



The Powerhouses of Education: Teachers for the Future We Want

17th UNESCO-APEID International Conference

29-31 October 2014, Bangkok, Thailand

Reflecting on the times he spent learning under a tree as a young boy, United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon emphasized that education is the single best investment nations can make to build prosperous, healthy and equitable societies when he launched the Education First initiative in September 2012.

That being the case, we face huge challenges with more than 60 million children all over the world not attending primary schools. While this number represents a substantial drop from 108 million since 1999, unfortunately most of the reduction was achieved between 1999 and 2004. Progress seemed to have stagnated between 2008 and 2010.¹ In the Asia and Pacific region, most countries have made huge strides in bringing children into school. In 2010, the net enrolment of 91.8 percent for primary education and 62.5 percent for secondary education appeared to fare better than world statistics.² Nonetheless, to meet the universal primary education goal by 2015, a total of 6.8 million teachers globally will have to be recruited – 1.7 million to fill new posts and 5.1 million to replace those who will retire from the profession between 2010 and 2015.³

Besides access to education, improving the quality of education is another challenge. Among the 650 million children of primary school age worldwide, 120 million do not reach grade 4 and another 130 million who are in school fail to learn the basics. This has turned the spotlight on teacher performance. The shortage of teachers, apart from hindering the achievement of universal primary education, in tandem with teacher education and training, obviously have an impact on students' learning outcomes. In fact, in 33 percent of the countries with data on primary education surveyed, more than 25 percent of the teachers were not trained to the national standard.⁴

Education systems are influenced by multiple factors, but many will agree that teachers play a key role in determining the quality of education, a point supported by many studies⁵ and reiterated by Ms. Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General, "Teachers ... ultimately determine our collective ability to

¹ UNESCO, 2012. *EFA Global Monitoring Report. Youth and Skills. Putting Education to Work*. Paris.

² UNESCAP, 2012. *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2012*. Bangkok. Accessed 11 march 2013, <http://www.unescap.org/stat/data/syb2012/index.asp>.

³ UNESCO-UIS, 2012. *The Global Demand for Primary Teachers – 2012 Update. Projections to Reach Universal Primary Education by 2012. UIS Information Bulletin No. 10*. UNESCO Institute of Statistics, Montreal.

⁴ UNESCO, 2012. *EFA Global Monitoring Report. Youth and Skills. Putting Education to Work*. Paris.

⁵ Hanushek, E., 1992. The Trade-off between Child Quantity and Quality, *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 100, pp. 84-117; Nye, B., Konstantopoulos, S. and Hedges, L.V., 2004. How Large are Teacher Effects? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 26 (3), pp. 237-257; Hanushek, E. et al., 2005. The Market for Teacher Quality, Cambridge, MA, *NBER Working Paper Series*, No. 11154; Hanushek, E.A. and Rivkin, S.G., 2006. Teacher Quality. In Hanushek, E.A. and Welch, F. (eds.), *Handbook of the Economics of Education* (Vol. 2). Amsterdam, Elsevier; Gordon, R. et al., 2006. Identifying Effective Teachers Using Performance on the Job, Discussion Paper 2006-01, *The Hamilton Project*, The Brookings Institute, Washington, D.C.; Leigh, A., 2010. Estimating Teacher Effectiveness from Two-year Changes in Students' Test Scores, *Economics of Education Review*, No. 29, pp. 480-488.

innovate, to invent, to find solutions for tomorrow. Nothing will ever replace a good teacher. Nothing is more important than supporting them.”⁶

History is dotted with outstanding educators who have inspired, and continue to inspire, generations of people. Confucius, Aristotle, Omar Al-Khayyam, Desiderius Erasmus, Friedrich Fröbel, Savitribai Phule, Anne Sullivan, Rabindranath Tagore, Maria Montessori and many others spring to mind. Those of us fortunate enough to have had teachers who, though un-named and unknown to the rest of the world, have made an impact in our lives will surely attest to the importance of qualified, committed and caring teachers.

Without a doubt, teachers today face vastly different demands and conditions. 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, counselors, mentors, technology experts, nutritionists, event organizers and role models, among many others!

