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Executive Summary

This report aims to provide, to the different individuals and groups of actors responsible for public policy development, a description of the regional panorama of the teaching profession. The study also seeks to assess the current situation, analyse its recent evolution, and examine the major critical obstacles.

The parting point is our assumption that teacher policy and specific policies related to teaching as a profession are a priority for achieving a more inclusive systems and for enabling children and youth to access the significant learning experiences of today's world.

This study entailed a process of policy identification and categorizing that hopes to enrich the debate about what is being done in Latin America and the Caribbean in relation to the teaching practice, with a special focus on the situations of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Peru, Guatemala and Trinidad and Tobago. Moreover, despite the heterogeneity of the situations, this research identified certain trends to undertake a comparative study of the region.

The first step was to interview specialists. Afterwards, a comprehensive review was made of the bibliography of international agencies such as UNESCO, OEI, OECD, BID and the World Bank, including literature published by the network of experts that has prepared studies for PREAL. The review included material from studies or reports by other authors with vast experience on the issue. Finally, widely known cases (no older than least three years and with properly documented evaluations) were used to illustrate the assessment.

The report confirms that in the majority of the region's countries, the teaching profession is associated with a structure built on levels, with a preponderance of seniority and the tendency to regard leaving the classroom as the main path to promotions. The most significant discovery is the widespread agreement on the need to implement mechanisms that recognize good teachers. In addition, there appears to be a fair degree of consensus regarding the need to implement performance evaluations systems of working teachers, based on standards agreed upon by teacher unions and different social organizations.

Our research findings associate the teaching practice with the context in which it is situated, and, in particular, in relation to working conditions, pay and incentives and the teacher evaluation system. This setting strongly influences the critical difficulty:

the articulation between professional advancement and effective performance in the classroom.

In its final section, the report details the strategic importance and the relevance that building a teaching profession has.

1. Introduction

This report was produced in the context of OREALC-UNESCO's Teachers for Education for All project and hopes to provide material to feed an informed debate on public policy on the teaching profession. The main objective is to offer a systemization for discussing the dimensions that should be taken into account when studying the teaching profession in Latin America and the Caribbean.

This report will outline the comparative characteristics of the teaching profession in the region. The hypothesis is that, despite heterogeneity of situations in the region, trends can be discerned that provide a basis for comparative analysis. Our overview of the region's current outlook will be complemented by reflection on the future prospects of teaching profession issues.

Addressing this issue ignites a highly charged and complex reaction, frequently associated with situations that spark debate and confrontation. Pay, incentives, promotion in the professional ranks, working conditions and teacher evaluation is facets of the controversy that rages among different groups of actors.

Education Ministries are the most important public employers of Latin America and the Caribbean, which explains its great influence in decisions made in the arena of the teaching profession. UNESCO-UIS (2009) indicates that some 750,000 new teachers must be recruited in Latin America and the Caribbean by 2015 in order to maintain the current teacher work force and fill all the new teaching positions needed to achieve the objective of universal primary education.

The great challenge of recruiting teachers in Latin America does not consist of merely increasing the total supply of teachers and improving career proposals, but also implies attracting highly qualified candidates who are capable of teaching in schools with critical needs and can teach specialized subject areas such as the sciences or mathematics (UNESCO, 2008).

2. The teaching profession: a description of the regional situation

From a broad perspective, the teaching practice can refer to the legal framework that establishes the teaching profession within a given sphere with regulation that governs the entry system, practice, mobility, development, promotions, and retirement of people who exercise this profession (Terigi, 2009).

In most countries, teaching statutes regulate the teaching profession. These are instruments that vest teaching with legitimacy, by establishing rights and obligations (Vaillant y Rossel, 2006). In the majority of Latin American countries, teachers work in public schools, are public employees, and, therefore, enjoy the stability of their position. In Argentina, for example, the national education law (LEN) of 2006 establishes teacher stability in their current position, contingent upon satisfactory performance, and in conformance with the existing regulations (UNESCO-IBE, 2010).

Some of the most prominent characteristics of the teaching profession in Latin America are related to the tiered structure, the predominant weight of seniority and the tendency to view leaving the classroom as a promotion (Vaillant and Rossel, 2006). In general, the career has both a vertical and a horizontal promotion mechanism (UNESCO, 2006). The first is related to the possibility of allowing the teacher to shoulder other responsibilities, while the second refers to possibilities for professional development without necessarily leaving the classroom behind.

According to Morduchowicz (2002), many countries appear to grant seniority a special place as the principal component that enables teachers to advance in a professional career that culminates in the highest position, one that trades classroom work for administrative and management responsibilities. A teacher can only obtain a substantial income improvement if he or she becomes school director and, from there, supervisor.

