

# Reconceptualising Teacher Education for a post-2015 EFA Agenda

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# The EFA concept

- The nature & purpose of education in each society should be based on the actual needs of children, youth, adults and especially the excluded (marginalised/disadvantaged)
- Education should benefit every citizen in every society

# The EFA Goals

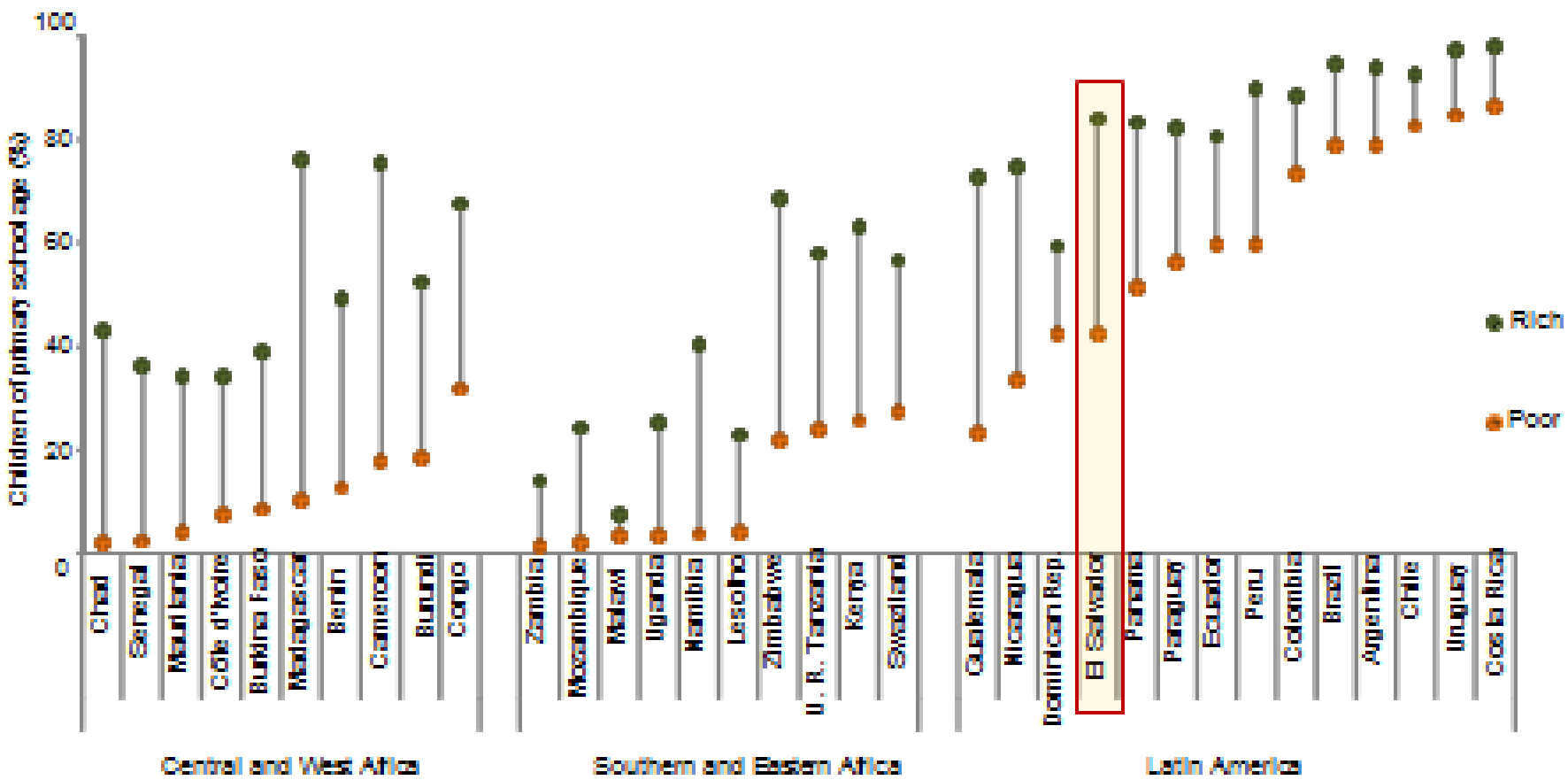
- Expand early childhood care and education.
- Provide free and compulsory primary education for all
- Promote learning and life skills for young people and adults
- Increase adult literacy by 50 %
- Achieve gender parity by 2005, gender equality by 2015
- **Improve the quality of education**

