications in the country of origin, or a third country, improving data on refugees, and improving educational planning with host and refugee communities, among other initiatives (UNESCO, 2019). We must involve stakeholders such as HEIs, NGOs, governments, international organizations, migrants' associations and human rights organizations to work together on this transdisciplinary subject, and we must think together how to improve our shortcomings.

UNESCO's new "Futures of Education: Learning to Become" is the report that was presented in November 2021. Led by a high-level commission composed of expert leaders from different fields and regions of the world and

involving the participation of young people, educators, civil society, governments, businesspeople and other stakeholders, this report will address the challenges already outlined in the previous one and include new issues that have emerged in the changing, dynamic world of recent years. The objective is to present an overview of what education and learning will be like in the future and offer a policy agenda.

To summarize, the current times of abrupt changes must be accompanied by a more attentive, effective, committed international educational community, whose actions are coordinated with policymakers to generate relevant changes. These are times when educational advances such as technology, digitalization and the massification of education are providing interesting solutions and generating new challenges in areas such as training, quality and inequality.

4.4. Which are the overarching topics, premises and values of the report?

The orientation of the report is based on the key concepts and **values** of GUNi and UNESCO: human rights, public service, international cooperation, sustainable development and innovation.

Our main premises are the following:

- We believe that higher education institutions are **societal institutions** and that higher education is a fundamental part of society, at the service of the public good.

- We believe in the **compatibility of excellence and public service**. Our mission is not to seek the maximum competitiveness of HEIs without any other considerations, but for this competitiveness to be at the service of society's interests and needs and useful for international collaboration to meet global challenges and advance knowledge, science and human progress.

- Beyond equipping students with the necessary tools to successfully enter the job market, higher education is a crucial method to provide people with **critical thinking**, wisdom and an understanding of the world.

- In the age of globalization, higher education must contribute to global peace and human development through science, culture and communication, strengthening **international partnerships and cooperation**.

- We believe in the crucial role of autonomy and academic freedom. **Autonomy** is a necessary condition

for the smooth functioning of HEIs and gives them the necessary degree of independence from external interference in their endeavours, and **academic freedom** as a right and an obligation.
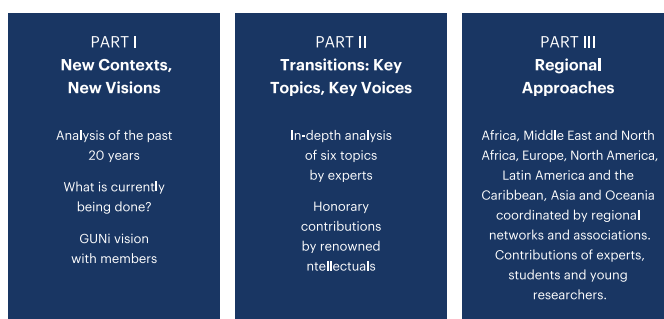
- The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and human rights with a special focus on gender equality, access and inclusion are two transversal overarching themes in our work.

- We believe in the power of **transdisciplinary** building of synergies between traditional disciplines such as science, technology and humanities as one of the main trends in future teaching, learning, research and work.

- We believe in the importance of **including all stakeholders** in society and providing a comprehensive global view of backgrounds, geographical regions, genders, and so on.

- We believe that the higher education sector's views are paramount, but we also believe in the importance of the rest of society's views, as **we understand that HEIs are embedded in their local, regional and international contexts**.

- We believe **the student should be at the centre** of HEIs' activities to support lifelong learning and knowledge production, acquisition and dissemination throughout life. This premise will be at the core of the report's conceptual framework.

The guiding framework of this special issue will be the 2015 UNESCO Report "Rethinking Education: Towards a Global Common Good" and it will be followed by "The Futures of Education: Learning to Become", published in 2021.

HEIs as societal institutions: the public good	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	The student at the centre – lifelong learning
International collaboration with a local–global balance	Transdisciplinarity	Compatibility of excellence and public service
Inclusion of visions from all stakeholders in society	Professional and human skills: beyond the human capital approach	Institutional autonomy and academic freedom

4.5. Preliminary structure

The report will have three main parts, besides an introduction and a conclusion. The first part will analyse the context and construct a new vision for HEIs. The second part called "Transitions" will seek to analyse and describe how we could move towards this new vision by approaching core issues and themes in higher education. Finally, the third part will seek to provide a regional approach with chapters on six regions focusing on the questions: What do the regions of our world feel higher education institutions should be like in the future? What are the similarities? What are the differences? These parts are explained in more detail below.