In a good number of countries the profession is organized on the foundation of a pyramid-type structure, designed in levels. Entry to teaching occurs from the of lowest hierarchical position and generally calls for the formal requirement of a teaching certificate in order to exercise as teacher, although this condition is not always met.

Latin America and the Caribbean offer school administrators basically four ways of selecting teachers (see chart 1): by a process of elimination or opposition, merits, competition and free selection as set by local official. Access by opposition refers to the selection process by which teachers are ranked according to exam scores or testing evaluations and candidates must prove their knowledge and suitability as teachers and for the subject matter or specialty they have applied to teach. An example of this mechanism can be found in Guatemala (UNESCO, 2006).

In some countries, such as Trinidad and Tobago, merit competition is the only existing mechanism. Teachers who enter the school system for the first time must be certified. They must have an education degree, for which they present required academic qualifications that vary by teaching level and are interviewed by a Teacher Services Commission (Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago, 2008).

In other countries, the access system by opposition is complemented by a merit competition. Despite great variability, the merits commonly considered are: qualifications obtained in initial training, continuing education courses, and prior teaching experience. The combination of merits and testing results determine selection and placement of teachers. The countries that have chosen this system include, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Peru (UNESCO, 2006).

Lastly, some countries lack a higher regulatory system that defines common criteria for selecting teachers. In these countries, the school itself or local education officials convoke applicants to fill vacancies and place candidates according to their own guidelines. In Mexico, the states (or the SEP in the federal district of Mexico City) are in charge of hiring and each state sets its own criteria.

Table 1. Forms of selecting teachers

	Forms of selecting teachers			
	Opposition	Merit	Competition	Diversity
Argentina			x	
Brazil			x	
Chile			x	
Colombia			x	
Guatemala	x			
Mexico				x
Peru			x	
Trinidad and Tobago		x		

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of UNESCO data for 2006 and the Education Ministry of Trinidad and Tobago (2008).

According to some authors (De Shano, 2010 y Terigi, 2010), a substantial number of teachers begin their career as substitute teachers, but once they are certified, labor stability is permanent until retirement. In most cases, new teachers enter the profession as temporary teachers or for a trial period, after which (competing again or passing different tests and evaluations) they earn rights as members of the teaching staff.

Profession entry often takes place in schools located in the most unfavorable settings (Terigi, 2010). In addition, teachers transfer from low populated areas to schools closer to their homes and frequently migrate from positions in the classroom to management or administrative posts. The practice of rotation undermines the construction of stable teaching bodies and a major social capital in the schools (Vaillant y Rossel, 2006).

A review of literature on the issue (Morduchowicz, 2002, 2009 and 2010, De Shano, 2010 and Terigi, 2010) indicates that labor laws anticipate, generally, that teaching positions will be occupied by individuals with specific training. Despite this provision,

not all regulations require a degree from an institution of higher learning. Among the countries studied, Guatemala exhibits certain particular characteristics. In this country, a secondary education-level teaching training course is required in order to teach primary and pre-primary education. This differs substantially from the situation of the majority of the region's countries, where initial teacher training takes place at the university level or higher (PREAL, 2008).

Although the teaching certificate is a requirement across the board in the region, in every country the teacher population is insufficient for filling vacancies and people "suitable" for the job enter the profession with some knowledge or experience in the subject matter but lacking any specialized training for teaching (Terigi, 2010).

The proposal Latin American bibliographic sources most frequently cite is the Mexican teacher-training course that consists of a horizontal promotion system in which teachers participate on a voluntary and personal basis, giving them. Prospective teachers may enter the career and rise in the profession if they meet a set of specific qualifications. The general guidelines for the teaching profession originated in 1993 and are the product of different proposals debated in joint committees (Morduchowicz, 2002).

Another proposal widely cited in sources (Terigi, 2010) is Puerto Rico's teaching career. This consists of four levels of promotion in the profession, defined by a combination of years of service and the type of certification the applicant possesses. It is a system designed for working, certified teachers who have the adequate certification for the position they exercise. At each level, the teacher must present a plan for personal professional improvement based on five stages, with a strong emphasis on continuing training and earning university credits.

The case of Colombia is also described in literature. In Colombia, Decree 1278¹ establishes a teacher classification system and state teaching directives, with a salary scale based on academic training, experience, responsibility, unemployment, and competency. Under this statute, registration in the scale and the satisfactory performance during the trial period permit entry to the Teacher Career. To enter, rise and remain in the system, teachers must demonstrate through evaluation that they have the skills needed to conduct classes or to direct a school (Morduchowicz, 2010).

