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Teachers' Professional Learning Study: **Diagnostic Report for the Flemish Community of Belgium**

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Teachers' Professional Learning (TPL) Study: Diagnostic Report for the Flemish Community of Belgium

The Flemish Government asked the OECD to undertake a targeted diagnostic study of the Flemish system for teachers' Continuing Professional Learning (CPL). Drawing on findings from interviews with Flemish stakeholders and schools, as well as document review, the study team identified strengths and weaknesses of the continuing professional learning system in the Flemish Community of Belgium, as well as opportunities and threats in going forward. Key findings from this SWOT analysis are summarised in the table below.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• There is system-level commitment to strengthening teachers' continuing professional learning (CPL), with the potential to build on pockets of excellence within the system • A system-wide approach to induction, well supported at the school level, ensures that all novice teachers can expect and have access to opportunities for professional learning • Collaborative initiatives have emerged at school, local and system levels, connecting actors within and beyond the school sector to support professional exchange and innovation	• CPL is not widely considered a core aspect of teachers' work embedded in their practice, with critically low levels of teachers' time spent engaged in CPL • The quality of CPL for teachers offered at the system and school levels is variable with regards to identification of needs, inquiry, engagement with data and research, and transfer of new learning into practice • The CPL system appears fragmented, with funding spread across multiple providers and limited information on and evaluation of CPL at system, school and individual levels
Opportunities	**Threats**
• New attainment targets and standardised assessments, if designed and implemented in meaningful collaboration with stakeholders, offer an opportunity to focus CPL on shared aspiration for learners • A co-constructed strategy and principles for teachers' professional learning could help inform a broader vision for the teaching profession in the decades to come informing all aspects of teacher policy • COVID-19 related digitalisation offers opportunities for creative and direct communication with and among teachers to share experience and resources for professional learning	• Insufficient focus on aligning, sequencing and co-constructing reforms of curriculum, assessment and teacher policy risks hindering their successful implementation • Low attractiveness and status of the teaching profession may reinforce teacher shortages, limiting opportunities to free teachers' time for CPL • Variable professionalisation support for school leadership (including teacher leadership) and school boards limits the potential to ensure CPL of consistently high quality in a context of freedom of education and school autonomy

1. Introduction

The OECD Teachers' Professional Learning (TPL) Study

An international study into teachers' professional learning

Effective teaching is at the heart of a successful education system. There is growing recognition that supporting teachers' professional learning from the beginning to the end of their career is critical to fostering high-quality teaching. The OECD Teachers' Professional Learning (TPL) study examines the policy environments that support teachers' professional growth by exploring common strengths and challenges in participating jurisdictions. In doing so, the TPL study aims to facilitate peer learning, enrich national debates through international exchange and support the development of effective teacher learning systems at both the system and school levels.

The study seeks to provide policy makers and practitioners worldwide with evidence and examples of effective and innovative policies to improve initial teacher preparation and teachers' continuing professional learning (CPL). "Teachers' continuing professional learning" is defined in a broad sense including all formal and informal activities aimed at helping teachers to update, develop and broaden their skills, knowledge and expertise. In particular, the TPL study looks at how schools and school systems:

- shape teachers' motivation to engage in CPL;
- ensure that teachers have access to CPL;
- provide different CPL opportunities;
- select and develop CPL content;
- ensure the quality of CPL.

The lens for analysis is provided by the conceptual framework for the TPL study (Boeskens, Nusche and Yurita, 2020[1]). The TPL study seeks to reflect recent advancements in the theory and practice of teachers' CPL by (1) considering a broad range of CPL goals to account for teachers' and their students' diverse and changing needs; (2) including informal and non-formal settings and formats such as personal study and collaborative learning; (3) going beyond the teacher's role as a recipient of CPL to focus on teachers' agency in the learning process, and shifting the emphasis from the individual teacher towards teachers' collective capacity.

The TPL study seeks to avoid a dichotomy between formal professional development (PD) and day-to-day professional learning, which are sometimes treated separately in the literature. Rather, the term CPL is used broadly to include the formal and informal activities that aim to update, develop and broaden the skills, knowledge, expertise and other relevant characteristics of teachers. Traditional professional development courses or seminars are seen as one component within a much larger ecosystem of continuing professional learning opportunities. Professional development initiatives may or may not lead to professional learning, but the two terms are not synonymous. From a review of relevant research, the conceptual framework for the study identifies the following characteristics of professional learning, as distinct from traditional professional development:

- an **active role for teachers** (individually and collectively) who are considered to be reflective professionals;

- a **context-based process** that recognises the importance for teachers to be responsive to the particular learning needs of their students and for schools to serve the particular needs of their communities;
- a **strong evaluative dimension** with teachers systematically examining the effectiveness of their own practice;
- a **long-term process** that is integrated into regular school life and includes systematically planned opportunities to promote professional growth;
- a process that **leads to change** in teachers' knowledge bases, beliefs and practice or capacity for practice.

Understanding the broader goals and the context in which CPL systems are operating is essential for analysing their strengths and weaknesses. Countries set different goals and priorities for their CPL systems. While there is an overall consensus that CPL should seek to improve the quality of teaching, the definition and measurement of quality teaching varies across countries. Besides quality teaching, countries often set broader objectives for CPL systems, such as enhancing teacher professionalism and teacher well-being. Countries also differ with respect to the actors involved in setting objectives and in the extent to which stakeholders have a common vision around the goals for teachers' continuing learning.

At the same time, while the goals for school education and for professional learning vary across the OECD, the objective to improve student outcomes is at the heart of all OECD school systems. If valued outcomes for students are understood to be the rationale for and focus of TPL, then successful professional learning has a positive impact on student outcomes and helps teachers link particular teaching strategies to their students' learning experience. The goal of professional learning is then not just to help teachers master particular strategies, but to help them develop, implement or adapt strategies based on how their diverse students learn and respond to them. It is important to note that across OECD school systems, valued student outcomes typically go beyond academic achievement to include broader learning, holistic socio-emotional development and well-being.

A specific diagnostic analysis for the Flemish Community of Belgium

This report for the Flemish Community of Belgium forms part of the OECD Teachers' Professional Learning (TPL) study. The analysis in this report is guided by the conceptual framework established for the study (Boeskens, Nusche and Yurita, 2020[1]) and, as with other country-specific reports in the TPL study, the methodology of the TPL study draws on a combination of desk-based research, diagnostic country visits and comparative analysis. The objective of the OECD diagnostic visits is to provide an international perspective and an independent diagnosis of countries' TPL systems, based on an analysis of each system's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis).

In the context of travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the study visit to the Flemish Community of Belgium took place virtually via video-conference from 11-19 January 2021, followed by a webinar to share the OECD team's preliminary impressions from the visit on 25 January 2021. The OECD study team comprised Andreea Minea-Pic (OECD), co-ordinator of the diagnostic study for the Flemish Community, Deborah Nusche (OECD), project lead of the TPL study, Claire Sinnema (The University of Auckland), Louise Stoll (Institute of Education, University College London) and Makito Yurita (OECD, seconded from the National Institute for Teachers and Staff Development in Japan).

The OECD and the European Commission (EC) have established a partnership for the study, which partly covers participation costs of countries which are part of the European Union's Erasmus+ programme. The participation of the Flemish Community was organised with the support of the EC in the context of this partnership. This report has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union. The involvement of the EC was co-ordinated by Brigitte Devos, Policy Officer for Belgium in the European Commission's Education, Youth, Sport and Culture Directorate-General (DG EAC).

The diagnostic visit was designed by the OECD in collaboration with the Flemish authorities. The purpose of the diagnostic visit was to collect a broad cross-section of evidence and views on continuing professional learning policy and practice from key stakeholder groups in the Flemish Community of Belgium. This was achieved through semi-structured interviews with a wide range of Flemish education stakeholders, including those in government education departments, national agencies, teacher unions, school boards, providers of professional learning, research institutes and others.

The OECD study team also spoke to school management, teachers and governors in four schools in different parts of the Flemish Community of Belgium. The schools were selected by the OECD, supported by the national co-ordinator for the Flemish Community of Belgium, with the aim to maximise diversity in terms of their setting (e.g. urban, suburban and rural), their student body (e.g. size and socio-economic composition) and other characteristics (e.g. type of provider, school performance, educational offer). Each meeting contributed to the study team's understanding of the landscape of teachers' professional learning in the Flemish Community of Belgium and the role that different actors play in developing and implementing professional learning policies.

The scope for analysis in this report includes all levels of school education, from elementary through to upper secondary education. At the request of the Flemish authorities, the focus areas of the analysis were teacher collaboration, teacher agency, evidence-informed practice, teachers' data literacy, and leadership for professional learning.

As part of its participation in the study, the Flemish Department of Education and Training prepared a country background report (CBR) following the study's conceptual framework and detailed guidelines (Department of Education and Training, 2021[2]). Unless otherwise noted, information on the Flemish school system included in this report is drawn from the CBR. The CBR is an important output from the OECD project in its own right as well as a key source for the study team. The CBR and this report complement each other and should be read in conjunction for a more comprehensive view of the Flemish TPL system. The CBR prepared by the Flemish Community identifies the following key challenges for the Flemish CPL system:

- creating a sense of urgency and acknowledging teachers as professionals;
- strengthening CPL with effect on teachers' practice;
- strengthening collaborative and school-based CPL;
- supporting sustainable transfer;
- strong leadership for teacher learning;
- towards tailored and evidence-informed CPL activities;
- intensifying the collaboration among providers;
- enhancing coherence and quality assurance;
- supporting the data literacy of teachers and school leaders;
- providing sufficient CPL opportunities in the context of multiple reforms and financial cuts.

The OECD study team wishes to extend its gratitude to the many people in the Flemish Community who gave time from their busy schedules to inform the study team of their views, experiences and knowledge. The meetings were open and provided a wealth of insights. Special words of appreciation are due to the National Co-ordinators in the Flemish Department of Education and Training, Katrijn Ballet and Monika Van Geit, and all colleagues who participated in the preparation of the Flemish Country Background Report. We are grateful to the co-ordination team for sharing their expertise and responding to the many questions of the study team. The author team is also grateful to colleagues at the OECD, especially to Cassandra Morley, Daiana Torres Lima and Rachel Linden for administrative, editorial and layout support, and to Paulo Santiago for overall guidance.

The policy context for the diagnostic study in the Flemish Community of Belgium

Significant reforms influencing teachers' professional learning

Teachers are a cornerstone of high-performing education systems and teachers' professional learning (TPL) is key for creating a 21st century teaching profession that enables all teachers and students to thrive. The Flemish Community of Belgium has displayed a mean student performance above the OECD average. However, recent international assessments and the COVID-19 pandemic have raised concerns about the school system's capacity to sustain high performance. As digitalisation increasingly permeates every aspect of learning and teaching, teachers need to continuously adapt their skills, expand their knowledge and develop new expertise to be able to engage with students in innovative ways. Recent declines in Flemish students' international assessment results have also created increasing pressure on the system to reconsider the conditions, incentives and support it provides to enable high-quality teaching and learning practices.

The Flemish Community of Belgium has been among the top performers among OECD countries participating in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) over the last two decades. Mean scores of 15-year-olds in science, reading and mathematics remain above the OECD average. However, student performance has been on a downward trend and more students fail to reach a basic proficiency level in science, reading or mathematics than before (OECD, 2019[3]; Klasse, 2019[4]). A similar decline in students' assessment results is observed at the end of primary education (Faddar et al., 2020[5]; Tielemans et al., 2017[6]). In addition, socio-economic and immigrant status continue to be strong predictors of students' achievement. In 2018, the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status explained 17% of students' performance in reading, compared to 12% on average across the OECD. Socio-economic status related even more strongly to students' mathematics or science outcomes. It explained more than 20% of variance in students' performance in these subjects in contrast to an OECD average of 14% in mathematics and 13% in science (OECD, 2019[7]). Similarly, immigrant students who do not speak Dutch at home also displayed lower performance in the assessment.

The Flemish Community of Belgium has recently initiated a series of reforms to help students adapt to changing demands placed on their skills. The educational curriculum is being updated, with the introduction of new development goals and attainment targets that are competence- rather than subject-based. Competences in Dutch, mathematics, science and technology are considered critical within the new curriculum (Eurydice, 2020[8]). New attainment goals are being progressively introduced for the different stages of secondary education, to be followed by primary and adult education at later stages. New attainment goals were introduced in 2019 for the first stage of secondary education. At the time of writing this report, they were being defined for the second and third stage of secondary education (for introduction in September 2021 for the second stage, and 2023 for the third stage). The attainment goals are, however, facing contestation from some of the education providers.

Apart from the curriculum reform, the Education Policy Note 2019-2024 also announces the introduction of standardised and validated tests, initially in Dutch and mathematics to assess the extent to which students achieve attainment goals, as well as their individual and their school's learning gains (Eurydice, 2020[8]). Students will take the tests at four different stages of their educational pathway. The Policy Note highlights the importance of developing adequate data literacy skills at the school level to ensure that teachers and school leaders can use these results to inform the improvement of teaching and learning processes.

To help teachers realise the aspirations of the curriculum, and ensure that they have the necessary skills and support to be effective educators and thrive as professionals, the Education Policy Note 2019-2024 also highlights a number of objectives for reinforcing the teaching profession. These include developing a competence framework for school leaders, providing all school leaders and teachers with

professionalisation opportunities, bringing professionalisation resources closer to school needs, monitoring quality and making adjustments to initial teacher education programmes.

In addition, collective bargaining agreements in 2019 resulted in measures reinforcing the job security of novice teachers and ensuring the competitiveness of teachers' salaries. As of September 2019, teacher induction became a right for novice teachers and an obligation for schools to provide. New opportunities were introduced for diversifying the profile and skills of the teacher workforce, reinforcing links with the labour market and addressing teacher shortages. For instance, a pilot project for "dual teaching" was introduced in September 2020 allowing company employees to teach part-time while continuing to work in the private sector. In addition, new side-entrants to the teaching profession can have their prior experience validated and accounted for in their teacher salaries as of the same date.

Teachers' professional learning in Flemish schools: Key elements

The Flemish Community of Belgium has one of the most devolved education systems among OECD countries. Schools make 63% of decisions in public lower secondary education, with the government responsible for the remaining decisions (OECD, 2018[9]). The constitutional right to "freedom of education" grants every natural or legal person the right to start a school and every parent to choose the school their child will attend. Schools are organised in three main educational networks – community education (GO!), subsidised public education (OGO) and subsidised private education (VGO). The majority of schools in the Flemish Community of Belgium are privately run: subsidised private education comprises 62% of elementary schools and 72% of regular secondary schools (Department of Education and Training, 2021[10]). School boards govern schools and can unite in umbrella organisations that represent schools in discussions with the government and support schools, for instance with curriculum or professional development issues.

The high level of school autonomy in the Flemish education system largely determines the recruitment and professional learning of teachers. Schools benefit from extensive autonomy with respect to the development of their educational approach and hiring decisions, within the scope of government regulations about education quality. School boards are responsible for hiring teachers, in line with legislation covering the expected qualifications and statutory rights of teaching staff. They decide on the composition of teachers' assignments, including their tasks and roles within the school.

Teachers' initial preparation and entry to the profession

Following the 2019 reform of teacher education programmes, students can enter teaching after having acquired a Bachelor's degree, a Master's degree or a higher education graduate degree (for vocational education and training (VET) subjects only) (Eurydice, 2020[8]). Alternative pathways for side entrants are also increasingly encouraged. These can encompass flexible pathways (e.g. through distance learning), teacher-trainee pathways that combine teacher education programmes with a teaching assignment and shortened pathways for specific students. A compulsory, non-binding admission exam was also introduced in 2017 for teacher Bachelor's programmes. The exam provides students with an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses as they enter teacher education, but it cannot prevent students from enrolling in teacher programmes.

At the end of their initial teacher education (ITE), teachers are expected to display a range of skills and attitudes defined by the basic competences for teachers (Box 1.1). The basic competences serve as a reference for the ITE curriculum and as an assessment framework for students in teacher training. They also emphasise the need for teachers' lifelong learning. They are complemented by a professional profile to guide teachers' continuing professional learning.

Box 1.1. Teachers' basic competences and professional profile

The basic competences

The basic competences for teachers were defined by Decree in 2007 and were redefined in 2018. Ten functional units and a range of attitudes related to teaching define the basic competences expected from newly graduate teachers.

The ten functional units define the teacher as:

- a guide to learning and development processes (e.g. the teacher can determine the initial level of the learner and of the class);
- an educator (e.g. the teacher can create a positive climate for the learner);
- a content expert (e.g. the teacher masters the knowledge and skills related to their teaching area or subject);
- an organiser (e.g. the teacher can create a smooth and efficient lesson);
- an innovator and researcher (e.g. the teacher can improve the quality of their teaching by making use or conducting research or critically reflecting on his own practice);
- a partner of parents or carers (e.g. the teacher can inform himself about the learner or communicate with parents or carers);
- a member of an education team (e.g. the teacher can collaborate with the educational team);
- a partner of external parties (e.g. the teacher can establish and maintain contact with external partners, such as the private sector, researchers, higher education institutions);
- a member of the educational community (e.g. the teacher is aware of their role and influence on society);
- a cultural participant (e.g. the teacher can approach a range of socio-political, socio-economic or cultural themes).

Attitudes teachers need to display apply to all functional units and include: decision-making ability, relational orientation, willingness to question themselves and the environment, eagerness to learn, organisational capacity, willingness to work collaboratively, sense of responsibility and flexibility.

Sources: Vlaamse Regering (2007[11]), *Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering betreffende het beroepsprofiel van de leraar*; Vlaamse Regering (2018[12]) *Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering betreffende de basiscompetenties van de leraren.*

Teachers' continuing professional learning

There are few formal requirements or incentives for Flemish teachers to participate in continuing professional learning (CPL). The basic competences and professional profile for teachers define a number of skills and professional attitudes teachers need to display throughout their professional careers (Box 1.1). Individual job descriptions established between teachers and their school may set obligations or rights in terms of teachers' professional development (see Section 2).

According to the 2009 Decree on the Quality of Education, schools are responsible for drafting coherent annual professionalisation plans. In addition, the Reference Framework for Quality in Education defines the expectations of the Flemish Government regarding schools' professionalisation policy and provides guidance on how to develop such a policy (Box 1.2). Schools are expected to "develop and pursue an effective professionalisation policy", while also developing and pursuing an "effective staffing policy that is integral and cohesive" (Onderwijs Inspectie, n.d.[13]).

Box 1.2. The Reference Framework for Quality in Education

In a system characterised by a high level of school autonomy, the Reference Framework for Quality in Education sets out commonly agreed expectations for high-quality education. It was designed in the 2015-16 academic year, in a process involving umbrella organisations, the Education Inspectorate and a range of other stakeholders. It applies to all education levels, with the exception of higher education. The framework describes four dimensions for quality expectations, in terms of i) Results and effects, ii) Development of learners, iii) Quality development and iv) Policy.

Schools' professionalisation policy is integral to the framework's "Policy" dimension. Schools are expected to "develop a systematic professionalisation policy" putting the needs of the school team and school priorities at its core. In addition, they should "promote professional dialogue, and reflection on learning and teaching", encourage "internal and external sharing of expertise", the "implementation of professionalisation initiatives" and monitor the effects of the latter. The framework puts a specific focus on novice teachers to whom the school should provide suitable guidance.

Source: Onderwijs Inspectie (n.d.[13]) The reference framework for Quality in Education, https://www.onderwijsinspectie.be/sites/default/files/atoms/files/OK_Dashboard_%20Engels.pdf.

Key actors in the Flemish CPL system

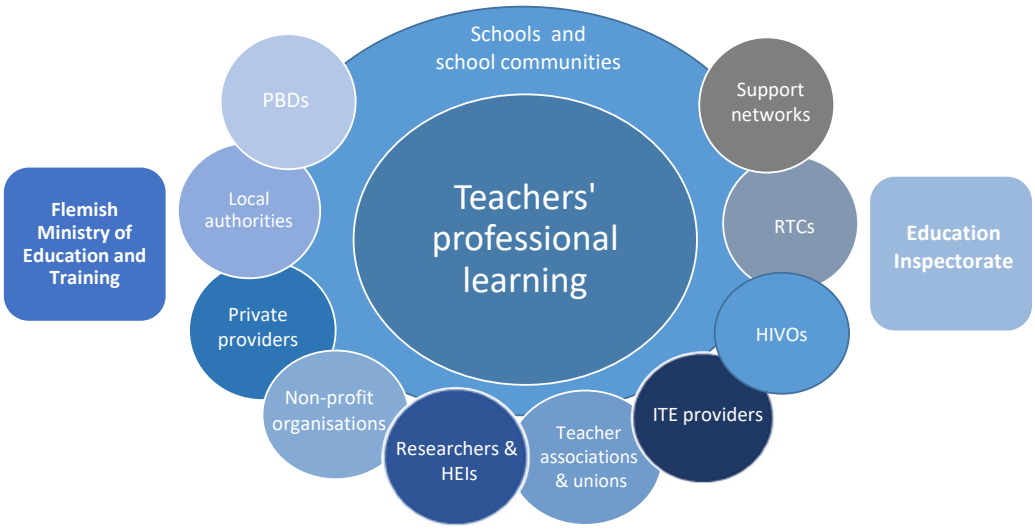
Teachers and schools are at the core of the Flemish CPL system. Teachers can engage in CPL based on the requirements of their job description, but also based on personal interests, needs or opportunities. Schools benefit from in-service training resources from the Flemish Community in order to implement their professionalisation plans and they can rely on their own resources for further professionalisation activities. As schools can participate in school communities, the latter can also provide resources for the professionalisation of staff in their schools. Beyond teachers and schools, a range of actors compose the Flemish TPL ecosystem (Figure 1.1):

- *Pedagogical Guidance Services (PBDs)*: Each umbrella organisation has its own PBD, responsible for providing support to educational institutions to help them implement their pedagogical plan, ensure the quality of education provision and help educational institutions develop into "professional learning organisations" (Onderwijs Vlaanderen, 2009[14]). A contract defines their collaboration with schools and the support they provide can take different shapes, from guidance to in-service training (in schools or external), or more integrated professionalisation approaches. PBDs receive funding from the Flemish Government (e.g. for pedagogical advisor posts), to whom they report yearly. They draw up triennial guidance plans describing their professionalisation vision and priorities.
- *Local authorities:* Municipalities are increasingly taking initiatives to organise CPL activities for teachers. Such initiatives can include networks that bring together teachers from different schools working on specific topics, facilitating exchanges between schools, universities or other educational experts and organisation of professional development on topics related to policy priorities..
- *Private providers and non-profit organisations*: Schools can use their in-service training resources for activities organised by a range of private providers. Non-profit organisations or foundations can also offer CPL activities, and receive and provide subsidies for CPL projects on specific topics (e.g. the King Baudouin Foundation).
- *Researchers and higher education institutions*: Researchers contribute to the TPL ecosystem through their own research projects, the production of practice-oriented knowledge or direct collaboration with schools and PBDs. Universities of Applied Sciences benefit from grants for

practice-based academic research. The Flemish Education Council (VLOR) also runs calls for researchers to work on practice-oriented research reviews.