# EFA: Key messages

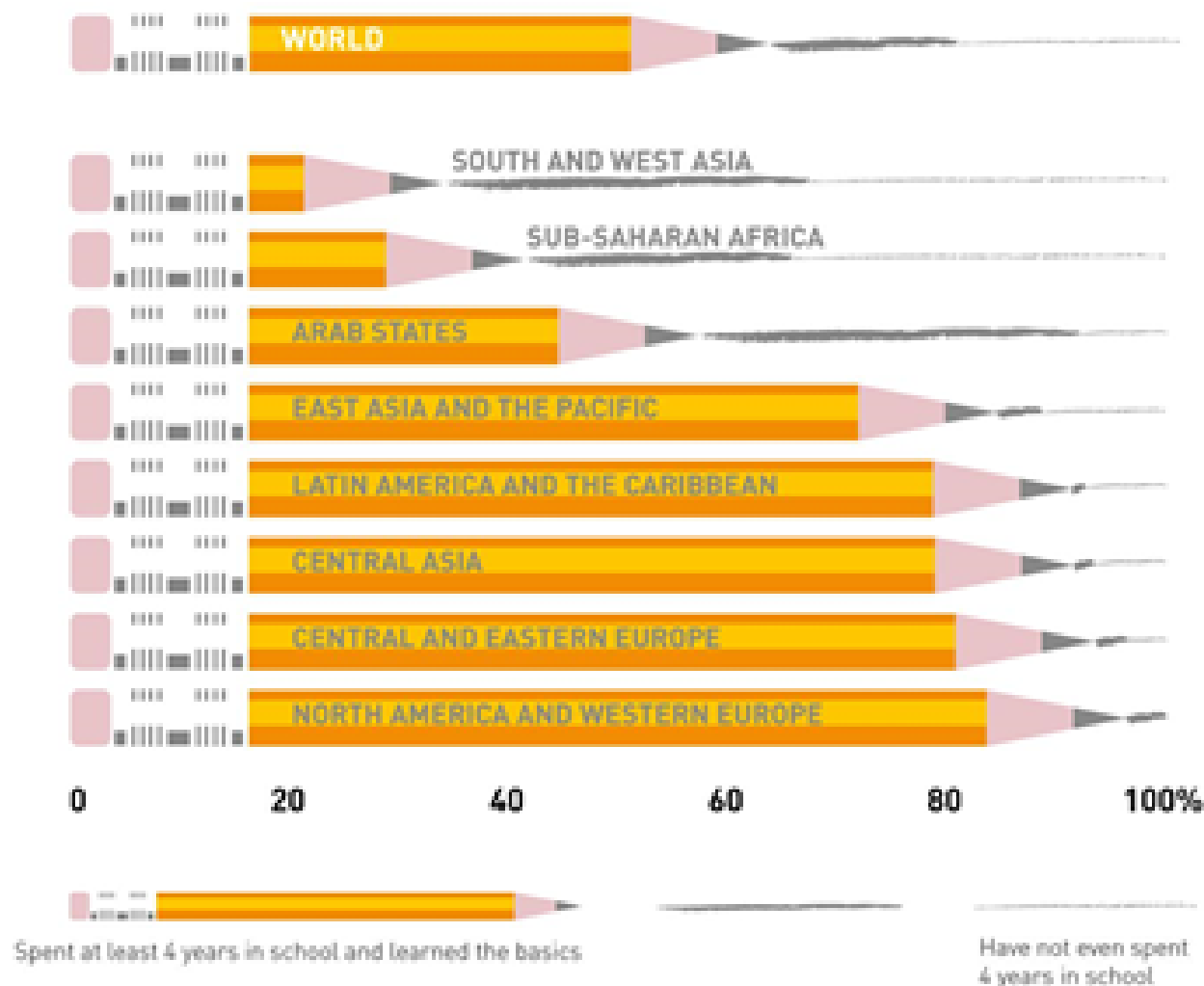
- By 2015, many countries will still not have reached the EFA goals.
- **There is a global learning crisis that is hitting the disadvantaged hardest.**
- Good quality education can only be achieved with good quality teachers.
- Global education goals after 2015 must track progress of the marginalized.
- **Education for All (EFA) from the start failed to draw attention to the role of teachers and teacher education in achieving its goals**

# Poorer children learn less

Children completing primary school and achieving minimum learning standards in mathematics, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America



# Many children in the poorest countries are not learning the basics



# GMR 2014 – addressing the learning crisis

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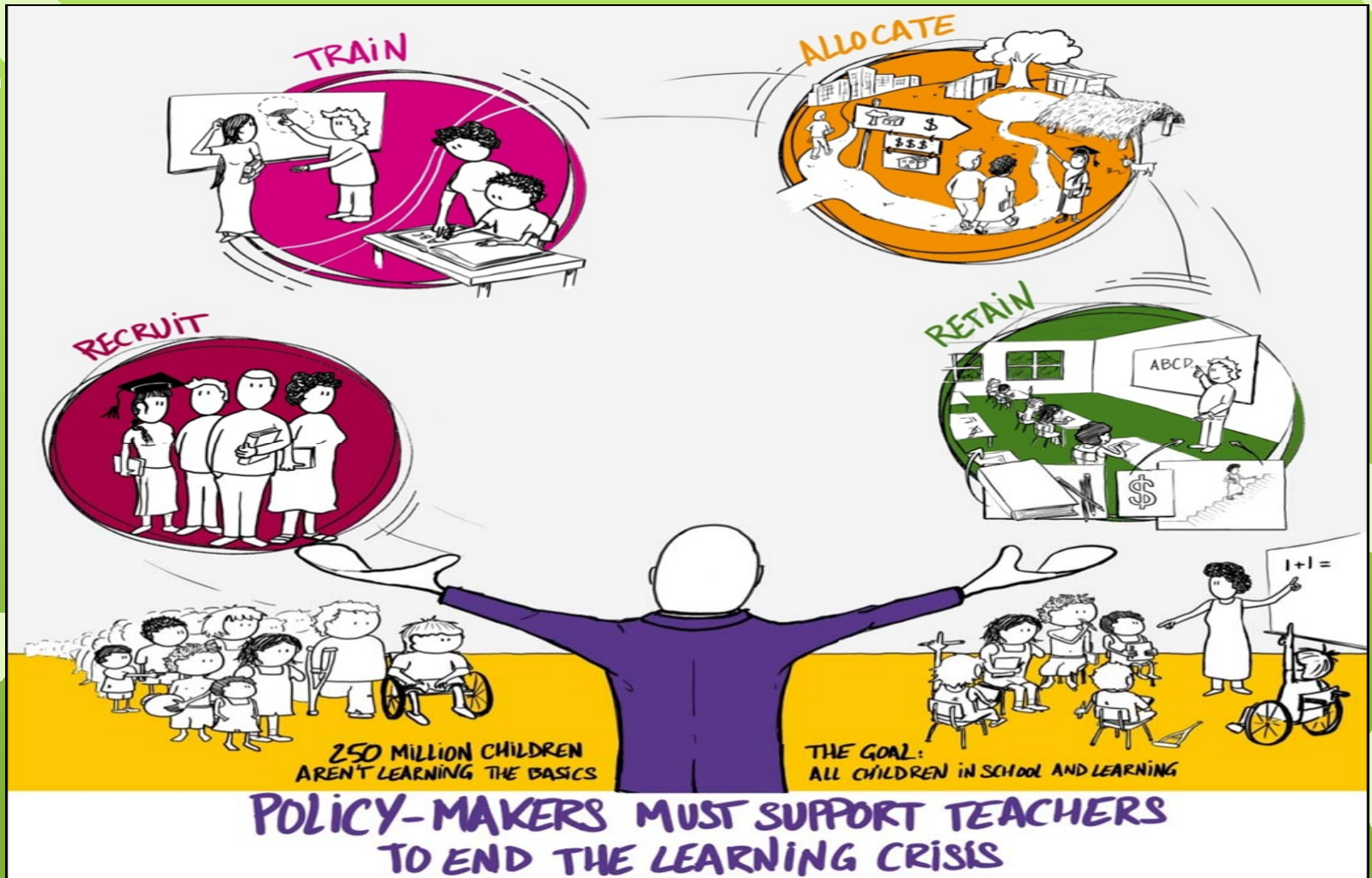
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Education for All Global Monitoring Report

- **Expand the pool of well trained teachers –**
- *Get the right people to become teachers i.e. select the best into teacher education and into teaching; [policies have a strong impact on status irrespective of cultural context]*
- *Develop them to become effective teachers i.e. raise professionalism through high quality training;*
- *Incentivise your best teachers to work with the most disadvantaged*
- *make teacher education equity focused;*
- *Incentivise through competitive career structure*

