



The Commonwealth  
Education Hub

# Quality Standards in Education

Discussion Summary

This e-Discussion was conducted by The Commonwealth Education Hub between  
09 May 2016 and 31 May 2016.

# Quality Standards in Education

## *Introduction*

Quality in education is centre stage to SDG4, and is supported by a general global commitment to improving quality in education. Since the start of the millennium, substantial improvements have been made across the Commonwealth and beyond (including for student-teacher ratios, assessment of learning outcomes, and in student learning outcomes themselves), however significant issues persist.

Quality education is largely dependent on trained facilitators/teachers, a learner-centred approach, good resources and facilities, relevant curricula and material, family and community support, gender-sensitive design, and a safe and conducive learning environment. Education is a complex system, requiring a holistic education system with a national framework that clearly outlines fundamental elements of quality assurance, which is the bedrock of quality education. Quality standards must be applied to both public and private sector education, and be backed by a comprehensive regulatory regime.

The Education Hub ran a three-week eDiscussion exploring quality standards in education. The objective of the three-week discussion was to bring together practitioners, academics and policymakers to discuss what different stakeholders can do to ensure quality in education and the use of quality standards.

The discussion reached out to over 750 participants, comprising representatives from Education Ministries, development organisations, the private sector and academia. Responses were received from 11 countries across all Commonwealth regions and beyond, and were moderated by Dr. Siti Tapsir, Deputy Director General, Department of Higher Education in the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia.

## About The Education Hub



Conceived as a ‘network of networks,’ The Commonwealth Education Hub is intended to promote knowledge sharing and collaboration among policy-makers and practitioners across the Commonwealth. Through its virtual ‘one-stop-shop,’ the Hub offers an array of online knowledge services designed to enable easier access to relevant information and resources, as well as to strengthen the collaborative context within which approaches, solutions, and best practices can be shared and adopted at scale across the Commonwealth, and perhaps even more widely.

[www.thecommonwealth-educationhub.net](http://www.thecommonwealth-educationhub.net)



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## Discussion Summary

### Key Points

- Quality in education has yet to be defined.
- The relevance of education with each context must be understood.
- Education has multiple purposes.
- Education must prepare people “beyond the qualification”.
- There needs to be a distinction between quality inputs, process and outputs.
- Education must develop productive and participatory citizens.

### Issues discussed

#### Definition/Complexity in identifying quality education

Despite being in mainstream discourse, a widely accepted definition of quality in education remains elusive. This challenge is not new, as highlighted by the quote provided by Mr. Mishra - “Quality...you know what it is, yet don’t know what it is” (Pirsig 1974). Quality in education was understood as meaning different things to different people, different within different contexts, illustrating the complexity in identifying quality education. Proposed definitions of quality in education included discussions around the notions of flexibility and variation within different contexts, and of quality in education as an aspirational goal. It was articulated by Mr. Williams that discussing quality requires distinguishing between “quality of inputs (teachers, books, curriculum frameworks, facilities), quality of process (the learning experience, classroom interactions, etc.), and quality outputs (characteristics learners have developed, not just their exam scores)”, whilst Mr. Chandramohan suggested that quality education should be contextualised “in terms of educational sectors, providers, users, delivery mechanisms, official quality assurance/enhancement institutions, and market/industry opinion makers/influencers.”

It was conceded that education has multiple purposes - both for individuals and society as a whole. Various themes emerged around the purpose of quality education including those in relation to socioeconomic development, values and citizenship, equity, wellbeing, and individual attributes and abilities.

## **Quality education - micro perspective**

Contributions spoke to quality in education which supports personal development. This included supporting wellbeing, livelihood generation and integration into society, empowering the learner and building resilience. It was stressed that quality in education for the individual is not fundamentally about student learning outcomes and credentials, but embodies more broadly learning and characteristics which support good quality of life (and sustainable development more broadly as discussed in the next section). Outcomes of quality education discussed included knowledge and hard skills, but also soft skills, attitudes and attributes such as critical thinking, values, awareness and tolerance. As Dr. Ahmad notes, “schools have to adapt in preparing the students with the skills beyond good paper qualifications.” Quality education was discussed as the development of the learner as a whole, and in supporting the learner across the life course - including transitioning from one education level to another, into the workforce, and as a contributing member of society.

## **Quality education - macro perspective**

More broadly than the individual, is the need for quality education for improving society and developing productive and participatory citizens that support sustainable development and the common good. Contributors discussed the links between what the individual learns and the influence of this on wider society, primarily the interrelationships between quality in education and economic development, poverty eradication, political stability, global citizenship and resilience. Also discussed to a lesser extent was the link to environmental health and protection, and empowerment of women. As Mr. Beukes suggests, “once a person has completed their formal learning, they should ideally be ready to enter the workforce and contribute to the economy”, with outcomes (such as knowledge, skills and attitudes) supporting positive participation in society.

The discussion focused predominantly on the link between education and the economy, and developing citizens that participate economically and contribute to global competitiveness. Various contributors stressed that quality education links education and the economy, aligning with national needs and targets. This was echoed by Ms. Gordon’s suggestion that “[youth] unemployment is an indictment of the quality of education to which they have been exposed.”

## **Factors which influence quality in education**

Education occurs within a complex and dynamic environment with various influences affecting quality, with changing and emerging challenges. As surmised by Mr. Williams, “[quality] is dependent on a wide variety of inputs, institutional arrangements and contextual factors. There is no single ‘golden key’.” There is no singular factor which influences education quality, with different factors emerging and having greater or lesser influence dependent on the contexts.

Various key factors which may influence education quality were raised by contributors, including teacher-learner interaction, the learning environment and focus, cultural dimensions, and investment in education. The primary focus, however, was on teachers - including their abilities, capacities and motivations. This sentiment was exemplified by Ms. Meoli’s statement that “well trained, skilled and knowledgeable teachers... [are] the foundation for a high quality education system and quality teaching”. Whilst there is no ‘golden key’, teachers may act as a gateway.

Factors of influence raised by participants included:

- Teacher training and development.
- Relevant curriculum, and learner-focused/friendly pedagogy and material/resources which support both academic achievement and personal development.
- Flexibility to adapt to modern learning needs (e.g. relevant knowledge and skills such as computer literacy).
- The presence of positive role models.
- Infrastructure availability and access (e.g. computers and single-gender hygiene facilities).
- Equitable and inclusive access.
- Continuity of service/stable educational environments.
- Quality assurance standards and comprehensive regulatory regimes.
- Class size/student-teacher ratios.
- Working conditions for teachers, including adequate compensation and availability of resources.
- Link between education and current and future economic needs.
- Sustainable investment in education (including sufficient remuneration for teachers and investment in resources).
- Inclusion of all stakeholders (ensuring quality in education is not the singular responsibility of anyone, but the collective responsibility of all - students, parents, teachers, government, regulatory bodies, institutions and communities all have roles to play.)

