

## CHAPTER 3

# Teacher Career Paths: Consolidating a Quality Profession

*This chapter argues that the single most important policy reform Mexico can make to improve education outcomes for its young people is to build a powerful system to recruit, prepare, develop and evaluate the very best teachers for its schools. It addresses the challenges of recruiting, preparing, developing and evaluating a top-flight teaching force, and sets out eight major recommendations in a sequence that follows a teacher's trajectory from initial training through to permanent status as a full professional, when professional development and evaluation become important elements.*

*This chapter begins with a general overview of teachers and the teaching profession in Mexico. It then presents eight recommendations in a sequence that follows a teacher's trajectory from initial education through to permanent status as a full professional. Each recommendation is presented with the same structure: the context for the recommendation is described, followed by relevant international research evidence of what works, and then the recommendation.*

## TEACHERS AND TEACHING IN MEXICO

In Mexico there are around 1.7 million teaching staff (1.1 million in basic education) serving more than 245 500 (more than 220 000 in basic education) educational establishments. In the 2007/08 school year, over 33 million students (76.5% or 25.5 million in basic education) were served by Mexican teachers (Table 2.3) (Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación (INEE), 2008).

### **Who are teachers in Mexico?**

The importance and role of teachers and teaching are topics that are often publicly debated in Mexico. However, the scarcity of information regarding “real” teaching practices has indicated a lack of interest in this topic from policy makers and, with a few exceptions, researchers (Goodson, 2003). For example, official statistics on the number of registered teachers are based on the number of teaching posts (*plazas docentes*) – a figure that does not coincide with the number of teachers who are actually working in schools. In fact the exact number of teachers in the country is unclear.<sup>1</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 2, in order to respond to these challenges, the national Congress approved in spring 2010 an initiative to begin the consolidation of a National Teacher Census (*Padrón Nacional de Maestros*). However, at this early stage the initiative does not apply to all teachers.<sup>2</sup>

Recent studies have provided a characterisation of Mexican basic education teachers. In 2008, the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), developed by the OECD, showed that across the 23 countries surveyed, 69.3% of teachers were women, while in Mexico this proportion was 53.2%.<sup>3</sup> Results from the survey also supported the “glass ceiling” theory, meaning there were fewer women in director positions in schools than men: 44.6% of the TALIS directors were women, while in Mexico this figure was even lower, at 34.7% (See Figure 3.1).

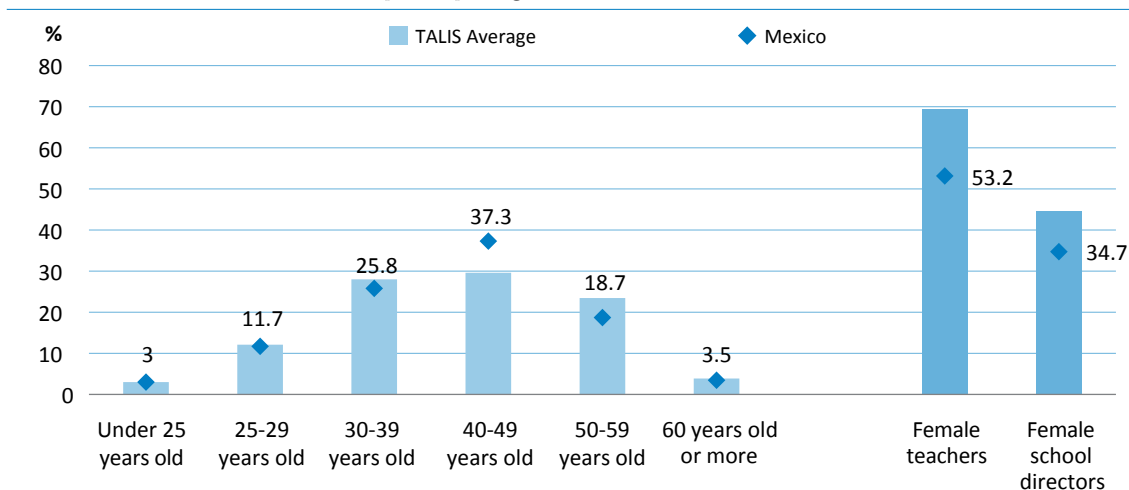
In common with most of the other countries in the TALIS survey, the education workforce in Mexico is ageing and older teachers will soon have to be replaced. Figure 3.1 shows that the 40 to 49 age group is the largest category of teachers in Mexico. While the average age of Mexican teachers is lower than in the other TALIS participating countries – consistent with the fact that Mexico's population is generally younger – it would be desirable to increase the entry of young teachers to the profession to counterbalance the ageing workforce.

TALIS data also show that just over 86% of lower secondary school teachers in Mexico have reached a level of education equivalent to a university or Master's degree (ISCED 5A)<sup>4</sup> – a figure close to the average of other countries. However, the proportion of teachers educated to postgraduate level is three times higher elsewhere than in Mexico.

Tenti (2007) found that the proportion of older teachers in Mexico who come from homes with low levels of education<sup>5</sup> was greater than that of younger teachers. More than 62% of the Mexican teachers who participated

Figure 3.1

### Age and gender of teachers and school directors in lower secondary education across participating countries in TALIS 2007-2008



Source: OECD, (2009), *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS*, OECD, Paris.

in the survey did not consider themselves poor, and a significant number of them – 61% – thought that their financial situation was better than that of their parents, suggesting that the teaching profession has been a factor in boosting social mobility in Mexico. Tenti also investigated the role of teachers in the home and found that almost 57% of the teachers interviewed in Mexico were the head of their household, compared to 37% and 35% in Brazil and Argentina, respectively.

Part of the relative attractiveness of the teaching profession to certain individuals is related to the income levels of teachers in Mexico, together with the benefits and the job security that come with a permanent post (Nieto de Pascual Pola, 2009). In a study conducted in 2002, Santibáñez (2002) concludes that, in comparison with other public servants and even some other groups of professionals, teachers are relatively well paid. “A teacher makes more, on average, for the working hours, than other individuals in the economy. In other words, if teachers worked a full 40-hour work week with the salary they receive today, they would be on a comparable level with other professionals or individuals with similar levels of education and experience in the private sector.” Teachers with two jobs would earn 25% more than a mid-level professional. Nevertheless, in absolute terms, Santibáñez admits that the salary level of young teachers with just one job is below that of most professionals or technicians as the duration of the school day is short, often not more than four or five hours per day. Studies on teachers’ working conditions and income and their impact on teaching performance and personal satisfaction levels would also be of use.

#### **Being a teacher in Mexico**

Mexican teachers operate under difficult conditions. Many teach in one school in the morning and a second one in the afternoon, or hold a second job unrelated to teaching. Many others work in very remote or small schools, operating in isolation with few opportunities for teamwork or learning from colleagues. Resources are generally sparse.

There is substantial evidence that the quality of the teaching force in Mexico is highly uneven. In TALIS, school directors were asked to identify teacher behaviours that impeded good quality instruction. Lack of pedagogical preparation, absenteeism and lateness were cited by 70% of directors in Mexico – a far higher percentage than in any other country in the survey, shown in Figure 2.2 (OECD, 2009).

According to many of the interviews conducted by the OECD Mexico Steering Group in 2009, the teaching profession in Mexico has lost its former status. It is not always recognised as a *profession*, but more as *technical/vocational* job. This may partly be because there is no formal framework of professional standards to guide teaching practices and teachers' work. It may also be because in recent decades teachers have been blamed for systemic deficiencies in the education system and for unpopular decisions and actions taken by the authorities and union leaders. It is also possible that the results of national and international education surveys have had a negative effect on the image of the teaching profession.

One additional element to take into account is that the current promotion mechanisms for educators the teachers career ladder (*Carrera Magisterial*) and to a lesser extent career progression programme (*Escalafón*) may not be effective in evaluating teachers' performance, as different studies confirm (Nieto de Pascual Pola, 2009; Santibáñez, 2002; Guevara and Gonzalez, 2004). This suggests that Mexico does not have an adequate evaluation system for in-service teachers or the means to identify and reward outstanding teachers. In addition, because the Mexican system does not have the capacity to identify low-quality teachers, they often stay in the classrooms. This may contribute to the negative perception of teachers and also to low student results.

### ***Preparing to become a teacher and entering the teaching profession***

The majority of teachers in Mexico have received some initial teacher preparation. As in many other countries, teacher education in Mexico is organised by level: one for teachers in basic education (this includes pre-primary, primary and lower secondary schools), and one for teachers in upper secondary education (Aguerrondo, Benavides and Pont, 2009).

Most basic education teachers receive their initial preparation in special higher education institutions for teacher education, known as Teachers' Colleges (*Escuelas Normales*). In total, there are 493 *Normales*, of which 267 are public and 226 private (Nieto de Pascual Pola, 2009). These institutions enrol approximately 170 000 students annually with around 70% in public institutions and the rest in private ones (Aguerrondo, Benavides and Pont, 2009). Presently, students in *Normales* spend about one third of their education on general pedagogy, one third on subject-specific training and one third in school placements. *Normales* became institutions for higher education in 1984, but did not adopt a research focus. In 2005 the *Normales* that were part of the Under-Secretariat of Basic Education became part of the Under-Secretariat of Higher Education. The aim was to reduce their isolation and improve their quality.

Upper secondary school teachers are prepared in universities in their subjects, often without any specific professional training to develop teaching skills (OECD, 2005). Generally, they enter the teaching profession not as a first but as a second or third choice of career. Many apply when they have no other alternative and mainly because it represents the only or the best job available.

In global terms, Mexico seems to be preparing more teachers than are actually needed, given the decline in the number of students in basic education. Taking account of both this and the current demographic composition of teachers in the country, it seems that Mexico can renovate its teaching force in relatively few years without harming the labour rights of current teachers (Nieto de Pascual Pola, 2009).<sup>6</sup> This is a historic opportunity that Mexico should not miss.

### **Entry to the profession and the first years**

Until very recently, Mexico did not have a national licensing mechanism for teaching. In 2008, the first national examination for teachers was implemented in 29 states (out of 31) and the Federal District. This examination aims to identify beginning teachers, teachers with no permanent positions and teachers aiming to have a second permanent post (*doble plaza*) who are suitable to teach in a classroom. The results of the examinations in the 2008/09 and 2009/10 cycles were discouraging, however: only around 30% of the teachers successfully passed the test.

Teacher allocation to schools has been a state responsibility since 1993. In reality, this task has been shared by states' authorities and the teacher union (SNTE) in most of the country. Since the National Teacher Examination was introduced, the goal has been to allocate all **new** teaching posts to those teachers who passed the examination. Most of the vacant **existing** posts (created due to resignations, death or retirement of other teachers) are still not open for competition. Schools and school directors do not have a say in teacher allocation.

Mexico does not have formal induction programmes for beginning teachers, and teachers do not have adequate support and mentoring or a probationary period before obtaining a permanent post.

### **Professional development and evaluation**

Since 1992, Mexico has provided continuing professional development for a large number of teachers. According to TALIS, 92% of Mexican teachers participate in training and professional development (Figure 3.2). This is one of the highest participation rates among TALIS countries: the average is 89% (OECD, 2009).

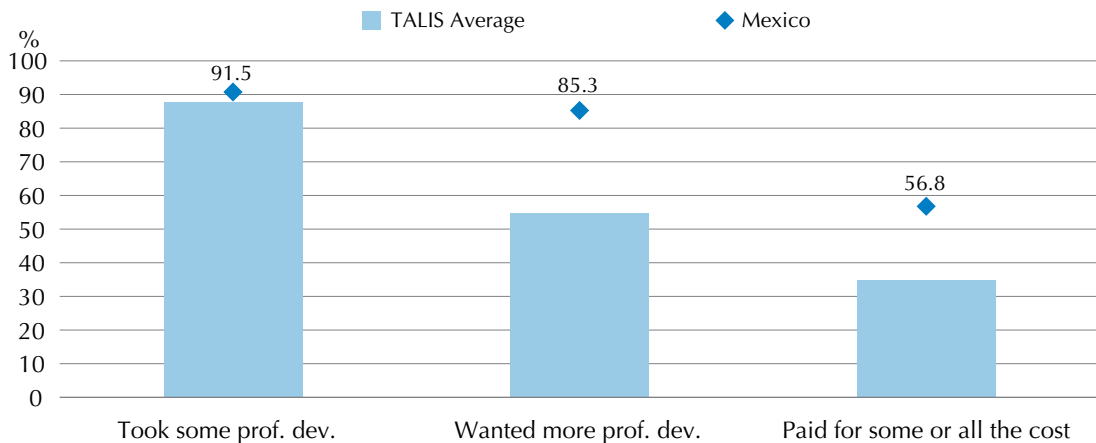
Most teachers have had opportunities to engage in professional development while in post. Most of the courses are offered to individuals through the National Training Catalogue (*Catálogo Nacional de Formación Continua*). The focus of the catalogue has, in recent years, shifted from more general courses in pedagogy to more content-oriented courses.<sup>7</sup> The general strategy of teacher professional development is also moving towards more structured and professional options, giving teachers the opportunity to complete specialisations (*diplomados*), Master's and PhD programmes. Participation in these courses can, together with other criteria, be used by teachers to increase their salaries through the *Carrera Magisterial*. The National Training Catalogue is the key pillar of a broad national strategy that aims to develop the National System of Training and Professional Improvement for In-service Teachers.<sup>8</sup>

States' education authorities also provide professional development for teachers, and some of these options give credit for *Carrera Magisterial*. In addition to the supply of training through the National Training Catalogue (*Catálogo Nacional de Formación Continua*) and the states, there is a wide range of different activities organised by universities and private organisations. However, these activities do not seem to be credited in *Carrera Magisterial* (Aguerrondo, Benavides and Pont, 2009).

Mexico has also the highest percentage of teachers reporting that they would have liked to have received more professional development than they did (80%). TALIS shows that the percentage of Mexican teachers whose school director reports a lack of qualified teachers as a factor hindering learning is almost twice the average of other participating countries (64%, compared to 38% for the TALIS average) (Figure 3.2). The percentage of Mexican teachers who had to pay for the whole cost of their professional development is twice the average across TALIS countries (19%, compared with the TALIS average of 8%). To summarise, Mexican teachers and the government do invest in professional development, but the resources do not seem to be used efficiently and the professional development options do not seem to have the desired results. In general, school(s)-based professional development options in Mexico are rare and are not incentivised.

Figure 3.2

## Professional development taken by teachers in lower secondary education



Source: OECD (2009), *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS*, OECD, Paris.

Mexico does not yet have a clear national set of teaching standards. The current Sectorial Education Programme 2007–2012 aims to “apply systemic mechanisms and operation rules, based on clear criteria, to certify the competencies of teachers” (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2007). As part of the Alliance, the government and the union agreed on the need to establish standards for teachers, students, parents and tutors, as well as for schools. The Steering Group was informed that there are different initiatives that aim to develop teaching (as well as student and school) standards. One of the main ones is led by the Under-Secretariat of Basic Education in collaboration with the Organisation of Ibero-American States and research teams from four Mexican organisations (for more information, see Recommendation 1 in this chapter). However, one of the main challenges the Education Ministry (*Secretaría de Educación Pública*, SEP) faces regarding this particular issue is how to build a proposed set of standards based on genuine consultation with, and supported by, those who are in the classrooms: teachers.

There are few available teacher evaluation instruments in Mexico. Evaluation has usually been the responsibility of school directors and, to a lesser extent, of supervisors or other educational authorities. Most of the evaluation is done by the director without any specific guidance or instruments. However, some related mechanisms are in place, which aim to support the promotion of teachers already working in the profession, most notably the career progression programme (*Escalafón*) and Teaching Career Ladder (*Carrera Magisterial*). The latter, created in 1993, is a voluntary programme by which basic education teachers can apply for promotion and higher salary levels. The programme aims to link promotion and salary progression to teachers’ professional performance. A formal evaluation of *Carrera Magisterial* concluded that the programme has had little or no impact on student achievement (Santibáñez *et al.*, 2006), and Nieto de Pascual Pola (2009) argues that it does not allow the best teachers to be identified or rewarded.

### ***Teachers are vital for student learning***

As early as the 1970s, Husen, Saha and Noonan (1978), in a review of 32 studies from less developed countries, concluded that trained teachers do make a difference and that teachers' knowledge, education, qualifications and experience are positively correlated with student achievement. More recent studies in industrialised countries have also shown that high quality teaching has a substantial positive effect on student learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Rockoff, 2004; Rice, 2003; Sanders, Saxton and Horn, 1997), while similar findings have been reported in Brazil (Harbison and Hanushek, 1992), Indonesia (Ross and Postlethwaith, 1989), Pakistan (Warwick and Reimers, 1992) and India (Bashir, 1994).

In its 2005 report *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*, the OECD noted that "of those variables which are potentially open to policy influence, factors involving teachers and teaching are the most important influences on student learning" and the report concluded that there is a broad consensus "that teacher quality is the single most important school variable influencing student achievement" (OECD, 2005).

Therefore, building a workforce of highly skilled professional educators is central to a country's ability to improve the outcomes of schooling for its young people (OECD, 2005; Barber and Mourshed, 2007; OECD, 2008; Sclafani and Manzi, 2009). Furthermore, the positive impact that a good teacher can have in attaining learning goals, even under adverse conditions and deficiencies in materials and infrastructure, which is the case in many Mexican schools, has been pointed out on repeated occasions (OECD, 2005; OECD, 2008).

Taking into consideration the important role of teachers for schooling, it is crucial to recognise teaching as a profession. The role of the teacher has to be defined as that of a high level professional within the framework of a school, rather than as an individual teacher with a post. This was already highlighted as early as 1966: "Teaching should be regarded as a profession: it is a form of public service which requires of teachers expert knowledge and specialised skills, acquired and maintained through rigorous and continuing study; it calls also for a sense of personal and corporate responsibility for the education and welfare of the pupils in their charge" (ILO/UNESCO, 1966). This sense of personal and corporate responsibility sets a high standard for teachers' behaviour and practices in schools.

