

# *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*

The International results from the OECD  
Teacher Policy Report

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## The OECD activity's contribution

A collaborative, cross-national process to:

- Better understand the nature of the concerns
- Analyse the factors that shape the attraction, development and retention of effective teachers
- Identify policy options and the conditions under which they are successfully implemented
- Help countries to learn from each other

# Why is teacher policy important?

- Teachers are the most influential resource in schools - teachers vary widely in performance, and lifting teacher quality is the policy most likely to improve student performance
- Teaching is the largest single employer of graduate labour (2.6% of the total labour force in OECD countries) and constitute the most important component of expenditure on schools (64% of current expenditure on schools is allocated to teachers' compensation, on average in OECD countries)
- Many countries have concerns about the teacher workforce in terms of shortages of well-qualified applicants, and whether enough teachers have the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of modern schooling. The ageing of the profession is compounding such concerns.

## Policy context

- Most countries are spending more on schools than ever before: student-teacher ratios have fallen, and average teacher salary has risen in real terms (salaries are generally based on experience, and the workforce has aged)
- However, teaching appears to have lost its competitive edge:
  - many other job possibilities for graduates
  - teacher salaries have fallen relative to GDP per capita
  - limited prospects for teacher career growth
  - mixed perceptions of the work ("important but difficult")
  - less attractive to "high achievers" and males

## Policy context (continued)

○ Many countries now have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to shape and benefit from substantial changes in the teacher workforce:

? Many new teachers will be starting in the next 5-10 years

? A younger workforce implies less budgetary pressure, and potentially frees resources for renewal and development

? But, if teaching is not perceived as an attractive profession for able people, and teaching does not change in fundamental ways, school quality could decline

○ Policy frameworks and initiatives do make a difference

? Differences among countries (some countries have an over-supply)

? Recent improvements within countries (which suggests the teacher labour market is cyclical, and not necessarily in long-term decline)

## Policy Directions: Introduction

○ Not all of the findings and policy implications apply equally to all countries. Countries have different traditions and are at different stages of policy development

○ Policy initiatives are necessary at two levels:

? The teaching profession as a whole

? Targeted strategies for particular types of teachers, and particular types of schools

○ It is difficult to address all areas simultaneously, and resource constraints mean that trade-offs are necessary

# Policy directions

○ Because the teacher labour market is highly differentiated, more **targeted policies are needed** e.g. special incentives for subject specialists in short supply, and teachers in hard-to-staff schools. **Teacher supply is responsive** to relative salary and job prospects (i.e. "elastic"), especially where teacher salaries are relatively low

○ **Teacher quality should be emphasised** more than teacher quantity e.g. stronger emphasis on selection into teaching, mandatory induction and probationary periods, on-going evaluation aimed at improvement, incentives and support to continue improving, and processes for responding to ineffective teachers

## Policy directions (continued)

○ **Teacher profiles** (statements of job competencies and performance standards) are needed to **align teacher development, performance and schools needs**

-- derived from the objectives for student learning

-- profession-wide agreement on what counts as accomplished teaching

○ Teacher development needs to be viewed as a **lifelong learning continuum**

-- no increase in the length of initial teacher education

-- more emphasis on induction and on-going professional development

## Policy directions (continued)

- The positive relationship between school decision-making and performance suggests that **schools should have more responsibility** for teacher selection, working conditions, and development. Schools will need stronger leadership teams, and disadvantaged schools will need more resources to compete for quality teachers
- Teacher education needs to offer **more flexible pathways into teaching** (e.g. both concurrent and consecutive models, and programmes for mid-career changers), and to have closer connections with teacher induction and on-going professional development

## Policy directions (continued)

- It could prove useful to use **more flexible terms of employment**: Employment status based on a system of on-going contracts with the requirement that teachers renew their certificates after a period of time, such as every 5-7 years.

Principles:

- Teachers achieve employment security by continuing to do a good job, rather than by regulation;
  - Periodic review provides the opportunity to recognise and acknowledge quality teaching.
- There needs to be a stronger emphasis on **teacher evaluation for improvement purposes**.
    - Opportunity for teachers' work to be recognised and celebrated and help both teachers and schools to identify developmental needs

## Policy directions (continued)

- Evaluation can provide a basis for **rewarding teachers for exemplary performance**.
  - Through speed at which teacher progresses in career;
  - Using non-monetary rewards;
  - Focussing on group rewards.
- Teaching would benefit from a **career ladder** based on skills, responsibilities and performance. There needs to be more opportunities for career diversity and mobility (between schools, between roles, and between teaching and other careers)
- Teaching needs to become a **knowledge-rich profession** in which individuals continually develop, and have the incentives and opportunities to do so, research is integrated into practice, and schools become **professional learning communities** that encourage and draw on teachers' development

## Policy directions (continued)

- There needs to be an **explicit recognition of the wide variety of tasks** that teaching actually entails
- Well trained support and administrative staff can help to **reduce the burden on teachers** and free them to concentrate on the tasks of teaching and learning
- **Better facilities** at school for staff preparation and planning would help in building collegiality and in programme provision

## Policy directions (continued)

- Essential to successful policy implementation to **engage all stakeholders in the process**. Teachers need a sense of "ownership" of reform
- On the other hand, **stakeholder groups should not be able to exercise veto over education reforms** that are mandated through democratic political processes.
- **On-going systematic dialogue and consultation** are fundamental for the process of policy implementation
- Teachers should be **more active in policy development**, and take the lead in defining professional standards e.g. through Teaching Councils
- The **research and data base** informing teacher policy is fragmented, and **needs to be strengthened** at national and international levels.

## Final Report

*Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*

To be published as an OECD Publication in early 2005

For further information:

[www.oecd.org/edu/teacherpolicy](http://www.oecd.org/edu/teacherpolicy)