

POLICIES AND PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT BEGINNING TEACHERS IN BRAZIL

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ABSTRACT

Are there educational policies in support of beginning teachers in Brazil? In order to answer this question, we took into account data collected by a research on teacher policies in Brazil, which included 15 case studies in five states and 10 municipalities of the country. Data collection procedures consisted of document analysis and visits to the sites where interviews were conducted with those managers or administrators in charge of the implementation of teacher policies. Research results showed that in two states and one municipality, there were teacher training activities by the time of examination entry in the carrier. In two municipalities we could identify true policies to support beginning teachers as part of a policy of continuing education. Research data also revealed three programs aiming at to approximate university and school and to promote the insertion in teaching: Pibid, proposed by Capes/MEC, a Federal action, Literacy scholarship, a state of São Paulo initiative, and a student teacher scholarship from the Education Department of the municipality of Jundiaí. These initiatives are very recent, but very promising in the attempt to reduce the problems faced by beginning teachers.

EDUCATIONAL POLICIES • IN SERVICE TEACHERS EDUCATION •
CASE STUDIES

T HIS TEXT DESCRIBES AND ANALYZES policies aimed at beginning teachers and induction programs into teaching, which were identified during field studies that were part of the survey of teaching policies in Brazil (GATTI, BARRETTO, ANDRÉ, 2011).

The survey was the result of a joint UNESCO / Ministry of Education (MEC) initiative, supported by CONSED (the Council of Education Secretaries – *Conselho de Secretários de Educação*) and UNDIME (the National Union of Municipal Education Managers – *União Nacional de Dirigentes Municipais de Educação*), and its major objective was to map policies for the training, careers and evaluation of teachers in compulsory education and the incentives provided for their work. The study's methodology included an analysis of official Brazilian federal, state and municipal documents; the review of academic studies; and statements made in interviews of those in charge of policy-managing agencies, and field recordings. The data that was gathered allowed several actions supporting and valuing teachers to be detected in the midst of the complexity and diversity of federal, state and municipal education policies, and shed light on many other aspects that require greater attention and investment. Field studies conducted in five Brazilian states and ten cities showed that programs and policies to support beginning teachers exist, and they will be described and analyzed in this text.

RATIONALE BEHIND THIS STUDY

Among statements collected when gathering field data for the above-mentioned study, the manager of one of the Education Secretariats (ES) in

the study said that the flight of better-trained teachers towards the private education system was one of the main challenges faced in executing teacher-training activities. This statement highlights the issue of how to retain good teachers in public schools.

The 2006 OECD Report *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* addresses this issue, stressing that teaching policies must make sure that teachers work in an environment favoring their success. The report brings together data gathered in 25 countries, and shows that concerns about competent teachers abandoning the career has led some countries to adopt policies not only to attract, develop and recruit good professionals, but also to create conditions conducive to teachers wanting to stay in the profession.

Analyzing attrition rates from the teaching profession in several countries, the report states that the rate tends to be higher in the first few years of professional activity, and falls as teachers gain experience (OECD, 2006, p. 186).

This finding is a very clear argument for policies specifically geared towards beginning teachers. In their first years of teaching, as they transition from being students to being teachers, novices experience a period that Veeman (cited by MARCELO GARCÍA, 2011, p. 9) as described as a reality shock, often marked by developing the ability to cope or by quitting the profession. This is a crucial phase in the professional cycle, because beginning teachers have to actually teach while at the same time learning to teach, since there are certain behaviors that can only be learned in practical situations (FEIMAN cited by MARCELO GARCÍA, 2011, p. 9).

If the highest rates of attrition among teachers occur in the first years of the profession, and if this is “a period of intense tension and learning in generally unknown contexts, when beginning teachers must acquire professional knowledge and maintain a certain personal balance” (MARCELO GARCÍA, 2011, p. 9), then it is essential that there be programs—and preferable that there be policies—to train, support and follow up teachers as they commence their working lives.

New teachers have to accomplish many tasks, according to Marcelo García (2011, p. 9), such as getting to know their students, the curriculum and the school setting; properly planning the curriculum and their classes; beginning to develop a teaching repertoire that enables them to survive as teachers; building a community of learning in the classroom; and continuing to develop a professional identity. Their responsibility for student learning is great.

