Chapter 3

WHAT CAN GOVERNMENTS DO TO IMPLEMENT EDUCATION POLICIES EFFECTIVELY?

Education reform will not happen unless educators endorse and implement it. This chapter discusses some of the actions that could help turn policies into practice, including acknowledging divergent views and interests, communicating the rationale for reform, fostering consensus, engaging stakeholders – including teachers – in designing and implementing policies, ensuring there is sufficient capacity and resources, and building partnerships with education unions to design and implement the reforms. The chapter presents examples of related initiatives from around the world.
Implementing reform of any kind, in any sector, is never easy; but it is particularly difficult in the education sector. One reason is simply the scale of the sector:

- Public spending on institutions alone (excluding financial support for students and families) is one of the biggest areas of public spending outside transfers (OECD, 2015).
- Virtually everyone has participated in education and has an opinion about it.
- Education is widely present and visible: almost every community has a school it can call its own, and higher education and training institutions are increasingly part of the local landscape and a presence in the workplace.

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 rules out “reform by stealth” and makes it essential to have consensus, or at least broad political support, for any proposed reform. In essence, education reform will not happen unless educators endorse and implement it.

Implementation of education reform is influenced by many of the same factors that influence implementation in other sectors. There is uncertainty about the size and distribution of benefits. But uncertainty is a particularly vexed issue in education reform because of the range of actors (including students, parents, teachers, employers and trade unions) who have stakes in education outcomes. Uncertainty about costs is problematic because education infrastructure is large and implicates multiple levels of government, each often trying to minimise or shift the costs of reform.

To some extent, these challenges are typical of the obstacles facing reformers in many domains. However, assessing the relative costs and benefits in education is rendered particularly difficult by the large number of intervening variables that influence the nature, size and distribution of benefits of reform. In short, it is rarely possible to predict clear, identifiable links between policies and outcomes, especially given the time lags involved.

The issue of loss of advantages or privileged positions is of particular importance in education reform, because the vast structure of established (usually public) providers implies the existence of extensive vested interests. The resistance of provider interests to reform may well be more acute in education than in other sectors (except, perhaps, for healthcare) for a number of reasons. Teachers are generally viewed positively by the public, even when there is great dissatisfaction with education systems. They often command greater public trust than politicians, so any resistance to reform on their part is likely to be effective. The implementation of reforms is often impossible without the co-operation of the providers. They can easily undermine reforms in the implementation phase, while blaming policy makers for having attempted misguided reforms in the first place. Last but not least, teachers in many OECD countries are well organised.

Timing is relevant to education reform in two senses. First and most obviously, there is a substantial gap 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. While timing complicates the politics of reform in many domains, it seems to have a greater impact on education reform, where the lags involved are far longer than is typical of, for example, labour- or product-market reforms. As a result, the political cycle may have a direct impact on the timing, scope and content of education reform. Education reform becomes a thankless task when elections take place before the benefits are realised.

Timing can be important also with regard to the sequencing of different components of reform. For example, one element – curriculum reform, for example – might require prior reform in pre-service and in-service training in order to be effective.

However, there are strong countervailing forces pushing for a shake-up of the status quo. At a micro level, education plays an important part in determining employability and earnings; at a macro level, it is associated with higher levels of productivity and growth. The emergence of the knowledge society and the upward trend in skill requirements in the labour market only increases the importance of education. And the cost of underperformance and underinvestment in education also is rising.

As a result, the circle of those who feel they are directly affected by the outcomes of education has broadened beyond parents and students to employers and virtually anyone who has a stake in social and economic welfare. These forces also make stakeholders more demanding. Strategies to overcome resistance to education reforms are similar in certain respects to those adopted in other areas. Reform is more easily undertaken in “crisis” conditions, although the meaning of “crisis” may be somewhat different in education. The shock involved is likely to be something that radically and abruptly alters perceptions of the education system rather than an event that suddenly affects its ability to function.
The release in December 2001 of the first OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results (OECD, 2001) sent shockwaves through Denmark because they undermined the widely shared but unsubstantiated view that Denmark had one of the best education systems in the world. PISA provided robust evidence that the system was, in fact, close to the OECD average and fairly inequitable. After considerable soul-searching and an expert review by the OECD, the Danish government launched a far-reaching reform of primary and lower secondary education (Danish Ministry of Education and Rambøll, 2011).

“Crisis” often takes other forms in education. It can be the slow-building, but relentless, pressures imposed by demographic changes. For example, the prospect of fewer upper secondary school graduates forced the government of Finland, only a few years after it created a new polytechnic sector, to launch ambitious reforms to reduce the number of tertiary institutions and alter how they were governed and financed. In Germany, smaller populations of school-aged children forced some Länder to merge education tracks at the secondary level (Realschule and Hauptschule).

**THE DIFFICULTY OF CO-ORDINATING REFORM IN COMPLEX EDUCATION SYSTEMS**

As in other sectors, co-ordinated reforms in discrete parts of education systems have proven to be mutually reinforcing. This was the case in Scotland when the government, intending to initiate sweeping reforms to curricula, testing and leadership, started with an overhaul of teacher training, induction and pay. The success of reforms in curricula and testing were seen as hinging on prior reforms that would have an influence on who teaches and how they are trained (OECD, 2008).

However, given that education systems involve multiple levels of government, implementation of “comprehensive reform” may be difficult to co-ordinate across the various levels of the administration, and across multiple regional and local jurisdictions. This problem was encountered in Denmark, where it has been difficult to synchronise reforms to strengthen national testing with the pre- and in-service training of teachers employed by municipalities (Nusche, Wurzburg and Naughton, 2010).

The United States shares with many other federal systems (Australia, Austria, Germany, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) a different kind of challenge in attempting to address the problem of weak student performance. Though the federal government can require states to set quality standards as a condition for receiving federal money for education, it cannot determine what those standards are. It was only in 2009 that state school officials and governors agreed on the principle of establishing national, common, core standards in English language and mathematics.

