



Global Network on Teaching Quality & Effectiveness

Concept Paper

Introduction

This proposal seeks institutional and financial support to launch a Global Network on Teaching Quality and Effectiveness. This is a unique opportunity to bring together disparate reform efforts by providing a global network that transcends regional focuses, a forum for sharing ideas and developing best practices to improve teaching and learning. This Global Network will bring together education and public policy leaders from various government agencies and non-governmental organizations and would focus on sharing best practices and promoting policies and programs related to improving teaching quality.

Specifically, the Network will identify, create and promote the following:

1. Policies and practices related to the improvement of teacher recruitment and preparation
2. Policy initiatives related to the development and design of professional teaching standards
3. Opportunities for smaller groups of countries, international agencies, and regional associations to coordinate and collaborate among themselves on specific policy and program initiatives related to teaching quality
4. Publications (papers, policy briefs, newsletters, etc.) on best practices related to teaching quality.

Background

The process of developing and retaining highly qualified teachers to support student learning is a global challenge. For instance, in 2011 UNESCO reported a global primary teacher gap of 9.1 million.¹ In North America and parts of Europe, the status of the teaching profession is on a steady decline, and only a small number of high-performing college students are attracted into the teaching career partly due to the availability of other career options with attractive pay and working conditions.² Sub Saharan Africa experiences acute teacher shortages to address the learning needs of the most disadvantaged children, threatening the achievement of the Education for All (EFA) goals by 2015; a fundamental target of the Millennium Development Goal 2.³ Further, with the expansion of free public education in Latin America and the Caribbean, school enrollments have skyrocketed, creating overcrowded classrooms with abysmal learning and teaching environments.⁴ In parts of the Asia Pacific region, there are urgent calls to reform teacher education and preparation programs as governments strive to position their nations to compete in the global economy.⁵

As policy makers in education systems across the world respond to these and other challenges that shape teachers policies, major career tracks have emerged in teaching:

1. Traditionally trained teachers with demonstrated mastery of content, pedagogy, and child development witnessed in top performing education systems as measured by the Program for International Student Assessments (PISA) such as Finland, Singapore, Korea and Ontario, Canada;
2. Proliferation of alternative pathways to teaching, either as a response to teacher shortages or as part of a broader strategy to deregulate the teaching profession, as witnessed in the Teach for America (TFA) program that recruits highly talented graduates from Ivy League universities, with a one-summer training, to become "Peace Corps" for two-year period in rural and urban low-income schools; and
3. Recruitment of less qualified or untrained teachers on short-term contract basis known as contract teachers, partly as a response to the teacher shortages in meeting Education for All (EFA) goals by 2015, or as a conditionality promoted by some financial lending institutions and mainly evident in Africa, South Asia and Latin America, and recently in Europe as a result of the financial and economic crisis.

There is a precipitous decline in the status of the teaching profession, with less and less attention paid to the 1966 Recommendation of the UNESCO and International Labor Organization that calls for the education and recruitment of high-performing teachers, improved working conditions, and teachers' participation in policymaking processes.⁶

Across all nations, there is a consensus among education stakeholders that educational quality is indeed a critical component to securing a future in the 21st century for societies and in improving the physical and human environment. To reach this goal of social progress, researchers have pointed out that teacher quality is one of the most important school-related factors in student achievement⁷ and that a teacher's mastery of the subject content and classroom practices strongly influence what students learn.⁸ However, this cannot work alone without adequate resources, supportive school climate, support for students coming from low socio-economic backgrounds and strong commitment to teachers' continuous professional development, voice and leadership. All these aspects combined together can result in better quality of teaching.

The conclusion is clear: high quality teaching can only be achieved through sound teacher policies. That means it is time to take a serious and sustained look at initiatives aiming at improving teaching quality, such as adequate learning and teaching conditions, professional autonomy, a supportive and coherent education system that is adequately financed and focused on improvement rather than control. The improvement of

teachers' qualifications is also an important consideration, one that requires investing in programs and procedures to ensure qualified teachers for every classroom.

Regional organizations, universities, teachers' organizations, and academics have long wrestled with the issue of quality and tried to offer their own solutions, but often in isolation from each other. Such efforts have resulted in the formation of bodies such as the UNESCO-led International Network of Teacher Education Institutions, Teacher Network of Latin America and the Caribbean, etc. In addition, recent efforts have also led to the development of new tripartite teaching boards in the Caribbean, an increase in teacher professional standards committees in Latin America and Africa, and attempts by several education bodies in North America and Europe to look to each other for new insights and ideas. The International Task Force on Teachers for EFA, established in 2008 and housed at UNESCO, has helped bring together education stakeholders to share strategies for addressing the teacher gap, with a specific focus on EFA and developing countries. UNESCO's Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa (TTISSA) and the International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) are some of the regional efforts that have helped address some aspects of the teacher quality challenge. However, more can be achieved if a common platform for all these and other initiatives to interact is created. The Global Network on Teaching Quality and Effectiveness aims to create that common space and forum for sharing and developing strategies for improving teaching quality.

Although all these efforts across the world point to the need for improvement in teaching quality, there is currently no international forum that transcends regional boundaries in which ideas and best practices can be shared on this topic. There is a great need now for nations to learn from each other practical ways to approach these issues. Through the use of technology, combined with the ease of international travel, it is now possible to come together in new and more dynamic ways to develop solutions.

