

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  
Directorate for Education  
Education and Training Policy Division

## **Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers**

### **Country Note:**

## ***The Flemish Community of Belgium***

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*This report is based on a study visit to the Flemish Community of Belgium in November 2002, and background documents prepared to support the visit. As a result, the report is based on the situation up to that period.*

The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Flemish Community of Belgium, the OECD or its Member countries.

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## 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Purposes of the OECD Review

1. This Country Note for the Flemish Community of Belgium (Flanders) forms part of the OECD activity *Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*. This is a collaborative project to assist teacher policy development for improving teaching and learning in schools.

2. The activity was launched in April 2002. OECD Education Ministers have set out a challenging agenda for schools in responding to rapidly changing needs and providing the foundations for lifelong learning. The Ministers drew a clear connection between the challenges facing schools and the need to attract, develop and retain high-quality teachers and school principals.

3. The project's purposes, analytical framework and methodology are detailed in OECD (2002a).<sup>1</sup> The main objectives are:

- To synthesise research on issues related to policies concerned with attracting, recruiting, retaining and developing effective teachers;
- To identify innovative and successful policy initiatives and practices;
- To facilitate exchanges of lessons and experiences among countries; and
- To identify options for policymakers to consider.

4. The Activity is focused on primary and secondary schools. It encompasses vocational programmes that serve secondary students, and special education programmes that enrol students of school age. While the major focus is on teachers, the scope includes other staff working in schools.

5. The project involves two complementary approaches: an *Analytical Review* strand; and a *Thematic Country Review* strand. The Analytical Review strand is using several means -- country background reports, literature reviews, data analyses and commissioned papers -- to analyse the factors that shape attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers, and possible policy responses. All of the 25 countries are involved in this strand. In addition, 10 of the school systems have chosen to participate in a Thematic Country Review, which involves external review teams analysing the countries concerned.

6. Flanders was the first system to host a review visit, and this Country Note is the report from the review team. The reviewers comprised OECD Secretariat members, and educational researchers and policy makers from Germany and the United Kingdom. The team is listed in Appendix 1.

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1. Reports and updates are available from [www.oecd.org/edu/teacherpolicy](http://www.oecd.org/edu/teacherpolicy)

## 1.2 The Participation of the Flemish Community

7. Flanders' involvement in the OECD activity is being organised by the Project Co-ordinator for the Flemish Community, Mr Guy Janssens from the Ministry of Education, and a Project Steering Committee established by the Ministry. The membership of the Steering Committee is detailed in Appendix 2.

8. An important part of Flanders' involvement was the preparation of a comprehensive and informative *Country Background Report* (CBR) on teacher policy. This was prepared by Professor Geert Devos and Dr Karlien Vanderheyden of the Vlerick Management School, University of Ghent.

9. The background report for Flanders, which was the first to be prepared in the Activity, provides extensive information, analysis and discussion in regard to: the national context; the organisation of the school system and teacher education; attracting new teachers; the training and development of teachers; the recruitment, selection and allocation of teachers; keeping qualified teachers in schools; and the views of key stakeholders. Some of the main issues identified by the Flemish CBR, and which are taken up in this Country Note, include:

- A general shortage of teachers in primary education;
- Teacher shortages in specific subject areas in secondary education;
- Concerns about the future quality of the teaching force, especially in primary education;
- The need for reform of initial teacher education, and teachers' professional development;
- The need for more flexibility in the design of teachers' work and career paths; and
- The balance of centralised and decentralised responsibility for human resource management decisions affecting teachers.

10. The Flemish CBR is an important output from the OECD activity in its own right, as well as a significant resource for the review team. The analyses and issues discussed in the CBR are cited frequently in this Country Note.<sup>2</sup> We suggest that the two reports be read in conjunction since they are intended to be complementary.

11. The review visit took place from 4 to 12 November, 2002. The itinerary is provided in Appendix 3. The review team held discussions in Brussels and Ghent with a wide range of education authorities, schools, teachers, students, teacher education institutions, teacher unions, employers, parents' organisations, trainee teachers, and researchers. The visit was intended to provide a broad cross-section of information and views on teacher policy in Flanders, and priorities for future policy development.

12. This Country Note draws together the review team's observations and background materials. The visit was not a review of Flemish education as a whole, but rather an analysis of the issues concerned with attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers in primary and secondary schools.<sup>3</sup> The present report will be an input into the final OECD report from the overall activity. The reviewers trust that this

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2. Unless indicated otherwise, the data in this Country Note are taken from the Flemish Country Background Report.

3. The current review did not address the staffing of special schools. The staffing of pre-primary education was considered as part of an earlier OECD review (see Bennett *et al.*, 2000).

Country Note will also contribute to discussions within Flanders, and inform other countries about Flemish innovations.

13. The review team is very appreciative of the hospitable, informative and frank meetings that were held during the visit, and the helpful documentation that each group provided. The Flemish education system is well known for its openness to external perspectives, and its lively internal debates. The team benefited greatly from both these traditions.

14. Needless to say, however, this Country Note is the responsibility of the reviewers. Although we had excellent assistance from Flanders, including detailed feedback from the Project Steering Committee on the draft of this report, any errors and misinterpretations are our own.

### **1.3 Structure of the Country Note**

15. The remainder of the report is organised into four main sections. Initially, in Section 2, the key contextual social, economic and educational factors shaping the teaching workforce and the teacher career in Flanders are outlined. That section also tries to draw out, from an international perspective, what is distinctive about the teaching workforce and teacher policy in Flanders. The text uses boxes to detail some of these distinctive features and innovations. Section 3 then identifies the main strengths of Flemish teacher policies, but also the challenges that the system faces. The discussion addresses eight broad areas: system governance and funding; initial teacher education; the labour market for teachers; career structure and incentives; roles and workloads; school leadership; evaluation and accountability; and teachers' professional development.

16. Section 4 uses the analysis of these issues to discuss priorities for future policy development. Some of these concerns (such as the shortage of primary teachers) are fairly recent in origin, but others (such as the structure of teacher education) are more long-standing. The suggestions draw heavily on promising initiatives that the team learned about during the visit. Section 5 has some concluding remarks.

17. The policy suggestions recognise the reforms that are already underway in Flanders, and the strong commitment to further improvement that was evident among all of the groups and individuals we met. The suggestions are also offered in recognition of the difficulty facing any group of visitors, no matter how well briefed, in grasping the complexity of Flanders and the factors that need to be taken into account.

## **2: THE CONTEXT AND FEATURES OF TEACHER POLICY**

### **2.1 The Structure of Government**

18. Belgium has a dual federal structure. On the one hand, it is divided into three Regions: the Flemish Region (five provinces in the north and west of the country); the Walloon Region (five provinces in the south and east); and the Brussels Capital Region (a bilingual area with 19 municipalities). Each Region has autonomous powers in regard to the economy, infrastructure and environment. The second concept underpinning Belgian federalism is that of Community, which has a language basis. There are

three Communities: the Flemish Community (the inhabitants of the Flemish Region and the Dutch-speaking inhabitants of Brussels); the French Community (the Walloon Region and the French-speaking inhabitants of Brussels); and a small German-speaking Community. The Communities have powers in areas where public services are highly dependent on language use, such as education, health and culture.

19. The dual nature of the federation reflects Belgium's history and the priority the language groups have given to maintaining cultural identity and managing their own affairs. The sense of identity is particularly strong in Flanders, which has merged the Region and Community aspects to create a single Flemish Parliament and a single Flemish Government, with its capital in Brussels.<sup>4</sup>

20. The Flemish Community has "assigned and exclusive" powers for a wide range of matters, including education and training. The only education powers of the federal government concern the ages of compulsory education, the minimum conditions for obtaining qualifications, and teachers' pensions.

21. Flemish governments have generally been coalitions of two or more political parties. The need to build and maintain political coalitions reflects the broadly consensual approach of Flemish society. Parliaments are elected for fixed 5-year terms. The next election is due in 2004.

22. Flanders has around 300 municipalities spread over five provinces and the Brussels Capital Region, all of which have some autonomy in local policy. The municipalities differ widely in population. Antwerp, the largest Flemish city, has a population of almost one million, and there are also many municipalities with just a few thousand people each. The Flemish government is responsible for general supervision and financing of the provincial and local authorities. However, there are some marked differences among the provinces and municipalities due to their varied political and social histories. This can result in different local approaches to education, and adds another layer of complexity to Flanders.

## **2.2 Social Context**

23. There are approximately 6 million people living within the Flemish Community, including about 0.2 million Dutch-speakers in Brussels. Around one million people live in the Brussels metropolitan region, which is officially bilingual and predominantly French-speaking.

24. The Flemish population is ageing. Although the overall population in Flanders is continuing to grow slowly, the number of young people (aged 0-19 years) is declining in both absolute and relative terms. In 1981 there were 1.62 million young people in Flanders, and this number had declined to 1.38 million by 1998 and is projected to decline further to 1.26 million by 2020 (Ministry of Education, 2000). The number of births in 1999 (62,000) was the lowest figure for over 20 years. It is projected that by 2010 the number of children aged 5-14 will be 13% lower than in 2000, while the number aged between 15-19 is projected to show little change. The demographic outlook is an important influence on the demand for teachers.

25. Immigration is a key source of population growth and change. Although immigrants do not account for a high proportion of the Flemish population, they have introduced much greater diversity into the schools, especially in large cities like Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent. Around one-half of the immigrants come from the European Union. However, it is those from other regions – Africa, the Middle East, and the former Soviet Union – who have attracted the most attention, and even opposition from some quarters. It is widely acknowledged that the increasing diversity of students has made teaching more challenging and requires teachers to develop new skills.

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4. By contrast, Belgium's French speakers have chosen to retain the separation of Region and Community.

26. Population mobility is fairly low in Flanders. Its small geographic area, high population density, and extensive transport infrastructure mean that people tend to live close to where they were born: over 70% of families live less than 10 km from a grandparent (Bennett *et al.*, 2000). The low population mobility strengthens the sense of identification with local structures and schools. It also means that teacher shortages and surpluses co-exist in different parts of Flanders since teacher mobility is also fairly low.

### **2.3 Economic Context**

27. Belgium is a wealthy country. In 2000 its per capita GDP was around \$26,400, which was the 11<sup>th</sup> highest among the 30 OECD Member countries.<sup>5</sup> The economic strengths of the country include its services and manufacturing sectors, and its role as a transport hub within Europe. Since the 1960s Flanders has experienced faster economic growth than French-speaking Belgium, and has moved from a reliance on agriculture to a much more diversified economic base. Flanders has one of the highest ratios of exports to production in the world, and accounts for over 75% of all Belgian exports. The outwards orientation of Flanders has stimulated, and been helped by, a strong emphasis on foreign language teaching.

28. The economic cycle in Belgium is closely linked to that in Europe, especially its main export markets of France, Germany and the Netherlands. Economic growth is projected to remain relatively flat until late 2003, when an upturn in export markets is likely (OECD, 2002b). Unemployment is expected to remain at over 6% until 2004, although the unemployment rate in Flanders will be lower than for Belgium as a whole. The relatively flat economy is likely to assist with teacher recruitment in the short-term at least.

29. A key macro-economic objective for Belgium is to reduce its large public sector debt, both to meet the fiscal requirements of Euro currency membership, and also to prepare for the likely future costs of population ageing (OECD, 2002b). The high level of public debt reduces the scope for extra public spending on schools.

30. In 2002 around 85% of the Flemish government budget of €17 billion came from taxes collected in Flanders and reimbursed by the federal government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2002). Regional taxes contribute around 15% of the Flemish budget and are a growing source of revenue. In international terms, Belgium has a high level of taxation, with a heavy reliance on income tax (OECD, 2002b).

### **2.4 The School System**

31. The strong traditions of local autonomy and self-determination that are embedded in the Belgian constitution are also evident within Flemish schooling. A recognised “organising authority” is empowered to organise and manage each school. The organising authority can be the Flemish government, a legal entity or entities, or private individuals. Thus, it is possible for an individual to start his or her own school and, provided there is sufficient demand and the school meets quality criteria and legislative requirements, teachers’ salaries and operating expenses will be subsidised by the Flemish government.

