

Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI)  
New Professionalism and the Future of Teaching

## **Introduction to Ambition Loops**

An introduction to the multi-national stakeholder study on New  
Professionalism and the Future of Teaching

## Introduction

Quality education is an accelerator of human capital and development. A quality education strengthens the economic output of countries, creates more equal opportunities, makes citizens healthier and less prone to negative societal issues such as crime and mental health issues. Aside from basic skills such as reading, writing and mathematics, a quality education improves civics and digital skills needed for a rich and fulfilling life. A requirement for a quality education, however, is having quality teachers who can teach in a way that fits both them and their students.

Current changes in the world and sudden crises have had a profound impact on education and the teacher profession. For example, in many countries the working population is ageing, its composition is changing and becoming ever more diverse due to migration. Young people entering the workplace are expecting different things from working life and might not want to stay in one profession their entire career. Many countries experience increasingly tight labour markets; several education systems are experiencing teacher shortages or need to anticipate to prevent this in the future.

Society has grown more demanding in its needs and is changing fast, requiring schools to do more. Among OECD countries, many teachers themselves indicate that they experience high levels of stress, attrition, and constant pressure as they are one of societies' cornerstones. What does this mean for the future of the teaching profession? What do school systems need to keep providing a quality education for their children?

The multi-national stakeholder study on New Professionalism and the Future of Teaching is aimed at education systems that are interested in anticipating the medium- and long-term in teacher professionalism and empowerment. Looking back on previous OECD data collection and publications, as well as two years of in-depth research on the topic, the project has devised a theoretical framework that allows stakeholders to construct a vision on what the teaching profession could look like in the future. The model focuses on collaboration and creating space for teacher autonomy, while at the same time allowing for the stakeholders involved to influence a future vision on teaching.

The research project has so far developed innovative tools that allow participating countries to test, discuss, and develop a future image by generating preferred scenarios. The goal is to co-create a clear picture of what the future teaching profession might look like that is evidence-informed by what we know today: previous research, OECD data and research collected during the study as well as input from all relevant stakeholders.

### 1. Introducing the work already undertaken in the New Professionalism and the Future of Teaching project

Over the period 2021-2022, CERI's New Professionalism and the Future of Teaching has undertaken a synthesis of the existing body of knowledge on teaching and teachers, a broad consultation among the OECD education community on opportunities and challenges for the future of teachers and teaching and initial conceptual work on "new professionalism". Guided by the CERI governing board, anchored in secondary analysis of OECD's most recent teacher survey results and provocations of CERI work on possible future scenarios for education (OECD, 2019<sub>[1]</sub>; OECD, 2020<sub>[2]</sub>; OECD, 2020<sub>[3]</sub>), it has produced conceptual work on:

- Teacher professional identity.
- Lessons from other professions.
- Principles for effective interprofessional and cross-sectoral collaboration.

- Scenarios with possible future roles for teachers in which the concept of “connective professionalism” will take a central place.

The work has resulted in several deliverables:

- Three symposia on the Future of Teachers and Teaching bringing together the OECD education policy, research, innovation and student and teacher surveys communities.
- A summary of the existing OECD body of knowledge on teachers and teaching.
- A webinar on "Promoting a stronger professional identity in teaching. How to develop and support teachers in times of change?".
- Conceptual work on teacher professionalism (Suarez and McGrath, 2022<sup>[4]</sup>; Mezza, 2022<sup>[5]</sup>; Nilsson Brodén, 2022<sup>[6]</sup>; McGrath, Forthcoming<sup>[7]</sup>; Ulferts, 2021<sup>[8]</sup>).
- Two tools that can be used in designing future policies on teachers (the teacher personas and the ambition loops).

