UNDG MDG NETWORK

[*Facilitator's Note: Welcome to the 5th Annual ECOSOC AMR E-Discussion on Education: Closing the Gap. The first phase will focus on Quality of Education. The moderator's message can be found here and background information can be found at the 2011 AMR E-discussion website. If you encounter any difficulties please contact the facilitator Ms. Kayla Keenan via (mdg@undg.org). Thank you.]*

Phase One Questions:

1. Given that the quality of teaching is critical to students' learning, how can the training and working conditions of teachers be improved in contexts with resource constraints?

2. Which interventions are most effective for retaining secondary-age students in school by preparing them with a foundation for lifelong learning and for labour market participation?

Summary of Contributions:

Dr. Francis Sathya, Plan International
Emphasizing that resource constraints are a poor excuse for low quality education, Dr. Francis Sathya highlighted the importance of sound governance and accountability frameworks and improved teacher training, which encourages innovation and focuses on a teacher's intrinsic motivation and innovation in addition to competencies and skills. He provided a series of practical recommendations to improve teachers' working conditions and training and enhance the retention of secondary school age students.

Tim Murray, Save the Children- Colombia
Drawing on the need to support decentralized mechanisms to support teachers Mr. Murray's contribution noted that regional "teacher support networks" can be spaces for knowledge and experience sharing, which can better reflect local needs and strengths. To address drop-out rates and labour market participation Save the Children Colombia shared its experience including agricultural training in school farms- which was based on rigorous assessments of local market conditions and are fully integrated into school curricula to ensure the programmes sustainability.

Dr. Guadalupe Vadillo, UNAM Virtual Highschool
Resources are a key variable in educational outcomes. Dr. Vadillo shared strategies which can address certain bottlenecks in the delivery of quality education as well as the experience in Mexico using a virtual highschool as a means to address student retention in secondary education.

[Ana Luiza Versani](#)
Basing her contribution on experiences with the Waldorf pedagogy, Ms. Versani highlights the ways that a focus on the needs and stages of childhood development are crucial to educational outcomes. Training programmes utilizing local resources to focus on the non-traditional capacities in the community could be one such way.

[Clinton Robinson, UNESCO](#)
Mr. Robinson in his contribution elevates the discussion focus from resources and their constraints on teacher conditions to take into consideration a focus on school and classroom levels locally. Linkages between teaching and quality learning are complex, but recent evaluations in the sub-Saharan Africa context have revealed that there is a disconnect between differing pedagogical strategies and practices in the classroom. Key factors that shifted this disconnect were local leadership and governance, both proving key to teacher motivation and in particular for the implications on interactions between teachers and learners and their related educational outputs.

[John-Mary Kayuza, UNDESA](#)
Central to Mr. Kayza contribution was addressing the need to unpack the terminology we use (in particular the meaning of "quality") and to ensure that it is pegged to the purpose of education and the context. When addressing issues about gaps in education levels, knowledge, skills, outlook of the population etc, policy should promote educational objectives that are in align with the development objectives of the country, rather than compete with another country's achievements.

[Chris Chinien, WDM-Consultant](#)
Mr. Chinien argued in his contribution that equal educational opportunities mean more than having access to education and training. It also means possessing the cognitive skills needed to learn and succeed in the learning environment.   A promising approach that would be likely to have more impact on learning achievement would include policies to improve both the quality and motivation of teachers and the conditions internal to learners, such as helping learners to develop their learning to learn skills.

[Luis Crouch, RTI International](#)
Mr. Crouch shared that while resources most certainly affect learning, there is significant empirical evidence to demonstrate that the solution may be more a matter of management than the total sum of resources. Discussing secondary student retention, Mr. Crouch noted that empirical studies on dropout causes are amazingly consistent. From country to country, and over the decades, the overwhelming weight of evidence points to the cost of education and its perceived low returns as the main cause of dropout. To resolve this the balance of issues between perception and quality must be addressed.

[Gloria Kavia Yona, Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute (TAFIRI)](#)
Ms. Yona in her contribution addressed issues of resource allocation as a bottleneck to quality education and listed a selection of options that could be used to both appropriate and allocate more resources towards education.

[Amitava Mukherjee, UNESCAP](#)
Ms. Mukherjee emphasized the use of local communities as a resource for local education needs, but importantly as well an accountability framework for teachers results and working conditions. She also reaffirmed that teacher training should be an on-going/continuous process, which can take place through innovative formats including IT kiosks in rural areas where outreach and continuing education may be difficult.

[Arshad Saeed Khan, UNESCO- Pakistan](#)
Mr. Khan highlighted the need to respond in a substantive rather than reactive way. One way to achieve this is to focus on more than training workshops or salary packages as key means to improve instructor capacity and work conditions, but to look to institutional arrangements which frame the instructors work. This could include broad governance issues, examination/qualification systems, or incentives structures. Additionally it was noted that when creating curricula for teachers it is important to include considerations of context and local needs at the design phase so that schools and training institutes can increase results rather than work in isolation from each other.

[Rosemary Nwangwu, UNESCO- Abuja](#)
Mr. Nwangu argues for a shift in perspective which uses incentives and training to create an denvironmet which cultivates knowledge sharing between educator and student. One way that this has been done which has increased secondary student retention and in some cases kept students in school through vocational/polytechnic university levels has been to infuse enterprise skills into the course work. This provides hands on learning and key skills for profit generating activity in the labour market.

[Dr. Francis Sathya, Plan International](#)
Dr. Sathya observes that despite prolonged efforts on curricula, teacher education and teaching methods, the educational attainment and quality have not reached the desired levels. Taking a holistic approach it is important to consider the political economy of education and market needs in addressing quality concerns, and communities (local, national and international) can play a role supporting accountability measures to resolve issues of equal access, education quality and education governance.

[Anna Obura, Consultant](#)
Ms. Obura stressed that while research on teaching methodologies provides feedback and recommendations for training, recommendations independent of a focus on implementation is insufficient to address teacher working conditions or student's educational attainment. A change in methods to provide teacher training that is participatory and observation based can be one means to bridge the methodology to implementation divide.

[Charmaine Gomes, UN ECLAC](#)
In contexts of limited resources Ms. Gomes highlights the importance of maximizing training potential and in-service teaching. For optimal effect she suggests a participatory approach for teachers using an observation-based method to experientially share and resolve challenges in a positive learning context. This could furthermore be supported by encouraging a role for teachers in the local/sectoral decision-making processes.

[Clement Siamatowe, UNESCO](#)
Key to motivation and developing resilient teachers is to ensure that teachers have support for life-long learning which will facilitate educators access to the latest knowledge. A further key determinant is community involvement in education. This is crucial to achieving educational objectives; where local teachers are engaged, motivation and accountability increases; where relevant development topics such as renewable energy, recycling, sanitation, health and nutrition issues, are incorporated into educational curricula the community can ensure both student retention but also sustainable livelihoods.

[Inder Sud, George Washington University](#)
Research has consistently focused on leadership and community involvement as primary drivers of effective schools. However, Dr. Sud points out in her contribution that despite growing education budgets, education quality remains an issue. Poor governance is often raised as the fault line, however another approach could involve re-thinking the traditional public education models to consider ways that public-private partnerships could be engaged to deliver education objectives. This could be particularly useful where it frees public resources (human, time and financial) to focus on system-wide regulations (such as standards, curricula, monitoring and evaluation) v. day-to-day school management.

[Gemma Carbó, University of Girona](#)
Ms. Carbó in her contribution remarked that teachers ought to be empowered to utilise cultural expressions and practices as a framework within which to educate students.

[Zemenu Tadesse, People in Need Ethiopia](#)
Ms. Tadessse underlined the need for teacher training to reinforce a student-centered approach using locally available resources. Further she encouraged colleagues to consider a focus on Alternative Basic Education as a means to support student retention and increase knowledge and skills, in particular for students who may not have access to formal education.

[Zubeida Masabo, UNICEF](#)
Ms. Masabo contributed to the discussion a need to ensure that urban education concerns and predictability (in particular for teacher salaries) were included in policy options for improving teachers' work conditions. Moreover she noted the importance of providing relevant and useful skills for student retention and successful participation in the workforce.

[Michel Arthur Tevoedjre, Retired](#)
Mr. Tevoedjre reaffirmed that resource constraints need not be a handicap to quality education. Natural resources and local environments are often under-utilised as an opportunity for education and training environments. To support secondary-age student retention Mr. Tevoedjire suggested a shift in focus from independent schools to integrated education spaces. These spaces would then work to create the space for the community to participate in ensuring the schools efficiency.

[Akanksha A. Marphatia, ActionAid International](#)
Ms. Marphatia's contribution presented research on how resource constraints can lead countries to respond in ways which undermine both teachers and educational objectives. Seeking to respond to this need, ActionAid and Education International shared their Education Finance Tool kit which elaborates on ways to both function in resource constraints but also to access additional funds for education.

[Phil Matsheza and Anga Timilsina, UNDP](#)
Focusing on a key contribution to the discussion of how governance in the education sector affects MDG achievement, Mr. Matsheza and Mr. Timilsina noted that anticorruption takes many forms, can take place at various levels and keenly impacts both the quality of education and achievement of MDG 2. Taking an approach which identifies bottlenecks and then focuses on interventions to alleviate the bottlenecks a draft report was shared as evidence based input to the policy discussions.

[INEE Secretariat](#)
INEE shared the implications for crisis and crisis-prone countries of teacher training and professional development programmes. INEE has compiled a range of good practices as a resource for education development practitioners which were highlighted in the abridged recommendations shared in their contribution.

[Linda Parton, VSO Vietnam](#)
Nothing that quality education is necessary but not a sufficient condition for student learning, Ms. Parton noted that community perception and value of education will impact the quality of education provided and teacher's working conditions. And while teacher training is important, it must not only be good but the conditions for using and experimenting, with what has been learned on the training, in the classroom must be right. In particular they need to be reinforced up by follow up support to the teacher in the classroom. Addressing student retention, Ms. Parton identified a need to further investigate why children do not attend school which should then inform the selection of secondary student retention interventions.

[Maria Lucia Uribe, University of Basel](#)
Ms. Uribe in her contribution focused on 3 key points. Training programmes often ensure quality when they are reinforced by a community of teachers. Further to this it is important that these communities (dialogue circles) engage with the broader community. And finally Ms. Uribe noted that when addressing teacher motivation, policy should focus on providing opportunities to the teacher and remove conditions which make teaching feel like a burden.

[Judith Sanson, Dyslexia International](#)
Ms. Sanson expressed the opportunity of using multi-media and tele-communication options as innovative formats for engaging teacher's training. Digital education can provide a means to increase teacher capacity to respond to student needs, especially in the context of literacy and disabled students.

[Chantal Uwimana, Transparency International](#)
Ms. Uwimana reinforced previous contributions on the impact of education governance. Providing research and advocacy on the linkages between governance and education, Transparency International demonstrated the important of transparency and accountability on how resources are utilized and schools managed in order to deliver better education outcomes. Concluding her contribution, Ms. Uwimana noted that financial costs of poor governance systems and corruption limit already scarce resources that could be invested in improving teachers training and work conditions.

[Alisher Umarov, UNESCO](#)
Mr. Umarov reflected on the education management system to enable properly managed resource utilization. He further highlighted that teachers' needs (both in terms of training and work conditions) must be addressed along the spectrum of their career. Mr. Umarov provided a selection of intervention options which could be employed in contexts of financial constraints.

[Ernestine Sanogo, SNV](#)
Ms. Sanogo observed that rather than discuss "how teacher's work conditions could be improved" we should refine the focus of the question to "how can teacher's performance improve for the benefit of students." From this perspective, transparency and accountability were considered key conditions for increasing the quality of education delivered.

[Gayatri Raghwa, Environmental Agency- Abu Dhabi](#)
Ms Raghwa shared her experiences with innovative responses to coordination and implementation of results-based teacher training that delivers objectives beyond passing an exam and demonstrates integration of knowledge into education practices.

[Dr. Angela Chinasa Izuagba, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education](#)
Dr. Izugaba in her contribution supported the need for observation and hands on training for teachers using various methods including learning centered methods and resources. A selection of retention interventions was shared.

[Marie-Claude Allez, ATD Fourth World](#)
Ms. Allez highlighted the need to adapt the concept of education for all to local contexts using broader indicators for the education quality. It was further noted that without concrete insights into poverty, teachers would continue to struggle to educate children effectively.

[Girma Hailu (UNDP-Ethiopia)](#)
Mr. Hailu using the Ethiopian example with performance results from formal to non-formal teachers, noted the importance of maintaining teaching standards and utilizing cost effective continuing education programmes. This in addition to local communities' provision of additional incentives can improve teachers work conditions.

[Marianne Schluze (Human Rights Consultant)](#)
Ms. Schluze applying a human rights based approach noted the need to address children with disabilities in the discussion on quality in education. She further highlighted the benefits from application of the principle of inclusion from the planning stages as a low cost measure for improvements.

[Nancy Williams (Montessori Phoenix Projects)](#)
Emphasizing the need to shift from a teacher-centered perspective to learner-centered teaching as a means to improve the quality of education, Ms. Williams shared a programme (Optimal Learning Environments) focusing on early childhood education (ECE) as an example of how to move the perspective.

[Janine Marin (ISOCARP)](#)
The potential for non-formal education and training to compliment formal education as a means to employ under resource constraints in response to a lack of teachers and resources was raised by Ms. Marin. Using local skills or materials in order to build the tools for quality education can deliver results in drawing the attention of students from early childhood.

[Cesare Maramici (FAO)](#)
Mr. Maramici drew attention to the need for redress and targeting of investment where possible towards reducing the urban-rural education quality gap. Sharing an example from India Mr. Maramici was able to highlight how non-formal education (simple experiments with low cost materials) could be used to increase the knowledge in students and communities.

[Celine Paramudayil (Medical Mission Sisters)](#)
Ms. Paramudayil drew attention to the importance of non-formal techniques and incentives to increase quality in education. Moreover highlighting the need for ECE Ms. Paramudayil argued that NGOs/private sector have a role (as stimulant) for early childhood education. She further outlined programmatic

support focused on coaching that Medical Mission Sisters provided to facilitate re-entry of students (targeting 8-18 female drop outs) as a way to increase secondary student retention.

Sister Ling (Hands of Love)
Sister Ling highlighted the function that technology and local infrastructure play in teacher work conditions and the importance of recognition in teacher morale and motivation.

Anne-Marie Chartier (INRP)
Noting the standards of quality education are often based on Western school Ms. Chartier noted that there are differences in education, literacy and learning and that in addressing the quality of education these must be addressed. Ms. Chartier proposed understanding the benefits of measuring teachers effectiveness and where possible propose complementary modes of learning (such as promoting non-literal rendition).

Cecila Cuellar (Independent)
Ms. Cuellar noted that effective curricula and pedagogy are indispensable but fundamental paradigms about the role of education, the nature of the learning process and the station of the teacher are equally important to improving the quality of education.

Bani Dugal (Bahá'I International Community)
Focusing her contribution on the emphasis of learning's connection to a sense of purpose and contributions to the welfare of society Ms. Dugal noted that educational processes in particular for secondary student retention must match intellectual training with mechanisms which develop youth's capacities and contribute to society.

Armando Avila Ribon (UNICEF-Corporation Legal Option)
Mr. Ribon referenced a need to express an appreciation of teachers work and respect for the work which teachers as trainers may undertake to ensure that the classroom is a real learning experience allowing students from the early years of secondary schools to identify their profile, find their strengths, skills and knowledge and to choose their education according to their preferences.

Deha Djossou Victorine (Plan Benin)
Mr. Deha identified ongoing on job training, in addition additional teacher training and technical guidance as key conditions to improve teacher's training and work conditions. Effective interventions to retain students are various, but should include development of mechanisms to protect girls and other vulnerable children against violence and abuse.

Rene Armando Hernández Espinoza
Mr. Espinoza sharing the experiences of Mexico in teacher's economic incentives and through specialized programmes such as Oportunidades highlighted how teacher's recognition can provide quality and results as well as how conditional cash transfers can increase enrollment, retention, approval and equity in education targeting girls education in particular.

Gilber Sanabria Callisaya (Independent)
Mr. Callisaya highlighted the need to target incentives towards progressive improvements in educational achievements.

[Lois Redman-Warner (UNDESA)](#)
Ms. Redman-Warner brought up the need when targeting education towards student retention that there is a need to align with development strategies and identify a defined role for the human resource.

[Mark Alter (NYU)](#)
Mr. Alter mentioned the opportunity of using Universal Design as a way to ensure students with disability are not limited and that teachers and staff understand the learning characteristics of students with disabilities.

[Nikhil Batra (BIMTECH)](#)
Referencing initiatives in Bangladesh, India and Australia, Mr. Batra remarked on the opportunities that a student centered and student directed self-participatory model can yield.

[Louise P.N. Kibuuka (Independent)](#)
Ms. Kibuuka shared how practical results-based orientation can ensure project ownership for future sustainable careers.

[Isabelle Turmaine (International Association of Universities)](#)
Ms. Turmaine proposed engaging secondary school students as part of the class which could provide assistance as identified by the teacher as a means to engage the student, provide them with skills and enhance the quality of education provided.

[Leonardo Charréu (University of Évora)](#)
Mr. Charréu suggested integrating injob teacher training from more knowledgeable staff to younger teachers as a means for improving the quality of teacher training.

[Pr Paré/Kaboré AFsata (Université de Koudougou)](#)
Mr. Pare noted that the level of recruitment and organization for training contributes to the teacher's competences and work motivation.

[Gisela Siririka (National Insititute for Educational Development)](#)
Ms Siririka recommended supporting teachers in resources constraints to develop materials from local context.

[Dr. Raphael Ogar Oko (Teachers without Borders)](#)
Noting that the quality of education is not dependent on teachers but also that students play a role as "horizontal teachers" Dr. Oko note that the teacher's attitude in this context is important. Furthermore Dr. Oko identified engaging students in the connection of abstract concepts to concrete challenges as a key means to improve secondary student retention.

[Mesfin Derash (SIL-Ethiopia)](#)
Ms. Derash identified the need to ensure at the point of recruitment a teacher's interest towards the profession as this can have significant impacts on working conditions.

[Rongming Wu (Fujian Provincial Government)](#)
Mr. Wu shared measures identified in China's Authorised National Blueprint on Education designed to enhance quality in education and teacher's work conditions.

Full Contributions:

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased about the opportunity to participate in the e-discussion. I would like to share my responses to the two questions you have posed

Training and working conditions of teachers:

As you have rightly pointed out, there are resource constraints. Resources constraints will be there always in varying degrees in all countries, however robust their economies are. Therefore, I think it is not entirely right to use resource constraints as an excuse for poor quality education. Teacher training can address the challenge well if it focuses on a teacher's intrinsic motivation and innovation in addition to their competencies and skills.   One of the key objectives of teacher training especially in resource poor countries should be to improve and support teachers' innovative attitude and skills as well as motivating them to be imaginative and creative in all situations. I don't think that teachers are naïve about resource constraints. In most countries they are not adequately prepared to be innovative and effective in the situations they are in. Even if a few of them are innovative and committed professionals, the education bureaucracy (from ministry of education down to the education inspector, head teacher and experienced co-teachers) acts as an obstacle. This situation is ultimately linked to the major issue of education governance and accountability. The education system cannot be accountable if the national governments in power are not accountable. Here are some realistic options to improve teachers' working conditions and training:

- Countries must improve revenue collection. Poor countries collect as little as 11% and they tax goods and services more than income, profits and capital gains. Increased revenue will help to increase public spending on education and to improve working conditions of teachers.
- Reduce corruption in education. Utilize education aid effectively. Take measures that the centrally allocated funds reach schools without any leakage.
- Set common standards for Teacher Training Colleges and appoint independent bodies involving public, private and civil society actors to ensure quality assurance of teacher training institutions.
- Experiences on the ground confirmed by studies (e.g. McKinsey & Company's How the World's most improved school systems keep getting better) confirm the importance of good leadership for igniting reforms and improving education systems. Therefore, governments must appoint energetic and enthusiastic strategic leaders to head education systems and teacher training colleges.
- In addition to their qualifications, recruit teachers for their passion, commitment and love of children.
- Engage teacher unions and PTAs constructively to improve teacher working conditions and implement the teacher code of conduct.