- *Teacher associations and unions* provide support to their members and can organise seminars or other professional development activities for teachers.
- *Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers:* While the core focus of ITE institutions is the preparation of teachers prior to joining the profession, they have increasingly also developed a continuing professional development offer.
- *Higher Institutes for Educational Studies (HIVOs)* propose 2- and 3-year programmes that enable teachers and school leaders to acquire and enhance pedagogical and teacher competences. Both types of programmes allow graduates to benefit from a salary supplement. In spite of their name, HIVOs are not part of the higher education system (Department of Education and Training, 2021[2]).
- *Regional Technology Centres (RTCs)* target teachers from the third stage of vocational and technical secondary education, supporting their professionalisation through collaborations with industry, support for technical content, networking and expertise sharing across schools on cross-sector topics (Department of Education and Training, 2021[2]).
- *Support networks* are a new model of support for pupils with specific educational needs enrolled in mainstream education. Support is provided both to pupils and their teachers (individually and as teams) so that the latter can design more effective teaching and learning approaches for their students.

Figure 1.1. The TPL ecosystem in the Flemish Community of Belgium: main stakeholders and providers



The Flemish Ministry of Education and Training and the Education Inspectorate are also important players in the TPL ecosystem. The Ministry supports CPL through an array of channels and resources. It does so primarily through subsidies to PBDs and the provision of in-service training resources to schools for the implementation of their professionalisation plans. In addition, the Ministry provides one-off or recurrent subsidies to a range of organisations, including HIVOs and RTCs, for the development of professionalisation projects on specific topics. It also supports pilot projects that enable schools to work on specific topics (e.g. dual teaching, from 2020 and 2022).

The government can also set specific professionalisation objectives based on policy priorities through the priority in-service training (INSET) grants. Any professionalisation organisation can apply for such grants and schools benefit from priority INSET projects for free. In 2020-2022, priority INSET projects focus on reading comprehension.

Provision of leave and/or replacement also counts among the types of support provided by the Ministry, although leave of absence for working on a specific assignment outside of the school needs to be approved by the school and finding replacement teachers to cover for teachers on training leave can be challenging (Section 2).

Finally, the Ministry runs a series of CPL initiatives, including seminars, participation in international projects (e.g. Erasmus+, eTwinning) and communication platforms to share professional development materials with or between teachers and facilitate professional exchange across the system (Box 1.3). In addition, the Flemish Government has renewed its programme for policy- and practice-oriented educational research, to support education stakeholders in making better use of scientific research.

The Education Inspectorate audits schools every six years and assesses the quality of education provision in schools, with a focus on attainment targets and development goals. The Education Inspectorate audit can also focus on CPL.

Box 1.3. Digital communication platforms for teachers

Klasse

Klasse is an education magazine and multimedia communication platform, with more than 57 000 subscribers. While part of the Flemish Government, the platform emphasises the independence of its editorial team with respect to its content and operation (Klasse, n.d.[15]). Klasse seeks to inform and support teachers, by connecting them, encouraging reflections about their practice and aiming to improve the image of the teaching profession in society. The platform bases its operations on the principles of constructive journalism that brings forward opportunities and good practices from across the system. The Klasse magazine is available online for free and in hard copy in every school. Apart from the magazine, Klasse organises campaigns and live events for teachers, and communicates through social media and newsletters. It also prepares a newsletter targeted at school leaders and focused on pedagogical policy, recent changes for schools, team organisation within schools, etc.

KlasCement

KlasCement is an educational resource network, part of the Communication Division in the Flemish Department of Education and Training. The network enables teachers to share and find inspiration from other teachers' educational resources, exchange with peers across the system through a teacher forum and be informed about a range of CPL resources shared by other organisations. A team of moderators from the Communication Division manages the network. During the COVID-19 pandemic, KlasCement curated teaching and learning resources from the network to better support teachers in adapting to remote teaching, organised webinars with pedagogical experts on topics of interest for teachers (e.g. ICT tools for distance education) and redesigned the teacher forum to enable more effective exchanges between teachers (Minea-Pic, 2020[16]). It should be noted thatthere is no system for quality control of the content of the educational resources. Between mid-March and end April 2020, the platform had more than 250 000 active members.

Key challenges from an international perspective

Designing a more forward-looking education system, while raising its quality and equity, necessarily depends on attracting, developing and maintaining a high-quality teacher workforce. Students need a well-

rounded set of skills (cognitive, socio-emotional and digital) to engage as citizens and workers in fast-changing and increasingly interconnected societies and economies. Developing such a mix of skills and instilling lifelong learning attitudes begins early in life, and school education is critical to building these foundations. This puts teachers, their skills, knowledge and expertise at the core of how students develop the competences they need for the future. The COVID-19 pandemic has further emphasised the essential role played by teachers in ensuring the continuity of student learning and providing vital support to students in need, even when school premises are closed. Building and maintaining an effective TPL system is critical for the Flemish school system to ensure excellence and equity in learners' education.

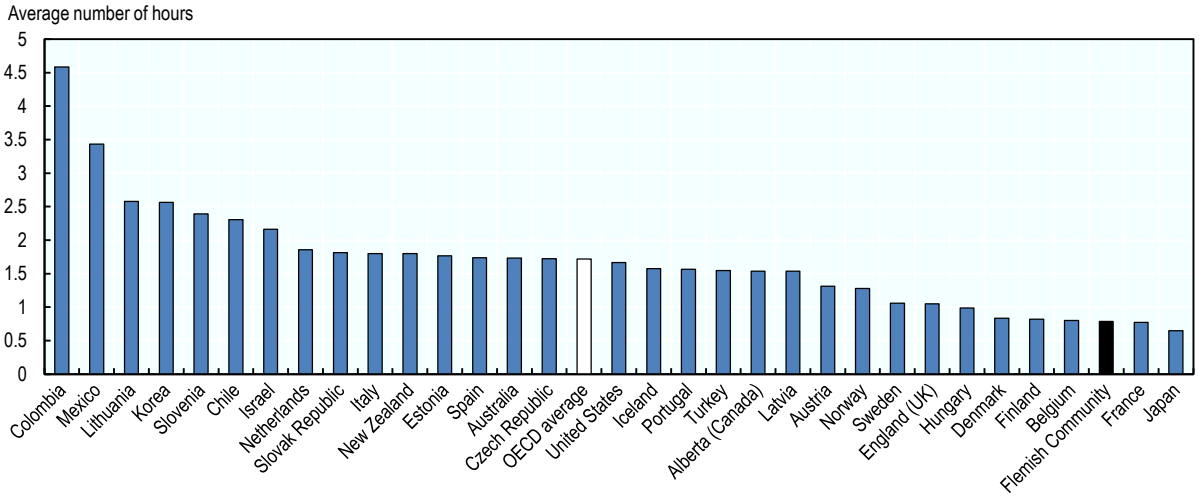
At the same time, Flemish and international studies identify a range of challenges facing the Flemish CPL system highlight a number of areas of concern regarding the effectiveness of the Flemish TPL system (OECD, 2019[17]; Department of Education and Training, 2021[2]). Enhancing evidence-informed practice, school leadership, collaborative professional learning practices and data literacy emerge as some of the key challenging areas in the Flemish TPL system. Teachers in the Flemish Community of Belgium devote considerably less time to their professional development relative to their OECD peers (Figure 1.2). In addition, teacher participation in more effective forms of professional development (e.g. peer learning, coaching and teacher networks) remains limited relative to more traditional activities such as one-off courses or seminars, which are known to be less impactful (Figure 1.3).

Schools are autonomous in defining their staff professionalisation plans. Nevertheless, more than 25% of lower-secondary school principals report a high professional development need in designing professional development for/with teachers (relative to 20% on average across their OECD) and 40% express a similar need for developing collaboration among teachers (26% on average across the OECD) (Figure 1.4). In addition, 40% of lower-secondary school principals report needing further training (relative to 24% on average across the OECD) for using data to improve the quality of their school. Tables 1-3 in Annex A provide a comparative perspective on teachers' professional learning in the Flemish Community of Belgium relative to other OECD countries.

In this context, the Flemish Government asked the OECD to undertake thisdiagnostic study of the Flemish Teachers' Professional Learning (TPL) system. The international study team set out to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) related to a) the policy environment and support infrastructure for teachers' professional learning in the Flemish Community of Belgium, b) the environment for professional learning in schools and c) teachers' engagement with professional learning in their own practice. This diagnostic report examines TPL in the Flemish Community of Belgium from these three inter-related perspectives.

Figure 1.2. Time spent by teachers on professional development, 2018

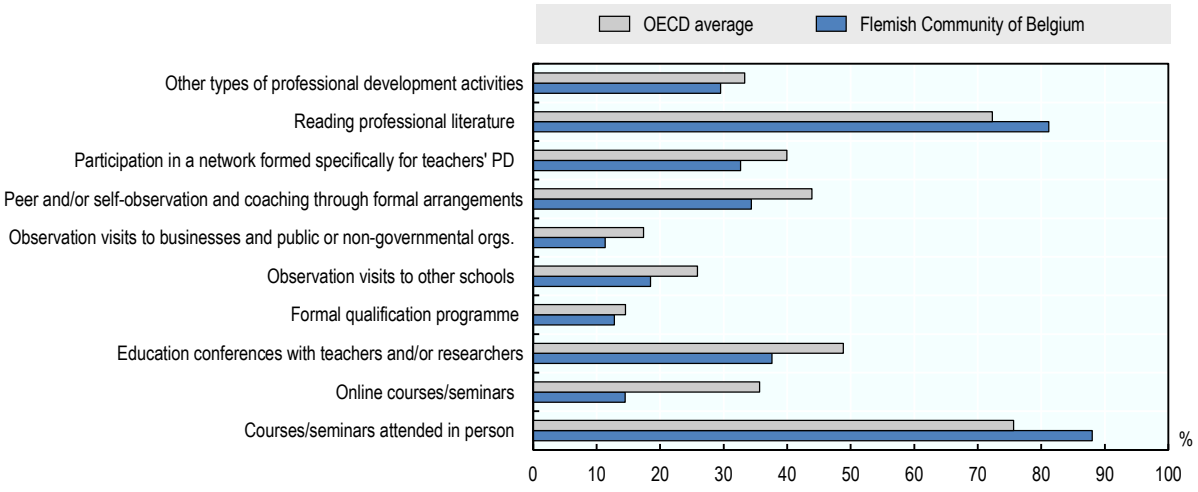
Average number of hours spent by lower-secondary teachers on professional development in the most recent complete calendar week prior to the survey



Source: OECD (2019[17]), *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*, Table I.2.27.
https://doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en.

Figure 1.3. Types of professional development undertaken by teachers, 2018

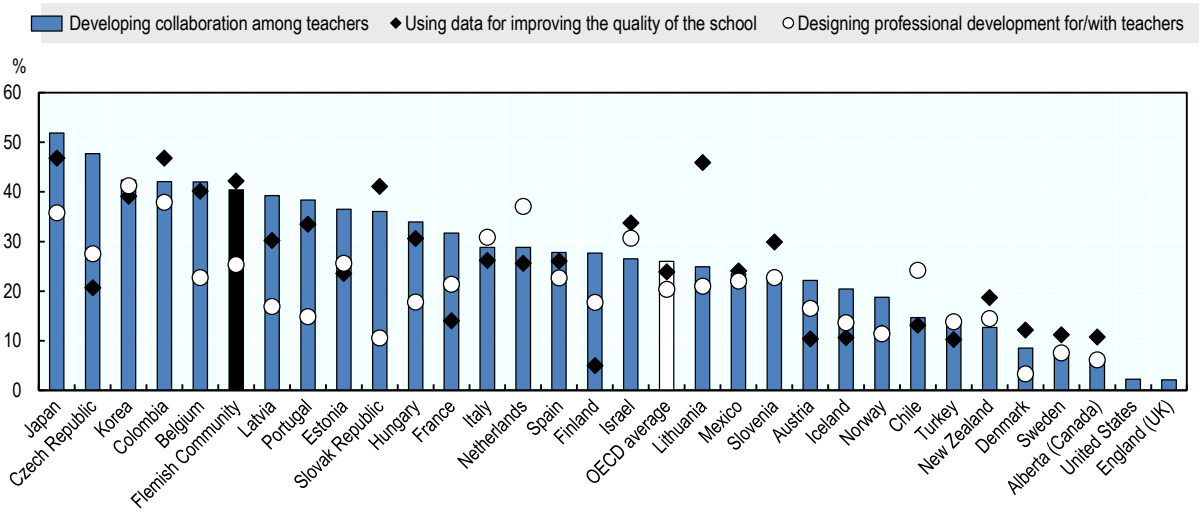
Percentage of lower-secondary school teachers who reported having participated in the following professional development activities in the 12 months prior to the survey



Source: OECD (2019[17]), *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*, Table I.5.7.
https://doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en.

Figure 1.4. Principals' needs for professional development, 2018

Percentage of lower-secondary school principals reporting a high level of need for professional development in each of the areas



Source: OECD (2019[17]), *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*, Table I.5.32. https://doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en.

Structure of the report

The sections of the report that follow diagnose strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in relation to teachers' continuing professional learning in the Flemish Community of Belgium from three angles:

- Section 2 focusses on teachers' professional learning from the system-level perspective, investigating whether the system architecture in the Flemish Community of Belgium is configured to support teachers' professional learning.
- Section 3 considers teachers' CPL from the school perspective, focusing on the ability of Flemish schools to create the conditions for effective professional learning. The section puts a particular focus on collaboration within and between schools (and with external actors) to support effective school leadership and professional learning.
- Section 4 considers teachers' CPL from a teacher's perspective, drawing on a range of evidence to reflect on the way professional learning is embedded in teaching practice in the Flemish Community. The section puts a particular focus on teachers' evidence-informed practice and engagement with research and data.

2. Creating a system that promotes continuing professional learning

This section focuses on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the system-level architecture supporting CPL in the Flemish Community of Belgium. Recognising that the configuration of system-level actors and policies is critical for the development of TPL in the Flemish Community of Belgium, this section analyses how policy-making and steering bodies, CPL providers, representative organisations and system-wide policies are configured to promote school and teacher engagement in effective CPL.

Strengths

System-level commitment to strengthening teachers' CPL

At the system level, there is widespread endorsement of the importance of teachers' engagement in professional learning activities throughout their career and of instilling lifelong learning attitudes in teachers from their initial education. The government intends to replace the term "in-service" training by that of "professionalisation", as part of Education Decree XXXI. This change of terminology indicates a shift in perspective from conceiving professional development as a one-off, passive training experience relying on knowledge delivery towards a focus on professional learning that incorporates a broader, more active involvement of teachers relying on both school-based and external expertise. The introduction of a series of reforms in this area, coupled with the participation of the Flemish Community of Belgium in relevant international projects, support this change of emphasis.

The government has introduced a number of policy measures to support this paradigm shift. Teacher induction became a right for novice teachers in September 2019 to help novice teachers build competences as they transition from initial teacher education to classroom teaching. In 2018, around 28% of lower secondary teachers with fewer than five years of experience had not participated in any induction activities when joining their current school (OECD, 2019[17]). The government has also engaged in a Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP) project funded by the European Commission on "'Implementing an effective induction system for novice teachers in Flanders" to support the implementation of the teacher induction reform (Eurydice, 2020[8]). The project seeks to strengthen the implementation of teacher induction in schools, engage PBD and ITE providers in the redesign of support for novice teachers and bring together evidence on how to enhance government policy and its effective implementation in a devolved education system (Department of Education and Training, 2021[2]).

In addition, the duration of priority INSET (*nascholing op initiatief van de Vlaamse Regering*) projects was extended from one to two years in 2015. Priority INSET projects funded by the Ministry of Education and Training form a key part of the Flemish TPL strategy. In a system characterised by school autonomy, the priority INSET projects can provide momentum for all Flemish schools involved in the initiative to get involved in and work on a shared priority. The INSET projects encourage professional learning in specific focus areas and provide incentives and scope for school leaders to free some of their teachers' time to participate in the related CPL activities. The extended duration of the priority INSET projects allows for a greater diversity of activities, combining a mix of training, coaching and guidance, bringing together entire

school teams. The availability of additional time for collective reflection is intended to support participants in embedding and extending the work at the school level beyond the two years funded by the Ministry and continue implementing policy changes on their own. At the same time, there are concerns that the financial means available for INSET days do not allow to reach out to all schools or to sustain the projects over time.

It was reported during the country visit that the government is envisioning further reforms to enhance more effective CPL for teachers. These include a reform of the programme for policy and practice-oriented research and a reform of the PBDs (Department of Education and Training, 2021[2]). As stipulated in the decree on the quality of education, PBDs are in charge of providing external support to schools. This task is formulated into seven decretal duties, including in-service training. PBDs have already shifted away from supporting individual teachers to supporting entire schools. At the same time, there are concerns that by moving more towards school-level support, teachers' individual needs may be overlooked. It is envisioned that the announced reform of the PBD shall comprise various strands, including on supporting teachers' classroom practices in a demand-oriented way (Weyts, 2019[18]). PBD classroom presence and teacher satisfaction are intended to become a condition for PBDs to receive subsidies. In addition, the Education Policy Note 2019-2024 also includes plans to support enhanced collaboration across PBDs as well as a more regular evaluation of their work.

Gradual change in CPL approaches across providers towards evidence-informed practice and innovation

National and international research evidence highlights the importance of professional learning opportunities that are sustained over time, embedded in teachers' work and linked to school leadership development and whole-school improvement (Boeskens, Nusche and Yurita, 2020[1]). Understanding of such approaches has been growing at the provider level in the Flemish Community of Belgium. A number of providers (e.g. PBD, priority INSET projects, HIVOs, partnership projects between universities and local authorities) are designing professional development initiatives involving longer programmes that bring together school teams rather than individuals and that pay attention to sustainability and transfer of learning into classroom practice.

PBDs and other providers (e.g. local authorities) are increasingly working in collaboration with schools and teachers to identify needs at the appropriate level and adapt their offer to the school's vision and policies. Some PBDs and other providers are creating opportunities for teacher teams to participate in professional learning opportunities together, which will likely support within-school transfer and wider involvement. Some CPL providers require whole-school participation in their offers. The OECD team also found evidence for an increasing combination of in-school activities and external support. The system can thus build on a number of examples of good practice.

Different actors in the Flemish system have taken initiatives to develop more innovative forms of CPL, based on networked approaches to professional learning. For instance, the city of Leuven, the University of Leuven and other partners have created an educational network to bring about innovation in the education system. The network makes use of labs that bring together policy makers, researchers and teachers to find solutions for education-related issues together. Other innovative professional learning initiatives in the Flemish Community of Belgium make use of ideas from social innovation (e.g. the use of theories of change and co-creation), opening new avenues for teacher-led professional learning.

Emerging connections between actors within and beyond the education system in supporting effective CPL

It was reported during the study interviews that various collaborations have emerged from the bottom up across actors within the education system, including partnerships between universities, university colleges and local or provincial providers, as well as some collaborations across networks. The Flemish Community

is increasingly supporting such connections between actors within and beyond the education sector to enhance the effectiveness of teachers' professional learning. In addition, a number of innovative approaches and collaborations have emerged between different parts of the Ministry of Education and Training, including projects run by the Communications division of the Department (e.g. KlasCement, Klasse, Box 1.3) and the development of connections to the world of work (e.g. the InnoVET project, Box 2.1). Such projects offer opportunities for teachers' professional learning, enabling contact and exchanges between schools and teachers belonging to different umbrella organisations.

Box 2.1. The Flemish InnoVET project

The InnoVET initiative, initiated by the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, in co-operation with the Regional Technology Centres (RTCs) and the Flemish Education Council (VLOR), is one example. InnoVET projects seek to familiarise teachers and students in VET with the labour market of today and tomorrow. They are based on partnerships that bring together a large variety of stakeholders such as teachers (from different schools and levels of education), employers, research centres and PBDs. To benefit from funding, technical secondary education and vocational secondary education schools respond to a project call and submit a joint project proposal with industry and research partners. InnoVET has also enabled the establishment of a learning network bringing together participants from different InnoVET projects as well as private partners (e.g. software suppliers) and universities.

