POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

to support teachers' and school leaders' careers and professional
development

2019

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BACKGROUND AND GOAL

The European Union is on the crossroads of defining new policy strategies for the next decade on education and training. The *European Education Policy Network on Teachers and School Leaders* is a Europe-wide network of different organisations (policymakers, European level social partners in education, school leaders, researchers and other stakeholders) to promote co-operation, policy development and implementation at different levels, and to support the European Commission's policy work on teachers and school leaders. This network is building on existing activities developed at European level, especially initiatives and projects supported through European Union programmes in the field of education, like the European Policy Network on School Leadership (EPNoSL).

We acknowledge and wish to contribute to the implementation of the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights adopted by the EU leaders. It defines that "*Everyone has the right to <u>quality and inclusive education</u>, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market.*" The leading principle of our work is that the mission of education is social and personal development.

This report presents the recommendations EEPN partners have compiled within the framework of the topic of the first year of the project on careers and professional development of teachers and school leaders. In addition, it describes the process how the network constructed the recommendations as well as justifies and exemplifies the recommendations with information from research and with feedback given to the recommendations.

The recommendations are to make teachers' and school leaders' careers more attractive in the European Union. They are evidence-based, and they have undergone a rigorous handling by the extensive EEPN network. They provide opportunity to policy makers and stakeholders to align them to different national, regional and institutional circumstances within an enhanced cooperation among different stakeholders and with consultation within own constituencies. We are aware that this process has to take place in order for the recommendations to have real impact on making teachers' and school leaders' careers more attractive in the European Union.

PROCESS

The process of how the EEPN network worked for the recommendations can be found in the EEPN Synergies report. Concisely, we tried to both find and build synergy across the goals and objectives, within the network and with the stakeholders. The report also includes flow charts for the annual work (Figure 1) and research (Figure 2) processes.

We wanted the recommendations to be evidence-based. Hence, we started our work with desk research mapping the starting level. There are in all five research reports as follows.

- Desk research report on good practices from practitioner and parent perspective
- Desk research report on good practices on policy advice and implementation
- Desk research report on research on teacher recruitment, retention and motivation in Europe
- Desk research report on research on school leader recruitment, retention and motivation in Europe
- Desk research report on ten most relevant European Commission funded projects for teachers' and school leaders' more attractive career paths

All the research reports (in total 76 pages) comprise of an introduction to the research task, a description of the research methods, a presentation of the research results, and of a conclusion highlighting major findings, identifying main defects, suggesting tentative recommendations, and proposing future actions. Each report also contains a reference list enabling one both to inspect the report more intensively and to broaden and deepen the examination of the report.

In the EEPN network, the research reports were examined, elaborated and approved prior to continuing the process. To synthesise the main information of the desk research for recommendations, a Highlights report was compiled. Finally, the collected information was used to construct policy recommendations that we thought would support making teachers' and school leaders' careers more attractive in the European Union.

As the EEPN network consists of so different actors and of so many European Union member states, there was the anticipation of encountering difficulties when forming the recommendations. However, the first draft recommendations did not receive many requests for alterations from the EEPN network. Thus, there were only a few insertions and changes. Most feedback was positive and focused on which concepts to use and on how to deal with implementation.

The elaborated second draft recommendations were published for the EEPN network and particularly to the participants at the EEPN annual conference in Jyväskylä, Finland, on November 18 2019. Also all the other information created in the process was distributed. This included besides the Synergy, Desk research and Highlights reports the Key policy messages report that was compiled parallel to the Recommendations report. While the recommendations were constructed within the EEPN network taking into consideration the views and standpoints of various interest groups, the key policy messages had a more neutral perspective. They aimed at viewing the EEPN desk research findings without including the views and standpoints of various interest groups.

The elaborated second draft recommendations were presented supported with all the other EEPN first year material at the EEPN annual conference in Jyväskylä, Finland, on November 18 2019. The morning programme included also the feedback from the European Commission and form Finnish Ministry of Education, host and European Union chair country at the time.

