Slovenia

TEACHERS

SABER Country Report
2015

Policy Goals	Status
1. Setting Clear Expectations for Teachers There are clear expectations for what students should learn and what teachers are supposed to do. Teachers' official duties involve both teaching and non-teaching tasks related to instructional improvement.	Advanced
2. Attracting the Best into Teaching Entry requirements are competitive. Working conditions and career advancement opportunities may be appealing for talented candidates. However, teacher pay may not be appealing compared with other professions.	Advanced
3. Preparing Teachers with Useful Training and Experience The current teacher's initial education system may be suited to provide good quality teachers. Novel teachers have opportunities to develop practical teaching skills.	Established
4. Matching Teachers' Skills with Students' Needs Teacher shortage is no longer a challenging issue. There is a system of grants for prospective teachers of certain subjects. 'Hard-to-staff schools' category is not used.	Established
5. Leading Teachers with Strong Principals Principals are required to attend Principals Schools and to pass exams before taking on school leadership positions. National policies stipulate that principals should serve as instructional leaders and provide teachers with guidance.	Advanced
6. Monitoring Teaching and Learning There are systems in place to assess student learning in order to inform teaching and policy. Individual teacher performance is evaluated by the school principal using internal and external assessment results, as well as insights from class observation.	Established
7. Supporting Teachers to Improve Instruction Virtually all teachers participate in professional development activities even though it is not mandatory.	Emerging
8. Motivating Teachers to Perform Promotion and hiring decisions, as well as teacher compensation, are informed by teacher performance at the school level.	Established

Data collection on Slovenia's teacher policies was completed in 2015. Consequently, the findings in this report reflect the status of the country's teacher policies at that time.

Overview of SABER-Teachers

There is growing interest across the globe in attracting, retaining, developing and motivating great teachers. Student achievement has been found to correlate with economic and social progress (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2007, 2009; Pritchett and Viarengo, 2009; Campante and Glaeser, 2009). Teachers are the key. Recent studies have shown that teacher quality is the main school-based predictor of student achievement; several consecutive years of outstanding teaching, moreover, can offset the learning deficits of disadvantaged students (Hanushek and Rivkin, 2010; Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain, 2005; Nye and Hedges, 2004; Rockoff, 2004; Park and Hannum, 2001; Sanders and Rivers, 1996). However, formulating appropriate teacher policies to ensure that every classroom has a motivated, supported and competent teacher remains a challenge. Evidence on the impacts of many teacher policies remains insufficient and scattered, the impact of many reforms depends on specific design features, and teacher policies can have very different impacts depending on the context and other education policies already in place.

SABER-Teachers aims to help fill this gap by collecting, analysing, synthesizing and disseminating comprehensive information on teacher policies in primary and secondary education systems around the world. SABER-Teachers is a core component of SABER (Systems Approach for Better Education Results), an initiative of the World Bank Education Global Practice. SABER collects information on the policy domains of different education systems, analyses it to identify common challenges and promising solutions, and makes this information widely available to inform countries' decisions on where and how to invest in order to improve the quality of education.

SABER-Teachers collects data on ten core areas of teacher policy to offer a comprehensive descriptive overview of the policies in place in each participating education system (Box 1). Data are collected in each participating education system by a specialized consultant using a questionnaire to ensure the comparability of information across different education systems. Data collection focuses on the rules and regulations governing teacher management systems. This information is compiled in a comparative database. Interested stakeholders can access the database for detailed information, which is organized into categories that describe how different education systems manage their teaching force, as well as copies of supporting documents. The full database is available through the SABER website.

Box 1. Teacher policy areas for data collection

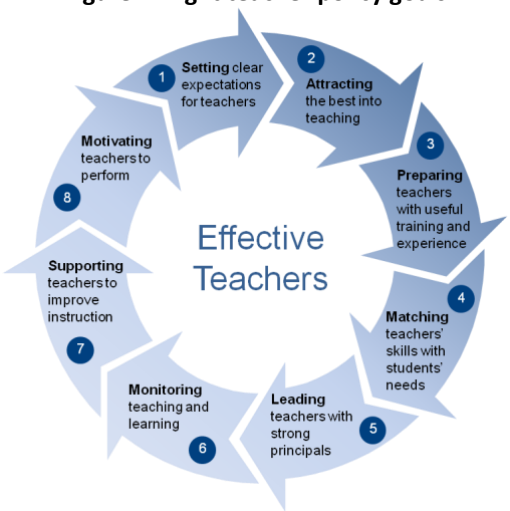
1. Requirements to enter and remain in teaching
2. Initial teacher education
3. Recruitment and employment
4. Teachers' workload and autonomy
5. Professional development
6. Compensation (salary and non-salary benefits)
7. Retirement rules and benefits
8. Monitoring and evaluation of teacher quality
9. Teacher representation and voice
10. School leadership

To offer informed policy guidance, SABER-Teachers provides an analysis of these data to assess how well each system's teacher policies promote student achievement based on the global evidence to date. Specifically, SABER-Teachers presents an assessment of each education system's progress in achieving eight teacher policy goals (Box 2).

Box 2. Teacher policy goals for evaluation

1. Setting clear expectations for teachers
2. Attracting the best into teaching
3. Preparing teachers with useful training
4. Matching teachers' skills with students' needs
5. Leading teachers with strong principals
6. Monitoring teaching and learning
7. Supporting teachers to improve instruction
8. Motivating teachers to perform

Figure 1. Eight teacher policy goals



All high-performing education systems fulfil these eight teacher policy goals to a certain extent in order to ensure that every classroom has a motivated, supported and competent teacher. These goals were identified through a review of research studies on teacher policies, as well as an analysis of policies of top-performing and rapidly improving education systems. Three criteria were used to identify the teacher policy goals, which had to be: (1) linked to student performance through empirical evidence; (2) a priority for resource allocation; and (3) actionable, meaning that they identify actions that governments can take to improve education policy. The eight teacher policy goals exclude other objectives that countries might wish to pursue to increase the effectiveness of their teachers, but on which there is too little empirical evidence at present to allow for specific policy recommendations.