Source: Flemish Ministry of Education and Training (n.d.[19]), *InnoVET: what, how and why?*, https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/innovet-wat-hoe-en-waarom (accessed on 16 February 2021).

Local and provincial authorities also promote opportunities for enhanced collaboaration across schools on priority topics. While Flemish schools belong to different umbrella organisations, local communities have increasingly organised learning networks and other CPL opportunities that target schools from different umbrella organisations in a particular geographical area. These CPL activities are often focused on locally relevant topics including diversity, multilingualism and special education needs.

Connections with actors beyond the education system have also been emerging. Projects, in the area of vocational education and training have favoured enhanced connections to industry. The pilot project on dual teaching has enabled some of these connections where teachers are partly employed in companies. RTCs also favour the creation of bridges between vocational and technical secondary education schools, teachers and industry. A number of RTC initiatives focus on sharing of experiences and expertise between schools and companies and set up trainings with partners in the labour market to allow teachers to enhance or acquire relevant skills outside of the school setting. As RTCs work across networks, they are able to bundle resources and share their expertise with teachers and schools from the entire education system acting as a neutral broker across umbrella organisations, industry representatives and companies.

Weaknesses

CPL is not reflected as a core aspect of teachers' work in broader workforce policies

At the time of the country visit, employment frameworks and conditions for Flemish teachers did not reflect an understanding of CPL as a core aspect of teachers' work. At the system level, there were no formal requirements or incentives for CPL, with the exception of induction for novice teachers introduced as of September 2019. Regulation on the status of primary teachers did not specify professional development as part of their roles and responsibilities. In secondary edcuation, while professional development was included in regulations as part of teachers' integrated assignments, teachers' specific rights and

requirements regarding CPL (e.g. in terms of format, content, frequency and monitoring) were set at the school level, resulting in variability across the system.

The existing statements of basic teacher competences and the "professional profile" f could serve as potential guidelines for teachers' professional learning (see Introduction). These teacher standards describe teachers as innovators and researchers who shall be acquainted with the results of educational research, innovate and adjust their practice based on further training. The Reference Framework for Quality in Education also defines expectations for schools' professionalisation policy. Yet, while such system-level frameworks and profiles emphasise the importance of teachers' professional learning, their intentions are not necessarily reflected in teachers' job descriptions, which are defined at the school level.

The vision that might be implicit in existing standards (e.g. the professional profile) does not appear to be well known in the system, and does not necessarily inform teachers' job descriptions, CPL and (self)-evaluation. Umbrella organisations may offer models of job descriptions that incorporate requirements for teachers' professional learning and can be based on the professional profile, but the actual place that CPL takes within the job description and the time that is dedicated to it remains at the discretion of the school (and the teacher) as part of the employment contract. While regulations stipulate the number of teaching hours for a full-time teaching assignment, time for additional tasks that compose such an assignment (including professional development) is not specified (Department of Education and Training, 2021[2]). In addition, few incentives or rewards exist for engaging in CPL at the system level: in contrast to some other OECD countries, there is no link between attending CPL and career development or teacher remuneration (Annex A).

This translates into a general lack of perception of professionalisation as part of teachers' jobs. Since teachers' assignments are defined in terms of teaching hours, CPL is often conceived as a trade-off with teaching rather than a part of teachers' core tasks. The lack of integration of CPL in teachers' jobs very likely results in a limited time allocated to such activities. As highlighted in the Introduction, compared to other countries participating in the OECD's TALIS, the Flemish Community of Belgium is among the school systems where secondary teachers spend the least time on professional development activities. Primary teachers reported a similar amount of time (OECD, 2019[17]). Among teachers with the highest workload in Flanders, 20% of them spend particularly long hours on planning and preparation as well as on marking and correcting students' work. While these teachers also tend to spend more time on professional development activities, professional development accounts for very little of their additional working time (Boeskens and Nusche, 2021[20]).

After the country visit informing this report, in April 2021, it was decided that professionalisation shall become a formal part of teachers' core tasks from September 2021. This is a positive development and an opportunity for the system to engage in co-construction with teachers to make sure that the importance of CPL is reflected in other aspects of school policy and widely understood, accepted and supported as a core part of their role.

System fragmentation and limited co-ordination among CPL providers

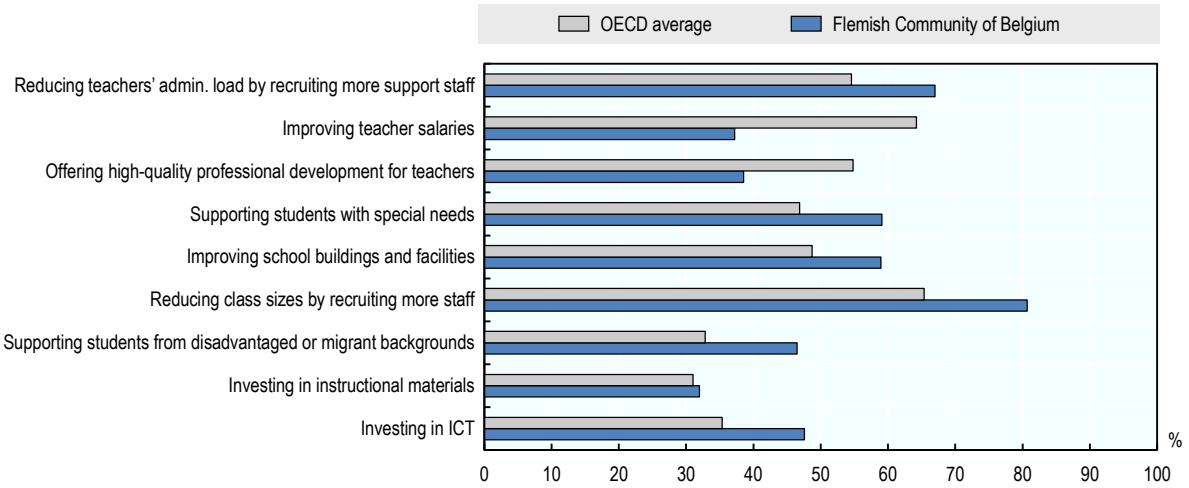
The Flemish CPL system lacks formal incentives for collaboration across providers, translating into a fragmented CPL landscape. There is little systematic co-operation between university colleges/universities on the one hand and schools or other system stakeholders on the other hand. While such collaboration exists, it often relies on the capacity or willingness of different stakeholders to work together, rather than on the existence of formal structures that support such co-operation. A number of structures to support collaboration between providers existed in the past, including the "SNPB", a cross-network partnership of four pedagogical guidance services (2006-2015) and the "networks of expertise" (2007-2015), but these were discontinued.

The multiplicity of providers potentially triggers inefficiencies in the distribution of funding. On the one hand, the overall amount of funding available at the aggregate level is not perceived by teachers as an underlying

weakness of the Flemish TPL system. If the education budget were to increase, lower-secondary teachers would rather allocate additional funding to other priorities, such as reducing class size or teachers' administrative workload or improving school facilities (Figure 2.1). In addition, only a minority of Flemish lower-secondary teachers (26% vs. 45% across the OECD; 38% of primary teachers) view the cost of professional development as a barrier for engagement in professional development activities. In line with the challenge discussed above, conflicts with teachers' work schedule and lack of time because of personal responsibilities are more frequently considered as barriers.

Figure 2.1. Spending priorities for education, as perceived by teachers, 2018

Share of lower-secondary school teachers who reported the following spending priorities to be of "high importance"



Note: Question: "Thinking about education as a whole, if the budget were to be increased by 5%, how would you rate the importance of the following spending priorities?"
Source: OECD (2019[17]), *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*, Figure I.3.66.
https://doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en.

On the other hand, the distribution of government resources across a large number of providers and the large variety of governmental funding channels for TPL raises questions about the efficiency of resource allocation. The Ministry relies on an array of funding mechanisms to support teachers' professional learning, including subsidies to PBDs, in-service training resources for schools, the priority INSET initiative, pilot projects, provision of one-off or recurrent subsidies (to HIVO, RTC, foundations, etc.). Around 30% of government resources for professionalisation are spread among a variety of beneficiaries and initiatives. While the remainder is channelled to schools as part of their in-service training budget, schools actually receive a relatively limited annual budget for each teacher's professional learning: EUR 66 for pre-primary and primary teachers and EUR 97 for secondary teachers in 2018-2019 for a full-time teaching assignment (Department of Education and Training, 2021[2]). This budget is intended to meet the local CPL needs of schools.

In addition, a relatively large share of projects (around one in four with a committed budget in 2019) among those funded by the Ministry of Education and Training do not benefit from recurrent funding and are designed as one-off initiatives. The vision behind these projects is that they shall stimulate and transfer innovation within and across schools. However, the lack of funding of such projects in the longer term translates into potentially limited impact in terms of teachers' professional learning. The country visit identified a number of instances in which teacher professional learning providers or beneficiaries of projects funded through non-recurrent subsidies considered them to be too short to achieve or sustain reasonable change for teachers' learning or school policies in this area.

While the current system likely results in inefficiencies in funding allocation, channelling more funding directly to schools would need to be accompanied by investments in building school leadership capacity. The existing array of providers and funding channels triggers a dispersion of resources that limits the capacity to reach schools' needs more directly and drives overlaps between TPL initiatives. The school budget for CPL is calculated based on the number of employed staff and their educational level, and can be complemented by schools with resources from their operational budget. School leadership capacity is thus crucial to effectively direct these resources, navigate and choose between providers so as to match their needs and potentially raise additional funding for TPL from other sources (more on this in Section 3).

The importance of collaboration and co-ordination between CPL stakeholders and providers has been acknowledged at the system level, but no formal structures for collaboration have been introduced. In 2013 and 2018, the PBDs were evaluated by the so-called "Monard Commission", with the 2018 evaluation highlighting the need for more structural collaboration between the PBDs, research institutes and knowledge centres. One of the strands of the PBD reform announced in the 2019-2024 Education Policy Note aims to enhance co-operation between the PBDs to support the exchange of expertise and an efficient use of resources (Department of Education and Training, 2021[2]).

Limited information on and evaluation of CPL at the system level

While a large portion of funding for TPL comes from governmental resources, with some private actors or local authorities also subsidising or initiating CPL projects, there is no system-wide overview of CPL activities taking place in the Flemish Community of Belgium. No system-level information is collected on the existing CPL offer, teachers' professional learning needs, their participation rates or the recognition or rewards that they might receive at the school level.

There is also no systematic monitoring of the quality of the CPL provision. With the exception of PBDs and ITE institutions, external quality control systems are absent. In addition, while the Education Inspectorate examines the quality of education provision in schools, it does not systematically include TPL as a focus of its audits. This translates into the existence of a variety of evaluation approaches at the different levels of the system that often rely on satisfaction surveys. With the exception of courses that lead to diplomas or certificates that require accreditation, providers are free to rely on the quality assurance systems of their choice triggering large variability in the type and quality of their evaluation instruments.

Elements of a quality assurance system are being developed. In the case of priority INSET projects, the Flemish Department of Education and Training is developing a questionnaire based on the framework of Merchie et al. (2015[21]) to assess effectiveness, which shall be complemented by focus group interviews. While focus groups have been introduced as pilot initiatives in this area, engaging participants has proved challenging. PBDs also rely on their own instruments for assessing the effectiveness of their guidance practices. One PBD reported having more than 90 evaluation instruments. At the same time, in its 2018 evaluation, the Monard Commission has found that evaluation methods used by PBDs are often limited to satisfaction surveys (Department of Education and Training, 2021[2]).

At the school level, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of CPL is largely dependent on the capacity of school leadership or of individual teachers (e.g. who can share their perceptions or views on specific CPL activities in which they engaged). In this context, at the time of writing this report, the Flemish Government had launched work with the PBDs to develop an instrument to measure the effectiveness of professional development activities delivered by PBDs, help PBDs to monitor their own work and enhance the capacity at the system level for monitoring PBD activities.

The lack of systematic quality evaluation in a fragmented system of CPL provision makes it difficult for school leaders and teachers to navigate the large existing offer and find appropriate, high-quality support. In a system based on the "free-market principle", where schools have the freedom to access and use private providers based on what they perceive as their professional needs, the lack of systematic

information on the provision and quality of CPL offers reduces the capacity to ensure market transparency and guarantee healthy competition between providers.

Given the multiplicity of providers, their limited co-ordination and the lack of information regarding the CPL offer and demand at the system level, a misalignment arises between CPL needs and the existing offer. After conflicts with work schedule and family responsibilities, the lack of relevant professional development is the third most frequent participation barrier reported by Flemish lower-secondary teachers in TALIS(Annex A). Teachers report, for instance, a very limited, irrelevant or even non-existent offer for some subjects, whereas the offer is too abundant for other subjects. A high-quality professional learning offer should cover both relevant subjects for teachers and more overarching concerns about curriculum, teaching and learning.

Threats and opportunities

Raising the status and attractiveness of the teaching profession

Teacher shortages in the Flemish Community were described by stakeholders interviewed during the study visit as an obstacle for teachers' engagement in CPL. Since CPL is not structurally embedded in teachers' jobs, replacing teachers who engage in such activities is crucial to enable their participation. However, in a context of teacher shortages, finding teacher replacements is increasingly challenging. In the interviews held by the OECD country visit team, teachers indicated feeling "guilty" for engaging in professional learning due to the difficulties this created for their colleagues responsible for replacing them in the classroom.

Teacher shortages have been on the rise in recent years, particularly in large urban areas, and the teaching profession has been added to the list of bottleneck professions (CBR). Principals in the Flemish Community of Belgium view the shortage of educational staff[1] as a greater obstacle to the provision of high-quality instruction than on average in OECD countries (OECD, 2019[7]). Perceived shortages are significantly higher in socio-economically disadvantaged schools. Around 31% of 15-year-old students in the Flemish Community of Belgium are in schools whose principal report that the school's capacity to provide instruction is hindered by a lack of teaching staff. The share goes up to 47% for students in socio-economically disadvantaged schools[2] (OECD, 2019[7]).

Attracting and retaining competent teachers is essential to addressing teacher shortages. Interviews by the OECD country visit team reveal, however, that the Flemish teaching profession suffers from a poor image and low status, which risk further amplifying existing teacher shortages. In line with the OECD average, around 26% of lower-secondary teachers agree or strongly agree that society values their profession. Younger teachers (under age 30) are, however, less likely to feel valued than older ones (over 50 years old) (OECD, 2020[22]). Moreover, the share of teachers holding a positive perception about the value of their profession in society has experienced the largest decline in the Flemish Community of Belgium (-20.1 percentage points) among OECD countries with available data in TALIS 2013 and 2018 (OECD, 2020[22]). In line with the data evidence, stakeholders reported to the study team that the teaching profession was often represented negatively or stereotypically in the public debate and in the media.

Teacher attrition remains a concern in the Flemish Community of Belgium (Nusche et al., 2015[23]). A growing rate of newly graduate teachers is leaving the profession early on in their careers. While the outflow of young teachers (under age 30) in secondary education has remained stable (17.9% in the 2009-

[1] The index of staff shortage in PISA (2018) is derived from four items: a lack of teaching staff; inadequate or poorly qualified teaching staff; a lack of assisting staff; inadequate or poorly qualified assisting staff (OECD, 2019[7]).

[2] Schools in the bottom quarter of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) are referred to as "socio-economically disadvantaged schools" (OECD, 2019[7]).

14 time frame, 17.9% in 2014-19), it has increased for teachers in pre-primary (9.2% in 2009-14, 12% in 2014-19) and primary education (8.7% in 2009-14, 11.7% in 2014-19) (Department of Education and Training, 2021[2]). The differences in attrition rates across levels of education might be linked to status, qualification and pay differences between primary and lower secondary teachers versus upper-secondary teachers (Nusche et al., 2015[23]).

Previous Flemish research found that the lack of career prospects and job security are major factors associated with young teachers' exit from the teaching profession in the Flemish Community of Belgium (Struyven and Vanthournout, 2014[24]). The government has recently taken a number of measures to enhance job security for teachers entering the profession (e.g. introduction of a pilot project in elementary education on teacher platforms to enhance job security for starting and temporary teachers, quicker acquisition of a temporary contract of continuous duration, linear wage increase) (Eurydice, 2020[8]). The continuity and effectiveness of these measures at increasing the job security and potentially reducing the outflow of young teachers remain to be determined.

In addition, a flat career structure that does not include progressive steps recognising different roles or responsibilities (Nusche et al., 2015[23]) constitutes an ongoing challenge for drawing top-performing students to initial teacher education. While there are some opportunities for task and function differentiation within schools, there are very limited opportunities for teachers to move into specialist functions and therefore little recognition or extrinsic motivation for teachers to engage in CPL. In addition, merit, place of employment or assignment difficulty have no influence on teachers' salaries (Department of Education and Training, 2021[2]). The lack of recognition or celebration of excellent teaching (e.g. in recruitment decisions) has potentially negative effects on teacher retention (Fuller, Goodwyn and Francis-Brophy, 2013[25]).

Job satisfaction and the current work environment also play a pivotal role in reducing teachers' intentions to leave the profession. In 18 countries and economies covered by TALIS 2018, including the Flemish Community of Belgium, job satisfaction is the most important element associated with a lower likelihood of teachers wanting to exit teaching (OECD, 2020[22]). However, relative to 2013, Flemish teachers' satisfaction with their profession has declined, whether it relates to the belief that the advantages of being a teacher outweigh the disadvantages or wondering whether it would not have been better to choose a different profession (OECD, 2020, p. Table II.2.15[22])).

Greater focus on lifelong learning and growth mindsets

Enhancing lifelong learning for all is crucial to enable all workers and citizens to adapt to an interconnected, increasingly digital and rapidly changing society and world of work (OECD, 2019[26]; OECD, 2019[27]). As skills requirements are constantly transformed, acquiring a range of skills in initial education and continuously developing them over the life course is a prerequisite for ensuring that people thrive and are not left behind. The COVID-19 context has further reinforced the importance of lifelong learning as citizens, workers, students and teachers have had to develop or use their knowledge and skills differently to adapt to the new environment. Teleworking has transformed working practices and interactions, citizens have had to adapt to increasingly digital public services while in schools, teachers had to transition to remote or hybrid teaching. The pandemic has thus profoundly reshaped skills requirements and with them, triggered an urgent need for all individuals, including teachers, to continuously upskill or reskill through lifelong and life-wide learning that goes beyond formal education and training opportunities.

Interviews held by the OECD country visit team revealed that a stereotypical idea of ending learning at the end of formal or initial education persists among youngsters in the Flemish Community of Belgium. In PISA 2018, fewer students in the Flemish Community of Belgium displayed a growth mindset relative to the OECD average. Around half (56%) of 15-year-olds in the Flemish Community of Belgium think that their intelligence is something they can change, in contrast to 63% on average across the OECD and 77% in Estonia. Displaying a growth mindset is positively associated with students' attitudes towards learning (value of school and learning goals) and their performance in reading (OECD, 2019[28]). Moreover, the Flemish Community of Belgium performs below the OECD average when it comes to the existence of a

strong culture for adult education (expressed as adults' participation rate and willingness to engage in adult education, as well as the share of people wanting to participate but who did not) (OECD, 2019[26]).

In this context, policies that enhance the accessibility, quality and equity of lifelong learning systems, from initial to adult education, spanning formal, non-formal and informal learning, remain crucial. The teaching profession is at the core of forward-looking initial education systems that prepare students to continue learning throughout life. For students to become lifelong learners, it is necessary that their own teachers are supported in becoming lifelong learners. Students' performance is closely related to the quality and skills of their teachers (Hanushek, Piopiunik and Wiederhold, 2014[29]). In addition, teacher attitudes, practices and enthusiasm matter for instilling learning attitudes in their students, such as ambitious learning goals, self-efficacy or a growth mindset (OECD, 2019[28]; OECD, forthcoming[30]). In turn, such learning attitudes are positively associated with students' outcomes in cognitive assessments, higher education and career expectations. In this context, the development of transversal skills at the core of the new curriculum becomes particularly relevant in the Flemish Community of Belgium.

According to interviewed stakeholders, the general lack of a learning culture that induces all individuals to continue learning and developing skills throughout life also applies to the education sector. Evidence from the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) shows that the Flemish Community of Belgium displays one of the lowest shares of tertiary-educated workers (27%) but also teachers (25%) expressing a need for further training to do their job among OECD countries (41% on average for tertiary-educated workers, 46% for teachers) (OECD, 2019[27]). While such low levels of need may reflect that workers with tertiary-education and teachers are well equipped in terms of skills for their working environments, it can also suggest a lack of recognition of the need to continue learning throughout their professional lives. The OECD country visit revealed that some teachers spend long spells of time without engaging in any CPL activity. As professional learning is not structurally embedded in teachers' jobs, the need for professionalisation after the end of initial teacher training may be underestimated at the individual level but also at the different levels of the system. In a fast-changing world of work and with education systems facing increasing pressure to update and reconsider learning processes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a lack of commitment to lifelong and life-wide learning risks leaving some teachers behind.