More generally, there are several features of education systems that need to be considered when contemplating reform:

**Specific capacity constraints.** Overcoming resistance to reform will be a wasted effort if systems do not have state-of-the-art knowledge, professional know-how and adequate institutional arrangements to support dissemination of information and lessons about the new tasks and responsibilities inherent in the reforms. Successful reform may require significant investment in staff development, or clustering reforms to build capacity in related institutions.

**General capacity considerations.** In knowledge-based societies, the increased importance of human capital is reflected in a greater demand for education at all levels, although in some countries declining birth rates have reduced participation rates. Internal and international migration can add to the challenge of anticipating and responding to changes in demand for education.

**Complex governance.** Education systems extend from local schools and independent universities to national ministries. The responsibilities of institutions and different levels of government vary from country to country, as do the relative importance and independence of non-public providers. Reforms need to take into account the respective responsibilities of different actors. Some reforms, particularly those related to strengthening accountability for the performance of the education system, may only be possible if responsibilities can be reallocated.

**Greater availability of performance data.** As obtaining, managing and accessing information has become cheaper, there has been an explosion of information on the performance of education systems, down to the level of the individual classroom and student. A political trend towards increasing accountability for public services has spurred greater interest in benchmarking performance, locally, nationally and internationally, allowing for more “evidence-based” policy making.

Education ministries have been on the front line of some of the most visible public policy reforms on issues related to improving quality, the status of teachers, strengthening accountability, managing capacity in the face of declining school-age populations and participation rates, and controlling and financing the cost of mass participation in higher education.
Education policy makers know only too well the difficulty of securing stable financing for expanding tertiary education, whether by reallocating funding from other areas of public expenditure, or imposing tuition fees. Reforms that entail more testing of students often encounter resistance from teachers concerned about external accountability. Reforms to advance or delay vocational studies may be resisted by parents who are sceptical about whether promised benefits will materialise.

**SOME LESSONS ON IMPLEMENTING EDUCATION REFORM**

Several policy lessons have emerged from OECD countries that have implemented reforms in education:

- Policy makers need to build consensus about the aims of education reform and engage stakeholders, especially teachers, in formulating and implementing policy responses.
- External pressures can be used to build a compelling case for change.
- All political players and stakeholders need to develop realistic expectations about the pace and nature of reforms to improve outcomes.
- Reforms need to be backed by sustainable financing.
- There is some shift away from reform initiatives per se towards building self-adjusting systems with feedback at all levels, incentives to react and tools to strengthen capacities to deliver better outcomes. Investment is needed in change-management skills. Teachers need reassurance that they will be given the tools to change and the recognition of their professional motivation to improve their students’ outcomes.
- Evidence from international assessments, national surveys and inspectorates can be used to guide policy making. Evidence is most helpful when it is fed back to institutions along with information and tools about how they can use the information to improve outcomes.
- “Whole-of-government” approaches can include education in more comprehensive reforms. These need to be co-ordinated with all the relevant ministries.

**Acknowledge divergent views and interests**

A diversity of views makes the policy-making exercise particularly challenging, especially given that policy makers often represent one of the stakeholder groups – the government authorities. For example, in the choice of teacher appraisal methods, there is a particularly contentious debate about the relative importance of the summative and formative purposes of such appraisals. On the one hand, policy makers and parents tend to value quality assurance and accountability. “They make the point that public schools are, after all, public institutions, supported by taxpayer money, and that the public has a legitimate interest in the quality of the teaching that occurs there. It is through the system of teacher evaluation that members of the public, their legislators, local boards of education and administrators ensure the quality of teaching” (Danielson and McGreal, 2000). On the other hand, teachers and their unions tend to prefer formative systems of appraisal with limited potential for external accountability (Avalos and Assael, 2006).

However, those divergent views can be accommodated. The Czech Republic, for example, began developing a standardised section of the school-leaving examination in 1997, but the section was only introduced 14 years later, in 2011. During this time, several models were developed, pilot versions were implemented, fundamental features were modified several times and the reforms were hotly debated, particularly among the country’s political parties, which could not reach consensus on the approach to the examination (Santiago et al., 2012).

**Communicate the rationale for reform**

Another priority is to clearly communicate a long-term vision of what is to be accomplished for student learning. Individuals and groups are more likely to accept changes that are not necessarily in their own best interests if they and society at large understand the reasons for these changes and can see the role they should play within the broad national strategy. The evidence base of the underlying policy diagnosis, research findings on alternative policy options and their likely impact, and information on the costs of reform versus inaction should all be disseminated widely, not just to the stakeholders with a direct interest.

For instance, in order to bring teachers on board for reforms of standardised student tests, it is critical that teachers understand and support the assessment goals (Hamilton and Stecher, 2002; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010). Establishing clear goals and standards and communicating them to teachers mitigates behaviours such as “teaching to the test”, as teachers have a clearer sense of the kinds of student outcomes they should be trying to achieve (Hamilton and Stecher, 2002).

Resistance to reform might also be due to imperfect information, either on the nature of the proposed policy changes, their impact, or whether or not the stakeholders involved – including the general public – will be better or worse off...
at the individual or group level. The public may be unprepared for some reforms, resulting in a lack of social acceptance for policy innovations. This might be exacerbated by an underdeveloped culture of evaluation in education. Thus it is important to make the evidence underlying the policy proposals available to the relevant stakeholders to help convince educators and society at large. The objective is to raise awareness of problematic issues, enhance the national debate and disseminate evidence on the effectiveness and impact of different policy alternatives, and hence to find a consensus on evaluation policy.