The discussion highlighted that quality cannot be achieved through a singular focus, and exists within a dynamic ecosystem. This ecosystem needs to take into account the interrelationships shaping education and learner outcomes within the given context of the environment.

### **Governance and quality standards in education**

The notions of governance and standards for quality in education surfaced throughout the discussion. It was accepted that good governance and use of quality standards are critical to ensuring quality in education. Participants suggested the need for engagement and collective participation and accountability, monitoring and evaluation, transparency and clear accountability and responsibility frameworks to support the development and sustained delivery of quality in education.

Contributors suggested the need for established international standards, and equally that there cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach to standards for quality in education, and that approaches require some level of tailoring to national context. It was suggested that countries need standards in relation to:

1. Curriculum standards.
2. Professional standards for educational personnel at all levels - training and performance.
3. Standards for the physical environment and the provision of educational materials.
4. Regulatory systems that ensure accountability of educational professionals.
5. Health of the learners.

South Africa was put forth as a country that has been able to develop and implement both national and internationally recognised Qualification Frameworks at the tertiary level. Policy and regulatory efforts in Lesotho and Pakistan to improve quality in education were also commended by contributors.

## Related Resources

*From James Keevy, South Africa*

- [Level-setting and recognition of learning outcomes](#), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

*From Sanjaya Mishra, Commonwealth of Learning*

- [Generalist Case Management](#) - A Method of Human Service delivery, Marianne Woodside and Tricia McClam, University of Tennessee. Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning.

*From Anja Nielsen, United Kingdom*

- [Schools online - Core Skills](#) - British Council.

*From Peter Williams, United Kingdom*

- [Qualitative Aspects of Educational Planning](#), IIEP, C. E. Beeby.

*From John Daniel, Canada*

- [Delors Report](#), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- [UWC Educational Model](#), The United World Colleges (International).

*From Paul West, The Commonwealth Secretariat*

- [Revisiting Learning: The Treasure within - Assessing the influence of the 1996 Delors Report](#), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

*From Nola Stair, Jamaica*

- [The Greenwich Graduate - our vision for the institution and its students](#), The University of Greenwich.

*From Katarina Meoli, Australia*

- [The Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures.](#)
- [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.](#)
- [Australian Professional Standard for Principals.](#)
- [Preparing Secondary Students for Work.](#)
- [Users Guide to the Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015.](#)
- [The Safe Schools Hub.](#)

*From Nnenna Eluwa, Nigeria*

- [A Transdisciplinary Vision for Concerted Action.](#) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

From The Facilitation Team, Education Hub

- [Sustainable Development Goal 4](#).
- [Holistic Quality Education Ecosystem](#) (Draft for discussion).
- [Education Hub Quality Standards Knowledge page](#).

## Discussion Question

**Subject:** [eduhub] DISCUSSION: Quality standards in education – Discussion ends 30 May 2016

Dear Colleague,

Quality in education is centre stage to [SDG4](#), and is supported by a general global commitment to improving quality in education. Since the start of the millennium, substantial improvements have been made across the Commonwealth and beyond (including for student-teacher ratios, assessment of learning outcomes, and in student learning outcomes themselves), however significant issues persist.

Quality education is largely dependent on trained facilitators/teachers, a learner-centred approach, good resources and facilities, relevant curricula and material, family and community support, gender-sensitive design, and a safe and conducive learning environment. Education is a complex system, requiring a [holistic education system](#) with a national framework that clearly outlines fundamental elements of quality assurance is the bedrock of quality education. Quality standards must be applied to both the public and private sector education, and be backed by a comprehensive regulatory regime.

Further [background information](#) on the topic is available on the Education Hub website.

The following questions will be used to guide this discussion:

1. *What are the factors that influence or determine the quality of education, and how do these relate to the purpose of and indicators of quality education?*
2. *Are there students/graduates' attributes beyond grades and outcomes that should be focused on (such as critical thinking, analytical skills, soft skills)?*
3. *What can quality education contribute to nation building? (for industry, being future ready, developing national and global citizenry).*

This discussion is being jointly facilitated with the Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia, and moderated by Dr. Siti H TAPSIR, Deputy Director General, Department of Higher Education in the Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia. Prior to her current role, Ms Tapsir was the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic and Internationalisation) at the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. This discussion will close on 30 May 2016.

Following this discussion, the Commonwealth Secretariat will be developing a policy brief on quality standards in education, with further consultation from Commonwealth Ministries of Education.

We look forward to an engaging and productive discussion.

Warm regards,

**The Facilitation Team**

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## Full Responses

### Participant responses:

1. Kimberly King-Jupiter, United States
2. Allah Bakhsh Malik, Pakistan
3. Winsome Gordon, Jamaica
4. James Keevy, South Africa
5. Sanjaya Mishra, Commonwealth of Learning
6. Thabiso Nyabanyaba, Lesotho
7. George Njoroge, Commonwealth Student Association
8. Anja Nielsen, United Kingdom
9. Balasubramanyam Chandramohan, United Kingdom
10. Farman Ullah Anjum, Pakistan
11. Winsome Gordon, Jamaica (2<sup>nd</sup> response)
12. Peter Williams, United Kingdom
13. John Daniel, Canada
14. Paul West, The Commonwealth Secretariat
15. Nola Stair, Jamaica
16. Hjh Rusmini bt. Ku Ahmad, Malaysia
17. Ved Goel, United Kingdom
18. John Arnesen, South Africa
19. Swati Sharma, India
20. Kishore Singh, India
21. Chris Beukes, South Africa
22. Katarina Meoli, Australia
23. Nnenna Eluwa, Nigeria

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#### Kimberly King-Jupiter, United States

Education has multiple purposes. From a community perspective, the ability that students have to participate in existing and create future industries is paramount to a country's global competitiveness. However, people need to be educated to also think about and theorize about their existence in order to change it. Education is as much about employment as it is about liberation. Quality in higher education means that when a student earns credentials, they embody the characteristics associated with learning outcomes. Unfortunately, to develop a higher education system that reflects quality requires an external body that stamps the institutions worthy of awarding degrees. This system should be regional so it is not embedded in national politics but the politic of excellence in higher education. It should be a system of peer-review that allows institutions to set specific institutional goals focused on improving institutional quality assurance.

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#### *Moderator's Note, Siti H Tapsir*

Quality assurance must be independent and free from political and interest group intervention. However, to achieve this state a good education policy, governance and framework is necessary.