32. The organising or governing authorities of schools have extensive autonomy. They are able to employ teachers, determine the curriculum content (study plans) within the overall curriculum framework, choose their teaching methodologies, and assess students. However, to receive government recognition and funding, the schools must agree to minimum conditions including undergoing an external inspection every six years and, since 2003, admitting all students who wish to enrol (subject to the school’s capacity and to acceptance by the student of the school’s educational project and regulations).

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5. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in equivalent US dollars converted using Purchasing Power Parity exchange rates (OECD, 2003).

33. In addition to the freedom to organise schooling, the Constitution also guarantees that parents have access to a school of their choice within a reasonable distance of home. Schools in receipt of public funding are not able to charge tuition fees, irrespective of whether they are classified as public or private schools. There are very few schools that are completely private in the sense of not being recognised by government or receiving government funding.

34. Most schools and educational services are grouped into one of three main networks:

- *Community schools* (GO), which are public-authority schools provided by the Flemish government. These schools, which are required to be neutral in regard to religious or ideological views, enrolled 14% of primary students and 16% of secondary students in 2000-01;
- *Subsidised public-authority schools* (OGO), which are the public authority schools established by provincial and municipal authorities. These schools, in which neutrality is also required, enrolled 22% of primary students and 8% of secondary students in 2000-01; and
- *Subsidised private-authority schools* (VGO), which form the largest network, are institutions founded by private individuals, and various forms of associations. These schools, most of which are linked to a religious denomination (principally Catholic), or which follow an educational method such as Freinet or Steiner, enrolled 64% of primary students and 76% of secondary students in 2000-01.

35. The networks represent the school organising bodies, and support schools in areas such as pedagogical advice and professional development programs. The networks are partly funded through earmarked government grants, such as for in-service training, although the majority of such funding goes directly to schools.

36. The networks engage in separate negotiations with the trades unions representing their employees, including teachers, and consult with their own parents' organisations. They also influence the curriculum followed by schools. However, the Ministry of Education is responsible for designating the aims and objectives of schools, within broad guidelines. The organising authorities must incorporate the Ministry's student attainment targets and core developmental objectives in their curricula. Schools must submit their curricula (study plans) for prior approval to the Ministry. There is no central assessment of student attainment. The main form of external quality control is through school inspections.

37. Education is compulsory from age 6 to 18 years, which is one of the longest periods of compulsory schooling among OECD countries. However, from age 15 onwards young people can choose a combination of part-time education and part-time work. Flanders also has an extensive system of pre-school education, and from the age three onwards there is almost universal attendance.

38. At around age 12 students transfer from primary school to the first stage of secondary education. This lasts for two years and involves a broad core curriculum to give students exposure to a wide range of subjects. However, schools differ in the extent to which they emphasise general and vocational subjects. Although formal selection into different types of school does not occur until the second stage (at around age 14), already in the first stage students are widely viewed as being on different educational and job pathways. At the second and third stages of secondary education there are four main school types:

- general secondary education (ASO) that leads mainly to higher education, and which enrolled 39% of students in 2000-01;

- technical secondary education (TSO) which leads either to technical studies in higher education or directly to an occupation (32% of students);
- vocational secondary education (BSO) in which young people learn a specific vocation as well as receiving general education, and which usually leads directly to the job market (27% of students); and
- secondary education in the arts (KSO) that combines specialist art and general education, and which leads to an arts occupation or to higher education (2% of students).

39. In 2000-01 there were some 410,000 students enrolled in 2,200 regular primary schools, with an average school size of around 190 students. Secondary schools are considerably larger: in 2000-01 there were around 413,000 regular full-time secondary students enrolled in 920 schools (average size of about 450 students). Although reliable international data on school size are not available, the large number of different school types suggests that Flemish schools are relatively small. Small schools tend to lift education costs, no matter what other benefits they may bring.

40. The majority of school funding is via grants from the Flemish government. The government pays teachers' salaries and provides operating grants for schools to cover items such as support staff, utilities and teaching materials.

41. Spending on secondary schools is substantially higher than on primary schools. In 2000-01, per student expenditure on secondary schools averaged about €6,400, which was more than double the per student expenditure on primary schools (€3,000). This difference is largely because the student-teacher ratio in secondary schools is much lower than in primary schools (9.8 and 13.8, respectively in 2000-01). These ratios are in turn lower than the OECD country average (which was 13.9 for secondary schools and 17.0 for primary schools in 2000-01). A further factor explaining the relatively high cost of secondary schools is that secondary teachers have much higher salaries (see Appendix 4).

42. Flanders performed particularly well in the 2000 assessments of 15 year-olds conducted by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The mean scores in reading, mathematics and science placed Flanders among the best performing group of school systems (OECD, 2001). Considering the distribution of students among the different proficiency levels, Flanders had more students in the high-performing categories (Levels 4 and 5) and fewer in the low-performing categories (Levels 2 and below) than the OECD average. Furthermore, there was less variation in performance according to students' social background than in most other countries with differentiated school systems (De Meyer *et al.*, 2002). However, there were relatively large differences among students from different socio-economic and language backgrounds, and types of study programmes (Lafontaine, 2002).<sup>6</sup>

## 2.5 Initial Teacher Education

43. In Flanders there are three major initial training routes for teachers. These offer flexibility and choice in both the type of training and in the pattern of delivery. To some extent, though, these training routes lead to different destinations: the type of initial teacher education institution that people attend, and the qualifications they obtain, are key determinants of the schools in which teachers work, their salary scales, and their career paths.

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6. Wide variation in performance by student background was also found in the French-speaking community of Belgium, but the overall level of performance on PISA in that system was substantially lower than in Flanders (Lafontaine, 2002).

- A *university-based* training programme combined with a subject discipline degree in areas such as mathematics or history. The teacher education aspect is normally taken concurrently with the subject studies over the last two years of a four-year degree, and involves both subject specific and general pedagogic studies. There is a limited amount of time spent teaching in schools during the course. Those who undertake this route normally go on to teach students in stages two and three of secondary education (generally aged 14 to 18) in their subject discipline. The qualification awarded is ‘qualified secondary school teacher – group 2’; and leads to a higher pay scale than for teachers without university qualifications.
- A *higher education college (Hogeschool)* programme of three years, involving pedagogy for the age range being studied and subject work. Teachers of stage one secondary students (12-14 year-olds) study as many as three different subject areas. There is school-based experience in all years of the course, and in the final year some sustained periods of supervised teaching in a number of schools. The colleges offer a range of programmes covering nursery, primary and lower secondary (stage one) teaching. The final qualification awarded is determined by the programme studied: for lower secondary it is termed ‘group 1’ since this is not a university-level qualification. Some higher education colleges also offer vocational and upper secondary teacher training.
- A third route is taken mainly by those entering vocational teaching, and is offered by the *Continuing Adult Education Colleges* on a part-time basis, involving both general pedagogy and teaching experience in schools. There are no fixed entry qualifications to these courses and the qualification awarded is the Certificate of Education (GPB). Many of those taking the GPB route are mature-age students, often in the process of changing careers, who fit the training around other jobs or around employment as an unqualified teacher. Increasing numbers of higher education graduates now take the GPB route as an alternative to university-based teacher education programmes.

44. In the 1980s there were too many people entering teaching and efforts were made to discourage entrants. With the emerging shortages of teachers in the last five years, the government has strongly marketed the profession and there have been increased numbers taking both higher education and GPB teacher education courses. Over the 10 years from 1991-92 to 2001-02, the number of students in primary teacher education courses increased by almost 70% (from 3900 to 6600), and there was a similar increase in training for lower secondary education (from 4500 to 7800). In the four years since 1997-98 the number of trainees in the GPB programme has more than doubled (from 3100 to 6500). The number of teacher education trainees preparing for upper secondary education rose by 8% between 2000-01 and 2001-02 (from 3100 to 3400), reversing the decline in numbers experienced during the 1990s.

45. At secondary level there are similar numbers of males and females entering teacher education, while at primary level 80% of teacher trainees are female. The proportion of males in primary teacher education (20%) is actually higher than in a number of other countries, although most of the groups we met would like to see more males entering primary teaching. There seemed to be little data available on the social or ethnic backgrounds of trainee teachers, although the anecdotal evidence suggests that few come from immigrant groups.

46. Access to most higher education courses in Flanders, including teacher education, is open to all who have satisfactorily completed secondary school. Pass rates on initial training programmes differ substantially according to the types of secondary education that trainees experienced. For example, among those training to be lower secondary teachers the pass rates for first-year students in 2000-01 from different types of secondary school was: ASO (69%); KSO (49%); TSO (34%); and BSO (13%). Quite a large proportion of trainee teachers now come from the TSO (technical secondary schools) and they experience

relatively low pass rates compared to those from an ASO (general secondary) school background. These variations raise questions about how well prepared some students are for the challenges of teacher training, and about how well teacher education institutions respond to an increasingly diverse intake of trainees.

47. Since 1996 Flanders has been progressively bringing together teacher education programmes, including the introduction of a minimum programme length for academic courses and the development of career profiles which set out the knowledge, skills and attitudes required of an experienced teacher. From these a set of minimum competencies have been developed which have been progressively introduced in initial teacher education programmes. In 2001 the government commissioned an independent evaluation of the teacher education reforms (Ministry of Education, 2001b) – see Sections 3 and 4 below.

## **2.6 The Teacher Labour Market**

48. In 2000-01 almost 100,000 full-time equivalent teaching and administrative staff were employed in regular primary (46%) and secondary schools (54%). Since 1993-94 the number of teachers in primary education has increased slightly (9%) while the number of secondary teachers has remained virtually unchanged.

49. The teaching workforce is largely feminised: in 2001, 79% of primary teachers and 56% of secondary teachers were female. In addition, it is an ageing workforce: in 2001, 29% of primary school teachers and 36% of secondary teachers were aged 50 years or over. This raises concerns as a substantial proportion of the current teaching workforce is likely to retire within the next 10 years. Another important feature of the teaching force is the substantial proportion of teachers working part time – 32% in 2001. The proportion is even higher in upper secondary education (35%) and at this level Flanders has one of the highest proportions of part-time teachers among OECD countries (see Appendix 4).

50. The labour market for teachers in Flanders is stratified according to level of education, type of programme, province, and subject matter. As such, considerations about the current balance between teacher demand and supply need to reflect the different sub-markets for teachers.

51. Teachers' employment is highly decentralised. The school boards, municipalities and provinces are responsible for the recruitment, selection and appointment of teaching staff, and therefore act as the employers. However, the determination of salary scales and working conditions is made by the Ministry of Education following a process of collective bargaining with the teacher unions.

52. The school principal<sup>7</sup> plays a major role in the recruitment of teaching and administrative staff, often directly contacting a potential candidate for a position in the school. This provides considerable advantages in matching teachers with school needs. However, in practice the extent of school autonomy in teacher recruitment is restricted by a complex set of rules. Schools must hire a qualified teacher in order to have their salary paid by the government. It seems that when recruiting beginning teachers most schools try to recruit those whom they already know well e.g. as a former student of the school, or as a trainee teacher on practice teaching, or from industry in the case of vocational schools. After the initial appointment, though, priority has to be given to the candidate with the highest level of seniority, and teachers with permanent status have priority over temporary teachers. Other rules require that priority be given to those who have worked for a certain number of years and, where two candidates are equal in this regard, priority

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7. The term "Principal" is used throughout this report as a general term to describe the person within each school who has the executive responsibility for managing the school. Other terms used in Flanders include "Head Teacher" and "Director".

is given to those who have worked in the same network of schools, or been employed by the same organising authority.

53. Two types of teacher appointment exist: temporary and permanent. A beginning teacher is given a temporary position and undergoes a probationary period. Once a teacher has worked for at least three years and a minimum of 720 days, they become eligible for a permanent position, but will only acquire that status if a permanent position is available, and they successfully apply for the post. A permanent position then provides the teacher with substantial job security. Notably, a teacher with permanency continues to be employed even if their job is lost due to falling student numbers. The Flemish government instituted a freeze on permanent appointments between 1996 and 1999. In practice, it now takes around seven years to obtain a permanent appointment, and there is a high attrition rate among temporary teachers. The proportion of temporary teachers has been rising in the last few years (from 21% in 1993-94 to 27% in 2000-01 in primary education and from 14% to 22% in secondary education). Among full-time teachers at upper secondary level, Flanders has one of the highest proportions of temporary teachers (see Appendix 4).