Retention of secondary school-age students:

- Include work experience part of the curriculum and examination grades
- Support schools and local trades, industries and employers work together and create job placements for students. A little bit of earning while learning will help the students value both school and work.
- Introduce and support mentoring
- Support and encourage the use of internet for seeking vocational guidance and look for opportunities for job training and employment.

Best regards.

Dr. Francis Sathya
Senior Policy Adviser, Education
Plan International Headquarters

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss topics which can impact the quality of education received.

When discussing options for improving the training and working conditions of teachers, it is important to frame the discussion in a context where regional educational authorities have concrete programmes to improve teacher capacity based on constant dialogue/information exchange with schools on their needs. Where authorities do not have the human/logistical resources to reach remote areas, it is important to establish decentralised mechanisms to support teachers- ideally this involves training and technical support from decentralised education authorities, but another key element to this strategy is the formation of regional "teacher support networks" which can be spaces for research and sharing experiences, building and sharing materials, training and in class room support. The advantage of these decentralised networks is that they can better reflect local needs and strengths. It is important to identify "leading teachers" to coordinate these groups, who are recognised for their knowledge and good practice, and to incentivise their involvement in these groups (for example by awarding diplomas). At Save the Children we are currently developing a proposal with the regional education authority, in Nariño, Southern Colombia, to pilot such networks in a remote conflict affected area.

Addressing drop-out rates and labour market participation for secondary age students involve multiple pronged approaches. Alliances with technical education institutions which provide real ´´on site´´ training in vocational skills- examples from Save the Children´s project in Colombia include agricultural training in school farms and the building of tourist packages with students training as guides. It is important that these initiatives: are based on a rigorous assessment of local market conditions; include business element in the strategy; are integrated into school curricula; and if possible bring real immediate benefits to school and students so that projects are more sustainable (e.g. school feeding or income from farms).

Best Regards
Tim Murray
Coordinador de Educación
Save the Children en Colombia

Good day and greetings from Mexico!

The first question addresses one of the most important variables in educational outcomes. In contexts with resource constraints I believe that a series of strategies should be implemented:

a. First, countries must identify individual levels of competence in the content knowledge base related to the teaching area and in educational skills of all teachers. This initial diagnosis should provide information in order to deliver the courses and learning experiences that close the gaps between low performing and qualified teachers.

b. As Dr. Sathya points out, countries must build on teachers' motivation. These actions should be implemented in a context where education is socially valued and not the last and least desired job option. Communication campaigns placing an enormous value on education would foster a positive sense of belonging among teaching staffs.

c. Learning strategies used with special needs students (including gifted and talented) should be taught to all teachers for they provide insights in order to meet all learners' needs.

In relation to the second question, Mexico City's local government has incorporated a scholarship for the virtual high school it provides to thousands of students at a time that has made a difference in retention rates. More than these external incentives, probably the core variable is providing a challenging curriculum with most interesting and updated learning experiences.

Best regards,

Dr. Guadalupe Vadillo
Science & Math Coordinator
UNAM Virtual High School
Mexico

Dear Colleagues

While resources can be a constraint I believe it is important to acknowledge that resources are not always the primary bottleneck for improving student learning. It needn´t take significant resources to create good teachers and working conditions. But it does take a group of good people to coordinate and launch training programs and tutorials. I belong to the Waldorf Pedagogy movement here in Brazil. In our movement in the classroom we use very simple things from the surroundings, we create our own books and material and so on. What makes the difference is our knowledge and research about how a child develops and what is good and appropriate for each stage of development. If we know that, we can address the children´s needs in a very economical way. So, I think we do need good hearted and solidary international companies willing to pay for good teachers to travel around the world to launch teacher training programs that can make the most of the local community resources. There are very nice people everywhere. In the middle of a very violent slum it might be a good storyteller that can make the difference. But, yes, we need a group of strong, well trained, good teachers willing to gather these people together and provide training that values what they already have and are.

Efficiency in student retention in my experience is based on respect, good-humour, art, crafts, drama, listening, sports, music and sharing biographies of people who were able to overcome obstacles. Again, adults working with a certain age of students, have to know, have to study, have to observe what is really going on inside their bodies and minds. If we know something sufficiently we can deal with it in a more effective way. What happens is that there are too many preconceived ideas about this and that, about how a youngster should behave and achieve, but not about how they really are and what are their wishes. They need good ideals and good examples; they need to direct their enormous energy into building, creating, performing, dancing, composing, and sharing something with the world. If they receive an education that makes them confident, that enables them to experience different aspects of the world through art, history, science, geography, they will be more apt to be successful in whatever job they choose to do. Sometimes the solution is more simple than it sounds.

Thank you very much.

Ana Luiza Versiani

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to respond to the first of the two questions – on the links between teaching and quality learning.

The question implies that much of the answer lies in upstream factors such as better training, improved teacher conditions (e.g. status, remuneration) and greater resources. I would like to add to those important considerations the critical need to focus on school and classroom levels. Thus my remarks converge somewhat with those of Dr Sathya.

What happens at classroom level – that is the interaction between teachers and learners – is sometimes referred to as 'the black box' because what actually happens at that level is not rendered visible and therefore cannot be factored into planning in a systematic way. The importance of looking at classroom interaction and the surrounding school-level environment was underlined by an evaluation I undertook 18 months ago in a sub-Saharan African context.

Information from teacher training institutions indicated a good level of training in pedagogical strategies and an emphasis on learner-centred, interactive approaches – informed by knowledge of research and practice in other countries/parts of the world. However, observations at school level showed that this training was not translating into practice, but that rather very traditional teacher-centred approaches were the norm.

Where then is the disconnect? As the previous contributor pointed out, teacher motivation is critical, but how can it be maintained and refreshed? Two factors that clearly made a huge difference were school leadership and governance. Where a head teacher gave leadership to the teaching staff and worked vigorously with the community to promote active local governance, the sense of professional pride, the morale and the accountability improved greatly, and this was reflected in better classroom interaction, including greater respect for learners and lower absenteeism. In another school, teachers were selected by the community structures and answerable to them; even though these teachers were less well trained (in terms of formal qualifications) their motivation was high and their commitment to

developing the children's potential palpable. Again, leadership and active local governance made the difference.

The links between teaching and quality learning are complex and multi-dimensional – pedagogical behaviour also. However, it seems that upstream improvements will only have strong impact where attention is also given to school and classroom processes of leadership and governance.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this discussion.

Clinton Robinson, PhD
Senior Programme Specialist
UNESCO

Dear Colleagues,

Before we go further I would suggest we discuss unpacking the terminology used.

What does "quality of teaching" refer to? It entails methods and methodology. It entails equipment (e.g. audio-visual materials), and logistics. It entails instructional materials that may be designed by teachers to tailor them to specific teaching situations or purchased as readymade. It entails the knowledge and outlook of the teachers. It entails facilities including buildings etc. It entails the objectives (the ultimate purpose of the teaching).

Quality is not de-linked from purpose. For this reason, quality teaching in one environment (with a different purpose) may not be quality in another environment. The good thing about such a critical environment/context-based understanding of "quality teaching" is that one may be able to find context quality teaching that is not expensive if it is tailored to fit the context and especially the purpose.

As an anecdote: I spent my first three years of school studying from under a mango tree, writing on the dust and fighting my "classmates" to ensure that the teacher got to see my writings on the dust before they step on them. Did I get quality teaching? Oh yes! First those three years excited in me, and many of my age mates at the time, a strong thirst and desire for learning/knowledge, a sense of aspiration that pushed me to study up to PhD. As I moved from school to school, from famous university to famous university including teaching in some of them, I never felt that I was deprived of quality teaching at the time, the mango tree and the dust notwithstanding. If that teacher was still alive I would buy him a very nice suit! This teaching was "quality teaching" irrespective of the lack of classroom and any other teaching materials. But the teacher must have been good at capturing the purpose of the moment and not lamenting the lack of classrooms or any other things. We learnt the alphabet. We learnt numbers, addition, subtraction etc, we learnt that we had to study if we had to be something in society, we learnt religion and how to respect our parents and members of society.

The point I am making is that we should not take the term "quality teaching" at face value meaning. What then is "quality teaching" today? I know in the era of globalization every country is striving to copy global big developed countries and teach to create global citizens. But still I believe that "quality teaching" should remain pegged to purpose of the environment and context. When this is agreed, then those who are experts in teaching/education can answer the question of how the training and working conditions of teachers can be improved in contexts with resource constraints.

The second aspect of this question which requires careful scrutiny is "closing the gap"! Which gap one may ask! In the whole process of "closing the gap" some countries may be forced to run after other countries' purpose and objectives. There may indeed be a gap between the levels of education of one country's population and another. But to me the most worrying gap a country should pay specific attention to is the gap between the education of its population and development purpose it has set for itself. It is difficult to develop a country using an uneducated population. But the education levels, knowledge, skills, outlook of the population etc must be in line with the development objectives of the country. Yet it seems like when people talk about closing the gap they are talking about the gap between the education level of one country compare to that of another. I always feel there is a point being missed here. When a developing country achieves the objectives of the MDGs related to Universal Primary Education: does this mean that it has closed the gap. I do not think so. Not necessarily. Some countries encounter problems that have to do with what to do with those who have completed Universal Primary Education and cannot access Secondary education.

Best,
John-Mary Kauzya
Chief, Public Administration Capacity Branch
UNDESA

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective in this discussion. I am pleased to make this brief contribution to this important topic.

Considerable efforts and resources are being devoted to provide equal education and training opportunities to all. However, having equal educational opportunities now means more than having access to education and training. It also means that a person has the repertoire of cognitive skills needed to learn and succeed in the learning environment. Many youth lack the essential cognitive skills to succeed even if they were provided access to education. The international community has recently reached the same conclusion to efforts for reducing the digital divide. The Education Testing Service International Expert Panel on ICT Literacy have argued that the: "digital divide should no longer be defined only in terms of limited access to hardware, software and networks, but rather, one that is also driven by limited literacy levels and the lack of the cognitive skills. This is mainly due to individual differences among learners arising from their habitual mode of acquiring, processing, storing, retrieving, and using information. To effectively learn, access to education alone without corresponding cognitive skills augmentation, will not decrease the education gap.

When information is presented to an individual, it is received through perceptual modalities. It is then held for a very brief time in the perceptual memory bank after which the information moves to a filtering system where a basic decision is made for memorizing, transforming, learning, or rejecting the information. If the information is to be memorized, transformed, or learned, it is immediately transferred to the short-term memory, which has a very short capacity and duration. The incoming information is then held in the working memory for comparison and analysis with previously stored information before being moved to long-term memory. That information then becomes part of the person's cognitive structure. Because of the rapidity with which information is processed and because of

the limiting capacity of various parts of the information system, control must be exercised over the system or the information could be rejected, lost, or incorrectly transferred or stored.

Cognitive-based research has repeatedly demonstrated that one of the most important factors contributing to achievement differences is the cognitive skills that a learner brings to academic tasks. In order to succeed a learner, must possess a repertoire of thinking skills that meet the cognitive demands of learning and performance tasks. Improving teacher quality, increasing teachers` motivation to teach by improving working conditions and salaries, or providing better facilities and instructional materials will not contribute to solve the learning differentials among learners. Need proof: just take a look at the mediocre learning achievement of many more developed countries that are already devoting considerable resources in education.

There are two main approaches for improving learning achievement. The first is to improve conditions that are external to the learners, such as improving the quality and motivation of teachers. While this is the easiest approach, the impact on learning is limited. The most promising approach that is likely to have more impact on learning achievement is to improve conditions that are internal to learners. We can do that by helping learners to develop their learning to learn skills. This is one of the basic pillars of learning advocated by UNESCO. UNESCO's conception of learning to learn is more concerned with the mastery of learning tools than the acquisition of structured knowledge.

More recently the European Union has also indicated that: "people must know how to learn…and must endow themselves with lifelong learning abilities" to be able to adapt to society's the changing demands. The European Union has also developed a learning to learn framework which encapsulates complex cognitive and metacognitive dimensions. Unfortunately, the great majority of teachers are not adequately prepared to assist learners to develop these complex cognitive skills. It is unlikely that institutions responsible of preparing teachers have the expertise to impart cognitive augmentation training to their student- teachers. In the meantime addressing conditions of learning that are external to learners, such as rearranging the tables and chairs in the classroom, will only make minimal contribution to improve learning. It does not have to be this way! There is a knowledge base to draw from to improve learning.

Chris Chinien

Dear Colleagues,

It seems to me that the issue is community respect in exchange for a job well done, and that is not so much affected by resources, because most human communities are willing and able to understand that "a job well done" is relative to resource availability and context. Furthermore, there is significant empirical evidence based on solid research that shows results can often be improved without requiring major increases in resources. Having said that, resources are certainly part of the equation, and they do affect learning. But sometimes it is more a matter of management than the total sum of the resources.

For instance, in many school systems 100% of children now have books, but many ministries deliver the books 3-4 months late—obviously not a problem of the amount of resources, but the way in which they are used and managed, since the kids eventually DO get the books. The issue is establishing relationships of respect and esteem that are based on actual achievement, and that do not presuppose either; that is, that simultaneously improve respect AND a sense of actual accomplishment, and one in

"exchange" for the other. It is unlikely that respect and esteem can be generated first, and then in exchange teachers will start delivering more effort and instruction. On the other hand, it seems unreasonable to demand more effort and creativity in situations where such effort is not met with true respect and esteem. In my opinion, governments and teachers need to both realize that there are two parts of the equation and they have to be switched on (or ratcheted up) at exactly the same time. And, again, it seems to me that this does not have that much to do with resources. Teachers have often had lots of respect, and are loved by their communities, and teach well, even in rather poor contexts.

I also concur with those who have noted that the issue is not so much all upstream factors (inter alia the ones that often require substantial resources) but what actually happens in the classroom. However, I do think that for good practices to become systemic and to scale up the systems or upstream factors have to be right.

As related to secondary student retention, most empirical studies I have seen on dropout causes are amazingly consistent. If one asks (in surveys) dropout students and parents why they have dropped out, the answers are consistent from country to country, and over the decades: lack of money (both cash cost and opportunity cost) is by far the most important cause of dropout , lack of quality (and hence low value for money) and relevance being a second cause. Issues such as distance or availability of schools is a distant third. Additionally with girls, gender-related health issues and safety are sometimes important. But the overwhelming weight of the empirical evidence (of which a fair amount exists) points to cost, and especially cost when little return is visible (low value for money). This may sometimes be an issue of perception; that is, the returns are sometimes perceived as low even when they are not. So it seems to me that to retain students, one either has to lower the cost (reduce fees or provide subsidies) or increase the value of what is learnt, by increasing the quality. Public awareness campaigns may help, but only if they tell the truth. (Telling people that education is a good deal for them, individually and financially, is not going to work if it is clearly not the case.) A further issue is whether increasing the perceived value is a matter of generally improving quality, or of being able to offer subjects whose applicability to the labor market is more obvious. My sense is that it is the former rather than the latter, but am not sure. And in any case, improving the latter is much more costly than improving the former.

Luis Crouch
RTI International

Dear Colleagues

In Tanzania as in many other developing countries, tight resources may not always be sufficiently allocated to the education sector. In these circumstances teachers are under paid with little/no motivation at all. Most teachers in Tanzania are just frustrated with hardship life. Someplace the school have only 2 teachers, imagine that situation?

One way for governments to address these issues that affect teacher's morale and working conditions, is to prioritise resources for education. To increase the allocation countries could increase the efficiency of tax collection and reduce corruption especially on that sector; reduce unnecessary expenses e.g. expenses related to purchases of expensive cars for government officers; other sources of incomes generating activities should be used efficiently and effectively, e.g. Tanzania has mining, forestry and marine resources, which if properly allocated can increase significantly the government contribution

towards the education sector; importantly the Government should provide good salary to teachers, quality trainings, teaching equipment, the allowances should be provided predictably; in addition to this for both student learning and a teacher's engagement the number of students per class for example, should be considered and improved as much as possible.

Regards,

Gloria Kavia Yona
Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute (TAFIRI)

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for engaging colleagues in this debate. Education from my perspective is a crucial issue because, amongst many other things, it has long term bearing on food security, with which I am concerned.

Given that the quality of teaching is critical to students' learning, the training and working conditions of teachers have to be improved in the context of resource constraints. There are several things that can be done.

First, there is the need to recruit as far as possible teachers from the local population. This has the dual effect of saving time and energy of the teachers in traveling, which provides more time and energy for the teachers to teach, which in turn increases the motivation of the teachers. And, the fact that a teacher is local, exerts social pressure on the teachers to perform, be punctual and reduce absenteeism. The lessons from the community run Saal Piali Schools, Midnapore, West Bengal, India are rewarding in this regard.

Second, teachers should be treated as specialized cadre of functionaries. They should never be loaded with additional burdens of performing non-teaching tasks like that of census enumeration, election duty and providing mid-day meals in some parts of India.

Third, teachers training should be a continuous process. It could now be based on self paced curriculum, trained through the use of information technology, like farmers who get information about markets and products from IT Kiosks (such as e-Choupal in India. See C. K. Prahlad's Book, "The Prosperity at the Bottom of the Pyramid").

Fourth, the technology of training in the teachers training institute needs to be changed, bearing in mind the difference between training and teaching and the fundamental difference between pedagogy (taking the participants from unknown to known) and andragogy (taking participants from known to unknown).

Warm regards
Amitava Mukherjee
Senior Project Expert, Special Unit on Countries with Special Needs
UNESCAP

Dear colleagues

Improving learning achievement levels of students is an important goal of Dakar Framework of Action (April 2000). Learning by the students is affected by a number of factors, some in-school and some out of school. Financial resources as well as political or community support are needed for improvement in working conditions of teachers and their professional development. These two issues cannot be addressed merely through organizing teacher training workshops or raising salary package of teachers, although these form essential elements of any strategy. Education governance and examination system need to be reformed in addition to training and provision of incentives for this occupation.

In the context of resource constraints, distance education or use of ICTs are cost effective strategies to upscale teacher training programmes. Instituting systems of certification of teachers and accreditation of teacher training institutions will lead to real improvement in the capability of teachers in pedagogy as well as subject matter knowledge.

In certain countries a system for accountability of teachers does not exist. For example, in some parts of Pakistan, teacher's absenteeism is a serious issue. Salary package of teachers and their working hours are more attractive than any other public sector occupation in Pakistan. Still an effective mechanism to compel or motivate teachers to take interest in improving their teaching practices is not in place. Teachers in Pakistan aim to prepare their students for the examination, instead of empowering them with critical thinking and problem solving skills. Since passing examination or securing maximum scores is the prime objective of teachers and parents of students, the result is a focus is on rote learning and reproduction of textual information published in the official textbooks.

In the recent past, Pakistan has established mechanisms at national and provincial levels to assess learning achievement of students of Grade 4 and Grade 8. New organizational structures like the National Education Assessment System (NEAS) and Provincial Education Assessment Centres (PEACs) have been created. Large scale assessment studies were carried out by the NEAS which showed low achievement levels of students in certain subjects or geographical areas. These studies also showed linkages of achievement levels of students with the subject matter knowledge of their teachers. Surprisingly, no serious effort has been made to use findings of such studies for initiating remedial measures in the areas of textbook development and teacher training.

Teacher training institutions in Pakistan prepare curricula for in-service training of teachers without taking into account the difficulties faced by teachers and students in schools, examinations, or in meeting needs of the market. It appears that schools and teacher training institutions in Pakistan work in isolation and there are no opportunities for action research to improve professional development of teachers.