PART I **New Contexts, New Visions**	PART II **Transitions: Key Topics, Key Voices**	PART III **Regional Approaches**
Analysis of the past 20 years What is currently being done? GUNi vision with members	In-depth analysis of six topics by experts Honorary contributions by renowned ntellectuals	Africa, Middle East and North Africa, Europe, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and Oceania coordinated by regional networks and associations. Contributions of experts, students and young researchers.

Part I – New Contexts, New Visions

The first part of the report will focus on the main challenges facing global society and make connections between these challenges and their impact on higher education institutions. It will be divided into two subparts. The first will assess the current state of affairs. The second will present the vision of GUNi and its members in terms of how higher education institutions must change to respond to the state of affairs.

In more detail, the first subpart will analyse **what has happened in the first two decades of the twenty-first century** in terms of general societal trends and trends in higher education institutions. This subpart will help the reader to understand the context, with the challenges facing our societies and their implications for higher education institutions. It will present an overview of the main subtopics that the report will cover in subsequent parts. It will deal with desired and undesired consequences of globalization, the implications of the climate emergency, global health, social challenges and inequalities, the crisis of liberal democracies, technological transformations, transformations of labour markets, increasing digitalization, and other topics. It will analyse the impact of these transformations on education in general, and higher education specifically.

The second subpart will include a real-time approach to **what is currently being done**. What are HEIs around the world doing to respond to the needs, challenges, crises and transformations analysed in the previous subpart? This subpart will analyse the responses of HEIs and provide inspiring examples of HEIs that are working on initiatives, new developments, changes and innovations to adapt to the new context.

Going a step further, the second subpart will provide a more purposeful document presenting **a new vision for HEIs**, put together by GUNi and the members of the network.

For this subpart, GUNi will create a task force: a group of member representatives who will work closely with the GUNi secretariat to draft the vision, which will then be shared with the rest of the members to be finalized. All members will have a say in the process and provide their input and contribution to the vision.

Creation of GUNi task force: a group of members who will work closely with the secretariat on the vision	Desk analysis + consultations with international experts: What has happened in recent years? How have we reached this point?	Desk analysis + consultations with international experts: What is currently being done well?	Building and drafting a vision towards a transition. Consultative process with the network's members

Part II – Transitions: Key Topics, Key Voices

> Based on Part **I**, how do we go from where we are to our vision for higher education institutions?

HEIs that want to rethink their role and activities in this decade need to consider a set of questions:

- What is the nature of our institution in terms of public service and good? How can we balance our local and global demands?
- What should teaching and learning be like?
- How can we foster more democratic, open research?
- How is the shift towards sustainability to be led?
- How can we become more accessible and inclusive through digitalization?

This thinking needs to be guided by the premise that the student should be at the centre of HEIs' activities and that HEIs support lifelong learning and knowledge production, acquisition and dissemination throughout life. By student, we do not mean the traditional student, but all types of students that universities can embrace (young, professional, continuing education, online, blended, part-time learners, older adults returning to education, international students and migrants, among others, all with different goals and challenges).

Through an approach to certain issues that shape higher education institutions, Part II will seek to analyse and describe how we could move towards the proposed new vision.

Although we will divide Part II into different themes or topics, for the sake of clarity and ease, we believe the HEI to be an **ecosystem** and each topic is interlinked. Consequently, there will be many cross-cutting issues.

Each topic will be analysed by at least one or two renowned experts in the matter.

Additionally, prominent international intellectuals from different fields and disciplines will be invited to share their ideas and make honorary contributions to the report.