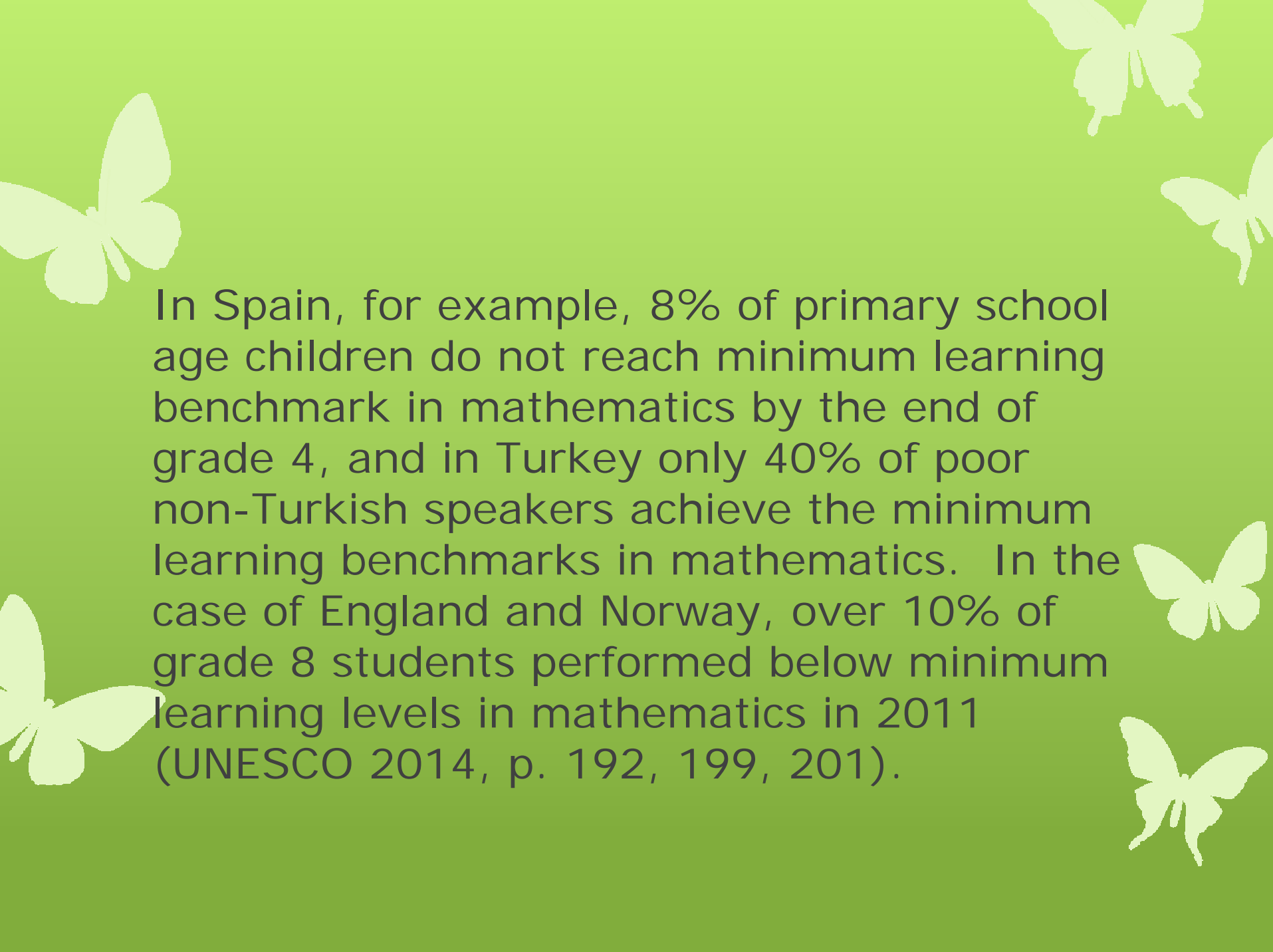
# Ending the learning crisis?






# Post 2015 EFA agenda – learning crisis in developed countries

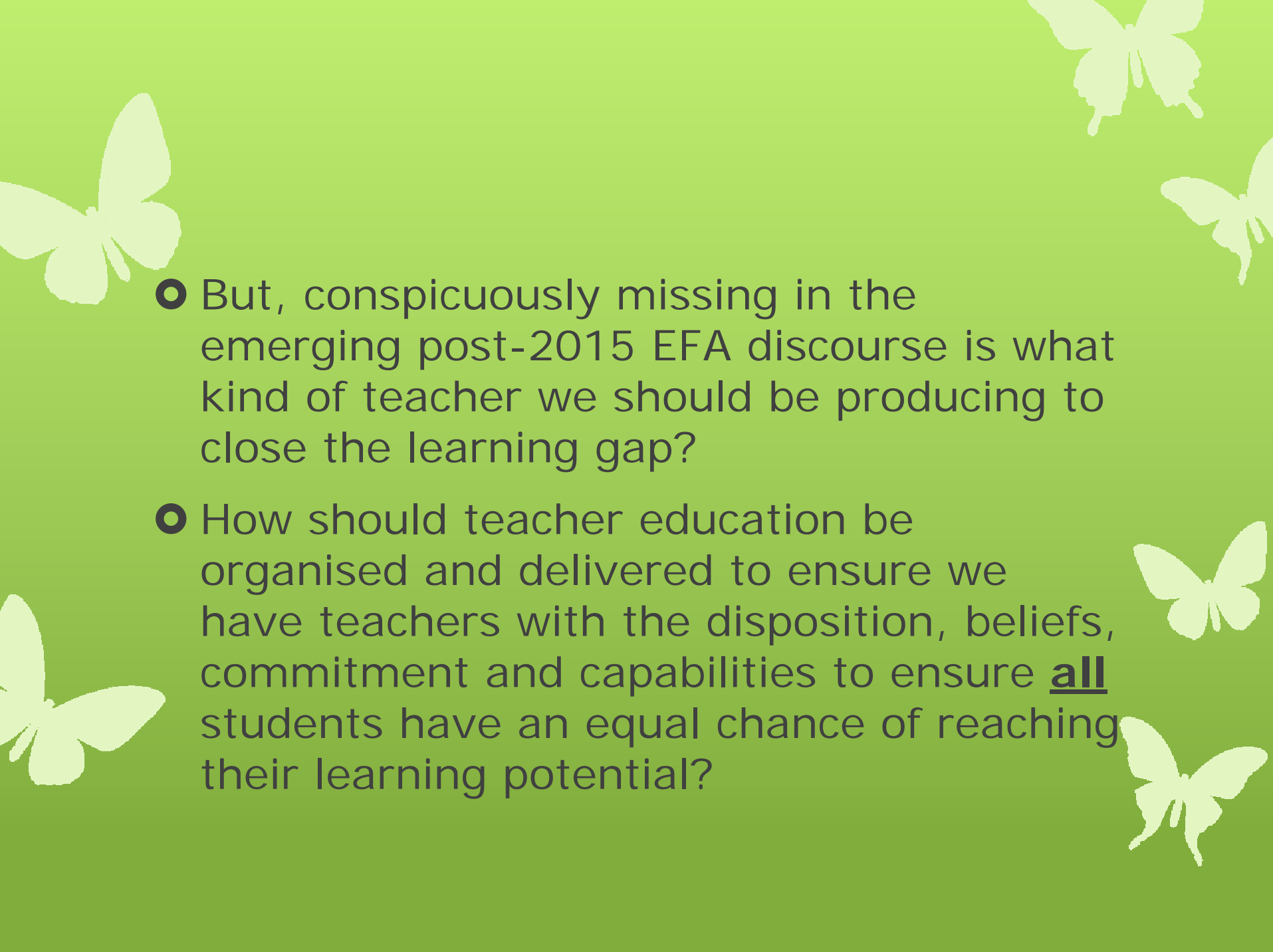
- Not all children in rich countries enjoy the benefits of a good quality education
- In middle and high income countries educational disadvantage is a growing problem
- Segregation by type of school – disadvantaged schools have a high proportion of low quality teachers which have an impact on student performance (OECD 2012; Darling-Hammond 2010)

