SAVE OUR
FUTURE

Background Paper 4:

Strengthening the Education Workforce and Creating Learning Teams

About the campaign

Save Our Future is a global coalition of diverse voices - from CSOs to the private sector, youth to researchers, media to multilaterals, foundations to influences and more - all uniting to deliver a simple, yet powerful message amidst the COVID-19 crisis: **Save Our Future.**

This campaign, supported by hundreds of organizations worldwide, is driving awareness and emphasizing the connection between education and advancing the other UN Sustainable Development goals; showcasing education solutions and innovations backed by evidence-based research; bringing together communities and diverse stakeholders to promote collaboration; and engaging people around the world in a dialogue around education to ensure all children can learn.

As part of the Save Our Future campaign, the Save Our Future white paper *Averting an Education Catastrophe for the World's Children* was developed and launched on October 22, with key actions and recommendations for global decisionmakers on protecting and prioritizing education amidst COVID-19.

For further information, please contact campaign@saveourfuture.world. To learn more about the Save Our Future campaign, please visit www.saveourfuture.world.

Background paper prepared for the Save Our Future white paper *Averting an Education Catastrophe for the World's Children*

Strengthening the Education Workforce and Creating Learning Teams

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This paper was written to provide background information to assist in drafting the Save Our Future white paper *Averting an Education Catastrophe for the World's Children*. It has been edited for clarity and to maintain consistent style and branding in line with the Save Our Future campaign. The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors and contributors and should not be solely attributed to the organizations representing the Save Our Future campaign. Contributors and their respective organizations have expressed broad agreement on the priorities and evidence supporting these priorities set out in this paper. However, this text should not be considered as the formal policy position of any organization and some organizations may have differing views.

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Introduction

As input to the Save Our Future white paper *Averting an Education Catastrophe for the World's Children*, this background paper outlines a set of concrete actions that education stakeholders can deliver in the next 6-24 months to generate the highest possible impact on learning for those children and young people who are furthest behind - this includes countries where most children have low learning outcomes as well as specific marginalized groups which have low learning outcomes anywhere in the world. The asks should contribute to achieving SDG 4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. This means all children achieving foundational learning (literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills) as well as shifting teaching and learning practices so a broad range of equally important outcomes can be achieved, such as those highlighted by SDG 4.7 (global citizenship education and education for sustainable development) and others that have been variously called higher-order competencies and 21st century skills (GPE, 2020; OECD, 2018; Care et al., 2017). This paper is focused on actions that can be taken around the education workforce. While the needs and issues are different at each educational level, this paper focuses on those pertinent to both primary and secondary levels.

Current situation

The opportunity for inclusive, quality education and lifelong learning as set out by SDG 4 has yet to be realized for many children. While many students struggle to learn the basics, there is simultaneously a growing demand for education to provide a wider set of equally important education outcomes (as mentioned above) beyond foundational literacy and numeracy. This puts students who are not learning at an even greater disadvantage. The most marginalized children continually fall furthest behind, with circumstantial realities such as poverty, gender, disability, geography, and ethnicity interacting to compound their challenges.

The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated these already difficult challenges to reaching SDG 4, creating conditions where over 60 percent of students worldwide have been unable to attend school for extended periods of time and cannot return to 'business as usual'. But the global crisis also presents an opportunity to harness the current political will and necessity for change to transform education and push for investments and commitments to build more resilient systems.

Most stakeholders in education agree that making faster progress on SDG 4 and being able to respond to rapid global changes - such as the COVID-19 pandemic - requires deep transformations of education systems. This means intentional coherence between all actors, elements and relationships so they work in concert toward the shared vision of quality, equitable and inclusive education (Pritchett, 2015).

Teachers and teaching

Education systems face varying obstacles depending on their specific context, but **teaching quality is the single most important influence on learning outcomes at the school level**. An effective teacher can make a major difference to a student's learning trajectory – significantly increasing student learning (Evans &

Yuan, 2018; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010; Hanushek et al., 2005; Rockoff, 2004) and impacting long-term student well-being, future academic achievement, and economic outcomes (Chetty et al., 2014; Sanders et al., 1996). Several years of outstanding teaching may also improve equity, offsetting learning deficits of marginalized students (Rivkin et al., 2005; Rockoff, 2004; Park & Hannum, 2001).

The key challenge is that many education systems do not have enough trained and qualified teachers in the right places to meet growing demand, and teacher allocation often exacerbates rather than minimizes inequality. An estimated 69 million teachers must be recruited by 2030 in order to meet SDG 4, with sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia accounting for over 76 percent of this need (UIS, 2016). In some of the poorest countries, these increases are equal to half or more of the projected graduates of tertiary education – a proportion that is unprecedented in even the most successful and industrialized nations (Education Commission, 2016).

But teacher shortages are not generic — teacher supply is often a localized problem and can vary by education level, geography, gender, and specific subjects. While the number of students should be a major determining factor in teacher deployment, Global Partnership for Education (GPE) data suggests that in most low- and lower-middle income countries, a significant proportion of teacher allocation is not based on the number of students (GPE, 2019). Inequitable deployment and allocation can lead to shortages for rural, remote, and underserved populations and compound issues with a workforce that is not representative of the population it serves in terms of gender, disabilities, ethnicity, indigeneity, and linguistic groups. For example, in Sierra Leone, only 27 percent of teachers at primary level and 14 percent at secondary level are female (UIS, 2016). This has immediate consequences for girls' enrollment, retention, and achievement, as well as the school culture and longer-term impact on girls' aspirations, safety in school, and job prospects (Kirk, 2006).

There is also evidence that **more qualified teachers disproportionately work with more advantaged schools and privileged students, have smaller class sizes, and focus on later grades** (OECD, 2018). Many interrelated factors drive supply issues. The pool of qualified recruits may be limited (Mulkeen et al., 2017), and attracting top graduates and retaining them is often difficult due to the low status of teachers, low pay, poor working and living conditions, and unattractive career structures (Mulkeen & Crowe-Taft, 2010). In some contexts, there could be an adequate supply of trained teachers, but they are unemployed due to issues like government caps on wage bills.

