

# **SETTING THE STAGE FOR IMPROVED LEARNING:**

The State of Teacher Policies in  
El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras  
and the Dominican Republic

**SEPTEMBER 2015**



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# Table of Contents

<b>Mission</b> .....	7
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	8
<b>Teacher Policy Indicators</b> .....	9
<b>The State of Teacher Policy</b> .....	11
<b>1. Preparing the Way for Effective Teaching</b> .....	12
A. Countries are advancing in setting clear goals for students and teachers .....	12
B. Schools still have not maximized classroom learning opportunities .....	14
C. Teacher training continues to show severe weaknesses .....	15
<b>2. Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining Talented Teachers</b> .....	19
A. The best candidates are not chosen to be teachers .....	19
B. The profession does not offer adequate incentives to attract and retain the most talented individuals .....	20
C. Teachers are not given enough support to improve teaching practices .....	23
<b>3. Managing for Good Performance</b> .....	25
A. Teacher assessment systems are weak and lack credibility .....	25
B. Good performance is not recognized and there are no mechanisms to deal with poor performance .....	27
C. The best teachers are not assigned to the most vulnerable students .....	28
<b>Priorities for Improving Teacher Policy</b> .....	30
<b>Appendices</b> .....	32
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	34
<b>Notes</b> .....	36





## Mission

In Central America and the Dominican Republic there is growing concern about the quality of education. Schools do not teach children and youths the skills they need to successfully enter the labor market and contribute to society.

Despite the importance of teachers in the learning process, in most countries of the region the systems for recruiting, selecting, training, retaining and supporting teachers remain deficient. Moreover, the groups that should be most engaged with governments to demand improvements in teaching and students' learning—parents, business people, and society in general—are often on the margins of the debate.

PREAL's Teacher Policy Report Cards seek to nurture informed debate about teacher policies through systematic studies of the state and progress of such policies in the schools of each country studied. This regional report summarizes the main findings and recommendations of monitoring reports for the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras in 2015. Those reports, the fruit of a collaborative effort by the Inter-American Dialogue, EDUCA (Dominican Republic), FUSADES (El Salvador), CIEN (Guatemala), and FEREMA (Honduras) offer a common analytical framework for monitoring the key elements of good teacher policy.

In each of the four countries, the collaborating organizations analyzed the state of teacher policies across nine common dimensions, grouped into three categories:

**1. Preparing the Way for Effective Teaching:** This category explores whether basic preconditions exist to allow for quality instruction, including clear expectations, sufficient class time, and solid teacher training.

### **2. Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining Talented Teachers:**

This category explores whether the current systems manage to select and retain the best candidates for teaching positions, and whether teachers are given support to improve their teaching practices.

**3. Managing for Good Performance:** This category explores whether teachers are regularly assessed; whether good performance is recognized and continual poor performance penalized; and whether human and material resources are allocated to provide quality education for the most vulnerable children and youths.

The teams used a common methodology devised by the Inter-American Dialogue. The findings, based on the best available information and validated by a panel of national experts, were discussed in a seminar on March 4, 2015 in Panama. The teams that produced the reports, along with representatives of the education sector in seven Central American countries, and officials of the Inter-American Development Bank, CECC-SICA, the Inter-American Dialogue and OREALC/UNESCO participated. The seminar and country studies comprised the starting point for this regional report.

The report highlights the most significant trends and findings at the regional level, supported by examples from each country. It also recaps the main recommendations of the national reports and proposes areas for improvement in teacher policy. By focusing on the areas in which progress has been made and those in which it has been absent, the report seeks to raise the profile of teacher policy, stimulate debate, foster consensus on common goals and activities, and set the stage for change.

## Acknowledgements

Based on the report cards for the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, the present report was prepared by Federico Sucre and Ariel Fiszbein, respectively the Assistant and Director of the Inter-American Dialogue's education program.

The authors are particularly grateful to Tamara Ortega Goodspeed for her impeccable work in designing the terms of reference underpinning this project, as well as for her comments and suggestions during the research and writing process. We are also grateful to Verónica Spross, Mario Alas Solís, Carolina Maduro, Helga Cuéllar Marchelli, Darwin Caraballo and Alexander García, as well as to their respective teams, for their enormous efforts in preparing the monitoring reports in their countries and for their comments on previous versions of this regional report. Finally, we thank Jeffrey Puryear, Pablo Cevallos, Ernesto Medina, Katherina Hruskovec, Javier Luque and Maria Oviedo for their comments and editorial support.

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# Teacher Policy Indicators

	EL SALVADOR	GUATEMALA	HONDURAS	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	REGION
<b>PREPARING THE WAY FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING</b>					
<b>Clear expectations for students and teachers</b> There are standards of what students should know and be able to do by grade and discipline, but teachers and principals often are unfamiliar with them. Teaching standards also exist, but implementing them remains a challenge, and there is no effort to monitor the extent to which the defined skills are applied in the classroom.	①	✓	①	✓	①
<b>Maximizing the opportunities for classroom learning</b> There are significant challenges in terms of teacher absenteeism and the effective use of class time. Some initiatives in recent years have reduced absenteeism, but there is little systematic tracking of attendance or of school days completed in practice.	✗	✗	①	✗	✗
<b>Training high quality teachers</b> Reforms are underway to improve the quality of teacher training through the creation of accreditation schemes and the establishment of agencies with responsibilities in this area. Nonetheless, there is still little quality control, misalignment between standards and the curriculum, and weaknesses in both mastery of effective teaching techniques and classroom practice.	①	①	✗	①	①
<b>ATTRACTING, HIRING, AND RETAINING TALENTED TEACHERS</b>					
<b>Selecting the best candidates to be teachers</b> Countries are designing processes to make teacher selection more rigorous, but these processes have been weakly implemented. They do not include interviews or the demonstration of teaching skills in the classroom. The profession has limited prestige, and teacher selection is still often based on seniority or political affiliation.	①	✗	✗	①	①
<b>A structure that attracts and retains the most talented</b> On average, teachers' salaries are competitive in the local labor market and they are generally paid on time. Salaries are not linked to teacher performance, however, and changes to the system are characterized by disputes between teacher unions and governments. Career advancement requires opting for administrative activities that take teachers away from the classroom and from teaching.	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
<b>Supporting teachers to improve teaching practices</b> School principals are not chosen for their academic and pedagogical leadership, and they rarely undergo specific training for their role. Nor is their performance systematically assessed. Countries generally make insufficient use of student performance data to improve teaching, although some countries have experimented with systems for doing so.	✗	①	✗	①	✗
<b>MANAGING FOR GOOD PERFORMANCE</b>					
<b>Regular and high quality teacher assessments</b> Teacher evaluation systems have little credibility, fail to take into account students' learning, and in general are neither regularly nor systematically implemented. Evaluations are not carried out by independent bodies and the results are not used to bring about concrete improvements in teaching practice.	✗	✗	①	✗	✗
<b>Recognizing good performance and tackling poor performance</b> Management systems neither recognize good performance nor establish mechanisms to deal with poor performance. Ineffective teachers are not fired except in very serious cases. The Dominican Republic is the only country that has a probationary period for teachers, and is introducing a system of merit-based certification and promotion.	✗	✗	✗	①	✗
<b>Providing quality education to the neediest</b> None of the countries studied has policies that guarantee a quality education to students from the neediest populations. Some countries offer incentives to attract teachers to vulnerable areas, but they are usually weak. Some efforts have been made to train teachers in bilingual education and to produce materials for indigenous groups.	?	①	✗	✗	✗

✓ The issue has been addressed successfully. ✗ The proper conditions are still not in place. ? The evidence offers no clear indication.

① Progress has been made in the right direction, but not enough.



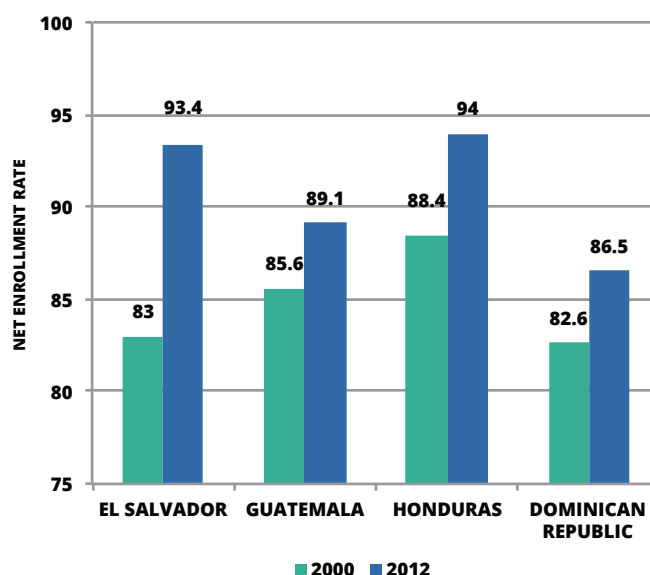
## The State of Teacher Policy

In line with regional trend over the past 15 years, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and the Dominican Republic have increased their educational coverage at all levels. In primary education, the average net enrolment rate for the four countries rose from 85 percent in 2000 to 91 percent in 2012 (see **Figure 1**), close to the regional average of 94 percent. In the same period, the average net enrolment rate at the pre-primary level grew from 37 percent to 43 percent, and at the secondary level from 43 percent to 55 percent (see **Appendices 1 and 2**).

Nonetheless, various national and international assessments reveal poor student performance. In general, the three countries that took part in UNESCO's Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (TERCE) in 2013 (Honduras, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic) ranked below the average in all the subjects assessed.<sup>1</sup> National tests further highlight learning challenges. In Guatemala's 2010 national assessments, for example, less than half of sixth-grade students reached a satisfactory level in math, and less than a third in reading.<sup>2</sup> On national tests in Honduras in 2010, less than 40 percent of students obtained satisfactory scores in reading and less than 20 percent in math.<sup>3</sup> For their part, secondary students in the Dominican Republic<sup>4</sup> and El Salvador<sup>5</sup> obtained average scores of close to 50 percent in the 2013 national tests in the two countries. Such low scores suggest that students have a very weak capacity to reason logically or to communicate effectively.

**FIGURE 1: NET PRIMARY ENROLMENT RATE BY COUNTRY, 2000 AND 2012 (%)**

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS). Education database. Accessed: June 26, 2015.



Gaps are also evident between students in different income quintiles, regions, and ethnic groups. According to UNESCO, in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Honduras the socioeconomic level of students in third and sixth grade has a positive relationship with their learning levels in reading, math, and science. In Honduras, half of students from urban areas reached a

**TABLE 1: NUMBER OF TEACHERS BY SCHOOL TYPE AND GENDER**

Source: Report cards on the state of teacher policies.

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF TEACHERS	% IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS	% OF WOMEN TEACHERS
El Salvador	56,386	81.0%	69.4%
Guatemala	228,072	57.5%	60.8%
Honduras	63,000	n.a	n.a
Dominican Republic	70,670	n.a	73.0%

satisfactory level in reading in the 2010 national test, but only 27 percent of students from rural areas did so. In Guatemala, more than half of students identified as “Ladino” or “other” in the 2010 national test obtained a satisfactory score, while less than a third did so among those identified as Maya, Garifuna, or Xinka.<sup>6</sup>

As the foundation of any education system, teachers perform a crucial function in facilitating students’ educational progress. The four countries studied have an ample teaching corps—more than 400,000 individuals in total, of which two-thirds on average are women (see **Table 1**). Most work in public schools, although in Guatemala a large percentage work in private institutions or cooperatives.

