At a glance

Quality teachers are central to quality learning throughout life. Multiple and inter-connected factors have an impact on teachers’ performance and student learning outcomes, but (i) conducive working conditions and the status of teachers, and (ii) professional development and training of teachers play key roles in producing quality teachers, and in turn quality education.

This session will address the following issues:

- Competencies teachers need to meet the learning demands of 2030;
- Bottlenecks in attracting the best qualified candidates to the teaching profession, motivating teachers and transforming their pedagogical approaches; and
- Policies and enabling environments needed to enable teachers to acquire and develop the competencies identified.

Equity issues related to teacher recruitment, training, promotion, and so on, will be considered. Recommendations may include strategies and priority actions to provide conducive working conditions for teaching personnel; national teacher competency standards; teacher training and professional development; and school management and leadership.

Trends, issues and challenges towards 2030

The Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDG) achievements should be duly acknowledged and commended even though their targets will not be met by 2015. Both the EFA and MDG initiatives have helped to rally countries around the world to come together to envision a sustainable and equitable future. Efforts to address unfinished EFA and MDG agendas have resulted in many global and high-level meetings to set a new agenda for post-2015.

At the Global Education for All Meeting in Muscat, Oman, in May 2014, ministers, heads of delegations, leading officials of multilateral and bilateral organizations, and senior representatives of civil society and private sector organizations agreed that the overarching goal of the post-2015 education agenda is to “ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030”. Seven global targets were identified for which country-specific benchmarks and respective indicators need to be developed based on wider consultations and reviews to reflect regional and national perspectives. To contribute to the development and refinement of Target 6, which focuses on teachers, this background note has identified several issues to be considered, as listed below.
a. The future of learning and teaching in 2030

Numerous studies have attested to the importance of teachers in delivering quality education (Hanushek, 1992; Hanushek et al., 2005 and 2006; Nye et al., 2004; Gordon et al., 2006; Leigh, 2010; UNESCO, 2014a; UNESCO-UIS, 2006 and 2012). There is no doubt that much is required from teachers today. In addition to imparting knowledge in their subject areas, they are expected to deal with students from diverse cultural, social and economic backgrounds, be sensitive to gender issues, promote tolerance and social cohesion, provide special attention to students with learning disabilities or behavioural problems, learn and apply new pedagogies and technologies, keep pace with current educational developments and initiatives, and all these on top of endless administrative duties, extra-curricular assignments, parents and community engagements, and so on. No longer mere transmitters of knowledge or facilitators of learning, teachers are tasked to be administrators, disciplinarians, counsellors, mentors, technology experts, nutritionists, event organizers and role models, among many others.

The roles of teachers have changed over the years and will continue to change in the future as we consider the following questions. What will the world be like in 2030? What will students in the future be learning? What impact will new technologies have on education? What will schools look like 15 years from now? What competencies and skills do teachers need to respond to these changes and new demands?

There has been much discussion about the roles of teachers (i.e. facilitator/learning manager, remediator, enricher, collaborator/mentor, and content creator) in the future of learning (Marquis, 2012). For example, the traditional image of a teacher has been challenged by the Khan Academy model which is reaching millions of students in- and after-school through online tutorials offering over 100,000 exercise problems, more than 5,000 short videos on YouTube and a personalized learning dashboard (Murphy et al., 2014; Trucano, 2014). Speculation is rife with scenarios of a self-paced education and flipped classrooms where teachers are on hand to offer personalized guidance and interactions, and less on lecturing.

The roles of the teacher differ according to the age group of student cohorts and in different settings. Teachers for the early years are expected to provide closer supervision of their students who will belong to a generation born and raised in technology-rich environments. Even though the digital divide may still exist in 2030, if current trends hold true, technology is expected to have reached even the most remote areas with increasing connectivity and access to information. According to ITU (2014), there will be almost as many mobile phone subscribers as the world population (96 percent of the world penetration rate), and almost 3 billion Internet users by the end of 2014 with two-thirds coming from the developing world. Mobile-broadband penetration will reach 32 percent by the end 2014, almost doubling the rate in 2011 and four times as high as 2009. Teaching online safety and responsibility may be a core responsibility of teachers in the future.

b. Attracting and retaining the best people to the teaching profession

A fundamental condition to ensure quality education is to have sufficient numbers of qualified teachers who can teach students from diverse backgrounds and with different learning styles and needs. There is a shortage of teachers globally, with an additional 1.6 million teachers needed to achieve universal primary education by 2015, and 5.1 million to achieve universal lower secondary education by 2030.