In 2007 Peru established a five-level Public Teacher Career (Carrera Pública Magisterial). The first level requires a minimum 3 years at that position, the second

¹ Authorized by Congress, Colombia currently has older teachers who are governed by Decree 2277 of 1979 that establishes regulations on the exercise the teaching profession and new teachers who are governed by Decree Law 1278 of 2002 which gives course to the new teacher professionalization statute.

level requires 5 years, the third requires 6, the fourth requires 6 and the fifth lasts until retirement. Teachers who had been subject to the Teaching Body Law now have the possibility of entering the Public Teaching Career, in which level V earns twice the salary of level I (Morduchowicz, 2010).

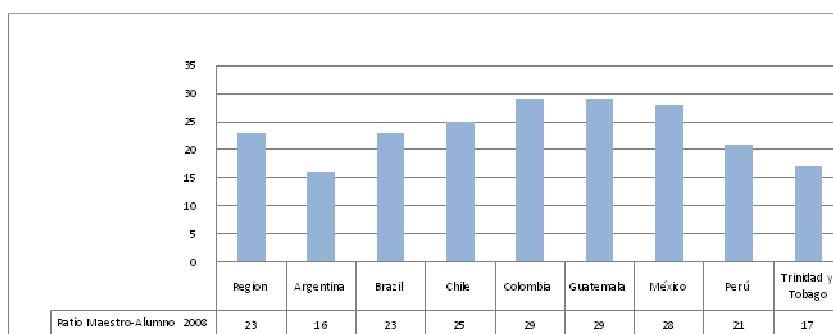
Analysis of the different teacher profession proposals reveals a complex network of intermeshing factors, which include working conditions, salaries and incentives, and teacher performance evaluation systems. These factors will be the focus of analysis of the following sections.

2.1 Working Conditions

A review of literature on the demand and supply of teachers, conducted by OECD (2002) highlights certain aspects of working conditions that are closely associated with teaching profession proposals, including the student-teacher ratio, student discipline problems, the length of time on the job, multi-jobs (moonlighting) and situations related to teacher rotation.

Classroom working conditions vary considerably among the many countries of the region. Although research on the influence of class size on student performance is not conclusive (Vegas & Petrow, 2008), on the average, teachers of the region do not face particularly large classes. The teacher-student ratio in the region in 2008 was approximately 23 (See Chart 1). Nevertheless, teachers of Colombia, Mexico and Guatemala must handle larger classes, which may be viewed as a negative aspect in terms of working conditions. In Brazil and Peru the teacher-student ratio was situated in the range of the Latin American average while Argentina and Trinidad and Tobago are well below this level.

Chart 1. Teacher-student ratio in 2008 in eight countries of Latin America and the Caribbean



Source: Prepared by the author based on UNESCO-UIS 2008 data

Some OECD (2002) reports suggest that student discipline problems also influence working conditions and the choice of career and teacher retention. Recent studies (Marcelo y Vaillant, 2009) show that one of the major reasons for leaving the teaching profession is disciplinary problems in the classrooms. It appears that when teachers feel they have greater control over disciplinary policies of their schools, also are more inclined to continue in teaching.

Working conditions in Latin American schools are not limited to wage scales or student discipline. The region has tremendous ethnic, racial and socio-economic diversity among schools and student populations. Such diversity also contributes to radically different working environments and probably shapes personal decisions about choosing the teaching profession and work location (De Shano, 2010).

Other factors to be considered in studying teachers' working conditions is the length of time they devote to the job, which varies from one country to the next. The real workload is always difficult to determine (Vaillant y Rossel, 2006), as the hours dedicated to the vocation are nearly entirely limited to classroom work. In general, classroom hours do not include planning, coordination, or evaluation that teachers commonly must do in their free time.

The other relevant fact regarding teachers' working conditions in Latin America and the Caribbean is related to multi-jobs, or moonlighting. The double workday is a common practice among a high percentage of teachers. In addition, the double workday is spent in different schools, which contributes to stress and physical exhaustion. This is reflected in the teacher stability index (UNESCO-UIS, 2008) that studies the permanence of teachers at a school for five years or more. For example, if 18 out of 20 teachers have been in one school five years or more, the stability rate would be 90%. In many OECD countries, this teacher stability rate is quite adequate. But in Latin America and the Caribbean, the phenomenon is expressed differently and the index tends to rank below 70% (UNESCO-UIS, 2008).