With best regards

Arshad Saeed Khan
UNESCO Islamabad
Pakistan

Greetings from Abuja Nigeria.

The first question on improving teacher performance in environments of acute resource constraints is one that remains at the heart of a successful EFA attainment. The initial emphasis on access has so reduced the import of all other considerations that to reverse the downward spiral of quality has become one that must be addressed radically.

In our experience, whereas it is important to attach students' learning to teacher performance, practitioners must also somehow detach this strict connection between student learning and teacher performance. The link can only be useful if teacher capacity building and incentives are built around them cultivating an information sharing and teaching style that weans students from depending solely on their teachers for knowledge but produces a crop of students that have learned to continue to learn.

Producing this crop of teachers is the real challenge that must be addressed. The surest way of doing so is to challenge teachers to draw out the best from their students. Initial teacher training of teachers should seek to produce teacher facilitators. Only facilitation skills adequately balanced with a teachers' rich knowledge of content can produce this crop of students who have learned to learn. In-service training should also target consolidating this style of teaching among practicing educators. A few experimental projects (reference projects?) have shown that teachers have done well in rural communities where they are housed by community members and also within the school premises (in old schools where accommodation is available) and where they are given some non-monetary incentives. Above all, teachers have done well where they are given a free hand to devise what works best for their students.

On the second question of retaining students in secondary schools, infusing enterprise skills in secondary school curricular have worked excellently especially for boys. In the prevalent situation in the South Eastern part of Nigeria where boys have no interest in schooling preferring to go into trade apprenticeship, this method of suffusing their curricular with income generating skills complete with enterprise education where they are actually taught the art of bargaining and negotiations have kept a good number of them in schools and able to complete their secondary education. A good number have actually gone on to Polytechnics and Universities sometimes through the distance mode while also running their businesses!

Rosemary Nwangwu, Ph.D
NPO/Education
UNESCO Abuja

Dear All,

It is interesting to learn about different perspectives on the issues. Thanks for all valuable contributions. I would like to add one further thought to the discussion.

The overall approach followed by governments, donors, NGOs and UNESCO to address issues of education quality are predominantly technical focusing on curricula, teacher education and teaching methods. Even after fifty years of application, this approach has not reached our expectations. There could be many reasons for this; e.g. poor teacher training, problems in teacher hiring process, poor working conditions and low self esteem of teachers. As we all know, resources alone are not the only constraint. For example, governments around the world spent the equivalent of PPP$ 2.5 trillion on education in 2004 or a 4.4% of global GDP in PPP$. Sub Saharan Africa spent PPP$169 billion or 4.5% of GDP. As a percentage of GDP, this is only lower compared to Arab States (4.9%) and North America and Western Europe (5.6%). One overall conclusion that we can easily draw from this is that the education systems are not delivering what they have been created for in spite of significant investments and all kinds of technical inputs.

While we try to improve education quality through financial and technical inputs, we must note an important point. Teachers in most countries are highly organized with significant collective power and influence. Teacher union membership is the basic right of every teacher. Given the poor working conditions in many countries, they have to be organized to claim their rights. A recent paper on teacher unions in Latin America notes that despite involvement of several actors in education in the region, the mobilization and blocking power of teachers remains a serious matter. Government authorities in many countries view their relationship with teacher unions as one of the most complex and conflictive issues that they have to deal with. This draws attention to the political economy of the whole education sector and we must bear that in mind while recommending different options to address education quality.

Therefore, it is important that we pay more attention to governance issues of education systems in general and education quality in particular. Whatever approach to education quality and accountability we identify in different socio-economic and political contexts, children, parents and care-givers must be part of it. They or their representative organisations must play a key role in education governance not only at the school level but also at the national and international levels. The EFA movement including national governments, UNESCO and civil society organisations must take the political aspects of education and market mechanisms more seriously to resolve issues of equal access, education quality and education governance.

Thank you.

Dr. Francis Sathya
Senior Policy Adviser, Education
Plan International

Dear Colleagues,

It is good to hear of research focusing on what happens at classroom level. I believe much of it exists, particularly at masters level, across the Africa region. But the recommendations are not being implemented. At a secondary level however– which explains a great deal about the lack of follow-up I've just mentioned - one doesn't hear about research observing tutors' methodology, as they induct/educate/train trainee teachers, at college and university level, across our multiple tertiary colleges, faculties and schools of education. I think researchers would find chalk and talk from the tutors in most cases rather than tutors providing opportunities for trainee teachers to experience participatory learning and opportunities through the Education course, opportunities to experiment, listen to each other and to lead discussion in some face-to-face sessions. [Increasing numbers in Education courses have made it impossible in many institutions, since 1985, to continue micro-teaching, small group discussion, tutoring, etc. We should contrast what is happening in east, central and west Africa with numbers in Education courses in Botswana, for example.] Further, observers would find little experience among the trainee teachers of their having to go out into the community (on various quests) and of having to report back and discuss their findings with their peers, with the tutors listening in and contributing from time to time. Third, I don't know of research identifying change in Education programmes in specific institutions over the 1980 – 2010 period.

In short, unless tutors transform their education programmes and the delivery of their programmes we are unlikely to see teachers move away from traditional modes of teaching once in schools. It is difficult enough at present – and has been, for the past thirty years or more – for teacher trainees to put into practice the 'preaching' and verbal recommendations on participatory teaching methods they hear from their tutors since the trainees have never witnessed or experienced such teaching/learning situations. The few videos that exist on teaching/learning situations in Africa are not generally available, or the TTC (Teacher Training Colleges)/university video equipment may not be available for use, or… or… Moreover foreign videos, if they exist in TTCs/universities, do not convince tutors or trainees that such methods can be used in Africa. They remain foreign and therefore unconvincing to students in Africa.

I have no doubt that tutors/universities/TTCs could transform their practice and approach, but programmes need to target such change very specifically. While TTCs will be easier to transform, it is exceedingly difficult to penetrate universities, and ways need to be found to do just this. But, as everyone knows, the echelons of power in all these institutions are over 50 years, are powerful defenders of the status quo and loathe to change, having no real incentive to change. As I say, however, I believe it is doable. It will require a strong Ministry of Education (MOE) and an even stronger political force behind the MOE to demand this change, to speak to an entire sector and to speak to vice chancellors. It has not been tried, except partially, in some institutions, through limited programmes. However, that does not mean that it is not achievable.

I therefore agree with the previous contributors: the targets they identify for change and the strategies they propose. I add this further dimension which requires transformation and without which schools/teachers will never change. It is a dimension one hardly ever hears discussed.

Best,
Anna Obura
Former Regional Education Advisor, UNICEF ESARO
Former Chair, Educational Communications and Technology (Methods),
Kenyatta University, Nairobi

Dear Colleagues,

It is important not to compromise the quality of training at the altar of financial resources but to seek innovative mechanisms for promoting and encouraging such training. I have experienced quality being compromised to the detriment of young school children and seen the spin off effects for the labour market.

With limited financial resources, it is important to maximise opportunities for training potential and in-service teachers. Various options exist to achieve these objectives. One such option is for ministries to make use of limited resources to train a small cadre of professionals who could then serve as trainers themselves. However for this to be successful one has to select the initial group with as wide a geographical spread as possible, taking into consideration that some young professionals may leave the service to participate in higher education or to seek employment in the other sectors. During initial training it would be effective, as part of the process, to employ hands on experience. This involves encouraging trainees to bring their experiences to the forefront (especially challenges) where they may be discussed and solutions could be tabled. The process of training should thus be observation based. This way, trainees would be observed in the work place by a trainer who could utilize positive reinforcement and provide guidance on challenges. I have found this extremely useful although it may be a bit intimidating if not handled properly or if it is perceived that it is a test. To mitigate this for any training process dialogue is important and is to be encouraged.

Improvements in working conditions for teachers involve trust. Teachers need to have the perception that management would want to make the work place comfortable and that they are doing all that is possible to make it so. For teacher motivation a perquisite is having their basic needs met, especially for teachers with family responsibilities. This often will include some degree of flexibility and care-giving accommodation is desirable. Furthermore, teachers need to understand the financial situation and understand that the limited resources are being used in the best possible way to improve circumstances for both themselves and students. I have seen where dialogue is very useful in this regard. And finally teachers need to feel that they are a part of the decision-making process even if they do not make the final decisions. This way, co-operation with less than adequate working conditions can be realised. However they also need to know what plans are being made for improvement of conditions.

Best,
Charmaine Gomes
Sustainable Development Officer
UNECLAC

Dear Colleagues,

Throughout my career in education I have never felt that someone has adequately addressed what motivates teachers in a satisfactory way despite many surveys conducted on this issue. I think that the teaching profession, like any other profession, is expanding through knowledge rapidly. As new knowledge is being added, better ways of training teachers and teaching and learning are emerging or being tested. I believe that too much weight is being attributed to poor pre-service training as the main contributor to poor teaching and learning. In my view, the solution lies in creating a more responsive, supportive and enabling environment for life-long learning that gives the teacher the opportunity to

acquire new knowledge and learn new teaching methods that are emerging. No one time preparation can be adequate, no matter how well it is done.

I also feel that teacher recognition is being sidelined. In my view it remains one of the most important sources of motivation. Recognition by students, parents, communities, supervisors and the employers with regard to their contribution would in my view, greatly motivate teachers. In many instances, teachers are blamed for high rates of failures among students, for tardiness, absences etc. In very few circumstances do teachers feel appreciated. I have seen the difference for myself between schools that appreciate teachers and those that only expect teachers to deliver.

Lastly, in many countries teachers are recruited centrally and posted to various schools. In my view teachers should, where possible, be recruited by the local authorities. If teachers are recruited from the same community, they are likely to be more dedicated to their community and not look forward towards the earliest opportunity to move elsewhere. I also support imparting entrepreneurial education (not just enterprise education) so schools can provide answers to some of the problems affecting their communities, i.e. making the school relevant to the community, especially in rural settings and not just avenues for educating students who later leave for better opportunities elsewhere. Such skills will have a lasting impact on students and the community.

Relevant development topics such as renewable energy, recycling, sanitation, health and nutrition issues, for example, provide ample opportunities for school involvement in the community in developing countries and especially in rural areas. Better participatory ways of supplementing government resources can be found through various ways that do not necessarily demand cash from poor parents (e.g. by tapping into the skills of the community). By being truly part of the community, the school administrators and teachers can better understand and find solutions to student absenteeism. PTA meetings should truly reflect partnerships and need not be conducted like regular business board meetings.

Clement Siamatowe
UNESCO

Dear Colleagues,

Clinton Robinson quite correctly points to strong school leadership and active community participation as the main drivers of effective schools. This has been well-established in research going back to the 1980s. The World Bank's education strategy paper of early 1994 pointed this out. The question then is why we have been unable to implement these ideas. Why, despite growing education budgets and substantial donor support for education over the years, does education quality remain poor.

"Poor governance" is often cited as the reason for poor performance of public schools. In more direct language, this means that funds for books and supplies do not reach the schools in a timely manner or often, at all. Teachers in public schools, despite being paid well, often above the salaries of teachers in private schools, do not show up to teach or "sub-contract" their jobs to unqualified substitutes. Parents face hurdles getting their children enrolled. Little attention is given to learning outcomes, and school principals have no accountability for outcomes. The list goes on, country studies are replete with such problems.

At the same time, in almost every poor country I have worked in, poor families are holding two or three jobs so that they can send their children to private schools. The parents perceive - correctly in my view - that these private schools, many run by non-profit organizations but also many for-profit, as providing better quality of education than "free" public schools. Private schools may be far from delivering quality education, but the parents certainly consider them to be better than the public schools.

I believe it is time to re-think the traditional public education model in developing countries, particularly for poorer countries that often have weak governance. We should consider ways in which public education can be delivered through private/non-profit sector that has proven to be more effective in managing at the school-level, while the public sector focuses its scarce capacity on things like standards, curriculum, monitoring and evaluation, etc. The increasingly popular charter school model in the United States – public financing and oversight and private delivery - may have something to recommend for developing countries.

I should also add that private sector is by no means the panacea for achieving better quality. There are many private schools that are successful in attracting students because of the void in the education market left by the inability of the public sector to meet demand. The public sector has a crucial role to play in bringing such schools under appropriate regulation and will need to develop capacity to do so constructively. Freeing the public sector from the burden of day to day management of schools should free time to focus their energies on this.

Time has come to think new and creative ways to improve the dismal state of public education in many countries. We need to be bold. Otherwise I am afraid we may still be bemoaning "poor governance" as the root cause of poor quality education 20 years from now.

Inder Sud, PhD
George Washington University

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you in advance to the organisers for this opportunity and forum to share.

Training and working conditions of teachers can be improved at different levels that probably need be taken into account simultaneously. From the UNESCO Chair in Cultural Policies and Cooperation located at the University of Girona, we defend the approach of the teachers to their own cultural expressions and students cultural practices and forms as a good way to start. We are not only talking about teaching in the mother tongue but also about trying to integrate the school and the lessons into the students' everyday way of life. The convention of the promotion and protection of cultural expressions provides a good justification for this. Culture might be a difficult concept but cultural expressions are much easier to understand and define.

Teachers need to be aware of how to promote children's skills. Music, literacy in all forms (including oral literacy), mass media and audio-visual messaging in general, cultural and natural heritage, dance, theatre, design, illustration, painting, eating, playing together are cultural expressions that exist more or less in all the contexts of the world. Cultural expressions are educational resources that teachers should adopt and can be used to create a qualified and positive pedagogical program properly related with its own students and context.

UNESCO chair has developed a playful interactive tool for the secretary of the Cultural Diversity Convention. The tool, which is also available in print, proposes a specific content articulated around the central themes of the convention: creativity and diversity of cultural expressions, both of them strategic aspects for the quality of education. The pedagogical approach is innovative since it tries to appeal the students in the first person (I-we-others-all) thus promoting a collective construction of the concept of "diversity" at the same time. Such pedagogical resources can be a good, open and free way to improve training and working possibilities for teachers everywhere.

 As far as the second question is concerned, we would like to return to the point of the culture opportunities and benefits. Nowadays, cultural and creative industries are a strategic challenge for many countries. After petrol and diamonds, intellectual capital and knowledge is probably the most important natural resource for many children and youngsters. Creativity, imagination, innovation capacities, cultural contents, different ways to face world etc. are abilities that can be educated trough cultural expressions, understanding teachers and students both as consumers and as active producers. Internet and new technologies provide availability on the distribution and commercialisation of a lot of good and simple ideas. Originality and diversity of perspectives promotes working opportunity for youngsters and an opportunity of change for all citizens.

Gemma Carbó,
UNESCO Chair in cultural policies and cooperation
University of Girona

Dear Colleagues,

Quality education is such a broad concept, yet in relation to the training and working condition I would like to share my view points.

I believe that Teacher Education Institutions should play an important role in shaping teachers, particularly the way they teach at the classroom level. In other words "teachers teach the way they are taught, not how they are told to teach". So the teaching and learning process should be participative or student-centered. I have experienced teachers who complain that they don't have enough resources. However, their commitment to the profession is really important. They need to be creative and use the scarce resources. I appreciate and support the idea of TALULAR (Teaching and Learning Using Locally Available Resources).

Regarding working conditions, I have to agree that the working conditions should be comfortable. School leadership should recognize and appreciate teachers' efforts and keep them motivated through facilitating a convenient working atmosphere. In other words, the school management needs to play facilitating role than controlling. In addition, there has to be moral support from the school management and community along with other non-state actors (e.g. Parent and Teachers Associations (PTA)).

I strongly believe that Alternative Basic Education (ABE) can form a basis for lifelong learning and labor market participation. If youth or adults who are out of school for various reasons get the chance for the basic education, they can develop knowledge and skills. This training and knowledge could help them to sell their knowledge and skills over time. Where successful ABE could be scaled up as an opportunity for

many people who do not have access to formal education. In Ethiopia for example NGOs are working in the area of ABE. I would suggest the involvement of all stakeholders, including the government, could help retain students in school as long as the opportunity is open for all.

Zemenu Tadesse, Project Manager
People in Need (International Non-Government Organization)
Ethiopia

Dear Colleagues,

Mr. Robinson is right in his analysis of the juxtaposition of pedagogical training and actual classroom interaction. It is very hard, for example, for a teacher to use interactive learner-centered methods in an overcrowded class, which is the case in most poor peri-urban neighbourhoods. It is also very hard for a teacher who doesn't know when and how they will receive their next salary to adequately pay attention to a pupil's learning needs. There is need, therefore, to improve the teaching/learning environment, strengthen structures for predictable, timely and equitable resource allocation.

Student retention involves various components and there is need to have more in secondary schools than just academic subjects as is the case now. Students need to learn skills that they can utilise in real life and academic subjects should be vehicles for attaining such skills. Expansion of vocational and social skills can assist to facilitate workforce participation where employment and self-employment opportunities exist.

Zubeida Masabo
UNICEF

Dear Colleagues,

Resources Constraints should not be put forward as handicap towards attainment of quality education and teaching in any country, especially in poor countries. I am convinced that there always is room to gain the best out of the least one possesses while ascertaining means to achieve higher objectives through development of country potentials and wealth. Education and Training should first use local resources to gain the basic expertise required in Basic – Primary - and Secondary Education. Every poor country has basic natural resources that must be used by teachers as education and training environments for citizen capacity – aptitude building and expertise so to satisfy basic needs. National parks and forests, for example, provide valuable laboratories for teaching about science and environmental subjects in ways that are engaging and locally relevant.

- There is an urgent need to improve the functionality of education and training environments. I would argue that this requires a comprehensive approach which includes:
- Good Governance and use of local natural resources and potentials (National Parks – Forest – Museums – etc.) should be part of developing countries education policy and strategies.
- Science Education Promotion must be an inherent part of a developing countries education policy; beginning at basic education levels.
- Basic - Primary – and Secondary Teachers should be trained in the use of local natural resources and potentials as teaching environments.
- ICTs should be used in the Training and Education Environment starting from Basic Education. Teachers must be expected to become expert user of ICT and they must be trained accordingly. No teacher (at any levels) should finish his or her training without appropriate expertise in the use of a computer and the internet.
- The Use of Micro Science Kits, which draw upon and address the local environment, should be wide spread within Basic – Primary and Secondary Education, thus to enhance local potentials.

Addressing interventions that are most effective for retaining secondary-age students in school by preparing them with a foundation for lifelong learning and for labour market participation requires scholars and students be efficiently trained with a foundation for a lifelong learning and for an efficient participation in economic development. To accommodate this the education environment would need to encompass complementary education infrastructures which satisfy education actors life basic needs. In short, developing countries should begin rendering the school environment into an Integrated Education Space where: scholars and students can not only gain attitude, aptitude and knowledge but can also the skills necessary to satisfy their lifelong basic needs : food, housing, health, information, communication and social development. And importantly work to create the space for communities to actively participate in the school environment by providing or producing all required to insure its efficiency.

Using Early Childhood – Primary and Secondary Schools as an example, the educational environment should include : a canteen supported by a farm (run by the school community); a heath center ; a library and an ITC center. Importantly for sustainability, these complementary infrastructures need to be inherent to the community social development.

Michel Arthur Tevoedjre
UN Retiree Benin

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this dialogue. My contributions below respond to the first question.

I agree that 'resource constraints' should not limit innovations and improvements to teacher training and working conditions. However, the reality is that they do limit the number of teachers that can be hired and reforms to training systems. The response from many Governments has been to hire 'untrained/under qualified' teachers in order to staff classrooms and also save costs as qualification levels usually determine salary scales. Evidence supporting this trend and feasible solutions are noted in ActionAid's research on 'Improving Learning Outcomes Project in Primary Schools in Burundi, Malawi, Senegal and Uganda' (in partnership with Dr. Karen Edge at the Institute of Education, University of London, shortly available at http://www.actionaid.org/main.aspx?PageID=175<http://www.actionaid.org/>).

