

Chapter 4

Teacher appraisal

The Performance Review and Staff Development Scheme (PRSD) is a comprehensive teacher appraisal system for all teachers in grant aided schools, based on a number of internationally recognised good principles. The annual process involves two lesson observations, a discussion of these observations between the reviewer and the teacher, and an action plan with objectives for personal and professional development in the following year. Teachers also get feedback during school inspections. A registration system confirms a teacher's eligibility to teach, but does not involve an appraisal of the teacher's performance or correspond to a step within the teacher's career.

This chapter looks at approaches to teacher appraisal within Northern Ireland's overall evaluation and assessment framework. Teacher appraisal refers to the evaluation of individual teachers to make a judgement about their performance and has typically two major purposes. First, it seeks to improve teachers' own practices by identifying strengths and weaknesses for further professional development: the improvement function. Second, it aims to ensure that teachers perform at their best to enhance student learning: the accountability function (Santiago and Benavides, 2009). An overview of the main features of the teaching profession in Northern Ireland is provided in Box 4.1.

Context and features

Teacher appraisal procedures

Regular teacher appraisal in Northern Ireland is conducted as part of the *Performance Review and Staff Development Scheme (PRSD)*, which applies to all teachers (including temporary, part-time and beginning teachers), as well as principals and vice-principals. The three stated aims of the PRSD are to (i) enhance the quality of education; (ii) recognise the contribution of teachers to achieving the aims of the School Development Plan and help them identify ways of enhancing their skills and performance; and (iii) identify the professional development needs and necessary resources to support teachers in their professional development and career progression. The review scheme was introduced in 2005 after consultation with the teacher unions and in formal agreement with all stakeholders. The PRSD review process is organised in an annual cycle comprising three stages:

- **Planning and preparation:** during this initial meeting, the reviewee and reviewer(s) meet to set objectives for the coming year, reflect on possible outcomes and agree on ways to monitor progress throughout the year. Each teacher is required to set three objectives in the areas of (i) professional practice, (ii) pupil and curriculum development and (iii) personal and professional development.
- **Monitoring:** throughout the review cycle, information relevant to the review and the documentation of progress made towards the agreed objectives is collected. It also includes observation of the reviewee in his/her work situation through classroom and/or task observation.
- **Review discussion:** at the end of the review cycle, the reviewer(s) and the reviewee assess the reviewee's performance in relation to agreed goals and establish a Review Statement which specifies the outcomes of the review and records any identified personal and professional development needs. They also agree an action plan and objectives for the next year.

The PRSD is closely linked to the school's strategic plan for improvement: the School Development Plan (SDP). The SDP brings together the school's priorities, the measures it plans to take to raise standards, the resources dedicated to these, and the key outcomes and targets for the three years ahead. Each school's Board of Governors is required to establish a Performance Review Policy, which reflects the SDP. The Boards of Governors are expected to ensure that training and development needs identified through the PRSD are reflected in the SDP and that adequate professional development opportunities are made available to all teaching staff.

Other forms of feedback for teachers

Teaching quality is also monitored by the Department of Education’s Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and through the self-evaluations conducted by schools. Observation of classroom practice is a key component of all inspection visits. Inspectors typically observe teaching practice of each teacher in a given school for two lessons, and also provide individual feedback. While these observations are not intended as a summative appraisal of individual teachers, an inspector may identify underperformance and inform the school principal who is responsible for taking appropriate action.

Teachers and school principals are also responsible for the internal evaluation of teaching quality in the school (Chapter 6). The ETI’s document *Together Towards Improvement* comprises an extensive set of quality indicators for schools to use in self-evaluations, which include indicators of high quality teaching and learning.

The organisation of most schools in curriculum areas further provides good conditions for regular exchange and peer learning among teachers. In some schools, curriculum area heads (i.e. heads of department in post-primary schools and literacy and numeracy coordinators in primary schools) provide regular informal observation, coaching, mentoring and feedback to their teacher peers, in addition to the formal discussion required for the PRSD process.

Competencies for appraisal

Teacher appraisal through the PRSD is conducted by the principal or a teacher reviewer appointed by the principal. Principals are responsible for ensuring that PRSD processes are fully implemented within their schools and linked to the SDP and the school’s main priorities. While principals in smaller schools may review all of their teaching staff themselves, in larger schools it is more common for principals to delegate the regular implementation of the PRSD process to senior members of the teaching staff. In this case, the responsibilities for PRSD are typically distributed in line with the school’s hierarchy, for example the principal will review the work of vice-principals, vice-principals will review the work of heads of departments, curriculum area heads and form teachers, who in turn will review the work of other teachers.

Principals in Northern Ireland must be fully qualified teachers. There are no other mandatory prerequisites to be eligible for principal posts, but the Employing Authorities may set their own criteria for recruiting individual principals. The Regional Training Unit (RTU) offers a Professional Qualification for Headship, which is an accredited course seeking to prepare future leaders with the necessary competencies for the profession. It is not mandatory for new principals to hold this qualification, but it is expected that they enrol in the course when taking on their position.

The introduction of the PRSD scheme in 2005 was accompanied by the provision of system-wide training to all school principals, representative governors and education officers. This training was delivered in form of a one-off training day by the Regional Training Unit (RTU), in collaboration with the Department of Education, Employing Authorities and recognised teacher unions. Preparation for PRSD is also included in the RTU training for all newly appointed principals.

Using appraisal results

Teacher appraisal results are used for a range of formative and summative purposes in Northern Ireland. The PRSD scheme is intended primarily to identify the individual

professional development needs of teachers and link these to school development planning. In addition, the results from the PRSD process are also considered when making decisions about teachers' promotion or progression to the Upper Pay Scale (see Box 4.1). Finally, the PRSD review provides an occasion to identify and address underperformance, as explained below.

When poor performance is detected in a teacher's work, the PRSD cycle is interrupted and an informal programme of support and development is put in place by the school principal in co-operation with the Employing Authority and professional development providers. While the timeframe for such support programmes may vary, the typical duration is three months. This may be followed by a formal stage which includes the issue of a formal written notice, a targeted support programme and ultimately dismissal if a satisfactory standard of work is not achieved (OECD, 2013).

A formal *Procedure for Dealing with Principals, Teachers and Vice Principals Whose Work is Unsatisfactory* has been in place since 1997. This procedure was designed by teachers' Employing Authorities in collaboration with the Department of Education, to provide a consistent approach to dealing with underperformance. Teachers for whom the procedure is invoked will not progress on the salary scale. At the time of the OECD Review, the procedure for dealing with unsatisfactory work was being reviewed and a new *Procedure for Supporting Effective Teaching in Schools* was finalised in June 2013. The new procedure is designed to help school principals, Boards of Governors and Employing Authorities adopt a consistent approach to dealing with teachers at risk of underperformance (TNC, 2013). It describes the different steps and options to be followed if a teacher's performance gives cause for concern (and informal measures have been exhausted) and explains the responsibilities of all those involved in the process. The Procedure sets a range of helpful principles and a framework for ensuring constructive professional dialogue and tailor-made responses in situations where a teacher's performance is causing concern.

Box 4.1 The teaching profession in Northern Ireland: Main features

Employment status

Teachers in Northern Ireland can have public servant or salaried employee status. They are not civil servants and do not have guaranteed employment at any stage of their career. Teachers can have open-ended or fixed-term contracts, but schools are advised to recruit teachers on a permanent basis unless the post is clearly of a temporary nature. At the time of the OECD Review visit, the relevant Employing Authority for a teacher could be one of five Education and Library Boards (ELBs), the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) or the individual Boards of Governors of Voluntary Grammar and Grant-Maintained Integrated Schools. While the Employing Authorities hold the contract of employment with their teachers, the day-to-day human resource management aspects such as discipline, supervision and dismissal of staff are delegated to the Boards of Governors. The Education Bill introduced into the Assembly in October 2012 would establish the new Education and Skills Authority (ESA) (see Chapter 1) and make it the employing authority for all teachers in grant-maintained schools.

Box 4.1 The teaching profession in Northern Ireland: Main features *(continued)*

Prerequisites to become a teacher and teacher recruitment

The Teachers' (Eligibility) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 as amended, determine the qualifications, age and health requirements for individuals eligible to teach in publicly funded schools (grant aided) in Northern Ireland. The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 makes it mandatory for all teachers in grant-aided schools to be registered with the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI). Teachers apply for a teaching post through an open competition. The Boards of Governors hold responsibility for staffing matters including the recruitment of teachers, even though these tasks may be delegated to the school principal.