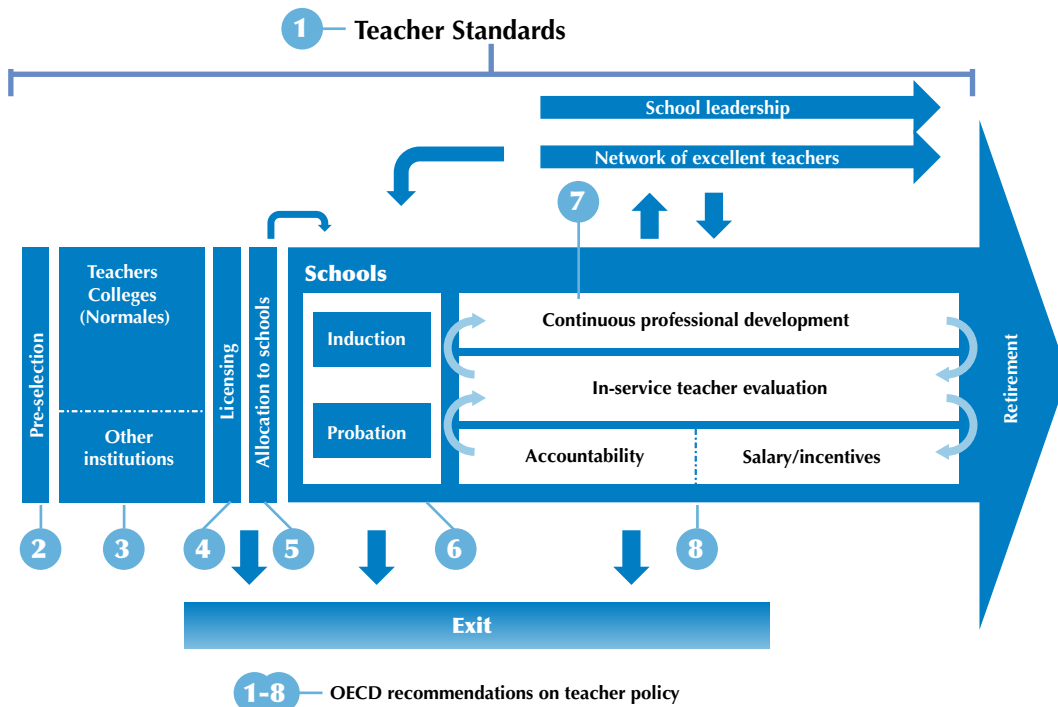
For these reasons, for decades, different programmes and initiatives in Mexico have been created and directed towards improving teachers' capacities and providing them with the materials they need to perform their job satisfactorily. However, there is still more to be done.

### ***A professional career path for teachers of basic education***

The following sections propose and develop **eight major recommendations** to make teaching a more attractive profession and create the kind of professional teaching force needed to improve student outcomes. The recommendations are presented in a sequence that follows a teacher's trajectory from initial education through to permanent status as a full professional (Figure 3.3). They have been developed after careful analysis of the challenges, of quantitative and qualitative data, empirical research and relevant country practices and contextualised to ensure they are feasible in Mexico.

Figure 3.3

## A professional career path for teachers of basic education

**RECOMMENDATION 1: Produce and implement a coherent, aligned set of standards for teachers**

Mexico needs to define clear teacher standards to signal to the profession, and to society at large, the core knowledge, skills and values associated with effective teaching.

**Context**

Given the challenges outlined in the previous sections, it is critically important that Mexico develops a comprehensive strategy both to improve the conditions under which many teachers work and to attract, prepare and develop a higher quality teaching force. The first step in the process should be to develop and implement a clear set of standards that define what good teaching looks like, and specify the knowledge, skills and dispositions that all teacher candidates should be able to demonstrate before being licensed to teach (see Recommendations 4 and 5 in this chapter). Both the Sectorial Education Programme 2007-2012 and the *Alianza* establish the need to create teaching standards.

The federal Under Secretariat of Basic Education (SEB) has recently started relevant work on classroom teaching standards. The Steering Group was informed that in coordination with some research teams from different organisations, and with the supervision of the Organisation of Ibero-American States (OEI), SEB has started to consolidate a proposal for classroom teaching standards. They are also developing proposals for school standards and curricula standards. During the school year 2008/09 a pilot project of the “Standards for Basic Education” was conducted in 480 primary schools and 128 lower secondary schools. Box 3.1 summarises the preliminary proposal, which has still not had broad dissemination or discussion with teachers or the general public and is not being used systematically yet.



The preliminary version of the teaching standards is focused on self assessment of teachers and appraisal of their practice by colleagues within schools. To be useful for multiple purposes – such as guiding teachers’ practice, training or external assessment of teachers’ performance – these standards need to include the knowledge and skills expected from teachers, and their professional responsibilities and commitment.

### Box 3.1 Classroom teaching performance standards for basic education – preliminary proposal by the Ministry

Recent efforts by SEP to develop a set of teacher standards for basic education in Mexico have led to a preliminary proposal that includes five main areas:

- **Planning:** content selection; goal selection; design of didactic strategies; selection of evaluation mechanisms.
- **Management of classroom environment:** interpersonal relations; group management.
- **Curricula management:** content knowledge; interrelation among courses; interrelation between courses and contexts.
- **Didactics:** presentation of the curricula content; adequate attention; group organisation; students’ peer-to-peer relationships; didactic resources; space resources; time management; indications; explanations; questions; guided activities; non-guided activities.
- **Evaluation:** self-evaluation; appraisal among students; teacher appraisal of students; knowledge feedback.

Source: Secretaría de Educación Pública (2010), *Communication with the Steering Group*, Mexico.

The standards were developed observing actual Mexican teachers in effective schools. This appears an interesting approach and a good start, but still requires consultation with teachers and different stakeholders. As professionals, teachers – those who understand the challenges of being teachers and promoting students’ learning – need to get more involved in the development of these standards and to provide feedback. Particularly, states that may have already developed their own set of teaching standards should be part of this process, as should those Ministry departments which may be potential users for different purposes such as training or evaluation. Finally, it is important to stress that the final version of these standards needs to describe explicitly and clearly what is expected from teachers in each dimension considered.

### **Research and international evidence**

Teachers’ roles have changed in recent years. Selected evidence points towards a different type of profession, in which teachers are no longer just delivering the curriculum, but also have the broader task of educating children to acquire the different types of skills required for the labour market. Learning has become more personalised, and teachers have to be well prepared to take on different kinds of roles to motivate students to learn, manage classrooms, assess and evaluate their students and provide personalised support. When looking at teaching practices in “alternative schools”, which aim to have teachers responding better to students’ needs “with varying degrees of intervention, the teacher role ranges from being a coach on the side that students can draw on (but do not have to) to a provider, organiser and manager of customised learning in experiential learning environments” (OECD, 2008).

Often, these are not roles for which teachers have been prepared, as their training focuses on content but

offers limited preparation for pedagogical and social support. It is important to highlight to the professionals and to society as a whole the key roles that are expected from teachers.

An OECD report defined five dimensions of teacher quality: a) knowledge of substantive areas and content; b) pedagogic skills, including the acquisition of and ability to use a repertoire of teaching strategies; c) reflection and ability to be self-critical – the hallmark of teacher professionalism; d) empathy, and commitment to the acknowledgement of the dignity of the other; and e) managerial competence, as teachers assume a range of managerial responsibilities within and outside the classroom. The report stressed that these dimensions should not be seen as independent; the integration of competencies across these dimensions of teacher quality is a mark of the outstanding teacher (OECD, 1994).

More recently, the OECD has analysed research on how people learn and how teachers can facilitate students' learning. The report *Innovating to Learn, Learning to Innovate* (OECD, 2008) defines more demanding skills for teachers: "To align with the innovation economy, teachers will require more autonomy, more creativity, and more content knowledge. These teachers should be highly trained professionals, comfortable with technology, with a deep pedagogical understanding of the subject matter, able to respond in an improvised manner to the uniquely emerging flow of each classroom. To foster collaborative and authentic learning, they will lead teams of students – much like a manager of a business or the master in a workshop – rather than controlling students autocratically, as the factory bosses of old."

Teaching standards can provide systemic coherence and consolidate the vision of what the country considers to be a good teacher: a common set of competencies that "good teachers" may have and/or develop. They can identify what skills and knowledge a teacher needs in order to provide high quality teaching. In fact, in a review of the evidence of teaching standards, research has shown that well-developed standards provide a basis for the profession to support student learning, and contribute to the quality of teacher education and continuous professional development options (Kleinhenz and Ingvarson, 2007).

A standard can be seen as a tool for rendering precise the making of judgements and decisions in a context of meaning and shared values. This definition is a useful reminder that a complete set of standards needs the following three components: a) content standards (what are we measuring?); b) rules for gathering evidence (how will we measure it?); and c) performance standards (how good is good enough and how will we judge the evidence?) (Kleinhenz and Ingvarson, 2007; Cox and Meckes, 2010).

Research has shown that teaching standards and methods for assessing performance are essential for career structures that reward improvements in the quality of teaching and retain effective teachers. "Writing standards provide an opportunity for the profession to build stronger bridges between research and practice. Standards support the development of a professional community in educational settings. They give teachers something about which to be collegial. Standards provide clear, long term goals for professional development. They indicate what the professional community thinks its members should 'get better at'. Profession-wide standards provide a more valid basis for teacher accountability than performance management schemes and standardised tests of students' outcomes" (Kleinhenz and Ingvarson, 2007).

Some people do not support standards for teaching because of concerns that they could be used against teachers, especially when they fail to express fully the nature of teachers' work. Such standards, it has been claimed, could de-skill teachers and intensify their work. To avoid a situation where professionalism under the guise of standards becomes a tool that enables employers to demand more of teachers (Sachs, 2001), stakeholders argue strongly that standards should be owned by the teaching profession, and not by employers. Another relevant consideration is that well developed standards do not prescribe or standardise the means by which the standards are brought to life in practice (Kleinhenz and Ingvarson, 2007; Cox and Meckes, 2010).

Teaching standards open up a range of opportunities for teachers to have a stronger and more credible voice in decisions that affect the quality of teaching and learning:

- Who gains entry to teacher preparation courses;
- Who trains teachers and how;
- Who gains registration and enters the teaching profession;
- Who defines what new teachers should know and what experienced teachers should get better at;
- Who sets the standards for good teaching;
- Who assesses and gives recognition to teachers who attain high standards.

Countries such as Australia, New Zealand, England, Scotland and the United States have defined teaching standards, including the broader areas that teachers should know about and the skills they should have. Some countries organise standards by school level (for example for primary, secondary and upper secondary) and/or by different stages in a teacher's career, as in the examples presented in Box 3.2.

### Box 3.2 Professional standards for teachers in Chile, the United States and England

In **Chile** the Framework for Good Teaching (*Marco para la Buena Enseñanza*) summarised national teaching standards. These are organised in four core areas: 1) preparation for teaching; 2) creation of an adequate learning environment; 3) teaching for the learning of all students; and 4) professional development. These standards are set out in 20 criteria and 70 descriptors. The framework is used for the accreditation of beginning teachers, accreditation of professional development programmes, teachers' evaluation and support, teacher selection and promotions, and to identify excellent teachers.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in the **United States** (NBPTS, 2009) defines five core propositions, which are: 1) teachers are committed to students and their learning; 2) teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students; 3) teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning; 4) teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience; and 5) teachers are members of learning communities. These propositions are then used to develop and elaborate more specific standards for 25 certificate areas.

The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) in **England** talks about professional standards for teachers as a framework that defines the characteristics of teachers at each career stage (TDA, 2009a). The TDA document states that "professional standards are statements of a teacher's professional attributes, professional knowledge and understanding, and professional skills. They provide clarity of the expectations at each career stage". The professional standards identify different career stages which are referred to as: qualified teacher status, core standards for main scale teachers who have successfully completed their induction, post-threshold teachers on the upper pay scale, excellent teachers and advanced skills teachers. The standards are arranged in three inter-related sections referred to as attributes, knowledge and understanding, and skills (TDA, 2009b). The standards show clearly what is expected at each career stage. Each set of standards builds on the previous set, so that a teacher being considered for the next stage has already met the standards at the previous stage.

Source: [www.mineduc.cl](http://www.mineduc.cl); [www.nbpts.org/the\\_standards/the\\_five\\_core\\_propositio](http://www.nbpts.org/the_standards/the_five_core_propositio); [www.tda.gov.uk/teachers/professionalstandards/standards.aspx](http://www.tda.gov.uk/teachers/professionalstandards/standards.aspx)

Standards may be used for different purposes, and in many countries are the basis for teacher evaluation systems, as shown in Santiago and Benavides (2009), who summarise teacher evaluation systems in Ontario (Canada), Chile, England, Singapore and Portugal.

### ***How to produce and implement a coherent, aligned set of standards for teachers***

Mexico needs to develop and use a common and coherent set of standards that define what teachers need to know and be able to do to improve academic achievement for all students. These standards would signal to the profession, and to the wider society, the defining core of knowledge, skills and values associated with effective teaching.

The purpose of developing teacher standards is to provide systemic coherence and consolidate a common set of competencies that “good teachers” may have and/or develop. These standards should be the reference for teacher initial education institutions, continuous professional development programmes, teacher evaluations and teacher certification. For example, these standards should serve as the foundation for the National Teacher Examination (see Recommendation 4 in this chapter) for assessing a candidate’s readiness to attain permanent status (see Recommendation 5 in this chapter), and for any further teacher evaluation scheme (see Recommendation 8 in this chapter).

Based on international experiences and pertinent literature, a good starting point for Mexico would be to describe the elements of good teaching performance. These qualities or attributes can be expressed as expectations of how teachers should perform and teach; they define the expected teacher performance needed for students to learn in Mexico. The current proposal of classroom teaching standards is a good start. These will need to be clearly defined and completed by other “non-classroom” standards that include other relevant issues, such as relationships with other teachers, parents and the community.

The Steering Group agrees that teaching standards in Mexico should have the following characteristics as a minimum (Mancera and Schmelkes, 2010):

- **Be understandable and aligned** with the tasks involved in teaching, the functioning of schools and student learning standards. Standards should reflect what teachers identify as good teacher performance.
- **Cover all of the teaching domains defined.** Every one of these domains must be subdivided into components and indicators.
- **Establish different levels of competency for each specific aspect that defines the domains of teacher and school work.** Standards should be used as a framework to guide teachers in the right path. The association of a teacher with a certain standard indicates the level of achievement regarding that standard. When standards are too high they become unattainable and lose their purpose for teacher guidance. Conversely, if standards are set too low, they no longer present a challenge for teachers, and therefore lose their value. Ideally, all standards should have different levels for every domain of teacher performance: the highest level would represent what expert teachers do; the lowest level would reflect the work of a beginner.
- **Reflect a nuclear group of performances that should be observable in all teachers and all schools,** irrespective of their conditions and circumstances. If every group of teachers or every kind of school had a specific group of standards, then this would be contrary to the very nature of standards and the existence of attributes of teaching that pertain to this profession. This, however, does not mean that standards have the intention or the effect of homogenising teaching. What it does imply is that standards must refer to the more abstract nature of the domain expected for all teachers. The standard is defined in a way that allows its adequate application in different contexts and situations.
- **Define and operationalise intended goals and outcomes of good teaching,** while not prescribing specific

practices for teachers to attain these goals. Indeed, standards should allow for creativity and individuality in the classroom. For example, there is no guaranteed way to motivate students to participate in the classroom and learn. This depends on the characteristics of students, on the subject that is being taught, on the time of the day when the lesson takes place, on the closeness to the vacation periods, and on many other factors. This is why teachers must know how to use their knowledge and skills on a day-to-day basis. The goal, however, is constant: the motivation and participation of students. This is what a standard must state and scale.

- **Word the standards in such a way that they include and take into account very diverse contexts.** In Mexico teachers have strongly differentiated functions due to the diversity among regions and schools. For example, a teacher in a one-teacher school does not carry out the same tasks as a teacher in an urban school, nor does a teacher in an indigenous community do exactly the same things as a teacher in a rural non-indigenous school. Standards should be included relative to teacher performance for innovating and adapting to specific contextual and cultural situations in order to better engage students in learning activities and thus produce higher learning outcomes. Standards relative to teacher performance for attending to the special needs of diverse students should also be part of the set of standards that are being defined.
- **Be dynamic.** Periodic revisions with the participation of teachers should be carried out in order to ensure that the standards are properly scaled, and that all aspects of good teaching are being considered, as the teacher evaluation system is fine-tuned and broader educational changes take place.

If standards are to have a real impact on teachers' skills and knowledge, there is a need to have real broad agreement on these standards. It is essential to design participatory mechanisms so that the main stakeholders, particularly teachers who work every day in the classrooms, can contribute to the initial definition and further

### Box 3.3 The need for teaching standards in Mexico, prepared by selected stakeholders from Mexico during the OECD-Harvard Seminar for Leaders in Education Reform, January 2010

Taking into account the Chilean experience, the progress already achieved in Mexico regarding standards and the international evidence presented by the OECD, the Steering Group suggests the possibility of exploring some of the following initiatives and their potential convenience for Mexico:

- Set up a mechanism for bringing the standards together into one set of proposals. One option is establish a collegial group (with key social and academic actors) to consolidate the proposals and their final design.
- Develop a strategy for national consultation to ensure that the standards are understood and approved by the majority of teachers.
- Once agreed, use these standards as a reference for in-service teacher evaluation; they can also be used as a reference in the certification mechanisms of initial teacher education.
- Ensure the standards indicate clearly the roles of teachers and directors, as well as technical pedagogical advisors (ATPs) and supervisors.
- Promote the standards to the media and other key stakeholders (for example civil society and parents).

Participants emphasise that creating the standards is a process that will require sufficient time and will need to take into account the relevant political, technical and socialisation variables.

Source: OECD (2010b), "Reflexiones finales del Seminario OCDE-Harvard para líderes en reformas educativas para fortalecer la profesionalización docente en México", OECD, Paris. [www.oecd.org/edu/calidadeducativa](http://www.oecd.org/edu/calidadeducativa).

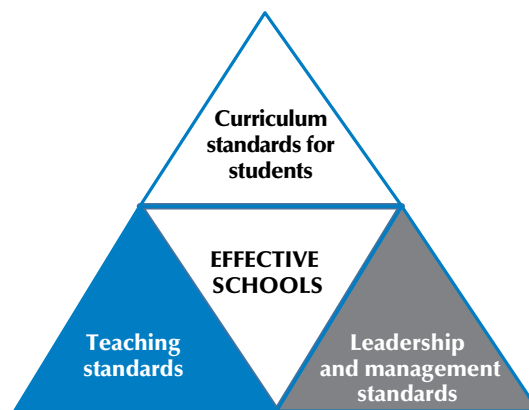
periodic revisions of the standards. Teachers should also be trained in the framework and how it translates into teaching practices in the classroom. It is essential that teachers receive sufficient feedback based on rubrics connected to the standards-based framework. A support system that can be reached by individual schools and teachers also needs to be set up. Teachers know that simply judging their strengths and weaknesses is not enough to change behaviour: feedback and support are also needed.

A “working” version of these standards could be prepared in the short term through a combination of: revising and adapting existing frameworks of standards for teachers from another country; taking forward the current initiatives being developed in Mexico; and adapting frameworks used in some states. The framework could then be developed further over a longer period. The different phases of this process have to be very coherent and well organised.

As explained in Chapter 4, teaching standards can be visualised as one element of a trio, all of which combine in effective schools: standards of attainment for students; standards for effective teaching; and standards for effective leadership and management (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4

#### Performance standards for effective schools



The development of standards for teaching and leadership recommended in this report complements work being undertaken in Mexico to develop new curriculum standards from pre-school to secondary levels. “This has been done by initiating a very wide consultation in 11 pilot states and then building up a model with their participation that will be put into effect in the 11 states (three pilot schools in each state) from January 2011. It is then intended to roll out the programme for all schools in the 2011-2012 school year. The teachers’ union and the Ministry are both closely involved. Each state has a project team and support is provided by two teams from the University of London” (Posner, 2010).

