

[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 virtualhighschool 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 KaviaYona, 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. Nwangwu argues for a shift in perspective which uses incentives and training to create an environment 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.

[InderSud, 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.

[ZemenuTadesse, People in Need Ethiopia](#)

Ms. Tadesse 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.

[ZubeidaMasabo, 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. Tevoedjre 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.

[AlisherUmarov, 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.

[GayatriRaghwa, Environmental Agency- Abu Dhabi](#)

MsRaghwa 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 Chinasalzuagba, Alvanluku 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 Schluzé \(Human Rights Consultant\)](#)

Ms. Schluzé 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 \(Bahá'í International Community\)](#)

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.

[DehaDjossouVictorine \(Plan Benin\)](#)

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.

[GilberSanabriaCallisaya \(Independent\)](#)

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.

[PrParé/KaboréAFsata \(Université de Koudougou\)](#)

Mr. Pare noted that the level of recruitment and organization for training contributes to the teacher's competences and work motivation.

[Gisela Siririka \(National Insitute for Educational Development\)](#)

MsSiririka recommended supporting teachers in resources constraints to develop materials from local context.

[Dr. Raphael OgarOko \(Teachers without Borders\)](#)

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.

[MesfinDerash \(SIL-Ethiopia\)](#)

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 KaviaYona
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 SaalPiali 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 prerequisite 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.

InderSud, 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 through 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.

ZemenuTadesse, 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.

ZubeidaMasabo
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 health 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 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 fared 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 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 proven 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 in several areas including computing, agricultural techniques, negotiation and peace building skills, human rights, new use of 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.

Best,

Maria Lucia Uribe

International Consultant and Researcher in Peace Education

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 tresserune structure d'accompagnementsolide?'* 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
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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. InderSud 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 apply 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.
AlisherUmarov
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](http://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
GayatriRaghwa
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 Chinasalzuagba (Reader)
Department of Curriculum Studies ,
Alvanlloku 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 alternative 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 monetary 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 within 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.

DehaDjossouVictorine
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,
GilberSanabriaCallisaya
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 NijeraSikhi (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 general. 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.

PrParé/KaboréAFsata
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 be 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 OgarOko
Africa Regional/Nigeria Country Coordinator Teachers Without Borders

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
MesfinDerash
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
- Streamlining 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

[Facilitator's Note: Welcome to the 5th Annual ECOSOC AMR E-Discussion on Education: Closing the Gap. Please find below all contributions received in the second phase focusing on Access to Education. The [moderator's message](#) 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 (mdq@undg.org). Thank you]

Phase Two Questions:

- 1. Early childhood care and education (ECE) provides enormous benefits and can mitigate the effects of deprivation and contribute to improved learning. From a local, national and global perspective what policy options have been effective in making ECE a reality for children and reaching the most disadvantaged or excluded children?**
 - 2. The benefits of educating women and girls has been widely documented. What experiences can you share on the bottlenecks, policy initiatives, and implementation efforts that have secured increased and sustained participation for girls in school?**
-

Summary of Contributions:

[Dr. Rania Antonopoulos, Levy Economics Institute](#)

Addressing how to use Early Childhood Development to target disadvantaged or excluded children, Dr. Antonopoulos shared two country based examples (South Africa and Mexico). The uniqueness in each of these instances was the framework of the programme to address the needs of infants and young children, are community based and the care giving is provided from within the community. This construction allowed these initiatives to contribute to multiple policy objectives including: poverty reduction, creation of basic infrastructure, promotion of gender equality and improved health and nutrition outcomes. When presenting the case to non-education community Dr. Antonopoulos indicated recent research findings have demonstrated that investment in social infrastructure as compared to physical infrastructure has had economic impacts in the community (via pro-poor job creation and pro-poor income distribution).

[HajaraNdayidde, UNICEF- Uganda](#)

Describing policy-based experience in Uganda Ms. Ndayidde provided the policy context and a detailed analysis on the challenges encountered and the constraints affecting access to early childhood care and education, in particular for the vulnerable and disadvantaged. Important in this was the need to address weak policy frameworks, integration of care, health, education and nutrition, data on ECCE providers, programmatic flexibility, capacity building and funding.

[Z. Patience Flomol, Save the Children-Liberia](#)

Experiences in Liberia shared by Ms. Flomol demonstrate the significance of on-going policy and programmatic transformations. Ms. Flomol emphasized the need for cultural integration in addressing issues related to sustained and increased participation for girls. Furthermore, the contribution asserted the need for a participatory policy process that involves women and girls at the design phase to ensure the policy is targeted towards the key bottlenecks preventing girls education.

[Victoria Kayser, Independent](#)

Ms. Kayser in her contribution drew attention to the option of correspondence courses as a means to access marginalized students, particularly in post-conflict contexts, as an opportunity utilizing low-cost ICT initiatives to reach and educate underserved children.

[Dr. GuadalupeVadillo, UNAM](#)

Dr. Vadillo expanding on the case study shared by Dr. Antonopoulos (Estancias Infantiles) raised a key concern that while compelling policies can be written on paper, there are often implementation gaps in what governments and institutions put into practice. In particular for Estancias Infantiles, the context information highlighted the risks in delegating service delivery for ECE to the private sector without sufficient oversight, infrastructure and proper training, which can place children at risk.

[Dr. Laban Ayiro, Moi University](#)

Despite significant strides made to reduce the gender gap in primary education in Africa over the last decade, and using Kenya as a reference, Dr. Ayiro noted that while robust policy are formulated an implementation gap remains and efforts need to be targeted to address this disparity.

[Guozhong Zhang, UNDESA](#)

Mr. Zhang raised the dimension that persons with disabilities brings to the issues of access to education and ECE. From this perspective, success factors were identified and shared based on UNDESA's experience in supporting governments, agencies and CSOs to advance disability inclusive policies and practices.

[Donald Wertlieb, Tufts University](#)

Professor Wertlieb followed up on the how to integrate disability into ECE initiatives given the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD). One disparity to be addressed in these efforts acknowledge a need to increase exposure, explicit references and application of the CRPD in ECE. In particular targeted analysis is required, focusing on children with disabilities that will lead to a multi-pronged and multi-sectoral approach to inclusive ECE policies.

[Dickson Wanglobo, Independent](#)

Given the social contexts within which education takes place, Mr. Wanglobo highlighted the need for ECE strategies to include parent-sensitisation components.

[Bani Dugal, Bahá'í International Community](#)

Ms Dugal noted that often the policy measures "needed" are known; however, if the social context is not taken into consideration these policy measures will not be as effective. Arguing for a community based approach Ms. Dugal identified a systematic approach as inherent to any sustainable efforts to ensure access to education, and in particular access for girls. Importantly, education as a process should not be the end, but instead the means to support a vision of the local society as a whole.

[Julius Chockerah, UNDP Kenya](#)

Mr. Chockerah using the Kenyan example highlighted how the legal and policy framework contribute to the realization of students rights to education, in particular with the direct bearing on girls education.

[Ernestine Ngo Melha, Association d'Aide à l'Education de l'EnfantHandicapé \(AAEEH\) and IREDU/CNRS, France](#)

Noting that disability is a main component of educational exclusion and marginalization, Ms. Melha shared experiences and policies in place for Sub-Saharan Africa and concerns particularly for the education opportunities afforded disabled girls. Identifying the gap between political will and implementation Ms. Melha proposed some policy options for to enable the realization of education for all objectives.

[Linda Biersteker, Early Learning Resource Unit, South Africa](#)

Using the Early Childhood Development Policy in South Africa, Ms. Biersteker noted that South Africa is employing a double pronged and importantly multi and inter-sectoral approach. In the first instance one way to combat the disparities in ECE (due to private v. public offerings) was to phase in expansion of a pre-primary year as part of government guaranteed education. However one limitation of these interventions is the children's capacity to benefit's heavy dependence on what happens before pre-primary age to maximise their health and nutritional status and develop positive approaches to learning. Complementary to this is a zero-four years old community based programme targeted to at risk children.

[Dorothy Meyer, Status of Women Committee of IFUW \(Past\)](#)

Based on the challenges Ms. Meyer recognized from the discussants experiences, the HIPPY example from New Zealand was shared as a way to involve families in ECE efforts to best prepare children for primary school education.

[Professor Malcolm Skilbeck, Deakin University, Australia \(Emeritus\)](#)

Identifying the need for a coherent integrated cross sectoral policy making Professor Skilbeck highlighted the importance in looking ahead to develop policies and programmes which do not generate new problems. Important factors for consideration from the perspective of the growing children/youth in such forward thinking policies would include issues related to urbanization, depletion of natural and life sustaining resources and high unemployment.

[George Anang'a, Plan UK](#)

Mr. Anang'a emphasized the issues that gender discrimination implies for education planning and strategies. Plan UK's experience has shown that resistance can be overcome by making allies within communities to eliminate gender inequalities in social structures, which will hopefully enable broader access to education for girls in a sustainable manner.

[RokhayaDiawara, UNESCO Regional Bureau-Senegal](#)

Mr. Diawara using examples from Kenya, Nigeria and Ethiopia shared how ECE principles have been integrated into policy in response to issues of access and inclusion for equitable education. Key initiatives included targeting students for basic school readiness through intensive preparatory courses, use of accessible and low-cost education materials, and mainstreaming of ECCE into the key training institutions for teachers.

[Francis Sathya, Plan International](#)

Dr. Sathya highlighted the importance of the terminology used in ECE and suggested that development practitioners focus on implementing already available policies rather than focusing on policy expansion (where political will and funding are not secured). Further building on other contributions using Plan International's [Because I Am A Girl](#) campaign as an example, Dr. Sathya outlined the key lessons learned and strategic actions that can support girls access to education.

[Matt Davies, International Movement ATD Fourth World](#)

Mr. Davies using ATD Fourth World's "Bébé's Bienvenues" programme highlighted how community involvement increases programmatic sustainability and the need for ECE programmes to transition students towards primary education. One key lesson learned was the gains that can be made from integrating ECE as a partnership with local health care facilities.

[Dr. Supote Prasertsri, Pannasastra University of Cambodia](#)

Dr. Prasertsri shared experiences from South East Asia that highlighted gaps in addressing "mother tongue" v. "teacher tongue" language implications in ECE programmes and for education objectives. Dr. Prasertsri further shared a strategy from Thailand that has increased girls access and retention in secondary education- the Thai National Student Loan Scheme.

[Ernesto Schiefelbein, Universidad Autonoma de Chile](#)

Mr. Schiefelbein noted a need for policy makers to be informed by cost-effective estimates on education policies to ensure that the police deliver on ECE objectives.

[Adriana Alfaro \(Devhi Foundation and Care Group Organization\)](#)

Ms. Alfaro identified that ECE is essential for educational inclusion, however it is important to note that ECE is not the sole responsibility of the education system, but can also be based on interactions with family, caregivers, community and school. Using Costa Rica as an example Ms. Alfaro detailed two programmes (Cen Cenai and Hogares Comunitarios) that can help extend coverage in the long term. One other means to ensure ECE sustainability would be to include combined (formal and informal) education systems to reach the community as a whole.

[INEE Secretariat](#)

The INEE Secretariat shared strategies for access and gender responsive learning environments which respond to supply and demand side barriers based on the INEE Pocket Guide to Gender: Gender Equality in and through Education.

[Kari Egge \(UN- Namibia\)](#)

Using the current context in Namibia Ms. Egge highlighted the issues in provision of ECE and ensuring the outreach is inclusive to disadvantaged families. In particular to address issues of quality Ms. Egge points out the need to address the connection between women and their roles in caring and providing for children. Ms. Egge further shared an experience from Uganda on a sustainable low cost model for a local community approach to ECE.

[Marc Regnault de la Mothe \(WFP\)](#)

Mr. Regnault de la Mothe highlighted the role of nutrition in the provision of ECE. Using the Gambia as an example where an integrated approach to ECD was able to enhance access to ECD through the provision of school feeding (focusing on girls' participation in particular).

[Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Iqbal \(University of Punjab\)](#)

Dr. Iqbal focused his contribution on two key points. The need to provide a friendly environment with interactive hands on teaching to increase access to ECE and the utility of a proper mapping of schools in relation to rural areas to better target delivery enabling increased female education.

[GhulamNabiNizamani \(ASHA\)](#)

Ms. Nizamani detailed the Pakistani experience with ECE, noting some of the challenges in implementation, and particular in provision of access to children with disabilities (in tandem with integrated health responses as well). Ms. Nizamani also shared a success story for increasing girls education via informal education in community friendly environments.

[Robert C West \(Independent Consultant\)](#)

In discussing the issues of access to education for students with disabilities Mr. West noted that an inclusive approach may not fully address the student's needs and referenced the possibility of use of radio to educate parents and those providing ECE with low-cost/no-cost means to mentally stimulate and provide organized structured interactions for their children.

[Dr. Allah Bakhsh Malik \(Literacy and Basic Education Department, Pakistan\)](#)

Dr. Malik reinforced the position that ECE and EDC impacts on student learning outcomes are considerable and highlighted the need to popularize the role of private sector in policy making.

[Dr. SanghamitraDeobahnj \(RanihatHighschool, India\)](#)

Detailing the India case where the Integrated Child Development Service (where provision of health, nutrition and ECE are included) are targeted to poor students in the rural and tribal areas Dr. Deobahnj noted the issues which can arise particularly in the community value of the teachers and the engagement in Supplementary Nutrition and immunization components which can lead to neglect of the ECE component. Dr. Deobahnj further detailed the issues facing girls access to education.

[Janine Marin \(ISOCARP Representative to UNESCO\)](#)

Ms. Marin described the role that parental support and the use of native/mother tongue language can play in educational attainment, particularly for girls. Further Ms. Marin shared how non-formal education could be used to support these efforts.

[Prof. Shirley Randell \(Kigali Institute of Education, Rwanda\)](#)

Dr. Randell shared the goals established by the Government of Rwanda for compulsory education in increasing girls participation in education.

[Cecilia Cuellar \(Independent\)](#)

Using the example of El Salvador, Ms. Cuellar noted that for provision of integrated services the government will need to focus on changing the priorities and infrastructure to address the varied needs, and that this implies issues on allocations of aid (short term v. longer term expenditures).

[AureaFerrerres \(Intervida\)](#)

Ms. Ferreres shared the perspective that the responsibility for education must extend to the full community (family, state and society) supporting educational objectives in integrated and comprehensive programmes and furthered the ideal that female education is made compulsory with an incentives and penalties structure put in place to reinforce participation.

Full Contributions:

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my views during this important dialogue. Let me please respond to two aspects related to the first issue raised, on early childhood care and development.

How do we make ECE a reality for those children that are the most disadvantaged or excluded? Among many country-level experiences, there are two programmes that come to mind, South Africa's Early Childhood Development (ECD) component of the [Expanded Public Works Programme](#) (EPWP) and Mexico's [Enstancias Infantiles](#). Though differently structured, what is unique about them is that (i) both address needs of infants and very young children, (ii) are community based, and (iii) the care is provided by community members for children of the community. South Africa's program is a response to the recognition that despite healthy growth rates, job creation in the post-apartheid period has not been strong, resulting in over 20-25% unemployment. In the case of Mexico, the intervention was meant to reduce the care responsibilities of mothers so as to facilitate their participation in income earning activities in urban and rural areas. Such investments accomplish, at low cost, multiple developmental objectives: while improving the physical and emotional health of children, it provides training and certification (skill upgrading) in ECD to community member-providers; mobilizes previously underutilized local resources (labour); engages productively previously socially excluded members of communities by creating employment opportunities; pays a minimum (but earned) income to the ECD providers; reduces unpaid care burdens of women; recognizes the social usefulness of caring for infants and young children. In short, such investments have the strong potential to contribute to multiple policy objectives: poverty reduction (wages paid to community workers); creation of basic infrastructure (for vegetable gardens, clean water, latrines, and creche); promotion of gender equality (in paid and unpaid work); and improved outcomes in health and nutrition of infants and very young children.

When making the case for ECE to the non-education community one of the interesting research findings is that the overall impact of investing in Early Childhood Development and Care (ECDC) (social infrastructure) as compared to other investments (physical infrastructure), such as building of roads for example, has stronger positive reverberations throughout the economy in terms of pro-poor job creation and pro-poor income distribution. Two studies I was involved in, one on South Africa-A Joint research project of UNDP and the Levy Institute: [Employment guarantee policies](#) and the other for the United States- [Investing in Care: A Strategy for Effective and Equitable Job Creation](#) show that this may indeed be the case for both developing and developed countries. Hence, it can be argued that ECDC interventions are good from a human development as well as an economic development perspective.

I would like to conclude by concurring with the comments of several previous contributors in phase I of this discussion: what might constitute "quality" education, especially at a very young and tender age? Even if it cannot live up to the highest standards, a clean, healthy environment where basic physical needs are met, mental stimulation and structured interaction with children of similar age is provided, and a sense of acceptance and encouragement to explore and learn through play can go a very long way.

Dr. Rania Antonopoulos
Director, Gender Equality and the Economy Program
Levy Economics Institute

Dear Colleagues,

We all know that quality Early Childhood Care and Education programmes are critical in providing a foundation for school readiness and success in life. Children who participate in preschool programmes stand a high chance of not repeating classes. To ensure quality service we do not only need the policies to provide direction but also the resources in terms of finance, materials and human resources.

In Uganda establishment of the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC) in 1987 and its subsequent report of 1989 was the first milestone for recognizing the importance of ECCE for increasing access to education, followed by the Government White Paper (GWP) 1992. The two documents strongly recommended, among other things, the attainment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Uganda. ECCE is given attention since it forms the basis for sustainability of UPE and lifelong learning. However it is largely left in the hands of the private sector. The Early Childhood Development policy that was approved and published in 2008 recognizes the public sector's role in ensuring the fulfillment of children's rights. It also recognizes that Government has an obligation to provide some measures of control and responsibility for the quality. Government has obligation to support parents and caregivers to effectively play their role.

Challenges and constraints that affect the increased access early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children include:

- Weak policy framework – in the case of Uganda, in 2008, the early childhood development policy for the education sector was launched. However, the policy does not guarantee compulsory pre-primary education and therefore, enrolment of younger children in ECCE remains very low despite a high population growth rate of 3.2% (2009). Governments through their social sectors need to develop and implement a communication strategy to address a number of issues including parent to parent/ teacher to parent collaborations. The issue of culture and economic status tends to hold parents back. A well planned and systematic communication and advocacy effort to market ECCE and to create the conditions for its acceptance and implementation in countries is needed.. The challenge is not only for the caregivers but also for those of us who are designing and implementing these programmes.
- Inadequate child's holistic development as well as coherent services from birth to primary education - integration of care, health, education and nutrition is still lacking. In addition, the curriculum and contents is delivered by differently trained personnel. The focus in most cases is on academics.
- Data on ECCE providers and beneficiary groups is not substantial - Consolidated and comprehensive data on providers, users and the number of children accessing early learning and stimulation in both formal and informal setting is not readily available. This presents a serious bottleneck in trying to determine an accurate assessment of the situation and plan efficiently and effectively for the general welfare of children. Socio-economic data, local inventories of existing services and information gathered from parents and community members all contribute to a comprehensive understanding of communities and how and where services can best be developed to meet local needs.
- Inequalities in access to ECCE - Many vulnerable children especially in conflict areas, isolated communities, and poor urban and other disadvantaged communities do not access any form of ECCE or access poor quality services. Barriers that limit access to ECCE include affordability, lack of access points, hours of operation, language of service, and lack of information about services

and support for the parents. In these situations choice is either limited or nonexistent. The fact that service provision is left to private proprietors tends to compound rather than reduce inequalities. As a result, the poor fall prey to exploitative proprietors who may focus on maximizing profit rather than benefiting intended beneficiaries.