At the time of the OECD Review visit, there were some variations in the processes for teacher recruitment depending on the type of school. For the controlled schools, each of the ELBs must set up a Teaching Appointment Committee and a recruitment scheme. While posts are advertised by the ELBs, the Boards of Governors are in charge of the actual interview process and submit the most suitable candidate(s) to the ELB for approval. For the Catholic-maintained schools, the CCMS is required to set up a recruitment scheme, and the recruitment process involves the Boards of Governors, the Diocesan Office and representatives of the CCMS. For the other types of schools, including Voluntary Grammar and Grant-Maintained Integrated Schools, the Board of Governors takes full responsibility for the recruitment process. It is expected that the implementation of the proposed ESA will bring greater unity to teacher recruitment and support functions currently provided by the five ELBs and other government-funded organisations such as the CCMS.

Teacher registration

All teachers who wish to teach in a grant-aided school in Northern Ireland need to be registered with the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI). To be eligible to register with GTCNI, teachers need to hold a teaching qualification approved by the Council and to have gained at least a grade C (or equivalent) in English and Mathematics GCSE (and in Science GCSE for primary teachers). Registration involves the payment of a registration fee, which needs to be annually renewed. The registration functions as an official confirmation of a teacher's eligibility to teach, but it does not involve an appraisal of the teacher's performance. Employing authorities are required to ensure that they only employ teachers who are registered with the GTCNI. The information held on an individual teacher's record includes the teacher's name, school, contact address, qualifications and employment history (GTCNI website).

Salary and career structure

Northern Ireland has a multilevel career structure for teachers, with two levels and a salary scale for each level. There is a Classroom Teacher scale and a Leadership/Principal scale. The classroom teacher salary scale has six steps on the Main Scale and three steps on the Upper Scale. Beginning teachers are placed on the first step of the Main Scale and move up one point every year based on satisfactory performance. Teachers who are at the top of the Main Pay Scale can apply for "threshold assessment" to move up to the Upper Pay Scale. Once on the Upper Pay Scale, they can further progress every two years until they reach the highest step. There are also five types of Teaching Allowances that schools may award to teachers for taking on substantial extra responsibilities, in line with the school's size and responsibility structure. Such extra responsibilities should be focused primarily on teaching and learning and correspond to one or more of the following criteria: *(i)* require the teacher to lead, manage and develop a subject or curriculum area, or to lead and manage pupil development across the curriculum; *(ii)* have an impact on the educational progress of pupils other than the teacher's assigned classes or groups of pupils; *(iii)* involve leading, developing and enhancing the teaching practice of other staff.

Box 4.1 The teaching profession in Northern Ireland: Main features *(continued)*

Teachers specialising in helping students with special educational needs may also receive an allowance. In addition, schools have some flexibility to provide extra pay to teachers for recruitment and retention purposes.

Initial teacher education

Initial teacher education is provided at five higher education institutions and lasts for four years. Teacher education programmes can be consecutive or concurrent. The concurrent model involves four years of study leading to a Bachelor of Education (BEd). It comprises academic studies, professional tuition and at least 32 weeks of practical teaching experience in the classroom. The consecutive model is intended for persons who already hold a Bachelor's degree. It involves one year of professional training leading to a Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and at least 18 weeks (for primary education) or 24 weeks (for secondary education) of classroom-based experience. PGCE programmes have traditionally prepared student teachers for teaching in their chosen subject area at the secondary level, but PGCE programmes for primary education are now also available. After completion of an initial teacher education programme, teachers become eligible for registration with the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI)

Professional development

At the time of the OECD Review visit, the main providers of advisory and support services for teachers in grant-aided schools were the Curriculum Advisory and Support Services (CASS) in each of the ELBs, the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and the Regional Training Unit (RTU), which is an integral part of the ELBs' CASS. Other providers of professional development include the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), higher education institutions, further education colleges and private providers. With the implementation of the ESA in 2013, it is planned that a single school development and support service will facilitate professional development for teachers in grant-aided schools at all stages of their careers.

Sources:

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GTCNI website (www.gtcni.org.uk).

Strengths

Teachers are respected and trusted professionals

Teaching is a highly respected profession in Northern Ireland. Enrolment in teacher education courses is selective, with between six and twelve candidates per place in teacher education, depending on the programme. Teacher education institutions are governed by centrally set quotas for the number of new students they can accept. Entrants into teacher education are generally good A-Level students having achieved two or three A-grades in their leaving examinations. In addition to a strong academic profile, teacher

education institutions can select their students based on other criteria such as commitment and empathy. Among the stakeholders interviewed by the OECD review team, including at the school level, there was a high degree of respect for the quality of initial teacher education and the competencies of new teachers who had graduated from teacher education programmes.

The OECD review team formed the view that teachers in Northern Ireland were generally seen as trusted professionals. This is reflected in the extensive professional autonomy granted to teachers with the revised (2007) curriculum. One of the aims of the 2007 core curriculum was to provide greater flexibility to teachers in exercising their professional judgement when planning lessons and providing instruction. In line with the revised curriculum, current requirements for student assessment also emphasise and enhance the professional judgement of teachers in assessing their students (Chapter 3). Overall, teachers are given considerable scope to exercise their professionalism and appear to benefit from high levels of trust among the different stakeholder groups.

One of the consequences of being considered as trusted professionals is that teachers in Northern Ireland are open to receiving feedback and being held accountable in relation to their practice. In a 2010 survey conducted by GTCNI among a representative sample of teachers in Northern Ireland, a large majority of teachers (92%) indicated “promoting and maintaining high standards of teachers’ professional competence” as an important reason for teachers to be held accountable (GTCNI, 2010). Teachers interviewed by the OECD review team said that they were eager to have more opportunities to discuss their practice. The review team saw examples of teachers developing research alongside their teaching role; teachers engaging actively with new knowledge; and schools encouraging teachers to become more inquiring and reflective practitioners and engage in collaboration with their colleagues.

There are common competence standards for teachers

Teacher competence standards are well established in Northern Ireland and provide a common understanding of what is considered “good teaching”. The GTCNI’s publication, *Teaching: The Reflective Profession* (2007) establishes a teacher competence model, which is intended to underpin all stages of teacher education and professional development. It describes 27 competences that teachers are expected to develop throughout their initial training and professional careers. These competences are grouped into three areas of professional practice: (i) professional values and practices, (ii) professional knowledge and understanding, and (iii) professional skills and applications in assessment. Each of the competences is further described and illustrated through phase exemplars for each stage of teacher education and professional learning. The Council has also developed a *Code of Values and Professional Practice* which is an integral part of the competence model.

The competence model appears to play an important role in providing coherence across initial teacher education and the early years of a teacher’s career. It clarifies what is expected of new teachers and creates a common language and reference for all those involved. According to representatives of institutions providing initial teacher training, the competence model is a key document informing all initial teacher education programmes; providing a common language and shared values and objectives around teacher professionalism. In some schools, the competence model also serves as a reference for the induction and early professional development of new teachers and informs their personal action plans. It is also used by the Education and Training

Inspectorate (ETI) as a reference for their evaluation of teaching and learning quality in schools.

Teaching standards or competency frameworks are an important element in any teacher appraisal system, as they provide a clear common reference to make judgements about teacher performance. They support the capacity of school leadership, educational authorities and others to effectively review whether teachers have attained a given level of competency. They also offer the potential to frame and align the organisation of key elements of the teaching profession, such as: initial education, registration, professional development, career advancement and teacher appraisal (OECD, 2013). While the competence model appears well established in initial teacher education in Northern Ireland, challenges remain in ensuring that it is also used as a reference for other aspects of the profession, namely: registration, regular teacher appraisal through PRSD and continuing professional development. This is explored in more details below.

The teacher appraisal model is comprehensive and thoughtfully designed

With the implementation of the Performance Review and Staff Development (PRSD) scheme, Northern Ireland has set up a comprehensive teacher appraisal system that is applied for every teacher in the system (including new and experienced, permanent and temporary, full-time and part-time staff) and covers all key domains of teacher practice. The system is based on a number of good principles reflecting internationally recognised good practice in teacher appraisal (Santiago and Benavides, 2009).

The main focus is on professional development and the improvement of teaching practice

Teacher appraisal in Northern Ireland is clearly oriented towards staff development and continuous improvement of practices. The identification of strengths and areas for development is a key purpose of the PRSD and the process is followed up by an action plan and objectives for personal and professional development in the following year. In a 2007 ETI review on the implementation of the PRSD scheme, almost all of the 31 schools surveyed indicated that they found the scheme beneficial in focusing staff on their training needs and on the importance of continuing professional development. The surveyed schools also considered that the PRSD provided a good focus for school improvement through the dissemination of effective teaching strategies within and across schools (DENI, 2013). In the GTCNI's 2010 survey, 83% of respondents confirmed that their professional development needs were identified through the PRSD process, and 78% of respondents indicated that they were "content" with the ways in which their needs were identified.