Induction programs that include support strategies, follow-up and capacity-building, can greatly help reduce the burden of these tasks and persuade new teachers how important it is to take part in continued professional development.

Acknowledging that training to teach does not end with the conclusion of teacher training courses, but must continue throughout their careers, is an important step for new teachers not to lose heart in the face of difficulties, and to be able to seek the necessary instruments and supports, whether this means more experienced colleagues, former teacher-training college lecturers, school-based activities, or learning in other training spaces. However, these initiatives must not depend on personal willingness or be limited to the individual sphere.

It is therefore essential that this support be available, and the major responsibility for that lies with education managing agencies, which must come up with programs or create appropriate conditions for schools to carry out projects enabling the transition from students to teachers. And these projects must be specifically designed for early professional experience, a moment that has entirely different features from pre-service training and ongoing training in that it is a transition phase, one in which individuals integrate with the teaching culture, the school culture, and learn the codes and standards of the profession. Education management agencies must also integrate induction programs into the broader sphere of professional development so that training activities are continued after the probation period.

The article by Imbernón (2006, p. 44), analyzing international reports on the teaching profession, underscores the fact that while there is general agreement that teacher knowledge and skill are insufficient to meet present and future education needs, paradoxically there appears to be little concern on the part of governments about the integration of new teachers into the profession, since “many countries lack systemic induction programs for beginning teachers”. Everyone agrees that the issue is important, states the author, but there is a scarcity of measures to address it.

The OECD report (2006) reiterates this state of affairs and explains that in its study of 25 countries, only ten reported having mandatory induction programs: Australia (certain states), France, Greece, Japan, Northern Ireland, South Korea, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Wales. In Scotland, participation by the teacher is voluntary, but the vast majority do so. In six countries, induction is at the discretion of the schools, and there are no formal programs in eight countries.

The situation is still worse in Latin America, according to Vaillant (2009), since induction into the teaching profession is not ruled by a policy, and there are very few institutionalized programs. The author reports three experiences cited by Cornejo (1999): one in Argentina, a teaching residency; one in Mexico, the provision of resources for teachers at school; and one in Chile, which has a professional induction project for recent graduates. A commission of experts in teacher training has recently been

created in Chile, made up of members from the Ministry of Education, from teacher training colleges and universities, in order to set up an induction system, the author writes. This commission produced a report recommending that schools set up a mentoring program: experienced teachers from the beginning teacher's school, whose own teaching has received positive evaluations, and who have been suitably trained for the task, act as mentors.

Another Latin American country beginning to show concern for the integration of new teachers is Colombia. Marcelo García (2011) explains that in this country, the process of following up on new teachers is informal and voluntary: teachers from the Teacher Training Institutes (*Escolas Normais Superiores*) act as tutors for their former students in a collegiate model where the more experienced help the beginners. It is a sort of professional sponsorship or buddy system, set up on the basis of goodwill.

Acknowledgment of the importance of such programs, according to Marcelo García (2011), has not yet translated into effective action, but some steps have been taken in this direction, such as at the Catholic University of Temuco, where mentor training has been proposed so that beginning teachers can be supported professionally in the early stage of their teaching careers.

Having noted these initiatives in European and Latin American countries, one may ask if there are policies and programs in Brazil for beginning teachers so as to ease their integration into the profession.

An initial examination of the teacher-training literature shows that very few studies have been conducted on this issue. Analysis of the texts presented at annual meetings of ANPED (the Brazilian Association for Research and Postgraduate Qualification in Education—*Associação Nacional de Pesquisas e Pós-Graduação em Educação*) and at ENDIPes (National Meetings for Teaching Didactics and Practice—*Encontros Nacionais de Didática e Prática de Ensino*) from 1995 to 2004 shows that only 24 out of 6,978 texts focused on beginning teachers (MARIANO, 2006, p. 12). This finding was borne out by Papi and Martins (2009) as they updated this mapping of texts presented at ANPED to more recent years (2005-2007), adding an examination of theses and dissertations defended from 2000 to 2007. The authors conclude that “the subject accounts for 0.5 % of studies in the broader field of education” (PAPI, MARTINS, 2009, p. 256), which shows the scant attention that early training has received from Brazilian researchers.

