

Policy Recommendations Adopted by 34th Session of the COMCEC

- **Increasing both the quantity and quality of teachers, particularly who teach in schools serving to disadvantaged and poorest through improving wage rates, pedagogical interventions, performance incentives, training and curricula reforms**

Rationale: Teachers are the most significant influencer of educational outcomes. However, they are in short supply in many OIC member countries. Efforts should be intensified to make teaching an employment of choice. Income levels are critical for attracting best candidates into the teaching profession. This partly explains why in high performing countries such as Singapore and South Korea, many top graduate students aspire to enter the teaching profession. However, teacher wage rates are very low in many OIC member countries. As indicated in SDG target-4, increasing the supply of qualified teachers must be a priority for the OIC countries.

On the other hand, evidence indicates that the level of competencies and knowledge among teachers remain low in the OIC member countries, particularly in schools serving the most excluded and poorest. Teachers lack the ability to transfer their own knowledge effectively to the students. Available options to improve teacher quality include contract-based appointment or the introduction of performance incentives. Pedagogical interventions that align teaching to student learning levels are also effective at improving student performance. Moreover, curricula reforms and teacher training should focus on the student's understanding of the subjects and promote analysis instead of rewarding memorization.

- **Increasing teaching and learning effectiveness through adoption and widespread use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based new models**

Rationale: In all assessments, the OIC as a group showed a declining trend in education quality, measured in terms of student achievement in math, science and reading. The use of ICT based teaching and learning models remain a popular choice to aid teachers and students to overcome such shortcomings. Jordan and Malaysia are two examples to OIC member countries which have launched new projects to improve the quality of education by investing in ICT infrastructure in education sector.

While the use of ICT-based teaching and learning models are popular and have some promising features, their success is not always guaranteed. Content design of ICT-based learning platforms is one of the important dimensions of this type of initiatives. Moreover, new ICT-based models should be tried in small-scales and only be scaled up following an evaluation of their impact on learning outcomes. Experiences of the OIC members who have made investments in this area can offer some guide to other members. Examples include distribution of low-cost tablet-PCs, establishing central online school monitoring and reporting systems.

- **Promoting better early-childhood learning opportunities through accessible and affordable pre-primary schooling**

Rationale: Income poverty and poor health are system-wide problems that also limit early-life learning opportunities. The level of malnutrition is very high in some of the OIC member states; physical illness is a major cause of student absenteeism from school. Therefore, investments in child health and enhancing access to quality pre-primary schooling can go a long way for removing inequalities in learning opportunities at later stages of school education. The importance of early development is already recognized in the SDGs target 4.2 i.e. "ensuring

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 by 2030”.

Country-specific analysis of learning outcomes of Jordan, Malaysia and Nigeria confirm the importance of pre-primary schooling for later success in primary and secondary grades. According to one estimate, providing children with 3 years of Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) would increase the average secondary and tertiary educational attainment by 0.7 years. However, coverage of ECED differs throughout the OIC members. In many countries, participation rate in pre-primary education is low. In many instances, reliance on private providers limits access of the children from economically poor families or creates inequality in access to quality pre-primary education.

- **Ensuring progressive universalism for closing the rich-poor gap in learning outcomes**

Rationale: Despite the reductions in poverty and increases in schooling rates in some OIC member countries, the gap between educational outcomes of students from rich and poor families persists. This socio-economic gap in learning is observed across the OIC region. The wealth gap is larger for the students studying at mainstream government schools in rural areas where the school quality is especially poor.

Findings in the context of all four case study countries of the research report indicate that income level of the family is strongly associated with student performance. Ensuring progressive universalism – allocating more resources to those who need it most – will require identifying children with learning deficits and effective mechanism to target them in the classroom and community. Only a few examples such as Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) in South Asia and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) schools in Jordan are observed to achieve success in providing quality education to students from economically disadvantaged families. More examples shall be identified across the OIC Region so that effective pro-poor education models can be made wide-spread. Madrassahs³ may play an important role in pro-poor education, however, some set of reforms and regulations might be needed to improve the prospects of religious seminaries across the OIC Region.

- **Enhancing and reinforcing accountability through parental engagement and involving parents in the monitoring of their children’s education and intensifying the parent-teacher interaction to improve education delivery**

Rationale: The delivery of equitable quality education is a shared responsibility whereby different stakeholders work together and depend on each other. The lack of accountability is a system-wide challenge and key reason for the poor returns to public spending in education in the OIC member countries. Teacher truancy is a significant challenge in OIC countries. According to one survey including OIC countries, on average nearly 20 percent of teaching time is lost every year due to factors resulting in teachers being away from school.

Evidence indicates a positive association between student performance in PISA and parental engagement. Student achievement is low where school authorities report only a minority of parents applying pressure on academic standards or the pressure being “largely absent”. Parents need to be kept up-to-date with what their children are studying and how they are progressing. This can enable parents to follow-up the progress by regularly consulting the teachers.

Moreover, increasing the frequency of parent-teacher interaction can enable the school to provide parents with clear information on how to effectively contribute to their children's learning. In addition, schools can provide useful information to parents through a variety of communication methods such as home visits, publishing newsletters, and parent's handbooks.