Nobody disputes the importance of teacher excellence in achieving learning outcomes. Exhortations to improve teacher performance as a key element of educational change are a common denominator across the spectrum of opinion on education policies. Recent studies on the matter by the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, and UNESCO suggest that efforts to foster teaching excellence require integrated systems to attract, select, train, retain, support, and manage teachers effectively.<sup>7</sup>

Traditionally, debate on teacher policies—in these and other countries of the region—has centered strongly on matters of salaries. Increasingly, however, there is greater debate on a range of factors that affect teachers’ effectiveness. Honduras, for example, has enacted legislation to move teacher training to the university level and has implemented a teacher assessment program. In the Dominican Republic, teacher policies, including Professional and Performance Standards for Certification and Development of the Teaching Profession, are central to the recently approved reforms and the National Pact for Education Reform. In this same vein, the first line of action in the new Five-Year Development Plan for the education sector in El Salvador is strengthening the teaching profession, another demonstration of the high priority being accorded to the issue in the country and in the region. In Guatemala, national education discussion and policy actions in recent years have focused on how to improve teacher training.

Within this broader context, the regional report offers a detailed examination of the state of teacher policies in the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, and

Honduras, in order to identify common challenges and opportunities and propose reforms to help improve the quality of the region’s teachers. Improving teacher policies is a necessary condition for improving the quality of education. Hence this document concentrates exclusively on such policies, while acknowledging that they must be a coherent part of a broader system-wide approach.

## 1. PREPARING THE WAY FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING

### A. Countries are advancing in setting clear goals for students and teachers

Clear targets for both students and teachers are a key part of effective teacher policies. If we do not know what is expected, it is hard to measure success. Fortunately, there has been some notable progress in this area recently.

All four countries have developed learning standards for students covering different grades and subjects, depending on the country. In Honduras, the Basic National Curriculum Design (DCNB) includes educational standards for students from first to sixth grade in math and Spanish; these were later expanded to cover natural sciences and social studies and extended through ninth grade. Standards for secondary are still pending.<sup>8</sup> In Guatemala, the National Base Curriculum (CNB) sets out skills, core fields, and areas for learning from pre-primary to the basic cycle of secondary, stipulating what students must learn for each grade. In practice, however, standards are more clearly defined at the pre-primary and primary levels than at the secondary level, especially in the areas of communication and language, math, the social and natural environment, natural sciences and technology, and social sciences.<sup>9</sup> For their part, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic have set clear targets for skills to be developed in each educational level and discipline.

Although the countries have indeed set targets for student performance, often teachers and principals are unfamiliar with these targets. In El Salvador, for example, there is evidence that some teachers do not know what to expect of their students; others do not strive assiduously to meet the established goals; and others lack the necessary resources to do so.<sup>10</sup> In Honduras, about 90 percent of teachers in the first and second cycles of basic education had the student standards for 2008, but many did not use them.<sup>11</sup>

In general, the four countries have established expectations for teachers, again with differences in the extent to which they have been developed among the different countries. The Dominican Republic has standards on what constitutes good teaching and what is expected of teachers by grade, subject, and/or area of knowledge.<sup>12</sup> The Dominican Republic currently has two coexisting curricula (1995 and 2011), and most schools have not begun to implement the new one.

**In all four countries, to a greater or lesser degree, there is a gap between the definition of standards and their practical implementation.**

However, the larger challenge is to ensure that teachers have the skills needed to convert the conceptual elements of the curriculum into concrete learning on the part of students.<sup>13</sup> Guatemala also has established a standard teacher profile, but the expectations for teacher practices in the classroom within that profile are insufficiently specific. In El Salvador, skills standards (knowledge, abilities, and attitudes) for teacher-training graduates by subject area (math, language, natural sciences, and so on) are clear, but such standards are not sufficiently linked to what is expected of teachers when they are hired.<sup>14</sup> Honduras seems to have the least developed system of teacher standards. Although the National Basic Education Curriculum Design (DCNB) stipulates what students should learn in five main areas (communication, natural sciences, social studies, physical education, and technology), the system does not clearly and specifically define what teachers should know and be able to do.<sup>15</sup>

While efforts have been made to define what is expected of teachers to some extent, standards on satisfactory performance levels and the evidence to be used to assess teachers' abilities are not well developed. Honduras does not have teacher performance indicators. In El Salvador and

Guatemala there is strong emphasis on defining content standards (that is, what teachers should know), but these are insufficiently linked to attainment indicators that make it possible to assess proficiency levels in terms of content knowledge and the teachers' capacity to teach. In contrast to the other three countries, the Dominican Republic recently created the "Professional and Performance Standards for Certification and Development of the Teaching Profession." These standards do define the kind of performance deemed effective, taking into account, among other things, mastery of the curricular approach and proficiency in the subject, given the level at which the teacher is working and his or her capacity to teach.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, all four countries face serious challenges in implementing their existing teacher standards. These challenges include unfamiliarity with the standards and their importance (El Salvador,<sup>17</sup> Dominican Republic,<sup>18</sup>); deficient mechanisms for monitoring the extent to which defined teaching skills conform to classroom practice (Guatemala<sup>19</sup>); and a shortage of materials to support teaching and learning in the classroom (El Salvador<sup>20</sup>).

In all four countries, to a greater or lesser degree, there is a gap between the definition of standards and their practical implementation. Partly, this reflects the education systems' modest capacity, but it also shows that the adoption of standards in practice takes time to unfold.

### **B. Schools still have not maximized classroom learning opportunities**

It is hard to facilitate learning if teachers or students are absent from class, or if class time is spent on non-academic activities. Some initiatives are underway in the four countries to tackle the problem of absenteeism, but in general terms there are no systematic efforts to maximize learning time.

Historically, students in the region have had far fewer days in class than are required by law. In the Dominican Republic, between 2009 and 2013 students completed only 81 percent of scheduled class days. In Honduras, the target of 200 annual school days established in 2003 was met only in 2013 (see **Figure 2**). Teachers, on average, attended just 90 days of class in 2009 and 140 days in 2011. In Guatemala, in 2010 and 2011, the average number of completed school days was between 90 and 120 of the 180 days stipulated by law. Although the situation improved significantly in 2013 and 2014,



it is estimated that some Guatemalan schools lose at least 30 school days a year.<sup>21</sup>

Teacher and student absenteeism, strikes and demonstrations, and the inefficient use of already short class hours (4–5 hours a day in many countries) negatively affect students' opportunities to learn. In practice, the countries lack a system for systematic monitoring and control of teacher and student attendance, or of school days actually completed, even when such mechanisms do in fact exist on paper. In the Dominican Republic, at least 42 percent of the reasons for "no teaching" in the 2011–2012 school year stemmed from union activity (strikes for wage claims) and teachers' association-related activity (meetings and assemblies of the teachers' union and their cooperative).<sup>22</sup> On other occasions, teaching time is lost due to training activities arranged by the schools. In Guatemala, for example, 35 percent of parents reported that teachers were absent from class because they were taking part in training, and 15 percent indicated that the absences were because of departmental meetings.<sup>23</sup>

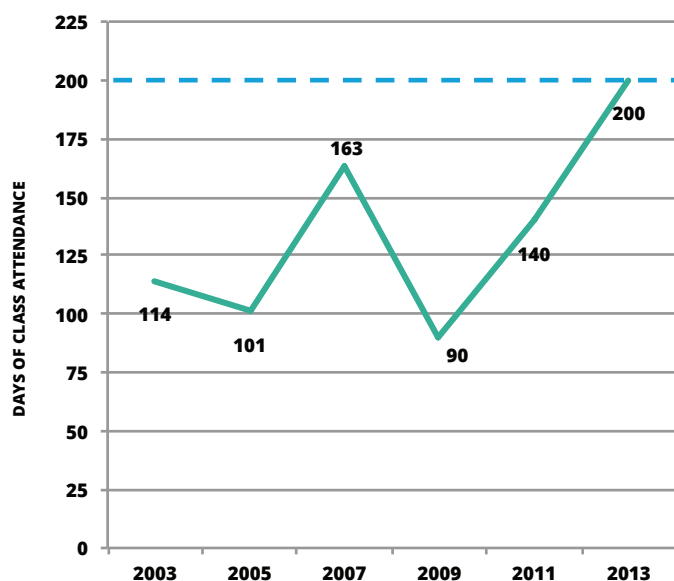
In an effort to rectify these shortcomings, since 2012 the Dominican Republic has been extending the school day and monitoring completed school days, and increased the related budget in 2013. In Honduras, one

of the Ministry of Education's strategies has been to extend the Monday-to-Friday school day from five to six hours with two sessions, morning and afternoon (extended day), and to stipulate that teachers should work for two hours on Saturdays. However, there has been no compensatory pay for teachers who work the extended day, and in fact some have lost their second job because of conflicting schedules.<sup>24</sup>

Civil society organizations have also begun to devise alternative strategies for maximizing teaching time. In Guatemala, for example, social auditing efforts have sought to track the number of school days delivered and make a register available to the education authorities and the public. One such effort is included in the Grand National Campaign for Education (GCNPE), a social and citizens' movement founded in 1999 and comprised of social organizations, universities, civil society institutions, and the media. Another effort, by Entrepreneurs for Education (*Empresarios por la Educación*) recently set up a digital platform to monitor school days completed as part of its citizen participation initiatives; this platform provides updated information so that the authorities can make decisions geared to improvements. In Honduras, too, several NGOs and civil society organizations, such as "Transformemos Honduras," have made efforts to gauge teacher absenteeism because there is no official monitoring mechanism.

**FIGURE 2: TEACHING STAFF'S AVERAGE CLASS ATTENDANCE (DAYS PER YEAR). HONDURAS. 2003–2013.**

Source: Inter-American Dialogue and FEREMA (2015). *El estado de las políticas públicas docentes: Honduras*. Figure 1, p. 15.



Ensuring that teachers and students attend school, however, is only the first step. Although the countries have made progress in combating absenteeism, they are still not maximizing learning opportunities in the classroom. For example, in Guatemala, although there is no systematic monitoring of the use of class time, 34 percent of parents report that the school day lasts four hours, not the five required by law, equivalent to the loss of one school day a week.<sup>25</sup> In the Dominican Republic, according to a 2008 study by Gallup and EDUCA, the average proportion of class time actually spent on teaching was 54.3 percent.<sup>26</sup> A regional study by the World Bank<sup>27</sup> estimated that in 2011 only 64 percent of class time was spent on instruction in Honduras, compared to a target of 85 percent set by international standards.<sup>28</sup> As in Guatemala, this means the loss of about one day of classes a week, a circumstance that significantly reduces students' opportunities to learn.

### C. Teacher training continues to show severe weaknesses

Reforms are underway to improve the quality of teacher training, but education authorities still exercise little quality control, resulting in problems at various levels.

