

The Facts on Education

Does Teaching Quality Make a Difference?

There is growing consensus that good teaching makes a big difference to students' learning. Many studies show that the quality of teaching is a key determinant of student schooling experience and attainment, regardless of race, gender or socio-economic background.

Researchers have tried to determine which factors seem to have the largest effect on teaching quality. Among the most important:

- **Teacher knowledge about good teaching and learning practices** appears to have the strongest and most consistent positive effect on student outcomes.
- **A degree in the subject** taught is significantly and positively correlated with student attainment and with staying in teaching, particularly at the secondary school level.
- **Teachers' verbal ability and literacy level** have shown some association with higher student attainment.
- **Continuing professional development** is necessary for improvements in teaching quality, especially when there are changes in curriculum, teaching methods, and the student population.

Other factors seem to have less association with student outcomes:

- Some studies find that **teaching experience** has a positive effect on effectiveness, especially experience gained in the first year of teaching, but the results are not always significant.
- Studies of **teacher behaviour and personality** have yielded inconsistent findings, although in some studies there appears to be a positive relationship between student learning and teachers' 'flexibility,' 'creativity,' and 'adaptability.'
- The **relationship between teachers with master's degree and student outcomes** is weak to non-existent.

These findings suggest the following:

- Teaching requires multiple skills
- The most important single element that distinguishes more effective teachers is their deeper knowledge about pedagogy, that is, how best to support and foster students' learning.

For online resources on teacher quality as well as the research references that inform this issue, please visit:

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