This logical chain between the teacher's appraisal and continuing professional development is essential to improving teaching practice. The identification of an individual teacher's strengths and weaknesses is essential for choosing professional development activities that meet the teacher's individual needs as well as the priorities in the School Development Plan. That teachers see the appraisal as a basis for future practice improvement is key to building a system where every single teacher feels concerned by the appraisal cycle and the relevant growth opportunities, regardless of their current level of performance (Isoré, 2009). It helps provide opportunities for all teachers, including the highly performing ones, to continue to learn and grow in the profession (Randi and Zeichner, 2004).

The principle of career advancement on merit is in place

In addition to its developmental function, the PRSD is also designed to provide an attestation for career and salary progression. Teachers gain access to the next salary step only if their performance is evaluated as satisfactory. This introduces an element of accountability in the annual review process. PRSD results are also one of the elements considered by school principals when making decisions about promotions or progression of teachers to the upper pay scale. Hence, in theory, teacher appraisal provides some opportunities to reward teaching performance, which can contribute to retaining effective teachers in schools and to making teaching an attractive career choice (OECD, 2005). In practice, however, schools appeared to have little room for manoeuvre to provide rewards and career opportunities to teachers identified as highly performing, and this challenge will need to be addressed (more on this below).

The appraisal cycle is firmly rooted in classroom observations and also draws on other evidence

The annual PRSD cycle involves two lesson observations, and the discussion of these observations between the teacher and the reviewer forms a key part of the appraisal process. This focus on observing classroom teaching is key to the improvement function of teacher appraisal.

Classroom observations are probably the most relevant source of information about teacher performance, as most aspects of teaching are displayed when teachers interact with their students. Only if teacher appraisal includes classroom observations, can it ensure that individual weaknesses are picked up and robustly addressed with suitable professional development action. Other indicators of teaching quality, such as lesson plans or teacher self-appraisal, are of course also important information, but they do not provide the same direct evidence as the observation of teachers in the classroom. Research indicates that if they involve high quality instruments and well-prepared observers, classroom observations are related to increases in student learning outcomes (Kane and Staiger, 2012; Kane *et al.*, 2010; Milanowski, 2004).

Alongside observation of classroom practice, the PRSD appraisal cycle monitors teachers' performance and progress in several ways, for example: objective setting, teacher self-appraisal, dialogue between the teacher and the reviewer, and analysis of documents such as the teachers' files and lesson plans. Drawing on several sources of information in this way provides opportunities to analyse different aspects of the teachers' work and to obtain a more comprehensive picture of his or her abilities (Goe *et al.*, 2008; Peterson, 1987; Rockoff and Speroni, 2011).

A consistent central model that provides flexibility at the local level

The PRSD provides a consistent model of appraisal for all teachers across Northern Ireland, with a common competence model and a structured review cycle to be followed in all schools. This approach has the advantage of ensuring that appraisals are systematically implemented across schools and that all teachers receive feedback on their performance. The central requirements also ensure that the appraisal process is followed up with action plans for individual and school development.

At the same time, the process is sensitive to local contexts. The appraisal cycle is organised at the school level and takes into account the school context, with internal school reviewers. While the teacher competence model provides guidance on overall

competences to be achieved, teachers and their reviewers also agree on three personal objectives that are relevant to the individual teacher and the school. The PRSD process monitors the teachers' progress in relation to these objectives. Classroom observations are mandatory, however schools are free to draw on other evidence of teacher performance as they see fit. As teachers have to respond to different needs depending on local conditions, it makes sense that schools are given a degree of flexibility and freedom in the implementation of appraisal processes.

Teacher appraisal is well connected to school self-evaluation and school development

Analysis from the OECD's *Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)*¹ suggests that school evaluations can be an essential component of an evaluative framework; fostering and potentially shaping teacher appraisal and feedback (OECD, 2009). Given that both school evaluation and teacher appraisal have the objectives of maintaining standards and improving student performance, there are likely to be great benefits from synergies between school evaluation and teacher appraisal processes.

The Northern Ireland teacher appraisal model stands out in its clear intention to articulate teacher appraisal, school self-evaluation and school development. The teacher appraisal process is strongly school-based and one or two of the three personal objectives teachers set in their appraisal are typically school-wide objectives. The appraisal model also emphasises that the identified professional development needs of teachers should feed into the overall school development plan. These identified individual needs are then likely to feed into the priorities addressed in school development activities.

In the schools visited by the OECD Review team, the classroom observations conducted as part of the PRSD cycle typically focussed on how teachers implemented school-wide priority issues in their own classroom teaching. In addition, most schools are structured in curriculum areas, with curriculum area heads typically working together with teachers to determine strategies and monitor progress for their particular curriculum area. This may involve informal observation, coaching and mentoring for individual teachers in the context of developing a particular curricular area within the school.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), in its external school evaluations, also provides an external view and feedback on teaching quality in the school as a whole. While it is not the ETI's role to evaluate individual teachers, inspectors do observe the teaching practice of almost every teacher in a given school and provide individual formative feedback to teachers in relation to how their teaching fits within the overall strategy and objectives of the school. The regular monitoring of schools by their Boards of Governors should validate the effectiveness of the teacher appraisal processes in place.

Involvement of teachers and their representative bodies

The involvement of teachers and their representative bodies in setting teaching standards and designing teacher appraisal approaches is essential for ensuring that such processes are effective and relevant for the teaching profession. Participation recognises teachers' professionalism, the importance of their skills and experience, and the extent of their responsibilities (Hess and West, 2006). If teacher appraisal models are developed in close co-operation with teachers and teacher professional organisations, teachers are more likely to feel ownership of the appraisal cycle and be open to receiving feedback and being appraised. A widely agreed appraisal model provides the school leadership with a

powerful tool to engage their staff in discussions about teaching quality and improvement.

In Northern Ireland, the teacher appraisal model was developed in close consultation with the teachers' representative organisations. Teachers' pay and conditions of service are discussed in the Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC), which comprises the employing authorities/employer representatives, the Department of Education, and five teachers' trade unions. The TNC is also in charge of negotiating and setting the procedures for teacher appraisal. The PRSD scheme was introduced in 2005 after formal agreement to its procedures by all stakeholders and it is reviewed every two years in conjunction with the recognised teachers' unions. Other procedures concerned with reviewing teachers' performance are also set up and reviewed in close collaboration with the teachers' unions. For example, the new *Procedure for Supporting Effective Teaching in Schools* (see above) was reviewed by a working group set up by a Joint Working Party of the TNC (DENI, 2013).

In addition, the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) was established through the 1998 (NI) Order and came into being in 2002 as an independent, professional and regulatory body for teachers. It provides an "authoritative research-informed voice on behalf of the profession on all matters relating to teaching" (GTCNI, 2013). The Council is in charge of establishing and promoting professional standards for teachers, developing and applying a code of professional practice for teachers, professional registration of teachers, accrediting education courses for teachers and pre-service teachers, and working closely with government and employers to promote continuous professional learning by teachers (GTCNI, 2013). The development of the teacher competence model by a professional body for teachers is a strength of the Northern Ireland approach.

The ETI's move to involving senior teachers in inspection visits as Associate Assessors (Chapter 5) further contributes to enhancing teachers' participation in Northern Ireland's overall evaluation and assessment framework, and to strengthening teachers' voice in the external evaluation of schools. While the programme was initially targeted mostly at principals and vice-principals, the ETI has increasingly opened up this experience to senior teachers. The Associate Assessors interviewed by the OECD review team identified this as a great opportunity to feed into external school evaluation processes and develop their own teaching and leadership skills.

A coherent approach to teacher education and professional development

Providing appraisal and feedback to teachers is only effective in enhancing teaching quality if it is connected to suitable professional learning opportunities for teachers. In Northern Ireland, teacher education and professional development are conceptualised as an integrated process of learning throughout the teacher career. This process comprises four key stages that are seen as part of a continuum: (i) initial teacher education; (ii) induction; (iii) early professional development; and (iv) continuing professional development, collaborative practice and school improvement. The teacher competence model, which sets out the competencies expected of teachers at each stage, is designed to provide coherence across these different stages of learning.

