



# Teacher Evaluation in Portugal

## OECD Review

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## Assessment and Conclusions

**JULY 2009**

The full report, *Teacher Evaluation in Portugal – OECD Review*, is  
available on the OECD website:

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## ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSIONS

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### *The current model of teacher evaluation in Portugal has been contentious but is necessary*

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Teacher evaluation plays a key role in efforts to boost education performance by emphasising high competence as a teacher. Previously, teachers progressed through the career structure on the basis of length of service and other fairly mechanical criteria, without any connection to effective teaching practice. Within schools, there is no culture of classroom observation and little tradition of peer evaluation, feedback and the sharing of good practice. In addition, most professional development still involves attending external training events rather than continuous, school-centred coaching and mentoring support. Yet these features of the teaching environment are not counter-balanced by a high performing school system - Portugal's performance in international surveys remains well below the OECD average. Against this backdrop, the Government's efforts to introduce meaningful teacher evaluation are very important and should be sustained.

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### *A range of factors explain resistance to implementation*

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Implementation of the model has been challenging. In part, this reflects natural resistance to change and the introduction of a new culture of evaluation. These changes have followed earlier adjustments in the terms and conditions of employment for civil servants, including teachers, such as the deferment of the retirement age, the two-year suspension of career progressions and very restricted wage rises. Indeed, the reforms to the teaching profession are linked to, and constrained by, public sector reforms more generally. The need to align measures for teachers with other civil servants in turn imposed a rapid timetable for introducing teacher evaluation and restoring career progression. The resistance encountered from teachers also reflects difficulties in operationalising a comprehensive model within a short time span and some unintended consequences of the model.

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### *Meaningful teacher evaluation is critical to improving education performance*

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Nonetheless, placing teacher evaluation at the core of school reforms has also generated a large consensus among the teaching profession that meaningful teacher evaluation is indispensable. This is an important achievement in itself and a significant step towards successful implementation. In moving forward and addressing the weaker points that have been revealed, it is important not to lose sight of the positive features and strengths of the model or slip backwards, losing the ground that has been gained. In considering modifications, notice must also be taken of the integrated system of performance evaluation for public administration.

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### *The current model for teacher evaluation provides a good foundation for further development*

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At this point, the priority is to consolidate the reform, holding a steady course, while accommodating legitimate concerns and difficulties where they arise and making the necessary adjustments. The current

model provides a good basis for further development. It is comprehensive, includes most domains of teacher performance, a wide range of sources of data, provides for more than one evaluator and has a peer-review element. Valuable expertise has been developed in schools during the current implementation process, and this should not be lost.

However, in our view, some adjustments are needed to reach the point where meaningful teacher evaluation is fully put in place. Most importantly, we believe policy needs to address two key tensions in the current model: between evaluation for improvement and evaluation for career progression; and between school-level evaluation and national-level consequences.

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### *Balance improvement and accountability and place school-level teacher evaluation in the broader school context*

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The current teacher evaluation model aims to achieve both improvement and accountability (career progression) objectives through a single process that is mostly internal to the school. It is important to carefully address the tension between evaluation for improvement and evaluation for career progression and develop their complementarity within an articulated framework. In addition, given the tension between school-level evaluation and national-level consequences, it is also important to place teacher evaluation in the broader school system context. The following interlocking approach would resolve these tensions:

- Strengthen evaluation for improvement through a component predominantly dedicated to developmental evaluation.
- Lighten the current model and use it predominantly for career-progression evaluation.
- Provide links between developmental evaluation and career-progression evaluation.
- Ensure appropriate articulation between school evaluation and teacher evaluation.

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### *Strengthen teacher evaluation for improvement purposes*

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There needs to be a stronger emphasis on teacher evaluation for continuous improvement of teaching practices in the school (*i.e.* developmental evaluation). In the current model, the concurrent accountability purpose can reduce the effectiveness of evaluation as an important tool for fostering improvement. Developing a component of evaluation that is predominantly dedicated to developmental evaluation and fully internal to the school would avoid this risk. This approach is consistent with the spirit of school autonomy, the new pedagogical responsibilities for school directors, and the need to reinforce performance management within schools, while respecting the professionalism of teachers.

