
26 February 2015

Dear Friends,

We hope you enjoy this week's edition of the Newsflash!

Sincerely,

The Firelight Team

(Resource) Where It's Needed Most: Quality Professional Development for All Teachers
(Article) Preparing Teachers in Fragile Contexts
(Award) Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life
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(Resource) Where It's Needed Most: Quality Professional Development for All Teachers

From the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies

In many parts of the globe, a majority of the world's teachers, despite the diversity of their professional contexts, participate in a remarkably uniform model of professional development – the workshop or “training” – despite research showing that such a model is unlikely to influence teacher practice or student achievement (Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010).

In many parts of the globe – particularly in the world's poorest and most fragile contexts where the need for quality teaching is greatest – the frequency of professional development is episodic, its quality variable, its duration limited and support or follow-up for teachers almost non-existent.

In many parts of the globe, the teachers who need the most professional development – teachers who are new to the profession, who are under-qualified or who teach outside their content areas – often receive the least professional development (OECD, 2008). Further, they participate in formal learning opportunities not when and where it matters most – in their classrooms as they are teaching – but away from their schools and outside of the school calendar.

And in many parts of the globe, teachers regularly fail to apply – or fail to implement with any degree of quality or fidelity – what they have learned from the “trainings” they have received. Consequently, and almost universally, teachers are blamed for this omission, despite the fact that it is most often the professional development system itself

that so often fails teachers and, in turn, fails their students.

In many parts of the globe, teachers may experience professional development characterized by some of the above practices. But the world's poorest and most at risk teachers in the most fragile contexts often experience professional development characterized by all of the above practices.

But change is afoot. In many parts of the globe there is a growing understanding that teacher quality is inextricably linked to – and indeed drives – student achievement (Rice, 2003; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). There is increasing awareness that teachers, like all professionals, must be carefully recruited and prepared to be teachers, and developed professionally throughout the course of their careers in order to be effective. In many parts of the globe, nations, districts and schools are beginning to move away from the poor professional development practices described above toward what we know is effective professional development – school-based teacher learning, differentiated teacher professional development, greater school-based support for teachers and teacher collaboration. This has happened mainly in wealthy and non-fragile countries, but increasingly, it is also occurring in low-income and fragile contexts. This guide attempts to capture those examples.

FRAGILITY AND EDUCATION

KEY POINTS

- Fragility is not just armed conflict or post-conflict recovery. It has multiple causes and effects (conflict, gang violence, poverty, political instability, natural disaster, weak political systems, ethnic or religious conflict).
- Because it has multiple causes and effects, fragility affects schools, teachers and learners in different ways.
- Fragility disproportionately impacts the most poor and marginalized people in any society (including religious and ethnic minorities and women) and, by extension, the quality of education these children receive.
- High-poverty and institutionally weak areas are least well-equipped to resist the effects of fragile conditions on their education systems.

THE ABSENCE OF CHALK: TEACHING, LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS

KEY POINTS

- Fragility (long term, protracted, or episodic in nature) has adverse impacts on quality education and learning and presents substantial barriers to teachers and teacher development.
- In emergencies, qualified teachers are often unavailable, unprepared or suffering from the physical and psychological effects of crisis.

- Poor working conditions adversely impact teachers' sense of identity and pride in their profession, weaken teacher confidence in terms of applying new learning and contribute to the reluctance to change.
- Teachers in fragile contexts further suffer from poor professional development, dysfunctional systems and the direct impact of conflict.

IMPROVING QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL TEACHERS: A SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are the seven major recommendations emerging from the Teacher Professional Development in Crisis online forum:

- Recommendation 1: Focus on teachers in fragile contexts – as professionals, learners and individuals
- Recommendation 2: Develop, apply, measure and institutionalize standards for teacher professional development
- Recommendation 3: Create professional development opportunities that promote teacher collaboration
- Recommendation 4: Provide teachers with ongoing support
- Recommendation 5: Invest in high-quality teacher educators
- Recommendation 6: Build instructional leadership at all levels of the educational system
- Recommendation 7: Use ICT to provide access to content, professional development and professional learning communities

To view the full resource, visit: <http://bit.ly/17xpjkl>

(Article) Preparing Teachers in Fragile Contexts

By Mary Burns, Global Partnership for Education

Issue 1: Teacher professional development (TPD) in fragile contexts is largely unexplored, under-researched and under-theorized

Professional development in fragile contexts has been largely overlooked. Thus, the vast majority of what we know about effective teacher professional development comes from “non-fragile”—versus fragile or least-developed—contexts. This is a problem.

