

Every child needs a teacher: closing the gap

“Teachers are the most important resource for improving learning. A lack of teachers, and especially of trained teachers, presents a major obstacle to achieving the [Education for All] goals.”¹

Overview

Education is a fundamental human right, which enables individuals to reach their potential and societies to prosper. In 2000 governments around the world agreed to deliver universal primary education by 2015 as part of the Millennium Development Goals. But today over 57 million children worldwide are still denied a primary education.²

Simply ensuring that children can go to school is not enough. A major challenge remains around ensuring *quality* education, which is essential in order that children attain minimum standards in numeracy and literacy, and master life skills essential to their future success and wellbeing.

Sufficient teachers, who are adequately skilled, trained and motivated, are vital to achieving this.

The issue: teachers matter

As the 2015 deadline for global education targets fast approaches, educators, experts and leaders around the world have recognised the pressing need to focus on quality learning.³ A concerted effort is now needed to meet the challenge of determining *how* education quality can be improved, and well-trained, supported and motivated teachers are central to this.

Research shows that the presence and knowledge of teachers are the most critical factors impacting on the test scores of students,⁴ and that a commitment to high teaching quality and standards goes hand in hand with successful education systems.⁵ However, globally

Key Facts

- **1.7 million** more teachers are needed to achieve universal primary education by 2015.
- In 33 out of 100 countries with data, **less than 75%** of primary school teachers were trained to national standards.
- **250 million of 690 million** children in primary school either fail to reach grade 4, or fall short of minimum learning standards.
- Evidence shows that teachers’ **presence and knowledge** is the most fundamental factor in student test scores.

Sources: UNESCO Institute for Statistics; 2012 Education for All Global Monitoring Report; P. Glewwe et al (2011) School Resources and Educational Outcomes in Developing Countries: a review of the literature from 1990 to 2010

there is a marked deficit in both teacher numbers and teaching quality, which has a drastic impact on learning outcomes for children.

Over 1.7 million more primary school teachers are needed to achieve universal primary education by 2015, on top of replacing the 5.1 million who will leave the profession during this period.⁶ Clearly, recruiting and retaining teachers must be a priority if the global community is serious about securing the right to education for every child. Yet even for those children able to access school, a meaningful education often remains out of reach.

Currently, there are 690 million children enrolled in primary school worldwide.⁷ Of these, 120 million fail to reach grade 4, and a further 130 million are failing to learn the basics. Malawi is an example of a country that is struggling; 34% of children fail to reach grade 4, and only 5% achieve minimum learning standards as a result of high dropout levels and low quality.⁸ Securing the right to education means moving beyond a focus on access to school, to ensuring that children in school are able to learn, for which well-trained teachers are fundamental.

Critical issues and barriers

- *Inequitable distribution*: disadvantage is perpetuated by unequal distribution of well-trained teachers, with marginalised children in poorer or remote areas more often taught in over-crowded classrooms with low quality teaching.⁹ For example, in Uganda, only half of rural teachers are qualified, compared with two-thirds in urban areas overall.¹⁰
- *Pupil-teacher ratios*: 26 of 165 countries with available data had a pupil-teacher ratio over 40:1 in 2010, with 22 of these in sub-Saharan Africa.¹¹ However, the pupil-*trained* teacher ratio sees this number rise as high as 155:1 in countries such as Ghana.¹² This is a cause for concern, as studies show that large class sizes hinder learning.¹³
- *Gender balance*: evidence shows that having more women teachers is associated with better education prospects for girls, in terms of enrolment, staying in school, and academic achievement.¹⁴ However, at primary and lower secondary level the average proportion of women teachers across low income countries remains unacceptably low, at 39% at primary level, and 25% at lower secondary level.¹⁵
- *Physical and attitudinal barriers faced by children with disabilities*: when they can access mainstream schools, children with disabilities are often taught by teachers who lack appropriate skills to address their specific needs and at times demonstrate reluctance to support the inclusion of children with disabilities.¹⁶
- *Lack of representative teaching force*: dominant ethnic, tribal, or religious groups tend to be over-represented in terms of academic achievement, and in teacher training courses. This problem is particularly acute in countries or areas where there are different languages used. Teachers whose first language is one of the majority languages are unlikely to want a post in a community with a minority language.