The preliminary topics are the following:

CHANGE AND INNOVATION IN MANAGEMENT
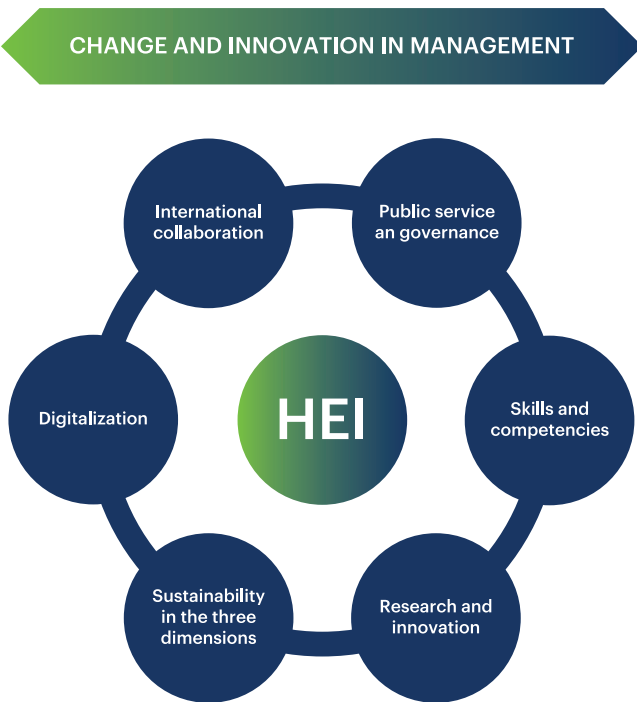
We have **six core themes** (public service and governance, skills and competencies, research and innovation, sustainability, digitalization and international collaboration) and one **"instrumental" topic** called **"change and innovation in management"**.

The instrumental topic is based on the premise that HEIs' management and structures do not always change or adopt innovation at the same pace as the developments and transformations to which they need to adapt (such as growth in institutional size, growth in terms of enrolments, growing digitalization, growing need for transdisciplinary teaching and research, and growing demands by society, which mean expanding missions). Higher education institutions sometimes have to cope with fast growth and fast change with rigid, slow, bureaucratic structures. How can we foster transformation and change from such management structures?

If we want to envision the university of the future, we need to think about change management, how innovation can be introduced as one of the core elements of the normal functioning of the institution, how transformational processes can be encouraged at organizational level,

how a more responsive, dynamic institution can be created, how cross-fertilization can be promoted between structures, how the classification and organization of universities can be rearranged or rethought in closed departments, and other aspects.

Some of the subtopics to be discussed are organizational change, innovation culture, moving beyond bureaucracy, and the structure and design of HEIs as institutions. The questions will be:

- Who should guide and implement transformation processes at HEIs?

- How can a culture of comprehensive organizational innovation be fostered?

- How can HEIs be transformed into more dynamic, flexible institutions?

The core themes are explained below.

1. Public service and governance. Re-thinking the nature of higher education institutions in the twenty-first century

This topic will depart from the premise that HEIs are essentially societal institutions (Benneworth et al., 2018). Since their inception, they have engaged with local actors and those from further afield to deliver their main missions, even though the nature and objectives of engagement have changed over time in line with social, political and economic contexts and needs.

The public nature of higher education is widely discussed in its many variables, but there is no worldwide agreement as there is for primary and secondary education. While some consider higher education to be a private good but acknowledge its public benefits in terms of economic growth and development, others view its publicness as "crucial infrastructures of critical and democratic debates" (Saito, 2020), among other perspectives. In recent years, authors have taken different approaches and have proposed new frameworks to think about the nature of higher education. A 2012 publication edited by Brenda Leibowitz proposed a distinction between higher education as a public good understood as a "public resource that brings material or intellectual benefits to individuals or society" and higher education for the public good, meaning "the idea that we can conduct the three roles of higher education… in such a way that we reflect upon who higher education is for, who it can serve and how" (Leibowitz, 2012). A few years earlier, Chambers and

Gopaul also stated that "whether higher education is a public good or is for the public good remains secondary to the general sense that higher education plays a significant role in addressing complex social problems" (Chambers and Gopaul, 2008 in Benneworth et al., 2018). Most importantly, the last UNESCO landmark report on education "Rethinking Education: Towards a Global Common Good?" (2015) proposed that "both knowledge and education be considered common goods", a new approach that "allows us to go beyond the influence of an individualistic socioeconomic theory inherent to the notion of 'public good'."

Following an analysis of a new higher education landscape based on growing massification and diversification, increasing commercialization and marketization, global rankings, etc., the topic will focus on the nature and role of higher education institutions in relation to the public and/or common good. The main objective will be to understand the implications for governance and re-think this governance of higher education institutions.