A strong focus on supporting beginning teachers

Research from different countries points to the importance of providing feedback and support to beginning teachers (OECD, 2010; 2012). At this early stage of a teachers'

career, it is particularly important to ensure teachers can work in a well-supported environment and receive frequent feedback and mentoring. Most high-performing education systems require their beginning teachers to undertake a mandatory period of probation or induction during which they receive regular support and can confirm their competence to move on to the next stage of the teaching career (OECD, 2010).

The attention to supporting beginning teachers is a particular strength of the Northern Ireland approach. Upon completion of initial teacher education, a “career entry profile” is established for each beginning teacher, outlining his or her strengths and areas for further development in relation to the competence model. When taking on a first teaching position, there is a formal one-year induction period to help teachers address the personal and professional needs and objectives identified in their career entry profile. The induction period involves a programme of both centre-based and school-based professional support provided by the CASS service of each ELB. The Board of Governors, upon recommendation of the school principal, approves the teacher’s completion of the induction period and the GTCNI holds a record of completion of induction.

As part of the induction process, teachers prepare a personal action plan, which forms the basis of a two-year period of Early Professional Development (EPD). This phase involves within-school support by a “teacher tutor” and the ELBs’ CASS. It is aimed at helping beginner teachers further develop and consolidate their competences. When the beginning teacher and teacher-tutor agree that all the criteria for EPD have been met, they will seek confirmation by the school principal. The Board of Governors approves the completion of EPD, based on the recommendation of the principal and a final reflection document produced by the teacher concerned.

The early teacher education and development phases are further strengthened through the *Teacher Education Partnership Handbook*, which provides guidance to all those involved in the process, including student teachers, beginning teachers, teacher tutors, ELBs and higher education institutions (Eurypedia, 2013).

The availability of teacher tutors in each school is an important element in facilitating the transition of teachers from initial education into full-time teaching at a school. Teacher tutors are responsible for placement and care of student teachers in a school. They are typically senior teachers who can draw on their own experience to support beginning teachers through their first years of teaching. The tutors are expected to hold regular meetings with beginning teachers, draw up action plans, assist in lesson planning, observe classroom practice, review progress and provide general support to help the beginning teacher reflect upon his or her practice and improve classroom teaching. Tutors can play a key role in helping beginning teachers understand existing standards, self-appraise their practice and use feedback from others to review and improve their practice.

Research indicates that beginning teachers benefit from such tutoring programmes as long as tutors are carefully selected, well prepared for their tasks, and given adequate time to carry out their tutoring role (Hobson et al., 2009; OECD, 2010; Santiago *et al.*, 2013). However, it is important to note that among TALIS countries there is no quantitatively important relationship between the existence of a formal induction/mentoring process and the frequency of teacher appraisal in their first two years at school (OECD, 2009). If the purpose of induction and EPD is to strengthen observation and feedback mechanisms for beginning teachers, it is important to make such elements an explicit and expected part of the programme.

Good attention to continuing professional development

While there is no legal minimum requirement for the number of hours or days of professional development, there are a number of arrangements to ensure it is relevant and continuously undertaken by teachers. First, teachers have a professional duty to review their teaching methods and participate in arrangements for in-service training. Second, the PRSD scheme is designed to identify and address teachers' professional development needs. Third, teachers are also required to be available for work under the direction of the principal on five days outside regular teaching hours (Eurypedia, 2013).

Continuing professional development can take different forms. In the schools visited by the OECD review team, there were typically ten days foreseen in the school calendar, during which the school was closed to students and the staff were able to focus on whole-school development and training. This strong focus on school-based professional development allows schools to develop close links between individual teacher professional development and overall school development. Typically, the professional development needs of individual teachers identified through the PRSD feed into the overall school development plan, and this in turn will influence the shape and focus of whole-school professional development days. Beyond the ten formal school development days, schools appear to engage in a range of more informal arrangements for within-school professional development. An analysis of responses to the GTCNI's surveys in 2006 and 2010 indicates that in-school professional learning activities had increased considerably during these years. The proportion of respondents indicating participation in team teaching had increased from 6% to 28%, lesson observation from 4% to 58%, mentoring and support from 0.3% to 40%, and curriculum planning and development from 21% to 80%.

Other forms of professional development include collaboration across inter-school networks and activities offered by external providers. The ELBs' CASS, the CCEA and the RTU are by far the most frequent providers of professional development. Higher education institutions, further education colleges and private providers play a much smaller role. The form and duration of external professional development programmes may vary from a few hours to several days to more intensive study. Some formal professional development programmes can lead to qualifications at Master's level. Participation of teachers in such offers depends on the professional development needs of teachers and the resources available in the school (Eurypedia, 2013).

The ETI's initiative to invite practising senior teachers and school leadership staff as Associate Assessors in their inspection visits (Chapter 5) is another new form of professional learning available for teachers. While this initiative benefits the quality of inspections by bringing the view of current school staff into inspection visits, it is also an excellent opportunity for the teachers participating as Associate Assessors to learn from other schools, develop their own competencies, and reflect about effective teaching.

Ensuring coherence in teacher professional learning across a teacher's career is an important priority for the Department of Education. Following a public consultation and the completion of several commissioned studies, the Department of Education was preparing a new strategy for the future direction of teacher professional development at the time of the OECD review visit.

Challenges

The competence standards are not used as a common reference for teacher appraisal

While the teacher competence standards appear to be well established as a reference for initial teacher education, the OECD review team formed the impression that they were not generally carried forward into the practice, appraisal and review of regular teachers at more advanced stages of their career. The main references for the PRSD process are the three personal objectives set for each teacher at the school level. In addition, most schools appear to develop their own criteria and checklists for the observation of teaching practice. But none of the teachers interviewed by the OECD review team mentioned the competence model as a reference used for the PRSD, which risks weakening the alignment between initial teacher education, teacher registration, teacher appraisal, professional development, and career development that common reference standards seek to achieve.

Most reviewers involved in conducting PRSD processes for their peers have not received any training to appraise teachers in relation to the competence standards. Meaning that the point of reference of the reviewers tends to be their own teaching practice and experience rather than a deep understanding of the level of performance that can be achieved by the most effective teachers in relation to the dimensions set out in the competence standards. The lack of a common framework of references for the PRSD process is likely to weaken the capacity of reviewers to evaluate teachers in the annual review cycle. While some schools have developed their own standards and criteria based on local practice, for teacher appraisal to be effective across the system it is important that all reviewers have a shared understanding of high quality teaching.

The competence standards do not appear to inform the design and offer of continuing professional development and further education for teachers leading up to the Master's level. Representatives of the initial teacher education institutions were unhappy with the lack of coherence between initial teacher education and the continuing professional development offer for teachers.

The role of registration in the teacher career is not clear

Currently, the teacher registration process appears to serve a limited purpose. Among the teachers interviewed by the OECD review team, it was seen as a mere bureaucratic requirement they had to complete upon graduation from initial teacher education. Registration does not involve a professional appraisal or attestation of teachers' actual competences, and it does not correspond to a step within the teacher's career. All teachers having completed their initial education will be granted access to registration if they follow the required administrative procedure and annually renew the payment of a £44 registration fee. Hence for individual teachers, the registration process appeared mechanistic and of little relevance to their professional and career development.

The main function of registration seems to be to collect system level information on the teaching profession. The aggregation of data in the teacher register allows the GTCNI to obtain accurate information about the composition and characteristics of the teaching profession. This constitutes a key source of information for the development of teacher policy. The register also provides schools with access to qualification data on individual teachers, which facilitates recruitment processes and ensures that new recruits are adequately qualified for their post. While these functions are important and valuable in

their own right, there is room to further embed registration processes in wider teacher policies that benefit teachers' career development.

There are variations in the implementation of PRSD

There is a requirement in Northern Ireland that all teachers go through processes of regular performance review as part of the PRSD cycle. The OECD review team formed the impression that this requirement is largely being met. However, since schools have flexibility in the implementation of the PRSD cycle, there is potential for wide variations in the design of teacher appraisal practice at the school level.

The quality of PRSD and other arrangements for teacher appraisal and feedback largely depends on the commitment and capacity of individual school principals. Principals not only act as reviewers for vice-principals and middle management staff, but they are also responsible for the effective implementation of PRSD across the whole school. As described above, there has been a considerable focus on building leadership capacity across Northern Ireland in recent years. However, there are indications that more time and investment is necessary to ensure that all school principals provide effective human resource management and pedagogical leadership. According to the 2012 Chief Inspector's report, the quality of leadership and management in the primary schools inspected had improved by 10 percentage points since the previous report (2010), but it was still not considered good enough in 22% of primary schools and 39% of post-primary schools inspected in the reporting period.