- *Lack of inclusive teacher training:* in order to develop the skills, experience and confidence to be inclusive of all children, teachers need to learn about and practise inclusive education during pre-service and in-service training, and they need to be given opportunities for continuing professional development (which extends beyond simply attending training courses) throughout their careers. Inclusive education training and continuous professional development need to be designed and delivered with inputs from diverse stakeholders, in particular community members and professionals with disabilities – to give a stronger sense of reality to teachers’ learning experiences.¹⁷
- *Reduction in aid:* global aid to basic education fell from US \$6.2 billion in 2010 to US \$5.8 billion in 2011.¹⁸ Low income countries need US \$26 billion per year to achieve universal primary education by 2015. Governments of countries facing increased pupil enrolment rates and scarce resources struggle to address teacher shortages and resort to a range of strategies such as employing teachers with lower academic qualifications; providing less pre-service training; and appointing teachers under different, usually insecure, terms and conditions. Relying on teachers who do not possess adequate subject knowledge or pedagogical skill does a significant disservice to children’s learning prospects.

What works?

The message is clear and simple. If the world community focuses solely on ensuring access to school for all children without addressing the shortage of teachers and investing in teaching quality, the right to education cannot be achieved for every child. Evidence and experience¹⁹ shows that the following policy elements are essential for tackling this issue:

<p>Workforce planning: thorough and ambitious planning is required. Trained teacher gaps need to be systematically identified by education ministries, working with local government. Imbalance between male and female teachers, skills gaps, and workforce diversity also need to be considered. The starting point should be a detailed assessment of what is needed to ensure teaching quality, which then shapes planning and allocation of resources – not vice versa.</p>	<p>Teacher recruitment and selection: to recruit on the scale needed, some countries may need to carry out recruitment drives, with incentives to ensure equitable teacher distribution. Strategies are also needed to attract those who have trained but left teaching to return, which may depend on decent remuneration and economic and donor policies. Selection for teacher training should be rigorous with high standards, and should also consider gender balance, and diversity and inclusion, e.g. in terms of ethnic, linguistic, religious and regional identity, and disability.</p>
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<p>Teacher training: reliance on unqualified teachers leads to low standards and discrimination, with children with disabilities, girls and children in rural and deprived areas losing out the most. Initial, pre-service training needs to be of high quality, with entry standards set at an appropriate level. All training, ideally, needs to be of at least post-secondary education level. Training should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be long enough to master core competencies, skills and knowledge • be linked to curricula • include training in child rights, disability gender and diversity • include a classroom-based component <p>The skills of existing but un- or under-trained teachers need to be upgraded, and a structured programme of ongoing development opportunities should be accessible to teachers during their career to maintain high standards.</p>	<p>Pay and conditions: extensive evidence shows pay levels and conditions for teachers are essential for quality and retention, with studies showing a link between higher teacher salaries and better pupil test scores. No progress can be made by blaming teachers themselves for what is a systemic problem. Instead, the focus should be firmly on tackling issues including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low wages • partial or late payment • requiring teachers to travel long distances to collect their pay <p>The bottom line is that to achieve high quality education, teaching must be an attractive profession of high-status. For this, teachers must be respected and remunerated as professionals.</p>
<p>Oversight and evaluation: successful education systems depend on respect for teaching as a valued profession, and investment in the training and development of teachers.</p> <p>High quality teaching also requires systems to ensure teachers' accountability to local communities. Clear processes are also needed for reporting issues such as gender-based violence and exclusion of children with disabilities as well as systematic links to other services. National engagement, such as through Teacher Councils, can help set and enforce professional standards, and teachers should be involved in education policy development, planning and monitoring.</p> <p>Teacher absence is a barrier to fulfilling every child's right to education. Efforts to tackle this issue should focus on underlying structural causes.</p>	<p>Value and investment: the success of education systems depends on having a sufficient number of high quality teachers. To achieve this, governments, supported by partners and in consultation with teacher organisations and teachers, need to establish and implement teacher policies on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training • recruitment • deployment • induction • continuing development • support • salaries • incentives and conditions. <p>All education systems require investment in teachers and teaching; to suggest otherwise is to deny and violate the rights of children, youth and adults in developing countries.</p>

What can the UK government do?