The number of teachers needed is not the only bottleneck. Many teachers suffer from poor status, low salaries and unattractive working conditions. Equity issues, such as gender imbalance is another area that can affect teacher retention, career advancement, motivation, etc. The 2010 UNESCO-UIS data showed that, globally, 62 percent of teachers in primary
education were women (UNESCO-UIS, 2012). Similarly, according to preliminary survey results of Southeast Asian countries, pre-primary and primary teachers are predominantly women (UNESCO, 2014b). On the other hand, in South and West Asia male teachers outnumber their female counterparts. For example, in Nepal, female teachers accounted for only 42 percent in primary school, 27 percent in lower secondary school and 16 percent in upper secondary school. The latest Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), released in June 2014, found that most of the lower secondary teachers in the countries surveyed, except for Japan, are women. In contrast, only 49 percent of principals in lower secondary schools in the TALIS countries are women. In fact, school leadership positions in Japan and Korea are primarily occupied by men – 94 percent and 87 percent, respectively (OECD, 2014). Such gender disparity, with women predominantly found in primary schools, but less likely to be holding managerial positions at all levels in proportion to their numbers, is supported by several research studies (Kelleher, 2012).

“The best performing school systems in the world have strategic and systematic approaches to attract, develop, retain and ensure the efficacy of the most talented educators — and they make sure great teachers serve students of all socio-economic backgrounds” (Auguste et al., 2010, p. 5). Indeed, the authors noted that no education system in the 50 and more countries they studied has achieved or sustained world-class status without top teaching professionals.

Finland and the Republic of Korea, two countries which have consistently achieved high PISA and TIMSS scores, recruit their teachers from the top 10 percent and 5 percent of graduating students, respectively (Pearson, 2012). In addition to recruiting the top third students to the teaching profession, countries such as Singapore also screen for “+” students, that is those who demonstrate other qualities and attributes to become good, effective teachers. The National Institute of Education in Singapore tests pedagogical skills and professional values through interviews and observations before students are selected, and throughout their training (Auguste et al., 2010).

More tangible and physical conditions, such as student-teacher ratios, class size and teaching hours may be modified easily – subject to budget availability and management capacity – to support and enable teachers to do the job they are trained for, that is, to educate the future generations. Interestingly, TALIS reported that teachers are not affected by class size; rather, it is the type of students (e.g., students with behavioural issues) who pose greater challenges to teachers’ job satisfaction and feelings of self-efficacy (OECD, 2014). Whether this applies to teachers in non-TALIS countries in Asia and the Pacific region needs to be examined. Other issues, such as deployment of teachers to areas of conflict, high rates of teacher absenteeism (Rogers and Vegas, 2009), parents exerting excessive pressures (UNESCO, 2013), and so on, are equally, if not more, complex and will require careful and balanced considerations in the search for viable solutions.

The financial implication throughout the discussion in this area is not lost on policy makers, and perhaps is a major factor why some countries have yet to adopt the strategies and approaches implemented by better off economies such as Singapore, Finland and South Korea. However, higher expenditures alone cannot guarantee better performances and learning outcomes; teachers’ capacities are equally important in delivering quality education.

c. Professional development of pre- and in-service teachers

Besides attracting top candidates to the teaching profession, education systems need to ensure quality pre-service teacher training as well as continuous in-service professional development programmes. One vital element to effective teacher education and training is the provision of clear teacher competency standards covering all levels of education – from early childhood and to post-secondary – and in both formal and non-formal sectors. These standards will invariably differ country by country depending on their respective needs and conditions, but some core elements will remain the same.
While many countries will already have some standards in place, the 2014 Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2014a) pointed out that in countries which have data, less than 75 percent of school teachers were trained according to national standards. This unfortunate situation could be a result of countries resorting to hiring people without adequate training in response to the pressure to expand teacher numbers rapidly to meet the universal primary education goal. Although specific data for Asia and the Pacific countries are unavailable, the provision of quality teacher education and training also has to be a major area of focus in the post-2015 agenda for the region.

For those who are already in service, continuous professional development opportunities should also be available to ensure that teachers are keeping up with new knowledge and technology. Teachers increasingly tasked to integrate new materials and topics (e.g., Education for Sustainable Development, Peace Education, Education for International Understanding, Global Citizenship, Intangible Cultural Heritage and so on) into an already overloaded curriculum will have to be trained to deal with these demands effectively and proficiently. Likewise, teachers who are not properly trained and empowered to take full advantage of available technologies may result in students who may be inadequately prepared for the future. This will worsen another wave of digital divide – children who have capable teachers and those who do not.