For the afternoon, the close to 150 conference participants were divided into five groups, all of which comprised of large variation in relation to participants' home country and professional status. The participants represented extensively the various stakeholder groups that are involved in the EEEPN work. Both the number of students (31) and countries (41) was notably high. Supported with five key questions, all five groups provided feedback to the elaborated second draft recommendations in two-hour long workshops. The feedback was documented in a digital platform called HowSpace, which was used also to disseminate all the material for the annual conference. Downloaded as a pdf, the feedback constituted 13 pages.

Based on syntheses the artificial intelligence tools of the HowSpace platform provided of the workshop feedback, a panel representing the European Commission, the Finnish Ministry of Education, EFEE, ETUCE, ESHA and University of Jyväskylä (research) discussed the workshop feedback and the recommendations. The audience could participate in the panel discussion with the help of the HowSpace platform.

The EEPN leadership team had two meetings after the annual conference to deal with the feedback. In these meetings, it was agreed to compile the recommendations as they are presented in this report. The reader of this report is strongly advised to become acquainted also with the other EEPN reports for the EEPN first project year. There are in total nine reports with around one hundred pages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the six recommendations the EEPN network constructed to support teachers' and school leaders' careers and professional development. Each recommendation will be stated followed by justifications and examples derived from EEPN desk research reports and feedback obtained from the EEPN network, and particularly from the EEPN annual conference.

To make teachers' and school leaders' careers more attractive in the European Union, we call EU institutions and EU Member States' national, regional, and local decision-makers to consider and implement the following recommendations.

1. **Analyse obstacles for choosing the teacher and school leader profession and improving the motivation and attractiveness of the professions by ensuring effective support to teachers and school leaders in particular concerning their professional well-being, supportive work environment, and career development in order to guarantee quality and inclusive school environment and school management.**

   All the five EEPN research reports found evidence to support the need for further analysis of obstacles for pursuing and continuing to work as teachers and school leaders, and for strengthening the appeal of the professions. There is a shortage of teachers and school leaders across Europe due to people both not seeking into and not staying in the professions. However, particularly in consideration of school leaders the exact numbers are missing.

   The obstacles and the needs for improvements were commonly connected with professional well-being, supportive work environment and career development both in the EEPN research reports and in the EEPN annual conference feedback. In the workshops of the annual conference, participants stated that new demands on education make pressures on schools, such as using ICT and social media, and preventing climate change. In addition, pupils' and students' diverse backgrounds and needs to feel included challenge educators. The challenges of and lack of support for inclusive quality schools and school management burden teachers and school leaders in several ways. Objectives and resources do not appear to correspond to each other successfully.

   The EEPN research reports identified essential information on why and how to develop teachers' and school leaders' recruitment and mobility, initial teacher education, academic standards and research-based education, induction, whole-career support, career path systems, appraisals, as well as salaries and status. This information demands further analysis for successful implementation on the European Union and EU member states' national, regional, and local levels.

   Feedback from the annual conference presented many examples and practices from different countries as solution models for how to support motivation and attractiveness in teachers' and school leaders' professions. These examples were, for example, emphasis on lifelong learning and collaboration with teacher unions and all parties (Denmark); national policy for teachers to participate in professional development every year (Bulgaria); and developing educational leadership studies in the universities (Finland). Annual conference participants expressed the need for exchange of expertise and best practices amongst different areas in Europe, writing annual programmes that enable teachers to learn from experiences and to develop, and life-long learning as an integral part of the schools' daily operation.

2. **Advocate high quality and inclusive initial education, induction phase, and continuous professional development of teachers and school leaders, as a right, supported by necessary reforms in consultation with social partners and relevant stakeholders, research, and sufficient and sustainable investment. Teachers and school leaders need to be well prepared to work in culturally and socially diverse educational institutions and to promote critical thinking, democratic values and human rights, civic engagement and a responsible use of new technologies.**

In one form or another, all the five EEPN research reports found systematic evidence for high quality and inclusive initial education, induction phase and continuous professional development as support to teachers' and school leaders' sustainable careers and professional development. They also presented several examples how differently these educations are provided in the various EU member states. Particularly, there is significant variation in induction phase and continuous professional development, and in all education for school leaders.