Even when there are enough teachers in the right places, education systems often do not provide the initial training teachers need to be effective, resulting in **many teachers being unqualified or poorly trained with limited pedagogical and subject knowledge**. A study in seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa found that less than 10 percent of primary school language teachers were able to demonstrate a minimum level of subject knowledge skill to teach grade 4 students (Bold et al., 2017). **Issues in pre-service training** include misalignment of teacher education with the curriculum, limited practice-based learning opportunities, and omission of newer skills (Naylor & Sayed, 2014). A study of initial teacher education in six countries in Africa found that very little teacher education actually focused specifically on learning how to teach literacy and numeracy (Akyeampong et al., 2011).

On top of these systemic issues, **teachers often work in relative isolation and are expected to fulfill increasingly diverse roles** (Schleicher, 2011) to address a wider range of student learning needs and education outcomes. Competing demands and little support often mean teachers cannot focus on what is known to improve learning. Classroom teachers are tasked with understanding and meeting the diverse needs of all their students (including first generation, multiple languages, diverse backgrounds, interrupted education, and special needs), often working alone in classrooms with large class sizes and with training that is highly generic and not tailored to their context or needs, nor rooted in evidence-based practice (Schleicher, 2011). In many cases, inclusive practices are not embedded in classroom teaching and support or specialist roles that could help teachers do not exist.

Yet we know that **other roles and relationships beyond classroom teachers are also strongly associated with better education outcomes**. Specialist teachers can support students with a range of needs by offering individualized attention in the classroom and providing practical advice to classroom teachers on educational inclusion strategies (Lewis & Bagree, 2013). Learning support staff can also have a positive impact on inclusion and student achievement (Navarro, 2015). Examples from diverse contexts illustrate how education support personnel and even trained individuals from local communities working alongside teachers in certain interventions have improved student outcomes, though unpaid volunteers should not be used as a long-term solution to substitute a diverse and professionalized workforce (Duflo et al., 2020; Education Endowment Foundation, 2020; Deluca & Kett, 2016; Lewis & Bagree, 2013; Lakshminarayana et al., 2013; Navarro, 2015; Cajkler & Tennant, 2009; Blatchford et al., 2008; J-PAL, 2006; Ebersold, 2003). Parents and other professionals, such as health workers, also have important roles to play in connecting students to their school and supporting well-being (Littlecott et al., 2018; Pound et al., 2016; Bishop et al., 2001).

Education leadership

Evidence also suggests that school leaders are critical in improving school performance, yet too little attention is paid to leadership. School and district leaders are increasingly viewed as instructional leaders, but in practice they tend to focus on administrative and supervisory activities (UNESCO, 2017; UNESCO, 2016; Vaillant, 2015). They are rarely selected, trained, or professionally developed to focus on leading learning and school improvement (OECD, 2014). In some systems, appropriate roles and job descriptions for leaders do exist, but are not enacted in practice. In centralized systems there is often limited decision-making, finances, and human resources provided to school leaders to lead on learning. **Teacher leadership** is equally important - such as senior teachers supporting more novice peers - yet **career pathways and progression for teachers are often not meritocratic**, with a lack of correlation between the factors used for promotion (certificates and experience) and teacher effectiveness (Crehan, 2016).

Engaging the workforce in social and policy dialogue

The expertise of the education workforce itself is often not used to inform workforce reform. Rather than being valued and empowered to innovate, teachers and other members of the workforce are too often perceived as obstacles rather than agents of change. In the latest Status of Teachers survey, 29 percent of unions responded that they were rarely or never consulted on education policy. Thirty-three

percent reported that they are not consulted on the development and selection of teaching materials, and 25 percent reported not being consulted on curriculum development (Education International, 2019).

There is still progress to be made in the representation of teacher organizations in Local Education Groups (LEGs) and equivalent structures - only 66 percent of LEGs in GPE partner countries included teacher organizations in 2019 (GPE, 2019). Roles beyond teachers are rarely unionized and therefore rarely consulted. Failure to take advantage of the education workforce's ability to highlight unforeseen risks and opportunities can lead to less effective design and implementation of education sector plans and reforms. Moreover, the workforce has a right to participate in policy and education decision-making that must be ensured by governments.

The education workforce is an education system's biggest investment and one of its greatest levers for change. To have any chance at achieving quality, equitable and inclusive education for all, education systems urgently need to increase support for teachers already in schools, harness the broader education workforce, engage a wider set of professionals and stakeholders, and support them, including to collaborate with each other to drive change.

Summary of evidence

This section highlights evidence around four key themes related to the workforce challenges outlined in the previous section: Teachers and teaching, learning teams (teachers working together and with other roles), leadership, and social and policy dialogue. This includes evidence on what we currently know does not work, interventions with proven impact, and promising practices from research, practice and policy. While this section attempts to focus on evidence to support immediate actions that can be taken over the next 6-24 months, much of the evidence suggests a longer-term vision of how to strengthen and support the education workforce.

Teachers and teaching

Prioritize the health and well-being of the education workforce to ensure that teaching and learning continues

The COVID-19 crisis has increased income and job security concerns for many teachers (especially private sector and contract teachers) due to massive, often long-term, school closures. To ensure teaching and learning continues it is critical that education systems **uphold the labor and human rights of the workforce** to decent work, support and regular, adequate pay as set out in the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966) and the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel (1997).

This includes policies that support the **health and wellbeing of students and the education workforce**, including a safe physical environment and attention to the psychosocial and socio-emotional needs of teachers. Teacher wellbeing has been linked not only to teachers' physical health, but also to stability in schools and to teaching effectiveness and student achievement. Teachers' emotions and stress levels have

been found to influence those of students and other teachers (Becker et al., 2014; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Measures to ensure health and wellbeing should be a top priority given the COVID-19 pandemic has put teachers and other education workers at high risk as they have been called on to staff schools, reach out to parents and communities, and provide instruction and other support to children of essential workers and vulnerable populations (UNESCO, 2020). Many schools in low- and middle-income countries face overcrowding, which is especially dangerous given the highly infectious nature of COVID-19 and nearly half of schools in least-developed countries lack clean water; nearly a third have no usable toilet (UNICEF & WHO, 2018). National governments and school systems must ensure the protection of education workers through **evidence-based public health measures** which means **establishing and maintaining clear policy and guidelines on COVID-19 for education that are accessible and disseminated widely** and having the funding and capacity to implement them (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, WFP, & UNCHR, 2020).

