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Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
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Организация  
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

# UNESCO STRATEGY ON TEACHERS (2012-2015)

## Introduction

This strategy aims at providing a priority-driven and consistent framework for the whole range of activities that UNESCO is meant to develop in relation to teachers until 2015, both within the sector and also across sectors, and drawing on the regular budget as well as on extra-budgetary sources. In accordance, capitalizing on the previous experiences and on the applications of the TTISSA (Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa) methodology and other UNESCO teacher related programmes, the strategy introduces a set of operational priorities that are then translated into specific action lines and the role that the different UNESCO units and institutes are called to play, as well as existing partnerships with other agencies and organizations.

While teachers, and the corresponding national policies that shape the teaching profession, are critical for the provision of a good-quality education, the main emphasis of the UNESCO strategy is on supporting teachers for quality learning. With this emphasis, the strategy wants to reinforce the principle that what matters in the end is, precisely, to configure a teaching force that works in an environment that rewards professional improvement and that is committed to improve the opportunities for student learning with well qualified and duly supported teaching practices.

By its very nature the strategy wishes to have a global outreach but with a focus on developing countries and a particular emphasis on Sub-Saharan Africa. In this respect, the Strategy provides an overall framework for a new initiative on teachers, aimed at accelerating progress towards EFA goals. The new initiative is called (provisionally) “Quality Teachers for EFA. The UNESCO Initiative for Teachers’ Capacity Development in Priority Countries” and is developed in an additional document. While its main emphasis is on teachers and teaching, it is meant to keep a holistic and sector-wide dimension.

## Priority Areas for Action

The following priorities drive the strategy:

1. **Teacher shortage: Bridge the teacher gap in priority countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa**, by developing further the national capacities to increase the number of qualified teachers and to deploy, support and manage them effectively.
2. **Teacher Quality: Improve teaching quality**, by [Add: “systematically organizing and”] disseminating the existing knowledge base about effective teaching, particularly in disadvantaged contexts, and about

mechanisms to support teachers and their professional development while removing obstacles to their success.

3. **Research knowledge production and Communication: Inform the global debate about teaching with comparative evidence**, by supporting the development of policy and normative frameworks, as well as dedicated instruments, and extending the opportunities for international dialogue on successful policies, strategies and practices, including through peer-learning, particularly in relation to policies for attracting, retaining, deploying teachers, especially in disadvantaged contexts. Under this particular line, networking will play a major role, at global, regional and country levels. And, also under this line a wider approach will be taken as to include also the complex realities of non formal education, literacy and lifelong learning with a particular emphasis on technical and vocational skills.

### Action Lines

A number of action lines, some of them already existing while others newly created, will be implemented in support of each of the priorities, as the table below indicates:

Priorities	Action lines	Activities
<b>1. Bridging the teacher gap</b>	1. Capacity development at country level	- Reinforcing teacher training institutions and teacher educators
		- Supporting teacher policy formulation, implementation and monitoring and facilitating feedback mechanisms so that teachers views can also inform policies
<b>2. Improving teacher quality</b>	2. Qualifying teachers and promoting their professional development	- Supporting teacher professional development through diversified strategies including ICT
		- Monitoring, improving and Sustaining teacher motivation
		- Clearing house-dissemination of best practices in classroom teaching
	- Teacher evaluation and support	
	3. Reinforcing school leadership	- Professional development of school principals and managers as instructional leaders
<b>3. Research, knowledge production, communication (Informing the global debate about teaching)</b>	4. Monitoring instruments and promoting teaching standards	- International reference frameworks and recommendations
		- UNESCO standards for teachers which may lead to an International Board of Professional Teaching Standards
	5. Documenting progress	- Reporting on critical issues about the teaching profession

## Priority 1. Bridging the teacher gap

### Action line 1. Capacity development at country level

Different actions will be undertaken to assist countries in addressing the teacher gap through tailor-made interventions to strengthen institutional capacity to increase the supply of qualified teachers. The first dimension of the first line of action will particularly focus on teacher training institutions, while the second dimension will address national capacity development for teachers' policy formulation, implementation and evaluation.