The results of the tests applied to teachers in the four countries suggest that there are serious shortcomings in their training. In the Dominican Republic, studies carried out in 2013 revealed that teachers in first to fourth grade of primary education were proficient in only 60 percent of the content of the math curriculum, and that 85 percent of them were in the lowest level of proficiency in the concepts needed to teach child literacy.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, there is no evidence that Dominican teachers with postgraduate qualifications perform better than those with fewer years of training. In Guatemala, teachers who took part in the qualification tests for teaching posts in 2014 gave correct answers to only half the questions in language and learning strategies, and to a third of the math questions. In Honduras, according to the Minister of Education, just 10 percent of candidates achieved a passing grade in the competition for open teaching positions in 2014.<sup>30</sup> In El Salvador, there has been a substantial improvement in the results of the Academic and Teaching Skills Assessment (ECAP) given to teaching position applicants: 91.6 percent of candidates passed the test in 2013, compared to 33.8 percent in 2001. But the test questions have not changed since 2001 and there are doubts about the robustness of the results.<sup>31</sup>

#### PRE-SERVICE TRAINING IS WEAKLY REGULATED

The four countries each have a large number of teacher training institutions. As in other countries of the region, all now offer at least some training at the university level<sup>32</sup> (see **Table 2**). In El Salvador and the Dominican Republic, teacher training is now established as part of tertiary education. Guatemala<sup>33</sup> and Honduras<sup>34</sup> have begun to transition teacher training from the high school level to tertiary institutions.

The education authorities, however, exercise very little regulation or effective quality control over these institutions. In El Salvador, for example, only six of seventeen higher education institutions offering pre-service training have been accredited. Honduras does not have a national teacher training system with a regulatory body. A total of seventeen teacher training

institutions determine their own course content and exit profiles, without any required links to the curriculum or quality assurance mechanisms. Nonetheless, Honduran training colleges now demand that their own teachers have at least a bachelor's degree, and the two universities that train teachers—Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán (UPNFM) and Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (UNAH)—require that their teacher educators have a master's degree. The Dominican Republic, which has 25 institutions offering teacher training programs, also lacks a structured accreditation and certification system. The recently proposed accreditation programs, however, demand a master's for trainers of first degree-level education students and a doctorate for trainers of master's-level education candidates. Guatemala has regulations to develop and strengthen the accreditation of teacher training institutions, but these have not been implemented fully because training at the tertiary level only began in February 2015. At the moment, the regulations are applied mainly in private educational institutions, not in the teacher training institutions or universities.

**The education authorities exercise very little regulation or effective quality control over teacher training institutions.**

Another factor that adversely affects the quality of teacher training is that such training is not systematically aligned with the content of the curriculum. In Honduras, for example, there is only a weak link between what is set out in the national curriculum and pre-service teacher training programs. Only some specific in-service training programs emphasize the relationship between content for students and teachers' skills.<sup>35</sup> As mentioned above, the modest proportion of teachers proficient in curricular content in the Dominican Republic reflects a marked

mismatch between what teachers learn in pre-service training and what they then are expected to teach. One of the goals of the National Pact for Education Reform in the Dominican Republic (2014) is to remedy this defect, which is exacerbated by the coexistence of two different versions of the curriculum (1995 and 2011).

The shortcomings in teacher training do not seem to be confined to mastery of curricular content. In some countries, there are also weaknesses in teachers' mastery of effective teaching techniques and classroom practice. In the Dominican Republic, for example, the syllabi of pre-service training programs cover both pedagogical knowledge and discipline-specific content knowledge for the subjects the teacher will be teaching. However, the number of student-facing classroom practice hours required varies by institution, and not all of them require student-teaching experience before awarding a degree.<sup>36</sup> In Honduras, all pre-service training programs, both at the secondary level and at university, demand professional teaching practice (student-teaching). But the duration and requirements of that practice experience are different in

the universities and the teacher training colleges, and even vary among institutions at the same level.<sup>37</sup> El Salvador has made positive efforts to improve in this respect. To graduate from a teacher training institution, all Salvadoran candidates must complete at least 400 hours of student-teaching while future pre-school educators must complete 440 practice hours.<sup>38</sup>

#### LACK OF PLANNING GENERATES IMBALANCES IN THE SUPPLY OF TEACHERS

The regulatory shortcomings of teacher training systems and the lack of planning (made more difficult by the shortage of appropriate statistical data for anticipating the system's needs) is also manifest in significant imbalances in the composition of the teacher workforce. In Honduras, for example, each year the teacher training colleges have graduated two to three times more primary school teachers than the number of teaching posts created annually for more than a decade. In 2014, in seven of the country's eighteen departments, 12,199 teachers applied and only 641 posts were offered at the pre-primary, primary, and

**TABLE 2: YEARS OF TRAINING AND INSTITUTIONS THAT TRAIN TEACHERS AT THE PRE-PRIMARY AND PRIMARY LEVELS IN CENTRAL AMERICA (2015).**

Source: Inter-American Dialogue and CIEN (2015). El estado de las políticas públicas docentes: Guatemala. Table 2, p. 15.

COUNTRY	LEVEL	YEARS OF TRAINING	TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTIONS
El Salvador	Tertiary	3	Universities
Guatemala	Tertiary* and secondary	3: Tertiary level 2: Secondary level*	Universities and teacher training colleges**
Honduras	Tertiary and secondary***	4: Tertiary level 3: Secondary level	Universities and teacher training colleges <sup>^</sup>
Dominican Republic	Tertiary	4	Public and private universities and the public Training Institute (university level)
Costa Rica	Tertiary	5	University
Nicaragua	Tertiary and secondary***	5: Tertiary level 3: Secondary level	Universities and teacher training colleges
Panama	Tertiary	4	University Level Teacher Training College

Source: Inter-American Dialogue and CIEN (2015). El estado de las políticas públicas docentes: Guatemala. Table 2, p. 15.

\* Updated for this study. The MINEDUC-USAC agreement was signed at the end of 2013 and the first cohort entered university in 2015.

\*\* The census was presented in 2004, and since then several teacher training bodies have disappeared while others have appeared.

\*\*\* Honduras and Nicaragua have a clear policy of transforming the secondary-level training colleges so as to transition teacher training to tertiary education.

<sup>^</sup> The data are current. No institutions have yet disappeared, although the decision as to which training colleges will be converted into universities and which into secondary-level institutions with academic programs is expected in 2015.

secondary levels, equivalent to one teaching post for every twenty graduates.<sup>39</sup> In El Salvador, it is estimated that in 2013 the public education system received 57,787 applications for teaching positions but only 890 posts were awarded.<sup>40</sup> Guatemala has an oversupply in primary education but excess demand at the pre-primary level, and at the secondary level there is a paucity of teachers who specialize in areas such as math, science or foreign languages (see **Figures 3 and 4**). The Dominican Republic has accumulated a deficit in secondary school teachers, especially in science and math.<sup>41</sup> It is worth noting that, although there is excess demand for teaching posts in some cases, the best candidates are not always chosen to fill vacancies because of political considerations, corruption and other inefficiencies in recruitment systems.

#### IN-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING IS POORLY LINKED TO ACTUAL PRACTICE AND LACKS INVESTMENT

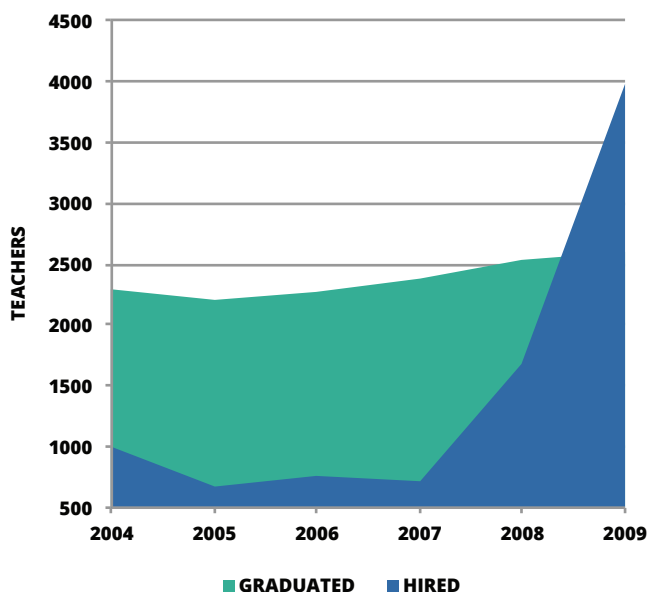
All four countries recognize that their teacher training systems have shortcomings and have made efforts to improve. A clear expression of these efforts has been the creation of teacher training and accreditation organizations and initiatives in almost all the countries. Guatemala, for example, established the General

Directorate of Accreditation and Certification (DIGEACE) and the Teachers' Professional Development Program (PADEP/D). The latter aims to upgrade the academic training of teachers in service, with a specialization at university level geared to improving their skills. PADEP/D covered 20,000 teachers between 2009 and 2014, and there is evidence of improvement in their classroom practice, though as yet there have been no impact assessments that are clearly related to students' learning. In El Salvador, several continuous teacher training initiatives have been undertaken. Among the most recent are the creation of the Teachers' Professional Development Fund in 2001 and the establishment of the General Directorate of Continuous Training-ESMA (Higher School for Teachers) during the 2009–2014 governmental term.

Nonetheless, the countries continue to face significant challenges. In Honduras, although the Ministry of Education has a National Institute for Education Research and Training (INICE), the latter does not coordinate and has not managed to devise an in-service teacher training "system" at the national level. Many NGOs and international agencies in Honduras are working in this area, but they do so in a partial and fragmented manner

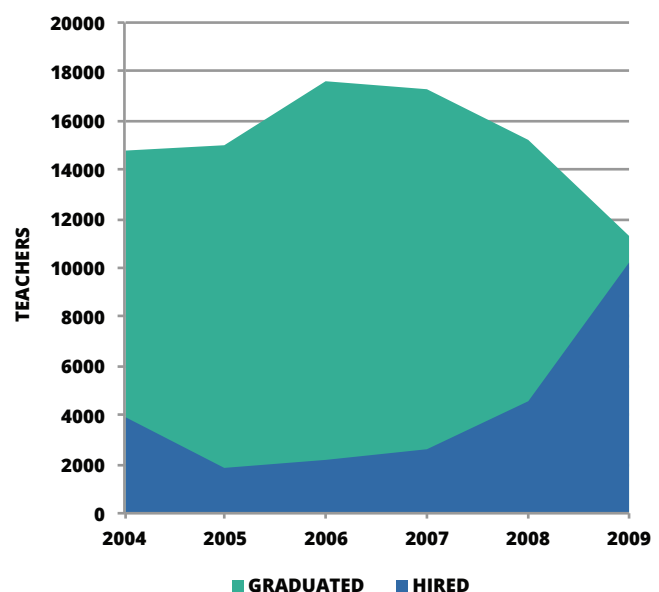
**FIGURE 3: COMPARISON OF GRADUATED AND HIRED TEACHERS, PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION. GUATEMALA. 2004–2009.**

Source: Inter-American Dialogue and CIEN (2015). *El estado de las políticas públicas docentes: Guatemala*. Figure 2, p. 17.



