

## Standard Policy Brief Template

Under the UNESCO World Higher Education Conference (WHEC2022)

[Section for Higher Education](#) | Division for Education 2030

Type: One organisation  | Alliance

### TITLE: Plan E for Education

Author:

Heller, Richard, Professor, Peoples-praxis

Date 15/03/2022

### Abstract

In order to help meet SDG 4.3 'By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university' this proposal is to create a 'PlanE for Education'. This would be similar to initiatives such as PlanS that require publicly funded research to be published in open access journals or platforms. Under PlanE for Education, at least some of the educational resources generated in universities using public money would be made freely available for sharing and use by others.

Peoples-praxis (UK Charity Commission registration number 1197471)

## **Content**

Abstract1

Content3

Acronyms3

Introduction4

### **Background to the policy proposal4**

University funding4

Corporatisation of universities and paywalls4

### **PlanS as a model5**

#### **PlanE for Education5**

Previous UNESCO recommendation5

The rationale for PlanE **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**

Some delivery details6

References6

8

## **Acronyms**

PlanE

PlanS

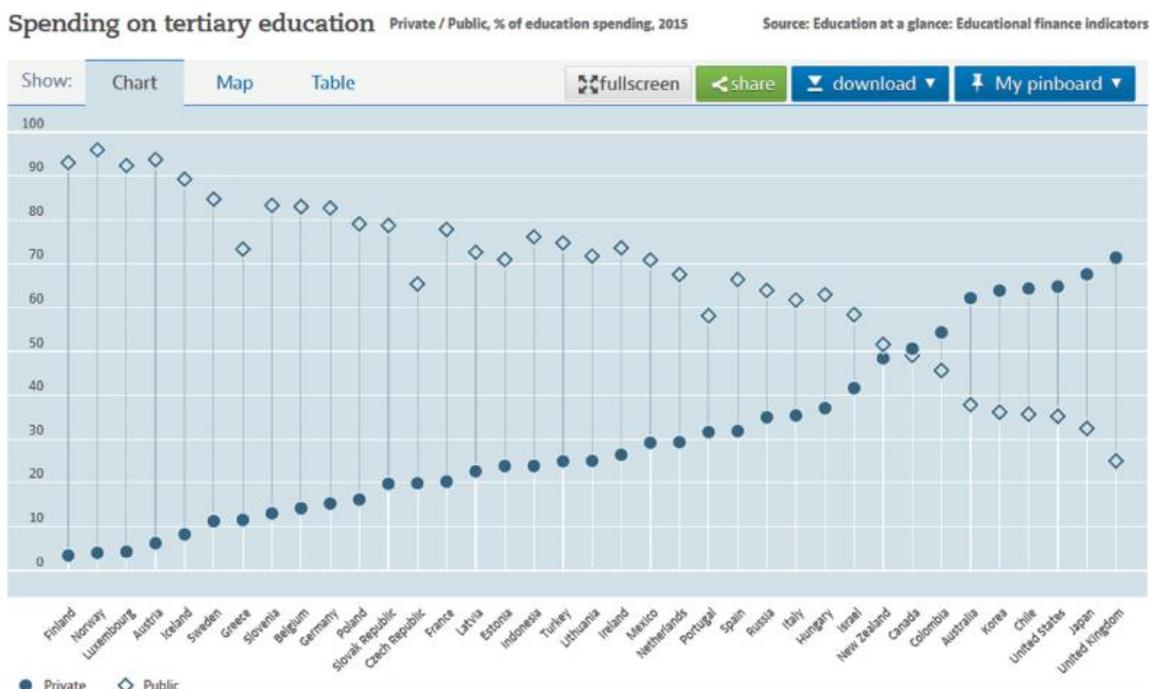
## Introduction

In order to help meet SDG 4.3 ‘By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university’ this proposal is create a ‘PlanE for Education’. In PlanE for Education at least some of the educational resources generated in universities using public money would be made freely available for sharing. The proposal was first made in The Distributed University for Sustainable Higher Education <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-16-6506-6> on which this policy brief relies.

## Background to the policy proposal

### University funding

Although universities have to generate some of their own finances, and in many countries students pay at least a portion of the costs of their education, public money subsidises higher education in most countries as a public good. The figure below from the OECD report ‘Spending on tertiary education’ (OECD 2021) shows the variation among OECD countries, where in some countries the majority of funding is public money, and in others private funding contributes a larger proportion than from the public purse.



