



A low cost 'Marginal Gains Strategy' to support SDG4

- **engaging educators and aid agencies as 'change agents' to bring a step change in teacher quality**

Summary

This strategy is a response by teachers and teacher educators to the Director General of Unesco, Irina Bokova's, call to teachers and teacher educators to be 'change agents' to achieve with SDG 4.

"...we need a new focus on the quality of education and the relevance of learning, on what children, youth and adults are actually learning ...We need an ever stronger focus on teachers and teacher educators as change agents across the board."

Irina Bokova Director General of UNESCO 2015 p.4

Five education professional associations held two conferences in 2016 to consider what educators could do in answer to this call. People from ten countries attended. A report was produced which provided details of what could be achieved from resources already in the system from which the summary below has been taken.

The full report is: ITTE/EFC (January 2017) **Making a difference to teacher quality - to ensure inclusive and quality education for all by 2020** a knowledge mobilisation strategy enabling Teachers and Teacher Educators to become "change agents" for UNESCO SDG4. This report is the outcome of the first Global Teacher Education Knowledge Mobilisation Summit for SDG 4c, April 2016. (www.meshguides.org/news). A second Summit is being held on 4 May 2017 in London to consider implementation of the findings.

A "Marginal gains" strategy for SDG 4 - key features from the 1st Global Teacher Education Knowledge Mobilisation Summit 2016

The Knowledge Mobilisation (Kmb) strategy outlined here draws on existing processes, relationships, and resources already in the education system to bring a step change in teacher quality within three years.

The strategy is based on providing teachers (parents and policy makers) wherever they are, with access via a mobile phone to a dynamic evidence base for practice which summarises the best evidence available in pedagogy and subject content knowledge.

Online communities of practice for educators at www.khub.net/connect-ed

Research summaries sharing knowledge between educators (MESHGuides) at www.MESHguides.org

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The proposition is that

- the education sector has within it the knowledge needed to improve, but knowledge is held in isolated pockets and is inaccessible to all stakeholders. Much knowledge of potential benefit to teachers and communities is held in university databases, research institutes, academic articles or doctorates, and by individual aid agencies.
- ‘Marginal gains’ achieved through minor changes in processes and practices at all levels and by all players could ensure the effective use of existing assets, to provide, cumulatively, a self-sustaining system for keeping teachers’ knowledge up to date.

The strategy proposes the following actions:

1. Adopting low cost ways of working including online networking and new forms of digital publishing to

- bring together in user summaries, index and localize existing research-based knowledge for teaching every concept for every subject for every age group (Wikipedia demonstrates the simplicity of this concept and the complexity of what can be achieved);
- fill in the knowledge gaps by scaling up promising research, harnessing the energies of educators who are research active.

2. Governance and structures: an international network of educators (e.g. deans of education) benchmarking standards and sharing knowledge, handbooks and resources, supporting initial and lifelong learning for teachers. Such professional development could include developing teachers’ skills to generate, access and apply new knowledge and so become ‘bottom-up’ agents for context-relevant change and innovation.

3. Educators as change agents. Professional/subject associations/networks have a wide range of minimal cost practical levers for change, such as

- personal contact with student teachers/teachers through initial/continuing professional learning programmes
- programme design which typically includes values, skills, knowledge, and attitudes
- publications: textbooks, training materials, web-based materials
- teaching content and style, including professional attitudes
- research publications: reports, articles, summaries
- idea sharing through networking, professional associations, national and international conferences and networks

4. Maximizing the value of existing capital assets (Pyis, 2016) including existing published research through:

- accounting for existing intellectual capital assets through an Intellectual capital register to limit the devaluing and disregarding of existing assets.

5. Repurposing/localising existing intellectual capital assets also proposed to UNESCO by Udenas et al (2014); Hennessy (2016), Payler (2016).

6. Modernizing research commissioning processes and bringing together research funders (governments, charities, aid agencies, corporate sponsors, and philanthropists) and journal editors/publishers to support this KMb strategy. For example, research commissioners could

- require new forms of publication, which make knowledge easily available;
- prioritise synthesis and gap analysis so as to avoid unnecessary replication;
- consider value for money of localizing and repurposing existing materials;
- register outputs on the ‘Edupedia’.

7. Reframing research and publishing expectations of academic staff to include

- new accountability/promotion standards and requirements;
- new journal publishing/research processes to support cumulative research rather than proliferation of small studies;
- syntheses to build an accumulating evidence base;
- new university processes to provide access to the latest research summarized for teachers/policy makers to support lifelong learning for teachers and research-informed policy making;
- leveraging the MESHGuides approach which has been built on 30 years’ research and development to provide an international standard

8. Reframing teachers’ roles

- to become a bridge between experts and those in their communities whose lives could be transformed by such knowledge, e.g. on water purity, health issues, energy, agriculture, entrepreneurship etc.
- to use and contribute to the evidence for practice.

9. UNESCO support is central to achieving the commitment of government and aid agency stakeholders.

For references see the full report on www.meshguides.org/news

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