**FIGURE 4: COMPARISON OF GRADUATED AND HIRED TEACHERS, PRIMARY EDUCATION. GUATEMALA. 2004–2009.**

Source: Inter-American Dialogue and CIEN (2015). *El estado de las políticas públicas docentes: Guatemala*. Figure 3, p. 17.



because of a lack of resources. Some projects train teachers in pedagogical techniques or subject matter knowledge, and others focus on current topics such as health, the environment, management, risks and so on. Still, a 2010 study showed a mismatch between what is imparted in teacher training and what teachers need to know to improve their practice.<sup>42</sup> In Guatemala,

the US Agency for International Development (USAID) systematized the experiences of twenty organizations and programs devoted to teacher training. Of the lessons learned, it is worth noting: (a) excess supply in some programs and excess demand in others; (b) improved skills in classroom management, but not in developing content; and (c) lack of differentiated and grade-specific professional development opportunities for teachers.<sup>43</sup>

**All four countries recognize that their teacher training systems have shortcomings and have made efforts to improve.**

In El Salvador, continuous training has been marked by its scant relevance to a long-term professional development policy. In other words, teaching staff are not assured of their right (and duty) to expand their knowledge and build true career paths that support student learning.<sup>44</sup> These shortcomings contribute to a situation in which the best candidates do not enter or remain in teaching (see **Table 1**). Investment in professional development in El Salvador has been very low and of doubtful effectiveness: between 2009 and 2013, a total of just US\$6.3 million was invested in providing undergraduate and graduate teaching specializations throughout the education system, an amount equivalent to less than 1 percent of the yearly education budget.

#### BOX 1: THE BEST CANDIDATES DO NOT GO INTO TEACHING

At the moment, the four countries of the region do not attract the best candidates to teacher training programs. One of the reasons for this is that the selection criteria for those programs lack rigor and structure. In other words, the less demanding the admission system for teacher training, the less talented will be the candidates who aspire to enter them. Note the case of El Salvador.

In recent decades the admissions criteria for pre-service teacher training in El Salvador have been inconsistent. They were very demanding in the days of the Alberto Masferrer Teacher Training College from 1968 to 1980. Each candidate underwent a test of scientific knowledge, a test of socio-vocational orientation, and an interview that focused on personality. Moreover, the number of places available was set in line with the demand for teachers and the job opportunities in the education system by geographic region. At that time, therefore, there was no teacher unemployment. With the closure of that college, the requirements for admission to pre-service training became less rigorous and, with the emergence of a wide supply of programs lacking adequate oversight, the profession became devalued. To counteract this, since the 1990s the MINED has been devising ever more stringent selection criteria. Teaching, however, continues to be seen as a second-rate profession. A student can enter the labor market after three years of training; and for the most talented it might only be a transitional career on the way to another profession.

Source: Inter-American Dialogue and FUSADES (2015). El estado de las políticas públicas docentes: El Salvador. p. 19.



## 2. RECRUITING, HIRING, AND RETAINING TALENTED TEACHERS

### A. The best candidates are not chosen to be teachers

Historically, as in most Latin American countries, the selection criteria for entry into teaching in the four countries studied have not been particularly stringent and “the few tests we have of content mastery by teachers in Latin America suggest that many teachers fail to reach acceptable levels.”<sup>45</sup> In all the countries, it has been hard to attract good candidates to teaching.

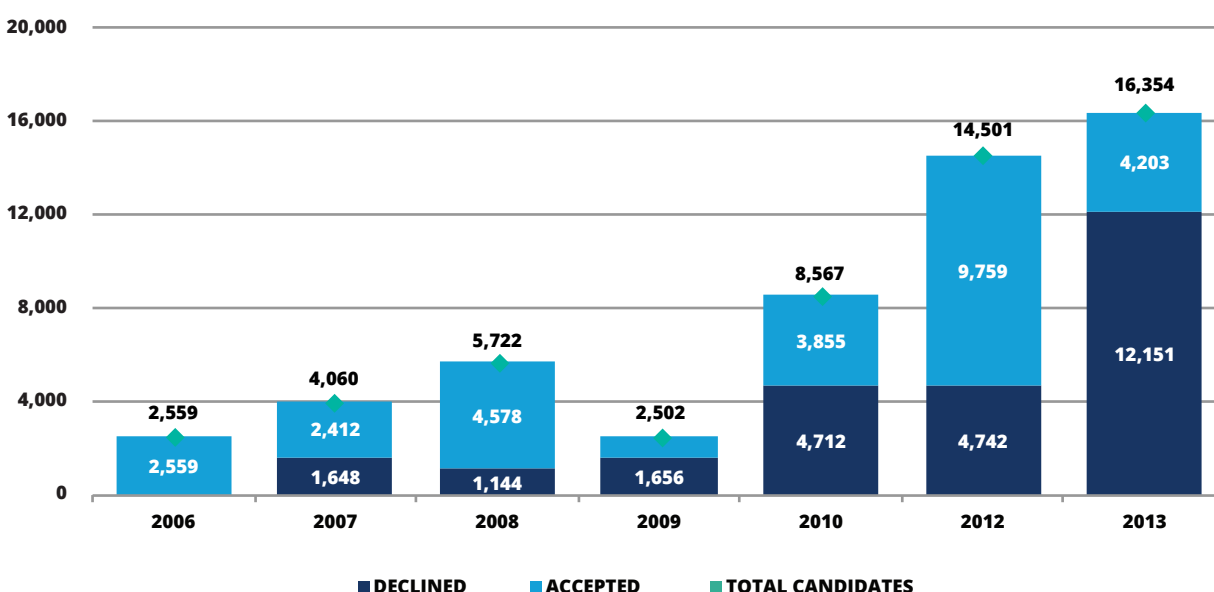
Aware of these deficits, some countries have taken steps to devise teacher selection processes that are more rigorous and relevant in order to attract the best candidates to the classrooms. The Dominican Republic, for example, has instituted competitive examinations to fill vacant teaching positions in the public sector. This process, which covered a maximum of 16,354 applicants in 2013 (see **Figure 5**), has three stages: (a) a test of logical reasoning; (b) a test of pedagogical knowledge and planning skills specific to the area of interest; and (c) an interview or final oral test.<sup>46</sup> Because of the increased stringency, only a third of applicants advanced

to the second stage in 2013. In El Salvador, those leaving pre-service training must take a standardized test that assesses their pedagogical and academic proficiency before they can be certified as teachers. This also happens with teachers in service. In Honduras,<sup>47</sup> candidates for public teaching posts are chosen through competitions that include tests of their content area knowledge, of pedagogy, and of education legislation.<sup>48</sup> In Guatemala, teacher candidates at the primary and pre-primary levels must get a minimum of 60 points (out of 100) on the selection criteria to join the pool of eligible candidates. Candidates who do not achieve a minimum score are removed from the running.

Nonetheless, constraints in the design and implementation of selection processes can give rise to unwanted outcomes. In Honduras, for example, evidence suggests that the selection processes are subject to political manipulation. In a survey of final-year students at UPNFM, only 5 percent believed that their performance as students influenced their job opportunities, while more than 90 percent identified a link to the ruling party as the most influential factor in securing a teaching post.<sup>49</sup> In El Salvador, when a decision is to be taken as to which candidate should be hired, the law stipulates that a selection board must

**FIGURE 5: CANDIDATES ACCEPTED AND DECLINED IN COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS FOR MINERD TEACHING POSTS, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, 2006–2013.**

Source: Inter-American Dialogue and EDUCA (2015). El estado de las políticas públicas docentes: República Dominicana. Figure 3, p. 19.



give preference to candidates with the most seniority in their year of graduation, regardless of their training specialty or their academic or pedagogical proficiency. This circumstance does not ensure that the best teachers reach the classrooms and discourages the most talented from applying for teacher training, since recent graduates can be excluded no matter what their level of skills.<sup>50</sup> In Guatemala, of the 60 points needed to seek a post with the Ministry of Education, only 15 relate to “in-service quality,” which includes the results of the diagnostic test of general knowledge in communication and language, math, and teaching abilities (see **Table 3**).<sup>51</sup> This means that candidates can be approved to teach without having earned any points for their teaching ability. Moreover, as in most of the other countries, the Guatemalan system still makes no provision for an interview, nor for an assessment of teaching abilities in a demonstration class. In the Dominican Republic, candidates need only score nine out of 20 points in the logical reasoning test in order to move forward in the process. It is worth noting that even with these criteria, only 25 percent of candidates passed the three stages of the competition in 2013.<sup>52</sup>

**TABLE 3: CRITERIA CONSIDERED FOR CANDIDATES TO TEACHING POSTS IN GUATEMALA, 2013.**

Source: Inter-American Dialogue and CIEN (2015). *El estado de las políticas públicas docentes: Guatemala*. Table 2, p. 19.

CRITERION	VALUE
Time in service	0–20 points
Residence	0–20 points
Academic degrees, ongoing professional development, and training	0–20 points
Academic service awards and social outreach	0–25 points
In-service quality	0–15 points

Notes: *Time in service*: years teaching classes after obtaining a teaching qualification. *Residence*: geographic area where the teacher and his/her family lives, relative to the municipality in which the teaching post for which he/she has applied is located. *Academic degrees, ongoing professional development and training*: academic training, professionalization, teacher’s general training. *Academic service awards and social outreach*: additional educational tasks and endeavors on behalf of the community. *In-service quality*: results of the diagnostic test of general knowledge (communications and language, math, and pedagogy).

It is important to note that most of the countries studied have mechanisms to recruit and certify professionals without previous teaching experience to teach in disciplines in which there is high demand. These alternative certification routes are important because they make it possible to fill teaching vacancies with qualified staff, especially in disciplines that change constantly in line with scientific and technological advances. The Dominican Republic, for example, has created the Teachers’ Professional Accreditation system to fill vacancies for specialized teachers, especially in the second cycle of primary education and in secondary school.<sup>53</sup> By August 2013, 1 percent of teachers in the Dominican Republic had completed this process. In El Salvador, there are courses in educational training to certify graduates from other professions.<sup>54</sup> In 2013, of the 53,570 individuals with teacher certification, some 4.3 percent (about 2,303) obtained their credentials from such alternative educational teacher training courses.<sup>55</sup> Honduras has created alternative certification programs for professionals without a background in education, as well as certification programs for in-service teachers without a degree.<sup>56</sup> Although only a small proportion of teachers have used the alternative certification methods to date, these mechanisms are fundamental to meeting the high demand in some disciplines, strengthening the links between education and the labor market, and upgrading the teaching skills of “empirical” teachers.

### **B. The profession does not offer adequate incentives to attract and retain the most talented individuals**

Beyond the selection processes, it is hard to make teaching attractive to good candidates without offering them adequate pay throughout their careers, as well as opportunities for professional growth.

As a result of an upward trend in the countries of the region, teachers’ average current salaries tend to be competitive in the local labor market—though not necessarily in international comparisons. In Honduras, teachers’ salaries are comparable with those of professionals with an undergraduate degree in other areas who enter the labor market (about US\$400–600 a month).<sup>57</sup> In the past six years, however, teacher’s salaries remained frozen, which in real terms (taking into account inflation) means a 30–40 percent drop in purchasing power relative to 2009. In the Dominican Republic today, a teacher’s pay for half a school day (four hours) is 32

percent higher than the economy's average pay for eight hours of work, while the salary of a secondary school teacher working an extended school day (eight hours) is 53 percent higher than that of a university graduate who is also working eight hours a day (see **Table 4**).<sup>58</sup> In Guatemala, the government reached an agreement with the teachers' union to give all teachers wage increases of 8 percent, 10 percent and 12 percent in 2013, 2014 and 2015, respectively. Today, the starting salary of a Guatemalan pre-primary or primary school teacher working half a day (five hours) is US\$909.45 a month. This is more than the starting salary of a professional with the same level of schooling (12 years), which on average is US\$597.78 a month. After fifteen years of work, teachers earn up to US\$1,591.54 a month, and during their career the amount can reach a maximum of US\$2,046.27 a month. In El Salvador, salaries for public-sector teachers have risen in the past ten years and are now significantly higher than in the private sector.<sup>59</sup> In 2010, the average monthly salary of private-sector teachers was estimated at US\$362, while their public-sector counterparts earned US\$566 on average.