Gradually, the OECD work on teachers and new professionalism identified collaboration, or “connective professionalism” (Noordegraaf, 2020<sup>[9]</sup>) as its main topic. Collaboration is associated with greater job satisfaction (OECD, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>). It is also necessary to work together to anticipate future opportunities and challenges facing education systems (Mezza, 2022<sup>[5]</sup>). Additionally, the future will mean involving other professionals to bring knowledge and expertise to benefit teaching and learning. To some extent, cooperation and connective professionalism are already present in many education systems. It is however, not always viewed as a specific professional quality on the level of a system, school, or teacher.

## 2. The next step: towards national use of the conceptual work in 2023 and 2024

During 2023 and 2024, the New Professionalism and the Future of Teaching team invites a select number of “frontrunner” countries to get more actively involved in CERI’s future work on teachers by joining an innovative multi-national stakeholder study. In working together with the OECD and other countries, the study will focus on the pivotal long-term question of where to next within education systems to strengthen professionalism and the future of teaching?

Central to this multi-national stakeholder study are the following policy assumptions:

- It is critical to attempt to anticipate future developments regarding teaching and teachers in a time of change and constant new developments.
- Co-constructing a shared vision on the future of teaching and teacher professionalism can guide future developments and policy regarding teachers and teaching.
- There is value in creating space in the teacher debate: thinking about a long-term sustainable vision on the future of teaching and teacher professionalism moves away from current “wicked problems” such as shortages, attrition, and retention.

### Box 1. Summarising the basics

A few education systems will be able to participate in the multi-national stakeholder study over a period of 18 months, starting in March 2023. The 18-month period will be divided into two periods of 9 months. Participating systems will provide a voluntary contribution of €70.000 to support the work. The main deliverable will be a national report, which will feed into a final synthesis report on new professionalism and the future of teaching. The main activities will include<sup>1</sup>:

- 1 (online) national research seminar;
- Tailoring the two OECD tools for use in the national study;
- Initial data collection;
- 1 peer learning session with fellow participants (countries) at the OECD offices in Paris;
- 1 OECD mission in participating countries, including a 1 or 2-day stakeholder workshop to generate preferred scenarios for the future of the teaching profession and 1 day working with the Ministry using the scenarios;
- 1 final synthesis meeting at the OECD in Paris at the end of 2024.

Should countries wish to provide voluntary contributions to support additional analytical work, they are invited to contact the team leader.

## 3. Working together through a set of strongly defined phases

The proposed study is divided into five consecutive phases which are outlined in this section.

### 3.1. Phase I: Preparatory activities

#### 3.1.1 Online start-up meeting

During the first meeting, the Ministry identifies who is best suited to be the national coordinator for the project. This can be within or outside a Ministry of Education. The national coordinator will serve as the main point of contact for the OECD.

In addition, the meeting will be an opportunity to already advance the development of the teacher personas tool (Nilsson Brodén, 2022<sub>[6]</sub>) by identifying available (inter)national datasets that are considered useful for their construction.

#### 3.1.2 Identify research questions and a possible partner organisation

During the first phase of the study, the OECD team and the nominated national coordinator(s) will discuss the Ministry's main research interests for the multi-national stakeholder study, within the context of developing a long-term strategy for new professionalism and the future of teaching.

The study entails several specific research activities that will require time commitment from the participating country. The OECD team suggests that the Ministry may wish to

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<sup>1</sup> The activities are described in more detail in the text below.

nominate a partner organisation to work on specific research activities within the study. To help decide this, estimated time investments are presented in Table 1. A partner organisation could be a university, a teaching training college, but also an independent research/advisory group.<sup>2</sup> Once this decision has been made, the groundwork for the main preparatory activities is ready.

