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## **TEACHER POLICIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND CENTRAL ASIA**

A Situation Analysis of Selected Issues in Preparation for  
Policy Dialogue Recommendations

**Working Paper**



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## Introduction

This paper presents key issues of the study “Teacher Policies in the European Union and Central Asia: A Situation Analysis of Selected Issues in Preparation for Policy Dialogue Recommendations. It has been compiled for a presentation of the study at the CAEP Regional Workshop “Teacher Policies and Quality Approaches in Central Asian Education Systems” in Istanbul from May 12-13, 2014.

The paper provides information on

- the reasons for conducting a study on teacher policies,
- the areas that were explored,
- the geographical coverage,
- the methodology applied,
- the implementation period,
- the results.

## Why a study on teacher policies in the European Union and Central Asia?

Educators and policy makers in the European Union, Central Asia and elsewhere are becoming increasingly aware of the contributions of teachers to the quality of education. In his groundbreaking study of 2009 (*Visible Learning: A Synthesis of over 800 Meta-analyses Relating to Achievement*), the Australian educationalist John Hattie explores the role of a number of factors that have a potential impact on achievement. Hattie underlines the importance of looking at how teachers can make a difference.

In its *Report on the Concrete Future Objectives of Education Systems* of 2001, the European Commission points out that “upgrading the initial and in-service training of teachers and trainers so that their skills respond both to the changes in society and expectations, and to the varied groups involved (all ages of young people in initial education and training, and a wide spectrum of ages of adults; people with specific learning difficulties, and with personal or societal difficulties; etc.) is a major challenge to the education systems over the next 10 years”. Since 2005, an expert group (“Cluster Group”) has conducted a series of peer learning activities. The *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications* of 2008 offer a useful tool for national policy makers for the reform and design of teacher education systems.

In Central Asia, teacher education is at the core of any strategy for the reform of the education system. Strategic documents reflect the concerns policy makers have about the quality of teacher education and the insufficient contribution teachers make to educational achievements. Policy makers in Uzbekistan are more explicit than those of the other Central Asian countries (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan) in expressing serious concerns about teachers’ inadequate preparation and their insufficient contribution to the quality of education.

The study responds to the CAEP’s task of conducting studies and providing policy advice. The study covers teacher policies in Central Asia and Europe at the secondary education level (ISCED levels 2-4).

The objectives of the study were to:

- Design recommendations for a high level policy dialogue between the EU and Central Asian countries and between Central Asian countries.
- Provide resource materials for expert forums.
- Improve teacher policies.

## **What were the issues explored?**

The study explored the recommendations for teacher policy at the EU level and looked into the teacher policies of two EU countries (Austria, France).

For Central Asian countries, the study covered six key areas of teacher policy:

1. Teachers' role in society
  - 1.1. Motivation for choosing a career in teaching
  - 1.2. Perception of the teaching profession in society
  - 1.3. Teachers' perception of their profession
  - 1.4. Regulatory framework on the status of teachers
  - 1.5. Teachers' role in education children and youth
2. Teachers' role within the education system
  - 2.1. Teacher education within the national program for education
  - 2.2. Teachers' contribution to the quality of education
  - 2.3. Feedback to teachers' work
3. Teachers' qualifications, standards and competence profiles
  - 3.1. Formal qualification
  - 3.2. Professional standards (subject knowledge)
  - 3.3. Professional standards (didactics)
  - 3.4. Social skills
  - 3.5. Personality traits
4. Teachers' initial training
  - 4.1. Institutions offering training
  - 4.2. Admission to training
  - 4.3. Duration of training
  - 4.4. Training contents (subject knowledge)
  - 4.5. Training contents (didactics)
  - 4.6. Practicum assignments and mentoring
5. Teachers' continuing development
  - 5.1. Regulatory framework for professional development
  - 5.2. Institutions offering professional development
  - 5.3. Access to information about professional development
  - 5.4. Availability of relevant professional development
  - 5.5. Accessibility to relevant professional development

- 5.6. Quality of professional development
- 5.7. Professional development offered by non-state providers
- 5.8. Professional development and career development
  
6. Recruitment and retainment of teachers
  - 6.1. Availability of teachers
  - 6.2. Recruiting body
  - 6.3. Employment of teachers
  - 6.4. Career pathways
  - 6.5. Teachers leaving the teaching profession

## **Which methodology was applied?**

The research was conducted

- Through desk research (around 100 documents relating to education in general, teacher policy at the EU level, teacher policy in Austria and France, teacher policy in Central Asian countries);
- Through field research (Central Asia);
- With the support of national experts in Central Asia.

## **How was the field research in Central Asia conducted?**

- CAEP cooperated with one national expert per country.
- The national experts used a questionnaire with six focus areas, 32 sub-areas, 93 closed and open questions (see Annex 3 of the report).
- The national experts consulted representatives of ministries of education, specialised agencies, teacher training institutions, headmasters of schools, teachers, students of pedagogy.

## **When was the study implemented?**

- Preparation of the study: November 2012 – February 2013
- Implementation of the study: March – November 2013
- Two meetings with national experts: May and August 2013
- Submission of reports by national experts: End of November 2013
- Presentation of study in Brussels: 12 December 2013

## **What were the results?**

1. An overview of activities at the EU level for the design of recommendations in the field of teacher education, in particular the *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications* as a tool for national policy makers.
2. An analysis of selected aspects of teacher policy in Austria and France.

3. Analysis of teacher policies in four Central Asian countries (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan).
4. Recommendations for a high-level policy dialogue in four areas:
  - Career orientation for prospective teachers;
  - Teachers' social skills;
  - Students' practicum assignments;
  - Teachers' professional development.