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#### *Allah Bakhsh Malik, Pakistan*

Quality Education is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals and SDG 4 is quint-essential pre-requisite for broader context of development. The key factors that influence the quality of education are; qualified and satisfied teachers, enabling teaching-learning environment and relevant curriculum, immaculate syllabus and child-focused and child-friendly textbooks. The central and the key figure, however,

remains teacher and teacher alone. The teacher as an experiential practitioner may overcome some of the inadequacies in terms of access, particularly in the far-flung areas in developing countries. Our three decades experience in Pakistan and SAARC Countries has significantly demonstrated that quality teachers are the chief determinant for quality education.

Life-skills are absolutely essential attributes towards a successful and meaningful life. The attributes; like critical thinking, inquiry into knowledge, understanding other's point of view, pluralism, inclusiveness, tolerance, analysis, synthesis and global citizenship are important accoutrements for promising citizenship in the new millennium and beyond. While the educators are concentrating on grades and student learning outcomes, it is high time to concentrate on soft-skills as well.

Quality education is in fact the foundation for nation-building, economic growth, holistic and sustainable development. With the pace of development in the contemporary world and progress being made through electronic super highways, the peaceful and congenial global citizenship is the future for all nations. While quality education is of paramount importance for nation building, it is also sine quo non for global citizenry. It is a challenge for academics today to empower the young generation through quality education enabling them to look-forward not only for nation-building but also living in a global village with peace, tranquillity and perfect repose of a global society.

The bench-marks and minimum international quality standards will definitely help to achieve the goals and targets of quality education. Government of Pakistan through Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has established National Curriculum Council with the mandate to develop minimum national standards for federating units and special areas. It is a matter of great satisfaction that Pakistan has been successful in developing minimum national quality standards in all subjects being taught from Grade I - XII. We will be happy to share our expertise and documents with the rest of the world pro-bono and are equally interested to learn from the best international experiences around the globe.

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***Moderator's Note, Siti H Tapsir***

Not only education is a complex and dynamic field in itself, but it is also subjected to continuous emerging challenges. In the era of internet of things and internet of everything, learners have now access to knowledge and information at a touch of a button. The multi-faceted nature of education has changed the role of education institutions and teachers as the traditional form embodiment of knowledge to curators of learning.

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***Winsome Gordon, Jamaica***

I like this dialogue. It is very interesting and the contributions speak to the complexity of identifying quality education.

*Question 1:* If we define quality education as meaningful education for personal development and sustained socio-economic and cultural development, then quality education would be directly related to the outcomes in these respects, and indicators determined accordingly.

Countries would need national standards for education. Such standards would include:

1. Curriculum standards
2. Professional standards for educational personnel at all levels - training and performance
3. Standards for the physical environment and the provision of educational materials
4. Regulatory systems that ensure accountability of educational professionals.
5. Health of the learners

Parents are major stakeholders and should play a role in partnering with the schools to provide quality education.

The expected outcomes of schooling should be clearly aligned to values, livelihood and development. The massive unemployment and lack of occupation among youth is an indictment on the quality of education to which they have been exposed.

For education to be meaningful, it has to be sufficiently flexible to meet the individual needs while responding to national development targets.

*Question 2:* From the earliest stage children need to acquire human values that enable them to respect life and care and live in peace with each other. Soft skills should include conflict resolution, civic pride and a positive sense of self. Education should enable the establishment of a self-identity that leads to understanding oneself and to personal stability. Education has quality when it is transformative.

*Question 3:* Secondary education should be closely linked to industries. It should stimulate invention and development of new knowledge through an investigative and integrated approach to learning. STEM (Science, Technology, Education and Mathematics) has become a buzz word and its now STEAM-A for the ARTS. For the benefit of Jamaica I would like to add sports so that the term becomes STEAMS. In an age of technology, many of our countries are simply consumers.

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### ***James Keevy, South Africa***

This is a really important discussion on standards and is certainly being more mainstream in the international discourse on quality in education. We first need to make sure we have a common understanding of "standards" as the concept is spoken about and applied in many ways. In South Africa we are currently looking at two levels, or types, of standards:

1. The first is professional practice standards for teachers. These standards describe the behavioral and ethical aspects of what is to be expected of a teacher. Professional standards provide a broad framework that guides most aspects of the system that relate to teaching, including induction, continuing professional development, entrance to the profession, licensing and adherence to a code of conduct.
2. The second level is that of content or subject standards for teacher education. These standards describe the minimum sets of knowledge, skills and competences that are expected from a teacher. Subject standards guide the development of initial teacher education curricula. (A recent UNESCO publication provides useful conceptual clarity on the differentiation between the knowledge, skills and competencies domains - see <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002428/242887e.pdf>).

The debate in South Africa at the moment is whether these two levels or types of standards represent a "false dichotomy" that should be challenged. Advice and suggestions from members of this discussion group will be welcomed.

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### ***Sanjaya Mishra, Commonwealth of Learning***

At the outset, I would like to thank the Education Hub of the Commonwealth for starting this discussion on quality education. While I will draw upon my experiences in various organisations in articulating my views, these are personal.

First, the notion of quality in education is the most misused, as it means many things to many people and differs according to the level of education. The notion of quality shifts from learning outcomes to infrastructure and employability. As Pirsig (1974) said "Quality... you know what it is, yet don't know what it is"! The lack of understanding of quality or everybody knows quality is the biggest problem that education faces today. A specific notion of quality in one context will not fit the purpose in another context. It is important to note that many university rankings are in business, and some governments have also started their own university rankings. For the public, these ranks show quality, while the parameters used may not be valid for many contexts. Nevertheless, they do create public perception of quality.

Second, who ensures quality and how? Is it the responsibility of the government, quality assurance agency, educational institution or the teachers? Certainly, it can't be the sole responsibility of any of these. When everyone is responsible, then no one is really responsible!

Third, what support mechanisms are in place for quality education? Is it a rhetoric only? No government wants poor quality education for their citizens. But, they fall short of providing the necessary support mechanisms and resources to make quality education happen. Range of issues, including lack of trained teachers, poor compensation and non-payment of salary, infrastructures in schools and colleges, are determined by budgetary allocation for education. While availability of funds may not be sufficient to bring in quality, it is a necessary pre-condition.

The holistic framework for quality education provides several dimensions of quality within national qualifications framework. And to focus on the questions for the discussion, these are helpful starting points. The problem remains in implementation of quality frameworks, guidelines and toolkits that are available in abundance. It is important to define quality in each and every educational system and sub-system, at national, provincial, as well as at every levels of education and institution and clearly write down what it means to offer quality education. Once quality is understood by all stakeholders in their own contexts, there is better possibility of improving quality by putting in the needed resources and expertise. Neither teachers nor infrastructure alone could improve quality. Focusing only on any one of the aspects of educational ecosystem would not help improve quality. Thus, from a national perspective, quality education parameters may like to include human capital development for national building, while from the industry perspective, they would like to see quality education as employable graduates who can not only perform skills for routine jobs but also possess needed analytical, critical, and problem solving skills.