Attention to sequencing and effective implementation of reforms

While a number of reforms have been introduced to support teachers' CPL, there is a risk that implementation will turn out to be challenging. Interviews held by the OECD team revealed an impression among stakeholders that little focus is put on sequencing reforms and providing guidance and support to school practitioners and other stakeholders for their effective implementation. The simultaneous implementation of multiple innovations and reforms makes it hard for actors to keep up with the pace, especially if they are not perceived as a coherent whole and little support is provided.

The curriculum reform is a case in point. The implementation of new attainment targets for the second and third stages of secondary education is scheduled for September 2021. The new attainment targets for primary education have not yet been developed. The new targets demand a shift in focus from subject-specific goals towards transversal goals across subjects and hence, a much broader view on what students need to know. This shift triggers an increasing need for teachers to work together and schools to organise the transition to the new curriculum within and across schools, as a team. Given the timeline for the introduction of the attainment goals, teachers, schools and initial teacher training institutions have only had limited time to work on the implementation process. In particular, teacher education programmes have not yet been adapted to the introduction of new attainment goals.

Limited attention to alignment and sequencing of reforms risks sending contrasting messages to stakeholders. There was a lack of clarity among stakeholders interviewed by the OECD study team about how reforms of the curriculum, student assessment and teachers' professional learning related to each other as part of an overall vision for the future of school education in the Flemish Community. In moving forward, it will be important that the kinds of learning supported by the new curriculum, with students as

more creative, enterprising and self-directed learners, should be mirrored in principles for teachers' own professional learning, so that they can work their way through the whole system influencing lifelong learning and growth mindsets.

Developing a co-constructed, overarching, positive vision for the teaching profession in the 21st century

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, a strong, positive vision about teaching as a continuously improving 21st century profession could help attract and retain teachers in the profession, as well as instilling lifelong learning attitudes. In the context of teacher shortages and the perception of teaching as a low-status profession, it will be important that such a vision is positive and supportive rather than focused on blaming teachers for declining test results.

Such a co-constructed, overarching vision for the teaching profession can build on existing positive stories regarding teachers' professional learning. While the image of the profession in the media tends to be negative or stereotypical, there is also acknowledgement among stakeholders at different levels of the system of the presence of good practices or accounts of motivating and effective professional learning for teachers. Such practices relate to innovative forms of teacher professional learning, teacher collaboration or teacher-led initiatives. Positive experiences can provide an opportunity to build upon and the system should take advantage of those and champion them to support further improvement.

Accompanying such a vision with a strategy for professional learning and the provision of necessary support and incentives would also bring about more opportunities for making teachers lifelong learners. At the time of OECD country visit, the Department of Education and Training had initiated an internal reflection on key principles for the future of professional learning and was considering to launch a consultation process with all bodies involved in TPL.

Engaging in such co-construction would be an opportunity to build broad ownership of the new professional learning principles and strategy for the Flemish Community. Co-construction can help ensure that a range of expertise is drawn on in designing the principles. It also ensures shared understandings amongst those designing and implementing CPL initiatives and increases the commitment of those in the system to ensure their work reflects the principles. The principles, developed through a process of co-construction, could provide a strong basis for building coherence across different professional learning initiatives and for embedding TPL with other key reforms such as the introduction of new attainment targets and cross-network tests.

In addition, linking key aspects of teacher policy to expectations for professional growth could also help create clearer expectations around teachers' professional learning. Teacher policy reforms related to teacher evaluation, career structure or time use could help embed CPL as a core aspect of teachers' responsibilities. The Flemish Community of Belgium has already adopted a number of policy reforms seeking to strengthen the teaching profession and address teacher shortages. These reforms have put a particular focus on novice teachers, through the introduction of the right for induction, measures to increase their job security and career stability (e.g. teacher platforms) or reformed teacher training at university colleges or universities (Eurydice, 2020[8]).

A reform of teacher appraisal processes is also underway (Department of Education and Training, 2021[2]). Turning teacher appraisal into a more regular opportunity for professional growth and linking professional learning and improvement to career development could create clearer expectations and incentives for teachers' professional learning (Boeskens, Nusche and Yurita, 2020[1]). Linking such reforms to teachers' professional learning could thus help make the vision for the teaching profession of the 21st century more tangible, by reflecting on specific measures that make CPL a concrete part of teachers' career.

Building on COVID-related digitalisation to develop more direct communication channels with schools and practitioners

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the digitalisation of education systems. To ensure the continuity of student learning, countries across the OECD have turned to digital tools allowing students and teachers to connect, access learning resources, undergo assessments or collaborate from a distance (OECD, 2020[31]). Similarly, online or blended formats of teachers' professional learning delivery are receiving growing attention. Countries across the OECD have relied on a range of online or blended formats to deliver professional learning opportunities for teachers in response to the crisis, including webinars, self-paced or tutored courses, teacher communities or banks of digital resources. While the effectiveness of technology-based forms of professional learning depends on a range of factors (Minea-Pic, 2020[16]; Dede et al., 2016[32]), their availability is crucial in a context of continuing health restrictions and limited in-person interactions.

Similarly to other OECD countries, the Flemish Community of Belgium has experienced a rise in digital professionalisation. In TALIS 2018, the Flemish Community of Belgium displayed one of the lowest shares of teachers engaging in online professional development among OECD countries (Minea-Pic, 2020[16]). The pandemic has led many professional learning stakeholders (e.g. government, PBDs, private providers) to switch to online professional development formats. While part of the offer is new, providers at the system level were also able to build on existing platforms. For instance, KlasCement and eTwinning have provided and will continue to provide valuable opportunities for ensuring the continuity of teachers' professional learning.

Online professional learning formats have enabled professionalisation to be carried out differently and have pushed forward more collaborative forms of learning. Teachers have been able to engage more easily with their peers online and the pandemic has also fostered an increased sense of co-operation and willingness to collaborate among teachers. The OECD visit revealed that teachers have frequently helped each other in adapting to the challenges of online teaching, exchanging and learning from each other about solutions for ICT-related problems or innovative teaching practices on line. Moreover, system-level platforms such as KlasCement, although functioning without quality control, have enabled more direct exchanges with pedagogical experts through online webinars and fostered teacher collaboration through a teacher forum where teachers could ask for peers' help when facing difficulties with ICT-based teaching solutions (Minea-Pic, 2020[33]).

COVID-related digitalisation can thus provide an opportunity for moving towards more innovative teacher professional learning. Such learning experiences can go beyond the passive, one-off trainings currently common across the Flemish teacher professional learning system and involve more collaborative activities in structured environments, more accessible external expertise and higher flexibility in terms of training duration to account for teachers' existing workload (Boeskens, Nusche and Yurita, 2020[1]; Minea-Pic, 2020[16]). Blended training formats can constitute suitable options for addressing time and location constraints that previously acted as barriers to teachers' engagement in CPL. Such learning formats appear to be as effective as in-person learning activities for teachers or adults, while also providing learners with more flexibility and decreasing costs (Escueta et al., 2017[34]).

While more evidence is needed on which features or combination of activities within blended learning are most effective, such formats provide extensive freedom in the design of professional learning activities for teachers. Structured exchanges with peers in the same school can complement the provision of online training or collaborative projects with teachers from schools situated in a different region or umbrella organisations. Similarly, blended formats of coaching, mentoring or expert support can accompany the provision of blended professional development activities (e.g. courses), with potential to enhance teachers' skills (Education Endowment Foundation, 2020[35]). A number of pre-conditions need, however, to be met to ensure that teachers are able to seize the benefits of technology-based learning (e.g. high-quality ICT access, digital competence) and central guidance can help teachers navigate more effectively the wealth of online professional growth resources (OECD, 2019[17]). The Flemish Ministry of Education and Training

has commissioned research to develop evidence-informed guidelines and inspiration for schools and teachers to organise 'blended learning', with results expected in March 2022.

Digitalisation can thus break some of the barriers associated with in-person professional development (e.g. time, location, costs, and relevance) bringing together teachers, experts and teacher professional learning providers in ways that are more straightforward. Beyond innovations in teachers' professional learning provision, digitalisation can also enable stakeholders involved in the Flemish teachers' professional learning ecosystem to communicate more directly. In particular, reaching schools and teachers becomes easier for all stakeholders involved in the teachers' professional learning ecosystem. Digital means, and in particular, platforms like Klasse, KlasCement (Box 1.1) or eTwinning, allowed the system level to communicate directly with teachers already before the COVID-19 pandemic. The OECD country visit revealed that other stakeholders in the teachers' professional learning ecosystem are increasingly relying on digital tools to establish contact with teachers and support them without going through any intermediaries.

Increased digitalisation of schooling and teachers' professional learning can further support a number of other system-level initiatives or efforts to develop more straightforward communication channels with teachers and schools. The announced reform of the PBD for instance puts a core focus on addressing the needs of teachers at the classroom-level, with teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness of counselling as pre-conditions for PBD subsidies. In addition, the OECD country visit revealed that the system level is increasingly aware of the need to establish more direct communication and co-construction with teachers and school leaders to build deep understanding and commitment around the new curriculum. There is also emerging evidence that PBDs areg workin more directly with teachers as they support them in professional learning communities.

Increased digitalisation of the education system can further sustain such efforts to create more direct links and communicate with teachers. The system level is already using a number of platforms as communication tools to enhance the image of the teaching profession and portray teachers as growing professionals. Such communication tools offer a strong basis to build upon at the system level to create a more positive narrative surrounding the teaching profession. For instance, education magazine and multimedia communication platform "Klasse" (see Box 1.3) showcases good practices by allowing teachers to get acquainted with the practices of their peers but also uncover the learning process through which their peers develop. As reported by stakeholders interviewed during the country visit, Klasse can provide opportunities to build constructive synergies in the system, as it already enables schools and teachers to more easily enter in contact and inquire about inspiring practices unfolded in different parts of the system.

Similarly, the 2019 social media campaign "Become a real influencer" (*Word een echte influencer*), initiated by the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training and other partners, sought to bring new, well-prepared candidates into teaching by creating a positive, attractive vision of the profession (Eurydice, 2020[8]; Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming, n.d.[36]). The campaign was of short duration, but is an example of system-level efforts that can inspire more sustainable initiatives to build a positive vision of the profession.

3. Embedding professional learning in schools

This section recognises the critical role schools in the Flemish Community of Belgium play in creating the conditions for teachers' effective professional learning. It considers the extent to which schools and school leadership teams are able to put in place an environment conducive to teachers' engagement in the type of professional learning that responds to their needs, the needs of their students, and of their communities. This section focuses on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with schools as organisational units for professional learning in the Flemish Community of Belgium.

Strengths

All schools develop a CPL policy

Successful school systems place professional learning at the centre of school improvement and school principals develop school improvement plans around professional learning (Jensen et al., 2016[37]). In the Flemish Community, the Quality Decree of 2009 mandates schools to draft a coherent annual professionalisation plan based on needs analysis approved by either local committee or staff meeting. In a positive addition since 2019, all Flemish schools are required to implement induction processes (see Section 4 below).

The school's professionalisation policy and plan, adjusted each year, can reflect national priorities or be aligned with the longer-term vision or pedagogical project of its respective umbrella organisation, although this does not occur systematically. The relationship is dialogical, with umbrella organisations also intending to work in alignment with schools' professionalisation plans. School boards may support school leaders to develop their vision and school project, providing a steer during initial development of their professionalisation policy where needed or giving them the mandate to develop their own policy.

School leaders sometimes engage in collaborative processes of policy drafting in groups of schools, supported by their PBD. Such use of networking, as elaborated later in this section, is valuable when it promotes shared understanding of effective professional learning and it links to whole-school development. Schools may also be guided by the PBD to use specific methodologies, sometimes influenced by the evaluation findings of Merchie et al. (2018[38]; 2015[21]). Further strengths relate to the use by school leaders of issues picked up in school inspections or identified by the school board or school network, as well as student data in working with PBDs when developing the professionalisation plan.

Anecdotal evidence from the four interviewed schools indicated the involvement of teachers as part of "school policy teams" in the development of the professionalisation policy, but school leaders seemed to have little leverage around ensuring that all teachers participated in CPL planning and implementation. Having a democratic platform and practice in school's decision-making is important when in mobilising whole-school level resources to make changes in practice. A democratic process at school level locates accountability for the pursuit of common goals at the level of every individual, thereby promoting shared accountability which supports effective CPL (Cordingley et al., 2020[39]). It also enables schools to design professionalisation plans with goals aligned to diverse practitioner needs in each local context.

While this does not happen systematically, whole-school professional needs identification in some schools also includes classroom visits and/or student surveys. Within approaches to professional learning known to have strong benefits for teachers' practice and students' learning, student input is frequently included (Timperley, 2008[40]; Halbert and Kaser, 2013[41]; Jensen et al., 2016[37]). In the Flemish Community of Belgium, this is less common, although students participate in school councils where TPL can be discussed. There is potential for drawing more on their input within the Flemish context.

School leaders have considerable autonomy in shaping CPL policy

Within a culture of autonomy and freedom of education, school leaders have authority to manage and organise human resources and shape their professionalisation strategies and policy. Autonomy, when used strategically and well supported, is important for successful school leadership (Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008[42]). To lead to consistently high quality of practice, however, it requires adequate capacity building, support and accountability for school leadership (this will be addressed in the following sub-section).

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, school leaders have considerable autonomy. School autonomy is grounded in the principle of "freedom of education", guaranteed by Article 24 of the Belgian Constitution. According to the 2009 Decree on Quality of Education, each school is responsible for providing good quality education. Within the framework of attainment targets and developmental objectives, schools are free to develop their own curricula, which reflect different priorities and cover broader areas. In addition, school leaders are typically strongly involved in teacher recruitment and in the definition of a teacher's job description. They can reduce teaching loads to free time for other tasks, and can assign specific responsibilities (Nusche et al., 2015[23]), although in practice this does not appear to happen frequently. The country visit team found that care co-ordinators, ICT co-ordinators, technical directors and teachers with responsibility for secondary school departments could be given extra hours for these tasks. In essence, leaders can potentially use their autonomy to create more of a learning culture, to provide the supporting structures and to pursue their school vision, although it emerged from the interviews with various stakeholder groups that their policy-making capacity related to CPL is highly variable (more on this below.)

It is a strength that Flemish school leaders can choose strategically how to allocate their school budget for professional learning. This means that they can find ways to increase funding for whole-school professional learning, and to support individual teachers in engaging in high quality, sustainable professional learning. At the same time it is a challenge that availability and use of resources and to enact CPL is variable across the system. The study visit indicated that Flemish schools can struggle around accessing sufficient funds for professional learning offers that require fees.

The autonomy of those in the teaching profession and other actors in the education system is highly valued in the Flemish Community of Belgium. Both policy approaches and school leadership practices are sensitive to any interventions that may violate autonomy of practitioners. While such strong autonomy may lead to a wide range of practice and inconsistencies in quality of practice, it preserves schools' freedom to innovate in their practice and in their approaches to CPL in changing contexts. It also offers flexibility in allocating available resources for goals set at the school level. Flexibility and freedom are also apparent in school leaders' choice around content and organisation of whole-school professional development study days, although policy teams in schools may also play a role in agreeing on topics.

In addition to drawing on internal expertise, school leaders in Flanders can decide to approach a CPL provider with a specific question – a problem that CPL can help address. Some invite innovative or pilot approaches to professional learning, where a provider's offer is based on summarising common needs of schools across networks. School leaders also approach providers who offer holistic packages blending teacher and whole-school development, a promising systemic approach to embed professional learning, drawing on Flemish and international research on evaluating successful professional development (Guskey, 2000[43]; Desimone, 2009[44]; Merchie et al., 2018[38]; Merchie et al., 2015[21]). School leaders are

free to seek expertise, support and resources from beyond their own school network, umbrella organisation or PBDs without being bounded by legislative or administrative constraints.

Emergence of collaborative learning practices within and across schools

A plethora of international evidence highlights the importance of collaboration and collaborative professional learning, with an increasing focus on how well colleagues within and between schools collaborate (Hargreaves and O'Connor, 2018[45]). In high-performing systems, collaborative professional learning is built into the daily lives of teachers and school leaders (Jensen et al., 2016[37]). Organisational communication between teachers engaged in collaboration can support them in learning from each other, which can help improve practice (Reeves, Pun and Chung, 2017[46]). Collaborative professional learning also contributes to growth in teachers' practice as well as student learning and achievement under the right conditions (Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Gardner, 2017[47]; Vescio, Ross and Adams, 2008[48]). In addition, being part of a professional learning community or network can broaden conceptions of what it means to be a teacher (Jensen et al., 2016[37]). Leadership is important in creating the appropriate culture, structures and collaborative learning opportunities (Stoll et al., 2006[49]; Cordingley et al., 2020[39]).

The OECD study team encountered a range of examples within and between schools, indicating that while deeper forms of collaborative learning are not currently widespread in Flanders, there are moves in this direction, with potential for further activity. "Being a member of the team" is a core responsibility in the Flemish professional profile for teachers (Vlaamse Regering, 2007[11]). The country visit found that school policy teams are an important feature of participative decision making in schools where colleagues interested in specific focus areas within the school's pedagogical project talk about them and participate in moving policy into practice. In addition, in meetings of secondary school departments, teachers of the same primary grade, and between teachers and other staff in special schools, colleagues have the opportunity to share ideas and materials, discuss challenges and to provide support. Learning may occur within all of these collaborative forums, although, as also recognised in the CBR, such collaboration does not always promote deeper forms of collegiality within schools (Little, 1990[50]) or joint practice development across schools (Fielding et al., 2005[51]). These forms of collaborative learning stimulate deeper learning that surfaces teachers' assumptions and beliefs and causes them to reflect on these, fundamental to powerful professional learning (Timperley, 2011[52]).

Efforts from within and beyond schools have introduced some deeper collaborative learning opportunities. The country visit noted some examples involving de-privatisation of practice (Louis, Kruse and Associates, 1995[53]) – opening up, exploring and critiquing each other's practice through, for example peer observation and feedback – although the country visit and Flemish research highlight that this practice is less common. This includes professional learning communities that have been introduced in the Flemish Community of Belgium (Vanblaere and Devos, 2017[54]; Valckx, Vanderlinde and Devos, 2020[55]). Team teaching or co-teaching is frequently included within induction of new teachers. Team teaching might be exploited further as a means to stimulate collaborate inquiry in support of collaborative professional learning (Schnellert and Butler, 2020[56]). Examples of its use beyond the early years of teaching mentioned during the OECD study visit included a school leader focusing a staff meeting on learning more about team teaching and opportunities for staff dialogue. Box 3.1 provides an example of a system-wide initiative to establish team teaching as part of the New Secondary Schools initiative in Austria.

Box 3.1. Structured team teaching in new Secondary Schools in Austria

Austria has introduced several opportunities for its teachers to collaborate as part of the New Secondary School Reform (*Neue Mittelschule*, NMS). Several structures in the NMS allow for teachers to lead and work with their colleagues, through the creation of new roles, such as learning designers, subject co-ordinators and school development teams. The NMS also includes additional teaching resources for teachers to work jointly as teams in a single classroom. The team teaching approach was first piloted in the Austrian context in only a few subjects and later expanded to all the subjects of the lower secondary curriculum. This approach had implications on increasing the number of staff for each subject area in Austrian schools, while keeping the overall number of teaching hours the same. It allowed teachers to learn from each other by working in the same class and also to provide more student-centred instruction, especially additional support for low-achieving students. Some of this team teaching also allows teachers from different schools and varying education levels to come together and share best practices. The foundation of these structures was laid in 2008 with the introduction of the NMS Reform, but it applies to all teachers from the academic year 2019-20 onwards.

Sources: Nusche, D. et al. (2016[57]), *OECD Reviews of School Resources: Austria 2016*, OECD Publishing, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264256729-en; OECD (2020[22]), *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume II):* Teachers and School Leaders as Valued Professionals, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/19cf08df-en.

It should be noted that collaborative strategies such as lesson study, instructional rounds and peer triads can be used within a coherent model of professional collaboration but they are not themselves such models (Harris, 2019[58]). There is a need therefore for coherent overall models rather than promoting particular strategies for collaboration.

Further potential also exists for Flemish school leaders to exploit dialogue and research- and data-informed conversations as a way to challenge thinking, stimulate deeper learning and develop shared meaning (Little and Horn, 2007[59]; Earl and Timperley, 2009[60]; Cordingley et al., 2020[39]). However, deepening talk, as valuable as this is, is not an end point. Moving from learning together through talk to learning together through observation and feedback is necessary as well as effective, and this is illustrated in professional experiences such as lesson study (Avalos, 2011[61]). In the Flemish Community of Belgium, some examples identified in the country visit highlighted a move toward integrating lesson study within professional development offers for schools, drawing on research from the Netherlands. This collaborative professional learning practice involves collaborative lesson design using research evidence, and lesson observation and feedback within a spirit of collective responsibility. A benefit of this "high-quality, deep mode of teacher learning" (Dudley et al., 2019, p. 213[62]) is its promotion of "meaning-oriented" teacher learning – learning why and how different practices work (Vermunt et al., 2019[63]).

Professional collaboration models internationally have over recent decades turned to promoting systematic collaboration not only within, but also across schools. This was seen, for example, in Networked Learning Communities in England (Jackson and Temperley, 2007[64]), School Improvement Partnerships in Scotland (Chapman et al., 2016[65]), a Teacher Learning and Leadership Program in Canada (Campbell et al., 2018[66]), Communities of Learning in New Zealand (Box 3.2) (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014[67]), inter-school collaboration in Shanghai (China) (Box 3.2) and Schools as Learning Organisations in Wales and other contexts (Sinnema and Stoll, 2020[68]; Stoll and Kools, 2017[69]).