54. Teachers with temporary and permanent status can both be dismissed. Teachers with a temporary contract can be dismissed with 30 days notice, or without any notice in the case of a dismissal for urgent reasons. Formally, a teacher with permanent status can be dismissed without notice, for example as the result of a disciplinary measure or if they have received two consecutive negative evaluations. The school governing body can take sanctions if a teacher does not fulfil the obligations laid down in the contract. Permanent teachers have a right of appeal against dismissal. In practice, dismissing a permanent teacher can prove difficult and rarely occurs.

55. In response to the problems faced by beginning teachers in obtaining secure employment, and by schools in hiring replacement teachers, the Ministry of Education introduced the Replacement Pool in 2000 (see Box 1). In effect, the Replacement Pool provides a means of more closely connecting teacher supply and demand in what is a highly decentralised and diverse labour market. The concept of the Pool seems to be widely supported although schools express concern that there are insufficient teachers to meet their needs for more than a few months of the year.

#### **Box 1: The Replacement Pool of Teachers**

During the late 1990s it became evident that new teachers faced difficulties in obtaining secure appointments as the number of permanent positions declined. This was discouraging for beginning teachers, and led to many leaving teaching altogether. The Replacement Pool was introduced in the 2000-2001 school year as one response to this problem. The Pool is a group of teachers whose salary is paid by the Ministry of Education and who supply short-term teaching for schools. The teachers nominate to work in a particular geographic area, and are available to work in all the schools which register for the pool (i.e. they are not restricted to employment in a single network). The Flemish Employment Services and Vocational Training Agency (VDAB) manages the scheme. Successful applicants are assigned to an 'anchor school', and work there when they are not required to replace teachers in other schools. Schools therefore find it easier to locate replacements for absent teachers, and beginning teachers have job security and a salary for at least one year. It also provides an opportunity for schools to assess the suitability of new teachers for longer-term posts. Teachers returning to the profession or other employees who are considering a teaching career can also register for the pool.

Over two-thirds of Flemish schools participate in the pool, and in 2003-04 around 4100 teachers took part. These are significant numbers relative to the total number of beginning teachers in the system. Despite the widespread support for the scheme, there are concerns that the total number of places paid for by the government is too limited for schools' replacement needs: "the pool runs dry too quickly", as one school principal put it.

56. There are three types of qualifications that are considered in teaching appointments: *required*, *acceptable* and *other*. An individual has the *required* qualifications if they hold a degree in teacher education in the subject areas and levels taught. Qualifications are considered *acceptable* if the individual has a degree in education but it is not in the area or level of the specific teaching assignment. When no

individuals with either *required* or *acceptable* qualifications are available, the employing authority can appoint an applicant with *other* qualifications, normally a basic certificate or a minimum number of years of relevant professional experience. The salary of teachers with *other* qualifications is lower than for teachers with *required* or *acceptable* qualifications, and they cannot normally obtain permanent status without upgrading their qualifications.

57. Teacher shortages exist within specific sub-markets. Evidence points to serious teacher shortfalls in primary education. For instance, in May 2000, primary schools hired nursery teachers for almost 12% of their replacements. Also, there has been a dramatic fall in the number of primary teachers looking for work recently. While in September 2000 there were 670 qualified primary teachers looking for a position, in 2001 the number was practically nil. Furthermore, there are important provincial differences. The situation is particularly serious in Flemish schools in Brussels: only 68% of replacement primary teachers had the required qualifications in 2001.

58. Shortages in specific subjects in secondary education have also been identified. This is the case for subjects in general secondary education such as Mathematics, French, Dutch and Religion but most dramatically in technical and vocational subjects. In the 1999-2000 school year, 40% of the appointed temporary teachers in technical and vocational subjects had only *other* qualifications. For secondary education as a whole, about 16% of all the temporary teachers in 2001 were teaching a subject for which they did not have the required qualifications. At upper secondary level more school principals in Flanders than in any other OECD country reported difficulty in hiring fully qualified teachers in areas such as the language of instruction, Mathematics, Sciences and ICT (see Appendix 4).<sup>8</sup>

59. Another marked feature of the labour market is the relatively low rate of teacher mobility among schools and provinces. While this can lead to schools having stable staffing, concerns were expressed that it can inhibit the introduction of fresh ideas and energy into schools. It can also worsen provincial imbalances in teacher supply and demand. For example, in primary education in May 2000, despite the considerable overall shortage of teachers, there were over 200 qualified teachers registered with the Employment Service (VDAB) and looking for work. This implies that prospective teachers are not always willing to move to where vacancies exist.

60. No figures exist regarding entry into the teaching profession by individuals having acquired prior professional experience in sectors other than education, but anecdotal evidence suggests that mobility into teaching from other careers is low. However, the growth in trainee teacher numbers in the GPB courses suggests that such inflows are rising.

61. The trade unions play a major role in the teacher labour market. There are four main teacher unions: two christian unions, COV (Catholic primary education) and COC (Catholic secondary education); ACOD (socialist); and VSOA (liberal). The government conducts negotiations with unions on matters affecting the working conditions or careers of teaching and administrative staff. Negotiations also occur between the networks of schools and trade unions. The negotiations seem to cover a very wide range of issues. Such negotiations are an important feature of Flanders education, and can help build consensus about desirable directions and assist with implementing change.

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8. The high degree of difficulty reported by Flemish school principals may also reflect the fact that they have more responsibility for hiring teachers than principals in most of the other 13 countries participating in the survey.

## 2.7 Teacher Employment and Careers

62. Teacher employment is decentralised to school boards and the authorities of the different networks of schools, but teachers are paid directly by the Flemish government provided that they meet the qualifications for employment, and the school does not employ more teachers than it is entitled to. Teachers have common salary scales regardless of the network of schools they belong to. All teachers with a permanent contract have a quasi public servant status -- while their employers are local school authorities, they are paid by the Flemish government and their employment conditions, including pensions, are within the public service framework.

63. There is a considerable number of different salary scales for teachers. Nursery and primary teachers have a common salary scale but different salary scales exist for lower secondary education and upper secondary education. In addition, a great number of salary scales coexist for upper technical and vocational secondary education. Principals have a separate salary scale. Typically, qualified teachers reach the maximum of the salary scale after 27 years of experience in nursery, primary and lower secondary education and after 25 years of experience in upper secondary education (Ministry of Education, 2000). This is longer than the average length of teacher salary scales in OECD countries (see Appendix 4).

64. The maximum salary of a primary teacher is around more 60% than the beginning salary, whereas for upper secondary teachers the maximum salary is about 70% greater. This implies that the biennial steps are equivalent to a salary increase of about 4-5%. The salary scale for primary teachers looks to be slightly “flatter” than the OECD average, whereas the scales for secondary teachers are slightly steeper (see Appendix 4). The basic structure of teachers’ pay -- a largely guaranteed increase throughout the career for around 25 years means that the total costs of the system are rising steadily as the workforce ages.

65. Compared to most OECD countries, Flanders puts a heavy emphasis on length of teaching experience in determining individual teachers’ salaries (OECD, 2003). Teachers with the same levels of qualifications and teaching experience receive essentially the same salary. There are no extra allowances for difficult working conditions, specific subjects or responsibilities, isolated areas, or indeed for exceptional performance. An exception is the allowance provided to primary teachers in Flemish schools in Brussels, since such teachers generally need additional knowledge of French. Extra pay is offered to certain teachers and administrative staff who obtain a special certificate such as a Certificate of Advanced Education Studies or a Diploma of Higher Educational Studies. Experience outside education is generally not taken into account with the exception of vocational and technical teachers who can have up to 10 years of work experience recognised on the salary scale.

66. The possibilities for career differentiation within schools seem to be very limited and are largely confined to the position of principal. Other possible management posts include deputy principal and vocational training co-ordinator, both in secondary education.

67. There is a high level of attrition in the early career. Among those who were working as temporary interim teachers in 1995, 24% had left teaching by 1999. The attrition rate from the teaching profession was higher in secondary education (30%) than in primary education (16%). The attrition rate also varied by network of schools, being higher in Flemish community schools (29%) than in public authority subsidised education (26%) or private authority subsidised education (22%). The high level of attrition in the early career is a major factor behind the teacher shortages experienced in Flanders.

## 2.8 Quality Assurance

68. Flanders places great importance upon the professional autonomy of the individual teacher and school. Set alongside this autonomy the government has established a quality assurance framework that comprises three key “quality pillars”.

- First, the Flemish Parliament has specified frameworks for the core curriculum in compulsory education and in initial teacher education. For the curriculum these are in the form of attainment targets, developmental objectives, and cross-curricular themes which set out minimum standards to be attained at the end of primary schooling and at the end of each of the three (two year) stages of secondary education. The networks of schools develop these into programmes of study which are subject to approval by the Ministry of Education. The attainment targets have been implemented for primary education and stage one of secondary school, and are being gradually introduced for stages two and three. These will form the standards for awarding certification of primary and secondary schooling: currently some 30% of students repeat at least one year. The statements of basic teacher competencies cover four levels of education: kindergarten; primary; lower secondary; and upper secondary. The basic competencies are starting to form the basis for assessing entry to the profession and profiling teacher development. A skills profile for experienced teachers has also been developed.
- Second, an external school inspection system operates on a six yearly cycle. Schools produce a self-evaluation which is the basis against which the inspection team assesses during a week-long visit to the school. Inspections start from evidence on both standards and well-being of the school as seen by students, teachers, employers, parents and others. Assessments are of the whole school, not of individual teachers, and lead to a published report. Inspection outcomes fall into one of three categories: positive; positive with recommendations that will be followed up through school action plans and further inspection visits; or negative. Entirely negative reports are rare; where they occur there is an independent review and second inspection which, if the criticisms are upheld, leads to a recommendation that the Minister cease funding the school.
- Third, pedagogic counselling services provided by the networks of schools offer advice on school-level plans, develop the programmes of study to inform teaching and assessment standards, and support teacher evaluation and development. These services are government funded. The government is exploring greater delegation of funds to schools and making the system more demand driven.

## 2.9 Teachers’ Professional Development

69. The quality assurance frameworks are intended to assist with identifying the development needs of schools and teachers. Provision of professional development can originate at school, network and government policy levels, but the principle is that schools and teachers retain their autonomy in decision making. At the upper secondary level at least, the evidence is that Flemish schools make much more extensive provision (e.g. through a separate budget) for teachers’ professional development than do schools in other OECD countries (see Appendix 4).

70. In practice, schools generally seem to participate mainly in network and national professional development activities, and in the schools visited by the OECD review team principals reported that they had little time to identify school or individual teachers’ needs through school self-evaluation or teacher evaluation. The evidence suggests that, at upper secondary level at least, Flemish teachers participate at

around the average country level in professional development, despite the fact that their schools generally make more provision for professional development (Appendix 4). Forms of professional development where Flemish teachers tended to be below the international average included “observational visits to other schools” and “participating in a teacher network” (see Appendix 4). These findings support the impression that Flemish schools are relatively self-contained. Indeed, on several occasions people used the term “islands” to characterise the apparently limited interaction among schools, even within the same network.

71. Provision of school-based professional development varied considerably in the schools visited and the approach taken was largely determined by the principal. Generally primary schools seemed to have a more systematic approach than secondary schools. Some have regular staff meetings that include professional development linked to school needs; one primary school that operated over three sites, had a devolved management structure in which teaching teams met regularly, teachers mentored one another and there were also activities for various staff groups according to need and interest during the year. The principal of this school was also a member of a network of 25 primary schools, and as a group they plan for the mentoring of newly appointed principals and for their own professional development. Some schools which take a particular approach to teaching and learning, such as the Freinet method, belong to wider networks in which teachers participate regularly.

72. Levels of teacher participation in professional development have increased in recent years and data provided suggests higher levels of primary than secondary teacher involvement in professional development. For example, in 1998-99 53% of primary school principals reported that between 75% and 100% of teachers participated in some form of external in-service training activity during the year (up from 41% of primary principals in 1996-97). By contrast, in 1998-99 only 12% of secondary school principals reported that between 75% and 100% of teachers participated in some form of external in-service training activity (earlier figures are not available for secondary schools).

73. Higher education colleges provide advanced teacher training courses which cover a wide range of topics including intercultural education, and special education, which those working in special schools are expected to undertake. The advanced training either builds on initial teacher education or provides teachers with skills in new areas. The study time required for these programmes is determined nationally and they involve between one and three years of study (generally taken part-time).