Second, we must address the resource constraints in a holistic and strategic manner. I invite colleagues to share their thoughts on our Education Finance Toolkit produced with Education International http://www.actionaid.org/main.aspx?PageID=166) which further elaborates on how this can be done, including:

- A framework for advocating for increased domestic resources through taxation (which joins Mr. Sathya's recommendation)
- Further review of the special tax for education (CESS) created in India, though facing challenges in implementation, is an interesting measure
- Resources for budget tracking which support monitoring of resources reaching and used at the school level with their allocation at the national level and eventually how the policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank influence both the size of the national budget and spending on teachers.

Our research on the influence of the IMF on education financing, especially teachers with the Global Campaign on Education tracks the imposition of 'wage ceilings' which have shown to constraint spending on teachers and other public sector workers (see Education on the Brink and Confronting the Contradictions). While we applaud the change in policy by the IMF in no longer imposing these ceilings, in reality, the restrictive macroeconomic (inflation, fiscal deficit) framework does not enable countries to increase spending on teachers. Though some flexibility was shown for increase social spending during the recent crisis, a recent review of IMF agreements once again leads to restrictive policies. Some solutions could include:

- An open dialogue about choices and potential solutions must take place with the Ministries of Education, Finance, the IMF AND civil society, which would be a sign of greater accountability and better governance.
- Policy scenarios which align macroeconomic policies with social policies/expenditure (see work by feminist economists Elson and Radhakrisnan) and enable a more flexible fiscal environment for longer term spending are promising
- Engagement of the Education For All Fast Track Initiative in finance discussions with all relevant partners to find possible solutions

- This requires redefining what 'macroeconomic stability' means - it means economic growth but also healthy and educated citizens who can support future growth which recognises contributions by women (informal economy, unpaid care work) and men. The new measure from the Human Development Report which combine life expectancy, educational attainment and income merits further exploration.

Finally, to join other contributor's comments on the quality of the teaching-learning environment in classrooms, we very much need to continue ensuring that we support gender equality - from training for teachers and ensuring all pupils are treated equally and supported to succeed. Often, schools can be spaces of violence and mirrors of wider inequality in society. This requires resources to improve current pre- and in-service training, innovative curriculum, pedagogical support and assessments. These are unlikely to be garnered unless we deal with the financial blockages outlined above.

Thank you again for launching this rich discussion.

Akanksha A. Marphatia
Acting Head of International Education
ActionAid International

Dear Colleagues,

This discussion is very timely as the anti-corruption team at UNDP has produced a knowledge product on "Anti-Corruption tools, methodology and good practices in education sector" with an objective of addressing corruption as a bottleneck to achieve the MDGs. We would this like to introduce the anti-corruption aspect to this discussion.

Corruption in the education sector takes many forms and may occur at national, sub-national and institutional levels. The education sector has witnessed substantial initiatives, often driven by development partners, to decentralise management responsibilities, decision–making and financial administration to sub-national and institutional levels. Much of the literature of good-governance in education, and that of more explicit anti-corruption approaches, is within the context of decentralisation in general and introduction of block or capitation grants to schools. Such grants provide financing- a fixed lump sum or an amount proportional to student numbers, respectively to be used as they decide often in keeping with a participatory school plan.

The World Bank, for example, has strongly promoted this modality, driven by a wider governance agenda for community accountability and participation but with expectations of reduced leakage (and improved performance in other risk areas) because of local oversight and accountability systems. In that sense, educational decentralisation and school-based management is perhaps the commonest approach to reducing corruption (amongst its other governance aims) in the allocation and utilisation of educational finance, and teacher behaviour. However, it is no panacea: parent and communities groups can be captured by corrupting forces or may lack capacity to exercise an effective oversight function.

The major hindrance to improve teachers' working and training conditions thus are directly linked to the following corruption factors in the education sector:

Teacher appointment, management, payment and training	• Fraud in the appointment and deployment of teachers (favouritism, bribes, gifts) • Discrimination (political, social, ethnic) • Falsification of credentials/ use of fake diplomas • Bypass of criteria • Pay delay, sometimes with unauthorised reductions
Teacher/school staff behaviour (professional misconduct)	• Ghost teachers • Absenteeism • Illegal fees (for school entrance, exams, assessment, private tutoring, etc.) • Favouritism/nepotism/acceptance of gifts • Discrimination (political, social, ethnic) Private tutoring (including use of schools for private purpose) • Sexual harassment or exploitation • Bribes or favours during inspector visits

There is no one solution for this complex problem. The following are some interventions intended to remove corruption as a bottleneck in the education sector.

1. Legislation

An adequate legislative framework is a necessary condition for tackling corruption. Corruption has usually been addressed as a cross-cutting issue. For instance in Vietnam, the 2005 anti-corruption law specifically mandates transparency in enrolment and examinations and public disclosure of public funds used in educational institutions.

2. Sanctions

The aspects of criminal sanctions and disciplinary measures to deter corrupt practices in education reported include: independent complaints systems; investigators with authority and access to relevant information; criminal sanctions according to the nature and level of malpractice; disciplinary measures (non-judicial); the publication of lists showing firms or individuals guilty of corrupt practices (e.g. blacklists for procurement contracts); increased powers of oversight of schools.

The literature emphasises the general lack of sanction for non-compliance with regulations, even in relatively severe cases for which criminal or disciplinary measures would seem appropriate. However, anti-corruption laws tend to be administered by anti-corruption agencies where they exist and there is very little connection with line ministries. Transgressions are not classified as corruption for the education sector which normally operates under some form of the Education Act. Moreover, penalties in the education sector following identified corruption are usually less severe than those in anti-corruption laws.

3. Codes of Conduct

Literature shows how codes of conduct of education personnel (including head teachers, inspectors, education authority staff, teachers and ancillary staff) contribute to improving professional behaviour and performance. In countries where malpractice and misconduct from the teaching force were increasingly reported in the media (for instance in the Gambia), teacher unions have been instrumental in the development of such codes. Recent examples of development of codes of conduct with strong inputs from teacher unions and significant support from agencies and particularly NGOs can be found in the Gambia and Sierra Leone. There are school-based codes of conducts, developed with the participation of children, teachers and community members (e.g. Cote d'Ivoire through the Rewrite the Future Programme of Save the Children) to address teacher absenteeism specifically, although they seem not to address issues of sexual harassment or "sex for grades". Success factors identified by these initiatives include mainly the strong involvement of teacher unions (through a bottom-up process in the case of the Gambia) and real collaboration between MoEs and unions. Remaining challenges pertain to the enforcement of the codes and the establishment of bodies responsible for administering sanctions. There are however countries where specific mechanisms or bodies have been established to ensure enforcement of the codes, Hong Kong and Canada are two such examples.

The dissemination of the codes and the appropriation of its content and implications by education staff are critical. All the above mentioned initiatives have emphasised the need for consultation, validation and information dissemination at national, regional, local and school levels, including children, teachers, local education authorities and parents.

There is reported impact of Codes of Conduct on teacher absenteeism, but there is no data on how codes may be curbing sexual harassment and abuse by education personnel. The impact of codes may be affected by their lack of dissemination, the difficulty of understanding them, lack of children and community knowledge of complaints procedures in case of non compliance, and the general lack of enforcement mechanism.

4. Better financial systems

Strengthening financial systems has been one of the anti-corruption methods used by donors and government to combat corruption in the education sector and improve financial planning and management overall. Whilst such macro-level methods will help budget transparency and may reduce the opportunities for education funds to be misused and diverted at the national level, it is in the management of their disbursement, reconciliation of expenditures and oversight of spending at the lower levels where there remain opportunities for both mismanagement and corruption. The most critical element here is improved electronic systems and use of the banking system, rather than cash, to make payments, for teachers salaries or school grants.

5. Better IT for administration

Better information systems can reduce opportunities for corruption in teachers' payment and appointments. Examples include the information systems in Colombia and payroll management tools in Zambia . Payroll clean up through random physical verification in schools was also used in Uganda . Although Uganda demonstrates a reduction in the number of ghost teachers, the literature cannot attribute it solely to the payroll clean up and teachers' census. The involvement of parents or Board which can verify which teacher is there and detect ghost teachers has also contributed.

6. Transparency and accountability

Initiatives transparency and accountability in the education sector include: advocacy campaigns; awareness raising and AC education; the use of media in information dissemination; PETS, service delivery and other surveys; community oversight; children's monitoring; innovative approaches to reduce teacher absenteeism; and more open procedures.

The main education areas to which these approaches are applied are education finance, school grants, school management, school personnel behaviour, and procurement. Local and appropriate tools, such as financial reporting on school notice boards can inform local oversight which will hopefully translate into better working conditions for teachers as well as increase student retention and accelerate progress towards achievement of MDG2.

The draft report (located [here](#)) summarizes the tools, methodologies and good practices in addressing the corruption risks in education sector, including the issues around the teacher quality. We would also welcome the opportunity to receive the inputs from the network members, particularly on the usefulness of this product.

Sincerely,
Phil Matsheza and Anga Timilsina
UNDP
Bureau for Development Policy
Democratic Governance Group

Dear Colleagues,

Through its global network, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies has made a commitment to ensuring quality, safe and relevant education in crisis and crisis-prone situations.

In the experience of INEE members, teacher training and professional development programmes in crisis and in crisis-prone settings must be firmly based on the actual and evolving needs and capacities of teachers, learners, and communities. Too often, teachers' education levels and compensation are minimal and conditions of work are subpar. As a result, inadequately supported teachers are expected to make lasting changes in classrooms with only minimal materials and training.

INEE has compiled a range of good practice approaches to improve teacher training and instruction in resource-constrained, crisis-prone or crisis-settings. INEE's Guidance Notes on Teaching and Learning and Guidance Notes on Teacher Compensation, created through the collaborative work of INEE members, provide some field- and theoretically-based practices. Below are abridged recommendations from the INEE Guidance Notes on Teaching and Learning; to view the full document, go to www.ineesite.org/teachinglearning:

- **Ensure teacher well-being is a core component of training and professional development efforts.** Teacher support during emergencies and recovery should be an integral part of national education plans as teachers are impacted both personally and professionally by crises. Advocacy for teachers to receive assistance during the first round of distribution and service delivery may ensure that they are better able to resume teaching responsibilities.

- **Strengthen peer support for teachers.** Training programmes should promote professional peer support structures amongst teachers to increase their coping skills and reduce psychosocial stress. This may involve providing opportunities for teachers to gather and share good practice outside school, or encouraging mentorship wherein 'master teachers' support new teachers.

- **Provide additional support to untrained or inexperienced teachers.** If untrained recruits are expected to assume teaching immediately, they will need relevant and timely training in relation to key content and teaching methods as well as basic, self-explanatory, and appropriate materials. Classroom management and psychosocial support may also be relevant. Untrained teachers can be paired with trained or experienced teachers to provide mentorship until a more structured training and supervision programme is available.

- **Follow training with continued professional development and support.** Continued support to teachers, through specific programme design as well as national education plans, is paramount to ensure effective application of skills and knowledge. A substantive follow-up strategy for continuous professional development should be established.

- **Recognise the unique position and responsibility of the head Teacher.** The role of the Head Teacher or Head Master should not be underestimated. They are the first line of support for the vast majority of teachers and will need training and continued technical and administrative support to ensure their effectiveness.

- **Establish or strengthen local support systems.** The current status and capacity constraints of pre and in-service teacher training programmes at national, sub-national, and local levels should be assessed and alternative support systems created at the school level or between a cluster of schools if needed. Where possible, training resources should be identified closer to schools to reduce time spent travelling and encourage greater oversight at a local level.

- **Ensure planning meets immediate and longer-term needs.** A plan should be drafted outlining teacher training needs including the number of teachers to train, gender, geographic location, language of instruction, and other relevant issues that will help to promote inclusive, equitable education. This plan will need to be adapted as the context changes.

- **Ensure sustainability with community involvement.** The role of the community cannot be under-estimated in influencing children's broader learning environment. For example, in many countries, School Management Committees (SMC) or Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) play an integral role in connecting the school and community. It may be appropriate and necessary to mobilise the SMC or PTA to provide greater and more direct support to the classroom-based instructional process. Likewise, the links with key community members, especially parents, may be used to convey information to the broader community which is helpful when changes made at classroom level require community support.

- **Draw on the human resources available at the community level to ensure appropriate and inclusive education.** When considering existing and potential community support to the instruction and learning process, consider who is available, the skills they have, and additional training or orientation they need. Consider also how children can be involved, and how parents and caregivers can be encouraged to take an active role in monitoring their children's learning.

- **Develop school level action plans indicating roles and responsibilities of the community.** School level action plans may identify ways in which the community can be involved in the provision of education. They may also identify the needs of individual children or youth who may have limited, or no, access to education. Plans should be drafted in collaboration with community leaders, parents, children, young people, teachers and school staff.

- **Support open dialogue between all stakeholders.** It is critical to encourage dialogue amongst the community including children, teachers, parents and MOE in order to put an appropriate model in place to meet learning needs and outcomes. Dialogue must take into account the context and culture when explaining the benefits of learner-centred, participatory and inclusive learning.

INEE Secretariat
www.ineesite.org

Dear Colleagues,

There have been many excellent contributions to this debate so far. I would like to offer a few anecdotes to illustrate some of my thoughts on these questions.

Quality teaching may be a necessary condition for students learning but it is not a sufficient condition. Parental, community and societal (as well as student) value of education and the institutions which exist to deliver that education have been shown to be equally as critical. As a Headteacher in the UK I once had a parent say to me 'You lot (teachers) are no good. All them politicians on the Telly say so'. However good the teaching in the school (and some of it was very good) we had little chance of succeeding with that mother's children. Research into which countries achieved the best mathematics results (sometime in the early 90s) showed that teaching methodologies made little difference. Countries where rote learning was the norm and those where more active learning was utilized faired equally well or badly. The over-riding factors were the value which students, parents and society put on the learning of mathematics and the esteem in which teachers were held.

Whatever the conditions and society's perceptions children will always learn better with 'good' teaching. Most teachers (and I include myself in this category) are not so naturally gifted and need good training, both pre-service and in-service. Not only must the training be good but the conditions for using and experimenting, with what has been learned on the training, in the classroom must be right. My experience as an advisory teacher in the UK and my experience on the education project in Cambodia have reinforced my view that if training is to be successful it must be followed up by support to the teacher in the classroom. VSO uses international and national volunteers in education programmes in a number of countries and this approach of combining training with on-going support is highly effective. There are many ways to provide this on-going support. The challenge is to find the most appropriate in different contexts.

Children are naturally good at learning (just look at what most achieve before they start school). The challenge for education systems is to ensure that children's thirst for learning and their ability to learn are not dampened by the institutions put in place to increase that learning.

On the second question we must investigate why some children are not in school. A young VSO volunteer undertook some research on why children drop out of school in a poor rural and fishing communities in Cambodia. Before undertaking the research she took several weeks to get to know the children, their families and the wider community. Some of the results are unsurprising. Lack of money to pay school fees; distance to school; older children being needed to look after siblings and animals while parents worked; and the need for children to contribute to family income were all quoted. One frequently quoted reason was that boys who had to help with night-time fishing would happily attend school when they went to the afternoon shift. When they were changed to the morning shift they dropped out of school because they were too tired to get up. A little flexibility on the part of the authorities could have overcome that problem.

Some of the results were not surprising but much less frequently quoted in research on this subject. Families and children recognised the need for basic literacy and numeracy but felt that the rest of the learning they needed would come through living their lives; parents were worried that if their children became too educated they would move to the provincial town or to Phnom Penh for work and they feared for the children's safety; and the only educated people in the communities were the teachers – and they were the only people in the communities who were not able to keep their families on the income from their main occupation.

Much has been written about the inclusion of vocational training into the secondary curriculum in order to encourage young people to stay in school. I am fully in favour of vocational training and have experience of being a welder trainer in Namibia. I have my reservations about 'tagging it on to' the secondary school curriculum. If we do, we have to be aware of the dangers of such courses being perceived as courses for 'failures' as many were in the UK.

By definition, most of us contributing to this and other educational debate have succeeded in a fairly traditional primary/secondary/tertiary education model. We must not assume that this model is appropriate in every context or for every individual and we must not see other models as less valuable. We must shift our thinking so that practical learning is seen just as valuable and necessary as academic learning. We must support governments in the identification of skills required for implementation of their SEDPs - and help them avoid the situation which many of us in the 'west' have experienced – being able to attract 200 applicants for a post requiring a B.A. in Media Studies but finding it impossible to call out a plumber on a Saturday evening when the water tank is leaking.

Linda Parton
Country Director and Mentor
VSO Vietnam

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to share ideas in this forum and for all the valuable contributions.

Regarding how to improve the training and working conditions of teachers in contexts with resource constraints, I propose the following three points:

1. Training: As highlighted by Ms. Gomes it is important to train a geographically spread group of teachers to become multipliers and trainers of other teachers in their regions and cities. I would add that to ensure the quality of the training provided by this initial group, the creation of a community of teachers is needed. This community can be a platform to share their concerns and ideas, but also to report their progress and support each other. At the same time it works as a kind of social control mechanism that allows mutual feedback, inspiration, encouragement and improvement. The community of teachers creates a sense of ownership by working on common rules, standards and participatory methodologies that are conducive to a high impact learning in the classroom, and based on those share best practices, challenges and ideas that they have implemented in their classrooms. These communities are formed by teachers from the same town and can communicate virtually with those in other cities and even countries, thus creating a stimulus to their profession.

2. Once teachers from the same school are organized, it is important to create spaces for dialogue with the wider community: students, parents, religious leaders, government, social and private sectors. These spaces, which I would call dialogue circles, can have several purposes: a) students, teachers, school administration, and parents come to discuss the issues that affect the environment of children, their responsibilities to ensure quality of learning, how they can support each other, problems that affect the community and children. The purpose is to discuss issues that affect children and the school inside and outside and in an environment of trust to find solutions together. During these spaces everyone can voice their concerns in equal basis and work together for a common solution. A similar initiative has been proved successful in schools in El Cauca, Colombia. You can find further information at http://www.maesvida.edu.co/index.php?section=20 (unfortunately only in Spanish).
b) dialogue circles with social and private sectors to join hands to train teachers in specific areas so they can improve their teaching and make it relevant to the social and economic market. These dialogues need to be materialized in concrete alliances where children would be able to benefit from more prepared and qualified teachers but also from the use of better equipment in schools such as: donated computers, labs, field visits to factories, mentoring programs with people from companies for youth in the last years of school, etc. Training of teachers in partnership with social and private sectors can be in several areas including computing, agricultural techniques, negotiation and peace building skills, human rights, use of new technologies, etc.

3. As for the working conditions, I believe by creating training opportunities for teachers to gain more knowledge and skills, teachers will be more motivated. However, this needs to be compensated by giving them benefits for the education of their children, decent and on time payment of salaries and in kind benefits, such as being part of research groups with multidisciplinary teams, access to recreational facilities for their children and family (companies' facilities), possibility to have access to scholarships, participate in conferences, etc. The teaching profession should be full of opportunities for personal and professional development and not feel like a burden to deliver some content to a group of students.

Maria Lucia Uribe
International Consultant and Researcher in Peace Education
Master Candidate of Peace and Conflict Transformation
University of Basel, Switzerland

Dear Colleagues

Our thanks to the organisers here and to the interesting contributors input thus far.