2.2 Salaries and incentives

The teaching profession is closely associated with salaries and incentives. This issue has sparked controversy in Latin America and the Caribbean in recent years. Bibliographic sources (Morduchowicz, 2009) state that teacher **salaries** consist of a salary base and other specifications that grant pay raises for different reasons, with seniority as the most important. In several cases, the salary base may increase substantially when incentives are taken into account.

The central definition of teacher pay structures is one of the most widespread characteristics of the region of current pay scales (Morduchowicz, 2009). In some countries with a federal structure, the trend in recent years has been to set a minimum salary for all teachers. In Argentina, the Teacher Salary Guarantee Law, passed and ratified between 2003 and 2004, establishes and unifies a minimum annual collective cycle at all spheres and jurisdictions of the country and guarantee salary levels to all teachers.

Morduchowicz (2010) states that that the deficits in the teaching profession basically exist in the training and recruitment phase, and recommends **salary incentives** to correct these shortages. The author affirms the incentives "are efforts to promote and recognize capable teachers, who are attracted to the profession, independent of alternative income or different opportunities for personal and professional development in other areas" (2010: 3). The issue of pay incentives has evoked debate

and opposing positions both among analysts as well as policymakers and union representatives.

Bibliographical sources (Vegas, 2006) identify different kinds of incentives based on the following criteria: knowledge and skills; student achievement; teacher training; teaching in schools in difficult settings and teaching specific subject matters. In Latin America and the Caribbean, a broad range of measures exist that can be adopted as incentives, although the region appears to favor the first two categories.

Lozano (2011) studies the Chilean experience in depth as an example of incentives based on teachers' knowledge and skills as well as student achievement. In regards to the first class of incentives, since 2002 Chile has had its Pedagogical Excellence Bonus (AEP). This consists of a voluntary process that seeks to recognize professional merit of teachers of primary and secondary schools. Teachers may apply for this benefit twice during the same level of the teaching profession. AEP teachers receive an economic award that is the approximate equivalent of the thirteenth pay during ten years, counted from the year of application. The bonus is lost if the teacher moves on to another level of the profession due to seniority (Morduchowicz, 2009).

In Colombia, the National Program of Incentives has a structure similar to that of Chile, awarding schools that perform well with resources for implementation of educational projects and teachers of those schools for the excellence of their work. In the last 6 years, the Colombian government has implemented a series of educational measures and programs, geared to improve public service quality. A central aspect of this initiative has been to foster professional excellence of teachers through a new Teacher Professionalization Statute and a Professional Development Plan, both associated with the incentives program mentioned earlier (Peirano, Falck, and Dominguez, 2007).

An emblematic case is that of Brazil and the creation in 1998 of the Primary Education Maintenance and Development and Teacher Appreciation Fund (FUNDEF), replaced in 2006 by the Elementary Education and Educational Professionals Appreciation Fund (FUNDEB). The fund's primary objective is to redistribute resources allocated to education by compensating states and municipalities in which the investment but student is lower the level set for each year. Considering that a minimum 60% of the fund is allocated for the salaries of education professionals, the outcome has been promising: Teacher salaries have improved significantly and the raises have been higher in places where pay had been the lowest in the past (Souza, 2001). In addition, the law that created the FUNDEF set a five-year period for teachers to obtain the competency required for exercising the teaching profession. With this objective in mind, it allocated resources for training "empirical" teachers, in other words, teachers

who did not receive formal training for exercising their teaching job (Namo de Mello, 2004).

Abundant evidence confirms that although pay and incentives are significant in influencing the decision to enter and remain in the teaching profession, teachers also highly value other aspects, such as recognition and incentives, that award good performance (Andrews, 2006). These are known as **symbolic incentives** that are related to the improvement of social worth of the teaching profession. Vaillant and Rossel (2010) indicate that in Latin America and the Caribbean it is possible to find some promising initiatives that aim to elevate civil society recognition of good teachers. Five of these are especially worthy of note: the *Grade 10 Educator Award* in Brazil, the *Sharing with the Teacher Award* in Colombia, the *Hundred Points Teacher Awards* in Guatemala, the *ABC Award* in Mexico and the *Teacher who Impacts Award* in Peru (see Table 2).