Teachers and education support personnel are essential in the fight against the pandemic and must be treated as frontline workers in response measures and school reopening. There are several international school reopening guidelines specific to teachers and support staff, from UN agencies, Education International and the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies' education in emergencies and COVID-19 resources. Suggested measures include but are not limited to: priority access to healthcare, clean water, sanitation and hygiene resources (PPE- face masks, gloves, disinfectant), virus testing and other health screenings (temperature and symptom checks), and vaccinations when they are available; support structures for all vulnerable staff; and systems to aid wellbeing and mental health, including workload and stress level (Education International, 2020). Teachers who are at high risk from the virus should be allowed to stay home and, where possible, enabled to teach remotely. Many teachers will have childcare responsibilities during school closures, so governments will need to collect data to understand how this affects alternative forms of education delivery and plan accordingly.

These risk assessments and safety efforts will require close coordination between the education sector and the health and social service sectors, as well as sustained, collaborative investment. Policy formation and coordination across sectors should be **agreed in collaboration with teachers and the wider education workforce, including involving them in planning and preparation for reopening schools.** Some teachers' unions have been directly involved in the COVID-19 response, stepping up when government responses have been too slow or insufficient. Teachers unions in Liberia, Honduras, and the Philippines handed out sanitizers and masks to education workers (Education International, 2020). Many unions have also developed their own policy guidelines to ensure the safety of staff and students for school re-openings, which have been used in social dialogue with government (see *Social and Policy Dialogue* section) or made available to union representatives and members to use at the school, local, or district level to demand occupational safety (Education International, 2020). For example, The Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU) called for minimum safety conditions to be met before schools reopen. These include the provision of temperature checks, assurance of water supplies in all schools, availability of full-time health professionals in all schools, availability of reliable transport to handle emergencies and

suspected cases, and the establishment of COVID-19 management committees to address concerns within schools (Education International, 2020).

<u>Use proven professional development practices and empower teachers to strengthen effective teaching</u>

To strengthen effective teaching, education systems need to work toward the longer-term goal of a **strong and coherent system of professional development**. **Investment in and collaboration with initial teacher training institutions is an essential first step to strong professional development**. The COVID-19 crisis has compounded the need for significant reform of initial teacher education, including around the use of ICTs for pedagogy, digital literacy, and data assessment for instructional differentiation (UNESCO, 2020). Reform of initial teacher education is challenging in the short-term; however, teacher training for foundational levels could be prioritized and include curriculum developers and tutors from teacher training institutions working together to update primary teacher training programs to align to the primary curriculum and include evidence-based strategies on how to teach early literacy, concrete activities for teaching basic numeracy concepts, and what is needed to get children achieve the expected rate of progression for each grade (Akyeampong et al., 2011).

Beyond initial teacher education, there are **professional development practices we know do not work but are still being used in many systems**. This includes teacher development focused on mass training that is often a one-off, generic, not tailored to teachers' needs or level, delivered in a cascaded way, dislocated from the classroom context, and without the follow-up required to tangibly change behaviors and practice (Loyalka et al., 2017; Orr et al., 2013).

Research shows that ongoing professional development is most effective when it is focused on a specific subject or pedagogical approach, tailored to topics relevant to the local context, and provides supporting materials, follow up visits, and collaboration opportunities to complement training (Popova et al., 2016). It should involve **practice-based cycles that are practical, specific, and focused on improving learning outcomes**, and should **articulate with initial teacher training curricula and instruction** to ensure systematic alignment and impact (Popova et al., 2016). **Coaching is emerging as a promising practice** for professional development (Coetzee, 2019; Kraft et al., 2018), including in low- and middle-income countries. Coaching should be data-driven and structured to include reflections on practice, strategies for improvement, clarity around the 'why' as well as the 'what' is being done, new practice trials, and progress reviews (Naylor et al., 2019). Professional development should be **free and widely available** to all teachers as well as evaluated for effectiveness. **Teachers and other key roles should be consulted on what support they need**.

Research suggests that **technology can also play an important role in teacher professional development,** for example in peer support, collaboration, coaching, and the creation of communities of practice (McAleavy et al., 2018). It does work best, however, as part of a blended approach, such as the use of mobile phone apps in combination with in-person support (English in Action, 2015). For more information see Save Our Future background paper *EdTech and COVID-19 Response*.

Research also suggests that **teachers need training in ICT for pedagogy and technology itself, even in technologies they know well**. It is important that barriers to acquiring technological skills are minimized and that specific groups of teachers are not marginalized in the process (McAleavy et al., 2018), especially those that may not be able to quickly adapt to technology-supported approaches. The post-COVID-19 reality will force many systems to reopen schools using blended delivery models; there is therefore great demand for professional development for blended teaching, which will likely need to be delivered using various delivery models.

In very low-capacity situations where classroom teachers lack the core competencies to be effective, there is strong evidence for providing **evidence-based structured pedagogy** for improved learning outcomes (Snilstveit et al., 2015), such as lesson plans or instructional guidelines in the form of videos or simplified, structured lesson plans. Training teachers to conduct formative and ongoing assessment in support of differentiated teaching can also be very impactful (Banerjee et al., 2016; Kremer et al., 2013; Kremer et al., 2011) so they can target teaching to student learning levels (see Save Our Future background paper *From Schooling to Learning for All: Reorienting Curriculum and Targeting Instruction*). These approaches should be used as interim strategies as they can cause de-professionalization of teachers and limit teacher professional autonomy.

In addition to strong professional development, education authorities should **empower teachers to innovate and drive change**. This requires an enabling policy environment that promotes **professional autonomy**, opportunities for leadership, and career progression (OECD, 2020). In "Education in a post-COVID world: Nine ideas for public action," UNESCO's International Commission on the Futures of Education calls on policymakers to "value the professional expertise of teachers and create conditions that give frontline educators autonomy and flexibility to act collaboratively."