We *welcome* this opportunity to share our latest initiatives in promoting teacher training online at a practical level. Whilst we are sensitive to the limitations of the digital divide, and the key importance of involving end-users in sharing our teacher training films and courses, there are many commonalities of interest and instances of good practices that can be shared online. In response to requests for teacher training via our helpline and the World Dyslexia Forum we coordinated last year, we created tools for teachers as follows below that address both the questions raised. Our courses are prototypes for adaptation to local linguistic and cultural requirements. With teams of international experts in literacy and specific learning difficulties, headed by a Scientific Advisory Committee, Dyslexia International has created the following for use by teacher putting Inclusion into practice:

- Free quality online learning courses for teachers, and a free printable book versions, now being simplified further for those teachers who have minimal/no official teacher training.
- The course, *Basics for teachers - Dyslexia: How to identify it and what to do* is available in English, French with Portuguese, German, - Arabic and other languages to follow.
- The accompanying film on teaching pupils who risk marginalisation, `*Comment tresser une structure d'accompagnement solide* ?` also in English, French and German
- The highly commended BBC half hour training film *Language Shock ...*which spells out the importance of good teaching - countering bullying and exclusion.
- The Dyslexia International e-Campus now in production will offer free quality resources for teachers including courses, online conferencing, tutorials, films, books and films. These presentations given by international teaching experts at the World Dyslexia Forum are available on our website.

Referring to the films mentioned above, the principles of teaching literacy to reduce drop out are demonstrated showing:
- the importance of age appropriate materials that relate to the students experience or are of particular interest and motivation
- the importance of a non-punitive approach, on the contrary an encouraging attitude on all occasions
- a structured programme that allows re-visiting lessons that were not fully understood
- a multi-sensory approach whereby the teacher presents the lesson with visual, audio and other modes of materials so that those with weakness in processing information in either modality are given fair chance
- giving the students the opportunity to present in class what they are interested in - to share their motivation and enthusiasm to learn.

We work with teachers in all five regions and welcome hearing from colleagues interested in making free and fair education available for all and equal opportunities for those who struggle with reading and writing.

Best regards

Dyslexia International -

Judith Sanson
Chair of the Board of Directors
DYSLEXIA INTERNATIONAL
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Dear Colleagues,

While the issue of education quality is multi-faceted, there is a strong consensus on the centrality of 'teachers' and 'teaching' in achieving quality and relevancy in education. Yet factual and statistical evidence continues to show numerous factors hinder successful teaching practice across the globe. Some of the issues have been raised in previous contributions, but I would like to re-emphasize the importance of education governance, as noted in this e-discussion by Dr. Francis Sathya from Plan International and Dr. Inder Sud of George Washington University. The manifestations of poor governance are multiple: classroom overcrowding, poorly maintained primary schools, poor working conditions, teacher absenteeism, and the lack of textbooks and supplies. Poor governance undermines the quality of teaching, particularly in the context of restricted resources.

The linkages between governance and educational quality are what prompted Transparency International, the global anti-corruption movement, to undertake field research and advocacy targeting primary education in various countries across Africa. Some of this research has been produced in a report (http://www.transparency.org/publications/publications/other/africa_education_watch) and additional findings will be released shortly. What this work has shown is the importance of improving the transparency and accountability for how primary education resources are used and schools are managed in order to have better education outcomes. Further research by TI, drawing on this data which covers more than 300 schools, reveals that schools which are accountable to parents, school management committees and other government bodies are likely to be schools that are better run. Moreover, there is positive correlation between more accountable and better performing schools. (http://www.transparency.org/publications/publications/other/mdg_report).

Findings from TI that will be released shortly present risk maps on the governance gaps in the education sector in 3 sub-Saharan countries. While some countries suffer major problems at the national level, where the allocation of budgets to schools is untransparent and the accountability structures weak, other countries have weak implementation and monitoring systems at the district level. Problems at school level are exacerbated by lack of capacity of school governing boards to implement and monitor budgets and by a poor participation of users in school matters. Approaches to address these weaknesses vary from policy changes to strengthened accountability structures including regular inspections at district level and capacity building and empowerment at school and community levels.

Governance clearly relates to teaching: Professional criteria, systems and regulations for the teaching profession is essential to recruit (and maintain) the best teachers. Merit-based appointments, fair-wage salaries and good working conditions would help to elevate the status of the teaching profession, which would be reinforced through the availability of professional development opportunities that benefit teachers and their students. Effective control and oversight mechanisms and more participation and demand from users would also contribute to an environment where quality teaching is appreciated and enforced. Finally, the financial costs of poor governance systems and corruption limit the already scarce resources that could be invested in improving teaching.

Best Regards,
Ms. Chantal Uwimana
Director of the Africa and Middle East Department
Transparency International

Dear colleagues,

Administration of the education system is based on optimization of complexity of diverse priorities, opportunities and limitations. It is good to assume social and political stability in the country, availability of sufficient resources and established commitment to achieve the ultimate goal of universal primary education; and then to think about the teaching force as one of the most important factors determining the quality of school education. However the diversity of the each country conditions pushes us to search each time for a specific category of balances and to overcome a big variety of resource constraints.

In this regard, and echoing the ideas discussed with colleagues in different countries, I would like to call to focus our discussion on common issues on how to produce and maintain competent teaching staff with adequate qualifications, how to organize appropriate training and support, how to manage sufficient remuneration and satisfactory working conditions for teachers within budget constraints.

I agree with the colleagues in this e- discussion who propose to reflect on the education system management as public sector management with some elements of the private sector. Therefore obtainable (including financial, human and physical) resources should be managed in such proper way.

First of all, we need teacher development policy as part of the country education policy and with legislative basis. It should be a strong commitment of the government, public and other stakeholders to have qualified teachers for quality education. Within the context of limited public resources, governments have to ensure the most prudent use of their funds. Sound management of such funds requires rules, regulations, procedures and analyses. These all applies to the teacher development policy and its budget also.

We have to identify the quality of existing teachers from the beginning of their career. They should be registered and employed on the basis of professional merit as proven by competitive examinations (theoretical and practical). Certain procedures have to establish such examination systems while paying strict attention to the anti-corruption measures (e.g. public examination; institute diploma; certification; and so on).

The accurate estimation and mid/long-term projection of the needs for teachers' recruitment and/or deployment, professional and material conditions should inform the planning pre-service and in-service teacher training systems as the next step. This should be an exercise to coordinate and pull together all (government, private, donor and other) training resources and funds to implement such plans. No single training on side without this coordination (a good practice would be the initiative lead by the World Bank in Timor Leste in 2005).

A National Teacher Task Force (NTTF) can be formed (including Head of State, public figures, mass-media and Teachers' Union representatives, teachers, parents, and other education stakeholders) for coordination and to keep the work public and transparent. NTTF should strengthen mechanisms for social dialogue in education by means of information sharing, consultation and negotiation on policies, financing, and teaching/learning conditions that ensure full participation of teachers, their organizations and other educational stakeholders in key reform decisions. The hot issues of the teachers' profession starting from provision of required respect, recognition and rewards to teachers should be on its agenda and implementation actions.

Sufficient remuneration is most difficult part where the Government should put maximum efforts if they want to build the wealth of their nation. Monetary compensations can be supported by other social incentives and rewards (e.g. free land provision to build a house, free public transport tickets, subsidies for paying communal charges, a goat/cow for teacher's family, and many other examples). The most rewards – honorary citizenship, Nations Teacher title and other ranks coming with additional honorary.

However, remuneration of teachers should be correctly linked to improving teacher performance. As it mentioned in ADB study "Hanushek (1994) observes that education systems routinely and worldwide pay for two teacher characteristics not positively associated with student achievement: qualification and experience. Indian experience confirms that proxies for teacher quality - such as type of certification, pre-service education, or salary - typically are not related to student learning achievement." (Kingdon 1995) In further agreement, a 1997 World Bank report notes that teachers' experience has not been found to be an important predictor of student achievement in the major empirical studies.

However, studies of learning achievement among primary school students have often linked low achievement to weaknesses of teachers' poor subject mastery (traced to weak general and pre-service education), limited teaching skills (traced to inadequate pre- and in-service training), and high absenteeism (traced to poor motivation and working conditions). Teachers' lack of subject mastery (not necessarily reflected in official qualification certification) is a major concern reported in the [World Bank] Country Sector Studies. Teachers simply may not understand the content they are obliged to teach. This is apparently attributed to various factors, including a weak or incomplete secondary education and pre-service training curriculum that omits advanced subjects…

Strategies to improve teaching and learning are likely to include upgrading skills of teachers by upgrading pre-service or in-service teacher training. Issues pertaining to current pre-service programs include the amount of general education, the duration, and the proportion of time devoted to classroom demonstration and practice. Teachers, themselves, are aware of the inadequacy of pre-service training." (quoted from David Chapman and Don Adams "The Quality of Education: Dimensions and Strategies". 2002. Asian Development Bank and the University of Hong Kong - retrieved from http://www.adb.org/documents/books/education_natldev_asia/quality/prelims.pdf).

The Ministry of Education should build appropriate support to the teachers from their first entrance to the school (a good example of this work is the EU produced [Handbook for Policy Makers on the induction of beginning teachers](#)). It must incorporate "creating a more responsive, supportive and enabling environment for teacher's life-long learning that gives the teacher the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and learn new teaching methods that are emerging" as contributed by Mr. Clement Siamatowe, UNESCO. This support system should be available 24/7 for all cases whenever teacher needs to "upgrade" their knowledge and skills, including ICT-based solutions (inclusive of social media), teacher self-training toolkits, other sources in the school/ministry library, consultation hot-lines in response to new patterns of education governance and management, new kinds of students, new theories of teaching and learning, and new technologies. Master teacher trainers' help and coaching, availability of attending master-classes, peer learning, parent and community involvement are a modest selection of available options for developing this support system.

In terms of improving teacher performance, constant focus must be on content and delivery of skills during pre-service and in-service training programs. Teacher also should be equipped with tools for continuous diagnosis, evaluation, and feedback in the classroom and school with student/parental involvement and support. They have to know how to organize "self-check" learning outcomes and teach these skills to the students. Peer review and team spirit should be involved in the class activities to control learning achievements.

Success of teachers' management directly depends on the daily results of well-trained middle-level managers – district education administration and school principals (head-teachers). They share responsibility for creating and maintaining satisfactory working conditions for teachers; school-wide staff development; sustaining stability and continuity of key staff. They are obliged to provide more accountability, more change, more excitement and more support to teachers as front-liners working with teachers in the school and assure district-level support for school improvement. The Government should encourage them to raise level of innovation, speed of decision making, support teachers opportunity to grow, provide rewards to teachers, and pace of new technology adoption.

As we discuss the issue of the economic and financial constraints which have required governments to adopt cautious policies on public expenditure, including for education, I would like to propose here some measures to enhance teachers' professional services within a context of budget constraints:

- Networking of teachers should assemble them with professionals in their field (no limits – world-wide, regional, country and district –wise); this will help to maintain exchange of experiences and best practices, finding common solutions and sharing resources;

- Shared teacher training centers and services to maximize use of existing knowledge within teacher life-long learning system, e.g. cascade teacher training to enlarge pull of the master teacher trainers; mobile teacher resource center rotating between schools in the district; short term swap of the experienced head/teacher (to get a help in the class) with inexperienced one to learn from experienced colleagues; shared support staff, resources and materials and other models of collaboration.

- Introduction of new teaching methods and systems, and governance in schools (school-based management) should increase impact on quality within the existing budget frame.

- Modernization of the financial function – switching to MTEF - multiannual budgets based on solid and indisputable forecasts should optimize the budget allocation and spending by the government, including expenditures related to the teachers.

- The bigger the bureaucracy, the harder it is to get decisions made at all, much less quickly and less costly. Implementation of administrative simplification to reduce the administrative burden in school and investment in IT modernization can create continuous new opportunities for education administrations of all levels.

- Introduction of best models in personnel management practiced in the private schools (appointing, dismissing teachers, determining teachers' salary increases and establishing teachers' starting salaries) can help to retain qualified teachers in the public school (see comparison details in "School Factors Related to Quality and Equity. Results from PISA 2000". OECD. 2005. http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/15/20/34668095.pdf) .

Some other measures should be taken from the public administration practices done in the healthcare and social welfare sectors (many sources can be found in many agencies publications).
I am sure that we all feel the topic of our discussion is very much desirable and timely, I think the discussion should be continued by UNESCO in one of the future studies, forums and conferences. We can come up with many more proposals and useful recommendations to help to our teachers and students.

As to which interventions are most effective for retaining secondary-age students in school by preparing them with a foundation for lifelong learning and for labour market participation? Regarding the second topic of discussion I would like to suggest to read an interesting study "Staying on at school: Improving student retention in Australia" done by the State of Queensland (Department of Education and the Arts) in 2004. http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/studentretention_main_file.pdf

Thank you to the organizers and participants for this forum and opportunity to share.
Alisher Umarov
Programme Specialist for Education
UNESCO Moscow

Dear Colleagues,

My contribution is related to the first question: in a context with resource constraints, how teachers training and working condition can be improved? I would like to refine this to say "how can the teacher performance improve for the benefit of students"? From my experience, transparency and accountability will be the key conditions to get teachers committed to do their best in lesson delivery for the benefit of students. Actually to get people involved into the implementation of an assignment, in a hard working condition without reward, the following minimum conditions are required so that teachers may accept self-sacrifice and execute the requested work:

- On the transparency side, people need: to be well informed about , and agree with the objective of the assignment / the program they are going to undertake; to know the real amount or quantity of resources allocated to the work.
- On the accountability side they will request regular feedback on the work progress as well as the financial situation related.

Unfortunately, transparency and accountability remain huge challenges to address in our countries at all levels (school, district, regional, national). Therefore, the role of beneficiaries (Parents) and civil society (PTAs, Teachers association, local NGOs), are equally important in making service providers/policy makers accountable. The civil society (teachers association, local NGOs, ...) are relevant actors but their effectiveness will depend on their capacity to raise funds (again the necessity of financial resources), or their level of commitment which is linked to their level of interest.

Among the various stakeholders, parents are the ones with the highest interest on their children education. Unfortunately, most of them don't understand the school system and some may not trust it. Their lack of trust in the benefit of classic education is based on the high rate of youth unemployment evident in the economy. It would be good to link basic education to employment challenges, with more innovative learning, vocational skills acquisition and make children operational for employment at each level of the school cycles (including the 1st step: BECE where the dropout rate is elevated). Doing something about it will help to increase parents interest to school. This, combined with enhancing Parents/PTAs skills in advocacy, may equip them to gradually request accountability from service providers and policy makers.

Ernestine Sanogo
Advisor / Education
SNV Ghana

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you so much for initiating these debates. These kind of stakeholder involvement is crucial if standards on such crucial issues are to be settled.

Quality of teaching is of utmost importance. Having been associated with teachers for so long, here are my observations: Teacher trainings should be mandated requirement for any educational institution be it a Government /private educational institution. Committed teachers wherever they are always strive to deliver quality teaching; main issue arises for educators who join the profession without 'a prior calling' or commitment. This is why while issuing license to operate for any teaching institution it is necessary to ascertain that they invest in capacity building the staff that they recruit for delivering quality education. Also it is necessary to agree on what constitutes 'Quality'. For many, quality is producing a 100% pass rate for students in examinations conducted. There is no one standard agreed system on modes of testing and this makes quality a very subjective issue on the ground. Beyond providing the basic knowledge, imparting critical thinking abilities, problem solving skills etc. are always cited as delivering a quality education, but are very rarely stressed upon or ascertained.

If I may I would like in this context to share my experience from Abu Dhabi with running a Sustainable schools initiative (www.ead.ae / sustainable schools initiative) organized by the Environment Agency- Abu Dhabi with support from Abu Dhabi Education Council. Training of trainers is one of four important component under this initiative that all registered schools must adhere to. Schools that have registered must send their teachers for trainings which are either conducted by us or by any other organizations as long as the training deals with sustainability issues. Schools can also call in resource persons to conduct trainings in their own school. Secondly proof must also be shown on how effectively the training was shared with all the teachers in the school, in addition to demonstrating evidence of integration for the lessons learnt from any such trainings. On behalf of the Agency we provide resource materials to

teachers in the form of books and downloadable materials. It is during these trainings that teachers from both government and private schools are networked and discussions and discourses are generated and shared for improving quality of delivery. So far this has worked well to increase the quality of education provided.

Regards
Gayatri Raghwa
Deputy Manager , Environment Education
Environment Agency- Abu Dhabi

Dear Colleagues,

To improve the quality of teaching, enough opportunity should be given to teacher trainees to experience good teaching. For instance, instead of the one-shot (13 weeks) teaching practice programme for the students doing the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) programme and two contacts of 12 weeks each for the first degree students as we have in Teacher Education programme in Nigeria; teacher trainees should go to schools and observe teachers teach for at least two weeks of every other month in a semester. They should be made to write a report on their observations vis a vis strength and weaknesses as well as suggest ways the teachers observed can improve their teaching.

In addition teacher educators should show examples of best practices they expect from their students in terms of using apt methods (Learner-centred methods) and resources.   This can be facilitated by retooling teacher educators on the use of the learner-centred methods and resources. This suggestion is based on data emanating from research in Nigeria that show that teacher-educators predominantly use the teacher-centred methods/ frontal teaching and the main instructional resource they use is the textbook. Retooling is necessary to make them move away from the teacher-centred methods to using the learner-centred methods, using ICTs as medium, and encouraging interactive activities in teaching etc. Teacher educators can be retooled through in-house seminars/workshops, networking, peer tutoring and peer evaluation of teaching. This will reduce cost as most of these will be done within the school environment and without disrupting teaching.

There is need to adhere to the teacher-student ratio specified in the policy in order to enhance learning and retention. When class sizes are unwieldy students hardly learn and this affects attendance, performance and retention. There is also the need to establish quality control and monitoring units in all education institutions, members of the unit will monitor quality teaching and provide practical inputs that will influence the practices of teachers thereby having a spill-over effect on learners' performance. In the same vein, there is need for each secondary school to encourage peer reviews of teaching in order to support reflective practice among teachers as well as facilitate good teaching.

Furthermore, in Nigeria each institute/ faculty of education and similar institutions that train teachers have a Centre/ Unit for Educational Technology, rather than emphasizing theory, the unit should engage teacher trainees in the actual production of resources and software for teaching their subject areas. This assertion is based on the fact that learning is fast and retention high when learners are able to concretize concepts taught; the only way to encourage this is through the use of teaching resources which should include ICT resources. If teachers while in training are actually taught how to develop or manufacture these resources and made to use them while teaching in practice, effective teaching and

learning will take place. Doing this will not only make the teachers resourceful but will deepen their understanding of their subject.

On intervention measures to be introduced to enhance retention, there is need for subjects in the curriculum to be made relevant to the student's immediate environment and needs. In addition, there is need to create different options to secondary education of both the formal and the non-formal type to create increased opportunity for people to enroll and remain in school even when they engage in some economic activities. There is also need for secondary education - labor market linkage to be established, especially for learners that may not proceed (immediately) to the tertiary level. This calls for the full implementation of technical and vocational education curriculum at this level.

Other measures that can enhance retention of students in secondary school include:

- Change in the methodology of teaching from teacher centered to active learning, collaborative learning strategies.
- Modifying the school calendar to suit the environment: for instance in Nigeria, the people are predominantly farmers and during the farming season parents require farm hands to plant the crops. Also, during harvest season they need more hands in the farm to harvest and sell the products before they perish. The implication is that if the school calendar does not allow these students to be on holiday during this period their parents must withdraw them from school. Hence the need to re-adjust the school calendar in such a way that the holiday periods align with the planting and harvest periods. Additionally the school day needn't always start from 8am daily in local communities in order to accommodate major market day's when parents need their children and wards to help market their farm products. This measure stems from research findings on causes of drop out that show that if the hours schools open daily do not take into cognizance the factors discussed above, punctuality, attendance, retention and achievement will be adversely affected.
- The issue of language of instruction should be addressed as the primary cause of high drop out in Nigeria is language failure. When a child does not follow instruction due to linguistic problems and cannot participate in class activities because he/she has not mastered the forms/structure of the language of school instruction schooling becomes meaningless.
- The state of most of our schools is another factor that contributes to high attrition as the environment is not conducive- the classrooms are in very poor shape and learners are exposed to the hazards of the weather. If school buildings are made more habitable and learner friendly, with enough resources like portable water, sanitation, desks and seats, enough learning and teaching resources for learners to use; more students will be retained.