Therefore, quality education in my humble opinion is an aspirational goal that is different in different contexts and should be seen as a work in progress towards excellence.

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***Moderator's Note, Siti H Tapsir***

Outcomes of quality education encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation of society.

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***Thabiso Nyabanyaba, Lesotho***

The knowledge and information era has raised the importance of higher education and the need to 'upskill' the workforce. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Lesotho are currently going through the rigorous process of programme accreditation under the Council on Higher Education. The pressure brought about by the external quality assurance bodies in developing countries like Lesotho has come with serious challenges to how to respond to the quality imperative in higher education. The accreditation process is turning out to be an extremely intensive exercise requiring high levels of investments from both the regulatory bodies and the institutions. Here in Lesotho, this resource intensive imperative comes at the time when the government continues to reduce financial assistance to higher education institutions, with government subvention to the university having dropped from a meagre (in comparison with other HEIs in the region) M132 million (US\$8.5 million) to M105 million (US\$6.8 million) between 2008 and 2013.

Within the external quality assurance context, the relevant body being the Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee in Lesotho, the process of accreditation has been stretched almost to exasperation by the emergence of cross-border and private higher education institutions. The resources required to monitor the quality of higher education has thus been raised by this trend and expertise in this area being still at its infancy in developing countries. Therefore, this has put immense pressure on regulatory bodies, including that of steering the ministries of education away from a focus on political expediency towards the quality imperative in the context where the legal framework sometimes does not enable efficient and effective implementation of quality recommendations. And for public higher education institutions, this has meant that they can no longer take for granted that resources will always be available and that they will receive unconditional support. Therefore, public HEIs are being forced to improve the quality and relevance of their programmes even in this context of declining resources.

It has become evident from this intensive accreditation process that institutions need to facilitate a paradigm shift away from a focus on basic skills towards high quality competencies that include problem-solving abilities, team-work and independent initiative. I am part of an initiative to set up internal quality assurance at the only public higher education institution in Lesotho, a responsibility that is compelling me to forget about lamenting our limitations and focus on opportunities for building a culture of quality teaching and learning. The first obvious hurdle has been raising the scholarship of teaching in the institution while maintaining a sharp focus on the scholarship of research. The dilemma in this task is that the lack of emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning over the years has resulted in a general regard that while research needs to be rigorous and well-supported, teaching and learning can be achieved through a 'quick job' without much systematic approach or peer review. This is an area that I feel passionate about: the need for internal quality assurance systems to be strengthened in order to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is improved and that people who teach in our institutions have been trained to facilitate quality learning experiences. My question has been that while I have observed high levels of appreciation among colleagues in higher education for the quality imperative, and notwithstanding the realization of the need to overhaul teaching in HEIs, how does one maintain high levels of commitment towards quality teaching and learning in the contexts of such serious resource constraints in developing countries?

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***Moderator's Note, Siti H Tapsir***

A good educational governance leads to a quality education that requires collective participation and collective accountability, formulation of strategies and monitoring performance, transparency, clear accountability and responsibility framework.

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***George Njoroge, Commonwealth Student Association***

Now more than ever, in the spirit of an "Inclusive Commonwealth" and Article XIII of the Charter of the Commonwealth, there is need to include youth and students in assuring the quality of education in the various Commonwealth countries. National Teacher Unions are regularly consulted, and their views considered whenever quality assurance policies and frameworks are being developed. The same platform needs to be extended to student organisations.

The Education 2030 Framework for Action also gives space for this kind of engagement.

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***Anja Nielsen, United Kingdom***

The quality of education is the new fight for the Sustainable Development Goals; enrolment is no longer enough. This development is one that should be celebrated, as the global community strives to ensure that all young people receive an education that will afford them equal opportunities for the future. As such, this discussion is most timely and welcome.

*1. What are the factors that influence or determine the quality of education, and how do these relate to the purpose of and indicators of quality education?*

There are two separate but related points that I wish to highlight in relation to this question. The first of these is the importance of teachers to education, as many colleagues have already noted. Quality teachers, equipped with the appropriate subject knowledge and pedagogical skills to deliver a culturally and age appropriate curriculum, are vital to ensuring a high standard of teaching. Linked to this is suitable student to teacher ratios. Though in 2011 the OECD noted that 'overall the evidence of the effects of differences in class size on student performance is weak,' research has shown 'a positive relationship between smaller class size and aspects of teachers' working conditions and outcomes.' Better working conditions for teachers, with more resources for teaching, would encourage teachers to remain in the profession, and their skills and experience remain with them. This, presumably, would lead to longer term positive results for an education system as a whole.

Furthermore, more satisfied teachers would, presumably, have more resources to address the other point I wish to raise; the importance of the psychological, social and emotional impact of schools. Education is far more than simply a matter of learning to read and write; children learn many other vital skills (not least socially) through

schooling, to which teachers contribute greatly. Solid indicators of a quality education include resilience, social skills, and academic ability. Teachers are key to all three. This is especially important to consider in conflict and disaster zones.

*2. Are there students/graduates' attributes beyond grades and outcomes that should be focused on (such as critical thinking, analytical skills, soft skills)?*

The aforementioned social and resilience skills aside, other skills outside of academics are also critical to assessing a quality education. Employers are increasingly looking for 'Core Skills', such as those identified by the [British Council](#): Communication and Collaboration, Creativity, Critical Thinking and problem solving, Citizenship, Student Leadership and Digital Literacy.

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***Balasubramanyam Chandramohan, United Kingdom***

In my response, I would like to draw on my experience of teaching and learning, research, and academic administration at different educational institutions in the UK, continental Europe, Africa and Asia, and on my current work as a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London on 'Transnational Education in the Commonwealth'. The views expressed here are my own and do not represent those of the institutions I serve(d).

*1. What are the factors that influence or determine the quality of education, and how do these relate to the purpose of and indicators of quality education?*

The idea of 'Quality of Education' defies any single definition and needs to be contextualized in terms of educational sectors, providers, users, delivery mechanisms, official quality assurance/enhancement institutions, and market/industry opinion makers/influencers.

Thus, comparisons become difficult or get distorted in headline-grabbing celebrations or angst of public figures such as politicians or vested interests and/or in discussions in the mass media.

The variables/factors that influence or determine the quality of education and how they relate to the purpose and indicators of quality have to be considered in terms of time (period under discussion), space (region/country/state) and processes and outcomes related to the delivery/assessment/validation mechanisms used.

Institutions in the Commonwealth family can help to discuss and achieve a broad and rolling consensus on benchmarks of quality of education and implementation strategies by sharing individual and collective experience of member countries. Commonwealth's non-treaty status can be helpful in reaching agreements on the direction of travel, even though it may not be useful in enforcing standards or quality frameworks as in the case of some treaty-based organisations.

