

WORKSHOP 4

Quality Education and the Key Role of Teachers

Co-organization and co-financing: Education International (EI)

Participants in the panel, moderator and rapporteur: list will be distributed during the Conference

Discussion Paper: IBE, in collaboration with EI and UNESCO

Background paper: Education International (EI)

This document is currently available from the ICE site: www.ibe.unesco.org
(Organization/workshops).



WORKSHOP 4

Quality Education and the Key Role of Teachers

Introductory videos:

Workshop 4 A - « Teacher training: a building block for education reform» (Jordan)

In Jordan, the education system is in the midst of a reform that aims to prepare students to enter the knowledge economy as « technologically literate learners ». The training of teachers in the use of information technologies has been a priority within the reform. In this video a teacher who has been attending IT courses at a learning resource center shares some of his views on how this training and the constructivist philosophies of the reform have impacted his teaching. Also highlighted in the film is the Queen Rania IT Center in Amman, the largest center for teacher training and the technological heart of the reform.

Workshop 4 B: « Future teachers learning to live together » (Sri Lanka)

At the height of civil tensions within the country, GTZ Basic Education Sector Programme (BESP) organized a literary competition on peace for student-teachers throughout Sri Lanka. This was followed by the project « Peace Link » which has the goal of fostering peace in education through coordinating exchanges between future teachers at training colleges from the North, South and East. This video gives insight into the lives of two teachers, one a Sinhala native speaker from the South and the other a Tamil native speaker from the North, who met through this programme. The two speak about how this initiative affected their lives, teaching, and concept of learning to live together in peace.

Discussion Paper

Inside the daily reality of classrooms and educational establishments, the promotion of quality education for all young people sharply brings to light problems concerning the role of the teacher and other education providers: their recruitment, the adequacy of their profile and function, their training, and their social recognition and status. It is evident that a sufficient number of competent teachers is required in order to improve the quality of educational processes. The Ministers of Education, when they met together at UNESCO for its 32nd General Conference, also reaffirmed this: “*We find indispensable the role of teachers as purveyors of knowledge and values and as community leaders responsible for the future of our young. We should do everything in our power to support them and to learn from them.*” (Final Communiqué of the Ministerial Round Table Meeting, 4 October 2003 – www.unesco.org)

A multitude of questions can be asked concerning the role of teachers. This 47th ICE workshop hopes to examine a few of these more specifically, providing a forum for discussing problems and especially for sharing experiences and practices that are often both innovative and promising.

1. Teaching: a demanding and constantly evolving profession

The image of the teacher as a specialist in a specific subject who stands alone in front of the class is still a reality today in many contexts, particularly at the secondary level. However, this perception of the role of teachers no longer matches the demands of teaching and the expectations that are made with regard to the education of young people. Even if the teaching profession has preserved an element of permanency, regardless of time period or education level, many elements have changed and are continually changing: knowledge and ways to access it, the influence of the media and of ICT's, societal demands, the social environment, the students themselves, etc. The teacher is moving away from being a "transmitter of knowledge" and led more and more towards becoming a "mediator in the construction of knowledge", a facilitator and, even at times, a social worker. He or she must also foster the development of social skills and create a learning environment that will encourage young people to learn to live together and to become responsible citizens. Faced with expanding access to secondary education, the growing heterogeneity of students, the redefinition of objectives, learning content, working methods and evaluation, the rising autonomy of educational institutions, the increasing participation of young people in decision making at the school level, and so on, there are some who do not hesitate to speak about a "new teaching profession", which has become much more demanding and complex. Therefore, the background paper for this workshop which was prepared by Education International (EI) cites "ten new competences for teaching", identified by Perrenoud⁴: 1) organising student learning opportunities; 2) managing student learning progression; 3) dealing with student heterogeneity; 4) developing student commitment to working and learning; 5) working in teams; 6) participating in school curriculum and organisation development; 7) promoting parent and community commitment to school; 8) using new technologies in their daily practice; 9) tackling professional duties and ethical dilemmas; and 10) managing their own professional development. This list is quite impressive and one could ask whether an individual alone, regardless of personal qualities and training, could reasonably be expected to take on such a complex role.

Q1. What constants (or elements of permanency) have been preserved in the role of the teacher at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

Q2. What specific problems are posed for teachers regarding the education and training of young people from 12 to 18/20 years of age?

Q3. What new skills are thus demanded of teachers to improve the quality of this education?