#### 1.1. Reinforcing teacher training institutions

- Particularly in countries where teacher shortages are combined with low teacher training capacity it is imperative to enlarge the coverage and the **quality of existing teacher training institutions as well as faculties/colleges of education of universities** particularly through blended learning modalities with a wider use of existing open educational resources for teacher training. *UNESCO will develop a dedicated program to enlarge the capacity of existing training institutions particularly through an intensive use of technology-supported solutions such as open and distance learning.*
- There is a need to reconsider the current approaches to teacher preparation in order to align institution-based teacher training to classroom requirements and intended curricula to ensure that the daily challenges of professional practices, particularly in precarious situations and contexts with limited resources, large class sizes, special education needs learners or multigrade teaching, inform teacher training. Similarly, the mechanisms and routes to qualified teacher status for mature students, particularly those crossing over from other occupations, will have to be explored. The use of diversified teacher training strategies will be promoted, including a better use of technology-based training, particularly for coaching new teachers and monitoring their performance through mentoring and peer-review mechanisms. In this line *UNESCO will contribute to promoting a review of current teacher training and professional development strategies, disseminate relevant recommendations, and support training of leading teams of teacher educators in selected institutions in target countries to facilitate institutional improvement.* While the balance between academic and practicum has to be ensured in teacher preparation, a major effort has to be made to ensure that teacher preparation is aligned with the intended school curriculum –a pending issue still in many countries. Contemporary school curricula frequently refer to active learning, adopt student-centred approaches, focus on outcomes and processes, emphasize competences/capabilities, promote integrated knowledge and cross-curricular dimensions, etc. How well teachers are prepared to face this major paradigm shift?

- **Teacher Educators (trainers):** have to be supported to upgrade their competences, to ensure that their professional profiles and code of conduct are in line with the latest developments in educational sciences and research. In the same vein, teachers trainers need to be connected to national and international networks of communities of practice. *UNESCO will disseminate in association with the relevant national networks or institutions the latest developments in learning sciences and educational research, elaborate on their implications for an improved and more meaningful experience of teacher training, and nurture knowledge sharing and cooperation across institutions.*

## **1.2. Improving teacher policy formulation, implementation and assessment at country-level**

Drawing on previous experiences, particularly from TTISSA, and with a clear emphasis on UNESCO priority countries particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Organisation will provide, upon request, technical support for needs analysis, policy formulation and strategic planning in the context of a sector-wide approach, with a view to attract talented candidates to the teaching profession as well as to effectively deploy and manage the teaching force. In this framework, UNESCO, particularly in countries benefitting from funding from Global Partnership for Education (GPE), will offer *technical assistance to further strengthen the capacities of member States to assess their teaching needs and develop evidence-based policies in relation to teacher recruitment, training, deployment and management, professional development, “formative” assessment and support, monitor the resulting initiatives over time and assess their impact on student learning, employing multiple methods with a view to improving practice.* Particular attention will be devoted to good practice on strategies for attracting and retaining teachers in rural, remote and disadvantaged countries.

## **Priority 2. Improving teaching quality**

### **Action line 2. Qualifying teachers and promoting their professional development**

A number of member States, and particularly of priority countries, experience specific problems in relation to the professional qualification of contract or community teachers, as well as para-teachers, mainly in primary education. In addition, in most countries, there is a need for reinforcing the mechanisms that can contribute to raise the quality of existing teachers with an intensive use of technology-supported solutions. In this respect, the following actions are to be developed:

- The reinforcement of **teacher professional development through technology-supported solutions** constitutes a powerful strategy to improve teaching. In accordance with individual countries' needs, priority in this domain will be given to literacy in primary education (reading, writing, reckoning), and mathematics and science in secondary education,

as well as transversal themes– with perspectives on gender, HIV & AIDS, ESD and ICT mainstreaming. *UNESCO will promote in-service professional development programs for teachers and teacher educators, particularly through blended training strategies and modalities.*

- Additional emphasis has to be put on the follow-up of **new entrants to the teaching profession**, making sure that adequate support mechanisms are in place. *UNESCO will contribute to the dissemination of best practices in supporting teachers for improved teaching/learning outcomes, particularly the new entrants as to make sure that they can find opportunities to advance professionally in a meaningful way for their daily teaching practices.*
- The most recent advances in learning sciences and in educational research, as well as the contribution of technology to enhance the quality of teaching and learning process, are yet to reach the majority of teachers and, in many instances, also teacher trainers. It is therefore critical to compile in meaningful ways and disseminate the existing **knowledge base about what works to enhance teaching**, particularly in key subject areas in disadvantaged contexts including large classes and multi-grade class. *UNESCO will further play its clearinghouse role with the objective of disseminating what works in teaching, particularly in disadvantaged contexts, through technology-supported networks and with a view to promote grass-root innovations and knowledge sharing between local schools.*
- While a lot of effort has been put into increasing the attractiveness of the teaching profession, there is international evidence showing that one of the most important challenges is how to support the improvement of teaching practices and the role and modalities that **innovative forms of support**, through the inspectorate, by peer-coaching or collaborative activities with expert input, can play to promote teacher effectiveness. *UNESCO, in partnership with other international agencies and organisations, will contribute to the analysis of best practices in this area, particularly in priority countries, and support member States and teachers' organisations in their piloting of new support schemes combining professional evaluation with support for professional improvement, and the scaling up of successful initiatives in this domain.*

### **Action line 3. Reinforcing school leadership and supervision**

For a long time school leaders have been considered to be mere institutional or administrative managers. Yet, there is a growing international consensus, driven by empirical evidence, about the opportunities that adequately qualified school leaders can leverage the quality of the teaching and learning experience through regularly coaching teachers.