In the case of teacher appraisal, Milanowski and Heneman (2001) found that teachers’ receptiveness towards a newly implemented system of teacher appraisal in a medium-sized school district in the United States was correlated with acceptance of the teaching standards, the perceived fairness of the process, the qualities of the evaluator, and the perception that the evaluation system has a positive impact on their teaching.

In 2007, Portugal’s Ministry of Education set up the Scientific Council for Teacher Evaluation (CCAP) as a consultative body to supervise and monitor the implementation of a teacher-appraisal system. The CCAP was composed of education researchers and distinguished teachers and, as such, was in a good position to recognise good evaluation practices, be informed of relevant research developments and provide evidence-based advice (Santiago et al., 2009).

In Hungary, the Council for the Evaluation of Public Education, established in 2004, is an advisory body of the Ministry of Education and Culture that seeks to bring scientific evidence to the decision-making processes within the education system. Its members, invited by the Minister of Education and Culture, are among the most prestigious national and international academic experts in areas such as the appraisal of teacher effectiveness, measurement theory, data collection and data analysis, content framework development and the management of evaluation programmes (Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010).

Box 3.1 describes how a communications policy changed the nature of the conversation about education reform in the US state of Rhode Island.

**Box 3.1 Communication strategies between US states and districts**

With about half of the funding for the national Race to the Top programme – nearly USD 2 billion – going directly to districts, state education agencies (SEAs) focused on building capacity to systematically support districts and schools in their improvement efforts. SEAs supported districts’ efforts to collect and analyse data to assess progress in meeting state and local goals, and established new routines to communicate and receive better information from their districts about how things were working on the ground.

For example, the SEA in Rhode Island formed cohorts of district leaders to meet every three months with state leaders and with each other – a process that promoted peer learning to resolve key implementation issues. District progress reports became a component of state programme meetings during which senior leaders discussed the progress of projects explicitly in terms of the district’s experience. The SEA made adjustments based on this feedback. For example, the Rhode Island Department of Education altered its communication strategies for a number of state initiatives based on feedback that the previous communication was confusing. Through this process, state and district leaders reported they experienced “a culture shift,” as they “moved from a compliance-oriented approach to an approach that emphasizes systematic reflection, collaboration, problem-solving and ongoing communication between [the Rhode Island Department of Education] and our districts.” State leaders in every Race to the Top state interacted with district leaders, principals and teachers regularly to better understand the realities of implementation and create support to meet local needs.

**Source:** US Department of Education.

**Foster consensus**

There is extensive evidence that consensus is conducive to successful implementation of policy reforms. At the same time, given the diversity of stakeholders in education, consensus can lead to agreement at the level of the lowest common denominator, which may be insufficient to lead to genuine improvement. As noted by Fiske (1996) with respect to school decentralisation, researchers are almost unanimous in arguing that if school decentralisation is going to be successful and have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning, it must be built on a foundation of broad consensus among the various actors involved and the various interest groups affected by such a change. In fact, he observes that countries where leaders sought to build consensus for reform are those where decentralisation was most successful.
Consensus can be fostered through proposals and feedback that allow legitimate concerns to be taken into account, and thus reduce the likelihood of strong opposition by some stakeholder groups. Regular involvement by stakeholders in policy design helps to build capacity and shared ideas over time. There is broad agreement in the literature that the involvement of stakeholders in education policy development cultivates a sense of joint ownership over policies, and hence helps build consensus over both the need and the relevance of reforms (Finlay et al., 1998; OECD, 2007). Policies promoting consensus build trust between the various stakeholder groups and policy makers. Keating (2011) analysed how various school districts in the United States developed and implemented new school-principal appraisal systems. In most school districts, collaboration between different stakeholders (e.g. unions, teachers, school leaders and community representatives) played a key role in the design and implementation stages. The setting of shared priorities, negotiation, consensus building and transparency often resulted in greater ownership and acceptance among stakeholders.

The experience of OECD countries suggests that mechanisms of regular and institutionalised consultation – which are inherent to consensual policy making – contribute to the development of trust among parties, and help them reach consensus. In Denmark, following the 2004 OECD recommendations on the need to establish an evaluation culture, all major stakeholder groups agreed on the importance of working to this end (their efforts were documented in “The Folkeskole’s response to the OECD” [Danish Ministry of Education and Rambøll, 2011]). Box 3.2 outlines a range of initiatives in Denmark for promoting dialogue and reaching common views on evaluation policies in education.

Box 3.2 Promoting dialogue and reaching common views on evaluation in education (Denmark)

In Denmark, there is a general tradition of involving the relevant interest groups in developing policies for primary and lower secondary schools (Folkeskole). The key interest groups include education authorities at the central level, municipalities (local government), teachers (Danish Union of Teachers), school leaders/principals (Danish School Principals’ Union), parents (National Parents’ Association), students, the association for municipal management in the area of schools, associations representing the interests of the independent (private) primary schools in Denmark, and researchers. The Council for Evaluation and Quality Development of Primary and Lower Secondary Education is the most prominent platform for dialogue in relation to evaluation and assessment policies among these interest groups. It works on collecting and disseminating the most important research results. A range of other initiatives helped to promote dialogue and consensus on education evaluation:

A reference group was set up to guide the project “Strengthening of the evaluation culture in the Folkeskole”. The reference group, whose membership includes all the relevant stakeholder groups, meets on a regular basis to discuss the project. This includes, for instance, the development of national student tests.

The interest groups of the Folkeskole were involved in 2010-11 in a committee established by the Minister of Education aiming at deregulating the Folkeskole.

In 2007-08, the Danish Union of Teachers and the Ministry of Education collaborated on a project called “The School of the Month”. Each month, a school was celebrated for remarkable results. The project has since been pursued under the heading “the good example of the month” (www.skolestyrelsen.dk).