Focus on equitable management and allocation of the workforce to address gender, inclusion, and equity

Using better data in smarter ways can drive more equitable deployment and ensure marginalized communities are served by the strongest teachers. Examples from other sectors are instructive: equitable and inclusive data guidelines from the health sector suggest workforce data disaggregated by gender, race, and ethnicity as a compulsory component of HR information systems and include roles beyond doctors and nurses, such as those in leadership and management (Szabo et al., 2020; Newman, 2014). Health systems are also starting to adapt **National Health Workforce Accounts** built into existing mechanisms to draw on a wide range of standard workforce indicators for establishing credible data systems that generate robust evidence for policy decisions and investments (WHO, 2017). Some education systems are also starting to develop specific data systems to support more inclusive workforce management. For example, Zimbabwe, with the support of GPE has established a Teacher Training and Development Information System that is linked to school and pupil data and designed to facilitate better needs-based deployment of qualified teachers and better targeting of teacher professional development (GPE, 2017).

Promising practices show that utilizing **geographic information systems data** can also help address issues of inclusion and equitable deployment of the workforce. In Malawi, use of Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) data has more accurately mapped schools to help target incentives to remote areas, rather than apply incentives on a blanket basis to rural districts (World Bank, 2016). In Sierra Leone, an innovative **preference matching model,** based on the Nobel-Prize winning model used in health, has been developed to better match teachers to remote schools they might be best suited to work in (e.g. in the same district with the same language) and where the need is greatest. This model incorporates the preferences of teachers and so aims to reduce absenteeism and attrition, as well as provide a more transparent and equitable allocation process (Mackintosh et al., 2020). Preference matching models should be completely transparent, so teachers understand which combination of factors impact their deployment.

Several studies show positive impacts of female teachers on girls' learning outcomes, increasing girls' likelihood of staying in school and participating in STEM subjects (where they have female teachers in those subjects), heightening girls' academic aspirations, and lowering girls' likelihood of being subject to violence (Evans & Le Nestour, 2019). While there is little empirical evidence on **gender aspects of teacher deployment**, promising strategies to encourage female teachers to accept positions in rural or underserved areas include **career guarantees for accompanying spouses, housing, transportation or similar incentives, and provision of local in-situ training** (Mulkeen et al., 2017). For example, Education International members in Malawi stress that ensuring safety for female teachers is crucial in remote areas - onsite residencies are a key part of safety provision. More broadly, incentives and other policy measures to attract and retain the strongest teachers in underserved areas - such as hardship allowance schemes - should be explored, and lessons from the health sector should be drawn on.

Ensure professional standards are met and provide alternative pathways to teaching so more underserved classrooms are served by qualified teachers

Establishing professional teaching standards can help countries attract high-quality teacher candidates and make routes into teaching attractive, accessible, and fair by ensuring minimum standards for pay and working conditions. The longer-term, system-level goal for professional standards includes salary structures that recognize and reward teachers with experience and highly accomplished skills, as well as differentiated career structures, training, and development programs that **enable the workforce to build its own capacity and professional knowledge base**.

In the short- to medium- term, countries need to rapidly expand the pool of potential teacher recruits and address shortages of qualified and trained teachers – including more women – in underserved areas. Promising practices show that some countries have **recruited teachers directly from underserved areas or provided alternative pathways to qualification for unqualified teachers**, **training them in schools supported by distance learning**. Both Malawi and Tanzania have recruited teachers from underserved areas and provided paper-based distance teacher training (UNESCO, 2014). In The Gambia, unqualified teachers are recruited locally and given in-service training that brings them to qualified status in three years (Mulkeen et al., 2017). In South Africa, school-based mentors were used to support unqualified

practicing teachers who were enrolled in a distance learning teaching qualification. The experience demonstrated that adequately trained mentors who understand how to mentor trainee teachers and pass on pedagogical skills are critical (Mukeredzi et al., 2015).

In Sierra Leone, the GATE (Girls Access to Education) program has used a similar model with proven impact. It provides a bridging program for women by combining **working as learning assistants in a local primary school with a distance learning program**. The women then earn their teaching qualification after 12-18 months. The program has been shown to promote learning and aspiration, particularly with female students (Crisp et al., 2017). When exploring alternative approaches to teaching qualification, professional standards must be met to ensure adequate training in key areas, such as content, pedagogy, and inclusion, and continued professionalization for teachers so the bar is not lowered for teaching recruitment and training.[1]

Learning teams

Use a team-based approach to leverage teaching expertise and specialist skills within and across schools

A learning team approach can enable **sharing of expertise within schools** so teachers with different levels and areas of expertise can support improvement of the workforce. The **most experienced and strongest teachers and those with specialist skills can be teamed with less experienced teachers**, trainees, and learning support staff so they could learn from and be supported by their more experienced colleagues (ASU, 2020; Basile, 2020). Studies show it is crucial for future teachers to gain practical experience in classrooms during their initial training (Bramwell et al., 2014). Including **trainee teachers** in the workforce as part of a learning team at school level could provide better initial training, especially on working collaboratively. Teaming experienced teachers with teacher trainees would also allow students to benefit from the expertise of the most capable teachers while receiving the support of other adults.

Strategic use of data can be used to maximize utilization of teaching expertise and specialists' skills across schools. For example, in Sierra Leone, the use of Geographic Information System (GIS) data to map distances between schools showed that up to a third of schools lacking a subject specialist could be jointly served by specialists at nearby schools with space in their timetable (Mackintosh et al., 2020b). In the long-term, strategic use of data could support many aspects of learning teams, including data-based decision making for school improvement.

Strategic use of technology can also help with sharing subject or pedagogical specialists across schools to reach the most marginalized. For example, the Media Center initiative in Amazonas state in Brazil uses video conferencing to broadcast lessons delivered by subject experts to over 1,000 rural schools (Robinson et al., 2016). One tutoring teacher (with graduate level teaching degree) assigned per classroom plays a key role in connecting students, technology, and content. They identify when students do not understand

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[1] See Education International and UNESCO's Global Framework of Professional Teaching Standards which has been proposed as a common international approach.

and ask the lecturing teacher for specific support or more detailed explanations as needed (Cruz et al., 2016). Lower- to upper- secondary school progression rates increased, dropout rates nearly halved between 2008 and 2011, and children's learning steadily improved (Robinson et al., 2016).