- Flexibility of programmes - ECCE should be built on principles of social inclusion that actively engages parents and other caregivers of children regardless of gender, culture, language or disability and also include practical and concrete ways to ensure that all children have access to the support, care and education throughout early childhood that equips them for life and learning. Parents in all situations face a challenge of balancing time between dealing with home chores and available quality time for child care. In Uganda there is limited opportunity for parents to come together to share and support each other. Even in the homes fathers feel that it is the responsibility of the mother to interact with children, while most mothers think that the role of the father is only to provide material things for the family. A recommendation could be to marry a national approach to implementing high quality programs with the flexibility to encourage local engagement and response to local circumstances.
- Collaboration and Networking - The effective provision of services to meet the goal of inclusion requires the combined expertise, experience and support of a range of individuals and institutions. The benefits of collaboration cannot be overemphasized. The practical question however is how to build an effective co-ordination mechanism of providers and users across sectors and departments, geographical bounds, interests and other areas. In Uganda, the proposed national ECD forum coordinated by the National Council for Children is an opportune entry point to bring traditional and nontraditional stakeholders together. It provides a mechanism for an inter- organizational/departmental approach. These efforts can be planned to culminate into clearly defined roles and functions of other organizations and agencies, modalities for interaction and then identifying, exploring and linking existing government policies that impact the well-being of children within a larger focus that evaluates the outcomes of all government social, economic, environmental and political policies that impact early childhood. Development, dissemination and implementation of a multi sectoral and holistic ECCE policy framework are needed. This will enhance the implementation of integrated programmes and services all children (0-8 years), including marginalized children.
- Capacity Building - Extensive professional, educational and training support for individuals within early childhood services and for the ECCE sub sector as a whole is required at different levels. This could cover ECCE instructors, policy development/analysis, administration, research, finance and other relevant sectors to build capacity to thoroughly examine existing ECCE models, frameworks, and best practices. Very often the proprietors and other providers have the good will but lack or have very limited technical expertise to establish a quality ECCE programme. As an example commonly community leaders or individual proprietors may be able to identify needs for education and strategies for mobilizing resources but rarely possess the full range of technical and professional skills required for building and operating ECCE centers. Capacity and technical guidance is necessary to enhance knowledge of such matters like legal requirements for creation of ECCE centers, curriculum and pedagogy. In addition there is a need to harmonize the varied experiences and competences among the ECCE practitioners, teachers/ Caregivers of ECD centres to ensure continuity and reflection on their practices in ECCE centers. The education sector in liaison with Universities and other training institutions needs to be supported to design and implement a Certificate in ECCE Teacher Proficiency using the Teacher Development and Management Systems and networks.
- Funding of ECD - the investment in ECCE remains low. Linked with this is the low quality particularly in areas where children are from disadvantaged communities socially, economically,

remote and rural sections. Discussions on increasing and involving government in ECCE funding need to be held at different fora as well. Resource allocation to support and strengthen community based early childhood services are still limited.

Thanks,
HajaraNdayidde
Early Childhood Development Specialist
UNICEF Kampala Uganda

Dear Colleagues,

In Liberia, Early Childhood Education has in the past been submerged in basic primary education with limited priority. Children above age 5 and attending pre-grades have been required to take an entry exam before sitting in grade 1. This entry exam according to the Education Sector Plan is to be abolished; however, Pre-school has been largely dominated by private ownership at 47% and 25% public with 63% of those enrolled in the pre-primary school more than 5 years old (Education Law 2008). Studies recently carried out and the new dimension in the national education system of Liberia is to transform the ECE into ECCD (Early Childhood Care and Development). This transformation process is on-going. Why this background? Because, Liberia national strategy for ECCD I would say is moving from the formative stage to transformation. With policy and curriculum development on the way, limited human resource capacity, Liberia will require enormous support to address need of early childhood development in Liberia. There has to be a cultural integration in the programme to address some of the negative aspect and strengthened the positives. ECE has enormous economic development benefits, and for Liberia, addressing ECD is going to be a mile stone in achieving children completing and retention rates in schools. The general, situation in Liberia is that enrollments have increased but completion rates are low. ECD has the potential to provide social-economic benefits; thus improving overall performance, and quality of education in Liberia. Since the Liberian ECE programme is about to launch with a World Bank & Donors CF Grant, child parenting education needs to be a core national initiative and integrated in the agenda, policies, with child rights education mainstreamed. The national government can invest in ECD services to the most disadvantaged students in remote communities through strengthening local structures and systems to manage community-based programs and initiatives.

Addressing the efforts that have secured increased and sustained participation for girls in school in Liberia there have been internal and external efforts and investments in girls education, but with limited success stories. One key bottleneck has been the limited involvement of the women and girls for which programs have been designed, which can contribute to non-success when programs are implemented in various parts of the world. Significant investment flows into programmatic hardware but the software component is often short lived. Programs may not be needs based, or are adapted from other countries but not culturally acceptable. The cultural dimension of girls education skills development need to be studied. Why are girls who are adolescent mothers with limited support not interested in economic empowerment activities? There are many girls who received support like take home rations, cash, and supplies (uniforms, learning materials) to attend school and yet they are not able to complete their education? The Liberian culture has a deep rooted belief that girls/women need to be supported by men and therefore, they need not work but be dependent. The marriage system requires the man to pay dowry (paying for the girl or woman as property). A common saying is that “a woman kenyah does not leave by the river side”, which means no matter what a girl will find a man to take care of her, whether she is educated or not.

While various interventions have been targeting life skills, vocational education or formal and non-formal education, the environment and job market are often not designed to meet the skills developed in women. Girls may be enrolled in schools but they may not complete formal education, some due to early marriage and pregnancy. In Liberia there is cultural acceptance of teenage pregnancy and early marriage, and there are limited restrictions on the male who impregnates the female. Social welfare policy to enforce that children, especially fathers, care for the wellbeing of their children can help with this. This needs to also take into account a families level of education to provide sex education for their children is limited, for some families it is a taboo subject. Importantly, currently there is no strategy in Liberia for continuing education for girls or women who drop out of school or want to acquire skills or vocational education.

Best Regards,
Z. Patience Flomol
Deputy Programme Manager, Educaiton
Save the Children- Liberia

Dear Colleagues,

To support ECE objectives for disadvantaged children a policy option we should consider is putting in place a system of correspondence courses for children and women without access directly to schools or training. The idea could be, for example, putting books sensory self-correcting (some already exist based on [Montessori sensorial materials](#)). This could facilitate outreach to receptive students, which could include victims of war, be they child soldiers, orphans, child-headed households, or women who have been victims of gender-based violence or physical torture.

Internal strife and civil wars are often synonymous with poverty for their victims. Yet in post-conflict contexts it has been clearly demonstrated that many survivors wish to pursue their education. Where children family heads exist, they have often done their utmost to ensure, frequently at their own expense, the upbringing and education for their brothers and sisters. Continuing education for these marginalised children can permit child soldiers to be rehabilitated and thus begin a "new life," it can enable women to learn a trade with which to support themselves and their family.

There are numerous reasons to support education objectives for these marginalised and underserved children. A key difficulty in targeting these hard to reach children is that there are insufficient institutional infrastructure in place, issues of leakage and often in post-conflict countries difficulty in resources appropriation. And even where nomadic schools are available, children are often unable to benefit from these institutions as they have responsibilities which prevent their participation. This can include responsibility for the family goat, or the school is located over 10km from the student's home.

Implementing a system of correspondence courses has the advantage of being a low cost initiative when compared with other systems such as [OLPC](#) (a self correcting computer with a power crank). Correspondence course work provides education easily accessible to inaccessible students, and can be created in an intuitive and uncomplicated format for students regardless of age.

Thank you,
Victoria Kayser

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to comment on the Mexican program called Estancias Infantiles described by Dr. Antonopoulos. One of the bottlenecks faced by many compelling policies is the that there tends to be a gap between programs in paper and the actual implementation governments and institutions put into practice. This might be the case of this program. Over 9 thousand estancias exist in Mexico and one of them shed light on the organization and lack of quality standards that they may exhibit.

For many years, early childhood education programs were created and managed by the government. The conservative last two presidents pushed forward the idea of involving the private sector in this area and decided to delegate ECE services to private investors. This meant that governmental authorities would approve those projects with the right infrastructure and human resources, comparable, for example, to the health and teaching staff that the Institute for Social Security (IMSS) provided. However this did not happen: the terrible fire at Guardería ABC in Hermosillo took the life of 49 children and wounded other 76. Lack of proper security measures and training of human resources were identified as causes of this disaster. Several societal groups claim that those conditions were not unique to that child care facility and that, at present, many children are at risk because supervision and follow up have not been installed as standard procedures in this program.

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

Dear Colleagues,

Girls' education on the African continent has made significant strides in that the gender gap has reduced significantly over the last decade, especially in primary level of education. Education of girls has received priority at the legislative and policy level. These include various education policies, poverty reduction and economic development agenda, the MDG and EFA initiatives as well as various international legal instruments on the rights of the child (Rendell & Gergel, 2009).

However, there are still many girls without access to primary and secondary education in Kenya and efforts to enhance inclusive education have been made (Keriga & Burja, 2010). Kenya regards inclusiveness in education in terms of education as a human right, and advocates for a policy approach to education that challenges exclusionary policies and practices and addresses learning needs of all learners in regular schools and classrooms (IBE-UNESCO, 2007). For example the government has, as a matter of policy given guidelines that girls pregnant teenage girls be allowed to continue their education after delivery as a way of removing all barriers affecting teenage mothers.

While policies may be formulated, as have the examples given, the gap between rhetoric and practice is still wide. Indeed, rhetoric on support for the girl child in education is quite popular but the resources invested need to match the expressed intentions.

Notwithstanding the existing challenges in improving girls' access to education, there have been notable progress that demonstrate the potential to overcome obstacles and inch towards UPE. The successful

strategies include introduction of FPE, efforts to eliminate worst forms of child labour, provision of sanitary supplies to girls, feeding programs and strengthening of guidance and counselling in schools.

Dr. Laban P. Ayiro,ss
Senior Lecturer,
Department of Educational Management and Policy Studies,
Moi University

Dear Colleagues,

Disability has been identified as one of the least visible but most potent factors in education marginalization which is evident in countries at different ends of the spectrum. And this is holding back countries' national progress towards achieving the goal of universal education for all. Lack of access to education including ECE by persons with disabilities, and girls and women in particular, is a major concern that needs enhanced and targeted actions to accelerate the inclusion and mainstreaming of them into development efforts, as highlighted by last year's MDG progress report, Outcome Document for the MDG High Level meeting, 2010 MDG Ministerial Declaration, as well as the latest General Assembly resolution (A/65/186).

To make ECE a reality for children with disabilities, we at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) are working in partnership with Governments, UN agencies and civil society to advance disability-inclusive policies and practices. Examples in countries such as Bolivia, China, India and Mexico suggest that the following are important to the success in achieving universal ECE for all that includes girls and boys with disabilities.

1. Raise the awareness of the rights and needs of child with disabilities among policy makers, educators, families, as well as members in the broader community. In this regards, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with 147 signatories and 97 ratifications (as of 15 Feb. 2011), obligates states to take concrete actions and measures to ensure the equal access to education for all persons with disabilities at all ages, including girls and women.
2. Early identification and interventions to address educational needs and foster abilities and potential of the children in question. Liaising and working with their families and health care providers is critical to ensure children with disabilities receive responsive health care and rehabilitation services at the possible earliest stage;
3. Involve and support home-based activities, through encouraging and supporting families to involve their disabled children in activity-based learning and care, utilizing effective communication and assistive devices such as personal mobility aids.
4. Creating inclusive, accessible and enabling communities and pre-schools. Providing a barrier-free and accessible environment and support for children with disabilities to participate and use various types of learning resources, such as play groups, day centers and preschools, with a focus on enabling all children to learn effectively and respond to diversity of needs of all learners. For instance, learning environment should be made to be accessible such as providing ramps, ensuring toilets accessible and using colours for those with visual impairments. It also means specific provisions in some cases for effective inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream settings, for example, deaf children should be provided opportunities to learn sign languages, blind children to learn Braille and orientation skills while deaf and blind children need to learn tactile Braille and mobility skills for their daily live and education.

Contributing to the ongoing global discourse on achieving universal education for all that includes persons with disabilities, in conjunction with the upcoming ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review, DESA will organize a panel discussion session, in Geneva, July 2011.

Tools and resources:

1. Keeping the Promises: Realizing the MDGs for persons with disabilities towards 2015 and beyond, report of the Secretary General (A/65/193)
2. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Article 24 of the Convention requires that states parties to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels. For the latest details of the Convention and updated signing and ratification, see website <http://www.un.org/disabilities>.
3. Including the rights of persons with disabilities in United Nations programming at country level: A Guidance Note for United Nations Country Teams and Implementing partners (by the United Nations Development Group/Inter-Agency Support Group for the CRPD Task Team) which is also available online http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/iasg/undg_guidance_note.pdf

Guozhong Zhang
Social Affairs Officer
Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (SCRPD)
Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)

Dear Colleagues,

Many thanks to contributors and facilitators of this important discussion and for the opportunity to participate in a new momentum for what so many of us recognize as essential elements of social and economic progress.

The [UNESCO Early Childhood Education \(ECE\) Conference in Moscow](#) and the [CEC/ISSA Conference on Inclusive Education](#) document the complex and awesome challenges and opportunities we face as we move forward with ECE and Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs and policies. Focusing our discussion upon the most disadvantaged or excluded children opens the door for a catalytic and transformational perspective and strategy, integrating key ECE initiatives with leveraging opportunities inherent in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD).

A cutting edge of the synergy between the human rights and international development agendas is the situation of children with disabilities. With the 2008 adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities (CRPD), the challenge of ensuring that children with disabilities become full participants in society comes to the forefront. Diverse nations and NGO's invest heavily in ECD and inclusive education (IE) (though we likely all agree that investment is insufficient), yet available and emerging tools for program implementation and evaluation neglect key variables associated with children with disabilities. Such variables are related to costs and benefits of interventions, whether providing a more realistic assessment of the challenges in the target population or in generating an appropriately differentiated scaling of impacts and outcomes. New "toolkits" guide societies as they implement ECD programs; they sometimes mention children with disabilities, but too-often only in parentheses or footnotes, perhaps recognizing or avoiding the significant challenges inherent in truly inclusive and

equitable projects. Advocates for children with disabilities have an opportunity and responsibility to seize this moment as awareness of CRPD grows and accountability parameters articulate. Advocates for ECD and ECE have an opportunity and responsibility to better acknowledge and integrate data, design, and implementation factors associated with ECD policy and programming as key preventive, promotive, habilitative and rehabilitative processes.

Children with disabilities merit less than a page of text in the 463 page 2009 Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report. However, the report recognizes that “disability is a significant source of inequality and marginalization in education.” (p.192) and laments that “progress in recognizing disability as an area needing policy attention has been limited. Only ten of the twenty-eight education plans endorsed by the Fast Track Initiative between 2002 and 2006 included a strategy for children affected by disability. While 13 others mention disability, there is little detail of strategies for the inclusion of disabled children in education, and five make no mention at all.”(p 192-193). While intergovernmental and transnational initiatives on behalf of children steadily gain traction, the particular promise and needs of young children and those with disabilities remain too often marginalized or hidden within too lengthy lists of priorities (e.g.<http://www.usaid.gov/press/congressional/2009/pl109-95arIII.pdf>). New guidance for early childhood development policies and projects issued by the World Bank lacks explicit indexing for disability, CRPD, or special education (Naudeau, et al, 2011). In the face of widespread acknowledgment of the special challenges of disability and the new CRPD mandates, these gaps and omissions threaten the effectiveness and integrity of serious efforts to meet key MDG benchmarks. The forthright re-commitment to the MDG by the US at the September UNGA makes for timely and pressing opportunity. Simultaneously, the recognition of these gaps and omissions allows for cross-sectoral problem-solving likely to enhance, even harmonize distinctive priorities in child development, education, social protection, nutrition, and health.

As toolkits for implementation of ECD programming are developed and launched, how might children with disabilities become more explicitly included? As EFA advances, how might its commitment to truly inclusive education be better realized? Just as colleagues have recently documented the relevance of the CRPD for World Bank initiatives more generally (Guernsey, Nicoli&Ninio, 2007) targeted analysis needs to focus on children with disabilities and engage the multiple stakeholders across the sectors of child and youth development, social and legal protection, nutrition, health and education. Our best thinking and our best leadership must be rallied around these catalytic opportunities.

Donald Wertlieb, Ph.D.
Professor
Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development
Tufts University

Dear colleagues,

In rural Northern Uganda, ECE is perceived by many as an optional education system meant mainly for children of the urban well-to-do class; and many parents in the urban setting unconsciously concurs for instance those working class women see it as an alternative for hiring baby sitters and quite some handful are only joining the prestige wagon of having a child in an ECE. So drawing from the above, there is need to sensitize the parents on the criticality of their children attaining ECE

Regards
Dickson Wanglobo

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for the continued opportunity to contribute to this discussion. We'd like to focus on question 2: What concrete steps can be taken to get girls into school and keep them there?

Many studies have given us a formidable body of evidence showing the positive effects of "concrete steps" for improving the state of girls' education. What has been much more difficult is the cultural shift towards prioritizing education for girls and changing the entrenched discriminatory attitudes and structures that underlie the lack of girls in school. It is also important to stress the point, which is now increasingly acknowledged, that any sustainable effort to effect change for girls must also consider the roles and attitudes of men and boys.

In thousands of communities, Baha'is have set into motion neighborhood-level processes that foster a learning environment in which individuals of all ages can come to recognize and develop their inherent capacities and, in turn, to channel their collective efforts towards the betterment of their communities. As it unfolds, the experience of the worldwide Baha'i community in the area of education reveals a number of concepts salient to the continuous refinement of educational processes.

1. *Enduring change depends upon coherent efforts to transform both the individual and society.* Social change is neither the result of 'upgrading the individual' (through secular education and training, or religious conversion) nor of an exclusive focus on changing social and political structures. The challenge of getting girls into school and keeping them there requires a systematic approach to the transformation of attitudes in the behaviors and values of individuals, their families and communities as well as efforts to change institutional structures and norms in a way that promotes girls' attendance and meaningful educational outcomes.
2. *The means of social change must be consistent with the ends.* It is not enough to focus on getting girls into school and keeping them there. Communities and nations must first articulate a vision of the kind of society they wish to live in and then consider the kind of individuals that will bring this about. If we envision societies in which men and women of diverse ethnic backgrounds, classes and creeds can live side-by-side and enjoy mutual prosperity, then we must consider what kinds of educational processes can support that vision. For example, the characteristics of such processes may include rectitude of conduct (including justice and trustworthiness) and freedom from prejudice. It would also require fostering relationships of reciprocity, empathy and genuine affection between the teachers, parents, students and the

wider community, thereby creating a rich web of support for the children attending the schools and the parents, teachers, administrators and others involved in educational processes.

3. *Consider service to society as an essential component of education.* Service to society helps the individual to develop skills and attitudes that awaken them to their inherent potential to contribute to the advancement of society. Furthermore, it creates a dynamic coherence between learning and action (service)—‘being’ and ‘doing.’ In this way, society can begin to rethink the assignment of categories to individuals based on age, gender and experiences, which obscure the individual’s potential for meaningful contribution to society.
4. *Consider the material and spiritual dimensions of the individual.* The human being is not only an economic and social being but a spiritual one—concerned with the meaning and purpose of life. Education, in its fullest sense, must provide the space and the environment to explore these fundamental questions, in a manner appropriate to their stage of development. In this way, educational processes and educators can acknowledge the inherent nobility of the child or youth, and, rather than seeing her or him as an empty vessel waiting to be filled, can foster interactions and experiences that help each one to discover and develop their inherent capabilities, whether technical, artistic, social, moral or spiritual.
5. *Think in terms of process, not projects.* The framework guiding Baha’i efforts in the area of education has been rooted in a dynamic of learning—characterized by action, reflection (on action), and consultation (to determine subsequent action). In many ways, the impetus for progress comes from many schools themselves being involved in a learning process. In this way, schools are oriented towards helping each other to advance rather than trying to out-compete one another. The insights from this process help to determine the way forward rather than looking to prescriptions for any one approach to education. The objective is not simply to establish a set number of schools or the imposition of a particular model of education but rather to set into motion a process that builds the capacity of the community, its parents, teachers, administrators, community leaders and children to create an environment conducive to the well-being and meaningful and sustainable education of the girls in their community.