### Corporatisation of universities and paywalls

The corporatisation of universities and the adoption of the competitive business model has resulted in higher education being sequestered behind massive ‘paywalls’. Is it appropriate that public money should be spent on producing and delivering education that is not made freely available but is being used for competitive advantage by the universities that receive it? This discussion has been had over the years in relation to open publishing, and it is possible to use a Creative Commons licence <https://creativecommons.org/> to publish your work so that it

can be used by others. A number of academic journals publish their articles using this kind of licence—and then the author, rather than the reader, has to pay the costs of producing and distributing the journal. We offer a practical method to extend this concept from publication in journals and books, to educational materials produced by universities.

### PlanS as a model

A good model on which to base this is Plan S, “an initiative for Open Access publishing that was launched in September 2018. The plan is supported by cOAlition S, an international consortium of research funders. Plan S requires that, from 2021, scientific publications that result from research funded by public grants must be published in compliant Open Access journals or platforms” (<https://www.coalition-s.org/>).

Although there have been some delays in the implementation of Plan S (<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-01717-2>), there is widespread global support for the notion that publicly funded research should be freely available and not hidden behind paywalls. There are already many examples of publications of public importance being made freely available—many of the early publications relating to the Covid-19 pandemic have been published as open access for the public good.

### PlanE for Education

#### Previous UNESCO recommendation

The UNESCO recommendation from 2019 encourages Member States to consider “*developing and implementing policies and/or regulatory frameworks which encourage that educational resources developed with public funds be openly licensed or dedicated to the public domain as appropriate, and allocating financial and human resources for the implementation and evaluation of policies*” (<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370936>).

#### The rationale for PlanE

This proposal is to create something similar to PanS, but for higher education—‘Plan E for Education’ through open online access.

There are examples of universities putting their materials online for anyone to access—with MIT an early leader in the field, launching the OpenCourseWare initiative in 2002 with 50 of their courses published freely online, now extending to all their courses (<https://ocw.mit.edu/about/milestones/>). The Johns Hopkins School of Public Health has a wonderful set of its courses freely available online to others. Despite the promise of MOOCs, they are not taking over the educational world or meeting global capacity building needs—they are mainly undertaken by those in high income countries and those who already have a higher degree.

The idea behind Plan E is to question the rationale for educational resources, produced in whole or in part through government funding, playing into the competitive business model of the higher educational sector. Why are these publicly funded educational resources not be made freely available to those who might benefit?

There are examples of organisations who utilise open access educational materials making their higher education courses free or at low cost. These include Peoples-uni where volunteers translate available Open Educational Resources into programmes and courses for academic credit and continuing professional development (Heller et al). These programmes aim to build

capacity in low resource settings, where considerable benefit can be obtained by individuals and their communities through education which they would otherwise be unable to access.

Increasing access to high quality education materials produced by universities would allow their use both by individual autodidacts, as well as by organisations who would create other educational contexts for their use—such as Peoples-uni. Other organisations might also develop innovative delivery methods to contextualise open educational materials once such access was available. Thus high quality education, produced through public funding, can be democratised and spread where it is needed.

### Some delivery details

Plan E would have three potential delivery strands—students access materials through the university that has produced them as per current practice, individual students could access materials for their own learning, and third party organisations can contextualise and deliver them in innovative ways.

In tandem with creating this access, we would suggest an accreditation system that would carry the accreditation afforded within the university who produced the material when it is offered outside the creating institution. This is more complex, but important for the originating university to be comfortable that the material is used appropriately. There could even be a staging post, where access is provided only to those who can provide an appropriate context for its use.

Measurable goals or targets would be for all universities that receive public funding to make at least 10% of its offerings available online in this way within the next three years. The choice of materials would be up to the institution itself, but material of major global public interest should be prioritised. We would request that governments, state and national, as well as universities sign up to this. A philanthropic organisation would be identified to provide minimal infrastructure funding to allow an organisation, similar to cOALition S for science publication, to oversee the initiative, provide a repository or inventory of resources and consider accreditation.

### References

Section 3.11 Plan E for Education—Increasing Online Public Access to Higher Education. In *The Distributed University for Sustainable Higher Education*. Springer, 2022. [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-16-6506-6\\_3#Sec11](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-16-6506-6_3#Sec11)

Heller RF, Strobl J, Madhok R. Online education for public health capacity building in low- to middle-income countries: the peoples-uni experience. *IRRODL* 2019a;20(1). <http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/3927>

OECD. Spending on tertiary education. 2021 (data from 2015) <https://data.oecd.org/eduresource/spending-on-tertiary-education.htm>Draft

Recommendation on Open Educational Resources. UNESCO 2017. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370936>

Creative Commons licence <https://creativecommons.org/>

MIT Open Courseware <https://ocw.mit.edu/about/milestones/>

cOAlition S. <https://www.coalition-s.org/>

Ambitious open-access Plan S delayed to let research community adapt. Nature.  
<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-01717-2>

**Annexes**

**Annex 1**

**Annex 2**