



# Executive Summary

Teachers are the most important resource in today's schools. Improving the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schooling depends, in large measure, on ensuring that competent people want to work as teachers, that their teaching is of high quality and that high-quality teaching benefits all students.

Teacher policies are the regulations and principles that shape the development of teachers and what they do. This report explores three teacher-policy questions: How do the best-performing countries select, develop, evaluate and compensate teachers? How does teacher sorting across schools affect the equity of education systems? And how can countries attract and retain talented men and women to teaching?

## WHAT THE DATA TELL US

Using data from the 2015 cycle of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and other related databases, this report shows that:

- A variety of approaches to selecting and evaluating teachers, and a wide range of career and compensation structures for teachers, can be found across the best-performing countries in PISA. But at least three elements tend to be common to high-performing countries' professional development policies for teachers: a mandatory and extended period of clinical practice as part of pre-service teacher education or of the induction period; the presence of a variety of bespoke opportunities for in-service teachers' professional development, such as workshops organised by the school; and teacher-appraisal mechanisms with a strong focus on teachers' continuous development.
- On average across countries and economies that participated in PISA 2006 and PISA 2015, increases in school responsibility for selecting teachers for hire were associated with improvements in student achievement; reductions in school responsibility were associated with declining student achievement. However, the causal nature of this association cannot be determined.
- In 2015, a majority of countries and economies that participated in PISA compensated disadvantaged schools with smaller classes and/or lower student-teacher ratios. However, in more than a third of countries and economies, teachers in the most disadvantaged schools were less qualified or less experienced than those in the most advantaged schools.



- Gaps in student performance related to socio-economic status were wider in countries where socio-economically disadvantaged schools employed fewer qualified and experienced teachers than advantaged schools.
- Greater school autonomy for managing teachers is associated with more equitable sorting of teachers across schools.
- In 2015, and on average across OECD countries, about 4.2% of 15-year-old students expected to work as teachers – a greater proportion than the current share of teachers in the adult population.
- In 2015, in many countries, students who expected to work as teachers had weaker mathematics and reading skills than students who expected to work in other professions that, like teaching, require at least a university degree. The skills gap between students who expected a career in teaching and students who expected a career as other professionals was often larger in low-performing countries than in top-performing countries. At the same time, the OECD Survey of Adult Skills shows that, in most countries, the literacy and numeracy skills of teachers are on par with those of other college graduates.
- Countries with higher teachers' salaries (relative to GDP) had, on average, larger shares of students who expected to work as teachers. And while in all countries girls were more likely to expect a career in teaching than boys, students' expectations of a teaching career were more gender-balanced in countries with higher teachers' salaries. However, there is no evidence that higher salaries attract high-achieving students into the teaching profession more than low-achieving students.

## WHAT THESE RESULTS IMPLY FOR POLICY

The findings show that, contrary to what is often assumed, high-performing systems do not enjoy a natural privilege simply due to a traditional respect for teachers; they have also built a high-quality teaching force as a result of deliberate policy choices, carefully implemented over time. The findings also show that there are multiple models from which other countries can derive inspiration. The fact that high performers are found on three continents and within different traditions of public governance and employment implies that incremental reforms, progressively implemented over time and within the constraints set by larger school policies and social contexts, can go a long way towards improving a system's capacity to select, develop and retain more effective teachers, and ensure that the most talented teachers operate in the most challenging schools and classrooms.

Opponents to school autonomy often voice concerns that greater independence of schools might lead to greater disparities in student performance and, perhaps more worryingly, to an education system that exacerbates existing economic and social inequities. However, the data suggest that this is not the most common result of greater school autonomy. In fact, many countries have been able to combine extensive autonomy of schools with strong incentives to ensure that schools prioritise student learning over other considerations, and with compensatory funding mechanisms to ensure that equity is not jeopardised. If school leaders have some freedom to adapt teachers' responsibilities, working conditions and pay to reflect the difficulty of tasks, they are better able to attract the most talented teachers to the most challenging classrooms.

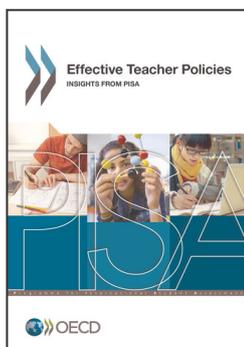


Still, the report shows that inequities in access to quality teachers and teaching affect both countries with centralised traditions and countries with decentralised traditions of teacher selection and allocation; and that they are strongly related to inequities in learning outcomes between advantaged and disadvantaged students.

These results imply that most countries could do more to oversee how teachers are allocated to schools. This includes not just monitoring the number of teachers, but also keeping a close eye on their qualifications, experience and effectiveness. Any teacher policy that aims to tackle student disadvantage should strive to allocate quality teachers, and not just more teachers, to underserved students.

In addition to limiting the inequitable sorting of teachers across schools, many education systems can also do more to address the needs of all teachers, particularly novice teachers, in disadvantaged schools. Much can be done during initial training and, later, through mentoring and bespoke professional-development opportunities, to equip teachers with the skills needed to work in disadvantaged schools and with an understanding of the social contexts of those schools and their students. Supporting teachers in their most challenging tasks could also help ensure that experienced teachers remain in the profession.





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