Dr Angela Chinasa Izuagba (Reader)
Department of Curriculum Studies ,
Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education,
Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria

Dear Colleagues,

ATD Fourth World firmly supports the use of improved dialogue to establish trust-based relationships between teachers and the poorest families, making greater use of populations' skills and knowledge to incorporate them into education and training teachers to be more aware of the world of extreme poverty.

We work closely with people living in extreme poverty think it is important to provide the concept of "an education for all" in a context suited to each country. The challenge is not to deliver a standard volume of educational instruction to the greatest number of pupils, but to extend the education provided from within the community and encourage a more open attitude to school education. Increased school enrolment rates will not be the sole indicator; detailed assessments must also be made of the progress of relations between populations and stakeholders in the educational system. This will require a policy of intensive discussions between educational institutions, teachers and populations, in order to agree to adjustments to curriculum content and timing. The hardest task remains improving ties between stakeholders in the educational system and the most disadvantaged population groups. The problems are partly to do with resourcing, but their roots lie mainly in relationships and teaching content. In order to successfully bring knowledge to the most disadvantaged groups, stakeholders in the education system need to enhance their dialogue with them and recognize parents as vital partners in their children's success. Teachers' attitudes are therefore critical. They need to learn about the world of extreme poverty as part of their training, so they understand that if a child's homework has not been done, perhaps it is because of a lack of electricity at home, or a need to work to help the family or that a child may miss a day's school as a result of not having eaten properly for a number of days, or if a family member has fallen sick. Without such concrete insights into extreme poverty, teachers will struggle to keep the doors of the classroom open to children from families in need, and to provide them with the support and encouragement needed to succeed at school.

To promote genuinely free school for all, also means keeping necessary books and supplies as cheap as possible and providing well-balanced meals and affordable transport to school. We think that striking a balance between community education and school education is very important. The challenge is to improve relations between schools and populations living in extreme poverty. The first form of education is received from parents, family and community. The influence of such education echoes strongly throughout all accounts, but at times it comes into conflict with the values promoted by educational establishments. It is no surprise to find signs of resistance, mainly in the form of pupils ceasing to attend school. Yet, if schools were to cease denigrating traditional forms of education, they could play a pivotal role in easing the tension between tradition and modernity. However, the quality of the education provided is often very low and in order to accelerate the growth of schooling and drive down costs, teacher training and salaries are also often very poor. Genuinely free primary and secondary school provision would be of great assistance to parents who sacrifice everything to ensure that their children can attend school.

Marie-Claude Allez
International Movement ATD Fourth World

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you very much for initiating such a useful and very timely discussion.

It is true that the quality and working conditions of teachers in many developing countries are of serious concern. As far as the training is concerned, it is paramount to ensure that all certified and trained teachers do maintain the minimum certain standard. No compromise should be made for the fulfilment of the minimum standards. It is equally important to devise a cost-effective refreshment programme for different categories of teachers to ensure continuous education for teachers. To substantiate my point and argument, I was closely following up the evaluation for the overall quality of education in the first-cycle primary education (Grade 1 – 4) delivered through the formal channel and alternative (formerly called non-formal) channel in one locality in Ethiopia. One of the critical findings is that the performance of teachers in alternative basic education programmes was so productive, result-oriented and better than the teachers in the formal schools despite their comparatively lower educational background. Teachers in formal schools are supposed to complete Grade 12, and then proceed through a one year course at the teachers training institute. Whereas, teachers under alternative education programmes are drop-outs from grade 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12, but go through an initial 3 month intensive training programme and then join the alterative basic education centres for teaching. They are supported by quarterly 3 – 5 days intensive refreshment training organized at centralized locations. Among other things, one of the critical factors for the stronger performance of the alternative basic education programme teachers is the continuous refreshment training programme. So devising a creative refreshment programme can significantly add the value in terms of enhancing quality of teachers at all levels. Apart from refreshment programme countries can also devised cost-effective medium and long-term career development programme for different categories of teachers to ensure sustainable teaching quality improvement.

As we speak of cost-effectiveness mechanisms and approaches, we can think of: (a) highly localized period training programme organized in one central location for a group of localities; (b) introduction of training courses through the radio and/or TV transmission which can easily cover wide area and large number of teachers/trainees; (c) introduction of on-line training courses through the use of internet; (d) introduction and implementation of continuing and distance education (also linked to career development) and so on. It is worth noting that training should equally pay attention to teaching methodologies, approaches and pedagogical aspects as subject matter training. Likewise, it is important to connect training with incentive and motivational mechanisms through devises and implementation of variety and less-costly recognition mechanisms for the successful and recommended qualified teachers such as issuance of recognition letters, localized awards such as monetary and in-kind appreciation by the school administration, local government, community etc., introduction of local-based 'teacher of the year' certificate etc.

As for the improvement of the working conditions of teachers, I observed that some communities and local government at lowest community level provide additional incentives for teachers on top of standard payment or benefit packages for all teachers, such as the local communities work for free on teachers' farms, contributing labour while constructing houses, and so on. Community level government administration pays nominal additional payments, provide farm lands, easy access to purchase consumer products from the community and cooperative shops and so on. I believe a combination of such organized assistance can improve working conditions for teachers.

Returning to second question, on retention of secondary-age students in schools... in my view, the reason for high drop out rates in secondary schools is structural and mainly related to economic and cultural/social barriers, inaccessibility and distance to secondary schools. So, it is central to address the core challenge of poverty, power imbalance in society and governance issues which are detrimental to ensure sustainable human development. At the technical and operational level, programme designers may fix gaps and improve programme qualities through various mechanisms. One could be the design of relevant curriculum and teaching methodologies and approaches. It is very important to ensure that the secondary school curriculum is matched with the foundation for lifelong learning and acquiring basic skills at secondary and post-secondary education levels.

In addition to various interventions from the supply side, it might be important to work on the demand-side; making the labour market/employers seek and adhere to certain minimum standards while recruiting. Some programmatic linkages between secondary-age students and labour market/employers unions through orientation, apprenticeship, internship etc. may retain or motivate students to stay in school until completion of secondary-school programmes. Strong collaboration and partnership between the education centres/institutions and employers/labour market on the promotion of retaining secondary-age students in school could really make difference improving retention.

Thank you very much for offering me the opportunity to share my views, and I look forward to learning from other colleagues.

Best Regards,
Girma Hailu
MDG Support Country Advisor
UNDP-Ethiopia

Dear Colleagues,

Linda Parton takes up the important question on why some children are not in school. In addition to the issue of physical accessibility, which will be part of the next round of discussion, it seems important to raise the issue of social barriers here, in particular the stigma and prejudices that children with disabilities face and that cause them to be hidden by families and communities. Many children with disabilities are "made invisible" and therefore go unnoticed if there is no pro-active effort to ensure that they are included in education efforts. Increasing awareness amongst teachers about social barriers seems paramount in closing the gap for those children that are not in school.

There is further mention of the need for legislation on teacher appointment. It is important that the provisions/criteria for teacher appointments to not discriminate persons against with disabilities by prescribing a standard of fitness or ability that amounts to the exclusion of persons with disabilities from becoming teachers. An important part in ensuring that children with disabilities receive education, through accessible mainstream schools, is that they have role models to follow. Additionally, teaching is a field where persons with disabilities frequently face discrimination based on discriminatory requirements and/or practices that prevent them from teaching despite having acquired the necessary qualifications.

The awareness of teachers of the multiple dimensions that accessibility has, not only for but particularly in ensuring the inclusion of children with disabilities is crucial. Referring to access is not just a question

of removing physical barriers such as inaccessible steps and making sure that bathrooms are built accordingly, the communications aspect is important, too. While curricula will discuss the development of speech and language and some of the challenges that children may face, it is important to keep in mind the wide variety of communications barriers: partially sighted and blind children, hearing impaired and deaf children, children who are non-verbal or have limited vocabulary. This extends over to intellectual barriers, not only children with intellectual impairments benefit from easy-to-read and other more accessible formats.

The principle of inclusion, if applied from the planning stages, which includes teacher education and appointment (see above) does not add significant cost. In applying it, it is important that all future teachers learn and understand the principle of inclusion and not just a select few who are educated separately to become "special ed" teachers. The support and understanding of all teachers is necessary to achieve inclusive education, which will benefit not only the children with disabilities but all children.

Warm regards,

Marianne Schulze
Human Rights Consultant

Dear Colleagues,

First I would like to thank everyone responding in this e-discussion and especially MDG-Net for hosting the discussion. Special thanks to Dr. Clinton Robinson for bringing up the black box problem. He asks, "where, then, is the disconnect?" (between teacher training and practice). I, too, have observed vast discrepancies between statistics boasting impressive accomplishment in new and broadly disseminated ECE programs and practice of the professed techniques. This is not the fault of the teacher trainers, nor is the fault of the teachers.

No matter how beautifully appointed the learner-centered classroom, no matter how well-informed the teacher, it is not much service if the teacher-student relationship is based in the teacher-centered paradigm. Indeed, resolving the problem of the disconnect became my main focus, especially since the NGO I worked with was investing so much in delivering high-quality Montessori teacher training courses to marginalized women living in impoverished conditions. We had impressive numbers, but reality revealed problems in the teacher/student relationship - mainly that there was no sign of learner-centered teaching, it was all teacher-centered. If the investment of our efforts was to be upheld, we needed to solve the problem.

What we are facing is what Dr. Montessori discovered, that the adult must experience a personal transformation in order to successfully determine how best to set up and maintain a nurturing learning environment so to facilitate each child as a unique learner. This transformation is both easily and not easily accomplished. However, Montessori teacher training programs for the most part seem to produce the transformation, so Dr. Montessori must have had an idea of how to facilitate the transformation, although the process is not made clear. So, I observed and studied Montessori teacher training segments for years before I was able to isolate the transformational aspects, which, by the way, are mostly housed in the relationship between trainer and student.

After many trials, my colleague and I were able to create a simple, yet highly effective, transformational learner-centered teacher training program with an ECE emphasis. The difference this new course made in our students was like night and day. In addition to increasing student (of the teacher training) retention, the sincerity of studies and quality of homework assignments were radically improved. Signs of teacher-centeredness became evident in the questions and comments made during the workshops and in their classroom children's substantial increase in self-discipline toward studies and in collaboration with peers.

We call the program Optimal Learning Environments (aka The Nature of Nurture). OLE is a stand-alone transformational grassroots teacher training course that can also be attached to more specialized programs. We have used OLE in orphanage worker training courses; for secondary school teachers that were transitioning to a more learner-centered format; to accompany Montessori teacher training courses for birth to six-years; in schools for children with social and learning issues (many of whom were diagnosed with autism and schizophrenia).

Each participant in an OLE program immediately also becomes a workshop-leader, expected to enlist and replicate each segment of the course in her/his own community, thus providing a means for sustainability and program development (think of it as each one teaches ten). Although this course has not yet been widely implemented, it is designed for vast growth in a countrywide or country cluster manner. NGO workers can take the course and become course supervisors, replicating the course segments during their visits to rural communities. They can also facilitate communications. As part of the training, participants work in groups of two or more to open and run an ECE program in their own community. In the beginning, the ECE programs can lack much in classroom resources (venue, shelving, meaningful manipulatives, furniture, etc.) however, the workshops provide continual acceleration toward improving means and quality. With the help of community participation, government involvement, and NGOs, the classrooms will improve.

OLE curriculum includes a Montessori overview of the nature of learning, the difference between learner-centered and teacher-centered instruction, human development (physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially) from birth to adult, communication skill development, curriculum development, and how to create and maintain effective learning environments. Professors from teacher training colleges might be encouraged to attend the workshops in order to use it as a foundation to help design and deliver grassroots Primary and Secondary teacher training courses for participants who wish to work with older children in participant's communities.

Nancy Williams, Ed.D.
President
Montessori Phoenix Projects

Dear Colleagues

The NGO – UNESCO Joint Program Commission "Eradication of Poverty, particularly Extreme Poverty" established six documents in close relation to the demand from different sectors of the Organisation in the framework of the Mid-term Strategy 2002 – 2007, was taken in 2001-2002. It is also the result of the conjunction between the information provided by the UNESCO's Program Specialists relating to the cross-cutting and inter-sectoral theme, MDG 1, and by national NGOs or local branches, telling the Commission the results of grassroots experiences.

Non-formal education & training, as a complement for formal education, can help to overcome the lack of teachers and resources. Partnerships with the decision makers, role of the family while respecting the elders, can provide parents a role in teaching appearing to their children as respected people, even if they are illiterate. Teachers' training for a quality education, could integrate, for basic education at least, the mother tongue, in order to well or better understand the concepts. TIC-innovation-handicraft and creativity, speak about solutions which are locally implemented, to answer and overcome the problems of disadvantaged people.

The Commission tried, from the analysis of local good practices, linked with the priorities and programs of UNESCO, and with the respect of Human Rights, to propose some basic principles that could lead toward more equity respectful of every human being's dignity.

Using local skills and local materials, in order to build the tools for a quality education, has delivered better results in drawing the attention of students, from early childhood. Using games to approach the basic concepts is also an efficient and fruitful training; in addition, the student/teacher relationship is completely different and supports the children who really wish to continue studying, finish the Primary level and graduating to Secondary education (links between formal education and non-formal education, as it is sometimes the case, can be a very good help).

The working document (original in French available), aims to show how education linking literacy, training, job to earn and manage its own life, is a mean to fulfill personal development, respectful of cultural diversity, and, by the way, sustainable development and a culture of peace, what is the dream of every human being, even rich or poor.

Thank you, for giving a voice to NGOs in the framework of this e-consultation.
Sincerely yours,

Janine Marin
International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP)
Representative to UNESCO,
President of the NGO-UNESCO Joint Program Commission "Eradication of Poverty"

Dear Colleagues

We are pleased to share this brief contribution on behalf of the Education for Rural People initiative.

Inherent in MDG 2 is the need to provide equal educational opportunities for all. In the current context of resource constraints it is necessary where possible to target investment with the aim of reducing the urban-rural education quality gap. The urban-rural knowledge and education divide is a main barrier in achieving universal primary education (MDG 2) by 2015. The 2009 UNESCO Global Monitoring Report indicates that four out of five of the at least 72 million out of school children are rural. Quality remains a critical foundational aspect of any advances in education for rural areas and quality concerns needs to address national capacity to implement education programs to address learning needs of rural people and overcoming the gap. Education will allow for improvements in capacity and productivity of rural people, increases in income and food security, and connects people to the local economy enhancing livelihoods.

Quality in education for rural people depends on many factors: facilities, teachers, materials, evaluation system, leadership, adequate curriculum and community links. Under FAO's guidance, ERP has developed a tool kit that provides quality education and training materials for rural teachers, technicians, instructors, trainers, parents, researchers, extension workers and others involved in formal and non-formal education for rural people. The Tool Kit is a collection of manuals, guidelines, best practices, web portals and e-learning courses, tools for self-studies, agricultural videos. With more than 500 good practices and courses collected and evaluated; they have been published and are now available for on-line consultation.

As creative example of where quality education has been implemented is interactive learning in India. With the financial support of Give2Asia, the Agastya International Foundation created and implemented an innovative educational programme using mobile science laboratories to reach remote schools in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Each mobile lab reaches around 30,000 students a year. The teachers proposed funny and simple experiments with low-cost everyday materials and supplies to demonstrate varied scientific principles. The sessions took place in the villages in school buildings, under the trees or in the open air during good weather. Not only does the programme attract school children and their teachers, but also parents, day labourers and other villagers often participate. The mobile science labs visit most schools on a weekly basis over a period of several weeks to maintain some level of continuity. The learning is hands-on and deductive, encouraging creative thinking and problem solving. Evaluations of the programme have indicated there has been a great deal of change in the attitudes students have about learning. Children and parents seem to take a new interest in school and education in general and teachers become more motivated and are experiencing new ways of teaching. This model for science education is affordable and can be replicated anywhere in the world.

Regards,

Cesare Maramici
Agricultural Education, Knowledge and Information Specialist
Food and Agriculture Organization

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your invitation to share on access to education.

My experience of living and working 10 years among the grassroots of India prompt me to respond to your request for knowledge sharing about access to education. Medical Mission Sisters at the programmatic level choose to live among the illiterate Dalits (Untouchables) to inform our programmes by being close to their reality. Amongst many initiatives we have organized women and started microfinance ventures to educate and motivate women to educate their children. What we have found is that as their money grew, they started to invest in their children's education. Meanwhile we also organized adult education programs in the village with the help of volunteers. "Each one, teach one" was a motto used for adult education.

Non-formal techniques like puppet show, street drama, songs etc. were conducted in villages as part of awareness building. Incentives were provided to parents who sent their children to school and special prizes given to students who performed well. With the help of an educated youth we started a nursery school right in the middle of the village bringing increased access to early childhood education.

The experience of early childhood education brought about interest in education not only to the students but also to the parents. Parents were proud to hear their children speaking English words which they could not dream of. NGOs/ private sector can act as a stimulant for early childhood education which is a strong base and a factor in motivation for higher education. 100% children in that village and nearby villages were sent to school. Today after several years I am glad to say many of them are professionally trained (teachers, nurses, police, social workers and two of them have even completed PhD and are college professors) and motivate others to study and has become role models among the Dalits!

A free tuition program for school going students in the church premises for two hours every evening with half an hour play was another method used to ensure study as most families did not have access to electricity in their homes. Cultural programs by the children attracted the parents and this provided the opportunity to raise awareness with the entire population. Special training was conducted in several villages for school dropouts as another way of getting children back to education. We targeted the children between the age of 8 to 18 specially drop out girls for special coaching. Initially we were able to make the children and their parents aware of the need for continuing education, and then we started with basics in English, Tamil (Vernacular) and mathematics. Local schools were contacted and after the entrance exam students were enrolled at the regular school and incorporated to class 5 -8 according to their capacity and age. Committed teachers offered support and encouragement to these students. Picnics and exposure to education institutions, contacts and sharing by role models composed of educated youth from similar backgrounds sharing their experience was another tool used to deepen their motivation

Free and compulsory education for all the children up to the age of 14 is a program the Government of India implements to support the children of people living in poverty. A free pass for students on public transport, midday meal programmes, nutritional advice, and provision of books, uniforms and occasionally rice to students are policy components that can be employed to alleviate poverty in rural areas. Key incentives provided by the state government (Tamil Nadu- South India) and undertaken for promoting women's education include bicycles for girls in the 12th grade and a gift of Rs.10,000 for the marriage of girls who have completed class 10. In India marriage is an expensive affair with the bride's

family has to offer a dowry. Poor parents often borrow money to marry off their daughters. In this context a sum of Rs.10,000 from the government is well appreciated by the family.

Lack of infrastructure like toilet facilities, class rooms (some classes are conducted under a tree) drinking water, long distance to school, babysitting siblings when parents work are some of the obstacles to girl's education in rural areas. Cultural taboos too are a barrier for educating girls e.g., if a girl attains puberty she is forbidden to continue her studies, early marriage and child marriages are some of the other basic hurdles facing girls in rural areas.

Informed by my experiences, suggestions that could significantly contribute to achievement of MDG2 and improve the lives of children would include:

- inclusive growth policies such as providing social protection to people living in poverty;
- educating and motivating women (motivating women to do what?);to educate their children and to discourage early marriage for girls.
- Enforcement of law for child marriages and early marriages;
- Better infra-structure especially toilet facilities;
- Schools within geographical proximity of students;
- Centers for baby care;
- Committed and efficient teachers;
- Access to decent work for all

Best regards

Celine Paramundayil
Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries
AKA Medical Mission Sisters

Dear Colleagues,

We at Hands of Love believe that technology (computers, laptops, WiFi), as well as greater importance for local infrastructure to maintain the connectivity of teachers and those who would actively seek teaching as a career, should be utilized in teaching and training future teachers. By allowing teachers to obtain better IT skills and equipment, the world opens up to a more enriched fulfilment of knowledge and ideas. This can be passed along to students who can learn through words and pictures of what the world outside of theirs is like. How this world came to be, as well as the possibility of students believing that they could accomplish this in their own world thus changing their own futures and the future of extreme poverty. We like to call this, "The Farmer Brown Theory."