Moreover, salaries are usually paid on time. In Honduras, delays in paying teachers who have tenure in the education system are rare, even in recent years when

there have been delays in paying new teachers or those working under temporary licenses or permits. In Guatemala, only teachers hired on annual contracts—unlike those who have a permanent position—experience delays in payment. In El Salvador and the Dominican Republic, delays in payment are the exception rather than the rule.

Although teachers have been awarded pay increases, these have not been linked to good or bad performance in carrying out their duties, nor to their students' actual learning. This can affect incentives to improve teachers' classroom practice, since they are all paid the same regardless of their efforts. In Guatemala, for example, the 8–12 percent pay increases mentioned earlier are the same for all the teachers in the system, without distinction as to those who are outstanding or those who perform poorly. In Honduras, an attempt was made in 2009 to apply incremental, performance-related pay scales, but the teachers' unions—as in other countries—protested under the banner of “for all or none” and in the end the proposed accountability measures were not implemented. At the moment, salary increases in all the countries are awarded for seniority, for obtaining degrees or diplomas, and/or for holding management posts. The Dominican Republic is the only country of the four

**TABLE 4: TEACHERS' SALARIES IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

Source: Inter-American Dialogue and EDUCA (2015). El estado de las políticas públicas docentes: República Dominicana. Table 2, p 20.

Original source: payroll register of the Ministry of Education, Central Bank of the Dominican Republic and International Monetary Fund, 2014.

SALARY CATEGORY (DOLLARS AT PPP)	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Primary teacher (four hours)	477.50	368.40	481.20	470.60	621.90	732.60	717.00	690.20	758.90	733.80	789.80
Extended-day primary teacher (eight hours)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,467.50	1,579.70
Secondary teacher (four hours)	475.60	417.30	464.20	454.00	690.60	838.80	821.10	790.40	869.00	840.20	904.10
Extended-day secondary teacher (eight hours)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,680.40	1,808.20
Average salary in the economy (eight hours)	614.30	484.60	596.70	615.10	626.00	642.20	685.10	695.30	691.90	697.60	685.60
Average salary, university graduates (eight hours)	1,117.70	864.00	1,009.60	1,070.60	1,097.70	1,107.00	1,188.20	1,188.7	1,206.60	1,189.30	1,181.30

under study that is starting to develop a pay structure that recognizes and rewards good performance (see **Section 3B**). Historically, however, even Dominican teachers with “unacceptable” scores on tests could receive monetary incentives.<sup>60</sup>

Salaries, however, comprise only one aspect of the profession that may help to attract and retain high quality teachers. For many teachers, the opportunity for professional growth and advancement is a very important incentive. Unfortunately, most countries do not have a clear professional development path that offers opportunities to move up the career ladder while teaching. In the Dominican Republic, promotion within the system follows a vertical logic and rewards teacher, above all, when they distance themselves from the classroom. For example, a regional director of teaching

with 20 years of service is paid 94 percent more than a classroom teacher with the same years of experience.<sup>61</sup> Mindful of this, the new Dominican certification system—which is still being rolled out—allows teachers to advance professionally without having to leave the classroom.

Another element that affects a system’s capacity to attract and retain good teachers is the creation of spaces that allow teachers to exercise responsibilities beyond just teaching classes. Such processes do exist but there are shortcomings in their implementation. The Honduran model, for example, offers a space—usually Saturday mornings—for planning classes and other teaching activities, and proposes that teachers collaborate on school activities, work with peers, participate in community service and so on. These activities, however, are not properly monitored and supported,

## BOX 2: COMPARING TEACHERS’ SALARIES IN LATIN AMERICA

It is often said that teachers are poorly paid and that their salaries are insufficient for a standard of living comparable to that of other professionals. It is important, but complicated, to examine this assertion. The question often arises: to whom can teachers be compared? Because of factors such as level of education, hours worked, years of experience, and the supplementary benefits of each profession, among other considerations, the comparisons vary substantially.

A recent study\* examines how teachers’ salaries evolved between 1997 and 2007, and compares them to the salaries of other professionals in Latin America. Using statistical methods and controlling the wage differentials by the professionals’ observable characteristics, the study finds that in most cases teachers are paid less than other professionals and specialists in Latin America. Nonetheless, the study provides evidence that the pay gap narrowed during the decade being analyzed. Most of that narrowing stems from a generalized lessening of pay gaps rather than from an improvement in the observable characteristics of teachers. The scale of the pay gap varies a great deal by country and across the wage distributions.

In the most recent period there have been significant pay increases for teachers in the four countries under study. In the Dominican Republic, for example, in 2003 a primary and a secondary school teacher working half day (four hours) earned US\$477.50 and US\$475.59 a month, respectively. This compares with the average salary of a professional with a university degree, working eight hours, of US\$1,117.72 a month in 2003. Ten years later, teachers’ salaries had risen significantly. In 2013, a primary school and a secondary school teacher were earning US\$789.84 and US\$904.08, respectively, and those working a full day earned US\$1,579.68. At the same time, the average salary of a professional with a university degree in 2013 was almost the same as in 2003, at US\$1,181.29.

\* Mizala, Alejandra and Hugo Ñopo (2014). Measuring the Relative Pay of Latin American School Teachers at the Turn of the 20th Century. Paper No. 15. Available at: <http://perueconomics.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/WP-15.pdf>.

and often they lead to the suspension of classes.<sup>62</sup> In Guatemala's schools, teachers are encouraged to take part in planning the school calendar, the organization of school government, and activities in the reading and math programs. Many teachers do not participate, however, sometimes because they have to teach in other schools and sometimes because of a lack of effective management and leadership on the part of the principals.<sup>63</sup>

In El Salvador, in 2005, an average teacher worked 1,073 hours a year, of which only 148 were spent exercising responsibilities outside the classroom.<sup>64</sup> This is a small proportion and it remains unclear whether the time was used for administrative tasks or for professional development. The country has made efforts to foster teachers' growth outside the classroom. Since 2003, for example, three pedagogical retreats a year—each one lasting five days—have been arranged to allow the teaching staff of each Salvadoran school to reflect on their own practices, planning teaching activities, and discuss learning assessment criteria.<sup>65</sup>

In the Dominican Republic, teachers working a regular four-hour day have very little official paid time for other responsibilities because their time is spent almost exclusively on teaching. This differs from the eight-hour extended day, which today covers a little more than 35 percent of all enrollments. Extended-day teachers are allowed four paid hours a week for project planning and implementation in the schools.<sup>66</sup>

To attract and retain the brightest professionals, countries must devise policies that allow teachers to advance in their profession. The recent salary increases in the four countries send a good signal but the incentives should go beyond monetary rewards, especially if the latter are given to all teachers equally without distinction as to the quality of their performance.

### **C. Teachers are not given enough support to improve teaching practices**

As with any professional, teachers need the support of principals, administrators, and colleagues in order to grow and improve their practices. This support could be more effective and systematic in the four countries.

School principals provide very limited academic and pedagogical leadership. This is partly related to shortcomings in, and in some cases absence of,

appropriate selection processes for principals. In El Salvador, the law does not require that management positions be held by individuals trained in educational administration. The approval of school nominating bodies that propose potential principals to the selection panel is more important than a performance assessment in choosing a school director. Moreover, the legal framework gives primacy to the principals' administrative functions over their pedagogical leadership,<sup>67</sup> although the latter is crucial in motivating teachers and ensuring that there is an environment of continuous learning in the schools. In the Dominican Republic, the Education Ministry (MINERD) inaugurated the Principals' School in 2012 with a view to training principals and improving their administrative and pedagogical management. The system, however, has not been formalized (it is quasi-voluntary) and there is a need for greater monitoring of those principals who have undergone the training.<sup>68</sup> In Honduras, the competitive process for selecting individuals for management posts has often been manipulated by political parties and teachers' associations.<sup>69</sup> Consequently, principals generally lack academic leadership qualities and sometimes they also lack administrative leadership skills. It is worth noting that in Guatemala the school principal career track does not formally exist.

There is practically no assessment of principals in the four countries. The only country that has made efforts to introduce an assessment system for principals is Honduras, where the assessment is the responsibility of a district or municipal director.<sup>70</sup> But these district or municipal posts change with every new government, thereby creating a certain amount of instability, and it is often reported that the individuals occupying these positions lack the academic legitimacy to supervise principals and assess their skills.<sup>71</sup>

Some countries have begun to make efforts to support teachers' and principals' educational and extracurricular activities. In the Dominican Republic, for example, the National Institute of Teacher Training (INAFOCAM) encourages continuous training in situ of all the staff in a school, and responds to the training needs identified.<sup>72</sup> Plans for improvement are drawn up at each school with a view to driving common efforts to improve achievement indicators and enhance institutional and teaching processes. In El Salvador, the Ministry of Education (MINED) has set up a technical assistance system for schools to support, provide feedback on and evaluate teaching, school management, the participation of the education community, and the implementation



of programs that help raise the quality of education services. The system features the position of Technical Teaching Assistant (ATP), who is responsible for offering advice to the school principal, fostering educational changes, and promoting continuous training among the staff. According to official data for 2014, there are barely 230 ATPs, 65 management assistants and 23 program assistants to serve 5,172 public education establishments. This means that each ATP is responsible, on average, for 22 schools. These small numbers make it difficult to offer proper attention to each school, but

**As with any professional, teachers need the support of principals, administrators, and colleagues in order to grow and improve their practices. This support could be more effective and systematic in the four countries.**

the system is a step in the right direction.<sup>73</sup> Guatemala has begun to create a National System of School Monitoring (SINAE), which involves a teaching monitor and a school management monitor to support teachers and principals in their efforts to improve their practices with constant feedback. To date it has not been possible to implement the system because of budget constraints; only pilot projects have been implemented in certain parts of the country.<sup>74</sup>

To guide the support efforts and improve the teaching provided, it is crucial to have reliable information about what students are learning. Although each of the four countries provide information on tests of student

performance to teachers and principals, in practice some countries use the information more effectively than others to improve teaching. In El Salvador, for example, teachers receive information on their students' performance on standardized tests, but there is no culture of using the information to strengthen educational processes.<sup>75</sup> Teachers and principals find it hard to interpret the statistical information and to use it in devising corrective measures. In the Dominican Republic, detailed annual reports provide information on students' results at the national, regional, and district levels, as well as by school, but there is no results-based policy of feedback and support to schools and teachers.<sup>76</sup>

Honduras and Guatemala are perhaps the two countries that have made most progress in this respect, partly because they have created and implemented technological mechanisms to support teachers and schools. Honduras has developed an extensive and modern online system of education statistics, the National System of Educational Information (USINIEH), which offers data on student learning by school, grade, section, and even by student, and contributes to decision-making in the school and in the classroom.<sup>77</sup> The information available is based on end-of-grade tests in math and Spanish and is aligned with the national curriculum for students in first to ninth grade.<sup>78</sup> The information is current but there are two significant constraints on the data from the year-end external tests: (a) in the countryside many teachers pay intermediaries to upload the data to the web (because of a lack of technical skills, distance from places with internet access, and so on); and (b) data from the census-based year-end assessment uses well-designed standardized tests, but these are applied, graded and introduced into the system by the teachers themselves without any external supervision, a circumstance that lessens their reliability.<sup>79</sup>

Guatemala's Education Ministry, through the General Directorate of Educational Assessment and Research (DIGEDUCA), has systematized reporting on student achievement test results to provide feedback to teachers. Information is made available on a website<sup>80</sup> with the goal of helping teachers to analyze and use the results so that they can adopt better classroom strategies geared to achieving the desired learning outcomes. Moreover, the country has produced teaching guides for teachers and principals, including classroom activities that can help boost learning in math and language.<sup>81</sup>

### 3. MANAGING FOR GOOD PERFORMANCE

#### A. Teacher assessment systems are weak and lack credibility

It is difficult to provide a quality education without effective teachers, but it is impossible to know if the teachers are effective unless the education system regularly conducts rigorous assessments of teachers' performance. To guarantee that all students receive the quality education they deserve, it is important that countries have technically solid and independent teacher assessments, based on objective and transparent criteria that take account of improvements in students' learning and that are supported by a well-coordinated school administration.