This component would be an internal process covering both the pedagogical and functional performance of teachers and take account of the school objectives as well as the circumstances of the evaluatee. The main outcome would be feedback on teaching performance as well as on the overall contribution to the school which would lead to a purely qualitative assessment (*i.e.* with no quantitative rating) and a plan for professional development, both to be kept on the teacher's school record. It could be organised once a year for each teacher, or less frequently depending on the previous assessment by the teacher and would be carried out by line managers (*e.g.* department co-ordinators), senior peers, and the school director or members of the school management group. The key aspect is that it should result on a meaningful report with recommendations for professional development and would complement ongoing informal professional support throughout the year.

There is always a risk that developmental evaluation, given that no direct links exist with career progression, is not taken seriously enough, especially when an evaluation culture is yet to emerge. This requires the external validation of the processes in place to organise developmental evaluation, holding the

school director accountable as necessary. It should also involve the school council to require annually information from the school director on the steps that have been taken to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning during the year.

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*Lighten the current model for use as predominantly career-progression evaluation*

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Evaluation for career progression is an essential mechanism to assess teachers' performance, determine advancement in their career, incentivise teachers to improve their teaching practices and inform their professional development plan. Evaluation for career progression can be achieved through the model currently being implemented, but three main adjustments would facilitate implementation. *First*, it would seem sensible, given the time needed to develop expertise on teacher evaluation and the current burden placed on school actors, to simplify the current model, in particular, by reducing the frequency of career-progression evaluation and simplifying evaluation criteria and instruments. *Second*, while keeping a predominantly internal focus, career-progression evaluation should include an external evaluator. *Third*, career-progression evaluation should be linked to national-level criteria standards and indicators (while accounting for the school context). These elements would strengthen the fairness of assessments across teachers and schools.

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*Provide links between developmental evaluation and career-progression evaluation*

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Developmental evaluation and evaluation for career progression should remain connected and it is important to design a sound basis for their interface. An immediate link is that career-progression evaluation would draw on the qualitative assessments produced through developmental evaluation, including the recommendations made for improvement. This might also include an interaction between the external evaluator and internal evaluators in charge of developmental evaluation. Similarly, results of career-progression assessments can also inform the professional development of individual teachers and provide useful feedback for the improvement of developmental evaluation internal processes. In proposing different procedures for developmental and career-progression evaluation, we would not wish to add to the work of teachers and evaluators, but instead, envisage a rebalancing to make more effective use of the time already spent on evaluation.

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*Ensure the appropriate articulation between school and teacher evaluation*

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

School directors are accountable to their school councils for human resources management within the school. Ideally this should include a system of school quality assurance, where the school strategy and the school self-evaluation results ensure continuous monitoring and improvement of school and teacher quality. School self-evaluation needs also to encompass the mechanisms for internal developmental evaluation and for following up on the results of career-progression evaluation.

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### *Re-examine profession-wide standards and reach a shared understanding of what counts as accomplished teaching*

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A national framework of teaching standards provides an essential underpinning for teacher evaluation. Teachers need a clear, concise statement or profile of what they are expected to know and be able to do. In turn, teachers' work, and the knowledge and skills needed, should reflect the student learning objectives that schools are aiming to achieve. The professional profiles already developed in Portugal – the general profile for teachers of all educational levels and specific performance profiles for pre-primary teachers and teachers of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of basic education – provide a good basis for further development. Specific performance profiles also need to be developed for teachers of the other levels and over time, expanded to reflect different levels of performance expected of new teachers, experienced teachers, and those with other responsibilities. A clear, well-structured and widely-supported teacher profile can be a powerful mechanism for aligning the various elements involved in developing teachers' knowledge and skills and teacher evaluation should be adapted to take them into account as soon as such profiles can be developed.

