



SABER

Tertiary Education

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Tertiary education systems play a critical role in creating the knowledge and human resources needed for global competitiveness, economic growth, and poverty alleviation. Despite rapid global growth in tertiary education, many important challenges remain—in areas such as expanding access, promoting equity, improving learning achievement, strengthening knowledge generation and technology transfer, and encouraging desired values, behaviors, and attitudes among students. SABER-Tertiary Education offers a conceptual framework and benchmarking tool to help countries meet these challenges by evaluating the appropriateness of their policies.

Why do countries invest in tertiary education?

Tertiary education refers to all postsecondary education, including but not limited to universities. In recent years a diverse and growing network of public and private tertiary institutions in every country—universities, colleges, technical training institutes, community colleges, nursing schools, research laboratories, centers of excellence, distance learning centers, and many more—have all helped prepare students to apply knowledge at an advanced level. Good quality institutions, diversified options, and relevant, equitable, and efficient tertiary education and research are key to ending extreme poverty and advancing economic growth.

What challenges exist?

Despite rapid growth in tertiary education around the world,

many challenges remain, including expanding and promoting equitable access, improving learning achievement, fostering educational quality for relevance, strengthening knowledge generation and technology transfer, and encouraging desired values, behaviors, and attitudes, among others. Tertiary education systems in many countries are plagued with high drop-out and non-completion rates. Despite extensive efforts to improve tertiary education opportunities worldwide, access to this level of education and success within it are highly inequitable. Inequality in tertiary education is, to a large extent, an extension of inequality at lower levels of education, and a reflection of system-wide structural barriers impacting the economic and social opportunities of many talented and capable young people. The main additional barriers

at the tertiary level are of two kinds, financial and nonfinancial. The latter include inadequate information, motivation, academic preparation and social capital. Progress in tertiary education has been uneven, and sharp contrasts remain between and within tertiary education systems worldwide. Although the economic returns on education for graduates of tertiary institutions are high, in several countries they have been gradually declining as a greater base of graduates joins the labor market, and concerns about the relevance of their skills persist. In addition, technological advances and the shift towards a global service economy are changing job profiles and skills. The stunning rise of the middle-income countries has intensified the desire of many nations to increase their competitiveness by building more highly skilled workforces. The result is an

intense demand for expanded access to tertiary education and, in particular, to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) that can provide students with skills and knowledge relevant to labor market needs.

What is SABER-Tertiary Education?

Using new diagnostic tools and detailed policy information, the World Bank Group's Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) platform collects and analyzes comparative data and knowledge on education systems around the world and highlights the policies and institutions that matter most to promote learning for all children and youth. SABER's detailed data-gathering and analysis are organized by "domains," or areas of education policymaking within an education system. These currently include levels of education (early childhood development, primary and secondary, workforce development, and tertiary), types of quality resources and supports (school finance, school health and school feeding, and teachers), areas of governance (engaging the private sector and school autonomy and accountability), information sources (education management information systems and student assessment), and complementary inputs and cross-cutting themes (equity and inclusion, information and communication technologies, and resilience). SABER aims to give all parties

with a stake in educational results—from students, administrators, teachers, and parents to policymakers and business people—an accessible, detailed, objective snapshot of how well the policies of their country's education system are oriented toward ensuring that all children and youth learn.

SABER-Tertiary Education collects, synthesizes, and disseminates comprehensive information on tertiary education to enable policymakers and development partners to learn how countries address similar policy challenges, and to track differences among countries in terms of needs, policies, and practices.

What drives effective tertiary education?

Based on extensive research and global evidence on high-performing and rapidly improving systems, a toolkit for assessment is currently under development and will include benchmarking of policies in the following tertiary education components:

- Vision for tertiary education
- Regulatory framework for tertiary education
- Governance of a tertiary education system and its institutions
- Financing of tertiary education
- Quality in tertiary education
- Equitable access, retention, and successful completion

- Relevance of tertiary education for economic development

How will SABER-Tertiary Education help to improve education systems?

The SABER-Tertiary Education policy framework can help improve education systems by:

- Strengthening tertiary education systems at the country level, rather than just individual post-secondary institutions. Past attempts to measure and analyze what works in tertiary education have emphasized the results of individual institutions, but there have been limited efforts to analyze the tertiary education policies and programs at the country level.
- Enabling countries to draw on the framework paper for an evidence-based global review of what specific policies matter most.
- Enabling cross-country learning and fostering informed dialogue and decision-making using a structured framework and methodology.
- Involving key system leaders and stakeholders in identifying reform priorities, leading to education policy reform and new program initiatives in several countries.
- Enhancing the global knowledge base on effective tertiary education policies.