

CHAPTER 6

In-Service Teacher Evaluation: Policy and Implementation Issues

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As discussed in previous chapters, education systems should provide access to basic education for all children and improve student learning. This chapter addresses one of the key factors for improving student learning: the quality of teaching. Research has clearly shown that the quality of teaching, and therefore the performance of every individual teacher, is the factor that has the greatest effect on student achievement (Manzi and Sclafani, 2010; OECD, 2009b). At the same time, there is compelling evidence, as discussed in Chapter 2, that higher educational achievement is strongly related to economic growth, with benefits to society as well as to the individual (OECD, 2010a). Teacher evaluation systems should therefore help to ensure that every classroom has an effective teacher, even in the most challenging environments.¹ The chapter begins by briefly reviewing some of the main elements of teacher evaluation systems based on international practices. It then considers the basic policy dimensions and issues commonly involved in implementing teacher evaluation systems. The chapter concludes with a series of considerations and recommendations for Mexico to support current and future efforts aimed at establishing an effective in-service teacher evaluation system.

6.1 INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES

Building a highly skilled professional educator workforce is central to a country's ability to improve the outcomes of schooling for its young people (Manzi and Sclafani, 2010; OECD, 2005). Continuous improvement and accountability require robust and accurate data and measurement systems that allow not only the tracking of student and school progress, but also intervention in a timely way with appropriate support. It must be stressed that public accountability also implies the responsibility of educational entities outside the school (e.g. districts, state governments). Schools themselves, particularly in very challenging environments, may not be able to adequately address shortcomings and problems relating to systemic or contextual issues. In many countries, even in the world's wealthiest such as the United States, inequities exist among schools in terms not only of the backgrounds and needs of students, but also of the resources and the professional qualifications of school staff that they are able to attract and retain (OECD, 2009b; NAE, 2009).

Thus, teacher evaluation across OECD countries forms part of a broader framework of accountability regarding the effectiveness of educational systems, institutions and actors (OECD, 2007). Within a larger context of public accountability, fair and effective teacher evaluations can provide crucial information for improvement and additional support. As the whole system and all of the actors need to be held accountable for student learning and growth, evaluation initiatives, including teacher evaluation, should be part of this comprehensive mechanism of aligned efforts, resources and objectives. In this context, teacher evaluation also functions as a quality assurance mechanism that provides a diagnostic picture of current performance levels, as well as evidence for decision making (OECD, 2007).

The recent trend in reform in many countries is towards test- and performance-based accountability (Sahlberg, 2009), as a way to ensure that overall reforms are fair and to provide evidence to support this. For evaluation to be effective, however, it is important that policies be based on shared responsibility and trust (Sahlberg, 2009).² This is particularly relevant for Mexico, where a robust in-service evaluation system that uses a wide array of instruments to measure teacher performance could also foster a culture that values the teaching profession. In such a system, every school and every teacher follows good teaching practices and meets expectations, and continuous development is a daily task.

In order for teachers to know what areas to focus on for improvement, as well as what constitutes "good" teaching practice, summative evaluation based on clear expectations and teaching standards can provide important information. Results from summative evaluations can serve as an important source of evidence to hold teachers accountable to expectations and professional performance (OECD, 2007). A clear conception of what is considered "good teaching" and the creation of teaching standards are fundamental to the development of a teacher evaluation system.

Recent and current reform efforts in the United States provide a rich example of the challenges and issues faced by different levels of government and schools in attempting to increase achievement, accountability, and provide fair and accurate teacher evaluation results. Although the United States has not been a top performer in PISA, it provides a valuable example of how local jurisdictions, such as states and school districts, can develop teacher evaluation systems within broader, federal guidelines. The case of the state of Delaware, for example, provides an interesting approach in the use of student learning outcome data in their *Performance Appraisal System*, where teachers cannot be rated effective or better unless their students demonstrate satisfactory levels of learning growth (Delaware Department of Education, 2010).

Another important issue regarding standards and evaluation is coherence. Specifically, coherence between curricular and performance standards, standards of good teaching, assessment and professional development is essential (NAE, 2009). In this sense, the development of teaching standards is an important step for a standards-based approach to improving the performance of the education system through accountability.³ The United Kingdom provides a good example of coherence in aligning the assessment of student outcomes and teacher practices relating to curriculum (Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, 2010).