Box 3.2. Examples of inter-school collaboration initiatives in New Zealand and Shanghai (China)

In **New Zealand**, Communities of Learning (CoLs), also known as *Kāhui Ako*, comprise groups of schools who together create a learning pathway for children and young people. CoLs provide opportunities for teachers to build knowledge and expertise, and stimulate improvement and innovation to support shared achievement challenges to be met. Collaboration is key to CoL's focus on improving teaching and learning. CoLs are supported through funding of within and across school leadership roles that recognise the expertise of those within schools, and the benefit of teacher leadership opportunities as part of a career structure for teachers.

In **Shanghai**, the school structure allows for teachers to collaborate on a daily basis as a part of their continuous professional learning. The system allows for this to happen by limiting the teaching time to 12 hours per week to leave room for collaborative time. During this time, teachers are involved in observing other teachers' lessons or taking up mentorship duties for new or struggling teachers. A key part of Shanghai's collaborative professional development is the sharing of best practices among teachers.

The Empowered Management Program in Shanghai allows for further inter-school collaboration aimed at supporting and improving low-performing schools. Under the programme, partnerships between high-performing and low-performing schools are set up for a period of two years. Teachers and school leaders from both types of schools work together closely, including visits across schools, discussing effective practices, observing classrooms and providing constructive feedback. The support given from partner schools also focusses on building research skills among teachers to help schools develop as learning organisations.

Sources: Ministry of Education (2021[70]), *About Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako* – Education in New Zealand, https://www.education.govt.nz/communities-of-learning/about/ (accessed on 24 March 2021); OECD (2020[22]), *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume II): Teachers and School Leaders as Valued Professionals*, Box II.4.1, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/19cf08df-en.; Jensen, B. and J. Farmer (2013[71]), *School Turnaround in Shanghai*: The Empowered-Management Program Approach to Improving School Performance, http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED561063.pdf.

In Flanders, collaboration and collaborative learning across schools was most noticeable among school leaders, where school boards with more than one school, PBDs, local authorities, the cross-network communities of schools, researchers or private providers have facilitated a range of collaborative practices. Examples include pooling resources, organising collaborative professional learning across schools within a community, and bringing schools together that are working on the same topic, for example curriculum change. Examples of school/university partnership projects include school teams learning through inter-visions across schools where one participant (the "owner") shares a problem, others clarify their understanding, brainstorm ideas and offer recommendations before the owner responds. For school leaders, opportunities include visiting schools and using strong schools as partners to pilot a project that they will then share with colleagues in other schools. As the Flemish system may seek to move toward deeper conceptualisations of collaboration for professional learning, it will be important to draw on the insights from successful initiatives, both in the Flemish Community of Belgium and beyond, that rely on collaborative strategies. Networking between schools could be further extended, emphasising "essentials" of effective networks (Rincón-Gallardo and Fullan, 2016[72]) (Box 3.3).

Box 3.3. Essential features of effective networks

Based on six literature reviews/studies specifically aimed at identifying characteristics of effective networks, and 12 network initiatives networking schools that showed positive impact on relevant student outcomes or on indicators of professional capital often associated with improved student outcomes, Santiago Rincón-Gallardo and Michael Fullan have distilled eight features of effective networks:

1. Focusing on ambitious student learning outcomes linked to effective pedagogy – with a shared vision, common goals, measurable outcomes, clarity around effective pedagogy, and commitment and efforts to change practice in line with this pedagogy
2. Developing strong relationships of trust and internal accountability – in order to open up, engage in challenging conversations and hold themselves responsible for their actions and improvement
3. Continuously improving practice and systems through cycles of collaborative inquiry – cycles of using credible evidence to identify problems, designing and acting on practice changes and testing them out, accumulating evidence of impact and refining or discarding ideas
4. Using deliberate leadership and skilled facilitation within flat power structures – leaders model and facilitate learning and leadership in others, with senior leaders signalling the importance of the activity and external facilitators helping embed collaboration through the system
5. Frequently interacting and learning inwards – dense, frequent knowledge sharing among participants, with focused interaction consolidating and refining practice and developing group norms of trust and responsibility to each other
6. Connecting outwards to learn from others – frequent interaction of individual members with their larger networks to offer wider access to required expertise and new ideas and prevent constant circulation of the same old ideas and practices
7. Forming new partnership among students, teachers, families, and communities – often transforming the roles of students, teachers and families, and combining school-focused strategies with efforts to engage multiple partners from the wider community
8. Securing adequate resources to sustain the work – creating conditions for effective collaboration, such as time, small amounts of flexible funding, and preparing for sustainability from the start

Source: Rincón-Gallardo, S. and M. Fullan (2016[72]), "Essential Features of Effective Networks in Education", Journal of Professional Capital and Community, Vol. 1/1, pp. 5-22, https://doi.org/10.1108/JPCC-09-2015-0007.

In addition to Flemish data within the TALIS 2018 findings (OECD, 2020[22]), Flemish researchers have devoted considerable attention to collaboration, networking and collaborative learning, of beginning teachers (März and Kelchtermans, 2020[73]; Ooghe et al., 2016[74]; Thomas et al., 2020[75]) ; using team teaching (e.g. (Meirsschaut and Ruys, 2017[76]; Meirsschaut and Ruys, 2018[77])) through PLCs (De Neve and Devos, 2015[78]; Devos and Tuytens, 2013[79]; Valckx, Devos and Vanderlinde, 2018[80]; Van Keulen et al., n.d.[81]; Vanblaere and Devos, 2015[82]; Vanblaere and Devos, 2017[54]), between teachers and school leaders (Vanhoof, Van Petegem and Vanhoof, 2015[83]), and with external stakeholders (Nouwen, 2019[84]). Such studies, separately and in combination are both a strength in choice of focus and also offer considerable insights into enhancing collaboration and collaborative learning in and across Flemish schools. Partnership projects, incentivising links between research and practice and further emphasising co-construction can be important ways to bring together insights from such studies and practice in schools.

Weaknesses

Policy-making capacity related to CPL is variable

Successful school leadership fundamentally influences the growth and development of individual teachers and whole staffs (Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins, 2019[85]), and understanding of school leaders is critical about their own crucial role in promoting, participating in and supporting CPL (Cordingley et al., 2020[39]; Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd, 2009[86]; Stoll, Harris and Handscomb, 2012[87]). To bring about a learning culture in schools, professional learning needs to be aligned and firmly embedded in school strategic planning (Jensen et al., 2016[37]).

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, it emerged from the OECD team's interviews with a broad range of system stakeholders that large variabilities across schools and school principals exist in their capacity to develop a powerful professionalisation policy with strategic links to their vision, pedagogic project, school development, human resource management and other resource policies. School culture and structures needed to support CPL also vary considerably. The country visit team heard from a range of different stakeholders that teachers' professional learning depends on the capacity of the school's leadership or on the school's culture.

The strategic connection between individual and collective professional learning and whole-school development in Flemish schools is not always clear. In part, this seems to be related to diverse, and sometimes narrow, understandings of the term CPL. Internationally, it is increasingly acknowledged that the broad term CPL includes a range of forms of learning for professional growth. Traditional professional development courses or seminars are only one component within comprehensive professional learning systems and professional learning does not necessarily or automatically occur through participation in such courses (Boeskens, Nusche and Yurita, 2020[1]). Conflating professional development initiatives with professional learning hinders strategic decision making around prioritising different forms of professional learning and allocating funding for them.

In expanding on the need for policy to be "supported, integrated and coherent", the Flemish Reference Framework for Quality in Education (from 2015-16) also emphasises the importance of harmonising of different policies. The country visit found little sense of professionalisation and CPL as an activity embedded in and connected to regular school processes. For example, appraisal (which may occur as infrequently as every four years) is not always used to identify and stimulate professional learning. When teachers are assessed by school leaders, professional learning is infrequently a major agenda item and may not be discussed. This makes it possible for teachers to engage in little professional development over many years without any associated practice of accountability.

Where schools are learning organisations (Kools and Stoll, 2016[88]; OECD, 2016[89]) and in and across effective professional learning communities (DuFour, 2004[90]; Stoll et al., 2006[49]), opportunities for learning are part of daily reality in the workplace and between schools – learning is central to and connects everything. This also includes an internal urgency for change, with close attention paid to the changing environment and its implications for professional learning. Evidence from TALIS (2018) indicates challenges in this area for Flanders. Fewer than two thirds of lower-secondary teachers (63.7%) believed that most teachers in their school are open to change (compared with an OECD average of 79%) and 60.3% of lower-secondary principals agreed that the school readily accepts new ideas (compared with an OECD average of 85.3%). Primary schools appeared relatively more open to innovation: 80.6% of lower-secondary teachers believed that most teachers in their school are open to change and 71.3% of primary principals agreed that the school readily accepts new ideas.

Variation in school cultures and structures also means that teachers in some schools rarely engage in deeper forms of collaboration or collaborative learning. TALIS 2018 findings highlight that 40.4% of Flemish lower-secondary principals (compared with a 26% TALIS average) reported that they need help in developing collaboration among teachers. Around 31% of primary-education principals reported a similar

need (OECD, 2019[17]). School culture is important to individual teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2016[91]). Opening up practice to the potential scrutiny of colleagues depends on encouragement of innovation and risk-taking and fostering deep collegial relationships within and across departments, teams and schools. Leaders developing trust within whole-school and smaller professional learning communities is therefore necessary to ensuring productive teacher professional learning (Stoll et al., 2006[49]; Postholm, 2018[92]). How school leaders' choose to focus whole staff meetings and whether they promote deep dialogue to extend professional language, are also important considerations.

In addition, while there is widespread regard for and commitment to the culture of and right to autonomy, as ensured under the Freedom of Education principle, the country visit revealed that this culture of autonomy and responsibility has no visible tie to consequences for teachers not engaging in professional learning. Nor is it picked up in appraisal – or this occurs infrequently. Principals act autonomously and have responsibility to ensure providing quality education to pupils through the Reference Framework for Quality Education and they are inspected in relation to this. Umbrella organisations and their PBDs are clear that they can guide schools but final decisions rest with the principals and their staff. Opportunities are missed if principals do not understand the intent within the Regulatory Framework for Quality Education indicators on professionalisation and learning and organisational structure. Fundamentally exerting autonomy not to pay attention to the evidence around powerful CPL and how to lead this threatens pupils' right to the highest quality schooling because teachers are not ensured the necessary related professional learning.

Needs identification does not sufficiently consider evidence, including on student needs

International reviews of professional learning that makes a difference to both teachers' practice and pupil learning highlight the use of evidence (Timperley, 2008[40]; Cordingley et al., 2020[39]). Evidence-informed practice, which the Flemish Community of Belgium aspires to, is not yet a common feature across schools in relation to CPL. The country visit highlighted that diverse approaches are taken to needs identification for teachers' CPL but these frequently do not include student needs. Flemish schools may look at a range of qualitative and quantitative data, including school teams examining student data provided by the PBD and focusing on classroom processes, but such detailed needs analysis is not widespread. School-level needs may be identified through school inspections, a "question" from school leaders or teachers, or something "urgent" from the network or the Flemish authorities. Teachers can also ask school leaders for a particular school-wide focus, or the choice may depend on the content of promotional leaflets arriving at the school. It came across in the stakeholder interviews that schools do not systematically benefit from steering, guidance and support with self-reflection and data use, and with balancing their own policy priorities, Flemish teaching policy and teachers' needs.

Lacking national quality assurance of external offers, school leaders are left to rely on their own judgement or recommendations of colleagues in other schools about the quality of external CPL offers. Frequently school leaders use very little if any research, some PBDs find it hard to bring research to schools, and research is often not considered sufficiently accessible for use in schools. International research highlights that in highly research-engaged schools, school leaders play a key role, often facilitating access to, engagement with and use of research evidence in their schools (Coldwell et al., 2017[93]). Some Flemish schools have started to learn about inquiry (Box 3.4), a practice associated with powerful professional learning (Timperley et al., 2007[94]), but it is not yet widespread. Schools with less interest in research tend to select practical external CPL options in preference to ones drawing on research evidence. Encouragingly, an increasing number of examples of external CPL opportunities combine research findings with opportunities for practice in-between sessions to support transfer. However, schools often find it hard to release teachers, especially outside of specific CPL sessions. This limits opportunities for evidence-informed CPL.

Box 3.4. Spirals of Inquiry, Networks of Inquiry and Indigenous Education, British Columbia, Canada

Spirals of Inquiry: A disciplined approach to inquiry is producing powerful professional learning and informing and shaping the transformative work in schools and districts across the province. Participating schools engage in a year-long inquiry about learning using the Spiral of Inquiry as the framework. The spiral consists of six key stages: scanning, focusing, developing a hunch, new professional learning, taking action and checking that a big enough difference has been made. At each stage, three key questions are asked: What is going on for our learners? How do we know this? How does this matter? Both the scanning and the hunch phase challenge assumptions and this happens already before any engagement in content-focused professional learning (Stoll and Temperley, 2015[95]).

Networks of Inquiry and Indigenous Education (NOIIE): These networks connect professional learning through principals, teachers and support staff and accelerate the transformative work across the province. Annually approximately 200 schools in 20 districts in British Columbia participate as active members of NOIIE. The focus on inquiry learning has proved to be beneficial to Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and teachers alike. NOIIE is considered to be an effective mechanism for realising sustainable teaching and learning change.

Sources: OECD (2015[96]), *Schooling Redesigned: Towards Innovative Learning Systems, Educational Research and Innovation*, OECD Publishing, Paris. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264245914-en; OECD (2017[97]), *The OECD Handbook for Innovative Learning Environments, OECD*, Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/9789264277274-en.

Limited evaluation of CPL quality at the school level

In terms of monitoring and evaluating CPL, the picture is also diverse. Within the Reference Framework for Quality of Education's, schools are expected to monitor the effects of professionalisation initiatives (indicator BL9). In some cases, evaluation occurs continuously, and follows a framework, often provided by the PBD or external provider, for example higher education, government programme (e.g. priority INSET, Erasmus). Some PBD counsellors work alongside schools supporting evaluation of CPL, including, for example, assessments of reading for longer literacy CPL opportunities or student observations related to lesson study. One PBD is piloting new tools to support school leaders in evaluating CPL. However, evaluation does not appear to be emphasised across all schools. In addition, existing approaches frequently lack theories of action around what impact is anticipated as a result of engaging in CPL (Guskey, 2000[43]; Desimone, 2009[44]). According to interviews with stakeholders, many schools are not aware of the research on evaluation of professional development that system stakeholders talk about as influencing some professional opportunities (Merchie et al., 2018[38]; Merchie et al., 2015[21]). Evaluation is thus frequently limited to practicality and usability and is associated with insufficient transfer.

Insufficient transfer to classroom level

Powerful professional learning changes teachers' practice (Desimone, 2009[44]; Avalos, 2011[61]), and the school and school leadership play an important role in this (Cordingley et al., 2020[39]; Stoll, Harris and Handscomb, 2012[87]) to ensure timely, job-embedded support (Guskey and Yoon, 2009[98]). In the Flemish Community, some longer forms of CPL exist, for example, two-year programmes and projects, including those offered by PBD, reflecting national and international research findings on the benefits of engagement over time to ensure that the learning is cumulative (Timperley et al., 2007[94]; Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Gardner, 2017[47]; Coordingley et al., 2015[99]; Merchie et al., 2015[21]). These include contextualised support for schools as they develop. Nonetheless, irrespective of schools' engagement with specific CPL opportunities, evidence from the study visit suggests insufficient transfer of new professional learning into

pedagogic practice. There appears to be limited understanding around how to support transfer, with some schools focusing on "quick fixes" and fragmented professional learning strategies. While teachers normally have to report on their professional learning experience, there appears to be no or little critical reflection on what it means for daily practice and it is infrequently translated into action. This can apply both to whole-school CPL and how school leaders respond to individual teachers when they return from courses.

Based on interviews with a range of different stakeholders, clear understanding does not exist across all school leaders that their commitment to and involvement in CPL is essential to ensuring its sustainability. Some appear to understand the systemic nature of change and seek external support to help them develop their schools further and holistically, connecting individual teacher learning and whole team development. This recognises the important connection between school, teacher development and the improvement of teacher practice (Thoonen et al., 2011[100]). However, currently, transfer insufficiently occurs. Sharing of professional development experiences in meetings happens, typically during regularly timed meetings when colleagues are expected to spread knowledge to the team. However, the OECD country visit revealed that such feeding back as part of general staff meetings was often disconnected from other teachers' current concerns and practice. In addition, staff meetings may not allow sufficient time for sharing such experiences effectively because of other agenda items.

Also, just accessing and sharing materials (e.g. downloadable documents) across networks or communities of schools and hoping they will share these with others in their school does not ensure use, or even understanding. Moving knowledge and practice around schools does not occur systematically in the Flemish Community of Belgium. Deepening understanding through leaders facilitating research-informed school-wide dialogue is infrequently emphasised. The OECD country visit team heard that many teachers appear to have a limited vocabulary to have critically important professional conversations in which they collectively explore their practice and how to improve it (Borko, 2004[101]).

Transfer also depends on a range of conditions, including:

- creating opportunities to practise (Stobart, 2014[102]);
- collaborative opportunities for teachers to work together and reflect on problems as they experiment with new practices (Thoonen et al., 2011[100]);
- developing a culture of risk-taking and lack of fear of failing to support use of deeper collaborative learning strategies to extend this to more colleagues (Kools and Stoll, 2016[88]).

Creating opportunities for coaching between teachers is not yet common practice in the Flemish Community, although it is emerging in some schools. Despite an open door culture in some schools, there appears to be limited encouragement of de-privatisation of practice – for example peer observation and feedback – with little feedback culture in many schools other than during new teachers' induction. Coaching and professional learning involving de-privatisation of practice, such as lesson study and peer observation, have potential in deepening collaborative professional learning e.g. (Kraft, Blazar and Hogan, 2018[103]; Dudley et al., 2019[62]) although the benefits of de-privatised practice in Flanders have been difficult to research because relatively little occurs (Vanblaere and Devos, 2015[82]).

In the Framework for Quality in Education, indicator BL4 – "The school has an innovative and learning organisational structure" refers to: "trying new approaches and practices and … stimulating co-operation between team members" (Onderwijs Inspectie, n.d.[13]). To deepen and extend knowledge and practice, school leaders would need to support, extend and promote several examples encountered during the country visit in pockets of the system. This includes emerging collaborative learning practices and contexts described previously (e.g. PLCs, lesson study, co-teaching), and using staff meetings for evidence-informed conversations about data and deep collaboration that opens up practice to scrutiny and support from colleagues. This involves making more explicit the school- or network-based evidence-informed collaborative professional learning strategies that deepen dialogue, create shared language and understanding. Learning from and with each other with a view to sharing expertise needs to involve much more than just explaining and sharing materials. School leaders who promote such activities not only

support teachers in developing greater self-efficacy, but enhance collective teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran and Barr, 2004[104]), the shared beliefs among educators that their combined efforts positively influence outcomes for all students (Donohoo, 2018[105]).

Threats and opportunities

Strengthening professionalisation support for school leaders and boards

The professional growth of school leaders throughout their careers is fundamental to school and teacher development (Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008[42]; OECD, 2019[17]). While a range of examples and offers for leadership development exist, development of leadership for CPL has not been a system priority in the Flemish Community of Belgium. It can depend on leaders' or potential leaders' particular situation, as was highlighted during the country visit where the nature, availability and quality of support differed between umbrella networks. Furthermore, in the OECD's TALIS study, well over half of Flemish lower secondary principals (58.4%) and 43.8% of primary principals indicate that scheduling conflicts prevent them from participating in continuing professional development (CPD), a 15% rise for lower secondary principals since TALIS 2013 (OECD, 2019[17]).

While Flemish principals have considerable opportunities to network with colleagues, through communities of schools and other collaborative structures, prior to the pandemic they were engaging in fewer deeper learning experiences such as peer/self-observation and coaching (25% of lower secondary compared with an OECD average of 47.2%). Online professional learning among principals was also limited (10.2% of lower secondary principals in comparison to a TALIS average of 35.9%) (OECD, 2019[17]). This is likely to have increased during the pandemic and the Ministry of Education and Training has commissioned research on blended learning in order to translate insights and good practice examples into tools for teachers. A considerable minority of principals also expressed a need for professional development in using data for improving the quality of schooling. Furthermore, if existing leadership development is mostly intended for new and existing school leaders, with limited opportunities created for developing teacher leadership, the opportunity will be missed to extend pedagogical leadership of CPL.

School boards have a significant strategic role in funding and supporting CPL for school leadership, in addition to their responsibility for hiring school leaders and many other relevant functions. Some positive examples exist, for example a school board arranging coaching for all of its school leaders, and a PBD offering joint school leadership development for school leaders and school boards. Such joint opportunities are a positive development. However, issues with funding are likely to represent a barrier for these to become more systematic. The removal in 2018-19 of opportunities for umbrella organisations to apply for funding for school board development might be a further barrier to ensuring professional support.

Addressing time and resource constraints to facilitate transfer of new learning into everyday practice

In successful school systems time is made available to ensure that professional learning is a normal part of daily work life in schools (Jensen et al., 2016[37]). However, in the Flemish Community of Belgium, the CPL challenge for school most frequently cited during the country visit is lack of time. School leaders frequently face challenges freeing time for teachers to attend external CPL opportunities, follow them up back at school and create conditions for teachers to team teach or observe each other. This means that for some schools there are more limited opportunities or very little time for professional learning.