**Table 1: Days needed from national coordinators and possible partner organisation for the study**

	National Coordinator/ Coordinating Team	Partner Organisation <sup>1</sup>
<b>Phase I: Preparatory activities</b>	Nominate a partner organisation Optional participation in online national research seminar (0.5 -1 day) 2 days (start-up meeting)	4 days (online national research seminar: preparation and participation) 2 days (start-up meeting)
<b>Phase II: Developing the national studies</b>	1 day (stakeholder mapping)	5 days (review national personas and tailor tools for data collection with OECD team)
<b>Phase III: OECD mission part I</b>	2 days (participation)	4 days (logistics, preparation, participation)
<b>Phase IV: OECD mission part II</b>	2 days (debrief stakeholder meetings, backward mapping from draft future scenarios)	Debrief stakeholder workshop (0.5 days) Participation in backward mapping at Ministry's discretion
<b>Phase V: Synthesising and sharing findings</b>	1 day (commenting and fact-checking the report) 2 days (final synthesis meeting)	2 days (commenting and fact-checking the report) 2 days (final synthesis meeting)

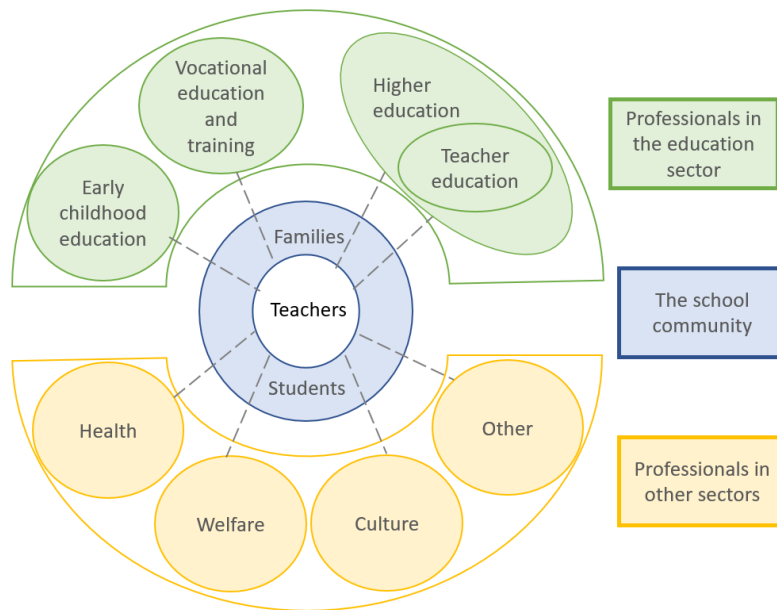
### 3.1.3 Stakeholder involvement for different stages of the study

To prepare the use of the ambition loops tool (McGrath, Forthcoming<sup>[7]</sup>), the partner organisation and the OECD prepare a map of all stakeholders that would need to be involved to participate during the different stages of the study. For example, organisations such as teacher educators, universities, school boards, teacher unions, experts, etc. (see figure 2). The different stages of the study that is referred to, would include:

- A national research seminar (3.1.4)
- Initial data collection and analysis (3.2.3)
- Stakeholder workshop (3.3.1)

<sup>2</sup> For clarity, the national coordinator and partner organisation responsibilities are mentioned separately throughout document.

Figure 1: Example of stakeholders involved during different stages of the study



#### 3.1.4 National research seminar

The next step in the study will be to organise an online national research seminar to support the development of the two tools we will be using for the multi-national study. Together with the national coordinator and partner organisation, stakeholders are invited to participate in this event. During the online national research seminar, national research related to the main research questions would be collected. The OECD team and partner organisation will gather the information and data to do further work on creating national personas, as well as statements of ambition needed for the ambition loops tool.

#### 3.1.5 Peer learning session at the OECD offices

National delegations are invited to attend a meeting to support peer exchange across countries involved in the project cohort. The meeting is intended to create space for exchanging and sharing future thinking regarding new professionalism and the future of teaching within the different national contexts, as well as learning from each other. It is proposed to be held at the OECD offices in Paris but the preferred location would be discussed with relevant national teams. During this two-day meeting participants are invited to share their national situation and research question(s) that have been identified. The meeting will also focus on introducing the forward-thinking research that the OECD team has been doing, as well as other OECD work that is related to the research questions.

