

Global pathways to an attractive teaching profession

The teachers we need for the education we want: The global imperative to reverse the teacher shortage

World Teachers' Day 2023

Summary Report

6 October 2023

Welcome and Introduction

Mr Tinti Enoch Rabotapi, co-chair of the Teacher Task Force Steering Committee and Chief Director at the Department of Basic Education in South Africa, welcomed participants and opened the workshop. Given continuing global teacher shortages, he highlighted the importance of the workshop theme and how the session was devoted to discussing country policies and strategies aimed at improving the attractiveness of the teaching profession and the retention of in-service teachers. It would have a focus on common and distinct challenges as well as enabling conditions for policies to be successful and scalable.

Mr Carlos Vargas, Chief of Section for Teacher Development at UNESCO and Head of the Teacher Task Force Secretariat, set the scene with a presentation titled, [*The teachers we need for the education we want: The global imperative to reverse the teacher shortage*](#). He highlighted that while 44 million additional teachers are still needed – down from 69 million in 2016 – the teacher recruitment targets are off track to achieve universal primary and secondary education in 2030 and the greater Sustainable Development Goals. The greatest teacher need remains in sub-Saharan Africa (15 million teachers), and globally most teachers are needed in secondary education (31 million). He also highlighted that teacher attrition, which has been increasing globally, is one of the greatest threats to achieving global targets due to a variety of factors (e.g. uncompetitive salaries, lack of recognition, heavy workloads). Mr Vargas added that to improve the attractiveness of the profession and tackle the root causes of increasing disinterest in the profession, holistic and comprehensive teacher policies are required that effectively address the issues of competitive remuneration, the promotion of trust and respect for the profession, and ensuring a better work-life balance.

Country Presentations

Mr Rabotapi welcomed five panellists to present examples from various countries and regions on pathways to make teaching a more attractive profession.

Burkina Faso: Mr Tahirou Traore, National Coordinator of the National Commission for Education for all, delivered a [presentation](#) discussing measures undertaken to improve the status and working conditions of teachers and thus increase attraction to the profession. Prior to 2000, there was a critical teacher shortage that was particularly pronounced in rural areas. As a policy response, the government began the recruitment of contract teachers (with a lower remuneration than those with civil servant status) as a partial solution to the teacher gap. As a result of union protests, however, the recruitment and employment of public sector contract teachers ended in 2015, and as of 2016 all contract teachers were granted civil service status. There were also some salary improvements, as well as the adoption of a special status of the teaching profession, which became officially recognized within the public service. Furthermore, to increase local autonomy in addressing shortages, recruitment and deployment have been regionalised, and this has a potential to ensure a more equitable distribution of teachers.

Chile: Ms Lilia Concha Carreño, Director, Centre for Improvement, Experimentation and Pedagogical Research, Ministry of Education, provided a [presentation](#) on the Teacher Professional Development (TPD) system created in 2016, which was related to a significant increase in teacher salaries. The TPD system aims to strengthen recognition of and foster professional development of teachers to ensure an appealing career path that encourages teachers to remain in the profession. The TPD system is currently being evaluated. Some of the solutions suggested in order to respond to the challenges identified by the evaluation include: strengthen mentoring for novice teachers and local peer support; to improve the relevance of continuous professional development; to strengthen access to pedagogy programs by expanding their scope and providing technical support to teacher training institutions; to ensure teachers have time away from the classroom to engage in professional development; to create a leadership path well-articulated within the TPD; to develop a retirement policy for teachers.

Indonesia: Mr Iwan Syahril, Director General of Early Childhood Education, Basic Education and Secondary Education and Director General of Teachers and Education Personnel, Ministry of Education, delivered a video presentation of the strategies and experiences in attracting and retaining quality teachers. He highlighted that the main challenges in the country are teacher quality and the unequal distribution of teachers, due to a lack of national recruitment standards and the heterogeneous approach of local governments to teacher deployment. Efforts to improve teacher quality have included strengthening both pre-service teacher education and in-service professional development. The curriculum of initial teacher education has been revised to make it more practice oriented, and scholarships have been provided for teacher educators to deepen their knowledge in key areas, such as digital transformation or special education. Continuous professional development has emphasized school leadership, the development of professional learning communities, and the utilization of technology to accelerate progress (notably through an online platform for teachers). The educators' talent management system has also been transformed, with a greater focus on incentivizing a culture of learning among

educators. On the recruitment side, the government began the implementation of a standardized national teacher recruitment system two years ago to ensure quality standards as well as improved teacher working conditions, which are less subject to local variation. so far 600K contract teachers have been recruited to government schools under this scheme and the aim is to reach 1 million teachers in 2024.