The four countries have much room for improvement in this respect, and much to learn about the world's best systems of educational assessment (see **Box 3**). Teacher evaluations in Guatemala and El Salvador are sporadic and of doubtful quality, and fail to take account students learning. In Guatemala, although the Teaching Statute

makes provisions for yearly teacher evaluations, these are not systematic and lack mechanisms to personalize the support offered to effective or weak teachers based on the results of the evaluation.<sup>82</sup> In El Salvador, public school management has been assessed since 2000, but the system disregards individual teachers' and principals' tasks. This makes it hard to establish effective feedback mechanisms that help improve every teacher's performance. In other general respects the system does examine teaching activities, as well as organizational and administrative processes, and it fosters self-assessment among schools, but these criteria are not clearly defined and they exclude both student performance and classroom observations.<sup>83</sup>

Of the four countries, the Dominican Republic and Honduras have made the most significant progress in the area of teacher evaluation, though they both continue to face substantial challenges. Under the Dominican Republic's 2003 Teaching Statute, teachers can be assessed on three occasions: (a) during the one-year probationary period at the beginning of their service; (b) through regular in-service assessments at least once every three years; and (c) through special assessments

#### BOX 3: MEASURING EFFECTIVE TEACHING: THE MET PROJECT

The Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project is an example of the substantial progress made in education, with important practical implications for improving teaching processes. The project worked with about 3,000 teachers in seven school districts in the United States and sought to measure teaching effectiveness using three instruments: (a) classroom observations; (b) surveys of students' perceptions; and (c) increases in levels of students' learning. The first step consisted of determining if these measures of effectiveness really identified the best teachers, or if the teachers just seemed better because they had better students. By distributing the students randomly among the classrooms in the second year of the study, the MET project confirmed the usefulness of these measures in determining teacher effectiveness. The project also concluded that, in order to predict student success more accurately, teacher evaluations should consider the three measures with proper weighting. Moreover, the study showed that class observations are most effective when they involve a second observer who does not belong to the school. The MET project illustrates a promising means of measuring teacher effectiveness. It also provides an example of how the information generated can help the teachers themselves to improve their performance.

Source: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (2013). "Ensuring Fair and Reliable Measures of Effective Teaching."

as ordered by the ministry. On only one occasion, however, in 2008, were teacher evaluations carried out under this legislation.<sup>84</sup> In practice, what unfolded was a lax and undemanding assessment in which the vast majority of teachers received a close to optimal rating. This raises important questions about the evaluation's effectiveness and the reliability of its results.<sup>85</sup>

The first teacher evaluations in Honduras, in 2013, covered three areas: (a) review of a teaching portfolio: (b) class observation with the Stallings instrument<sup>86</sup> in a national sample; and (c) a knowledge test for 55,000 teachers in basic education. In 2014, for the second consecutive year, Honduras held the performance assessment for a national sample of teachers in service.<sup>87</sup> These are annual and mandatory tests but they are designed in a longitudinal way so as gradually to include all teachers. Although the teacher evaluations do not have concrete consequences and require technical improvement, this is a very commendable first step for Honduras, where attempts to assess teachers failed in the first decade of this century because of the unions' constant rejection and mistrust in a highly politicized system.

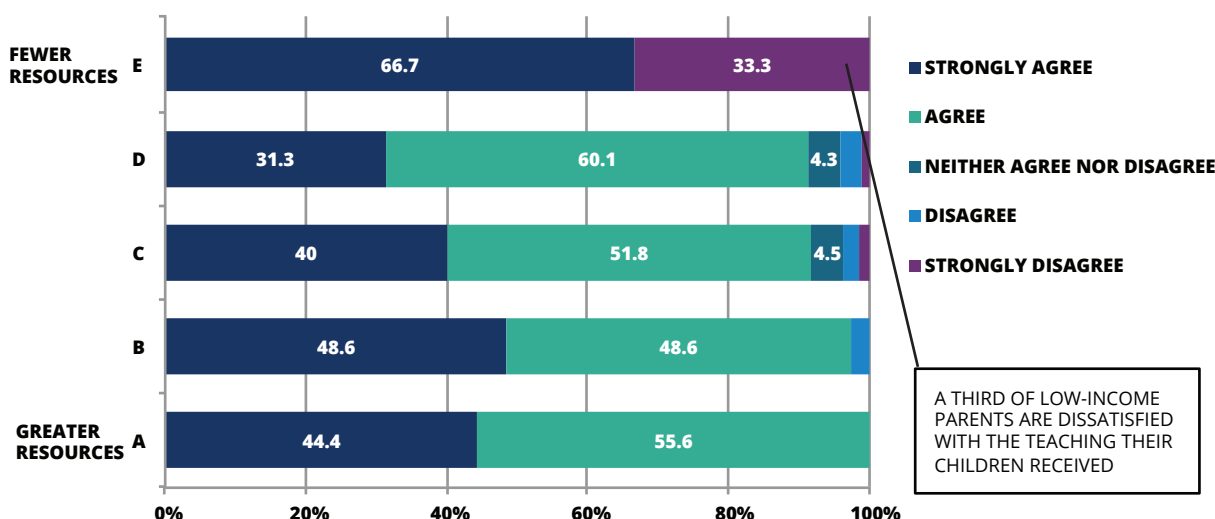
An essential component of any teacher assessment system is the transparency and credibility of the body responsible for designing, setting, and analyzing the tests. Guaranteeing trust in the assessment process is important for at least two reasons: to secure solid

evidence that can underpin decisions about school improvement activities; and to ensure the continuation of successful programs and strategies when governments change, especially in countries where relations between the government and the teachers' unions have been quarrelsome. One way of making teacher evaluations transparent is to delegate them to independent bodies. In 2008, for example, the Dominican Republic selected an external firm to conduct teacher evaluations. Another assessment of teacher performance and certification is expected by late 2015.

The four national studies reveal weaknesses the use of the assessment results so as to bring about concrete improvements in teachers' practices. In Honduras, for example, despite the progress made in recent years, teacher evaluations still do not have a concrete objective and the data available have not been used to improve teaching, despite efforts to disseminate the information. In the Dominican Republic, 83,110 teacher reports (one for each teacher), as well as 9,180 school-level reports, 104 education district reports and 18 education region reports were drawn up to disseminate the results of the 2008 evaluations. Training sessions and informational meetings were held for principals and teaching specialists at the regional and district levels. These latter individuals, in turn, were responsible for informing the teachers who had undergone the assessment. Representatives of the MINERD and the teachers' union, however, revealed during

**FIGURE 6: TEACHERS HELPED MY CHILDREN LEARN THEIR SUBJECTS. SANTO DOMINGO AND SANTIAGO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. 2014.**

Source: Inter-American Dialogue and EDUCA (2015). El estado de las políticas públicas docentes: República Dominicana. Figure 8, p. 28.



the interviews conducted for this study that the reports were not used to draw up plans for improvement among individuals or particular schools.<sup>88</sup>

### B. Good performance is not recognized and there are no mechanisms to deal with poor performance

As mentioned in earlier chapters, teachers are assessed with varying degrees of rigor when they are selected to enter the teaching profession. Only the Dominican Republic has a one-year probationary period once teachers have been hired. Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras do not have a similar system enabling them to verify a teacher's capacity to transmit knowledge effectively to students as a condition of continuing employment.

Very rarely do the countries under study fire poorly performing teachers, even when existing laws allow it. In Honduras, for example, except in very serious cases such as prolonged absences or child abuse, jobs are "for life" and there is no system to penalize poor work.<sup>89</sup> El Salvador also lacks appropriate mechanisms to penalize teachers whose performance is unsatisfactory or to remove them from the education system. The only ways of being fired and losing a teaching appointment are: serious misconduct, being convicted of a crime, absence from work without good reason for eight consecutive days or ten non-consecutive working days

in a month, or incapacity to carry out teaching duties.<sup>90</sup> Whether they formally exist or not, in practice the "exit options" from teaching are virtually nil in the four countries under study. Moreover, the countries lack performance measurement systems that would enable them to identify and help teachers whose performance is consistently poor.

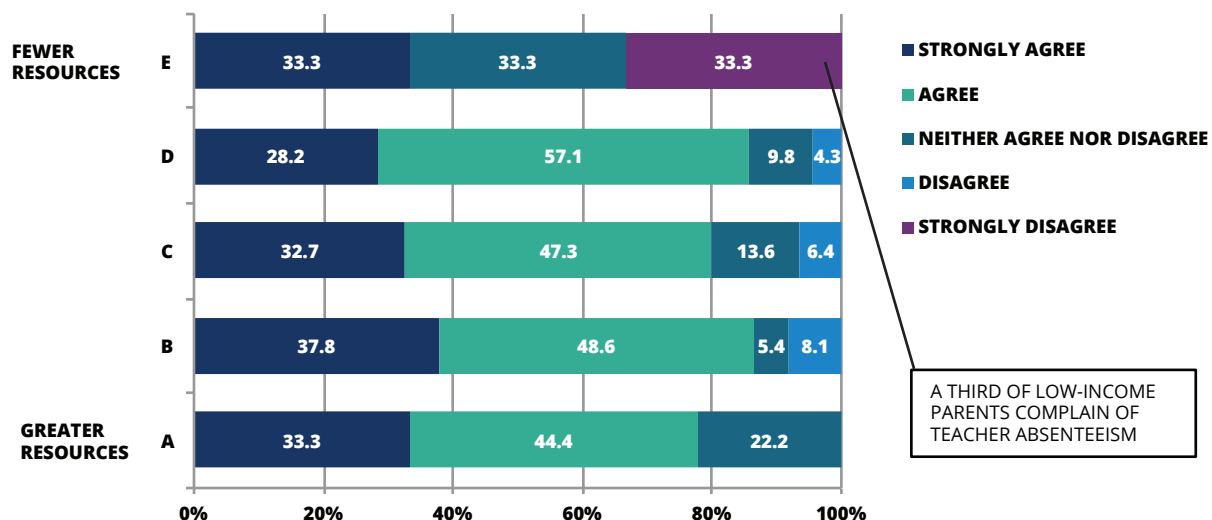
Added to shortcomings in the regulatory frameworks are failings in the implementation process. In the Dominican Republic, for example, although the legislation in force states that those who perform poorly should undergo a year of training followed by a reassessment and possible dismissal if they fail, these regulations have not yet been applied. The Dominican institution responsible for implementing these measures, the Teaching Professional Panel, has not yet begun to operate.<sup>91</sup>

On the other hand, good performance goes unrecognized. As explained earlier, wage increases in the region are not linked to performance indicators. Generally, teachers can only boost their income if they obtain additional academic degrees, take on managerial positions, attain sufficient seniority and/or work a double shift, irrespective of whether they are effective or perform poorly.