- While school leaders are mostly seen as managers of education delivery units, teaching can benefit a lot from adequately **trained school leaders** who act also as instructional leaders, thus guiding teachers' practices and supporting them. *UNESCO will contribute to identify what characteristics make school leadership critical for a quality experience of teaching and learning and support member States, in particular priority countries in*

*Sub-Saharan Africa, in their efforts to qualify school leaders by strengthening national capacity for them to develop relevant policies and professional support and development programs for school leadership.*

### **Priority 3. Informing the global debate about teaching**

#### **Action line 4. Monitoring instruments and promoting standards of professional practice**

- UNESCO is engaged with ILO in the monitoring of existing **international recommendations** related to the status of teachers and the conditions for a proper development of the teaching profession. Over recent years, a consensus emerged for a more policy-related monitoring process of the observance of the existing normative instruments, calling for new approaches. Furthermore, as it is also the case in many other professions, both the professional requirements and the actual conditions of work have evolved dramatically in recent decades –as the discussion about standards mentioned above is likely to unveil. *UNESCO will continue to be engaged in raising the quality standards of the teaching profession worldwide and its social recognition by reinforcing the mechanisms to monitor existing international recommendations with an evidence-based approach and analyzing the new demands and expectations regarding the teaching profession in the 21st century. UNESCO will also encourage the use of the existing monitoring instruments to guide social dialogue about the teaching profession.*
- UNESCO is in a unique position to create and promote internationally agreed **teachers standards**, drawing on the work already going on in some regions as well as on the pioneering work done in particular countries, including open and accountable self-regulations. Developing countries, particularly those lagging behind in relation to EFA goals, could benefit enormously from clear standards on which to base their strategies for teacher qualification and professional development. Therefore, it is proposed that *UNESCO, in partnership with relevant international stakeholders, develops such teaching standards and the corresponding guidelines for implementation, builds international consensus over them and disseminates them.*

#### **Action line 5. Clearing-house: Documenting progress in teachers and teaching worldwide**

One of the most effective ways to contribute to raise the social esteem and the attractiveness of the teaching profession is by documenting with evidence the efforts made by member States to support teachers in their engagement to offer a quality provision of schooling, particularly in relation to EFA.

- This process shall involve not only the analysis of trends in recent years or the estimates of future needs, but also the discussion of best practices in **policies and strategies intended to support teaching and raise its**

**quality** in meaningful ways for student learning, and the identification of success factors. *UNESCO will report through a variety of means on the teaching profession worldwide and the challenges ahead, and disseminate it through a number of national and regional fora and one major international conference on teaching and also at country level to maximize its use and impact on national policy debates on teachers and teaching policies.*

### **Implementation principles, modalities and funding sources**

Such a global strategy can only be successful if based on the principles of coordination, cooperation and effective partnerships. This applies to both the different UNESCO entities (Headquarters, Institutes, Regional Bureaus and Field Offices) and to the concerted efforts with major partners for EFA, in particular the Task Force on Teachers for EFA and the CapEFA programmes, as well as other relevant UN agencies.

In addition, the Strategy has to be unfolded at regional and country levels taking into consideration the particular needs and expectations of individual member States. Because of this, the Strategy will also include mechanisms for networking and peer-learning opportunities across countries and regions.

Beyond these principles, the table below provides an indication of the main funding sources and partners for each priority and action line. As the Strategy unfolds, the table will have to be updated recurrently.

<b>Priorities</b>	<b>Action lines</b>	<b>Funding sources</b>	<b>Main partners</b>
<b>1. Bridging the teacher gap</b>	1. Capacity development at country level	- Mostly extra-budgetary sources from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o China</li> <li>o Cap EFA</li> <li>o Task Force on Teachers for EFA</li> </ul>	- Education International - Commonwealth Secretariat - OIF - GPE
<b>2. Improving teaching quality</b>	2. Qualifying teachers and promoting their professional development	- Mostly extra-budgetary sources from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o China</li> <li>o Cap EFA</li> <li>o GEMS</li> <li>o Nokia</li> </ul>	- Education International - COL - GPE
	3. Reinforcing school leadership	- Mostly extra-budgetary sources from GEMS	- GEMS - Education International
<b>3. Informing the global debate about teaching</b>	4. Monitoring instruments and promoting teaching standards	- Regular budget	- ILO - Education International - TEFAS
	5. Documenting progress	- Regular budget	GMR

### **Monitoring and assessing the strategy**

In addition to the above mentioned action lines, UNESCO will embed a systematic monitoring mechanism for each action line and devote enough resources to document the efforts made, list the achievements and lessons learned through the implementation in different member States and disseminate the results internationally.