⁴ Perrenoud, Ph. (1999) Dix nouvelles compétences pour enseigner. Invitation au voyage, Paris, ESF

2. Recruiting quality teachers

An education system that aims to offer a quality education for all young people should be able to count on teachers who are well trained and adequately paid. Further, they should be capable of independently following the evolving processes and structure of knowledge, and have the necessary competencies to take into account the growing interdependencies at both the global and local levels that impact on schools. Many countries are suffering from a serious shortage of teachers, or at least of teachers who are qualified in particular subject areas. There are numerous obstacles that frequently challenge the presence of well-trained, competent teachers in classrooms, for example, low wages, precarious social status, heavy workload, large class sizes, limited prospects for professional advancement, etc. Many systems are bearing witness to an aging secondary teaching staff, which further accentuates the cultural distance between students and those who are responsible for their education; female representation is often very unequal as well. Moreover, the attractiveness of the teaching profession to competent young people is lessening in favour of higher revenue professional opportunities. All over the world, too many young people are leaving the formal education system having lost the motivation to learn, and consequently, the desire to teach. In certain countries, teachers are leaving their profession early on, in favour of more advantageous working conditions and career prospects. In other countries, as a response to the shortage, there is a call even for teachers who have not had adequate training (volunteers, “*vacataires*”, junior teachers, etc.).

Q4. What measures could be taken to attract the best candidates, including young people and women in particular, to the teaching profession?

Q5. What will convince good teachers to stay in the profession?

Q6. What do we know about the influence of recruitment policies on the actual quality of education for young people? Do these policies have medium/long term perspectives or should they be simply considered as emergency measures?

3. Pre-service and in-service teacher training

At all levels, teaching is increasingly being considered as a real profession and not simply as a talent. This recognition thus necessitates a sound professional training and the acquisition of skills well beyond those related to subject knowledge. The criteria for initial training, recruitment, integration and in-service training concern all teachers, but particularly those in the post-primary level. Some subjects that teachers were initially trained in are disappearing. Consequently, teachers need to be redeployed to accommodate the changing roles and functions within the teaching system. New learning areas are also emerging. Health promotion, HIV/AIDS prevention, sex education, and life skills training, which in the past rarely or never appeared in schools, now imply different approaches to teaching and learning based on strong human relations and interpersonal skills. Within this perspective, the recourse to new technologies is not an adequate response. In general, the demands of the “new teaching profession” require the acquisition of skills that are much larger in scope than those

necessary to simply transmit knowledge. Some trends that can be observed at the level of pre-service training include, on the one hand, longer duration of training, and on the other, a qualitative improvement towards: “professionalisation”, a better balance between theory and practice, broadening pedagogical and didactic skills, creating links to research, utilizing new technologies, etc. However, it seems that there still is not enough place given to, inter alia, self-evaluation (“the reflective practitioner”), interpersonal and communication skills, interdisciplinary approaches, dialogue, teamwork, and “collective professionalism”. Some people have even gone as far as proposing that it would be better to invest less in initial teacher training and to place more emphasis on ongoing professional development. Certain recent studies indicate that teachers tend to reproduce the pedagogical styles that they experienced as students rather than the ones they acquired during their teacher training.

- Q7. What types of policies for pre-service and in-service teacher training would allow countries, particularly those in the South, to respond to the combined challenge of expanded access and quality improvement of education and training of young people?***
- Q8. Are there any successful or promising policies in the world today that articulate well the pre-service and in-service training of teachers?***
- Q9. What role can school administrators play in the improvement of teacher training?***
- Q10. How can the training of trainers be improved, particularly that of university instructors, who are usually the ones responsible for the training of teachers?***

4. Ensuring support for teachers

One might expect that teachers themselves are committed to improving the quality of education, have a professional ethic, and feel responsible for their own continual professional development both as a right and a duty. However, often there is a disparity – and sometimes a complete division – between the expectations of the school public (and parents or society) and the way in which teachers believe that they should practise their profession. At times isolated, overworked, living in precarious conditions and facing difficult classes, teachers also need a decent status, support and recognition of their irreplaceable role; they need this from public officials, parents, students, and society as a whole. They also need to create a community amongst themselves and to be able to count on the support of effective and responsible professional associations.

- Q11. Among the many possible action plans that could be envisaged, what are the most effective levers that the government and public officials could lean on to provide teachers with the support they need?***
- Q12. What could and should professional associations bring to this field***