

Chapter 7

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING TEACHER POLICY

Summary

Teacher policy needs to draw on well-informed research, lead to sound agreements between stakeholders and offer solid implementation strategies. This chapter discusses the processes of consultation, development and implementation that underpin policies that work. It also examines the major gaps in the research and information base to support teacher policy, and suggests priorities for future work.

Experience from a number of countries indicates that unless teachers and their representatives are actively involved in policy formulation, and feel a sense of “ownership” of reform, it is unlikely that substantial changes will be successfully implemented. On the other hand, stakeholder groups should not be able to exercise a veto over education reforms that are mandated through democratic political processes. It is difficult to find the right balance, but open and ongoing systematic dialogue and consultation are fundamental to the process.

In addition to consultative mechanisms, there are also institutional arrangements that can help to promote dialogue and engage teachers and their professional associations in policy formation. This is illustrated by the development in several countries of Teaching Councils that provide teachers and other stakeholder groups with both a forum for policy development and, critically, a mechanism for profession-led standard setting.

It has also become apparent that the available data and information on teachers, their work and careers addresses only part of the spectrum covered by teacher policy, making the development of better national and international information on teachers a priority. In most countries there are also extensive research gaps concerning the teaching profession. 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 and ensuring that teachers engage more actively with new knowledge. Policy formulation would also benefit from more extensive monitoring and evaluation of innovation and reform, with more policies launched on a pilot basis before widespread implementation.