

# *Three Years of Global Partnership to Address the Teacher Challenge - Three Years from the 2015 EFA Benchmark: Achievements and Perspectives*

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*International Task Force on Teachers for Education for All, Policy Dialogue Forum  
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The objectives of the November 2012 policy dialogue forum in Namibia are:

- i. To take stock of three years of global collaboration and existing efforts aiming to reduce the teacher gap and accelerate countries' efforts towards the achievement of the EFA goals, and
- ii. To draw lessons from these experiences and set an agenda for the three years ahead leading to the 2015 benchmark: What aspects of teacher policy development need to be addressed as a priority? Which target groups to focus on? How to better deliver results together?

This panel is focused on teacher education and professional development. This, I would argue is the critical area that we need to address if we are to note developments with respect to the past three years and perhaps more critically, identify what we need to do in the next three years.

The key issues raised in the concept note correctly identify teaching as a profession that needs both good quality pre-service preparation and continuous updating of the pedagogical skills and subject knowledge of teachers. The concept note further raises questions on the pre-service training models, the form that teachers' continuous professional development and in-service training takes and how can one ensure such form plays a major contributory role to enabling quality teachers. In focusing on professional development and teacher education, there are also issues raised with respect to the resources required, models and practices that seem to yield better results, and the role of technology in this mix. Is there a need to have a national policy that governs this effort to enable better teachers to be trained and for their continuous professional development? Or should this be concentrated at the institutional and school levels only or both?

While the focus on teacher education and professional development is the critical path to understanding what we have to do in the next three years, I want to argue that we need to take a leaf from the world of business and focus on ‘supply chain management’. Supply chain management (SCM) is often described as the management of a complex set of interconnected businesses or parts of businesses that enable one to provide a product or service that is needed and indeed required by the end customers.

Of course a more complex definition is provided by the APICS Dictionary (American Production and Inventory Control Society - is a not-for-profit international education organisation, offering certification programs, training tools and networking opportunities to increase workplace performance) and defines SCM as the “design, planning, execution, control, and monitoring of supply chain activities with the objective of creating net value, building a competitive infrastructure, leveraging worldwide logistics, synchronising supply with demand and measuring performance globally”.

We know that education is a complex ‘business’. We also know that there are a range of parts that are required to work together if our education system is to function at an optimum level. Defining this optimum level (quality statement or quality of the product that is needed), to continue with the business analogy, is indeed a crucial requirement if we are to understand how to get all the parts of the education ‘business’ to work together to deliver quality education.

Herein lies the challenge that we face as the International Task Force on Teachers for Education for All – how do we get the other parts of the education system to function fully so that the component that the task team is focused on can create net value and contributes to the education system. We need to be able to focus on getting this part of the supply chain correct and work with the other global organisations and forums that are focused on the other parts of the education system. In this regard other issues that needs to be addressed, besides teacher training include the status and working conditions of teachers. The teaching profession in many developing countries is very unattractive. The salary and condition of service are generally poor as compared with other professions such as law, medicine, engineering, etc. and the biggest challenge for teacher education institutions is how to persuade more and more high school graduates to enroll into their programmes. Governments, employers and other stakeholders must therefore demonstrate a firm commitment to motivating teachers, improving the salary and working conditions of teachers and implementing robust incentive systems that attract more high school graduates to teacher education. Addressing the existing teacher-gaps should go hand-in-hand with taking concrete steps to improve the status and condition of service of teachers and enhancing the attractiveness of teaching and teacher education on the part of governments, employers and development partners. So if we as teacher trainers do our own part of the system well and all parts of the system start to be implemented well, the education system can indeed become a high performing system.

While we consider the role of teacher education and professional development, we need to take a moment to understand the task at hand. The numbers seem to be daunting. Achieving Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2015 requires well-trained teachers of good quality. About 10 million teachers will be required worldwide; Sub-Saharan Africa will need more than 3 million teachers by 2015. Commonwealth developing countries (the focus of the Commonwealth of Learning) have all made clear commitments to address the shortfalls in teacher supply and significantly improve the quality of their teachers.

There are valuable global frameworks that are used to determine what the education system should do, For example, the Education For All goals (EFA) as articulated in the Dakar Framework for Action 2000 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) provide a good starting point to determine the end ‘product’ of a high quality education system. Promoting access and enhancing the quality of education are part of the most important concerns of EFA and MDG. Addressing the current and projected shortfalls in teacher supply and improving the quality of teachers constitute some of the important instruments in this complex business of education.