The UK government has made important commitments and plays a key role as a leading donor to global education goals. This year the UK became the single largest bilateral donor to education (overtaking the US). It has committed to support 9 million children in primary school and 2 million in lower secondary school by 2015, and to train 190,000 teachers to help raise education quality.²⁰

The UK also plays a central role in multilateral organisations which are delivering results in access to education and teacher-training, such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA).

As one of the richest countries in the world playing a powerful role in international affairs, the UK can play an important role in addressing global trained teacher shortages.

Key Recommendations:

Building on its commitments and achievements to date, DFID should:

1. Focus on reforming teacher training, in particular in service training, as part of its strategies to improve the quality of education

We know that the quality of an education system will never be greater than the quality of teachers in it.²¹ Yet there is strong evidence that current teacher training is very low quality in many countries and rarely provides teachers with the skills they need to make their classrooms gender sensitive and disability inclusive. This includes pre-service training, but also continuous professional development.²² We need to develop as rigorous a focus on quality of such teacher training as we do for learning outcomes for pupils. Building on its existing work, DFID should become a world leader in supporting innovative and high quality teacher professional development.

2. Invest in female teachers, particularly in rural areas and at lower secondary level

DFID has taken a leading role in promoting girls' education. Building on this important contribution, and in light of strong evidence on the positive role of female teachers, DFID should look at ways to increase the number of female teachers, particularly in rural areas and at lower secondary level. Some recent studies indicate that teachers in rural areas, for example in Cameroon, are often disproportionately younger and male.²³ Investing in female teachers would not only help to address the teacher shortage, but would also serve as an opportunity to develop a more inclusive and gender balanced teaching force. In addition gender should be incorporated into teacher training so that both male and female teachers can make their classrooms gender sensitive.

3. Find ways to incentivise good teachers to work in the areas in most need

There are a series of policy options which seek to ensure that the best teachers are working in the areas with the most educational need – or at the very least that there is no

disincentive for trained and experienced teachers to work in such areas. These can include improved rewards, support or career progression for teachers in the poorest areas.²⁴ In all countries where DFID influences policies, an assessment to ascertain which of these approaches might be most effective should be made. The poorest children are far less likely to be in school and learning without such action.

4. Collaborate with national policy-makers and practitioners to embed inclusive education principles throughout teacher training and practice

DFID should support national policy-makers and teacher educators to develop a more in-depth and hands-on understanding of inclusive education, and a better sense of how to embed inclusive education principles throughout pre- and in-service teacher training and hands-on practice. DFID should support the creation and development of a well-resourced system for providing specialist teaching support to disabled children and classroom teachers. Teachers trained in inclusive approaches benefit all children and will help bring millions of currently excluded children like those with disabilities in to education.

5. Work with global partners on efforts to overcome shortages of trained teachers

DFID should support national and international efforts to overcome the global teacher shortages and raise quality. The UK has a key role to play within the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and its new strategic focus on teachers, as well as within the UN's Global Education First Initiative. DFID should also use its influence to ensure urgent progress with the International Task Force on Teachers for Education for All. This is currently the only global forum working specifically to address the gap in well-trained teachers, with a mandate encompassing advocacy and facilitation of global efforts to achieve the Education For All (EFA) goals.

6. Ensure that investment in teachers is recognised as fundamental to the success of post-2015 goals of achieving quality education for all

The UK has played a central role in discussions so far about the post-2015 successor framework to the Millennium Development Goals, in particular because of Prime Minister Cameron's role co-chairing the UN High Level Panel. The UK's continued leadership is vital as the post-2015 negotiations continue at UN and inter-governmental levels. In particular, given the consensus on the need for quality universal education, the UK should use its position as the largest bilateral donor to education to emphasise the central importance of investing in sufficient numbers of trained teachers to achieving the ambitious post-2015 goals.

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