The Local Government Denmark project “Partnership on the Folkeskole”, involving 34 municipalities, has been a platform for co-operation and reflection among municipalities (www.kl.dk/ImageVault/Images/id_40353/ImageVaultHandler.aspx).

The Quality and Supervision Agency in collaboration with the Danish Evaluation Institute carry out “inspirational seminars” for teachers and school pedagogical staff with the aim of encouraging schools to develop evaluation activities.

The Quality and Supervision Agency has all major stakeholder groups represented in focus groups, which are summoned on a regular basis to provide input on different initiatives related to strengthening the evaluation culture in the Folkeskole.

The different interest groups of the Folkeskole regularly launch common actions and/or common proposals related to issues in the Folkeskole, e.g. a paper with the title Common knowledge – Common action.

Source: Danish Ministry of Education and Rambøll (2011).
At the heart of the New Zealand education system is strong trust in the professionalism of all actors and a culture of consultation and dialogue. Overall, the development of the national evaluation and assessment agenda has been characterised by strong collaborative work, as opposed to prescriptions being imposed from above. As a result of this participative approach, there appears to be considerable agreement and commitment of schools to overall evaluation and assessment strategies. While there are differences of views, there seems to be an underlying consensus on the purposes of evaluation and an expectation among stakeholders to participate in shaping the national agenda (Nusche et al., 2012).

Similarly, policy making in Norway is characterised by a high level of respect for local ownership. This is evident in the development of the national evaluation and assessment framework. School owners and schools have a high degree of autonomy regarding school policies, curriculum development and evaluation and assessment. There is a shared understanding that democratic decision making and buy-in from those concerned by evaluation and assessment policy are essential for successful implementation (Nusche et al., 2011).

In Finland, the objectives and priorities for education evaluation are determined in the Education Evaluation Plan, which is devised by the Ministry of Education and Culture in collaboration with the Education Evaluation Council, the Higher Education Evaluation Council, the National Board of Education and other key groups. The members of the Education Evaluation Council represent the education administration, education providers, teachers, students, employers, employees and researchers, and thus can influence the aims and priorities of evaluation systems (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, forthcoming).

A “Monitoring Commission” (Commission de Pilotage) in the French Community of Belgium was given a key role in monitoring the education system. It has two main missions: co-ordinate and review the coherence of the education system, and follow the implementation of pedagogical reforms. Its membership reflects all the relevant actors in the education system: school inspectors, school organisers, researchers, teachers’ unions and parents’ representatives (Blondin and Giot, 2011).

When new policies are introduced, a combination of top-down and bottom-up initiatives generally fosters consensus (Finlay et al., 1998). For instance, a study of evidence-informed policy making underlines how the involvement of practitioners – teachers, other education staff and their unions – in producing, interpreting and translating research evidence into policy gives these practitioners a strong sense of ownership and strengthens their confidence in the reform process (OECD, 2007). In the Flemish Community of Belgium, the Flemish Education Council (VLOR) is an independent advisory body that the Ministry of Education and Training is required to consult when a draft decree is prepared for the Parliament. The council brings together representatives of school organisers, school leaders, teachers, researchers, students and parents (Flemish Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, Edubron Research Group, 2010).

System-wide consultations can be major facilitators of reform. Box 3.3 provides two recent examples from Chile and Italy in which extensive consultations laid the foundations for fundamental changes in teacher policy. Box 3.4 describes how the national Race to the Top programme in the United States encourages individual states to create their own vision for improving teaching and learning, and to support all the individuals in their education system to act on that vision in ways that made sense at the local level.

**Box 3.3 Consultation and teacher policy reform in Chile and Italy**

**Chile**

The Teachers’ Act of 1991 was designed to introduce teacher evaluation systems in elementary and secondary schools. The scheme allowed employers to dismiss teachers who were negatively evaluated two years in a row. This evaluation system, however, had not been implemented because of objections from the Teachers’ Association about the composition of the evaluation committees, and the fact that the system focused on punishment rather than improvement. However, teacher evaluation continued to be a topic of public and political concern throughout the 1990s. In response, the Minister of Education established a technical committee comprising representatives of the ministry, the municipalities and the Teachers’ Association. After several months, the committee reached agreement on a model for teacher evaluation. At the same time, its members agreed to prepare guidelines for standards of professional performance and to implement a pilot project in several areas of the country to evaluate and adjust the procedures and instruments to be used. After wide consultations throughout the country and agreement with the teaching profession, a framework for performance standards was developed and officially approved. The pilot project for teacher performance evaluation has been applied in four regions. In June 2003, the ministry, the municipalities and the Teachers’ Association signed an agreement that established the progressive application of the new evaluation system.

...
Italy
In March 2003, major new legislation, General regulations on education and basic level of performance regarding education and professional training, was passed by the Italian Parliament. The legislation is considered a landmark in the decentralisation of education, and involves a new focus on outcomes and quality. In order to pass this new legislation, numerous political activities and debates were undertaken throughout Italy, including with stakeholders, community groups and experts. Committee members also contacted citizens directly, through e-mail. Parents were a particular focus of the legislation, with initiatives to improve school choice, provide better-quality information, and strengthen school and system accountability. The legislation also encompassed the establishment of a national evaluation system, and changes to initial and in-service teacher education requirements. The process took place over 18 months and the wide consultations were seen as vital in building the momentum for change.


Box 3.4 The changing role of states in US education
State education agencies (SEAs) that applied for a Race to the Top grant had to articulate a comprehensive and coherent plan to improve student achievement and secure buy-in and commitments from many stakeholders, including the governor, the state board of education, and local school districts that would work with them to implement the plan.

Many SEAs had never attempted to work this closely with their districts to implement specific initiatives to improve teaching and learning before Race to the Top. In many states, a teacher or district leader’s experience with its SEA had been a one-way street. Top-down policy memos or directives on training requirements may have been the only ways the agency in charge of overseeing education in their state had communicated with teachers. District leaders may have had little interaction with their SEA beyond notifications that funds were available for their schools or that reviews and audits would be conducted to ensure that rules were being followed.