Issue 2: “Fragility,” while broadly defined, is often narrowly interpreted

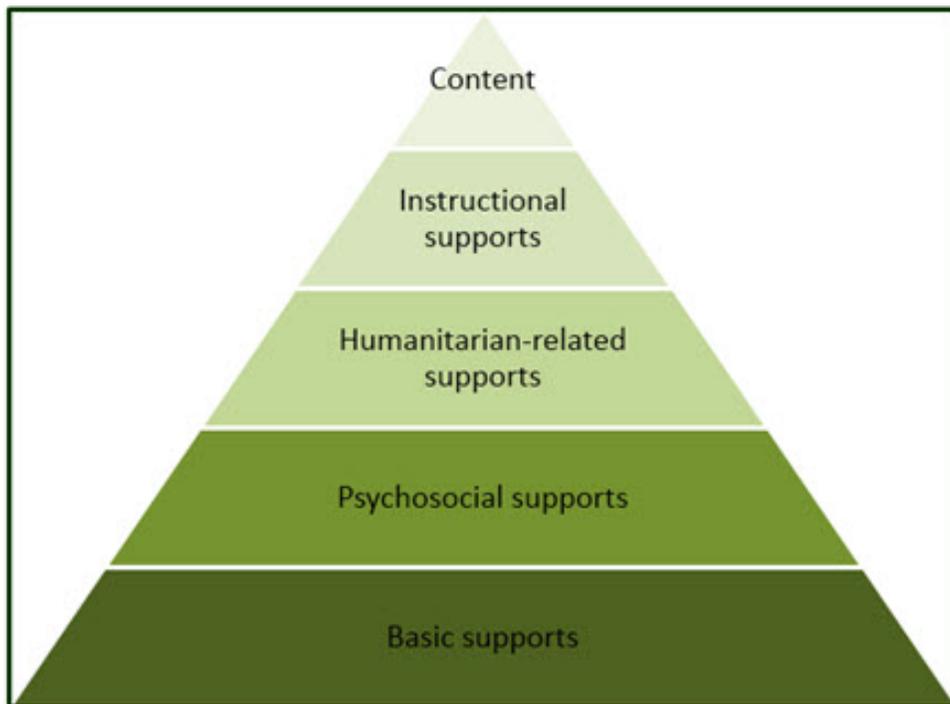
The definition of “fragility,” while broad, is often narrowly interpreted—as either peri-conflict (conflict in near future, present, and/or immediate past tenses) or in reference to the absolute least-developed environments. Within such narrow interpretations, we have no trouble seeing places like Syria, Iraq, Niger or Liberia as fragile contexts. But we do have trouble viewing areas that don’t easily fit our narrow interpretation—US inner-city schools or migrant communities on the US-Mexico border or drug-and gang-riddled places in Latin America—as fragile.

Issue 3: There is little planning or preparation for or coherence around education in fragile states

Conflict may suddenly explode, but far more often it festers like a sore and runs (to clumsily paraphrase Langston Hughes). Despite the inevitability, probability, or possibility of conflict, disaster or disruption in so many places, there is often little planning around (and for) education in emergency situations.

Issue 4: Teachers in poor and fragile contexts need the same high-quality professional development as teachers in non-fragile contexts

While there is little research on effective TPD in fragile contexts, what research does exist suggests that teachers in fragile contexts benefit from the same type of high-quality professional development as teachers in non-fragile ones—in particular, to regular collaboration with peers and with ongoing support.



Issue 5: Quality professional development for teachers in fragile contexts cannot wait

The final issue is one of urgency. The international education community rightly talks a good deal about the fact that quality education for the world's children poorest cannot wait. But it often overlooks the nexus between quality education for the world's poorest children and a high-quality teacher teaching those children. Quality teachers don't simply emerge ex nihilo. They must be carefully recruited, screened, prepared, developed, instructed, monitored, supported, supervised, cultivated, and rewarded.