#### **RECOMMENDATION 2: Attract better candidates and raise the bar for entry into the teaching profession, especially at the Teachers’ Colleges (Normales)**

*If teaching is to acquire the status of a fully-fledged profession in Mexico, the first step must be to improve the calibre of applicants to initial teacher education institutions, especially, but not exclusively, at the Normales.*

### Context

The 2008 teaching examination figures show that of the 8 239 posts open for competition for the 2008/09 school cycle, only 2 847 were available to recently graduated teachers (Nieto de Pascual Pola, 2009). If we take into consideration that the number of graduates is approximately 28 700 a year, we can see that those who manage to enter the teaching profession represent less than 10% of the potential candidates. A first conclusion is that there are no efficient mechanisms for regulating entry to the Teachers' Colleges (*Normales*) so that it is aligned with the available teaching posts. On the other hand, the fact that more than 65% of the vacancies (5 932 of more than 8 000) were covered by teachers who were already in-service teachers (most of them with no permanent posts) indicates that the initial education system is inefficient. This is even more serious if we take into account that of more than 5 300 in-service teachers hired in that year, 3 000 came from universities, 1 500 from private teachers' colleges (*Normales*) schools and only 800 from public *Normales* (Nieto de Pascual Pola, 2009). Nonetheless, these figures only relate to posts open for competition. In fact, it is difficult to know the real percentage of graduates who enter the education system each year as non-permanent teachers.<sup>10</sup>

In the coming years, the demand for teachers will decrease due to the smaller number of students in the first grades of primary education (Aguerrondo, Benavides and Pont, 2009). The 5-14 year-old population is expected to decrease by 13%, but the population will only increase by 2.5% among the 15-29 year-old population by 2015 (Partida Bush, 2006).

There may be a slight increase in demand for teachers due to retirement, but generally the average age of Mexican teachers is lower than in many other countries (Nieto de Pascual Pola, 2009). Overall, it can be expected that a decreasing demand for teachers will gradually have an impact on all parts of the education system. If the number of teachers graduating from *Normales* and other initial teacher education institutions does not decrease, there is a risk that many young people will spend their time getting an education that they will not be able to use for the purpose intended.

In fact Mexico as a whole has already been training many more teachers than it can employ (Nieto de Pascual Pola, 2009; Guevara and Gonzalez, 2004), which represents an inefficient use of scarce resources. At the same time, it has been shown that as many as 70% of schools suffer from a shortage of qualified teachers (OECD, 2009), while evidence of a relatively high rate of absenteeism and late arrival at school (*ibid.*) can suggest a lack of motivation or commitment to teaching on the part of many current teachers. It can also show the difficulties teachers encounter in reaching schools in rural areas or difficult urban sectors, as well as the necessity of keeping second jobs to increase their income.

As in other Latin American countries, in Mexico the majority of the students applying to enter *Normales* and other initial teacher preparation (ITP) programmes have low-quality secondary education. *Normales* students with whom the Steering Group met complained that they had already forgotten what they learned in upper secondary education and that they had never received sufficient subject knowledge. Furthermore, for many of them teacher education was not their first choice but rather their second, third or fourth after they had been refused entry to other tertiary programmes.

The over-supply of students preparing to be teachers is compounded by the fact that nearly 70% of applicants fail the National Teacher Examination (see Recommendation 4 in this chapter), which is further evidence of both the low entry bar into teacher education and the quality of preparation offered by the *Normales*. This situation creates an extraordinary opportunity to improve the quality of the teaching force by reducing the numbers of people allowed into initial preparation programmes and restricting entry to candidates with the greatest potential.



### **Research and international evidence**

Barber and Mourshed's study of the world's best performing school systems (the McKinsey Report) found that such systems tended to be more successful than lower performing ones at recruiting more capable people for the teaching profession: "The top performing systems we studied recruit their teachers from the top third of each cohort graduat[ing] from their school system" (Barber and Mourshed, 2007).

High performing systems ensure that they select and recruit the most effective trainee teachers by restricting entry to teacher training while at the same time attempting to ensure that the pool of candidates for teacher training is as large and strong as possible. Failing to control entry into ITP has a detrimental effect on teacher quality because, for example it tends to lead to an oversupply of candidates, resulting in a situation whereby some newly qualified teachers are unable to secure teaching posts. This in turn makes teacher training less appealing to potential new recruits. Making ITP more selective is considered to make teaching more attractive to high performers. OECD (2005) notes that:

*"Too great a supply ... is not necessarily a blessing. Some countries with teacher surpluses find it hard to ensure that talented people choose to enter teaching. And surveys find that school directors in countries with a teacher surplus worry more about teacher morale and enthusiasm than do those in countries without such a surplus."*

When it comes to selecting candidates from the pool of applicants to ITP, the world's best performing school systems employ rigorous checks designed to assess applicants' potential to become good teachers. Such checks tend to work on the assumption that: "for a person to become an effective teacher they need to possess a certain set of characteristics that can be identified before they enter teaching: a high overall level of literacy and numeracy, strong interpersonal and communications skills, a willingness to learn, and the motivation to teach" (Barber and Mourshed, 2007).

The checks or selection criteria employed by those acting as gatekeepers for entry into teacher training vary according to the model of ITP that is followed and, in some cases, the age group the candidates are training to teach. Across the world, ITP programmes generally fall into one of two models – the consecutive model and the concurrent model (OECD, 2005; Eurydice, 2002; Musset, 2010). The first involves students receiving degree-level education in a particular subject (or subjects) before they enrol on a programme of teacher education; the second combines the study of a particular subject with theoretical and practical elements of teacher education and training. The minimum entry requirements for concurrent ITP programmes normally include the successful completion of secondary school qualifications, while those for entry onto a consecutive model of teacher training normally include the successful completion of some form of undergraduate study at university level.

In some countries, including ones which have both concurrent and consecutive models of ITP, potential candidates have to pass an examination in order to demonstrate their suitability for teaching and gain entry to teacher education. For example, in Malaysia, Singapore and China secondary school graduates take a national examination, whilst in France, New Zealand and Canada individual teacher training institutions set their own examinations (Cobb, 1999). In many cases, such examinations take the form of tightly timed multiple-choice tests, sometimes referred to, due to their relative simplicity, as "pencil-and-paper" or "tick-box" tests. Most countries do not rely entirely on examinations as a means of screening entry to ITP; however, many employ multiple selection criteria which often include previous academic achievement and satisfactory performance at the interview.

The screening procedures of two of the world's higher performing education systems, Singapore and Finland, are held up as exemplars by the authors of the McKinsey Report, notably because both systems "place a strong



emphasis on the academic achievement of candidates, their communications skills, and their motivation for teaching” (Barber and Mourshed, 2007). The Finnish selection process is described in Box 3.4.

#### Box 3.4 Finland’s process for selecting candidates for initial teacher preparation

**Finland** employs a multi-stage process of teacher selection which begins with a national screening process involving a 300-question multiple choice assessment which tests literacy, numeracy and problem-solving. This is followed by university-based tests that evaluate candidates’ ability to process information, think critically and synthesise data. The selection continues with university-based interviews which assess candidates’ motivation to teach, motivation to learn, communication skills and emotional intelligence.

Source: Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland, (2010), Available: [www.minedu.fi/OPM/](http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/).

To ensure that the pool of candidates from which selection takes place is as large and strong as possible, some education systems have sought to remove obstacles to entry into the profession by introducing additional or alternative routes into teaching, an approach also used by those seeking to address teacher shortages. Examples include the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) and flexible Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programmes in England, and the Boston Teacher Residency programme and Chicago Teaching Fellows programme in the US. In the GTP programme, which typically lasts for one academic year, trainees take up a salaried teaching post and, if successful, achieve qualified teacher status (certification) while in post. This means that more mature entrants do not have to be without a salary while they negotiate their prospective career change. Those systems that have introduced such alternative routes into teaching have found that, in general, the quality of applicants is at least as good, if not better, than more traditional teacher training programmes (Barber and Mourshed, 2007).<sup>11</sup>

There are a large number of different factors that influence young individuals who decide to become teachers. Research on the reasons for becoming a teacher indicates that many teachers choose the profession because they want to deal with children or they want to teach (OECD, 2005). Although important, salary may not be the major reason for young people wanting to become teachers, but it does influence the choice of professional career. It seems that teacher salaries, relative to those in other occupations, have a greater influence on teachers’ decisions to return to teaching after a career interruption, and to remain in the profession, than on the decision to become a teacher (OECD, 2005). Attractive salaries may, from this perspective, be important in motivating good teachers to remain in the profession, attracting potential new recruits (although this may not be the most important factor), and persuading those who have left teaching to return to the profession.

#### ***How to attract better candidates and raise the bar for entry into the teaching profession, especially at the Normales***

In order to improve teaching, Mexico needs better teacher candidates. Therefore ITP institutions must raise the bar for entry into teacher preparation programmes. This is key to making teaching a more respected profession and ultimately building support for improving the working conditions of teachers.

If teaching is to acquire the status of a fully-fledged profession in Mexico, the first step must be to improve the calibre of applicants to initial teacher education institutions, especially, but not exclusively, at the *Normales*. The second step is to improve substantially the quality of these institutions, as suggested in Recommendation 3.

One way to improve the calibre of applicants would be to establish a national screening exam as a gateway into initial teacher preparation programmes. Such an examination would be designed to ensure that candidates have solid content knowledge in the subjects they intend to teach, as well as the requisite aptitude for, and commitment to, teaching as a career. This could be complemented with other evaluation tools such as interviews.

In those regions in which there are insufficient well qualified candidates, compensation strategies can also be implemented. One option is to accept unqualified students into a “remedial year”; upon successful completion of this they can continue with the standard programme.

In an effort to ensure that the pool of candidates from which selection takes place is as large and strong as possible, some education systems have sought to remove obstacles to entry into the profession by introducing additional or alternative routes into teaching. This is another relevant option for Mexico. One way is to use the screening examination suggested above (or a version of it) to identify professionals from other fields who would like to enter the teaching profession. *Normales* and other ITP institutions can offer short programmes (for example one year long) to prepare them as teachers.

More generally, adequate financial and non-financial incentives during the initial preparation are essential to attract and support good candidates. Adequate working conditions, a professional environment, professional guidance and services from the authorities and the union, and adequate salaries are also essential to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession in general.

**RECOMMENDATION 3: Create a reliable accreditation system for all initial teacher preparation institutions, develop specific standards for those who teach teachers and put in place strong quality assurance mechanisms**

*Public and private Normales and other institutions running programmes of initial teacher preparation need to be substantially improved if they are going to remain the country’s principal vehicle for preparing its teachers. The first step should be to put in place a set of rigorous accreditation standards for all Normales and other teacher training institutions.*

**Context**

Although some *Normales* and other ITP institutions provide sound initial preparation for teacher candidates, there are large variations among them. Far too many students leave ITP without sufficient skills and knowledge to become good teachers. There are reasons to believe that too many teacher candidates in the *Normales* are not provided with sufficient opportunities to improve and develop their subject content knowledge or subject pedagogical knowledge.

Results of the 2008/09 and 2009/10 examination for entrance to the teaching profession suggested that the knowledge of applicants from *Normales* and other ITP institutions was weak. In 2008/09, 70% of those who took the examination did not pass (new and in-service teachers), and only 28% of new teacher candidates passed (Aguerrondo, Benavides and Pont, 2009). For the 2009/10 examination, three categories were used to classify the candidates, depending on their results: a) acceptable (25% of all candidates); b) needs academic support/levelling (70.8%); c) unacceptable (4.1%). Only 23% of new teacher candidates were classified as acceptable (see Table 3.1).

Another example which reflects the same challenge are the examinations that the *Centro Nacional de Evaluación para la Educación Superior, A.C.* (CENEVAL) introduced in 2003 to test the general knowledge of students towards the end of their teacher preparation courses. Only 39% of the students achieved results that were judged to be satisfactory or better in these exams (Aguerrondo, Benavides and Pont, 2009). Because the exams were mainly theoretical, these results indicate weaknesses in subject matter preparation. The General Directorate for the Higher Education of Professionals of Education has confirmed there is a linear correlation between the results achieved by students in the CENEVAL examinations and those achieved by students from the *Normales* in the National Teacher Examination. In other words, the students who obtained high results in the CENEVAL test also obtained high results in the National Teacher Examination, and the same applied to the students who did not perform well.

Many *Normales* suffer from weak connections with other parts of the education sector, in particular with schools and universities. They have developed a closed structure with little interaction with other academic institutions or research centres (Aguerrondo, Benavides and Pont, 2009). The rules for appointing teachers to the *Normales* are vague and not transparent. There do not seem to be strong mechanisms in place to guarantee that the best teachers and/or those most academically qualified will be appointed. *Normales* students also indicate that there are problems related to the school placement during their in-school practice. They have far too few opportunities to observe excellent teaching during their periods of school placement. “For the most part, it has to do with anachronistic institutions, which do not respond to current needs preparing professional teachers or for those needs of the communities in which they are located” (Nieto de Pascual Pola, 2009). There are a large number of *Normales*. Many of them have fewer than 100 students in total and some have serious infrastructure problems with very scarce resources for materials, maintaining the buildings and library facilities. This also means there are insufficient human resources and not enough resources for developing research capacity (Aguerrondo, Benavides and Pont, 2009).

Over the years many different programmes have been developed to improve the quality of the *Normales* and ITP institutions. Whether these measures have led to substantial changes is far from clear. Many academics and stakeholders still refer to the lack of quality and the lack of sufficient infrastructure in some *Normales*. Different experts continue to ask for reforms in teacher education including improving the curriculum to increase

### Box 3.5 Inter-Institutional Evaluation Committees for Higher Education and the evaluation of initial teacher education

A main focus of the Mexican Sectorial Education Plan 2007–2012 is to develop and foster a planning and evaluation culture for high quality education in higher education institutions. For this purpose, since 1991, the CIEES were created as part of the National Evaluation System of Higher Education to foster an evaluation culture and improve the efficiency of tertiary education institutions.

In 2008, some *Normales* were asked to participate in the evaluation processes. The national evaluation authorities (DGESPE) and the education authorities of the different states have launched, through the CIEES, external procedures for the evaluation of some initial teacher education programmes. This process has three phases: 1) to establish tripartite arrangements; 2) to organise an induction seminar for directors of institutions that will participate in the evaluation process and discuss objectives and methodology; 3) after the institutions have carried out a self-evaluation and sent the reports, to organise meetings and evaluation visits. Of 493 teacher training institutions, 268 participate and 708 programmes are being evaluated.

Source: Secretaría de Educación Pública (2007), *Programa Sectorial de Educación 2007-2012*, SEP, México.

the relevance of practical experience, improve the quality of teacher training institutions, and implement independent evaluations. Teachers do not receive enough pedagogic preparation and, in the case of secondary education, they do not receive enough preparation in the subject they intend to teach.

*Normales* and other ITP programmes do not have a strong certification mechanism based on standards. The current external evaluation implemented by some public *Normales*, Inter-Institutional Evaluation Committees for Higher Education (CIEES in Spanish), is a good step forward and should continue. However, this seems insufficient if quality is to be assured in all *Normales* and other ITP programmes.

The Alliance for Quality in Education (*Alianza por la Calidad de la Educación*) includes seven measures for strengthening *Normales* schools, all of them very relevant. However, the *Alianza* does not formally propose the introduction of a specialised accreditation mechanism, potentially rendering the seven proposals to be without consequences. A quality accreditation system would reinforce the measures outlined by the *Alianza* (see Box 3.6).

One of the main challenges Mexico faces is the lack of strong professional education colleges or associations (such as the Ontario College of Teachers, or other associations of professional bodies existing across the world). Any potential accreditation system would need to clearly define who will lead the accreditation process.

### Box 3.6 Measures in the *Alianza* to strengthen teachers colleges (*Normales*)

1. Improve the profile and performance of the academic personnel of teachers colleges (*normales*). This includes measures to:
  - Support and recognise full time teachers that meet desirable profiles, and incorporate new full time teachers.
  - Introduce scholarships for teachers to enable them to carry out high quality postgraduate studies in Mexico or abroad and promote the production of academic texts among the teaching staff in schools.
  - Improve the teaching skills and knowledge of all school teachers in mathematics, history and reading.
2. Improve students' performance by supporting them with scholarships.
3. Extend assessment practices to improve the quality of institutions, programmes and students . On July 2010, 9% of the 1 335 programmes of *Normales* were already assessed and the remaining 91% had already started the assessment process.
4. Revise and update the curricula and the general knowledge examinations for degrees in pre-school, elementary, secondary and physical education.
5. Continue to strengthen the infrastructure, installations and equipment.
6. Strengthen the bodies responsible for planning the enrolment of *normales*.
7. Improve regulation of the operation of private *normales*.

Source: [www.alianzaconcursonacional.sep.gob.mx](http://www.alianzaconcursonacional.sep.gob.mx)

### **Research and international evidence**

Teacher education in almost all countries contains at least four elements:

- knowledge about the subjects the teacher is supposed to teach;
- knowledge and skills about how to teach the particular subject (sometimes called pedagogical content knowledge);
- knowledge about how children learn and develop;
- the opportunity to practice teaching under the supervision of an accomplished teacher (Fredriksson, 2010).

Professional ethics and teachers' social responsibility should cross-cut the teacher training curriculum so that teachers are made aware of: a) their role in achieving equivalent learning outcomes among children from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds; and b) the need to analyse the consequences of being absent, arriving late or leaving early, abandoning children in the middle of the school year to change workplaces, and not taking advantage of time allocated to classroom instruction. Research also shows the importance of training teachers to face diverse languages and cultures and to make teaching relevant to these children (OECD, 2010a). It is also essential to make teachers aware of the ways that inequality can be combated from within the classroom, developing their abilities to deal with diversity.

International evidence and empirical research can provide valuable material to help understand the key challenges and solutions in improving the quality of initial teacher preparation institutions. In a review of reforms in teacher education in the United States, Darling-Hammond (1997) identifies a number of features shared by teacher education institutions that are successful in preparing teachers to teach diverse learners effectively. These institutions have:

- a clear vision of good teaching that is apparent in all coursework and clinical experiences;
- a curriculum grounded in substantial knowledge of child and adolescent development, learning theory, cognition, motivation, and subject matter pedagogy, taught in the context of practice;
- extended clinical experiences (at least 30 weeks) that are carefully chosen to support the ideas and practices presented in simultaneous, closely interwoven coursework;
- well-defined standards of practice and performance that are used to guide and evaluate coursework and clinical work;
- strong relationships, common knowledge, and shared beliefs among school- and university-based faculty;
- extensive use of case study methods, teacher research, performance assessment, and portfolio evaluation to ensure that learning is applied to real problems of service.

