Equitable Access to Higher Education – Are we making progress?

Dr. Graeme Atherton, Director National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) UK, and World Access to Higher Education Day (WAHED)

My work

- Leading National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) in the UK

- Professional organisation for access to higher education with over 100 universities as members offering professional development, networking and research & advocacy – www.educationopportunities.co.uk.

- Convening World Access to Higher Education Day (WAHED)

- Research in equitable access and success globally

Key issues

- Looking at progress and drivers in 'equitable access'

- Availability and generation of data

- Impact of COVID-19

- Emerging themes from the 3rd World Access to Higher Education Day in November 2020
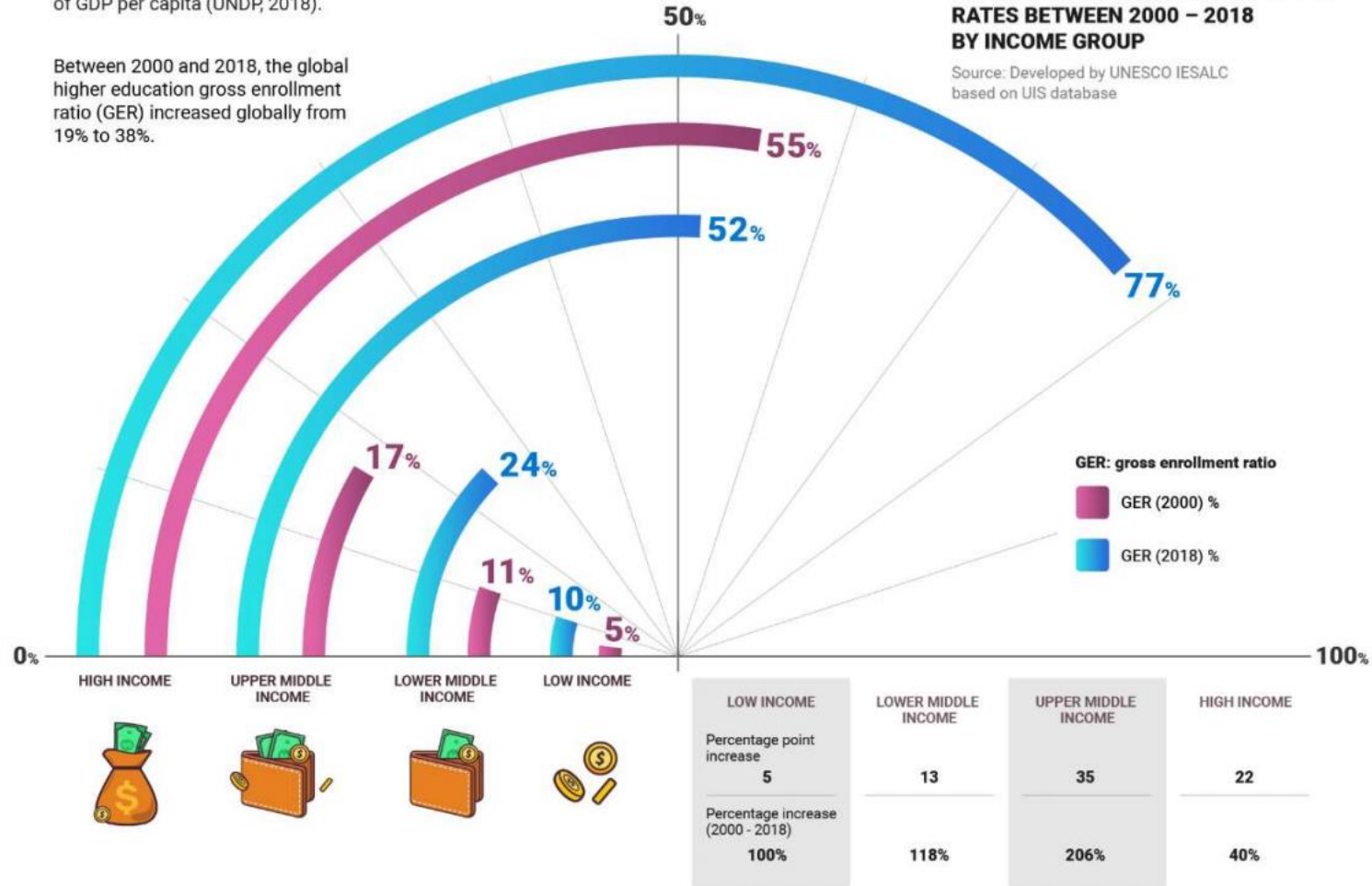
Higher education remains out of reach for many of the world´s poorest people

There seems to be a strong relationship between gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and tertiary gross enrollment ratio (GER). An increase in university enrollment tends to coincide with the rise of GDP per capita (UNDP, 2018).