Table 2. Initiatives that award teachers in five countries of the region

Country	Awards	Purpose	Beneficiary
Brazil	Educador 10 Puntos	To recognize the work of teachers of all Brazil who create innovative programs in their schools	Primary education teachers with successful classroom programs of at least one year in implementation with visible results
Colombia	Compartir al Maestro	To honor outstanding teachers of Colombia and foster a more fair social valuation of the teaching profession	Primary and secondary school with significant and well evaluated educational experiences
Guatemala	Teacher 100 Puntos	To recognize good classroom practices and identify innovative projects of the best teachers of the country	Primary education teachers with good classroom practices
Mexico	ABC Award	To recognize outstanding teachers who have a positive impact on their students' learning.	Teachers, school directors, and pedagogical technical advisors of primary education public schools of the entire country.
Peru	Maestro que Deja Huella	To identify, distinguish, and publicize transcendental exercise of educational work of teachers who have a positive imprint on their students	Teachers, school directors, or at primary education classroom teachers who develop innovative proposals for working with their students

Source: Prepared by the author, drawing from Vaillant and Rossel, 2010

The *Educador Punto 10* is an award initiative of the Victor Civita Foundation, which is open for all educators who work in public and private preschool and primary education in Brazil. Selection committees study projects that are submitted and narrow the field down to 40 finalists. From these it selects ten Grade 10 Educators, from which a winner is chosen. The *Compartir al Maestro* competition has been conducted since 1998 in Colombia, sponsored by the Share Foundation. This award is based on meticulous selection procedures that includes on site visits to view the projects submitted for the competition, to which all public and private school teachers of Colombia may apply.

Another highly interesting experience in Latin America and the Caribbean is Guatemala's *Premio Maestro 100 Puntos* that arose in 2006 as an initiative of that country's Business Group for Education. The award, backed by universities, companies,

private foundations and international entities, addresses preschool and primary school teachers in urban and rural areas and in both public and private schools.

The *Premio ABC* was developed by the *Mexicanos Primero* organization. It requires participating teachers to have worked at least five consecutive years with a minimum 95% attendance rate, have a teaching degree, be certified by the National Working Teachers Updating Exams (ENAMS), have participated in three continuing education courses of at least 20 hours in the last 5 years and have successfully developed an innovative pedagogical project.

Finally, the *Maestro que deja huellas* is a teacher award conferred by Peru's *Banco Interbank* that had its first cycle in 2007. The competition is open to all working teachers, school directors, or classroom teachers in all the different disciplines in early, primary, secondary and special education in public, urban and rural schools throughout Peru.

The objectives of teacher awards in Latin America reveal a focus on two closely related major issues: the social hierarchization of the teacher by conducting events that award the most effective teachers and identify and publicize successful experiences of the work of teachers.

In some countries of Latin America and the Caribbean award competitions are open only to teachers who work in public schools (Mexico and Peru), while others encourage participation by all teachers from both public and private schools (Brazil, Colombia and Guatemala). Some competitions are limited to primary school teachers, while others include secondary education teachers as well. Every one of these award competitions require that the teacher be carrying out an innovative teaching project or strategy and several require that the project be in practice a substantial amount of time prior to application (Vaillant y Rossel, 2010).

Most award initiatives give cash prizes to the teachers or the schools in which they work. Some awards consist of didactic materials or computers. They also include travel for teachers, offering scholarships to study abroad, and or material goods. It is important to note the attention the communications media assign to the various teacher awards, with broad press and television coverage.

Although evidence about the effects of awards on elevating the social valuation of teachers is still incipient, awards appear to have become an interesting instrument that complements other policies that strive to improve recruitment, retention and, ultimately, create incentives for a better teacher performance.

2.5 Evaluation of Teacher Performance

In much of Latin America and the Caribbean, teacher evaluation has not been a priority issue, although this does not mean that the practice or regulation is nonexistent. School supervisors and teacher center directors, as well as students and their families,

frequently assess teacher conduct, often with non-formal mechanisms (Vaillant and Rossel, 2004 and Roman, 2010). However, criteria and evaluation perspectives differ greatly.

What does appear to be a constant in Latin America and the Caribbean is that each time a systematic evaluation plan is proposed, the first reaction from teachers is to regard it as a threat. Juan Carlos Navarro (2003: 151), upon analyzing teachers' attitudes towards evaluation, affirms that "an overall sense of dissatisfaction with education systems prevails, that has tended to employ evaluation results in an effective way, on the one hand, to develop national policy and reforms, but, especially, to reach the schools and the classroom in a constructive manner."

Teacher evaluation experiences continue to be scarce in Latin America and the Caribbean. Like their incentive programs, teacher evaluation plans of Chile and Colombia have been widely described, as well as, more recently, Peru (Vaillant, 2010 a). There is a logical explanation for this, as incentives are commonly a fundamental component of performance evaluation systems.

