

SUPPORTING TEACHER COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT FOR BETTER LEARNING OUTCOMES

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European Nations have realized that making sure that all their teachers have the essential competences to be effective in the classroom is one of the keys for raising levels of pupil attainment; encouraging teachers to continue developing and extending their competences in a fast-changing world. In this context the European Nations have agreed upon some points to bring reforms in education system about what it takes to be a high quality teacher.

Teaching Competences and Teachers Competences

Teaching competences - Role of the teacher in the classroom - 'craft' of teaching - complex combinations of knowledge, skills, understanding, values and attitudes.

Teacher competences - Teacher professionalism on multiple levels – the individual, the school, the local community, professional networks.

Teacher's competences have powerful effects on student achievement: up to three quarters of school effects on student outcomes can be explained by teacher effects (Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2005).

- **Improve the whole continuum of teacher education:** recruitment and selection of teachers, quality of initial teacher education, and systematic support to beginning teachers, relevance and quality of career-long opportunities for professional development.
- They acknowledge the need to define clearly what teaching staff are expected to know, and be able to do; such **frameworks of teacher competences** can then be the basis for improving the whole continuum of teacher education.
- Ensure that those recruited to teaching and school leadership posts are of the highest caliber and well-suited to the tasks they have to fulfil. The **knowledge, skills and commitment of teachers** and the quality of school leadership, are the most important factors in achieving high quality educational outcomes.
- Have agreed that, as a minimum, teachers should have a specialist knowledge of the subject(s) they teach, plus the necessary pedagogical skills to teach them, including teaching to heterogeneous classes, making effective use of ICT, and helping pupils to acquire transversal competences.
- Have noted the need to promote **certain key professional values and attitudes amongst teachers:** reflective practice, autonomous learning, engagement in research and innovation, collaboration with colleagues and parents, and an involvement in the development of the whole school.

Their analysis suggests that countries vary in:

- the level of detail in which they are described (or not)
- whether they are described only for initial teacher education or are expected to grow and develop over the whole teaching career
- the policy tools used (legislation, regulation, guidelines, university curricula, specification of learning outcomes, requirements for entry into the profession, teacher certification)
- the actors who are entrusted to implement policy (government organizations, teacher education institutions, professional bodies such as teaching councils)

Development of teacher competence frameworks

Several European countries consider a range of factors to develop teacher competence frameworks.

1. The conceptual basis - a social consensus about what education, school, and indeed, teachers are for; thereby providing teachers with a sense of security in their roles. Be aware of the national and international educational context.
2. Ownership - The stronger and deeper the involvement of a significant proportion of teachers at all stages of the process of developing the framework, the more likely it is that they will feel ownership and accept the outcome. Involvement implies more than merely informing or consulting teachers.
3. Purpose of any framework
4. The process leading to a framework of teacher competences
5. The framework features
6. Putting complex teacher competences into words

Benefits of Frameworks

An instrument to:

- Ensure quality in the selection of teachers, in their preparation and in their professional development, facilitating effective dialogue between different stakeholders about policy planning and implementation.
- Assess the development of teacher's competences.
- Promote quality in education.

Teacher Competencies: Current situation in European countries vary

1. Policies to promote teacher professional development exist in most Member States and nearly 90% of teachers say they have taken part in professional development activities, but variation exists in the type of activity, its impact, the intensity of participation, and the age and proportion of teaching staff participating.
2. Continuing professional development (CPD) is considered a professional duty for teachers in 24 European countries or regions. In some countries it is a prerequisite for career advancement, salary increases.
3. A considerable proportion of teachers feel that they require more professional development than they currently receive (OECD 2009).
4. Member States thus need systematic programmes to assess teachers' learning needs, and provide relevant individualized training
5. More than 13% of teachers report that they have never been appraised. Large numbers of teaching staff only receive appraisal and feedback once a year or less.
6. When teaching staff were appraised, they often did not receive relevant feedback on their performance. In Italy, Spain, Portugal and Ireland over a quarter of teachers said that they had not received feedback on their performance. Whereas, all teachers in Bulgaria, Lithuania and the Slovak Republic said they received feedback on their work.
7. Research shows that effective teacher learning is school-based and collaborative.

3 key system components to encourage teachers to further develop their competencies

- Stimulate teacher's active engagement in career-long learning and competence development in effective ways.
- Assess the development of teacher's competences, with tools that are aligned with the purpose and design of the teacher competence model being used in each system
- Provide coherent, career-long appropriate and relevant learning opportunities, through which every teacher can acquire and develop the competences they need.