Some of the subtopics that will be discussed are:

- The expected social and public role of higher education institutions
- Balancing global and local demands
- Quality, transparency and accountability of HEIs
- Institutional autonomy and governance structure

Some of the questions that will guide the development of the topic are the following:

- Do we need to envision a new way to be accountable to society?
- How should higher education be funded?
- How should we balance global objectives with local and regional ones? Can we define a new social contract between higher education institutions and society that considers the local–global balance?
- How can an appropriate balance between the roles (cultural, social, economic and innovative) of higher education institutions be achieved and maintained?
- How can we promote more authentic engagement with all actors in society, especially those with fewer resources?
- Does enhancement of institutional autonomy lead to more institutional dynamics or institutional conservatism?

2. Skills and competencies. Human and professional skills. A humanist vision for a changing world

For the last three centuries, universities have been characterized by their monopoly on knowledge creation, distribution and certification (Prats, 2020). Universities prepared students for certain professions such as medicine or law and, under the umbrella of their exclusiveness, issued degrees that guaranteed stable employment. Paths were fixed and students faced their careers with job-for-life expectations.

Within a world in constant transformation, the job-for-life career pattern has been replaced by the need to deal with a rapidly changing and highly uncertain labour market. A degree is just a step in a lifelong sequence of training stages. Higher education institutions cannot limit themselves to generating and transmitting knowledge, a remit that is not exclusive of HEIs anymore. Instead, they must support personal and professional promotion and make knowledge bear fruit, also in the form of job insertion (Fitó, 2020). HEIs' commitment is not only to train competent professionals. Our global world requires responsible, critical citizens who can develop personally and professionally and meet the contemporary needs of society. As stated by UNESCO (2015), education is not only about gaining skills; it is also about the values of respect for life and human dignity, which are crucial for social harmony in a diverse world.

This topic will deal with how job-market changes affect teaching and learning. It will address the need for ensuring employment without disregarding the responsibility of higher education to enhance humanist profiles.

Changes in our globalized world have a deep impact on HEIs. The last decade has seen a growing number of degrees that did not exist before per se, and new job titles are being created at an astonishingly fast pace. The interaction between disciplines to solve problems defines most of the new jobs. On another front, there is a vast array of digital content at our disposal and students are compelled to learn from multiple sources. They have the opportunity to study in different countries, and in collaboration with industry and the third sector. The changing job market challenges students and professionals and makes lifelong learning a must. This instability reflects our current society, which has intensified demands on HEIs to train critical, committed citizens who can address current global challenges.

In this framework, the following should be focus points for HEIs:

- **Transdisciplinarity** (or antidisciplinarity) is crucial, that is, looking at issues rather than looking from disciplines (Prats, 2020).

- Learning to **distinguish relevant information** is more important than gathering it. Do we really need to continue to award degrees certifying knowledge that in many cases will be obsolete in a short time? Instead, should we provide a subscription or access to the knowledge HEIs offer (Prats, 2020)?

- **Human skills** should be a cross-cutting issue in the curriculum, including learning to approach problems from different perspectives, cultivating and exploiting creativity, participating in complex communication and fostering critical thinking.

- **Digital skills** should be a focus of attention. More widely, the digital strategy must become central in HEIs: the health crisis has accelerated a process that was already on the agenda. **Practical and engaged models**, linked to the needs of the market, should be another focus of attention.

- The global world demands a high level of **internationalization**: international mobility, project collaboration, etc. Students need to learn certain values included in the global citizenship concept and the local–global balance dimension.

- Dual learning, industrial doctorates and professionals who have a teaching profile are examples of **collaboration with industry and the third sector**. Higher education needs a constant dialogue with the other inhabitants of the ecosystem (Fitó, 2020).

- Students must gain the ability to manage their **lifelong learning**, be flexible enough to reorient their careers, and learn new contents and skills.

- **Humanities** play a major role in social, academic and scientific areas and help to promote a more equitable, responsible and democratic society (GUNi, 2019). Beyond equipping students with tools to successfully enter the job market, higher education is a crucial method to provide people with critical thinking, wisdom and an understanding of the world.

- **Personalized learning**, in which technology can play an important role, should be at the core of teaching methodologies.