Since 1996 Chile has a *National Performance Evaluation System* (SNED) that every two years evaluates performance of municipal and private subsidized schools by measuring student achievement with the *Education Quality Measurement System* (SIMCE). Schools that are well evaluated receive additional resources for two years through the Performance Excellence Subsidy. These resources are distributed entirely among teachers of the selected schools. The program is based on the principle that a good teacher is one who succeeds in having students learn what they are supposed to learn. From this outlook, the SNED generates direct incentives for teachers based on students' results on standardized tests (Peirano, Falck, and Dominguez, 2007).

Since 2003 Chile has also had the *Teacher Professional Performance Evaluation System*, which evaluates teachers every four years on the basis of national standards developed in the Good Teacher Framework (MBE). The evaluation has four components: a) a self-evaluation, that comprises 10% of the overall evaluation; b) a third-party reference report (school director and pedagogical technical director), comprising 10%; c) an evaluation by a peer from a different school, comprising 20%; and d) a *portfolio* that comprises 60% (Peirano, Falck, and Dominguez, 2007).

If the teacher obtains one of the two best scores – outstanding or competent – he or she can take an exam to test knowledge of the subject matter(s) taught, to obtain the Personal Performance Variable Bonus (AVDI). Granted on a quarterly basis, this addition to the teacher's salary represents between 5% and 25% of the National Minimal Basic Salary (RBMN).

The teacher who earns one of the two lowest scores – basic or unsatisfactory – is obliged to enter a training program. The evaluation identifies the points the teacher must focus on, consistent with professional improvement plans. A teacher who obtains the unsatisfactory score must be evaluated again the following year after the training course. If the teacher's next evaluation has not improved, he or she must leave the classroom to enter a professional improvement program, after which the evaluation is repeated. A third unsatisfactory evaluation obligates the teacher to leave the school system.

Another case bibliographic sources describe is Colombia's Teacher Professionalization Statute. In place since 2002, this mechanism establishes three types of evaluations (Vaillant, 2010 a):

- A competition that evaluates aptitude, competency, experience and suitability of the future teacher upon entering the profession; once the teacher has entered, through this test, he or she receives a position for one year;
- A performance assessment conducted every year in which teachers who obtain unsatisfactory scores in two consecutive years must leave the profession;
- A voluntary competency exam for teachers who have remained at least three years in a position and enables promotions or relocation on the pay scale for those who earn outstanding scores.

The Colombian evaluation system consists of three entities. Each body evaluates teachers at different stages of their career and for different objectives. But teachers who aspire to rise in the wage scale must take a special evaluation based on specific competencies required for their teaching work (Peirano, C., Falck, D. and Dominguez M, 2007).

Table 3. Teacher performance evaluation in Chile, Colombia and Peru

Chile		Colombia			Peru		
Form	National Performance Evaluation System (SNED)	Professional Teacher Performance Evaluation System	Career entry test	Performance evaluation	Competency Evaluation	Career entry and work performance	Promotion and access to other positions
Strategy	Evaluates schools every two years	Evaluates teachers every four years	Evaluation at end of the school year	Evaluates teachers every year at different stages of the career	Voluntary evaluation of teachers with at least three years in the profession	Evaluates teachers every three years	Voluntary annual teacher evaluation
Results	If schools are well evaluated teachers receive additional resources for two years.	Teachers who fail to attain satisfactory scores are tested again in a year, after a professional improvement plan. If they fail to improve a third time, they must leave the teaching profession.	If the applicant passes the competition, he or she enters the teaching career.	A teacher who obtains an unsatisfactory score during two years must leave the service.	A teacher who obtains outstanding score is promoted on the pay scale.	A teacher who does not pass is evaluated again the next year after training and a follow-up process.	A teacher who passes the tests successfully is promoted or can access a new position.

Source: Prepared by the author

In Peru the Public Teacher Staffing Career law, of 2007, establishes that teachers must pass a demanding competition that consists of an exam and review of his or her professional history, and a personal interview (Morduchowicz, 2010). The new law provides for two kinds of evaluation methods:

- Mandatory for entering career and work performance, conducted every three years, and if teacher does not pass, another evaluation is conducted a year later after a training reinforcement and follow-up during a length of time not more than three quarters after the failed evaluation.

- Voluntary for promotions and for verification of mastery of teacher's skills and performance upon applying for pedagogical management, institutional management or research positions. In order to qualify for the tests, the teacher must have passed the performance evaluation for the level prior to which he or she is applying. Depending on vacancies and merit, the teacher can only obtain the post with a total evaluation score equal to or greater than 70%.

In Peru, the Education Ministry in conjunction with the agency that administers the examination, the SINEACE (National Education Quality Evaluation, Accreditation, and Certification System, created in 2003) conducts teacher evaluations.