By classifying countries based on their performance in each of the eight teacher policy goals, SABER-Teachers provides a diagnosis of the key challenges to cultivating effective teachers. For each policy goal, the SABER-Teachers team identified policy levers (actions that governments can take to reach these goals) and indicators (that measure the extent to which governments are making effective use of these policy levers). Using these policy levers and indicators, SABER-Teachers classifies the progress of education systems towards achieving each of the eight teacher policy goals using a four-tiered scale (latent, emerging, established and advanced). The scale assesses the extent to which a given education system has put in place the type of teacher policies related to improved student outcomes (Annex 1). The main objective of this assessment is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher policies of an education system and thus pinpoint possible areas for improvement (Vegas et al., 2012).

The main focus of SABER-Teachers is policy design, not policy implementation. SABER-Teachers analyses the teacher policies formally adopted by a given education system. This type of analysis is an important first step towards strengthening the policy and institutional frameworks that policy-makers most directly control and that influence how well a system functions. At the same time, policies 'on the ground', i.e. policies as they are actually implemented, may differ quite substantially from policies as originally designed. In fact, they often do differ due to the political economy of the reform process, lack of capacity on the part of the organizations charged with implementing them, and/or the interaction between these policies and specific contextual factors. Since SABER-Teachers collects only limited data on policy implementation, the analysis of teacher policies presented in this report should ideally be complemented with other data-gathering efforts that focus on how well teacher policies are actually implemented on the ground.

This report presents the results of the SABER-Teachers tool as applied in Slovenia. A collaborative effort between the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, hosted within UNESCO, and the World Bank SABER-Teachers initiative made this report possible. All data collection, related analysis, and report preparations were completed by UNESCO using the World Bank Group's SABER tools. The report describes the performance of Slovenia's education system in achieving each of the eight teacher policy goals. It also contains comparative information from education systems that have consistently scored highly on international student achievement tests and those that have previously participated in the SABER-Teachers initiative. This report has been formally endorsed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of Slovenia. Additional information on the teacher policies in the education systems of Slovenia and other countries can be found on the SABER-Teachers' website.

Country Context

Economic Context

The Republic of Slovenia is located in Central Europe between the Eastern Alps, the Adriatic, the Balkans and the Pannonian Plain. Throughout the nineteenth century, it belonged to the Habsburg Empire, but in 1918 it became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, renamed Yugoslavia in 1929, and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia after the Second World War. In 1991, Slovenia became an independent country and is now a full member of the European Union (EU) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Slovenia adopted the euro in 2007 and its economy is based mainly on exports to other European countries. It has a population of two million inhabitants, an area of 20,273 km² and, by 2015, it had a gross national income (GNI) per capita of US$18,162 (World Bank, 2015).

In 1989, Slovenians comprised only about one-tenth of the total population of the Yugoslav Federation, but it was the most productive of the Yugoslav republics, accounting for one-fifth of its GDP and one-third of its exports. In the 1990s, Slovenia successfully overcame the challenges of political, economic and social transition to become an independent nation, and its economic links with Western Europe and with other parts of the world became stronger. However, in the late 2000s, Slovenia's economy suffered a severe setback due to the economic crisis and it is still recovering. Its economy grew by 3.1 and 2.3 per cent in 2014 and 2015, respectively (World Bank, 2015).

Education Context

Education in Slovenia has a long tradition. Compulsory primary education, regardless of gender, was introduced in 1774. In 1869, it was extended to eight years of formal education. The first university in the Slovenian language was established in 1919. The education system continued to develop after the Second World War, and in the 1990s it was overhauled. As part of this reform, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports prepared a strategy to guide the development of the education system (Bela knjiga, 1995), which was updated 15 years later (Bela knjiga, 2011). According to the latest version of the strategy, the key principles that guide the development of the education system include equal opportunities, inclusiveness and quality. The reform also introduced an external examination or assessment at both the primary and secondary education levels, and created support agencies to assist schools in resolving challenges (Gaber and Tašner, 2010). From 1999 to 2004, the curriculum has been gradually redesigned at all education levels, the duration of compulsory primary school was extended from 8 to 9 years, and adult education was remodeled and strengthened as well (Bela knjiga, 2011).

Most children are enrolled in preschool, although it is not compulsory. Admission to compulsory education starts at the age of six. Primary and lower secondary education are combined in Slovenia and lasts 9 years (3 three-year cycles). There are three types of upper secondary education: i) vocational education and training programmes (2–3 years, leading directly to the labour market, but also offering the possibility to continue in a 2-year upgrade programme); ii) technical education programmes (4-year programmes in different areas); and iii) *gimnazija* or academic upper-secondary school (4-year general education programmes). Tertiary education consists of vocational colleges (2-year programme), single higher education institutions (non-university), and universities (altogether 4 years). Study is organized according to the principles of the European Higher Education Area (bachelor's, master's and doctoral programmes).

Slovenia achieved universal primary education nearly a century ago. In the past decade, access to education has increased more prominently to preschool and to middle and upper secondary schooling. In 2010/11, 74 per cent of children were enrolled in preschool compared with 63.6 per cent in 2005 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011). In this sense, after completing primary education, virtually the entire cohort continues to the secondary level. A rapid decrease of enrolments in shorter, 2-3 year programmes has been noted (currently only around 10 per cent of the cohort enrols in this kind of programme), as well as an increase in 4-year general secondary schools (gymnasia) (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011). The number of students in tertiary education has grown sharply. By 2000, approximately 95 per cent of secondary education graduates of 4-year secondary schools continue their education at the tertiary level. In the 2006/07 school year, Slovenia was the EU country with the largest proportion of youth aged 20-24 years enrolled in tertiary education (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011).

