


# Chapter 6

## Valuing Teachers' Voices in Educational Reform: A Path to Achieving Global and National Sustainable Development Goals

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter explores teachers' pivotal role in achieving global and national sustainable development goals, particularly focusing on SDG 4: Quality Education. It emphasizes the importance of valuing teachers' voices in shaping educational reforms, specifically focusing on the 2024 World Teachers' Day theme, "Valuing Teachers' Voices: Towards a New Social Contract for Education". The chapter examines the critical contributions of teachers as societal pillars who shape students' academic abilities and their ethical, moral, and emotional growth. It addresses*

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*the global teacher shortage, low salaries, poor working conditions, and lack of professional development, highlighting their impact on recruitment, retention, and educational outcomes. The chapter further explores the unique challenges faced by Bangladesh in teacher recruitment and development and proposes solutions for improving teacher quality, status, and professional empowerment. Ultimately, it calls for a new social contract for education, empowering teachers as key stakeholders in educational policy and reform.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Teachers are undeniably the cornerstone of education systems worldwide. They are the primary agents in shaping future generations, not only enhancing students' academic abilities but also nurturing their ethical, moral, and emotional growth (Odell et al., 2020; Ghamrawi, 2023; Anapey, 2024). Teachers serve as the backbone of any nation, influencing the social and cultural fabric of society. Their role goes beyond the classroom, as they help mold responsible citizens capable of contributing to sustainable societal development. Yet, despite their critical influence, teachers' voices often remain underrepresented in shaping educational policies (Adhikari & Shrestha, 2023). It is essential to recognize and value teachers as key contributors to education reform, particularly in the context of achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which emphasizes the provision of quality education for all. This chapter aims to explore the vital role teachers play in national and global development and underscore the importance of valuing their input in the creation of educational policies (Haug & Mork, 2021).

SDG 4, established by the United Nations in 2015, specifically seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (UNESCO, 2020). Achieving this goal requires more than just a global commitment; it necessitates systemic reforms that address the multifaceted challenges faced by educational systems worldwide (Ramaswamy et al., 2021). Teachers are integral to this mission, as they directly impact student outcomes and contribute to broader social development goals. However, the involvement of teachers in policy-making processes remains minimal in many countries, a challenge that undermines the efficacy of educational reforms (OECD, 2021). To bridge this gap, it is crucial to incorporate teachers' voices in discussions about the future of education, especially in light of emerging global and local challenges (García-Feijoo et al., 2020).

The theme of World Teachers' Day 2024, “Valuing teachers' voices: towards a new social contract for education”, reflects a growing recognition of the need to reconsider how education systems are shaped. The “new social contract” calls for a collaborative approach between governments, educators, and communities, wherein

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