Research has also shed light on ITP quality and performance. Even with effective mechanisms for assessing the developing competence and potential of student teachers, the likelihood of individual trainees' successful completion of ITP will depend significantly on the quality of the institution and/or the relevant course of teacher preparation. Given the inevitable variation in the content and quality of teacher training programmes (Boyd *et al.*, 2007), different educational systems seek to quality assure their ITP through the use of external examiners and/or arrangements to secure external accreditation of the institution or the programme.

In the United States, for example, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) performs this latter function (Fox and Certo, 1999). The governments of other countries, such as England, have attempted to overcome or minimise the perceived problem of variable content and quality in ITP by introducing a national curriculum for initial teacher preparation and/or by ensuring periodic inspections of training providers and programmes. Such procedures are intended to validate course content and certification procedures, and thus quality assure the assessment of trainee or newly qualified teachers' readiness to teach, a

function performed in England by the inspection body Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills).<sup>12</sup> Box 3.7 summarises different approaches to ITP evaluation.

### Box 3.7 Examples of how initial teacher preparation programmes are evaluated in selected countries

- In **England**, institutions that administer teacher education programmes are monitored by Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills). All teacher training providers have to implement the standards for qualified teacher status (QTS) and the requirements for initial teacher training (RITT) set by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA). Ofsted, a non-governmental agency which is accountable to Parliament, inspects providers of ITP by: examining a range of documentation, including a self-evaluation form provided by the ITP institution, plus trainees' assignments; observing and evaluating training sessions; interviewing personnel involved in the programme; and observing ITP tutors when they assess trainees in school settings. All ITP providers are examined at least once every six years.
- In the **USA**, individual states administer their own evaluation systems, although most agree to be monitored by the non-governmental organisation, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). NCATE examines the quality of ITP provision and the standards achieved by the trainees in much the same way as Ofsted does in England. In addition, course providers can volunteer to submit their programmes for evaluation by the Teacher Accreditation Council (TEAC).
- In **New Zealand**, any institution providing ITP must submit its programmes to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). All newly developed programmes must be visited and evaluated by representatives from NZQA; if they are recommended for approval, visits are repeated on a five-year cycle.
- In **Brazil** all ITP programmes must be accredited by the National Council of Education or the Ministry of Education. A similar accreditation system is used in **Argentina**, where ITP providers are regulated by the Federal Teacher Education Network (Avalos, 2000).

Source: Hobson, A. J. (2009), "On being bottom of the pecking order: beginner teachers' perceptions and experiences of support", *Teacher Development: An international journal of teachers' professional development*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 299.

### **How develop specific standards for those who teach teachers and put in place strong quality assurance mechanisms**

An important barrier to attracting more talented young people to the teaching profession is the perceived quality of Mexico's teacher preparation institutions. Public and private *Normales* and other institutions running programmes of ITP need to be substantially improved if they are going to remain the country's principal vehicle for preparing its teachers. Therefore a set of rigorous accreditation standards that all *Normales* and other ITP institutions must be expected to meet should be put in place. The Steering Group welcomes the current external evaluation implemented by some *Normales* (CIEES, see Box 3.5). However, it considers that an accreditation system specific to *Normales* and other ITP institutions, which is grounded in standards, is urgently needed in Mexico.

Accreditation standards for ITP should address: the qualifications of faculty members and the processes for initial appointment, evaluation and promotion based on standards; the quality of the curriculum and its alignment with the curriculum of the schools; the mechanisms to ensure high quality placements for student teachers; links with universities to ensure access to current research on teaching and learning; and the quality of facilities, including the library. The accreditation standards should also give special rating to the school's pass rate on the National Teacher Examination. The accreditation system should be run transparently and with a clear governance structure.

A clear and independent governance structure for this accreditation system is essential, and has to clearly define who will be the main interlocutor of *Normales*. Some key stakeholders have suggested to the Steering Group that the following options should be explored:

- creating a structure such as the Mexican Sciences Academy;
- creating an organisation led by civil society organisations;
- “reviving” the *Consejo Nacional de Educación Normal*;
- creating a system of school accreditation similar to the National Council on Science and Technology (*Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología* – CONACYT).

Every institution should be reviewed cyclically – perhaps every five years – beginning with the smallest schools. Those that are weak should be given support to improve. Those that ultimately cannot meet accreditation standards should be merged or closed, since keeping them open is an inefficient use of resources and unfair to those young people who want to become quality professional teachers. The initiatives that aim to regulate private institutions (similar to the one currently being set up in the Federal District to improve the regulation and supervision) should continue. Progress has to be made in developing consistent high quality criteria for both public and private normal schools (Nieto de Pascual Pola, 2009).

The development of future teacher demand and the whole *Normales* and ITP system should be assessed in order to predict the number of teachers needed in the future and to see whether the current number of institutions is needed. If necessary, the intake of students to *Normales* should decrease. In areas where a surplus of *Normales* is identified, measures should be taken to help them merge or transform into institutions for other types of higher education or upper secondary education. Some of them could become specialised research or training centres for in-service teachers. In this context, the development of the *Padrón Nacional de Maestros*, mentioned in the first section of this chapter, is of much relevance.

One specific suggestion to reduce the isolation of *Normales* and other ITP institutions is to create state-level academic councils that would bring together staff from the *Normales*, ITP institutions, universities, schools and representatives of stakeholder groups and civil society. Such councils could provide a venue for ongoing dialogue and exchange of views among those with an interest in teacher education, as well as identifying potential avenues for better collaboration among the various educational institutions within each state and the federation. Conformation of these councils should nevertheless be considered carefully (for example representativeness, qualification, relevance and neutrality, among others).

**RECOMMENDATION 4: Revise, improve and expand the processes for assessing the suitability of teacher candidates and in-service teachers to teach (teacher licensing)**

*Mexico should further develop and improve the new teacher licensing examination (Concurso); continue introducing the use of more authentic and performance-based means of assessing the knowledge and capabilities of teachers; and improve the governance structure and, in particular, the operation of the Independent Federalist Evaluation Unit (Organismo de Evaluación Independiente con Carácter Federalista, OEIF), while looking for an efficient long term strategy.*



### Context

One of the main pillars of *Alianza por la Calidad de la Educación* is to raise teacher quality in all Mexican schools by developing better mechanisms for teachers to access permanent teaching posts (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2008b). This aims to increase transparency and give a clear structure to processes that have historically been rather shadowy, unequal and sometimes corrupt.

The *Alianza* agreement stipulates that a national certification examination for teacher education graduates will be implemented to determine who will access permanent posts. This licensing exam aims to identify the best candidates among the teacher education graduates. It is also for teachers who are already working in school but who do not have a permanent post, and for those who want to have an additional post (*doble plaza*). Box 3.8 summarises the main characteristics of this examination.

#### Box 3.8 Modalities of the National Teacher Examination

There are two basic modalities of this exam:

1. for “new entries” (*nuevo ingreso*): for newly graduated teachers from teacher education preparation programmes at tertiary-level institutions (for example *Normales* or universities) who apply for a permanent post (*plaza*);
2. for “in-service” teachers: those who are already working as school teachers but who do not have a permanent post, and those teachers who aim to have a second permanent teaching post (*doble plaza*).

Lower secondary education teachers can also take the test to qualify for more teaching hours, as part of the “hour-week-month” (H-W-M) system. The H-W-M system gives (some) teachers the possibility of applying for teaching contracts of a certain number of “hours” per week and per month (as opposed to full time posts).

Candidates applying for the examination may have to have graduated from an official teacher preparation institution (this includes public or private *Normales*, National Pedagogical University, other universities, among others). States can establish particular requirements for candidates (for example to be born in the state, or to speak an indigenous language).

Since in Mexico there are no national teacher standards, the institution in charge of the exam (OEIF) uses norm-based pass marks based on minimum scores calculated according to a dual method (Hofstee Method), which also takes into consideration the available posts in each state. During the 2009/10 National Teacher Examination, applicants were classified as “acceptable”, “needing levelling support” or “not acceptable”. The differences in the minimum scores between the different states were significant.

Several versions of the National Teacher Examination exist depending on the education level and specialisation that is to be evaluated. Among these versions are: general and indigenous pre-school, general and indigenous primary, technical, general and distance lower secondary, special education, artistic education and physical education. It also includes versions for the H-W-M system, mainly in lower secondary, in areas such as: English, mathematics, history and biology.

Source: Aguerrondo, I., F. Benavides and B. Pont (2009), “School Management and Teacher Professionalization in Mexico: Context, Challenges and Preliminary Policy Orientations”, Analytical Paper, OECD, Paris; [www.alianzaconcursonacional.sep.gob.mx](http://www.alianzaconcursonacional.sep.gob.mx).



As mentioned before, the pass rates in the first two teacher examinations for entrance to the teaching profession (2008/09 and 2009/10) were very discouraging. Table 3.1. summarises the latest examination results.

Table 3.1

## The National Teacher Examination results, 2009/10

Results	Global		General results	
	Taking the examination	Acceptable	Needing levelling support	Not acceptable
Total	123 856	31 086	87 741	5 029
%	100	25.1	70.8	4.1

Results	Global	Results: new teachers		
	Taking the examination	Acceptable	Needing levelling support	Not acceptable
Total	81 490	18 661	59 277	3 552
%	100	22.9	72.7	4.4

Results	Global	Results: in-service teachers		
	Taking the examination	Acceptable	Needing levelling support	Not acceptable
Total	42 366	12 425	28 464	1 477
%	100	29.3	67.2	3.5

Source: [www.alianzaconcursonacional.sep.gob.mx](http://www.alianzaconcursonacional.sep.gob.mx).

In 2004, Mexico formally reported to the OECD that only 13 states in Mexico used licensing mechanisms to select teachers for teaching posts. In five of these 13 states, new and vacant posts were allocated through a teacher examination. In another three states, posts were allocated following the recommendations of mixed commissions (with participation from the State Education Authority and from SNTE). In the other five states there were examination mechanisms only for some types of teaching post. In the other 19 states, no formal licensing strategy was applied, other than obtaining the graduate certificate from a *Normal* or other ITP institution (Guevara and Gonzalez, 2004). In those states where no formal licensing mechanisms for teachers existed, teacher posts were *de facto* given in agreement with and mainly controlled by the union. While the SNTE itself formally followed the internal rules stipulated in their norms (*estatutos*) to allocate posts (based mainly on factors such as length of time in the profession and teacher training), the mechanisms were not transparent and were sometimes perceived as unequal and highly politicised. Under these schemes, in some states in Mexico, teachers were able to “buy” their posts; therefore, some had the right to “sell” or “offer in heritage” their permanent posts to whomever they chose, including their relatives.<sup>13</sup>

The new licensing mechanism proposed by the *Alianza* is associated with the creation of an independent “assessment unit of a federalist nature”. Its main role is to decide the implementation process, design the examination and supervise its correct execution (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2009). Defined as a transitional strategy, the licensing exam was applied for the first time for the period 2008/09 with the agreement and surveillance of SEP and SNTE. A transitional body, the Technical Independent Unit (OTI),<sup>14</sup> was created to design and survey the 2009/10 examination. All states participating in the examination and the federal SEP were represented, but since the union was not represented, the OTI was transformed into the Independent Federalist Evaluation Unit (*Organismo de Evaluación Independiente con Carácter Federalista*, OEIF). The OEIF is a collegial unit of 70 members, half selected by states and federal education authorities; the other half selected by the union. The OEIF was responsible for the 2010/11 examination.<sup>15</sup>

The Steering Group considers that the introduction of the national public examination for teachers (*Concurso*), in particular, represents a major breakthrough in Mexico's education system, and signifies a new culture of meritocracy, transparency and accountability. It provides important foundations for the advancement of teacher quality and capacity-building within the education sector, with the ultimate goal of improving student learning and achievement.

Despite this progress, the new procedures have a number of limitations. For example, not all states have signed up to the test; the failure rates in both 2008 and 2009 were high; and a lack of transparency remains with regard to the precise mechanisms for teacher appointment in some states (Nieto de Pascual Pola, 2009). In addition, it is not clear that the strategies to support those needing levelling support (70% of the total who took the test), result in improving teacher quality. These courses, implemented for the 2010/11 cycle, are provided by the state authorities, in coordination with SEP, and it seems that candidates in this category only need to pass some courses to be able to obtain a post. It also seems that many of the teachers needing levelling support are in-service teachers and some of the beginning teachers in this category still obtain posts as non-permanent teachers. Some in-service teachers, working as non-permanent teachers or applying for a second permanent post, did not reach an acceptable minimum the exam but remain teaching within the classroom.

The existing mechanisms for developing the national examination through the *Organismo de Evaluación Independiente con Carácter Federalista* (OEIF), which appear to combine both technical development work and an (important) political legitimisation function, are very cumbersome and inefficient, making the development process extremely time-consuming and onerous for a large number of stakeholders.

### **Research and international evidence**

A number of education systems apply tests or examinations to those who have recently completed programmes of initial teacher preparation. They do this for a number of reasons: the first is to define or ensure a "minimum standard for the profession" (Larsen, with Lock and Lee, 2005), which also serves to reassure the public, and parents in particular, about the quality of the teachers in charge of the education of their children. This is especially important in contexts where there is a lack of trust in the rigour and content of teacher preparation programmes (D'Agostino and Powers, 2009).

Second, it is argued that tests can "provide future teachers the opportunity to learn a broad set of skills and an expansive knowledge base" (D'Agostino and Powers, 2009) through their influence on the curriculum of teacher preparation programmes whose graduates will be required to take the test before they can take up a teaching post. Third, research suggests that testing designed to ensure that teacher candidates have adequate subject knowledge is particularly beneficial. Kennedy (2008), for example, found that content knowledge has an important influence on teacher performance (Angrist and Guryan, 2008). More specifically, tests that can effectively measure potential new teachers' literacy skills are said to be advantageous, since "a teacher's level of literacy, as measured by vocabulary and other standardised tests, affects student achievement more than any other measurable teacher attribute" (Barber and Mourshed, 2007).

Some education systems use competitive examinations as part of a centralised procedure to control the number of candidates with access to public employment as teachers and to allocate new (and more rarely in-service) teachers to particular teaching posts. In Spain, for example, a combination of pre-service teacher training coursework and competitive examinations (both written and oral) are used to control access to teaching posts in the public sector. In Greece the weighted results of a written examination are used to allocate vacancies, with the first choice of schools going to the most successful candidates, judged by their national ranking in the test.

Related to the arguments set out above, tests (and competitive examinations in particular) are one method by which countries may seek to raise the status of the teaching profession and thus raise the quality of applicants (Barber and Mourshed, 2007).

Despite the existence of these various arguments for testing, however, the empirical evidence to support them is thin and it is clear that there exist alternative means of achieving most of their claimed benefits. For example, regarding the influence of standardised examinations on the curricula of initial teacher preparation (ITP) programmes, we have seen that some countries seek to achieve similar goals through alternative strategies, such as the validation and inspection of ITP providers. It may also be argued that alternative methods of assessing teacher candidates' subject knowledge (such as the subjects studied and grades/classifications gained in high school or on undergraduate degrees) might be equally or more valid, although there is not always a good and consistent match between the content of (for example) undergraduate degrees and the content knowledge candidates are deemed to require for teaching. (Hobson et al, 2009)

One of the main arguments against the use of tests or examinations as a form of assessing beginner teachers' competence or readiness to take up teaching posts is that "the assumption that effective teaching can be ensured by isolating sets of skills that can be measured through the use of multiple choice tests, check-lists or schedules of competence statements ignores the complexities and highly contextualised nature of teaching" (Larsen, with Lock and Lee, 2005). In particular, commonly used examinations such as multiple choice and paper-and-pencil tests cannot "meaningfully measure such crucial teaching qualities as dedication, leadership, sensitivity, reflective thinking, ability to communicate and social awareness" (Glassford, 2005). As a result, testing can "fail to distinguish good teachers from bad" (Loeb, Rouse and Shorris, 2007). One US panel of experts concluded that "there is currently little evidence available about the extent to which widely used teacher licensure tests distinguish between candidates who are minimally competent to teach and those who are not" (Committee on Assessment and Teacher Quality, 2000, cited in Larsen, with Lock and Lee, 2005). Similarly, a meta-analysis by D'Agostino and Powers (2009) found that "tests reveal little about [teaching] performance". The same authors reported that test scores tended to be "less related to teaching performance than students' success levels in the pre-service programmes the tests were designed to hold accountable", and that "pre-service teachers' performance in college, especially during student teaching, predicted performance better than teacher tests". They concluded that those involved in hiring and selecting teachers ought to focus as much or more on candidates' performance during ITP as "on their scores in the tests used for licensure purposes".

Contrary to the argument presented above about the potential positive effect of testing on the content of ITP programmes, it may also be argued that testing, especially in high stakes competitive examinations, is disadvantageous insofar as it may encourage ITP programme providers to "teach to the test" – that is, to seek to maximise trainees' performance in the examinations rather than focus on helping them to develop their capability as teachers.

As might be expected, given the evidence set out above, it is clear that while most of the world's best performing school systems do use some form of testing (for example literacy and numeracy tests) as a method of screening potential entrants to the teaching profession, they do not rely too heavily on this method. Rather, they tend to employ testing alongside other, more authentic, methods of assessing teacher candidates' competence, such as portfolios of evidence and the assessment of student progress. As Brodsky and Woods (2000) noted: "While traditional forms of documentation, such as tests and term papers, are still used to evaluate [candidates'] knowledge, more authentic instruments are used to evaluate what they are able to do."

Another crucial consideration in selecting and recruiting the most able teachers or potential teachers relates to the means of assessing whether or not those selected to undertake a programme of ITP are judged to have successfully completed such a programme. In many countries around the world, student teachers face a range

of types of assessment throughout the duration of their ITP programmes. These usually incorporate assignments, observations of their teaching in school, portfolios<sup>16</sup> and examinations. In France, trainee teachers have to complete a dissertation based on six weeks' practical experience in a school as well as a further six weeks of teaching practice in another school (Asher and Malet, 1999).

In England, all prospective teachers must meet a prescribed set of standards relating to aspects of teaching competence to achieve qualified teacher status (QTS). Evidence that these standards have been met takes a range of forms, including observations of teaching and professional conduct in school settings, a portfolio of evidence, and oral and written assignments. In recent years prospective teachers have also had to successfully pass online tests in numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology (ICT). Trainees are allowed to retake the tests as many times as needed for success but will only be recommended for the award of QTS on successful completion of all three.

In some systems, a threshold test during ITP is employed to determine which candidates are allowed to continue with their training. In Germany, there are two levels or phases of ITP. The first (university-based) phase – in which candidates study two (secondary school) or three (primary school) subject disciplines, along with courses in pedagogy and other aspects of education – is assessed by an examination, success in which leads to the second (practicum or internship) phase of ITP (Ostinelli, 2009). During the two-year internship phase, at least 25 lessons are observed and evaluated as part of the assessment (Cobb, 1999); this is followed by an examination designed to evaluate trainees' ability to reflect critically on professional practice, the results of which are fed into a classification system used in assigning teaching posts.