While SEA staff had the skills and knowledge to ensure compliance with federal and state laws and regulations (e.g. tracking compliance with timelines and holding districts accountable for adhering to established processes), different skills were needed to implement their Race to the Top plans. Forging new, closer partnerships with their local education agencies, SEAs built the knowledge and skills of their staff and recruited new staff to drive comprehensive and collaborative change in their education system. For example, SEA staff had to work in partnership with district staff to support their lowest-performing schools and improve data systems to meet the needs of teachers and leaders. Rather than receiving updates from district staff on a monthly or quarterly basis, SEA staff often needed to work side-by-side with district staff on an ongoing basis to identify and solve practical implementation issues.

When local education agencies and schools encountered challenges, Race to the Top SEAs responded by seeking creative solutions to meet local needs. For example, Georgia made hundreds of tweaks to its statewide data system based on teacher feedback during the first years of use. The state continues to receive and act upon teacher feedback regularly as it develops new data reports and makes its data system easier to use.

Delaware and Tennessee had initially planned to conduct large-scale training sessions to help teachers transition to new standards. However, after soliciting feedback from teachers, they changed their plans. Instead, they brought school teams together for action planning and used the talents of their own excellent teachers, rather than outside consultants, to provide training.

Some states reported that the expanded responsibilities of SEAs helped them attract new talent who brought fresh ideas on ways to develop collaborative relationships with districts and communicate with local leaders and teachers. For example, Massachusetts hired former superintendents, who had positive track records of working at the local level and understood the challenges of translating state policies into practice, to support implementation of Race to the Top initiatives.

SEAs were also challenged to improve collaboration within their agencies between offices that traditionally functioned independently and were unaccustomed to sharing information or expertise. SEA leaders had to break down these internal barriers and establish a culture in which information was freely shared.

Source: US Department of Education.
Consultations on matters affecting teacher policy also need to include such groups as teachers’ educators, employers and students. Box 3.5 outlines the range of consultation structures used in Hungary and Box 3.6 provides an example from the United Kingdom.

**Box 3.5 Consultation structures in Hungary**

Hungary uses various mechanisms of dialogue and consultation to provide professional and civil society organisations with opportunities to present their interests in teacher policy reforms. The National Public Education Council (Országos Köznevelési Tanács) has the right to initiate and propose actions and to formulate opinion on the issues concerning education (e.g. regulation of syllabus, course books, teaching equipment, examination system, in-service training of teachers). The Council’s agreement is mandatory for some decisions on public education. Its members include representatives of teachers’ professional organisations, teacher-education institutes, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, employers’ associations and chambers, individuals delegated by the Minister of Education. The National Minority Committee (Országos Kisebbségi Bizottság) vested with similar rights in the education of minorities; all national minority self-governments delegate one member to the committee. The Council of Public Education Policy (Közoktatáspolitikai Tanács) acts for the Minister of Education as a board for preparing decisions, forming opinions and making proposals. It deals with every issue related to public education policy (except employer–employee relations). All significant professional, social and government partners are represented on this board, which is organised at the national level. The National Council for Students’ Rights (Országos Diákjogi Tanács) may submit proposals on decisions pertaining to students’ rights. It consists of nine members – three are delegated by the minister, three by the national student organisations for students between the ages of 6 and 14, and three by the student organisations for students between the ages of 15 and 18. Other consultative and policy bodies are concerned with tripartite issues between education-sector unions, education employers, and the relevant ministries, and the operation of vocational education and training.

*Source: OECD (2005).*

**Box 3.6 The Civil Service Reform Plan in the United Kingdom**

The Civil Service Reform Plan (2012) outlines the UK government’s aspirations to ensure that the government gathers evidence and insight on policy from external experts. Government departments across the United Kingdom use an official consultation process to help stakeholders engage, own and commit to policies, understand possible unintended consequences of a policy, and better shape implementation.

For example, the Department for Education in England (DfE) used the consultation process to gather proposals to reform secondary school accountability (2013) and make schools accountable for their pupils’ progress across a broader range of subjects, instead of only on students’ performance in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). DfE received 412 written responses to the accountability consultation; it also held discussions with stakeholders at a series of events and conferences. Building on the results of the consultation, DfE designed a new set of accountability measures related to the performance-based tables to be developed from exam results. They will be used starting in the academic year 2015/16.

*Source: OECD (2015).*

**Engage stakeholders and practitioners in designing and implementing policies**

The policy development process is more likely to yield consensus if policies are designed co-operatively among the different stakeholders working towards a common goal. Indeed, regular interactions help to build trust and raise awareness of the major concerns of others, thus fostering a climate of compromise. Evaluation policy, in particular, has much more to gain from forging a compromise among distinct perspectives than from imposing one view over all others. For instance, teachers will accept to be evaluated more easily if they are consulted as the process is being designed. The involvement of the higher education sector in innovating policies can be an important instrument too (Box 3.7).
Box 3.7 German federal and Länder governments co-operate in the “quality initiative in teacher training”

The quality initiative aims to enhance the quality of teacher training at Germany’s institutions of higher education. The goal of the initiative is to develop and multiply innovative concepts for teacher-training courses. Applications for funding from institutions of higher education are reviewed by education experts for the innovation and efficiency of their proposed projects. Funding guidelines have been agreed between the federal government and the Länder. The federal government is devoting around EUR 500 million for a 10-year period, beginning 2015, to support institutions of higher education in this way.

The “Standards for teacher training: Educational sciences” and the “Common content requirements of teacher training in teaching disciplines and subject-related methodology of the Länder” of the Standing Conference ensure high-quality teacher training at institutions of higher education.