To date, no such international space or network specifically dealing with teaching quality issues exists for national education policymakers and other stakeholders to take stock of what is happening, evaluate what is working, and deliberate on these issues at a national level. The existence of such a network will fill a void for industrialized and industrializing countries alike as they seek to gather the best thinking on the development of teachers - their most important educational resource.

A response to the problem

The US National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) along with the National Education Association (NEA), Education International (EI) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization-International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (UNESCO-IICBA) propose to establish a global network, a forum for ongoing communication and cooperation on issues related to teaching quality and effectiveness. This network will bring together education and public policy leaders drawn from government agencies and organizations interested and focused on identifying, sharing and promoting policy and programs related to teacher and teaching quality. Such a "network of networks" would facilitate more efficient communication across national boundaries on policies and program initiatives related to teaching quality and effectiveness.

Plan of action

Work to establish the network will occur in three phases:

Phase One	Develop the initial framework (concept) on teaching quality and effectiveness
Phase Two	Host consultative meetings with a group of experts in education and government leaders from around the world
Phase Three	Launch the global network and establish long-term operation procedures

The two phases of the project have been completed by NEA International Relations in collaboration with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. The framework or concept paper that captures global trends in teacher and teaching quality and sets the base for further discussion was completed and shared with participants prior to the first consultative meeting in March 2011.

1st consultative meeting

The first Consultative meeting was held on March 18, 2011 in New York City comprising of 34 participants representing various organizations, sectors and regions of the world. Participants for this consultative meeting were identified based on their professional expertise and contributions to international education, specifically teaching quality and effectiveness.

During this meeting, objectives of the Global Network on Teaching Quality and Effectiveness were discussed. The meeting was preceded by the International Summit on the Teaching Profession that also underscored the importance of teaching quality. Participants endorsed that the Global Network should focus on the entire teaching continuum including recruitment, preparation and development, professional learning, evaluation and compensation, in addition to the contexts in which teachers work, in efforts to improve the quality of education systems. As a result, three working groups were formed to work on various policy levels related to teaching quality. The working groups included:

1. Teacher Preparation, Recruitment and Engagement
2. Professional Development, Support and Retention
3. Teacher Evaluation and Compensation

Once operational, it was agreed that the Global Network will identify and share perspectives on the current research, practices, and policy initiatives that can address these three topics on an international scale. It will also provide opportunities for researchers to share insights on the theories and current bodies of research that support education practices and policies related to quality education. They will also provide perspectives on current trends in education policies and practices from across the globe that impact on teaching quality, including to the concept of “best practices” in quality education.

In addition, participants agreed on deliverables that could lead to the **official launch of the Network in autumn 2012**. A survey conducted by Education International is underway to identify any existing education networks that could be drawn into this “Network of networks” to better articulate on policies and practices on teaching quality globally. In addition, within the first 12 months, the Global Network would issue a publication detailing the purpose, function, and operational design. It would also establish an online presence for the purpose of soliciting membership and participation from the global community and for sharing best practices related to teaching quality.

Funding and Operational Expense requirements

A funding commitment is needed in order to launch and sustain the global network. Currently, Education International (acting as the Secretariat) continues to provide in kind support, in the form staff time committed to cover all activities related to the Global Network project. **Support is needed from all organizations committed to improving teaching quality to realize the launch of the Global Network projected for autumn 2012.**

Timeline

15 March – 15 May 2012: Survey on networks on teaching quality

13 July 2012, University of Cape Coast, Ghana: 2nd Consultative Meeting of Steering Committee

5 October 2012: Launch of Global Network and Website

Steering committee

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End Notes

¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2011). *"The Hidden Crisis: Armed conflict and education. EFA Global Monitoring Report."* Oxford University Press.

² Byron Auguste, Paul Kihn and Matt Miller, *Closing the talent gap: Attracting and retaining top-third graduates to careers in teaching.* McKinsey & Company. September 2010.

³ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2010). *Reaching the Marginalized. EFA Global Monitoring Report.* Oxford University Press.

⁴ "Brazil: Brazil only now is reaching universal elementary education." *Florida Trend.* August 1, 2006; available at: http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi_0199-5669764/Brazil-Brazil-only-now-is.html

⁵ Zhikui Niu, (2009) "Reforms on teachers' employment system and children's rights to education in China", *International Journal of Educational Management*, Vol. 23 Iss: 1, pp. 7-18

⁶ Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendation Concerning the Status of the Teaching Profession, Seventh Session, Geneva, 11-15 September 2000. <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/techmeet/ceart00/ceartr.pdf>. See also; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2006). *"Teaching Policy to Improve Student Learning: Lessons from Abroad."*

⁷ Rivkin, S.G., Hanushek, E.A. and Kaim, J.F (2005). "Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement." *Econometrica, Econometric Society*, 73 (2) 417-458; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF). *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future.* New York. New York. 1996. <http://www.nctaf.org/documents/DoingWhatMattersMost.pdf>

⁸ Aslam, M. and Kingdon, G. "What can Teachers Do to Raise Pupil Achievement? Oxford, UK, University of Oxford. (2007). Darling-Hammond, "Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: A review of State Policy Evidence" *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 8 (1) 2000.