It would be nice to say, "more money and better benefits" as part of better conditions, but given the current context of resource constraints there are many cases where this would be difficult to accomplish. The morale of teachers is important because in many cases teachers have a closer understanding of the students they teach. The fact that for many this might have been a life time goal, to one day help those who might be less fortunate especially teachers in extreme poverty areas.

Recognition plays a key role in teacher morale and motivation. Events, as well as the understanding of costs of even only coverage for local travel when planning such events, as well as using technology to maybe have a yearly conference for teachers where they can receive recognition can provide teacher's with a sense of satisfaction. Even just being listed as an invitee and/or attended can make an impact. Although this cannot take the place of monitory advancements for teachers that others know of their work, personal sacrifice and have included them in a type of conference or event in their individual nation; could definitely boost confidence and job satisfaction.

When we discuss secondary-age student retention I believe for some, especially children who might not attend a university or higher education as part of their future, that vocational training provision is key. Vocational training in professions that have real market value with in the local and regional context can provide a transition for students from education to workforce participation. This could include location specific occupations, even if not part of the generalized aptitude attitude of being let's say a nurse, doctor, lawyer, etc.

Best Regards,
Sister Ling
HOL GS

Dear Colleagues,

I'm unsure that everyone agrees on what is meant by "quality of teaching for learning". I have been involved in primary education (particularly literacy classes) in Francophone Africa (Morocco, Senegal, Congo, Burkina Faso), Latin America (Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia), and more recently in Bangladesh. In each instance I was always struck by the gap between the rhetoric (from academia or expert reports), generally disqualifying against teachers (well-meaning but poorly trained, routine, ignorant theories "scientific" learning) and the actual work of these teachers in local conditions. Indeed, these discourses of "discreditation" provide information on less objective reality of schools which are highly variable depending on the place and people, than on conceptions of the elite international field of primary education. The instruction considered valid, which is defined through "quality education for student learning," is one that complies with standards of Westernized schools (often private) in which the elites teach their own children.

Research done on the history of education shows that primary education is a process whose dynamism depends on relationships (conflicting or collaborative, rigid or flexible) between expectations (or explicit demands) for local school training and offers of schooling/education driven by regulators. Indeed, we must not confuse education, literacy and learning: these three processes embedded in today's schools of developed countries may be partially independent and/or disjointed (see the controversial issue of learning v. technical professionals who can/should be borne by business or the school). With regard to primary school, the authorities may be political (elected), administrative (school office, regional secretariat, Ministry of Education), religious (foundations, orders teachers), social (community meetings, philanthropic movements, NGOs). They operate either at the local level (community, district, village, town) or at higher territorial levels. The rule of "three generations" seems to hold for the European space: it takes three generations before the literacy process is irreversible in the family group. This does not mean that all group members are also enrolled in school: in each family, parents invest in those who have "more opportunities" for education. In France, it was not until the 1960s for the bourgeoisie that secondary schooling for all children was extended "as much as possible" and "as long as possible" (boys

and girls). Family strategies begin to overlap so gradually with school principles: equality of education for all (regardless of the geographical and social origin, religion, race, gender, etc.) schooling through tertiary levels, widespread use of public schools, free education, etc.

In any case, teachers are the primary interface between parents and school authorities: and institutional discourse questioning their authority weakens or ruins their opportunities. Teachers must first gain the trust of parents who send their children to school regularly or not, ensure that the parents are satisfied with how their children are taught (information, pedagogy and the teaching language). Even where there may be official requests which advocate working modes that break with older educational traditions, a teacher must take into account parent's expectations. It is thus upon local school traditions, the habits of work, standards of learning socially shared a teacher must begin to build.

An example: oral memorisation of textbooks was overwhelmingly practiced until the 1950s in primary schools in Europe, though it was no longer part of the education of institutional elites since the 1850s (rote learning, without intelligence, prevents the student to understand what they read, which is responsible for reduced academic achievement, to "know by heart, it is not to know", etc.). This form of learning is still heavily practiced in many schools in Africa and Asia, and strongly denounced as the cause of low success rates in these schools. Current discourse repeats the nineteenth century dialogue, even where they suggest other references "scientific". This form of learning has been abandoned by teachers in Latin America, even though the conditions that would have permitted recourse only to the written exercises, without literal memorisation, were rarely available in popular schools and teachers were not prepared for this change.

We could, instead advocating this type of work, understand the benefits of measuring their effectiveness, and propose complementary modes of learning requiring no preparation or special equipment (promoting non-literal rendition, in writing, etc.).

Regulators that recruit, pay and evaluate teachers, normally ensure their training manual. Training programs that I have experienced are two main types:
- they aim to "disseminate" using available options (conferences, videos, syllabi, etc.) knowledge from learning theories, hoping that teaching practices "informed" by this knowledge create positive change. Conflicts inevitably arise, because every "theoretical model" reflects only one aspect of learning, and a "mode" is soon challenged by another (teaching by principle against routine teaching, constructivist v. behaviorists; cognitive v. constructivist, etc.). The result of training programs is to change the discourse that teachers provide children and schools, and disqualify their practices without providing them new.
- they are intended to provide a model of good practice, regardless of whether they are compatible or feasible in local work conditions. These programs lead to superficial changes which are generally counter-productive. For example: placing tables of students face to face is useful when you have to do group work. However, because of overcrowding and lack of teaching materials, in small groups this is often impossible to practice.

In both cases, these options have the initial effect of discrediting existing practices and common tools of work: teachers have more confidence in themselves or in the merits of their tools (reading books, textbooks, etc.) which are rigorously tested by linguists or psychologists. The new tools are much more complex and difficult to use.

Proposals

In a context marked by restricted resources, the budget priority is to preserve teacher's salary, not the physical teaching materials (e.g. computer equipment, which can be stolen, "crash", and only work if power is available). Indeed, teachers may not feel obliged to be accountable to their employer if it pays them poorly and/or erratically. Teachers in this instance may resort to menial jobs which distract them from classes. If the employer wants to retain a say on schooling, it is to see how, in addition to wages they can ensure local communities provide teachers (often young women) with accommodation, living costs and physical safety.

Supervisors and regulators responsible for training can design brief trainings in three areas:

- How to maximize learning with the tools available (text-books present in schools, manuals etc.)? How to attract attention to the hidden resources contained in the textbooks. How do we best serve? How to acquire knowledge other than by mere recitation? The goal is to locate what can and what does not allow for this form of learning; its advantages along with its limitations.

- What activities without special equipment or heavy preparation, can be practiced in addition to regular activities conducted with the textbooks? A number of activities on the comprehension and production of texts can be gathered from collective oral work, requiring only a blackboard and chalk: texts written on the board by the master but with words or phrases missing for student completion; already learned texts to be further rediscovered or re-elaborated; texts elaborated verbally with the class group (from school experience or a commonly known fiction story, informational text developed from a scientific activity, or drafting a letter to another class etc.) and then dictated to the teacher writing on the board before the children, then copied the specifications . Ditto for many of the training activities on mental arithmetic and writing, operative techniques, patterns of problem solving standards, etc.

- How to enable the exchange of knowledge amongst teachers? Informal discussions among teachers help build professional identities and allow the transmission of knowledge. Experienced teachers can help beginners to easily solve a number of difficulties in managing the class. Two types of exchanges are possible: the most effective place after a sequence of class (the teacher who led the session can answer questions, explain their choices, etc.). If direct observation is impossible, he can present the students' productions. The other type of exchange can be done in small groups where it is possible for anyone to tell his colleagues what he does and what he feels is "good knowledge" and vice versa. Proposals for assistance and the relevant solutions are considered by the larger group and valued collectively.

- How to make visible achievements arising from work done? There are simple tools for a teacher to see and demonstrate the progress of each student. Displayed on a table or on a personal record, each student enrolled its accomplishments for the year. The teacher must choose the categories of assessment which are neither too general ("mother tongue") nor too specific ("interrogative sentences). Their use must refer to the official curriculum and be related to class work. This "objectification" of learning from the work done (rather than standardized tests) strengthens the bond of trust with students and their parents and is easily read by authorities.

Best Regards,
Anne-Marie Chartier,
Associate Researcher on Educational History
INRP

Dear Colleagues,

Teachers are often forced to contend with modest salaries, deteriorating facilities, little recognition and limited training and support. These realities will change only as humanity's fundamental priorities come to reflect a more comprehensive conception of human prosperity and well-being. Effective curricula and pedagogy are indispensable, but fundamental paradigms about the role of education, the nature of the learning process and the station of the teacher are equally important.

Education can fulfill its true purpose in the context of enabling individuals to discover and develop their inherent capacities and to enable the wider society to benefit therefrom. Teachers must come to regard each student as a "mine rich in gems of inestimable value," and must be able to discover these "gems" (including various talents and capacities) in their students and actively help to polish them. Those who selflessly arise to undertake the education and training of young minds are indeed rendering a most valuable service to their community and society as a whole. In doing so, they must come to see themselves as active agents of their own learning, seeking the support of peers, parents and community members in order to continually develop their capacities.

These are among the principles that form the basis of a decentralized system of neighborhood education that focuses on the spiritual education of children that has taken root and begun to flourish in thousands of Bahá'í communities around the world. The emphasis is on learning to think about, to reflect on, and to apply spiritual concepts (e.g. justice, equity, oneness of humankind) to the life of the individual and of society. The teachers in this system arise from the community; their training revolves around small circles of study carried out in the neighborhood or village. Their continuing education consists of ongoing consultations with other volunteer educators who meet on a regular basis to reflect on and learn from the experiences of the group. New teachers are accompanied by more experienced teachers in the early part of their service and, as they gain experience and capacity, they, in turn, can accompany others in the process.

Like the performance of teachers, retention of students hinges on fundamental questions of meaning and purpose. Lifelong learning is a noble aspiration, but this process must be connected to a sense of purpose that impels individuals to take charge of their own spiritual and intellectual growth and to contribute to the welfare of society. Young people, particularly those between the ages of 10-14, are sometimes characterized as problematic, unresponsive, self-consumed, and often lost in the throes of physical and emotional change. Yet many of these challenges ultimately stem from this group's most galvanizing qualities–their altruism, their acute sense of justice, their curiosity, and their desire to contribute to the construction of a better world.

Spiritual and moral education of young people is often divorced from intellectual and vocational training. This division stems largely from high-minded intentions of tolerance and respect. Nevertheless, all societies hold within them political, economic, and cultural interests that promote harmful and corrosive patterns of thought and behavior among young people. Developing one's ability to reflect on spiritual, moral, and ethical principles, and apply them in concrete ways is indispensable to a coherent

and meaningful education program. To the degree that young people feel that educational processes enable them to develop their capacities and enable them to improve their own condition and that of society, will they value that system and support its aims and objectives.

To address the deepest aspirations of young people, educational processes must match intellectual training with mechanisms that instill into youth a twofold moral purpose: to develop their inherent capacities and to contribute to the betterment of society. The use of communication technology, widely used by youth, can assist in developing this sense of moral purpose—young people can develop their powers of expression and become active participants in social discourses. Meaningful interaction with members of older generations can also enrich educational processes by deepening community ties and fostering exchanges that avoid the tendency to classify the younger and older generations as the uninformed and the learned.

Employment is also an important dimension of development, and one to which countless millions aspire. All must have the opportunity to earn (or if not able to earn, receive) enough to meet their needs. Yet more than simply meeting one's basic needs and generating wealth, work provides one with a role in the community and an opportunity to develop one's talents, refine one's character and render service to society.

Best,
Bani Dugal
Principal Representative
Bahá'í International Community

Dear Colleagues

When we seek to improve the work conditions of teachers, we should be aware that very few teachers like to be told what they are doing wrong. A better approach is to start with what acknowledging what has been done well. Then the teachers know that in most cases assigned to an "expert" in the best ever and I practiced teaching brings things done. In short I would suggest two key areas for consideration to improve the teachers training: appreciation of teachers work; and respect for the work which teachers as trainers may undertake.

When we seek to ensure secondary student retention the question should be approached from the student's perspective asking "why sit in the school?" One such reason may be that it is safe, welcoming and they are valued. But more importantly the education must ensure that the classroom experience is a real learning, e.g. the student has the power to discover knowledge (metacognition) and learns that where there are mistakes, there are also learning opportunities.

Best Regards,
Ceclia Cuellar

Dear Colleagues,

The conditions to improve care and the right to education for boys and girls require addressing several factors that, in our view are essential. The first is the update of training for teachers, teaching directors and public officials involved in education, in particular expanding on issues that are priorities in schools today. This includes a focus on differential rights, methodology and pedagogy, flexible education environments, gender, education in crisis contexts etc. This is essential as they are linked to the major strategies and new paradigms that as humanity we have set, such as the Millennium Development Goals MDGs, the Hyogo Framework for Action, Education for All, EFA International Strategy for Education in Emergencies, among others.

Another need identified is to think of sustainable processes, to that extent training in education should aim at two things:

- improving institutional management for teachers and principals, as well as in general for the education sector. This would complement efforts by state and local authorities (municipalities and departments in Colombia). Moreover this should address resource allocations for teacher training and refresher courses that are considered in institutional improvement plans and the plans to support the institutional improvement of educational institutions and the education ministries
- ensure that national development plans, and municipal departments provide the necessary resources to meet these new needs for materials, training and updates that require possible for teachers

From my perspective the response must be comprehensive. It would be inclusive of training teachers in specific subjects (through scholarships, competitions, meetings and management) and demonstrate a political commitment to public education consistent with the training needs of teachers in the context of the needs in providing education. Training teachers gives them the ability to improve their rankings and thus their income and quality of life, a factor also essential for the proper motivation and development of teachers' work.

How to keep students in school and prepare them for the labour market is a pertinent question in our case. It touches precisely on the crisis of the Colombian educational system, namely the lack of articulation of the elementary and secondary education and secondary technical education and vocational technology and training that is consistent with the needs of boys and girls for life long education.

I believe in the Colombian case a review of the curriculum in elementary through high school reviewing the issues related to skills development to see where education is failing, citizenship skills, communication skills, skills work, etc. is necessary. Integrative skills that are developed from the early years of school are the seed of the progressive development of skills and achievements in high school, a poorly developed skills set bring about a low self-esteem, lack of enthusiasm for study and logically consequences for the lives of the students.

These measures in addition to a curriculum review must undergo development in the process of learning and teaching methodologies and pedagogies, including 'alternative' non-traditional options that break with the traditional approaches and allow student to access full development of their autonomy and creativity, collaborative learning. Diagnostics of capacity resilient students are alternatives that allow

greater development of skills and better social integration and community world and a better integration into the labor market.

Finally that educational institutions have agreements with technical and vocational institutions that allow the student from the early years of secondary identify their profile, find their strengths, skills and knowledge and to choose their education according to their preferences.

Best,
Armando Avila Ribon
Education Advisor
UNICEF-CORPORATION LEGAL OPTION
Córdoba Colombia

Dear Colleagues,

First, it should be noted that in the context of underdeveloped countries such as Benin and most countries in sub-Saharan Africa, net enrollment rates and the gross enrollment rates were good indicators to assess the access to education for children worldwide. Given the lack of childcare facilities, depriving sometimes up to half of children in developing world the right of access to education, one can understand that an important step was to open school doors to all children, girls and boys, urban and rural areas, in disaster situations or not, poor or rich.

Quality on principle should be included itself in the definition of education and it should not be necessary to speak of quality education. All steps should be taken by states to ensure quality education for all children. But this is not the case as can be seen. The Beninese education system now faces a crucial problem in the number of teachers and non-qualified teachers (only 46% of teachers are qualified according to the statistical yearbook 2008-2009 of Ministry of Nursery and Primary Education).

Under these conditions, an effective strategy to train teachers and improve their working conditions would be:

For teacher training:
- Ongoing training for teachers on the job. Organizational arrangements of these courses will be to train trainers of trainers and develop a pool of local trainers responsible for the training of teachers in one module each quarter. This will help retain teachers in educational activities during the school years while enhancing their skills;
- Initial training for young people wishing to exercise the teaching profession. This training will be provided by both the state and by private organizations. The State will retain the role of curriculum development, inspection and certification. The State shall take the following well-defined criteria, the number of trainee teachers with the resources available;
- The State shall provide to developers of private teacher training, technical guidance and financial support to the extent of its capabilities.

To improve working conditions for teachers
- Promote community participation in improving the physical environment of schools;
- Establish mechanisms for internal funding needs for improvement of working conditions of teachers.

Effective interventions to retain students in secondary education can be achieved via various interventions, among which could include:
- Establishment of school counseling services for children who received certificates of Primary Education;
- Development of mechanisms to protect girls and other vulnerable children against violence and abuse (e.g. sexual abuse);
- Establishment of arrangements to facilitate the development of personal and collective research by both children and ICT.

This is only the first step, the work will be continued.

Deha Djossou Victorine
Learning Advisor
Plan Benin

Dear Colleagues,

In the Mexican case, which results from international and national assessments have documented, we have identified some key variables that affect the quality of education. One has to do with socio-cultural conditions, cultural capital and geographical dispersion, the schools and students. However, a comparison of the results of the national assessment of academic achievement in schools focusing on the conditions of poverty, found that schools and students achieve equal progress in levels of educational attainment. This isolates the variables, one of the factors that explain such behavior appears to be the teacher. This has been acknowledged in such a way that during 2010 it was associated with the application of economic incentives to teachers with the highest levels of achievement or those who achieved the largest improvements. The association of direct stimuli to the levels of achievement is a relatively new method in Mexico and the results are still pending, but for now teachers expectations are that that the best teachers will be recognized through the achievements of their students as measured by valid and reliable instruments.

The Carrera Magisterial program, introduced after the 1992 reform has been aimed at improving educational quality, but as demonstrated by several studies (Ornelas, 2001. Vegas and Umansky, 2005. Santibañez, et. Al. 2006. Murillo, 2006), the correlation of the program with educational quality is not significant. Although this does not mean you have failed because teachers enrolled in the program have changed their teaching practice in order to remain and become creditors to the established economic rewards. On the other hand, the Quality Schools Program has sought to empower schools by developing a school plan focused on process management. This is intended to improve education indicators which in exchange the federal government provides a number of resources proportionally to provide parents, teaching staff so they may decide on which aspects are targeted for reversals. And while the authorities have placed an emphasis on training and professionalization, it has been detected that resources are being invested in physical infrastructure improvements, purchase of furniture and ICT. Unfortunately

the initial good spirits by teachers has declined, due to the following factors: increased bureaucracy, delays in the delivery of resources, and discretion in the delivery of resources.

Far from these programs are prestigious schools, premised on traditional teaching methods which have yielded results. These have been guided by an emphasis on memorization, authoritarianism, verticality, standards compliance strict behavioral and educational work, discipline, civic, cultural and physical activities. This model in recent times has been crossed with the programs described, which have the potential, and incorporate the use of ICT leading to better results. However, a strong clash exists between the social reality of the student and school realities. It presupposes the existence of two opposite worlds, because on one hand is the social context of student and family and the student enters another reality in the school building or at school activities.

The model rooted in traditional practices, in spite of educational innovation, continues to prevail and in some cases has become dominant. In Mexico from assessments made on social programs of the Social Development Secretariat (SEDESOL), especially the specialized programmes of Oportunidades which have been successful, as reflected in enrollment, student retention, completion rate and educational equity. Oportunidades provides a number of resources to families and food pantries, to encourage children attending school and ensure they receive basic medical attention. To support these objectives it is the responsibility of the teacher or principal and the medical community to report on the participation of children. Conditional cash transfers from this program were designed to increase enrollment, retention, approval and equity in education, providing additional incentives for girls, i.e. for girls enrolled in school the scholarship is higher than those of males. But this has led to perverse incentives in rural areas within an indigenous context. The transfers are provided to mothers and this can lead to domestic violence where the husband demands for grant money allocated to other expenditures that are not related to school. The other issue is that it has encouraged young motherhood, and increased the demographic.