Bani Dugal
Principal Representative
Bahá’í International Community

Dear Colleagues,

Formal schooling in Kenya consists of eight years of primary education, four years of secondary education and four years of university education, this is referred to as the 8-4-4 system. The national education system has evolved over time. In 1984, the 7-4-2-3 system was replaced with 8-4-4 system, with both systems providing 16 years of schooling. Basic education is defined as 12 years of primary and secondary education. Parallel to the formal system are non-formal education programmes catering for disadvantaged populations in arid and semi-arid regions and urban slums. These include programmes teaching literacy, vocational and other skills are provided by NGOs, religious organizations and local communities.

The Government introduced free primary education in public schools in 2003 and free day secondary education in day schools in 2008. Some private schools complement the public schools and offer other systems of education (e.g. British and American). University education takes a minimum of four years depending on the degree pursued.

Education in Kenya continues to generate many questions especially in relation to content, equity, access, relevance and quality. There has been a long-term concern that the 8-4-4 system of education does not sufficiently prepare young people for employment, self-sufficiency and the current realities of the nation. According to UNESCO (2006), “too many students are graduating from schools without mastering a set of minimum skills”. UNESCO further affirms that the extent to which education can translate into personal, social and developmental benefits are vital but “in many countries that are striving to guarantee all children the right to education, the focus on access (to education)” often overshadows attention to quality”.

Gross enrolment rates (GER) for primary education in Kenya increased from 105% to 110% in 2008. The GER for girls are lower than for boys but the trend appears to indicate that the gap is gradually narrowing. The net enrolment (NER) in primary education also increased from 83 in 2005 to 93% in 2008.

Equality and equity in education in Kenya is a challenge at all levels. Disparities exist regionally, in urban and rural areas, and among communities due to social, cultural and economic factors. For years, girls in Kenya have been sidelined with their role as mothers being emphasized over and above their need for education. With the introduction of free primary education, the Government has achieved impressive primary school enrolment rates. Gender disparity at primary education is very small but disparities become progressively more obvious from secondary through to university education.

The existence of a facilitative legal and policy framework has contributed to the realization of the education rights to the young people and has led to improved service delivery in several areas. One restriction on delivery has been the slow pace of enforcement of existing legislation and policy, partially caused by lack of adequate financial and human resources. Key legal and policy reforms that have had a direct bearing on the ECD include the National Plan of Action on Education for All, the national Gender and Education Policy; the Education Act of the laws of Kenya. The national gender and education Policy provides a framework for addressing gender inequalities and discrimination in key sectors such as education and provides a framework for achieving gender parity at all levels of education. However, enforcement of this policy has been problematic and gender differences in tertiary and higher education are still large.

Best regards
Julius Chokerah
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Kenya

Dear Colleagues,

After the previous speakers who have addressed the issue of disabled children I would like to focus on the situation in the countries of Sub Saharan Africa.

Disability is considered as one of the factors of educational exclusion and marginalization. According to some statistics, only 2% of children with disabilities are educated in the world and very few complete a full course of study. A higher proportion of children with disabilities excluded from education systems are located in the developing countries of Asia and Sub Saharan Africa (one third of the 35 million excluded according to the Monitoring Report on EFA UNESCO 2009). In sub Saharan Africa, despite the improvements in terms of parity between boys and girls especially at the primary school, the situation of girls with disabilities is even more worrying because of the double prejudice developed against women and persons with disabilities. The MDGs cannot be achieved without the inclusion of persons with disabilities and girls with disabilities in particular. Aware of this situation, the international community and sub-regional bodies have developed instruments that guarantee the right to education for children with disabilities (The Dakar Declaration (2000), United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), the Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities...)

At the national level, the constitution of most countries has made education an obligation and responsibility of the State and recognizes the specificity of certain groups including people with disabilities. Following the recommendations of international bodies, policies for the inclusion of persons with disabilities have been developed in some countries in sub Saharan Africa however they have been framed as strategies for poverty reduction rather than in education. With regard to those relating to education, several countries have drawn out since 2002, plans for education development in a comprehensive way to access to fast track additional resources in order to meet the requirements necessary to achieve the EFA goals by 2015 and universal primary education; in some of these plans the concerns of children with disabilities are highlighted while in others they are sidelined (Bines, 2007). Most countries have also adopted measures to free primary education and strategies to encourage girls to attend school in areas where resistance to schooling girls has been hard to overcome (e.g. the case in Cameroon, Sénégal).

UNESCO recommends inclusive education to take into account the needs of all learners marginalized or at risk of educational exclusion (IBE-UNESCO, 2008). Inclusive education and equal opportunity are the options chosen by some countries in sub Saharan Africa. However there is a gap between political will and the actual practices observed. In terms of educational provisions, schooling for children with disabilities is more the matter of the private sector, ministries in charge of Social Affairs and NGOs. From the demand side of education, some families do not see the interest and the need to send a disabled child at school in contexts marked by overcrowded classes, increased school dropout rates and high unemployment rates affecting even young graduates.

Education for people with disabilities in early childhood overall is of great importance because it represents a critical step to success in later learning and plays a key role in the formation of personality (Tiressew, 2000). Specifically, the education of female children with a disability is as essential as the contribution of an educated woman in society is recognized.

To reduce the gap between the political will and reality observed in practice, it would be necessary to develop effective education policies that increasingly recognize the right to education for all, promote

access and retention of children with disabilities (girls and boys) in the school system from early childhood. These policies should be in line with the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This requires awareness and incentives aimed at families and communities, training of persons to receive and care for handicapped students at the school level, the provision of human, material and financial to support students in their education, the involvement of families / communities and organizations of disabled persons in the definition, implementation and evaluation of educational policies towards this target and inclusion of the disability dimension in the implementation of all existing national strategies aimed at boosting girls' education.

Ernestine Ngo Melha

Chairperson Association d'Aide à l'Education de l'Enfant Handicapé (AAEEH)

Educational researcher IREDU/CNRS Dijon-France

Dear Colleagues

The evidence for benefits for disadvantaged children of holistic ECCE interventions of different kinds, which include health, nutrition and stimulation components, is indisputable, provided that they are of sufficient quality. A challenge is that ECE is too often seen as referring to preschool centre programmes and in the majority of countries access to these is unequal, favouring children whose families can afford to pay for the service and those in urban centres, while those who would gain the most benefit are excluded. The trend towards adding a pre-primary year to primary schooling is a way of providing equitable access provided that children are not excluded through fees or distances. However, children's capacity to benefit from such an intervention is heavily dependent on what happens before pre-primary age to maximise their health and nutritional status and develop positive approaches to learning.

In South Africa early childhood development policy has taken a two pronged approach. Firstly, a pre-primary year is being phased in for 5 year old children as part of basic schooling. By 2014 all children are expected to have received this service, which is offered either in accredited community schools or in a reception class at public schools. Secondly, and more importantly given the need for the earliest possible intervention, an integrated policy for children zero to four years is being phased in. This recognises that most children in this age group will not attend a preschool centre (though provisioning of this kind, is being upgraded and extended) and that the majority of children need to be reached through their families and communities. It also recognises the importance of a broad range of developmental factors such as the need for primary caregivers to be enabled to support health, nutrition and early stimulation. The focus of this national integrated plan is the 3 million children living in poverty - in particular orphaned children, children with chronic diseases and disabilities, children in child headed households; children affected by HIV and AIDS and children from dysfunctional families. The services to be delivered include maternal and child health, psychosocial support, access to social services, facilitation of birth registration and early stimulation.

This requires an inter-sectoral approach at all three tiers of government – national, provincial and local. It also requires a different kind of early childhood worker who is able to work at community level, engaging with families, linking them to services, providing education and information in a way that is sensitive to local context and child rearing practices. Issues such as developing a local evidence base about the most appropriate approaches that provide value for the investment and reach into the poorest and most remote homes; learning to work interdepartmentally and inter-sectorally; developing quality guidelines for this type of service; and defining funding and provisioning norms engaging

government, UNICEF, NGOs and academics. Financial resources and training are still largely targeted to preschool centres which are the established ECE provisioning model. Advocacy is needed to raise awareness about the importance of a range of ECD programme approaches. While there is a great deal to be worked out for effective delivery of this National Integrated Plan for young children under 5 years, this is a very promising policy to lead the development of an effective ECCE system.

Best,

Linda Biersteker
Research Director
Early Learning Resource Unit
Cape Town, South Africa

Dear Colleagues

As I come from a country, New Zealand, where Early Childhood Education in various forms is widely available I have been interested to note some of the issues faced by administrators in establishing ECE in developing countries. The issue of parental involvement in ECE, especially among lower socio-economic and migrant groups of people was one that has been addressed successfully in a number of areas in New Zealand using the HIPPY Programme.

I am sure that many of you will be aware of HIPPY (Home Interaction Programme for Parents & Youngsters), a home-based programme that supports parents in becoming actively involved in their four- and five-year-old children's learning. Parents and children work together for fifteen minutes a day with storybooks, puzzles and learning games that help children become successful learners at school. The programme builds on a bond between parents and children and offers support to parents so that they can provide their children with skills and confidence to commence school with confidence and a positive attitude to learning.

Details about the operation of HIPPY in New Zealand can be accessed at <http://www.familyservices.govt.nz/working-with-us/programmes-services/early-intervention/home-interaction-programme-for-parents-and-youngsters.html>

Best,

Dorothy Meyer
Past Convener of the Status of Women Committee of IFUW

Dear Colleagues,

It is evident that as countries become materially richer (per capita GDP) one set of problems associated with early childhood care and education come to be replaced by another. For example, in the Western ("developed") world there is now a massive problem of childhood obesity which, as health experts remind us, is very likely to increase the incidence of illness and disease – and not only in later life. Likewise, violence toward children resulting from a range of social, economic and interpersonal issues within families is at an unacceptably high level in many of these countries. A significant policy issue arises from the human rights agenda, vis-à-vis the rights of parents or of particular categories of adults

(e.g. men convicted of child molestation) vis-à-vis children's rights – and needs – and the responsibility of the state. Major inequities in effective access to participation in schooling and structural pre-schooling continue in many countries, as shown for example in the international program for student assessment (PISA).

In short, although on a global scale the impact of poverty and warfare must remain targets for action, it is important in looking ahead to develop policies and programs which will not generate new problems. Thus severe overcrowding and high unemployment in conurbations are predictors of continuing and almost certainly growing threats to the well being of children. We need more and better publicized studies of such social and cultural trends, as urbanization, depletion of life sustaining resources and threats to mental as well as physical health – all from the perspective of the growing child and young person. Such knowledge – often partial and scattered – needs to be consolidated, reviewed and used in making the case for child/ youth focused policy coherence. UNICEF is well placed in this regard by comparison with other inter-governmental bodies.

It is important to continue drawing on and providing more publicity to case studies and specific instances; it is equally important to draw up a research –policy agenda which both pulls together diverse experience and identifies the need for further trend analysis. Something like this occurred incidentally, under Roosevelt's New Deal, in a national effort to overcome the impact of the Great Depression. There is a global crisis in early childhood education and care, at least in one reading of the EFA Monitoring Report. If this is accepted we need coherent, integrated cross sectoral policy making and this should engage all countries, not only those most often targeted.

Emeritus Professor Malcolm Skilbeck
Deakin University, Australia

Dear Colleagues,

In a recent survey, we asked Plan International staff to list the challenges they faced in the implementation of projects to support the rights of girls. Amongst the 34 responses we received, the most frequent reply can be broadly categorized as “resistance to change”.

Resistance to improving the lives of girls is the manifestation of gender discrimination. It has its roots in value systems, culture and tradition and works its way up into societal systems that reflect these values and beliefs. Initiatives to increase gender equality are encountering gender discrimination at all levels of society, from relationships within families to organized religion.

In many countries where Plan works a sizeable number of parents do not support the schooling of their daughters, sometimes at the primary level and more often at secondary or tertiary levels. Obstacles for girls to realize their right to education are found on many levels. They include the higher status of sons in family hierarchies, customary practices such as child marriage, and an education system that does not accommodate young girls after marriage and childbirth. Offering bursaries for girls may help overcome some obstacles in the short run, but it will not lead to sustainable changes in the lives of girls if the attitudes and beliefs that underlie the value system do not change.

Whereas it may be difficult to address gender discrimination that is rooted in culture and tradition, that may be supported with interpretations of organized religion, and that helps consolidate the existing

power structure of communities. Plan's approach to overcoming the resistance is based on identifying potential allies within families, within communities, within governments and within religious bodies and strengthening their position without ever discounting the power of those who want to maintain the status quo.

Plan's approach is to promote the rights of girls and to eliminate gender inequality and gender-based discrimination from within social structures. The strategy is not without risks. It has to be applied carefully in order not to expose potential allies to a backlash by those who are resisting change.

Thanks,

George Anang'a
Development Education Adviser
Plan UK

Dear colleagues,

Neuroscience research findings on the various stages of child development point to the importance of investing in early childhood and the added value of early learning and stimulation. These findings have been used to advocate for ECCE with policy makers. Despite this evidence, ECCE programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa are highly inequitable on all accounts. The disparities are correlated with economic, geographical, social, and cultural disparities.

However, some interesting experiences have taken place in several countries to face the challenges of ECCE programmes in term of access and inclusion with objectives to increase access to quality basic education for all, which I would like to share.

An innovative approach to ECCE service delivery termed 'Rapid School Readiness Initiative' was formulated to enhance access to ECCE amongst children from poor households in Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASAL) districts of Kenya. The main goal was to increase basic school readiness skills through two months of rapid preparation amongst the many children from the poor households who do not attend ECD but enrol in primary school due to the free primary education services begun by the government.

Programme objectives are to:

- equip children (5 years plus) with minimum basic school readiness competencies through a two-month rapid preparation approach;
- increase access to ECCE through creating awareness among parents and community of the importance of ECCE;
- mobilise communities in target areas to initiate and sustain ECCE programmes;
- link beneficiary children with primary school for standard one intake.

The programme targets children from 5 to 8 years. These children are chronologically ready for formal schooling but may not have had an opportunity to attend any ECCE programme. The children were also not attending primary school in spite of the offer of free primary education.

The programme employs a multipronged approach that combines the following components and activities:

- development of a rapid school readiness initiative Module I guidebook for teachers;
- identification of beneficiary poor households in target districts;
- identification and orientation of teachers on the RSRI guidebook;
- community awareness creation and mobilisation involving discussions about the programme with beneficiary communities and mobilising them to start and sustain the programme;
- 60 days of rapid preparation for children and establishing linkages with primary school and
- follow-up monitoring and comparative outcome evaluation.

Five thousand children have been served through this innovative approach, with 80% transitioning to primary school where they remain. About 1,200 students are provided access annually; 2,000 parents have been mobilised; 150 ECCE centres have been established, with 80% ongoing and 80 teachers and district field officers who have been orientated and are actively involved in the programme. The children who undergo this programme are better off in terms of school readiness and perform better in primary school than those who go to primary directly. However, children from the regular ECCE programme perform the best.

Additionally an innovative and cost-effective approach towards school readiness for 6-yearold children is developing in Ethiopia. With a small budget, more than 3,000 children have been reached in 3 different regions by using low-cost materials that made an enormous impact on school readiness. The most valuable lessons learned from that programme are: young learners are quite eager to learn; and participation of parents is much more than expected. Parents allow their children to learn and to teach their younger brothers and sisters; they are eager to learn themselves and to support their children in many ways. Awareness raising on the importance of school readiness is a side effect. The intervention included translating and adapting materials that have been developed by the Child-to-Child Trust and UNICEF HQ.

These materials are the *Children's Early Learning Pack, Young*

- *Facilitators' Guide to School Readiness, and Teacher's Guides.* These materials were adapted and translated into three local languages of the three pilot regions and printed before the implementation started in September 2008.
- *Children's Early Learning Pack.* An all-inclusive learning pack to help young learners get ready for school. The older children participating in the approach received an early learning kit filled with activities to foster the skills of early literacy and numeracy in their local language.
- *Young Facilitators' Guide to School Readiness.* This is a step-by-step simple guide to accompany the activities contained in the learning kits; a more general guide has also been developed. These guides, designed specifically for use by older children in their role as young preschool facilitators, explain the purpose of each learning activity, how it should be used, and why it is important for children who are about to start school within a year.

- *Teacher's Guide and Training Workshop*. This is a guide for grade 6 teachers that highlights how each activity supports early thinking and young children's motor and language development.

To increase access to ECCE for children aged 3-5 years and make the service available to every child in this age cohort, a directive was given to the Nigerian states by the federal government to establish at least one ECCE class in every public school in the country. The resultant gap in teacher/caregiver provision led to a review of the pre-service teacher education programme and the introduction of ECCE as an area of specialisation at NCE. Consequently, to meet the increased need for caregivers and teachers, ECCE studies is being mainstreamed into the curriculum of an initial 18 pre-service teacher training institutions (Colleges of Education), while plans are under way to scale this up to the other Colleges of Education nationwide. The National Teachers' Institute has also been retraining teachers and caregivers already within the system to build their capacities. The curriculum materials developed have also been translated into 13 local languages while plans are underway to mass produce these documents under a public-private partnership arrangement.

Rokhaya Diawara
UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Africa
Dakar, Senegal

Dear Colleagues,

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECE): Before we consider the policy options, there must be agreement on the concepts of ECE. Is it ECE or ECCE or ECD (Early Child Development) or ECCD? The term, 'pre-school' is also used by many. The International Standard Classification of Education (1997) uses the term pre-primary education. Agreeing that learning begins at birth, World Declaration on Education for All (1990) called it, 'early childhood care and initial education'. However, the Guidelines for implementing the World Declaration on Education for All (1990) mentioned about the 'expansion of early childhood care and developmental activities'. The paper for the strategy session of the World Education Forum (April 2000) referred to it, ECCD. I wonder how the EFA Goal (Goal 1) reduced it to ECCE? I think that clarity in the concepts and definition are crucial to develop clear policies.

Although everyone agrees that ECCD is important, the political will and the resources are either not there or they do not match the needs or promises of governments and donors. Policy without a strong will and money is of little use. Therefore, I wouldn't recommend more policies. Let countries implement the policies that they already have with a particular focus on marginalized children and communities.

Education of Girls and Women: [Plan International](#) has an ongoing global campaign for lifting girls and women out of economic and education poverty. The campaign, known as [Because I am a Girl](#) is based on our experience of supporting child rights programmes in more than 40 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The following lessons underpin our work in general and the Because I am a Girl campaign in particular:

- Poverty and exclusion must be addressed simultaneously
- We must work at the local, national and international levels to address the policy, financing and practice issues of girl's education

- Empowerment of the excluded groups, particularly girls and women must be an important element of the strategy for inclusive education.

In addition to the above, some simple actions that everyone, including children parents and care givers can take are:

- Understanding the origins and implications of one's own stereotypes and prejudices and striving to overcome them
- Resisting discrimination of all kinds both individually and collectively
- Leaders of social institutions including family, community, school and religious institutions ensuring the application of the principles of equality and non-discrimination in practice.

Dr. Francis Sathya
Senior Policy Adviser, Education
Plan International Headquarters
francis.sathya@plan-international.org

Dear Colleagues,

One of the International Movement ATD Fourth World's greatest involvements in ECE has been in Haiti, in impoverished neighbourhoods perched on the steep slopes of Port-au-Prince. Because of their isolation (there are few roads, schools, or community centres), birth registration and immunization rates are low. Infant and child mortality rates are high not only because of the low income levels, but also because of the number of young parents with inadequate information on early childhood development. The Movement has organized within the zone in which it works two projects: one for children from 0-3, and a second one for children 3-6.

