COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION REPORT 2023

INCLUDES PERSPECTIVES FROM
Asian Development Bank | Association of Caribbean Higher Education Administrators
Association of Commonwealth Universities | British Council | Commonwealth Consortium for Education
Commonwealth of Learning | Education Cannot Wait | Education Development Center
Global Partnership for Education | Government of Malta | Government of New Zealand
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development | Teach For All | UN | UNESCO | UNICEF
As school systems and communities around the world grapple with remediation and the future of education, one universal truth remains and must guide our decision-making: quality. Education is a fundamental right for every child. That inherent right transcends economics, race, gender, language, conflict and crisis.

To realise a future where all children exercise this right, we must create localised learning systems that are scalable across contexts. Effective materials development and supply chains, teacher support and coaching, lesson plans and assessments, and meeting...
Quality education, of course, supports strong learning outcomes. Quality learning must also foster children’s recognition that they deserve those outcomes and are equipped to forge their own futures.”
Educational spaces, schools and other non-formal settings are places of academic learning where children recognise their self-worth and the value they can bring to themselves, their families and society. Learning systems also need to sustain excellence in the quality of curricula, materials and skill training alongside activities that reinforce the ongoing human connection.

**How do we “operationalise” dignified learning?**

The United Nations (UN)'s 1989 ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child set standards to recognise a child's right to an education. However, learning systems have not evolved in order to scale quality learning for all children. Quality education, of course, supports strong learning outcomes. Quality learning must also foster children's recognition that they deserve those outcomes and are equipped to forge their own futures.

Room to Read (www.roomtoread.org) focuses on creating a world free from illiteracy and gender inequality through education. Our programmes have operated across 21 countries in the past two decades and benefitted more than 32 million children. We scale learning sustainably by designing, implementing and institutionalising effective models for literacy and gender equality. We support governments as they integrate our models into their own.

Humans, especially the youngest, learn best face-to-face with trusted mentors, advocates, role models and peers. Research shows that we cannot underestimate the importance of learning through social transmission. Education systems have the infrastructure to harness this human connection between teacher and students and benefit from youth’s perspectives.

“**When young students with access to locally relevant, high-quality learning materials, are encouraged and treated as diverse thinkers, they exercise their right to education and experience dignified learning.”**
Among peer groups. Room to Read supports teachers in engaging with learners in literacy and life skills activities, and designs and scales quality mentoring for adolescent girls. We create high-quality, proven teacher guides and student books that are organised, scoped and sequenced, allowing teachers to lighten their load, thus increasing time to focus on connecting with students.

Strong teachers and mentors need time to build trust with students. They have knowledge and expertise learners can recognise. They allow learners to ask questions and try new things. They give respectful feedback and encourage their students to experiment and improve their skills. They guide with patience, helping develop grit and perseverance. They create opportunities to laugh and rejoice in learning. They celebrate “aha” moments and affirm their students’ self-worth. They ensure dignified learning.

We know there needs to be more qualified teachers with enough time to address the learning needs of every student. Some students find themselves in classrooms with more than 100 children per teacher. Other children are left out of classrooms completely. If we have any hope of ensuring quality education for all, solutions for dignified learning in informal educational settings are critical. Human connectivity made all the difference.

The future of education

When young students with access to locally relevant, high-quality learning materials are encouraged and treated as diverse thinkers, they exercise their right to education and experience dignified learning, placing them on track for improved educational and life outcomes.

I invite education leaders everywhere to make this vision possible by examining their operational models and recognising the value of traditional educational components alongside those that foster learners’ sense of self-worth. Nelson Mandela noted: “The true character of society is revealed in how it treats its children”. Let’s make sure our children are treated with dignity.