

Teacher Evaluation in Portugal

Assessment and Conclusions

TEACHER EVALUATION IS NECESSARY AND HAS A KEY ROLE IN BOOSTING EDUCATION PERFORMANCE

- The current model of teacher evaluation in Portugal has been contentious but is necessary. It boosts education performance by emphasising high competence as a teacher.
- Previously, teachers moved through the career structure mainly on years of service without any connection to effective teaching practice. Yet Portugal's outcomes in international surveys remain well below OECD average.
- Implementation of the evaluation model has been challenging for several reasons. Resistance from teachers also reflects difficulties in rapidly operationalising a comprehensive model and some unintended consequences.
- Nonetheless, placing teacher evaluation at the core of school reforms has also generated a large consensus among the teaching profession that meaningful teacher evaluation is indispensable.

THE CURRENT MODEL PROVIDES A GOOD FOUNDATION FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

- In moving forward, the strengths of the model should be maintained and the weaker points addressed. Valuable expertise developed in schools during the current implementation process should not be lost.
- The current model is comprehensive, includes most domains of teacher performance, a wide range of sources of data, provides for more than one evaluator and has a peer-review element. But it aims to achieve both improvement and accountability (career progression) objectives through a single process that is mostly internal to the school.
- Two key tensions in the current model -- between evaluation for improvement and evaluation for career progression; and between school-level evaluation and national-level consequences -- could be resolved through an interlocking approach that would:
 - Strengthen evaluation for improvement through a component mainly dedicated to developmental evaluation
 - Lighten the current model and use it predominantly for career-progression evaluation
 - Provide links between developmental evaluation and career-progression evaluation
 - Ensure appropriate articulation between school evaluation and teacher evaluation

STRENGTHEN TEACHER EVALUATION FOR IMPROVEMENT PURPOSES

- Teacher evaluation should emphasise continuous improvement of teaching practices in the school. Using the same model concurrently for accountability can undermine its effective use as an important tool to foster improvement. Having a component of evaluation for developmental purposes fully within the school would avoid this risk.
- Developmental evaluation is consistent with school autonomy and the pedagogical responsibilities of school directors. It reinforces performance management within schools, while respecting the professionalism of teachers. It would be carried out by line managers, senior peers, and the school director or members of the school management group.
- It should be a purely qualitative assessment (*i.e.* with no quantitative rating) to provide feedback on teaching performance as well as on the overall contribution to the school. It should include a plan for professional development and a meaningful report to complement ongoing informal professional support throughout the year.
- The processes used for developmental evaluation should be externally validated and the school director held accountable for them. The school council should require information each year from the school director on the steps taken to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning during the year.

LIGHTEN THE CURRENT MODEL FOR USE PREDOMINANTLY FOR CAREER-PROGRESSION EVALUATION

- Evaluation for career progression is an essential mechanism to assess teachers' performance, determine career advancement, incentivise teachers to improve teaching practices and inform their professional development plan.
- Evaluation for career progression can be achieved through the model currently being implemented, but three main adjustments would make assessments across teachers and schools fairer and facilitate implementation:
 - simplify the current model by reducing the frequency of career-progression evaluation and streamlining evaluation criteria and instruments

- keep a predominantly internal focus but include an external evaluator
- link to national-level criteria standards and indicators (while accounting for the school context)

PROVIDE LINKS BETWEEN DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION AND CAREER-PROGRESSION EVALUATION

- Developmental evaluation and evaluation for career progression should remain connected. Evaluation for career progression would draw on the qualitative assessments produced through developmental evaluation and recommendations made for improvement. Career-progression assessments can inform the professional development of individual teachers and provide useful feedback for the improvement of developmental evaluation internal processes
- Different procedures for developmental and career-progression evaluation should not add to the work of teachers and evaluators, but instead, rebalance to make more effective use of time already spent on evaluation.

ENSURE APPROPRIATE ARTICULATION BETWEEN SCHOOL AND TEACHER EVALUATION

- School evaluations are an important component of a broader evaluative framework that can foster and potentially shape teacher appraisal and feedback. Both school and teacher evaluations have the objective of improving student performance and effective school evaluation should include the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.
- School evaluation should include the external validation of the processes used for developmental evaluation.
- Results of a school evaluation should have implications for the size of the quotas of *very good* and *excellent* teachers to be granted by career-progression evaluation in a given school, as is currently the case.

OTHER ADJUSTMENTS TO STRENGTHEN EVALUATION

- Use existing professional profiles and add to them to develop a national framework of teaching standards to underpin teacher evaluation and give teachers a clear statement of what they are expected to know and be able to do.
- Develop common national criteria with adaptation at the school level, building on the parameters the Ministry has already defined for both the scientific-pedagogical and functional evaluations. Differentiate criteria according to the stage of the career and the type of education.
- For developmental evaluation, the Ministry could define items and well-articulated criteria for use across all schools while leaving schools to further refine them and adjust the weight of each component. For career-progression evaluation, a smaller set of criteria common across schools, reflecting core aspects of the teaching profession, should be applied with school context taken into account when the teacher is assessed.
- Rely on three core instruments: classroom observation, self-evaluation and teacher portfolio. Target these instruments to assess the key aspects of teaching.
- Teachers should provide evidence to demonstrate student progress in their classrooms, for instance, through specific evidence and portfolios. But do not use indicators such as student test results, drop-out and absentee rates for individual teacher evaluation at this stage. These are more relevant for whole-school evaluation than individual teacher performance.
- Empower and equip school leadership to take responsibility for teacher evaluation and embed teacher evaluation in a broader process of developing each school into a professional learning community.
- Redesign and further develop training for evaluation skills to build capacity to carry out evaluation effectively throughout all schools, giving priority to school directors. Accredite external evaluators for career-progression evaluation.
- Base career advancement on evaluation results. Performance-based rewards should be carefully designed and non-monetary rewards considered. Maintain quotas on ratings for career progression until the system is sufficiently mature.
- Give a more prominent role to the Inspectorate who can stimulate the quality of school leadership and the quality of teaching through their external school evaluations.
- Strengthen the role of the Scientific Council for Teacher Evaluation to guide the development of teacher evaluation.
- Maintain teacher evaluation during the transition towards a more robust model.

FURTHER READING

These Assessment and Conclusions are drawn from [Teacher Evaluation in Portugal](#) published in July 2008. Further information about the Review is available on the OECD website www.oecd.org/edu/teacherevaluationportugal.