



Joint Message on the occasion of World Teachers' Day

5 October 2007

Today, on World Teachers' Day, we celebrate teachers and the central role they play in efforts to achieve quality education for all children. However, in many countries not all children have the opportunity to enter a classroom or gain basic literacy or numeracy skills, as there are simply not enough qualified teachers. This has negative outcomes not only for the future of individual children, but also for the development of whole societies.

Teachers are a crucial element in the achievement of the international education goals of Education for All (EFA) and of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These commit governments to providing a good quality education for all children by 2015. The growing shortage of qualified teachers is the main challenge to the realization of these goals. UNESCO estimates that by 2015, 18 million new teachers will be needed globally – 4 million in Africa alone. High rates of population growth, increasing enrolment rates and the impact of HIV and AIDS in some sub-Saharan African, Arab and South and East Asian countries, and large numbers of teachers leaving the profession combined with shortages in some subject areas in more developed countries, seriously threaten these goals.

But the challenge is more than one of numbers. The quality of teachers and teaching is also essential to good learning outcomes. This implies an education system that attracts and retains a well-trained, motivated, effective and gender-balanced teaching staff; it implies a system that supports teachers in the classroom, as well as in their continued professional development. Dissatisfaction with loss in status, low salaries, poor teaching and learning conditions, and lack of career progression or adequate professional training have driven large numbers of teachers out of the profession, sometimes after only a few years of service.

Some policies being implemented to recruit and retain teachers can, however, be at the expense of education quality. Responses to shortages through larger class sizes, by increasing teacher workload, especially if teaching support is already poor, by lowering the entry level to teacher colleges, by hiring untrained or poorly trained professionals or contract teachers with little job security, can further lower the status of the teaching profession, leave teachers ill-equipped to cope with the realities of the classroom or result in a loss of professional motivation.

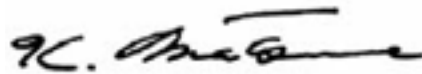
Guidance on key policies for effective teachers and teaching is provided by the joint ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, 1966 and by the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel, 1997. The Recommendations set out guidelines and good practices on teachers' status, their training, working conditions, career progression, and involvement in education decision-making through consultation and negotiation. The celebration of World Teachers' Day on 5 October every year, marking the commemoration of the 1966 Recommendation's adoption, is an occasion to take stock of the challenges and consider what action is needed in order to achieve high quality teaching and learning for all.

In implementing the Recommendations and their policy goals, there is a great need for strong evidence to facilitate ongoing and effective planning. Complete, timely and comprehensive data and information about teachers, schools and pupils can provide insights into a range of policy concerns. Teacher-related data and information systems, up-to-date research, cost analysis, micro-planning, and school mapping are all important elements of planning for, and managing, an effective teaching force. So too is information on the investments from public and private sources needed to ensure quality education and teaching in accordance with the 1966 Recommendation, as well as on teachers' aspirations, the impact of teacher training, including in-service training, the obstacles and means to fully engage teachers and their organisations in key education decisions through effective social dialogue, and other influences on teachers' practice in the classroom, all of which can significantly impact on children's learning.

However, at present, there is a serious gap in data and information about teachers and teaching. Current comparative databases are weak and require improvement in order to better monitor progress towards the achievement of international goals. We must strive to work together to build systems and structures that will enable and

support ongoing and efficient planning and management of this crucial element in achieving quality education for all – the teacher.

On World Teachers' Day, we celebrate teachers across continents, in all countries, in towns and in villages, and thank them for their continued efforts often in difficult circumstances. In acknowledging the vital role they play, we reaffirm the need to continue to work together to better understand the issues and ensure that we are equipped to make the right choices so that teachers are recruited, trained, and supported in ways that lead to a motivated, effective teaching force, able to contribute to our shared goal of achieving quality education for all children.



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