



## Building a capacity - UNESCO and school leadership

The world of education is getting smaller yet more complex, socially, culturally, economically and politically. At the same time the role of education is becoming more important, irrespective of the stage of any country's phase of development.. Global networking has resulted in the newest research and information being more widely accessible. Principals and other education leaders all over the world need to be at the forefront, when discussions and decisions are made about the new models of education, which respond to contemporary world changes. The major dilemma is how can actions by school leaders impact positively as part of an educational response to these 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges.

Meanwhile, the map of education is changing other ways. Policy makers all over the world have noticed that education can really make a difference in the standards of living and the emotional health and well-being experienced globally. For example, maximising educational opportunities for whole-country populations has contributed to significant economic and social progress by many countries in South-East Asia, Eastern Europe and the Gulf; in Africa, too, there are signals that potential for growth, led by a 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy will be rapidly realized.

The role of school leaders is essential in supporting these developments. School Principals are key components in raising standards of education and for promoting social and emotional well-being. Both are implicated as factors in 'effective schools' and prosperous economies. We must seek to preserve the autonomous role of Principals, as 'ownership' is one of the key drivers for creating better teaching and learning communities. Furthermore, ownership needs to be based on mutual trust between education policy makers and Principals

Every successful school must have their own leader. If we want to make real changes in education, we must give schools, through their principals more autonomy to make these changes. UNESCO can support this by providing guidance, evaluation and local solutions. We need to look at school leadership in the larger scale, it is not just a profession, it is much more. It is where decisions are made that promote positive learning and teaching for our future generations. Investment in school leadership is vital.

We therefore suggest 5 aspects of school leadership, which might best support UNESCO initiatives in promoting achievement for all by:

1. Strengthening non-governmental organizations (NGOs) role in Principals' training and in service professional development. Principal-to-Principal learning has been a very effective and economical way to strength Principals' knowledge and skills, using mentoring. UNESCO could be an active partner in this, especially in those countries identified as having particular needs in this respect. The *International Confederation of Principals* (ICP) and our affiliate national associations could be effective partners in this kind of collaboration.

2. Establishing a UNESCO development campaign for in-service training program for school leaders. School leadership is combination of moral purpose, practical skills and pedagogical leadership. UNESCO should act as a point of reference for partnership initiatives which enable mentoring communities to emerge which join those working in high GDP nations with Principals in less economically advantaged locations. The benefits will be accrued by both parties, both in terms of educational achievement and social coherence.
3. Continuing to promote achievement and access in girls' education. Education is a strongly female-orientated occupation and it is likely that many more of our future school leaders will be women. A continued and visible emphasis upon equality and equity in education will be a major contributor to an inclusive society, one of the key goals of the United Nations.
4. Challenging education policy makers to invest resources in new learning environments and pedagogies. Innovative educational ideas will not thrive unless there is a positive and well-resourced school environment. The efforts of even the most committed teachers will be undermined if appropriate facilities and infrastructure are not made available on a more widespread, even global, basis.
5. Emphasising the role of Principal is promoting educational initiatives, which address violence reduction, child protection and the promotion of safety and well-being amongst all the world's children.

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