Cuba is another country of the region with a teacher evaluation system, under the supervision of a Committee consisting of the school director, experienced teachers, and union members. The teacher must make a statement about the evaluation and if not convinced by the results, he or she may appeal to a higher review body. Higher qualified teachers have the opportunity to receive training in courses, degree programs, doctoral and master's programs nationally and internationally. In Cuba the evaluation system offers a stimulus in the form of bonuses and/or salary increases. Teachers who fail to achieve the results expected in the final evaluation have the option of requalifying, that is, they can intensely study in pedagogical universities, while retaining their teaching duties.

The most salient confirmation we have made is that the absence of consensus when it comes to mechanisms for evaluating teacher performance. A factor that justifies such diversity is associated with regulations that govern the teaching profession. Through our review of literature on the issue, we have also ascertained that, like the situation of incentives, teacher evaluation is an issue highly loaded with ideology that generates fierce controversy. (Vaillant, 2010).

3. Critical Aspects

Profession, attraction, and retention

The need to attract and retain good teachers is a key issue that continues to resurface in most countries of Latin America. But difficulties exist not only in attracting and retaining good candidates but also because teaching is viewed as an entryway to other studies or occupations. Consequently, a professional environment must be built that improves education system capability and recovers teachers. It must also stimulate the teaching profession to become one of the first career options for young graduates with good educational achievements (Vaillant, 2006).

Clearly, it is indispensable to consider the different factors that influence good teaching and can produce a viable professional career. And this can yield an adequate

implementation plan. The key is to foster modes of promotion in the teaching profession and a system of promotions that does not discourage good teachers.

Our review of literature of Latin America and other continents indicates that education officials today face the constant challenge of providing a sufficient number of competent teachers, who remain motivated, and possess adequate working conditions throughout the duration of their teaching career (Vaillant, 2006).

Teaching profession and phases

The life span of a teacher, from the standpoint of the profession, ranges from 30 to 40 years and is highly shaped by the first five. The earliest stage is key, as it is the period when the teacher builds a work culture. And, significantly, professional teaching career proposals in Latin America span the entry period in teaching as a specific issue of concern. Few countries have policies that focus specifically on beginning teachers (Marcelo, 2010 and Vaillant, 2009).

Concern for the professional teaching career must contemplate the stages through which the teacher transits, throughout the course of his or her professional life. Research conducted by Day *et al*, 2007 suggests that the exercise of the teaching profession exhibits significant changes in each stage of professional life. The first 0-3 years of work are a stage when a firm commitment is forged and support from directors and supervisors is fundamental in this regard. In this period teachers already understand the meaning of effective professional performance. From 4 to 7 years in the career is the phase in which teachers build professional identity and develop classroom effectiveness. Then, from 8 to 15 years as a teacher is the stage when growing tensions and transitions arise. At this stage some teachers shift into positions of responsibilities and must make decisions about the future of their career. When teachers reach 16 to 23 years of professional life, they enter a phase in which problems emerge in regards to motivation as well as commitment. Subsequently, when the teacher reaches 24 - 30 years of work, he or she faces major challenges for maintaining motivation. Finally, with 31 or more years as a teacher, motivation plummets due to the approach of retirement.

The phases of a teacher's professional life comprise a sphere for reflection when it comes time to design career proposals for teachers, as all indications suggest that the phases shape teachers in different ways.

Career and professional development

Literature (Terigi, 2010) suggests that greater articulation must be found between teacher career and professional development. Returning to the latter idea, it is interesting to review the empirical evidence (Vaillant and Rossel, 2006) related to the

aspects that give teachers the greatest sense of satisfaction with their profession. These include student achievement, professional commitment, continuing training, satisfaction that comes from teaching what one knows and the emotional bond with the students.

Participation in a challenging course and passing it; developing a project to carry out in the school, setting it in motion and evaluating it; the satisfaction from winning a skill competition and the prestige associated with that; identification of problem areas in institution of the school and building mechanisms to find solutions; applying for scholarships; advising a colleague who enters the profession, are all examples of achievements important to teachers, that from the perspective of an entire work experience make for an attractive and stimulating professional career, (Terigi, 2010).

Career, incentives and clear rules

For incentives to work, first of all, objectives must be clearly defined and the rules of the game must also be clear. Literature (OECD 2009; Lozano, 2011) insists that criteria for incentive bonuses must be clearly designed, in terms of the definition of positive indicators and balance of the amounts to be awarded.

Some authors (Morduchowicz, 2010, Lozano, 2011 and OECD, 2009) affirm that incentives represent a very important and instrumental element that is intrinsically related to the context in which they are developed. The response to a given type of incentive depends on certain characteristics such as teachers' skills and specialization in a given subject matter.