China: Mr Minxuan Zhang, Director, Teacher Education Center, UNESCO Category 2 Centre, [presented](#) policies to attract and retain high quality teachers in rural and remote areas in China. Firstly, the Free Teacher Education Programme (later called Governmental-granted Teacher Education Programme) offers a tuition waiver and a grant for living expenses to students who commit to return to their home province after their graduation and teach in a rural school for 6 years. Over 300K graduates of this program are now teaching in the schools of their home province. Secondly, the Rural Teacher Support Plan provides a living subsidy, which ensures an income higher than that of local civil servants, and a housing subsidy, which includes free housing in dormitories for teachers and the government's support to purchase properties by instalments. Thirdly, measures have been taken to improve the financial benefits of teachers, including measures to ensure a salary that at least equals that of civil servants in the same region, medical benefits and a retirement pension equal to 100% of the salary for over 20 years of teaching.

World Bank: Mr Ezequiel Molina, Senior Economist in the Education Global Practice, [presented](#) what lies behind the success or failure of teacher policies. He shared that despite the growing evidence on effective teacher policies, most countries still do not implement these policies successfully. He further argued that for policies to be successful, they need to be designed and implemented with careful consideration of the barriers that could hinder teachers' take-up of the policy (individual-level barriers), and the barriers that could hinder the implementation and sustainability of policies at scale (system-level barriers). He then presented examples of individual and system level solutions to attract the best candidates into teaching and deploying them where they are most needed. At the individual level, making teaching rewarding is a key dimension to attracting the best into the profession. Countries are working towards this goal by bolstering the profession's social status (such as in Chile or the U.K.) and providing subsidized tuition for high-achieving students (South Africa, Shanghai). At the system level it is necessary to build political consensus for additional budget allocations in education that will make competitive teacher pay possible. Bundling reforms is a way of enlarging political support, such as in Peru, where the reform of teacher evaluation was bundled with salary increases. On the other hand, ensuring that the recruitment process is clear and easy to navigate (Brazil) and making vacancies in harder-to-staff schools more visible to applicants (Ecuador) are ways to favour deployment of teachers where they are most needed. At the system-level, using data systems to monitor teachers' understanding of recruitment processes and partnering with the right actors to develop user-friendly and easy to maintain recruitment platforms (Chile) are also key tools in ensuring equitable deployment.

Breakout Rooms

Participants split into language-based breakout groups to discuss more deeply challenges and strategies to attract and retain qualified teachers. A rapporteur for each group presented the main highlights of the breakout session as listed below.

Arabic Language Breakout Group: Mr Saud Alsalahi (ABEGS - Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States), summarised the main challenges, including the lack of social recognition of teachers, whose image needs to be bolstered, for example through media. There is also a lack of teacher support at the school level (including socio-emotional and financial aspects), and a shortage of long-term teacher development programmes, which should be available throughout a teacher's career. The legislative and regulatory environment also needs to be enhanced. There should be a policy overhaul focusing on teacher training institutions, granting greater autonomy to teaching professionals and promoting the enabling conditions for more effective teaching. He further states partnerships at local, national and regional levels (e.g. between unions, or sociocultural partnerships) are decisive to make the profession more attractive.

English Language Breakout Group: Mr Martin Henry (Education International) reported that there should be an improvement of teacher working conditions, including salaries, teacher well-being and ensuring work-life balance. This will require a commitment to public spending in education, with an increased expenditure per student every year. When resources are limited in rural areas, local governments should be supported financially by the central government. Social recognition of teaching should also be fostered, through a clear and well-established status for teachers. He further noted the importance of social dialogue, through the involvement of teacher unions in the development of teacher policies, frameworks, and professional standards. He also mentioned that teacher quality should be supported through a good pre-service training and access to high-quality and collaborative professional development throughout the teaching career. Finally, he stressed that teacher career paths should be diverse, allowing teachers to grow professionally, both remaining in the classroom and taking up leadership roles.

French Speaking Breakout Group: Ms Evelyn Laroche-Joubert (EvalUE - Evaluators and Experts of the European Union) reported the challenges identified by participants. These include teacher salaries, teacher working conditions (access to teaching resources, adequate school facilities, suitable learning environments), the need to recognize teacher status at the state level and the importance of the social recognition of the profession, which is negatively affected by the low remuneration of teachers.

Spanish Language Breakout Group: Ms Lilia Concha Carreño (Ministry of Education, Chile), summarized the discussion, which included balancing accountability (performance indicators and teacher assessment) with teacher support and assistance, e.g. in the form of trainings that are

relevant to the increasing challenges teachers face in their practice, such as bullying and school violence. She also stressed the need to make teaching a collaborative endeavour to reduce teacher isolation, and to ensure teacher socio-emotional needs are met. Efforts should also be devoted to reducing pre-service teacher dropout from teacher training programmes. Finally, she highlighted group's discussion that there should be state-level commitment to the stability of teacher policies independently of political changes in the country, as well as adequate funding, policies grounded in school needs, and partnerships with key stakeholders, like teacher training institutions (e.g. universities), international organizations and NGOs.