Not all countries make use of examinations to assess prospective teachers' abilities. In Australia, assessment systems differ from state to state but there is no standardised examination. Instead, trainees are assessed by a range of "performance-based assessments" which are principally related to prospective teachers' experience in school on the "practicum" (Larsen, with Lock and Lee, 2005). Some universities require an extended reflective action research project, while others encourage trainees to set their own goals during their practicum; goals which are subsequently examined through a blend of self-assessment and school mentor assessments (Ingvarson *et al.*, 2006).

Beyond the entry-to-ITP phase, qualifying to teach in Finland is also not examination-based. Instead, alongside other methods of assessment, including essays, investigation tasks and evaluations of their ability to take an active part in discussion seminars, trainee teachers have to produce a Master's level dissertation. The thesis topic for this is usually pedagogical or psychological for those wishing to teach primary-aged children, and subject discipline for those wishing to teach secondary-aged children. According to Ostinelli (2009), this type of ITP leads to a highly motivated teaching profession where attrition rates are low.

### ***How to revise, improve and expand the processes for assessing the suitability of teacher candidates and in-service teachers to teach (teacher licensing)***

The Steering Group considers that Mexico should continue to improve the strategies to assess the suitability of teachers to teach and in the short term should aim to do the following:

- further develop and improve the teacher examination (*concurso*);
- continue introducing more authentic and performance-based means of assessing the knowledge and capabilities of teachers;
- improve the governance structure and, in particular, the operation of the OEIF, while looking for a more efficient long-term strategy.

The OECD Steering Group considers that Mexico needs to strengthen existing mechanisms for assessing whether or not student teachers successfully graduate from ITP, in order to ensure that all potential entrants to the teaching profession meet minimum standards, particularly in relation to their practical teaching skills. At present, for many providers of ITP, the completion and successful validation of the programme appear to be largely one and the same, and in many institutions the mechanisms for assessing and confirming teacher candidates' practical teaching capabilities are weak.

Given the current situation in Mexico, in which the quality of ITP remains weak or variable, the OECD Steering Group believes that it will be efficient to continue to employ the National Teacher Examination to help make judgments about the suitability of: in-service teachers for appointment to permanent positions or second teaching posts (*doble plaza*); and newly qualified teachers for appointment as teachers. This would mean continuing to use an **improved** version of the examination to assess the knowledge of all newly certificated prospective teachers. Measures to achieve this could be:

- The present (four-section) broad structure of the examination should be retained and strengthened through increasing the number of questions overall and introducing some open-ended questions to supplement existing multiple choice or "tick box" questions.
- Pass marks of the examination should progress towards systems based on standards rather than norm-referenced, and should be defined at national level and consistent across states (see Recommendation 1).
- Introduce, in the short term, a minimum level in the exam that all candidate teachers should reach, independently of the availability of teaching posts. This will allow to differentiate among those that are currently classified as "needing levelling support" between those candidates that are eligible for a teaching post and those candidates that need further support and would need to retake the test. This would allow to choose the candidates among those who reach the minimum standard, and assign the posts to those who obtain the best results of this group. In this way the exam would combine a criterion reference approach (establishing a cut score) with a norm reference approach (assigning posts according to the scores obtained by candidates).

The Steering Group would also encourage the use of more authentic and performance-based means of assessing the knowledge and capabilities of teachers. The interviews, portfolios and psychometric examinations already requested or being explored in some states can be adequate complementary tools (if quality and transparency are assured). For new prospective teachers, some of these more authentic tools could be linked to their in-school teaching practice during their initial preparation programme (for example in order to apply for the examination they can present a portfolio of work prepared during the last year of practice evaluated by an independent certified evaluator). For those already working as non-permanent teachers but seeking permanent posts, these more authentic assessments could be based on their actual performance as teachers (for example a teacher can provide a portfolio of his/her work during the last couple of years, commented on by his/her director).

The Steering Group considers that those applicants who do not successfully complete the examination but who score above a certain level which indicates the potential to achieve a minimum level should have the opportunity to undertake additional training. Therefore it strongly supports the decision of the OEIF to request those classified as "needing levelling support" to follow a remedial course. These courses could be an excellent opportunity for teachers to catch up on those areas/topics that were weak during their ITP. However, in order to achieve this goal, the extra preparation should be carefully designed and adapted as much as possible to real teachers' needs. Furthermore, teachers that stand below the minimum acceptable level and have taken the additional training, would need to pass the teacher examination before obtaining a teaching post. At the same time, more authentic assessment tools could be used to give them feedback and improve their practices (for example interviews, peer support, portfolios).

The Steering Group considers that the quality of Mexican education would improve if teachers are strongly supported to become better. However, in order to improve Mexican education it is also necessary to prevent incompetent teachers from entering or remaining in the education system teaching Mexican children. Therefore it suggests that:

- Newly qualified teachers who do not reach the minimum acceptable in the examination (for example after a second or third attempt), should no longer be eligible to become teachers.
- In-service (non-permanent) teachers who do not reach the minimum acceptable in the examination (for example for a second or third time) should no longer be eligible for a permanent post.
- Those who are applying for a second teaching post (*doble plaza*) and do not reach the minimum acceptable of the examination should not obtain the second post, and should enter into a carefully designed support and evaluation scheme.

The Steering Group considers in the **short term** that the aims, governance and operation of the OEIF should be revised. The technical and political functions, which are currently combined, should be separated. A more streamlined working group should be established in order to effectively undertake technical development work in a more efficient manner, and should include representatives of ITP providers and independent academic experts. CENEVAL, or an alternative body chosen to administer the national examination, should be (re-) commissioned to develop the examination for a minimum (for example two-year) period, in order to provide some continuity and enable them to plan ahead; this should be done as soon as possible in order to give the organisation sufficient time to consult widely, develop questions and prepare examinations that are fit for purpose, and to design additional instruments. This may also improve the information teachers have available and facilitate their preparation for the examination. A different structure, comprising state and national representatives, can be responsible for approving the main domains of knowledge and skills to be assessed, the timetable and ground rules governing the administration of the tests in the different states, and the public communication strategy.

If Mexico wants to consolidate a professional teacher licensing mechanism in the **medium term**, it would need to continue working towards establishing more efficient, transparent and fair permanent structures. This means that the current OEIF structure and functioning may need to evolve. It is important to separate technical from political tasks. However, teachers' examinations and certification will have only limited success in improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools if these measures do not come with effective strategies designed to improve the quality of – and confidence in – initial teacher preparation.

**RECOMMENDATION 5: Progressively open all teaching posts to competition, and revise the process of initial appointment to teaching posts to allow more selection choice for both candidates and schools**

*All teacher posts (including vacancies) should be open for competition, given that at present some are allocated through the mixed commissions and others through the licensing examination (concurso). The system for allocating teachers to schools, currently based on teacher choice, should be improved so that there is a better match between schools and teachers. The Sistema de Corrimiento should be kept and improved.<sup>17</sup>*

**Context**

Mexico formally reported in 2004 to the OECD that the allocation of teachers to new posts was the **exclusive** responsibility of state authorities in 11 states; a **shared** task between SNTE and the state (50% each) in 18 states; and an **independent** SNTE decision in three states. Regarding vacant posts (open posts created due to resignation, death or retirement of other teachers) the report signalled that, in 13 states SNTE independently



allocates these posts; in seven states the state authorities independently take this decision; and in the other 12, this is a shared task between SNTE and the state authorities (50% each) (Guevara and Gonzalez, 2004). Nieto confirms that, until a short while ago, education authorities had in practice the right to assign only half of the newly created posts; the SNTE took part in the allocation of almost all of them (Santibáñez, 2008).

The Steering Group emphasises that, since the introduction of the new National Teacher Examination (see Recommendation 4 in this chapter), all **new posts** have had to be filled by means of competitive examination. However, most of the **vacancies** (around 70% of available posts each year) are not yet open for competition. The media has recently cited a report called *Incidencias de Personal 2001–2006*, which concludes that during that period eight out of ten teaching posts in Mexico were decided by or in agreement with the SNTE.<sup>18</sup>

The 2008 *Alianza por la Calidad de la Educación*, established that the candidates ranked highest in the examination would be given the first choice of schools with available posts that they would be allocated to. The examination, administered for the first time in 2008, was designed primarily to strengthen the quality of teachers, using performance as a basis for teacher appointment and promotion, and to achieve greater transparency and accountability.

While the new system has, to some extent, brought greater transparency and fairness, the new procedures have a number of limitations. For example: while 50 000 teaching posts were available, only 8 000 were open for competition; some candidates who failed the examination nevertheless still obtained a non-permanent teaching post; and a lack of transparency remains with regard to the precise mechanisms for appointing teachers to schools in some states (Nieto de Pascual Pola, 2009).

In addition, requiring in-service teachers to undertake examinations, especially those who feel they have already demonstrated their competence as teachers, can be damaging to their morale and commitment. Furthermore, assuming that there exists some correlation between performance in the examination and teacher quality, the likelihood that those teachers who score most highly in the examination will choose to work in the most desirable schools, means that existing inequities between schools and regions may be exacerbated.

### **Research and international evidence**

A comparative study carried out by the OECD shows that in countries with a more centralised approach (including those applying competitive entrance examinations, for example France, Korea and Italy), as well as those more decentralised countries (where schools usually follow “open recruitment” to hire teachers, for example Canada, Denmark, Finland and the United Kingdom), **all** teaching posts are open for fair competition (OECD, 2005).

Regarding centralised procedures for appointing teacher candidates more generally, the OECD (2005) notes that in countries where schools have little direct involvement in appointing teachers, the process of teacher selection is not merely “highly impersonal”, it is also “hard for teachers to build a sense of commitment to the schools where they are appointed” and very difficult if not impossible to ensure that “schools have the teachers that fit their particular needs”. From their review of the evidence, these authors conclude that “greater school involvement in teacher selection ... helps to improve educational quality” and should be encouraged. School leaders’ ability to select their teaching staff is central to their ability to establish a school culture and capacity that are conducive to better student performance (OECD, 2008). We would add that teachers are likely to be more effective in schools they have affirmatively chosen to join.

In those (most) countries in which schools (or their directors or governing bodies) are responsible for appointing their own teaching staff, a range of selection procedures are used. These procedures usually include one or more of the following: face-to-face interviews with applicants (often by a panel); observation of candidates’ teaching

(for example of a “sample lesson” in the school to which they are applying for a post) and/or completion of other set tasks; examination of applicants’ portfolios of evidence; evidence of previous academic performance (for example, degree classification); and references (for example from ITP tutors and teachers in schools in which the applicants trained or taught). In the case of hard-to-staff schools, incentives may be needed to promote a minimum stability of the teacher body for two or three years. This measure would allow a sense of ownership of the school by the teacher, and would foster equity.

***How to progressively open all teaching posts to competition, and revise the process of initial appointment to teaching posts to allow more suitability and choice for both candidates and schools***

The Steering Group suggests that all teaching posts should progressively be opened to competition; this includes new and vacant posts. The current system of allocating teachers to schools, linked to the results of the teacher examination, should be improved to achieve a better match between schools and teachers. At the same time, the *Sistema de Corrimiento* should be kept but improved.

The decision to use ranking on the examination as a principal means of allocating teachers to schools has been an important step forward for Mexico in increasing transparency in the teacher appointment process. However, results in the examination should not be the exclusive source of information upon which such judgments are made, and ought to be used alongside additional methods of establishing candidates’ competence and suitability or “fit” for the specific needs of the particular school. If well implemented, this can make the system of teacher allocation to schools more transparent and merit-based.

If Mexico intends to hold schools more accountable for student performance, it is critical that they be given a stronger role in selecting teachers. The next chapter of this report argues that one of the principal roles of school leaders is to help build a positive and distinctive school culture. Central to accomplishing this goal is the ability of directors to recruit staff who understand and fit that culture. It is also important in the teacher allocation process that the schools with the greatest need be given priority to select teachers they believe can be most effective in their specific context. This may require Mexican officials to create incentives to persuade talented young teachers and directors to choose and/or remain in rural, hard-to-staff schools.

From the candidate’s perspective, it is also important to build some flexibility into the appointment system, since teachers are more likely to be effective in schools they have chosen, and where they believe there is a good match between their strengths and interests and the school’s needs. The Steering Group believes there are ways to introduce more choice into the system without undermining the progress that has been made through introducing the national examination and ranking system. One suggestion, already in place in at least one state, is to allow the top three candidates to interview for a given vacancy, and then to allow the school to choose between them. As long as vacancies are filled at the schools with the greatest need first, giving schools and candidates more opportunity to choose one another should not necessarily undermine the equity goals of the system.

**RECOMMENDATION 6: *Establish a probationary period for beginning teachers with intensive mentoring and support, followed by a performance evaluation before appointment to a permanent post. Create a cadre of excellent mentor teachers to provide such support***

*As the first years of practice are key to teaching quality, and there are concerns about ITP and the initial selection of teachers, it is important to implement a formal induction period with substantial support for all beginning teachers (including those with non-permanent posts) and a probation period for beginning teachers to demonstrate in practice that they are capable of effectively facilitating student learning and successfully undertaking other aspects of their teacher roles.*



## Context

What most higher performing countries have learned is that no matter how good their initial teacher preparation institutions are, a fraction of their graduates will not make a successful transition into teaching. They have also learned that they must provide substantial on-the-job support for even well-prepared beginning teachers to enable them to make a successful transition from student to fully-fledged teacher. Therefore in countries such as Mexico where initial teacher preparation is uneven and many teachers have received a weak education, adequate professional development for beginning teachers is key for their future and that of their students.

Presently, induction programmes in general do not seem to be very common, either for those beginning teachers who obtain a permanent post or for those hired as non-permanent teachers. It seems that in most schools there is no formal structured support or mentoring programmes for teachers. Furthermore, there does not seem to be much discussion at the federal and state level about the need to develop mechanisms to support new teachers and help them to develop their professional skills

In contrast to the situation in many educationally high performing countries, in Mexico there is no probation period at the end of which beginning teachers must demonstrate their competence in facilitating student learning and undertaking other aspects of their teacher roles. In fact, beginning teachers who obtain a permanent post immediately after their studies can keep it *de facto* for their whole life, even if they are unable to prove they can be good teachers. A distinction should be made in this context between induction and probation (see the definitions in Box 3.9).

### Box 3.9 Induction and probation for beginning teachers

Many countries have two different parallel processes for beginning teachers in their first years of service.

- Induction: normally understood as a programme designed to support new teachers. Mentoring is usually part of the induction programmes. Mentoring can be defined as the one-to-one support of a novice or less experienced practitioner (mentee) by a more experienced practitioner (mentor), designed primarily to assist the development of the mentee's expertise and to facilitate their induction into the culture of the profession (in this case, teaching) and into the specific local context (here, the school).
- Probation: usually defined as a kind of "on the job" qualifying phase that must be successfully completed before the teacher is eligible for a permanent position.

Those responsible for assessing beginning teachers during the probation phase are usually not the same people (such as mentors) as those who support their induction.

*Source: Eurydice (2002), The teaching profession in Europe: Profile, trends and concerns. General lower secondary education. Volume 1: Initial training and transition to working life. Eurydice European Unit, Brussels. Hobson, A. J. et al (2009), "Mentoring Beginning Teachers: What We Know and What We Don't", Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 207-216.*

There do appear to be education professionals working within and across schools who would potentially be well placed to undertake both the assessment function associated with new teacher probation and the corresponding support function of new teacher induction. These are supervisors (who work across schools) and technical pedagogical advisors (*Asesores Técnico-Pedagógicos*, ATPs) (who already hold support roles **within** schools but also **across** schools) respectively. Unfortunately the ATPs' posts and tasks are not clearly defined in most of the states and, as with teachers, their work, career progression, professional

development and evaluation are not guided by clear standards and guidelines. The tasks of supervisors are better defined, but they do not seem to be given the adequate support and resources to undertake their tasks which are *de facto* mainly administrative. The Steering Group was informed that many ATPs and supervisors are not appointed according to their capacities or merits, but for many other reasons including non-transparent practices or because, despite their negative performance, it was difficult to take them out of the education system.

### **Research and international evidence**

The experiences of teachers during their first years are of crucial importance for their future development of the skills and knowledge needed for good teaching. Many countries offer different support mechanisms for new teachers during their first years of service (Eurydice, 2002; see also Box 3.10).

Recent research has found that beginner teachers can profit a great deal from mentoring, but not all mentoring is good. Selection and preparation of mentors influence the quality of mentoring. One problem is that sometimes not enough time is given to the mentors to carry out their tasks. In order to make sure that mentoring works it is necessary to see that mentors are carefully selected, given sufficient time to carry out their tasks and have the opportunity to participate in good preparation programmes (Hobson *et al.*, 2009). In cases where, for whatever reason, it is not possible to offer mentoring for beginner teachers, they might be offered early professional development programmes as an alternative (McIntyre, Hobson and Mitchell, 2009).

In several higher-performing education systems, beginning teachers are required to undertake a period of probation, by the end of which they must have confirmed their capability or competence in order to secure their license to teach. While such probationary and induction periods normally (for example in England and New Zealand) last for one or two years, in some systems (for example in Boston and Chicago in the US) they can last for as many as three or four. However long they last, such approaches normally provide a mechanism by which those who are judged to be ineffective may be removed from their posts and from the profession, while those who are able to demonstrate their competence may be given or become eligible for a permanent position.

More generally, a probationary period typically takes place, as is the case in England, alongside or as part of a new teacher induction programme which includes mentoring support, thereby creating opportunities for formative as well as summative assessment and for teacher development (Larsen, with Lock and Lee, 2005). However, some studies suggest that the assessment of beginning teachers should not be carried out by the same people who support their induction and early professional development, since (for example) in such circumstances beginning teachers are less likely to admit to areas of weakness and thus to identify their professional development needs (Hobson, 2009; Abell *et al.*; 1995, Heilbronn *et al.*; 2002; Williams and Prestage, 2002).

In accordance with the advice of Roelofs (2007), who argued that “all evidence of competence should be registered and interpreted within specific teaching situations”, teacher evaluation in most systems which have probationary periods for new teachers normally involves various forms of **performance-based assessment**. These typically include direct observation of the candidate’s teaching and/or assessment of documentary evidence through which beginning teachers need to demonstrate their teaching capability against a set of standards. In England, for example, beginning teachers are observed six times (normally during the first three terms of their first teaching post), while their professional attributes in and out of the classroom are also monitored. In many parts of the world, including the USA, documentary evidence is increasingly being presented in teacher **portfolios**. In Connecticut, for example, decisions about whether to license beginning teachers are based largely upon the assessment of a portfolio which contains a range of evidence relating to the first two years of teaching:

“The portfolio requirements are highly structured and subject-specific. The portfolio is comprised of documentary evidence of a unit of instruction on a significant concept, including lesson logs, videotapes of classroom teaching, teacher commentaries, samples of student work, and reflections on their planning, instruction, and assessment of student progress. Teachers are asked to demonstrate how they think and act on behalf of their students. In doing so, teachers are able to show their skills and knowledge in a [...] nuanced manner, speaking to their experiences in the use of specific classroom teaching strategies with particular groups of students” (Larsen, with Lock and Lee, 2005).