The design of teacher evaluation schemes poses challenges for countries, with a range of issues needing to be addressed (Manzi and Sclafani, 2010):

- What should be the different components of a fair teacher evaluation system?
- How should the formative and summative purposes of evaluation be balanced?
- How should teachers be engaged in the design and implementation of teacher evaluation systems?
- How can reliable standards of teaching practice be developed, implemented and evaluated to form the basis for such evaluations?
- How can student assessment results be used in evaluating teachers?
- What kind of stakes or consequences should be attached to the results of teacher evaluations?

Countries take different approaches to in-service teacher evaluation (OECD, 2007).⁴ Some use it primarily for formative purposes,⁵ focused on identifying weaknesses in the teaching practice of individual teachers and to support improvement. Other countries use evaluation for summative purposes, attaching certain consequences for teachers according to the evaluation results, and some for both.

What is clear, however, is that in-service teacher evaluation can improve teacher performance (Barber and Mourshed, 2007). In Chile, for instance, evidence shows a positive relationship between student averages in the SIMCE (*Sistema de Medición de Calidad de la Educación*) student achievement test and the number of teachers performing well in teacher evaluations (Manzi and Sclafani, 2010). Teacher evaluation improves teacher practice because it identifies effective teachers as well as those who need support. It helps in designing better teacher development programmes and contributes to the retention of good teachers, providing tools for the design and provision of incentives and payment schemes (OECD, 2009b). In this sense, coherence between a teacher evaluation system, continuous options for capacity-building and rewards is a complex but crucial balance countries strive to achieve.

The task is indeed complex. Besides coherence and thorough planning, teacher evaluation requires thoughtful and careful implementation or it is unlikely to have much impact on student performance. As discussed in Chapter 2, effective implementation can prove challenging. The following section presents common issues and policy areas that should be considered.

6.2 FOUR KEY QUESTIONS EVALUATION SYSTEMS MUST ADDRESS

Four areas should be considered when designing a teacher evaluation system (Mancera and Schmelkes, 2010), and are presented below:

WHY evaluate?

The two primary objectives of teacher evaluation are good educational results, which is the ultimate goal of teaching, and assessment of the teaching process. Teacher evaluation aims to ensure that teachers perform at their best to enhance student learning. At the same time, it seeks to improve a teacher's own practice by identifying strengths and weaknesses for further professional development. These two approaches commonly refer to summative and formative evaluation, respectively (OECD, 2007). Educational results depend on many factors, but three main criteria are effective teachers, effective schools and effective school leadership. Systemic reform should see the school as the unit of accountability.

WHAT to evaluate?

Teacher evaluation systems should be able to identify effective teachers and effective teaching practices. Since the ultimate goal of the education system is student learning, student outcomes should be taken into account. A teacher evaluation system therefore needs standards of good teaching and a well-planned comprehensive evaluation framework. Participation of all stakeholders, especially teachers, in the design of the framework is important for success. Evaluation should be accompanied by feedback and support for all teachers to be able to improve their performance. Most importantly, the connection between the evaluation system and professional development needs to be clear. According to Danielson (2007), the following domains must be included in the teacher evaluation framework: planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction and professional responsibilities.

International experience also shows that a teacher evaluation system should build upon solid standards of good teaching. Standards should have certain characteristics (Mancera and Schmelkes, 2010): *i*) cover all the teaching domains defined; *ii*) establish different levels of competence for each specific aspect that defines the domains of teacher and school work; *iii*) reflect a nuclear group of performances that should be observable in all teachers and all schools; *iv*) define and operationalise intended goals and outcomes of good teaching; and *v*) be dynamic to allow ongoing revision of the standards, so these remain accurately scaled and take account of all aspects of teaching practices. To ensure the success of an evaluation, teachers need to be involved both in the construction of the standards and in effective training.

HOW to evaluate?

The challenge is to design a system that is fair, transparent, objective and credible to teachers. Hence, it is crucial to build an evaluation system with an array of instruments for measuring teacher performance, together with mechanisms for cross-referencing information that looks at teachers from various angles, allowing teachers' performance to be judged as objectively as possible, covering most aspects of the teaching profession. Some key instruments are student performance, student portfolios, self-evaluation, interviews and knowledge tests. School visits and classroom observation help triangulate and validate results from various instruments. A comparative analysis on teacher evaluation practices by Manzi and Sclafani (2010) highlights some important issues in this regard. For example, they found that international practice differs in the instruments used and that classroom observations serve to overcome the fact that standardised tests do not cover all areas taught by teachers in some countries. Evidence also suggests that it is easier for principals to distinguish teachers whose students' achievements were low or high on standardised tests, but it is harder for them to judge those in the middle (OECD, 2007).