The Commonwealth of Learning, with our focus on Learning for Development and in particular focused on helping governments, institutions and communities to expand the scale, efficiency and quality of learning by using open, distance and technology-based approaches, have noted the concerns in this area of teacher development. The key issues that we have identified include:

- teacher shortfalls
- teacher quality in the context of countries’ commitment to the achievement of Education for All (EFA).
- provision of technical support to developing countries of the Commonwealth to harness the potentials of technology and open and distance learning (ODL) in order to significantly enhance the graduate output of their teacher education institutions and
- the quality of the delivery and management of their teacher development programmes.

In order to address these issues, COL has identified the following core strategies that we believe are necessary:

- partnerships,
- capacity building and
- materials development, including open educational resources.

These are not mutually exclusive and are in practice intertwined: one activity may incorporate more than one or all three strategies. To continue with the business analogy, teacher professional development is not a linear process and is a complex matter within a complex system that is education.

Let me focus on the three strategies that I believe could provide this Task Force meeting with possible strategies for the remaining three years leading to 2015 and beyond.

## 1. Partnership

The partnership with teacher training institutions is based on mutually agreed goals and the desire to promote teacher education in their respective countries. A key feature of the partnership is the mutually defined roles and responsibilities and outcomes. Strong partnerships have been formed with ministries of education, faculties of education in selected universities, teacher education institutions, multilateral organisations such as UNESCO, World Bank and others such as relevant regional and national bodies. The partnership is based on mutually agreed goals and activities and well defined roles, responsibilities

and time lines. The emphasis is on engendering greater collaboration, sharing models, knowledge, materials and other resources that enable improvements in teacher development.

## 2. Capacity development

Capacity development is defined as actions and processes that is aimed at developing the capability of ministries of education, teacher education institutions and quality assurance agencies to harness the potentials of technology, ODL methods, resource materials, knowledge and skilled people in order to train more teachers and significantly enhance the quality of teacher professional development programmes in respective countries. Capacity development typically focuses on training of teachers, head teachers, teacher educators and other education personnel.

The use of technology is making capacity building much easier. The use of technology to support teacher development also enables countries and institutions to move away from a ‘bricks and mortar’ approach to one that enables learning to take place in multiple venues using multiple technology platforms. The experiences of many developing countries suggest that campus-based ‘brick and mortar approaches’ to teacher training cannot adequately address the current and projected shortfalls in teacher supply. There is the need to harness the potentials of ODL and new technology in order to train larger number of teachers. There are many examples of such uses of ODL in teacher training. The National Teachers’ Institute Kaduna has in the period 2005-2011 trained about 58,000 teachers and provided continuing professional development opportunities to more than half a million teachers in the past five years alone under the government’s MDG programme. Other notable examples include India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. ODL has proven to be a viable cost-effective strategy for addressing the shortfalls in teacher supply for EFA.

A related problem is that in many developing countries, a significant proportion of teachers are untrained. The proportion of untrained teachers may be as high as 40% - 60%. How can these teachers upgrade their qualifications while on the job i.e. without enrolling in full-time campus-based study or abandoning their classrooms? Clearly what is needed is a school-based approach that harnesses the potentials of ODL and new technology and provides teachers the much needed opportunity for continuing professional development. Doing so will undoubtedly enhance the quality of teaching and engender the improvement of students’ learning outcomes.

## 3. Materials development

Having the appropriate materials available to support teacher training and professional development is a critical part of the complex challenge. Fortunately there are important developments in this area that is starting to make the developments of materials much easier.

The advent of open educational resources (OER) enables more institutions, individual teachers and the whole system to access education resource materials, thus enabling more teachers to be trained with a shorter lead time to prepare for courses.

## Putting all of this together

In any complex system, as we recognise education to be and noting the complexity of the teacher development sub-system, there are other critical areas, viz.

- Integration of ICT into teaching, learning and administration.
- Quality Assurance Frameworks for teacher education institutions.
- Ensuring the materials and training are gender sensitive.
- Materials for teacher training available in various formats, e.g. in online, off-line and traditional text formats.

I have spent some time on providing an overview of the business of education and in particular, the key sub-system of teacher training and professional development. Working on the understanding that this Global Task Force is looking into this sub-system and that others involved in the interconnected system of education are focused on other aspects, then a key requirement is to ensure that the various global players are working together to ensure there is net value to the education system as a whole. This requires a high degree of international co-ordination, engagement and partnerships so that the actions are complementary in nature.

Building capacity is also a vital component of a well functional teacher education system. There are various international agencies, national institutions and other organisations that have played and should continue to play a role in this regard. Such capacity building also requires a policy framework that needs to be in place. Having high quality materials that support teacher education is a must. Ensuring institutional quality to conduct teacher education is vital.

This ability to partner, build capacity and policies and share materials should be the main focus of what we need to do in teacher development for the remaining three years. The Global Task Team can play a critical role in this area, playing a facilitator/enabler role.