To read the full article, visit: <http://bit.ly/1AOsFgK>

(Award) Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life

Awarded since 1994 by WWSF Women's World Summit Foundation - an international, non-profit, humanitarian NGO, serving the implementation of women's and children's rights and the UN development agenda - the Prize (\$ 1000 per laureate and \$ 3000 for specific African women's organisations), honors women and women's groups around the world exhibiting exceptional creativity, courage and commitment for the improvement of the quality of life in rural communities (395 prizes awarded so far). The Prize aims to draw international attention to laureates' contributions to sustainable development, household food security and peace, thus generating recognition and support for their projects. While rural women are vital in providing examples of sound practice in their communities, they still do not have full access to tools needed for development, such as education, credit, land rights and participation in decision making. By highlighting and awarding creative development models, innovations and experiences enhancing the quality of rural life, WWSF participates in addressing the eradication of rural poverty, gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment.

Eligibility

- Nominees should be women and women's groups currently active in rural life whose efforts have not yet been acknowledged by other awards. They may not nominate themselves.
- The nominating organization or individual must have direct experience of the nominee's work. The nominator may not nominate a family member, be a member of the nominated organization, nor can an organization nominate its senior officer (i.e. founder, president etc.). No more than 3 nominees may be presented by the same person/organization in the same year. The nominator commits to organize an award ceremony if the candidate is selected for the Prize and invite the media.

Any of the following elements should be emphasized:

- Exceptional courage and perseverance in improving rural life

- Creativity in the approach
- Preservation of and respect for the environment
- Continuing impact on the community

Laureates are selected by an international Jury composed of WWSF Board of Directors; are announced officially in September and celebrated in their countries on 15 October – International Day of Rural Women. WWSF has a commitment to award annually 5 to 10 creative rural women and women's groups around the world.

Nomination materials should arrive no later than 30 April through the post. E-mail nominations are not accepted.

For complete details, visit: <http://bit.ly/1zrvu12>

(Call for Proposals) Saving Lives at Birth: A Grand Challenge for Development

The Challenge

USAID, the Government of Norway, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Grand Challenges Canada, and DFID have joined together to launch Saving Lives at Birth: A Grand Challenge for Development, to find the tools and approaches to help the mothers and newborns during their most vulnerable hours.

We seek groundbreaking prevention and treatment approaches for pregnant women and newborns in poor, hard-to-reach communities around the time of delivery.

This is the period when the majority of maternal and newborn deaths occur and the population that has been the most difficult to reach.

We seek innovative ideas that can leapfrog conventional approaches in three main domains: (1) technology; (2) service delivery; and (3) “demand side” innovation that empowers pregnant women and their families to practice healthy behaviors and be aware of and access health care during pregnancy, childbirth and the early postnatal period, especially the first two days after birth.

Seeking Breakthroughs

Significant breakthroughs in innovation often come about when new ideas and disciplines are applied to long-entrenched problems. New technologies and approaches transform insurmountable development challenges into solvable problems. To harness this ingenuity, we encourage partnerships that bring together diverse expertise from non-traditional partners. And to foster sustainability, we encourage the private sector to bring their expertise and experience to bear on these problems.

Types of Awards

We will invest in a portfolio of projects. Through this portfolio, we will seek groundbreaking innovations by providing:

- Seed Funds to support the development and validation of ideas capable of impacting health outcomes for pregnant women and their babies in low-resource settings,
- Validation Funds to introduce and validate the effectiveness of innovations to reach proof-of-concept, and
- Transition to Scale Funds to develop, refine, and rigorously test the impact of integrated solutions that have previously measured promising health outcomes in a controlled or limited setting and have the potential to credibly scale to improve the lives of millions of pregnant women and newborns in multiple countries. Transition funding is limited to integrated solutions that unite technology, service delivery, and demand.

Key Features

- A brief application.
- Rapid turnaround time. We aim to select awards within 5 months from the proposal submission deadline.
- Opportunities for shared learning and collaboration among innovators, funders and other public health experts.
- A review process designed to identify potentially groundbreaking ideas that show great promise.

Solutions Should

- Be "off the beaten track," daring in premise, and clearly differentiated from standard practice;
- Enhance uptake, acceptability and provide for sustained use (potential for sustainability as defined as cost-recovery, sustained use, and sustainable impact);
- Be low-cost or highly cost-effective solutions;
- Have a strong likelihood of achieving a substantial impact on one or more important adverse maternal, fetal, or neonatal health conditions;
- Be scalable in resource-poor settings;
- Be able to be monitored, measured and evaluated.

Deadline: 27 March 2015

For complete details, visit: <http://bit.ly/1AXblo4>

As part of the Firelight Foundation's Capacity Building Program, Firelight provides "Newsflashes" to share relevant resources and information with our active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website:

<http://www.firelightfoundation.org/resources/newsflash>

We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at newsletter@firelightfoundation.org

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