Between 2000 and 2018, the global higher education gross enrollment ratio (GER) increased globally from 19% to 38%.

CHANGE IN TERTIARY PARTICIPATION RATES BETWEEN 2000 – 2018 BY INCOME GROUP

Source: Developed by UNESCO IESALC based on UIS database

GER: gross enrollment ratio
- GER (2000) %
- GER (2018) %

50%
55%
52%
77%
17%
24%
11%
10%
5%
0%
100%

HIGH INCOME | UPPER MIDDLE INCOME | LOWER MIDDLE INCOME | LOW INCOME

	LOW INCOME	LOWER MIDDLE INCOME	UPPER MIDDLE INCOME	HIGH INCOME
Percentage point increase	5	13	35	22
Percentage increase (2000 - 2018)	100%	118%	206%	40%

Source: Data from UIS database

UNESCO IESALC (2020) Towards universal access to higher education: international trends

Beneficiaries in access to higher education by gender: 2000-2018

Between 2000-2018 the male GER increased from 19% to 36%, while that for females went from 19% to 41%.

4% of COUNTRIES

→ **In tertiary education,** only 4% of countries have achieved gender parity.

CAPTION

- Europe and North America
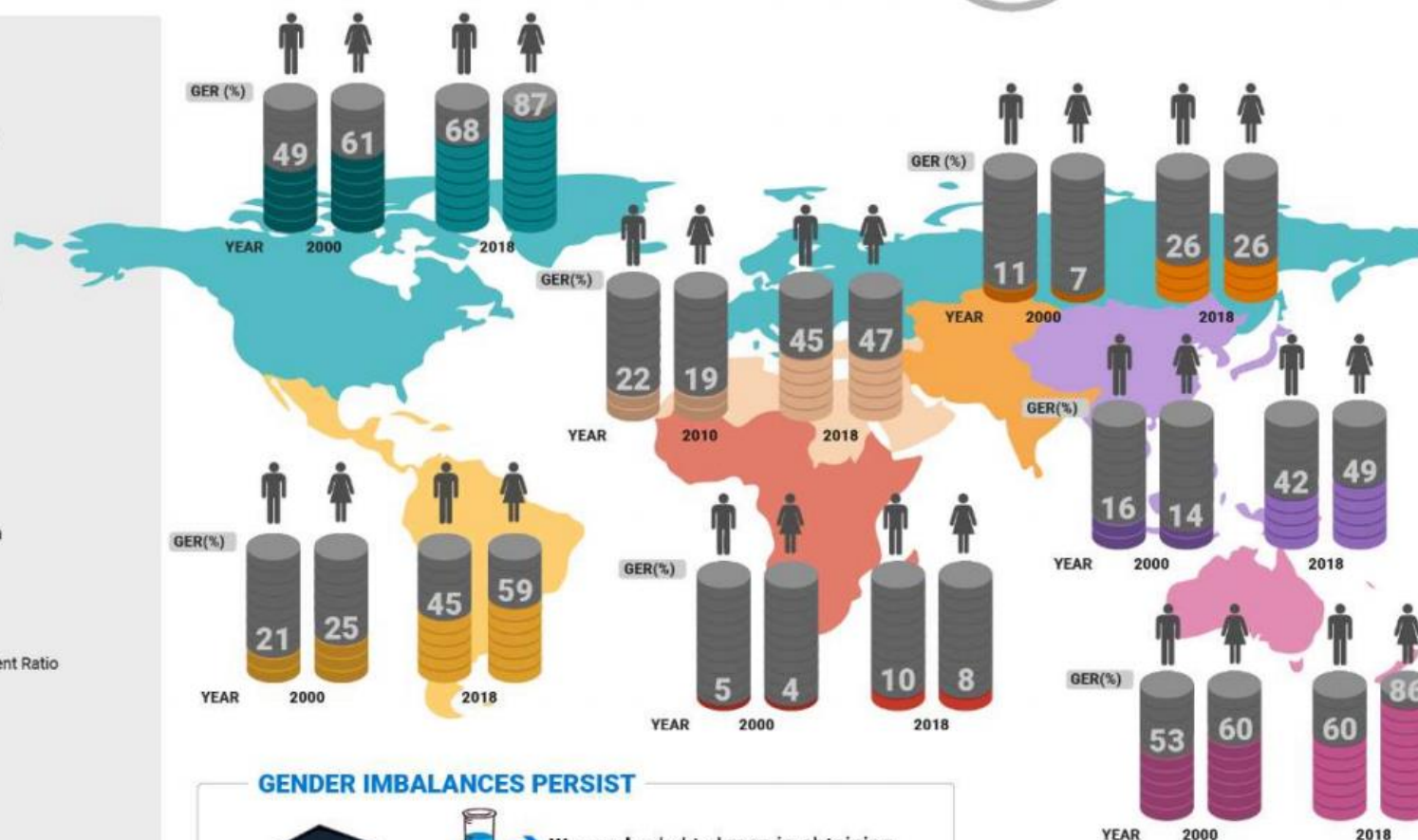- Sub-Saharan Africa
- Latin America and Caribbean
- North Africa and West Asia
- Central and South Asia
- East and South-east Asia
- Oceania