If leaders do not find ways to reorganise groups, only 1.5 days per year for primary schools and 1 day for secondary schools are available for the whole school to get together for professional learning. This makes it difficult for themes to be carried through, and can lead to a "here and now" rather than longer-term strategic focus. It also takes time to develop a school-wide learning culture and to embed new learning into practice through experimenting and reflecting individually, evidence-informed, reflective dialogue,

opportunities to meet, co-plan and design, co-teach, observe colleagues, give and receive feedback, coach and more.

Release time enables teachers to see each other learn and collaborate, within and between schools. The challenge of finding replacement teachers in the Flemish Community of Belgium to release teachers or, alternatively, reconfiguring teaching and timetables inhibits deeper professional learning. In TALIS, compared to 2013, around 15% more Flemish lower-secondary principals signalled scheduling conflicts as barriers to continuous professional development in 2018 (OECD, 2019[17]). The country visit also heard that after-school meetings are further limited in their potential for professional learning with many younger teachers needing to go home to their own children.

Furthermore, the distribution of CPL funding and budget cuts mean that there are frequently insufficient funds at school level, especially in primary schools (EUR 67 per full-time equivalent for (pre-) primary and EUR 97 for secondary per year). This particularly inhibits the more sustainable and systemic and contextualised CPL opportunities over time offered by private providers that aim to promote greater transferability. It can also be a barrier to schools' ability to develop expertise in coaching, mentoring and team teaching or extend within- and across-school collegiality through professional learning communities, collaborative inquiry, lesson study, and other forms of peer observation and feedback. While some schools manage to find additional funds, it should not depend on school boards' and leaders' creativity to raise these.

Potential for co-construction and strategic development of school leadership competence framework

School leadership frameworks are helpful in providing guidance around the key characteristics, responsibilities and tasks of effective school leaders, as well as highlighting the fundamental character of school leadership as leadership for learning (Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008[42]). It is generally acknowledged that leadership for CPL is important in Flemish schools. The development with the profession of a competence framework for school leaders announced in the 2019-24 Policy Note, provides the opportunity for further strategic development of leadership for learning. Such leadership includes continuing development of teachers and other staff through leadership of professional learning as well as pedagogical leadership of pupils' learning. A greater focus on leadership for learning would help ensure that TPL is part of whole-school policy and school development.

Flemish models of leadership development, consultancy and support already exist with features that can be drawn on or adapted. Examples of such features include longer programmes involving groups of schools that become a learning community, pairs of leaders from one school participating for greater impact, partnering first phase schools with new schools for mutual inter-visions and/or coaching. International examples of peer review for school leaders also highlight its benefits for leadership development (Godfrey, 2020[106]). Other possibilities to consider might also include extending the leadership shadowing pilot to include a focus on shadowing professional learning leadership, and international inspirational visits including use of technology.

Teacher leadership could be included within the competence framework. Associated leadership development opportunities could be offered, for example through designing further opportunities to become engaged in networks, and collaborative inquiry efforts that develop professional curiosity and change leadership (Kaser and Halbert, 2017[107]). Current train the trainer efforts support development of internal pedagogical leadership capacity. Bringing together those involved in coaching around the Flemish Community of Belgium (counsellors, internal coaches, those working in support networks) with other key stakeholders might support co-construction of one or more mutually agreeable frameworks. Such frameworks would support expansion of shared leadership and the growth of teacher leadership, whereby "shared leadership transforms the merely involved into the engaged" (Jesacher-Roessler and Westfall-Greiter, 2018, p. 100[108]).

Deepening evidence-informed practice to target and prioritise resources for CPL

A range of new data sources may become available to schools to support evidence-informed practice. Potential exists for assessments of new attainment targets based on 16 key competences to provide schools with data to support needs identification for CPL and evaluation, although these attainment targets do not currently benefit from consensus. The new national standardised assessment system proposed in the 2019-24 Policy Note will likely enable schools to have access to data to identify needs, and could help more schools think about equity across the system. This may lead to better collaboration, as long as they are treated as development opportunities rather than high stakes accountability. Examples of gathering student voice already exist in schools, some providers and at a national level. Extending this would help enable a broader picture of pupil needs to inform professional learning.

While a culture of data use, inquiry and evaluation of effectiveness of practice is not yet widespread, examples are seen throughout the system. University colleges already engage in practice-oriented research to extend the basic competence of teachers as researchers and innovators. PBDs are often evidence-informed and some offer support to schools in using data and research. Use of stories that emphasise growth and encourage contributors to be open about their learning process highlight contextual and leadership conditions that support evidence-informed practice. Further ways of promoting evidence-informed practice can be seen around the system. These include teacher training students carrying out research through practice-based inquiry in schools, teachers coaching them as they work on their theses, and sharing their inquiries at whole school meetings; some PBDs, researchers and priority project designers (in different combinations) developing or co-designing evidence-informed strategies, some of which have been stimulated by the practice-based academic research funding within the framework of professional higher education.

Some unions and other providers are also disseminating research findings. The country visit team noted that some Flemish researchers emphasised the need to think about learning and language used when designing processes and tools in user-friendly formats – acting as translators. This is important for knowledge exchange that is oriented towards use and practice change (Stoll and Brown, 2015[109]). In the Flemish Community of Belgium, higher education researchers already have an obligation to serve schools. The Flemish Ministry of Education and Training and VLOR jointly organise an annual “school <3 research” event bringing together practitioners and researchers. Design of research-informed tools, in collaboration with other providers and practitioners themselves, might be extended as a valuable aspect of these commitments. Klasse and KlasCement, widely accessed by Flemish schools, might also helpfully support the process by promoting accessible evidence-informed tools and materials. Box 3.5 provides an example from England.

Box 3.5. Research-informed professional learning tools

Catalyst is “an evidence-informed, collaborative professional learning resource” for teacher leaders or other school leaders, aimed at supporting change and professional learning of teacher leaders in England. It is composed of: Research Findings cards (related to specific research questions, such as “Tracking Impact” or “Sharing Knowledge Within and Across Schools”) and Professional Learning cards (used to support peers in learning from research findings).

Research-informed resources are designed to help learners deepen learning and collaborative enquiry, challenge their thinking, develop a safe environment for genuine dialogue and trialling of new practices, enable follow up of research sources, and encourage openness to learning and tracking of their progress and learning. Such resources can also be designed to develop learners’ capacity, including skills and confidence, to self-facilitate. They aim to help practitioners encounter research in manageable units of meaning and in accessible, varied formats. The materials and tools present evidence in ways to:

- capture users' interest and deepen engagement
- stimulate exploration of topics and issues and challenge thinking
- aid reflection on their own practice
- help them articulate tacit knowledge, beliefs, and theories of action
- help social processing by feeding conversations
- stimulate collaborative learning, enquiry and problem solving
- move them to generate new knowledge and take action that will enhance their practice.

In designing Catalyst, the research and development team were influenced by the research project's questions that focus on powerful ways of sharing knowledge. Consequently, in sharing the answers to the research questions, they chose to summarise their findings in short paragraphs that capture the essence, as a way of introducing colleagues to the evidence. In designing professional learning processes to engage participants with these research findings, they have drawn on their own research, research and development, facilitation experiences in this project and others, and further research findings. The latter focused on; knowledge mobilisation, knowledge exchange, and knowledge animation; professional learning and development; professional learning communities and learning networks; and schools as learning organisations.

Sources: UCL Institute of Education Research and Development Network (n.d.[110]), Catalyst, https://www.ioe-rdnetwork.com/catalyst.html (accessed on 16 February 2021); Stoll, L. et al. (2021[111]), Catalyst: An Evidence-Informed, Collaborative Professional Learning Resource for Teacher Leaders and Other Leaders Working within and across Schools, Crown House; Stoll, L. and Brown, C. (ed.) (2015[112]), Middle leaders as catalysts for evidence-informed change, IOE Press.

A new curriculum and COVID-related digitalisation as opportunities for collaborative professional learning

Considerable opportunities for professional learning are to be found through the new curriculum in the Flemish Community of Belgium, although the introduction of broader final objectives (e.g. learning to learn, social and ICT skills) across the 2nd and 3rd stage of secondary schools is currently being contested. The opportunity exists for the whole school team to look together at the new curriculum and how to organise it to make it work so it is coherent for the pupils. In developing pupils' social skills to promote powerful cooperative learning, teachers could further model deeper forms of collaboration and collaborative learning. Bringing in more non-educators at secondary level through, for example, dual teaching extends both collaboration and learning opportunities. In relation to the new curriculum, experts in the wider community might support schools in assessing, for example, creative thinking through expert reviews, gallery critique, authentic tests and exhibitions, thereby enhancing collaborative professional learning (Lucas and Spencer, 2017[113]).

Digital competence is a basic literacy for pupils. The pandemic has brought into sharp relief that it is also a teacher competence in need of further development. COVID-19 has been a major test for schools, pushing colleagues to see significant learning needs. Use of video in professional learning is emerging in the Flemish Community of Belgium. This is identified as effective in enabling teachers to review and reflect on others' practices (Education Endowment Foundation, 2020[35]), and to consider alternative pedagogical practices with colleagues (Borko et al., 2008[114]). Such de-privatisation of practice can also occur, for example, in video clubs that have shown potential to change beliefs and pedagogy (Box 3.6). With permission, such videos – and processes to support their analysis and stimulate dialogue – might also be located on existing online platforms.

Box 3.6. The Mapleton Video Club

Video clubs are professional development environments where teachers participate together to discuss video segments from their peers' classrooms. A research study of the Mapleton Video Club that unfolded its activities over one academic year, comprising 10 meetings and gathering 7 teaches illustrated how a video club can enable the development of a learning community for teachers.

The Club was developed as part of a university-school district partnership, in a school with low student performance in mathematics. Teachers could receive professional development credits, recognised by the district, for their engagement in the Club. The Club was unfolded in a context of mathematics curriculum reform: teachers had different levels of familiarity with the latter. Two facilitators were engaged in teachers' meetings.

The Club turned progressively into a learning community and the research study resulted in a "Framework for the Development of a Teacher Learning Community in a Video Club". Researchers examined the evolution of the learning community using several dimensions (Collaborative and collegial interactions, Participation and discourse norms, Focus on teaching and learning) along which the community developed from a beginning level to a high-functioning community. The Mapleton Club developed into a high-functioning learning community (in which participants collaborated and participated in meaningful analyses) at different stages for the different dimensions. The Framework can be used to help build experiences that can lead teachers develop together into teacher learning communities.

Source: Van Es, E. (2012[115]), "Examining the development of a teacher learning community: The case of a video club", Teaching and Teacher Education, Vol. 28/2, pp. 182-192, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2011.09.005.

A number of cross-network offers enable schools' access to and choice around digital professionalisation. Further plans to link schools with business for training extends possibilities for collaborative learning with members of the wider learning ecosystem. Some schools and teachers are already connecting internationally through Erasmus, eTwinning or other means, using electronic platforms in order to see what is happening in other countries. Digital access can provide further possibilities to connect them with others who have experience of new curricula or are starting down this route. Here, the Flemish Community of Belgium might extend its existing practice around schools developing relations with schools internationally, for example through Erasmus eTwinning, and looking at issues from different angles and perspectives (Mehta and Peterson, 2019[116]).

Further opportunities lie in thinking creatively about how the range of online platforms might be used more collaboratively in helping to deepen digitally-assisted collaborative learning and move it around the system. Digitalisation has great potential as an enabler of collaborative learning, both because it is not always possible to get people together, and because of the greater interest in online sharing shown by beginning teachers in the Flemish Community of Belgium. Here the system might reflect on how it recognised, encouraged and scaled up initiatives such as KlasCement (Box 1.3), potentially involving beginning teachers in co-constructing ideas. Further investigation would also be helpful in how online coaching might be enhanced (Education Endowment Foundation, 2020[35]).

4. Embedding professional learning in teaching practice

This section acknowledges teachers' role in the TPL ecosystem, as beneficiaries of professional learning opportunities but also agents of their own professional learning and actors who can help develop a culture of professional learning in schools and beyond. Teachers can be major stakeholders in the wider professional learning system with a role in shaping school and system-level approaches. The analysis in this section examines the extent to which teachers are able to engage in effective professional learning in the Flemish Community of Belgium, frame their own professional learning and contribute to professional learning cultures in their schools.

Strengths

Growing teacher recognition of the need for robust, embedded, extended and impactful professional learning approaches

Accounts of some teachers experiencing pockets of excellence in professional learning was an encouraging finding of the country visit. There are resources, tools and capabilities that can be shared and used across the system in ways that enhance the learning of increasing numbers of teachers. Recent initiatives were shared during the country visit of, for example, including collaborative activities across schools, lesson study, data teams or long-term courses that focus on professional growth. In addition, some pre-service teachers were cooperating with practicing teachers to inquire into problems of practice and some design based initiatives.

The strengths of these initiatives taking seed across the system for teachers requires a learning orientation to ensure that these promising initiatives do not happen in isolation and a willingness to recognise the expertise of people and success of initiatives already in place. Such a learning orientation can reside in individuals (Patrick and Joshi, 2019[117]) and is characterised by a growth mindset whereby intelligence is viewed as malleable and the skills and talents of teachers are considered able to be developed through effort (Dweck, 2006[118]).

A strength in the Flemish Community of Belgium, revealed in the country visit, is the recognition by teachers of the need for improvement in CPL. While there are teachers for whom professional learning is a low priority, there are teachers who do recognise that there is a need for more robust, embedded, extended and impactful professional learning approaches. There are also many examples of high calibre practices at the local level that reflect such approaches and potential for expertise and experience of those to be shared. Teachers described, for example, some professional learning offerings that extend over long periods of time, during which relationships are established and sustained, and that enable their learning to be supported.

The importance of encouraging co-operation and professional dialogue amongst actors across the system is also increasingly recognised. With this objective at heart, the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training targets pedagogical advisors and teacher educators for professionalisation initiatives. For example, between 2017 and 2020, the Flemish Government allocated a subsidy for the professionalisation of teacher educators. The programme included universities and colleges, and had the purpose of enhancing the

quality of teacher educators involved in teacher training. Workload credits were allocated to the programme. In addition, professional learning communities (PLC) for teachers and teacher educators are amongst tools and initiatives that have begun to focus on professional growth. The Association for Teacher Trainers (VELOV) is, for instance, organising a number of learning communities for teacher educators across the Flemish Community of Belgium.

Induction is a right for novice teachers

Support through induction programmes, coaching, or mentoring are recognised as important to supporting the growth of new teachers (Blömeke et al., 2015[119]). Induction programmes for beginning teachers (including support, guidance, and orientation programmes) display positive effects on teacher commitment, retention and teacher classroom instructional practices (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011[120]).

Although direct causality between teacher induction and student achievement is challenging to establish, teacher induction is widely accepted as an important phase in teachers' professionalisation journey. Recent analyses of distinctive features of high-performing countries in terms of students' cognitive outcomes also stress the importance of induction. Teacher candidates in high-performing countries tend to benefit from prolonged practical training, and when they engage in relatively limited practicum during their initial education, they tend to benefit from intensive induction or mentoring (OECD, 2018[121]). Other studies highlight the potential for induction, done well, to be a powerful contributor to reducing the level of perceived stress (Harmsen et al., 2019[122]).

A comprehensive view of induction requires attention to not only specific activities and programmes for newly qualified teachers, but the broad set of measures that can promote their professional learning – attention to the whole responsibility of being a teacher (Shanks et al., 2020[123]). School leaders also have an important role to play in supporting induction and mentoring of novice teachers (Kutsyuruba and Walker, 2020[124]). Professional learning, encouragement and support for school leaders is needed to enable them to fulfil their role in planning and facilitating the induction of beginning teachers (Costa et al., 2019[125]).

Induction to help new entrants' successful transition into the teaching profession became a mandate to schools in the Flemish Community in September 2019, and is a right reserved for novice teachers. Each school has responsibility, as well as autonomy, in providing induction support to new entrants, and is free to organise its support without constraint from external measures or structural mandates. Schools are expected to develop induction programmes as part of their professionalisation policies. The development of a framework for induction is supported by a Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP) project on implementing an effective induction system in Flanders, funded by the European Commission.

Concerning induction, schools have clearly thought through processes for new teachers, and the country visit team noted the commitment of schools to ensuring that new teachers are supported. A member of staff` is given time to lead this aspect of realising the school's professionalisation policy and schools provide mentors. Over the induction period, examples from the study visit highlighted that novice teachers may have opportunities to observe colleagues, to be observed by school leaders and receive feedback, and to team-teach or co-teach.

Willingness of teachers to share experience and resources for teaching and learning

Professional networks through which resources can flow are increasingly recognised as critical to teacher learning and educational improvement. When teachers are part of a strong professional network, they are more likely to remain in the teaching profession, feel a greater sense of efficacy, and engage in deeper levels of conversation around teaching and learning. Building and supporting professional relationships and networks is a critical way to sustain the work of teaching and learning and ultimately of change (Daly, 2010[126]). Sharing both resources and knowledge allows the insights relevant to reform efforts to spread in ways that support change and improvement. Individuals who are active advice seekers report higher

levels of new learning and improved practice, both in terms of new learning influencing practice and improved practice reaching students (Sinnema et al., 2021[127]). This reflects findings from prior work that has established teachers' advice seeking as linked to improvements in instructional practice (Berebitsky and Andrews-Larson, 2017[128]). In addition, professional learning benefits not only the teacher involved, but also indirectly benefits others through advice seeking actions (Farley-Ripple and Buttram, 2015[129]; Penuel et al., 2012[130]).

From a social network perspective, therefore, initiatives that increase the density, decrease the centralisation and embed reciprocity of relationships (Hubers et al., 2018[131]) are key to professional learning. There is a need for well-functioning networks that see members turning to a wide range of people for advice, materials and other social and professional resources (Sinnema et al., 2021[127]). At the same time, there is a risk of some network members being disproportionately burdened when too many rely on too few for advice. Educators who were highly sought out for materials reported less improvement in their practice than their less sought out contemporaries, likely due to being overloaded (Sinnema et al., 2021[127]). An implication for school leaders is to ensure everyone is aware of expertise available to them from a wider pool of people than those they might typically turn to.

Many examples were shared during the country visit that evidenced the willingness of teachers in the Flemish Community of Belgium to talk with others and share resources for teaching and learning. This occurred in recent times, for example, in response to the Covid-19 context and using forums such as KlasCement (Box 1.3). This disposition towards support of others' learning and practice is an important condition for teacher professional learning efforts.

Weaknesses

Critically low levels of teachers' time spent engaged in CPL

Time is essential for professional learning initiatives, but not sufficient or decisive (Hauge, 2019[132]). Time and in particular, extended time and frequent contact with a provider or facilitator, is necessary for teacher professional learning to effectively improve teachers' practice and impact on student learning (Timperley et al., 2007[94]). But there are examples of such extended opportunities that resulted in little or no impact, highlighting the importance of how time is used and the nature of the professional learning activity alongside the provision of sufficient time. Providing time and resources for collaboration does not automatically lead to teacher learning and development (Soini, Pietarinen and Pyhältö., 2016[133]). Time needs to be spent in ways that create a collaborative professional culture, in which the teachers have agency in their own and others' learning processes. The provision of time can enable learning when the conditions and leadership is conducive to such learning—this includes a focus on collaboration, promotion of teacher agency and connection to a shared vision.

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, teachers generally experience critically low levels of time engaged in professional learning. At the extreme, some teachers do not, even over timeframes of more than a year, opt into or encounter any professional learning. International comparisons of time spent in CPL highlight this issue. Anecdotal evidence from the OECD team's consultations with schools pointed to important variations in CPL engagement across schools. Some teachers interviewed by the OECD study team reported encountering hardly any, or none, while others experienced some or, in a few cases, extensive CPL. Several teachers reported that they did not have opportunities to engage due to constraints of time or teacher replacement. Limited time spent on CPL was also, in some cases, explained by a lack of match between the needs or demands and the offer available to teachers (see Section 2). Some teachers described being receptive to taking part in CPL but not seeing anything or much of relevance to them in the offer available to them.

While there is not a direct relationship between the amount of time spent in professional learning and the impacts of such activity on teachers and subsequently on learners, the features of high quality professional

learning do demand a great deal more time than teachers in the Flemish Community of Belgium currently typically encounter. There are important, albeit indirect, consequences of this situation for learners. Too few students will be taught by teachers who have access to, and engage in, enough high quality professional learning to ensure their experience of teaching and learning and educational success is improved. Many of those involved in the country visit spoke of how professional learning, while important, is not reflected in the way teaching jobs are defined (see Section 2).

At the time of writing this report, it had been decided that professionalisation shall be included as a core part of teachers' roles and responsibilities in legislative requirements as of September 2021. Reflecting the importance of CPL in school strategy, legislation and policies is important. Indeed, research indicates that teachers' engagement at some point in professional learning is more important than if teachers volunteer themselves to take part at the outset (Timperley et al., 2007[94]). Teachers' participation in professional learning can have positive impacts for students both when it is done voluntarily and when it is compulsory (Timperley et al., 2007[94]). Going further, embedding CPL as a core part of teachers' practice will also require a change in mindsets of practitioners.