Are these demands realistic and appropriate? What should be the priorities of teachers as custodians of learning? What kinds of education and training are needed to develop teachers as the powerhouses of education for the future we want? What support should be provided to enable teachers to do the jobs expected of them? What policies must be in place to ensure that teachers can perform and contribute to the national, regional and global education goals? These are hard questions requiring honest answers.

The Powerhouses of Education: Teachers for the Future We Want

Rio+20, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development that took place in Brazil in June 2012 has as its tagline, *the Future We Want*.

Indeed, what is the future we want?

Put simply, we all want a world of sustainable peace, harmony and prosperity. It is a world that many of us may not witness in our lifetime, but it is a noble goal to strive for. As countries across the world continue to grapple with political, economic, social and environmental challenges, education advocates cheer Mr. Ban’s decision to make education a priority on the international agenda to meet three objectives: (i) putting every child into school; (ii) improving the quality of learning; and (iii) fostering global citizenship. With education as the power to transform lives and build sustainable, peaceful and prosperous societies, then teachers are clearly the powerhouses to drive this transformation.

UNESCO has initiated a series of meetings to forge a vision of education for the future as part of its work in shaping the post-Education for All 2015 education agenda. The quality of education has emerged as a major concern, along with the need to recognize effective and relevant learning as one of the key areas to be addressed. Quality teachers are central to quality learning, right from early childhood and onwards throughout life. Quality learning requires a professional, committed teaching force that is able to respond to diverse learning needs, supported by effective and safe learning environments and competent school leadership, and is underpinned by pioneering findings of scientific research on learning.

Still, raising questions about teachers and the quality of education can provoke passionate debates among policy makers, professors, researchers, school administrators, teacher educators, teachers, union

⁶ Irina Bokova, 2011. World Teachers Day. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/teacher-education/world-teachers-day/previous-years/2011/>.

members, parents, communities, students, employers – indeed, everyone you can think of – and thus require careful consideration of a broad spectrum of issues and perspectives, such as:

- teachers’ roles and responsibilities;
- recruitment, selection, deployment, management and retention of teachers;
- teacher preparation and professional development;
- status, remuneration, career development, working conditions and mechanisms for social dialogue;
- rights and safety of teachers;
- monitoring and evaluation of teacher performance for accountability;
- innovative pedagogies, technologies and tools of teacher education and teaching practices.

Policy makers and educators must devise and implement effective teacher policies and reforms to address all these issues before the Education First objectives can be met. As a first step, we need to understand and set realistic and clear expectations, roles and responsibilities for teachers. These will help to frame discussions on the types of teachers needed, the types and range of work and responsibilities required, as well as the structures, institutions and organization of the educational systems to be in place.

Secondly, we need to attract the best people to the teaching profession. 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.⁷ In contrast, a 2007 McKinsey report pointed out that lower-performing countries rarely attract the right people into teaching. It cited a policy maker in a region that recruited teachers from the lowest third of high-school graduates as saying, “One cannot give what one does not have.”⁸ While high scores and grades alone cannot guarantee that the recruits will become caring and committed teachers, it is unrealistic to expect students who perform poorly to be able to transcend their personal challenges and become competent teachers without substantial input to enhance their own capacity first.

Incidentally, teachers are held in high regard in both Finland and the Republic of Korea, as well as in Singapore, another top performing country. The status and respect given to the teaching profession is a powerful and persuasive factor in attracting talented people to make teaching a preferred career choice. Still, besides academic excellence, the selection criteria should also consider the aptitudes and personalities of the candidates – such as good interpersonal and communication skills, a love for learning and learning for life, motivation to teach, ability to work with children and young people – to ensure that they are well suited to the profession.

Providing appropriate pre-service teacher education, in-service training and professional development is another critical area that will make an impact on the quality of teachers and learning outcomes. Teachers must be equipped with the right knowledge, skills and resources to be able to perform and engage their students productively. Establishing teacher competency standards and qualification frameworks will assist in preparing and providing comprehensive and innovative teacher education curricula, pedagogies and tools that respond to new teaching-learning paradigms. These will lay a strong foundation for teachers to embark on their careers confidently and competently. Continuous support is needed to help teachers reach their potential, sustain their performance and motivate them to improve themselves for life.