The motives that give rise to incentives may be classified as performance, teaching in difficult situations, and continuing teacher training. However, the wide range of possibilities show that there does not exist one single nor a best institutional design for compensating effort, dedication and ongoing teacher improvement in terms of salary.

Career and symbolic incentives

The debate on the issue of incentives generally focuses on economic considerations and tends to overlook the importance of symbolic recognition in education. Analysis of the subject almost exclusively addresses the monetary incentives.

In recent years, the idea that society does not sufficiently value, and frequently undervalues, teachers has been an issue of concern for many authors. Recent articles (Vaillant and Rossel, 2010) indicate that, while pay and monetary incentives are important factors in determining professional status, teachers' motivation for entering and remaining in the profession has a strong quotient of non-monetary recognition.

Awarding teachers has a special significance in this context, especially in the framework of the current relationship between “quality of life (or welfare) and non-monetary incentives that seek to raise the prestige and social status of a teacher and the profession as a whole. Although the evidence about its impact is still incipient and limited, it does comprise an interesting instrument that can complement other policies that aim to improve recruitment, retention and, finally, effective teacher performance.

Centralized salary structures

An issue that has provoked constant controversy is how centralized a country’s pay structure should be. Among the arguments that favor establishing a minimum salary base are the following: they are objective, and therefore not subject to the discretion of any individual official; the salary is predictable, and upon entering the career the teacher knows what he or she will earn in the future; it is simple for teachers to manage and understand, and it reduces, if not eliminates, competition among teachers (Morduchowicz, 2009). Moreover, there is the facet of justice in paying teachers who share similar characteristics (experience, certification, performance) the same salary.

However, there are also disadvantages to pre-established pay scales (Morduchowicz, 2009). Some of the most significant are the following: mediocre teachers earn the same as teachers who are more qualified, better educated and more committed to their work; certified teachers whose degrees are associated with a higher training receive the same pay as those who lack higher education; more experienced teachers do not reap benefits – nor are they paid – from more challenging work or difficult work; the compensation system is unconnected to activities the teacher carries out in the school; and the current structures pay the same for different efforts and skills.

Career, consensus and evaluation of performance

Reports we have studied (OECD, 2009, UNESCO, 2006) indicate that performance evaluation systems that work, generally result from an agreement among all the actors involved, and have majority support of those who are the object of the evaluation. Successful teacher evaluation proposals have known how to balance the interest for qualitative improvement of education with demands for effective teacher body management, and the educators’ legitimate rights.

The evaluation systems that work (Vaillant, 2010, b) indicate that the design is not the only important component, but above all, the process that had to be traversed in order to achieve successful results. Such achievements will be produced by significant technical efforts that include not only reviewing relevant literature, but also holding international seminars, seeking advice from experts of diverse countries, collaboration from national academics and conducting pilot programs.

A performance evaluation system appears to work when it has led to better understanding of the teaching staff, and provides a solid foundation for decision-making, carries out a thorough and ongoing follow-up of the effects produced by the change processes, and prioritize analysis and appreciation of the results achieved by students, teachers, schools and the school system.

4. Suggestions for building solutions

A study of what occurs in the region reveals different stages in the teaching profession. In some countries, given a political decision, the improvement of working conditions and salaries and incentives is feasible. In other countries the situation is more complex and requires greater effort to raise the social status of teachers by offering them better teaching profession opportunities, as well as higher economic and symbolic incentives.

What conditions have the power to traverse from an arena devoid of professionalism to a fully professional condition? What education policy is capable of fostering appropriate working conditions, adequate pay and incentives as well as evaluation that strengthen teacher's work of teaching? How can these policies be maintained over time? The answers to these questions are to be found in the broad network of factors that contribute to increasing the attractiveness of the profession and ensure that teachers remain in the profession. What are those key factors?

The teaching profession must be viewed in the context of policies of effective recognition that allow teachers to improve their living and working conditions and stimulate the profession, and encourage young talented people to enter it. These considerations form the basis for a series of concrete measures already fostered by international agencies such as UNESCO and that seek to implement teaching profession mechanism on the foundation of basic standards agreed upon by unions and social organizations.

One of today's fundamental tasks in the region involves finding a way to improve teaching profession prospects and change the collective perception regarding this profession (Vaillant, 2006). Improvement of the current situation hinges on restoring teachers' self-confidence, but it also depends on the improvement of working conditions and demanding that teachers take responsibility for the results they achieve. To pose this change in mindset requires decisive support from teachers, educational administration staff and society as a whole.

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