Together, HEIs, government and policymakers, and the private sector (public–private partnerships) should create appropriate education for the future in the terms presented above.

Some of the subtopics that will appear in analyses and proposals will be **employability** issues in a complex, **highly changing job market**, the role of **humanities** in **global citizenship education**, and **innovation in teaching and learning** to address these challenges.

Some of the questions that guide this topic are the following:

- How can transdisciplinary learning be promoted at all levels?

- What is the role of degrees and certifications in a world where some knowledge becomes obsolete in a short time?

- Human and digital skills will be most in demand according to predictions by the main organizations. How should HEIs foster them in curricula?

- How can internationalization and global values be embedded in the core of higher education?

- How can teaching and learning be made more adaptable, flexible and personalized? Will digitalization help HEIs in this quest?

- How can the link between education and employment be strengthened, considering that education has to train citizens, not just employees?

3. Research and innovation. Towards open, ethical and multi-collaborative research and innovation?

In the knowledge society (also known as the information or network society), knowledge has become the most important element of our socioeconomic models. The globalization process has increased this conception and strengthened the importance of knowledge as one of the main elements of our society. Globalization has benefitted knowledge production and dissemination. The internationalization of higher education and research has enabled scientists and researchers from all over the globe to work together, co-produce knowledge and contribute from different perspectives. Globalization has also had a massive impact on higher education in terms of the number of enrolments and the amount of knowledge made available around the world. Improved access has been a key element and a growing trend in recent years. However, globalization has also increased inequalities (Altbach, 2016). It has enhanced the role of centres and

peripheries, increased the use of English as the language of research and instruction to the detriment of other languages, and fostered brain drain from developing to developed countries. Globalization has also promoted Western models, the quest for research-intensive universities and a model of excellence (praised in global rankings), to the detriment of other HEIs that perform important roles in their regional or local contexts but have been devoured by a system that has fostered uniformity. One key example is that the main scientific journals and the most innovative infrastructures are in Western centres. This also has consequences in terms of clustering and low distribution of funding streams.

Higher education institutions have been the main producers and transmitters of knowledge through basic and applied research throughout history. For many years, higher education institutions have sat at the top of the "ivory tower". They have been perceived as inaccessible and detached from the real world and its citizens. However, this trend is changing as a result of three main factors. First, we have seen a decrease in funding and stronger competition for funds in which new actors are being invited to participate. Second, there has been increased pressure in terms of accountability and demonstrating the impact of research. This impact can be measured in different ways, but applied research is being prioritized over fundamental research. This is further emphasized by the belief that "University research has the potential to help solve the grand challenges of the twenty-first century through local and global engagement" (Benneworth, 2017). Third, and of most interest to this report, is the democratization of research, which has had a major impact on the way research is performed and disseminated.

We must not forget that fundamental research is precisely this: fundamental. It cannot be put in a corner. However, higher education institutions have the opportunity to become more relevant and socially embedded through democratizing movements such as open access, responsible research and innovation (RRI), citizen science, participatory and community-based research, social innovation, and so on. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a key example of these trends towards more socially embedded, applied research to solve "grand challenges".

This topic will examine the opportunities that new approaches to research and innovation provide to HEIs and how HEIs should embed these approaches in their practices. It will cover the following areas:

- Centres and peripheries

- English as a language of research

- The ethical, environmental and social implications of research and innovation

- Fostering multi-stakeholder collaborations in research: the quadruple helix model, social innovation

- Research for "grand challenges" (SDGs, for example)

- Responsible research and innovation (RRI)

- Access: open science movements

- Participatory research movements such as action research, participatory research, community-based research and citizen science

- The importance of transdisciplinarity

- Some questions that guide this topic are:

- Given the aforementioned trends and movements, how should researchers be trained, and how should their capacities be strengthened?

- Is the democratisation of science through open science feasible? How can it be made effective by each HEI?

- How should HEIs foster transdisciplinary research?

- How should universities foster research that considers ethical and social factors?

- How should HEIs promote participatory and citizen research and science?

- How can modern-day public institutions maintain and promote commitment to social equality and the universal availability of all knowledge?

- What are the implications of the paradigm of responsible research and innovation (RRI) and how can it be approached on an institutional level?

