

DID YOU KNOW

Recommendations of Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2013-14

Unlocking Teachers' Potential to Solve the Learning Crisis

Children's educational opportunities should never be determined by where they grow up, their parents' income, their ethnicity, their gender or whether they have a disability. Yet, in a quarter of the world's countries, less than half of children are learning basic literacy and numeracy skills, and about 80 per cent of those not learning these basic skills live in sub-Saharan Africa. In total, 250 million children are not learning the basics. Urgent action is needed to ensure that these children do not become a lost generation.

How governments and donor agencies respond to this crisis will determine whether good quality education for all can be achieved. Learning disparities emerge early in life, even before children start school, so it is vital to see that all children benefit from early childhood education and go on to receive primary schooling of good quality in the early grades. If children learn to read with comprehension and understand basic mathematics by the time they complete primary school, they acquire

the foundations for making further progress in education and gaining the skills they will need to get good jobs.

To acquire these foundation skills, children need trained and motivated teachers. This Report identifies 10 most important teacher reforms that policy-makers should adopt to achieve equitable learning for all.

1. Fill Teacher Gaps

Many countries, especially the poorest, suffer from chronic teacher shortages. It is vital that policy-makers introduce strategies to recruit new teachers and to train, deploy and retain them. It is particularly crucial that in the 29 countries not expected to have enough teachers to achieve universal primary education until after 2030, governments, supported by donor agencies, redouble efforts to make up teacher shortages. The need for additional teachers becomes even more acute when teacher shortages in lower secondary school are included. To achieve universal lower secondary education by 2030 – a likely target date in the next set of global goals – with 32 students per teacher, an additional 5.1

million teachers will be needed, half of them in sub-Saharan Africa. South and West Asia requires an additional one million lower secondary school teachers. Thus, countries in these regions need to activate policies that begin to address the vast shortfall.

2. Attract the Best Candidates to Teaching

Children need the best teachers to optimise their learning opportunities. These teachers should be drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, reflecting learners' diversity. It is vital that they have at least a good secondary education.

Affirmative action should be considered to attract more women into teaching. To increase the pool of better-educated female teachers, policy-makers should also aim to improve girls' access to secondary education, especially in disadvantaged areas.

In addition, recruitment efforts should focus on hiring and training teachers from under-represented groups, such as ethnic minorities, to serve in their communities. Such teachers, familiar with the cultural context and local language, can increase the number of disadvantaged children who are learning.

3. Train Teachers to Meet the Needs of All Children

Every teacher should receive training to equip them to meet the learning needs of all children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Many teacher candidates are recruited with weak subject knowledge because they have also suffered from a poor quality education. Rather than leave this problem to be addressed through ongoing training, policy-makers should remedy it through good quality pre-service teacher education programmes.

Pre-service training should equip teachers with the skills to teach children to read and to understand basic mathematics in the early grades. Trained teachers will not have the set of skills needed to improve learning for all children if they do not have sufficient time learning to teach in real classrooms. Policy-makers should therefore ensure that adequate classroom teaching experience is an essential part of training to become a qualified teacher.

In ethnically diverse societies, where local language instruction plays a crucial role in securing foundation skills, teachers should learn to teach in more than one language. Teacher education programmes should also prepare teachers to teach multiple grades and ages in one classroom, and to understand how teachers' attitudes to gender differences can affect learning outcomes.

More broadly, every teacher should have access to regular ongoing training to develop and strengthen teaching skills. Such training should enhance teachers' practical skills, especially in methods of teaching and assessment to support disadvantaged learners, and

keep them up to date with innovation in the curriculum.

The capacity of many teacher education programmes is far from sufficient to meet the needs of the numbers of teachers to be trained. Innovative approaches such as distance teacher education, combined with face-to-face training and mentoring, should be encouraged to extend both pre-service and ongoing teacher education to reach more teachers and accelerate progress towards good quality education for all.

4. Prepare Teacher Educators and Mentors to Support Teachers

Globally, the training of teacher educators has largely been ignored, with the result that most teacher educators have little knowledge and experience of real classroom teaching challenges. Policy-makers should give training of teacher educators high priority, ensuring that educators have adequate exposure to the classroom learning requirements facing those teaching in difficult circumstances. Once teachers qualify to teach, the professional support they receive in the early stages of their career is vital to their effectiveness. Policy-makers should ensure that trained mentors are available to help newly qualified teachers translate teaching knowledge into activities that improve learning for all children.

5. Get Teachers to Where They are Needed Most

Recruiting the best teachers and giving

them the best training will amount to little if they do not teach in the areas where they are most needed. Often poor, remote areas do not attract the best teachers because of inadequate infrastructure and harsh working conditions.

Adequate compensation, bonus pay, good housing and support in the form of professional development opportunities should be used to encourage trained teachers to accept positions in disadvantaged areas. In remote or rural areas with acute teacher shortages, governments should recruit teachers locally and provide them with ongoing training to ensure that all children, irrespective of their location, have teachers with the capacity to improve their learning.