Although Oportunidades has been successful and has largely retained students until the completion of secondary education, graduates depending on the context, often enter the work world to migrate to the United States of America or urban settings as laborers, street vendors. However at the same time approximately 7 out of 10 exiting secondary school students entering the high school level.

Best Regards,

Rene Armando Hernández Espinosa
Head of Department
Department of Educational Research

Dear Colleagues,

Teachers education cannot be examined independent of the facts (particularly important in contexts of poverty) that over a career people are likely to have changed careers various times. (A carpenter may need a course of education to serve temporarily as a master carpenter). Where teachers are in severe demand, teacher training should be short (perhaps modular and in situ) to ensure a minimum standard before further considering other possible training and work experience that can be exploited to improve the quality of teaching.

Where the government would like to increase the stability of the teachers the government will need to address the incentives for increasing quality (through continuous training and innovation) while ensuring that these efforts are targeted at progressive improvements in achievement, rather than self-satisfaction and personal fulfillment. Notwithstanding the need for fair remuneration as an attraction for many people, in situations of poverty teaching is a work option that ensures some stability in income and a work schedule that allows other economic activities. In this context, many people (including well-trained people) see teaching as a temporary source of income. In such contexts teachers cannot be considered as a workforce isolated from the rest, which necessarily has consequences that affect the design of policies aimed at improving the working conditions of teachers.

On the other hand, the simple option of granting a wage that guarantees the stability of teachers (especially in sparsely populated areas with few resources), often goes against the desired innovation and creativity. Intended for teachers even since its formation, perhaps with the inability to be anything else, many teachers are limited to the reproduction of practices learned in their training, and do not venture to develop innovations and alter the status quo, preventing in this improve the quality of education.

In this context, other incentives are needed. In general, the teaching is seen as a vocation in which the biggest incentive is self-satisfaction and personal fulfillment through work. However, especially in resource-poor settings, these motivations are subordinated to those of simple survival. There is no denying that teaching in many contexts and circumstances is a brave admirable and selfless act. But it must also admit that this is not widespread. Teachers are, as already noted at the outset, as many people are driven by economic circumstances (most of them women who can use the time that remains available for home care) to perform in teaching.

In general, students leave school because it does not deliver support to them in achieving their expectations and life goals. Their teaching and teacher education, have been in many ways isolated from the economic life of society. Not deny the concerns of many countries in adapting their curriculum to their context, but this adaptation should be considered in the ways it can be perceived by students. Moreover, teachers can better prepare students to participate in the labor market only if they are able to understand and participate themselves in the labor market. This of course is in light of the fact that extreme labor liberalization can deliver counterproductive results.

Best Regards,
Gilber Sanabria Callisaya
Bolivia

Dear Colleagues,

Free public education is somewhat of a misnomer, since it is paid for with tax revenues. In countries where education is subsidized, this includes facilities, tuition, transportation to school, text book loan schemes, school meal services, and school uniform allowances. These benefits are accessible to students from elementary to tertiary levels; and in addition, annual national scholarships are awarded to high performing students to pursue university degrees in fields of their choice at universities that they select and seek admission to themselves. Indeed, citizens in countries with free education are willing to support national human resource development programs to this extent, because of the great value they attribute to education. Not many factors could discourage the pursuit of education under these circumstances…

The true freeness of public education is the freedom to pursue whatever area of study one might choose. Notably, that choice is guided by a social value rather than by a productive or economic value. Aspirants embracing traditional professions may be guided by inherited education legacies and systems. However, at some point, questions arise as to the scope in contemporary situations for earlier models of education that continue to claim public investment and about the returns to be expected from those investments in terms related to the public living conditions and standards expected today. This is called to question by increasing levels of unemployment, dependence on foreign expertise, low exports and productivity, lack of creativity and innovation, inefficient and ineffective public problem solving.

Determining the value of public education can best be aligned with development strategies, identifying a defined role for the human resource. This way investment in education becomes more purposeful and measurable, enabling accountability by institutions and their leaders, providing indicators for bench marking and for gauging progress. Involving the public in these planning and decision-making processes can contribute to their re-evaluation of education, resolving the paradoxical position of education as valued although of no meaningful and deliberate national value.

Best regards,

Lois Redman-Warner
Division of Public Administration and Development Management
UNDESA

Dear Colleagues,

Based on my experiences in the US and internationally I believe the approach for students with disabilities should not be tied or limited to any disability but based on a model of inclusion. Schools should have teachers and staff who understand learning characteristics of students with disabilities and a strong background in 'best practices.' However, to make it work for all students in all schools educational systems should consider Universal Design (CEC 2005) which assumes (1) a continuum of learning differences in the classroom; that is, students will learn at levels at, below, and above grade level, and each student has individual areas of strength and weakness; (2) a curriculum that is presented flexibly, so it includes, engages, and challenges all students appropriately; (3) all students progress under the same standards, rather than establishing alternative curricula or standards. It maintains high expectations for all and does not water down the curriculum for students with disabilities; and (4) is inclusive by design: teaching methods and assistive technologies will be built in or be readily available.

Given a school based on a model of universal design the challenge to teachers, families and students, therapists and administrators is how to we harness our resources (sometimes very limited!!) to maximize the instruction of all kids (recognizing some kids may need more or less). The responsibility to educate/ instruct is a school agenda and not solely the responsibility of one teacher.

Thank you,
Mark Alter, Ph.D.
New York University
Professor of Educational Psychology

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for this forum for engagement on education. Education is an issue of utmost concern, which faces many challenges and requires considerable changes in government policies/regulations or institutions. However, to address secondary age student retention and prepare students for sustainable livelihoods I think a self-participatory model, more of a student-centered and student-directed learning approach, can yield results.

Involving a student directly in the learning approach is important to relevant and purposeful learning objective and providing students the learning which develops student's independence. It not only involves the student actively in the learning process but also provides students with the information about the student's field of interest and their potential so that we can teach and provide guidance according to the student's level of interest. The curriculum should be based on student's needs concerning the student as a whole person, focusing more on asking about their interests after having discussions with them. This would include providing students with information (kind of mentoring) - about completing their education, about their rights, life skills options and options of vocational skills at one place and to make them aware of increased options in life which literacy can provide them. This process will be of help because the mentoring session will provide us an opportunity from where it will be easier for us to get to know the problems the students are facing, what obstacles are there in their path of education, what is the cause of their disinterest in the field of education, by identifying that one can work on the issues.

Providing them education and skill training according to their interest will develop the student's interest in the learning process and further providing them the market linkage according to their training will provide them with the work opportunity and a feeling of security which will help them gain confidence in their skills and they can learn to further utilize their skills in a more commercial and productive way. These practices have been used effectively in Nijera Sikhi (let's teach ourselves) initiative to eradicate literacy in Bangladesh, such kind of practices were also used in T.E.A.C.H initiative in India and also in 'Worth A While', an initiative for literacy development in Australia.

One more important issue is the empowerment of women and the adults in the family by providing education because these people play an important role in shaping the family. By imparting life-skills, training girls and other uneducated adults in the family can empower them to take responsible decisions and enable them to further use the skills for the benefit of their families. This can increase retention because in most of the parts of the world women have household care responsibilities. If they are aware

about the benefits education can provide, then they will definitely act more responsibly by sending their children to school and by behaving more responsibly in adverse situations.

Best Regards,
Nikhil Batra
Student Representative: Center for Corporate Relations
Birla Institute of Management Technology- BIMTECH

Dear Colleagues,

Nothing is more conducive for resource support than a calm and pleasant environment. Teachers need a good environment to prepare the lessons to teach and a pleasant environment to deliver what they've got to the learners. A good environment for preparation means well equipped libraries with modern communication and information for material as well as self-willingness to learn and deliver to one's best potential.

Learners need to appreciate that the teacher is there to help the learners achieve their goals and not simply to give tests to gauge their ability to learn. Secondary school age students should be molded through ownership projects for future sustainable careers. The emphasis should be geared towards practical skills other than theory; occupying the students with practical results-based orientation keeps the youth busy and occupied.

Best Regards,
Louise P.N.Kibuuka

Dear colleagues,

As an answer to both questions posed for this phase, what would you think of engaging secondary school students and university students (and not only those studying to become teachers) in assisting teachers in the classroom? They could work with part of the class, provide help in doing exercises or assist in any other activity where additional hands are identified as needed by the teacher.

It could both enhance:
- Quality of teaching in large-size classes without involving (increased) funding. A reward of some sort could be provided; special training sessions organized; credits earned for engaged university students, etc.;
- Retention rate of secondary school students. As the quality of education is improved, it generates an incentive to be "teacher helpers"; students could be inspired to enter the teaching profession;

This might have already been piloted or implemented somewhere which I am not aware of - if so, I would like to be informed. Whether tested or not, this could be a way forward to explore, evaluate and possibly be applied in some places.

Isabelle Turmaine
International Association of Universities

Dear Colleagues,

It is my opinion that only by adopting an attitude of sharing and solidarity can we allow the necessary professional training of teachers to take place and be effective, even in times of crisis and budgetary constraints, as we are now experiencing around the western world (in particular). The more senior teachers, who have gained experience through their professional careers and life experience should be invited (from pre-school to university) to put their knowledge and expertise at the service of younger colleagues. This activity would thus be integrated in their distribution of teaching service in their work institutions, and could be easier than it seems. As Henri Giroux suggests, teachers are still regarded as knowledge workers; effective teachers are the ones who felt continuously incomplete. If we hypothetically did a database with the names of teachers who would like to integrate a mega-team of continuing education formers to act all around the world, surely the world politicians would be surprised because, fortunately, we could find very generous people in the academy.

Expository teaching under the authority of a teacher is now being contested by young adolescents in schools. This challenge has really been dramatic in many schools all over the world. As a first place to teach democratic principles, paradoxically it is also just the first place that truly does not practice democratic principles in generally. How often are young people questioned about the content they would like to study? In fact young students continue to have very little voice. So education truly focusing on the needs of these students is necessary and that education can only be done by teachers who have obtained qualification for working with this kind of very special students (and the need for pedagogy where emotions can accompany rationality). An immersion into the world of work can be done by schools, providing autonomy to link up with industry and business and expand classrooms for workshops and working places where it is possible to emancipate these students as young and conscious "citizens" who will have a role in society.

Thank you very much

Leonardo Charréu
Visual Art Educator
Department of Pedagogy and Education
University of Évora, Portugal

Dear colleagues

The teaching question is crucial in the process of increasing quality in teaching. Admittedly various evaluations could not demonstrate a direct bond between the training of teachers and performance of pupils, but that by no means calls into question the importance of this training. One is especially challenged with better organization for training so that it contributes to provide teachers with competences which they need while taking care to maintain and cultivate their level of motivation in a permanent manner. With this intention, a certain number of parameters should be considered.

- The level of recruitment: it matters that recruitment is defined according to the level of quality, even of the teaching in the counties. To locate at a level such as at resulting from the training, they can obtain a baccalaureate (secondary studies). That is at the same time a stimulation which makes it possible to have a sufficient basic academic level so that the training will be comparable. In the case of a country like Burkina Faso, the level of recruitment can be the class of 1era (after the well heard BEPC).

- Duration of the training: dependent on the level of recruitment. A level of recruitment of the 1era could equate one year of initial training whose occupational qualification ensures a classification of the baccalaureate level in public office.

- The structuring of the training: the time for training must still be judiciously used (theory in institute of training - practical in situation of class without responsibility - theoretical in institute with a certification based on an evaluation which takes into account all the phases of formation.

- Wage levels: already defined in the levels of recruitment and the duration of training, however specific premiums could be considered.

- The accompaniment after training and the training continue: the training should not end once the teacher has left the training institute. Local government must provide each other the means of implementing truly the training plans elaborated but which have to be equally applied. This should supply teachers with a motivational plan of career to remain in the trade.

Pr Paré/Kaboré AFsata
Présidente du Réseau africain francophone d'éducation comparée (RAFEC)
Université de Koudougou, Burkina Faso

Dear Colleagues,

My opinion is that we need to support teachers in developing materials from local context. Teachers need the skills on how to develop their own materials from their local environment. From this approach I do not think that resources can hinder learning to such an extent. Teachers need to be creative and innovative. I'm writing this with rural teachers in mind and again one needs to support them when it comes to development of resources. We are surrounded by concrete resources or we can learn from our environment i.e. stones, leaves, sticks etc.

Thanks

Gisela Siririka
EO: Broad Curriculum
National Institute for Educational Development

Dear Colleagues,

The issue of teacher training is critical to the realization of quality education for all. Without doubt, the quality of teaching is essential to students' learning. The quality of teaching should not be viewed as an exclusive responsibility of the "vertical teacher" perceived by students as the sole source of information. If we take into consideration that students themselves are also "horizontal teachers", we must therefore look at the quality of teaching which is not dependent on the teacher alone

The other core issue that needs to be understood is the fact that the quality of teaching depends on the attitude, knowledge and skills of the teacher. It therefore implies that we need to re-examine the content of teacher education programs in colleges and universities as most teacher education programs are merely focused on acquisition of subject matter and methodology knowledge without enough attention on attitude and skills.

The improvement of teacher training should not be limited to increased cognitive content while ignoring the crucial component of the affective and psychomotor domain content of education. Most institutions in Nigeria, for example, award degrees in "character and in learning" but you will notice that there are no provisions in the curriculum for character education, which I think is important for improving the quality of teaching. The quality of teaching depends on the quality of the teacher and not the quantity of certificates and degrees acquired and the cognitive centered curriculum content. We do not need to make teacher training a one-off college or university affair which ends when the teacher is issued a degree or certificate; teacher training needs to be a lifelong program. This makes the need for the establishment of a culture of teacher professional development imperative in Africa, so that teachers capacity can be continuously developed within the work place.

Rather than focus on sandwich programs and other distance learning courses, it may be more cost effective, if professional development of teachers is included in each school's yearly plans. In this way, there will be the need for raising a community of teacher's professional development educators, who can mentor other colleagues within the school system. At the levels of primary and secondary schools, there is the need to connect teacher professional development to professional advancement and remuneration. It is unfortunate to mention that in Nigeria, the promotion of teachers in primary and secondary schools do not take their professional development abilities into consideration. So, whether a teacher is able to make scholarly publications or not, he stands to gain or lose nothing in terms of promotion and increased salary. Rather than focus on out-of-school in-service training for teachers, we need to focus on institutionalizing teacher professional development within each school system.

To retain secondary age students in school, we need to make the school curriculum to be relevant to the day to day challenges students are confronted with. In most countries in Africa, including Nigeria, national policies on education were initiated immediately after independence and most have not been significantly reviewed to meet contemporary challenges. Students find no meaning in school if the learning experiences they gain are mere abstract concepts with no relationship to contemporary issues. Our definition of "school" need to broadened so that other non-formal education centers can be regarded as schools based on the formalization of their program of activities.

To retain students in schools, we need to create a family culture in the school where teachers teach with a parental heart, thereby winning the heart of learners and we need to make our learning human. We need to connect abstract concepts to concrete challenges of life. While it is good to teach that 2 + 3 = 5, it is more important if we translate the abstract concept of addition to the concrete meaning of the

power of cooperation and unity. While 2 is less than 5, and 3 is less than 5, when 2 and 3 come together, there are equal in value with the big 5. In cases like this, students will see the value of remaining in school as lessons in schools are relevant to family and community life. We simply need to extend our curriculum to include more skills acquisition subjects and much emphasis on developing the psychomotor skills as we have attributed so much to cognitive knowledge. The most important factor in retaining anyone in any activity is to win the heart and interest of the person. So, schools must be made to serve as source of inspiration to students.

If students are interested in the school, the additional knowledge and skills being taught will help to engage them more. Without the interest and heartistic commitment to the school, the knowledge and skills being taught may not be enough to retain students in schools. Let attendance, attentiveness and contribution to ideas in schools count eventually in the assessment of students ability. This will encourage retaining of students in schools.

Best Regards,

Dr. Raphael Ogar Oko
Africa Regional/Nigeria Country Coordinator Teachers Without Borders

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Dear colleagues

Thank you very much for the opportunity you gave us to forward comments and suggestions regarding the quality of teaching.

Among the many factors for improving and maintaining the quality of teaching the first and foremost should be the interest and need of the individual teacher coming to this profession. This is decisive in such a way that if the individual teacher likes his/ her profession, undoubtedly he or she will be committed and would sacrifice for the profession and its success. The interest and need of teachers towards the profession should be seen at the very beginning of the selection and recruitment of individuals for teachers training. Unless individuals coming to this profession are coming by their interest and enthusiasm, or if they are coming because of lack of some other job, then it will be impossible to maintain quality in the profession.

Interest towards one's own job is decisive. Interest results in commitment. Interest can make someone work under varieties of challenges. Interest would lead to creativity of resources. Thus, as far as the many years of teaching experience and working in the education sector is concerned, interest in the teaching profession contributes towards quality of teachers. Needless to say that we need to look for individuals who have the interest in the profession when selection and recruitment is underway.

Best regards
Mesfin Derash
MLE Coordinator for SIL- Ethiopia

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to introduce the recent China's Authorized National Blueprint on Education "Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long Term Education Reform and Development (2010—2020)" from July 2010 (referred to as the Plan).

Key policy options from the first chapter of Section IV: Guaranteeing Measures: Chapter 17: Strengthening building of teachers' contingent with the following 5 articles of the Plan could be of use to teacher's training and work conditions.

- Building a vast contingent of quality teachers
- Promoting professional ethics among teachers.
- Raising teachers; professional efficiency.
- Heightening teachers' social status, salaries, benefits
- Streaming administration over teachers.

If detailed policy measures supporting those objectives could be implemented in an integrated approach at various local authorities levels in China with good governance, the target of improvement of teacher's training and work conditions, turning China's vast population into human resource will be no doubt achieved gradually. However, these measures still lack of precise budget estimates for implementation. It is difficult to say how much government expenditure on education can be regarded as resource constraints. This in China requires a further in-depth survey.

Discussing effective interventions for retaining secondary-age students and addressing issues related to life-long learning and labour market participation. I am sure articles of chapter 6 could improve results:

- Intensifying efforts in developing vocational education.
- Mobilizing the enthusiasm of industries and enterprises in vocational education.
- Speeding up vocational education development to meet the needs of rural areas.
- Making vocational education more appealing.

30 years' of rapid development in China has transitioned the nation from a society in which agriculture was the major vocation to industry to manufacturing presently leading employment trends and the innovative industries which we expect to become the next great employer in the future. Labor markets need workers with useful skill sets. As a boy or girl who finishes the nine year's compulsory education, one of the best options for him or her in China is to enter vocational schools which guarantee future employment opportunities once qualified.

The State Council Leading Group Office for Poverty Alleviation and Development launched a special program called "Demonstration Bases for Vocational Training for Poverty Alleviation" in 2004, which is also called the "Rain Dew Plan." Similarly a program called as "Sunshine Plan" was launched by Ministry of Agriculture in 2003. Both initiatives have successful experiences for boys and girls in the poverty stricken areas which were unable to remain in school to obtain various kinds of skill training and decent jobs in urban areas. Both the Rain Dew Plan and Sunshine Plan have a mechanism fundraising for the secondary age students from poverty stricken areas of China. This enables the budget to be shared by multiple parties, including the national, provincial level special fund for poverty alleviation and enterprises who hire them after training. Additionally it is responsibility of the local authorities including those who supplied the trainees and those who received them. The involvement of NGOs has contributed significantly for these plans.

Best Regards,
Rongming Wu
Senior Policy Researcher for Fujian Provincial Government,
PRC, China