"Bébésbienvenus": an ECE programme for children 0-3 years of age

The programme is carried out by an 'animatrice' from the neighbourhood, who has been trained by the Centre for Special Education, and continues to benefit from the Centre's ongoing support and training courses. In the beginning, in 1997, mothers helped to identify an available space outdoors, where they could meet for a weekly two-hour session. The programme was thus visible to the community, and easily accessible. This was important in gaining the community's trust, and generating interest in the activities. As the number of participants increased, the programme was moved indoors to ATD's community centre. By this time – 2009 – the programme had become a regular part of community life. Regular visits in homes and neighbourhoods helped maintain a personal link and ensure that all those who are most in need of support are reached.

The mothers receive basic health and nutrition information, as well as information on their child's physical, mental and emotional development. The 'animatrice' ensures that the children are registered, and maintains a link with a local health clinic, which ATD helped to open. Because the clinic staff are involved in some of the sessions on health care, they have become known to the parents, who therefore feel more comfortable in taking their children to the clinic. In order for the families to be able to use the health clinic for regular check-ups, ATD covers the insurance payments to a partner organization, which provides each family with a health card. Once a month, the parents gather without their children to make mobiles and toys, and evaluate their child's progress.

Pre-school for children 3-6 years of age

The pre-school activity was launched after discussions within the neighbourhood confirmed that it would respond to a felt need on the part of parents, and they were willing to invest in its success. It is also supported by the Centre for Special Education, as well as by UNICEF. ATD accompanied the parents who needed to go to court in order to obtain birth registrations for their children. Pre-school activities take place two mornings a week. As for the 'Bébésbienvenus' programme, the activities were originally organized in the open space between two adjacent houses, and then were moved indoors where the facilities were better. Meetings are regularly organized for the parents on a specific theme related to child development, as well as to ask for feedback on the programme and resolve any problems encountered (discipline, importance of punctuality and regular attendance, etc.). The children's families also receive a card, granting them access to health care.

The Centre for Special Education provides training, followed by ongoing support to the teachers in terms of planning the programme of activities, developing the necessary materials, and evaluating the children's progress. The programme is evaluated every three months. Links have been established with the local primary school, and the parents are helped to enroll their children at the end of the pre-school programme.

Lessons learned and recommendations:

1. *Importance of ongoing involvement in the community:* It is of critical importance that the person responsible for the ECE programme be a part of the community, and therefore be trusted by the community. In addition, he/she must maintain regular contact with the parents, in order to support their efforts to provide the best possible environment for their child, and to help them handle the challenges they encounter in their struggle for survival. In the pre-school programme, the teacher makes the round of the neighbourhood before each session in order to encourage the children to participate, and to maintain contact with the parents.
2. *Need for partnership with local health care facilities:* Often people living in poverty do not make use of public services even when available, because they are often humiliated, and feel blamed for their child's situation. By sensitizing the health care personnel to the challenges faced by the people in the target neighbourhood, and inviting them to participate in the sessions with the parents, the teachers have created an environment in which the people feel welcomed at the clinic. The programme has likewise helped the clinic to extend its services into the neighbourhood. The support of the local clinic for health care, immunizations, vitamin supplements, food supplements for malnourished children, etc. is essential in order for the parents to be able to put their new information into practice. In situations where no health care services are available, it is important that they be created.
3. *Importance of ongoing professional support to the ECE providers:* The involvement of the Centre was essential in providing the materials, support, and ongoing training required for a programme aimed at preparing children from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to successfully perform in primary school. The Centre's support in monitoring and evaluating the programme was also key to ensuring that the programme was adjusted as needed.
4. *Attention to preparing the transition to the formal school system:* It is important to establish a bridge between the community and the formal school system. The school staff and teachers need to be sensitized to the situation of children living in extreme poverty, and the need to take

their situation into consideration - for example, not punishing them if they miss school one day, but instead recognizing the challenges they face (they might have been absent because they had to help their family forage for food that day). Teachers need to be supportive of the parents' efforts to ensure that their children go to school, and to ensure that the children will not be victims of discrimination, taunting or bullying.

5. *Importance of families' participation in the programme development:* An ECE programme cannot succeed without the full support of the families. It is therefore essential to involve them from the beginning – in the choice of site, the selection of the person from the community to be trained as the 'animatrice' or teacher, the ongoing evaluation of their children's progress and of the programme itself. Not only is this important in order to ensure the continued participation of the children and their parents in the programme, because they see it as directly relevant to their needs, but also the parents' empowerment through their involvement will help their children to develop the self-confidence and self-esteem that they will need to later succeed in the formal school system.
6. *Need to work through local organizations or community groups:* In order to ensure that the poorest and most socially excluded families are not overlooked, it is useful to identify local organizations or religious institutions that have already gained their trust, or that are at least known to them. Such groups can play a lead role in helping a community to carry out a mapping exercise to ensure that no child is left out, and then to ensure that these families are not made to feel unwelcome in the ECE activities.
7. *Positive impact of coupling ECE with income-generating projects:* Experience in other projects has demonstrated that the impact of ECE projects in impoverished neighbourhoods can be optimized through the provision of income-generating opportunities. Otherwise, the ECE programme will need to be very realistic about the families' capacity to meet their children's nutritional and health care needs.
8. *At an international policy level, importance of multi-pronged, human-rights-based approach:* It has become increasingly recognized that extreme poverty is both a cause and a consequence of human rights violations. People living in extreme poverty face a lack of income, food insecurity, homelessness or inadequate housing, lack of official identity, poor health, lack of justice (arbitrary detention, harassment, impossibility to defend themselves), and insufficient educational opportunities; they are not heard or considered in community decision-making processes; the unity of their family is threatened; and they are easy prey to exploitation. Therefore, the greatest impact on children's ability to take full advantage of ECE, pre-school and then basic educational opportunities will be achieved through a multi-pronged approach aimed at improving the families' overall living conditions. Because choices will need to be made in terms of priorities, it is critical that the families themselves be involved in the decision-making processes. All too often, programmes fail to make the best use of available resources because they have overlooked some of the obstacles and challenges faced by the families.

Matt Davies
Head of International Policy and Advocacy
International Movement ATD Fourth World
www.atd-fourthworld.org

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for organizing this forum. Please allow me to share some experience and thoughts.

While ECE provides enormous benefits, many governments have not committed sufficient resources nor policy support to programmes. Experience from Thailand shows that community-based action on ECE, with financial support from the Central Government, produces a high participation rate and positive physical growth for children. Unfortunately, since the program is operated in the Central Thai language, most children from ethnic backgrounds have immensely suffered from the loss of their mother tongue. These students grow up speaking only in "teacher's tongue". This creates a considerable cultural gap between grandparents and children; local knowledge and wisdom are lost through this program. In Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea, where mother tongue is required at an early age, the program has produced positive results both culturally and physically. We must urgently review ECE policy in many countries to ensure that it enhances cultural and linguistic diversity as well as creativity for future generations.

At the primary level through the utilization of a school lunch program has significantly facilitated increases in enrolment among the deprived population, especially for girls. Experience from Thailand again proves this point. However, Thailand is a food surplus country, where children can attend schools all day. In food deficit countries, some of these options should be considered: (a) provision of emergency food aid by World Food Programme linked to food production by parents. Children receive free food, while parents receive seed loans for food production or income-generation (b) books and all learning materials provided free of charge or on a loan basis (c) scholarships should be made available for girls from poor families, thus preventing their early drop-out for work.

Focusing on addressing issues in secondary education, all schools should be located within walking or cycling distance to allow girls to attend regularly. In deprived communities, pupils could be required to attend only half day, enabling students to engage in productive work at home. This program works very well in Bali, Indonesia. A second key policy option is to create a national student loan scheme for all deprived girls and boys at secondary and university levels. In Thailand the scheme for the first ten years of operation (1995-2005) lent a total of \$ 10 billion to 3 million upper secondary, vocational and tertiary level students. Candidates come from families with an annual income less than \$ 6666. The program has greatly enhanced equal education opportunities among the youth nationwide. Thailand has succeeded with this scheme, reaching the stage where most unskilled workers are now drawn from Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos, because most of Thai girls are in schools. Of course, this has created a lot of drop-out among secondary school girls in these three neighbouring countries. Similar loan schemes are needed in these three countries, too, if we are to achieve the EFA goals in ALL countries.

Policy makers should consider trans-boundary migration phenomena as a result of inequality of education opportunity for each region.

Dr. Supote Prasertsri
Advisor to the Board of Trustee
Pannasastra University of Cambodia.

Dear Colleagues,

Various options are available to provide ECE: parents, preschool, TV programmes (i.e. Sesame St or Blue Clues); child care for employees, public libraries, access to computers & games, feeding programs, monitors, retraining primary teachers, health checkups, supervisors or information systems.

The problem is to compare the probable benefits (related to costs) of each alternative. With Larry Wolff we have used a [Delphi technique](#) to build cost-effectiveness estimates (ratios between estimated increments in learning and costs) that may alert policy-makers to the strategies they are actually selecting. Examples of applications in Africa and Latin America for primary schooling are available in the website of the EFA-Fast Track Initiative Partnership:

- <http://www.educationfasttrack.org/media/library/afrSchWolffCostEffeaug262007.pdf>
- <http://www.educationfasttrack.org/media/library/lacschiefwolffcepal.pdf>

This simple exercise helps to challenge conventional wisdom and press planners and decisions makers to double check some of the assumptions routinely built into more traditional decisions (mainly formal preschooling). However, the value of the estimates depends (of course) on the quality of the "judges" selected for estimating impact and feasibility.

Best,

Ernesto Schiefelbein
Senior Lecturer
Universidad Autonoma de Chile

Dear Colleagues,

To answer the questions on making ECE a reality for disadvantaged children we need to build support for several premises:

- Education and daily life are natural and potential spots for transformation of human progress;
- ECE is essential for educational inclusion; it is the foundation for school success; it is necessary for achieving an equitable world where underprivileged children can start from a solid foundation; it is essential for achieving gender equity; it is a good strategy for poverty reduction;
- ECE, from our perspective, cannot lie only in the education system since at this age, the interaction between family, caregivers, community and school is essential for achieving "quality" and integral-ecological point of view;
- Talking about quality in the Early Years Care and Education, is a complex approach that cannot be measured only in terms of schooling, it should be evaluated in terms of rates violence against children, desertion, rates of emotional stability, accidents, nutrition, security, health, recess time, and spaces for recreation, sports and playing with a children focused perspective.

In Costa Rica, free early years education starts and is obligatory at 5 ½ years old. Based on statistics from the Ministry of Education, out of 9,601 institutions, only 2755 incorporated preschool. In the last article of Costa Rica from UNICEF website, only six of every 100 children are in a public care system (from 0 to 8 years old); and only 5% of children between 0 to 3 years old are in a care system or in early stimulation programmes. Knowing that ECE is possible through the education system, the Cen Cinai Program and HogaresComunitarios are initiatives that can help coverage in the long term, however they require significant investments.

It could be a good strategy after contextualizing, identifying an overall perspective and strengthening skills, and faculties to empower people that are involved in any way through the early years through training programs from a human rights perspective. The ECE approach could be a combination of an effort between the formal and informal system where programs can be accessible to parents, family networks, caregivers, community leaders, day care staff and teachers.

A positive breakthrough would be to create synergies through cooperation between the Government, United Nations, NGOs, and others, where everyone can contribute and complement a national approach for ECE. From that perspective, some proposals have been presenting positive results, such as: Reggio Emilia in Italy; The Pratham Organization in India (Balwadi); "PITC" Program in California (USA), and other more organized perspectives in countries, such as: Finland, Canada and Australia.

In Latin America, there are many programs trying to interconnect efforts between the formal and informal system, some of them are: Chile (Manolo and Margarita learn with their parents, Educated in the early years); Colombia (Hobis, Atlantic Coast Project, Leadership Training Program, a Good Start); Brazil (Family Brasileira Strengthened); Venezuela (Little Simon, Teacher at home) and others.

Adopting a decentralized model, through the systematic training and a well-established monitoring and evaluation system with an open line communication, can help closing the bridge of The State as a duty bearer on these issues.

Adriana Alfaro
Executive Director
Dehvi Foundation & Care Group Organization
Costa Rica

Dear Colleagues,

Through its global network, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) has compiled a range of good practice guidance to ensure that girls, boys, women and men have access to quality and safe education in times of emergency and crisis.

Below, we are pleased to share strategies for equal access and gender-responsive learning environments, on both the supply and demand sides of educational provision, drawn from the new [INEE Pocket Guide to Gender: Gender Equality in and through Education](#). These lists are far from exhaustive, and examining the exact nature of barriers in each situation is essential.

Supply Side Barriers and Possible Strategies:

Barrier: Schools are far away and girls and/or boys are unable to access them safely.

Possible Strategy: Temporary learning spaces established near to communities; adults accompany groups of learners to and from school.

Barrier: Learning spaces are staffed only by male teachers resulting in girls or their families being reluctant or unwilling to attend; learning spaces are staffed only by female teachers resulting in a lack of role models and boys being unmotivated to go to school.

Possible Strategy: Recruit female or male teachers and classroom assistants. Where trained staff are not available, consider asking trusted volunteers to participate in educational activities.

Barrier: Minimal or no sanitation facilities result in low attendance and high drop-out rates for adolescent girls who are menstruating.

Possible Strategy: Work with water and sanitation colleagues and the local community to build male and female toilets and hand washing facilities

Barrier: Female learners are at risk of sexual violence or abuse from the teaching staff and stop attending.

Possible Strategy: Create protective learning environments by developing a Code of Conduct for Teachers and Other Education Personnel.

Barrier: Young mothers or girls and/or boys formerly associated with armed forces are unable to (re)enter school as they are too old for their grade level.

Possible Strategy: Work to ensure there are flexible educational opportunities in the form of extending the age for school attendance, or providing non-formal training. Avoid mixing older and younger boys and girls.

Demand Side Barriers and Possible Strategies:

Barrier: Poor families prioritize boys' education and don't send girls to school.

Possible Strategy: Provide incentives or targeted support to female learners, such as uniforms, schools fees or food to reduce the direct cost on families.

Barrier: Communities are ideologically opposed to girls' education or cultural practices such as early marriage and pregnancy curtail girls' access to schools.

Possible Strategy: Work with communities and local organisations to promote the importance of culturally acceptable female education; Launch a media campaign or negotiate endorsement by religious leaders.

Barrier: Girls or boys are occupied with household or income-generating duties and don't have time to attend school.

Possible Strategy: Consider using shift classes to improve flexibility of school timing; where caring for younger siblings is a concern, consider establishing early childhood spaces to care for young children while their siblings attend school.

Sincerely,
INEE Secretariat
www.ineesite.org

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for including me in this debate which I find of very high importance. I am currently based in Namibia where our new Education Minister recently declared he would like to undertake education system reform from ECD or ECE through tertiary education, and the debate about quality becomes even more relevant.

A little bit of background - Namibia has a hybrid education system based on the former Apartheid education system – sad to say more than 20 years after Independence but it is the case, and the British Cambridge system. With two distinctly different systems forming the basis for education provided to children and young people in the country, the challenges are many and highly evident to all. While undertaking major education system reform, the country is bound to face numerous challenges.

To establish a new education system and improve the quality of education for all children and at all levels needs support and it is therefore important that the much needed resources and technical assistance are provided not through a piecemeal approach but based on a well-grounded situation analysis and a road map for action that embraces all aspects and components of the work – with a clear time line and milestones for stock taking and measuring of progress.

When the above is said, from my perspective, Namibia has an excellent point of departure for taking ECE and quality education forward as it is and must form an integrated part of the education reform debate and formulation. One challenge we will face is the absence of qualified staff and child care attendants, especially at local and community levels, with the relevant background to ensure that the growth and development of children under the ECE programmes are regularly monitored and reported on. Access to learning material and facilities are also challenges due to the distances and accessibility that must be considered.

In respect to outreach, local community based models for ECE must be developed and promoted, especially in disadvantaged communities and among disadvantaged families and those run by children and/or are female headed. Namibia has more than 200,000 orphans and vulnerable children due to the AIDS epidemic and outreach programs that enhance their opportunities for stimulation, learning and growth, must be a priority in the debate.

While we are addressing the issues of quality, I would also like to raise the issue of the connection between women and their roles in caring and providing children, from the perspective that women also need to care for themselves. This is an area that is often neglected when programs are planned and women are hence often left out of the dialogue when it comes to their own needs for health care and nutrition, generation of income beyond subsistence, access to and education opportunities and participation in the economic mainstream that often make them remain in poverty and deprivation. Women's participation in political and decision making processes, at community, regional and national levels must also be included in strategies that address ECE as women would otherwise only be expected to remain at home, unable to take full part in the societal processes and to break away from the vicious circle of poverty and exclusion. Acknowledging that women are key in ECE and also in the education of

their children, empowering women with knowledge, tools and instruments must take place for them to provide and care for children from the early age also relates to raising their status in their families and communities.

With increased focus being given to ECE within the framework of global education, women who commit to and implement ECE programmes and activities, must be given status in society and be recognized for what they are doing to educate the nation, not only at the local level but also through national and international fora. Since it is mostly women who take on these roles, they need also to be able to take time off from their family duties and take part in educational activities outside of the home. Should they not be compensated in one way or the other for this work, like in my home country where this is recognized through a monthly allowance provided to the woman in her name until the child/children reach the age of 18!

Although I am now based in Namibia, I would like to share one model used in Uganda as an idea for how a local community approach to ECE could function, successfully used already in the early nineties when I was working there.

In a relatively small local rural community there were many households with many orphans from the raging AIDS epidemic and since these children had almost all lost both parents, they were residing with their grandmothers, very seldom with both grandmother and grandfather. As there was hardly time for these women to get to health clinics, go for PTA meetings or even do the necessary farming/ gardening or shopping, they organized themselves in groups of five. Every day, one of the five women would organize child care for her "own" children and those of the neighbors, while the others would attend to their own needs. Although the women did not have big houses, they were able to cater for the children who would also help out for the hours the child care arrangement lasted. The women, who brought their children, could while the children were under mentoring, attend to training activities in addition to do the necessary chores mentioned above. With enhanced knowledge about child care, stimulation and health activities, they gradually became more confident, more caring and understanding and felt empowered to attend to the PTA issues in their local communities. They also could take a day off to attend to their own health care needs etc. The concept of five days came up because the women would like to be with the children during weekends and this was also when relatives would visit, they would go to church and also visit others.

The model was very low cost and worked well in rural communities where the environment was quite safe and the women also knew each other from the school, church and other places where they used to assemble. Community outreach was used by the NGO to build the capacity and for mentoring of women who were implementing the learning with children of different ages. The programme created strong community cohesion that was a benefit in situations where there was a need to draw upon extra ordinary resources for example in relation with funerals that were quite common those days.

What would it take to get ECE to figure more prominently on the global agenda?

I would immediately say leadership – to call upon prominent leaders like the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister in Namibia who has made child nutrition his main priority in the fight against poverty and deprivation. With nutrition comes the understanding of the complexity of poverty eradication and that all development issues are inter-dependent and related. Such leaders must be called upon as national and international champions and stimulated to take up roles as roles models for other countries and at global levels. They will need to be supported with the necessary resources to enable them to develop

models of their eminent work, share strategies with other countries and contribute in fora where ECE issues are debated. There are too few leaders today who see ECE as their priority, often as they also do not know enough about the issue and how it can be approached from their political platform. The role models/champions role is therefore strategically important to help to set the agenda correctly and give priority to ECE at the respective political levels, whether this is nationally, regionally or internationally.

Non-education community engagement may be the most challenging, as we need to know who they are first of all and also acknowledge that “they know everything about education as they have all gone to school”! Most of those who express such attitudes may change them if education/ECE is given higher status in society, if teachers are paid like medical doctors and education is recognized as core in all development debates whether these are around finance, mining of gold, diamonds or uranium, about fisheries, agriculture, health, or other issues. To place ECE as the determinant and education as the central issue that determine the future of the nation and not only of the poor should be re-considered and supported by effective communication campaigns, evidence based reports and positive examples on how ECE and education have brought positive changes in local families, communities and to the nation as a whole.

