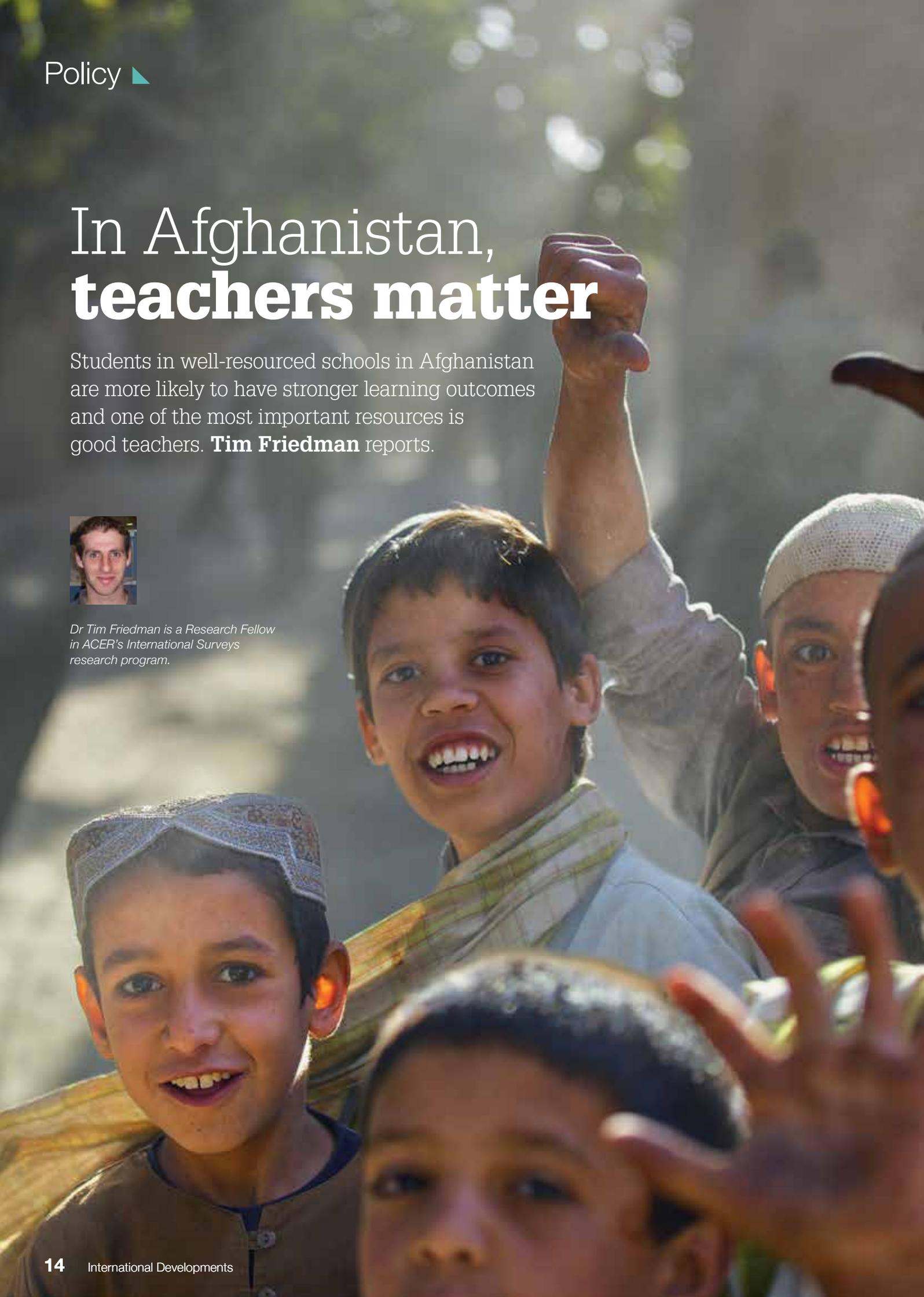


In Afghanistan, **teachers matter**

Students in well-resourced schools in Afghanistan are more likely to have stronger learning outcomes and one of the most important resources is good teachers. **Tim Friedman** reports.



Dr Tim Friedman is a Research Fellow in ACER's International Surveys research program.



A new ACER report on the relationship between school-related factors and achievement outcomes for students in Afghanistan has found that the supply of appropriately trained teachers and physical infrastructure is associated with improved outcomes for students.

The report, *Class 6 School Factors in Afghanistan 2013*, investigates results for Class 6 students from the 2013 Monitoring Trends in Educational Growth (MTEG) program in light of a school questionnaire designed to collect key information from school principals on the characteristics of teachers and schools as well as on school policies and resources.

While the results show that well-resourced schools are associated with higher student achievement, many of the differences observed in student achievement can be explained by the fact that students in such schools tend to come from families that have access to greater resources.

Teachers matter more

Nevertheless, supplying improved physical infrastructure would be expected to improve the learning environment for students. The provision of basic infrastructure such as electricity, water, telecommunications and the like, and an adequate supply of textbooks, is associated with improved student achievement outcomes. Of greater importance, arguably, is the need for the provision of trained and motivated teachers.

According to the report authors, a focus on improving teacher quality may have a greater effect on improving student outcomes than increased physical resources.

Resources in the school and home

- Students attending schools in urban settings have higher levels of achievement in reading and writing literacy than students from non-urban settings.
- The greater the distance a student's school from community facilities, especially shopping centres or marketplaces, the more likely that the student will have lower achievement in reading or writing.

A focus on improving teacher quality may have a greater effect on improving student outcomes than increased physical resources

- Students taught in the language they speak at home are more likely to perform better in writing, but not in reading or mathematics.
- Students who have access to their own textbooks perform better in writing, reading and mathematics than students who share textbooks.
- Students who attend schools with a greater proportion of teachers with a university education are more likely to perform better in reading, and students attending schools with a greater proportion of teachers having recently undertaken professional development are more likely to perform better in writing.

While the report findings help in describing the context in which Class 6 students in Afghanistan are learning, its main finding is that student achievement is largely attributable to the degree of resourcing available both in the student's school and at home. ■

Further information

Class 6 School Factors in Afghanistan 2013: The relationship between school factors and student outcomes from a learning assessment of mathematical, reading and writing literacy by Tim Friedman, Sally Robertson, Stephanie Templeton and Maurice Walker is a Monitoring Trends in Educational Growth report published by ACER's GEM Centre.

LINKS

Read more about ACER's GEM research at www.acer.edu/gem

Read *Class 6 School Factors in Afghanistan 2013: The relationship between school factors and student outcomes from a learning assessment of mathematical, reading and writing literacy* at <http://research.acer.edu.au/mteg/13/>