In Slovenia, declines in birth rates have affected enrolments. Between 1990s–2000s, there was a

decline in age cohorts (up to a third less than in 1980), which was particularly noticeable by the drop in the number of students enrolled in primary schools. However, this trend has recently stabilized given that the number of births has increased slightly (SURS, 2015). On the contrary, the decline in the birth rate was less noticeable in four-year secondary schools and in tertiary education where the number of students enrolled has grown rapidly compared to other education levels.

In addition, Slovenia has participated in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) since 2006. In fact, in the latest editions of PISA, Slovenian students performed above the OECD average in two out of the three subjects. For example, in 2011 they reached on average 513 points in science, while the OECD average was 493 points. Similarly, in mathematics, Slovenia scored 510 points compared with the OECD average of 490. In previous research, reading literacy has proved to be a weaker area, but in 2015 achievements have also greatly improved in this area: the average achievement is 505 points (the OECD average is 493 points), which is 24 points more than in 2012 (Pedagoški inštitut, 2016).

Teacher Policy Context

Slovenia shares a tradition of teacher education that is typical of Central Europe. From 1870 onwards, teacher colleges conducted a four-year programme at the secondary level to train primary school teachers. As a rule, teachers in grammar schools had a university degree, and their subject specialization was strong. However, training in pedagogical practices was almost non-existent. After the Second World War, prospective primary school teachers were trained in two-year colleges (at the tertiary level), and from around 1985 these colleges merged with universities and began to implement four-year programmes. Thus, a university degree has become a standard for all teachers of both primary and secondary schools. In-service training and teachers' professional development has also been strengthened, mostly financed by the state. Since 2011, a master's degree is required for all new teachers. In previous periods, there was a significant shortage of qualified teachers, especially in certain areas such as mathematics or foreign languages. However, after 2000 the shortage of teachers gradually diminished and is no longer a challenge today. Prospective teachers are trained in a parallel as well as a consecutive model (SURS, 2014; Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, 2015).

Slovenia's Teacher Policy System Results

Goal 1: Setting clear expectations for teachers

Advanced●●●●

Setting clear expectations for student and teacher performance is important for guiding teachers' daily work and aligning the resources necessary to help them constantly improve their instructional practice. In addition, clear expectations can help ensure coherence among different key aspects of the teaching profession, such as initial teacher education, professional development and teacher appraisal.

SABER-Teachers considers two policy levers that school systems can use to reach Goal 1: (1) clear expectations of what students should know and be able to do; and (2) useful guidance on teachers' use of time in order to improve instruction at the school level.

Policy

(1) In Slovenia, there are clear expectations of what students are expected to learn and what teachers are supposed to do. Responsibility for setting standards on what students must know and be able to do after completing each school year, as well as on what teachers are supposed to do in the classroom, lies in the hands of the Council of Experts in General Education and in the Council of Experts in Vocational and Technical Education. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports and these two Councils share the responsibility of adopting officially recognized education programmes. The Councils recommend the 'general part' of the programme to the Minister, and also decide on the 'special part'. The general part includes stipulations such as length of education, compulsory methods of knowledge assessment and grading, admission requirements, and conditions for progression and completion of education. The special part includes timetables, subject-curricula, subject-knowledge catalogues, and examination catalogues detailing the content of subjects, knowledge standards, skills and knowledge required for teachers. The Ministry coordinates the bodies responsible for the implementation of the curriculum at the different levels and supervises the implementation of the national curriculum.

(2) Official teacher tasks are clearly stated and extend beyond direct teaching. Their working time is officially stipulated, but not structured in detail. Slovenia has established a 40-hour working week. Primary school teachers are expected to teach 22-25 hours per week, and secondary teachers 19-25 hours, depending on subject and field of work. Teachers devote their remaining weekly hours to class preparation and other related tasks. Classroom preparation includes content and didactical planning, as well as training teaching assistants. Other teacher tasks include participating in the school's expert bodies (e.g. planning and evaluation), conducting collaborative teacher analysis, working with parents, collecting and processing performance data, maintaining labs, participating in professional development activities, as well as collaborating with teacher education institutions to mentor teacher trainees (Table 1). In addition, teachers participate in school excursions, trips, competitions, outdoor activities, holiday retreats and camping, as well as cultural and sporting activities and other generally beneficial and humanitarian activities. Teachers also stand in for absent teachers.

Teachers' tasks beyond direct teaching are officially established and regulated. However, due to the great diversity of teachers' individual work, this time is not formally specified in detail. It is the principal's responsibility to assign time. This solution has proven to be effective in practice as it empowers principals and gives them flexibility to treat teachers on a case-by-case basis according to school needs and their individual capacities and interests.

Successful education systems such as those of Ontario (Canada), Finland, Japan, South Korea and Singapore devote considerable time at the school level to instructional improvement activities, including collaborative teacher analysis of instructional practice, as well as mentoring and professional development (Darling-Hammond and Rothman, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Levin, 2008). In addition, these systems tend to devote a smaller share of teachers' time to actual contact with students than other systems, but a larger share of time to teacher collaboration, on-site professional development, and research on the effectiveness of teaching strategies. Japan, for example, devotes about 40 per cent of teachers' working time to these types of activities, while Ontario currently devotes 30 per cent (Darling-Hammond and Rothman, 2011).

Implementation

Evidence suggests that policies that regulate working time are generally followed. Schools with two shifts have almost completely disappeared in recent years in Slovenia. In some cases, teachers teach slightly more lessons per week than stipulated, depending on the size of the school and the fluctuation of the enrollment. The entire teacher workload is perceived as high. According to a recent survey, the actual weekly workload is 47.56 hours on average (Krek and Vogrinc, 2012). This means that, in addition to the weekly teaching workload, surveyed teachers invested 27.56 hours in tasks other than teaching, such as preparing lessons, cooperating with the specialist services of the school, extracurricular activities, remedial and additional classes, and individual and group support for students. However, it cannot be concluded that this observation points to a serious problem (Krek and Vogrinc, 2012).