Portfolios are regarded by many as effective mechanisms for facilitating not only the assessment but also the **professional learning** of probationary and other teachers. It is argued, for example, that the process of putting together a portfolio can enhance teaching by promoting (or further encouraging) reflective practice. Portfolios are useful to evaluate real teaching practices, which are the most elusive component for traditional evaluation methods (Sun Figueroa, 2010).

***How to establish a probationary period for beginning teachers with intensive mentoring and support, followed by a performance evaluation before appointment to a permanent post, and create a cadre of excellent mentor teachers to provide such support***

Induction and probation schemes during the first year(s) of a beginning teacher’s career are fundamental processes that Mexico should implement. The Steering Group recommends implementing a formal induction period with substantial support for all beginning teachers and a probation period in which beginning teachers are expected to demonstrate in practice that they are capable of effectively facilitating student learning and successfully undertaking other aspects of their teacher role.

An important step in establishing teaching as a respected profession is to put in place a process for requiring teachers to demonstrate that they can meet professional standards of practice at a reasonably high level before awarding them a permanent post. However, in order to put in place a meaningful probation period coupled with an effective final evaluation, it is necessary first to create an induction and support system for beginning teachers so they can have ready access to experienced, accomplished professionals to guide their on-the-job learning.

In the view of the Steering Group, teaching is fundamentally a craft, and a first year teacher should be viewed more as an apprentice than a fully formed teacher. For this reason it is important to structure schools so that beginners can have the opportunity to observe and work under the tutelage of mentors who can model exemplary teaching practices.

Creating and training a cadre of mentor teachers is not only key to putting in place a fair system for supporting and evaluating probationary teachers, it can also be a powerful strategy for recognising and rewarding outstanding teachers and extending their influence to other schools and districts. If Mexican schools are to become learning organisations, teaching practice needs to become more public and more subject to scrutiny by peers, and every school will need teachers who can lead such ongoing inquiry into the improvement of practice. Mentor teachers can be an important vehicle for distributing leadership in schools, an idea that will be further developed in Chapter 4. Some experienced teachers should be trained to become mentors (for induction), others to become evaluators (for probation).

In the view of the Steering Group, Mexico should offer **induction** schemes to **all** beginning teachers who work in classrooms (including those who passed the National Teacher Examination and are expecting a permanent post (see Recommendation 4) and those who failed the examination but are hired as non-permanent teachers). At the same time, it considers that **all** teachers should complete a **probation** period to a satisfactory standard *before* obtaining a permanent post. In order to reinforce teachers’ induction support, Mexico can redirect part

of the professional development options and resources (see Recommendation 7) to beginning teachers. These professional development opportunities could be proposed by the federal authorities or by the states.

Those who fall short of the standards and do not demonstrate sufficient potential for meeting them in the foreseeable future **should be released** from the classroom. Those who do not meet the standards at the end of their probation period but who are judged to have the potential to do so within 12 months should have their probationary and induction programme extended (for example into a second year), although if they do not reach the relevant standards by the end of this period they too should be released from the education system. Only when teachers have successfully met the standards should they become eligible for permanent status.

The Steering Group does not have a fixed view on the ideal length of the probation period for beginning teachers, but we think it should be at least one or two years. We understand that under Mexican labour law a six-month probation period would be possible. This is short by international standards, but it suggests a place to begin while pushing for a more extended period in the future.

**RECOMMENDATION 7: Build a more relevant system of integral professional development that combines school-based development options with the course-based options in the National Training Catalogue**

*The current supply of professional development is dispersed across a range of different providers and organisations and teachers say that the courses offered to them may not be relevant to their needs. Many teachers fund their own choices beyond the courses offered by the government and the states. Development options should be diversified and made more coherent and relevant to school needs. Current efforts to make the National Training Catalogue more relevant should continue; and school-based training opportunities should be increased and supported.*

**Context**

Since 1992 Mexico has provided continuing professional development for a large number of teachers. According to the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), Mexican teachers have one of the highest rates of participation in training and professional development (92%, with an average across TALIS countries of 89%). About 66% of the professional development days are compulsory in Mexico, which is higher than the OECD average of 51%. Mexico also has more than twice the TALIS average number of days of professional development for teachers (34, compared to the TALIS average of 15). The most common type of professional development that Mexican teachers participated in was "courses and workshops" (94%) (OECD, 2009). TALIS also shows that Mexico has the highest percentage of teachers reporting that they would have liked to have received more professional development than they did (80%). The main professional development needs identified by the teachers concerned deal with heterogeneity in the classrooms, such as teaching students with special learning needs, teaching in a multicultural setting and student counselling.

The percentage of Mexican teachers whose school director reports a lack of qualified teachers as a factor hindering learning is almost twice the average of other participating countries (69%, compared to the TALIS average of 38%). TALIS results also indicate that in Mexico there is a pronounced difference in the participation rates of teachers in professional development courses according to their previous qualification level: teachers with higher initial qualifications have higher participation rates. Those with at least a Master's degree or higher received almost twice the number of days of development courses than those with less than a Bachelor's degree. Teachers in village schools took an average of eight days fewer than those living in a small town or a large city. Furthermore, despite the fact that all the courses offered by the federal government and the states are free, Mexican teachers were more likely to report cost as a barrier to taking more (about half the teachers

reported not being able to take more professional development courses because they were too expensive). The percentage of Mexican teachers who had to pay for all the costs of their professional development was twice the average across TALIS countries (19% compared with the TALIS average of 8%). Mexico has one of the highest percentages (25%) of teachers having to pay for the full cost of their professional development.

Teachers can take up to 200 different courses offered for teachers in the National Training Catalogue (*Catálogo Nacional de Formación*). The focus of the catalogue has, in recent years, shifted from more general courses in pedagogy to more content-oriented courses, with a particular focus on mathematics, sciences, language, history, civics and ethics. Many teachers and directors argued that the courses in the Catalogue were not always relevant to their needs or were not offered when needed in their states. It should be noted, however, that the needs identified by TALIS (responding to students with special learning needs, teaching in multicultural settings and student counselling) do not seem to be emphasised sufficiently in the Catalogue.

Participation in the courses offered in the catalogue can, together with accreditation of other activities and professional experience, be used by teachers to increase their salaries through *Carrera Magisterial*. The courses are usually organised by the Ministry of Education in special organisations referred to as “Teacher Centres” (*Centros de Maestros*). The courses are free of charge for the teachers, so long as they receive a passing grade. Even though these centres exist all over the country, many teachers must travel long distances to participate, taking them away from their students. Another option for states or communities where there are no centres is to take the courses in the SEP offices across the states.

To open up supply, in the most recent catalogue, there are courses provided by a wider range of institutions, especially tertiary education institutions. The goal is to offer more structured professional development options and to give teachers the opportunity to complete *diplomados* (specialisation), Master’s and PhD programmes.

The states’ education authorities provide other professional development for teachers. Some of these are organised in collaboration with the federal government; others are organised directly by the states. In addition to the offer of the National Training Catalogue and the states, there is a wide range of different activities organised by universities, the states or by private organisations. Some of these activities get public support or funding. However, since these activities are not considered training courses that are part of the Catalogue (*Cursos de Actualización*), teachers who take them do not obtain credits in *Carrera Magisterial* (Aguerrondo, Benavides and Pont, 2009). As explained previously (Recommendation 6), it seems there is not sufficient and structured sustained support programmes for beginning teachers – either for tutors or for teachers who would like to become directors (see Chapter 4). There are very few opportunities to offer collective training in schools based on schools’ needs and realities.

### **Research and international evidence**

Even with an excellent system for initial teacher preparation and induction it will always be necessary to provide continuous professional development for teachers throughout their career. Continuous professional development includes a range of tasks such as to “update, develop and broaden the knowledge of teachers acquired during the initial teacher education and/or provide them with new skills and professional understanding” (OECD, 2005).

Nearly 90% of the teachers in the countries participating in TALIS reported taking part in a structured professional development activity during the 18 months preceding the collection of data. The most common forms of teacher participation in continuing training are informal dialogue to improve teaching, courses and workshops and reading of professional literature. Most teachers also reported that they would have liked more professional development, but the views varied widely. Most teachers requesting further professional development seem to need support on issues related to teaching students with special learning needs, ICT

teaching and student behaviour. When teachers were asked about the reasons why they might not participate in professional development the most common, given by 47% of all teachers in the study, was “conflict with work schedule” (OECD, 2009).

According to Villegas-Reimers (2003), evidence shows that continuous professional development has an impact on teachers’ beliefs and behaviour, but the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their practice is far from simple. Scheerens (2000) observes that studies of unusually effective schools in developed countries agree that opportunities for professional development are one of the relevant factors that can have an impact. A World Bank review of education in Africa reported that in-service training of teachers can have a positive impact on educational quality if it is appropriate, well-organised and competently delivered (World Bank, 1988). Darling-Hammond (1999) concludes: “Teachers who participated in sustained curriculum-based professional development reported changes in practice that, in turn, were associated with significantly higher student achievement scores on state assessment”.

In around half of the countries that participated in TALIS, teachers who had received more professional development reported significantly higher levels of self-efficacy. TALIS also suggests that teachers’ participation in professional development goes hand in hand with their mastery of a wider array of methods to use in the classroom, even if it is not clear to what extent professional development triggers or responds to the adoption of new techniques. The great majority of teachers reported that the professional development they took part in, across a range of activities, had a moderate or high impact. The greatest perceived impact is in teacher research and qualification programmes. Yet relatively few participate in this type of activity and those who do often feel frustrated by the lack of sufficient time to devote to it (OECD, 2009). It seems safe to assume that the impact of continuous professional development varies a great deal. To what extent it has an impact on students’ learning depends on whether or not it meets the needs of students, teachers and schools. In that context, the way it is organised and its content seem to be crucial.

Some studies, almost experimental in design, have shown that teachers who have been given in-service training in a specific topic manage to produce better results in this topic in their classes than teachers who have not received the same training (Good, Grouws and Ebmeier, 1983; McCutchen *et al.*, 2002). Research also shows that traditional in-service training organised through seminars and courses often has a very limited impact on the quality of education (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Schwille and Dembélé, 2007).

There are indications that school-based professional development in many cases is more efficient as a tool to improve teaching than traditional in-service courses (Musset, 2010; OECD, 2009; Villegas-Reimers, 2003; Hill, 2007). In some countries a clear link has been developed between continuous professional development and the needs of the schools and the students. This approach can be found in decentralised education systems such as those in Iceland, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden (OECD, 2005), but also in more centralised systems such as the province of Ontario (Canada). The director of the school decides, in consultation with the teachers, about the content and structure of the professional development. Closely linked to this approach is school self-evaluation, where schools themselves identify their needs and what to do to meet them (McBeath *et al.*, 2000). Such school self-evaluation can be organised in many different ways, ranging from “spin-offs” of external evaluations to entirely internally determined evaluations (Scheerens, 2000).

The providers of professional development vary between countries. In some countries professional development is provided mainly by government agencies, universities and teacher education institutions. In other countries, mainly those with decentralised systems, the schools decide themselves between different providers on the market. The extent to which the market is regulated varies between countries (Eurydice, 2002).



### ***How to build a more relevant system of integral professional development that combines school-based development options with the course-based options in the National Training Catalogue***

The Steering Group considers that there is general agreement on the need to strengthen teachers' professional development in Mexico and this is one of the priorities of the *Alianza*. However, Mexico still needs to target the right type of professional development, and identify the best ways to offer this and how better to coordinate the offer. A more relevant system of professional development needs to include more school(s)-based professional development.

As the previous section emphasised, school-based professional development is the most efficient way to provide teachers with the support they need to improve their teaching. At the same time there is a need for a mix of different types of continuous professional development that meet different demands. Furthermore, the supply of training needs to be aligned with national teacher standards (Recommendation 1) and the national curriculum over the long run.

As the courses in the National Training Catalogue seem to play such a crucial role for teachers' professional development it seems to be most urgent to continue current efforts to improve the range of courses on offer. It is important to continue to emphasise the skills and knowledge of teachers in key subjects such as language and mathematics. In order to ensure that these courses lead to improvements, it is important to find ways to follow up how teachers take advantage of their new skills and knowledge. Such follow-up studies could be organised by universities and/or *Normales* and could also help to make teacher education a more recognised area of research.

The closer collaboration in recent years between the SEP General Directorate of Continuous Education of In-Service Teachers and tertiary education institutions is also a move in the right direction. In order for *Normales* and universities to provide courses that focus on how to teach the subjects, there is a need to provide resources to these institutions so they can develop more research in this field.

The other priority in continuous professional development is to create space for more school-based activities. At present, in general schools do not have the resources, capacity or autonomy to organise relevant training activities. Using the network of supervisors and technical pedagogical advisors (ATP) and providing additional guidance to schools and their directors as to how to understand needs and find the appropriate training is key. Some states, and those schools involved in the PEC programme, have had experience in school-based training. To gather experience, one option could be to start to pilot school-based training in some states where the possibilities for doing this are better and more advanced than in others. Careful evaluation of these experiences can be used to develop this approach further and to see how good experiences can be transferred from one state to another.

It will therefore be key to revise the current strategies at national and state levels for providing professional development for teachers. These also imply rethinking how time and resources can be reorganised to free teachers so they can undertake these options. This implies: 1) completing the revision of the National Training Catalogue for relevance to teacher pedagogical and curricular practices; 2) developing approaches for schools and their teachers to define and formalise the specific professional development they need for their schools; and 3) ensuring that these additional professional development programmes are supported and accredited as part of their professional careers (in the teacher career ladder *Carrera Magisterial* for example) and linked to any formal evaluation system (see Recommendation 6 on the creation of a probation period and Recommendation 8 on the creation of an in-service teacher evaluation system). Recommendation 13 suggests the development of networks of schools focused on developing learning communities for teachers and schools.

**RECOMMENDATION 8: Develop and implement a rigorous teacher evaluation system focused on improving teaching**

*A standards-based teacher evaluation system is urgently needed in Mexico. This should be a purely formative system in its first years with adequate professional support opportunities. Once it is implemented and its rules are socialised, it can include formative and summative consequences, including rewarding excellent teachers and supporting less well-performing teachers. Teachers who are persistently poor performers should be excluded from the education system.*

**Context**

Mexico does not currently have an effective system for evaluating teachers, fairly rewarding teachers whose practice is outstanding, or effectively supporting teachers whose practice needs to be improved. Teachers in Mexico are typically evaluated by their directors, and seldom by a person not within the school. Schools are not evaluated at all. Some states use students' results in the National Evaluation of Academic Achievement in Schools (*Evaluación Nacional de Logro Académico en Centros Escolares* or ENLACE) examination as the only means of recognising individual teachers; a strategy that is discouraged by research (Manzi, 2009) and by the Steering Group. This issue is further discussed in the OECD report on in-service teacher evaluation and incentives (OECD, 2010c).

As above mentioned, the current *Carrera Magisterial* programme and *Escalafón* are not efficient mechanisms for evaluating, supporting and rewarding teachers but rather promotion mechanisms for in-service teachers. The programme aims to link promotion and salary progression to teachers' professional performance. However, "performance" is measured largely in terms of examination performance and attendance on courses, which are unlikely to reflect teachers' effectiveness in facilitating student learning accurately (Santibáñez, 2002). A formal evaluation of *Carrera Magisterial* by the Research and Development Corporation (RAND) concluded that the programme has had little or no impact on student achievement (Santibáñez *et al.*, 2006) while Nieto, (2009) argued that "as it works today, the CM does not allow the best teachers to be identified or rewarded". It should also be mentioned that, in the current system, progression through the levels of *Carrera Magisterial* does not require evidence of improved teacher performance, as measured by evidence of improved student learning. Box 3.10 reviews the links between teacher evaluation and *Carrera Magisterial*.

The Sectorial Education Programme 2007-2012 defines the goal of creating a systematic teacher evaluation system based on standards (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2007) and the OECD was asked to provide some guidance and recommendations as to how to design a teacher evaluation system in Mexico. A specific report was drafted for that purpose and this recommendation draws on and summarises the key proposals presented (Mancera and Schmelkes, 2010).

- The recommendation on teacher evaluation is presented within the teacher career paths strategy because the Steering Group believes that teacher evaluation is not an end in itself but should be part of a broader teacher policy strategy to raise student learning outcomes and overall school performance as well as to ensure that teachers have opportunities for improvement. Teacher evaluation can contribute to improve teacher performance and underlies the importance of teacher motivation and feedback mechanisms to teachers.
- An important part of success depends on developing a good understanding of how to evaluate teachers and also of what can motivate teachers to maintain and improve quality. Teacher motivation is understood to embrace multiple dimensions, including an attractive work environment, career perspectives, access to professional development, efficient school management and opportunities to learn from and model effective teaching practices from other Mexican teachers.



### Box 3.10 Teacher evaluation and its links to *Carrera Magisterial*

A reliable teacher evaluation system must lie at the foundation of teacher incentive programmes as a means of measuring the quality of teaching accurately.

Making *Carrera Magisterial* rely on a solid teacher evaluation system would help the programme revamp the factors upon which its evaluation lies today. The tests on “*Preparación Profesional*” and “*Acreditación de Cursos de Actualización y Superación del Magisterio*” measure some of the areas of teacher competence – disciplinary and pedagogical content – but cannot assess many other areas of the professional practice of teachers. Training courses may lead to improved teacher performance but this is not necessarily the case. “*Desempeño escolar*”, which relates to teacher performance as judged by directors or supervisors, does not rely on external evaluation methods that require judgement by independent evaluators.

The instruments to enter the programme are the same as for promotions. An evaluation system that ties financial incentives to promotion should also demand more from those that reach the higher levels.

*Carrera Magisterial* is well liked by teachers – not surprisingly, since it has led to salary increases for a majority of those who have applied. The federal government is investing over 40 billion Mexican pesos in the programme annually. The size of *Carrera Magisterial* and its impact on the teaching profession make it necessary to ensure that participating teachers are evaluated using the criteria and methods of a robust teacher evaluation system like the one proposed above. This is a major reason to accelerate the design and implementation of a solid teacher evaluation system.

Source: Mancera and Schmelkes (2010), “Specific Policy Recommendations on the Development of a Comprehensive In-Service Teacher Evaluation Framework”, Analytical Paper, OECD, Paris.