The background is a solid light blue color. It is decorated with several white butterfly silhouettes of various sizes and orientations, scattered across the top, bottom, and sides of the slide.

In Spain, for example, 8% of primary school age children do not reach minimum learning benchmark in mathematics by the end of grade 4, and in Turkey only 40% of poor non-Turkish speakers achieve the minimum learning benchmarks in mathematics. In the case of England and Norway, over 10% of grade 8 students performed below minimum learning levels in mathematics in 2011 (UNESCO 2014, p. 192, 199, 201).



In most OECD countries 'students with an immigrant background tend to have lower education performance than native students even after taking into account their socio-economic background, a difference that in some countries is equivalent to 1.5 years of schooling (OECD 2012)

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- The background is a solid light blue color. It is decorated with several white butterfly silhouettes of various sizes and orientations, scattered across the slide. There are four butterflies in the top left, two in the top right, one in the middle right, one in the bottom right, and one in the bottom left.
- But, conspicuously missing in the emerging post-2015 EFA discourse is what kind of teacher we should be producing to close the learning gap?
  - How should teacher education be organised and delivered to ensure we have teachers with the disposition, beliefs, commitment and capabilities to ensure **all** students have an equal chance of reaching their learning potential?

# Teachers: agents of change or continuity?

- Teachers will become agents of change only if their training prepares them to reflect deeply on their assumptions about teaching, students and their personal or professional identities, otherwise they will become agents of continuity (Paine & Zeichner 2012)
- Teachers are pedagogic actors because of their relationship to learners (Robertson 2012)
- Learning is driven by relationships – teachers professional practice is situated within an intricate web of relationships that shape and constrain their pedagogical choices (Gardinier 2012, p 659).

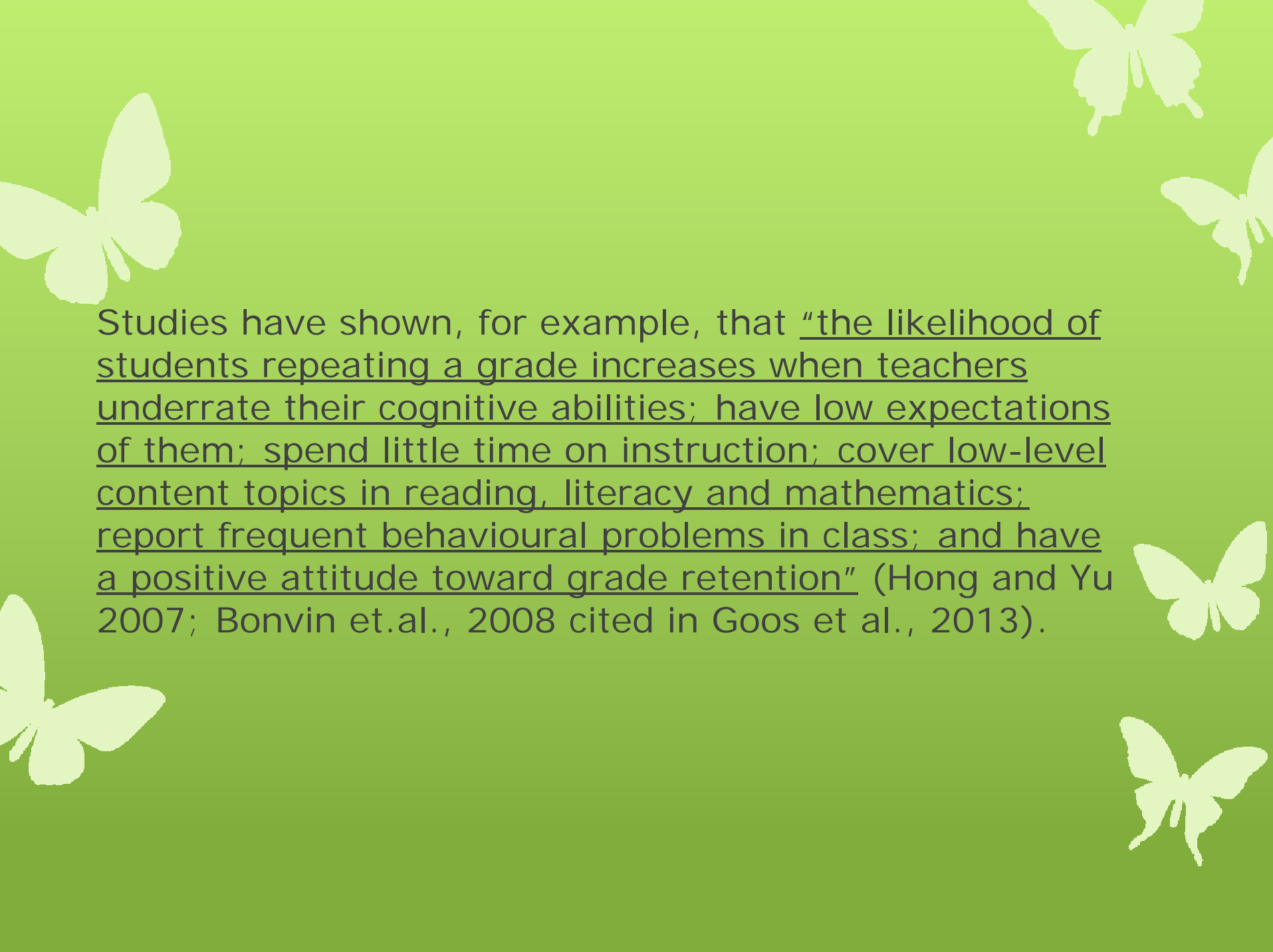
# What teachers believe matters

Teachers often underrate what low performing disadvantaged students can achieve – a belief which is often fulfilled by low outcomes, poor attendance and grade repetition.