Table 1. Teachers' official school improvement tasks

	Slovenia	Japan	Russia- St. Petersburg	Serbia	Singapore
Mentor peers	✓	✓		✓	✓
Collaborate on school plan	✓	✓		✓	✓
Design curriculum	✓	✓			✓
Participate in school evaluation	✓	✓		✓	✓

Source: SABER-Teachers database

Goal 2: Attracting the best into teaching

Advanced●●●●

The structure and characteristics of a teaching career make it more or less attractive to talented individuals. They may be more inclined to become teachers if they see that entry requirements are on par with those of well-regarded professions in which compensation and working conditions are adequate, and attractive professional development opportunities exist.

SABER-Teachers considers four policy levers that school systems can use to reach Goal 2: (1) requirements for entering the teaching profession; (2) competitive pay; (3) appealing working conditions; and (4) attractive career opportunities.

Policy

(1) In Slovenia, educational requirements for new teachers aim at attracting talented professionals. The level of education required to enter the teaching profession might reflect its attractiveness. While not the only way to communicate an attractive profession, it does serve as one of the indicators: education systems where teacher positions are competitive often have rigorous entry requirements. Systems where entry to the profession is most demanding require a research-oriented bachelor or master's degree.
In Slovenia, by 1987, all teachers at primary and secondary schools had been trained in four-year study programmes at university, and a bachelor's degree became the minimum qualification to enter the teaching profession (1997 ISCED 5A). However, since 2010, a master's degree (1997 ISCED 5A; 2011 ISCED 7) became a requirement for all new teachers in primary and secondary schools. In addition to the master's degree, the successful completion of the professional examination is also a prerequisite for a tenured teaching position.

(2) Teacher pay in Slovenia varies according to performance. Teacher promotions in Slovenia are based on performance, and actual salaries are below those of other Slovenian tertiary educated employees but above the OECD average. Upper secondary teachers, for example, earn 94 per cent of what other tertiary educated workers earn, compared with the OECD average of 91 per cent. Teacher pay is therefore relatively attractive. However, salaries varied substantially in the past decade. Between 2005 and 2009, teachers' salaries increased by up to 10 per cent for all education levels, but were reduced again by around 10 per cent between 2010 and 2013 due to the global crises that also affected Slovenia (OECD, 2015). Wages depend on collective bargaining, which entails a negotiation between the government and representatives of teacher unions.

(3) Teachers' working conditions in Slovenia are generally attractive. Working conditions can play an important role in the decision to become a teacher. Talented candidates who have opportunities in other professions may be discouraged from becoming

teachers if working conditions are unpleasant, unreliable or unsafe. SABER Teachers measures working conditions through pupil-teacher ratios to monitor overcrowding and compliance with infrastructure requirements. The most recent school census data from 2007 suggested favourable teacher ratios (Table 2).

Slovenian schools are characterized by small average class sizes. Average student-teacher ratio (from 2013 data) is 19.0 in primary education, 19.8 in lower secondary education and 13.5 in upper secondary education. According to recent OECD findings, the smaller the average class size, the more time is spent on teaching and learning instead of maintaining classroom order. Double-shift schools, which were once the rule, have now become an exception. Provision of materials (e.g. textbooks and other supplies) improved significantly over the last two decades, most schools have been renovated, and classrooms are equipped with modern teaching technology.

Table 2. Student-teacher ratios, primary school

Slovenia	16.0
Finland	13.0
Japan	17.0
Mexico	28.0
Russian Federation	20.0
OECD average	15.0

Sources: OECD, 2015; data from 2013

(4) In Slovenia, career opportunities may be appealing enough to attract talented individuals to the teaching profession. Teachers in most education systems have the opportunity to be promoted to the position of principal at some point in their careers. In addition to these 'vertical' promotions, most high-performing education systems also offer 'horizontal' promotions to academic positions that allow teachers to grow professionally, yet remain closely connected to instruction instead of moving to managerial positions (OECD, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2010).

In Slovenia, there is a promotion system for teachers that allows them to become principals, mentors, advisors and councillors. Promotion depends on performance (measured by promotional points in a system that includes a large number of indicators) and is linked to better pay. Teachers can also be promoted to principal positions after they successfully complete a special training programme ('School for Principals'). Teacher evaluations do inform promotions, which may make the teaching profession more attractive to career-oriented professionals and encourage teachers to compete by performing well in their current positions.

Implementation

Currently, education requirements for new teachers are quite strict. In the past, there was a lack of qualified teachers, and students – who had not yet graduated – taught in classrooms. The situation has changed in the past decade and anecdotal evidence suggests that today's applications for a vacant teacher position are usually highly competitive (more in urban areas than in the countryside). In accordance with the law, from 2011 new teachers must have a master's degree (5 years of study) to enter the teaching profession. Teachers who were already teaching in 2011 and have the old 'diploma' university degree (4 years of study) are allowed to stay in the profession and are encouraged to pursue further academic studies. In fact, although the requirement to complete a master's degree programme does not apply to teachers who joined the profession before 2010, in recent years some teachers strive to achieve a higher degree as part-time university students. Principals are directly responsible for hiring teachers and, as a result, detailed teacher assignment criteria to specific schools do not exist. However, a candidate's qualifications, a particular school's needs, and the resources available are usually taken into account.

Incentives to attract qualified candidates to the teaching profession have proven to be successful. Although teacher salaries are slightly lower than the average for employees in the public sector with the same educational level, teachers' social status is still relatively favourable (VPIS, 2015; Kos et al., 2012). Aside from competitive salaries, other incentives in place to attract secondary education students to the profession include scholarships that are funded by the government. In addition, research has shown that Slovenia's induction and mentoring programmes attract new teachers, given that they facilitate their transition to the classroom (VPIS, 2015; Kos et al., 2012).

