

Sustainable Financing of Expanded Access for UPE and USE – Exploring the Options for Financing Teachers

The levels of enrolment at different levels that can be sustained financially depend on:

- overall budget allocations to education,
- sectoral allocations to primary, secondary, post secondary and higher education
- allocations to teaching salaries, non-teaching salaries, non-salary expenditure
- development expenditure

Gross enrolment rates are determined by levels of public expenditure as a proportion of GDP; the public recurrent expenditure per student as a % of GDP per capita; and the proportion of the population in the school age group. The first is determined by government and has an upper limit around 5% of GDP allocated to education. The last – population - is not subject to policy change in the short term. Affordability is therefore largely determined by the second – the cost per student. Expansion therefore depends on reforms that lower costs per student (unless there is scope to increase overall allocations to education as a % of GDP).

High enrolment countries in the Commonwealth have different characteristics than low enrolment countries. The differences include:

- Lower ratios of secondary to primary costs per student (less than 2:1 compared to 4:1 or more) and lower ratios of higher education costs
- Greater time on task of teachers and more teaching hours
- Less high cost boarding which is subsidised
- More even distribution of teachers between schools and less variation in student teacher ratios between schools
- Teachers salaries closer to average earnings

Teacher costs per student are critical to managing growth since these are the largest element in costs per student. Reforms are needed to improve teacher employment, utilisation and deployment in ways which do not undermine recruitment and retention. If costs per student in low enrolment systems are not constrained mass access will be unsustainable. The question is which reforms offer most promise and which have already been tried successfully?

This Working Group will consider three sets of issues.

1. How should teacher recruitment and conditions of service change to increase the affordability of expanded access e.g. teaching assistants, contract teachers, incentives to maximise time on task, performance related pay?
2. How can teacher deployment be improved to increase efficiency and effectiveness and reduce costs per student e.g. student number rather than curriculum determined staffing ratios, ceilings on salary budgets within schools determined by formula funding, targets for variations in staff student ratios between schools?
3. How can teacher training be reformed to provide new teachers at affordable costs e.g. shorter initial training followed by CPD; more on-the-job mentoring, multi subject training?