Peer reviewers play a key role in implementing teacher appraisal. Teachers interviewed by the OECD Review team conveyed that the quality and extent of feedback they received depended considerably on the capacity and effectiveness of their individual reviewers. The experiences related by teachers to the OECD review team illustrate the wide range of different experiences with PRSD. Several teachers referred to PRSD as a "light touch" model, an approach that does not harm the routine organisation of schools, but with limited impact on teaching practice. This appeared to be related in part to the reluctance of reviewers to exercise professional judgement and make critical observations.

The responsibilities for evaluating other teachers are typically designated based on the hierarchy of the school, with teachers in senior positions (heads of department, curriculum area heads, form teachers) taking responsibility for reviews of their colleagues. Most peer reviewers involved in conducting PRSD have not been specifically trained or prepared for this function, which may reduce their willingness and capacity to evaluate their peers and provide guidance for improvement. As reviewers are typically colleagues of the reviewee, they are mindful of preserving a good school climate and positive working relationships with their colleagues. Hence, feedback was sometimes conceptualised as giving recognition and praise to the reviewee rather than providing constructive criticism and identifying areas for development. In some cases, the reviewers did not have the needed legitimacy in the eyes of reviewees to be perceived as a credible source of feedback. While seniority is an important criterion to be designated as reviewer, it does not necessarily determine whether a teacher is well placed to evaluate others.

In the GTCNI's 2010 survey, 66% of teachers expressed generally positive comments about PRSD reviewers, but a substantial minority expressed concerns. There was also a very mixed picture regarding the usefulness of the PRSD in improving teaching practice: 35% of teachers indicated that classroom observation feedback as part of the PRSD process was helpful in developing their teaching proficiency, while almost as many

respondents (33%) reported that this was not the case, and 24% were “not sure”. Some teachers interviewed by the OECD review team indicated that classroom observations were more useful for the reviewer in terms of learning from other teachers’ practice than for the reviewee.

Making time available for classroom observation and review was another concern, especially in primary schools where principals are typically teaching principals, and other members of the leadership team have full teaching loads. Partly due to the lack of time available, the PRSD process was sometimes limited to two announced 30-minute observations per year and perceived as a bureaucratic process rather than a professional dialogue. In the GTCNI’s 2010 survey, when asked to suggest how the PRSD process could be improved, one of the common themes mentioned by teachers was the need for the process to be less time-consuming, or for additional time to be made available to conduct the process properly.

Teacher appraisal may not focus sufficiently on individual professional development needs

Linking teacher appraisal to individual professional development is a challenge for many countries across the OECD. Among the teachers surveyed in TALIS, over 40% reported that they did not receive suggestions for improving aspects of their work and 44% agreed that teachers’ work was reviewed merely to fulfil an administrative requirement. According to the reports of principals in TALIS, only 56.6% of teachers were in schools where the identification of a specific weakness in teacher appraisal leads always or most of the time to establishing a professional development plan for the teacher.

As described above, the Northern Ireland approach to teacher performance reviews is very closely linked to whole-school evaluation and development. While this is a strength in terms of achieving synergies between teacher appraisal, school evaluation and school improvement, it also carries some risks for the effectiveness of individual teacher appraisal and the identification of individual training needs.

Several stakeholders interviewed by the OECD review team found that the PRSD process was more useful for school leadership and whole-school planning than for the improvement of teaching quality in the classroom. In the schools visited by the OECD review team, the teachers’ individual objectives were very much influenced by the School Development Plan. For example, if the focus of the SDP was on developing ICT competency across the school or on implementing a new literacy strategy, these objectives were likely to be translated into the PRSD objectives of all teachers, with the consequent classroom observations focussing almost exclusively on how teachers were implementing these school-wide strategies.

While the focus on whole-school development is commendable and should be maintained, there is a need for individual teacher appraisals to also evaluate the teacher’s practice in relation to wider indicators of “good teaching” and to consider the reviewees’ individual needs and priorities. Otherwise, teachers might be missing out on a genuine review of their pedagogical practice. There is a risk that the focus on a limited number of whole-school priorities reduces the relevance of the PRSD process to individual teachers, with the related danger that individual needs might be overlooked. When asked in the GTCNI’s 2010 survey how their professional development needs could be better determined, over half of the respondents suggested that there was a need to better “meet individual needs” (55%) and to “provide specific and relevant training” (51%).

There is no external validation of teacher appraisal processes

Teacher appraisal through the PRSD is school-based and does not involve agents external to the school. While Boards of Governors have the role of validating school-based teacher appraisal processes, the information regarding the individual objectives and performance of teachers is not always shared with the governors, and the extent and quality of the Boards of Governors' involvement is very variable. Individual Boards of Governors may not have a clear understanding of the level of teaching performance that can be achieved by the most successful schools in order to assess the standards applied in teacher appraisal in their school. Moreover, the ETI does not have the possibility to check and validate schools' approaches to PRSD in any systematic way. While schools can volunteer to share information regarding their appraisal processes, the ETI cannot request access to such information.

The limited extent of external involvement in teacher appraisal raises some challenges. Teachers are appraised in relation to locally set objectives, using school-based criteria and indicators. As mentioned above, the competence standards, which could provide some consistency in appraisal processes across Northern Ireland, do not seem to be widely used for the PRSD process. There is therefore likely to be considerable inconsistency in the nature and rigour of the kind of judgements made in PRSD processes. Many reviewers are making their own judgements in isolation, with the consequent danger that they are either reluctant to provide substantial feedback or that they might be out-of-line and perhaps too limited in expectation in comparison with standards being applied in the best performing schools.

Given the absence of a school-external component in teacher appraisal, teachers do not have the opportunity to gain an independent or external validation of their competences. They are entirely dependent on local capacity to benefit from opportunities to improve their practice, see their professional development recognised and gain greater responsibility as they evolve in the profession. The involvement of some externality in teacher appraisal could provide an element of consistency and rigour by providing an external validation of school-based approaches to teacher appraisal. This is particularly relevant because the PRSD process can be linked to advancement in the teaching career and salary scales, which are determined centrally. In this context, an external check of school-based practices can help ensure fairness and consistency in the PRSD process and the use of its results for career advancement.

Limited use of results to inform career progression

Providing attractive career pathways for teachers is a challenge in teacher policy around the world. Findings from TALIS show that in most countries, the link between teacher appraisal and career advancement remains weak. Across TALIS countries, only 16.2% of teachers indicated that the appraisal and/or feedback they received led to a moderate or large change in the likelihood of their career advancement, and only 26.7% reported that it led to changes in work responsibilities that made their job more attractive (OECD, 2009).

The OECD review team formed the view that the PRSD scheme is currently more successful at informing the professional development of teachers rather than their career progression. In the GTCNI's 2010 survey, 59% of the respondents indicated that PRSD was "not at all" helping them to think about wider career aspirations. Only 42% felt that it had increased their participation in decision making and career planning, and 34% found that it had enhanced their morale and motivation. Stakeholders interviewed by the OECD

review team indicated that there were few possibilities to use the PRSD process to motivate, promote or incentivise strong performance. The PRSD was widely seen as a routine annual cycle to validate satisfactory performance of teachers, rather than as a motivating and rewarding system.

The nationally agreed career and salary structure appears to provide little flexibility for school principals to recognise and reward strong performance. While the Upper Pay Scale was originally created to allow school principals to incentivise and reward strong performance, currently almost all teachers who apply for “threshold assessment” have been successful in moving to the Upper Pay Scale (DENI, 2013). There is little budget for school principals to differentiate salaries according to the accomplishments of individual teachers. The absence of a clearly designed career structure is likely to undermine the potentially powerful links between teacher appraisal, professional development and career development.

A number of Teaching Allowances exist for teachers taking on substantial extra responsibilities (Box 4.1). At individual school level, the Board of Governors is required to adopt and keep under review a management structure appropriate to the needs and circumstances of the school, indicating the responsibilities attached to each position and the level of salary/teaching allowances each position attracts. However, the award of such positions and allowances is not typically linked to an appraisal of teachers’ performance in relation to the competence standards.

Uncertainty about the effectiveness of teacher appraisal in identifying underperformance

Another important purpose of teacher appraisal systems internationally is to provide a mechanism to identify weaknesses in teacher performance and ensure that underperformance is adequately addressed. However, results from TALIS indicate that the use of teacher appraisal to address underperformance is not widespread. On average across TALIS countries, 51.0% of principals indicated that they would never report a teachers’ underperformance to another body to take action. TALIS data also shows that a substantial number of teachers across countries had the perception that sustained underperformance is not necessarily addressed: only 23.1% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the school principal in their school would take steps to alter the monetary rewards of a persistently underperforming teacher, and only 27.9% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that in their school, teachers would be dismissed because of sustained poor performance.

