

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION: THE FOCUS ON TEACHERS

#### *Summary*

The OECD has made a major international study of policies for attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers in schools. Drawing on the experiences of 25 countries around the world, and extensive data and research, the OECD project has analysed the key developments affecting teachers and their work, and developed policy options for countries to consider.

Significant long-term questions are being raised about the need for school systems to become much more competitive in recruiting skilled and motivated people as teachers, and how to improve the effectiveness of teachers' work. This chapter discusses why teacher policy is high on national agendas, describes the methodology used in the project, and highlights the main policy challenges that countries now face.

The project focuses on teacher policy issues in 25 countries: Australia; Austria; Belgium (Flemish Community); Belgium (French Community); Canada (Quebec); Chile; Denmark; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Ireland; Israel; Italy; Japan; Korea; Mexico; the Netherlands; Norway; the Slovak Republic; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; the United Kingdom and the United States.

There are some striking differences among countries in their approaches to teacher recruitment, teacher education, teacher pay and working conditions, teacher employment, evaluation and career structures. International analysis provides countries with an opportunity to learn more about themselves by examining their experiences against those of other countries, as well as building up evidence on the impact of different approaches to teacher policy. The report provides many examples of innovative and promising teacher policy developments from around the world.

A much larger number of new teachers will enter the profession in the next 5-10 years than in the past 20 years. The entry of substantial numbers of new teachers with up-to-date skills and fresh ideas has the potential to substantially renew the schools. However, if teaching is not perceived as an attractive profession, and teaching does not change in fundamental ways, there is a risk that the quality of schools will decline. There are high stakes in teacher policy.