But it is not only in studies and surveys that the issue has been virtually forgotten. Researchers at the Carlos Chagas Foundation recently carried out a study of modalities and practices in continued teacher education in states and cities of Brazil (DAVIS, NUNES, ALMEIDA, 2011) and found no training activities designed for beginning teachers. Since the

study focused on continued teacher education policies and encompassed actions executed by education management agencies throughout the country, we shall briefly comment on its results. Data were gathered through field recordings and interviews at 19 Education Secretariats throughout Brazil's five regions; six were state-level Secretariats, and 13 were municipal. Among several findings in the study, the authors drew attention to eleven:

- a. vitally important to the work carried out was the fact that well-structured continued teacher education teams were set up locally;
- b. when the teams comprised professionals from the local education network, projects were less subject to disruption by changes in management or in coordination personnel;
- c. in most of the Secretariats studied, however, training activities in the form of courses, lectures and workshops were individualized; in other words, they worked with teachers from different schools rather than with school teams or teachers from a single establishment;
- d. the continued education modalities deemed most productive by the vast majority of Education Secretariats are long-term, regular, and held in the schools themselves;
- e. this training very often does not articulate with other teacher policies;
- f. teacher education activities to strengthen ethical posture, professionalism, a sense of communal responsibility and of citizen awareness were not found;
- g. teacher education activities for beginning teachers were not found;
- h. ESs generally did not evaluate teachers after continued education, except indirectly or informally;
- i. classroom work after continued education is not followed up;
- j. Ministry of Education efforts to formulate continued teacher education policies and strategies in broader dimensions were clear;
- k. there was significant approval of the federal government programs *Pró-Letramento* and *Gestar II* where they were carried out.

The findings of the study by Davis, Nunes and Almeida (2011) point up essential aspects to be taken into consideration when drafting continued teacher education policies, such as a trainer-training process; the definition of long-term teacher-education activities for schools, so as to strengthen professionalism among teachers, and focusing on issues of daily teaching practice; the following up of teachers after they have taken part in training activities; the linking of continued teacher education policies to other teacher policies; and the existence of a training evaluation system. The study did not find programs geared specifically to beginning teachers

in the states and cities in question, which led us to include this issue in the survey of Brazilian teacher policies (GATTI, BARRETTO, ANDRÉ, 2011).

INVESTIGATION METHODOLOGY

Against this background of international reports, and considering proposals by authors who advocate the need for investment in the early stages of professional teaching careers (NÓVOA, 2009; VAILLANT, 2009; MARCELO GARCÍA, 2011; MIZUKAMI, 2008; NONO, MIZUKAMI, 2006), we have tried to locate initiatives to support beginning teachers in the Brazilian states and cities involved in the 15 field studies we carried out.

The study by researchers from the Carlos Chagas Foundation, by making data and analyses public, was an important benchmark in defining field studies: we thus decided to choose states and cities not included in it, thereby expanding the information base regarding teacher support policies in Brazil. It was also a counterpoint to the present study, indicating aspects in common as well as points of contrast.

The criteria for the choice of states and cities for carrying out field studies were as follows: 1. regional representation, in other words one state Education Secretariat was chosen from each region of Brazil, provided it had not been included in similar research; 2. proposals were to be relevant, innovative or wide-ranging, in other words, states or cities with distinctive management models in the support of valuing of teaching work were chosen; 3. states and cities were chosen that had a curriculum proposal supported by a booklet-based teaching system. The decision to include Secretariats with curriculum proposals underpinned by booklet-based teaching systems was motivated by an interest in examining their relations with teacher autonomy.

Five states, one from each of the five regions of Brazil, were chosen, and two cities were chosen within each region, making up a total of five State Secretariats and ten cities, giving 15 case studies.

Data for the case studies was gathered by experienced researchers who had met with the coordinator to be presented with the goals of the field study, the procedures to be followed, and the data gathering instruments. Two interview scripts were drafted, one aiming to characterize the Education Secretariat in terms of the number of schools, classes, and levels of education provided; as well as the number of teachers, type of training, and workload. This script also requested information on whether there was a career plan, how entry to the profession occurs (by public competitive exam, contract or some other means) and on the salary levels of teachers.