Closing Remarks

Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director of Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems at UNESCO, contextualized the session within World Teachers' Day Celebrations, which this year focused on teacher shortages. He further highlighted three issues as a conclusion of the meeting. Firstly, he mentioned that the challenges facing the teaching profession have an international resonance, and this has an impact on the achievement of SDG4, since the right to education depends on the availability of qualified teachers. Secondly, the teaching profession needs to evolve, within the [new social contract for education that UNESCO called for](#), in alignment with the transformation of the education sector itself as a response to global changes, including the lifelong learning dimension, and societal and economic transformations. Thirdly, there is a momentum, with several teacher-related initiatives taking place this year: the [High-Level Panel on the Teaching profession](#) set up by the United Nations Secretary-General that will be producing a set of global recommendations; a [Global Report on Teachers](#), which is under preparation by the Teacher Task Force and UNESCO; and the upcoming [UNESCO General Conference](#), which will also prominently feature teachers.

Summary of Key Takeaways

The breakout sessions and presentations revealed common challenges across countries and regions for attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers. The deteriorated working conditions of teachers, unattractive remuneration, the loss of social recognition, the perceived lack of support and adequate training to face emerging challenges (such as violence in schools, or the digital transformation), emerged as issues of concern globally. Novice teachers were identified as being particularly at risk of leaving the profession.

The good practices and aspirations shared by participants to reverse the global teacher shortage revolved around three main areas: material and symbolic working conditions, teacher education and training, and system-level enabling factors for policy measures to be effective.

Material working conditions, such as contractual status, job security and a competitive remuneration, were highlighted by many as the foundation to improve attraction and retention. Several countries have made efforts in this direction, such as Burkina Faso, Chile and China. Creating a more satisfactory working environment for teachers was also mentioned by other participants as an important means to improve attractiveness to the profession. This includes fostering a sense of belonging and further collaboration between teachers, but also guaranteeing teacher safety in the face of school violence.

Social recognition was also highlighted as key to improve the attractiveness of the profession, such as in Burkina Faso where official status of the teaching profession itself within the civil service is an important step towards wider social appreciation for teachers. Leveraging social media platforms was also suggested by some as a possibility to improve the public image of teaching.

Adequate initial teacher education as well as lifelong access to continuous professional development (CPD) were identified as key levers to support teachers in facing emerging challenges. Indonesia revamped the curriculum of initial teacher education, and redesigned the CPD offer to focus on critical areas, such as digital competencies, special education and school leadership. In Oman, some training initiatives have specifically targeted school principals, who are seen as key agents of transformation.

Measures to attract teachers to hard-to-staff areas were also discussed. These include both improved working conditions and financial support to pursue initial teacher education. In China, for example, students who commit to return to their home province to teach are offered a tuition waiver and a grant for living expenses during their studies, and rural teachers receive a living and a housing subsidy.

From the point of view of teacher policies, participants stressed the importance of long-term political commitment to guarantee that enough time is allowed for policies and initiatives to unfold and bring about change. Bundling reforms was suggested as a strategy to maximize political support, such as in Peru, where the reform of teacher assessment and the increase of salaries were bundled together. The involvement of teacher voices in teacher policy design was also stressed as key, both to promote teacher buy-in but also to maximize policy relevance, given that teachers have first-hand knowledge of school needs.

At the level of implementation, administrative and political decentralisation are to be factored in, assessing the need for a better coordination or a transfer of resources between central and sub-national government. In Indonesia, for example, a standardized national teacher recruitment system was designed to ensure teacher quality standards across the territory as well as a more equitable teacher distribution.

Different kinds of partnerships were considered essential to support and sustain change, with the involvement of a variety of stakeholders including teacher unions, civil society organizations and companies, and making sure that schools move away from siloed approaches and are part of broader learning ecosystems within their communities.

Finally, financing was identified as a key enabling factor underlying all other measures, in order to make changes sustainable. In China, for example, the government made spending promises in terms of minimum spent as a percentage of GDP and a percentage of government expenditure, with a commitment to increase expenditure per student every year.

Resources

Presentations

- [UNESCO & Teacher Task Force presentation: *The teachers we need for the education we want: The global imperative to reverse the teacher shortage*, Mr Carlos Vargas, Chief of Section for Teacher Development, UNESCO and Head of the TTF Secretariat](#)
- [Presentation 1: *Elements and measures to attract and retain teachers in Burkina Faso*, Mr Tahirou Traore, coordonnateur national de la Coalition nationale pour l'Education pour tous du Burkina Faso, Burkina Faso](#)
- [Presentation 2: *Teacher policy reform in Chile: Teacher professional development system*, Ms Lilia Concha Carreño, Directora, Centro de Perfeccionamiento, Experimentación y Investigaciones Pedagógicas, Ministry of Education, Chile](#)
- [Presentation 4: *Three policy cases to recruit and retain high quality teachers in China*, Mr Minxuan Zhang, Director, Teacher Education Center, UNESCO Category 2 Centre, China.](#)
- [Presentation 5: *Making teacher policy work*, Mr Ezequiel Molina, Senior Economist in the Education Global Practice, World Bank](#)

Recordings

- [English](#)
- [French](#)