WHO evaluates?

The availability of trained and competent evaluators has to be guaranteed. Effective evaluators should have at least: *i*) knowledge of the work teachers carry out; *ii*) training to make expected observations; and *iii*) autonomy in relation to the evaluated teacher (Mancera and Schmelkes, 2010).

Equity is also an important factor to consider in developing an evaluation system. While a comprehensive teacher evaluation framework allows the setting of common performance measures for all teachers, it should recognise the very different situations in which teachers work. This is especially true in countries with large disparities such as the United States and Mexico. Other issues that need to be taken into account are the status of the teaching profession, concerns about the quality and fairness of education, retention problems, the stress between internal and external evaluations, the definition of teacher evaluation as such,⁶ and relatively weak accountability for students' learning.

6.3 CONSIDERATIONS FOR MEXICO

Current reform efforts in Mexico focusing on aspects of teacher selection, accountability, and assessments for evaluation, may offer useful insights for countries facing similar contexts and difficulties: heterogeneous geography, income inequalities, an ongoing decentralisation and devolution process, and a large and complex basic education system (pre-primary, primary and secondary). In this context and to support current and future efforts, the following are summary recommendations for Mexico for an in-service teacher evaluation process that allows teachers at all levels of the performance spectrum to improve, to be recognised and to contribute to overall educational results:⁷

- *Establishing consensus among stakeholders on the importance of developing a comprehensive, transparent and fair in-service teacher evaluation framework is vital.*
- *A foundation for such a framework is the development of teaching standards that provide teachers with clear guidance as to what is considered good teaching practice, and opportunities for professional development and improvement.*⁸
- *It is essential to ensure that all teachers meet minimum levels of professional performance and results.*

As indicated in its *Education Sector Programme 2007-2012*, the Mexican government sees the creation of a standards-based, in-service teacher evaluation system as one of its education priorities. The Programme indicates that evaluation is a central tool for ensuring the quality of education. Evaluation is thus considered vital for accountability, as a communication tool and as a basis for designing public policies (SEP, 2007).

Mexico has made some progress in teacher evaluation in recent years, including *Carrera Magisterial*, *Escalañón Docente*⁹ and exploratory efforts aimed at developing teacher standards, all of which should be reviewed during the design of a comprehensive teacher evaluation system. Current efforts, however, are not necessarily articulated or comprehensive, and are not based on an accepted definition of performance standards for students or teachers. The effectiveness of past efforts is also relevant. A study made by the Rand Corporation showed that *Carrera Magisterial* has had little or no impact in increasing student achievement (Santibañez *et al.*, 2007). Evaluation has traditionally been the responsibility of school principals and, to a lesser extent, of supervisors, or other educational authorities. Table 6.1 summarises the evaluation practices currently used in Mexico.

A key question is therefore how Mexico could effectively begin to build a comprehensive in-service teacher evaluation system. As discussed in Chapter 2, a key step is to learn from international experiences but to adapt them to the conditions, constraints and opportunities of the Mexican educational system (also suggested by Mancera and Schmelkes, 2010). To accomplish this, Mancera and Schmelkes (2010) suggest implementation steps that are essentially sequential but that could also be done simultaneously depending on circumstances and opportunities (Table 6.2).

Table 6.1

General overview of teacher evaluation practices in Mexico

FUNCTION	INSTRUMENT	PURPOSE
Access to teacher education (Escuelas Normales)	Several	Selection/Admission
Initial studies certification	Exam presented at the end of initial teacher training – <i>EGEL/CENEVAL (Examen de término de los estudios en Escuelas Normales)</i>	Formative/Summative
Selection	Selection exam <i>(Concurso nacional de oposición para la obtención de plazas docentes)</i>	Summative = To obtain a teaching post (<i>plaza docente</i>)
Horizontal promotion (continuous training)	Exam – <i>Carrera Magisterial/ Examen de preparación profesional</i> Exam – <i>Carrera Magisterial/ ENAMS (Exámenes Nacionales para la actualización de los maestros en Servicio)</i> Exam (seeks to calculate student learning outcomes) – <i>Carrera Magisterial/ Evaluación de Aprovechamiento Escolar</i>	Summative Formative/Summative Formative/Summative
Recognition and stimuli	Calculation model <i>(Programa de Estímulos a la Calidad Docente)</i> (based on ENLACE results, school types and socio-economic context)	Recognition, with the intention of becoming an incentives programme in the future

Source: Translated and adapted from Zorrilla, 2009.