The examples included in the EEPN research reports, and also in the feedback of the annual conference, manifest the necessity of taking into consideration cultural and societal diversity in teachers' and school leaders' initial education, induction phase and continuous professional development. Two main reasons for this necessity were identified.

On the one hand, the European Union manifests itself as culturally and socially diverse. Various member states have different cultural and social contexts. Hence, they are also applying different approaches to develop their societies and education systems. This variation becomes very explicit in the EEPN research reports, and manifests itself in how differently initial education, induction phase and professional development are being provided within the various EU member states.

On the other hand, the European Union, EU member states as well as local communities and educational institutions have to be able to understand, support and develop diversity, while at the same time working for equity, inclusion and engagement. The EEPN research reports recognised examples of EU funded projects (e.g. eTwinning, NAOS) and education (e.g. Finland) for this purpose. They were also able to identify some common key elements as well as needs for development. These should be examined further both on the European Union and on the member states' national, regional and local levels for successful implementation.

Both the EEPN research reports and the EEPN annual conference feedback emphasised equity, inclusion and everyone's participation as goals for educational institutions. Hence, including them in the recommendation is vital. Particularly, the annual conference answers to questions on new challenges and developments highlighted the need for critical thinking and use of new technologies. Similar notions were found also in the EEPN research reports.

Annual conference feedback suggested the following solutions for teachers' and school leaders' professional development: mentoring and coaching; exchange of expertise between different areas in Europe; recognizing and supporting all kind of leadership and at all levels; and providing the tools and education for school leaders necessary for including students with special needs. In addition, there is the need to ensure freedom of expression and democratic values. Several of these notions were included also in the EEPN research reports.

3. **Ensure equal access and equal opportunities to work in the teaching and school leadership profession and to obtain initial and continuous professional development for teachers and school leaders regardless the gender, age, sexual orientation, economic status, ethnicity, language, religion and citizenship status.**

   Neither the EEPN research reports nor the EEPN annual conference feedback included direct evidence for connecting this recommendation with gender, age, sexual orientation, economic status, ethnicity, language, religion and citizenship. The reports and feedback simply did not include information about the connection. However, it was decided to include it in the recommendation.

   With this, we wanted both to emphasise the significance of the connection and the need to obtain research evidence of its status in the European Union. Several of the characteristics included in the list appeared as weak signals in discussions at the EEPN kick-off meeting in Amsterdam in February 2019. Especially, they were mentioned when regarding permanent work agreements and career development into school leadership positions.

   It is also important to raise the issue of equal access to the teaching and school leadership profession and to initial and continuous professional development from the perspective of the identified teacher and school leader shortage in the EEPN research reports. Based on them, the focus of how to decrease the shortage has been on strengthening the appeal to education as a profession, on providing alternative paths to obtain initial education to work in education, and on supporting people to continue working in the field of education.

   The EEPN research reports also included information of various approaches to provide both traditional and alternative (one third of European countries) initial education and continuous professional development. However, they did not provide us with information about how accessible these approaches are.

4. **Advocate a whole school approach and democratic school culture by ensuring democratic and collaborative school leadership with the participatory approaches of all relevant school actors (school heads, teachers, parents, students, etc.) as an example to create democratic and inclusive school environments.**

   Examples of the whole school approach and democratic school culture were found in the EEPN research reports for good practices (Droichead in Ireland, LLP in UK) and for relevant EU funded projects (Hand in Hand Erasmus+). Sometimes these two were also connected with inclusive education and inclusive schools (European Council Recommendations 2018/C 195/01).