## 3.2. Phase II: Developing the national studies

### 3.2.1 Developing the national personas

After identifying available (inter)national datasets, the OECD team will develop, in collaboration with the national partner organisation, a set of national personas for each of the participating countries. A set of fictional teachers, informed by both international and

national evidence, will be used to demonstrate national characteristics. Each set will include a “future teacher persona”. Figure 2 shows one of the sample sets which will be adapted using overall (inter)national data and research.

**Figure 2: An example of fictional teacher personas**



**Persona**

***Eden and José, the networked and ambitious collaborators***

Eden and José are in their early 30's. They work full time and are ambitious at work and in their personal lives. They have a strong connection with broad networks in person and online, which they use to lead new projects at the school and connect with other teachers and professionals beyond their school. Even though their peers in other professions have greater flexibility, they appreciate working in a school with a collaborative mindset and opportunities for professional collaboration. They aren't as stressed as their friends working in schools with less of a collaborative environment. They seek out, and receive, impactful feedback on their teaching from a variety of sources.

**Research** Eden and José belong to the Millennials/Generation Y (25–41-year-olds). For people in this generation a basic expectation is to achieve work-life balance. There is also a desire for travel and flexibility. They have multiple expectations for their working environment, including flexibility, variety, culture, fun, training, rewards, and feedback from managers. Their loyalty is incentivised. From this, the parts of the persona describing a variety of personal and professional collaborations and their appreciation for working in a collaborative school and receiving impactful feedback are derived.

**OECD data** TALIS 2018 revealed significant correlations between a collaborative culture in the school and job satisfaction. Receiving impactful feedback was also related to job satisfaction. Furthermore, a collaborative school culture and reported perception of being able to rely on each other, was associated with lower stress levels. Working full time was related to higher reported levels of participation in deeper forms of professional collaboration, as well as higher self-efficacy compared to those who work part time.

### *3.2.2 Initial data collection and analysis*

The ambition loops will be enriched by findings from the national research seminar. The OECD team in collaboration with the partner organisation works out a format for data collection on different perspectives. The aim is to analyse points of consensus and tension between stakeholder groups, which will be used during the OECD workshop in the countries. The format is sent out to all participating stakeholders. The partner organisation supports the data collection. Responses are used to prepare the national missions in the third phase of the proposed study.

### *3.2.3 Progress meeting and preparing the OECD mission*

During an online progress meeting, the OECD team, the national coordinator, and national partner organisation meet online to reflect on the first two phases of the project and decide whether the study is on schedule and going according to plan. The meeting will also be used to look ahead to the OECD mission and beyond. In preparation, the OECD team has summarised and categorised the data which was acquired during the first two phases of the study. This will be used to prepare sessions and further discussions during the OECD mission.

### **3.3. Phase III: OECD mission part I: stakeholder workshop on preferred scenarios for the future of the teaching profession**

Phase III and part of phase IV will take part in each participating country during a one-week mission. The first three days will be used to perform phase III, while the last two days will be used for the first three activities of phase IV.

#### *3.3.1 OECD stakeholder workshop*

The main activity of the mission is an OECD workshop involving all pre-selected stakeholders. This will be led by the OECD team. Stakeholders (or their representatives) will engage in an ambition loops session to identify common ambitions for the future and generate their preferred scenarios for the teaching profession. The focus will be on three main actions:

- Mapping current stakeholder connections: the current strength of relationships and future possibilities.
- Using the ambition loops statements to generate preferred future scenarios for the future of teaching.
- Stakeholder input for backward mapping to discuss possible actions needed to realise their preferred future scenarios.

It is anticipated the stakeholder workshop will be held for up to two days and is planned well in advance. The stakeholder workshop will also be an opportunity for stakeholders “to meet” the national teacher personas that were constructed in preparation of the OECD mission.