Thus, in Slovenia, available data suggest that the teaching profession is attractive for secondary school graduates, and admission is competitive (VPIS, 2015; Kos et al., 2012). The volume of candidates for the profession reduces the need for incentives, as is the

case in other countries where entry into the teaching profession is highly competitive (e.g. Singapore and South Korea).

Goal 3: Preparing teachers with useful training and experience

Established●●●○

It is crucial to equip teachers with the skills they need to succeed in the classroom. Success requires subject matter and pedagogic knowledge, as well as classroom management skills and a great deal of teaching practice. Good preparation puts all teachers on an equal footing, giving them a common framework for improving their instructional practice.

SABER-Teachers considers two policy levers that school systems can use to reach Goal 3: (1) minimum standards for pre-service training programmes; and (2) required levels of classroom experience for all teachers.

Policy

(1) Standards to enter pre-service teacher education programmes are stringent. Virtually all high-performing countries require that teachers have the educational equivalent of ISCED 5A (a research-oriented bachelor's degree). Certain systems, such as in Finland, also require a research-based master's degree (OECD, 2011). In Slovenia, since 1986, a university degree has been a requirement to teach primary education and, since 2011, all primary and secondary education teachers are required to have a research-based master's degree as well (Table 3 and 4).

Table 3. Required educational level of lower secondary school teachers (main model)

	Slovenia	Belgium	Finland	Germany	Norway	Turkey
Bachelor's (ISCED 5B)		✓			✓	✓
Master's (ISCED 5A)	✓		✓	✓		

Source: Eurydice (data 2013/2014)

Table 4. Models of teacher training

	Slovenia	Japan	Serbia	Shanghai	Singapore
Concurrent	✓			✓	✓
Consecutive	✓	✓	✓		✓
Alternative				✓	

Source: SABER-Teachers database

(2) New teachers are required to have a good amount of practical classroom experience before entering the profession. Practical experience is a critical factor in the preparedness of teachers entering the profession. The more teachers are able to try out their pedagogical theories, subject-matter knowledge and classroom management skills, the better prepared they are for their careers. Most high-performing systems require teacher entrants to have considerable classroom experience before becoming independent teachers; some of these systems also provide mentoring and support during teachers' first and even second year on the job (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ingersoll, 2007).

In Slovenia, teacher education institutions must meet specific accreditation criteria provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports. Teaching practice in schools is a compulsory part of initial teacher education programmes. These programmes include a minimum of 15 ECTS credits (375-450 hours) implemented according to the principle of reflective practice, which combines subject knowledge, pedagogical training and a gradual introduction into the teaching profession. Teaching practice in schools is organized in different ways, from observation to active teaching. It usually takes place in several stages (e.g. over 2 weeks within different semesters across a career).

New teachers are required to complete an internship for at least ten months, which is the equivalent of a school year. During the internship, they receive guidance from experienced mentors who also monitor and evaluate their performance. During the internship, teacher trainees conduct classroom work and perform other school activities in collaboration with other teachers and staff. Internships may also be voluntary for those graduates who are not yet employed in a school.

Implementation

Higher education institutions provide pre-service teacher training and ensure their quality. Among other features, accredited study programmes and syllabuses include detailed instructions on the implementation of teaching practice in schools and other educational institutions. Similarly, pre-service teacher training programmes have internal quality assurance mechanisms through internal evaluations.

Goal 4: Matching teachers' skills with students' needs

Established●●●○

Ensuring that teachers work in schools where their skills are most needed is important for the equity and efficiency of an education system. First, it is a way of distributing teachers as efficiently as possible, making sure that there are no shortages of qualified teachers in any given grade, education level or subject. Second, it is a means of ensuring that all students in a school system have an equal opportunity to learn. Without purposeful allocation, it is likely that teachers will gravitate towards schools serving better-off students or those located in more desirable areas, deepening inequalities in the education system.

SABER-Teachers considers two policy levers that school systems can use to reach Goal 4: (1) incentives for teachers to work in hard-to-staff schools; and (2) incentives for teachers to teach subjects in which there is a critical shortage of instructors.

Policy

(1) There are mechanisms to address teacher shortages but the category of 'hard-to-staff' schools does not exist in Slovenia. Attracting effective teachers to schools that are in disadvantaged locations or serve underprivileged populations is a challenge for many countries and often requires a specific set of incentives. In Slovenia, no hard-to-staff schools exist, and the education system considers them a marginal problem, only associated with a few vocational schools. This may be because Slovenia has a strong tradition of public education and equity, and social segregation is relatively low, while school networks ensure broad access and contribute to the diversity of the student body. More recently, the inclusion of children with special needs and/or specific learning difficulties has become one of the central principles of the national educational system (Kavkler et al., 2015). Currently, incentives exist for teachers who want to pursue careers in special education. In addition, an array of in-service training courses is available to schools and teachers to support them in improving their skills to serve struggling students (Žarkovič-Adlešič and Plevnik, 2015).

(2) For Slovenia, teacher shortages appear to be mainly a problem of the past. Most education systems have at least some subjects for which there is a critical shortage of teachers, that is, too few teachers to meet students' needs. Successful systems develop policies and incentives that encourage teachers to teach these subjects. Monetary bonuses, scholarships and career opportunities are all examples of such incentives. In today's Slovenia, there are enough teachers in most subject areas, but occasionally smaller problems appear in specific areas (e.g. in recent years, there has been a high demand for special needs and rehabilitation teachers due to the implementation of an inclusive policy).

Implementation

The implementation of the inclusive policy has flagged a shortage of special needs teachers, and current programmes do not have the capacity to train all the teachers needed to fill the available positions.

Goal 5: Leading teachers with strong principals

Advanced●●●●

The quality of school heads is an important predictor of student learning. Capable principals act as instructional leaders, providing direction and support to teachers in order to improve instructional practice at the school level. In addition, capable principals can help attract and retain competent teachers.