Table 6.2

Implementation steps in sequential order

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	
A. General initial steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Making the case for a teacher evaluation system 2. Involving stakeholders 3. Involving local authorities 4. Identifying a champion for the plan 5. Ensuring funding
B. Creation of the evaluation framework	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing standards for teaching 2. Developing valid performance measures 3. Building a robust data management system 4. Training competent evaluators
C. Preparation in schools	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training school leaders and teachers on the evaluation system 2. Creating access to feedback and improvement 3. Implementing a communication plan for teachers and principals
D. Piloting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Designing a pilot programme to test design, instruments and evaluators
E. Full implementation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preparing transitions from pilot to full implementation 2. Attaching consequences to the evaluation system 3. Creating of an evaluation plan
F. Monitoring and evaluation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Defining indicators 2. Establishing baselines 3. Defining information sources and process

Source: Developed and adapted from Mancera and Schmelkes, 2010, and OECD, 2009b.

Evidence on teacher performance and student learning outcomes should be gathered from multiple sources. In addition to interviews, portfolios, classroom observations and teacher knowledge tests, the use of standardised tests of students to evaluate teachers' performance is fundamental. As discussed in previous chapters, Mexico already applies a national student assessment, ENLACE, that could serve to identify schools with above-average teacher performance. ENLACE is a major asset of the Mexican education system and could be used as part of a collective assessment process, with the school as the unit of accountability. For individual teacher summative assessments, ENLACE would need to evolve to include value-added components, so that it can measure more clearly the contribution of schools and eventually teachers to the learning of their students in specific contexts.

Designing, piloting and implementing a comprehensive, transparent and fair in-service teacher evaluation system should be a gradual process. It took Chile ten years to design and implement its system, and education results are still lagging. Mexico also has a clear need to improve student performance. Based on discussions of the OECD Steering Group on Evaluation and Teacher Incentive Policies and the Steering Group on School Management and Teacher Policy, Mancera and Schmelkes (2010) have made 11 recommendations, as listed in Table 6.3, for Mexico to move forward in this matter.

Table 6.3

Summary of specific recommendations for Mexico regarding teacher evaluation

Recommendation 1. Establish a leadership structure and clear rules for the governance of the evaluation system.

Recommendation 2. Establish a technical unit that will be responsible for the implementation of the evaluation.

Recommendation 3. Develop standards for teaching.

Recommendation 4. Design an in-service teacher evaluation model that gradually evolves from a purely formative system to one that combines formative and summative aspects.

Recommendation 5. Define the instruments for the in-service teacher evaluation system.

Recommendation 6. Develop a support system for school-based development that leads to the improvement of teacher practice, and a system that monitors this improvement.

Recommendation 7. Train evaluators.

Recommendation 8. Reduce administrative duties of supervisors and principals, and increase school autonomy.

Recommendation 9. Prepare a programme for ENLACE to enable the measurement of value added.

Recommendation 10. Gain momentum with key stakeholders towards establishing the teacher evaluation system.

Recommendation 11. Pilot and evaluate the design, instruments and evaluators in different contexts, before rolling out the evaluation system to the entire system of schools.

Source: Mancera and Schmelkes, 2010.

In addition to the creation of standards, Mexico should reach a consensus on the importance of designing and implementing a comprehensive, transparent and fair in-service teacher evaluation system. Building and operating a framework for teacher evaluation is a long and complex endeavour. Political and administrative changes need to be navigated and stakeholders should be involved in the process. Both national and state-level authorities should take an active part in the design, along with input by local authorities. Teacher unions and civil society should also be involved in making major decisions. All relevant stakeholders should be represented on a designated body responsible for ensuring the implementation of a system that achieves trust and support from teachers and society in general. It is important to establish mechanisms for continuous teacher training and in the case of Mexico, formative evaluation should be established and tested before introducing significant consequences for individual teachers (Mancera and Schmelkes, 2010).