### **3: STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES IN TEACHER POLICY**

#### **3.1 System Governance and Funding**

74. The organisation of the Flemish school system has considerable strengths. Parents do not need to pay fees to access a wide range of school types, programmes and educational philosophies for their children. School funding depends on attracting students, and this is a very direct form of accountability. The competition among schools, and among networks, encourages responsiveness to individual needs. The great variety of schools increases the potential for innovative approaches. We were told a number of times that communities feel close to their schools. The existence of the three “quality pillars” helps to balance autonomy with accountability for the use of public funds.

75. Parliament needs to give final approval to major changes in the education system. This implies that wide debate and support are needed before substantial change takes place, which lifts education’s profile. There is widespread support for the principle of consultation, and extensive consultation is

commonplace throughout the system. The complex system of checks and balances reduces the risk of change being introduced that is not widely supported.

76. As a school system Flanders is open to international perspectives and learning from other countries' experiences. It is a very active participant in cross-national projects conducted by the OECD and other international organisations. The results of such work are widely disseminated by the Ministry of Education. The publication in 2000 of a special volume that compared indicators of Flemish education with international data typifies this openness.

77. The Ministry is also active in promoting research on Flemish education, and publicising the results. We learnt of very substantial research commissioned by the Ministry in areas such as teacher remuneration, teachers' professional status, teacher career paths, teacher workloads, and human resource management at school level. Such research is important not only for improving the knowledge base for teacher policy, but also as a way of introducing new information and ideas to schools. Indeed, in a system like Flanders where central authorities have only a limited operational role in schools, commissioning and disseminating research can be an important means of influencing developments. Most of the research is based in universities, and the Ministry's support is helping build research capacity in the teacher area. The inspectorate of education also publishes an annual report on the quality of education, based on inspection reports and its own research, and which is widely disseminated among the stakeholders.

78. At the same time, the discussions and documents revealed a number of concerns about the overall system. There seems to be a very strong focus on legislation. Despite the fact that authority is decentralised, people within schools appear to look upward to the Minister and Department to take the initiative. There seems to be a top-down paradigm of educational reform. Under such circumstances change can be slow and local autonomy more apparent than real. At the same time, the many different institutions and groups give rise to a lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities. It is not clear who should take the lead in solving problems, and there does not seem to be a strong sense of "ownership" of reforms among the schools and teachers who have to make them work.

79. Schools have some discretion in allocating budgets other than those for teaching salaries. Overall there is a good level of resources available to schools: student-teacher ratios are relatively low; teacher salaries are comparatively high; and there is some flexibility in work patterns. There have been recent initiatives to improve resources even further e.g. in ICT and equal opportunities programmes.

80. Nevertheless, the visit revealed a number of concerns about school funding. The uniform funding on a per student basis within networks potentially disadvantages a range of schools: small schools; those with special needs (e.g. due to a high proportion of immigrant students); schools in high cost areas (e.g. Brussels); or schools that wish to innovate. The funding differences between primary and secondary schools are particularly large by international standards. Networks appear to duplicate some services to schools, and some networks are very small; both of these factors tend to drive up system costs.

81. Although Flanders has relatively high expenditure on teachers, grants to schools for other operating expenses (support staff, utilities and teaching materials) appear to be low (see Appendix 4). Teachers express concern that they have to pay themselves for many teaching materials. There are few cases of schools taking an entrepreneurial approach to attracting more resources (e.g. through partnerships with industry), but there were some impressive examples we saw that could assist other schools in this regard. A long-term concern is that considerable investments will be needed to modernise the buildings and equipment in many schools. The building stock is relatively old, and the replacement and renovation costs will put pressure on some schools to close, as well as reduce the capacity for increases in salaries and other recurrent spending.

### 3.2 Initial Teacher Education

82. The existence of three major alternative training routes for teachers offers entrants choice and diversity in terms of how they will be trained: part time or full time; where they undertake that training (the GPB with its 21 local centres is widely accessible, for example); and choice in the emphases of the programme. The challenge facing teacher education is to retain these flexibilities and the strengths of the current programmes while tackling the issues raised by the 2001 teacher education review

83. The strengths of Flemish teacher education include: the quality of subject knowledge training provided in university programmes; the quality of pedagogic training in the higher education college programmes; and in the GPB route the flexibility of the programme and its relevance to classroom practice.

84. The weaknesses are also well understood. University training programmes are seen as too fragmented for students and spread out over time. There is a potential lack of staff engagement with trainee teachers especially by subject academics, and limited opportunities for joint planning between subject and pedagogic departments. Higher education programmes are seen to provide insufficient expertise for lower secondary teachers in their third required subject specialisation<sup>9</sup> and there is little opportunity for, or expectation of, staff to engage in research and development. On the GPB programmes concerns were expressed about a lack of differentiation to meet the needs of a wide range of teachers – vocational, primary, lower secondary; and it is unclear which standards of performance are expected compared to other routes.

85. Teacher education programmes for the different levels of schooling have few common elements, and so do not enable teachers to easily move between phases, e.g. from teaching in nursery school to primary school. This is an issue for Flanders currently when there is a shortage of primary teachers and nursery-trained teachers are being appointed, but apparently find it hard to adapt their practice to the expectations in primary education.

86. The Ministry has moved to fill a major information gap by commissioning a large research project on the entrants to teacher education, the causes of the variations in pass rates, and the early career experiences of teachers; this study is due to report in 2004. Established sources of improvement and course development within teacher education institutions include the internal quality assurance processes used in higher education institutions and universities and, in the case of GPB programmes, the quality assurance undertaken by the Inspectorate. There would seem to be scope, though, for greater sharing of evaluation results and good practice among providers of teacher education in to help improve the quality of the sector as a whole.

87. Teachers and teacher educators expressed some concerns about the quality and motivation of a minority of trainees, although the level of commitment and enthusiasm of teachers and trainees that the review team met was impressive. Some of those taking university teacher education courses indicated that their studies were either second or third choices or as a fall-back option in case the graduate labour market deteriorated. In contrast, the motivation of those taking lower secondary teaching training appeared to be high and reflected a desire to work with this age group while not being restricted to only one subject discipline.

88. The challenges that need to be addressed in teacher education were well set out by the 2001 review. It identified six key policy recommendations for “sustained evolution” of teacher training: (1)

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9. The 2001 teacher education review concluded that the subject matter experience in lower secondary education training was not sufficient with regard to the third subject specialisation, and the Minister plans a reduction from three to two required subjects.

improvement of the minimum competencies; (2) more consistency in the expectations of teaching practice and better mentoring of trainees; (3) establishing a probationary period with induction support linked to professional development; (4) clarification of the wider professional duties of teachers and what is expected from new entrants; (5) supporting the implementation of the Bologna agreement on European-wide recognition of qualifications, and moving to degree level study for all teacher education with some increased consistency between training routes, including considering the future role of the GPB programme; and (6) the need for urgent action on the issues raised which should be tackled through working in partnership between providers and schools.

89. The review team saw a range of examples of work starting to tackle these issues in practice. On comparability of levels of study between part-time GPB and higher education routes, Sint Lukas College in Brussels has mapped its already modularised GPB training programmes to higher education grade equivalence. Discussion with tutors and trainees about the GPB programme suggests that total free choice of the order of modules is problematic and may need the introduction of some prerequisite modules if maximum benefit is to be achieved for trainees.

90. On strengthening the links between the theoretical programme and teaching practice in schools, including improving the quality of mentoring and support, a range of new work is emerging. One example at the Artevelde Hogeschool in Ghent involves teaching practice on the nursery and primary programmes where they are piloting longer periods in one school in the final year of training. This allows trainees to become part of the teacher community in the school and develop greater skills in class management and planning for progression in teaching and learning. However, one consequence is that final year students may be seen by fewer potential employing schools; and there is a more limited range of experience in different types of schools which needs to be considered.

91. The Artevelde Hogeschool programme also illustrates how to strengthen the involvement of teachers in the mentoring of trainees. In particular the StaP programme for lower secondary training involves teachers as mentors and tutors for new teachers (see Box 2). School-based tutors and mentors are given training with release from some other duties and/or limited payment. The initiative provides agreed and consistent feedback to the students in a planned manner by the school-based tutor, using mentors' judgements of teaching they have observed and related to the minimum competencies and the teacher career profile.

### **Box 2: An Internship Model of Teacher Education**

The Artevelde Hogeschool in Ghent is running a pilot project with twenty one secondary schools on developing partnerships in teacher education. The project involves 160 students who are undertaking training for lower secondary education and are in their third and final year of training. It was developed from the Oxford Internship scheme, run by Oxford University in England, and aims to provide better support and opportunities for students while teaching in schools, a transparent relationship between schools and the higher education institution, professional development for those supporting students; and links to coaching newly qualified teachers.

The name StaP means Stage Project and refers to the step from training to the workplace involving joint responsibility for students' progress. Standard models of supervision involve each student having between four and six school mentors who may give feedback and guidance. However, the pilot study indicates that feedback is not always well co-ordinated, nor are there any resources or training to support the mentoring role. Higher education tutors make a few brief visits to the student so there are limited opportunities for liaison with the mentors and students.

Each school has a named general tutor from the Hogeschool who is responsible for communication with the school and provides an external input into the mentoring and assessment of students. This role ensures

liaison between the various parts of the course and work in schools; and supports consistency of assessment of trainees in relation to the agreed national competencies.

This approach is a form of internship that aims to better prepare beginning teachers and to build stronger links between schools and teacher education institutions. Teachers who have been involved have found it professionally developmental and satisfying but flagged the need for them to have sufficient time to undertake the role of professional tutor. Some teachers have been involved in contributing to other parts of the course and to planning for better induction coaching for new teachers coming to their schools. For more details see Schepens, De Clercq and Buyse (2002).

92. A similar programme of training and funding for mentors developed by the University of Ghent is having an impact on the links between the two parts of the initial training programme. In both these projects it was apparent that there need to be clear expectations on schools and mentors about the quality of those selected to mentor trainees and their participation in training and evaluation to gain maximum effect. However, many of the teachers that the review team met in schools were unaware of the competencies and the career profiles; successful mentoring will depend upon implementation of the competencies. This needs training to ensure familiarisation and consistency of implementation and interpretation by teachers, students and teacher educators. Where teachers were aware of the competencies, they saw them as too ambitious and complex for what can be achieved in initial training programmes. They wanted more definition of observable practice to facilitate ease and consistency of interpretation and use.

93. The relevance of training programmes and the preparedness of newly qualified teachers to tackle the expectations of the classroom were raised by teachers in a number of schools. They thought that teacher educators often lacked recent classroom experience, few subject tutors have any school experience and there was little input from experienced teachers in planning and delivery of training programmes. In most cases they thought that courses needed further work to adapt to the pressures now faced in schools and it was apparent that teacher education institutions are starting to respond. For example, the University of Ghent now gives higher priority to the challenges schools face in teaching non-Dutch speaking students.

94. Some schools supported newly qualified teachers by pairing them up with an experienced teacher; other schools offered general support if new teachers came and requested it; while some schools seemed to leave the new teacher to sort out their problems alone. A comment from one trainee was that compared to industry there was an absence of induction, on-going professional development and performance management, which she felt reduced the extent to which she could improve her teaching and effectiveness.

95. Visits and evidence provided to the review team demonstrated the commitment by all those involved in teacher education to better prepare teachers for the new demands in schools., There was also a commitment to strengthen the supervision of trainees by school-based mentors who are well trained in coaching and assessing, and are encouraged to work in partnership with the college or university. There was a strong sense from all programme providers of the need to develop further and a willingness to work together to bring about change. However, there was some anxiety that change might be imposed from outside rather than being developed collaboratively.

### **3.3 The Labour Market for Teachers**

96. There are a number of positive structural features which characterise the Flemish labour market for teachers. The diverse range of school types and educational approaches increases the potential for matching teachers' skills and preferences to schools and programmes. Having schools directly involved in the recruitment and selection of teachers increases the likelihood of addressing school needs. Flemish

schools recorded a level of school involvement in teacher appointments well above average among the 14 countries taking part in the OECD International Survey of Upper Secondary Education (see Appendix 4 and OECD, 2004).<sup>10</sup> While this suggests that Flemish school principals have considerable scope to build their own team and to develop a distinctive school identity, the priority rules for making teacher appointments (see paragraph 52) mean that principals' autonomy is limited in practice.