4. Sustainability. Reinventing the role and place of HEIs for a sustainable future

Sustainability, understood in its three dimensions (economic, social and environmental), has become one of the key challenges of our times. The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has provided us with a guiding framework and pathway to transform our work

and reorient it towards the 17 SDGs. Higher education institutions have a central role in fulfilling this agenda. University leaders, academics, students, researchers and other higher education stakeholders must drive the process towards a sustainable future.

The 2030 Agenda has enormous potential for HEIs. HEIs can have a major impact through their global activities, partnerships, and the education of national and international students. Their potential influence on economic development, poverty reduction, health, technology and community building must be considered.

However, engaging HEIs involves major leadership challenges. It involves more than knowledge and commitment to the principles of sustainability, and requires changes that must deal with complexity, uncertainty, multiple stakeholders working together and ambiguous terminology.

Transforming HEIs towards the sustainability paradigm does not only mean adding new content to education programmes or teaching about sustainability in all subject areas. it also requires the deconstruction and questioning of social, economic, cultural and environmental assumptions that serve the status quo and are reproduced by current education systems.

As Tilbury argues, sustainability is not a checklist. It is a process that takes time and involves HEIs in the search for interdisciplinarity, participatory pedagogies, real world research and opening institutional boundaries so that the notion of sustainable communities extends beyond the walls of universities (Tilbury, 2011). According to her, "the transformation of universities towards sustainable development requires readjustment of their activities from a critical approach geared towards building a sustainable future."

Some of the subtopics that may appear in the sustainability topic are sustainability as an institution-wide approach, leadership challenges, sustainability as a process, the 2030 Agenda and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Some of the questions that may guide the approach to the topic are:

- How is the shift towards an institutional approach to sustainability to be led?

- How can HEIs foster debates on our social, economic and environmental assumptions?

- Government support for HEIs is vital for them to achieve a sustainable future. In a global context of authoritarian governments and detachment from institutions, how can HEIs overcome these difficulties?

- How can HEIs help their communities to take a critical approach; question social, economic, cultural and environmental assumptions; and redesign learning efforts?

5. ICTs and digitalization. The digital-human future: towards more inclusive, accessible HEIs

Digitalization has become the key word of our times. Technological advancements bring about new opportunities for improving the human condition. However, they also introduce new social challenges and the risk of creating divisions between those who have access to potential benefits and those who do not. The preconditions for leveraging the potential of technological developments vary among and within countries. This implies that with rapid change there is also a risk of exacerbating rather than bridging digital divides. Therefore, our mission is twofold: we need to consider the opportunities to explore and advocate and raise awareness of the main global challenges and risks related to digital transformation to close gaps, avoid biases and ensure an inclusive, fair, ethical, human-centred approach to digitalization.

There is no 'one size fits all' for digital transformation in higher education. HEIs vary in nature and scope and operate in very different contexts. However, technological advancements have an impact worldwide on citizens' lives, on how societies are developing, on the skills and competencies required to take part in society and, most importantly, on how to access information and knowledge. Although these transformations are taking place in different ways, at different paces and with different means and opportunities, one common factor to HEIs is that they all face the question of how to adapt and shape higher education in an increasingly digital world.

The wealth of digital educational resources has made new demands on higher education systems and institutions, including the development of innovative curricula, study programmes and alternative learning pathways and routes to higher learning. These are facilitated by online, distance and open education, blended learning delivery models

and short skills-based courses. The potential of online learning is enormous. It is building new paths to higher education and expanding lifelong learning opportunities. It also helps to reduce individual and institutional education costs by offering flexible alternatives.

This represents a key opportunity for content generators to improve quality and inclusion in higher education provision. Digital environments offer countries a strategic opportunity to help meet local needs and develop capacities related to them.

Some of the main subtopics to be discussed under this timely topic are access and inclusion, inequalities, the knowledge divide, institutional culture vs. technological advancements, digitalization and mobilities.

Some of the guiding questions framing the topic are:

- How can HEIs become more accessible and inclusive through digitalization?

- How should HEIs tackle the inequalities caused by the knowledge divide, lack of access to the internet and technological devices?

- Is digitalization going to reinforce other types of in-equalities between the haves and the have nots or will it promote real inclusion and access? How can HEIs make a difference?

- How can digitalization be included at institution level in terms of work processes?