   EEPN annual conference feedback contained explicit support, concrete descriptions and examples for both the whole school approach and democratic school culture. According to the workshops, solutions for the development of democratic and collaborative school leadership create trust in partnerships based on shared values, rights, responsibilities and long-term objectives; on quality education for teachers, school leaders and other school actors to develop collaborative and democratic school leadership; on including democratic values and critical thinking; on projects and professional collaboration between teachers, school leaders, parents,

students and other stakeholders (Germany, Ireland); and on effective support from the government through funding and policy.

5. **Support professional autonomy of teachers and school leaders to choose the most appropriate learning and teaching methods to ensure student-centred learning and freedom of expression, reinforced by research supporting pedagogy, knowledge, skills and competences of teachers.**

Autonomy as an element to support teachers' and school leaders' careers and professional development was included in all the EEPN research reports except for the one studying the most relevant European Commission funded projects for teachers' and school leaders' more attractive career paths.

The EEPN report on good practices from practitioner and parent perspective connected autonomy with school-based teacher recruitment, with high-performing education systems, closer learner support and government-school autonomy balance (Netherlands). The one on good practices on policy advice and implementation emphasised teachers' professional autonomy (Finland).

The EEPN report on teacher recruitment, retention and motivation presented the effect of autonomy on teachers' retention, work quality and motivation. The one on school leaders compared degree of autonomy in the recruitment of school leaders, in school leaders' decision-making powers, and in the relationship between autonomy and accountability.

Feedback form the EEPN annual conference on the other hand emphasised that autonomy requires effective support from the government (funding and policy), independent and honest research as well as best practices as a basis for policy decisions. In addition, teachers and school leaders need support during the early stages of their careers. A particular problem was identified with qualifications for school leaders. Furthermore, we need to listen to learners' voice as well, because autonomy brings motivation also to students (Finland).

6. **Encourage partnership and cooperation between educational institutions at different sectors and levels with different local and regional actors in an open school approach, within and beyond national borders, to achieve democratic and inclusive school leadership and enable smooth transitions.**

Including the open school approach in the recommendations was the result of discussing the first draft recommendations and their feedback from the EEPN network in the EEPN leadership team. The first draft recommendations did not contain it. Only one of the EEPN research reports noted the open school approach. It was the one presenting ten most relevant European Commission funded projects for teachers' and school leaders' more attractive career paths.

The report presented the Open Schools for Open Societies (OSOS) project as an example for projects developing school innovation. The project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, and it aims to help a thousand European primary and secondary schools with opening up to their own local communities. Its consortium is composed of a total of 19 partners representing ten European (Greece, Finland, Germany, Spain, Netherlands, Bulgaria, Italy, France, Portugal, and Ireland) and three non-European

countries (Israel. Australia and the US). The project's approach is to describe and implement a process that will facilitate the transformation of schools into innovative ecosystems.

Whether to keep the recommendation in the final version discussed the EEPN leadership team until the very last moments of the process. However, the EEPN annual conference feedback provided rather strong support for the recommendation.

Based on the EEPN annual conference feedback, we need to remember the role of the school as the heart of the community. There has to be cooperation amongst various schools and school levels, no competition. In addition, we need to consider various ways to support cooperation such as projects and long-term partnerships with other actors, cooperation with parent councils, companies, organizations and workplaces. Furthermore, governments must support flexibility concerning workloads and responsibilities of teachers and school leaders. We need also exchange between research and school practice.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Based on the workshop discussions of the EEPN annual conference, the presented policy recommendations have to be further developed with both bottom-up (from schools, teachers, school leaders, parents, students, civil society, etc.) and top-down actions (national ministries, EU institutions and EU projects). We need sharing of good practices of inclusive teaching, school collaboration and networking. Hence, we need cooperation, collaboration and dissemination amongst the various levels and countries in the EEPN project.

As the EEPN network start working for second year goals, it must not forget working to support the implementation of the EEPN first year recommendations. Particularly, national solutions have to be established to provide structures, processes and practices to together discuss, evaluate and enact the policy recommendations on the national, regional and local levels.

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