The other script adopted two main axes for its structure: support mechanisms for teaching work, and continued teacher education. In the

first part the goal was to find out about resources available to teachers at schools, such as libraries, laboratories, special rooms, teaching material, reinforcement classes. Part of this goal is to see if there are incentives for teachers or for the school to use innovative practices and to obtain good student learning outcomes, and if there is support for teachers to take part in events and cultural activities, if books and magazines are purchased, and if there is support for mental and physical health. In this section we sought to discover how entrants to the profession are followed up. The second part of the script aimed to map continued teacher education processes: modalities, agencies/sections in charge, contents addressed, and training strategies. Another goal was to see how far teachers are involved in planning teacher education activities, the major challenges found, follow-up of teachers post training, and ways of evaluating the training.

The researchers contacted the Education Secretariat in these states and cities in advance so as to locate those in charge of implementing the curriculum and carrying out teacher education activities, and to schedule and request supplementary material. They remained in the field approximately two days and, by and large, were made very welcome. Based on the material obtained (documentation made available by the education secretariat, field records and transcriptions of interviews), reports were drafted and sent to the coordinator of the field studies; after reading the material several times and holding discussions with other coordinators of the research, the main axes organizing the presentation and discussion of the data were defined: support for teaching, continued teacher education processes, teaching promotion policies, and follow-up policies for beginning teachers.

Only the data for new teacher support programs and policies will be addressed in this text.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

Unlike the study by Davis, Nunes and Almeida (2011), which failed to find training activities focusing as a priority on beginning teachers in the 19 Education Secretariats studied, the present study detected some initiatives for supporting beginning teachers in some of the states and cities of Brazil. In two cities it was possible to identify not only activities, but a clear policy for following up teachers beginning their teaching career, which seems very promising to the present author, since they are recent initiatives; once they are known they may encourage other education managers to perform similar activities, adapted to their specific contexts, and in line with the history of local education policy.

One type of initiative for beginning teachers that was identified during the fieldwork was to promote training activities in the shape of

courses, seminars, and discussions when new teachers enter the career, linked to the public competitive examinations.

In the State Educational Secretariat of Espírito Santo, teachers who enrol in the public competitive examination for a teaching career are selected in two stages, one of which is a 60-hour training process with lectures on current topics in education, the study of texts, discussions and teaching workshops on practical teaching issues, as well as peer exchange of information through groups or plenary sessions. Only after this phase do they sit a qualifying examination. The results of the latest public competitive examination, held in June 2010, are very promising: of the 704 teachers who took part in the six consecutive days of the training process, only two dropped out and two failed, which entitles us to hope that many of the entrants who passed may navigate the professional settling-in period with less difficulty.

In the State Educational Secretariat of Ceará there was also a change in the public service examination for new entrants in 2009: there were two qualifying examinations, one theoretical and one practical, after which candidates took part in a five-module distance-education capacity-building course. The modules were:

1. an introduction to distance education, and the use of a virtual learning environment;
2. public administration, and civil servants' rights and duties;
3. education policy, and basic education legislation;
4. General Didactics;
5. Didactics applied to one of the following areas: Art Education, Biology, Physical Education, Philosophy, Physics, Geography, History, Spanish, English and Portuguese languages, Chemistry, and Sociology.

The interviewees stated that beginning teachers are followed up in the schools, that the education managers are responsible for this, and take it upon themselves to provide guidance for studying, planning, and monitoring daily teaching activities. At the end of three years, the new teachers are evaluated to be confirmed (or otherwise) as public servants.

In the Jundiá Municipal Education Secretariat, beginning teachers are given 30 days of capacity-building before going into a classroom, during which time they are paid a salary. The training is given by experts from the two foundations specially hired for this purpose.

These initiatives are not yet ideal, because they include ad hoc activities, and interviewees did not point to a "schedule" of follow-ups for new teachers throughout the early stages of their work. Many managers stated that new teachers would be accompanied at school by the coordination team, but failed to provide more objective data about

how this follow-up is carried out, or about the evaluation of such actions. In any case, it was clear from the interviews that the vast majority of those responsible for executing teacher policies are aware that special care is needed for new teachers. Concern about this issue came through in many of the statements, but what can and should be done remained rather vague.