GER = Gross Enrollment Ratio

Europe and North America
GER (%)
YEAR 2000: 49 / 61
2018: 68 / 87

North Africa and West Asia
GER (%)
YEAR 2010: 22 / 19
2018: 45 / 47

Central and South Asia
GER (%)
YEAR 2000: 11 / 7
2018: 26 / 26

Latin America and Caribbean
GER(%)
YEAR 2000: 21 / 25
2018: 45 / 59

Sub-Saharan Africa
GER(%)
YEAR 2000: 5 / 4
2018: 10 / 8

East and South-east Asia
GER(%)
YEAR 2000: 16 / 14
2018: 42 / 49

Oceania
GER(%)
YEAR 2000: 53 / 60
2018: 60 / 86

GENDER IMBALANCES PERSIST

→ **Women lag** behind men in obtaining degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

Charting Equity in Higher Education: Drawing the Global Access Map

Graeme Atherton

Constantino Dumangane

Geoff Whitty

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE AUSTRALIA

centre of excellence for equity in higher education

Pearson

The Access Map Study

- Survey of data collection practices in 50 countries

- Overview of data on access to higher education by social background from World Bank, UNESCO, Eurostudent & OECD

- Higher Education defined as UNESCO (International Standard Classification of Education [ISCED] Level 6)

- Study can be found at: https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/corporate/global/pearson-dot-com/files/innovation/Charting-Equity_WEB.pdf

Fifty participating countries

Afghanistan	Egypt	Latvia	Russian Federation
Australia	Estonia	Lithuania	Rwanda
Austria	Ethiopia	Malaysia	Scotland
Botswana	Finland	Mexico	Serbia
Brazil	France	Netherlands	South Africa
Bulgaria	Germany	New Zealand	South Korea
Canada	Ghana	Nigeria	Sweden
Chile	India	Northern Ireland	Switzerland
China	Indonesia	Pakistan	Turkey
Colombia	Iraq	Philippines	United States
Croatia	Ireland	Portugal	Wales
Denmark	Israel	Puerto Rico	
England	Kenya	Qatar	

Table 1: Number of survey countries where data are collected nationally and/or regionally on participation by:

Gender	47
Socio-economic background	36
Learners from rural backgrounds	33
Older or mature learners	33
People with refugee status	32
Disability	31
Ethnicity	29
People who speak a particular language	20
Indigenous groups	16
Religion	14
Other groups under-represented in HE	14

Key Findings

1. Available data suggest that inequalities in access to HE are pervasive

2. The data have important limitations

3. Comparisons across countries are important but difficult

4. Access means more than entry and participation

5. Political will and resourcing shapes data collection

A Global Equity Data Charter for Higher Education

● **PRELIMINARY STEPS** ● **BROADER INITIATIVES** ● **NEW ENTITIES**

Governments should:

● Make all the data they collect on participation in HE by social background available in an open access form as soon as possible after it is collected.

● Integrate data collection on who participates in HE by social background in their national statistical strategies, and include questions that look at these issues in national and regional social censuses.

● Make providing information on the social background of student intakes a statutory requirement of the license to operate and deliver HE for providers from both the public and private sectors.

● Set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) targets for increasing levels of entry among groups from at least four different measures of social background, and invest in appropriate systems of data collection to measure progress against these targets.

● Form a body that operates at arm's-length from government and has responsibility for the collection and analysis of data on HE participation.

● Support this body to produce an annual report that is presented publicly to national law-makers. This should summarise the data available on higher education participation by social background, and the progress being made in this area.

International organisations should:

● Work together to form a global equity data working group that brings together agencies and leading researchers across countries to strengthen data collection policy and practice. This would provide a stronger basis for comparative analysis.