In Northern Ireland, there is a formal procedure for dealing with unsatisfactory work (see above); however, little information is available on how schools use teacher appraisal and the PRSD cycle to identify underperformance. Since classroom observations appear to focus primarily on how specific school-wide priorities are implemented in the classroom, there are some doubts about whether these observations are a sufficient mechanism to ensure that weaknesses are picked up and swiftly addressed. This highlights the timeliness and expectations of the new procedures to deal with underperforming teachers and school principals. Its impact and effectiveness will partly depend on the capacity of school principals, Boards of Governors and the ETI to identify teachers facing difficulties in a timely and sensitive manner so that the Procedure can be invoked as appropriate.

Concerns about the availability of professional learning opportunities for teachers

Among many of the stakeholders interviewed by the OECD review team, there was a degree of dissatisfaction with the current model for providing continuing professional development for teachers. The main concerns are summarised below:

- Teacher and school leadership representatives interviewed by the review team considered that there were a lack of professional development opportunities for teachers. There were concerns that some important areas of professional practice were not covered by available offers, and that provision was often too focussed on the technical and functional implementation of central initiatives rather than on deep professional learning. There was also an impression that external training was often disconnected from the particular context and challenges of an individual school.
- Representatives of initial teacher training institutions explained that despite the coherent design of professional learning as a continuum across the career (see above), the continuing professional development of teachers was in fact disconnected from professional learning in the early years of a teachers' career. The provision of CPD is typically not informed by the teacher competence standards, and there are no formal or systematic links between institutions providing initial teacher education and the professional development that takes place in schools.
- At the central level, there was concern that the past model of free provision of training through the ELBs' CASS, the CCEA and the RTU had not been meeting the training needs of schools in a cost-effective way. In the context of fiscal constraints and pressures on educational budgets, the general direction was therefore to downsize significantly the supply of professional development provided by these bodies, while refocusing available resources on professional support for schools that are underperforming.

At the time of the OECD Review visit, an important change was foreseen in the landscape of professional development providers. With the implementation of the ESA in autumn 2013, it is planned that the ELBs' professional development services will merge into a single service provider for professional development across Northern Ireland. While this development has potential benefits in terms of ensuring a coherent provision of professional development across the region, at the time of the OECD Review visit there was considerable uncertainty around the form the new school support service would take.

As schools typically do not have a dedicated training budget and the market of private training provision is relatively limited in Northern Ireland, there is little tradition of schools freely choosing from a wide offer of professional development opportunities. Beyond the 2010 GTCNI survey, there is no national-level information regarding the participation levels of teachers in professional development offers, with the general perception being that fewer teachers had been able to access external professional development more recently, and that a greater part of professional learning was expected to take place within schools.

Collaboration between schools has great potential for school improvement on a wider scale (Pont et al., 2008). There are indications that teachers in Northern Ireland appreciate this form of professional learning as the GTCNI's 2010 survey shows that outside of their

own schools, the type of professional development that teachers considered to be of the most benefit was “networking with colleagues (including online)” (29% for first and second ranking combined). However, in the Northern Ireland context, schools competing against each other to attract students (Chapter 1) may create barriers to inter-school collaboration.

Policy options

This section presents a set of policy options that aim to draw on current strengths in teacher appraisal policies and address identified challenges:

- Strengthen the role of GTCNI as an independent professional body
- Review the teacher competence model
- Establish a competence-based career structure for teachers
- Conceive registration as career-progression appraisal
- Maintain and consolidate PRSD processes for regular developmental appraisal of teachers
- Ensure that teacher appraisal is followed up with adequate professional learning opportunities
- Collect system-level information on teacher appraisal practices

Strengthen the role of GTCNI as an independent professional body

Several stakeholders voiced concerns about the visibility and legitimacy of the GTCNI as a professional body for teachers. The GTCNI is a small organisation of seventeen staff, of which three are administrative staff and seven are working on the registration team. Teachers associated the Council mostly with the requirement to pay an annual fee and with the mandatory registration process, which does not have much impact on the professional or career development of individual teachers.

According to the Department of Education, the Council does not currently hold the legislative powers necessary to regulate the teaching profession in an independent manner (Department of Education and Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland, 2012). Its current position as not fully independent from the government might lead teachers to perceive the GTCNI as a government body, with potentially detrimental effects on its credibility as a professional body. The Department of Education has proposed to amend the existing GTCNI legislation to provide greater independence for the Council. In the Minister of Education’s statement to the Assembly on 6 November 2012, he emphasised his commitment to strengthening the role of the General Teaching Council as the professional body in supporting teachers and in upholding the highest professional standards (DENI, 2013). A consultation regarding this proposal was conducted in early 2013 (Department of Education and Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland, 2012).

The renewed and strengthened role of the GTCNI has the potential to enhance the Council’s role as a fully-fledged professional body, establishing coherence across teacher professional learning and career advancement. Beyond changes in its status, the GTCNI will need to provide strong leadership and a vision for the teaching profession. This could involve the revision of the teacher competence standards to reflect different roles and responsibilities of teachers in schools, the design of a competence-based teacher career

structure, and the further development of registration processes to involve an appraisal of competences at key stages of the teacher career. These suggestions will be described in more detail below.

Review the teacher competence model

A framework of teaching standards is an important reference point for teacher appraisal. While competence standards for teachers exist and are widely used in initial teacher education in Northern Ireland, their use for regular appraisal and professional development in schools is limited. To ensure coherence between initial teacher education, registration, appraisal and professional development, it is essential to promote the wider use of the competence standards that underlie all of these processes as a working document in schools.

To understand why schools are not currently using the competence standards for internal appraisal and PRSD, it would be helpful to conduct a thematic review on the use of teaching standards and criteria by schools. This would help understand how the central standards are currently viewed and used, what are seen as most powerful and productive elements, what issues it raises for effective teacher appraisal, what additional checklists and criteria schools have developed themselves, and how the competence model might be simplified or further developed. The ETI appears well placed to collect such information from schools. It would then be the role of the GTCNI to use the results of the review to revise the teaching standards in close collaboration with stakeholders in schools.

It would be useful to develop clearer descriptions of the competencies necessary for different roles and career steps for teachers. This would not necessarily require different standards across stages of the teaching career, but could involve a single set of standards with appraisal criteria specific to distinct career levels. Such a revision of the competence standards would help recognise the variety of responsibilities in today's schools and the expertise developed while on the job. The description of competences should be complemented by criteria and illustrations of effective practice, to help make the standards operational for regular use in school-based teacher appraisal.

Establish a competence-based career structure for teachers

There is room to further develop the teacher career structure in Northern Ireland in order to recognise and reward teaching excellence and allow teachers to diversify their careers. Schools and teachers could benefit from a more elaborate career structure for teachers comprised of a number of key stages. Access to each of the key stages could be associated with a formal appraisal process through the teacher registration system (more on this below). An important policy objective should be to match the career structure for teachers with the different types and levels of expertise described in the revised teacher competence standards. This would strengthen the incentive for teachers to improve their competences and reinforce the matching between teachers' competences and the roles that need to be performed in schools to improve student learning.

Some countries link teacher assessments with opportunities for vertical promotions to school leadership positions. But the practice of linking outstanding teacher performance to promotions for school leadership positions may not respond well to the needs of most teachers, for two main reasons. First, a good teacher is not necessarily a good manager or leader and the skills required for teaching a classroom and managing a school are not the same. Second, this practice may have adverse effects on teaching quality within a school because, paradoxically, the best teachers are rewarded by being removed from classroom

teaching. To resolve this dilemma, some education systems have attempted to build career options for excellent teachers who wish to remain in the classroom (Box 4.2 provides examples from Singapore and Australia). When designing a career structure for teachers, education authorities should make sure that career pathways are varied with some teachers moving into leadership roles while others remain predominantly teaching in the classroom.

Box 4.2 Teacher career structures in Australia and Singapore

Australia: Advanced Skills Teaching positions

Teachers in Australia undergo appraisal, on a voluntary basis, to gain promotion positions in schools in recognition of quality teaching performance by applying for Advanced Skills Teaching positions (ASTs). These positions are linked to higher pay and are generally associated with further responsibilities and specific roles in schools. In most cases, teachers do not have to be at the top of the salary scale to apply for these positions, which entails a thorough assessment of their performance. Advanced Skills Teaching positions, which exist in almost all educational jurisdictions, for the most part accomplish two important functions: the recognition of advanced teaching skills with a formal position and additional pay; and a better match between teachers' skills and the roles and responsibilities needed in schools through competitions to gain the positions. These have the benefit of rewarding teachers who choose to remain in the classroom rather than to move into management positions.