97. The freedom of school choice for parents, together with school involvement in the recruitment of teachers, provides incentives for schools to seek out specific teacher characteristics to meet school needs. The extensive use of part-time employment provides flexibility in responding to fluctuations in demand for teachers. Opportunities to work part-time are attractive to many people, and thus increase the potential supply of teachers. Another structural element providing flexibility to the system is the existence of a probationary period for beginning teachers. This provides the opportunity to identify and retain those best suited to the profession.

98. Despite these considerable strengths, the teacher labour market currently faces some important challenges. Little flexibility exists regarding teacher incentives. Teachers with a given set of qualifications and teaching experience are generally paid the same irrespective of their working conditions, level of shortages in the subject area, or school location. This restricts the capacity of schools and the system as a whole to address staffing problems (e.g. shortages in specific subjects) or to promote teacher mobility between schools and provinces.

99. The initial teaching qualification places people on a particular career path, and there seems to be little retraining readily available for when shortages exist in other areas, or when teachers' own interests change. The current incentive structure does not encourage the in-flow of people from other careers into teaching: the recognition of qualifications and skills acquired in other sectors appears limited.

100. The recruitment and selection of teachers is not always transparent. During the visit it was suggested that some schools prefer not to openly advertise vacancies because that would compel them to follow seniority rules in regard to appointments, rules that may not suit school needs. In addition, there do not seem to be clear criteria for assessing the quality of beginning teachers seeking employment.

101. There seems to be a lack of information to connect those looking for a teaching position with the schools seeking teachers. This seems to be especially the case for trainee teachers in their final year of study. Not only did they report a lack of knowledge about specific vacancies, some also seemed unaware of basic information about teacher salaries or conditions of employment. It also seems that information about teacher demand and supply in specific subject areas or levels of schooling is not being used to adjust the provision of teacher education programmes.

### **3.4 Teachers' Career Structure and Incentives**

102. Analyses by the Hay Group (2001) indicate that in broad terms the compensation of Flemish teachers is around the centre of the job market for people with similar qualifications. Although teachers often have a lower salary, the other benefits of the job mean that their overall compensation package is competitive. For example, the Hay Group study showed that a teacher typically has 29 more vacation days than people working in industry. (The estimated equivalent "surplus" for principals is much lower – 9 days

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10. Principals of upper-secondary schools were asked the following question: "Is the hiring of new teachers the responsibility of the school (e.g., the principal's or the department head's)? (If teachers are assigned to your school by an external agency, e.g., a government agency or school district, the answer to this question should be 'No')".

more vacation days than managers in industry.) An additional benefit is substantial job security for those teachers with permanent status. The Hay Group estimates that teachers' job security is equivalent to a 6% benefit (in salary terms) over people in industry. Teachers also benefit from a generous pension scheme. The regulated retirement age is 60 but it is possible to retire from the age of 58 and teachers may also be granted earlier retirement for health reasons.<sup>11</sup>

103. Compared to other OECD countries, teacher salaries are relatively high, especially at the upper secondary level (see Appendix 4). The perception that teachers' compensation is broadly competitive was confirmed by the informal discussions held with teachers, as they rarely mentioned salaries as being at the top of their concerns. Nonetheless, the situation of beginning teachers is less satisfactory given that they have low job security. As noted earlier, it takes around seven years to acquire permanent status.

104. Teachers' compensation largely concentrates on salaries. The provision of time-allowances, sabbatical periods or opportunities for professional development seems to be quite limited. The current compensation package does not recognise the different nature of the tasks to be performed defined, for instance, by working conditions, specific area of school, or specific subject. As well, compensation is based largely on qualifications and years of teaching experience. With few exceptions, rewards for extra responsibilities or additional duties are not provided. Similarly, the compensation package is not related to reviewed performance, or to skills and experience obtained in other occupations.

105. Another aspect that stands out is the unevenness of the hurdles throughout the teaching career. The obstacles are quite high in the beginning of the career while the teacher has a temporary status. During this period of the career, the teacher goes through a probationary period, may be appointed for short periods of time, can be replaced by teachers with a permanent appointment, may need to move from one school to another, and can be dismissed in a relatively straightforward manner. Once permanent status is acquired, the picture changes markedly, and the teacher acquires a significant level of job security together with virtually automatic salary rises over time. However, the salary scales are long, and opportunities for advancement on criteria other than years of service are limited. The lack of opportunities for promotion was often mentioned as one of the main causes for the lack of attractiveness of the profession, contributing to both attrition among young teachers and burn-out among older teachers.

106. The current compensation system also raises concerns of fairness. In particular, secondary teachers who perform similar tasks in the one school but who were trained in two different types of teacher education institutions – higher education colleges and universities – have different salary scales.

### **3.5 Teacher Roles and Workloads**

107. The designated teaching hours refers to the number of hours that the teacher is required to be in the classroom per year. The specified teaching time clearly underestimates the full workload of teachers. Other school activities such as contacts with parents, correcting work, supervising students, professional development and administrative tasks are not included in this amount. Even though this is a limited indicator of teacher workload, and international comparisons of teaching time need to be treated cautiously, the evidence suggests that Flemish teachers have a relatively high number of net teaching (contact) hours per year. Class teaching hours are above the OECD average in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education (see Appendix 4). On the other hand, Flemish teachers earn above average salaries, and the net effect is that their salary per hour of contact teaching is above the OECD average. The

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11. As a result of the pressures brought about by teacher shortages, in 2002 the government raised the pre-retirement age from 55 to 58 and a transition system is currently in place.

difference is especially large at upper secondary level, where they have the fourth highest salary per teaching hour (Appendix 4).

108. Teachers' workload is mainly conceived in terms of classroom teaching hours: teachers are not expected to be at school when they do not have classroom teaching, which limits the scope for collaborative work and whole-school planning. On the other hand, teachers often do not have good facilities at school for preparation and consultation. In some schools principals used after-school sessions and Wednesday afternoons for whole school planning and development, but they expressed concern about doing this too often as it encroached on teachers' personal time. Primary teachers in one school, though willing, felt unable to find time for more collaboration because of the pressure of additional duties at lunchtime and fitting in their own class planning and preparation. Teachers in another school mentioned the resentment they felt because they had to fund their own professional resources and saw themselves as already 'giving a lot'.

109. The commitment of teachers to their classroom teaching is impressive, but the importance of taking on wider tasks within schools does not seem to be widely acknowledged. Statements of teachers' job profiles and competencies have been developed that define a more comprehensive role for teachers. However, they appear to be little known in schools and generally not used to plan teachers' professional development.

110. Teachers indicate that their job is becoming more demanding, including with more administration and paperwork, and that they want to be able to focus more on classroom teaching. There is little differentiation in school staffing: almost all of the adults working in schools are classified as teachers (see Appendix 4), with few support services for school managers or teachers, especially in primary schools.

111. In several schools principals and teachers expressed concern about the increasing behavioural problems and demands they were facing from students and families. Several teachers referred to the valuable work of the Student Guidance Centres in offering support for students, including advice and support for parents, in relation to learning and behavioural difficulties. However, in practice teachers seemed to have to deal with quite complex issues themselves because these centres were overstretched. Referrals to the centres are generally by students themselves or by parents; teachers did not seem to have much direct contact to ensure effective follow through of the guidance work in the classroom, nor to use the service to support and develop their own skills in handling such issues.

112. There seems to be unevenness in teachers' workload as non-teaching roles and time use are "voluntary" and not well defined. Some individual principals and teachers are "in charge of everything" because there is no internal differentiation or clarification of roles and responsibilities. Some classes are very small, while others are quite large. In general, beginning teachers seem to have high teaching loads, and little structured support, although we did learn of promising moves to provide a mentor-based system for new teachers.

### **3.6 School Management and Leadership**

113. The school system offers a great variety of schools to match the interests and educational philosophies of a diverse group of aspiring leaders. An individual or group committed to a particular philosophy or educational approach can even found their own school and receive government funding.

114. Principals do play a major role in the current school system. The tradition of school autonomy means that a principal potentially has considerable influence on teacher appointments, the pedagogical programme and the future development of a school, although the priority rules concerning teacher

appointments restrict this in practice. We were impressed by the principals we met and the differences that they were making to their schools.

115. We understand, though, that throughout the system as a whole the position of principals is raising concern. Indeed, almost all of a school's leadership tasks seem to be solely their responsibility. This responsibility ranges from broad issues of instructional leadership and the future development of the school to issues of a smaller scale such as the upkeep of facilities on a day-to-day-basis. Many school principals report on the wide variety of tasks they are responsible for, many of them small administrative tasks, which they feel leaves little time for planning and educational innovation.

116. The Ministry of Education has developed a detailed job profile for principals. However, the fact that principals do not refer to this document when speaking about their tasks and responsibilities suggests that it has not been well disseminated and discussed with principals. The document does not appear to have been used to communicate responsibilities and limits of the principal's role with those currently in office or coming into office. Conversations with principals indicate that their perceptions of the tasks of a principal differ to a large extent. The leadership tasks and responsibilities within a school are not very transparent.

117. Concepts of dispersed or shared leadership – where responsibility for different areas of school management and leadership is delegated within the school -- are not yet systematically introduced. This potentially has two negative effects. First, principals may perceive their role as rather lonely and lacking in support and communication for problem solving. Second, placing the entire responsibility for management and leadership with one person provides little incentive or opportunity for other teachers to take on responsibilities and gain leadership experience. When teachers see their job as by and large limited to classroom teaching, they are less likely to seek opportunities for growth in leadership roles. The introduction in 1998 of the concept of school communities in secondary education (voluntary co-operative ventures between secondary schools) has increased the potential for a greater variety of school tasks, including leadership tasks, although the indications are that this has not happened to a great extent as yet.

118. The selection and nomination of principals differs among the networks of schools. Some networks (e.g. the Freinet schools) use formal selection processes including job postings, interviews and even assessment centres. In most of the networks, however, future principals seem to be identified in more informal ways by the respective school board or network. The lack of open job advertisements and transparent selection procedures may mean that the most effective people do not become principals. This might give current and prospective teachers the impression that careers in education are not based on merit. A lack of transparency may also reduce motivation among teachers who have an interest in taking on greater responsibility.

119. Principals are generally appointed on permanent contracts. While permanency can provide the system with leadership stability, it can also create barriers to quality improvement. The significant amount of authority held by an individual principal is not clearly linked with commensurate evaluation and accountability. For principals who are not able to cope with the range of demands of the job, or whose interests change, there do not seem to be formal mechanisms for returning to classroom teaching or moving to other jobs in the field of education. The government is planning to introduce fixed-term mandates for principals but the date of the implementation is still to be decided.

120. The financial and other rewards given to principals in Flanders seem to be too low to make the job sufficiently attractive. The study by the Hay Group concluded that Flemish school principals receive a lower compensation package than managers with comparable responsibilities in the private sector. The salary difference between a regular teacher and the principal does not seem to be sufficient compensation for the considerable difference in workload and responsibility.

121. Opportunities for the professional development of principals seem to be rather limited. The impression is that being a good principal is seen as a skill that a teacher can learn by just doing it rather than through targeted preparation, selection and on-going development.

### **3.7 Evaluation and Accountability for Improvement**

122. With regards to accountability and evaluation Flanders already has considerable strengths. It takes part in a range of international studies and uses international data to benchmark performance in education and to stimulate debate. Furthermore, the Ministry funds a substantial amount of research on issues related to teaching and teacher education.

123. Schools seem to be confident about high standards in achievement and the PISA results have in fact shown that Flanders schools do comparatively well. There might, however, be a risk of becoming rather complacent about standards if attainment data are not regularly available. Without data on students' attainment, comparable standards at all schools in the system are hard to guarantee, and the system lacks a solid basis for identifying school needs.

124. As noted several times already, the diverse range of schools and the funding system encourages competition between schools and gives parents and students a choice if the quality of a particular school does not meet their expectations. The school system in Flanders already provides many of the benefits of school funding through educational vouchers currently discussed internationally.

125. The school system has a wide range of different stakeholders (e.g. principals, local school boards, networks of schools), all of which are to some extent responsible for the quality of education provided within each individual school. As long as all of those stakeholders co-operate closely to support the improvement of teaching and learning in a school they serve as a potentially strong support system for student learning. The risk, however, is that in a system distributing responsibility so widely it is not always clear who should be held accountable for action when there is a problem.