If teacher-appraisal procedures are designed at the level of the administrative structure only, there will be a “loose coupling” between administrators and teachers that will both fail to provide guarantees of quality, and will discourage reflection and review among teachers themselves (Elmore, 2000; Kleinhenz and Ingvarson, 2004). Frontline actors, such as teachers and school leaders, may be in the best position to foresee unintended consequences and judge what is feasible in practice.

Involving teachers and school leaders in the development of education reforms is likely to facilitate the implementation of those reforms. For example, by engaging teachers in the design, management and analysis of students’ standardised test results, teachers are more committed to the testing process and are more likely to apply the test results to improve student outcomes (Mons, 2009). Another example concerns the lead role to be played by teachers in developing and taking responsibility for teaching standards. Teachers’ ownership of teaching standards recognises their professionalism, the importance of their skills and experience and the extent of their responsibilities (Hess and West, 2006). Education authorities also have a lot to benefit from experienced teachers providing advice on the design of teacher-appraisal systems. Based on their own experience and research, they are in a good position to identify effective teaching practices and to help develop relevant criteria and instruments to evaluate teachers (Ingvarson et al., 2007). As a result, factors that influence the success of introducing an evaluation system include professionals’ acceptance of the system and perceptions of whether the evaluation processes are useful, objective and fair; and the extent to which evaluators and those being evaluated share a common understanding of evaluation purposes, procedures and uses.

Various researchers have stressed the importance of both, including the voices of stakeholders and professionals in the evaluation design process, and including stakeholders and professionals in the evaluation procedures, as a precondition for establishing trust and collaboration (Clifford and Ross, 2011; Leon et al., 2011). Studies by Thomas et al. (2000) and Davis and Hensley (1999) on school leader and evaluator perceptions of school leader appraisal in Alberta, Canada, and California, United States, respectively, revealed substantial differences between both groups, which provides some evidence for the importance of including school leaders in all stages of the process of developing appraisal systems as well as in the appraisal process itself.

The involvement of teachers and school leaders in their own appraisal process has been identified as key to the successful implementation of individual appraisal processes. Engaging teachers and school leaders in their own appraisal, e.g. through setting objectives, self-appraisal and the preparation of individual portfolios, can help create a more effective and empowering process for teachers and school leaders, and, therefore, aid successful implementation.

Teachers who are constrained in ways likely to reduce their own intrinsic motivation to teach may behave in more controlling ways and be less effective in teaching their students. By contrast, if teachers are involved in planning and implementing evaluation schemes, they are more likely to sustain reform efforts (Leithwood et al., 2000).
Several countries have established teaching councils that provide teachers and other stakeholder groups with both a forum for policy development and, critically, a mechanism for profession-led standard setting and quality assurance in teacher education, teacher induction, teacher performance and career development. These bodies aim to establish the kind of autonomy and public accountability for the teaching profession that has long characterised other professions, such as medicine, engineering and law. Box 3.8 outlines the development of the Teaching Council in Ireland.

Box 3.8 The Teaching Council in Ireland

The Teaching Council, established in 2006, seeks to promote and maintain best practices in the teaching profession and in teacher education and training. As a statutory body, the council regulates the professional practices of teachers, oversees teacher-education programmes and enhances teachers’ professional development. Through these activities, the council provides teachers with a large degree of professional autonomy and thus enhances the professional status and morale of teachers. The main functions of the Teaching Council are to:

- establish, publish and maintain a code of professional conduct
- establish and maintain a register of teachers
- determine the education and training requirements for teacher registration
- review and accredit programmes of teacher training
- regulate the induction and probation of teachers
- promote teachers’ continuing education and professional development
- represent the teaching profession on education issues and establish procedures for exchanging information with teachers, organisations involved in education and the public
- advise the minister on such issues as: the minimum education qualifications required for entry into programmes of teacher education and training, the professional development of teachers, teacher supply and on the work of the Council
- conduct inquiries into the fitness of teachers and impose sanctions on underperforming teachers, where appropriate.

The Council comprises 37 representatives from various parties involved in school education: 22 registered teachers and 15 persons from teacher-education institutions, school-management organisations, national parents’ associations, industry and business, and ministerial nominees.


In addition to system-level consultative mechanisms and policy-making bodies, it is also important that teacher engagement occurs at the school level. Box 3.9 provides examples from Spain and Sweden.

Box 3.9 School-level teacher involvement in Spain and Sweden

Spain

School-participation mechanisms are well established through a number of different bodies:

- The School Council is the basic policy-framing body and generally includes the principal, director of studies, teachers, students, parents, local authorities and non-teaching staff. Its responsibilities include developing guidelines for the overall school programme, the internal organisation of the school, the disciplinary regime, out-of-school activities and facilities management.

- The Teachers’ Assembly includes the principal and the teachers. It is responsible for co-ordinating pedagogical decisions, such as defining student-assessment criteria, organising support classes for underperforming students, and providing counselling and guidance to students.

- Co-ordination bodies within the teaching staff complement school organisation. These include tutors, teams for different grade levels and pedagogical co-ordination committees.

...
The need to more actively engage the teaching profession extends beyond reasons of politics and pragmatism. One of the main challenges for policy makers facing the demands of a knowledge-based society is how to sustain teacher quality and ensure that all teachers continue to engage in effective modes of ongoing professional learning. Research on the characteristics of effective professional development indicates that teachers must be active agents in analysing their own practice in the light of professional standards, and their students’ progress in the light of standards for student learning.