Even so, it is worth mentioning an innovation in teaching policy geared to recognizing good performance. The Dominican Republic is introducing a teacher certification

**FIGURE 7: MY CHILDREN'S TEACHERS WERE NEVER ABSENT. SANTO DOMINGO AND SANTIAGO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. 2014.**

Source: Inter-American Dialogue and EDUCA (2015). El estado de las políticas públicas docentes: República Dominicana. Figure 9, p. 28.



and promotion system that seeks to build teachers' skills, professionalize their classroom work, and upgrade their working conditions. The proposal is to assess the following criteria: classroom performance, subject matter and pedagogical knowledge, professional development, professional responsibilities in the school, and experience. Teachers, principals and other instructors in the school can request voluntary certification tests and can advance sideways in their careers. Moreover, the system's different categories suggest the need for differentiated salary levels comparable to those offered by other, socially valued professions. The factors to be taken into account when establishing a salary system are: years of experience, performance in sectors that have a large number of vulnerable students and a high degree of professional development (for example, continuous training, postgraduate studies, research, publications, awards and so on). Recertification is not a requirement but there are mechanisms allowing for automatic departure from the system for those teachers with poor rankings on consecutive evaluations following efforts to help them improve. The system provides for annual individual monitoring and improvement plans to overcome any shortcomings identified.<sup>92</sup> As in many other areas, the challenge will be one of implementation and sustainability over time.

### C. The best teachers are not assigned to the most vulnerable students

What little information is available suggests that students from poorer backgrounds do not receive the same quality of instruction as their more fortunate peers, a reflection of the inequity in the education system. In the Dominican Republic, for example, an EDUCA study<sup>93</sup> indicates that the parents of students from low-income families, compared to more affluent parents, are less satisfied with their children's education and perceive greater teacher absenteeism (see **Figures 6 and 7**).

Some countries of the region offer incentives for teachers to work in vulnerable areas, but the incentives are generally weak with little structure. In Honduras, education regulations have encouraged work in rural areas by calculating every three years of service in rural areas as five years of service in terms pay and seniority. Additionally, teachers in the provinces Islas de Bahía and Gracias a Dios receive a pay supplement because the cost of living is higher. Despite the incentives, these regions usually are assigned teachers who recently entered the system, are less experienced, and who sometimes have not even graduated.<sup>94</sup> In El Salvador, efforts have been made to compensate teachers who

#### BOX 4: INCENTIVES FOR TEACHERS IN VULNERABLE AREAS IN EL SALVADOR

Efforts have been made in El Salvador to reward teachers who work in schools with a large proportion of rural children, who normally live in poverty. In 2013, 41.5 percent of 56,386 teachers were working in rural areas. Of these, 23 percent had zero to five years of experience, 18 percent had six to 10 years, 27 percent had 11 to 15 years, 20 percent had 16 to 20 years and 12 percent had 21 to 25 years. In the public sector, 65.2 percent of 45,730 teachers received a supplement to the basic salary for working in a small rural school that was remote or hard to reach. In the same sector, 32.7 percent of teachers received an allowance for working in rural areas, 24.2 percent for working a double shift, and 8.3 percent for holding a management position (principal or deputy principal). According to the 2015 Salaries Law, the allowance for working in the countryside or working a double shift in basic education is US\$242 a month. The allowance for having served for 10 consecutive years as principal of a school that teaches up to ninth grade can be a maximum of US\$392 a month. The allowances are significant and seem to be effective in retaining teachers in rural areas or encouraging them to work double shifts. Nonetheless, it is also true that, given the oversupply of teachers in the labor market, applicants for public sector posts are willing to accept a job in a remote rural area with relative ease, in the expectation that later they can ask for a transfer.

Source: Consultation with FUSADES, April 27, 2015.



work in rural areas where a high percentage of children live in poverty (see Box 4). The other countries do not have data on teachers in vulnerable areas.

In general, teachers lack the necessary support to respond to the specific needs of poor, rural or indigenous children. In El Salvador, for example, teachers in urban schools working with children at risk of violence are not trained in how to identify and deal with students who have problems of violent conduct. Neither are they offered the support of psychologists or social workers to guide their work.<sup>95</sup> In El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, rural schools often have multi-grade classes, but the training system and the support materials are designed for teachers who work with only one grade. On the assumption that teachers apply for jobs close to their homes, Guatemala's Education Ministry, in conjunction with the University of San Carlos, has given teachers in the countryside priority access to the Teachers' Academic Professional Development Program (PADEP/D). Efforts have also been made to place

PADEP/D graduates in the first grade of primary school, given that early education affects school performance throughout the subsequent grades and levels of education. There are no empirical data, however, to determine how effective this initiative has been.<sup>96</sup>

Some countries have made progress on initiatives to support bilingual education. In Honduras, for example, bilingual materials have been distributed (such as textbooks, dictionaries and grammar guides) to several indigenous groups such as the Pech, Tolupan, Lenca, Garifuna, Misquitos and Tawahca.<sup>97</sup> The Education Secretariat has also developed materials in math and Spanish, but a lack of financing has hampered their distribution. Guatemala has made an effort to train bilingual teachers. Nonetheless, it is unclear if this has really translated into a greater number of qualified bilingual teachers in schools with a high percentage of indigenous students, or if the efforts are bearing fruit in terms of greater learning on the part of the students.

**Experience shows that many good practices fail when it comes to implementation. Hence it is especially important to emphasize the implementation details of any new policy, taking corrective measures as necessary, before the policies lose credibility due to perceived lack of impact, and to deliver concrete results. Similarly, policy design could benefit from greater effort to build consensus, and from multisector dialogue designed to reach agreement among key actors with a view to recapturing and strengthening substantive aspects of policies during implementation.**

# PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVING TEACHER POLICY

The analysis of the state of teacher policies in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and the Dominican Republic presented in this document reveals both strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, it is clear that teacher policy is gaining importance in public debate and in education management in the region. There are several promising initiatives that, sustained over time and implemented effectively, could have positive effects on the quality of education. Efforts to define teaching standards and strengthen teacher training, incipient teacher evaluations, and the introduction of competitive selection processes to enter the profession indicate that teacher policy reforms are increasingly regarded as a necessary condition for improving the quality of education in the region.

Progress, however, has been irregular. First, advances have not been uniform across the four countries. Depending on the policy dimension considered, the same country can present very different performances. These differences are to be expected given the complexity of reform processes, but they also suggest that the countries are making strategic use of windows of opportunity as they present themselves. This strategy has its advantages, and sometimes it is the only way to move forward on issues that are usually very contentious. Nonetheless, it can also prevent reforms from working as an integrated whole and leave aside key issues.

Second, in some policy areas there has been very little progress. Most particularly, the four countries have faced great difficulty in moving forward in the area of 'good performance management.' Finally, the country studies have shown that so far teacher policies have been implemented to only a limited degree. There are recurrent examples of programmatic norms and agendas that are not fully applied in practice. Partly, this limited policy implementation reflects problems associated with modest management capacity. More generally, however, it seems that a combination of institutional inertia and resistance to change eventually becomes a critical bottleneck to implementing the proposed teacher policies.

We have drawn up a chart that summarizes the recommendations made in the four country studies (see **Annex 3**). Beyond the reform priorities in each of the countries, we believe that the regional outlook reveals a series of common challenges that are very probably shared by other countries not examined in this report.

The following recommendations reflect those common challenges and offer a unified perspective on how to tackle them.

- 1. Finish defining educational standards for students and teachers in all grades and subjects.** Moreover, guarantee that the curricula and pre-service teacher training programs are aligned to those standards.
- 2. Increase the effective time in class** by enforcing regulations on the number of days and hours allotted to pedagogical activities, and by training teachers to use class time effectively.
- 3. Make pre-service training more demanding, better aligned to standards for students and teachers, and more practical** so that graduates leave with classroom experience. Ensure the quality of teacher training through more systematic assessment of training institutes, including closing those that do not show good results over time.
- 4. Make entry to the teaching profession highly competitive and selective,** so that only the best candidates reach the classroom. Many countries now have competitive selection processes for hiring new teachers, but these processes are still not working as they should. Very few countries, moreover, have a sufficiently long (and intense) probationary period that allows schools to verify the skills of those selected.

5. **Reform the teaching profession to offer more opportunities for professional development** that do not require teachers to forsake the classroom, and ensure that salaries are competitive in a context of growing professionalism.
6. **Offer strong support and guidance to teachers,** especially at the first stages of their career, **and train school principals so that they can better perform their role.** It is important to identify those teachers who are facing difficulties, establish clear targets for improving performance, and set up mentoring and peer support programs. To that end, principals need training to prepare them to be academic and pedagogical leaders in their schools. Apart from their administrative duties, principals must serve as tutors and provide feedback to teachers.
7. **Conduct technically solid and independent teacher evaluations** based on objective and transparent criteria that take account of students' learning, that are supported by a well-coordinated administration, and that make it possible to identify problematic areas and find solutions that help ensure high quality teaching.
8. **Design rewards (monetary and non-monetary) to recognize teachers' effort, dedication and praiseworthy results,** thereby positively motivating them. Take decisive action in cases of abuse and corruption that lead to high rates of absenteeism, the buying and selling of teaching positions, and a lack of commitment to children's education.
9. **Devise special policies to train and stimulate teachers who work with vulnerable populations** and with the region's indigenous peoples, including in their native language.