#### ***School level accountability***

126. The Flanders Inspectorate in general seems to be well-regarded, its procedures are transparent and its reports are public documents. The inspection reports have two main functions: to assess whether the school should continue to receive public funding; and to improve school quality. The inspection system focuses on whole school evaluation rather than on individual teachers. Teacher performance appraisal is entirely seen as the task of the school principal. The fact that school inspections take student feedback into account sends a signal that students and their learning are the core business of schooling. It is a strength that the Inspectorate sees its task in providing guidance and stimulating improvement rather than in punishing schools for underperformance.

127. Schools are required to engage in a process of self-evaluation when preparing for the six-yearly Inspectorate visit. However, we understand that relatively few schools conduct self-evaluations on an on-going basis outside of the Inspectorate cycle. Well-structured school self-evaluations do not seem to form part of a global strategy for school improvement across the system. Professional development for teachers and principals does not seem to be sufficiently based on priorities identified through school self-evaluations.

### *Teacher appraisal*

128. Officially, performance appraisal of individual teachers is seen as a responsibility of school principals. Regular evaluation of teachers' performance by principals is being implemented using the agreed competencies and job descriptions. However, principals often indicate that they are not able to complete this satisfactorily for teachers in their schools due to a lack of time. Few teachers seemed to work as "critical friends" or peer mentors for one another in developing their practice. Most teachers seemed to be unaware of the existence of the competencies documents, and did not refer to them in talking about their own skills and knowledge. There appears to be little observation of teaching by principals, particularly in secondary schools, although in several schools we visited the principals did discuss teachers' work with them on a regular basis.

129. There also seems to be a lack of tools for guiding and informing the process of staff appraisal. Such tools would assist principals and other senior staff, and also help teachers to better prepare for assessment – and to benefit from it. Furthermore, there seem to be few specific programmes to train principals in methods of performance appraisal.

130. Because a coherent system of teacher performance appraisal is lacking, the principal and school boards have little systematic information on individual teachers' needs that could inform decision-making on professional development priorities. Whenever principals have concerns about teacher performance there is no formal structure of coaching and supervision to support the development of that teacher.

131. There is not a solid basis for recognising and celebrating the work of teachers. The civil servant status of teachers with a salary structure based on experience, and the lack of a consistent system of performance appraisal, make it extremely difficult to remove an ineffective teacher who has permanent status. The lack of a formal and systematic system of teacher appraisal does not allow for the introduction of an incentive structure rewarding excellence. A limited focus on teacher evaluation runs the risk of sending teachers an implicit message that their work is not important.

### **3.8 Teachers' Professional Development**

132. The system has a wide variety of providers of professional development, which potentially, offers schools choice and a competitive market to ensure high quality, relevant and cost-effective provision. However, in the schools visited there seemed to be little uptake beyond the schools' own network.

133. The opportunities for advanced teacher training allow access to a wide variety of further development that would be professionally refreshing and extending for the teacher and improve the range of skills they can offer in the classroom. However, there are no incentives for teachers to undertake these programmes in terms of either contributing to higher degree accreditation or being pre-requisites for specific teaching posts, except in relation to special educational needs.

134. The three funding sources and levels of identification of professional development needs – national policy, network and school level -- are a potentially powerful mechanism for initiating change. However, there is a danger of a lack of coherence between them and some principals indicated that they found the external professional development expectations did not always match the needs of their schools and teachers; and provided little opportunity for them to take forward school-based issues.

135. The statements of teacher competencies and job descriptions that have been developed have the potential for being very powerful in supporting and focusing professional development. They offer a common understanding of, and language for, the expectations of teachers' roles. The work to further

develop these statements through improving the descriptions, including identification of initial standards of competence, will help but it needs to be accompanied by effective training and evaluation for all involved.

136. Although organisational and contractual factors mean teachers tend to work alone and are keen to retain their autonomy, it was apparent that those who were working together were finding this professionally significant, and in some cases found it eased the workload they experienced as individuals. The tradition of teachers working collaboratively to evaluate students' achievement and progress, award the primary and secondary certificates, and advise students and parents on a choice of secondary education is a powerful model on which to build.

137. Several teachers indicated that they were unwilling to be involved in professional development if it meant that they were absent from their classes as either their students would fall behind if there was no teacher available, or other colleagues would take the students and so have increased class sizes. Absence cover for teachers is only available after two weeks and this militates against some forms of professional development. While part-time teachers can provide schools with staffing flexibility, a high proportion of part-time staff can make it more difficult to build effective communication and whole-school development.

138. The move to a profession where all teachers have qualifications equivalent to university level will create a potential demand from current teachers to upgrade their qualifications over the next few years. Opportunities should be available for teachers to do this, which in turn could allow many to re-energise themselves by developing and extending their skills in relation to the basic competencies. This could also be linked to incentives for successful completion.

#### **4: PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

139. The suggestions that follow are intended to help the Flemish school system meet the challenges of attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers. They seek to build on initiatives that are already underway, and which further strengthen the traditions of decentralisation and local autonomy within an overall framework of quality assurance. These suggestions are based on the review team's observations, discussions and reading, especially of the policy discussions in the comprehensive background report (Devos and Vanderheyden, 2002). They are offered for evaluation and debate.

##### **4.1 Lifting the Status of Teaching**

140. The status of teaching in Flanders seems to have fallen over the years, especially in regard to primary teaching. This view was provided to us by virtually everyone we met, including final-year students in secondary schools, trainee teachers, and teachers themselves. The impression given was that teaching is a career choice mainly for those with strong altruistic motives, or for those whom the flexible working hours or job security were attractive, or those who were not able to get their more preferred jobs. There was little sense that people choose teaching because the work would be exciting, or that being a teacher would open up opportunities for personal growth and career development. Teaching also seems to suffer from negative media stories especially when focusing on student misbehaviour and violence. In this respect, being a teacher is viewed by many people as difficult or even potentially dangerous.

141. Such attitudes are not unique to Flanders, and turning them around is a long-term project. The marketing campaign initiated by the Ministry of Education, and supported by the teacher unions and other stakeholder groups, is a positive step and seems to have had an impact on the numbers entering teacher education. Such campaigns need to be continued and broadened so that the Flemish community appreciates the importance of teachers' work, better understands the achievements of schools, and has a more accurate view of what teachers actually do, the wide range of skills that they use, including increasing use of modern technology, and the benefits they obtain from the job.

142. The views of teachers themselves indicate the features that need to be drawn out more clearly. The Hay Group survey showed that Flemish teachers highly valued the emotional rewards in their work: its social relevance; working with young people; creativity; autonomy; challenges; and contacts with colleagues. A number of times teachers indicated to the review team that the people who know schools best – such as volunteer parents and employers who host student-workers – have the most positive image of teaching. The structure of Flemish schools should provide many opportunities for encouraging local communities to have close contact with their schools. Media stories and documentaries that open up the schools to the wider community, and which provide an accurate account of what teachers do, are also an important part of the “soft” strategies that educators need to employ. Given the concerns that have been expressed in Flanders about the relatively low proportions of males and people from immigrant backgrounds entering teaching, as well as general campaigns there also need to be targeted initiatives that provide positive role models of such teachers working in schools and being valued by school communities.

143. It has been mentioned several times that salaries and employment conditions for Flemish teachers seem to be broadly competitive with, and in some respects even better than, the compensation packages of comparable workers in industry. Indeed, the Hay Group survey and our own discussions indicated that teachers tended to focus on factors other than salaries when considering the attractiveness of the job. Nevertheless, the salary position of primary teachers does not appear so attractive, a situation compounded by the job insecurity experienced by many beginning teachers. Furthermore, Flanders is one of the countries where teacher salary scales have shown little change in real terms since 1996, and the salary rises for different types of teachers have been quite uniform.<sup>12</sup> Rather than uniform salary increases, the teacher labour market in Flanders appears to need a more targeted approach, with increases focused on teachers in the shortest supply – beginning primary teachers and some subject specialists in secondary schools; and teachers willing to work in more difficult locations. This would be a step towards a more differentiated teaching profession – a point taken up further below. Targeted salary rises, especially for beginning primary teachers and specialist secondary teachers in short supply, would also go some way to addressing the concerns about a shortage of male applicants for teaching positions.

## **4.2 Continuing to Reform Teacher Education**

144. The 2001 review of teacher education provides a very sound basis for continuing to improve the sector, and its recommendations are already being actively being addressed by teacher education providers and government. Within this framework, several particular priorities became evident through the OECD review.

145. First, to improve recruitment into teaching, teacher education courses need to be comparable with one another but not lose the diversity of training routes, flexibility, patterns of provision and locations

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12. It has been estimated that between 1996 and 2001 the salaries of Flemish teachers at three points in the salary scale (starting, 15 years experience, and top) increased by between 1% to 3% faster in real terms, whereas the OECD country average increases were around 8-10%, and in some countries different groups of teachers experienced much faster salary increases than others (OECD, 2003, p. 383).

offered. The ideal to aim for is different modes and structures but with common high standards, and course credits to facilitate mobility across courses and between different sectors of schooling. There is a need to extend the collaborative work that some universities and Hogeschools are doing on course comparability to include GPB providers.

146. Second, to improve the relevance of training and support received on entry to the profession for new teachers and give schools better prepared, more flexible practitioners it is desirable to develop partnerships between schools and teacher education providers to:

- involve practising teachers and principals in course planning and delivery to better reflect the new challenges that schools face e.g. in student behaviour, communicating with parents, new styles of teaching and learning, developing the use of technology, cultural diversity, and supporting children who do not speak Dutch;
- place expectations on school principals to select mentors on the basis of being effective practitioners, interested in supporting and coaching beginning teachers, and willing to train and develop their own skills to support trainees. Trained mentor coaches will enable schools to support newly qualified teachers. Principals need to have budget flexibility to provide mentors with appropriate compensation for the additional workload involved, and/or time release from their regular duties; and
- provide newly qualified teachers with an appropriate timetable, a mentor and an induction programme linked to the career profile and basic competences to support their development in their first or probationary year. This is especially important in relation to retaining beginning teachers in the profession.

147. Third, to improve the quality and motivation of those entering teacher education courses, a number of strategies could be considered to make it an active choice by more well qualified students. These include: developing financial and other incentives (e.g. scholarships and loans) to encourage able students to choose to train to teach; including specific incentives to teach in shortage subjects; better informing potential entrants of the practical and theoretical demands of the course, including encouraging them to spend time in schools early in their programme so that they make more realistic choices; introducing more modularisation into the structure of teacher education programmes to increase their flexibility; and increasing the incentives to providers of teacher education to offer courses that meet identified actual or potential shortages and reflect policy developments, e.g. teachers of ICT or immigrant children, and to actively market these courses to potential candidates.

148. Fourth, teacher education institutions need to be better informed about the backgrounds of those who enter their courses, the factors that influence their success in the course, their destinations after graduation, and their early career progress. The teacher education sector as a whole does not seem to have a tradition of using information about its graduates' job experiences as a way of monitoring its own performance and using this feedback to more closely meet teacher and school needs. As noted earlier, however, a major study addressing these issues is due to report in 2004.

149. Finally, the teaching profession itself needs to play a more active role in designing teacher education programmes, and determining who meets the criteria to enter the profession. The views and experience of effective teachers and school leaders need to be central to the teacher education reforms.

### **4.3 Improving the Labour Market and Diversifying Teachers' Careers**

150. The Flemish teacher labour market comprises a number of quite distinct sub-markets, which suggests that the incentive structure should be used in a more flexible manner. For instance, pay differentiation to account for shortages, higher allowances for teaching in difficult areas, transportation assistance to promote mobility all need careful consideration. Also worthy of attention are non-salary strategies, such as lower class contact times or smaller classes, for schools in socially difficult areas or which have particular educational needs. Some promising initiatives have been taken in this regard, such as the salary allowance for primary teachers in Brussels, and the possibilities for teachers who wish to work extra hours to receive higher payments.

151. It may be worth considering setting aside part of the overall budget for Flemish schools to support innovations in applicant schools. To be effective, such grants would need to be based on schools demonstrating a clear case for the changes they want to introduce, ensuring that the funding was maintained for long enough to give the innovation a chance to work, requiring that the uses of the funds be externally evaluated, and that the lessons of the innovation be disseminated to the wider school community.