Hargreaves (2003) has drawn attention to the difficulties of building collaborative cultures in schools, and of extending these beyond a few enthusiastic well-led schools and school districts. He argues that the approach adopted in a number of school systems amounts to “contrived collegiality”, that is, collaboration imposed from above that “by crowding the collegial agenda with requirements about what is to be done and with whom, it inhibits bottom-up professional initiative … As a result teachers sometimes actually collaborate less or abandon collaborative ways of working once the urgency of implementation or creating a school improvement plan has passed”. He argues instead for the creation of professional learning communities within and beyond schools. Policy can encourage the formation of these communities through:

- leadership-development strategies that describe how to create and sustain learning communities
- building indicators of professional learning communities into processes of school inspection and accreditation
- linking evidence of commitment to professional learning communities to performance-related pay and measures of teacher competence used in recertification
- providing seed money for self-learning in schools and among schools
- professional self-regulation through processes and organisations that include all teachers.

**Use and evaluate pilot projects before full implementation**

Policy experimentation and the use of pilot projects can help build consensus on implementation, especially as they allow for evaluations of the effectiveness of the proposed policies before they are fully implemented. Policy experimentation and the recourse to pilot schemes can prove powerful in testing out policy initiatives and – by virtue of their temporary nature and limited scope – overcoming fears and resistance by specific groups of stakeholders. A pilot implementation is a cost-effective way to ensure that a given initiative meets its intended purposes before full implementation. Seeking feedback from the involved school agents during the pilot implementation is essential for correcting the potential flaws and concerns related to the initiative being tested.

In Ireland, pilot projects are usually developed before wide-scale implementation. This is reflected in a school self-evaluation pilot project undertaken in 2010/11 by a sample of 12 primary schools in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills. Similarly, the Project Maths initiative for second-level schools began in September 2008, with an initial group of 24 schools. Project Maths introduced revised syllabi for both junior and leaving certificate mathematics.
It involved changes to mathematics content, how students learn mathematics, and how they are assessed. The pilot project helped the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to learn from schools how the proposed revisions worked in classrooms and led to the development of teaching and learning resources and assessment instruments (Irish Department of Education and Skills, 2012).

Another approach is to periodically review and evaluate processes after full implementation. Teachers and school leaders are more likely to accept a policy initiative today if they know that they will be able to express their concerns and provide advice on the necessary adjustments as the initiative evolves. Amsterdam et al. (2003) analysed the three-year development and validation of a school-principal appraisal system (i.e. standards, criteria and instruments) in South Carolina, United States, that involved researchers from the South Carolina Educational Policy Center at the University of South Carolina, the South Carolina Department of Education, a stakeholder committee (e.g. superintendents, school principals, teachers, guidance counsellors and journalists) and an expert panel. Superintendents responsible for carrying out the appraisal and school principals contributed to the development of standards and criteria through a survey and an online discussion group.

The new standards, appraisal criteria and instruments subsequently underwent a process of piloting and validation through focus groups. School principals involved in the pilot were surveyed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the new system. Based on their findings, Amsterdam et al. argue that stakeholder input may help to ensure that appraisal systems are practical and useful for those concerned, and that the appraisal is supported by key stakeholders. At the same time, involving school leaders in the design of standards and appraisal criteria may help to establish an understanding of the criteria against which school leaders will be appraised.

In New Zealand, the Ministry of Education commissions independent evaluations to monitor the implementation of national policies. For example, implementation of the country's curriculum in English-medium schools was monitored by the Education Review Office (ERO) in a series of reports. The ministry, in collaboration with ERO, also developed a framework to monitor and evaluate the implementation of national standards. The “National Standards: School Sample Monitoring and Evaluation Project”, run by a contracted evaluation team, collected information from a sample of state schools over the period 2009-13. This information was complemented by survey data, information from ERO reports and results from national and international assessments (Nusche et al., 2012).

In a range of countries, it is typical for external evaluators to collect feedback from schools and other stakeholders on their experience with the evaluation process in order to monitor its implementation. School-evaluation procedures may also be reviewed through national audits, stakeholder surveys, independent assessments and research studies. The same happens in the area of teacher appraisal. For example, the state of Rhode Island in the United States has developed a formal mechanism for evaluating districts’ teacher-evaluation systems and using the resulting information to improve and validate those systems. The mechanism builds on a sophisticated set of standards that are used to guide the review of educator-evaluation systems. The results of evaluations are used to refine instruments and processes over time as new information is collected and analysed (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2009).

**Ensure adequate capacity and sufficient resources**

It is essential to develop capacity among stakeholders to implement evaluation and assessment policies. This includes providing support for school agents to understand evaluation procedures, training for evaluators to undertake their responsibilities, and preparation for school agents to use the results of evaluation. Evaluation and assessment are beneficial for improving education practices provided that they engage the skills and commitment of practitioners.

In addition, bureaucratic demands on schools need to be reduced and sufficient resources provided to implement evaluation and assessment policies. Both those who are evaluated and the evaluators should be partly released from other duties. Schools agents should have time to reflect on their own practices, especially when the process requires self-appraisal and the creation of a portfolio. The administrative workloads of evaluators, especially school leaders, should be reduced in order to provide evaluators with more time for evaluation activities, feedback and coaching.

Fiske (1996) underlines the importance of training policies for effective and successful implementation of reforms to ensure that all stakeholders are equipped and prepared to assume the new roles and responsibilities that are required of them. For example, for teacher appraisal, it is fundamental to provide in-depth training to evaluators to guarantee that they are legitimate in the eyes of teachers. Scepticism about the reliability of data stemming from a lack of capacity of schools and teachers to understand and use data to inform development is also likely to make it more difficult to implement these kinds of reforms (Campbell and Levin, 2008).
In Portugal, a variety of factors complicated implementation of a teacher-appraisal system in 2007: there was little experience with and tradition of evaluation; the system was unprepared to undertake large-scale teacher appraisal because of the limited professional expertise of those who were responsible for evaluating teachers; teachers complained that the system was unfair; excessive bureaucratic demands were imposed on schools; and little time was given to implement the model (Santiago et al., 2009).