Many experts have also highlighted the need for specialist support for classroom teachers as well as more effective models and arrangements to address inclusion (NCTE, 2014; Singal, 2008). **Specialist teachers** can support students with special needs by offering individualized attention in the classroom and practical advice to classroom teachers on educational inclusion strategies (Lewis & Bagree, 2013). They can be **school- or cluster-based**, such as Sightsavers' **itinerant specialist teachers** for children with disabilities in Uganda and the Inclusive Education Resource Teachers in India (Lewis & Bagree, 2013; Lynch et al., 2011). Evidence on the effectiveness of such models is mixed (Lewis & Bagree, 2013; Lynch et al., 2011) due to frequent shortages of these roles, their heavy workloads, the breadth of expertise covered, distance they have to travel, and relationships with teachers (Singal et al., 2016; Singh, 2010). More research is needed to understand what models of specialist support can have the most impact.

Create learning teams, drawing on the broader education workforce, community, and professionals from other sectors to support learning and inclusion of the most marginalized

Understanding how different workforce roles at all levels of the system can support quality, equitable and inclusive education is key to a learning team approach. This involves looking at how these roles can work collaboratively to support a wide range of important education outcomes. A variety of roles already exist in many education systems and can include trainee teachers, specialist teaching roles, education support personnel and learning support staff, parents and the local community, and professionals from other sectors.

Box 1: What are Learning Teams?

Learning teams are groups of professionals led by teachers that collaborate inside the classroom, within schools, districts and systems to ensure learning for all. Learning teams will be different in every context and at every level in the system. They can include qualified teachers, education support personnel, leadership and management, and health and welfare specialists. Learning teams also engage the community to draw on local knowledge and support, especially from parents.

The diagram below shows how a learning team design represents a shift from current class design, where teachers tend to be at the center undertaking many different roles, to a design where the learners are at the center, supported by a teacher-led collaborative team of professionals which collectively leverages a variety of expertise and experience to focus on improving the learning and inclusion of all students, as well as continually learning themselves (Education Commission, 2019).
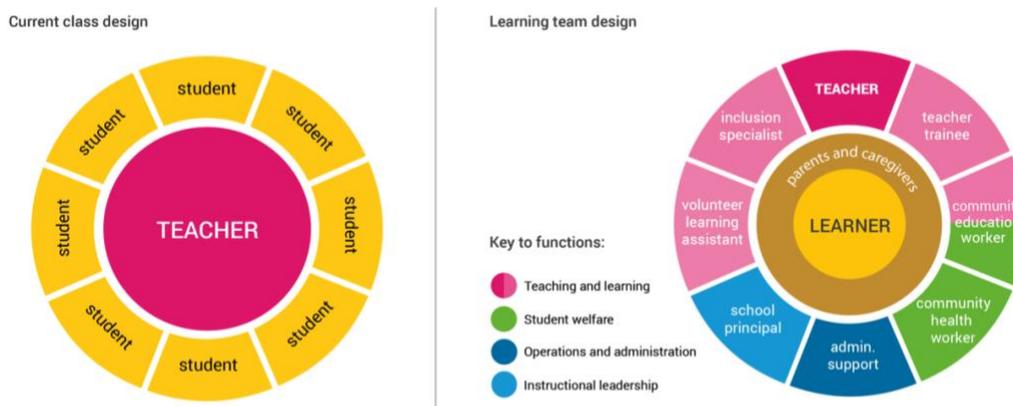
Source: Modified from Education Commission (2019)

Education support personnel (ESP) cover a wide range of people working in the education sector, such as teaching and learning assistants, librarians, school nurses and counselors, office staff, maintenance staff, and security staff, among others. Despite being an essential part of the education workforce, the work of ESPs is often unrecognized and very under-researched. Most of the available evidence is around learning support staff (such as teaching and learning assistants). More research is needed to understand the models and impact of ESPs and how they contribute to education outcomes, especially in low- and middle-income countries (Butler, 2019).

Learning support staff can undertake tasks that do not necessarily require a qualified teacher but still have a positive impact on learning outcomes (e.g. helping manage classroom behavior in large and multi-grade classes, facilitating small group or computer-enhanced learning, or managing learning resources) thus freeing time for teachers to focus on tasks requiring higher-level skills and competencies (Navarro, 2015). Learning support staff have also been shown to reduce teacher stress when taking over many time-consuming administrative tasks (Butler, 2019). Studies of the best school systems show how the use of other teaching and learning roles, such as teaching assistants, to support teachers can improve learning if

adequate support for their training, induction, and deployment is in place (Lewis, 2016; Barber et al., 2010; Barber & Mourshed, 2007) and if they are given specific objectives, adequate time, and enact targeted interventions (Farrell et al., 2010).

There are a variety of examples of **community education workers** that are recruited from local communities and have had a positive impact on foundational learning, student welfare and wellbeing. Several studies find that remedial instruction programs have strong impacts on learning outcomes when implemented by members of the community with some training, particularly in instances with low student knowledge levels (Duflo et al., 2020; J-PAL, 2006). These community education workers help provide **local language skills and additional support to teachers with large class sizes, and can facilitate closer ties among schools, families, and communities** that are critical for student achievement (Deforges & Abouchaar, 2003). These types of roles often **attract women** and help them develop additional skills (Naylor et al., 2019). Preparation and training for these roles needs to be planned for as well as supported and supervised by a qualified teacher.

In Ghana, the **Teacher Community Assistant Initiative** utilized local high school graduates as community assistants (through the existing National Youth Employment Program) to lead in- and after-school remedial classes for small groups of students in primary school. On average, the initiative significantly improved skills in literacy and numeracy (Duflo et al., 2020).

Camfed's Learner Guides – young women mentors from the community – facilitate an extra-curricular pastoral curriculum covering self-esteem, financial literacy, relationships, and barriers beyond school. Learner Guides act as the missing link between school and community, especially on health and welfare issues. Evaluations show increased confidence, questioning of gender norms for boys and girls, and retention and engagement for marginalized girls. Pupils in participating schools demonstrated increases in their math and English scores (Camfed, 2017).

The Luminos Second Chance program helps out-of-school children cover three years of learning in 10 months and integrate back into formal school using local young people with at least a 10th grade education to serve as classroom facilitators. Second Chance children complete primary school at twice the rate of government students and nearly twice as many are the highest achievers on standardized tests compared to government students (Akyeampong, 2018).

Partnerships within the education system and beyond – including **families and communities, higher education, civil society, cultural institutions, and businesses**– can support broader education goals (OECD, 2015). New evidence demonstrates the importance of beyond-school partnerships and coalition-building for successful education reforms (DLP, 2018). Utilizing wider networks, education systems can engage and connect to other actors to make education more relevant for learners, forge a greater connection to the world outside school, and provide a broader range of skills and expertise to address education challenges and foster innovation.