An inclusive debate engaging all sectors in a visionary and future oriented fashion about what the citizens regard as Quality Education, what they want and need from a future oriented education system that matches the modern world, and how they think the governments and local authorities should take leadership in this endeavor may give some interesting perspectives for enhancing quality of education at national and local levels.

Thank you for your attention and warm regards
Kari Egge
UN Resident Coordinator
Namibia

Dear Colleagues,

Worldwide every year millions of children start school malnourished, in ill health and in poverty in their early years. Early childhood trauma like retarded growth in the womb, stunting and anaemia are not typically viewed as mainstream education issues, but evidence strongly suggests that they should be. Malnutrition during the critical first 1000 days of life can leave a young person with permanent physical and mental impairments, harming a child's ability to learn, and robbing children of their very potential in life.

If there is a silver bullet for development, this is early nutrition and education. Good nutrition may be not just the best way, but the only way to reach all of the MDGs. Without adequate nutrition, people cannot break the crippling chains of poverty, they are more vulnerable to diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria, and hungry children cannot learn in school. Effective early childhood care and education can provide children with a better chance of escaping the poverty trap. Appropriate and timely nutrition gives a head start in life: we have to unlock that potential. There is strong – and growing – evidence that high-quality care in the early years can act as a springboard for success in school. In turn, education provides vulnerable and disadvantaged children with a chance to escape poverty, build a more secure future and realize their potential.

The Journal of the American Medical Association reported the adverse intergenerational impact of poor nutrition – with mothers who were stunted as children having a 40 percent higher risk of their children dying in their first five years of life. The science is clear that healthy mothers are a pillar of a healthy family, and we must target mothers and young children directly in order to build food secure communities.

A study in India estimated that the country loses 4 percent of its GDP to malnutrition. A WFP study in Central America found the cost of malnutrition is as high as 11 percent of GDP. WFP are right now working with the African Union to conduct a study on the cost in 10 African countries which coincides with the finalization of the AU's nutrition policy.

We know why and we know how to improve nutrition and care for children. Now is the time to act. We need to embrace a comprehensive vision of health for children and families. Support interventions that incorporate elements of good nutrition, effective health care, de-worming and hygiene practices. We have to ensure that all child health and developmental concerns are identified, and children and families are linked to an ongoing source of continuous, accessible care to meet their basic health needs. Importantly we need to provide all children with a safe, nurturing, engaging, enjoyable, and secure learning environment, in order to help them gain the awareness, skills, and confidence necessary to deal with school and life. The continuum of children's growth and development does include the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of each child.

The World Food Programme assisted 2.3 million pre-school children in 2009. Among the countries it supports, Gambia is a particular success story. WFP development project in that country achieved an increase of 23% increase in enrolment in ECDCs and noted that food is clearly a major element in attracting children to pre-school education. The Gambia addresses the challenge of universal primary education by highlighting the priority of access and quality basic education in its PRSP II and 2004-2015 Education Policy. Based on past performance in education, policy priorities are identified to allow for the growth of educational opportunity and improve the effectiveness of education at all levels, from early childhood development (ECD) to tertiary and higher education. According to the Education Policy (2004 – 2015), the Department of State for Education (DoSE) has developed strong linkages with other government departments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and committees to promote an integrated approach to ECD. Through these linkages, the DoSE will participate in the implementation of the National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development and strengthen its ties and collaboration with parties interested in this area. Through the multi-sector working group and the committees set up for the promotion of ECD, partnerships and alliances with civil society and international agencies will be promoted and sustained. The growth and development of children between the ages of three and six (ECD) is recognized as a means to improve the learning outcomes at all levels. As such, the Education Policy (2004 – 2015) states that the access to ECD will be enhanced through the provision of school feeding, with a main focus in girls' participation.

Best Regards,

Marc Regnault de la Mothe
Policy Officer
World Food Programme

Dear Colleagues,

The issues, ECE and education of girls are especially pertinent given the current circumstances.

In Pakistan, ECE has been formally recognized recently, as the curriculum for ECE was approved in 2007. In the past ECE was informally available, but was not part of the formal school system in government schools, although private sector is very much active in this regard. However, the problem that we face is that a large number of children dropout before reaching the end of primary schooling, which is five years in duration. The reason for dropout is that children of very young age are not received in school in a comfortable and conducive environment. In order to increase access to ECE it is imperative that children be provided with a friendly environment and teaching be based on hands on and interactive activities, less structured as far as possible. More over schools need to be provided with necessary infrastructure and facilities.

Secondly, in Pakistan about 70 percent of the population lives in rural areas and many are girls. In the past enrolment of girls in schools has been very low but, recently due to various government interventions significant improvements have taken place, in terms improved enrolment and retention rate of girls. Still a lot remains to be done in this regard. It is important that proper mapping of schools is carried out and in future school are built in areas of reduced access. Moreover, education, particularly for girls, needs to be linked with the local requirements, trades and occupation.

But, the most important is to make at least primary education compulsory both for boys and girls, which is not the case at moment in all countries.

Prof. Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Iqbal
Dean Faculty of Education
University of the Punjab

Dear Colleagues,

Early Childhood Education (ECE), in Pakistan termed Katchi or pre-primary, is defined as both formal and informal as well as public or private education services for children aged 3-5 years. In the public sector traditional style dominates: the child sits in a multi-grade classroom, sharing the space, material and teacher time with students of Class I and II. In the traditional style, there are no special funds for ECE and the regular primary teacher allocates a portion of his/her time in teaching "Katchi" students. Even students don't understand when they became eligible as regular students? In this system children at early ages don't find comfort at school and depend on her/his sibling or relative already studying in same school. Even teachers are not trained to handle such kind of students. As there is no policy for ECE many teachers discourage attendance of these young students. Private institutions exist, encouraged by Government and Non-Government Sector, but they are relatively limited and without any planning. Same time no guidelines have been made available for ECE. You may see these two resources from Pakistan; <http://www.ecdpak.com/publications/Sofia-Shakil.pdf>; <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001472/147222e.pdf>.

Most of our discussions on ECE we neglect children with disabilities, who cover more than 10% of overall child community. Without including these children in education systems we can't achieve our goal of "Education for All". ECE is a crucial stage for children with disabilities because this is the stage where a child with disability is often identified then the rehabilitation process started. Mostly rehabilitation focused on physical development for children left behind in mental development or the ECE process. There is a huge need to revise policy of ECE at international level and steps should be taken to include children with disabilities in at the ECE level. In developing countries like Pakistan where special education remains limited, such interventions are needed and inclusive education should be promoted. But same time at health sector such facilities should be provided that a child with disability early detected and early intervention may be possible.

Regarding the second question I would like to share a success story from our area. In this part of world still today girl's education is not compulsory. It is still optional and school dropout rate for girls is very high. On a self-help basis and experimental basis we started a community based school as informal education in a room donated by one of the community members in his house. Suddenly we observed the interest of girls and women increased and male family members didn't objected on their female family member's education. In this way not only new girls entered in education but adult education also started. After such success we formalized that school through local government support. But sustaining these gains proved difficult as space was limited and there was a huge female community interested in education. If such model of community based education adopted then education can be promoted for girls in conservative societies.

Best Regards

GhulamNabiNizamani
Coordinator ASHA
CEO PDPO / DPI PAK

Dear Colleagues

I appreciate the experiences and insights that contributors have shared over the past week. My contributions are from a macro-planning perspective.

There have been comments on the gap that one often finds between policy and practice and on the rights of children to which national governments have made commitments. The difficulty is invariably that education budgets in developing countries are inadequate to cover all the needs, and attention to one aspect almost inevitably means that something else is neglected. The investments to get more (all) children into school had as an unintended consequence- deterioration in the quality of education in many schools. The elimination of inefficiencies in government spending and the full and efficient application of donor funding to the priorities of the national education strategic plan, with adequate attention to the most disadvantaged communities, would help towards achieving more with the same budget.

The “inclusive” approach to educating children with disabilities may often include them in the classroom while still preventing them from engaging in learning, either because the teacher is unaware of how to meet the child’s special needs, or because of class size. This raises the question whether colleges of education and universities offering an initial teaching qualification routinely train their students to use inclusive approaches, not just theoretically, but also during teaching practice.

Of course, there are situations in which dedicated adults with little formal training provide a more stimulating environment than do many qualified teachers. What I have missed in the contributions is any reference to the successful sustained use of radio to educate parents and those providing ECE of low-cost or no-cost ways in which they can provide mental stimulation and organize structured interaction for their children.

Robert C West, D.Ed.
Independent Consultant
west@mweb.com.na

Dear Colleagues,

The early years of children are extremely precious and there is almost a consensus and unanimity of views that Early Childhood Education (ECE) is important. ECE is not only crucial for childcare but also significant for the personality development of the child. Appropriate ECE is the foundation of success and has an enduring effect on the future of children in terms of their learning capacity and thinking patterns. These early years lay the foundation for what follows and are determinant in building and developing the initial capacity of children to learn and acquire knowledge. ECE supports the attitudinal development in personality of the child.

The impact of Early Childhood Education and Development on the learning outcomes of the students is enormous. Through ECE, the chances of early dropouts from schools are drastically reduced. The learning is improved facilitating the continuity and secure understanding of students. The worst dropout cases have been reported from the disenfranchised and marginalized sections of society and the effect can be mitigated through regular stream of ECE in our education system. There is a dire need and incessant demand for introduction of ECE in the public schools system.

The private sector has already introduced ECE and is catering for affluent sections of society especially in urban areas. There is a need to popularize the idea at policy making regional, national and international level through advocacy and secure dissemination on the importance and impact of ECE on the life and careers of students. The utmost concentration with stoic determination and focus on students from disadvantaged and less affluent households will not only help to reduce the dropout rate and but will significantly enhance access and improve the quality of education.

Dr Allah Bakhsh Malik PhD
Secretary to the Government
Literacy and Basic Education Department

Dear Colleagues,

My sincere thanks to everyone concerned for initiating such type of valuable e-discussions which gives everyone a global platform to put forth his/her views.

We all know that the first five years are crucial for a human being. Researchers have found that 90% development of the brain of an individual takes place before 5 years of age. This explains the importance of these formative years in our lives. ECE or the early childhood education deals with this vital period. But unfortunately functions in a neglected way in many developing and underdeveloped countries. Using India, which is one of the most populous and developing countries, as an example there is a huge gap between the rich and the poor which is highly visible in the access to qualitative Early Childhood Education (ECE). There are private institutions imparting ECE for with parents who are willing and able to pay more.

In India ECE provided by government, is one of the six packages of ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services). This programme caters mainly to ordinary public and very poor. It helps children in rural and tribal areas to come to ECE centres and avail of the other packages of ICDS as well. In some Indian states where ECE centres are associated with the Primary schools while in others these are independent.

But it has a dark side as well. Though the job is no less important than primary education, the teachers in ECE are paid much less and in many cases looked down by others in society. For this reason there is deficiency of well-educated and well-trained staff in this area. Also staffs of ICDS remain engaged most of the time in Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP), immunization and health related activities neglecting totally the ECE component. As a result majority of children enter primary education ill-prepared which hampers the growth of their further education.

Government ECE centres which function for the majority of the population living in slum, rural and tribal areas lack the minimum child-friendly infrastructure. Many lack spacious, safe playground and the lively and attractive environment for children where the very young minds would have learnt the foundations of life ahead.

Discussing bottlenecks in the field of girls' education in school, in India girls disproportionately face sanitary and hygienic problems at school. The majority of schools do not have separate toilets for girls and in those schools which have, are usually not at all clean, hygienic and safe. I think this is a serious bottleneck which leads to a lower percentage of attendance of female students in many schools.

Some schools located in remote areas do not have female teachers which is a handicap in handling problems of female children. Many school also lack properly-trained teachers in handling the problems faced by the girl child during the physical, mental and emotional changes taking place in adolescence. In rural areas stress should be placed on opening more girls' schools because of the existing societal customs and traditions which does not allow interacting freely with male students. Also this facilitates the all-round growth of the female child in a more relaxed atmosphere.

All are taught general subjects in school but relevant and interesting subjects such as sex education, self-defense techniques, house and family maintenance concepts, personality grooming, better communication skills, national and global gender issues should be discussed in separate special sessions for girl students to motivate them to come to school regularly. After gaining expertise in these types of useful life skills, it could definitely secure their increased and sustained participation in schools. Girls

should feel confident of facing life after finishing school as well-equipped with necessary life-skills. Free counseling also should be available to the female students for their personal problems.

Another point to ponder here is the preference of male child in many families. Sometimes it leads to female foeticide and neglect of girl children in the family. This situation is also prevalent in Kerala, the highest literate state of India, so one can well imagine the plight of girls in states like Rajasthan and Haryana. It needs urgent attention in many states to provide the female child the opportunity to live, be educated and be an active part of the nation's growth movement.

Before concluding I would like to add that there is urgent need to have an anti-corruption system in the society as well in organizations to ensure the planning and programmes for ECE and education of female children are successful and for outreach to the most disadvantaged or excluded children.

Thank you,

Dr. Sanghamitra Deobhanj
Ranihat High School, India

Dear colleagues,

As Junuz Korkzacc used to say "the child is a person," and the 20th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on the Rights of the Child was an opportunity to further promote that concept worldwide. So it seems that the basic attitude is to consider firstly the person we face to be educated. From here we must find the means with which to show him/her that s(he) is a unique person who has something to offer others and receive from them. In order to do this this we have to find the exact words to be understood, particularly towards children who face difficult situations due to the different kinds of poverty: food, of course, money, certainly, but above all attention, even love, that are important deprivations to sentiments of a person as someone of interest to others.

When, as teachers or educators, we try to highlight positive aspects of every one which can be different from one child to the other, then children could feel concerned. It seems that before changing our attitude towards children, individually, we should seek to change the outlook on children. Some could say this is "utopian", but utopia represents an ideal to be reached, that can be achieved! It is true that we, as a teacher or an educator, have to face a one hundred children classroom, it could be difficult, but not impossible, if we have in mind that basic idea: every child is a unique person, and I must show it that it is true in my conception of education.

If this open mind to the others is always present in our teaching or educating early childhood, the benefits will be present in primary school, since this should motivate children with the pride to show his/her best, and, may be, in that way of looking at school, there should less and less children drop from non-finished primary courses. By the way, for this positive result, to link formal and non-formal education appears as a very good kind of education, and can be (has to be?) realized at a local level and slowly become to a top-down attitude or policy.

For girls in particular in their education they could receive better benefits where parents can play a role; for instance if parents are firstly educated on the positive input of educated girls. To do so school could be open in order to inform parents on the unique person that every boy or girl is. In fact, when girls,

particularly in difficult situations, have bad results at school, the parents "know" what they will be told about their child by the teachers, and do not wish to go and see teachers who do not have something positive to share concerning their child. A changing attitude of teachers towards very young pupils could help in maintaining girls at school, showing the parents that it is useful and fruitful.

It is more and more accepted that kindergarten or preprimary school must follow up the education given by the parents. To be efficient, the use of mother language should be practiced by the teachers for the 2 or 3 first school years. This will enable children to better learn concepts, and on the other hand, mother and girl(s) would be able to follow up together daily schooling lessons contributing value to parents, particularly mothers at home, who do not speak National or official languages.

Finally, possibly non-formal education could help. Some international NGOs welcome parents and promote education through games. For instance, AMI (Association Montessori International) teaches all basic concepts through games, allowing to really know surfaces, volumes, series, associating forms and colours; the experience conducted in a transit camp in Kenya, near Nairobi, named "A corner for hope" is a good practice than can help girls and families. On a similar way, OMEP (Organisation Mondiale de l'Enseignement Pr scolaire) aims to give motivation for studying to children through games, implemented in Canada, then in several African countries "A ludotheque for you".

In conclusion as well new attitudes towards children, particularly girls, the use of the mother language especially in ECE, could represent an opportunity to maintain girls at school. But overall, it seems important to discover a link between formal and non-formal ECE.

Thank you for your attention,

Janine Marin
ISOCARP Representative to UNESCO
President of the NGO-UNESCO Joint Program Commission "Eradication of Poverty"

Dear Colleagues,

The Government of Rwanda's policy of increasing compulsory schooling from the six primary years to the first three years of secondary school has been successful to date in increasing girls' participation in school through the traditional early dropout years. The President's promise to extend this initiative to the full six years of secondary school during his current seven year term of office will also be an incentive for girls to stay in school. We will be able to judge whether this is sustainable at lower secondary levels in two or three years' time.

Attention to the quality of education is of course also needed

Best,
Shirley

Professor Shirley Randell AO, PhD, FACE, FAIM, FAICD
Director, Centre for Gender, Culture and Development
Kigali Institute of Education (KIE) Rwanda

Dear Colleagues,

In countries like mine, El Salvador, training for parents starting from pregnancy is almost nonexistent and largely focuses on nutritional and health needs. Health care officials do their part from the perspective of health. But education is only recently starting pilot programs in urban areas for daycare (Guarderías) (focusing attention care of mothers - for children from 6 months to 3 years for working mothers- free vocational training only).

But expanding Guarderías facilities in rural areas and improve training in mothers caring capacities, investment requires a change in priorities from governments are not designed for education. Changes in education policy from maintenance to implementation on from foreign aid are usually limited projects that only run for a short duration. In summary this will require lobbying the government to increase investment in education for quality and access and not simply investment in projects for photos and public relations.

To get and keep girls in school, based on the measures I see in El Salvador gender does not affect school participation of students. For a specific school of 800 students, we have happened to see that only 10 students who were pursued by the maras (gangs) which led to the decision of parents not sending children to school for safety .

Best,
Cecilia Cuellar

Dear Colleagues,

The first 6 years of life of the child are decisive for their development. At this stage children acquires skills such as crawling, walking, running, writing, building, as well as abilities to think, speak, learn and reason and interact. The expression of these feelings and values that accompany a child throughout its life and allow it to integrate into society where it happens to be born. In this context it is life itself that demands education from an early age with a more holistic, participatory, integrated, and contextualized with significant and varied learning. This education must respond to social, environmental and communications that the planet presents.

How can this objective be achieved? Joining forces and being responsible in the education of children. Schooling is not the answer to reach 100% of the population. Only when the family, state and society come together and rethink their educational role; only then people will begin to feel more secure, creative, critical, leaders and happy.

The proposal would create integrated and comprehensive programs, including information by different means, which may be developed with minimal costs, so that people are well trained and committed to their communities, are the answer. It is imperative that children are prioritized. A process of awareness of the role of the whole society in forming a child's life is carried out.

Regarding female education, the answer is specific and unequivocal: it must be compulsory for the state, which should establish a whole system of penalties for negligence to parents or carers who do not send

girls and boys to school. The State must guarantee access and the family must fulfill its duty to register, support and stimulate learning.

Aurea Ferreres
Intervida

[Facilitator's Note: Welcome to the 5th Annual ECOSOC AMR E-Discussion on Education: Closing the Gap. Please find below all contributions received in the third phase focusing on Innovation in Education. The [moderator's message](#) 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 (mdq@undg.org). Thank you]

Phase Three Questions:

- 1. How can non-state actors (including civil society organizations, faith-based groups, private philanthropies and the private sector) best contribute to the achievement of education and learning for all?**
- 2. What innovations, including through the use of technology and through new financing arrangements, are needed to make education appropriate for the modern world?**

Summary of Contributions:

[Felicia Onibon, Change Managers International Network](#)

Ms. Onibon noted that innovations needn't be "outward oriented" through community involvement innovative approaches can be taken to common issues. In parallel to targeting community involvement, exposure to best practices from elsewhere in the world could permit governments to determine where to best target resources for access to innovations and importantly bring out the ideas that are hidden but for the need of stimulation.