Although effective actions to support beginning teachers were not found in most of the managements investigated, policies exclusively for entrants were found in two municipal Secretariats. They are long-term proposals aiming to support and favor the integration of new teachers into the education network.

The Municipal Education Secretariat of Sobral, in the state of Ceará, has an in-service training program specially designed for teachers joining the education system. Regulated by Municipal Law 671, enacted April 10, 2006, the program consists of a training experience and practical pedagogical enhancement, both deemed fundamental in the professional performance of teachers. The program was started because of the result of the public competitive examination of 2005, when it was found necessary to fill gaps in the training of the teachers who passed the examination. The team that was interviewed explained that the initiative intends to suitably train teachers to meet the needs of the municipality and adapt them to the real educational situation.

During a three-year probation period, teachers from the municipal education system in Sobral must take part in training sessions provided by ESFAPEM, the teacher training school. Teachers attend class one evening per week because Education Secretariat regulations do not allow teachers to be taken out of the classroom during working hours.

Another requirement to be met by the teachers is that they take part in at least 50% of the available schedule of the *Olhares* Program, which seeks to broaden the teachers' cultural universe through an annual program including conversations with artisans, meetings with writers, museum visits, watching plays and movies, teaching workshops that expose teachers to different languages, reports of success stories, and participation in the Annual Meeting of Educators of Sobral—an event bringing together teachers from the town's public and private school systems.

The training meetings have the following structure: one-hour weekly meetings to work on the Mediated Learning and Cognitive Change Program (*Programa de Modificabilidade Cognitiva e Aprendizagem Mediada*); two monthly meetings geared to schoolwork, taking the form of seminars to study and discuss Mathematics and Portuguese language classes;

and Broadening of the Cultural Universe (*Ampliação do Universo Cultural*), through teachers' participation in the Olhares Program.

A total of 200 classroom hours of training is available, and those teachers participating must attend 80% of these hours "in order for their internship to be satisfactorily concluded and receive a favorable assessment from trainers as to their performance and participation in the course", as interviewees told us. Professionals being trained on the probational internship are given a financial incentive of 25% of the baseline salary of 40 hours to take part. Criteria for granting this incentive are laid down in the law. This investment is included on teachers' pay slips as soon as the training commences.

This is the only institutional incentive that the study found, since it is regulated by law and integrated within the municipality's continued teacher education policy. The special attention given to beginning teachers seems extremely important if they are to feel less isolated and if they are to receive necessary pedagogical support to overcome possible difficulties in their early career.

There is also a program for beginning teachers in the Municipal Secretariat of Campo Grande, in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. According to the interview:

[...] it is not only about plugging gaps in their pre-service training, but also about integrating them into the Secretariat's Quality Education Policy, in other words, so they can find out about the structure of the central agency, the jurisdiction of each sector, we clarify any queries about how the Campo Grande teaching system works, and show them the documents and policies that will guide their professional life.

Activities are carried out in certain stages with these new professionals:

- *First stage:* new teachers are invited to get to know how the Campo Grande teaching system works, and are shown the documents and policies that will guide their professional life. At this moment they are given information on the duties of each sector of the Secretariat and also of the school. The same process applies to the educational professional hired to be the pedagogical coordinator in the network. This professional receives training in a different group from everyone else, so that he or she will receive special attention and be fully aware of his or her responsibilities in their role as person in charge of continued teacher education under the Secretariat.