Traditional, transmission-oriented approaches to CPL remain commonplace

It is widely accepted that professional collaboration is key to efforts toward enhanced learning for students and for teachers (Datnow and Park, 2019[134]). Collaboration, if it is to have the impact that is intended, requires particular conditions—teachers can both individually and collectively gain motivation, inspiration and energy from each other to improve student learning (Datnow and Park, 2019[134]). This in turn, can contribute to educational excellence and equity. In contrast to contrived collegiality, collaborative professionalism involves "relationships that positively influence student learning, need better tools and deeper trust, clearer structures and stronger cultures, expertise and enthusiasm, knowing what to do and how to be with each other — both solidity and solidarity" (Hargreaves and O'Connor, 2018[135]). It requires "joint work" that involves rigor, dialogues, expertise and open, honest feedback (Little, 1990[136]).

While most collaborative approaches to CPL in the Flemish Community focus on novice teachers, deep collaborative practices have been found to be beneficial for teachers' learning beyond the early years of teaching (Putnam and Borko, 1997[137]) and collaborative professional learning is important for pedagogical improvement and innovation in teaching (Bakkenes, Vermunt and Wubbels, 2010[138]). According to TALIS, 49% of Flemish lower-secondary teachers have never participated in collaborative learning (OECD, 2019[17]). At the same time, teachers who have had more opportunities to participate in collaborative forms of professional development also report more frequent engagement in deeper forms of collaboration at school.

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, there was also a sense that CPL continues in many (though not all) instances to have a transmission rather than collaboration orientation – a teacher "getting" new knowledge or information from trainings they attend. Often those the country visit heard from mentioned a sequence whereby an individual teacher attends a training, in the hope they can share their newly gained knowledge back to others. These approaches are evidenced by the prevalence of CPL approaches that involved teachers choosing one-off sessions from a catalogue, for example. It was clear, however, that opportunities to share back are not necessarily always possible. In some cases teachers relied on an annual study day as the key (or in some cases entirety) of their CPL experience. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, teachers' engagement with CPL is also highly dependent on decisions made at the level of their school leadership. Because there are high levels of variability in leader capability for establishing and sustaining conditions for CPL in their schools, the system is not currently ensuring quality CPL for all teachers across the system (see Section 3).

At the same time, these patterns also imply an opportunity to support teachers to access resources (including knowledge and expertise) embedded in social relations with those in their networks (Liou and Daly, 2014[139]). Well-connected teacher networks are important given their association with strong teacher collective efficacy and in turn, improved student achievement (Moolenaar, Sleegers and Daly, 2012[140]).

Teachers who can benefit from more resource exchanges thanks to their social network position are also more likely to be able to enhance their own human capital for their teaching practices and student outcomes (Daly et al., 2014[141]).

Variable quality of professional learning for teachers

The impact of teacher learning on teacher pedagogical practices needs to be understood as multi-causal, multidimensional, and multi-correlational (Opfer and Pedder, 2011[142]). Consideration should be given not only to individual but also school orientations to learning systems as mediators of teacher learning and change. Since there is a variety of means, activities or systems for learning that can result in similar learning outcomes, their interaction, as well as accounting for teachers' contexts and characteristics matter for learning effectiveness (Opfer and Pedder, 2011[142]).

In this respect, there are a number of potential markers of quality with regard to the context of professional learning in the Flemish Community of Belgium. These markers relate to practitioner inquiry, engagement with research and data, as well as in terms of the sustainability and embeddedness of professional learning. The country visit to the Flemish Community of Belgium established a risk that the improvement of teaching (related to the improvement of valued student outcomes) will be left to chance if mechanisms for ensuring robust, embedded, extended and impactful CPL within the context of autonomy for schools are not developed and activated. This suggests a challenge for the Flemish Community of Belgium to establish, within the autonomous system, mechanisms for ensuring appropriate levels of certainty in relation to the quantity, nature and quality of professional learning the teachers of learners in the system take part in.

Practitioner inquiry and engagement with research

Practitioner inquiry can be a powerful approach to shape future professional learning in the Flemish Community. Inquiry oriented approaches (Sinnema, Meyer and Aitken, 2016[143]) are an important focus of teacher learning that impact improvement and are increasingly a feature of CPL initiatives internationally (Campbell et al., 2016[144]; Kaser and Halbert, 2014[145]). These initiatives draw on many decades of research. Teacher research should be embedded in the context of teachers' work, and not as an imitation of academic research (Stenhouse, 1975[146]). There is a well-established call for such inquiry also in relation to teacher education. Teacher education should not aim to compel teachers to obey teaching rules or follow rigid prescriptions, but to educate them to reason soundly about, and develop their teaching performance (Fenstermacher, 2009[147]).

In powerful professional learning, teachers are supported to respond to complexity through developing adaptive expertise (Le Fevre et al., 2020[148]). They learn to adopt an evaluative inquiry stance as well as to value and use deep conceptual knowledge, be agentic, aware of cultural positionings, metacognitive and with a systemic focus. Supporting teachers to become adaptive experts who can use deep conceptual knowledge to understand and work effectively to solve problems in novel situations (Le Fevre, Timperley and Ell, 2015[149]) is a key marker of high quality professional learning. Professional learning that supports adaptive expertise will engage teachers with the principles underlying their practice.

Building teachers' engagement with research is an equally important focus for CPL. Many recognise the positive relationship between knowledge generated through research and through practice, and the value of practitioners engaging with research to inform their thinking and decisions about teaching and learning (Winch, Oancea and Orchard., 2015[150]; Brown and Zhang, 2016[151]). When school climates are focused on learning, experimentation, and valuing new ideas, teachers report more interactions around teaching and learning that are more frequent and useful, and more research/evidence use in their schools (Brown, Daly and Liou, 2016[152]).

Research engagement is also a challenging element of CPL. Even in systems that explicitly value and promote research engagement (Sinnema and Aitken, 2014[153]) through wide-ranging initiatives, teachers

are unlikely to engage with research where they do not have sufficient support, conducive conditions and adequate resourcing to support that aspiration (Lai and Sinnema, (In Press)[154]). In the New Zealand system, for example, professional learning is embedded in the curriculum through a research-derived and research-promoting model of pedagogy called Teaching as Inquiry (Box 4.1). In addition, research engagement is formalised in the standards for the teaching profession; and a range of initiatives promote practitioner/researcher partnerships.

Box 4.1. Collaborative Inquiry – Teacher-led innovation

A collaborative inquiry initiative in New Zealand, the Teacher-led innovation, was designed to support quality practice that improves student achievement, which can be shared and adapted for use across other schools. It aimed to raise student achievement and strengthen teaching and education leadership by funding groups of teachers to have time together to develop innovative teaching practice in order to improve learning outcomes, particularly for priority learners, students with special education needs and students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

The initiative was characterised by:

- Collaborative Inquiry: groups of teachers working together to understand their practice and the impact on students
- Expertise: leveraging expertise within schools, complemented by support from external experts
- Flexibility and adaptability: project teams and fund administration need to respond to change
- Knowledge mobilisation: knowledge gained from projects needs to be shared.

An evaluation of the initiative found that teacher projects are most likely to be effective effective when they are underpinned by carefully and logically designed proposals that take account of the experience of others, involve an iterative and collaborative process, and are informed by high quality evidence with respect to the innovative practices of focus.

Once underway, effective Teacher-led innovation fund projects were found to be characterised by:

- Unrelenting focus on improvement—improvement of both teaching and learning;
- Levels of risk-taking and innovation appropriate to the capacity of the teachers and contexts involved;
- High-quality collaboration—well-established collaboration routines and norms, that are regular and occur over an extended duration;
- High-quality data and data analysis;
- High-quality, supportive *and* rigorous discussion;
- High-quality expertise from internal sources (teacher leadership) and external sources (relevant quality research, and external experts whose expertise aligns with team needs).

One team of teachers, for example, noticed a group of students underachieving in reading – they were puzzled about why and motivated to understand why this was so, and how they might solve the problem together. They focused on three main goals—improving transition processes (making them smooth and educationally and culturally responsive), improving student attendance, and improving literacy progress (acceleration). Together, they decided on a range of activities to carry out together to help understand and solve the problem. These activities included:

- Explicit and consistent literacy teaching approaches
- Regular data collection and systematic monitoring
- Regular peer observation and reflection

- Reading research together
- Peer review meetings with learning data
- Parent and early childhood education engagement activities
- Templates (as a basis for joint work and inquiry).

Source: Sinnema, C. (2018[155]), The Promise of Improvement Through and Of the Teacher Led Innovation Fund: Evaluation of the Teacher-Led Innovation Fund - Final Report to the Ministry of Education.

During the country visit in the Flemish Community, many actors in the CPL system referred to difficulties in helping teachers engage with research. Providers tended to either avoid expecting teachers to engage with research, because of the view, for example, that research was not sufficiently related to teachers' reality and daily practice or that they see themselves "as teachers, not researchers". It was also suggested that the language of research was often not easily accessible, with some providers mentioning their role in translating research. In further developing the professional learning system in the Flemish Community, it will be important to avoid a perception of teaching and inquiring as incompatible alternatives.

The study team heard of several examples of university colleges or universities working closely with schools to develop evidence-informed practice and engaging teachers in research, although these were not widespread. Promising approaches in school-university partnerships in Flanders include connections to initial teacher education where schools have a group of student interns who engage in research. This can lead to a more coherent continuum of professional growth for teachers. Going further, developing deep and sustainable partnerships between academics and schools can strengthen engagement with and use of research and other evidence (Box 4.2).

Box 4.2. Features of Effective School-University Partnerships

Research-practice partnerships may involve Initial Teacher Education, Continuing Professional Development and research communities together with practitioners in forms of inquiry and action research. Some include all three, with further initiatives focusing on specific communities and / or focus areas. Effective partnerships appear to share certain features:

- Skills and dispositions to support such collaboration – including ability of those in higher education acting in different ways, converse in different languages and listen to different voices
- Nature and quality of relationships – mutual respect, trust and sense of being valued
- Sufficient time and flexibility to adapt as the partnership evolves
- Sustained engagement from key institutions – including commitment of leaders
- A distinct partnership culture – 'third space' to generate ideas, grow mutual approaches and enable innovation to thrive
- Membership extended to the wider community, especially parents
- Working together on specific developments in a spirit of collaborative inquiry, supported with joint professional development
- Problem-centred approach to local problem solving with design-led strategies - recognising that problems and partnerships to address them are complex, with multiple strands
- Commitment to genuine collaboration, ensuring the practical arrangements and investment in evaluation

Source: Handscomb, G., Gu, Q. and Varley, M. (2014[156]) *School University Partnerships: Fulfilling the Potential*, Bristol: NCCPE, https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/literature_review_final.pdf (accessed on 3 February 2021).

Engagement with data

A growing body of research sets out the benefits of teachers and school leaders engaging with data in order to improve teaching and learning. This includes data of a range of types (quantitative and qualitative) and from a range of levels – including individual student data, classroom, school and system-level data. Data use should be an organisational routine to contribute to sustainable improvements for all stakeholders; this has implications not only for teachers, but also for leaders who have a role to play in ensuring teachers have access to data, and time to work with it as part of their professional development (Schildkamp, 2018[157]).

Professional development opportunities focused on data use typically address educators' data use knowledge, skills and attitudes. The goal of ultimately impacting on student achievement requires the challenging task of converting data to useful information and then to appropriate action (Poortman, Schildkamp and & Lai, 2016[158]). Effective in-service professional development in the use of data relies on a number of features, among which creating structures and protocols for data use; and provision of professional development over extended periods of time (Schildkamp and Poortman, 2019[159]).

CPL in the Flemish Community of Belgium does not tend to involve teachers using data. In the interviews conducted with stakeholders, the perception of the role of data in relation to teachers' professional learning seemed to be often neutral or even negative. While some providers offer CPL for teachers on data-informed practice, interviews indicated that few schools ask for the results of national tests and many consider that engaging with data (or doing research, including practitioner research) remains a challenging aspect of teachers' practice.

In this context, the introduction of new standardised assessments (see Section 2) in the Flemish Community may present an opportunity to engage the system in a broader reflection and dialogue about the usefulness of different types of data – standardised assessment results being one among others – to support the improvement of teaching and learning. The new standardised assessments proposed by the Flemish Government in the 2019-24 Policy Note are intended to provide information on the extent to which pupils achieve the attainment targets, the learning gains of individual pupils and the learning gains at school level. Schools whose students perform significantly below expectations on the national assessments will be required to enter into a freely chosen guidance pathway to improve the quality of their education. The Policy Note refers to the importance of teachers' data literacy skills and inquisitive mindset for them to use assessment data effectively to enhance pupil guidance and internal quality assurance. The introduction of national assessments is intended to be accompanied by specific professional learning opportunities for teachers. Against this backdrop, the Flemish Department of Education and Training has commissioned a case study to the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) on the introduction of standardised assessments, and how they could best support efforts to ensure high quality education for pupils.

Sustained and embedded professional learning

Much research reveals how professional learning that is sustained and embedded in the day-to-day work of teachers can support improvements in teachers' knowledge, skills and capabilities. For example, a study of more than 2 000 Finish teachers revealed that teachers' sense of professional agency depends on "perceiving instruction as a bidirectional process, use of students as a resource for professional learning and continuous reflection on teaching practices" (Soini, Pietarinen and & Pyhältö, 2016[160]). Active professional agency thus requires "reflecting and adapting but also efforts to learn at work" and can result into enhanced learning and well-being.

When professional learning is sustained and embedded it enables providing a context more likely conducive to learning (Timperley et al., 2007[94]). Such a context allows to challenge prevailing discourses, participate in professional communities, process new understandings, question problematic beliefs, and analyse the impact of one's own teaching on student learning with others in the community. CPL in the

Flemish Community of Belgium, as it was described by different actors to the OECD study team, is not yet typically embedded in the day-to-day practice of teachers with learners and colleagues. The lack of embeddedness is likely to explain why the kind of professional learning in which beliefs about teaching and learning are engaged was seldom mentioned during the country visit. Such belief engagement is critical when seeking to change and improve practices.

Threats and opportunities

Positioning teachers as lifelong learners

The country visit found strong evidence of explicit attention to CPL for those at the beginning of their career which is commendable. There was, however, little to suggest that CPL is currently resourced or organised in ways that ensure teachers have opportunities throughout their career. The focus on early career teachers does not position teachers as lifelong learners who can benefit from CPL throughout their teaching. These findings mirror research from the Flemish context, which indicate that experienced teachers do have a sense of collective responsibility and do occasionally engage in reflective dialogue, but they rarely engage in the de-privatisation of practice. While experienced teachers have high self-efficacy, the more experience teachers had, the less likely they were to report having changed their classroom practice or having become more competent (Vanblaere and Devos, 2015[82]). Practices used in Flemish schools for induction of new teachers could thus helpfully be extended to all teachers to enhance school-based learning opportunities.

It is important to note that the limited engagement in lifelong learning is not a phenomenon specific to the education sector, but one that appears to characterise the tertiary-educated workforce in Flanders more broadly. As mentioned in Section 2, evidence from the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) shows that the Flemish Community of Belgium displays one of the lowest shares of tertiary-educated workers (27%) expressing a need for further training to do their job among OECD countries (41% on average for tertiary-educated workers) (OECD, 2019[27]). While such low levels of need may reflect that workers with tertiary-education and teachers are well equipped in terms of skills for their working environments, it can also suggest a lack of recognition of the need for lifelong learning. It was suggested in the OECD study interviews that the low levels of engagement in lifelong learning might be related to a relatively stable labour market and high rates of job security in the Flemish Community of Belgium.

Certainly, in the case of the teaching workforce, those with a permanent contract have very substantial job security in the Flemish Community. Teachers with a permanency status continue to be employed even when their jobs become redundant due to falling student numbers. Although it is theoretically possible to dismiss a teacher with permanent status as a result of a disciplinary measure or after multiple consecutive “insufficient” evaluations, this only exceptionally happens in practice (Nusche et al., 2015[23]). The career structure for teachers in Flanders offers few opportunities for professional growth and promotion. Although a degree of job differentiation can be offered at the school level, there are no distinct stages in the teacher career associated with competence levels or specific roles and responsibilities taken on in schools.

Multi-stage career structures can offer the opportunity to create powerful links between teacher appraisal, professional learning and career advancement. An important aspect of this is to link expectations of teacher competences at different stages of a career (as reflected in professional profiles) and the responsibilities of teachers in schools (as reflected in career structures). Such a career structure could formalise opportunities for greater career diversification and enhance the attractiveness of the teaching career and motivation for continuing professional learning (Nusche et al., 2015[23]). Box 4.3 provides an example from Estonia. Career structures can also help incentivise and support teacher leadership in schools, including roles for teachers’ to lead their colleagues’ professional learning (more on this below).

Box 4.3. Multi-stage structure of the teaching career in Estonia

In 2013, Estonia introduced a vertical career structure alongside a reformed system of teacher professional qualifications. Its main aim is to serve as a reference for teachers' competence development and it comprises four distinct stages, reflecting different levels of professional skills and experience. Unlike many other multi-stage career structures, the stages are not formally linked to salaries and access to higher stages is voluntary. The career stage Level 7.1 is awarded indefinitely, while Levels 7.2 and 8 are awarded for a five-year period after which the teacher must reapply.

- Teacher (Level 7.1): Awarded upon entrance into the teaching profession, following the completion of an initial teacher education programme (at Master's degree level) or following the recognition of professional qualifications for this level by the teacher professional body.
- Senior teacher (Level 7.2): Awarded to teachers who, in addition to their regular teaching activities, support the development of the school and of other teachers and are involved in methodological work at the school level.
- Master teacher (Level 8): Awarded to teachers who, in addition to their regular teaching activities, participate in development and creative activities in and outside their school and closely co-operate with a higher education institution.

The Estonian Qualifications Authority has developed professional standards that define the competences associated with each stage of the career structure. A teacher professional organisation (the Estonian Association of Teachers) is responsible for the certification process that determines teachers' advancement across career stages. Twice a year, teachers can apply for a new certification. A three-member committee oversees the two-stage application process, which involves an evaluation of the candidate's application materials and an interview.

Source: Santiago, P., Levitas, A.; Radó, P.; Shewbridge, C (2016[161]), OECD Reviews of School Resources: Estonia 2016, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264251731-en.

Strengthening teacher leadership

International evidence highlights the importance of leaders supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality (Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008[42]; Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd, 2009[86]). Distributed leadership is critical to supporting such leadership (Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008[42]) and to supporting teacher development more broadly (Spillane, 2005[162]; Harris, Jones and Huffman, 2018[163]). This involves a teacher leadership focus on agency for enhancing pedagogical practices among colleagues to improve pupils' educational experiences and outcomes (York-Barr and Duke, 2004[164]). Box 4.4 provides some examples from other countries.

The country visit revealed that shared leadership is spoken about but does not appear to be embedded or incentivised, particularly in primary schools. A few leadership positions exist, for example guidance co-ordinators, ICT co-ordinators, and care co-ordinators, but none of them is explicitly designed to lead professional learning in schools. Teachers can be assigned responsibilities for overseeing the induction of or mentoring new teachers. In secondary schools, there are greater opportunities to develop shared pedagogical leadership through subject department chairs. However, there is mixed understanding of shared leadership and the potential of teacher leadership is underused. Consequently, ensuring the coherence, follow through and evaluation of the school's professionalisation policy and its connection to associated activities such as teacher appraisal can depend on the principal alone. This is problematic given that the OECD country visit team heard that Flemish school leaders often struggle to find time for such activities. In addition, according to TALIS, only 15.1% of lower-secondary principals' time is spent on

curriculum and teaching related tasks, including mentoring teachers and designing and organising professional development activities for teachers (OECD, 2019[17])[3]. While this is only slightly lower than the OECD average (16.6%), this was identified in the previous TALIS study as a key feature of instructional leadership of school principals (OECD, 2016[89]), and other research on successful leaders highlights their focus on improving the instructional programme and promoting and participating in teacher professional development (Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins, 2019[85]; Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd, 2009[86]).

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, there is an opportunity to increase structures and supports to enable teachers to be seen as, and see themselves as not just the recipients of CPL, but as leaders of others' professional learning. Improved system conditions may enable leaders and teachers at all levels of the system to draw on their areas of expertise, and enact responsibility for leading teachers' professional learning within the autonomy that characterises the system. The basic competences of newly graduated teachers and the professional profile framework (Box 1.1) create space for such teacher leadership, as they focus on teachers as members of education teams, able to collaborate and work with colleagues and as members of educational community whose responsibility can also encompass their own and others' professional learning.

Box 4.4. Developing new professional learning leaders in high-performing systems

New professional learning leaders are developed at the school and system level in different countries. They are regularly trained alongside school principals so each school has multiple leaders to continually improve professional learning. In schools, they work closely with school principals and ensure that teachers' individual and collective professional learning is meeting school objectives. While job titles vary across systems – they are school staff developers in Singapore and co-ordinators of inquiry in British Columbia – what is common is that they are peer leaders, chosen from the teaching force and sometimes remaining one of the teachers in a school. Individual teachers make behavioural shifts when they see colleagues – not just official leaders – role-modelling effective practices.

School staff developers (SSDs) are professional learning leaders in Singapore schools. Senior teachers are appointed to this role, where they champion, plan and help facilitate professional learning within a school. They design and deliver professional learning initiatives, and lead induction and mentoring programmes for new and novice teachers. They also provide support for senior teachers and lead teachers who mentor less experienced teachers. Sometimes, they simply find the best external expertise to target an individual teacher need. School leaders plan and set school learning directions and objectives in school development plans. The SSDs then create a 'Total Learning Plan' to achieve school objectives. The plan sets strategic objectives for teacher learning, the approach to achieve them, and the specific professional learning programmes, activities and time required to deliver them.

Source: Jensen, B. et al. (2016[37]), Beyond PD: Teacher Professional Learning in High-Performing Systems, National Center on Education and the Economy, https://www.ncee.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/BeyondPDWeb.pdf (accessed on 26 February 2021).