Research in Ghana, for example, found a sizeable proportion of newly qualified teachers (41%) stating that they did not believe they could improve the academic performance of slow learners (Akyeampong & Stephens 2002, p 269). This view was expressed soon after they had completed teacher education, prompting the researchers to conclude that teacher education in Ghana was not "... a transforming experience that shapes motivations and pedagogic beliefs" (Akyeampong & Lewin 2002, p. 349).

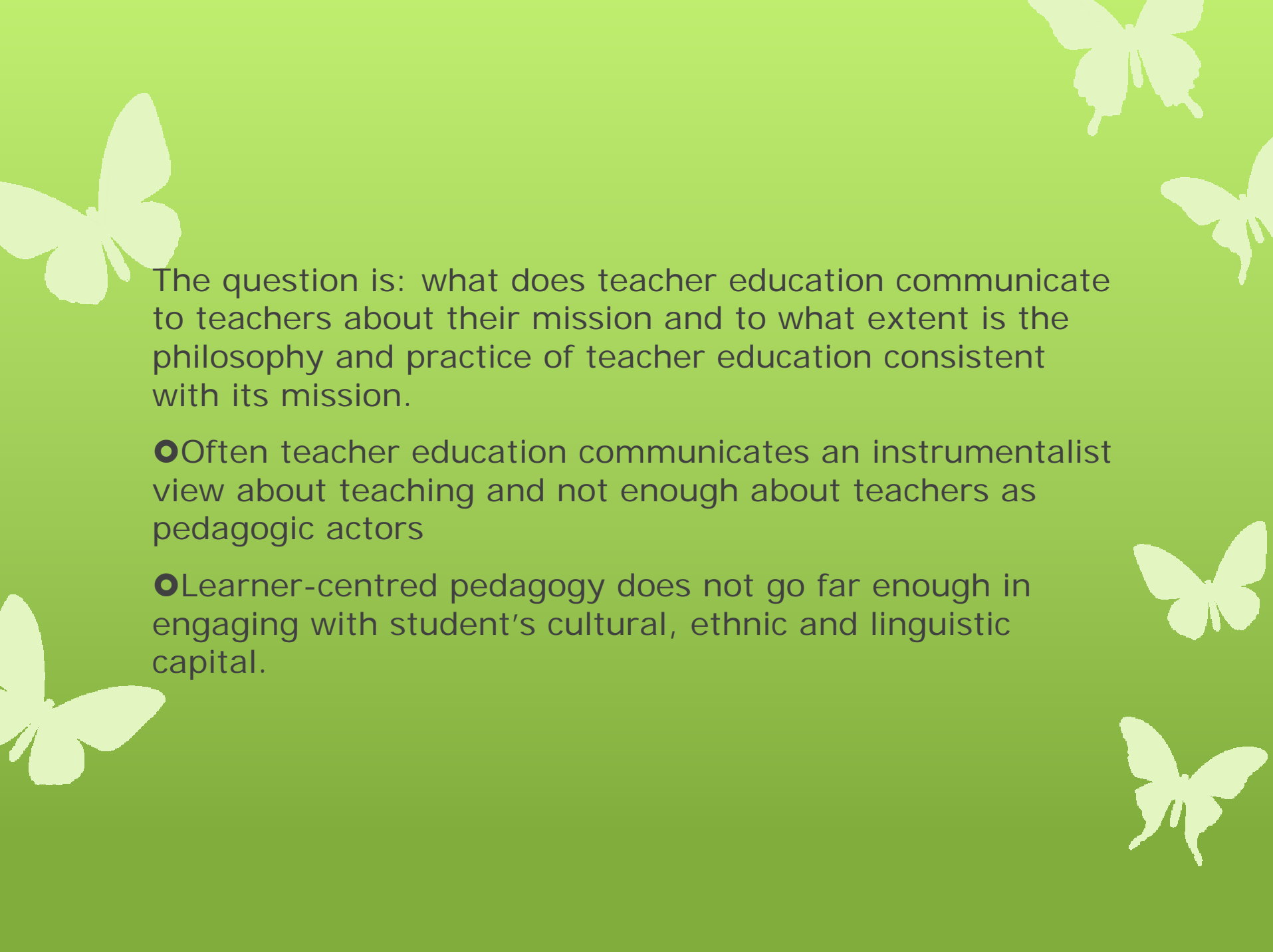
# Challenge: low expectations for disadvantage students

Teachers with the best intentions can have low expectations of the academic achievement of their students with negative consequences for the nature of the curriculum experienced by students, the quality of instruction provided by teachers ... the self esteem of students, their aspirations, and their motivation to learn (Leithwood, 2010; Dumont, et al., 2010)



Studies have shown, for example, that “the likelihood of students repeating a grade increases when teachers underrate their cognitive abilities; have low expectations of them; spend little time on instruction; cover low-level content topics in reading, literacy and mathematics; report frequent behavioural problems in class; and have a positive attitude toward grade retention” (Hong and Yu 2007; Bonvin et.al., 2008 cited in Goos et al., 2013).





The question is: what does teacher education communicate to teachers about their mission and to what extent is the philosophy and practice of teacher education consistent with its mission.

- Often teacher education communicates an instrumentalist view about teaching and not enough about teachers as pedagogic actors

- Learner-centred pedagogy does not go far enough in engaging with student's cultural, ethnic and linguistic capital.

