

NEW TEACHER POLICY: THE NEED FOR MORE DECENTRALIZATION

- The bill that stipulates changes to the current teacher regulation was introduced last week. We celebrate that the government seeks to increase the relevance of the teachers' performance when defining their wages in the municipal sector, and also that it will be somehow considered as a ground for dismissal.
- However, we believe that excessive trust is being put on the work of the Center for Training, Experimentation and Pedagogical Research (CPEIP, in Spanish), and the proposed performance evaluation suffers from too much centralism.
- Likewise, we regret that this centralized regulation will include the private subsidized sector, taking teacher management away from them by transferring it to the State.
- We are in favor of measuring the teachers' performance in a decentralized way, by taking into account the reality of each school. Therefore, we propose to strengthen the role of the Principal, granting him more power in the management of his teachers.

A bill was introduced last week, which stipulates changes to the rules currently applying to the teachers of the municipal sector and extends part of it to the private subsidized sector, and the sector with delegated management (DL 3166). This initiative pursues an objective that gathers a large consensus: to increase the quality of the teachers. In order to fulfill it, it establishes new requirements both for those who wish to practice the profession and for the programs offering Education careers. Likewise, it reduces the lesson hours of the teachers and increases their wages in exchange for subjecting them to a performance evaluation with direct consequences.

We celebrate that the government seeks to increase the relevance of **the** teachers' performance when defining their wages in the municipal sector, and also that it will be somehow considered as a ground for dismissal. However, we believe that the proposed performance evaluation suffers from too much centralism: there is no background that allows to believe that it will correctly incorporate the differences in the context that teachers have to cope with in each corner of the country. In this sense, steps should be taken towards a decentralized performance measurement, which takes into account the reality of each school and their students, so that teachers can be ranked, from there, in different income segments. Therefore, we propose to strengthen the role of the principal –who is not considered in this bill, in spite of the fact that he should be leading the educational process–, granting him more power in the decisions concerning the evaluation and management of his teachers.

NEW REQUIREMENTS TO STRENGTHEN TEACHER TRAINING

Today, there are more than 200 thousand practicing teachers in the school systemⁱ and more than 93 thousand students are studying to become a teacher. Each year, 17,500 students, on average, enter teacher education and approximately 15,000 get a degree. From the 70 higher education institutions delivering some sort of Education Program, 33% is not certified, and from the 863 programs that are offered, 28% has not been certified and 42% has been certified for less than 4 years.ⁱⁱ It is in this scenario that the government's bill proposes some measures aiming at increasing selectivity and promoting improvements in the training offer for teachers:

- Compulsory certification (institutional and for the program) in order to offer teacher education;
- New requirements to enter teacher education: being part of the best 30% of the PSU test, the 30% with best grades in secondary education, or have participated in a special talent hunt and teaching vocation program;
- Compulsory diagnosis test for the institutions offering teacher education;
- Induction program for new teachers entering the school system.

Given the current scenario, we agree that it is necessary to elevate the standards for this profession; however, we are cautious when it comes to anticipate the effects that these measures can achieve.

As for certification, it makes sense to us to make it mandatory, provided that the current evaluation, which is focused on the processes, is updated towards an assessment including result variables, such as the possibility of having an employment, expected income, vacancies, etc., so that the applicants know what expectations to have in the future if they choose teacher education, and thus contribute to improve the pool of candidates.

In relation to the requirements to enter teacher education, we have some doubts regarding their impact if better candidates, who fulfill these requirements, are not effectively attracted. For example, restricting today the access to only the best 30% in the PSU test could entail a sharp reduction in the number of applicants; in fact, this year only 54 selected students obtained more than 700 points. We believe that this should be done progressively, as the bill establishes, together with finding out new instruments that allow to better discriminate those who have the potential to become good teachers. Likewise, it is possible that an overly structured and rigid career, as the one existing today in the municipal sector and the one proposed in this bill, will be the first disincentive to attract good candidates.

In relation to the Induction Programs, there is evidence availableⁱⁱⁱ that shows that they could help elevate the performance of new teachers and their students. Nevertheless, we believe it is necessary to evaluate its high cost, as well as the staff availability for becoming mentors, and start, for example, with a pilot program so as to be able to revise its design and impact. Furthermore, we believe that

the government's proposal relies too much on the role of the Center for Training, Experimentation and Pedagogical Research (CPEIP, in Spanish), a body that is part of the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC, in Spanish), since this Center will manage and execute the induction system, and it will also select and train the mentors who are responsible for guiding the beginners, independent of the educational facility. We know that the teacher's work significantly depends on his adapting to the specific educational project in which he is involved, and that this induction dimension will be overlooked if the process is left in the exclusive hands of a centralized body such as the CPEIP.

CERTIFICATIONS AND NEW TEACHER DEVELOPMENT SEGMENTS

First, it establishes that only those who have a teacher's degree can practice as a teacher. The truth is that there is no background to justify such a measure; on the contrary, it goes against the recommendations of the most recent evidence regarding the contribution of talented professionals from other related areas who decide to work as teachers. Evaluations of the program *TeachForAmerica* in the United States and *EnseñaChile*^{iv} tell that teachers incorporated through this programs, although they do not have a teacher's degree but have passed a series of additional filters^v, are more effective in terms of the learning levels they achieve among their students. It seems that traditional certification does not necessarily enable recruiting better teachers than with other alternative mechanisms^{vi}. Thus, instead of restricting the access of talented professionals to the teaching practice, alternative criteria should be searched for in order to include them, inasmuch as it allows relying on the best ones in the classroom, especially in the Chilean context, which still lacks good teachers, particularly in the most extreme regions of the country.