At all levels, closer coordination is needed with **health and social services professionals** who provide

specialized services to schools such as assessment of physical and mental health, counseling, health education, and addressing domestic issues that impact learning (e.g. early childbearing, children acting as caretakers, domestic violence). This can also strengthen overall service provision to children with special needs and disabilities (Hollenweger & Martinuzzi, 2015). In Kenya, as part of Education Development Trust's Let Girls Succeed program, local community health workers are engaged to support inclusive education for girls, playing a role in ensuring access and identifying barriers to learning (Coffey, 2017). These workers have been particularly impactful during the COVID-19 period and initial findings show they play a key role in supporting learning continuity during the crisis: 91 percent of the community health workers are encouraging girls to access radio/TV lessons, 67 percent are encouraging parents to allow the girls access to lessons, and 78 percent are undertaking household visits to motivate girls to continue to study privately with the tutorials delivered (Amenya et al., forthcoming).

To facilitate learning teams, promote peer and school collaboration

All members of learning teams will need training and support to work as a team. There are several proven evidence-based structures and practices that can be used. Learning teams would be enhanced by **peer collaboration**, which has strong positive impacts on learning outcomes. A study in New Zealand found that teacher peer collaboration was associated with a 17.2 percentage-point increase in the proportion of students achieving the standard set versus a 9.4 percentage-point increase in the control group (Patterson, 2014). Learning teams could also form **professional learning communities** and communities of practice, as studies show that these can support improved teaching and learner outcomes and motivation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Dogan et al., 2015; Ratts et al., 2015; Vescio et al., 2008). These may need to operate virtually during the pandemic - for example, the Teachers for Teachers project in Kakuma Refugee Camp that includes peer coaching and mobile mentoring (Mendenhall, 2018), but attention should be paid to ensure that this does not exclude some participants. Evidence also shows that when schools collaborate, they tend to improve more rapidly. **Networks of schools and educators** have demonstrated they can organize the diverse expertise needed to solve complex educational issues (Prenger et al., 2019; Hargreaves, 2010). These are part of the first steps towards a **learning system**. To encourage collaboration within and across schools, teams need to be motivated around the same goals and aligned across a system, which requires strong **leadership** (see *"Leadership"* section).

The concept of collaborative professionalism underlines all of these practices. **Collaborative professionalism** is a culture where educators work together as fellow professionals through planning, discussion, and feedback that aims to respond to and be inclusive of students and their communities (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2017).

Leadership

Reorient school and district leaders toward instructional and transformational leadership to improve teaching and learning

School leadership has been defined as the practice of creating supportive education environments in which teachers are able to develop their practices and engage effectively with students' learning (OECD, 2020). A review of school leadership policies and practices by UNESCO concluded that effective school

leadership that provides **instructional guidance and fosters continuous improvement** is the key to successful, large-scale, and sustainable education reform (UNESCO, 2016). This happens most powerfully when leaders support teacher learning and motivation (Leithwood et al., 2008) and create a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). This can include transforming schools into sites of professional development through mentoring and coaching, facilitating peer learning, ensuring teachers work collaboratively to facilitate improvement in instructional practices (Marzano et al., 2005), and encouraging a focus on shared goals (Chrispeels et al., 2000).

However, in the most recent OECD TALIS survey, only around half of principals said that acting as an instructional leader is something that they do often in school alongside more traditional administrative tasks (OECD, 2020). To help leaders focus more on instructional leadership rather than administration, time for instructional leadership could be freed up by using technology to assist in administrative and management functions, such as data collection and analysis and timetabling. Administrative tasks (e.g. finance, management of school resources and facilities) could be shifted to lower-cost support staff who could be shared across schools if necessary.

Studies from high-income contexts show that **districts (or middle level education structures) can also play a transformational role** in leadership for inclusion and improving teaching and learning. Despite a trend of decentralization in many countries, district leaders and managers are underutilized as strategic leaders for local change (Harris et al., 2019; UNESCO IIEP, 2018; Fullan, 2015; Leithwood, 2013). In some contexts, district leaders are often producers of data for use by the state or ministry, but not yet users of data for local strategy and decision-making. The data analysis function at the district level should shift to support data-driven planning, provide analysis to help leaders identify gaps in performance among schools, teachers, and students, and prioritize district-wide resources.

Finally, leadership as a principle - and not merely a position - should be encouraged, meaning **teachers themselves must be recognized as leaders of their profession**. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how critical it is that teachers be empowered to lead and innovate during times of change. An Education International survey of members showed that the ability to navigate the "new normal" was not determined by any algorithmic or technological product, but by the ability of teachers who had the professional space and trust to make decisions (Education International, 2020). Governments should recognize, incentivize, and invest in the growth of teacher leadership, and researchers should collect evidence on teacher leadership, especially during the pandemic and school re-openings (see Box 2 for an example).

> **Box 2:** Teacher leadership during COVID-19
>
> At Malaban ES (fishing community on the shores of Laguna de Báý) in the Philippines, Teach For Philippines teachers spearheaded the 'Gabay na Guro' program. This community project promoted home-based literacy by equipping parents with the knowledge, skills, attitude and resources to teach reading at home. This directly supported Nadine and Ramil's work on literacy in-school, and the two teachers also helped set up a home library system for their students' parents called Reading Corners
>
> **Source:** Teach For Philippines, 2020

Gather more evidence on competencies needed for effective leadership

Training and professional development are key to ensuring leaders at all levels can be effective. Research shows that school leadership training can improve student outcomes and, when successful, is highly cost-effective. Researchers in Brazil found that the Jovem de Futuro (JdF) three-year training provided to school and district leaders led to student test score increases in math and Portuguese. The training program cost about 5 percent of public expenditures per student for secondary school, while it increased the amount that students learned on average during secondary school by about 30 percent (Global School Leaders, 2020).

There is a lack of evidence on **leadership competencies and effectiveness** to inform training and professional development in many low-income countries, but a study from New York City showed that five specific leadership practices accounted for half the variation in the student outcomes measured by test scores: frequency of teacher feedback, school-wide use of student data to influence teaching practice, structures for learning-level teaching provided to students, increased class time, and staff having high expectations of student potential. The study also revealed that time spent by school leaders on coaching and targeted classroom observations were particularly helpful in raising student outcomes (Global School Leaders, 2020).