*2. Are there students/graduates' attributes beyond grades and outcomes that should be focused on (such as critical thinking, analytical skills, soft skills)?*

The notion of graduate attributes is based on independent learning, which generally includes critical thinking, analytical skills, and soft skills, although these may not be foregrounded or explicitly demanded in some assessment/validation procedures.

*3. What can quality education contribute to nation building? (for industry, being future ready, developing national and global citizenry).*

The overriding contribution that quality education can make is in the sphere of upholding the integrity of educational and other institutions. The trust that can be placed in the product of formal education relies on objective measurements that support replicability and subjective perceptions of its quality by a range of its users - especially the learner. Producing competent and confident school leavers, graduates, postgraduates and professionals can help in nation building in material as well as moral spheres.

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***Farman Ullah Anjum, Pakistan***

Developing world is going through the challenge of Access and quality, two opposite things not meeting each other at any point. On the basis of experience and exposure to education, there is a need of two strategies: Strategy of access, and strategy of quality. The marginalized people need access which is no doubt a throw away approach as we tackle the emergencies and the quality where the inclusion part is accomplished. When we talk of quality, there is a danger that marginalized will remain out. Quality always comes with cost and there are a number of factors to quality which need a close observation.

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***Moderator's Note, Siti H Tapsir***

Quality education is beyond compliance of regulatory standards and quality oversight. Quality education is a culture in itself.

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***Winsome Gordon, Jamaica***

There is no magic to quality education. In our developing countries, if quality infrastructure is not in place and regulated, the system operates on political expediency referenced by Thabiso. Culture can grow but there is an immediacy that has to be forged, particularly with respect to education provided for learners in disadvantageous situations. (poor circumstances)

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***Moderator's Note, Siti H Tapsir***

A healthy and tolerance socio-emotional and interaction sphere provides conducive learning environment for meaningful learning experience for learners. Such a learning environment is free of peer pressure, bullying and discrimination. Another important aspect in learning sphere is the safety and security of the learning environment from any form of physical and non-physical threats.

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***Peter Williams, United Kingdom***

Education's basic purpose is to promote development of the learners' capacities and to lead them out (the Latin roots of the word 'education' being 'e-ducere' in Latin or to 'lead out' in English) of their prior condition to greater awareness, understanding, knowledge and creativity.

It follows that good quality education in terms of the learning process can take place with any level of material resources. As many of us have experienced in our personal lives, whatever the level of development of the society in which we live, an instructor poorly qualified on paper may nevertheless be a high quality teacher in terms of her or his capacity to encourage and excite the pupils in their care and may serve as an inspirational role model. This is not to downplay the value of teacher qualifications in terms of academic achievement and pedagogical skill.

Even when it does not achieve the exam results that would take it to the top of the national league tables, a school may be in the first rank of excellence for what it achieves with limited resources and underperforming entrants. In terms of 'value added' and progress of the learners in its care an under-resourced school may be the best in its locality, with an even more impressive record than its prestigious rival which admits only the cleverest and wealthiest entrants and unsurprisingly comes out 'top' in terms of the number of 'A' grades.

Quality in education is not just about range and sophistication of inputs, or outputs as expressed by scores on final exams. Education process and the experience of learning is an important dimension of quality. Thus the character of school life and of human relationships in school are important in themselves - a nursery, school or college where pupils are fearful, abused and unhappy, and made to feel inferior because of their disabilities or family or social and cultural background, can hardly be called a good quality institution even when its exam results are impressive. In countries where expectation of life is 60 or less, a large part of the population spends a quarter of their lives attending education institutions: so that this phase is not just 'preparation for life', it is life. From this standpoint, some of the 'efficiency' measures used by international agencies and others in their

assessments of education systems are way off target - they treat pupils who have attended school for four or five years but who have not passed the primary school leaving exam as having 'learned' nothing at all; whereas a young person's grasp of the way modern society works and the different groups that make it up may have been totally transformed. I wouldn't go further than 'may', because I am certainly not arguing that attendance at a poor quality school for ten years automatically confers great benefit!

All I am doing here is to follow others in making the unoriginal point that in discussing quality of education one needs to distinguish quality of inputs (teachers, books, curriculum framework, facilities) quality of process (the learning experience, classroom interactions etc), and quality of outputs (characteristics learners have developed, not just their exam scores). Nearly 50 years ago in 1969 I first read the series of essays in *Qualitative Aspects of Educational Planning* edited for IIEP by the incomparably wise and compassionate C. E. Beeby, a volume I would recommend to anyone tempted to refer to quality of education (or that ghastly expression 'quality education!') in a casual way as if the whole world knows precisely what is meant.

Four more points:

1. As others in this discussion have emphasised, the quality of the outputs from the education system is dependent on a wide variety of inputs, institutional arrangements, and contextual factors. There is no single 'golden key'.
2. Probably, however, as others have said the quality of teachers and arrangements for deploying them have most impact on learning - and here issues of skill and character, teacher motivation and morale, continuity of service in the same school so creating a stable environment are important. Class size is crucial for the character and intensity of teacher-learner relationships. It does not escape notice that while, in the face of vehement dissent by teachers' representatives, many clever people argue that class sizes of 50 or more are not necessarily injurious to quality (usually as measured only by exam scores!), these same pundits are to be observed seeking out for their own children places in private or privileged public institutions where teaching groups of 15-25 are the norm!
3. The quality of education systems should be distinguished from the quality of learning opportunities, even though the one affects the other. Those planning education systems have to be concerned with such matters as accessibility and sufficiency of school provision, equality of opportunity, the inclusiveness of the system in serving all parts of the population, the relevance of the curriculum to the skill needs of the economy, the role of schools in promoting good citizenship and a healthy population, education's contribution to nation building and a sense of identity.
4. At system level 'comprehensive regulatory regimes' have their place in ensuring minimum standards are met, but surely deserve less emphasis than 'comprehensive support systems' to enable, encourage and celebrate good educational practice?

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***John Daniel, Canada***

The United World College Educational Model is an example of quality and standards being expressed and implemented on key dimensions throughout a system of 15 institutions: 12 2-year colleges offering the IB diploma and 3 schools that offer other levels of schooling as well.

The model, which implicitly picks up all features of the Delors Report and was originally inspired by the work of Kurt Hahn, is captured in this diagram:

The UWC core values are:

- International and intercultural understanding
- Celebration of difference and integrity
- Personal responsibility and integrity
- Mutual responsibility and respect
- Compassion and service

- Respect for the environment
- A sense of idealism
- Personal challenge
- Action and personal example

More information is available at [UWC\\_Educational\\_Model.pdf](#)

The success of the implementation of the model is partly accounted for by the ‘deliberately diverse’ intake of pupils, most especially for the 2-year IB Diploma course, where they share rooms in a boarding environment.