152. The potential sources of teachers can be expanded by opening the teaching profession to individuals with relevant experience acquired outside education. A useful model is provided by recognition of work experience gained outside education for teachers in vocational and technical education, and the fact that new entrants can start working and earning a salary before completing teacher training qualifications. The flexibility provided by the GPB teacher education course is particularly useful in this context. Given the age structure of the Flemish teacher workforce it will also be important to enable older teachers to continue working while they wish to, and they are still making a worthwhile contribution. Offering greater opportunities for reduced working hours and pay, while still preserving pension entitlements, may be attractive to many older teachers and help to retain their experience in the system while at the same time creating more vacancies for younger teachers.

153. Opportunities for younger teachers would also be improved, and the profession made more attractive, if the weighting given to seniority in making teacher appointments was reduced. Elements other than qualifications and years of experience, and which are more directly related to teacher effectiveness, need to be emphasised when advertising vacancies and selecting teachers.

154. The Replacement Pool is an important innovation for providing new teachers with more job security early in their careers, as well as assisting schools in meeting short-term staffing needs. As noted earlier, though, there are concerns about whether the pool is currently large enough. Some schools and stakeholders have also expressed concerns about the fact that the operation of the pool infringes to some extent on schools' autonomy in selecting staff, and that a succession of short-term and even concurrent positions for young teachers makes it hard for them to develop confidence and a sense of professional identity.

155. The more fundamental problem, though, is that the Replacement Pool is located in a labour market in which there is both an overall teacher shortage, and a lack of permanent teaching vacancies. In this situation, the burdens of adjustment are being borne largely by beginning and temporary teachers rather than by the experienced teachers with permanent status. The burdens are also felt by those schools who are unable to obtain the teachers that they need, and by the system as a whole when young teachers leave and potential teachers do not enter. The solution is not to increase the number of permanent positions, as that would build further constraints into the system. Rather, the direction is to move towards a situation where all teachers are employed on renewable contracts dependent on their effectiveness and a demonstrated demand for their services.

156. In the last few years Flanders has articulated an ambitious set of curriculum objectives and statements of teacher competencies for its school system. These imply that schools and teachers need to take on a greater range of tasks and responsibilities both within and beyond the classroom. It is vital that the best qualified people are encouraged to take on these roles, and are recognised and rewarded for doing so. An important step could be to relate remuneration levels to the tasks and responsibilities of the individual teacher. In particular, the career structure might benefit from the introduction of a clear categorisation according to the tasks being undertaken and the skills acquired in the profession. Moving towards a system of fixed-term, renewable contracts for all teachers would help considerably in these respects by encouraging schools to more clearly identify their needs, facilitating teacher mobility, and providing greater flexibility in meeting changing demands.

157. For this suggestion of moving more personnel responsibilities to the school level to work well and to be credible, it would be important to ensure that school-level decisions are taken within the framework of a system-wide career structure that is developed through consultative procedures involving all stakeholder groups. Key elements in such a framework include agreed criteria and processes for evaluating teachers, and clear and independent appeals mechanisms for teachers who feel that they have not been treated fairly. As is argued in section 4.5 below, a fundamental prerequisite for the devolution of more personnel responsibilities to school level is that steps be taken to improve the selection, training and evaluation of school leaders.

158. A further important ingredient in opening up new career opportunities for teachers would be a more systematic approach to teacher appraisal and professional development. This would help teachers to demonstrate their strengths and developing skills to employing authorities, and thereby improve their capacity to secure the positions that they want. An agreed system-wide framework of teacher appraisal and professional development would help encourage teacher mobility between schools.

#### **4.4 Strengthening Teachers' Professional Development**

159. The increased complexity of the teaching task, including changing demands and increasing expectations of teachers, was frequently cited as a major reason for increased teacher resignations and worsened teacher shortages. Teachers commented on the demands caused in coping with challenging behaviour from students and families. They also spoke of the challenges in keeping up with new curriculum requirements and in developing new teaching and assessment approaches. Professional development is a key element in helping them to successfully manage these new demands in a proactive and planned manner.

160. Ways in which the current professional development work could be extended and more fully address the changing needs of the profession could be through:

- encouraging networks, professional associations, schools, higher education institutions and School Guidance Centres to further identify and disseminate effective and successful practice linking it to schools' and teachers' self-evaluation;
- developing internal knowledge management systems in schools - e.g. through collaborative working and peer evaluation - to support sharing expertise in schools and provide professional development from within; and
- developing the expectation that professional development is part of the work of all teachers and is important for their long-term career development.

161. It is apparent that there is a wide variety of professional development that schools can draw on to support whole-school development. For some teachers working in this way reduces feelings of isolation and overload, and therefore will help improve retention. Principals need to ensure that professional development is of high quality and well matched to teacher and school needs. To further strengthen this it may be worth considering how:

- principals, teachers and school boards can be helped to strategically plan professional development based on evidence from evaluation to support the schools' priorities, meet teachers' individual needs and take account of the various external professional development expectations. The emphasis could then move to more local ownership of, and responsibility for, professional development;
- professional development can be offered in a form that allows integration into on-going school work. Ways to release teachers for professional development commitments without colleagues or students being potentially disadvantaged, is a major priority.

162. Expecting and supporting teachers to undertake regular professional development is likely to raise the status of the profession and increase the motivation of those entering and retention of those in the profession. However, for this to work the professional development must be seen to be relevant, accessible and of high quality. Education authorities have an important contribution to make in evaluating professional development and disseminating good practice. A further way that teacher retention can be improved is for those who take career breaks to be able to stay in touch with developments in teaching and offer training to refresh teaching skills when returning from a career break. To develop further the consistency and standard of professional development it may be worth considering how:

- higher education institutions can offer links from professional development to formal qualifications and give credits towards further awards for those who wish to take them, including offering accreditation for approved courses offered by other providers;
- to relate professional development activities more closely to career paths and personal development including effective and consistent use of the teacher competencies, the professional profile and developing a professional portfolio. A key element of this is the development of an induction programme that can be jointly provided by teachers, training institutions and the networks over the first year of teaching linked to a major lift in the teacher's status and even salary when they are assessed as a fully competent teacher. The statements of teacher competencies and career profiles that have already been developed provide a framework for better linking initial teacher education, induction and professional development yet, as noted earlier, substantial training is needed to ensure familiarisation and consistency of use throughout the school system; and
- providing opportunities for professional renewal through changes in role and responsibilities at times e.g. secondments to work in other settings including within the networks of schools, teacher education programmes, and workplaces in industry. Such secondments, which could be provided on a cost-sharing basis between the teacher's employing authority and the seconding employer, can help to bring schools and industry closer together, as well as create openings for new teachers in schools.

## 4.5 Improving School Leadership

163. Principals play a key role in the Flemish school system. They exercise significant responsibilities already, and these are likely to grow in the future. Principals and other school leaders are major resources in their own right, and important influences on the extent to which teachers perform well, achieve job satisfaction, and continue to develop professionally. The further development of Flemish education is critically dependent on the supply of able and committed school leaders.

164. Given the range of responsibilities that principals have, it is important that there be a leadership team in each school to share the load and ensure effective delivery. This would enable the principal to focus on educational leadership for improving learning and teaching of students and staff, rather than needing to concentrate mainly on administrative tasks. Flanders has below-average proportions of school staff in the “management personnel”, “teacher aides” and “other support personnel” categories (see Appendix 4). Principals need additional administrative support to gain more time for important tasks related to educational leadership, such as teacher performance appraisal, teacher coaching and designing professional development. The need for extra support is a particular priority in primary schools.

165. To make the principalship more attractive as a career step, principals should be better paid on the basis of fixed-term, renewable contracts. It is encouraging that the government is to introduce fixed-term mandates for principals. As part of this principals should be required to take part in a training programme, and to be accountable for the attainment of school objectives on a regular basis. The linking of principals’ work to structured training and regular evaluation would provide an important model for other teachers. The job profile for principals that has been developed could serve as a starting point for the development of training modules and courses. Effective principals with several years of professional experience could be teaching courses for newly appointed principals. A (part-time) university degree in educational management and leadership could lead to a further professionalisation of the system. There should also be a range of professional development opportunities for principals already in the job.

166. In general, principals’ positions should be openly advertised on the basis of clear criteria. Professional development activities, formal qualifications and leadership experience as a teacher should be taken into account when appointing principals. Selection of principals should be done through a broadly based panel, including principals from other schools. The renewal of their position would be as the result of formal evaluation, and thus a signal of their on-going contribution. Fixed-term contracts would also offer an opportunity for those who did not want to continue as principals to return to classroom teaching or look for other positions.

167. A key requirement is for principals and other school leaders to be trained and supported in conducting teacher evaluations and linking this to professional development planning. There should be a clear-cut mandate for the principal to organise professional training on the basis of needs and challenges identified through a formal process of teacher appraisal and school self-evaluation. A fundamental ingredient in this is that teachers are able to see that principals and other school leaders are themselves evaluated on a regular basis and the results used to help plan their professional development.

## 5: CONCLUDING REMARKS

168. Flanders is a high quality, well-resourced school system, with many structures for consultation and building consensus, open to review from outside and international comparisons, and with a good research and information base. The principles of decentralised decision making and wide school choice are deeply embedded in Flanders. The system manages to capture many of the benefits of a market-oriented approach within a framework of public finance and accountability that provides wide access to quality schooling. Nevertheless, it is a complex system, with a delicate balancing of competing interests and pressures towards both centralisation and local autonomy.

169. Flanders faces serious problems in teacher recruitment. Vacancy rates are rising, as is the proportion of teachers who lack full qualifications. The age structure of the workforce means that these problems are likely to become even more acute as large numbers of teachers retire in the next few years. Like all school systems, Flanders also faces challenges in ensuring that teachers continue to develop their skills and knowledge, including the role of ICT in supporting teaching and learning. Most of those who will be teaching in five to ten years time are already working in schools. Substantial professional development will be needed to ensure that schools and teachers meet emerging new needs, and that quality standards continue to improve.

170. Attracting and retaining effective teachers involves action on a wide variety of fronts: the image and status of teaching needs to be high, and teachers' work valued by the wider society; salaries and employment conditions need to be competitive relative to other graduate occupations; teacher education courses need to be intellectually stimulating, provide solid professional preparation, and award qualifications that have credibility not only in schools but in other workplaces as well; there need to be avenues into teaching for people from other careers and who have a breadth of experience to offer; schools need to be organised to bring out teachers' best, and provide the support they need to do a good job; the work environment needs to be stimulating, collegial and effectively led; teachers need opportunities to develop their skills, to take on new roles, and to have their work recognised and rewarded.

171. These are just some of the factors involved in a comprehensive policy framework for teachers. This report has reviewed the development of teacher policy in Flanders, its considerable strengths and the challenges that it still faces. The report makes a number of suggestions in which existing policy directions in Flanders could be strengthened and hopefully made even more effective. The over-arching theme is to provide schools with more flexibility and responsibility in staffing within a framework in which the education authorities monitor educational outcomes, guarantee quality, and ensure that resources are concentrated in areas of greatest need. The overall aim, which was shared by everyone we met, is to ensure that the best possible teachers want to work in Flemish schools, and that they continue to improve throughout their careers.

172. The structure and traditions of the Flemish school system actually offer many advantages when considering developments in a complex area like teacher policy. The diverse range of schools, organising authorities and provinces provides opportunities for pilot studies, thorough evaluations, and fine-tuning, before policy changes are implemented on a wider scale. As well, the many opportunities that key stakeholder groups have to meet and consult with each other means that new proposals can be thoroughly assessed from all sides. These processes can potentially give rise to a very powerful momentum for broadly-supported change and effective implementation in schools and classrooms.