The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/2014 noted that out of 40 national education plans surveyed, only 17 included strategies for improving teacher education programmes – for example, Bangladesh aims to upgrade the certification in education to a diploma in education – and only 16 foresee further training for teacher educators (UNESCO, 2014a). According to TALIS reports, 55 percent of teachers expressed a desire for more professional development but cited conflicts of work schedules (86 percent in Japan and 83 percent in the Republic of Korea), lack of suitable professional development programmes and absence of incentives for participation as barriers to their participation (OECD, 2013 and 2014).

d. School leadership and management

Leadership in school is closely linked to the school’s mission, goals and performance. The management of school personnel, administration, functions and activities has a direct impact on the climate, environment, classrooms, curriculum, attitudes, teaching and learning practices. The TALIS 2013 report (OECD, 2014) has devoted one chapter to school leadership, underlining the integral role of school principals in ensuring students’ learning outcomes, promoting equity and excellence, creating and sustaining conditions for quality teaching and learning. Seen as the focal points connecting multiple stakeholders in the education sector – teachers, students, parents, government officials and policy makers – school heads are often called upon to manage and balance diverse and conflicting demands. Visionary, capable and efficient school leaders can achieve a lot by inspiring, motivating and developing their staff in addition to familiarizing themselves with contemporary learning environments and emphasizing learning as the core business of education. It is easy to understand why school leadership is becoming a priority in improving student achievement results (Pont et al., 2008; Robinson et al., 2009; Branch et al., 2013).

School heads in Asia and the Pacific region have traditionally been working under highly centralized systems that limit their power and autonomy in making decisions. The Ministry of Education in many countries (e.g. China, Thailand, Singapore) designs the national curricula, syllabi and examinations as well as controls funding and staffing including teacher selection, recruitment and staff development. By and large, the roles of school heads are mainly to monitor staffing needs, schedule activities, manage school finances and resources, evaluate teachers and ensure that they keep accurate records. Consequently, the administrative functions of principals are more explicit and their instructional leadership functions less so (Sindhvad, 2009).
Still, amidst increasing globalization, rapid technological innovations and a growing knowledge-based society, a major focus for management under such conditions is a leadership of change. The challenge for policy makers and school leaders alike is how school leaders can adapt to these changes and become change agents themselves.

Expected to provide strong leadership, school leaders will require relevant training and professional development in accordance to established standards too. In the past, school principal training before the appointment was not a common practice among developing countries, except for on-the-job training for a teacher who has served as a deputy or assistant principal. Only a handful of countries, such as China, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines and Thailand in this region had addressed the need to improve school management, primarily by establishing institutions to train school principals (Sindhvad, 2009). Things have improved in recent years as seen by Australia’s introduction of a National Professional Standard for Principals. The Standard defines the role of the principal and unifies the profession nationally, describes the professional practice of principals in a common language and explains the role of quality school leadership in improving learning outcomes. The Standard has identified five areas of professional practice: leading teaching and learning; developing self and others; leading improvement, innovation and change; leading the management of the school; and engaging and working with the community (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011).

Key strategies and action areas

Evidence shows that an education system is as good as its teachers, and that education quality improves when teachers are supported. Therefore the key strategies proposed for the post-2015 education agenda are essentially to recruit the best and most suitable candidates for the profession, provide them with the best education and continuous training opportunities, and equip them with the necessary pedagogies and tools, as described below.

- Provide conducive working conditions and supportive environment to attract top candidates and retain high performing teachers in the teaching profession

To attract and retain top performers, countries such as Singapore, Finland and the Republic of Korea offer a variety of benefits and incentives including free tuition, high salaries, performance and retention bonuses, and outstanding contribution awards. Singapore monitors starting salaries of different professions to ensure that new teachers are paid competitively. A series of measures are in place to allow high performing graduates to receive comparable salaries including a comprehensive and time-consuming system of teacher appraisal and progression underlining its belief that developing a competent teacher is a lifelong undertaking (Schleicher, 2011). Through its various policies and incentives, Singapore has a low teacher attrition rate of 3 percent, compared to 14 percent in USA. Teachers in Finland receive more modest salaries but work fewer hours in relation to the peers in other European countries. They also enjoy greater autonomy and decision making in school policy and management, textbooks, course content, student assessment policies, budget allocations and so on. A combination of job security, attractive salary, good vacations and social prestige has made teaching a popular career choice in South Korea where teachers are paid the highest salaries in the world (Auguste et al., 2010).