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### *Develop common national criteria with adaptation at the school level*

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A fair and reliable teacher evaluation system needs to evaluate teachers using well-established criteria for 'good' teaching. The parameters defined by the Ministry for both the scientific-pedagogical and functional evaluations are a good basis to establish criteria for teacher evaluation, but we recommend the Ministry to go further.

For developmental evaluation, the Ministry could also define 'items' and well-articulated criteria to be used across all schools. Schools should retain the autonomy to further refine such 'items' and criteria and weight of each component so their particular context and objectives are contemplated. This would bring a better balance between the ownership of the process by schools and the need to ensure the comparability of standards across schools, while recognising the still incipient expertise of schools in developing instruments and criteria for teacher evaluation.

For career-progression evaluation, the Ministry should develop a smaller set of criteria common across schools, reflecting the core aspects of the teaching profession. Given the national-level consequences of career-progression evaluation, it is important to ensure that all actors have a common understanding of expectations for career progression. It would also make career-progression evaluation a less burdensome process that concentrates on key aspects and those which can be more objectively measured. In turn, the school context would be taken into account when the assessment of the teacher is carried out using the common national criteria.

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### *Differentiate criteria according to the stage of the career and the type of education*

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The criteria also need to be differentiated for different stages of the career. This issue is particularly relevant in career progression decisions, but is also important in evaluation for improvement. Currently the system establishes a common set of criteria for all teachers, regardless of their career situation. It seems reasonable to adapt the criteria or to change the relative importance of different criteria according to the stage of the career, taking into account changes in roles and in management responsibilities. There could also be a case to adapt criteria to the educational level at which teaching is undertaken (aligned with differentiated teaching profiles) and to the type of education provided, including the teaching of *non-traditional* students (*e.g.* education and training courses, adult education courses, recurrent education).

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### *Target instruments to assess the key aspects of teaching*

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It is desirable to evaluate the elements that are important in teaching and learning and that make teaching effective. This objective should be reflected in the choice of both the evaluation criteria and instruments, which should be closely aligned. The Review Team endorses the general recommendations from the Scientific Council for Teacher Evaluation regarding principles for the construction of evaluation instruments: selecting necessary and useful information only; ensure the precision, credibility and reliability of the data; respect the principle of transparency; cross-check data coming from different information sources and from the application of different methods; and high degree of professional ethics throughout the whole process.

We recommend that instruments be simplified, concentrating them on the most relevant aspects of teaching performance, and that guidelines are devised to assist with the use of instruments, the development of indicators and ways to carry out the assessment rating. While this is essential in the context of career-progression evaluation, it could also prove useful to schools in their internal developmental evaluation systems. Such guidelines could be developed by the Scientific Council for Teacher Evaluation, possibly in collaboration with the Inspectorate.

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### *Rely on three core instruments: classroom observation, self-evaluation and teacher portfolio*

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We consider that the teacher evaluation system should be based on three core instruments: classroom observation, self-evaluation and the documentation of practices in a simplified portfolio. Teacher evaluation, both developmental and for career progression, should be firmly rooted in classroom observation, since this is where the key dimensions of teaching take place. Therefore, we concur with the Portuguese system in underlining the role of classroom observation. But there is a need to develop guidelines for observations. Again there could be a role for the Scientific Council for Teacher Evaluation and the Inspectorate in developing these guidelines.

In our view, it could be useful to develop a simplified, but well structured, portfolio to complement the teacher's self-assessment. Teacher portfolios can contain different elements including: lesson plans and teaching materials, samples of student work and commentaries on student assessment examples, teacher's self-reported questionnaires and reflection sheets. The portfolio should also allow teachers to mention specific ways in which they consider that their professional practices are promoting student learning and provide evidence to demonstrate student progress in their classrooms. It should be noted that portfolios are not only a tool for evaluation *per se*, but also play a role in supporting a reflective approach to teaching practice that is a hallmark of effective teachers.