Second, it establishes a compulsory teacher certification for subsidized schools (municipal and private) and those with delegated management (DL 3166), which will be implemented and executed by the CPEIP. This certification will be defined by a Knowledge Test and a Portfolio like the one currently included in the Teacher Evaluation, consisting in a class video and material prepared by the teacher in relation to this, in order to evidence his/her good teaching practices. The results of this certification, as well as the teacher's years of experience, will allow ranking him among one of 5 Professional Development Segments: Initial, Early, Advanced, Superior or Expert (the last two are voluntary); each one will be linked to an extra allocation to increase the teacher's wage. Likewise, it will be an exit mechanism for beginners who are unable to certify in the Initial segment after 3 years (4 if he/she was not selected for induction), and for the teachers who remain for over 9 years in the Initial segment without being able to upgrade to the Early segment.

Additionally, the minimum base wage is increased and some allocations are modified, although the Experience allocation is maintained, in spite of the fact that this variable is also incorporated to the definition of professional segments already described.

We celebrate that the government has searched for a mechanism to increase the relevance of the teachers' performance when defining their wages in the municipal sector, and also that it

will be somehow considered as a ground for dismissal. We understand that this is very difficult in political terms. Nevertheless, we believe that excessive trust is being put on the work of the CPEIP, and that the proposed performance evaluation suffers from too much centralism: there is no background that allows thinking that it will correctly gather the differences in the context that teachers have to cope with in each corner of the country. Evidence suggest that the instruments chosen by the government are not an effective way to measure the performance in the classroom. For example, the evaluations made to the programs that put requirements for entering the teaching profession have shown an insignificant impact –or even null- on the level of the recruited teachers: both the certifications^{vii} and tests evaluating specific knowledge^{viii} have not succeeded to predict the performance of the teachers.

Instead, we are in favor of taking steps towards a decentralized performance measurement, which takes into account the reality of each school and their students, in accordance with their own goals, and, from there, to rank the teachers in differentiated income segments. Therefore, we propose to strengthen the role of the principal –who is excluded from this bill, even though he should be leading the educational process-, granting him more power in the decisions concerning the evaluation and management of his teachers. Currently, in the municipal sector, more than half of the enrolment takes place in schools whose principal was selected through the senior management system (*Alta Dirección Pública, ADP*), and this renovation is expected to be completed by 2016. The Quality and Equity Law (2012) stipulated the same entry requirement, with the aim of relying on better principals who could take the responsibility for the management of the teachers. There is recent evidence that shows that, in general, the principals have accurate opinions on the efficiency of the teachers under his responsibility, and that they correctly use the information related to their performance in order to make hiring decisions^{ix}. Furthermore, the presence of an efficient principal has a positive impact on the school's performance, since teacher management is a mechanism through which the principal can improve the performance of the students^x.

Under the same logic described above, we consider that extending this new regulation to the teachers of private subsidized schools means a great setback for the sector, which currently has more autonomy on this matter, since teacher management is totally taken away from them by transferring it to the State. Evidence from the PISA test shows that the best educational systems are giving more autonomy to the schools^{xi}, and this bill goes in the opposite direction.

REDUCTION OF LESSON HOURS

Finally, we should mention one of the main measures envisaged in this bill: the progressive reduction of the teachers' non-contact time, which will pass from 75% today to 65% of their total contract hours. On average, teachers in Chile dedicate more time to teaching than the OECD countries who participated in the 2013 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). In this context, it seems a positive initiative to reduce the lesson hours so that teachers may have more time to prepare their lessons and make collaborative and coordination work.

Having said that, it is important to simultaneously improve the efficiency of each lesson hour, which is highly related to improving the planning activities, but also the school climate. The same TALIS survey reveals that, on average, teachers in Chile dedicate only 73% of their classes to effective teaching, since the remaining 26% is spent on administrative tasks (11%) and keeping order in the classroom (15%). These last percentages are quite above those of other teachers in the OECD countries participating in the survey.

CONCLUSION

In brief, the government bill is a good effort to incorporate teacher performance as a relevant variable when deciding their professional development in the municipal sector. However, it suffers from excessive centralism, which we believe could be solved by further involving the school principal, who is, after all, the person who should lead the educational process that allows his students to actually learn.

Moreover, we are concerned that by extending this centralized regulation to the private subsidized sector, it will be totally deprived from the teachers' management by giving it to the State; and teacher management is one of the most relevant factors when it comes to influencing an educational project.

Finally, we believe that this regulation will not necessarily attract better candidates, since it will make the access to the teaching profession more rigid, and that alternative mechanisms should be considered to include the best ones in the classroom.

ⁱ Source: MINEDUC Database 2014.

ⁱⁱ Source: Mensaje, Bulletin Nr 10008-04.

ⁱⁱⁱ Glazerman et al. (2010).

^{iv} Decker, Mayer and Glazerman (2004); Alfonso, Santiago and Bassi (2011).

^v For example, in 7 years, *EnseñaChile* has received around 8 thousand applicants, from which less than 7% has been chosen.

^{vi} Constantine et al. (2009).

^{vii} Kane, Rockoff and Staiger (2006).

^{viii} Cantrell and Kane (2013).

^{ix} Rockoff et al. (2011).

^x Branch, Hanushek and Rivkin (2012).

^{xi} OECD (2013). "PISA 2012 Results: What Makes Schools Successful? Resources, Policies and Practices". Volume IV. PISA, OECD Publishing.