# Teaching for social justice

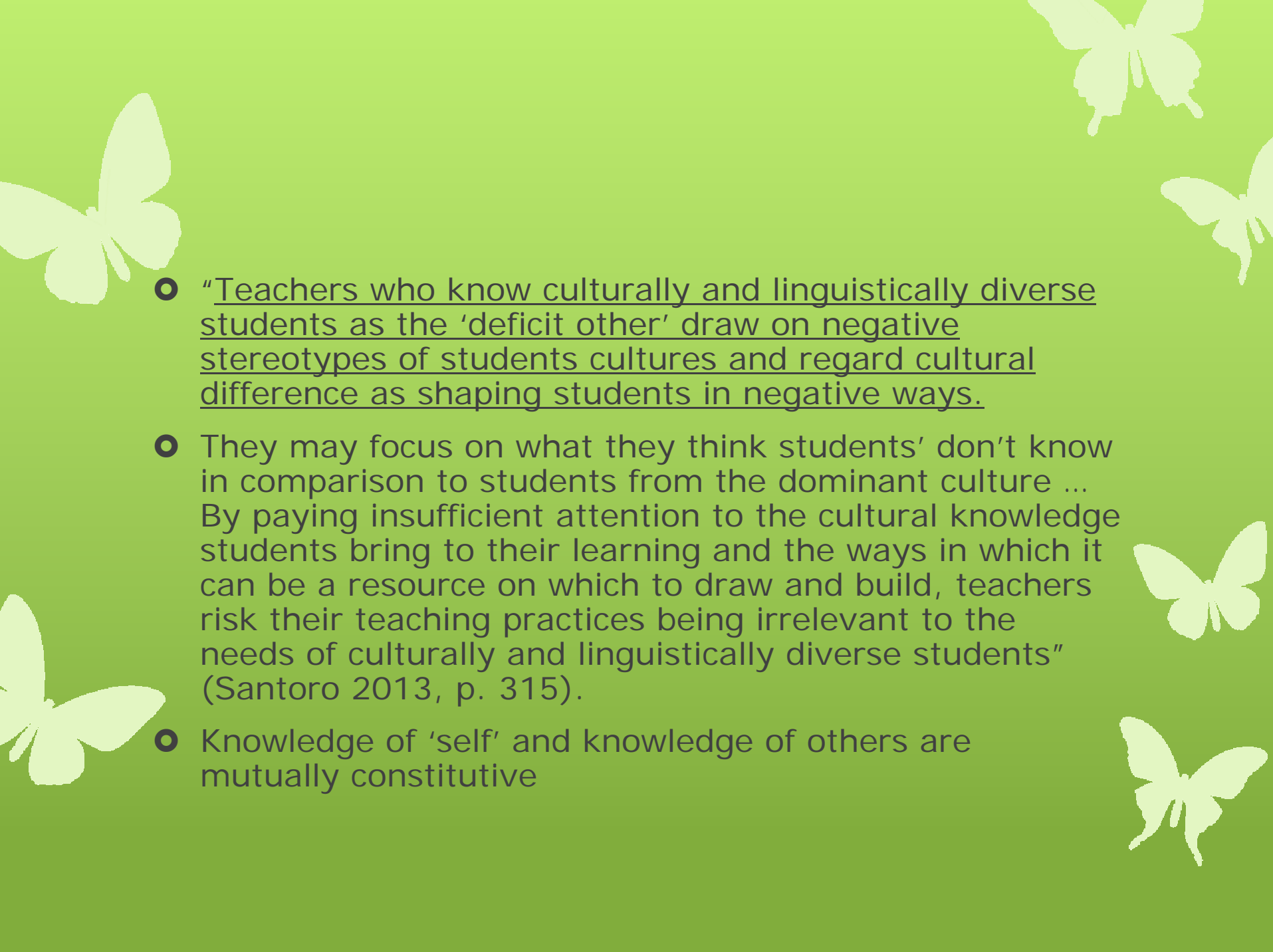
I would argue that for the curriculum of teacher education to respond to a post-2015 EFA equitable learning agenda, it has to be capable of raising the social justice consciousness of all teachers so that they see themselves “as agents of social justice who teach so that all learners, especially those least well served by schools, can achieve (Spalding 2013, p. 284).