### Research and international evidence

In order to have a reliable means of identifying and supporting teacher progress and improvement, individual schools or (in more centralised countries) education systems can have mechanisms in place to undertake evaluations of teachers on a regular basis. With regard to the wider aims of schools and the ultimate goal of maximising opportunities for student learning, the most effective systems of teacher evaluation are those that also link to and provide opportunities for continuing professional development and improvement (*formative evaluation*) and which serve to identify and reward effective teaching (*summative evaluation*), although these two goals may have sometimes conflicting implications (Santiago and Benavides, 2009).

In addition, given the negative impact of retaining ineffective or low-performing teachers on student results (Barber and Mourshed, 2007), it is not surprising that however effective selection processes at entry to ITP, completion of ITP, and teacher appointment stages are, many education systems recognise the need for a means of removing from post those teachers who turn out to be ineffective.

The first question to respond to is why to evaluate: in order to improve teaching practices, these have to be evaluated and a system put in place to support teachers for the improvement of student learning. To do this effectively, it is necessary then to address what to evaluate; that is, to describe the attributes of good teaching performance and to define an evaluation framework (Mancera and Schmelkes, 2010; see also Recommendation 1). The main purpose of teacher evaluation is to improve teaching and thus the students’ results. Therefore, teacher evaluation should always have *formative purposes*; that is, it should supply proper feedback to teachers on their needs for improvement. In addition, it should identify the support and teacher training mechanisms needed to ensure improvement.

The next question to respond to is how to evaluate. Among the different options for teacher evaluation countries use are: some measures of student performance, classroom observations, teacher interviews, teacher portfolios, teacher tests or questionnaires and surveys. Within this range of methods, the evidence suggests that alternative and more authentic methods of performance-related assessment, notably those that generate evidence relating

### Box 3.11 Teacher evaluation systems in Chile and England

In **Chile**, the System of Professional Teacher Performance Evaluation for teachers in public schools (*Sistema de Evaluación del Desempeño Profesional Docente administradas por las municipalidades*) aims at the improvement of teaching and consequently also of students' results. It is designed to stimulate teachers to further their own improvement through learning about their strengths and weaknesses. It is based on explicit criteria of what will be evaluated, but without forcing a prescriptive model of teaching. Other aims have also been defined by those in charge of designing and implementing the evaluation system: a) recognition of professional merit; b) improvement of the status of the teaching profession; c) training opportunities to overcome deficiencies; and d) contribution to the discussion of a new professional development model. Since 2005 it is mandatory for the totality of teachers working in schools administrated by municipalities (the public sector).

Teacher evaluation is based on a set of national teaching standards summarised in the Framework for Good Teaching (*Marco para la Buena Enseñanza*; See Box 3.2). The evaluation is carried out at the school level and follows a mixed internal and external approach. It includes different tools: self-evaluation (10% of final score); supervisor evaluation (10% of final score); peer evaluation (20% of final score); and portfolio (60% of final score). Evaluation criteria do not include students' academic results. However, Chile uses student performance data to 'validate' the evaluation system.

In **England**, School Teacher Performance Management is part of the development of the new professionalism for teachers. This system includes: a) developing a culture where teachers feel confident and empowered to participate fully in performance management; b) the acknowledgment of teachers' professional responsibility to be engaged in effective, sustained and relevant professional development throughout their careers and to contribute to the professional development of others; and c) the creation of a contractual entitlement for teachers to effective, sustained and relevant professional development as part of a wider review of teachers' professional duties. The Performance Management Regulations apply to teachers covered by the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document. The evaluation is differentiated according to the career stage. Teacher evaluation is carried out at the school level and follows on the whole an internal approach mostly based on evaluation by the peers.

Professional standards, established in September 2007, provide statements of good teaching for each of the five stages of the career (See Box 3.2). Statements of professional duties and responsibilities of teachers, the job description and the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document are also considered. The system includes an Annual Review for: a) objective setting; b) planning and review statement; c) classroom observation according to an established school protocol; d) individual interviews; and e) other evidence at the discretion of the teacher evaluated. Student results are not directly used to assess the performance of individual teachers.

Source: Santiago, P. and F. Benavides (2009), "Teacher Evaluation: A Conceptual Framework and examples of Country Practices", Analytical Paper, OECD, Paris.

to teachers' success or otherwise in fostering student learning, are the most appropriate and effective. Barber and Mourshed (2007) thus note that the teacher evaluation mechanisms employed by most top-performing school systems are "based on the evidence of [teachers'] classroom practice". Box 3.11 summarises some key aspects of the Chilean and English teacher evaluation systems.

The results of an international review of teacher policy found that seven out of 26 countries reported using student performance measures as a component of their teacher evaluation mechanisms (OECD, 2005), while evidence from Brazil suggests that student results on standardised tests are used to identify effective teachers and promote teacher development and school improvement (OECD, 2009b). In Chile, England and Ontario (Canada) students' results are not used directly for teachers' appraisal. In Portugal the evaluation criteria originally included students' academic results and school drop-out rates (as well as assessments by students' parents). But these criteria were eliminated from the model (Santiago and Benavides, 2009).

There are many frameworks that can be used internationally to evaluate teaching practice (Perrenoud, 2004; Rewards and Incentives Group, 2009; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009; OECD, 2009b; Kelly *et al.*, 2008; Singapore Ministry of Education, 2006). Typically, they propose that at least four main areas be covered in professional performance, as outlined in Danielson and McGreal (2000)<sup>19</sup> and summarised in Box 3.12.

The quality of teacher practice should always be evaluated with reference to equity; that is, to the ability of the teacher to plan, create an environment, differentiate instruction based on individual student needs, and strive for positive learning outcomes for all students.<sup>20</sup> Teachers should strive to achieve desired learning results with all students, and this requires routinely giving special attention to each student or subgroup of students. Each of the domains defined should address the issue of equity and provide a definition of good teaching practice regarding equity, with progressive levels of achievement for each domain.

In some countries, such as Mexico, where evidence suggests that the time allotted for teaching is not used optimally by teachers, criteria for judging teacher performance should include attendance and punctuality, as well as time on task. These criteria, like others, can be modified as the system progresses and average levels of teacher performance improve substantially.

A very important question in every evaluation system is how to assess impact on students' learning. Gathering multiple sources of evidence about teaching practice meets the need for accuracy and fairness in the evaluation process, and takes into account the complexity of what a good teacher should know and be able to do (Santiago and Benavides, 2009). A standards-based approach with multiple sources of evidence offers guidance on how to replicate teacher effectiveness. Complementary student-performance-based systems can identify teachers who are associated with improvements in students' learning, but these need to take into account other sources of information in order to yield insights into the reasons why the individual teachers are effective (Sclafani and Manzi, 2009).

Systems based on student performance, although useful to identify teachers associated with learning improvement (if based on value added information), do not give information about the reasons for teachers' effectiveness or failure. This represents a serious limitation from an education policy perspective, because it does not offer guidance on how to replicate teacher effectiveness. Manzi (2009) suggests that a standards-based evaluation system is only useful as long as the standards reflect performance dimensions that are connected with student learning. If standards are conceptually or empirically dissociated from learning, support for the evaluation system immediately erodes. In order to ensure this connection, there are two options: one is to combine student performance data and teacher performance indicators in the evaluation system; the other is to use student performance data to validate the evaluation system.

### Box 3.12 Areas covered by teacher evaluation systems

**Planning and preparation.** This domain has several components that describe how a teacher organises the content that students are to learn; that is, how a teacher designs instruction. Components include a deep understanding of content and pedagogy and an understanding and appreciation of the students and what they bring with them. The content must be transformed through instructional design into sequences of activities and exercises that are accessible to the students. This area also covers assessment plans. Assessment techniques must reflect instructional outcomes and document student progress. Assessment must be used for formative purposes and provide diagnostic opportunities for students to demonstrate their level of understanding. This domain is based on the principle that a teacher's role is not so much to teach as to arrange for learning. The plans and the students' assignments may be included in a teacher's professional portfolio. The plan's effects must be observed through action in the classroom and reflected in student learning outcomes.

**The classroom environment.** These are aspects that set the stage for all learning. Components have to do with the way a teacher establishes a comfortable and respectful classroom environment that cultivates a culture for learning and creates a safe place for risk-taking. This must lead to student behaviour that is cooperative and non-disruptive, and to a physical environment that is supportive of these purposes. Caring, high expectations and teachers' commitment to students are included in the components. Master teachers in this domain are able to create an atmosphere of excitement about the importance of learning. The skills are demonstrated through classroom interaction and through interviews with or surveys of students.

**Instruction.** The components of this domain are at the heart of teaching and refer to the engagement of students in content. What matters is to get children to develop a complex understanding and to participate in a community of learners. It refers to the implementation of plans designed in the first domain. Good teachers in this domain have finely honed instructional skills. Their work in the classroom is fluid and flexible. Their questions probe student thinking and serve to extend understanding. They are attentive to different students in the class. Skills in this domain are demonstrated through classroom interaction, observed either in person or on videotape, as well as through student learning outcomes.

**Professional responsibilities.** These include roles assumed outside and in addition to those in the classroom. They involve professional engagement with families and the communities, as well as their work for the school as a whole. They also include professional growth. Teachers that excel in this domain contribute to the general well-being of their institutions. The skills in this domain are demonstrated through teacher interaction with colleagues, families, other professionals and the larger communities.

Source: Mancera and Schmelkes (2010), "Specific Policy Recommendations on the Development of a Comprehensive In-Service Teacher Evaluation Framework", Analytical Paper, OECD, Paris

The last question is who should evaluate. The availability of sufficient numbers of trained and competent evaluators is a further requirement for the successful evaluation of teachers based on teaching standards. Evaluators should have, as a minimum:

- **Knowledge of the work teachers carry out.** It is not uncommon for well-known and experienced teachers to become evaluators beyond the boundaries of their own districts or states.

- **Training in making the expected observations** in accordance with established teacher standards and procedures for evaluations.
- **Autonomy in relation to the evaluated teacher.** This is necessary in order to avoid conflicts of interest. When an evaluator has a personal relationship with the teacher he/she is evaluating, it is possible to foresee a conflict of interest that could damage the objectivity the evaluation needs.

Finally, the design of an evaluation system requires considering both processes and results. Knowing the results of teacher evaluation, mechanisms to foster improvement in teaching practices need to be in place. If teaching practices are not transformed, it will be difficult to achieve substantial improvements in student learning outcomes. In order to improve teaching practices, these have to be evaluated and a system put in place to support teachers for the improvement of student outcomes.

Teacher evaluation can also be summative in nature; that is, it can lead to positive or negative consequences for the teacher, or both. It is important for good teachers, and particularly for teachers that show improvement in their practices and results, to be recognised by receiving monetary and/or non-monetary incentives as a consequence of good performance. It is also important for an education system to have solid means of identifying teachers who show no interest in or capacity for improving their teaching practices and results in spite of support and training received as a consequence of formative evaluation, and to make the necessary decisions.

In Chile, the consequences for teachers obtaining the two lowest performance levels include the opportunity of professional development offered by the employer (municipality), with funding provided by the Ministry of Education. Since the final results of the evaluation are based on the national standards, it is easy to identify relative strengths and weaknesses of teachers and these aspects guide professional development decisions. Initial teacher preparation institutions receive regular information about the average performance of their former students, which enables them to adjust their education. This information is also useful for the creation of specific incentives. The initial agreement about teacher evaluation did not specify monetary incentives for high performing teachers and only included negative consequences associated with persistent negative evaluations. After the evaluations started and the law regulating the evaluation was approved, the government added a voluntary incentive for teachers receiving positive evaluations. In order to obtain the incentive, teachers who are evaluated as “competent” or “outstanding” have to pass a test measuring their knowledge in their subject area. Depending on the scores in the test, teachers can receive a raise in their basic salary ranging from 5% to 25% for up to four years (when they are re-evaluated). Currently about two thirds of eligible teachers take the test, and about 50% of them receive some monetary incentives. Teachers who receive the lowest rating – unsatisfactory – have to be evaluated once a year. Following the first “unsatisfactory” evaluation, teachers retain their regular duties, but have to participate in professional training programmes offered by their employers. Following a second negative evaluation, they have to work under the supervision of another teacher and receive additional training. If they receive an “unsatisfactory” evaluation for the third time, they are dismissed.

In Portugal, schools take responsibility for establishing individual professional development plans taking account of the annual school training plan. It is assumed that opportunities for feedback with formative purposes will be provided, in particular through: self-evaluation; training plans for teachers rated “regular” or “insufficient”; and planned meetings between the teacher evaluated and the evaluator. The awarding of “excellent” for two consecutive periods reduces the time required to access the rank of senior teacher by four years. The attribution of an “excellent” and a “very good” reduces that time by three years and two ratings of “very good” grants a reduction of two years. “Regular” or “insufficient” ratings imply that the evaluation period is not counted for progression in the teacher’s career. Evaluation is also used for obtaining a permanent post at the end of the probationary period, contract renewal for contract teachers, or the opportunity to apply for a post in a school, including when it involves the mobility of permanent teachers.

If the teacher holds a permanent post, the awarding of two consecutive or three non-consecutive classifications of “insufficient” determines the non-distribution of teaching duties in the following school year and, while keeping his/her status as a civil servant, the teacher has to move to another career in the same year or the following school year. The awarding of “regular” or “insufficient” is also accompanied by a plan for in-service training for the improvement of practice.

### ***How to develop and implement a rigorous teacher evaluation system focused on improving teaching***

The Steering Group encourages Mexico to develop and implement a rigorous teacher evaluation system that gradually evolves from a purely formative system to one that combines formative and summative aspects.

The purpose of evaluating teachers is to improve their practice in order to improve student learning: the main goal of the system should be formative in nature. Teacher evaluation should give feedback to each teacher on how to improve his or her practice, and the system should support mainly school-based professional development mechanisms to ensure that improvement is possible (see Recommendation 7). But distinguishing between good and bad teachers, and particularly recognising good teachers, is undoubtedly important for motivating teachers and for making the teaching profession attractive (Recommendations 1 and 2). Therefore, in the mid-term, both formative and summative objectives of teacher evaluation should be sought.

However, since summative evaluations are generally resisted by teachers because of the important consequences for their professional lives, the OECD Steering Group recommends that the formative evaluation system be well established, accepted and valued by teachers before introducing consequences of significance to individual teachers' conditions.

In order to be able to describe and improve teaching practices, it is necessary first to define what is understood by good teaching in Mexico. The first task in the development of a teacher evaluation system is to develop a framework of good teaching (as explained in Recommendation 1). The Steering Group reinforced its recommendation that this framework should be based on standards of teaching practice, which have to be developed by a technical unit and submitted to wide consultation with many stakeholders, but particularly with teachers who work under a vast array of circumstances. Once these standards are defined, teachers should be trained in the framework and on how to implement it in the classroom.

The evaluation framework in Mexico should define standards in at least the following domains:

- use of instructional time (attendance, punctuality, time on task);
- planning and preparation (the design of instructional activities and evaluation procedures for all students);
- classroom environment (making the classroom a safe place for risk-taking);
- instruction (adapted to different students, engaging and challenging);
- professional responsibilities.

Special care should be placed on the ability of teachers to strive for **equity**; that is, to attend to the needs of different students in order to achieve learning outcomes for all.

Once the evaluation framework has been defined and agreed upon, it should be piloted in different contexts. Since the framework defines teaching practice, evaluation procedures should emphasise gathering evidence on each of the domains of teaching practice defined in the framework. The instruments for gathering this evidence have to be defined, tested, calibrated, and their validity and reliability must be ensured.



Taking account of international research, teachers should be evaluated on the basis of a wide array of instruments, including: classroom observation (either direct, or with videos, or both); teacher portfolios (planning, critical reflection on the work carried out, classroom discussions); teacher self-evaluation (self-reflection on their practice vis-à-vis the standards); evidence of student learning (samples of student work and student performance data), teacher interviews, reports from the director and supervisors; teacher knowledge tests; and other teachers, parents and student information (based on surveys or focus groups). The specific weight given to each instrument has to be defined by the technical group that designs the standards.

Student results are important. Mexico has developed an important evaluation programme (ENLACE) that is carried out on an annual basis with all students from the third to the twelfth grades. ENLACE has many limitations and the direct use of these results to evaluate individual teachers is highly discouraged. Nevertheless, student results can be used immediately by the teachers as a motive for critical reflection on their practice, and evidence of this should be included both in teachers' portfolios and in interviews with teachers when possible. Also, student results can be used to check the results of teacher evaluation. If large discrepancies exist, this is enough reason to look into the evaluation procedures in depth. In its present state, ENLACE is suitable for school summative evaluations.

It is central to the quality of the evaluation process for evaluators to be well selected and adequately trained. Evaluators must have knowledge of the work teachers carry out, and be trained to gather the required evidence and autonomy in relation to the evaluated teachers. Retired teachers, ATPs, professors in *Normales* and the units of the *Universidad Pedagógica Nacional* could all provide personnel for this purpose. The grading and ultimate judgement and improvement rubrics fed back to the teachers should be collectively decided on.

A central aspect of teacher evaluation is its effect on improving teaching practices. For this to occur, it is necessary to develop, in parallel with the evaluation system, a complex but indispensable school-based professional development system that can support the in-service training processes needed for teachers to reach the higher levels in the domains tested in the evaluation (see Recommendation 7). Broader school autonomy seems a necessary complement for effective formative evaluation to happen in schools (see Recommendation 12). It implies, among other things, identifying, selecting and training mentor teachers and coaches; reducing the administrative load of the school director, and training them to become instructional leaders involved in the development of the teachers in their schools. It also requires re-training supervisors so that they can mentor and monitor classroom practice improvement. This is a major reform in itself and a key factor in improving student learning in Mexico.

Defining and putting into operation a teacher evaluation system, such as the one described above, demands a long-term and complex process capable of navigating across government administrations. This has delicate political implications and implies technical as well as legislative and regulatory requirements.

In order to progress as soon as possible to constructing a teacher evaluation system in Mexico, the Steering Group agrees with the directions identified by Mancera and Schmelkes (2010). Some of the main recommendations are summarised in Box 3.13.



**Box 3.13** Proposals for a path to develop in-service teacher evaluation in Mexico

1. Establish a leadership structure and clear rules for the governance of the evaluation system.
2. Establish a technical unit that will be responsible for the implementation of the evaluation.
3. Develop standards for teaching (in agreement with Recommendation 1).
4. Design an in-service teacher evaluation model that gradually evolves from a purely formative system to one that combines formative and summative aspects.
5. Define the instruments for the in-service teacher evaluation system.
6. Develop a support system for school-based professional development that leads to the improvement of teacher practice, and a system that monitors this improvement (in agreement with Recommendations 6 and 7).

*Source:* Mancera and Schmelkes (2010), “Specific Policy Recommendations on the Development of a Comprehensive In-Service Teacher Evaluation Framework”, Analytical Paper, OECD, Paris.

**CONCLUSION**

This chapter has argued that the single most important policy reform Mexico can make to improve education outcomes for its young people is to build a powerful system to select, prepare, develop and evaluate the very best teachers for its schools. Eight recommendations suggest a comprehensive strategy both to improve the conditions under which many teachers work and to attract, prepare and develop a higher quality teaching force. They follow a teacher’s trajectory from initial training through to permanent status as a full professional, when evaluation and professional development become important elements.