AST positions embody two key concepts in the teaching profession in Australia. First, they recognise the need to introduce career diversification as a result of the greater variety of roles in schools – e.g. departmental head, team leader, and manager of curriculum development and/or personnel development. Second, they reflect the need to reward teachers for their developing skills, performance and responsibilities, in what constitutes a competency-based professional career ladder. Teachers, as they access AST positions, are expected to have deeper levels of knowledge, demonstrate more sophisticated and effective teaching, take on responsibility for co-curricular aspects of the school, assist colleagues and so on. Access to AST positions involves formal appraisal processes which are more summative in nature.

- **New South Wales** introduced the Highly Accomplished Teacher (HAT) position in July 2009. The HAT position is an initiative of the Smarter Schools National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality. A HAT is an excellent teacher who models high-quality teaching for his/her colleagues across the school and leads other teachers in the development and refinement of their teaching practice to improve student learning outcomes. HAT positions are classroom-based positions with a reduced teaching allocation to enable them to mentor other teachers, including student teachers, beginning and more experienced teachers, work with university partners and take a role in the school's leadership team. HATs are appointed through a merit selection process which requires, as a prerequisite, application to the NSW Institute of Teachers for consideration of accreditation at Professional Accomplishment or Professional Leadership. These positions are two-year appointments and are limited to 100 positions over the life of the National Partnerships.
- The **Northern Territory's** Accomplished Teacher status requires applicants to participate in an "inquiry process" over 12 months, based on the Northern Territory Teacher Registration Board Accomplished Standards of Professional Practice for Teaching. The assessment of performance is undertaken by assessment panels and moderation committees and includes the appraisal of teaching modelling and role in curriculum and professional learning. This process was being reviewed in 2011.

Box 4.2 Teacher career structures in Australia and Singapore (*continued*)

- In **Tasmania**, the Advanced Skills Teacher position recognises outstanding classroom teachers and leading staff members. It is targeted at teachers recognised as exemplary practitioners, who are accorded additional responsibilities within their school. It is a promotion available to any permanent teacher who satisfies the application process, operating in a similar way to a salary increment. Positions are advertised by individual schools on a needs basis.
- The **Victorian** school system includes one promotional appointment for those teachers who want to remain in the classroom: Leading Teacher. The programme is intended to serve the dual purpose of recognising outstanding classroom teachers; and providing schools with a human resource to lead various in-school programmes and projects. Schools advertise for Leading Teacher positions on a needs basis – the position is usually associated with a specific anticipated responsibility. The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development aims to maintain a Leading Teacher profile of 10 to 15% of full-time teaching staff.

Singapore: Linking teacher appraisal to career pathways

The Education Service Professional Development and Career Plan (Edu-Pac) in Singapore recognises that teachers have different interests and aspirations and provides three different career tracks for teachers:

- The **Teaching Track** allows teachers to remain in the classroom and advance to the levels of Senior Teacher, Lead Teacher or Master Teacher. This provides an opportunity for teachers to focus on classroom teaching while obtaining a leadership role along with a senior-level salary.
- The **Leadership Track** provides opportunity for teachers to take on leadership positions within the school or at the Ministry of Education.
- The **Senior Specialist Track** allows teachers to join the Ministry of Education’s headquarters and as specialists with particular expertise in specific aspects of education.

The Enhanced Performance Management System (EPMS) serves to support teachers’ professional and career development and its results inform promotion decisions as part of Edu-Pac. The EPMS process involves performance planning, performance coaching and performance appraisal. Performance planning involves a teacher self-appraisal and a discussion with the teachers’ reporting officer (typically a Head of Department) about target setting and performance benchmarking. Performance coaching is ongoing and includes a formal mid-year review between the teacher and the reporting officer. Finally, the performance appraisal at the end of the year includes an appraisal interview and a rating of actual performance against planned performance. Teachers are appraised based on actual achievement as well as potential for future performance. Decisions on the teacher’s “current estimated potential” are made in consultation with senior colleagues of the teacher based on observation, dialogue, portfolio evidence and the teacher’s contributions to the school and its environment. The final performance grade affects the annual performance bonus received for the year’s work as well as promotions to the next level of the career pathway.

Sources:

Lee, C.K. and M.Y. Tan (2010), *Rating Teachers and Rewarding Teacher Performance: The Context of Singapore*, Paper presented at APEC Conference on Replicating Exemplary Practices in Mathematics Education, Koh Samui, Thailand, 7-12 March 2010.

Weinstein, T. L. and K. S. Struthers (2012), “Similar Demands, Different Responses: Teacher Evaluation in the United Kingdom and Singapore”, *Educational Policy Analysis and Strategic Research*, Vol. 7, No. 1, International Association of Educators, Urbana, IL.

Conceive registration as career-progression appraisal

As described above, teacher registration does not currently constitute a major step in the teacher's career. To make registration meaningful for teachers, it could have a main purpose of holding teachers accountable for their practice and determining advancement in their teaching career. This redefinition of teacher registration would convey the message that registration is not merely a formality and that reaching high standards of competence is the main road to career advancement in the profession.

This would imply that registration should be based on a review of teachers' actual practice. One way of organising such a registration system would be to require graduates from initial teacher education to apply to be "provisionally registered" with the GTCNI in order to seek employment as a teacher. Provisionally registered teachers could then apply for full registration upon completion of their Induction and Early Professional Development Programme. Full registration should be linked to an appraisal in relation to the revised competence standards. Access to a promotion for fully registered teachers could be through a voluntary application process and teachers should be required to periodically renew their registration status when not applying for a promotion. Box 4.3 provides an example from Australia.

Box 4.3 Teacher registration in Australia

Registration is a requirement for teachers to teach in Australian schools, regardless of school sector. All states and territories have existing statutory teacher registration authorities responsible for registering teachers as competent for practice. The levels of teaching registration vary according to the jurisdiction. In most jurisdictions, teachers reach the first level of registration from the relevant authority upon graduation from an approved initial teacher education programme. Currently, each teacher registration authority has its own distinct set of standards for registration; however, from 2013 jurisdictions will be progressively introducing the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the Standards) which will provide a national measure for teachers' professional practice and knowledge. Advancement to full registration (or professional competence) is achieved after a period of employed teaching practice and, from 2013, an appraisal against the Standards at Proficient level.

In all states and territories, after teachers have initially become registered within their jurisdiction, they must renew their registration. The period of registration varies but is most commonly five years. The main function of the registration process is that of certifying teachers as fit for the profession mainly through the mandatory process of accessing or maintaining "Full/Competence" status – as such, these processes ensure minimum requirements for teaching are met by practising teachers. Registration processes constitute a powerful quality assurance mechanism to ensure that every school in Australia is staffed with teachers with suitable qualifications who meet prescribed standards for teaching practice. At their initial level (provisional/graduate registration), they also provide a policy lever for setting entrance criteria for the teaching profession and, through the accreditation of initial teacher education programmes, strengthen the alignment between initial teacher education and the needs of schools.

Source: Santiago, P., et al. (2011), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Australia 2011*, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing. doi: [10.1787/9789264116672-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264116672-en)

Appraisal for registration/career progression is summative in nature and would need to ensure that competence standards are consistently applied across schools and teachers.

This suggests that processes for registration and registration renewal should involve an element of externality. Appraisal for registration and registration renewal could be mostly a school-based process approved by the principal and the Board of Governors, but should include an external view, for example through an accredited external evaluator. This could be a teacher from another school with expertise in the same area as the teacher being appraised. External evaluators would receive specific training for this function, in particular in standards-based methods for appraising evidence of teacher performance, and would need to be accredited by the GTCNI for this function. The appraisal for registration and registration renewal should be firmly based on classroom observation and include reference to a range of evidence indicating effective teaching, such as teacher portfolios and evidence of student learning (Santiago and Benavides, 2009).

Such career-progression appraisal is also the basis for recognition and celebration of a teacher's work. It provides opportunities to recognise and reward teaching competence and performance, which is essential to retaining effective teachers in schools as well as in making teaching an attractive career choice (OECD, 2005). It does not directly link appraisal results with teacher pay but instead, to career progression, therefore establishing an indirect link with salaries. This is a desirable option as direct links between teacher performance and pay have produced mixed results according to the research literature (Harvey-Beavis, 2003; OECD, 2005). As such, appraisal for career progression (or teacher registration) would fulfil the function of formally recognising the knowledge, skills sets and experience acquired in the profession, which presupposes that teachers have access to the related professional development opportunities.

