



STATE OF AFFAIRS REPORT

WITH KEY POLICY MESSAGES

2019

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State of Affairs Report

European Education
Policy Network



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STATE OF AFFAIRS

In 2019, the first year of its project, the European Education Policy Network (EEPN) is focusing on how to make teacher and school leader careers more attractive in different European countries. Key policy messages of the report are based on the work of the former European Policy Network on School Leadership EPNoSoL (*School Leadership for equity and learning - The EPNoSL Toolkit, 2015*) and the results of EEPN desk research and discussions in 2019 (*Desk Research on Good Practices Practitioners and Parents, 2019; Research on Good Practices: Policy Implementation, 2019; Research on Education: School Leaders, 2019; Research on Education: Teachers, 2019; Research on EU Funded Projects, 2019*).

The *Key policy messages* are intended to be a basis for communication of EEPN views and as an advocacy tool for its members and the wider educational community. Key policy messages are based on findings related to the following aspects of teachers' and school leaders' profession:

- Status of educational staff & salaries
- Autonomy and responsibilities
- Initial education
- School leadership
- Induction & CPD
- Career development and appraisal

Status of educational staff & salaries

Attracting quality and highly motivated staff into schools is a pre-requisite for raising standards of education. There is no high-quality education without high quality motivated teachers and school leaders. Numerous reports confirm that the attractiveness of the teacher profession across Europe is on the decreasing path. Countries are facing a shortage of teachers due to the aging workforce and less graduates entering the profession, as well as significant numbers of teachers who leave the profession. The reasons are various and span from low status of the profession, stress and well-being of teachers, opportunities for career advancement and development to salary levels and working conditions and environment. On the other hand, there is no concrete data beside indication of shortage of school leaders across Europe. It is certain, however, that school leaders work in highly demanding positions, often with little and inadequate preposition training and scarce in-service training. Knowing the importance of school leaders for both inclusive school cultures and attainment of students, it is of vital importance to develop policies that will both attract and retain quality candidates for the positions, as well as support them in the role through trainings as well as schemes of shared leadership roles at school level.

In some countries, part of what contributes to exceptional academic or other achievements is that teachers are recruited from most qualified graduates who are also later paid well. There is a clear correlation between higher teacher salaries and the country's educational performance – teachers' salaries represent the largest single cost in formal education and have a direct impact on the attractiveness of the teaching profession, as well as the in-school opportunities to learn and develop as teachers (connected to CPD). What is more difficult is to measure teachers' social status, or cultural factors determining the level of respect for teachers in a society - the most comprehensive attempt is the Global teacher status index. However, the perceived status is appraised and experienced, and virtually crucial as an attractiveness for young people or a factor when deciding whether to leave teaching or not. In most EU countries, salary levels respond to perceived social status of the position in question, ranking



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from basic schoolteachers to subject teachers in primary education, to teachers in secondary education to school heads. Countries where the teaching profession is less popular, have to solve the problem of raising the quality of teacher education while making the profession more attractive, risking the dilemma of “higher the criteria, fewer the candidates”.

Autonomy and responsibilities

Autonomy is another factor tied to both status and retention: when teachers are able to choose materials, teaching methods and determine classroom organization and discipline, their motivation is reportedly higher, however only if a high degree of continuous support exists. The results show that greater autonomy has a positive impact on the system level, students' achievements are higher in systems with overall higher autonomy and where school leaders can be more independent in their responses to local conditions. Moreover, Pearson's and Moomaw's survey has shown that as curriculum autonomy increases, teachers' on-the-job stress decreases and as general teacher autonomy increases, their motivation, empowerment and professionalism increase. All these factors result in a better and more inclusive school climate and greater overall wellbeing of school staff and job satisfaction. However, it must be stressed that autonomy and accountability are interconnected and that teachers and school leaders need to be empowered and supported in order to be effectively autonomous.

Initial education

Initial teacher education differs greatly across EU and comparisons are difficult, however it is certain that it is one of the most important factors in assuring an effective functioning of the education system. Teacher education can also be seen as an element of the more general policy objective of increasing the attractiveness of the teaching profession and teacher retention (European Commission, 2018a). The recent TALIS report however indicates that teachers feel less prepared for some aspects of their jobs, for example subject pedagogy or classroom practice (Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Iceland and Italy) and teaching in a mixed ability setting (Estonia and Czech Republic). “All this suggests that some teachers feel that the training they received was not completely successful in preparing them for some aspects of their job. This can point to room for improvement in the training provided, but it can also be a way for teachers to acknowledge the importance of acquiring some teaching experience over a substantial period of time to feel very well prepared. This suggests that more can be done to improve training in this aspect and that actual practice is crucial for developing these skills.” (OECD 2019). Feeling prepared for the job would potentially increase teacher retention in the first five years of teachers' careers. Furthermore, in high performing systems, teachers are trained in academic universities, where they receive sound theoretical ground as well as relevant practical skills. When teachers have higher level of formal education and research-based studies the prestige and attractiveness of the profession tends to increase which contributes to the better quality of training.

