"Open and distance education is one strategy that enables economic, social, political, and digital justice"
– ICDE Presidents' Forum 2021

ICDE GLOBAL ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN FOR OPEN, FLEXIBLE AND DISTANCE LEARNING

ADVOCATE AT A NATIONAL LEVEL

WHAT IS ADVOCACY AT A NATIONAL LEVEL?

Advocating at the national level entails influencing the policymaking process of your country to bring about progress. It involves reaching out to members of parliament, ministries of education, departments for innovation, technology, health, and jobs, program directors, and other related policymakers in order to persuade governments to commit to specific goals for bringing access to quality, open, flexible and distance learning to all. It requires first determining who the decision-makers are, how the policy cycle functions, and how to approach policymakers in your region, before putting together a strategy with clear objectives and actions. It requires a thorough understanding of the facts as well as the ability to construct persuasive arguments in favor of your objectives. Advocacy campaigns can evolve from a local to a national level, where the opinions and agendas of civil society and local politicians can influence national officials and authoritative forces at a higher level.

WHY ADVOCATE FOR QUALITY OPEN, FLEXIBLE AND DISTANCE LEARNING AT A NATIONAL LEVEL?

Advocating at a national level can influence policymakers and stakeholders to prioritise, promote and advance open, flexible and distance education as an important part of their national education system. Advocacy at this level may also seek to influence resource allocation, including the amount of the national budget being spent on for example appropriate infrastructure, systems supporting learning activities in both offline and online learning environments and necessary competency development for teachers and educational leaders. Persistent pressure from influential stakeholders e.g. non governmental organisations (NGOs), local governments, and communities to ensure equal and equitable access to education through Open, Flexible and Distance Learning, increases the chance of national governments paying attention to the issue and may lead to (the allocation of) increased budgets, which in turn may drive increased human resources and public awareness. Policymakers at the national level can be urged to adopt significant benchmarks for quality Open, Flexible and Distance Education in order to create a real difference to close the education gaps and to make commitments to monitor and measure appropriate targets.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Achieving inclusive and quality education for all reaffirms the belief that education is one of the most powerful and proven vehicles for sustainable development. This goal ensures that all girls and boys complete free primary and secondary schooling by 2030. It also aims to provide equal access to affordable vocational training, to eliminate gender and wealth disparities, and achieve universal access to a quality higher education.

Source: United Nations Development Programme, 2021.

THE ISSUE YOU WANT TO CHANGE

It is crucial that you research and maintain a comprehensive up-to-date understanding of your specific issue and challenges. You and your peers will have an understanding of the access to and impact of Open, Flexible and Distance education, or the lack of such in your communities. It is important that you document this. Research should include identifying stakeholders who are directly involved in policy processes related to Open, Flexible and Distance education in your country. This information is essential before starting a successful advocacy campaign. It is advisable to make use of the materials that ICDE has available. After completing the background research, the next step is to gather specific information on the priorities of your government in national education and the role of OFDL, and identify specific, evidence-based changes with a clear plan on how these can be achieved with your organisation's or institution's involvement. UNESCO has numerous policy papers and reports which can be used to support your advocacy campaign and are readily available online. In particular, UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring reports, are an important resource. The 2020 Report: Inclusion and Education - ALL MEANS ALL , assesses progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on education and its ten targets, as well as other related education targets in the SDG agenda. A complementary new online platform, Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER), prepared by the GEM Report, has been launched describing countries' laws and policies on inclusion and education.

You can use data on your country from this report, database, monitoring tool and platform to support your advocacy campaign promoting Open, Flexible and Distance Learning as part of the solution.

HOW DO YOU ADVOCATE?

The difference between a successful and unsuccessful advocacy campaigns is often not how worthy the cause is, but rather how strong your plan is. You must ensure that your strategy is sound, that you have chosen the right target audience, and that you use the right methods to reach your audience. A strong advocacy plan should include the following:

- **Goal(s)** – What exactly do you want to change?
- **Targets and strategies** for achieving the goal – Who do you need to influence? How are you going to influence them?
- **Action plan** – Who will do what, when, how and why?
- **Measurable objectives** – How will you measure success qualitatively and quantitatively?
- **Progress monitoring and evaluation** – How will you know if your plan is on track?

THE ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNING CYCLE
Source: Bond, United Kingdom

Effective advocacy is based on the message that you are delivering, how you deliver that message, and the audience you intend to reach. How you frame the issue will depend on who you are talking to, and their personal and professional experience. Develop tailored messages that are evidence-based with clearly cited facts and statistics. Consider using images such as graphs or infographics to document and support your argument.

ICDE has published numerous publications which can be presented to policymakers, government representatives and other stakeholders. These are research papers, project reports, insight papers and documentation from special interest groups, networks and committees, all available at www.icde.org.