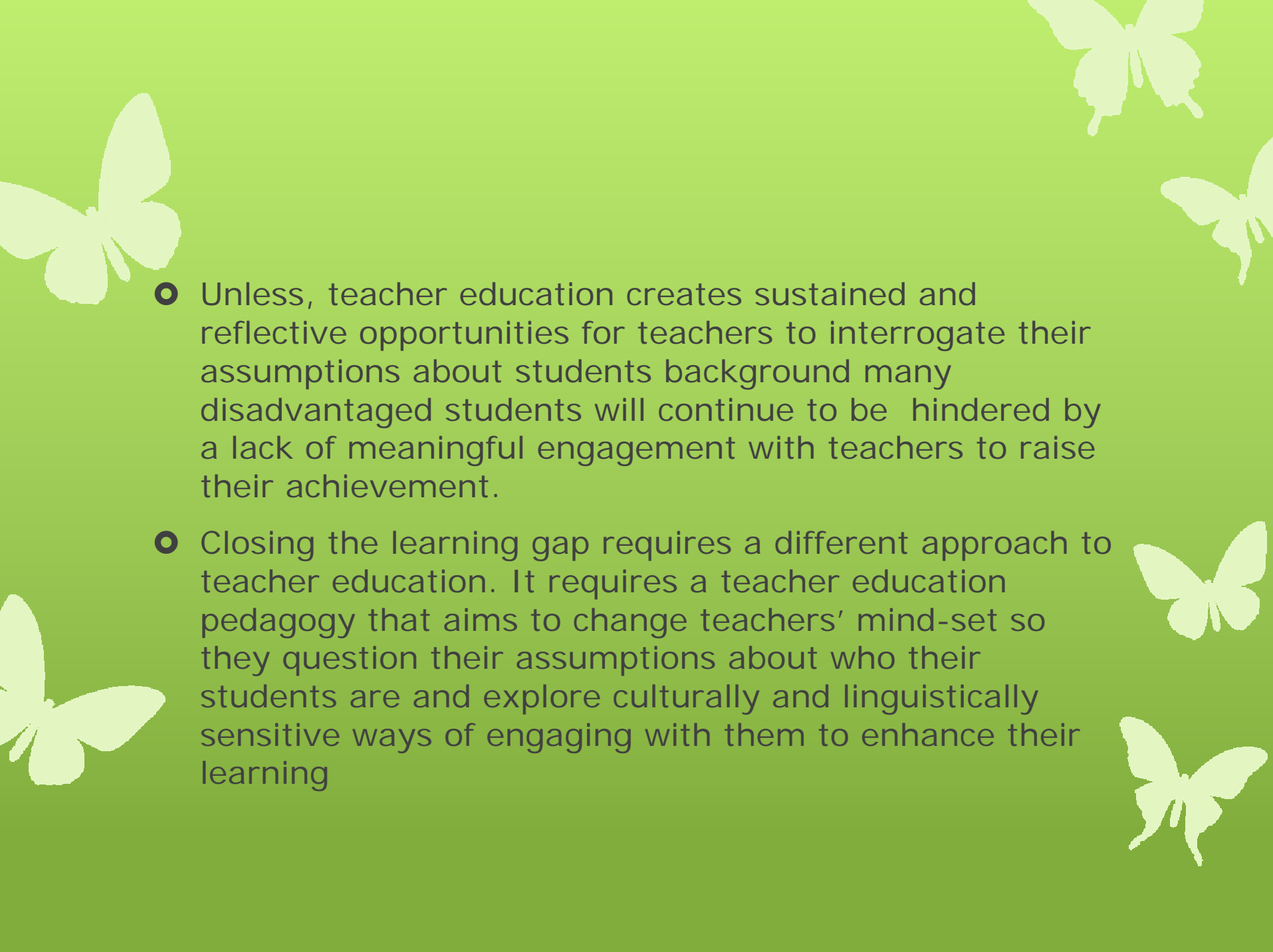
# Equity-based teacher education

Teacher education has to equip every teacher with the “knowledge, strategies, and tools to address differences ... inclusively” and promote “understanding of the socio-cultural factors that produce individual differences, make teachers aware of educational and social issues that affects students’ learning, and (adopt) multifaceted approaches that take account of students’ individual characteristics, of their interests and their learning from outside school, and of their previous knowledge and individual and cultural experiences (Macura-Milovanovic et al., 2012, p. 21, 23).

# Inclusivity and 'knowing' students

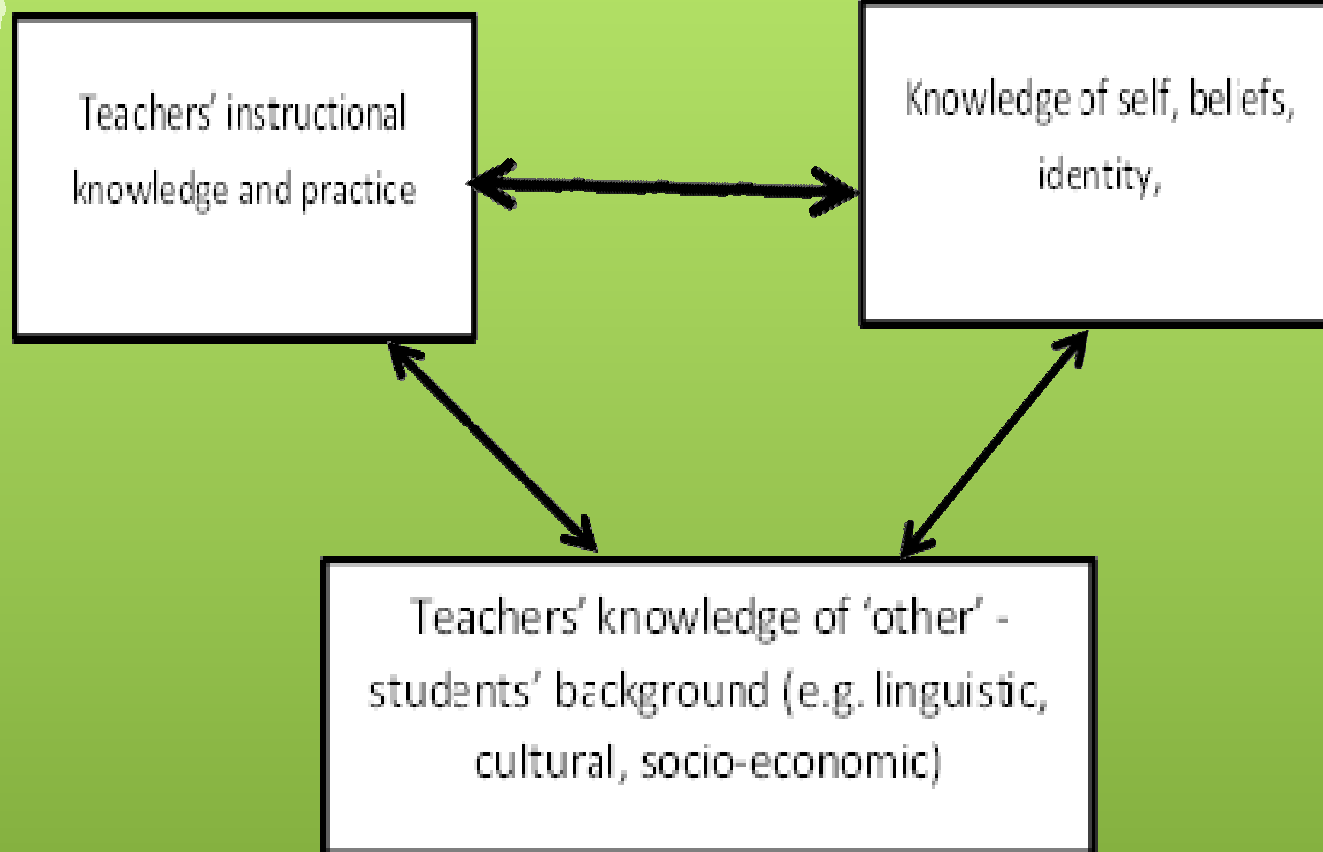
- Teachers with a commitment to inclusivity will be more prepared to adapt instructional approaches that reflect deep understanding of students' background (cultural, linguistic, social, economic etc.), than those who are less committed to this ideal.
- "knowing students is a complex business – and possibly the most important element of teaching. It is important to developing meaningful and relevant curriculum, assessment practices, and effective student-teacher relationships and is, in fact, important to everything a teacher does. Teachers have to understand what is culturally relevant to their students and recognise when existing curriculum fails to build on, or acknowledge the cultural knowledge students bring to their learning" (Santoro 2013, p. 314)

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- The slide features a light blue background with several white butterfly silhouettes in the corners. There are two butterflies in the top-left, two in the top-right, one in the bottom-left, and two in the bottom-right.
- "Teachers who know culturally and linguistically diverse students as the 'deficit other' draw on negative stereotypes of students cultures and regard cultural difference as shaping students in negative ways.
  - They may focus on what they think students' don't know in comparison to students from the dominant culture ... By paying insufficient attention to the cultural knowledge students bring to their learning and the ways in which it can be a resource on which to draw and build, teachers risk their teaching practices being irrelevant to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students" (Santoro 2013, p. 315).
  - Knowledge of 'self' and knowledge of others are mutually constitutive