The recommendations have the following structure:

- Number and title;
- Justification;
- References to the relevant sections in the text;
- Considerations for the policy dialogue;
- Resources.

## **How were the policy dialogue recommendations designed?**

Each of the recommendations is

- based on the results of the study;
- based on the recommendations of the national experts;
- based on an identified issue common to the four Central Asian countries studied;
- an issue that has been given increased attention in European countries and at the EU level;
- an issue that is suitable for cooperation between the EU and Central Asian countries;
- is an issue that is suitable for cooperation among Central Asian countries;
- an issue that can be dealt with in cooperation programmes and projects.

## **What were the recommendations of the national experts for improving the teacher policy in their country?**

### **Kyrgyzstan:**

- Raise the status of teachers in society.
- Prepare teachers better for their profession.
- Design standards for teachers' subject matter knowledge, didactic and social skills.
- Adjust the professional development system to teachers' actual needs.
- Improve the career advisory services for future teachers.
- Improve the human resource management system in education.

### **Tajikistan:**

- Further improve legislation in education.
- Raise the status of teachers in society and the preparation of teachers.

- Inform future teachers better about their profession.
- Design standards for teachers' subject matter knowledge, didactic and social skills.
- Design standards for the work of educational institutions.
- Further develop the professional development system.
- Improve the material basis of educational institutions.
- Support teachers in acquiring ICT skills.
- Support educational processes with teaching materials.
- Promote the interaction between teachers and parents in order to improve the quality of work of educational institutions.

### **Kazakhstan:**

- Introduce functioning legislation in education.
- Further develop standards for training in pedagogy, in particular in regard to teachers' practical training.
- Design of competency-based curricula.
- Design standards for teacher qualifications.
- Further develop the professional development system.
- Review admission procedures for pedagogy.

### **Uzbekistan:**

- Ensure that the professional development system meets teachers' actual needs.
- Review legislation in education.
- Review the recruitment system in education.
- Improve management in education.
- Ensure that teachers are well enough prepared in terms of student motivation.
- Organise practical work in a way that allows teachers to get a clear picture of their profession.

## **Recommendations for a high-level policy dialogue (extract)**

### **Topic №1: Career orientation for prospective teachers**

**Justification:** Prospective teachers in Central Asia have only limited knowledge about the teaching profession. This limited knowledge is an obstacle to a well-balanced career choice and therefore constitutes an obstacle to ensuring that the most interested and most-talented students choose enter this profession. In many cases this leads to disillusionment, frustration and lack of motivation.

**Considerations:** The following considerations can support the policy dialogue on this topic:

- Young people' decision for the teaching profession is often guided by misconceptions that stem from their own experience as students or from an erroneous representation of the teaching profession in society.
- For a considerable percentage of students of pedagogy in Central Asia teaching is the second career choice. This has far-reaching implications

both for their motivation during their training and in their professional career.

- Countries in Central Asia face a shortage of well-qualified and motivated teachers. European countries like Austria and France also face difficulties in attracting teachers.
- Can cooperation support the design of a mechanism to ensure that young people make a well-balanced career choice that is not influenced by romantic ideas, misconceptions or strategic considerations about entering university?

**Topic № 2: Teachers' social skills**

Justification: Central Asian countries lack standards for teachers' social skills. Teachers' social skills have a decisive influence on teacher-student relations, which are among the factors with the highest impact on student achievements. Teacher-student relations also have an impact on the school climate.

Considerations: The following considerations can support the policy dialogue on this topic:

- Teachers' social skills include their ability to communicate and interact in an effective and constructive manner with individuals such as learners, colleagues, parents.
- The quality of teacher-student relationships and, as a result, student achievements, depends on number of variables including warmth, encouragement of higher order thinking, adapting to differences and genuineness.
- The *Sectoral Qualifications Framework in the Field of Education and Science of Kazakhstan*, although it aims at professional and communication skills for teacher to teacher interaction are a first step toward the design of a framework for teachers' social skills in their interaction with students.
- Can cooperation support a study on the need for social skills training for teachers in Central Asia?

**Topic № 3: Students' practicum assignments**

Justification: Practicum assignments and induction programmes play a decisive role in shaping teacher's perception of their profession. In Central Asia, teachers with responsibilities as mentors and supervisors of students do not have special training.

Considerations: The following considerations can support the policy dialogue on this topic:

- Practicum assignments and induction programmes play a decisive role in shaping future teachers' perception of their profession.
- Supervisors at practicum assignments, whether from the teacher training institution or the schools, should fulfil minimum requirements and be especially trained.

- Austria is among those European countries that have extensive experience in the training of mentor teachers for both practicum assignments and induction programmes.
- Can cooperation support the design of criteria for the qualification of mentors and supervisors and contribute toward the design of a training programme for mentors and supervisors?

**Topic № 4: Teachers' professional development**

Justification: Professional development is mandatory in some countries in Europe and all countries in Central Asia. In Central Asian countries, professional development courses are often perceived as mandatory for professional advancement in terms of upgrading and salaries, but considered of only limited usefulness for teachers' everyday practice. The majority of teachers show a high degree of motivation to develop their professional knowledge and skills.

Considerations: The following considerations can support the policy dialogue on this topic:

- Teachers in Central Asia have only limited opportunities to choose professional development courses which they are interested in and consider relevant for them.
- Professional development can cover a wide range of domains and should be looked at from a broad perspective.
- Professional development can take place through a wide range of activities.
- Teachers' opinion of the relevance of professional development courses has direct impact on their interest and the impact of courses.
- A feedback mechanism on the usefulness and impact of professional development courses is key to an effective professional development system.
- In France, it has been recommended to make professional development a key pillar of human resource management.
- Can cooperation support the review and redesign of professional development systems?