

Chapter 6

RETAINING EFFECTIVE TEACHERS IN SCHOOLS

Summary

Teacher policy needs to ensure that teachers work in an environment which facilitates success and that effective teachers wish to continue in teaching. This chapter reviews the trends that are raising concerns about retaining effective teachers in schools. It examines the policy tools that are potentially available to maintain effective teachers in schools, reviews the evidence on the main causal factors involved and develops policy options for countries to consider.

There is concern in a number of countries that the rates at which teachers are leaving their positions are compounding school staffing problems and leading to a loss of teaching expertise. However, countries also observe that a certain level of teacher attrition is inevitable and that a low rate of attrition does not necessarily indicate that all is well with teaching and the schools. Whether a given level of teacher attrition is a positive or a negative indicator will be influenced by which teachers are leaving and which ones are staying, and the factors that lie behind their decisions.

Although attractive salaries are clearly important in improving teaching's appeal, the analysis suggests that policy needs to address more than pay. Teachers place a lot of emphasis on the quality of their relations with students and colleagues, on feeling supported by school leaders, on good working conditions, and on opportunities to develop their skills.

There needs to be a stronger emphasis on teacher evaluation for improvement purposes which, while designed mainly to enhance classroom practice, would provide opportunities for teachers' work to be recognised and celebrated and help both teachers and schools to identify professional development priorities. It can also provide a basis for rewarding teachers for exemplary performance.

The analysis also reveals that the teaching career can benefit from greater diversification, which would help meet school needs and also provide more opportunities and recognition for teachers. Greater emphasis on school leadership would help address the need for teachers to feel valued and supported in their work. In addition, well-trained professional and administrative staff can help reduce the burden on teachers, better facilities for staff preparation and planning would help build collegiality, and more flexible working conditions, especially for more experienced teachers, would prevent career-burnout and retain important skills in schools.