



World Teachers' Day 2019

“Young Teachers: The Future of the Profession”

Asia-Pacific Regional Forum

“Attracting and Retaining Youth to the Teaching Profession: the Role of Professional Development”

7-8 October 2019, Bangkok

Concept Note

Background

Teacher shortage: severity, consequences and underlying factors

Teachers are proved to be the most influential school-based factor on students' performance and achievement. The great importance of teachers is highlighted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by all the 193 United Nations Members in 2015. The fourth of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in the Agenda called on countries to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, and a key means to achieve this ambitious goal is to substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers.

However, the world does not have enough teachers, let alone enough qualified teachers. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), by 2030, 68.8 million teachers must be recruited to achieve SDG 4. Among them, nearly 48.6 million are needed to replace teachers leaving the profession, with the remaining to expand access to school and improve education quality by reducing the pupil-teacher ratio.¹ Most countries face teacher shortage of varying degrees and across different educational levels. Even when quantity of teachers is not yet an apparent problem, there can be concerns over their quality.² Forced by the urgent need for teachers, many countries have had to hire people without adequate qualifications to teach at schools. As a result, the proportion of trained teachers fell from 72% in 1999 to 53% in 2013.³ In the Asia-Pacific region there were about 16 million primary school teachers in 2015, accounting for 52 per cent of primary teachers worldwide. Nevertheless, approximately 10.8 million teachers still need to be recruited to achieve universal primary education in this region by 2030.⁴ Meanwhile, the expanding access to secondary education in many Asia-Pacific countries demands increased supply of qualified teachers in middle schools as well.⁵

¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), “The World Needs almost 69 million New Teachers to Reach the 2030 Education Goals”, *UIS Fact Sheet*, 2016, No.39, retrieved from <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/fs39-the-world-needs-almost-69-million-new-teachers-to-reach-the-2030-education-goals-2016-en.pdf>.

² OECD, “Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers”, 2011, retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/34990905.pdf>.

³ UNESCO, “The Challenge of teacher shortage and quality: have we succeeded in getting enough quality teachers into classrooms?” *Education for All Global Monitoring Report, Policy Paper 19*, 2015, retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232721>.

⁴ UNESCO Bangkok, “Some Asia-Pacific countries still struggling with high primary pupil-teacher ratio: Updated UNESCO eAtlas of Teachers”, 2017, retrieved from <https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/some-asia-pacific-countries-still-struggling-high-primary-pupil-teacher-ratio-updated>.

⁵ UNESCO Bangkok, “Financing of Secondary Education in the Asia-Pacific Region”, *Education Policy Research Series*, retrieved from <http://www.aasbi.com/articles/FinancingEduAsia.pdf>.

Apart from the expansion of school access and enrollment, the endemic shortage of teachers is attributable to two immediate factors: difficulty to recruit a sufficient number of qualified candidates to the profession and retention of existing qualified teachers. Studies have found that the teaching profession is mostly unattractive to young people, which is the case in both developed and developing countries, including in the Asia-Pacific region. Many newly graduated from teacher education institutions (TEIs) do not choose to become teachers at all. The situation is exacerbated by frequent teacher attrition in most countries, especially among the early-career teachers – up to one third of teachers in developed countries leave the profession within the first five years.⁶

World Teachers' Day: ILO/UNESCO Recommendation and the theme of 2019

Against this background, the **World Teachers' Day 2019** is themed on *Young Teachers, the Future of the Profession*. Held annually on October 5 since 1994, the World Teachers' Day commemorates the signing of ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966). The Recommendation recognized that “improvements in the social and economic status of teachers, their living and working conditions, their terms of employment and their career prospects are the best means of overcoming any existing shortage of competent and experienced teachers, and of attracting to and retaining in the teaching profession substantial numbers of fully qualified persons”.⁷ These recommended measures remain highly valid half a century later. Ample contemporary studies have re-confirmed that the attractiveness of the teaching profession is affected by such factors as social image, salary and other employment terms, recruitment methods, working environment, support from school leaders and administrators, and career progression. In addition, **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)** has been referred to as an important factor concerning attraction and retention of teachers.

CPD: importance for the teaching profession and quality education

Teachers need CPD to constantly update their knowledge, skills and competences in order to keep abreast of the developments in their academic subjects, the evolving learning needs of their students and the changing expectations from other stakeholders. This is especially true in the 21st century with rapid advancements in almost every field. CPD has a noticeable impact on teachers' work, particularly considering that a large number of teachers across the world are under-prepared for their profession.⁸ Furthermore, quality CPD increases staff's job satisfaction and motivation. It is especially crucial for new entrants to the profession who are undergoing the difficult transition from being a student teacher to a real teacher confronted with the multitude of duties and challenges. However, early-career teachers are often left to “sink and swim” without necessary support and professional development opportunities, which worsens their “burnout” and triggers their decision to leave the profession. Moreover, a significant proportion of teachers think that the CPD provided does not meet their needs.⁹

⁶ Buchanan, J., Prescott, A., Schuck, S., Aubusson, P., Burke, P., & Louviere, J., “Teacher Retention and Attrition: Views of Early Career Teachers”, *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 38, Iss. 3, 2013.