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- Unless, teacher education creates sustained and reflective opportunities for teachers to interrogate their assumptions about students background many disadvantaged students will continue to be hindered by a lack of meaningful engagement with teachers to raise their achievement.
  - Closing the learning gap requires a different approach to teacher education. It requires a teacher education pedagogy that aims to change teachers' mind-set so they question their assumptions about who their students are and explore culturally and linguistically sensitive ways of engaging with them to enhance their learning

- “When I first started teaching, one of the schools I worked in, some of the teachers had a very narrow perspective of children who came from a different culture and a different background and they didn’t have an awful lot of knowledge, were quite ignorant about why a child might behave in a particular way. Also they didn’t have the mind-set that would allow them to question themselves to find ways of working around the child”
- “Minority ethnic teachers felt that the requirements of the national curriculum hindered their ability to support the learning of minority ethnic pupils and compromised their professional expertise.
- African Caribbean teachers also felt that some teachers’ unwillingness to appreciate the learning needs of an increasingly diverse pupil population undermined the cultural and social significance of their communities”.

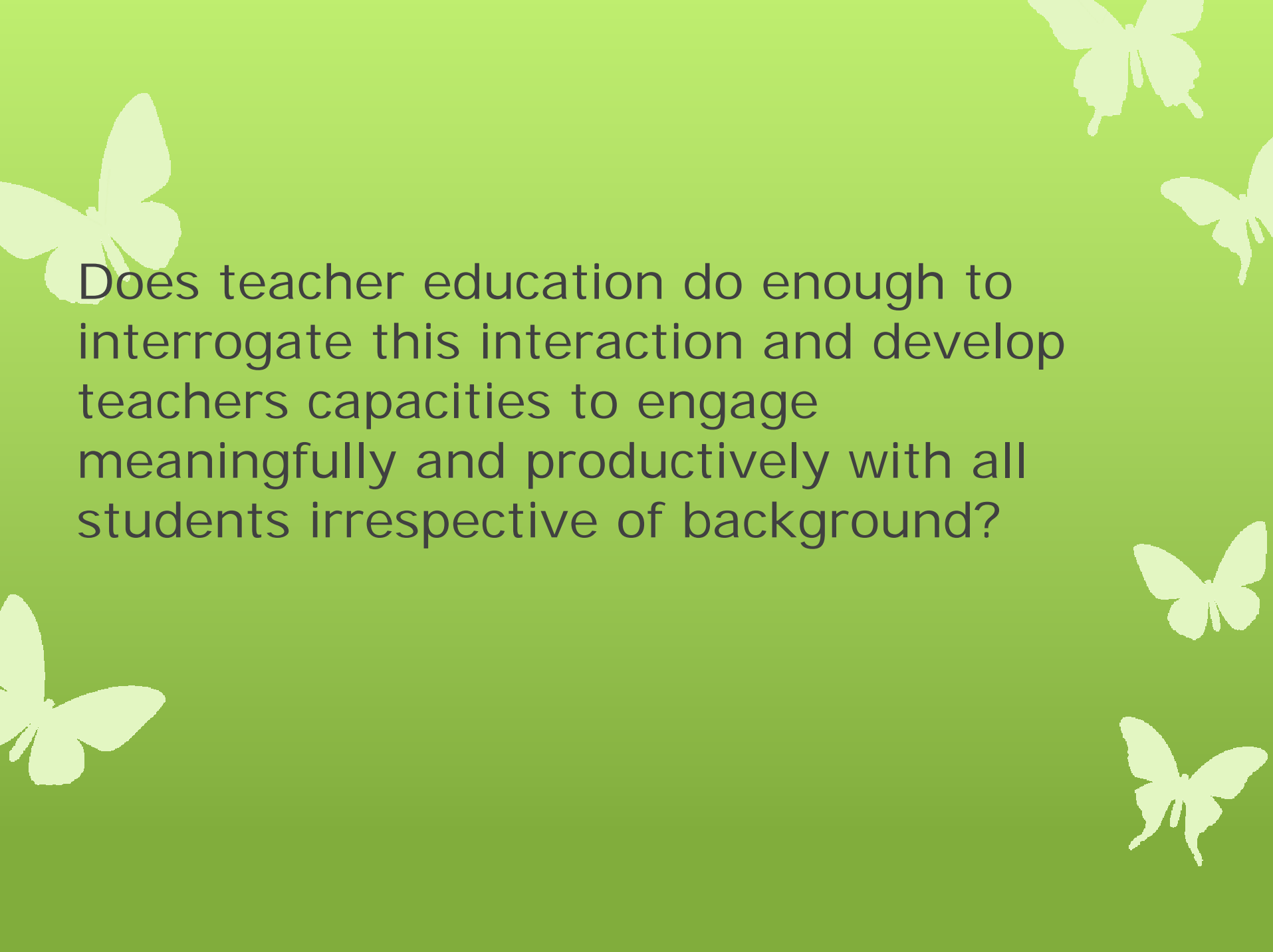
Cunningham & Hargreaves (2007)





# Knowledge of 'self' and knowledge of students are mutually constitutive

- Awareness of assumptions or presumptions about ethnically diverse students
- Stereotyping students from particular ethnic or socio-economic background and give them less opportunity to learn, or interpret their lack of understanding as reflecting a generalised deficit view of the ethnic group the student originates from.
- In Ghana, for example, trained teachers would often blame poverty, hereditary factors and witchcraft as reasons why some children from poor rural backgrounds underachieve (Akyeampong 2002).



Does teacher education do enough to interrogate this interaction and develop teachers capacities to engage meaningfully and productively with all students irrespective of background?

# How should teacher education respond to a post-2015 EFA agenda in which equity and quality education is a primary goal?

## OECD REPORT: EQUITY AND QUALITY IN EDUCATION: SUPPORTING DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS

- Develop teachers' capacity to diagnose student problems and context of the schools they teach
- Provide practical field experiences in disadvantaged schools as part of teacher education
- Provide mentoring to teachers in disadvantaged schools
- Ensure schools combine diversified and flexible pedagogic strategies with assessment
- Ensure a curriculum with high expectations

# Research agenda for teacher education

- Research – more research on learning to teach ethnically diverse students
- Adapting curriculum – culturally responsive curriculum – what does this mean and how do we achieve it?

Thank you!

