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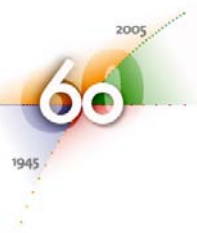
Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织



Teachers

Teachers are the key to any education reform. Yet their situation is increasingly troubling, in the North as well as in the South.

To date, between 15 and 35 million teachers are needed to achieve the goals of Education for All (EFA) by 2015. Ranging from the lack of appeal for a badly paid profession, poor working conditions or a devastating AIDS pandemic, the reasons explaining the dearth of teachers are numerous. The keystone of the educational system, teachers and professors are a determining factor in attaining one of the six goals set for 2015 at the Dakar EFA Forum: providing quality education. Their essential role to the cultural, economic and social development of populations, places a huge responsibility on them, hence the importance of helping them to prepare for their profession.

The 1966 General Conference adopted a Recommendation on the statute of teachers, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), in Geneva. Despite the diversity of worldwide legislation, the Recommendation proposes a range of standards applicable worldwide. Although the 1966 text only applied to pre-school, primary and secondary school teachers, a 1997 Recommendation includes the higher education sector. All subjects linked to the profession are examined, such as teacher preparation (training, recruitment), career opportunities (advancement, job security), rights and duties (individual freedom), salaries, health and pension benefits. World Teacher Day on October 5 was chosen

to coincide with the adoption of the Recommendation on October 5, 1966. But the 146 Articles which comprise it are not longer sufficient in the face of harsh geopolitical realities. In the North, as in the South, the lack of teachers is reaching alarming levels. Not only is there a quantitative problem, the need for teachers is estimated at 30 million, but there is also a drop in quality. In an effort to cut public spending, certain countries are calling on volunteer teachers who are poorly trained and equally poorly paid. In addition, in many countries the teachers' pay is too low to

render the profession attractive, especially in rural areas. In Africa, for example, according to the 2005 Education for All Monitoring Report, the pay for teachers was lower in 2000 than it was in 1970. In some schools, the rate of enrolment has risen much more rapidly than the number of teachers,



Class in Tanzania
(A. Gillette © UNESCO)

so much that the student/teacher ratio can be as high as 60 to 1 (one teacher for 60 students). UNESCO's role, in the face of such a deteriorating situation, is to advise countries on how to offer improved training to educators at the secondary and higher education level or to urge the respect of international standards concerning the rights and duties of the profession. The top priority of the Teacher Education Section is the "Initiative for Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa". This project has activities in the 46 participating countries, through 2015. The aim is to adapt policies regarding teachers to coincide with national development

Teachers

Teachers

Sierra Leone: primary school teachers in a difficult situation

In 2001, at the end of the civil war which tore Sierra Leone apart for eleven years, school registration fees were abolished and free meals offered in all schools. This led to a spectacular rise in school registrations, which tripled in less than four years, and resulted in large classes, sometimes of up to 70 students.

Approximately 20% of the teachers in government-funded primary schools are not paid by the State. Many are volunteers with limited or no professional training. Some are paid in kind by the community in which they teach. The average monthly salary of a state-run primary school teacher at the end of 2003 was US\$50. In real terms, the worth of teachers' pay has been halved since the mid-1990s. Most teachers must provide for four or five people with less than US\$2 per day. In addition, payment of salaries is often late. In urban areas, teachers increase their pay by giving private classes. In rural areas, teachers often sell cakes and candy to their students during study breaks. Despite growing morale problems, teacher absenteeism, estimated at approximately 20% at the end of 2001, seems to have somewhat abated.

Source : 2005 EFA Monitoring Report

priorities: improving the quality of training; to recruit and retain a greater number of teachers. The Organization is also committed to training teachers to use appropriate technologies and distance education. For example, the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity-Building in Africa (IICBA), a Teacher Training Network, allows training institutions to become familiar with the latest developments in the field, in particular the development of electronic libraries. The UNESCO Bangkok Bureau manages a portal dedicated to the application of information and communications technologies to continuing education in teacher training. Besides highlighting these concrete actions, the 2005 EFA Monitoring Report published by UNESCO makes several recommendations:

- faced with reduced staff levels in the teaching profession, some countries have lowered requirements for entering the profession. This affects the quality of aspiring teachers and thus the quality of teaching provided. Improved salaries or improvements in admission procedures to teacher training (aptitude and motivational testing, interviews) could be envisaged;

- improve initial training. Young teachers should be accorded more time in the first years on the job to improve their teaching skills;

- training programmes for teachers do not provide sufficient time to learn their subjects. The programme should provide time for trainees to revise core subjects;

- assignment of teachers is a crucial point. So that teachers will be distributed in an equitable fashion, the Report calls for a coherent national assignment policy, which takes into account the needs of each school.

Faced with the challenge of Education For All, countries are often obliged to apply methods favouring quantity over quality. Some African and Asian countries hire teachers as auxiliaries, who are not considered civil servants. However, this practice is not limited to poor countries since auxiliaries can be found in the United Kingdom working along side qualified teachers.

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To Find Out More

UNESCO Bangkok and its teacher training portal (in English):

<http://www.unescobkk.org/education/ict>