



Concept Note: A Global Network for Teaching Quality and Effectiveness

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 partiality, 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 evaluating and improving teaching quality and effectiveness.

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

- (1) Policies and practices related to teacher recruitment and preparation
- (2) Policy initiatives related to the development and design of professional teaching standards
- (3) Programs and practices related to the design and implementation of teacher evaluation systems and measures and compensation
- (4) 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 and effectiveness
- (5) Publications (papers, policy briefs, newsletters, etc) on best practices related to teaching quality.

Background

The process of identifying, developing and retaining highly qualified teachers to support student learning is a global challenge. For instance, 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 due to the availability of other career options with attractive pay and working conditions.ⁱ 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.ⁱⁱ 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.ⁱⁱⁱ In parts of the Asia Pacific region, there are urgent calls to reform teacher education and preparation programs as nations strive to position themselves to compete in the global economy.^{iv}

As education systems across the world respond to these and other challenges that shape the supply and demand of teachers, 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 programs to teaching, a response to selected teacher shortages or as part of a broader strategy to deregulate the teaching profession, 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 as a response to the teacher shortages in meeting Education for All (EFA) goals by 2015, evident in Africa, East and South Asia, and Latin America.

These global developments have contributed to the precipitous decline in the status of the teaching profession since the 1966 recommendations of the UNESCO and International Labor Organization calling for the education and recruitment of high-performing teachers, improved working conditions, and teachers’ participation in policymaking processes.^v

Across all nations, there is a consensus among education stakeholders and economists that educational quality is indeed a critical component to securing a future in the 21st century global economy and in improving the physical and human environment. For example, a recent study finds that the U.S. Gross Domestic Product in 2008 would have risen an additional \$1.3 - \$2.3 trillion had the United States matched the educational level of top-performing countries such as Finland and Korea.^{vi} To reach this goal of higher student achievement, researchers have pointed out that teacher quality is the single most important school-related factor in student achievement^{vii} and that a teacher’s mastery of the subject content and classroom practices strongly determine what students learn.^{viii} And research shows that when classrooms are staffed with effective teachers, within three consecutive years, students gain an additional year of growth in academic performance.^{ix}

The conclusion is clear: high quality teaching results in high student performance. That means it is time to take a serious and sustained look at improving teaching quality. Clearly, the supply of quality teachers is an important consideration, one that requires investing in programs and procedures to ensure quality 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.

Although all these efforts across the world point to the need for improvement in teacher and teaching quality, there is currently no international forum that transcends regional boundaries in which ideas 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 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 developing 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 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 policy and programs related to teacher and teaching quality. Such a network would facilitate more efficient communication across national boundaries on policies and program initiatives related to teaching quality.

Plan of action

Work to establish the network will occur in three phases: (1) develop the initial framework (concept) on teaching quality; (2) host a consultative meeting with a group of experts in education and government leaders from around the world; and (3) officially 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 consultative meeting in March 2011.

Consultative meeting

The second phase — Consultative meeting — was held in 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 for Teaching Quality and Effectiveness were discussed. The meeting was preceded by the International Summit for 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 March-April, 2012. A survey conducted by the NEA 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 will issue a publication detailing the purpose, function, and operational design. It will 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, NEA (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 early 2012.

ⁱ 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.

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

ⁱⁱⁱ “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

^{iv} 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

^v 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/cearttr.pdf>. See also; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2006). “Teaching Policy to Improve Student Learning: Lessons from Abroad.”

^{vi} McKinsey and Company (2009). *The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in American Schools*. McKinsey Social Sector Office, New York.

^{vii} 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>

^{viii} 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.

^{ix} Hanushek, E”The Trade-Off Between Child Quantity and Quality” *Journal Of Political Economy*, vol 100 (1):84-117. 1992.