[Patricia Miaro, Canadian International Development Agency](#)

Ms. Miaro raised the issue that perhaps our perspective needs to shift in order to embrace innovative practices in education. This could involve a shift in focus from topics and issues to include an analysis of the people involved to focus on accountability and possibly invite more innovation in the work.

[Helen Abadzi, EFA FTI Secretariat](#)

Arguing that cognitive neuroscience can improve education quality and relevance, Ms. Abadzi highlighted some of the challenges to applying cognitive neuroscience in lower-income countries and urged the need to inform donors and stakeholders how this information can benefit their work.

[Dr. R. Shashi Kumar, Bangalore University](#)

Dr. Kumar in his contribution emphasized the benefits of investing in early childhood education and how the differential needs of younger children in education should be used to define the role that technology can play in supporting their development.

[Valentine Mukuria, Macquarie University](#)

Ms. Mukaria focused her contribution to the possibilities of “partners in education” between higher education and research facilities with civil society. Universities are able in particular via such partnerships to assist with the development and implementation of service-learning curricula as an innovative approach to education. Civil society via this relationship can further access and utilise such resources for their programmatic work to ensure that education is appropriate to the modern world in “real-time”.

[Mary-Luce Fiaux Niada, Swiss Development Agency](#)

Ms. Fiaux Niada noting Swiss Development Agency Work in West Africa highlighted that certain context conditions needed improvement in order to further facilitate the effectiveness of non-state actors contributions to education objectives.

[Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Iqbal, University of the Punjab](#)

In the context of shrinking resources, in particular Government allocations, Dr. Iqbal notes that the role of non-state actors is essential to improvements in the quality of education. However, some non-state actors/partners may need orientation to the agenda/objectives of education for all. Further where innovations are based on developing world infrastructure capacities, developing world countries should be provided assistance to adapt or develop indigenous materials/technologies which can be used in the local context.

[NoroAndriamisezana, UNESCO](#)

Ms. Andriamieszana, based on her experience, noted a need to align Government, international organisations and non-state actors policies, strategies and principles. This would enable all parties to work holistically and could open opportunities for non-state actors to contribute through non-formal education and vocational training.

[Dr. Michael Daniel Ambatchew, Consultant](#)

Dr. Ambatchew highlighted the ways that non-state actors could seek to work together through technical capacity-building and/or financial assistance to cover gaps in education coverage. However it is important to emphasise that non-state actors projects should aim to introduce appropriate, applicable and sustainable changes that have visible impact upon education, and whose successes and failures are transparently and accurately reported.

[Madeleine Laming, International Federation of University Women](#)

Ms. Laming identified a key role for non-state actors in lobbying national governments to advocate appropriate action on education. In looking towards innovation as a means to bring education to those who cannot participate traditionally Ms. Laming noted that while ICT can transform ideas about the future, more needs to be done to ensure that alternatives are developed to allow students to access ICT and innovations in remote areas.

[Clinton Robinson, UNESCO](#)

Mr. Robinson in his contribution identified the responsiveness of innovations implementation to scale as conditioned by their local context. Expanding on this Mr. Robinson moved the discussion from innovations in policies and technology and shared that innovation can also extend to systems and focus on the model of education and schooling in relation to the needs it services.

[Dr. Guadalupe Vadillo, UNAM Mexico](#)

Dr. Vadillo reinforced previous contributions focus on the need for integrated partnership approaches to education objectives with all local counterparts and expanded on the role of civil society in questioning current administrative and organizational policies for educational services that concentrate on local needs.

[Shaheen Attiq, Bunyad Foundation](#)

Ms. Attiq shared the example of CSO engagement (Bunyad Foundation) in innovative campaigns via mobile technology targeting illiterate female adolescents.

[David Turner, University Glamorgan](#)

Refuting the perceived contributions that cognitive neuroscience can provide in answer to questions on education, Professor Turner identified a differing approach than focusing on cognitive neuroscience, economics or management as key areas for innovation, but instead shared the need for education systems to innovate their approaches to students so as to reflect the students learning needs.

[Octave Apedo, Caritas Internationalis](#)

Distinguishing education as a participatory process, Mr. Apedo highlighted the need for civil society's involvement in reinforcing links between planning of education and other development instruments through sensitization and outreach.

[VijithaEyango, UNICEF-Cameroon](#)

Mr. Eyango raised the issue of approaching private sector interest as an opportunity to advance education needs with new financing arrangements. Sharing examples from Morocco, Pakistan and Cameroon Mr. Eyango demonstrated how private-sector partnering models can support a common cause with positive outcomes.

[Ward Heneveld \(Hewlett Foundation\)](#)

Mr. Heneveld shared his four stages for innovation (start-up, expansion, scaling up and full adoption) and outlined their relationship to each other. He further highlighted the importance of the process of stimulating innovation rather than a focus on the innovation itself.

[Vicky Colbert \(FundaciónEscuela Nueva\)](#)

Ms. Colbert advised on the experiences in educational innovations and the concept of social participation as well as the role of collaborative learning. Key lessons learned for educational innovations and systems reform included the need for partnership with the government to ensure coverage and large scale impact as well as with civil society and the private sector to ensure quality and sustainability.

[Bani Dugal \(Baha'I International\)](#)

Ms. Dugal revealed the role that non-state actors can play in redefinition of gender roles and the prominent role that religious communities can play. To further this objective Ms. Dugal shared the Sistema de AprendizajeTutorial as an innovative example.

[J.R.A Williams \(Independent Consultant\)](#)

Mr. Williams examined shifting the perspective of innovation from maintaining the status quo to look anew at the basics of educational services and in particular who they serve. This should be done in a way that transforms the system of classrooms, schools, teachers, students, diplomas and curricula into something resembling a system centred on learning that is relevant, appropriate, participatory, flexible, inclusive and protective.

[Marie-Claude Allez \(ATD Fourth World\)](#)

Ms. Allez shared ATD Fourth World's experience with a programme in Madagascar committed to increase capacities in computer technologies for youth with little or no formal education to transition them into productive employment. One of the key lessons learned was the need for focus on the quality of the relationship between trainers, trainees and their families.

[Isabel Castillo \(Universidad de Ciencias y Artes de Chiapas\)](#)

Ms. Castillo discussed the opportunities for partnership between non-state organisations at the local level to lead the innovation.

[MoustafaMohamadMoustafa Wahba \(Independent Consultant\)](#)

Mr. Wahba shared reforms which if applied to TVET systems could create a framework for workforce innovation.

[LaxmiSaxena](#)

Ms. Saxena provided a training methodology which supports the use of e-consultancy as an innovation for the development of human potential.

[Guadalupe G de Turner](#)

Ms. Turner noted the need for dialogue between neuroscientists and educators and possibly collaboration on research efforts.

Full Contributions:

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for this new area of discourse. For me innovation can be brought into Education through what seems old fashioned but may be one of the main options for most developing countries today. This is community participation and involvement in decisions concerning schools within their communities. Past commitments and interest of all key stakeholders were the ace of recorded successes. Today apathy have set into most education systems both from government circles [where inadequate financial provisions have been made to the sector] and with parents who spend more time on other things except the development of their children's education.

Schools management have been left in the hands of uncommitted managers at different levels of school governance. There is absolutely no way considerable progress can be made if there is no major intervention. This major intervention in most African countries like Nigeria could fall within a call for a State of Emergency in the Education sector.

There is need for a systemic advocacy drive to woo community interest in education. There is also need to show case good practices from other parts of the world though videos or electronic/internet connections. Governments should be willing to invest in solar energy for schools to enable community schools access to latest innovations among their peers in other parts of the world. Education becomes uninteresting if it is myopic and centralized around a static community.

Exposure can bring out new ideas and capacities that are innate but hidden for lack of stimulation. Teachers and education managers must begin to see the sector as one of pride and great importance and treat themselves as important contributors to the development of their environment. People see you the way you portray yourself. Education is the bedrock of national development. The custodians of this sector should accord it that high level regard that it deserves.

Best,
Felicia Onibon
Change Managers International Network
Nigeria

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you Mr. Burnett for your very thoughtful launch message. As a matter of fact, it lead me to other questions: How is it that most interesting "innovations" rarely make it to scale? There must be good reasons besides the financing issues, I suppose!

What if our collective analyses have serious flaws regarding "stakeholders"? For example - teachers as a group, their unions, the non-state education community without forgetting obviously ministries of education? We deal in our analyses with "topics" (teaching and learning materials, new technology applied to education, constructions etc.). We deal with issues (girl education, violence in school, marginalized children, decentralization). All of these questions effectively are crucial and have to be dealt with.

As our results are not at the level of our expectations, could it be also appropriate to look at responsibilities and accountability of those who run, in a way or another, the "system" or part of it? If our "lens of analysis" included "people" besides topics and issues, would all our work become more "innovative"?

From my very cold Canada, I send you these thoughts in the hope your comments will enrich the discussion.

With my best regards,

Patricia Miaro
Senior Education Specialist
Thematic and Sectoral Specialists Division
Geographic Programs Branch
Canadian International Development Agency
www.acdi-cida.gc.ca

Dear colleagues,

It's good to 'hear' a dynamic and engaging voice as we start to discuss these issues around innovation.

The answer to the boring, conservative, unimaginative image of education is cognitive neuroscience. It's exciting, highly relevant, and has very innovative applications. These include brain imaging that elucidates how much instruction is needed for reading fluency to be acquired; similar research on how mathematical competencies develop among students; cognitive networks research which helps predict which instructional methods may be more efficient than others.

However, few people know sufficient detail about the educational applications of cognitive neuroscience topics for the lower-income countries. For example, little is known about the visual word form activation that is a prerequisite to reading or the development of the number line in students' minds. Unfortunately these topics are not customarily taught in faculties of education, they are taught in psychology departments. And some education professionals may lack the background to understand these new developments and their implications sufficiently.

To attract more financing it may be useful to explain to donors and other stakeholders how better to benefit from this knowledge. At the EFA FTI Secretariat we constantly monitor the research and produce summaries of relevant topics. Some items appear on our website (currently under construction), and are available upon contact. One book I have written on this topic is the 2006 "Efficient Learning for the Poor".

Best regards,
Helen Abadzi
EFA FTI Secretariat

Dear Colleagues,

Early education is important for all children. And study after study shows that it needn't be prohibitively expensive. We have to thrive hard to take part in providing ample opportunities for both research and developmental facts for proper implementation of the child care.

Role of Technology

The role of technology in early childhood education, birth to age eight, is a controversial topic. Parents and educators have concerns about potential benefits or harm to young children. Critics contend that technology in schools wastes time, money, and childhood itself by speeding up the pace and cutting down on essential learning experiences. Proponents suggest that children should have the advantages that new technologies can offer. Thoughtful observers are concerned that while exciting and potentially valuable things are happening with children and computers, we may not be using these tools in the best ways, or obtaining the results we expect.

Young children have needs that are real and different from those of older children and adolescents. Children from birth to age eight are learning rapidly, using all of their senses and their entire bodies to take in sensations and experience the world around them. The variety of rich experiences that promote early literacy, including conversations with caring adults, storytelling, drawing and painting, and pretend play, is critical in the development of both oral and written language. Every day, playful experiences in print-rich environments expose children to the processes of reading and writing for real purposes. Technology has a place in this environment; language and literacy development are major strengths of technology use with young children through the opportunities and motivation it provides.

Investment

Investments in quality child care and early childhood education do more than pay significant returns to children—our future citizens. They also benefit taxpayers and enhance economic vitality. Economic research from economic studies in dozens of states and counties, and in longitudinal studies spanning 50 years demonstrates that the return on public investment in high quality childhood education is substantial.

ECE Needs

Lack of exercise and obesity are serious problems that need to be addressed during both in-school and out-of-school hours. Time should be allotted for user and learning of computer, watching TV and physical activities according to the age and class level.

The role of early childhood education (ECE) in children's lives, both at the time they participated in it, and later, has been a key focus for the Competent Children, Competent Learners study. At the time the study started in 1992 (with a pilot study), there were some overseas studies showing that ECE experience appeared to benefit children, with attention paid to structural aspects of quality provision such as adult: child ratios, group size, and staff qualifications, but no New Zealand study. Since this study began, more research into the contribution of ECE has also occurred, providing an increasingly robust understanding of the relationship between ECE experience and children's development, and the contextual and research aspects that can influence findings about that relationship. The Competent Children, Competent Learners study makes a useful contribution to this field of research because it is one of the few longitudinal studies to have followed its participants into adolescence.

Best,

Dr. R. Shashi Kumar

Chairman (Board of Examiners); Principal Researcher: India-EU Trade and Investment Relations
Bangalore University

Dear Colleagues,

Innovation plays a pivotal role in education but often the impact of new innovations are not felt on a global scale for various reasons such as agreement of definitions of innovation and as a result, funding for “innovations”. Patricia Miaro raised a sound point regarding asking the “right questions” about innovation and the “lens” through which we look at innovation in education and how we ask questions about its role in education. Additionally, there is the issue raised by Nicholas Burnett about financing and models of education as “potential impediments” to innovations in education. Often funding will be granted to “educational innovations” based on value assigned to these innovations, and if the value analysis is skewed then so might be the funding. Also, if some educational innovations are proposed but funders do not consider these innovations as aligned to the funders interests, then funding may not be granted.

While this discourse can and might go on for a while, I would like to shift the focus to possibilities of forming “partners in education” between higher education and non-state actors (including civil society organizations, faith-based groups, private philanthropies and the private sector).

Much of my experience has been working with universities in developing and implementing service-learning curricula as innovative approaches to education. The service-learning courses/units I have designed and taught comprise of community-based learning and application of academic theory into practice as central components of the course. To make these courses/units effective, I have sought “partners” for the courses/units from various sectors in the community. These partners have included faith-based groups, private sector and civil society organizations. With these partners, we go through a process of partnership formation, to ensure that the “education goals” of the partnership are mutual (ensuring reciprocity) and sustainable. Essentially, these service-learning courses/units are innovative in the way they incorporate non-state actors into the educational mission of higher education. The partnerships provide a platform for students to learn through real-world/real-life experiences at the various organizational settings of our partners. Students get the opportunity to apply theory into practice at their placements/service-sites (at the partner organization) while learning in practice what really works, what does not work, and why and this information is then discussed during the classes back at university.

Our partners receive the benefit of the university’s support towards achieving their (partners) mission through the work the students do at the organization. Students have reported having learnt so much from service-learning courses whose general learning outcomes include: critical thinking and problem-solving skills, perspective transformation, citizenship, personal and interpersonal development and discipline-specific understanding and application. Our partners, by being the real-world/real-life “partners in education”, have also expressed gratitude for the partnership which has enabled them to fulfill their mission and more importantly, has enabled them to feel that they are part of the process of “educating” and preparing the students for their future roles in society. I believe service-learning curricula are a very effective approach to incorporating and engaging non-state actors in the education process (to achieve education and learning for all) and at the same time service-learning curricula are an innovative way of making education appropriate for the modern world in “real-time”. Many service-learning courses/units while starting on a more local scale are now expanding and having quite a major impact on the global scale.

Thank you.

Valentine Mukuria, PhD.
Senior Research Assistant,
Faculty of Business and Economics
Macquarie University, Australia

Dear colleagues,

In West Africa, where the Swiss Development Agency for Cooperation provide key support to the education sector, the formal education system cannot reach all children, youth and adults and cannot maintain them in the system due to low quality and low relevance; therefore, high level of drops out and low level of knowledge and competencies. We are all aware of these issues.

In that context, civil society organizations -and also peasant associations, handcrafts federations- have conceived and implemented innovative models of basic education linked with skills adapted to local development, mainly in the non-formal education “sub sector”. These non-state actors can strongly contribute to the education and learning for all if:

- The quality of their experiences is guaranteed through specific standards or criteria
- Their experiences are articulated to the formal system (“passerelles” between the various education offers in order to make lifelong learning concrete)
- The importance of non-formal education is recognized by the State, including in national plan and also benefits from increased financial means from the State
- There is a national strategy that define the responsibilities of the State and the non-state actors in the sector (“stratégie du faire faire”)

In many countries, these conditions need to be improved.

Best Regards,
Mary-Luce Fiaux Niada
Chargée programme Education
Swiss Development Agency

Dear Colleagues

Thanks to the moderator who has beautifully phrased the questions regarding contribution of various stakeholders for achieving education for all and the issue of innovation and use of technology to make education appropriate for the modern world.

In the traditional societies the responsibility for education laid with the family and local community, which were later on taken up by the state government. We have seen that in the recent years, particularly in the developing countries, for example Pakistan, the government’s support (financial allocation) is shrinking with the passage of time. Various indicators, including financial allocation during the past few years, rate of enrolment at various levels in government schools etc., can be presented as evidence. In these circumstances, it is imperative that the whole society, various civil society groups and

organizations must be involved, not only in making provisions for education for all, but to play their role in improving the quality of education to achieve the goal of developing an egalitarian society. Faith-based organizations, including mosques and other religious institutions can play a tremendous role in this regard, but still the Government needs to play a coordinating role. Individuals of these organizations need to be given orientation in order to implement the agenda for achieving education and learning for all.

The use of innovative technology and audio visual aids are crucial for improving learning and achievement by individuals. But, many developing countries do not have the supportive infrastructure to enable the use of innovative technologies which need the use of uninterrupted supply of electrical energy. Developing countries need to be empowered to develop indigenous materials and technologies which can be used in local circumstances.

Lastly, as I mentioned earlier the financial allocation for education in developing countries is being decreased with the passage of time. In majority of these countries, the structure for educational management is highly centralized, rigid and extensive. In order to cut the non-developmental expenditure, and diverting the financial resources to development sector, the centralized system of educational management needs to be decentralized and devolved, empowering the local communities to take the ownership.

Best,
Prof. Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Iqbal
Dean Faculty of Education
Institute of Education and Research
University of the Punjab

Dear Colleagues,

From my view as a UNESCO staff member working in education, non-state actors' contribution to the achievement of education and learning for all cannot be dissociated from government's and /or international organization's contributions. It seems indeed that there is an alignment of their activities, programmes and projects with those of the UN for example.

Based on the above scenario, non-state actors could adjust UN or other policies, strategies and principles on education and learning according to the cultures, needs and priorities of peoples; non-state actors could prepare better conditions for implementing strategies/policies/principles. They can support for example initiatives on the use of local languages in information sessions for concerned actors about key recommendations and principles from strategies/policies. In many countries where orality prevails these sessions are crucial for exchanges and for obtaining beneficiaries' commitment, participation and ownership.

Ideally non-state actors would best contribute to the achievement of education and learning for all by responding to peoples' needs and priorities that are not covered and financed by formal education and learning. People out there know best their realities and this is an area where non-state actors can make a difference. An example of innovation is to support tailor-made education and learning: street children in a country like Madagascar can communicate in foreign languages as they "learn" from foreign tourists whom they hear speak when they go shopping or sightseeing; civil society actors can provide these

children with training on tourism and becoming tour-guides, coupled with literacy classes and languages teaching-first language and foreign languages- to develop their knowledge of languages and skills. This is perhaps what we know as “technical and vocational education” in a formal structure; however non state actors can contribute to this type of education without necessarily going through a lengthy procedure.

Thank you.
Ms. NoroAndriamiseza
UNESCO

Dear Colleagues,

Perhaps before addressing what Non-State Actors (NSA) should do, we should first consider what they should not do. NSAs shouldn't steal the thunder from governments' educational achievements. All too often, probably because they have to account for funds used as well as raise new funds, NSAs pretend they are solely responsible for any and all progress made. They may have provided the icing for the cake, the raisins in the cake, or the butter for buttering the pan, but hardly ever the cake itself. The topping up of funds or sprinkling some new funds does not entitle one to claims of ownership, often boldly proclaimed in titles like, “XX Improves the Education in Country Y”, causing silent resentment in partners. NSAs should see their role as supporting actors to government rather than as the main contestants for the best actor award.