SABER-Teachers considers two policy levers that school systems can use to reach Goal 5: (1) investment by the education system in developing qualified school leaders; and (2) the decision-making authority given to school principals to support and improve instructional practice.

Policy

(1) There is systemic training for principals in Slovenia. Research from high-performing education systems suggests that principals can develop leadership skills through supported work experience or specific training courses. For example, the systems of Japan, South Korea, Shanghai (China) and Singapore all require that

applicants for principal positions participate in specific coursework and/or a specialized internship or mentoring programme designed to develop essential leadership skills (OECD, 2012; Darling-Hammond 2010) (Table 5).

Table 5. Mechanisms that support the development of principals' leadership skills

	Slovenia	Japan	Serbia	Shanghai	Singapore
Courses or other training requirements	✓		✓	✓	✓
Mentoring or internship programme	✓	✓		✓	

Source: SABER-Teachers database

In Slovenia, principals have to meet teachers' qualifications, but they are also required to have at least 5 years of experience in education, hold the title of Councillor or Advisor, or the title of Mentor, for at least for five years, and have successfully completed the required training course in the National School for Leadership in Education (NSLE).

In 1995, a special training programme for prospective principals was established by NSLE (popularly called the 'School for Principals'). The programme lasts one year and comprises 144 classroom hours, which includes both teaching hours and the time that principals spend in one-on-one consultations with students. It is implemented in small groups of 18-21 participants and consists of six compulsory modules. Today, the NSLE also offers other courses, such as support for new principals.

In addition, the NSLE provides a non-compulsory mentoring programme for newly appointed principals, which aims to provide systematic support and assistance to teachers during their first years of service. This programme is implemented in the form of five one-day meetings of newly appointed principals and their mentors. Following every meeting, individual collaboration between the mentor (experienced head teacher) and the newly appointed principal takes place.

(2) School leader duties in Slovenia include evaluating teachers and providing support to improve their effectiveness. Once education systems have qualified principals in place, they need to focus on improving classroom instruction (OECD, 2013; Barber and Mourshed, 2007). High-performing education systems such as those in Finland, Ontario (Canada) and Singapore consider their principals to be instructional leaders: they are expected to be knowledgeable in teaching and curriculum matters, as well as provide guidance and support to teachers. Principals in these systems evaluate teachers, provide feedback, assess their schools' needs for professional development, and direct instructional resources where they are most needed (Darling-Hammond and Rothman, 2011).

Under Slovenian legislation, principals are considered pedagogical leaders and managers of public schools. Their duties include, among other activities: (i) promoting professional education and training for education staff; (ii) supporting teachers' instruction; (iii) monitoring their work and offering advice; (iv) supervising the work of counselling services; and (v) assuring and determining quality through self-evaluation.

Implementation

The NSLE is also implementing a new programme that is designed for principals who want to train for systematic improvements in educational leadership. Recent research has shown that principals who exhibit concerns about their teachers enhance the effectiveness of the school. One of the central themes of the 2016–2017 NSLE programme will be the monitoring and evaluation of the work of educational professionals, including principals, in primary and secondary schools, as well as in preschools (NSLE, 2017).

Goal 6: Monitoring teaching and learning

Established●●●○

It is essential to assess how well teachers are teaching and whether students are learning in order to devise strategies to improve both processes. First, education systems must identify poorly performing teachers and students before they can provide struggling classrooms with the adequate support they need. Second, teacher and student evaluations help identify good practices, which can be shared across the system to help improve school performance.

SABER-Teachers considers three policy levers that school systems can use to reach Goal 6: (1) availability of data on student achievement; (2) adequate systems for monitoring teacher performance; and (3) multiple mechanisms for evaluating teacher performance.

Policy

(1) In Slovenia, assessments have been established to monitor both student learning and teacher effectiveness. All high-performing education systems monitor student performance to inform teaching and teacher policies, but they do so in very different ways. They may conduct large-scale system-wide assessments, student evaluations (by teachers), or employ other standardized student learning methods. Regardless of the mechanisms they use, high-performing systems ensure that three main functions are fulfilled:

1. The education system collects complete and relevant student achievement data on a regular basis.
2. Public authorities have access to these data and use them to inform policy-making.
3. A feedback mechanism shares these data and relevant analyses at the school level, which is then used by teachers to improve their instructional practice.

Slovenia introduced standardized national assessments to monitor student learning and achievement in the mid-1980s. Since then, evaluations have been applied on a yearly basis in primary and secondary schools. At the primary level, the **national assessment** is applied at the end of grades 6 and 9 to evaluate students' proficiency in mother tongue instruction and mathematics. Additionally, proficiency in a foreign language is also assessed in grade 6, and a third subject – chosen by the Minister of Education, Science and Sports – is also assessed in grade 9, which is the last year of compulsory education.

Assessments in the last grade of primary or compulsory education are mandatory for all students. They are organized and carried out by the National Examinations Centre (RIC – for its acronym in Slovenian), an independent government agency within the National Examinations Commission, which is composed of university and pre-university teachers and other education experts. Their results are used mainly to inform education policy and practice. However, students and parents also use them as additional sources of information to learn about students' knowledge and skills, as well as to fulfil entrance requirements for some secondary schools.

At the secondary education level, there are two national assessments: the **general *matura*** and the **vocational *matura***. Both tests are organized externally in full or in part (for the vocational *matura*, some tests are assessed by external examiners). Students take the *general matura* at the end of the gymnasium (*gimnazija*). The test is comprised of five subjects: three are compulsory (mother tongue instruction, mathematics and a foreign language), and the remaining two can be chosen by the student. Tests are completely assessed externally (via the RIC agency). The vocational *matura* is administered to students at the end of their technical upper-secondary education and is assessed in part by external experts who are members of a School Examinations Committee. Exams in four subjects are assessed by the Committee: mother tongue instruction, a theoretical-technical subject (compulsory), either a foreign language or mathematics, and a work project (elective). Policy-makers at the national level and school principals use the results of both assessments to analyse and enhance the quality of teaching.