6. International collaboration. Strengthening partnerships for our common goals

In the last decade, the phenomenon of globalization has led to an exponential increase in the internationalization of higher education and cooperation among higher education institutions, academics, researchers and even students and external stakeholders. Although higher education policy is mostly shaped at national level, the nation-state's predominance in governing higher education is dwindling in the face of increasing interdependence and collaboration among higher education institutions around the globe. Along with these cooperative dynamics, the social, economic and cultural role of higher education institutions is being reappraised, and their configuration changed within the supranational framework.

Regional and global networks and international associations are having a vital effect on higher education institutions and their communities. They foster and help to build partnerships, co-produce and share knowledge from regions and cultures, share best practices, steer capacity building and guide changes and transformations among HEIs around the world. In the last few years, we have seen a willingness to cooperate, share and connect, despite some populist and narrow-minded nationalist movements. As the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development states, there is a need to establish multi-stakeholder partnerships to reach our common goals.

There are many instances of ground-breaking collabora-tions between HEIs seeking to imagine new models of HEIs that are more collaborative, inclusive, mobile and acces-sible, among many other characteristics. The European Universities Initiative is a highly illustrative example.

However, in parallel to these interesting trends and initiatives are others in the international arena such as attacks or restrictions on academic freedom, marketization and managerialization, rising competition among HEIs, the quest for excellence based on global rankings, the star-model of the "research university", homogenization of HEIs and difficult balances between autonomy and accountability.

We need to promote a culture of international collabo-ration and cooperation; foster the open transmission of knowledge, multi-stakeholder partnerships and knowled-ge and science diplomacy; and strengthen networks and associations.

Some of the subtopics to address are:

- International collaboration and cooperation
- HEIs reimagining new international collaborative models
- Knowledge and scientific diplomacy
- Free flows of knowledge
- The role of global/international networks, associations and organizations

Some of the questions that guide the development of the topic are:

- How can we strengthen the role of regional, international and global higher education networks and associations?
- In a world where global rankings tend to dominate at international scale, how can we overcome this competitive vision and favour a culture of collaboration and cooperation between HEIs?
- How can HEIs strengthen the work of international and global social movements?
- How can HEIs foster respect and promotion of human rights, democracy and academic freedom?

Part III – Regional Approaches

Although we live in a globalized, interconnected world, where global and international higher education play a key role, we also understand that each region has certain patterns that should be tackled from a regional approach. Higher education institutions around the world have many similarities, but also frequently differ in terms of purposes, organizational cultures, goals or strategies. Nevertheless, certain characteristics are shared in regional higher education systems. What do the regions of our world think higher education institutions should be like in the future?

In this part, we address the real future of HEIs in the regions of the world: Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, Europe, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and Oceania. We will commission experts from each of these regions and include chapters on each one. The contents will draw on local expert networks and build on the knowledge and vision they have developed. Synergies will be established with the Union for the Mediterranean, the European University Association, the Association of Arab Universities, the Association of African Universities, and others. The regional chapter on Latin

America and the Caribbean will be coordinated by the presidency of the GUNi regional office, based in Mexico. Students and/or recent graduates from each of the regions will be invited to contribute, to open up the perspective to young voices.

4.6. How will the special issue be developed?

GUNi aims to prepare this report through a participatory process. This will involve consultations and debates with members and experts from inside and outside the sector (the third sector, NGOs and businesses, among others) to obtain the widest vision and scope, and ensure relevance.

Most importantly, GUNi will engage its members by inviting them to reflect on the main questions framing the report and will organize specific consultations to finalize matters.

GUNi will organize online consultations with international and renowned experts in the field and beyond. The first round of online consultations will be held in November 2020.

GUNi will actively engage its regional office in Latin America and the Caribbean and will encourage members to participate and give their thoughts on the issue.

GUNi will seek advice and inspiration, build on existing and ongoing initiatives on the same topic, and foster synergies with their promoters. It will also promote partnerships with regional and global networks.

GUNi will include diversity in terms of regional inclusion, expertise and gender.

Finally, our aim is for this report to serve as a starting point for a long-term strategic area. GUNi intends to follow up on the report's main findings and premises, in line with those of the 3rd World Conference on Higher Education.