With these two premises in mind, then how NSAs can contribute to EFA becomes clearer. They can assist governments in implementing their educational plans by providing technical capacity-building and/or financial assistance. They can cover gaps in government educational coverage, especially for disadvantaged groups. They can lessen the load on government educational systems by catering for those able to pay, and they can experiment with alternative and/or innovative approaches that may light the way for future developments. Numerous praiseworthy NSAs exist that have acted with these parameters, like SIDA whose provision of paper for textbooks and the construction of schools and classrooms have positively propped up the education systems in countries like Ethiopia, and Save the Children Norway's work in Alternative Basic Education Centers that were taken aboard by the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia, but to mention a few.

Carrying on from this perspective, NSAs should not be striving to create islands of excellence that cannot be taken to scale and fizzle out, but rather introduce appropriate, applicable and sustainable changes that have visible impact upon education. A case in point is CCF's “Majet” project in ECCD, where a mother of a relatively well-nourished child in a poor neighborhood with malnourished children would be identified and encouraged to share her culinary skills with other mothers in the area, who would have access to the same ingredients but not the cooking skills.

Using school toilets to produce bio-gas, installing solar panels and computer workstations to introduce schools to modern technology and information as is being done by Link Community Development in several African countries, and training teachers in interactive teaching methods are all wonderful, insofar as they are demanded for by the schools and the awareness, know-how and capacity exist to sustain them. Otherwise, due to the blowing of a single fuse or the testing of the ‘fragility’ of a solar panel by a farmer's stick, they could be rendered futile. This takes us on to the important need for acknowledging ‘Successful failures’ as most NSAs do not want to wash their dirty linen in public, though this may prevent others from making the same mistakes. At times, impact may be non-existent, as single

projects fail to address the whole system and try to tackle a single symptom rather than the cause. Instead, they only tout their successes on expensive glossy pamphlets covered in donor logos, using precious funds that might have been better spent on students' textbooks.

It is imperative to gain agreement and buy-in of local communities as well as policy-makers, and ensure that information is shared with all in a transparent manner. School grants, allowing schools to use funds as they see fit, and school performance appraisal meetings with communities are definitely steps in the right direction. But education should lead to a change in human behavior and humans need time to changes, at times ages. So let us keep working at innovations, but keep realistic timeframes not to end up as the brunt of a joke by a Nairobi cartoonist who once wrote, "Prados for all by the year 2000!"

Dr. Michael Daniel Ambatchew
Consultant

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for these thoughtful questions and an opportunity to share my views on them. I have given this a lot of thought while I have been attending the CSW session as an NGO delegate (the International Federation of University Women) and come to the conclusion that our most effective role is to lobby our national governments and advocate appropriate action on education. If the NGO is an international one, then it can also use international fora to highlight educational issues wherever possible. Last night I attended the launch of UN Women - a marvelous achievement, but one that was initially prompted by GEAR - a non-state organisation. We can be active at a local level through advocacy, fundraising and other action such as providing direct assistance, but using our numbers to influence governments is more effective in the long term.

New technology has enormous potential to bring education to people who cannot attend classes in the traditional way, but it needs to be used carefully to be effective. The material delivered via electronic media had to be of good quality and appropriate to the context - computers are not the whole answer. Nevertheless, ICT can be used to transform people's ideas about what is possible for the future - children cannot be what they do not see and ICT allows them to see much further. More needs to be done to ensure that alternatives are developed that will allow people to use new equipment in remote areas: we have had solar powered calculators for years so why is it so hard to find a solar powered laptop?

Best,
Madeleine Laming
International Federation of University Women

Dear Colleagues,

Thanks to Nick Burnett for his provocative words of introduction: boring, unimaginative, etc.! I tend to agree... let me explain why.

I would like first, however, to comment on Nick's introduction, and on the formulation of one of the question, before making a broader remark:

The introduction allows that there are many useful innovations out there, but that they are on too small a scale, not global. The question is: why do they take place and are effective on a small scale? I believe the answer has to do with the fact that the innovations are responding to context. Education is a socially and culturally situated process, through which values are communicated, future generations socialised and patterns of interaction established. Even though goals such as the EFA goals are global, their implementation takes place in particular contexts. Innovations may be promoted on a large scale, but their take-up, relevance and effectiveness will be conditioned by context.

The second of the two questions posed is based on a large assumption about the purpose and nature of education, namely that it should be 'appropriate for the modern world'. At a certain level, this is indisputable, but it is only a part of the direction of change that education might, and should, take. It is quite right that education ought to enable access to new horizons and knowledge, to broad networks and fresh opportunities. However, at the same time, education is about understanding the environment in which we live, applying cognitive skills and knowledge to the daily and the familiar – indeed this would seem to be the basis for grappling with new and diverse kinds of knowledge. While there is much debate about how, for example, the educational opportunities of ICTs may be better grasped, they remain a tool for learning, and their usefulness will be seen not only in rendering education more appropriate for the modern world, but in how far we (as learners) are able to reach our full potential within – and beyond – our own environment. Much education does not do that, particularly in parts of the world where patterns of learning/education take little or no account of local culture and knowledge.

A comment on what might constitute innovation: in many fields, innovation occurs when ideas go beyond the paths trodden hitherto, when questions about the current understandings and systems are asked. In education, it seems to me that we need to ask some questions about the system as such, and particularly whether the almost universal model of education as schooling is serving well in all circumstances. Promising innovations seeking to respond to diverse realities may indeed be squeezed out by the system. There are contexts and population groups which are manifestly not well served by schooling, and these merit reflection on how quality learning and effective socialisation in the local context might best be structured. In places, further investment in schooling might be the best way forward, in other contexts, different patterns may be adopted and adapted. This is largely uncharted (but not new) territory – but innovations always lie beyond and outside where we are now.

How might civil society organizations contribute to innovation? Precisely by being flexible enough and by analyzing context sufficiently closely to try new approaches – then, to return to Nick's point about scale, the question is whether the principles and lessons learned (not the programmes as such) can be applied more widely... and possibly change the system. That would be real innovation!

Thank you for the opportunity for this debate.

Clinton Robinson
Senior Programme Specialist
Division of Basic Education
UNESCO

Dear colleagues,

The contributions shared include important factors in the process of achieving learning for all. The idea that there must be congruency among the diverse inputs of the governmental and societal agents is central to the establishment of successful educational policies.

Probably one of the key variables is the inclusion of research findings concerning what makes solid learning happen. There is an array of knowledge that in general has not been included in the different elements of the educational system: curriculum, standards, textbooks and other resources, school and class management, teacher training, teaching performance. This is especially true in developing countries. All or most children are taught but few of them learn.

Civil society organizations have questioned both the relevancy and the potential motivation of contents and educational methods that most schools at present use. A sound conclusion has been: most children would not attend school if they knew better. Probably they do because that is what they are supposed to do and they think the limited and uninteresting contents they study and the poor teaching skills of many teachers are the only option.

Gifted and talented learners provide insight to the boring, slow pace and repetitive curriculum many schools offer when they refuse to go to school or cause trouble in the classroom declaring that they would be learning a lot more on their own. These students question the whole educational system and societal groups are often the ones that hear the message and put forward great ideas.

A couple of years ago, in a “desirable futures” exercise, several Mexican educators came up with interesting proposals: from the abolition of educational levels to the placement of kids in learning groups according to maturational levels in each emerging skill to the complete participation of the community in the creation of reality-based learning activities. These ideas ignited the desire to learn in all of us who read them, in perfect contrast with what is evoked by the drills and lectures that the majority of our schools propose.

Best regards,

Dr. Guadalupe Vadillo
Coordinator / Science and Math
UNAM's Virtual High School
Mexico

Dear Colleagues,

Developing countries must involve Civil Society for EFA objectives, this is especially essential for those who slip through the cracks, including the disabled, minorities, rural folk, the poorest of the poor. Creating an atmosphere conducive for them to learn is a forte of NGO's. Their key asset can be to act as a conduit between the Government/ public sector & communities. Poverty has its own priorities; with rising oil prices & the global recession...the biggest sufferers are the poor. And, in bureaucracy for most developing countries, where regular jobs are quite scarce, corruption prevails. Civil Society must be involved for more transparency in the development sector, to make communities air out their needs

& become partners of EFA. More often than not the needs of the rural families are usurped by their urban cousins.

From our perspective at the country level, technology is most helpful to promote EFA- a first step for MDG's. In Pakistan the Bunyad Foundation started a small programme with UNESCO's support, assisting adolescent girls to gain literacy with the help of mobile phones...and it worked! Concentration of the big funders, like World Bank, UNICEF etc. concentrate only of young children, & there is hardly any concentration of older children/adolescents. In Pakistan most districts have less than 25 % female literacy in the rural areas. With 6 months of concentrated focus Bunyad was able to transition illiterate female girls towards literacy with the help of mobile phones. Apathy turned into action. Even for rural teachers and their learners. Following on from our experience we have also found that radio & TV can have a huge impact by up-dating the vision & knowledge base of these learners by sharing up-dated information.

Best,
Shaheen Attiq
Bunyad Foundation

Dear Colleagues,

I remained quiet in the face of the assumption stated in the Phase 1 question that “the quality of teaching is critical to students’ learning”, and all that implies for not radically rethinking the place of the learner in education.

I kept my peace when the main thrust of the argument in Phase 2 seemed to be that we have good policies, but they are not implemented properly (mostly because teachers are not properly trained and held to account).

But it is not possible to remain silent when Helen Abadzi claims that, “The answer to the boring, conservative, unimaginative image of education is cognitive neuroscience”. Neuroscience is not, and never will be, the answer to any educationally important questions.

Ms. Abadzi devotes Chapter 5 of her book to “Literacy Acquisition and the Biology of Reading”. Maryanne Wolf, an expert on reading says, “No one was ever born to read. Human beings are genetically programmed to do a variety of functions, including learning to speak, using a highly sophisticated set of operations that contribute to the survival and flourishing of our species. But learning to read is not part of our genetic equipment” (Wolf, 2008: 184) The reason why Wolf can assert this so unequivocally is that reading has developed only in the last 5000 years or so, a timescale that is as the blinking of an eye against that required for biological evolution. So we can be sure that anybody who asserts that there is a “biology of reading” is peddling pure hokum.

In the Appendix of her book, Ms. Abadzi repeats the old fallacy that, “Our modern skulls house a stone age mind” (p.227). However I am of the belief that my mind is furnished with a range of capabilities, from differential calculus to the special theory of relativity, and including a few computer programming languages, that could not have been imagined even a few centuries ago. I own up to having a Stone Age brain, or one that is physically indistinguishable from our Stone Age ancestors, but my mind, like yours, is a very different matter.

Many grandiose claims are made for neuroscience and the contribution that it can make to education. For example, it is claimed that knowing that an expert (reader / calculator / musician) uses different parts of the brain than a novice can help us develop educational programmes to help novices develop their skills. However, because the expert generally has a great wealth of experience, they are usually performing a different act from a novice. Imagine asking a novice and an expert to calculate 6 times 8; the expert will simply recall the answer, while the novice may be counting on their fingers. Knowing what a novice and an expert do cannot help us to teach a novice to become an expert. And knowing which part of the brain is engaged by either adds nothing at all to our development of curricula.

There is, however, one aspect of neuroscience that is of great relevance to education; if we let the neuroscience industry siphon off research resources to pay for glossy scanning technology, the field of education will be even more impoverished than it is today.

There are many exogenous discourses that impinge upon education, among which neuroscience is one, but economics is another, and management a third. Collectively they promote the idea that efficiency and time-on-task are crucial for education, that education can be 'delivered', that it will meet the needs of the economy, and that it can be improved by setting targets and outcomes. Education will not be much improved until we take positive steps to give learners control over their own learning, expect teachers to be professionals who are capable of making thoughtful and humane decisions about education, and prepare them accordingly. We need to stop thinking of teachers as teaching machines who deliver a curriculum that covers what we think children need to know, where it is a race against time to cram facts into their young heads. We need education systems that provide second and third chances, and allow plenty of time off task.

In short we need a play-based curriculum, because we all learn best when we are playing – doing something that we have chosen for ourselves. Schools need to be places where everybody involved, whether pupils, teachers, administrators or cleaners have an opportunity to express themselves creatively through music, art, science, mathematics, language, teaching or cleaning.

It is one of the ironies of the post-industrial, knowledge economy that schools are the last bastion of the production-line factory system of the nineteenth century.

David Turner
Professor of Education
University of Glamorgan
And World Education Fellowship
Trustee and Treasurer

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Dear Colleagues,

Education is a powerful tool in our human societies. Considering the geographical realities and values of the world, education systems are being carried out in rural and urban environments, in poor and rich countries, with different educationally material possibilities available. At its foundation the achievement of education and learning for all is a participatory project. A systematic review needs to be undertaken which considers the economic, social, political and cultural background of people and their communities. Reinforcing links between planning of education and other development instruments such as PRSPs for reducing extreme poverty is imperative in developing countries. Civil society is to be constantly sensitized on the importance of this. I esteem that it is necessary to consider this when people and communities contribute to the achievement of education and lifelong learning for all.

Best regards.

Octave Apedo

Caritas Internationalis

Dear Colleagues,

I have read with interest the dialogue and wanted to weigh in with some observations. While it's useful to look holistically at the world of non-state actors, my comment relates directly to the private sector's contribution to education goals.

During my academic career, I was quick to align with university and civil-society support for the education cause, and highly suspect of government, multilateral and private sector interest in the sector. That era of skepticism ended when I moved to USAID and had the opportunity to witness first-hand innovative private-sector partnering models spanning North Africa to Asia. Morocco's BMCE Bank's model involved a partnership with the Ministry of Education to construct primary schools in the most under-served regions of the country. It was a carefully brokered partnership that balanced differing agendas--humanitarian interest, government ownership, shareholder anxiety, private sector visibility--but with an end result that provided Morocco's most vulnerable children with new avenues of access to primary education. The Pakistan education model was different. It was a private sector partnership for youth which began with a group of business men in Lahore on a mission to address the needs of growing numbers of out of school, disenfranchised youth. Their recipe for success was a program that included voluntary mentoring and coaching support (put in by the business leaders), contributions of zakat (tithe) to the common cause, and workforce training. Program success was determined by gainful employment.

My last example takes me to UNICEF and a great education partnership we have in Cameroon with MTN, one of the largest cell-phone providers in the country. For the past few years they partnered with us in our fight for better water and sanitation in Cameroon's schools. And they stuck with us even with all the bureaucratic hurdles that we put them through. And late last year when we reached out to them and pointed out the glaring gender disparities in four of Cameroon's most marginalized regions, they shifted course to join the cause. Not only do they provide infrastructure and scholarships for girls, refugees and other vulnerable populations, they are our partners when it comes to sending national text messages for our back to school and hand-washing campaigns, during our recent cholera outbreak they were our supporters in "our schools without cholera" campaign. No we don't have MTN's logo on our primary school textbooks, so we are not naïve about profit maximization agendas in play, but the relationship

has been carefully cultivated, managed and Cameroon’s most vulnerable children are the ultimate beneficiaries.

We’re already well into the 21st century; we have to be realistic about the current funding landscape. It’s an era of escalating education needs, scarce resources and shrinking donor pots. New financing arrangements offered by the private sector if carefully cultivated offer one part of the solution. Let’s be open to those opportunities.

Best regards,
 VijithaEyango
 Chief, Education
 UNICEF Cameroon

Dear Colleagues,

Below is a summary chart of the stages in the development of an education innovation that I devised some time ago.

Stages of Development of an Education Innovation

	START-UP STAGE	EXPANSION STAGE	SCALING STAGE	FULL ADOPTION STAGE
Who’s Responsible?	Creative Entrepreneur or local organization as an implementer (Mom & Pop shop)	Entrepreneur with some professional managers (Mom & Pop shop with staff)	Entrepreneur with lots of managers plus an external impact evaluator	Government and others
What is there in practice?	Activities on a small scale tried and revised frequently	Larger universe with some activities fixed and others being perfected	Full model implemented with formal evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies to support adoption • A detailed program design and implementation plan • Implementation
Who are the beneficiaries?	Children in one to a few schools and/or communities	Numerous communities, more learners	Enough learners and locations to attract the system’s notice	All communities and learners for that government’s jurisdiction

Challenges (beyond financing)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Putting ideas into practice, while open to significant changes Maintaining the original vision while adapting to reality 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Management and administration of a complex operation Making sure everyone understands the vision and the practice and believes in it (knowledge, skills and attitudes) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Balancing the needs of practice and the needs of rigorous research design Continuing growth in management, administration, and staff development Responding to outside negative critiques 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining the spirit of the innovation Resist government tendency to simplify and formalize the model
Current Funding Sources	Self plus friends	Small donors, parent INGO's	QEDC, World Bank, Others?	Governments with donor support
Possible Future Funding Sources	An innovation fund?	Additional funders: INGOs, Operating foundations, etc.	Additional funders: Larger foundations, World Bank; bi-laterals	Government with declining donor support: public funds; donors



The sequence is divided roughly into four stages: start-up, expansion, scaling up, and full adoption. Planners like me have for decades focused on designing and implementing system-wide reforms that start at the full-adoption stage. Most implementations have failed. More recently, we have looked for successful innovations and concepts developed by non-governmental organizations that can be scaled up to full adoption through transfer to new settings. This approach hasn't been much more successful than large-scale reforms, so we've turned more recently to building evidence (through impact evaluations) and depending on it for making scaling up possible. I haven't seen this added evidence having had much impact yet. Incentives to innovate at the small scale with risk capital from donors with the prospect (and mechanisms) for helping successful start-ups expand do not exist. The IT incentives structure that has supported Apple, Google, and Facebook in their development has not been thought about carefully enough to have an impact on how we stimulate innovation in Education. What if governments and donors offered risk capital allowing for a 8 or 9 out of 10 failure rate for start-up innovations (and simple evaluations of them) with another pot of funding available for the successful innovators who want to expand and eventually scale up,?

On the other hand, we all ought to understand by now that the ecology of schooling is such that each school's unique environment requires careful close management of learning outcomes with the ability to adapt whenever and wherever learning is not occurring as expected. I realized this school-level need many years ago when I served on an evaluation of integrated pest management (IPM) for rice cultivation in Southeast Asia. The major pest for rice is a bug called the stem-borer, and its main predator is the spider. In those days IPM required that each farmer have a one-meter-square plot in each of his rice

fields, no matter how small, where he kept track of the stem-borer/spider ratio. Whenever the ratio gets above the prescribed level, the farmer sprays that field, and only that field. The next field which is usually just over the dike between them is not touched! The farmer needs to monitor each field regularly and when there is a problem respond as needed in that field. How well do school heads keep track of learning problems in their schools and how well do inspectors/supervisors do this for each of the schools that they supervise. Certainly, the responses in education at the school level are more complicated than in rice cultivation, but I believe there is creativity and ability to innovate in every school that has not been tapped because education systems do not trust the school-level personnel to respond on behalf of their children. If given that trust, coupled with clear expectations for learning and accountability for action, innovation will expand in each school. Does anyone know of mechanisms that respond to this need for using learning outcomes to stimulate innovation in individual schools?

You may note that in both of these comments, it's the process for stimulating innovation that's important, not the innovation itself. It is time that the international community in education development transferred our attention from creating innovations that will produce learning to enabling people who work directly with learners to devise and implement their own innovations.

Best,
Ward Heneveld
Hewlett Foundation

Dear Colleagues,

After years of working with governments promoting access and quality in low income schools, we have two important lessons learned: we need to work with governments to ensure coverage and large scale impact; but we need civil society and the private sector to ensure quality and sustainability.

In the case of the Escuela Nueva model, a transformative pedagogy and educational innovation in basic education that we have developed and implemented not only in Colombia but in other countries, specifically in the LAC region, we have learned that it is crucial to have private public partnerships in place. The concept of "social participation" is key in relation to the sustainability of educational innovations. Educational innovations fade and are vulnerable to political and administrative changes and we have to not only introduce innovations within the system but also ensure that they are sustained.