We also recommend not using indicators such as student test results, drop-out and absentee rates for individual teacher evaluation at this stage. These indicators are fundamental, but we consider that they are more relevant for whole-school evaluation than for individual teacher performance evaluation. It remains essential that teachers provide evidence to demonstrate student progress in their classrooms, but we consider that it can be provided, for instance, through specific evidence and portfolios. Student test results are not commonly used in countries for the evaluation of individual teachers, in large part because of the wide range of other factors impacting on student results. "Value-added" models have the potential to identify the contribution an individual teacher made to a student's achievement, but they would require a major additional investment in large scale national-level student testing across levels of education and subjects and would take years to develop.

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### *Empower and equip school leadership to take responsibility for teacher evaluation*

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Skilled leaders can help foster a sense of ownership and purpose in the way that teachers approach their job, provide professional autonomy to teachers and help them achieve job satisfaction and continue to develop professionally. Portugal's new approach to school management, as well as teacher evaluation, will only succeed in raising educational standards if school directors exercise pedagogical leadership and assume responsibility for the quality of education in their schools. Therefore the appropriate selection, training and career development of school leaders is a critical element.

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### *Teacher evaluation is part of the broader process of developing each school into a professional learning community.*

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It is also clear that teacher evaluation will only be worthwhile in the longer term if it becomes part of a culture or climate where each school is a professional learning community. School directors and their teams of deputies, heads of department and senior teachers should be pedagogical leaders with the vision, the commitment and the capacities to fully develop their staff as effective teachers. School leadership is of fundamental importance to improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising educational performance in Portugal's schools.

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### *Redesign and further develop training for evaluation skills*

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Building the capacity to carry out evaluation effectively throughout all schools is critical. In our view there needs to be a major investment in training for evaluation skills. The initial step is to broaden the knowledge, skills and evaluation experience of the trainers, drawing in international expertise in the field of evaluation theories, methodology and practice. In contrast to current arrangements, training should also include practical elements such as assignments, role-play, video recording, and strategies to deal with feedback.

School directors should have priority in the training provided for evaluation, given their crucial role in providing pedagogical leadership and reviewing effective practice and this training could be extended to other members of the school management team, in particular the Commission for the Co-ordination of Performance Evaluation.

The success of the teacher evaluation system will greatly depend on the in-depth training of the evaluators. Experience from other countries suggests that evaluators should have a range of characteristics and competencies, including: background in teaching; knowledge of educational evaluation theories and methodologies; knowledge of concepts of teaching quality; familiarity with systems and procedures of educational and school quality assurance; understanding of instrument development; awareness of the psychological aspects of evaluation; expertise in rating an assessment; and mastering of evaluation-related communication and feedback skills. Evaluators for career progression should be highly qualified in all these areas.

It is also vitally important that teachers as evaluatees are given support to understand the evaluation procedures and to benefit from evaluation results. Training modules should be offered for teachers so they know what is expected from them to be recognised as 'good' teachers, and to be prepared to make the best use of the feedback received. The aim would be that as standard professional behaviour, teachers would regularly engage in reflective practice, study their own methods of instruction and assessment, and share their experience with their peers in schools.

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***Accredit external evaluators for career-progression evaluation***

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As described earlier, we recommend that the evaluation process for career progression includes an evaluator external to the school, as part of a panel in which the school director is included. Including an external evaluator for evaluations for career progression would strengthen the credibility of the process and the comparability of the ratings applied. Credible external evaluators are most likely to be ‘accomplished’ current teachers who are recognised as having in-depth subject knowledge and pedagogical expertise, as highly proficient and successful practitioners, able to guide and support others in the teaching process. They should also have experience of being evaluated, have completed a dedicated training programme and have experience as internal evaluators. Their competence as evaluators could be validated through an accreditation process that could be carried out by an external agency such as the Inspectorate. Evaluators should be compensated for carrying out their role (with teaching duties reduced or extra pay) and should themselves be evaluated. Of course, it will take time to establish and accredit sufficient external evaluators to be able to implement this recommendation.