The new curriculum as a lever to develop teachers' commitment to shared aspirations

The reform of the curriculum in the Flemish Community of Belgium present a potential opportunity to be used as a lever for developing teachers' commitment to shared aspirations around which they are supported to collaborate and professionalise. However, the processes for developing, finalising and introducing the new curriculum need to be sufficiently inclusive for the sector to feel ownership of and

[3] 14.4% of primary principals' time is spent on curriculum and teaching related tasks.

commitment to it. With effort toward those conditions, a new curriculum can provide the basis for bringing teachers together for CPL focused on those curriculum goals. In addition, when practitioners establish and sustain strong commitment to aspirations for the system set out in a new curriculum, the priorities for the foci of CPL are easier to establish, the system can more efficiently target resources toward those priorities, and there is more likely to be collective demand for professional learning in support of those aspirations.

For instance, following the introduction of the 2007 curriculum in New Zealand, high quality support was found to have a role in improving the regard that educators had for the curriculum, in ways that increased their confidence, which in turn contributed to their ability to give effect to the curriculum in their practice (Box 4.5). In addition, focusing on teachers' interpretations and understandings of the new curriculum were key to its success, and had implications for professional learning. Limited shifts in curriculum-related practices signalled a need for more opportunities for theory engagement in relation to the curriculum as a whole and its elements. Educators' existing beliefs need to be cued (in relation to the new understandings) and examined in relation to the new learning. Giving effect to real change in response to the curriculum requires confidence, and confidence requires (amongst other things) deep understandings about the distinctions between the old and the new. In this, lies an opportunity for professional learning to focus on those distinctions, with targeted efforts to establish shared understandings about the recently and soon to be introduced attainment targets.

Box 4.5. Collaborative curriculum design in New Zealand

In New Zealand, work is underway in 2021 to refresh the national curriculum so that teachers will be better supported to design relevant and exciting learning experiences and make a positive difference for learners, their families and communities. Ministry officials have signalled their commitment to a collaborative process of co-design with opportunities for educators across the sector, learners, parents and families to be involved at all stages of the refresh.

One of the first elements of the New Zealand Curriculum to be refreshed, the "New Zealand's histories curriculum" has seen a draft designed in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders. The draft has been the focus of widespread public consultation over several months, including a survey. Schools have also been invited to test the draft content over two school terms and provide feedback on their experience to the Ministry of Education.

Source: New Zealand Ministry of Education, n.d., "Changes in education: National curriculum refresh", https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/changes-in-education/national-curriculum-refresh (accessed on 30 January 2021).

Challenges associated with new curricula being realised, including challenges of depth, spread, reach, and pace, present particular demands for professional learning (Sinnema and Stoll, 2020[68]). Those learning demands relate to teachers' commitment to, knowledge and understanding of, and capability in curriculum. Rather than relying on external professional learning provision, schools as learning organisations (Kools and Stoll, 2016[88]) can create the conditions required to respond to those challenges and learning demands. A further opportunity is to support teachers to make the connection between system-wide priorities (such as a curriculum), and their own practice. Currently, as the country visit revealed, there is a perception that teachers do not always recognise their own role or the agency they could have in contributing to addressing problems identified in the system.

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, the shift, for example, to key competences no longer ordered by subject or discipline, and the emphasis placed on transversal skills alongside transdisciplinary knowledge suggest an important paradigm shift for teachers and schools. This shift has implications for the approaches teachers take to pedagogy and assessment, and for the resources and tools they use. Professional learning can be targeted to align with the associated capabilities teachers will need to meet the demands and enjoy the opportunities of the new curriculum. The sequence of introducing the new

attainment targets first in the 1st stage of secondary education followed by the 2nd and 3rd stage and then primary education also presents opportunities for the system to learn as the curriculum is developed and introduced. This will demand that teachers are not merely informed about the curriculum whereby it is just, as the country visit indicated, “information on paper” but meaningful engagement in the design process.

The country visit highlighted the potential of CPL in particular circumstances—when there is a real need for CPL, then there is motivation. Just as the teachers were motivated toward professional learning to meet their learning needs for remote teaching during the pandemic, the new curriculum, and related strategies for student assessment, could be designed and implemented in ways that develop a shared sense of teachers’ learning needs for realising aspirations for students in the Flemish Community of Belgium.

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Teachers Professional Learning Study

This report is part of the OECD Teachers' Professional Learning (TPL) Study. The TPL study examines the policy environments that support teachers' professional growth by exploring common strengths and challenges in participating jurisdictions. In doing so, the TPL study aims to facilitate peer learning, enrich national debates through international exchange and support the development of effective teacher learning systems at both the system and school levels.

For more information

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Annex A. Professional learning in the Flemish Community of Belgium in context

Figure A A.1. A school-level snapshot of TPL: How does the Flemish Community of Belgium compare?

Top 25% value among OECD countries

Bottom 25% value among OECD countries

	% of principals who received school administration or principal training programme / course prior to appointment	% principals who received instructional leadership training / course prior to appointment	% of principals who develop a professional development plan for their school	% of principals who support co-operation among teachers to develop new teaching practices	% principals who ensure teachers take responsibility for improving their teaching skills	% of principals who need PD in designing professional development for/with teachers	% of teachers who report that observe other teachers' classes and provide feedback in their school at least once a month	% of teachers who report that they work with other teachers in their school to ensure common standards for assessing student progress at least once a month	% of teachers who report that they participate in collaborative professional learning in their school at least once a month	% of teachers who report that they teach jointly as part of same class in their school at least once a month
Flemish Comm. (Belgium)	**14.6**	**13.5**	**52.8**	**51.4**	**49.4**	**25.4**	**3.3**	**21.7**	**4.3**	**18.1**
Alberta (Canada)	30.0	17.1	49.2	52.3	48.7	6.1	7.9	43.1	29.2	22.2
Australia	12.1	18.8	61.8	60.3	76.4	6.6	10.5	62.3	39.0	23.4
Austria	w	w	78.5	61.3	53.6	16.5	10.2	46.1	13.3	63.0
Belgium	24.8	29.2	39.6	52.0	49.0	22.8	4.5	25.9	3.9	20.8
Chile	41.4	30.6	64.0	79.3	81.7	24.2	6.3	32.4	24.2	28.5
Colombia	20.1	19.2	57.8	84.2	77.9	37.9	11.8	30.4	19.4	27.7
Czech Republic	23.3	17.7	54.5	60.2	68.5	27.5	7.8	50.2	23.0	7.1
Denmark	27.1	25.0	47.3	45.2	59.4	3.4	11.1	37.9	12.5	36.1

England (UK)	43.4	37.9	70.2	51.0	66.9	2.0	11.5	45.8	25.5	13.5
Estonia	30.1	17.4	38.2	45.3	49.3	25.6	5.2	42.8	19.4	21.5
Finland	75.5	23.9	70.9	64.8	49.4	17.7	6.6	38.1	8.5	34.4
France	29.1	m	20.6	55.8	47.9	21.4	m	23.9	3.2	15.5
Hungary	40.7	70.6	41.0	59.2	58.9	17.8	7.2	17.9	14.2	24.1
Iceland	23.7	29.0	51.6	59.1	52.7	13.7	9.5	45.0	36.3	31.7
Israel	56.1	38.5	65.1	62.3	72.0	30.7	6.5	55.5	30.6	21.6
Italy	29.3	20.7	72.1	65.6	62.0	30.9	24.7	43.9	17.9	62.3
Japan	12.9	47.1	42.8	30.6	45.0	35.8	13.9	24.3	5.9	58.3
Korea	48.3	61.9	64.3	46.0	58.4	41.3	6.0	17.0	12.8	18.7
Latvia	14.3	16.9	54.0	69.5	82.8	16.9	8.5	40.7	12.5	17.2
Lithuania	17.5	9.2	48.3	62.6	80.6	21.0	4.5	21.1	11.3	5.4
Mexico	14.0	15.9	82.7	70.7	74.7	22.0	7.8	36.5	33.1	53.3
Netherlands	12.0	12.8	81.5	38.7	73.9	37.1	7.4	28.3	14.7	15.8
New Zealand	24.8	22.4	55.2	56.9	69.0	14.5	11.0	52.7	44.2	23.3
Norway	33.4	43.6	32.4	64.6	51.6	11.4	11.1	63.1	43.5	37.1
OECD average	**30.7**	**28.9**	**55.0**	**59.3**	**62.6**	**20.4**	**8.8**	**39.9**	**21.2**	**27.9**
Portugal	41.5	18.8	47.7	61.3	59.7	14.9	6.7	43.2	4.8	22.6
Slovak Republic	16.4	16.7	59.7	65.0	79.0	10.6	4.5	33.2	1.9	33.5
South Africa	31.6	33.3	66.4	70.7	77.0	38.5	8.5	45.3	12.5	11.2
Spain	32.9	25.8	40.6	63.3	57.8	22.7	5.4	49.7	20.8	20.9
Sweden	21.9	33.8	39.8	53.9	42.2	7.6	13.8	57.7	43.7	42.3
Turkey	15.2	21.5	45.1	70.6	80.6	13.8	12.9	38.6	28.6	22.5
United States	50.7	55.9	63.8	59.0	65.8	20.2	6.7	42.3	34.4	21.1

Notes: For the following indicators: % of principals who received school administration or principal training programme / course prior to appointment; % principals who received instructional leadership training / course prior to appointment; % of principals who develop a professional development plan for their school; % of principals who support co-operation among teachers to develop new teaching practices; % principals who ensure teachers take responsibility for improving their teaching skills; % of principals who need PD in designing professional development for/with teachers - in Australia, the participation rate of principals is too low to ensure comparability for principals' reports and country estimates are not included in the OECD average.

Source:OECD (2019[17]) TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners, OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en.

Figure A A.2. A system-level snapshot of TPL: How does the Flemish Community of Belgium compare?

Top 25% value among OECD countries **Bottom 25% value among OECD countries**

	% of teachers participating in a least one PD activity in the 12 months prior to the survey	Average number of different PD activities in which teachers participated in the 12 months prior to the survey	Average number of hours (i.e. 60 minutes) spent by teachers on PD in the most recent complete calendar week	% of teachers reporting : Barriers to participate (lack of pre-requisites)	% of teachers reporting : Barriers to participate (too expensive/ unaffordable)	% of teachers reporting : Barriers to participate (conflicts with work schedule)	% of teachers reporting : Barriers to participate (no relevant PD on offer)	% of teachers reporting : Barriers to participate (no incentives to take part)	% of teachers reporting : Barriers to participate (lack of employer support)	% of teachers reporting : Barriers to participate (family responsibilities)	% of teachers who "agree" or "strongly agree" that the teaching profession is valued in society	% principals reporting that a shortage of qualified teachers hinders the school's capacity to provide quality instruction "quite a bit" or "a lot"
Flemish Comm. (Belgium)	**97.1**	**3.6**	**0.8**	**8.3**	**26.6**	**45.6**	**29.5**	**25.7**	**17.1**	**33.1**	**25.8**	**34.2**
Alberta (Canada)	98.7	4.5	1.5	4.7	41.6	52.5	29.4	41.2	15.7	40.8	62.7	6.8
Australia	99.3	5.2	1.7	6.4	43.7	60.1	21.8	35.2	23.3	31.5	44.7	15.5
Austria	98.7	3.9	1.3	5.9	14.1	43.2	52.0	39.0	13.3	28.2	16.1	4.4
Belgium	94.2	3.1	0.8	14.0	29.0	50.0	37.5	39.5	19.0	40.3	16.3	46.5
Chile	86.9	2.8	2.3	15.5	77.4	68.8	60.4	73.6	61.0	48.3	14.6	17.8
Colombia	90.8	4.0	4.6	15.7	77.3	49.4	42.2	67.9	65.2	24.8	40.2	52.6
Czech Republic	97.3	3.8	1.7	8.0	29.8	50.8	22.0	30.5	15.1	34.8	16.0	18.2
Denmark	92.4	3.2	0.8	5.9	51.2	49.9	38.3	38.9	20.1	24.1	18.5	22.4
England (UK)	96.5	4.0	1.0	8.4	56.5	64.5	27.1	44.3	28.2	31.9	28.8	37.6
Estonia	97.7	5.0	1.8	7.7	32.1	37.6	30.2	14.7	12.2	25.2	26.4	17.7
Finland	92.7	3.4	0.8	5.8	37.2	52.0	41.3	51.9	26.6	37.6	58.2	2.1

France	82.6	2.4	0.8	12.9	25.9	45.5	39.7	46.9	17.8	44.8	6.6	36.2
Hungary	94.5	4.0	1.0	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	11.8	29.2
Iceland	95.5	4.6	1.6	5.6	39.0	61.9	40.9	44.0	14.4	45.4	10.1	6.5
Israel	96.2	4.5	2.2	9.0	22.8	48.6	28.7	58.3	25.6	52.3	30.4	37.4
Italy	93.2	3.3	1.8	15.4	53.6	55.3	41.0	70.2	34.1	36.8	12.1	41.1
Japan	89.2	3.6	0.6	30.7	60.7	87.0	38.1	46.3	57.3	67.1	34.4	30.2
Korea	97.8	5.7	2.6	40.4	57.3	88.1	39.5	65.9	71.3	64.5	67.0	11.0
Latvia	98.6	5.2	1.5	6.6	37.5	32.3	21.4	20.5	11.7	22.7	23.3	22.9
Lithuania	99.4	6.1	2.6	2.9	53.8	46.9	43.0	30.7	23.2	16.2	14.1	11.8
Mexico	89.4	3.6	3.4	29.2	58.2	53.3	54.3	72.1	68.0	30.3	41.7	18.5
Netherlands	98.2	4.3	1.9	4.9	22.5	44.0	33.3	22.3	23.9	25.0	30.7	20.5
New Zealand	98.5	4.8	1.8	7.7	44.2	55.8	35.4	42.3	23.6	31.3	33.6	28.5
Norway	93.8	3.4	1.3	7.8	43.4	49.1	17.8	33.3	28.4	31.5	34.8	3.6
OECD average	**94.5**	**4.0**	**1.7**	**11.0**	**44.6**	**54.4**	**38.2**	**47.6**	**31.8**	**37.3**	**25.8**	**21.0**
Portugal	88.0	2.9	1.6	12.1	65.9	77.2	61.9	84.6	89.1	53.4	9.1	32.1
Slovak Republic	92.2	3.4	1.8	9.5	42.9	30.4	40.3	42.8	12.6	38.2	4.5	8.2
Slovenia	98.3	4.7	2.4	4.1	47.2	58.2	33.4	48.0	19.3	32.6	5.6	1.1
Spain	91.8	3.3	1.7	9.6	41.6	58.6	53.7	76.3	28.9	58.1	14.1	5.8
Sweden	95.4	3.9	1.1	8.7	52.5	56.5	41.4	32.1	32.0	20.1	10.7	13.4
Turkey	93.6	4.3	1.5	7.9	41.0	55.9	51.3	68.7	55.2	39.1	26.0	22.4
United States	98.1	4.5	1.7	8.3	38.2	48.5	27.3	46.9	18.8	42.3	36.3	23.7

Note: For "% principals reporting that a shortage of qualified teachers hinders the school's capacity to provide quality instruction "quite a bit" or "a lot"" - in Australia, the participation rate of principals is too low to ensure comparability for principals' reports and country estimates are not included in the OECD average.
*Source:*OECD (2019[17]) TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners, OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en.

Figure A A.3. A teacher-level snapshot of TPL: How does the Flemish Community of Belgium compare?

Top 25% value among OECD countries

Bottom 25% value among OECD countries

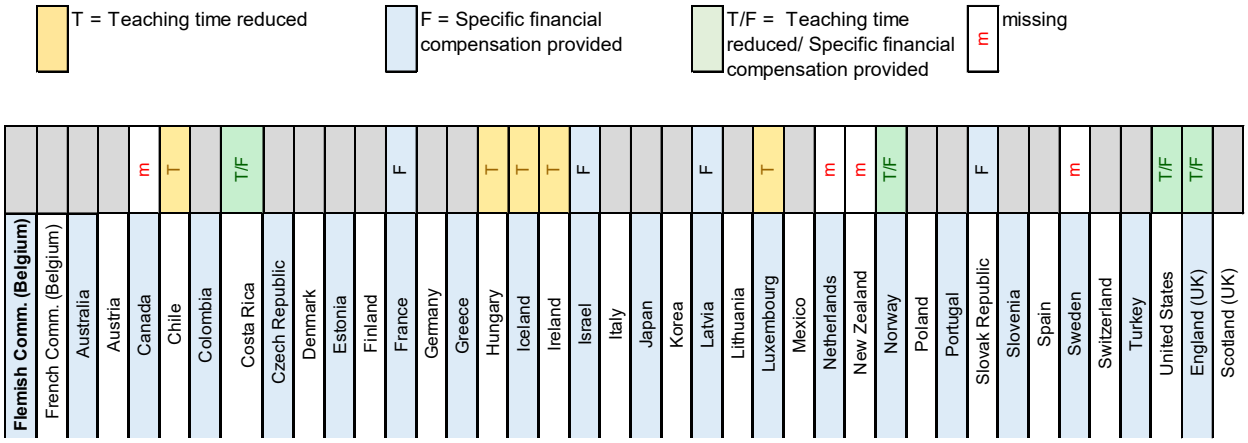
	% of teachers reporting PD activities had a positive impact on teachers' practice during last 12 months	%of novice teachers with assigned mentor	% of experienced teachers with assigned mentor	%of novice teachers who benefitted from formal induction at their current school	%of novice teachers who benefitted from informal induction at their current school	% of experienced teachers who benefitted from formal induction at their current school	% of experienced teachers who benefitted from informal induction at their current school	% of teachers participating in peer/self-observation & coaching	% of teachers participating in peer networks
Flemish Comm. (Belgium)	**76.6**	**40.5**	**2.6**	**61.2**	**62.1**	**31.0**	**34.9**	**34.4**	**32.7**
Alberta (Canada)	91.4	24.7	6.1	44.9	41.4	24.4	37.1	40.7	63.4
Australia	91.7	36.7	11.8	60.9	68.1	52.6	59.9	69.7	61.2
Austria	79.6	10.8	1.0	27.9	28.1	12.8	14.3	30.7	22.3
Belgium	69.2	24.9	2.0	46.7	49.5	28.7	32.8	25.4	41.0
Chile	76.5	7.4	3.8	23.4	25.5	24.6	24.2	37.6	20.2
Colombia	89.4	21.6	11.2	49.2	41.4	41.6	37.7	37.3	30.2
Czech Republic	78.4	25.9	2.8	44.3	56.4	39.2	51.1	44.8	23.6
Denmark	70.9	15.0	2.1	20.1	38.8	17.4	30.7	31.4	35.7
England (UK)	82.0	37.2	6.3	81.1	66.5	60.7	62.8	71.1	44.8
Estonia	76.5	17.4	1.6	20.8	43.4	16.9	25.7	51.8	58.5
Finland	78.6	9.7	2.5	27.4	51.9	25.8	52.9	14.2	33.9
France	70.6	16.6	1.4	13.8	21.4	6.3	13.4	19.9	26.5
Hungary	m	27.3	1.8	23.3	24.6	22.2	27.4	51.4	29.5
Iceland	82.2	17.5	4.0	17.7	38.2	15.5	26.8	23.4	55.7
Israel	81.3	46.6	12.5	42.1	30.7	28.4	28.3	49.4	53.2
Italy	84.3	5.1	2.0	10.6	11.4	20.5	18.8	24.7	31.8
Japan	91.5	39.9	17.6	32.2	17.0	9.4	7.2	55.2	30.6
Korea	86.8	16.3	7.2	20.8	22.7	15.0	21.5	75.7	68.2
Latvia	88.6	16.0	2.3	30.5	42.8	33.5	39.6	61.1	37.8
Lithuania	89.0	9.0	1.7	22.6	33.3	15.4	20.2	69.1	55.5

Mexico	85.0	17.2	7.8	31.6	30.0	26.5	29.9	41.1	33.6
Netherlands	82.3	40.8	7.1	67.0	59.1	49.8	55.0	49.6	38.4
New Zealand	86.9	56.4	18.4	76.4	75.9	51.5	59.0	77.7	57.8
Norway	78.0	17.7	0.8	35.8	46.2	14.1	28.3	24.6	40.2
OECD average	**81.8**	**21.9**	**5.1**	**35.8**	**38.9**	**27.6**	**33.6**	**43.9**	**39.9**
Portugal	81.9	14.1	6.6	14.8	37.5	14.2	41.4	29.4	13.9
Slovak Republic	80.4	21.8	2.3	57.2	45.4	48.0	48.0	52.5	23.2
Slovenia	87.2	5.4	0.7	31.8	35.0	43.4	46.7	58.9	42.7
Spain	78.8	10.2	1.4	18.3	17.5	20.8	19.4	18.6	24.1
Sweden	72.5	16.8	2.5	25.8	39.6	12.8	24.6	46.8	46.6
Turkey	71.8	15.0	1.7	30.1	8.6	19.7	8.5	21.5	43.1
United States	89.3	39.2	8.4	61.5	59.4	43.5	48.1	55.4	51.0

Source: OECD (2019[17]) TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners, OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en.

Figure A A.4. Compensation for participation in professional development activities

Lower secondary (general programme)



Source: Adapted from OECD (2020[165]),*Education at a Glance 2020*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/19991487 (accessed on 10 February 2021).