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## **APPENDIX 1: THE OECD REVIEW TEAM**

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## **APPENDIX 2: PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR, PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE, AND AUTHORS OF THE COUNTRY BACKGROUND REPORT**

### **Project Co-ordinator for the Flemish Community**

Guy Janssens, Director-General, Nursery and Primary Education Administration, Ministry of Education

### **Project Steering Committee**

Guy Janssens (Chair), Nursery and Primary Education Administration, Ministry of Education

Wilfried Boomgaert, Policy Co-ordination Division, Ministry of Education

Ann Dejaeghere, Policy Co-ordination Division, Ministry of Education

Marleen Deputter, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research Administration, Ministry of Education

Geertrui De Ruytter, Policy Co-ordination Division, Ministry of Education

Geert Devos, Vlerick Management School, University of Ghent

Hilde Lesage, Secondary Education Administration, Ministry of Education

Jacques Perquy, Flemish Education Council

Patrick Poelmans, Primary Education Administration, Ministry of Education

Micheline Scheys, Policy Co-ordination Division, Ministry of Education

Willy Sleurs, Educational Development Service, Ministry of Education

Luc Tesseur, Education Services, Antwerpen

Ann Van Driessche, Budget and Data Management Division, Ministry of Education

Michel Van Uytfanghe, Christian Teachers Union, on behalf of all the teacher unions

### **Authors of the Country Background Report**

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Karliën VanDerheyden, Vlerick Management School, University of Ghent

### APPENDIX 3: PROGRAMME OF THE REVIEW VISIT

#### Monday 4 November: Brussels

- 9:00 Guy Janssens National Co-ordinator, and Ann Dejaeghere
- 9:30 Geert Devos, author, Country Background Report
- 11:00 Project Steering Committee (see Appendix 2)
- 14:30 Senior officials, Ministry of Education: Gaby Hostens, Director General Secondary Education; René Vanotterdijk, Inspection Secondary Education; Roger Peeters, Inspector General Primary Education; Ivo Cappaert, Director General Adult Education; Jan Adé, Director General Higher Education and Scientific Research; Gaston Moens, Department of Educational Development Services (DVO)

#### Tuesday 5 November: Ghent

- 9.00 Arteveldehogeschool, teacher training institute  
Director: Hilde Meysman, teacher educators, and trainee teachers
- 12:00 Koninklijk Atheneum III, secondary school (Flemish community network)  
Jo De Schuytter (Director), Chair Education Board, teachers, and senior school students
- 17:00 Teacher union officials: Eric Dolfen (COC); Sabrina Janssens (COV); Marina Van De Meersschaut (VSOA); Dirk Huyghe (ACOD)

#### Wednesday 6 November: Ghent

- 9:00 Basisschool Sint-Jan Berchmanscollege, primary school, Catholic network  
Geert Van Malderen (Director), and teachers
- 13:30 Glorieux Technisch Instituut, secondary vocational and technical school, Catholic network  
Luk Vermeulen (Director), and teachers

#### Thursday 7 November: Ghent

- 9.00 Freinetschool het Trappenhuis, primary school, Ghent municipality network  
Jacky Deblaere (Director), and teachers
- 14.00 Department of Teacher Education, University of Ghent  
Antonia Aeltermann, Head, teacher education

#### Friday 8 November: Brussels

- 9.00 Seminar of key stakeholder groups: Ludy Van Buyten, Secretary-General Department of Education (Chair); Lieve Claeys, Flemish Secretariat for Catholic Education (VSKO); Maggy Dekens, Provincial Education Flanders (POV); Katty Elias, Forum of Small Education Providers (VOOP); Jan Geens, Flemish Council of Professional Education (VLHORA); Raymond Gevaert, Belgian Association Teachers of French; Kristel Hebb, Belgian Association Teachers of French; Guy Janssens, Department of Education; René Laumen, Flemish Association Teachers of Mathematics; Frank Lefever, Liberal Union of Public Servants (VSOA); Romain Maes, Christian Trade Union in Primary Education (COV); Ronny Mispion, Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training (VDAB); Hilde Similion, Community Education (GO); Willy Vanhaeren, Education Secretariat of Towns and Municipalities of the Flemish Community (OVSG); Michel Van Uytfanghe, Christian Teachers Union (COC); George Vansweevelt, General Union of Public

Services (ACOD); Trees Gilles, Flemish Confederation for Parents and Parents-Teachers Associations; Barbara Tan, Economic Union of Flanders (VEV)

14:00 Koen Van Hee, Hay Consulting Group

15:00 Seminar with educational researchers: Micheline Scheys, Policy Coordination Division; Geertrui De Ruytter, Policy Coordination Division; Nadine Engels, Free University of Brussels; Antonia Aeltermans, University of Ghent; Jean Pierre Verhaeghe, University of Ghent; Geert Kelchtermans, Catholic University of Leuven; Roland Vandenberghe, Catholic University of Leuven, Jef Verhoeven, Catholic University of Leuven

18:00 Deputy Chief of Staff of the Minister for Education

**Saturday 9 November: Brussels**

9:00 CVO Sint-Lukas Hogere Leergangen, adult teacher training (“GPB”)  
Walter Vervliet (Director), teacher educators, and trainee teachers

**Sunday 10 November: Brussels**

9:00 Review team meetings

**Monday 11 November: Brussels**

9:00 Review team meetings

**Tuesday 12 November: Brussels**

9:00 Basisschool Hendrik Conscience, Schaarbeek, primary school, Flemish community network  
Gerda Calders (Director), and teachers

14:00 Project Steering Committee meeting (see Appendix 2)

17:00 Visit conclusion

#### APPENDIX 4: COMPARATIVE INDICATORS ON TEACHERS

	Flanders	OECD country mean	Flanders' rank <sup>1</sup>
<b>Current expenditure – composition (2000)<sup>2</sup></b>			
Compensation of teachers (%)	68	63	7/17
Compensation of other staff (%)	14	15	11/17
Compensation of all staff (%)	82	80	13/27
Non-staff expenditure (%)	18	20	15/27
<b>Staffing levels (2001)</b>			
Classroom teachers, academic staff and other teachers, primary and secondary schools, per 1000 students, in full-time equivalents	90	71	5/28
<b>Distribution of school staff by personnel category (upper sec., 2001)<sup>3,4</sup></b>			
Management personnel (%)	3	5	=11/14
Teachers (%)	82	73	=1/14
Teacher aides (%)	close to 0	2	=12/14
Professional support personnel (%)	8	4	2/14
Other support personnel (%)	7	17	14/14
<b>Part-time teachers as a percentage of total teachers (upper sec., 2001)<sup>3</sup></b>			
	35	25	3/12
<b>Temporary teachers (upper secondary, 2001)<sup>3</sup></b>			
Full-time temporary teachers as a % of all FT teachers	21	12	2/12
Part-time temporary teachers as a % of all PT teachers	28	41	11/12
<b>Teachers who are not fully qualified (upper secondary, 2001)<sup>3</sup></b>			
Full-time teachers who are not fully qualified as a % of FT teachers	13	14	7/10
Part-time teachers who are not fully qualified as a % of PT teachers	19	31	9/10
<b>School responsibility for the hiring of teachers (upper sec., 2001)<sup>3</sup></b>			
% of students attending schools which are responsible for hiring teachers	94	67	5/14
<b>Teaching vacancies (upper secondary, 2001)<sup>3</sup></b>			
% students attending schools where there are no vacancies to be filled	5	6	8/13
% of FTE teaching posts needed to be filled in 2001-02 school year	10	12	9/13
<b>Teacher absenteeism (upper secondary, 2001)<sup>3</sup></b>			
% of class periods cancelled due to absence of assigned teacher	5	4	3/14
% of class periods covered by another teacher due to absence	5	7	8/12
<b>Perceived difficulty hiring fully qualified teachers (upper sec., 2001)<sup>3</sup></b>			
Language of instruction (%)	42	13	1/14
Mathematics (%)	90	33	1/14
Foreign languages (%)	69	32	2/14
Sciences (%)	74	30	1/14
Computer sciences/information technology (%)	84	49	1/14

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(continued)

	Flanders	OECD country mean	Flanders' rank <sup>1</sup>
<b>Annual teacher salaries, public schools (with minimum training, 2001)<sup>5</sup></b>			
Primary - starting salary (US\$)	24 618	21 982	10/29
Primary - 15 years experience (US\$)	33 047	30 047	12/29
Primary - top of scale (US\$)	39 127	36 455	12/29
Primary - ratio of salary after 15 years experience to GDP per capita	1.23	1.31	=14/29
Lower secondary - starting salary (US\$)	24 618	23 283	11/28
Lower secondary - 15 years experience (US\$)	34 475	31 968	13/28
Lower secondary – top of scale (US\$)	42 028	38 787	11/28
Lower sec. - ratio of salary after 15 years experience to GDP per capita	1.29	1.34	13/28
Upper secondary, general - starting salary (US\$)	30 544	24 350	4/28
Upper secondary, general - 15 years experience (US\$)	44 085	34 250	4/28
Upper secondary, general - top of scale (US\$)	52 990	41 344	6/28
Upper secondary, general - ratio of salary after 15 years to GDP per capita	1.65	1.43	7/28
<b>Ratio of salary after 15 years experience to starting salary (2001)</b>			
Primary	1.34	1.37	14/29
Lower secondary	1.40	1.38	12/29
Upper secondary, general programmes	1.44	1.41	12/28
<b>Number of years from starting to top salary (lower secondary, 2001)</b>			
	27	25	=12/26
<b>Net teaching time, hours per year (2001)<sup>6</sup></b>			
Primary education	831	792	9/26
Lower secondary education	716	714	10/25
Upper secondary education, general programmes	671	656	8/25
<b>Salary per hour of net contact (teaching) after 15 years experience (2001)<sup>5</sup></b>			
Primary (US\$)	40	37	=8/26
Lower secondary (US\$)	48	45	=12/25
Upper secondary, general programmes (US\$)	66	52	=6/25
Ratio of salary per teaching hour of upper secondary and primary teachers	1.65	1.38	4/25
<b>School provision of professional development' (upper secondary, 2001)<sup>7</sup></b>			
School has a separate budget for teacher PD (%)	98	61	=1/14
School provides time for teacher PD (%)	90	78	=5/14
School organises staff development activities (%)	88	79	5/14
<b>Teacher participation in professional development (upper sec., 2001)<sup>8</sup></b>			
ICT-related professional development activities (%)	30	32	7/14
Other (non ICT-related) professional development activities (%)	48	48	6/14
Observational visits to other schools (%)	31	53	12/14
Regularly scheduled collaboration among teachers on instruction issues (%)	86	82	8/14
Mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching as part of a formal arrangement (%)	44	54	9/14
Collaborative research and/or development on a topic related to education (%)	73	73	7/14
Network of teachers e.g. one organised by an outside agency or over the Internet (%)	43	55	10/14
Visited companies/employers (%)	73	70	7/14

Notes on next page

*Notes:*

1. "Flanders' rank" indicates the position of Flanders when countries are ranked in descending order from the highest to lowest value on the indicator concerned. For example, on the indicator "Compensation of teachers", the rank "7/17" indicates that Flanders recorded the 7<sup>th</sup> highest value of the 17 OECD countries that reported relevant data. The symbol "=" means that at least one other country has the same rank on the indicator concerned.
2. Expenditure on goods and services consumed within the current year which needs to be made recurrently to sustain the production of educational services. Refers to current expenditure on schools and post-secondary non-tertiary educational institutions. The individual percentages do not always sum to the totals due to rounding.
3. As reported by principals. The figure is computed by weighting the principal's response for each sample school by the number of students enrolled in the school. The data is drawn from the OECD International Survey of Upper Secondary Schools (ISUSS), a study of upper secondary schools carried out in 4,400 schools of 14 countries in the 2001-02 school year. For more details see OECD (2004).
4. *Management personnel* includes professional personnel who are responsible for school management and administration, i.e., principals, assistant principals, headmasters, and assistant headmasters. *Teacher aides* includes non-professional personnel or students who support teachers in providing instruction to students. *Professional support personnel* includes professional staff who provide student services, e.g., guidance counselors, librarians and psychologists. *Other support personnel* includes maintenance and operations personnel, e.g., receptionists, secretaries, plumbers, drivers, cleaning personnel, etc.
5. Expressed in equivalent US\$ converted using purchasing power parities.
6. Calculated on the basis of the annual number of weeks of instruction multiplied by the minimum/maximum number of periods that a teacher is supposed to spend teaching a class or a group, multiplied by the length of the period in minutes and divided by 60. Excludes breaks between lessons and days when schools are closed for holidays.
7. Percentage of upper secondary students whose school principal reported school support for teachers' professional development.
8. Percentage of upper secondary students attending schools where principals reported that at least one teacher participated in professional development activities during the 2000/2001 school year.

*Source:* OECD (2003)