



Second International Policy Dialogue Forum

“Providing Teachers for EFA: quality matters”

Kempinski Hotel, Amman, Jordan, 6-7 July 2010

Background

“Success or failure in achieving education for all hinges critically not just on countries delivering more years in school; the ultimate measure lies in what children learn and the quality of their education experience...Many countries are failing the quality test”

(EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010)

“Delivery of quality education is critically dependent on having a sufficient supply of properly trained and motivated teachers.”

(EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009)

On the occasion of the Dakar World Education Forum as the third millennium dawned in year 2000, representatives of 164 countries pledged to achieve by 2015 the Education For All (EFA) goals of- (1) expanding and improving early childhood care and education, (2) achieving universal primary education, (3) meeting learning needs of youth and adults, (4) improving adult literacy by 50%, (5) achieving gender equality and (6) ensuring quality in education.

The sixth agreed goal of the above described Dakar framework is a forceful reminder that the ultimate objective is not merely the provision of school access to all children but *Quality Education For All Teachers*, for their part, represent the common thread running through the Dakar framework for they are indisputably essential to the achievement of each and every one of the six goals having regard to quantity and quality alike. Hence the oft-quoted phrase: ‘The quality of an educational system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers’.

The quality imperative for EFA

Despite impressive gains in numbers of children and young people of both sexes, being schooled since 2000, many are countries are considered to be failing the quality test. Enrolment rates in primary education are almost never matched by completion rates, and results of assessments of learning outcomes across much of the developing world are cause for concern as are unemployment rates among school graduates.

Indeed, the latest EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) sounds a warning note: The ultimate aim of schools is to equip children with the skills and knowledge they need to realize their potential, develop secure livelihoods and participate in society. On the contrary, evidence suggests that many schools are failing to meet even minimum standards for the quality of education. Children in the early grades are not mastering

the reading skills necessary for further learning. Without these foundations, returns on the huge investment that governments and households make in education will be sub-optimal”

Without quality of education, there is no point in broadening access and scaling up educational services. Yet addressing the issue of quality may represent a daunting challenge in as much as quality in education is multidimensional. “I trust that we can (also) agree that the expanded access has not been matched by commensurate progress in the quality of education, which is an EFA goal in itself. *By quality, I do not simply refer to learning outcomes or test scores. I also mean relevance, resource efficiency and meaningful participation in education*” (I. Bokova, UNESCO Director-General, 2010 EFA High-Level Group meeting,)

- Learning outcomes: increase in access to education since 2000 has not been matched by an improvement in learning quality and many children are completing their primary education without even having achieved functional literacy and numeracy, which makes of learning outcomes a crucial issue.
- Relevance of education to the development of life skills, citizenship, and to the world of work. This is an issue which plagues many poor countries but also many of the more wealthy ones. For example, in the Arab region the percentage of employment of those who graduated in 2003/2004 was estimated at 14%, 18 months after graduation. These difficulties are partly linked to the lack of adequacy of students’ academic specialisation to the job market: 63.2% of Arab States students are enrolled in humanities and social sciences, against 28.3% in sciences and applied sciences.
- Efficient use of resources for education: Increasingly, in a context marked by an intense competition for resources in public spending, policy makers are inclined to evaluate choices involving specific inputs and processes from the cost-effectiveness perspective. For instance, deployment of teachers, recourse to untrained contractual teachers in large numbers as opposed to better educated but costlier professional teachers, multigrade teaching or double shift schooling are constant policy issues raising resource efficiency considerations that determine the quality of and educational system. Critical to ensuring an efficient and effective allocation of resources is educational planning, the weakness of which has had a dramatic negative impact on systemic quality in many countries of the developing world.