- *Second stage*: meetings with the teachers to diagnose their difficulties and organize the training.
- *Third stage*: training is carried out, collectively and mainly *in situ*. The group in charge of a given school travels there in order to carry out training activities meeting the specific needs of the school. The adjunct director and pedagogical team are asked to be present at this moment so that they can continue with training at the school. The goal of this pedagogical movement is to inform teachers' teaching practice, providing theoretical and methodological underpinnings to ensure quality of teaching that will be reflected in quality student learning. Teachers working in early childhood education, and in the first, second and third years of primary school receive special attention because it is in these years that the highest concentration of entrant teachers occurs. Teachers who teach from the sixth to the ninth grade (11-to-14-year-old students) also receive special attention, but the main focus is on Portuguese and Mathematics teachers.
- *Fourth stage*: follow-up of the teaching and learning process, putting forward alternatives to help these teachers' pedagogical work. During follow-up, a range of instruments are used to gather data and information on reading and writing classes at the schools.
- *Fifth stage*: evaluation of student learning, above all the first, second and third years of primary school, through diagnostic activities. Evaluation of the third year was added in 2011, occurring in April and August. Results of the evaluations are one possible instrument for validating (or otherwise) the teacher education job done by the Secretariat with these teachers, who may either work in the early or in the final years of primary school.

The model used by the Municipal Education Secretariat of Campo Grande covers a number of aspects deemed essential for a program to support beginning teachers:

- a. it includes consultation with these teachers to map out in-service training activities based on their needs;
- b. it provides for pedagogical follow-up and support for new teachers in their work setting;
- c. it aims to involve school managers in the training process and subsequent follow-up of new teachers as they integrate with the profession;
- d. it references the training and support process for new teachers to student learning outcomes;
- e. it is concerned with evaluating the training process.

The proposals of Sobral and Campo Grande cause a very positive impression; however, there should be a more detailed investigation involving the school management teams and particularly the new teachers to evaluate the actual contribution of training activities to their professional practice.

INDUCTION PROGRAMS: PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY AND THE SCHOOL

The case studies did not merely identify new teacher support policies, they also located programs setting up partnerships between universities and schools to provide future teachers with better preparation, facilitating their entry into the teaching profession. Such programs include PIBID (the Institutional Program for Scholarships for Beginning Teachers—*Programa Institucional de Bolsa de Iniciação à Docência*), which is run by the Ministry of Education and CAPES (the Committee for Post-Graduate Courses in Higher Education—*Coordenadoria de Pessoal do Ensino Superior*); the Literacy Scholarship (*Bolsa Alfabetização*), run by the state government of São Paulo; and the Scholarship for Teaching Interns (*Bolsa ao Estagiário de Pedagogia*), in which individuals work as teachers' aides in elementary school first-year classes, provided by the Municipal Secretariat of Jundiaí.

PIBID was set up under the umbrella of CAPES to train teachers to teach in the compulsory education system, by fostering teacher training programs and granting scholarships to students enrolled in undergraduate teacher training programs. One differentiator of the program is that it grants scholarships not only to university students and teachers, but also to public school teachers who follow up scholarship-holders' activities in schools, thus serving as co-trainers of new teachers, in tandem with the University trainers.

Originally designed for Federal Higher Educational Institutions and serving some three thousand scholars in 2007, in the fields of Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics for secondary school, PIBID expanded rapidly to include State-level, Municipal and Community Public Universities, covering teacher training in all subjects, and serving virtually 30,000 scholarship holders from 146 institutions in 2011.

There has not yet been a far-reaching evaluation of the effects of PIBID on young teachers, nor has the quality of trainees been compared between this and other programs, but ad hoc evaluations (AMBROSETTI, RIBEIRO, TEIXEIRA, 2011) have shown very positive results both in how motivated the students involved have been to join the teaching profession, and in the willingness of teachers in schools, who feel challenged to re-evaluate their

own teaching practices in cooperation with these new actors in the school setting.

Another program seeking to bring universities and schools closer together and favor teacher training is the Literacy Scholarship (*Bolsa Alfabetização*). Set up in 2007 by the State Government of São Paulo, its target audience is trainee teachers from teacher training institutes working in the state education system under the supervision of university lecturers. Scholarship-holders help practicing teachers to teach reading and writing, and must also carry out an investigative project on their experiences in school, supervised by their university tutor and by the practicing teacher. The results of their investigations are presented to the school where the trainee taught, to the University where he or she is studying, and to the Education Secretariat that setup the program, thus linking the know-how of universities and schools.

In 2010 the São Paulo State Education Secretariat signed 88 agreements with Higher Education Institutions (IESs—*Instituições de Ensino Superior*) to meet the needs of 2,099 second-year primary school classes (7-year-olds) in 976 schools supplying 2,099 scholarship-holding research students (GATTI, BARRETTO, ANDRÉ, 2011, p. 134).