This is achieved because UWC has National Committees in 150 countries that are tasked to find pupils with high potential on a needs-blind basis and to ensure that they come from diverse backgrounds on dimensions such as nationality, language, ethnicity, religion, family wealth, etc.

### **Paul West, *The Commonwealth Secretariat***

I recall the report titled: "Revisiting Learning: The Treasure within - Assessing the influence of the 1996 Delors Report." (<http://tinyurl.com/ja7zsk7>), which suggests:

*"In the lifelong learning perspective, learning is about the development of the whole person: "It is about allowing every individual to participate in society and making our society more cohesive. Learning enables people to develop to their full potential and to play an active role in their environments. It allows them to try new things and to harness untapped talents. Along with enhancing employment opportunities and professional standing, learning lays the groundwork for fulfilment in life."*

The Delors Report provided a vision for learning throughout life based on four key pillars:

- Learning to know
- Learning to do
- Learning to be
- Learning to live together

There, however, remains a challenge of translating this vision into practice. Could these pillars form the basis for thinking about a set of quality standards for education? The authors suggest: "Quality education may be seen to be founded on the four pillars of learning, inspired by an integrated conceptualization of the quality and relevance of education that provides the cognitive, moral and cultural dimensions of learning."

What could a set of criteria be for quality standards in education for learning throughout life if the starting point is the four pillars found in the Delors Report? Gleaming ideas from the WEF report titled: "New Vision for Education: Fostering Social and Emotional Learning through Technology" (<http://tinyurl.com/z7u8am4>), one might begin to map as follows:

- Learning to know: literate, scientifically literate, financially literate, ICT literate, numerate
- Learning to do: critical thinking/problem solving, communication, persistence/grit
- Learning to be: curiousness, initiative, adaptability, leadership, creativity
- Learning to live together: culturally and civically literate, collaboration, social and cultural awareness

This is very much a work-in-progress. Any ideas?

***Nola Stair, Jamaica***

I'd like to add a response to Question #2:

Are there students/graduates' attributes beyond grades and outcomes that should be focused on (such as critical thinking, analytical skills, soft skills)?

I'd like to share a matrix of student/graduate attributes, which was developed after consultation with the campus community, at my previous UK university -

[http://www2.gre.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/832044/GraduateAttributeStatements.pdf](http://www2.gre.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/832044/GraduateAttributeStatements.pdf)

It served as a good starting point to inform curriculum development and program reviews....

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***Hjh Rusmini bt. Ku Ahmad, Malaysia***

There is a stark evidence of education system that consistently yield respectable results and goes beyond providing basic education. A strong political will seems to play a major role in steering its own country towards achieving targeted goals thus propelling the system to become relevant with the environmental changes and meeting the demand of the society. Quality education has been the prime agenda of excellent system around the world as it is frequently interrelated with economic growth, social mobility and political stability.

*1. What are the factors that influence or determine the quality of education, and how do these relate to the purpose of and indicators of quality education?*

Evidence from most of the literature relates quality education starts with quality teachers. International research has shown that when two average, eight year old student were given different teachers one high performing and the other low performing, the students' academic performance diverged by more than 50 percentile points within three years. The findings provide stark evidence that teacher quality is the most significant school- based determinant of students' outcome. There are a number of fundamental elements that correlate with quality teachers. Selecting and attracting among the best students to join teaching workforce appear to be a fruitful policy among the excellent education systems. Consequently quality of pre-service training should commensurate the capability and competency of the best-selected teacher students. To sustain teacher quality and to retain the promising ones, there are a few factors that need to be taken into considerations in meeting their intrinsic and extrinsic demands. Most probably remuneration will serve for extrinsic demands. However encouraging carrier path and professional development recognition may sustain quality and excellent teachers as well as fulfilling their intrinsic demands.

*2. Are there students/graduates' attributes beyond grades and outcomes that should be focused on (such as critical thinking, analytical skills, soft skills)?*

With the proliferation of technology and the impact of globalization, schools have to adapt in preparing the students with the skills beyond good paper qualifications. The disparity between what is going on in the classroom and the market demand is evident. Thus, focusing on students' soft skills namely critical thinking, creative thinking, communication skills, collaboration, citizenship to name a few is vital. The expansion of the elements in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018, from emphasizing on cognitive skills to global competence namely embracing values and multicultural, suggesting the significance of soft skills.

*3. What can quality education contribute to nation building? (for industry, being future ready, developing national and global citizenry).*

Quality education is a definite solution to the prosperity and wellbeing of the country. There are evidences from countries without natural resources emerged on the top rank of economic growth and stability as well as sustaining top ranking in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and TIMSS.

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***Ved Goel, United Kingdom***

I have carefully followed very useful discussion on quality of education and some very valid points about definition of quality, purpose, its parameters and implementation issues. The efforts being made to improve quality of education in South Africa at two levels and Lesotho in higher education are commendable. It appears to me that

the saying that one size does not fit all hold for quality of education since there is no one standard of quality. For example if you make a pudding and put too much butter in it to improve its quality then somebody with a weak digestion may suffer from diarrhoea while the others may appreciate the quality. Therefore, we must look at what Peter says at the purpose of education which is development of the learner. Most of the education systems geared towards development of learners in the national context and these systems are also aligned to global citizenship, the SDGs and UNESCO Education Agenda. Therefore, to be realistic, the standards of quality need to be rooted in the national priorities.

Let us take the example of school curriculum. If a country recognises that its school curriculum is not suitable for holistic development of learners and/or is not aligned to SDGs and UNESCO Education Agenda 2030 then to improve quality, it may focus its efforts on improving curriculum. The development of curriculum demands that quality parameters be taken into consideration right from defining objectives and selection of content. Quality also demands that practising teachers be involved in the development process. Another important dimension of quality is gender mainstreaming.

The implementation of curriculum is not devoid of quality considerations. To ensure quality, teachers must be oriented and supported in schools including provision of requisite material to teach the curriculum. Quality also demands that curriculum is neither over prescriptive nor overloaded so that teachers could use their professionalism to do what they consider important for learners. Quality curriculum also provides opportunities for learners to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to understand and solve practical issues, situations, and problems.

Another important aspect of quality in education is assessment and examination system being used to measure mastery of variety of competencies as envisaged in the curriculum. Quality demands that system must be valid, reliable and fair and that the findings of assessment are being used to improve teaching and learning.

Quality education also plays an important role in empowering learners to cope with national issues and realities, such as the protection of the environment, the empowerment of women, climate change and the increasing use of technology in all sectors. Quality education is also central to national endeavors such as the eradication of poverty, the democratisation of the economy

Thus demonstrates that quality in education is a complex issue. It requires that need for improving quality of a component of education be identified, articulated and that its implementation be managed like a project.