Maintain and consolidate PRSD processes for regular developmental appraisal of teachers

While PRSD was designed to achieve both developmental and accountability functions, experience to date indicates that its developmental function has been predominantly in practice. This is appropriate given that there are risks in combining developmental functions and high-stakes accountability functions in a single teacher appraisal process (Isoré, 2009). Teachers may be less open to reveal any problems or weaknesses in the appraisal process if it is connected to high-stakes consequences on their career or salary progression (Santiago and Benavides, 2009). This, in turn, can jeopardise the improvement function of the appraisal process. The OECD review team therefore recommends that the PRSD process retains its predominantly developmental character.

While the PRSD process overall is well designed and well accepted among stakeholders, the analysis above suggests that a few adjustments could further enhance its role in helping teachers improve their practice. First, while the process should be school-based and retain its close link to the School Development Plan, it should be underpinned by common reference standards of “good teaching” (the revised competence model discussed above) and not focus exclusively on the three personal objectives defined at the school level. There should be particular attention to the objective of improving the learning of all students, and particularly for groups identified as underperforming.

Second, peer reviewers should receive specific training for observing classroom practice and providing effective feedback for the improvement of teaching practice. Developing skills and competencies for teacher appraisal across the school system takes time and requires a substantial commitment from both education authorities and the main actors involved in teacher appraisal. Considerable time is needed for explanation of teacher appraisal; consensus building among stakeholders about the indicators and norms

that make up school or teacher quality; preparing and training of evaluators in terms of methodology, techniques and approaches; and providing time and resources for schools and teachers to implement and adapt processes at the school level (OECD, 2013). Box 4.4 provides examples from Chile and Portugal, two countries that also use peer reviewers for teacher appraisal.

Box 4.4 Building capacity for peer appraisal in Portugal and Chile

Teacher appraisal in **Portugal** relies almost entirely on peer appraisal. All key roles in teacher appraisal, including performance appraisal as well as co-ordination, counselling and pedagogical supervision, are exercised by teachers. To enhance capacity for appraisal at the school level, the Ministry of Education entered into a contract with a higher education institution as the managing organisation responsible for launching an in-service training system for teacher appraisal. In the first half of 2011, 50 teachers with a Master's degree in the field of evaluation were identified from Portugal's five educational regions to participate in specialised training on teacher appraisal including classroom observation. In this post-graduate training, particular emphasis was placed on classroom observation, as this was seen as the area that could have the greatest impact on improving teaching and learning. Upon completion of the training, it was expected that this first group of highly qualified teachers would be able to act as multipliers and provide training in teacher appraisal to other the teachers in their schools.

One of the characteristics of **Chile's** teacher appraisal approach (*Docentemás*) is the high involvement of practising teachers as evaluators. The participation of teachers at various stages of the appraisal process contributes to building ownership and appraisal competency among teachers and may also help them to understand and benefit from their own appraisal to a greater extent. Practising teachers can apply to two key roles in the appraisal process: (i) as evaluators of teacher portfolios in one of the centres set up for this purpose by *Docentemás* in various universities; and (ii) as peer evaluators who conduct peer interviews and participate in the municipal evaluation commissions. For both roles, intensive preparation processes have been set up to build the capacity of those selected. The portfolio evaluators are trained in a one-week training session, where they work together with specialists on concrete examples of different performance levels. The training sessions comprise individual and group work in which teachers discuss judgements about proficiency levels. This is followed by a test period where the evaluators apply what they have learned, internalise the portfolio evaluation processes and benefit from group discussion about the results. The peer evaluators are selected and trained by the national *Docentemás* team or the local university in charge of the process. Only teachers who have been previously rated as Outstanding or Proficient can apply to become peer evaluators. They receive training in two full-day seminars, during which they learn about the six questions to be asked in the interview and the rubrics to be applied in assigning performance levels. The training also includes exercises and feedback to the participants. At the end of this training phase, there is another selection process and not all of those initially selected will be retained as peer evaluators.

Sources:

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Third, in order to guarantee the systematic and coherent application of developmental appraisal through the PRSD, it would be important to ensure an external validation of school-based PRSD processes. One option is that school inspections performed by the

ETI in their evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning, include a review of the school's PRSD processes, holding the school principal and the Board of Governors accountable as necessary. This would ensure that minimum standards for developmental teacher appraisal are met and that every teacher receives regular professional feedback. An implication is that schools would need to document their PRSD processes to some extent.

Developmental appraisal (PRSD) and career progression appraisal (registration) should not be completely disconnected from each other. A possible link is that appraisal for teacher registration takes into account the regular qualitative appraisals produced through the PRSD process. This could be done, for example, through a portfolio bringing together the documentary evidence of performance provided by teachers throughout their PRSD cycles. Also, in spite of its emphasis on teacher development, the PRSD process should retain its function of identifying sustained underperformance with possible consequences for the maintenance of teacher registration and eligibility to salary increments.

Ensure that teacher appraisal is followed up with adequate professional learning opportunities

Without a clear link to professional growth opportunities, the impact of teacher appraisal on teaching and learning will be relatively limited (Goe et al., 2012). Where the appraisal is not followed up with professional development that is relevant to the individual teacher, the appraisal process may not be taken seriously or may encounter mistrust or apathy by the teachers being appraised (Danielson, 2001; Milanowski and Kimball, 2003; Margo et al., 2008). Ideally, teacher appraisal should result in tailored feedback for each teacher, which should be followed up with learning opportunities through professional development, mentoring or other means (Hill and Herlihy, 2011). The creation of the ESA provides an opportunity to review and reorganise the supply of support for teacher professional development and school development. Combining the ELBs' CASS services into a single provider for teacher professional development may allow a more consistent approach for teacher professional learning across the entire region, ensuring that all key areas of demand are covered through adequate training offers.

It is important to plan for innovative ways of organising the local delivery of learning opportunities and there is a need to envisage teachers' learning as something broader than participation in training courses. According to Timperley (2011), the term "professional development" is now mostly associated with the delivery of information to teachers in order to influence their practice. By contrast, the term "professional learning" refers more to an internal process in which teachers create professional knowledge through interaction with information in a way that challenges previous assumptions and creates new meanings. Alternative ways of professional learning could include the creation of "teaching schools" where practitioners visit other schools and exchange practical advice, action research and collaboration between schools within a geographical area.

However, in a context where schools are competing with each other for students, such collaboration is not likely to happen naturally or automatically. Mechanisms need to be in place to leverage school-based expertise and to motivate and reward good practice schools for sharing their practice and working with practitioners from other schools. The creation of Area Learning Communities appears to have greatly helped in strengthening collaboration and peer learning among the participating schools (see Chapter 1).

However, this initiative has so far been limited to post-primary schools and is focused on the implementation of the Entitlement Framework. Extending the Area Learning Communities approach to primary schools and widening the scope of collaboration activities has the potential to further enhance peer learning among schools. Such school networks should also be more strongly connected to different support agencies at the local level.

Collect system-level information on teacher appraisal practices

For the design of teacher policy, including approaches to teacher appraisal, it is important for policy makers and relevant agencies to have information about school-based processes for teacher appraisal. Even though the GTCNI conducts a four-yearly survey “Teachers’ Voice”, there are some information gaps. For example, little is known about the standards and criteria that reviewers use to appraise teachers as part of the PRSD process, or about the way the PRSD results are used to address underperformance. There are several options to collect such information. The ETI could conduct a thematic inspection about different forms of teacher appraisal at the school level. This could also help mobilise and disseminate school-based expertise and innovative approaches. Another option for Northern Ireland to consider is to participate in the OECD’s *Teaching and Learning International Survey* (TALIS), which collects teachers’ and school principals’ views on their working environment, in an international comparative perspective. TALIS focuses on lower secondary education and seeks to provide policy-relevant information on: how teachers’ work is appraised and the feedback they receive; teachers’ professional development; teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about teaching and their pedagogical activities; and the role and functioning of school leadership.

Notes

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- 1 TALIS is the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey, which was implemented in 2007-08, covering lower secondary education and with the participation of 23 countries (OECD, 2009). The results derived from TALIS are based on self-reports from teachers and principals and therefore represent their opinions, perceptions, beliefs and their accounts of their activities. Further information is available at www.oecd.org/edu/talis. The second cycle of TALIS (TALIS 2013) is being conducted in 2012-13.

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