There is also limited understanding on the **most effective recruitment practices for school leadership roles and how teachers, principals, and other education personnel can become leaders, particularly in crisis situations** (Huber & Hiltmann, 2009). Certain individuals might receive preference simply based on existing recruitment systems, and biased expectations around who a leader is might prevent potentially strong leaders from being attracted. More research is needed, but recruiting leaders should include intentional consideration of political, cultural, and inclusion issues. For example, there is a disproportionately small share of school leaders in low-income countries that are female, pointing to the need to examine a multitude of biases, discriminatory practices, and systemic challenges that leaders from underrepresented groups may face (Gipson et al., 2017).

<u>Taking a systems-strengthening approach can support and align leadership at different levels of the system</u>

Education leaders are embedded in a broad set of relationships and organizations both within and outside school systems have a profound impact on how these leaders can shape the teaching that occurs inside of the classroom. **Leadership is not only distributed horizontally across people and aspects of the situation within schools, but also vertically across people and organizations in educational systems and the educational sector more broadly**. Leaders at school, district, regional, and national levels reciprocally depend on each other and must share an overarching vision and goals for teaching and learning to be effective. To support alignment of leadership across a system, **a multilevel mindset is needed, leadership needs to be examined throughout the broader educational system, noting how leadership responsibilities are distributed and managed across levels and roles** (Spillane et al., 2019).

To support a shared vision at all levels, high-performing professionals can play a role as **"system leaders"** to share their experience and practice with other schools and foster school collaboration. Using system leaders is a cost-effective and powerful way to support peer learning and increase the professionalization of education leadership. Teachers are more likely to change their practices when they see colleagues they admire – not just official leaders – championing desired improvements (Jensen et al., 2016). In addition, using high-performing head teachers to mentor others working in similar schools is effective. Professional networks of head teachers – where head teachers exchange their challenges and solutions and learn from each other to improve learning achievements in students – can increase the intrinsic motivation of head teachers and their teachers (Education Development Trust, 2017).

Social and policy dialogue

<u>Develop a supportive institutional and regulatory environment to ensure the rights and responsibilities of the education workforce, including social dialogue for policy and decision-making</u>

Decision makers must **communicate directly through social dialogue with teachers**, as no meaningful education change is achieved without the support of teachers in the classroom. Social dialogue builds trust between actors in the system and democratizes and enhances the legitimacy of the policymaking process (Education International, 2020). It ensures the expertise and experience of the workforce informs change. The path to improvement in education lies in deep and respectful inquiry into the practices that need to be changed. Once teachers agree that decision makers have understood those practices, then together, they can compare the relative merit of what to do. Deep and respectful dialogue can take different forms and be both formal and informal (Robinson, 2017).

The Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART) set out a definition of social dialogue specific to education and teachers: "Social dialogue is understood to mean all forms of **information sharing, consultation and negotiation** between educational authorities, **public and private**, and teachers and their democratically elected representatives in teachers' organizations" (ILO, 2012). These three forms should be the norm, taking

place at all levels of the system and from the very beginning of policy formation. Social dialogue should always aim to uphold the rights and responsibilities of the education workforce as set out in the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966).

It is also important to **engage roles beyond teachers, such as school leaders, district officials, and education support personnel through their representative organizations**. In Uganda and India, STiR Education consulted district officials to understand their needs and priorities to help improve the intrinsic motivation of thousands of district and subdistrict officials and 200,000 teachers. As a result, the organization provided district officials with special training and links to networks that supported their efforts to motivate teachers and bound them to the reform process (STiR & IDinsight, 2018).

Engaging stakeholders in the development of education policy requires a deliberate regulatory environment and institutional mechanisms to do so. Common stakeholder engagement strategies should aim to build on existing mechanisms where possible and expand them into multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral forums. Some countries are investing in implementing social dialogue frameworks, for example Uganda, Ghana, Malawi and Burkina, and others have established social dialogue governing bodies such as Committees for Sector Social Dialogue in Benin and Senegal, the Consultative Council in Côte d'Ivoire, and the Multi-Partite-Commission in Haiti (UNESCO, 2018). There are more general bodies for consultation and dialogue within the education sector in many countries, such as Local Education Groups (LEGs). Teachers and their organizations, as well as other civil society organizations, are important actors in these spaces and should be integrated and empowered to make their voices heard in these fora as much as possible.

Strategies can include **mapping stakeholder groups, undertaking consultations, interviews, surveys, or visiting district and school sites** (Aslam & Rawal, 2019). In addition, Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) and other instances of formalized education sector dialogue are also important opportunities to engage the perspectives of teachers and their organizations. However, this can be difficult as not all stakeholders are formally organized, particularly marginalized groups, making it difficult to engage them systematically. Evidence from the health sector suggests that unorganized or marginalized groups can be organized through **coordinated social movements, creating national user lobbies, explicit promotion of participation in policymaking through a supportive regulatory framework, and skills training and practical exposure to the policy development environment** (Kleintjes et al., 2010).

Actions to strengthen the education workforce

1 | Prioritize the health and wellbeing of the education workforce as essential workers so learning can continue

Long-term goal:

- All education systems to uphold the labor and human rights of the workforce to decent work, support and regular pay, as well as coordinate and fund evidence-based cross-sectoral policies and practices that ensure their safety, health, and wellbeing, including psychosocial support and safe environments for teaching and learning.

Immediate asks:

- International organizations to establish and maintain clear good practice international guidelines on the education response to COVID-19, informed by the most up-to-date public health evidence for managing and controlling the transmission of COVID-19 within schools and the community. These should also consider the workforce's socio-emotional and resilience needs, be developed in collaboration with the education, health, and social sectors, and be accessible and disseminated widely. See *"Teachers and Teaching"* section for more detailed recommendations and resources.
- National and local governments to fund and implement these guidelines and monitor school re-openings to contextualize COVID-19 and post-pandemic responses.
- National and local governments to preserve the rights and responsibilities of the workforce including decent work, support and regular and timely pay, whether they are in the public or private sector.
- School leaders, teachers, and other members of the education workforce (through their representative organizations) to actively participate in planning and preparing for school re-openings, prioritizing their and their students' health and wellbeing.
- Governments and donors to increase their multi-sectoral funding and resource mobilization efforts so the necessary salaries and resources can be provided to the education workforce, considering them as frontline workers.
- Researchers in education collaborate with the health and social sectors to produce the most up-to-date research to inform school re-openings and pandemic responses. Researchers collect and share empirical data on school re-opening and capture learnings from new delivery models, learning arrangements, and cross-sectoral collaboration.