- **Improving access of poor student/youth to vocational education through eliminating/reducing school fees, offering monthly scholarship schemes and providing adequate facilities (i.e. accommodation) for students coming from remote areas**

Rationale: Vocational Education and Training (VET/TVET) primarily focuses on providing skills to the youth in formal/informal sector. These young people are the major workforces in any industrial activities. Therefore, VET system can contribute in equipping youth for occupation, providing necessary skills and meeting the industrial requirements for economic growth. Successful VET system can also play an important role in poverty eradication and reducing the income gap between the rich and the poor.

There is a great number of young unemployed people in the OIC Region and the main constrain is to attract poor young people to skill trainings. The empirical evidence shows that many young people could not be able to enter into skills trainings due to school fees and other related costs. Vocational education and training should be offered free of charge or at lower prices to attract poor youth. Besides, monthly stipend or interest free loan may be provided to poor people for their education. Free vocational training, and monthly scholarship schemes can also enhance enrolment and provide greater opportunities for poor students.

Furthermore, a great number of people in the OIC Region are living in rural areas, and their income level is mostly very low. In order to attract poor youth in skills training for future employment, TVET institutions should be expanded in rural areas or these institutions should have necessary facilities (i.e. provision of hostels) in the OIC Region.

- **Matching the skills thought in TVET institutions with the industrial requirements through job-oriented and demand-driven curriculum update and improving facilities of TVET institutions as well as establishing a training center inside industrial area**

Rationale: There is a strong relationship between TVET sectors and labour market demand. Vocational education generally provides job focused short and long-term training, which make unemployed people competent to meet industrial demand. Nonetheless, finding a job may not be easy for the graduates of TVET institutions if their education and training do not match the requirements of the industry. For this reason, bridging the gap between TVET and labour market demand is crucial to enhance the productivity of youth, who are well skilled, competent and professional capable in different areas.

On the other hand, there is a lack of industrial linkage with TVET institutions in many OIC member countries. A great majority of the TVET institutions do not have modern machineries. On the contrary, most local industries have modern machineries installed to ensure continuous increase of their production capacity and to compete in global market. Therefore, TVET facilities need to be improved with modern equipment, labs, and machineries for offering updated skill training. In this point, industries should enhance cooperation with TVET institutions in the form of establishing a training center inside the industrial area that will provide demand driven current skills for the TVET students for a certain period of time.

Furthermore, outdated curriculum and training hinder graduates to meet the current industrial demand. In order to close the gap between TVET and the industry requirements in the OIC member countries, curriculum update is required to make it more job-oriented and demand-driven.

- **Increasing both the quantity and quality of teachers in TVET sector through providing professional development programs, industrial attachment, and recognition of their work based on performance**

Rationale: Teachers are of particular importance since they have direct influence on educational outcomes. Students' learning outcome in TVET sectors largely depends on teachers' teaching practices. However, research report conducted for this meeting shows that the level of competency and knowledge of the teachers in TVET sectors is not adequate and teachers do not have enough practical industrial experience in many OIC member countries. Moreover, numbers of specialized teachers (subject specific) are very low in TVET institutions.

In order to address these challenges, three specific strategies are recommended: firstly, teacher-training programs for updating instructors' (teachers) skills should be continued in different forms (pedagogic, subjective, and exchange programs); Additionally, teachers should update their pedagogical techniques by means of using modern technologies in case of face-to-face, blended and online teaching approaches in TVET sectors; secondly, industrial attachment for technical teachers for a certain period of time (six months) can be practiced in TVET sectors; and lastly, achievement of teachers certification (license) for teaching involvement in TVET sectors is necessary before starting regular teaching. In order to attract bright and meritorious competent teachers in TVET sectors, motivational incentives such as attractive salaries can be provided and new teachers having industrial experience can be recruited in TVET sectors of the OIC member countries.

In addition, for enhancing the capacities of teachers and trainers, experts from different industries can be invited as Resource Persons in TVET institutions for sharing their expertise. Both teachers and students should visit industries regularly to observe industrial practices. Furthermore, in order to enhance sustainability of TVET sectors, and to cope up with the current trends, teachers should have provision for life-long learning that would assist them for updating their knowledge and skills.

- **Increasing awareness about TVET and social recognition of its graduates in order to increase enrolment in TVET sectors and create new job opportunities for skilled graduates**

Rationale: Skills training is not attractive when finding job is not secure. Evidence shows that job focused skills attract young people towards vocational education. Research evidence shows that due to lack of knowledge and awareness on TVET and relatively low social status of TVET graduates, parents mainly send their children to general education instead of TVET institutions.

In order to attract poor young people towards skill training, a number of job opportunities should be available in OIC member countries. Few initiatives in this regard can be as follows: governments and private sector should create a number of job provisions; donor agencies should work with the government to generate alternative sources of employment for skilled graduates; and TVET graduates should be actively involved in creating jobs through entrepreneurship.

Industry should not recruit any technician and/or any skilled labour force without having relevant certificate from TVET institutions. Furthermore, TVET institutions and the industry need to close cooperation with Employment Agencies.

In this framework, awareness about TVET and recognition of skills training need to be enhanced in the OIC Region through seminars, conferences, and public service advertisements. The promotional activities of TVET sectors can also be extended via all media. Moreover, awareness raising activities can be organized among teachers, students and parents at school level so that they would be encouraged to enter into TVET sectors.