More than half of all countries in the European Union have introduced **compulsory education for school leaders** (Ingþórsson et al., 2019). The trainings are offered as pre-service, during the induction, or while in-service, and there is a high cross-country variance of when the training is actually offered. Despite, the increase of provision of training programs for school-leaders there is evidence that school leaders do not feel adequately prepared for their new position (Schleicher & OECD, 2012). This could be



connected to the quality of training but also content of trainings themselves. TALIS 2018 report shows there is a great cross-country variance of job-specific training school leaders receive. Approximately 90% of Finnish school leaders, 35% of Latvian and less than 10 % of Croatian school leaders report receiving school administration or principle training programmes. The same is true for instructional leadership elements where 95% of Maltese school leaders report such elements were part of their formal training, but only 50% of Finnish school leaders, only 30% of Lithuanian school leaders, and only 10% of Croatian report the same (OECD, 2019). All of this points that the training programmes for school leaders in many EU countries should be better aligned to the functions school leaders are expected to perform.

Induction & Continuous Professional Development

Ongoing and considerable numbers of qualified teachers who leave the profession within first five years on the job has been one of the major challenges in education systems across EU. Provision of high-quality professional support in early stages of teaching careers is crucial for preventing early leaving from the profession. **Teacher induction** is organized differently in nearly all of its aspects in different European countries. The key to a successful start to a teaching career and a first step towards preventing early leaving from the profession is the presence of a system providing an induction period. Some successful examples (e.g. Estonia and Netherlands) have already introduced an induction phase, most often in the form of mentoring. This is combined with a collaboration between schools and teacher training institutions. (EACEA, 2015; Eurydice, 2018; IBF, 2013; Menon 2012; Valencic, 2014.) The European Commission also recognised early career support as essential to retention (European Commission, 2013). They suggested early career support programmes should be provided for beginning teachers for the first two or three years of their careers, and that they should have reduced contact hours. Novice teachers need professional support both in the form of external training and systematic peer support in the first few years of their careers. Supporting novice teachers should be acknowledged as part of the professional work of mentor teachers, and thus remunerated. Initial teacher training should align with professional demands of the induction phase offering a smooth transition from university to teaching jobs. (Based on den Brok et al, 2017; IBF, 2013; EACEA, 2015; EC 2018; Thomas et al, 2019).

It can be considered that all EU countries have a requirement for **continuous professional development** of teachers, and most have it for school leaders. In 2015, the European commission reported the call from many teachers for more professional development linked to tailoring, diversifying, and innovating teaching practices, greater collaboration to share and diversify teaching practices; both professional development and collaborative work were linked to increased job satisfaction (European Commission, 2015). In several countries, school leaders also struggle with finding opportunities to participate in professional development courses with their regular duties "getting in the way"; embedding professional development into the work schedule of school leaders could address this issue (OECD, 2018). Across European countries the offer and requirement of CPD both for teachers and school leaders differ greatly as do the providers of the service. Research shows that CPD and life-long learning is essential however it also shows that what is offered in CPD is rarely in line with what teachers and school leaders themselves evaluate as their need and what research shows to be most effective methods of development and support. Often CPD is reduced to one-off lectures or attending a conference, whereas



research shows that longer programmes and a school-embedded approach to CPD activities are more effective. “School-embedded professional development is able to incorporate the teaching experience, the school context and teachers’ collegiality to improve teachers’ instruction.” (Borko, 2004; Opfer, 2016; Opfer and Pedder, 2011). CPD training is more likely to affect teaching practices if teachers can relate the content of their training to their everyday work in their schools and classrooms. Furthermore, since school-embedded professional development relies on capacities and know-how within schools (e.g. school climate, networking, quality relationships), it can be a cost-efficient way to support teachers and principals (Kraft, Blazar and Hogan, 2018[46])” (OECD 2019). Therefore, an alignment of the offer and the needs should be a priority of any CPD reforms, while providers of CPD should carefully consider effectiveness of their methods.

Career development and appraisal

There are two main policy models for **teachers’ career paths** in Europe (Eurydice, 2018.), the flat career structure and a multi-level career structure. France, Cyprus, Poland and Slovenia are examples of countries implementing the flat career structure which is applied to all qualified teachers. A salary scale may be in use, but it usually relates to years spent in service and, in some cases, performance. A flat career structure may allow teachers to widen their experience or take on additional tasks or responsibilities. Multi-level career structures exist in about half of EU countries (Eurydice, 2018), and in most cases school leaders are involved in promotion decisions. In a multi-level career structure, there are several formally defined career levels. These levels are usually defined by sets of competences and/or responsibilities. Within a multi-level career structure, different career levels are structured in terms of ascending complexity and greater responsibility. Although both structures can be incentive for teachers to choose teaching as a profession and to stay in the profession, especially when a further step in careers also leads to salary increase. School leaders on the other hand could benefit from creating a career progression path for the position for example towards leading multiple schools or optionally progressing to a position at a school supervisory authority.