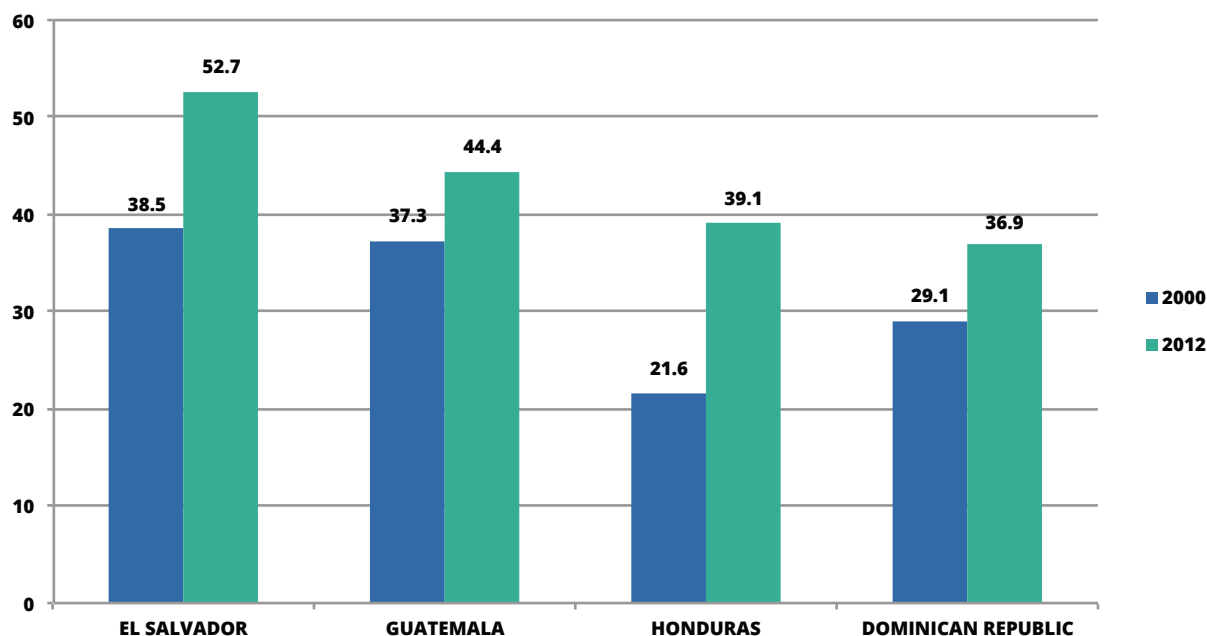
Experience shows that many good practices fail when it comes to implementation. Hence it is especially important **to emphasize the implementation details of any new policy**, taking corrective measures as necessary, before the policies lose credibility due to perceived lack of impact, and to deliver concrete results. Similarly, policy design could benefit from greater effort to build consensus, and from multisector dialogue designed to reach agreement among key actors with a view to recapturing and strengthening substantive aspects of policies during implementation.

There is no single recipe for success: each of these policies can be implemented in a variety of ways and each country will have to find the variant that works best in its particular context. Hence the importance of a broad dialogue, based on the best available information, on the state of teacher policies in each country and on how to tackle challenges. In highlighting the areas in which progress has been made and those in which it has been absent, this report seeks to raise the profile of teacher policies in Central America and the Dominican Republic, to stimulate debate, foster consensus on common goals and activities, and set the stage for change.

# Appendices

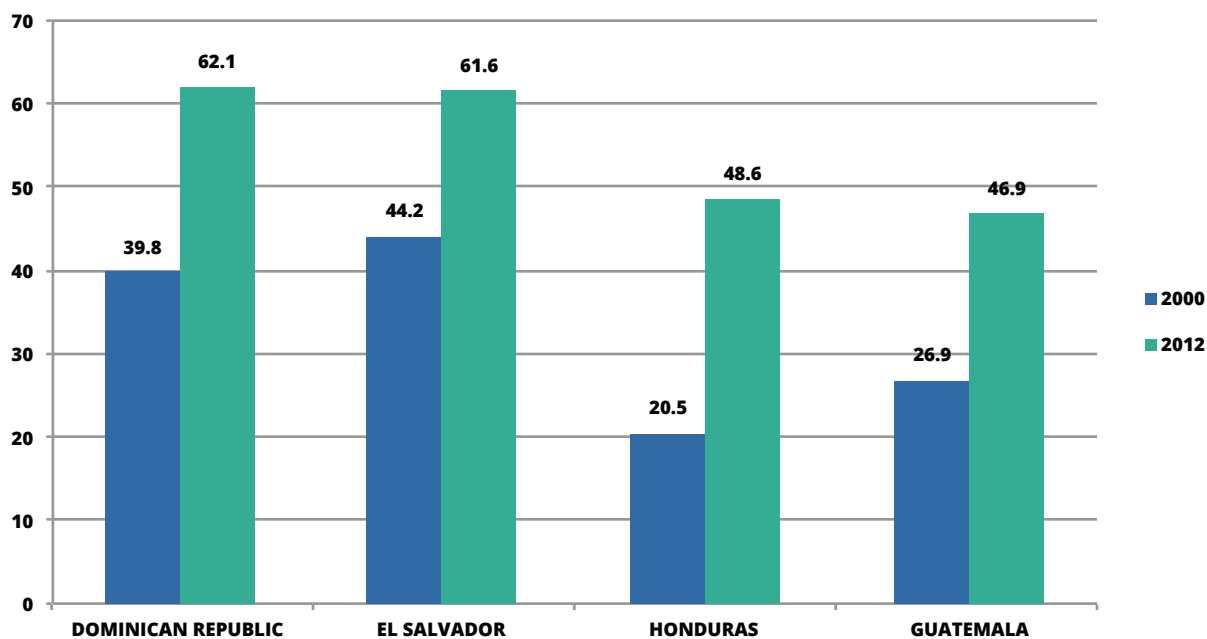
## APPENDIX 1: NET ENROLLMENT RATE IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION (%), 2000 AND 2012.

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS). Education database. Accessed: June 26, 2015.



## APPENDIX 2: NET ENROLLMENT RATE IN SECONDARY EDUCATION (%), 2000 VS 2012.

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS). Education database. Accessed: June 26, 2015.



## APPENDIX 3: COUNTRY-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

ISSUE	EL SALVADOR	GUATEMALA	HONDURAS	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
<b>1A. Set clear expectations for students and teachers</b>	Define teacher standards that stem from consensus among the education community.		Systematically define what teachers should know and what they should be able to do.	
<b>1B. Maximize opportunities for classroom learning</b>	Enforce and monitor the number of days and hours allotted to academic activities. Improve time management in the classroom.	Establish mechanisms to assess the application of the curriculum. Set up an absenteeism register and a system to monitor the use of class time.	Support and strengthen measures geared to training teachers to use classroom time more effectively.	Make timetable compliance, the number of days worked and the use of class time part of teachers' assessment and certification.
<b>1C. Train high quality teachers</b>	Establish rigorous processes for selecting, training, assessing, and graduating teachers. Require graduates to demonstrate their skills in the classroom.	Support the training of teacher trainers.	Link teacher training to standards. Entry assessments and leaving exams should be centered on discipline-specific knowledge, and on knowing how to teach and manage a class.	Make teacher training more demanding. Align training with the new curriculum. Include classroom practice. Prioritize training for early childhood and secondary school.
<b>2A. Select the best candidates to be teachers</b>	Improve the ECAP assessment. Introduce a program for induction into teaching (2–3 years) before teachers are tenured.	Prioritize the results of diagnostic tests in competitive selection processes. Implement competitive examinations at the secondary level. Consider including interviews and demonstration classes.	Apply hiring processes with probationary periods. Convert teacher selection mechanisms into credible and reliable academic processes.	
<b>2B. Establish a structure to attract and retain the most talented</b>	Institute greater wage differentials in line with training and experience.	Strengthen the rules governing the teaching profession and its regulatory mechanisms.	Offer competitive salaries to teachers.	Implement the National System for Teacher Certification so that teachers can develop personally and professionally in their posts.
<b>2C. Support teachers to improve teaching practices</b>	Create communities of practice, institute teacher tutors, and develop leaders of teaching staff.	Strengthen the pedagogical monitoring of in-service teachers. Institutionalize a new system of supervision. Implement a principals' career path and formalize their role.	Establish support and monitoring procedures for novice teachers.	Use students' test results to design and fine-tune teaching practices in the classroom. Improve teamwork among peers.
<b>3A. Implement regular and high quality assessments of teachers</b>	Establish mechanisms to assess and certify teachers.	Devise effective processes to assess teacher performance.	Conduct independent, credible, periodic and mandatory assessments of teachers' performance linked to their students' learning.	Establish a more rigorous, independent and transparent model of teacher assessment.
<b>3B. Recognize good performance and tackle poor performance</b>	Introduce performance-related pay increases, and incentives participate in professional development and excellence initiatives.	Establish incentives for good teaching performance that take into account student learning.	Offer opportunities for professional advancement in line with performance. Create consequences for good or poor performance.	Pay teachers in line with their performance, measured in part by changes in their students' learning.
<b>3C. Provide quality education to the neediest</b>	Train teachers for work in multiple contexts and with diverse populations	Design incentives so that the best teachers are assigned to high needs populations and to primary schools.	Establish incentives so that students in the poorest areas are taught by the best teachers.	Create monetary incentives and give institutional and social recognition for teachers serving in vulnerable areas.
<b>Other issues</b>	Establish an information and monitoring system with indicators for teacher training and practice.	Strengthen the education community and increase its participation in support of teacher policies.	Enhance the active participation of civil society.	Conduct a national census of teaching staff.

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28. The Stallings method, developed by Professor Jane Stallings, helps measure and compare data on four variables: (i) teacher's use of time for instruction; (ii) use of tools and support materials, including computers and other ICTs; (iii) teachers' pedagogical practices; and (iv) teachers' ability to keep students focused. See Stallings, Jane, (1980). "Allocated Academic Learning Time Revisited, or Beyond Time on Task." Educational Research. Vol. 9, No. 11, pp. 11–16.
29. República Dominicana, p. 16.
30. Honduras, p. 20.
31. El Salvador, p. 20.
32. Historically, teacher training in many countries was offered only at the secondary school level.
33. Since 2012, Guatemala has created a two-year high school diploma in science and letters with a module in education and its specialist fields. Students then continue their specialist training at the tertiary level for three years to obtain a university degree in teaching. Pre-primary teachers continue to train at the secondary level in teacher training colleges.
34. Honduras still has teacher training colleges (secondary level) and universities, but the plan is to transform the latter so that there is only higher education.
35. Honduras, p. 18.
36. República Dominicana, p. 18.
37. Consultation with FEREMA, April 27, 2015.

38. There are two practicum experiences, each of 200 student-teaching hours (400 hours in total). For early childhood education there are four practicum experiences, two of 100 hours each and two of 120 hours each (440 hours in total). Source: Ministerio de Educación de El Salvador (2013).
39. Honduras, p. 18.
40. El Salvador, p. 16.
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67. El Salvador, pp. 22–24.
68. República Dominicana, p. 23.
69. Honduras, p. 20.
70. In 2015, for the first time, the General Directorate for the Curriculum and Assessment conducted an assessment of management staff in schools. The district directors did not apply it, although under the law they are the principals' immediate supervisors (consultation with FEREMA, June 8, 2015).
71. Honduras, p. 22.
72. República Dominicana, p. 24.
73. El Salvador, pp. 24–25.
74. Guatemala, p. 22.
75. El Salvador, p. 24.
76. República Dominicana, p. 22.
77. Honduras, p. 21.
78. Honduras, p. 22.
79. Consultation with FEREMA, June 8, 2015.
80. Available at: [www.mineduc.gob.gt/DIGEDUCA](http://www.mineduc.gob.gt/DIGEDUCA).
81. Guatemala, p. 21.
82. Guatemala, p. 22.
83. El Salvador, p. 25.
84. The national Pact for Education Reform calls for a performance assessment and the MINERD has already issued the invitation to tender applications. The process is underway (consultation with EDUCA, June 10, 2015).
85. República Dominicana, p. 24.
86. Stallings method. See endnote 28
87. Honduras, p. 23.
88. República Dominicana, p. 25.

89. Honduras, p. 24.
90. El Salvador, p. 26.
91. República Dominicana, p. 23.
92. República Dominicana, pp. 25–27.
93. This study is confined to the urban areas of Greater Santo Domingo and Santiago.
94. Honduras, p. 26.
95. El Salvador, p. 27.
96. Guatemala, p. 23.
97. Honduras, p. 26.





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