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***Ensure careful design to determine performance-based rewards and consider non-monetary rewards***

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We support the principle of career advancement on the basis of evaluation results. However, the intended additional “bonus” pay element should be approached with considerable caution. The evidence of the overall impact of such extra payments is mixed and can be contentious and potentially divisive. Rewarding teachers with time allowances, sabbatical periods, opportunities for school-based research, support for post-graduate study, or opportunities for in-service education could be more appealing for many teachers. In some circumstances it may be more effective to focus on group recognition and rewards at the school or grade level rather than individual teacher rewards. In any case, linking evaluation and reward requires a careful design of career-progression evaluation. In particular, it needs to ensure that evaluation criteria are clear, indicators are reliable and fair, evaluators have the adequate expertise, and results are well articulated to teachers.

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***Maintain quotas on ratings until the maturity of the system renders them unnecessary***

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Although unpopular with teachers, we see no alternative in the short term to retaining the school quota system until evaluators are sufficiently proficient and the criteria sufficiently explicit to render school quotas unnecessary. This will occur as the system gains in maturity and a collective understanding emerges on the teaching skills and performance that merit a *very good* or *excellent* rating. It is reasonable to associate the performance of teachers with the performance of a school, having taken contextual factors into account. It is difficult to envisage an underachieving school full of excellent teachers, a clear paradox.

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***Give a more prominent role to the Inspectorate***

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The Inspectorate can play an important role in both stimulating the quality of school leadership and the quality of teaching through their external school evaluations. These school evaluations should provide important feedback on leadership and management, the quality of the teaching and learning processes, the school climate, and the performance of students. The Inspectorate could also examine and validate schools’ internal quality assurance arrangements, in particular those in place to conduct developmental evaluation, and the accreditation of external evaluators involved in career-progression evaluation. The Inspectorate can also strengthen teacher evaluation by modelling and disseminating good practices, especially while the teacher evaluation system is still in its early years.

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### *Strengthen the role of the Scientific Council for Teacher Evaluation to guide the development of teacher evaluation*

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The Scientific Council for Teacher Evaluation (CCAP) fulfils a key role in the development of teacher evaluation in Portugal. This group is in a good position to recognise ‘good’ evaluation practices, to keep abreast of relevant research developments and, as a result, to provide sound advice and recommendations based on evidence. The CCAP could also play a role in developing tools to support the system, such as guidelines on using instruments, developing indicators, or carry out classroom observation, in collaboration with the Inspectorate.

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### *Teacher engagement and motivation is needed for successful school reform*

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Meaningful teacher evaluation and the resulting feedback, reflection and professional development will only happen if teachers are motivated to make it work. Hence, it is essential to find ways for teachers to identify with the goals and values of teacher evaluation arrangements and practices. This includes providing support to teachers to help them understand what evaluation involves, how it can strengthen their role as professionals and how it can help them to improve student performance. Also, by having the opportunity locally to develop instruments and procedures for teacher evaluation, based on central guidance, teachers have the scope to develop a clear, fair and rigorous approach in every school.

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### *Maintain teacher evaluation during the transition towards a more robust model*

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We have set out a number of proposals for improvement in the system of teacher evaluation in Portugal and we reiterate that the present model provides a good basis for further development. We acknowledge that many of these proposals would take at least two years to fully implement. The task now for Portugal is to develop a road map and timeline for making adjustments to strengthen teacher evaluation to capitalise and consolidate the expertise already developed within schools, and manage the transition process towards a more robust model for career progression that has high credibility with teachers, parents and the general public. In the meantime, the key priority is to strengthen the developmental evaluation within schools, including a classroom observation element for all teachers, and providing teachers with rich qualitative feedback. Teachers wishing to move more rapidly through the career scale can continue to opt for a rating that includes classroom observation. The transition would also involve the development of capacities needed to support a more robust career-progression model, including the development of national-level criteria and the training and accreditation of external evaluators. Supporting effective teaching and learning practices and strengthening accountability for performance of schools and teachers would make an important contribution to improving education outcomes in Portugal.