In addition to national assessments, Slovenia participates in several international student learning examinations, including PISA administered by the OECD.

(2) There are some systems in place to monitor teacher performance. Most high-performing systems conduct teacher evaluations using a multiplicity of mechanisms for data collection and varied criteria for assessment. In Slovenia, all schools conduct regular self-evaluations, which focus on reviewing educational processes and comparing results from internal and external evaluations. Furthermore, in 2011, an education expert group proposed a national framework for quality assurance that aims at improving quality by further strengthening the link between external assessments and self-evaluation at the school level. The purpose of this initiative is to improve the use of external data to better inform self-evaluation processes. This step requires new measures to be developed at the system level (Kos Kecojević and Gaber, 2011), but it has not yet been implemented.

(3) Multiple criteria are used to evaluate teacher performance. Research suggests that no single method

of evaluating teacher performance is fail-safe. Most high-performing systems conduct teacher evaluations using multiple data collection mechanisms and varied assessment criteria (Table 6). Ideally, a comprehensive teacher evaluation framework combines student results, teachers' portfolios, classroom observations and student/parent feedback. International experience and research both indicate that none of these approaches taken separately produce a balanced and objective evaluation of teacher performance.

Table 6. Criteria for evaluating teacher performance

	Slovenia	Bulgaria	Russia- St. Petersburg	Serbia	South Korea	Singapore
Subject matter knowledge	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Teaching methods	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Student assessment methods	✓		✓	✓		
Students' academic achievement			✓	✓	✓	

Source: SABER-Teacher database

In Slovenia, teacher evaluations use several sources for information, including results from national assessments. Evaluations cover a wide variety of criteria including knowledge, teaching methods, and assessment methods. However, student achievement is not directly incorporated into teacher evaluations due to differences between the different groups of pupils and students that cannot be attributed to a single teacher. Nevertheless, mentoring students who achieve remarkable results in national or international contests is taken into account indirectly: teachers are rewarded for the exceptional success of their students via progression to higher titles with an impact on salary.

Implementation

School self-evaluations along with external evaluation results help to identify areas of improvement for teachers. The principal is responsible for ensuring and determining quality through self-assessment. Principals oversee teachers' educational work, monitor their work, offer advice, and recommend promotions of education staff into positions with higher wages.

Goal 7: Supporting teachers to improve instruction

Emerging●●○○

Support systems help improve instruction at the school level. In order to continually improve their practices, teachers and schools need to be able to analyse the specific challenges they face in classroom teaching, access information on best practices for addressing these challenges, and receive specific external support tailored to their needs.

SABER-Teachers considers three policy levers that school systems can use to reach Goal 7: (1) opportunities for teacher professional development; (2) collaborative professional development that focuses on improving instruction; and (3) assignment of professional development training on the basis of perceived need.

Policy

(1) Teachers are not formally obliged to comply with a minimum amount of professional development hours on an annual basis, but in practice almost all of them do. SABER-Teachers assesses whether education systems require teachers to complete a minimum amount of professional development activities on a yearly basis. In Slovenia, there is no formal obligation or sanction for teachers who do not participate in professional development activities, and thus, Slovenia's rating in this policy lever drops to 'emerging'. This is due to the fact that, in Slovenia, professional development is understood as a teacher's right and, as a result, virtually all teachers participate. Similarly, several professional development opportunities entail both 'hard' and 'soft' motivation incentives to encourage teachers to attend. For example, teachers collect credit points when they participate in accredited programmes of continuous professional development. These programmes are a prerequisite to progress in the career ladder as they become mentors, advisors and/or councillors with higher pay grades. Financing for these professional development programmes comes from special funds provided by state governments.

(2) Various forms of professional development exist in Slovenia. Research suggests that effective teacher

professional development is collaborative and provides opportunities for in-school analysis of instructional practice. As mentioned earlier, high-performing education systems such as those of Japan and the city of Ontario (Canada) devote as much as 30 per cent of teachers' school time to professional development and instructional improvement activities. These activities include observation visits to other schools and participation in teacher or school networks, as well as engaging in research, mentoring and/or coaching (Table 7).

Table 7. Types of professional teacher development

	Slovenia	Japan	Russia- St. Petersburg	Serbia	Singapore
Observation visits	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Teacher networks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
School networks	✓	✓			✓
Research		✓			✓
Mentoring/ coaching	✓	✓			✓

Source: SABER-Teachers database

Similarly, in Slovenia, teacher professional development covers various activities. In addition to enrolling in in-service teacher training programmes, the following types of work are taken into account as part of professional development activities: (i) mentoring/coaching, including support to novice teachers; (ii) class observation; (iii) participation in professional groups (i.e. teachers of the same or similar subjects); (iv) active participation in workshops, seminars and conferences (regional, national); (v) participation in research projects; and (vi) participation as an advisor in national external examinations, among others. For all these forms of work, teachers accumulate credit points that affect their promotion to titles and a higher salary.

It is also a tradition that teachers are assisted in their work by other educational experts (e.g. pedagogues, social pedagogues, special educators, social workers or educational psychologists). These professionals are either employed full-time in a particular school or carry out a so-called mobile service (one expert providing services to more than one school).

(3) Teacher professional development is assigned based on priorities and needs. The law requires principals to promote professional development opportunities among their staff. They also take into account identified teachers' needs and school priorities to decide how to invest financial resources earmarked for these kinds of activities. In Slovenia, on a yearly basis, there are nearly 500 different courses available, and schools and teachers can choose among them.

Implementation

Although professional development is not formally required, practically all teachers take part. The National Institute of Education (NIE) annually releases a catalogue of continuing education and training, which includes two categories: 'updating' and 'other' programmes. Updating programmes are designed to support the provision of quality education in schools and to better attain learning objectives, as well as to train teachers in the implementation of systemic and curricular innovations in a broad sense. These programmes are based on an annual tender of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, taking into account the national priority areas and specific needs of individual schools. Teachers enrol in these programmes online. They do not pay for basic training themselves, as all schools are able to meet the cost of basic training programme. Other programmes are designed separately and if teachers decide to participate, they may have to pay a full or partial fee. In addition to the NIE, higher education institutions offer continuous professional development programmes. After the successful completion of a programme, teachers receive a certificate.