STAKEHOLDERS TO APPROACH

- **Departments and Ministries**
- Education
- Inclusion and Integration
- Employment
- Infrastructure and Technologies

- **Parliament members in Committees for**
- Education
- Inclusion and Integration
- Employment
- Infrastructure and Technologies

- **Regional education authorities**
- Directors of Education, Inclusion and Integration etc.
- Regional education officers
- Regional school/university officers
- Regional UN Officers

- **District education authorities**
- Directors of Educational Spending
- District Education Advisers/Managers
- Community Education Directors

- **Civil Society Organisations**

- **Religious, social and business leaders**

- **Educators on various levels**

> «Real change requires a real investment: connectivity and bandwidth are keys to equitable access to education for all »

– ICDE Presidents' Forum 2021

IDENTIFYING THE TARGET AUDIENCE

Primary audience

Your audience can be broken down into primary and secondary targets. A primary target is the person who has the most power to give you what you want to advance your campaign. It is always a person and not an institution, e.g. the Minister of Education, rather than the Ministry of Education. You will need to decide who has the most relevant influence in your national government ministries. When deciding on your primary target, it is important to evaluate your own influence as well as that of the target. For example, an advocate for women's rights who is a leader in a renowned national university, potentially wields public opinion, has volunteers and supporters who may be constituents of the primary target, and can be considered experts in the field. Attributes such as this will be important for primary targets.

Secondary audience

Your main audience may be influenced by different actors; thus it is also important to identify your secondary targets in your advocacy strategy. A secondary target has influence over your primary target and you will need to research the individuals that might have the greatest impact on them. Be creative and look at your organisation's professional and social networks to see who has connections to the primary target. Secondary targets can be widely variable and multi-sectoral; for example, the leading radio station or newspaper, a leading businessperson, or a foreign government representative. For each target, identify your relationship to them (this may be through another contact), and your tactics to reach them. Intergovernmental institutions, such as the United Nations, the European Union, and the African Union, can exert political pressure on national governments to implement legislation. There may be representatives in these institutions, e.g. a UN staff member, working on access to quality education for all, who would be willing to work with you on promoting legislation to support this.

A **STEP BY STEP** FRAMEWORK WOULD REQUIRE YOU TO THINK THROUGH THE FOLLOWING:

Background
• Brief context & situational analysis – what's the problem? Why advocate on the issue?
Goal
• Long-term goal that you want to contribute towards?
Objectives
• Do these contribute to the realisation of your goal?
Targets
• Who has the power to make the necessary changes?
• Who influences those people who can make changes?
Allies/partners
• Who can you work with to build momentum and support?
Activities & outputs
• Policy & research – understanding of context, barriers, opportunities etc.
• Advocacy – what tools and channel to use to achieve goal
• Popular mobilisation – which stakeholders and how to persuade them
• Engagement of key stakeholders – what activities with which partners
Key messages
• For each audience
Timeline
• Moments/opportunities for influence? How to be prepared for these with evidence and advocacy needed?
Roles & responsibilities
• Who is responsible for what?
Budget
• How much will each action cost? What gaps (incl. capacities)? How to fill them?
Measurement & evaluation
• Measure against objectives (remember: advocacy can be a long process)

Source: Adapted from Graduate Women International – GWI, 2015

WHO CAN HELP YOU REACH YOUR TARGETS?

Strong partnerships are important in achieving access to quality open, flexible and distance education for all. As you develop your advocacy strategy, be prepared to reach out to people who work in related fields (e.g. education or technology experts) as well as sectors other than education and those with experience working on national policy. There are multiple actors who can affect the issue you are working on, or who work in the same or similar areas; by working together you can increase the chances of being listened to and creating change.

ADVOCACY CHECKLIST

The following checklist offers a guide to assist you in developing and carrying out your advocacy campaign. It can be adapted to suit local needs. You can also add to this checklist.

☐ Carry out extensive research and pull out all relevant data as proof points
☐ Prepare documentation (e.g. talking points, fact sheets, infographics)
☐ Develop a strategic advocacy plan
☐ Identify primary targets and their corresponding secondary targets
☐ Create an influencing strategy to reach your primary targets
☐ Begin implementing your advocacy plan
☐ Write a letter to your primary target and request a meeting and ensure to follow up (call, mail etc.)
☐ Engage your members or stakeholders in your campaign and invite them to sign up to activities such as petitions and campaign events
☐ Contact your partners and invite them to be involved in your campaign
☐ Follow up all actions
☐ Ensure that you are engaged with the prominent actors in Open, Flexible and Distance education in your country
☐ Include information on your campaign in your newsletter, member newsletter and on your website
☐ Use social media e.g. Facebook and Twitter to disseminate the key messages for your campaign and build them into discussion on social media on Open, Flexible and Distance Education and Learning
☐ Involve the general public in your campaign by including information on your campaign in the media e.g. radio and newspapers, and by holding public events
☐ Send information on your campaign to icde@icde.org
☐ Monitor and evaluate your progress

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