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***John Arnesen, South Africa***

My definition of **quality** is that the product, service or experience is of sound quality if it is **fit for purpose**.

If we look at motor cars much discussion would follow a comparison of similar spec motor vehicles. For example, deciding between a BMW, Mercedes or Audi is ultimately about personal preference - **they will all be fit for purpose and therefore are all quality vehicles**. These vehicles will all meet the safety, reliability and environmental standards which are set by independent expert and internationally recognised standards bodies.

If we make the comparison with education there are numerous ranking systems that suggest one institution [and by implication its associated learning programmes] is 'better' than another... The BMW vs Mercedes vs Audi debate....

I want to suggest the establishment of globally recognised independent standards [for example, outcomes based level descriptors] to evaluate the institutions and their qualifications. So rather than making decisions based only on ranking systems, I feel that the learner firstly needs to know if the institution and the associated qualification is **FIT FOR PURPOSE**. It is a quality qualification meeting internationally agreed standards.

To achieve this I believe the work done by a number of countries to develop and implement national and internationally recognised Qualification Frameworks [South Africa is a good example] provides the basis for ultimately achieving a set of globally accepted standards.

The learner would still choose between institutions but the choice would be made from only those that meet the recognised standard.

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**Swati Sharma, India**

Access to education remains major challenge globally and the majority of children out of school are from vulnerable and marginalised groups. We must embrace equitable approaches, along with social protection measures for the benefit of marginalized and vulnerable groups. It is important to provide opportunities for people from all backgrounds deprived of access to the formal system. Inclusive education and innovative approaches are necessary for fostering social inclusion.

Tackling 'learning crisis' and to ensure acceptable level of learning is a big challenge today. Ensuring access and improving quality and learning are two sides of the same coin.

Quality education can ensure a child's smooth transition to primary school and thus can reduce the drop-out rates. As learning outcomes are closely linked with quality of education and training, it should be of international standards, with the focus on national and local needs and cultural and social conditions.

Equality and quality go hand in hand, and quality of education and learning achievements must be ensured for all children and adults without exception. Quality interventions are necessary to provide equitable educational and learning opportunities for all children.

Quality of education especially in public schools is degrading. This is due to poor standards of quality. This can also be attributed to lack of qualified teachers, and their low salary as well as good learning material.

A key factor relates for financing for quality. It is well known that most of education budget goes for recurring expenditure, most of it towards teachers' salaries and not much is left to improving quality of education.

Improving teaching profession and giving them better remuneration is indispensable for attracting qualified and motivated teachers. This requires increased budgetary support. More funds are also necessary for providing good text books and learning material to students as part of their right to basic education.

Therefore, national level action must be promoted to overcome these deficiencies. Of first and foremost importance is the need for increasing education budget with specific allocations for quality. Unless Governments give this priority consideration, quality can be promoted maintained, much less improved, and the key objectives of quality education in post-2015 sustainable development agenda will remain constrained.

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**Kishore Singh, India**

Please find below two texts relating to Quality:

- i. [Recommendations made by me in my capacity as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education in my Report to the Human Rights Council](#); and
- ii. [Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council](#), taking into consideration these recommendations.

I think, these texts will be useful since they relate to State obligations for the right to quality education, and responsibility of Governments to take national level measures, pursuant to the Resolution of 2012 (operational para. 4), adopted by the Human Rights Council.

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**Chris Beukes, South Africa**

Education plays a significant role in all spheres of humanity. However, what good is education if it is not getting a person ready to work. Once a person has completed their formal learning, they should ideally be ready to enter the workforce and contribute to the economy. While it is true that competition for work is becoming more fierce due to fewer opportunities, it is also true that the majority of people leaving the formal education system are not ready to work regardless. Including work readiness as a core quality measure for education should be a given. Determining the subtle nuances within work readiness would then be the next natural step.

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## ***Katarina Meoli, Australia***

### **Initial Teacher Education**

Quality standards in education are at the heart of teacher education reform in Australia. An essential part of a quality education system is the quality of the teaching and to ensure teachers are entering the classroom equipped with the skills needed to help every child learn, there has been a focus on improving initial teacher education.

In Australia there are 48 providers of initial teacher education delivering around 400 programs to around 30,000 initial teacher education students. In order to produce graduates that are classroom ready from their first day, these programs will undergo a strengthened accreditation process using revised standards.

The national approach to the accreditation of initial teacher education in Australia has been in place since 2013. The *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* [www.aitsl.edu.au/initial-teacher-education/ite-reform/accreditation](http://www.aitsl.edu.au/initial-teacher-education/ite-reform/accreditation) are based on the assumption that providers produce new teachers that meet the Graduate level of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* [www.aitsl.edu.au/australian-professional-standards-for-teachers](http://www.aitsl.edu.au/australian-professional-standards-for-teachers).

The national approach is currently being revised and strengthened following the release in February 2015 of the report *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers* from the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group. In December 2015, all education ministers across Australia agreed to the revised Standards and Procedures and to an accelerated timeframe that will see all programs across the country submitted for accreditation against the new standards by the end of 2017.

The revised Standards and Procedures include:

- More rigorous requirements relating to the selection of entrants into initial teacher education
- The use of the national literacy and numeracy test for initial teacher education students
- New requirements relating to subject specialisation for primary teachers
- The need for formal partnerships between schools and initial teacher education providers to ensure access to quality professional experience placements, and a requirement for a final year classroom teaching performance assessment
- The introduction of a two stage accreditation process for providers
- Existing standards have been revised to clarify expectations and remove duplication
- Strengthened procedures to increase the rigour of the accreditation process including restricting the iterative nature of the process and quality assurance activities.

By introducing more rigour to the accreditation process using strengthened national standards, initial teacher education programs will equip graduates with the skills and knowledge needed to be effective educators.

### **Teaching Profession**

Well trained, skilled and knowledgeable teachers provide the foundation for a high quality education system and quality teaching is essential to lifting student outcomes. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership is committed to raising the quality, value and status of the teaching profession through the development of and support for the implementation of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (the Standards) and the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* (the Standard).

The Standards are a public statement of what constitutes teacher quality and define what teachers should know and be able to do at different stages across their careers (Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead). The Standards comprise three domains: Professional Knowledge; Professional Practice and Professional Engagement; each with a number of standards that articulate the knowledge, skills and attributes required across the four career stages.

The Standards are an objective tool to measure teaching capability at the various levels of a teacher's work cycle and provide a nationally agreed quality assurance mechanism that ensures Australian teachers have the required

competencies to be effective educators. The Standards underpin national approaches to the accreditation of initial teacher education programs, the registration of teachers and the formal recognition of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers. Further information is available at [www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au](http://www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au).