● Use (and develop) tools like the Global Access Data Map and proposed Global Equity Index to track progress, and update them on a regular basis to publicise the progress made.

● Support the formation of a global centre for HE access and equity data collection and analysis that will support improvements in data collection across the learner journey.

Higher Education providers should:

● Work with governments, their representative bodies and independently to put strategies in place to collect information on their intakes – and their progression and outcomes – by social background.

● Put in place governance structures to make sure that data on the participation, success and progression of learners by social background are systematically monitored and acted on.

● Work with governments and external agencies to make sure that data on access, participation, success and progression of learners by social background are included in HE ranking systems.

Global Equity Index

Assumed drivers of HE participation

Global equity index scores derived from:	Country wealth (GDP)	Participation in HE (GER tertiary)	Extent of inequality (GINI index value)
OECD + gender datasets	-0.1193	0.4066	-0.3785
Eurostudent + gender datasets	0.2779	-0.1731	-0.0552
SEDLAC + gender datasets	-0.0673	0.0229	-0.1395
World Bank + gender datasets	-0.0498	-0.1396	0.0641

Implications for policy

Our preliminary analysis suggests that relying solely on broad changes to the macro policy environment (expanding HE systems, growing economies, or reducing inequalities in income distribution) to address inequalities in HE access may not be enough. Although expanding our HE systems is likely to increase the numbers of learners from different groups who can participate, it will not necessarily increase the relative chances of under-represented groups participating. Instead, inequality in HE access is a problem that appears to need specialist attention.

University Access, Student Success and COVID-19 in a Global Context

THE SUTTON TRUST

Dr Graeme Atherton

https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Covid-and-Global-University-Access.pdf

Summary

- Survey of 45 countries – 24 from Asia and South America, 5 from Africa, 2 North America, 14 Europe

- Undertaken from August – October 2020

- Looking at impact of COVID-19 on access to higher education for those from low income and marginalised backgrounds and the success of these students when in higher education

Key Findings

- Of the countries surveyed, in 80% of cases university admissions had been disrupted. Where admission was disrupted in 75% of cases this was via some form of cancellation of examinations.

- In 60% of countries some form of additional financial support in place for low income students, usually as grants or reduced tuition fees.

- Of the 21 countries in the study who are members of the OECD, only 2 were not providing any additional financial support such students could benefit from.

- In 80% of countries courses have been put online as a result of the pandemic, but evidence of specific provision for low income students is low.

"It needs to be 'normal' that all students have access to devices and data, as well as basic training in computer literacy and learning online. It is probable that 'blended learning' is going to become dominant, so it is critical that marginalised students' skills in developing their own learning programmes and their competence to cope with online learning is developed."

" The focus should be on addressing technological gaps, guaranteeing access to the internet and computer equipment to very low cost (preferably free for Students at the expense of the State), for vulnerable populations, marginalised groups, rural areas, etc. We need to declare Internet access as a Fundamental Right of People. "

Box 1: California Higher Education Recovery with Equity Taskforce[10]

The Recovery with Equity Taskforce was established by Governor Gavin Newsom's Senior Policy Advisor for Higher Education, Dr. Lande Ajose, in consultation with the Governor's Council on Post-Secondary Education. The Recovery with Equity Taskforce is made up of state and national experts in higher education equity and innovation and is chaired by Dr. Ajose. It was established in August 2020.