2| Create school-centered learning teams of qualified teachers and support roles to get the most marginalized children back into school (when and where safe) and learning

Long-term goal:

- A professionalized education workforce that optimizes the skills and expertise of teachers and the broader education workforce to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and resilience of education systems for learning, equity, and inclusion.

Immediate asks:

- National and local governments to use data-driven approaches to improve the quality and availability of teachers in the most marginalized areas, for example through the re-allocation of qualified teachers at a local level, supported by incentives to address workforce needs and gender, inclusion, and specific subject gaps; and sharing shortage expertise and specialist skills across schools in-person and remotely.
- National and local governments to work with teacher training institutions to design and initiate the implementation of alternative routes into teaching that address the longer-term gaps through recruiting teachers directly from underserved areas, and providing school-based training, mentoring, and distance learning to the same professional standard as other routes.
- Local governments and school leaders to recruit and train parents, and members of the community as community education workers, to work with qualified teachers in teacher-led learning teams to support school re-opening and/or continuity of learning. Community education workers to undertake community orientated activities (for example, targeted outreach to the most vulnerable children to get them back into school or to provide them with learning resources); act as a multi-way communication focal point; address learner welfare and wellbeing issues; liaise with other community based roles such as community health workers to ensure health and other needs are met; they could also provide remedial learning support under the guidance of a qualified teacher (see Save Our Future background paper *From Schooling to Learning for All: Reorienting Curriculum and Targeting Instruction*). Over time, governments should take steps to professionalize this community education worker role in its own right and/or develop it as part of an alternative route into teaching.
- School leaders, teachers, and other members of the education workforce to actively participate in designing and implementing approaches to improve the number of qualified teachers in marginalized areas and in the creation of learning teams.
- Researchers to work with governments, the education workforce, and their representative organizations to capture lessons learnt and evidence from aiming to increase the number of qualified teachers in underserved areas and creating learning teams.
- Governments and donors to mobilize funding to support the increase in qualified teachers in underserved areas, the creation of teacher-led learning teams, and their evaluation.

3| Support leaders and teacher-led learning teams with evidence-based and collaborative approaches to preparation and continuing professional development, incorporating remote ways of teaching and learning

Long-term goal:

- A professionalized education workforce functioning with effective learning teams, supported by sustained investment in initial preparation and continuing professional development and driven by strong leadership at all levels of the system.

Immediate asks:

- National and local governments to provide clear expectations, guidelines, and priorities for leaders, teachers, teacher training institutions, and other members of learning teams, supported by regular multi-way communication and flexibility to adapt based on need and evidence from the ground.
- National and local governments to work with teacher education institutions, school leaders, and teachers to rapidly develop and provide free professional development focused on these priorities (mentioned above) – which may include a focus on foundational subjects and pedagogical skills, assessment for learning, teaching at the right level, blended and remote learning approaches, and how to work collaboratively in learning teams (see Save Our Future background paper *From Schooling to Learning for All: Reorienting Curriculum and Targeting Instruction*). Professional development should be delivered through school-centered, regular training focused on effective teaching practices for improved learning outcomes within the context, and supported by materials, coaching, and collaboration opportunities. Some forms of EdTech have the potential to enhance the quality, reach, and flexibility of teacher professional development (see Save Our Future background paper *EdTech and COVID-19 Response*).
- National and local governments to rapidly develop professional development for school and district leaders that enables them to consider evidence-based approaches to remote learning; facilitate school-centered teacher professional development; provide data-driven instructional leadership; recruit, develop, and lead learning teams; and empower leadership at all levels to drive innovation and improvement in learning.
- Local governments to identify system leaders or district roles to facilitate collaboration, learning, and the sharing of resources and innovation across schools through communities of practice and peer learning communities focused on improving learning. This could include partnering low and high-performing schools and should complement supportive supervision and coaching for school leaders where possible.
- National governments to work with teacher education institutions to take initial steps to improve the quality and relevance of initial teacher education. Teacher training for foundational levels could be prioritized with curriculum alignment, evidence-based strategies on how to teach beginning literacy and numeracy, and what is needed to get children to progress at the expected rate of progress for each grade.

- Researchers to work with school leaders and teachers to evaluate and document lessons on effective ways to support leaders, teachers, and learning teams, capturing what has worked and what has not and how to better prepare for future crises.
- Donors to stop funding professional development approaches that are ineffective and instead provide funding for evidence-based approaches that support leaders and teacher-led learning teams to be effective and to evaluate and share lessons on how these are implemented.

4| Establish a supportive institutional and regulatory environment to recognize and empower the rights of the workforce to participate in social and policy dialogue and decision making and enable their expertise and insights to inform change

Long-term goal:

- Education systems with well-established mechanisms and normative practices for engaging with the education workforce through their representative organizations at all levels of policy formation and other forms of education decision making.

Immediate asks:

- International organizations, such as UNESCO, EI, and ILO to communicate guidelines and training to the key parties, advocate for governments to undertake social and policy dialogue, and hold governments to account for upholding the status of the teaching profession.
- National and local governments to create the policies and structures, including legislative measures, to ensure fair, inclusive, and effective social and policy dialogue with members of the workforce in both public and private sectors and proactively engage the workforce in formal decision making, including in Local Education Groups or their equivalent. This dialogue should be continuous so it can respond in a timely way to changing contexts.
- Teachers and other members of the workforce to proactively lead social and policy dialogue, acting as agents of change, as well as actively participate in Joint Sector Reviews and other formal education sector dialogue convenings.
- Civil society and local leaders to hold elected officials and education authorities accountable for holding social and policy dialogue with the workforce and implementing the results.
- Researchers to involve education unions in their work and evaluate the most effective approaches for social and policy dialogue and share the learnings.
- Governments and donors to provide funding for social and policy dialogue to take place as standard practice in all education reforms.

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