In decentralised countries, where local decision making is pervasive, local education authorities often have limited capacity to implement evaluation and assessment policies. For example, there is considerable disparity in education expertise across Norway’s 430 municipalities. Smaller municipalities do not benefit from the same capacity as larger municipalities to work on curricula and assessment reform (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2011).

Milanowski and Heneman (2001) found that even if teachers accept the standards of and the need for a teacher-appraisal system, they may still resist implementation if it adds too much to their workloads. And a study by Cullen (1997) on school-principal appraisal in England identified school principals’ lack of time as one of the key challenges for ensuring successful implementation of the procedures.

Time the implementation of reform carefully

As discussed above, not only is there a substantial gap between the time at which the initial cost of reform is incurred, and the time when the intended benefits of reforms materialise, but sometimes certain reform measures are best introduced before others, in a specific sequence.

Time is needed to learn about and understand the reform measures, to build trust and develop the necessary capacity to move onto the next stage of policy development. The World Bank distinguishes four phases of development of student-assessment frameworks, for example: latent (absence of assessment activity), emerging (enabling contexts, system alignment and assessment quality taking shape), established (enabling contexts, and stable, assured or consolidated system alignment and assessment quality) and advanced (enabling contexts and highly developed system alignment and assessment quality) (Clarke, 2012).

Box 3.10 The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI)

The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) encourages teachers, parents and the community to work together to introduce innovative projects to meet local needs. The AISI was initiated in 1999 and it is now completing its fifth three-year cycle (2012-15). The AISI’s platform allows schools and districts to develop teachers’ professional capacity in curriculum and pedagogic development through its process of collaborative inquiry. Teachers in 95% of schools have been involved in continuous inquiry as a routine part of their professional practice.

The AISI was initiated and sustained through close partnership between the Alberta Teachers Association (ATA), the Alberta government and other professional partners, such as the Alberta School Boards Association. ATA is the single professional organisation to which Alberta educators belong and includes school principals and district (local authority) superintendents as well as classroom teachers. In addition to the typical collective bargaining functions, the ATA spends around half of its overall budget on professional development, education research and public advocacy for a stronger teaching profession, improved teaching and learning, and greater innovation.

TALIS 2013 clearly shows Alberta’s strong commitment to teacher professionalism. Alberta teachers were more likely to report participating in professional learning than teachers in other TALIS-participating countries and economies: 85% reported participating in courses and workshops (the TALIS average was 71%); almost 80% participated in education conferences (the TALIS average was 44%); nearly two in three belong to a professional network (the TALIS average was 37%); and almost 50% were involved in individual or collaborative research (the TALIS average was 31%). Most Alberta teachers reported participating in professional learning, considerably higher than in other countries (4% of Alberta’s teachers reported that they had never participated in professional learning compared with the TALIS average of 16%).

Source: OECD (2014); Alberta Education (2014); Hargreaves and Shirley (2012).
What can governments do to implement education policies effectively?

**Build partnerships with education unions to design and implement reforms**

Putting the teaching profession at the heart of education reform requires a fruitful dialogue between governments and unions. A survey conducted in 2013 among 24 unions in 19 countries by the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC) revealed that many elements of this dialogue are already well developed.

The large majority of respondents to this survey indicated that they partially engage with governments to develop and implement education policies (Figure 3.1), even though just a small minority reported full engagement. However, unions considered themselves generally more engaged in policy development than in implementation. While most unions reported that governments had established arrangements for consultation, half of the respondents felt only partially engaged in these consultations. Fewer unions reported being engaged in consultations where formal structures for such engagement exist, compared to the willingness of governments to respond fully to consultation requests. That suggests that the mere existence of formal structures alone does not guarantee actual engagement. Perspectives sometimes varied between unions in the same country, reflecting the fact that governments may have different relations with unions representing different sectors of the workforce. Unions were also asked to identify areas of education policy that are currently the subject of productive discussions (Figure 3.2).

![Figure 3.1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/88893330569)

**Teachers’ unions education policy engagement with governments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy development</th>
<th>Policy implementation</th>
<th>Union consultation request</th>
<th>Consultation structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of unions</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>Full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.2**

**Teachers’ unions/governments education policy engagement, by individual education policy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional development</th>
<th>Work conditions</th>
<th>Equality issues</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Pay</th>
<th>Representation</th>
<th>Special needs</th>
<th>Student assessment</th>
<th>Teacher evaluation</th>
<th>Governance</th>
<th>Institution evaluation</th>
<th>Institutional funding</th>
<th>Student behaviour</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>School improvement</th>
<th>Teaching council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost all respondents mentioned teachers’ professional development, followed by working conditions and equity issues. Curriculum issues, pay, support for students with special needs, teacher evaluation, student assessment and institutional evaluation were also mentioned by a majority of unions. One-third reported productive discussions on student behaviour. Issues rarely mentioned were educational research, school development and teaching councils. Similar questions were asked about training policies (Figure 3.3).

While most respondents indicated that they were partially engaged with governments, more unions reported no engagement in implementing training policy than reported full engagement. Fewer unions reported that they were able to engage governments when they considered it necessary. While half of the respondents reported the existence of full consultation structures on education policies, fewer reported full consultation structures on training policies.
Asked about areas of training policy that are covered in ongoing productive discussions, the majority of unions identified the curriculum, followed by professional development, equity issues, pay, adult learning and working conditions. Lower levels of consultation were reported for youth training strategies and funding for training (Figure 3.4).

In general, the TUAC survey presents an encouraging picture of union involvement in most OECD countries, particularly on teacher and skills policies. However, there is room for improvement in stabilising and institutionalising union-government dialogue. Examples of existing collaboration between teachers’ unions and governments across OECD countries show that there are opportunities for unions to provide professional development and for teachers to share professional practice and leadership. Governments can recognise and support these initiatives.


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What can governments do to implement education policies effectively?


