

# Closing the 69 million teacher gap needs to be top priority for world's education leaders

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Addressing the global teacher gap of 69 million should be the number one priority for education policymakers the world over, a new international study has warned.

The shortage of teachers is the biggest threat to the international goal of providing quality teaching to all [children](#) according to the study led by Prof Kwame Akyeampong, Professor of International Education and Development at the University of Sussex.

Prof Akyeampong said: "The global teaching shortage crisis disproportionately impacts children from poor and marginalised backgrounds because they live in communities that do not attract trained and effective teachers. This situation is made worse because, globally, demand for trained teachers exceeds supply".

The study, which surveyed experienced teachers from 44 countries, was launched at the Global Education and Skills Forum 2018 in Dubai on Saturday. Other speakers at the forum included Hollywood actor Charlize Theron, Olympic athlete Mo Farah, former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, former UK Chancellor George Osborne, ex-US Vice-President Al Gore and former French President Nicholas Sarkozy.

The study argues that many governments are not doing enough to attract and support teachers to deliver quality [education](#) for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

It recommends employers place as much value on a [teacher's](#) interpersonal skills as their academic qualifications in order to raise the level of education for disadvantaged students.

Furthermore, it recommends that governments use interviews when recruiting to teacher education programmes far more widely than is done currently to establish a candidates' [interpersonal skills](#) and qualities, and commitment to meet the learning needs of all children, irrespective of their social, ethnic, and economic background.

The study says while doing so will inevitably make teacher recruitment more time consuming and resource intensive, the trade-off is considerable in increased teacher motivation and retention, leading to improved learning outcomes for students and in particular the most disadvantaged.

It also recommends teachers be backed up by specialist psychosocial support to free up curriculum time to allow them to focus on the learning needs of their students.

Prof Akyeampong said: "Costs should not be used as an excuse not to invest in recruiting, training and resourcing teachers to meet the learning needs of millions of disadvantaged children, because not doing so will cost even more in terms of loss in a country's talent pool for social and economic development. Investing in teachers is investing in development."

Well-publicised teacher concerns in the UK are also found around the globe by the study, with calls for higher teacher pay and more funding made by teachers in the US, Kenya, Mozambique, Portugal, Australia, Madagascar, and Sierra Leone.

The most common complaints from teachers were around a lack of

funding, resources, and insufficient learning facilities, as well as a heavy workload and a lack of time to invest in supporting children to learn.

The study calls for a broader conception of teacher quality and student learning beyond what is typically found in policy papers, moving beyond skills that can be easily measured.

It also recommends increased practical training that reflects the real-life scenarios that teachers encounter on a daily basis in the classroom and freedom from the hegemony of standardised tests to allow students to express their learning in more creative ways and to explore their own interests.

Prof Akyeamong said: "The study has shown that concerns about a learning crisis that mostly affects disadvantaged children is shared by teachers around the globe. The world's governments need to act now with greater investment to increase the supply of well-trained teachers."

Provided by University of Sussex

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