Certification supports teachers to explore their practice at the Highly Accomplished or Lead career stage of the Standards. It is a voluntary evaluation process that recognises skilled teachers and promotes the development of collaborative professionals who continually reflect upon and improve their practice. It is also a tool that can be used to underpin performance appraisals, identify professional development needs and enhance career progression.

It is important to note that as Certification refers to the formal recognition and classification of teachers' practice, the terms 'Highly Accomplished teacher' and 'Lead teacher' do not refer to job positions. This makes Certification under the national system portable within and across sectors, states and territories, but it does not mean that any industrial arrangement attached to Certification is automatically transferable.

High quality professional learning that has a focus on improving student outcomes and supports teachers to develop the capabilities described in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers is also a priority. The nationally endorsed Australian Professional Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders affirms, at a high level, the importance of professional learning in improving the professional knowledge, practice and engagement of teachers for high impact student outcomes.

Responsibility for setting priorities for teacher professional learning sits with state and territory education authorities and teacher employers. School leaders also play a role in building a professional learning community in their school that is focused on the continuous improvement of teaching and learning by identifying and implementing professional learning opportunities that are aligned with staff learning plans and school priorities.

### **School Leadership**

The Australian Professional Standard for Principals (the Standard), developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, has a focus on world class school leadership techniques. The Standard sets out what principals are expected to know, understand and do to achieve excellence in their work. The Standard can be used to build the quality and capacity of principals across Australia and to provide a basis for the broader Australian community to understand the scope and complexity of a principal's work. The Leadership Profiles build on the Standard and describe the leadership practices of principals. The Profiles provide a comprehensive developmental framework and shared understanding of highly effective school leadership. The Standard and Leadership profiles can be found at [www.aitsl.edu.au/australian-professional-standard-for-principals](http://www.aitsl.edu.au/australian-professional-standard-for-principals) and [www.aitsl.edu.au/leadership-profiles](http://www.aitsl.edu.au/leadership-profiles).

The Independent Public Schools initiative is funding a range of activities, including professional development, to increase the capacity of school leaders to manage their schools to obtain the best possible education outcomes for their students. The activities being funded include professional development for school leaders in managing their school operations, training for school council members to help them become more involved in their school, and the use of experienced and expert principals to support other schools to build leadership capability.

### **Preparing Secondary Students for Work**

Preparing Secondary Students for Work is a framework for vocational learning and vocational education and training (VET) delivered to secondary students that sets out a vision in which all secondary students experience vocational learning and quality VET courses; and both vocational seamlessly integrated into secondary schooling and valued by parents, students, teachers and employers. Fundamental to achieving this vision is the availability of suitably qualified and experienced teachers and trainers.

The framework was endorsed by all Australian education ministers in December 2014 and developed collaboratively with schools, industry and the training sector. The framework is supported by a dedicated [Preparing Secondary Students for Work - MySkills](http://www.aitsl.edu.au/preparing-secondary-students-for-work) website. The website contains a range of resources to support the framework including fact sheets to help schools better collaborate with employers, key elements to consider for great career education and an online VET self-assessment tool for schools to enable them to plan, implement and review their VET programs.

The framework identifies that VET delivered to secondary students is the same as all other VET and the same standards apply. To drive quality in the VET system, the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)

2015 apply robust requirements for all trainers and assessors. From 1 January 2016, training and assessment can only be delivered by individuals who hold a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment or its successor, or a diploma or higher level qualification in adult education. In addition, training and assessment can only be delivered by individuals who have:

- vocational competencies at least to the level being delivered and assessed
- current industry skills directly relevant to the training and assessment being provided
- current knowledge and skills in vocational training and learning that informs their training and assessment
- individuals must also undertake professional development in the fields of knowledge and practice of vocational training, and learning and assessment, including competency-based training and assessment.

Further information on the standards is available at Users Guide to the Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015 | Australian Skills Quality Authority.

### **Safe Schools Hub**

Safe, supportive and respectful teaching and learning environments contribute to positive learning outcomes and wellbeing. The National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) provides Australian schools with a vision and a set of guiding principles to develop positive and practical student safety and wellbeing policies. The NSSF was revised and endorsed by all Australian education ministers in 2010 to help school communities plan and implement effective whole-of-school safety and wellbeing policies and practice.

The NSSF acknowledges the strong interconnections between student safety, resilience, wellbeing and learning outcomes and encourages the active participation of all school community members in developing and maintaining a safe school community.

To assist schools in implementing the NSSF, a suite of online resources is available on the Safe Schools Hub (the Hub) website at [www.safeschoolshub.edu.au](http://www.safeschoolshub.edu.au). The Hub is the digital home of the NSSF and provides a comprehensive suite of information and resources for school leaders, teachers, students, parents, specialist professionals supporting students, and pre-service teachers. Through the Hub, school communities are provided with up-to-date and relevant information and resources to make decisions and take action that will build a positive school culture and improve the resilience, wellbeing and education outcomes of Australian students.

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### ***Nnenna Eluwa, Nigeria***

According to the former Director General of UNESCO Federico Mayor (UNESCO, 1997) "Promoting sustainable development, whose close interrelationship with democracy and peace is increasingly recognized, is one of the key challenges of our time; and education in all its forms is vital to addressing it successfully."

The report (UNESCO, 1997) further said that "It is widely agreed that education is the most effective means that society possesses for confronting the challenges of the future. Indeed, education will shape the world of tomorrow. Progress increasingly depends upon the products of educated minds: upon research, invention, innovation and adaptation."

In the declaration made by the Heads of States of member states of the United Nations on the Agenda for the SDGs, the seven Targets and recommended Actions for the SDG 4 in the document, (United Nations, 2015) are as outlined below;

#### **Targets;**

4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education

4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations

4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

**Action Recommended;**

4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

4.b By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries

4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States

According to (Leslie, 2009) "as the following quote from the then UK Lord Chancellor illustrates:

A healthy society is made up of people who care about the future. People who willingly contribute to its development for the common good... People who want to be practicing citizens. Before this can happen they need to have a sense of belonging - of identity - with the community around them... Citizenship education must give people confidence to claim their rights and challenge the status quo while, at the same time, make plain that with rights come obligations. (cited in Crick, 1998: 61 emphasis in original)"

There is therefore a clear need to expand the education centers and schools to include skills acquisition, practices on entrepreneurship development and community sustainability activities with lifelong education. I see the education centers not just as childhood education centers but also as PTA mothers and fathers training centers towards sustainable child, home, family and community education for resiliency. I envisage that in addition to the basketball pitches, there will be school farms, skills workshops, cooperative shops and financial and personal management facilities.

It is not just enough to say education is the key to a sustainable future, we need to reflect it in the allocation of time, space, activities, policies and total required facilities to achieve the expected outcomes.



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