### **3.4. Phase IV: OECD Mission Part II: Refining a shared vision on the future of teaching**

#### *3.4.1 OECD team synthesises preferred future scenarios within the education system*

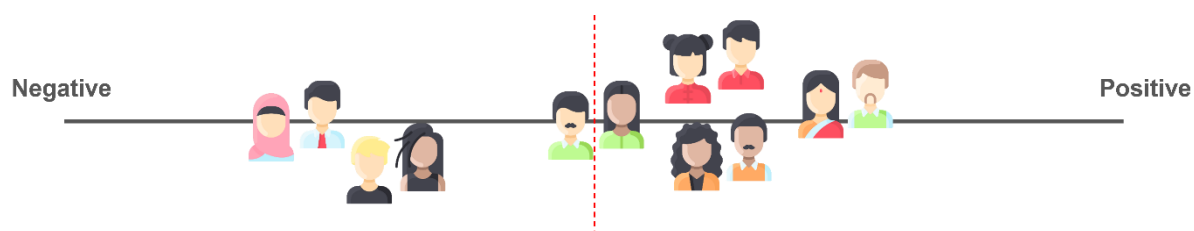
The set of preferred future scenarios generated by stakeholders during the OECD workshop, are the main elements to inform a shared vision on the future of teaching. The OECD team, with assistance from the national partner organisation, distils this set of preferred future scenarios into a draft set of national preferred scenarios for the future of teaching. These scenarios will serve as one of the main pillars for the national report. Based on the findings of the stakeholder workshop and worked out in detail by the OECD team and the national partner organisation to provide possible global itineraries for future realisation of the scenarios (see 3.4.5).

#### *3.4.2 Debrief between OECD team, the national coordinator and a small Ministry team*

In this part of the process the OECD team works in person with a small team from the Ministry (and others as suggested by the country such as the national partner organisation). The OECD team presents the main findings on the draft set of national preferred future scenarios, that were derived from the stakeholder workshop. Additionally, the national personas, which were designed during the second phase of the study will be presented to the Ministry. They may be amended when deemed necessary. The national personas will be utilised to perform a “stress-test” and improve the draft set of national preferred scenarios for the future of teaching. The findings will be presented in the national report.



**Figure 3: Using the personas tool to look at teacher attitudes towards future of teaching scenarios**



#### *3.4.4 What “lessons (hints) for transformation” emerge through this process?*

Both the ambition loops tool and the personas tool, as well as the study itself up to this point, will have yielded several lessons that can provide guidance to future policy developments regarding new professionalism and the future of teaching. These lessons will be compiled and added to the national report.

#### *3.4.5 Backward mapping: how to get there?*

Backward mapping involves thinking step by step, based on the defined scenarios, about what it would take to achieve each of the preferred future scenarios. Using initial input from the OECD stakeholder workshop, this step will give policy makers and stakeholders alike an inside look into what would be needed in a practical sense to achieve change in the future of the teaching profession. The process will use a back casting approach led by the OECD team.

### **3.5. Phase V: Synthesising and sharing findings**

#### *3.5.1 Drafting the national report*

Once all the data and other information is available, the OECD team will draft a national report, including the process description, the discussed scenarios, backward mapping and the national personas. OECD finalises and shares the documented outcomes of phases 1-IV with the national coordinator for a factual check and approval. This national report can be presented and discussed with stakeholders, upon request. Each national report feeds into the synthesis report for new professionalism and the future of teaching. This showcases the methodology and the different sets of national teacher personas and national preferred scenarios for the future of teaching produced with participating countries in 2023 and 2024.

#### *3.5.2 Final Synthesis meeting*

A final synthesis meeting to cover the yield of the overall study will be held at the OECD in Paris at the end of 2024. The meeting will be organised in conjunction with the publication of a synthesis report that shares lessons from the work of the project across countries.

#### 4. Contact and more information

Over the past weeks, the CERI team has had multiple consultations with countries to discuss participation with the study. Should you wish to arrange a meeting, or request more information, please contact [EDU.Teachers@oecd.org](mailto:EDU.Teachers@oecd.org).

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