In the context of increasing accountability and providing opportunities for capacity-building and professional development for teachers, it is important that all teachers meet minimum levels of professional performance and results. Growth in student learning should be one of the evaluation criteria. In this way, a teacher would not be considered effective unless their students demonstrate satisfactory levels of student growth, while a teacher would not be rated ineffective if their students show satisfactory levels of student growth. It is also essential that basic issues such as attendance, punctuality and time-on-task can be included in the earlier stages of the teacher evaluation framework as a way of getting all teachers to perform at capacity. Including basic criteria such as these can produce considerable and timely gains for the teacher evaluation system in a cost-efficient manner (*i.e.* ensuring that all of the “low-hanging fruit” is collected first).

As discussed in Chapter 3, evidence from studies in the United States and developing countries shows that teacher absences can strongly impact student learning, especially in the poorest areas and remote communities. The *Teaching and Learning International Survey* (TALIS) conducted by the OECD shows that for a quarter of Mexican teachers, only between 40% and 60% of instruction time is actually spent teaching (OECD, 2009a). In addition, principals report that 70% of instruction in their school is hampered by teachers arriving late, by teachers being absent, or by teachers not having adequately prepared their lessons (OECD, 2009a). Bearing in mind the socio-economic disparity in conditions across Mexico, basic professional performance, as a sound basis upon which to build capacities, is one of the main issues that teacher policies and evaluation must address.

NOTES

1. This chapter draws on two expert papers commissioned as part of the Co-operation Agreement between Mexico and the OECD: “Report on In-Service Teacher Evaluation and Development Practices in a Comparative Perspective” by Jorge Manzi and Susan Sclafani (2010), and “Specific Policy Recommendations on the Development of a Comprehensive In-Service Teacher Evaluation Framework” by Carlos Mancera and Sylvia Schmelkes (2010).
2. Responsibility- and trust-based reforms involve the gradual building of a culture of responsibility and trust within the education system that values the professionalism of teachers and principals in judging what is best for students and in reporting their learning progress. They often involve channelling resources and support to schools and students who are at risk of failure or of being left behind.
3. An often cited reference is C. Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching*, Perrenoud (2004), although others may also be relevant: Rewards and Incentives Group (2009); Ontario Ministry of Education (2009); Khim Ong (2008); and Singapore Ministry of Education (2006).
4. Existing schemes of teacher evaluation in OECD education systems take multiple forms. They differ in terms of scope and methods of teacher evaluation, criteria and standards, and data-gathering instruments, according to the educational context and tradition, the actors involved in the design and implementation of the evaluation system and the primary purpose of the evaluation. The consequences of evaluations on teachers’ careers also vary. Although the single promotion table and the single salary scale remain widespread, several countries link their teacher appraisal system either to recognition and rewards, whether financial or not, or to professional development opportunities (OECD, 2009b).
5. Formative evaluations are essential to assess the quality of teacher performance and are a useful instrument to underpin teachers’ professional development. A formative evaluation system, designed and oriented mainly to improve the quality of instruction, can also serve to identify good teachers.
6. An important goal of teaching policies in Europe is to attract and retain the best candidates to the profession. In Latin America, it is to improve the quality of existing teachers (Manzi and Sclafani, 2010).
7. These recommendations should be considered in the context of the OECD recommendations on teacher professional development and school leadership (OECD, 2010b), as the quality of schools has an important impact on teaching. For a broad description of current teacher policy in Mexico, see Chapter 3 of *Improving Schools: Strategies for Action in Mexico* (OECD, 2010b).
8. Teaching standards should also reflect content standards. This is particularly important for Mexico given current reform efforts in this area.
9. Both *Carrera Magisterial* and *Escalafón Docente* serve mainly as mechanisms related to promotion. See Santibañez *et al.* (2007) and OECD (2010b).

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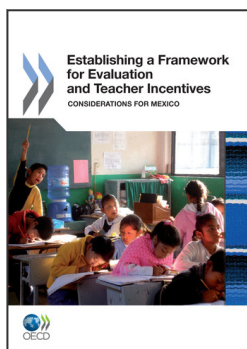
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