The Taskforce was created to work collaboratively to produce a roadmap for the state's education leaders, government, and philanthropic institutions to ensure that California's public post-secondary institutions recover from the impacts of COVID-19 more integrated, equitable, and resilient than before — and more aligned with the economic needs of the state. The Taskforce's recommendations will be delivered by the end of 2020 to the Council and the Governor, and will outline specific actions that can be taken in the mid- and long-term.
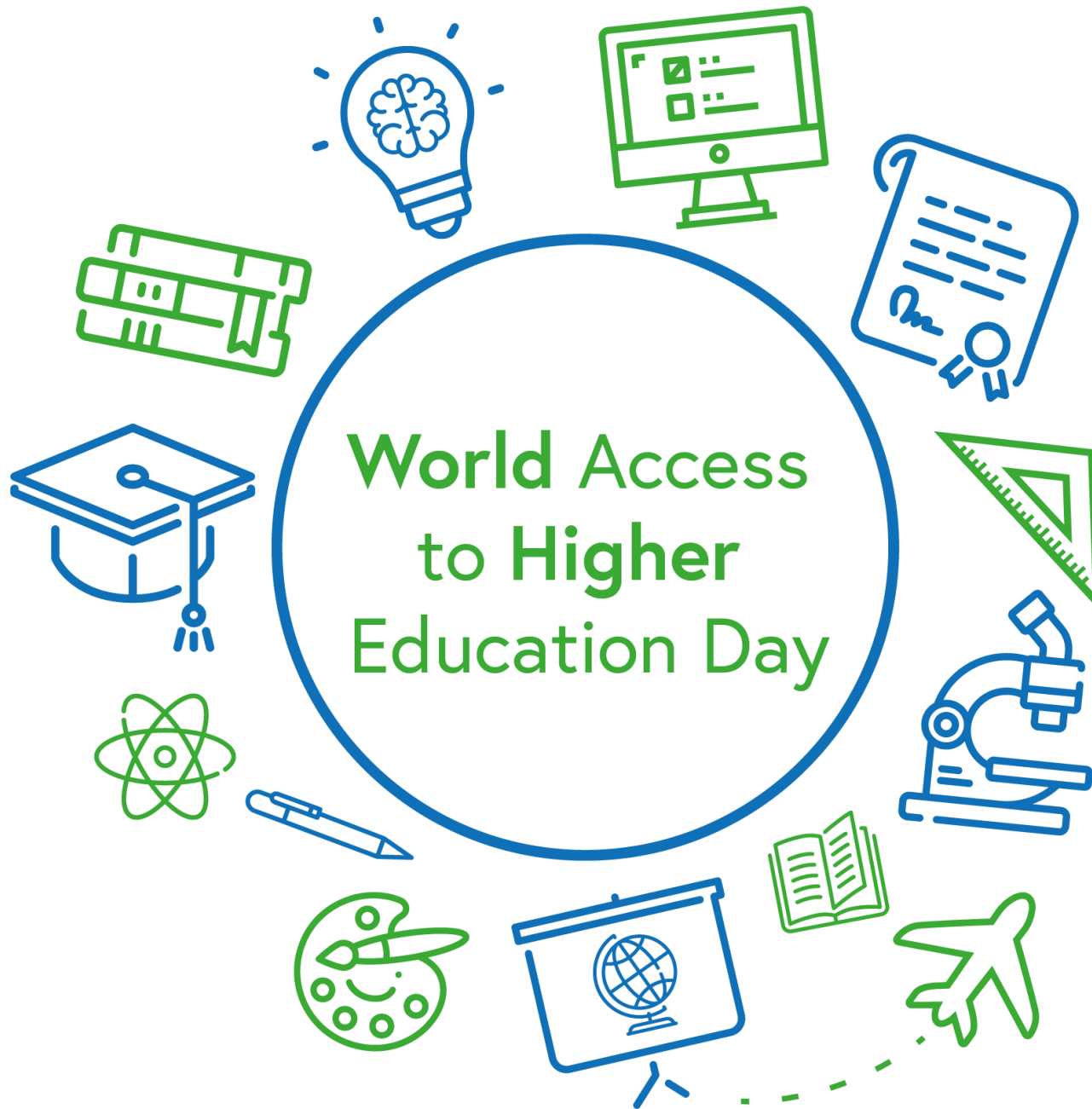
What is WAHED?

- Global day to focus attention on inequalities in access/success in higher education by social background and act as a catalyst for local, regional and national action – www.worldaccesshe.com

- 3rd WAHED 17th November 2020

- 30 events in different countries led by universities and others

- Global Equity Policy Map

- WAHED24 – 6 online conferences (one in each continent) with over 500 attendees from 80 countries

- 4 new research reports released - https://worldaccesshe.com/events/world-access-to-higher-education-day-global-conference-series/

- To find out more about WAHED 2020 please go to - https://www.universityworldnews.com/special-report.php?publication=global&report=WAHED

Key themes emerging WAHED24

- Pandemic leading to permanent shift to online learning to some extent
- Data shows enrolment increasing overall but gaps between groups widening
- Importance of statutory policies – laws guaranteeing progression or quota
- Extent of digital divide and it's impact on reversing progress in access e.g. female students in Africa pulled back into housekeeping/caring
- Policy commitments from governments patchy e.g. Only 6 out of 39 European countries have national targets in place to enhance participation of underrepresented groups in HE, with another 9 countries having targets in place which are not being followed.

Summary

- Relative differences in participation between groups may be widening – even if absolute increases are occurring

- Data collection systems need to be improved

- Access and success require specific focus

- Digital divides may exacerbate inequality

- Policy commitment improving nationally (?) but much room for improvement (new research from WAHED 2021 updating policy map with 40 countries from Europe/Asia)

- Cross sector/organisational/country collaboration has crucial role

To follow up on the presentation or other issues please contact me on:

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