



Conclusion

This publication has underlined the importance of developing a central role for teachers in educational change. Successful countries have shown how a teaching profession that assumes a high level of responsibility and is well rewarded can attract some of the best graduates into a teaching career. Indeed, a striking contrast between the teaching profession in different countries is its status and the caliber of its recruits. Dramatically increasing the quality and prestige of a nation's teaching corps is far from easy and cannot be done overnight. However, the many examples of reforms in this publication that have produced specific results, shown promise or that have illustrated imaginative ways of implementing change, show that the challenges can be successfully addressed. They include measures at the recruitment stage, but more importantly involve transforming the teaching profession from within. Highly qualified graduates are unlikely to be attracted to teaching if they see an existing teaching corps with low skill levels that are not trusted to act as professionals.

While there continue to be major unresolved issues in the debate on effective teacher policies, both within and between countries, the Summit participants agreed that significant improvement is possible. As this concluding report from the Summit notes, and contrary to what is often assumed, a high-quality teaching force is not due simply to a traditional cultural respect for teachers but is a result of deliberate policy choices, carefully implemented over time. The highest-performing countries show that thoughtfully designed and purposefully executed systemic efforts can build a high-quality teacher workforce.⁵⁰ The Summit also concluded that making teaching an attractive and effective profession requires supporting continuous learning, developing career structures to give new roles to teachers, and engaging strong teachers as active agents in school reform, not just implementers of plans designed by others. It also requires strengthening the knowledge base of education and developing a culture of research and reflection in schools so that teaching and learning can be based on the best available knowledge.

It was not surprising that the issue of designing and implementing fair and effective teacher evaluation systems provoked most discussion at the Summit. As the summary notes, a host of questions were raised: the balance between teacher and school evaluation; the definition of quality and criteria to be used; the need for training for people conducting the evaluations; how to protect against discrimination; the relationship to compensation; and finally, the dangers of distorting an education system through relying on narrow measures of effectiveness.⁵¹ In order to make progress on any of these fronts, it will be essential for governments and teacher organizations to work together to invent a new vision for the teaching profession. It will also be necessary to move from a conversation among elites towards engaging a broader dialog with other stakeholders in the system – including parents, students, teachers and employers. Several participants suggested that information and social media technologies could be used to give a broader voice to teachers, parents, students and others who have a stake in the success of the education system.

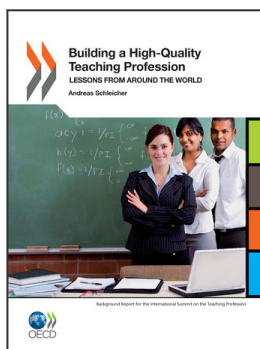
The Summit also concluded that it is important that policies do not just tackle one small piece of the puzzle but are part of a comprehensive approach. If high quality teacher recruits are placed into an unchanged school environment, the system will win every time. Just as the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers, the quality of teaching and teachers cannot exceed the quality of the work organization in which teachers find themselves; the quality of teacher selection and education; the quality of teacher careers; and the quality of teacher evaluation.

The transformation of today's teaching force requires smarter development of professionals than is typically seen in most education systems. While more resources need to go into such development, simply laying on more courses is not enough. Above all, professional development needs to be integrated not only into an individual teacher's career, but also school and system changes. At the career level, in-service education, appraisal and reward need to be closely aligned. At the same time, learning that improves individual competencies and collaboration among teachers to produce better instruction in the classroom must go hand-in-hand.



Finally, in a process of educational reform that too often becomes politicized, it is essential to build a constructive political process in which teachers share the main goals of reform with politicians and administrators. This does not mean that the specific interests or concerns of particular groups can be ignored; there will always need to be compromise in making changes to well-established systems, particularly when some individuals are bound to be threatened by change. However, around the world, it has been shown that collaborative models of educational reform can be highly effective.

The success of different education systems varies significantly in equipping all students with important foundation skills. It was therefore appealing to bring together education leaders from high performing and rapidly improving education systems to explore to what extent educational success and related teacher policies transcends the specific characteristics of cultures and countries. The Summit participants agreed that there was enormous value in learning from international comparisons on this subject. As the report from the Summit notes, these comparisons help to get individuals outside of their own context and established patterns of thinking, provoke imagination, show where some of the successes and failures have been, and broaden both policymakers' and teacher organizations' views of possible options and trade-offs. They can help educators to think anew, to encourage innovation, and design new approaches that are informed by the world's best practices. This Summit is therefore a springboard for ongoing discussions of teacher policy in the 21st century⁵¹ and the next Summit on the teaching profession will take place in 2012.



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