Although, traditionally, most **school leaders** are selected from within the education sector, a teaching degree is not a compulsory requirement for becoming a school leader in all European countries (Pont, Nusche, Moorman, & Hopkins, 2008; Popović, Alfirević, & Relja, 2019; Taipale, 2012). There are two pathways to school leadership. The one that is rooted in daily teaching practice and successfully acquiring a leadership position is a result of being a successful teaching professional. This is the prevalent pathway in the majority of European countries. There are also examples of the other pathway to school leadership (e.g. Netherlands and France) where leadership positions can be seen as a separate career path. (EACEA, 2015; Scottish Government, 2018; Snoek, 2011.) In most European countries, pathways to leadership include specialised training that may be provided by universities or by leadership academies (Scottish Government, 2018; Stoll, 2007) independent from or collaborating with academia. Although some European countries have policies that offer school leadership as a separate career path (i.e. becoming a principal without having been a teaching professional before) the numbers of those who take this path is negligible. Further research into reasons for this and policy level exploration of possibilities to employ professionals with a non-teaching background could help alleviate shortages of school leaders. In recent studies on school leadership shared leadership or distributed leadership, participative decision-making and shared responsibility are emphasized in creating a positive school climate and thus to greater job



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satisfaction of both teachers and school leaders. Shared leadership can be also seen as a strategy to alleviate school leaders from over- burdening and over-complexity of their roles.

Most of educational systems use some kind of systemic **appraisal** for teachers with the aim to provide feedback to teachers on their practice, and this may also be linked to salary schemes. Appraisal systems have a role in reviewing and determining professional development needs (EACEA, 2015; Eurydice, 2018.) as well as in detecting low-performing or burnt-out teachers and may lead to supportive/remedial measures. Appraisals based on a developmental perspective, evaluate quality of teaching and are perceived by teachers to be fair and transparent tend to increase job satisfaction. There are also systems that use test-based appraisals and they have a particularly strong influence in damaging teacher retention. School leaders usually have a very important role in teacher appraisal – either organizing or participating in it – yet many school leaders received no training in the field. Classroom observation and discussion is the most common method for appraisal, sometimes combined with self-evaluation. In an ideal case, the voice of students and parents is also facilitated in appraisal processes, but it is only possible in about a quarter of EU countries (EACEA, 2015.) There are also less systematic examples of appraisal systems, such as awards or recognition organized by government, NGOs or professional organisations that usually have no impact on teacher salaries but may have a major impact on self-esteem and thus lead to professional satisfaction.



OVERARCHING POLICY MESSAGE

Public funding in education should provide for:

- a. competitive salaries of school staff;
- b. continuous professional development adapted to teachers' and school leaders' needs;
- c. decent working environment.

KEY POLICY MESSAGES:

1. The qualification and the responsibilities of teachers and school leaders should be reflected in their salaries.
2. Higher level of formal education and research-based studies tend to increase the prestige of the profession and contribute to better quality of training.
3. Accountability and autonomy are interconnected. Autonomy afforded to teachers and school leaders contributes to the professionalisation of the jobs thus increasing their social status, accountability and the quality of their work, however relevant support is needed.
4. Initial teacher education must include practice in order for novice teachers to be better prepared for the transition from training to job and decrease early leaving from profession.
5. Professional support to novice teachers is crucial for preventing early leaving from the profession.
6. Continuous professional development is important at all stages of teacher careers, thus it is important to introduce such schemes for various professional career stages, including CPD for teachers before retirement.
7. School leaders need to be trained in topics relevant to their function, including management, pedagogical leadership, appraisal of teachers and inclusion of parents, students and local communities in school activities and governance.
8. Continuous professional development offered should be based on teachers' and other school staff needs and such, to provide proper learning
 - a. Empower school leaders and teachers to analyse their needs
 - b. Offer programmes to schools that are longer, module-based and take a whole-school approach.
 - c. Support peer-to-peer learning and mentoring between teachers, between school leaders, between schools.
9. Shared leadership/ distributed leadership enhances cooperation and positive school climate.



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10. Alternative paths to school leadership position and creating a career progression path for the position of school leaders would help offer motivation for the positions.
11. Career path systems for teachers should have a progression path, be aligned with appraisal system and reflected in teacher salaries.
12. Appraisal systems should be based on development principles, evaluate quality of teaching, be fair and transparent.

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