

Chapter 4

DEVELOPING TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Summary

The pace of social change and the heightened expectations of schools have broadened and deepened teachers' roles. This chapter discusses the different approaches that countries are taking to develop teachers' knowledge and skills, and reviews promising initiatives in initial teacher education, induction, and professional development.

Countries benefit from clear and concise statements or profiles of what teachers are expected to know and be able to do. Such profiles are necessary to provide the framework to guide initial teacher education, teacher certification, teachers' on-going professional development and career advancement, and to assess the extent to which these different elements are being effective. The teacher profiles need to reflect the student learning objectives that schools are trying to achieve, and profession-wide understanding of what counts as accomplished teaching.

More flexible structures of initial teacher education are proving effective in opening up new routes into the teaching career. The stages of initial teacher education, induction and professional development need to be much better interconnected to create a lifelong learning framework for teachers. Initial teacher education must not only provide sound basic training in subject-matter knowledge, pedagogy related to subjects, and general pedagogical knowledge; it also needs to develop the skills for reflective practice and research on-the-job.

Countries are rethinking the role of field experiences in schools. These now tend to happen earlier in teacher education, and are framed to provide a broad experience of what it means to be a professional teacher. Well-structured and resourced induction programmes for new teachers are vitally important in ensuring a good start to the career.

Effective professional development is on-going, includes training, practice and feedback, and provides adequate time and follow-up support. Successful programmes involve teachers in learning activities that are similar to ones they will use with their students, and encourage the development of teachers' learning communities. There is growing interest in developing schools as learning organisations, and in ways for teachers to share their expertise and experience more systematically.