Rewarding teachers for their contributions comes in various forms and methods: attractive salaries and benefits, progressive career advancement and conducive working conditions are the usual factors being considered. Teacher salaries account for a huge proportion of the education budget in most countries, and the levels vary substantially from country to country, but they tend to remain below other graduates’ salaries. Singapore has implemented a series of measures to allow their high-quality graduates to start

⁷ Pearson, 2012. *The Learning Curve. Lessons in Country Performance in Education*. UK.

⁸ Barber, M. and Mourshed, M., 2007. *How the World’s Best Performing School Systems Come Out on Top*. McKinsey.

their teaching careers on salaries competitive with other professions. It includes a comprehensive and time-consuming system of teacher appraisal and progression underlining its belief that developing a competent teacher is a lifelong undertaking.⁹

Other conditions such as student-teacher ratios, class size, teaching hours and physical environment can be modified pending national needs and available resources. Unfortunately, issues such as deployment of teachers to areas of conflict, high rates of teacher absenteeism, parents exerting excessive pressures and so on are more complex, raising fears that the teaching profession may face increasing challenges in certain countries.

UNESCO-APEID International Conference

Based in the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education in Bangkok, Thailand, the Asia-Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID) is a regional inter-country cooperative programme involving more than 40 Member States. APEID's mission is to contribute to sustainable human development through the design and implementation of educational programmes and projects at the post-primary level of education, focusing on educational innovation for development. APEID has organized a series of international conferences since 1995 to provide a forum for policy dialogue and information and knowledge sharing on development-oriented education innovations and exemplary practices in and beyond the Asia and Pacific region.

With support from the Japan Funds-in-Trust, APEID is convening the 17th UNESCO-APEID International Conference, *The Powerhouses of Education: Teachers for the Future We Want*, to facilitate discussions on leading-edge thinking about teachers and teaching practices, explore innovative approaches and tools to enhance the teaching profession, consider mechanisms that can improve the status and working conditions of teachers, and identify enabling policies and instruments to prepare, motivate and support teachers to become the powerhouses of education. More specifically, the UNESCO-APEID International Conference will provide a forum to:

- Increase understanding and knowledge about the teaching profession;
- Showcase and promote innovative approaches, projects and practices that prepare teachers for their profession and enhance their performance;
- Encourage national, regional and global collaboration to promote the teaching profession and revive teaching as a career of choice;
- Facilitate networking and exchange of experiences among the participants.

Eminent speakers and paper presenters will share their rich experiences in linking theory to practice. Policy makers, academicians, researchers, school leaders and administrators, teachers, parents, students and representatives from the private sector will be able to examine the broad concepts about the teaching profession and practices, as well as policies, tools and resources available to enhance the teaching profession. Participants are encouraged to discover how they can optimize their knowledge and contribute to efforts to prepare teachers for the future we want.

Sub-themes of the conference

- I. Roles and responsibilities of teachers through the ages
 - Examining traditional wisdom about teachers
 - Investigating perspectives from multiple stakeholders
 - Addressing the feminization of the teaching force
 - Forecasting teacher competencies needed in the future

⁹ Schleicher, A. 2011. *Building a High-Quality Teaching Profession. Lessons from Around the World*. OECD.

- II. Teacher preparation and professional development
 - Developing teacher standards and qualification frameworks
 - Reinforcing pre-service and in-service teacher education and training
 - Preparing teachers for globalized but inclusive and sustainable societies
 - Researching and identifying innovative curricula, pedagogies, technologies and tools to enhance the teaching profession

- III. Status and working conditions of teachers
 - Enhancing the status of the teaching profession
 - Attracting, recruiting, deploying and retaining high quality teachers
 - Improving working conditions and benefits of teachers
 - Protecting the rights and safety of teachers

- IV. Policies and instruments to enhance the teaching profession
 - Formulating effective governance, management and regulatory policies and processes to promote the teaching profession
 - Strengthening school leadership to enhance the teaching profession
 - Designing environments and resources to enhance the teaching profession
 - Creating partnerships, collaboration and networking opportunities

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I touch the future. I teach.

Christa McAuliffe (1948-1986)

Teacher and Space Shuttle Challenger Crew Member