⁷ See point 145 of the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation, retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/--sector/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_493315.pdf.

⁸ Eleonora, Villegas-Reimers, “Teacher Professional Development-an international review of the literature”, UNESCO, 2003, p.19.

⁹ OECD, “The Professional Development of Teachers”, Chapter 3 in *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS*, 2009, p.48.

CPD not only impacts teachers themselves, but also has considerable effects on students' learning and the success of educational reforms. The Education 2030 Framework for Action for the implementation of SDG 4, adopted by 184 UNESCO Members in 2015, states that "The absence and/or inadequacy of continuous professional development and support for teachers and national standards for the teaching profession are key contributing factors to the low quality of learning outcomes", whereas "successful education systems have focused on a professional development continuum that supports teachers' own learning and improvement throughout their career". The Framework calls on countries to "review, analyse and improve the quality of teacher training (pre-service and in-service) and provide all teachers with quality pre-service education and continuous professional development and support".¹⁰

TEI-based vs School-based CPD

Although countries recognize the importance of teachers' professional development and provide it in some formats, its nature, frequency and quality vary considerably.¹¹ The effectiveness of CPD may be hindered by a set of factors, such as the divergence between institutional and individual needs, insufficient funding and administrative support, lack of time or conflict with teachers' work schedule, and shortage of trainings catering different demands and priorities of teachers. Traditionally, CPD programmes are mainly developed and conducted by teacher education institutions (TEIs) in formal format of courses, lectures or seminars. This type of CPD usually takes a 'top down' and 'one size fits all' approach without tailoring, and thus cannot meet teachers' diverse needs effectively. A more effective type of CPD for teachers is arguably that which is based in schools and related to daily teaching and learning activities, enabling teachers to critically reflect on their own teaching practices, to research innovations in improving students' learning and achievement, and to share good practices and collaborate with each other in finding solutions to problems in real classrooms. The delivery modalities of such school-based CPD may include mentoring, coaching, consulting, peer observation, peer-to-peer informal dialogue or technical assistance, collaborative or individual research, etc. Regardless of the type and mode of delivery, provision of quality CPD requires support from policy makers and school leadership, as well as active engagement of teachers themselves.

In the above context, the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education avails itself of the occasion of the World Teachers' Day 2019 to organise a forum on the role of professional development in attracting, retaining and empowering young teachers, with the following specific objectives, expected outcomes and target participants:

Objectives

- Celebrate the World Teachers' Day, honour the teaching profession and motivate young teachers in the Asia-Pacific region;

¹⁰ See *Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4*, retrieved from http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf.

¹¹ UNESCO, "Teachers in the Asia-Pacific: Career Progression and Professional Development", p.2.

- Increase the awareness of the ILO/UNESCO Recommendations concerning the Status of Teachers, SDG 4, the 2030 Education Agenda and UNESCO's work in teacher development;
- Overview the status of young teachers in the Asia-Pacific region and the underlying factors;
- Share good practices and lessons learnt in attracting and retaining talented youth to the teaching profession among the Asia-Pacific countries, with emphasis on the role of continuing professional development (CPD), particularly school-based CPD;
- Facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaboration on attraction and retention of young teachers and CPD for teachers, especially school-based CPD;
- Provide a platform for networking and partnership building between teachers, schools, teacher education/training institutions, education authorities and related international organisations.

Expected Outcomes

- The World Teachers' Day celebrated in the Asia-Pacific region with re-affirmed appreciation of the teaching profession and encouragement for young teachers;
- Awareness of the ILO/UNESCO Recommendations concerning the Status of Teachers, SDG 4, the 2030 Education Agenda and UNESCO's work in teacher development increased in the Asia-Pacific region;
- Overall picture of young teachers' status in the Asia-Pacific region and the main underlying factors formed, laying a foundation for further regional discussions and actions;
- Good practices and lessons learnt in attracting, retaining and empowering young teachers, especially in school-based CPD for teachers, shared among the Asia-Pacific countries, serving as useful reference for improvement in CPD for teachers at national, local and school levels;
- Dialogue and potential collaboration facilitated between different key stakeholders on attraction, retention and empowerment of young teachers and particularly on CPD for teachers;
- New contacts, networks and potential partnerships built up among teachers, schools, teacher education/training institutions, education authorities and related international organisations in the region.

Target Participants

- Young, senior and prospective teachers in the Asia-Pacific region;
- Experts on professional development for teachers;
- Leaders of schools and teacher education institutions;
- Teacher policy makers and representatives of Ministry of Education from UNESCO Asia-Pacific Member States;
- Representatives of UN agencies and other international organisations and non-governmental organisations directly relevant for the topic.

Date & Venue

Monday-Tuesday, 7-8 October 2019, AVANI Sukhumvit Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand

Language

The Forum will be conducted in English only.

Programme (please see the Annex)

Contact Persons

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