6. Use Competitive Career and Pay Structures to Retain the Best Teachers

Many low income countries find it difficult to raise teacher salaries substantially because of budget constraints. Governments should nonetheless do all they can to make teachers' pay more competitive. Paying teachers low salaries sends a negative signal to society about the value of teachers' contribution to education quality. In some poor countries, teachers barely earn enough to lift their families above the poverty line. To recruit the best teachers and retain them, teacher pay must be similar to that of professionals in comparable fields to avoid the risk of teachers losing motivation or leaving the profession.

Performance-related pay programmes should be considered with caution. They often tend to reward teachers who are already in good schools teaching high achieving students. Ultimately, these programmes can be a disincentive to teach students who face difficulties in learning, including those living in poor communities. Attractive career and pay structures should be used as incentives for all teachers. Career and pay structures should recognize and reward teachers in remote areas and those who teach disadvantaged children.

7. Improve Teacher Governance to Maximise Impact

Teacher governance policies that recognize and reward good teacher behaviour should be given top priority, but it is also necessary to tackle unprofessional behaviour such as absenteeism, private tutoring and gender-based violence.

Governments should work more closely with teacher unions to formulate policies. This should include seeking their advice on strategies to support weak learners, as well as the adoption of effective codes of conduct. Such codes should refer explicitly to violence against pupils, ensuring that penalties are consistent with legal frameworks for child rights and protection. A range of penalties, such as suspension and interdiction, should be used to tackle serious cases of teacher misconduct.

Teacher absences often signal low morale and poor job satisfaction. To

raise morale and reduce absenteeism, it is vital to improve teachers' working conditions, make sure they are not overburdened with non-teaching duties and offer them access to good health care.

When teachers engage in private tutoring of their own students, the poorest students suffer most because their families cannot afford tutoring and their teacher is often spending less time covering the curriculum in the classroom. In some instances, the root cause is low teacher pay, so improving teachers' salaries is one way to help address this problem. Banning private tutoring outright is likely to be difficult to enforce, but at a minimum teachers should not be permitted to tutor students privately whom they are also supposed to be teaching in the classroom. Providing clear guidelines should ensure that teachers do not sacrifice classroom time to teach the school curriculum privately.

Governments should also invest in strengthening school leadership. Strong school leadership is required to provide teachers with professional support, and also to make sure that teachers give equal guidance to all students.

8. Equip Teachers with Innovative Curricula to Improve Learning

Teachers need the support of inclusive and flexible curriculum strategies designed to meet the learning needs of children from disadvantaged groups, including those who have had their schooling interrupted. Teachers

and teaching assistants should be supported with curriculum content and delivery methods that not only improve learning, but also reduce learning disparities, allowing low achievers to catch up.

Policy-makers should ensure that the early grade curriculum focuses on securing strong foundation skills for all, is delivered in a language children understand and is backed with appropriate resources. It is important that curriculum expectations match learners' abilities, as overambitious curricula limit what teachers can achieve in helping children progress.

In countries with a large population of out-of-school children and youth, governments and donors should give priority to investment in second-chance and accelerated learning programmes and recruit and equip teachers with the skills to run them.

In many countries, technology is being used to supplement and improve children's learning. To maximise the use of technology tools, teachers in both formal and non-formal settings need to be taught to use these resources innovatively and effectively while making sure the technology is accessible to all.

It is not sufficient for children only to learn foundation skills in school. A curriculum that encourages interdisciplinary and participatory learning is vital to foster transferable skills that promote global citizenship.

9. Develop Classroom Assessments to Help Teachers Identify and Support Students at Risk of not Learning

Teachers need strong skills in classroom-based assessment practices to identify and help learners who are struggling. Pre-service and ongoing teacher education should train teachers how to use assessment tools to detect learning difficulties early, and how to devise appropriate strategies to tackle these difficulties.

Students can make considerable gains if they are offered more opportunities to monitor their own learning. Teachers should be provided with skills to help students use learning materials to evaluate and monitor their progress.

Targeted additional support via trained teaching assistants or community volunteers is another key way of improving learning for students at risk of falling behind.

10. Provide Better Data on Trained Teachers

To achieve good quality education for all, it is crucial to know how many trained teachers each country has and how many additional teachers are needed, but in many poor countries reliable information is often lacking.

Countries should invest in collecting and analysing annual data on the number of trained teachers available in different parts of the

country, and by gender, language, ethnicity and disability, at all levels of education. These data should be complemented by information on the capacity of teacher education programmes, with an assessment of the competencies teachers are expected to acquire through the programmes.

Just as internationally agreed standards are available for primary and secondary schooling, similar standards need to be developed for teacher education programmes. Such information will enable national governments and the international community to monitor the quality of teachers and to plan more effectively to meet demand for trained teachers.

More and better quality data on teacher salaries in low and middle income countries are also needed to enable national governments and the international community to monitor how well teachers are paid, and to

raise global awareness of the need to pay them sufficiently. Teacher salary data from OECD countries, for example, enable analysis of differences between beginning salaries and what teachers earn 15 years later. This provides useful information on the relationship between pay structure and career progression, as well as comparability with other professions.

Conclusion

To end the learning crisis, all countries, rich or poor, have to make sure every child has access to a well-trained and motivated teacher. The 10 strategies outlined here are based on the evidence of successful policies, programmes and strategies from a wide range of countries and educational environments. By implementing such teaching reforms, countries can ensure that all children and young people, especially the disadvantaged, receive the education they need to realize their potential and lead fulfilling lives.