Another program aiming to bring IESs closer to schools is one that places Pedagogy interns in first-year primary school classes (6-year-olds) in the municipal schools of Jundiaí. Scholarship-holding students work as teachers' aides for the entire year. In 2011 the Municipal Education Secretariat of Jundiaí signed an agreement with three teacher training courses in the city. The Secretariat pays 600 Brazilian Reals per student to the IES, and commits to assigning one of its teachers to coordinate the work of 20 students. Each student receives 500 Reals and the remaining 100 go to the teacher. The IES teacher thus receives 2,000 Reals. The students also receive transportation vouchers. Since the Secretariat wants to see interns remain within the system, it provides capacity building and certification that contribute points to the public competitive examination.

The programs that are developed in this partnership between universities and schools must be valued and extended to other regions of Brazil, because they are an excellent alternative to overcome the historical gap between training spaces and the space where the profession is exercised. Furthermore, they help students identify with the profession and enable entry into teaching.

Support policies for beginning teachers, seen in a very few Brazilian municipalities, deserve every attention from public agencies that are responsible for education management, because they may be reproduced and adapted to other contexts, and may help reduce the attrition rate and keep able teachers in the profession.

IN CONCLUSION

This examination of programs and policies for entry to the teaching profession detected by state-of-the-art teacher policies in Brazil reveals on the one hand promising prospects, and on the other some points deserving attention.

Acknowledgment of the need to follow up beginning teachers, recounted in the statements of most of the managers we interviewed, and the initiatives of some Education Secretariats in promoting a type of training alongside public competitive entry examinations, both seem to be important signs that there is an environment favoring new teacher support policies.

Another highly positive point revealed by the survey is the design of proposals suited to local contexts and to regional specificities. Despite the fact that, of the total number of 15 Education Secretariats in the study, only two experiments with teacher training and beginning teacher follow-up were found, the design of these proposals is geared to the particularities of their context, respecting the history and the evolution of educational policies and the actors involved in them. This is an aspect to be valued, because given the diversity of Brazil, it is not possible to think along the lines of a single teacher training model.

Adaptation to the specific contexts does not, however, do away with the need for a national policy to support new teachers, which must contain basic training principles integrated into a professional development process wherein the responsible actors and their duties are defined and regulated within the law. These general guidelines will enable the creation of regional and local policies—otherwise there will always be the risk of disparate, discontinuous and ad hoc actions.

Another point worthy of attention in the process of defining a beginning teacher support policy is the evaluation of teacher training activities. One benchmark criterion that has been used by several Education Secretariats, such as Campo Grande, is student performance in evaluations. This measurement requires caution, because if it is expected that training actions lead to significant student learning outcomes, then it is necessary to question what type of evaluation is being used. Systemic evaluations privilege the disciplines of Mathematics and Portuguese, and this may lead to curriculum impoverishment and teaching-to-the-tests, which would be regrettable.

In some countries such as Colombia and Argentina, teaching competencies guiding the teacher training and teacher evaluation processes are defined. Beatriz Avalos (2012), a member of the commission discussing this issue in Chile, refers to the need for a “good teaching

framework”, established in a collective discussion involving the following stakeholders: school teachers, education system specialists, university personnel, members of the community. There is a long way to go before we reach this stage.

Another step that should be part of a proposal for beginner teacher policy is a trainer-training system (these trainers are called mentors in many countries) to characterize the experienced teachers who will be in charge of following up beginning teachers. These trainers—or mentors—need an institutionalized space for study, discussion and support if they are to carry out this all-important supervision task. This issue must not go unanswered, lest we reinforce informal professional relations, voluntary work, and the weakening of the profession.

The multiplicity of aspects identified show that there is a long way to go in Brazil. A useful starting point would be to set up a commission of experts or enthusiasts on teaching issues, made up of representatives of government agencies and from civil society, and the commission would be charged with drafting a proposal, containing general principles or guidelines which would lead to more specific proposals drafted by mixed commissions, so as to meet regional and local specificities. This would be one way of advancing a beginning teacher integration policy.

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