According to the World Bank, (Social Participation Manual), "Participation is the process by which people share control of the decisions on activities, programs or institutions that affects their lives." The evidence of studies on participation has demonstrated that it enhances quality, sustainability and impact. In the case of Escuela Nueva, the concept of social participation is the cross cutting dimension to all the different components of the system. This aspect has permitted it to be one of the longest bottom up innovations of the developing world.

Once Escuela Nueva became a national policy, reaching more than 20,000 rural schools in Colombia, we had to partner with private organizations like the Coffee Growers Association to support its sustainability. Innovations fade within bureaucracies. We also had to create an NGO, the FundacionEscuela Nueva to promote and maintain its quality, and to continue innovating. Education is so crucial for society that it should not only be in the hands of governments. It is a responsibility of the entire society. (World Conference in Education Jomtien)

Although it is urgent to invest in school infrastructure, teacher recruitment and antipoverty strategies, it is necessary to focus more on pedagogical renovation and to improve the way instructions are delivered. More than half of the money is wasted in poor ineffective teaching methods, inefficient training of teachers and lack of reliable learning materials coherent with teaching training strategies, renovated teaching practices and innovative learning methodologies.

In order to improve education quality and learning achievement and I would like to highlight the importance of promoting educational approaches and systems that emphasize creative and collaborative knowledge builders as a major challenge for 21st century education. (This is the essence of Escuela Nueva).

The Director of the Interdisciplinary Research Center of Paris, Francois Taddei presented a report to OECD countries in 2009, "Training creative and collaborative knowledge builders: a major challenge for 21st Century Education." In this document the author analyses how educational systems are evolving slower than the rest of society and traditional teacher centered education is not organized to promote creativity and the ability to update knowledge. Moreover he argues that only in some countries, which allow the emergence of new education paradigms, can foster creativity and experimenting with new educational schemes, developing creative environment and programs and disseminating the best educational practices, those are the ones that are having results. Changes in education are not rapid enough and schools have changed less than other components of our societies, and academic content and pedagogy have changed only minimally. (Everything has changed except the classroom!)

In relation to 21st century skills, the meta-competencies of learning to learn, learning how to synthesize information, testing knowledge, learning to collaborate, to criticize, to accept criticism, to communicate ideas clearly using all tools of the day, to take initiatives, to dare to take risks and how to be creative, should be part of any curriculum. In this regard, Taddei states that unless there is a systemic view where all the above meta-competencies are developed, education cannot encompass the exponential increase in knowledge. Education should allow children to adapt to the environment that is changing faster and faster.

Collaborative knowledge building has demonstrated advantages since students have changed from that of clients to that of participants. There is a shift from a teacher directed approach to more student centered learning. A new role of the teacher, not as a transmitter of facts but as a facilitator should be promoted.

Finally, there are solutions, pioneering schools have demonstrated results. As Karin Chenoveth cites in [It is Being Done](#), "we know what works in education, the research is prolific, amazingly then, the question today is not what works but why we do not implement what we know works in all schools for kids."

In relation to strengthening social justice, equity and reaching the marginalized, I would like to highlight the importance of mentioning the issue of multi-grade education. This is due to the fact that learning and teaching in multi-grade schools and classes is extensive in a wide range of countries. According to Angela Little in "Education for All and Multi-grade Teaching", the EFA Framework for Action identifies primary schools as the institutional means for the achievement of two important goals: 1) access to free and compulsory education of good quality education specially for girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities and 2) improving all aspects of quality of education.

According to Little “many of the current shortfalls in achievement of the EFA goals are found among those communities who live at margins of societies, and who participate in the margins of the formal education system. At many of these margins, schools either do not exist at all, or where they do, they often involve multi-grade teaching. These schools are largely invisible to those who plan, manage and fund education systems. Yet they persist. Little maintains that “a conservative estimate of 30% of children, currently in multi-grade classes in all countries yield a world total of 192.45 million. Add this to say, 50% of the currently out of school children for whom opportunities to learn are most likely to happen in a multi-grade class. This generates an additional 52 million children. This totals a 244.45 million children world-wide for whom a multi-graded pedagogy is likely to be the one through which they learn in primary school. For the developing countries alone the total estimate is 218.60 million

The significance of multi-graded schooling for EFA is greater in developing than in industrialized countries. Although learning and teaching in multi-grade settings is widespread in many countries with well-developed education systems, “for children to learn effectively in multi-grade environments, teachers need to be well trained, well-resourced and hold positive attitudes to multi-grade teaching. However, many teachers in multi-grade environments are either untrained or trained in mono-grade pedagogy, have few if any teaching resources and regard the multi-grade classroom as the poor cousin of the better resourced mono-grade classroom found in large, urban schools and staffed by trained teachers. “

Most EFA goals are predicated on a mono-grade classroom and although multi-grade teaching is often considered to be a second class education, in some cases necessity has been transformed into a positive pedagogy. For millions of children worldwide the only type of schooling to which they will gain access, will be multi-grade. Areas experiencing conflict offer limited learning opportunities for children and, where opportunities do exist, the arrangements are multi-graded. The thesis Angela Little poses is that multi-grade schooling can make a significant contribution to the EFA goals of access and quality.

Finally, I would like to highlight the importance of articulating the role of collaborative learning, “a new learning paradigm”, and the impact on peaceful behavior. Education for peace should be approached not only as content but as participatory learning. There is significant evidence demonstrating the impact of collaborative learning in reducing stereotypes and prejudice, strengthening self-esteem, promoting gender equity and handling diversity in the classroom.

Vicky Colbert
Founder and Director
FundaciónEscuela Nueva
Colombia

Dear Colleagues,

Increasing women’s access to education and learning is a goal of development initiatives around the world, for research has consistently associated women’s education with a host of desirable social outcomes. Yet participation and access are becoming increasingly understood as mere way stations on the path to the more profound goal of empowerment, defined as the capacity to affect one’s own well-being and execute strategic life choices.

Achieving empowerment through the agency of education hinges on the process by which educational systems can transform dominant values and social patterns of gender inequality. Put simply, schools are often the site of “doing,” rather than “undoing” gender roles. Educational initiatives often struggle to address change at societal levels, and all too often educational systems reflect prevailing social prejudices, and reproduce, rather than challenge, the status quo.

Here, then, is a critical point of leverage for non-state actors. Such groups, religious communities preeminent among them, are uniquely positioned to effect a true redefinition of gender roles, establishing a holistic understanding (among men as well as women) that more accurately reflects the full range of human talents and capacities. We offer the experience of the Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial (SAT) as one step in this direction.

SAT is a secondary education program, based in Columbia but offered throughout Central America and parts of sub-Saharan Africa, which fosters reorientation by encouraging students to rethink gender relations in their everyday lives. The program features many notable features, from a tutor/study circle format to an emphasis on synthesizing the intellectual and spiritual elements of human existence, but its more transformative innovations in the realm of gender equality include:

1. Gender is mainstreamed into the curriculum, providing explicit material and opportunities for discussion in a range of subject areas including technology mathematics, science, language and communication.
2. Gender is linked with the broader goal of social justice. “One of the reasons we insist on relating the status of women with the principles of justice,” officials state in one of the program’s textbooks, “is that we are not satisfied to see some women liberated from that form of oppression that is based on sex only to join the institutions of oppression operating in the context of class, race, nationality, and political and economic power.”
3. Students engage in reflection, dialogue, and debate. Because community service is central to the program, the sphere of dialogue on gender issues naturally expands to include friends, family, and neighbors, sometimes coming to influence local governing structures and business communities as well.
4. Teachers are given the opportunity to reflect critically on their understanding of gender in professional development sessions. Ongoing reflection not only fosters improvement in technique and approach, it prompts the continued evolution of teachers’ own understandings of gender and its role in education and society at large.
5. It emphasizes that transforming gender roles requires change among individuals and in social structures such as the family. Text-based narratives and ongoing discussion begin a process of critical reflection on the family as a basic structure of society requiring profound transformation in order to reflect gender equality – a reality demonstrated time and again by research on patterns of action and interaction in the domestic sphere.

Best Regards,
Bani Dugal
Baha’i International

Dear Colleagues,

Like Professor Turner I have held back from comment on the discussions. But his and Dr. Robinson's contribution have inspired me to come to their support and add my thoughts based on thirty years working in education and development in more than twenty countries.

Unimaginative, Boring, Conservative...

Of course they are! They have to be to succeed as they have so well over the last 200 hundred years in maintaining the status quo, preparing the workforce for acquiescent labour, and convincing the people that learning to do things like look after themselves is not worth the effort, and is boring compared to shopping for products that will look after them and make a fat profit for someone else.

The best innovation would be true innovation. Let us look anew at the basics of our education systems. What are they for? What do they serve?

Let us look anew at our models of education? Why schools? Who would ever come up with the universal model of a school if they were set the task of devising a system to encourage learning rather than obedience? Why an unfulfillable demand for secondary and tertiary education? Is it not because people want to become more educated but rather because they need a foothold on the mountain of profit that the modern masters label as 'job', and are misled in to believing that certificates and degrees will give them one.

Let's look anew at what is 'appropriate for the modern world'. This modern world is one where the existence of climate change, energy depletion and nuclear weapons foretell a bleak future for humankind with a resonance into every aspect of life. Our education and learning can continue to be directed at marshaling the armies and firepower needed to give advantage to our nation state or blocks in the scramble for diminishing resources, while ensuring the provision of enough propaganda in the form of corporate controlled media and entertainment and advertising to ensure that the battle is not compromised. Or it can belatedly begin to address the needs of individuals and communities to understand the realities of the world and help them devise ways of working together to cope with them.

Was Plato's assertion that education is the business of the state, except its funding? Using philanthropy to support education is not innovation. It is reversion. Almost all American Ivy League universities and huge swathes of schooling around the world were inaugurated by industrialists and religions. Were the Cornells, Stanford's, Rockefeller's disinterested or were they seeking to perpetuate a system that had served their interests and prejudices so well? Catholic schools, Muslim madrassa's and Confucian shensindo were founded for religious, not educational purposes. As other contributors have observed, the challenge is not to get more involvement from the rich and religious, it is to get genuine participation from children, families, teachers and their communities in the planning and delivery of education

Innovation in education means primarily the transformation of the system of classrooms, schools, teachers, students, diplomas, curriculum into something resembling a system centred on learning that is relevant, appropriate, participatory, flexible, inclusive and protective. The purpose of that education is clearly stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: to develop each child's personality, talents and abilities to the fullest. It should encourage children to respect others, human rights and their

own and other cultures. It should also help them learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people. How very very far from that is the dreary vision of schooling I have witnessed in classrooms from Wales to Fiji and points in between.

J.R.A Williams
Independent Consultant

Dear Colleagues,

The two questions under current review relate to the innovations needed to make education appropriate for the modern world, and to the contributions from non-state actors that could achieve education and learning for all. ATD Fourth World integrates both of these concerns in its various actions, in particular when promoting access to knowledge, culture and education.

As an example of this commitment, the ATD Fourth World has launched a project in Madagascar directed towards young people aged 16 to 23. The ATD Fourth World had been active in Antananarivo for a long time, with the peoples of the AntohomaDinika district and its Ikopa discharge, and had gained enough confidence to start a dialogue with young people. This dialogue, which demonstrated their interest in computer technologies, was at the origin of the project.

ATD Fourth World decided to offer these young people new information technologies training. The objective was not only to enable young people that had received little or no school education, to develop the necessary technology skills to find a job, but also to make them aware of the actions required on their part to achieve their goals. The project started at the end of 2006 and was made possible through the mobilization of various partners: an NGO provided 20 computers, and several public and private partners supplied financial and technical equipment and support, including free broadband internet connection for 2 years in 6 different locations.

These young people are trained to set up objectives for their future and to search for internships and permanent jobs. Several private partners have offered internship programs, one of them including the help of a coach. For example, in January 2009, some 20 young people, 11 of them living in the Andramiarana discharge, were offered, after an initial training session within ATD Fourth World premises, a two month qualification training that would give them access to a professional certificate, recognized by the State authorities, for the use of Microsoft Office software.

ATD Fourth World has developed a special educational approach of non-abandonment which helps young people to stay the course to achieve their goals. Most of them have received little or no school education: the average for the first class in training was 2.3 years of school attendance; it went down to 1.3 years for the second class in training. Consequently, attendance to training sessions becomes a real challenge, especially during the initial year, and requires a very careful supervision from trainers in monitoring absenteeism and anticipating family problems; trainers need in particular to frequently visit trainee's homes and set up real partnerships with their parents, using such instruments as correspondence bulletins.

At the inception of their training sessions, most of these young people have little confidence in their own capacities and pay no respect to the group which they now belong. Consequently, principles of solidarity and mutual assistance need to be considered as an integral part of their training. More specifically, problems arising from different speeds in learning or from rivalries between top performers

and low performers, which increase the risk of dropouts, are frequently discussed between trainers and training groups in order to restore confidence. Each trainee receives from ATD Fourth World a 1,000 grant, to compensate for shortfalls in family earnings, as most of these young people participate actively in the financial condition of their families.

Today, ATD Fourth World has decided to step up its project and address not only initial computer training but also professional new technologies training. Trainers have designed with several partners a new program which complements the initiation two years program, and offers graduating training which facilitates access to professional internships and real jobs. ATD Fourth World in Madagascar developed in January 2011 a new partnership with Agence Française de Développement in order to promote education actions with other NGOs. Such actions which currently relate to the fields of plumbing and catering/cooking, will host between 60 and 80 young people in the coming four years.

All these projects depend upon the quality of the relationship between trainers, trainees and their families, who rely on solid trust and permanent dialogue. These qualities need to permeate not only the direct participants to these projects, but also society as a whole, which shall provide a level of recognition high enough to enable these young people to get a job.

Marie-Claude Allez

International Movement ATD Fourth World - UNESCO Representative

Dear Colleagues,

It is an honor to be part of this Discussion. I have followed closely phases one and two and found myself struggling to collaborate with ideas that could be implemented at the world wide level. Every country is so different in the way they run their education system and even within countries there are differences. The same is true with the role that non-state actors play in every country. This third phase discussion gave me an insight that I would like to share with you.

Up to this moment education has been a tool to mold people according to either government styles, industry needs or religious trends. We are at a moment in the history of the planet that education should be a tool to allow people to develop their own creativity and critical thinking in such a way that they can find their own way to face and survive in the world we are leaving them. As Einstein stated it so clearly "we can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them". We are all a product of an education system that gave rise to the environmental, social and economic crisis we live in. (Sir Ken Robinson <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCbS4hSa0s&feature=related>)

I agree with Dr. Ambatchew about the not very wise way non state actors have used their energy and their money but, on the other hand, we cannot deny that non state actors are the ones that have triggered changes in the past. Rome Club triggering the sustainable development trend, comes to mind. I do not think they should only support the government since it is clear that government education is not working in most countries! Not to move people towards sustainable development.

I think that non state organizations could play a key role to help solve the current education crisis and the main innovation will be that education should be lead by a council of non-state and state organizations in every country. Modern technology should support these councils. Initially partnerships should be encouraged.

Perhaps non state organizations could help to create another "Rome Club" that will trigger the movement of education towards allowing human beings to develop their full potential and to free themselves of the prison that Einstein describes so eloquently "A human being is a part of a whole, called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest... a kind or optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty"

At the newly created Earth Sciences College at UNICACH we are trying to develop partnerships that will help to bring sustainability to the university classroom, not adding solar panels or water saving devices or resources but pedagogies and strategies that sustain knowledge in the mind of the students, and that will help them develop their critical thinking and nourish their sensibility to all living creatures.

Saludos from Chiapa's mountains

Isabel Castillo,
Professor and College Board Member Advisor
Universidad de Ciencias y Artes de Chiapas (UNICACH), Mexico

Dear Colleagues,

From my moderate point of view, if a TVET System is reformed to apply the following options and possibilities, it will surely put in place a framework for making workforce innovation and excellence happen:

1. Setting national TVET policies and customizing TVET system design
2. Integrating the TVET into the socio- economic policies for Employment & Human Resources Development
3. Integrating the TVET into the educational policies
4. Establishing of Enterprises and Training Providers Partnerships ETPPs
5. Building quality and demand oriented workforce (quality and demand based TVET)
6. Establishing labour vocational qualifications and occupational skill standards
7. Promoting talented workforce through "modularized" off-the-job and on-the-job learning and training to ensure that TVET is elastic and fluid rather than rigid and standardized.
8. Assuring that the environment in which the learner is trained is a replica of the environment in which he / she must subsequently work.
9. Assuring that the training jobs are carried on in the same way with the same operations, the same tools and the same machines as in the occupation itself
10. Continuous professional development of instructors / trainers / teachers
11. Keeping pace with training technological advancements and using technology appropriates in TVET
12. Encouraging Continuing TVET as continuing education and training, within the framework of Lifelong Learning
13. Improvement of collaboration between Higher Education HE and TVET

14. Creation a TVET system that is: Effective, Efficient, Relevant, Flexible, Modular Respondent, Accessible, Affordable, Accountable, Sustainable, and which fulfills its general obligations towards the society
15. Continuously investing and re-allocating financial and human resources in the TVET System
16. Engaging community and industry as significant players in TVET

Best regards.

Eng. Moustafa Mohamed Moustafa Wahba
Competency Assurance & TVET Consultant

Dear Colleagues,

Education & Training should be seen as a process for development of human potential. Broad objectives of this methodology are to understand that education is a process, not as a product. Another objective is also to generate a definition of education which defines a 'good' or 'quality' education. This method is geared towards devising a definition of education as a process to develop social, mental creative and ethical potential of human being.

There are certain techniques used for education of teachers. Five Indian states of Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa and Tamil Nadu are utilizing e-consultancy and certain applied research programs for teachers. These programs include group discussions, demonstration of presentation skill and practices adopted while applying. An exercise can be conducted, which uses all these procedures.

A training methodology for doing so is outlined below.

1. Discover your co-trainees.
 - a. Experience, analysis of experience and knowledge generation
 - b. Modeling and practice
 - c. Demonstrations
 - d. Presentation by experts, followed by a question-Answer session

2. Group Discussions:

Group Discussions form a very integral part of training. We outline one such process that is designed to achieve the results effectively. The training can be initiated by:

- a. Informing the participants and guests about the organization responsible for the training.
- b. Articulating the training objectives.
- c. Narrating the training techniques which are going to be used for the training
- d. Making participants interact and know one another as co-trainees.
- e. Making them feel at home and relaxed.

Multiple rapid-fire questions:

In the field of education & training by e-consultation a teacher can have multiple options to educate by creating rapid fire questions. These questions can be generated by following methods:

- Creating multiple choice
- Freeform text entry
- Dropdown list question-timed question

- Question with reducible scoring
- Random steps & questions
- Restoring attempts
- Using on screen/printing
- Scoring creating and using objectives

3. Visual Illustrations:

Visual illustrations can be a great method of teaching. These can be conducted with the help of e-consultancy (using computers) or traditional kit in classrooms like blackboards. The objectives are:

- To make the lessons visually attractive & impressive
- To stimulate the sense of sight which leaves a lasting impact on a child's mind
- To enable a learner to visualize accurately & learn faster

Best,
LaxmiSaxena

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for arranging this discussion forum, it has been inspirational. I would like to add to the discussion of the role of neuroscience. I think that it is time, and it is urgent to provide a real dialogue between educators and neuroscientists when we are talking about educational issues. It can't continue to be one sided discussions. Educators from the different areas of education should be brought to the discussion in equal terms, sharing knowledge and experience.

We need to bring the soul into this discussion; after all we are human beings. The fundamental question is not what neuroscience (usually the medical profession and psychologist) can bring to education, but what educators can bring to the study of neuroscience when we are talking about learning and teaching. On balance educators are who has spent more of their working life in formal and informal education in contact children/adults.

One innovation would be that neuroscience researchers (who traditional attract good grants) start integrating educators in their investigation teams.

Best regards,
Guadalupe G de Turner
General Secretary