Foreword

The skills that students need to contribute effectively to society are changing constantly, but school systems are not keeping up. Most schools look much the same today as they did a generation ago, and many teachers feel insufficiently prepared to develop the practices and skills required to meet the diverse needs of today’s learners.

To build teacher professionalism, policy makers and the profession itself must establish clearly and concisely what teachers are expected to know and be able to do. Many of the key attributes and skills of successful teachers will only become evident once teachers begin working in the classroom. Formal, measurable skills are necessary but not sufficient; they must be complemented by the intangible qualities that are difficult to quantify, including motivation and self-efficacy. And these qualities are often enhanced as teachers improve their performance and effectiveness through professional development activities – and as education systems recognise teachers’ professionalism.

These things are easy to say, but hard to do. It is rarely possible to predict clear, identifiable links between education policies and outcomes, especially given the lag involved between the time at which the initial cost of reform is incurred, and the time when it is evident whether the intended benefits of reforms actually materialise. As a result, there are a lot of stakeholders in education who have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Even small reforms can involve massive reallocations of resources, and touch the lives of millions on both the client and provider sides. This makes it essential to build broad political support for any proposed reform. In essence, education reform will not happen unless educators endorse and implement it.

To help governments make education reform happen, while placing teachers and school leaders at the centre of improvement efforts, the German ministers of education, the OECD and Education International brought education ministers, union leaders and other teacher leaders together for the sixth International Summit on the Teaching Profession in Berlin, Germany, in March 2016.

One of the secrets of the success of the International Summit on the Teaching Profession is that it explores difficult and controversial issues on the basis of sound evidence, provided by the OECD as global leader for internationally comparable data and analysis. This publication summarises the evidence that underpins the 2016 summit, bringing together data analysis and experience to develop better education policies for better lives.

The report was prepared by Andreas Schleicher, based on data and comparative analysis from several OECD publications: “How teachers teach and students learn: Strategies for success at school” (forthcoming), Supporting Teacher Professionalism: Insights from TALIS 2013 (2016); TALIS 2013 Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning (2014); Synergies for Better Learning: An International Perspective on Evaluation and Assessment (2013); Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS (2009); and Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers (2005).

Karine Tremblay provided expert advice, Marilyn Achiron edited the text, and Sophie Limoges co-ordinated production of the report.
Please cite this chapter as:


DOI: https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264252059-1-en