The Teacher challenge for EFA

Since 2000, teacher recruitment has not kept pace with the increase in students’ enrolment and 10.3 million additional teachers (1.9 million new teacher posts and 8.4 million teachers posts needed to replace departing teachers) are needed between 2007 and 2015 in order to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE) with a pupil-teacher ratio equal or less to 40:1. Sub-Saharan Africa alone accounts for 1.2 million new posts to be created, and 2.4 million teachers to be hired. In the Arab States, the number of teachers has increased by 26% since 1999, but 1.1 million additional teachers, including 282,000 new teacher posts, are still needed to achieve UPE by 2015. The global teacher gap is even larger if other levels of education and quality issues are considered. In particular, increases in enrolment at primary levels impact positively on further levels of education, thus compounding the teacher challenge.

Acknowledging the magnitude of the ‘teacher challenge’ worldwide, the 2008 EFA High Level Group meeting endorsed the creation of the **International Task Force on ‘Teachers for Education for All’**, as a global alliance of partners working together to address the teacher gap in EFA, with a secretariat based at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The Task Force was mandated, in that regard, to explore the possibilities of both South-South and North-South-South cooperation and to focus more specifically on those countries furthest away from reaching the EFA goals and those with the largest teacher gaps.

Quality Education For All: meeting the teacher challenge and addressing the quality imperative

Teachers are at the forefront of education provision in any country, and, as such, are essential to all aspects of education quality. Indeed, *Teachers are the single most important education resource in any country*” (GMR 2010) and are key to meeting the quality imperative in EFA.

Firstly, while teachers are not the sole determinants of the quality of learning outcomes, they are an important factor and, most importantly, they are also one the policy-maker can impact upon. A key element of quality in relation to teachers for EFA hence relates to ensuring that teachers contribute optimally to learning outcomes.

Secondly, teacher-related costs represent the major part of recurrent education spending; therefore there is a direct relation between efficient use of resources for education and the provision of teachers for EFA. This notion of resource efficiency should be broadened to cover efficient planning and resource allocation for teacher development and support. In addition to the allocation of sufficient resources for teachers for EFA, efficient application of these resources to hire, train and support enough teachers, including appropriate teacher deployment, is crucial.

Thirdly, relevance of education to the development of life skills, citizenship, and to the world of work does not only relate to appropriate curricula. In order to ensure such relevance, there is a need to appropriately train teachers so that they can support the cognitive, social, and moral development of their students. Furthermore, teachers coming exclusively from academia and with no experience of the professional life they are teaching for may not be able to provide their students with the necessary information, attitudes, or thinking skills relevant to their future profession, hence the importance of appropriate teacher profiles and/or in-service experience. Finally, the large mismatch sometimes observed between students’ orientation and the job market can also relate to the deficit in the number of secondary school teachers and higher education faculty in certain subject areas, in particular science specializations and specializations that are new worldwide.

Yet, the above suggests that the relationship between teacher provision and the quality of an education system is not a one-way process. Just as teachers in the right numbers are needed to bolster systemic quality, so the quality of the educational system requires high standards in teaching, in turn calling for teachers to be of high quality, that is professional and competent.

The Amman Policy Dialogue Forum-Objectives and expected outcomes

In this context, the International Task Force on ‘Teachers for Education for All’, is organising a policy dialogue forum entitled “Providing teachers for EFA: quality matters” with the following objectives:

- To share country experiences and practices in relation to the provision of teachers for EFA having regard to quality issues, and in particular to (i) learning outcomes (ii) relevance of teaching to the socio-economic context and (iii) efficient planning and resource allocation in teacher policy;
- To contribute to a heightened awareness of quality issues in national teacher policies and practices; and
- To contribute to a better understanding of the role of teachers in promoting quality in education and thereby, keep teachers high on the political agenda.

This Forum will be a unique opportunity for policymakers from across the world to exchange ideas and views on all these issues. With Amman, Jordan, as its chosen venue and the participation of policymakers from the Arab States, the policy dialogue forum will also provide an opportunity to gain an insight into the challenges of EFA, teachers and educational quality, as experienced in the Arab region.

The exchanges and ideas generated at the Forum will feed into a major international conference to be organised by the Task Force, in partnership with the African Union Commission and the European Commission, in October 2010.