5. Final considerations

To summarize, we might say that we are at a watershed moment for higher education institutions. We are going through a period of abrupt transformations, high interconnection, a rise in digitalization and new technological and scientific developments. At the same time, there is increasing distrust in democracy, public institutions and even science. We are currently going through a global pandemic that has had and will have countless effects on our societies, our lives, and our economies.

In this context, and after over 10 years, UNESCO will be inviting the global higher education community to the 3rd World Conference on Higher Education in mid-2022 in Barcelona, in partnership with GUNi.

In this context too, GUNi will launch an International Call for Action (2022–2025): "Rethinking HEIs for Sustainable and Inclusive Societies" to open up the debate, and think collaboratively about the nature, role and organization of HEIs towards 2030. The special issue of the GUNi World Report will be the stepping stone to the more ambitious GUNi initiative.

GUNi was created to follow up on the main decisions of the 1st World Conference on Higher Education. We have been working for over 20 years to strengthen the role of higher education in society and to help higher education institutions to change their focuses. We believe that GUNi can make a key contribution to the next decade, leading up to 2030 and beyond.

6. References

Altbach, P.G. (2016). *Global perspectives on higher education*. Johns Hopkins University Press

Altbach, P.G., Reisberg, L., and Rumbley, L.E. (2009). Trends in global higher education: Tracking an academic revolution. UNESCO 2009 World Conference on Higher Education, Paris, 5–8 July 2009

Benneworth, P., Ćulum, B. Farnell, T., Kaiser, F., Seeber, M., Šćukanec, N., Vossensteyn, H., & Westerheijden, D. (2018). *Mapping and Critical Synthesis of Current State-of-the-Art on Community Engagement in Higher Education*. Zagreb: Institute for the Development of Education.

Chambers, T. and Gopaul, B. (2008). Decoding the Public Good of Higher Education. Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 12(4) 59-91.

Fitó, À. (2020). Por una ciudadanía crítica, responsable y ocupada. *ElDiario.es*, 5 July 2020

Gazzola, A. (2010). GUNi Talks. Retrieved from http://www.guninetwork.org/guni-talks/ana-lucia-gazzola

GUNi. (2019). *Humanities and higher education: Synergies between science, technology and humanities. Higher Education in the World 7*. Barcelona, GUNi

Leibowitz, B. (2012). *Higher Education for the Public Good: views from the South*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books

Pedró, F. (2020). UNESCO's framework for the day after COVID-19 in higher education. GUNi, Barcelona, 2020

Prats, X. (2020). The future of higher education. Fixing the future. Education Edition. Atlas of the Future. 3 December 2020 (webinar)

Quinteiro Goris, J.A. (2020). The Internationalisation of higher education: Until when do we leave measurements? Retrieved from https://www.iesalc.unesco.org/en/2020/05/08/the-internationalization-of-higher-education-until-when-do-we-leave-measurements/

Saito, H. (2020) The Transnational Frontiers of Japanese Education. p.11

THE World University Rankings. (2020). How Covid-19 is improving university governance. Retrieved from https://www.timeshighereducation.com/hub/pwc/p/how-covid-19-improving-university-governance

Tilbury, D. (2011). Higher education for sustainability: A global overview of commitment and progress in GUNi. *HEIW4 Higher education's commitment to sustainability: From understanding to action*. Pp. 18–28. Retrieved from http://www.guninetwork.org/publication/higher-education-sustainability-global-overview-commitment-and-progress

UNESCO. (2015). *Rethinking education. Towards a global common good?* Paris, UNESCO. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232555

UNESCO. (2017). *Rendir cuentas en el ámbito de la educación: cumplir nuestros compromisos; Informe de seguimiento de la educación en el mundo 2017/8*. Retrieved from https://educacionmundialblog.wordpress.com/2018/01/24/corporaciones-en-el-sector-educativo-demasiado-grandes-para-rendir-cuentas/ and https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000261016

UNESCO. (2018). *Digital Credentialing – Implications for the recognition of learning across borders*. Paris: UNESCO. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000264428

UNESCO. (2018). UNESCO at UNGA: Ensuring access to higher education for refugees. Retrieved from https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-unga-ensuring-access-higher-education-refugees

UNESCO (2019). UNESCO pledges its renewed support for refugees' education at Global Refugee Forum. Retrieved from https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-pledges-its-renewed-support-refugees-education-global-refugee-forum