Furthermore, to promote more balanced teacher profiles, countries may also wish to formulate flexible policies to encourage teachers from diverse backgrounds and under-represented groups particularly from local communities to join the profession. For example, by waiving entry requirements to enable recruitment of teachers from ethnic minorities, Cambodia has increased the number of teachers in remote areas who can teach in their local languages. Concurrently, barriers that discourage people with
disabilities to enter the profession should also be removed, and more inclusive education policies be implemented to support these teachers. Nonetheless, to counter concerns about under-qualified teachers, continuous in-service training programmes will have to step up to improve and enhance the knowledge and skills of these teachers. The example set by Viet Nam in developing a core national curriculum and guiding framework for inclusive education in 2010 is very encouraging. The Republic of Korea’s practice of rotating teachers every five years to different schools allows a more equitable distribution of good teachers, and those working in disadvantaged schools are compensated by additional stipend, smaller class sizes, less teaching time, the chance to choose their next school after teaching in a difficult area and greater promotion opportunities (UNESCO, 2014).

• Develop and implement relevant and appropriate pre-service training and continuous professional development opportunities for teachers in accordance to the national competency standards for teachers at all levels (ECCE to post-secondary education, including TVET and Higher Education) and in all sectors (formal and non-formal)

The example of Singapore will serve well to reinforce the importance of continuous teacher training and its impact on learning outcomes. Teachers have 100 hours of in-service training annually. New teachers will be mentored for the first few years of their career, and trainers visit the schools to identify difficulties or to introduce new practices. In terms of career development, Singapore has put in place three career paths to provide its teaching personnel continuous professional development opportunities and growth – leadership track, teaching track and specialist track (Auguste et al., 2010). In Shanghai, China, primary school teachers are tasked to complete 240 hours of professional development within five years.

Promoting a broader perspective, the South Asia Teacher Education and Development (SATED) Programme initiated by the South Asian Centre for Teacher Development in Sri Lanka, concentrates on building the capacity of teacher education institutions and continuous professional development of teachers in South Asia through workshops, seminars, study visits, research, knowledge sharing, and delivery of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) equipment and services.

• Ensure effective school leadership and management practices are established to implement relevant policies and practices so that teachers can focus on their core responsibility of teaching

While mentoring is an essential component of teacher preparation and training, it is often overlooked. In Norway, school principals assigns an experienced staff member to mentor each new teacher; the mentors receiving training in teacher education institutions and become integral actors for providing in-school guidance (OECD, 2005). Likewise, the Singapore government provides funding for experienced teachers to train for a postgraduate degree to become mentors for other teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). By paying more attention to mentoring and integrating it into the school system, school leaders can set up an effective platform to support and guide their teachers.

Progressive career advancement is only one example of rewarding teachers for their contributions. Other less obvious but meaningful channels for recognition, such as giving teachers the autonomy to decide how they teach what is in the curriculum, convey the trust and belief in the professionalism of teachers, as is in the case of Finland. In the same way to promote legitimacy and ownership, the School and Teacher Education Reform Programme in Rajasthan State in India encourages teacher educators from state, private and non-governmental teacher training institutes to help develop teacher education and school curricula and materials (UNESCO, 2014).
Target and indicators

Target
By 2030, ensure that all learners are taught by qualified, professionally-trained, motivated and well-supported teachers.

Proposed indicators
• Conducive working conditions and a supportive environment are in place to attract top candidates and retain high performing teachers in the teaching profession, e.g.:
  - Recruitment and selection: % of top X of high school graduates majoring in teaching degrees/diplomas; % of top X college/university graduates entering the teaching force; etc.
  - Salary, benefits, career development, status: in comparison with other professions; deployment incentives, etc.
  - Retention: percentage of teachers leaving the profession
  - Equity: disaggregated by sex and level - pre-school teachers through to principals and management; formal vs non-formal
  - Factors affecting teachers’ well-being
  - Any policy scheme (e.g. scholarship) that supports those entering teacher colleges/universities

• Relevant and appropriate training and professional development opportunities are available for teachers following the national competency standards
  - National competency standards for teachers at all levels (ECCE to post-secondary education, including TVET and HE) and in all sectors (formal and non-formal) have been clearly formulated and implemented
  - Teacher preparation and professional development (pre- and in-service) from ECCE to post-secondary, formal and non-formal) are designed, implemented, monitored and assessed in line with the national competency standards
  - The provision of technology and tools for teacher education and teaching practices is ensured in order to enhance innovative pedagogy to support the future of learning in 2030
  - The number of in-service trainings organized and X percentage of teachers trained

• Effective school leadership and management practices are established to implement relevant policies and practices so that teachers can focus on their core responsibility of teaching
  - National standards for school principals
  - Various kinds of training or professional development programmes are available
  - Duties and time are allocated for each
  - Assessment framework/tools for monitoring or evaluating principals and teachers are in place

Questions for discussion
• What competences do teachers need to meet the learning demands of 2030?
• What are the bottlenecks in attracting the best qualified candidates to the teaching profession, motivating teachers and transforming their pedagogical approaches?
• What policy and enabling environments need to be in place to support teachers for the future we want?
References