***Establish teaching standards***

The first step in the process should be to develop and implement a clear set of coherent aligned teaching standards that define what good teaching looks like, and specify the knowledge, skills and dispositions that all teacher candidates should be able to demonstrate before being licensed to teach.

The current proposal of teaching standards developed by SEP seems a good start, but still needs to be improved. Some of the main challenges include: establishing authentic consultation mechanisms to engage teachers in the development of these standards; establishing more effective and transparent collaboration within the different units within SEP concerned with the future use of the standards; and creating useful and applicable standards.

***Attract better candidates into teaching***

In order to improve teaching, Mexico needs better teacher candidates. Therefore ITP institutions, and in particular *Normales*, need to improve the calibre of applicants who want to become teachers. A stronger student force is key to making teaching a more respected profession and ultimately building support for improving the working conditions of teachers. One way to achieve this is to raise the bar for entry into ITP programmes and to establish a national entrance screening exam and other assessment tools.

***Strengthen initial teacher preparation***

To attract and retain talented young people, the quality of the ITP institutions needs to be improved. Many Mexican students leave ITP without sufficient skills and knowledge to become good teachers and many *Normales* suffer from weak connections with other parts of the education sector, in particular with schools and universities.

Therefore a set of rigorous accreditation standards that all *Normales* and other ITP institutions must be expected to meet should be put in place. Accreditation standards for ITP should address: the qualifications of faculty members and the processes for initial appointment, evaluation and promotion based on standards; the quality of the curriculum and its alignment with the curriculum of the schools; the mechanisms to ensure high quality placements for student teaching; among others. The accreditation standards should also give special rating to the school's pass rate on the National Teacher Examination. The accreditation system should be run transparently and with a clear governance structure. Every institution should be reviewed cyclically beginning with the smallest schools. Those that are weak should be given support to improve. Those that ultimately cannot meet accreditation standards should be merged or closed, since keeping them open is an inefficient use of resources and unfair to those young people who want to become quality professional teachers.

### **Improve initial teacher assessment**

The OECD Steering Group believes that at present, it will be efficient to continue to employ the National Teacher Examination as a licensing scheme to help make judgments about the suitability of in-service teachers applying for permanent positions, second teaching posts (*doble plaza*); and newly qualified teachers for appointment as teachers. However, Mexico needs to revise, improve and expand this licensing process in order to ensure that all potential entrants to the teaching profession meet minimum standards, particularly in relation to their practical teaching skills. This would mean continuing to use an **improved** version of the examination to assess the knowledge of all newly certificated prospective teachers. In particular, the examination should progress towards systems based on standards rather than norm-referenced. In parallel, Mexico needs to progress towards more performance-based means of assessing the knowledge and capabilities of teachers. The interviews, portfolios and psychometric examinations already requested or being explored in some states can be adequate complementary tools, if quality and transparency are assured.

The Steering Group suggests introducing a minimum level in the exam that all candidate teachers should reach, independently of the availability of teaching posts. Applicants who do not successfully complete the examination but who score above a minimum level should have the opportunity to undertake additional training. Beginning teachers who do not reach the minimum in the examination several times should no longer be eligible to become teachers, and in-service (non-permanent) teachers who do not reach the minimum several times should no longer be eligible for a permanent post. Those applying for a second teaching post (*doble plaza*) who do not reach the minimum level should not obtain the second post, and should enter into a carefully designed support and evaluation scheme. In the short term, governance and operation of the OEIF should be revised. If Mexico wants to consolidate a professional teacher certification mechanism it needs to continue working towards establishing a more efficient, transparent and fair permanent governance structure of a technical nature, rather than political, focused on better quality of teaching.

### **Open all teaching posts for competition**

The Steering Group also suggests that all teaching posts should progressively be opened to competition; this includes new and vacant posts. The new system has brought greater transparency and fairness, but it has a number of limitations. Among them that only less than 20% of posts have been open for transparent competition (through the National Teacher Examination); some candidates who failed the examination nevertheless still obtained a teaching post (non permanent); and lack of transparency remains with regard to the precise mechanisms for appointing teachers to schools in some states. The current system of allocating teachers to schools, linked to the results of the teacher examination, should also be improved to achieve a better match between schools and teachers.

### ***Support, mentor and evaluate beginning teachers before appointment to a permanent post***

The Steering Group recommends implementing a formal induction period with substantial support for **all** beginning teachers so they can have ready access to experienced, accomplished professionals to guide their on-the-job learning. A meaningful probation period coupled with an effective final evaluation should also be created. In this period beginning teachers are expected to demonstrate in practice that they are capable of effectively facilitating student learning and successfully undertaking other aspects of their teacher role. **All** teachers should complete a probation period to a satisfactory standard **before** obtaining a permanent post.

Creating and training a cadre of mentor teachers is not only key to putting in place a fair system for supporting and evaluating probationary teachers, it can also be a powerful strategy for recognising and rewarding outstanding teachers and extending their influence to other schools and districts. Mexico can redirect part of the professional development opportunities and resources to beginning teachers.

### ***Provide more relevant and coherent professional development of in-service teachers***

There is general agreement among key actors on the need to strengthen teachers' professional development. The current strategies at national and state levels for providing professional development for teachers need to be revised by: 1) completing the revision of the National Training Catalogue to ensure it is relevant to teacher pedagogical and curricular practices; 2) developing approaches for schools and their teachers to define and formalise the specific professional development they need for their schools; and 3) ensuring that these additional professional development programmes are supported and accredited as part of teachers' careers (in *Carrera Magisterial* for example) and linked to any formal evaluation system (see below). This also implies rethinking how time and resources can be reorganised to free teachers so they can undertake these options.

A more relevant system needs to include more school(s)-based professional development, which is the most efficient way to provide improve teaching. It should be a priority to create space for more school-based activities and to provide schools with more resources, capacity or autonomy to organise relevant training activities. Using the network of supervisors and ATPs and providing additional guidance to schools and directors as to how to understand needs and find the appropriate training is key.

### ***Evaluate in-service teachers to improve teaching***

Mexico needs to develop and implement a rigorous teacher evaluation system that gradually evolves from a **purely formative** system that identifies professional development needs to one that **combines formative and summative** aspects (for purposes of career advancement, award performance rewards or to establish sanctions for underperforming teachers). Its purpose should be to provide feedback and guide teachers to improve their practice in order to improve student learning. The formative evaluation component should be well established first, accepted and valued by teachers before introducing consequences of significance to individual teachers' conditions.

The evaluation should be based on standards of teaching practice. It is central to the quality of the evaluation process for evaluators to be well selected and adequately trained. A fundamental aspect of teacher evaluation is its effect on improving teaching practices. For this to occur, it is necessary to develop, a complex but indispensable school-based professional development system as the one described before, which can support the in-service training processes needed for teachers to reach the higher levels in the domains tested in the evaluation.

Chapter 5 gives some guidance on how to implement the recommendations of this chapter and those on school management, school leadership and social participation analysed in Chapter 4.

## ANNEX 3.1

### TEACHER ACCREDITATION MECHANISMS USED IN SELECTED COUNTRIES

The main challenge Mexico is confronted with in the short term on this issue can be summarised as follows: how to create a permanent (federal) teacher licensing mechanism, responsible for the design and implementation of nationwide teacher licensing exams from 2010/11 onwards, that works efficiently, transparently and fairly and that is supported by all key stakeholders.

In the mid-term, strong policies are needed in order to improve the quality and coherence of the processes of teacher education, certification, licensing, allocation of posts, teacher deployment to schools and teacher re-certification.

Country	Accreditation authority	Websites
Brazil	Higher Education Institutions (HEI): All ITP programmes must be accredited by the National Council of Education or the Ministry of Education.	<a href="http://portal.mec.gov.br/index.php">portal.mec.gov.br/index.php</a>
Argentina	HEI: ITP providers are regulated by the Federal Teacher Education Network.	<a href="http://www.me.gov.ar/">www.me.gov.ar/</a>
Australia	REGION: Individual states are responsible for accreditation.	<a href="http://www.dest.gov.au/">www.dest.gov.au/</a>
Canada	REGION: Provincial departments take responsibility for accreditation.	<a href="http://www.cmec.ca/Pages/default.aspx">www.cmec.ca/Pages/default.aspx</a>
China	STATE: ITP students must pass a national examination administered by the Ministry of Education before beginning ITP.	<a href="http://www.moe.edu.cn/english/">www.moe.edu.cn/english/</a> <a href="http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/apeid/Documents/status_of_teachers/China.pdf">www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/apeid/Documents/status_of_teachers/China.pdf</a>
Denmark	HEI: The teacher training institutions are quality assured by external examiners appointed by the Ministry of Education.	<a href="http://www.eng.uvm.dk/">www.eng.uvm.dk/</a>
England	STATE: Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA).	<a href="http://www.tda.gov.uk/">www.tda.gov.uk/</a>
Finland	HEI: Ministry of Education.	<a href="http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/?lang=en">www.minedu.fi/OPM/?lang=en</a>
France	STATE: Ministry of Education.	<a href="http://www.education.gouv.fr/">www.education.gouv.fr/</a> <a href="http://www.iufm.education.fr/connaitre-iufm/plaquettes-documents/en_IUFM2.html">www.iufm.education.fr/connaitre-iufm/plaquettes-documents/en_IUFM2.html</a>
Germany	REGION: Federal state accreditation mechanisms run by the Lander.	<a href="http://www.bmbf.de/en/6595.php">www.bmbf.de/en/6595.php</a>
Greece	STATE: Ministry of Education.	<a href="http://www.ypepth.gr/en_ec_home.htm">www.ypepth.gr/en_ec_home.htm</a>
Hong Kong	STATE: Education Ordinance.	<a href="http://www.edb.gov.hk/index.aspx?nodeID=268&amp;langno=1">www.edb.gov.hk/index.aspx?nodeID=268&amp;langno=1</a>
Hungary	HEI: The Hungarian Accreditation Committee, an independent body, accredits all ITP courses.	<a href="http://www.okm.gov.hu/main.php?folderID=137">www.okm.gov.hu/main.php?folderID=137</a>
Italy	HEI: There is some confusion as to whether there is a state mechanism for accreditation or if accreditation is linked to successful completion of ITP. There is a surplus of teachers and not enough teaching positions at the present time. "Those wishing to take the teaching exam ( <i>cattedre</i> ) must have this designation. Teachers must pass another exam ( <i>concorso</i> ) to obtain professional teaching status" from the Ministry of Public Education website: <a href="http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/722/Italy-TEACHING-PROFESSION.html#ixzz0OoMbCgT4">education.stateuniversity.com/pages/722/Italy-TEACHING-PROFESSION.html#ixzz0OoMbCgT4</a>	<a href="http://www.pubblica.istruzione.it/">www.pubblica.istruzione.it/</a>
Japan	HEI: ITP has to be approved by "Monbukagakusho", Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology.	<a href="http://www.mext.go.jp/english/">www.mext.go.jp/english/</a>
Korea	STATE: National Ministry of Education.	<a href="http://english.mest.go.kr/">english.mest.go.kr/</a>
Malawi	STATE: Malawi National Exam Board.	<a href="http://www.malawi.gov.mw/Education/Home%20%20Education.htm">www.malawi.gov.mw/Education/Home%20%20Education.htm</a>

Country	Accreditation authority	Websites
Malaysia	STATE: Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education.	<a href="http://www.moe.gov.my/?lang=en">www.moe.gov.my/?lang=en</a> <a href="http://www.educationmalaysia.gov.my/">www.educationmalaysia.gov.my/</a>
N Ireland	HEI: From 2010 GTC Ireland will have a greater role in accrediting and registering teachers.	<a href="http://www.deni.gov.uk/">www.deni.gov.uk/</a>
Netherlands	HEI: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science approve ITP courses.	<a href="http://www.minocw.nl/english/">www.minocw.nl/english/</a>
New Zealand	HEI: ITP course approved by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.	<a href="http://www.minedu.govt.nz/">www.minedu.govt.nz/</a> <a href="http://www.teachercouncil.govt.nz">www.teachercouncil.govt.nz</a>
Poland	HEI: ITP has to be approved by the University Accreditation Committee meeting standards asset by the Ministry of National Education and Sport.	<a href="http://www.poland.pl/education/structure.htm">www.poland.pl/education/structure.htm</a>
Portugal	HEI: ITP course is sanctioned by a <i>Licenciado em Ensino</i> or a <i>Licenciatura – Ramo de Formação Educacional</i> , according to the issuing institution. All courses have to meet accreditation standards set by the independent body, INAFOP (National Institute for Accreditation of Teacher Education). Teaching positions are allocated according to ranking in a national competition.	<a href="http://www.min-edu.pt/">www.min-edu.pt/</a>
Romania	HEI: ITP courses accredited by National Center for Teacher Training. Successful completion of ITP leads to qualification of teacher status. But new teachers need to pass a competitive examination to be assigned a permanent position.	<a href="http://www.edu.ro/">www.edu.ro/</a>
Russia	The State Attestation Commission accredits the ITP courses. Primary teachers may be trained in non-university institutions (technikums).	<a href="http://www.wes.org/eWENR/05dec/practical.htm">www.wes.org/eWENR/05dec/practical.htm</a>
Scotland	STATE: GTC Scotland.	<a href="http://www.gtc.org.uk/">www.gtc.org.uk/</a>
Singapore	STATE: Ministry of Education approves all teacher applications.	<a href="http://www.moe.gov.sg/">www.moe.gov.sg/</a>
Slovenia	STATE: Ministry of Education and Sport.	<a href="http://www.mss.gov.si/en/">www.mss.gov.si/en/</a>
Spain	REGION: Comunidad Autónoma.	<a href="http://www.mec.es/cesces/inicio.htm">www.mec.es/cesces/inicio.htm</a>
USA	REGION: Individual states are responsible for accreditation. Some states administer a licensing exam which is a commercially produced test.	<a href="http://www.ed.gov/teachers/landing.jhtml">www.ed.gov/teachers/landing.jhtml</a>

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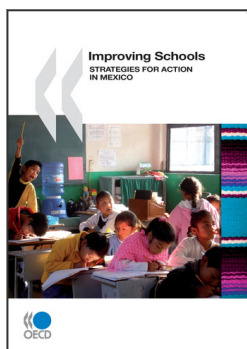


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## NOTES

1. Numerous teachers hold two teaching posts (*doble plaza*). The inaccurate number of teachers reported in official statistics is also a result of, for example, teachers who have been “commissioned” by the union or state education authorities and consequently are not teaching a group. In parallel, some teachers become directors but, due to a lack of official promotions or director posts, they keep their teaching posts. Corruption is also a factor that contributes to artificially increasing the number of teachers: for example, people whose names appear on the payroll but who do not receive a salary. The extent of these phenomena is unknown (Nieto de Pascual Pola, 2009). Several civil society organisations have requested a census and for this to be made open to the public. See for instance: [www.dondeestamimaestro.org](http://www.dondeestamimaestro.org).
2. It only covers those teachers who are employed at the formally federal schools: the so-called “federalised schools” (*escuelas federalizadas*).
3. This figure coincides with data in a comparative analysis of the professionalisation of teachers in Brazil, Argentina and Mexico by the International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP-UNESCO). Of the three countries considered in this study, Mexico has the best “feminisation” index of its teaching body for lower secondary (Tenti Fanfani and Steinberg, 2007)
4. ISCED is the International Standard Classification of Education designed by UNESCO and universally used. The latest version of this is known as ISCED 1997.
5. Understood as the parents’ level of education.
6. For more details, see Recommendations 3 and 5 in this chapter.
7. In fact, 80% of the courses focus on mathematics, sciences, language, history, civics and ethics. The Alianza also stipulates that these courses will be offered in coordination with higher education institutions.
8. The creation of a *Sistema Nacional de Formación Continua y Superación Profesional de Maestros en Servicio* is one of the aims of the *Alianza por la Calidad de la Educación* and of the *Plan Sectorial de Educación 2007-2012*.
9. These are: *Centro de Estudios Educativos*, *Servicios Integrales de Evaluación y Medición Educativas*, *Universidad Pedagógica Nacional* and *Heurística Educativa*.
10. See Recommendation 5 in this chapter, where the OECD recommends that all posts (newly created as well as vacancies) should be open for competition.
11. A broader discussion of methods of making teaching a more attractive career choice, and of recruiting, selecting and employing teachers, can be found in report: *Teachers Matter – Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* (OECD, 2005), Chapters 3 and 5, respectively.
12. This issue and associated recommendations are discussed further in Chapter 4.
13. However, the agreement also stipulates that the “buyer” or recipient of this “heritage” must have satisfied all the formal requirements that the Mexican education system requires to become a teacher. This means that a retiring teacher could offer her post to her son or nephew if he had graduated (or would soon graduate) from a formal ITP institution.
14. In Spanish: *Organismo Técnico Independiente* (Technical Independent Unit).
15. More than 145 000 candidates took the examination in July 2010.
16. A description of a portfolio tool is included in Recommendation 6 in this chapter. A portfolio (or portfolio of evidence) has been defined as “a tool for the organised collection of teaching documents and artefacts” (Larsen, with Lock and Lee, 2005, p. 21). Broadly, there are three basic types of portfolio: learning portfolios, used primarily to document progress and learning; credential portfolios, mainly used to evidence achievement of predetermined standards for assessment purposes; and showcase portfolios, used to demonstrate “best” achievements (for example for job applications), though some portfolios seek to serve more than one of these functions.
17. The *Sistema de Corrimiento* is the “cascade” mechanism that allows in-service teachers (those who already have a permanent post) to be re-allocated to other schools. When there is a vacant post, in-service teachers can request it. The longer teachers have been in the system, the better their chances are of obtaining the posts. Only after this process is complete are the remaining vacant posts (not all of them) open to new teachers and teachers soliciting a *doble plaza*. The recommendation of the OECD is to open all new and vacant posts to competition while keeping the *Sistema de Corrimiento* and improving it (for example allowing school directors and staff to choose among those in-service teachers who want to move into their schools).
18. See, for example, the article: “Controla SNTE 8 de 10 plazas”, published by *Reforma* on 19 February 2009.
19. Evaluation studies of the use of the Danielson model in the US have demonstrated that the system is both valid and reliable, with the group of teachers who scored well on the evaluation system also showing greater student growth on tests than teachers in the control groups (Milanowski and Kimball, 2003, Milanowski, 2004, Milanowski, Kimball and Odden, 2005).
20. In Mexico many classes have students from different cultures with different native languages (Mancera and Schmelkes, 2010).



From:  
**Improving Schools**  
Strategies for Action in Mexico

Access the complete publication at:  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264087040-en>

**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2010), "Teacher Career Paths: Consolidating a Quality Profession", in *Improving Schools: Strategies for Action in Mexico*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264087040-5-en>

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