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## Pre-service teacher preparation

### BRIEF 4

#### Teacher education

#### **Pre-service teacher preparation programmes with strong structure, coursework, and field experiences are crucial to preparing future teachers.**

Pre-service teacher preparation programmes, also called initial teacher training or initial teacher education, vary greatly across countries. The structure, coursework, and field experiences of pre-service programmes are important to consider when designing or reforming teacher training because they all contribute to the level of preparation. High-quality teachers need high-quality training, but many countries may need to consider cost-effectiveness in deciding on the specific combination of pre-service and in-service training experiences needed in order to deploy enough teachers for growing education systems.

#### **Issues and Discussion**

Pre-service training programme structures: Pre-service programmes may be conducted as part of a secondary school diploma course, on higher education campuses, in other schools through school partnership programmes, or through online and other forms of distance education. It is necessary to consider the local context and national needs in determining which types of programmes are most appropriate.(4) For example, Pakistan used distance training via radio, television, and correspondence beginning in the 1970s to achieve a rapid increase in the number of trained primary school teachers (see the [Allama Iqbal Open University](#)); whereas the Accelerated Learning Program in Brazil trains new teachers by requiring them to follow a highly structured curriculum that they implement directly in primary schools.(12) In addition to these context-dependent variations in structure, the length of pre-service training and the qualifications necessary to join the teaching profession may vary both within and across countries. In some countries the required qualifications are higher for secondary teachers than for primary teachers, while in other countries they are the same. The required qualifications might include: certificate, diploma, degree, or master's degree.(4) However, an analysis of PISA results suggests that a bachelor's degree is the minimum qualification for achieving the highest student performance.(17) The quality of pre-service preparation is more dependent on the programme's structure and support than on the duration.(5) However, graduates of short duration programs (e.g., 2-10 weeks) will likely need substantially more in-service support than graduates of long duration programs (e.g., 2-5 years).(9)

Coursework: Teachers' knowledge of the subject(s) they teach is often correlated with their students' achievement scores. Recent evidence from South Africa, for example, suggests students' scores increase considerably when taught by teachers with higher knowledge of the subject.(19) It is

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therefore vital for pre-service teachers to develop deep knowledge of their content area. Courses about pedagogy are also vital. These courses are most effective when teacher educators demonstrate and implement varied pedagogical approaches in the courses, rather than merely lecture about pedagogy, which is common in many countries.(6)(11) Other important topics to be covered in pre-service teacher preparation include: classroom management, learning issues and special needs, assessment practices, and the use of technology in education. It is also vital for teachers to develop academic content-related fluency in the language of instruction.(7)(14) Singapore's National Institute of Education goes beyond these considerations by emphasizing that the development of teachers' knowledge and skills needs to wrap around a "central pillar" of [three core ensembles of teacher values](#), focused respectively on the relationship with the learner, on teacher identity, and on service to the profession and community.

**Pedagogical content knowledge:** Research about the balance of content and pedagogy coursework in teacher education is inconclusive.(17) Yet, the best pre-service programmes emphasize [pedagogical content knowledge](#), which focuses on the question of "how to organize and present the content in a way that makes it accessible for increasingly diverse groups of learners."(18)(4, p.5) Programmes build pedagogical content knowledge by giving detailed consideration to the question of how to teach a specific subject at a specific level—such as how to teach reading and language arts in early primary school or how to teach algebra and geometry in lower secondary school—in addition to reinforcing basic content knowledge and general pedagogical skills.(13)(19)

**Field Experiences:** Field experiences such as internships and periods of teaching practice require pre-service teachers to observe and practice teaching in actual classrooms. The quality of field experiences varies greatly and depends on their structure, duration, sequence, and supervision by teacher educators. The duration of field experience in different programs varies from as little as nine weeks to as many as nine months or more.(16)(19) Some programmes have only one field experience while other have multiple. Research suggests that more experience in classrooms is better, although if only a short field experience is feasible, it may be supplemented by giving more support and guidance to new teachers. In some of the best programmes pre-service teachers spend earlier experiences primarily observing expert teachers and the remainder practicing how to teach. In addition, cohort models may provide the best support for pre-service teachers during teaching practice conducted in rural areas.(10) If field experiences only occur after or at the end of training, there are minimal opportunities for guidance and feedback about the teacher's practice.(19) It is therefore important for field experiences to occur early and throughout the pre-service training in an integrated manner that compliments other courses.(11)

**Teacher Educators/Trainers:** In some countries, teacher educators/trainers have little or no previous experience working as a teacher or supervising teachers. In addition, they often receive no induction or professional development programmes to ensure the quality of their instruction in the pre-service. These realities influence the quality of the courses in pre-service programmes, but strong support networks and training programmes for teacher educators/trainers themselves can significantly improve the overall quality of pre-service teacher training.(8)

## **Inclusiveness and Equity**

**Teaching in large, multi-level, and under-resourced classes:** Teachers are more likely to feel confident and prepared to teach in large and under-resourced classes if they have training modules or courses on effective teaching methods for such contexts, such as using small groups and student

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pairs to enhance learning.(1)(3) In addition, some rural areas have multi-level classrooms due to low population density. Pre-service teachers who may teach in these schools should have training on how to adapt lesson plans for students of different ability levels, including how to develop materials for independent study that engage learners.(1)

Teaching students with disabilities: Pre-service teacher preparation programmes in many countries lack a strong focus on how to diagnose and accommodate learning disabilities. Those that do address these issues, however, achieve better results nationally.(15)(19)

Teaching with gender equity: In order to increase academic performance among girls, prevent gender-based violence, and implement a gender-sensitive curricula, modules or courses on gender-sensitive pedagogy are also crucial.(2)

## Policy Examples

- Ethiopia (pp. 46-51) [[PDF](#)]
- South Africa [[PDF](#)]
- Yemen (pp. 41-44) [[PDF](#)]
- Tanzania [[PDF](#)]

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