Goal 8: Motivating teachers to perform

Established●●●○

Mechanisms that adequately motivate teachers enable school systems to signal their seriousness in achieving education goals, making a teaching career attractive to competent individuals, and rewarding good performance while ensuring accountability.

SABER-Teachers considers three policy levers that school systems can use to reach Goal 8: (1) linking

career opportunities to teacher performance; (2) mechanisms that hold teachers accountable; and (3) performance-based compensation.

Policy

(1) Hiring decisions and promotion opportunities are linked to teachers' performance outcomes. To ensure teachers are capable before granting them long-term contracts, authorities need both a probation period upon initial hires and the right not to offer long-term contracts to teachers who do not perform during the probation period. In Slovenia, this period lasts for a maximum of 10 months under the supervision of a mentor. A trainee is obliged to prepare and pass a professional examination. A positive assessment of the traineeship and an exam pass are requisite conditions for an open-ended appointment. Teachers at the workplace can be promoted to the positions of mentor, advisor and councillor and they can thus progress in terms of salary. Both promotion and salary raises depend on teacher performance.

(2) Expectations of teacher behaviour and professional ethics are in place. Requiring teachers to meet certain standards in order to remain in the profession can facilitate the removal of ineffective and/or dangerous teachers. SABER-Teachers measures whether teachers may be dismissed for misconduct, child abuse, absenteeism and poor performance. In Slovenia, suspension and/or firing requires a complex legal procedure in compliance with education, labour and criminal law. In cases of violations against sexual integrity or other criminal offenses, school inspectors may suspend teachers immediately. In case of poor performance, the principal can begin the process to terminate a teacher's employment. Parents can also submit complaints to the school inspection. In cases of poor performance, however, in practice the education system provides opportunities to improve performance, such as mentoring and additional training before suspension.

(3) Teacher compensation is linked to teacher performance at the school level. To align teacher incentives, systems that are most effective at motivating teachers provide incentives to perform well (e.g. performance bonuses). As already mentioned, performance reviews inform teachers' promotions, including salary raises. In accordance with the law, the principal is responsible for proposing the teacher's promotion to a (higher) position and for deciding on the teacher's progress on the salary schedule. The principal is also responsible for monitoring teachers' work and for advising them.

Implementation

Ongoing professional development is not formally required, but over the years it has become part of the school culture. Teachers commonly attend various forms of training and they care for their professional development. It is also not uncommon that teachers enrol as part-time students at universities to obtain a new (higher) degree. Several recent and completed studies in Slovenia have shown that the system of teacher professional development works well, but they also recommend ensuring additional training for the mentors of novice teachers and to develop an induction model for the teaching profession (Bela knjiga, 2011).

Policy Implications

This SABER country report has offered a snapshot of Slovenia's key teacher policies and how they compare with top global performers, as well as with those of similar education tradition. This section presents policy implications to further improve the teacher policy framework. These recommended measures derive from the analysis above and interviews conducted in Slovenia.

Attracting the best into teaching (Goal 2)

Teacher education programmes in Slovenia are clearly attractive to young people. There is growing interest in courses such as classroom teaching, special education and social pedagogy, and enrolment for them is highly selective. However, interest in courses to become teachers of mathematics, science and technology is lower and therefore enrolment is not as selective (VPIS, 2015). Policy suggestions include:

- consider how to increase interest in these fields at the national level, and ensure that all education programmes become selective and attractive for the most talented individuals.

Preparing teachers with useful training and experience (Goal 3)

Today in Slovenia, teaching practice is a compulsory component of initial teacher education and training programmes. However, some data suggest that the implementation of this standard may vary considerably across teacher training institutions (Cvetek, 2002; Juriševič et al., 2007). In addition, research shows that induction programmes and mentoring for novice

teachers improves student learning. However, Slovenia does not yet offer these programmes. Therefore, some recommendations are to:

- check the actual implementation of the teaching practice standard;
- assess the quality of teaching practice in teacher education programmes; and
- implement induction programmes and mentoring for novice teachers.

Matching teachers' skills with students' needs (Goal 4)

Policies implemented in the past to improve teacher allocations have yielded good results given that teacher shortages are no longer a challenging issue. However, not all schools are in the same situation. Research has shown that there are gaps in learning achievement by socio-economic status, similar to what happens in developing nations (Gaber and Marjanovič Umek, 2009). Furthermore, teachers require additional knowledge and skills to work with different children so that they can tailor instruction to students' specific needs (Kavkler et al., 2015). It seems that the education system does not pay enough attention to schools that serve a large proportion of students from vulnerable social groups. In modern societies, these issues pose a growing challenge to education quality and equity. Although the category of 'hard-to-staff schools' is not used in Slovenia, and most schools are rather well-equipped with support staff (e.g. special and social pedagogues, etc.), achievement gaps do exist in practice. Some policy options to address this challenge include:

- strengthen in-service teacher training to target children from low socio-economic backgrounds and with special needs;
- identify potential low-performing schools;
- provide visible incentives for teachers to work in low-performing schools (e.g. faster promotion, higher salaries or increased benefits); and
- introduce termed contracts with attractive salaries and promotion conditions, and other benefits to encourage new teachers to serve vulnerable schools for a limited period of time.

Supporting teachers to improve instruction (Goal 7)

Given that professional development is not a formal requirement in Slovenia, a potential policy recommendation is to:

- formalize feasible requisites of professional development for all teachers to ensure they benefit from adequate in-service teacher training and development opportunities. This would contribute towards reconciling policy with existing practices.

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Annex 1: SABER-Teachers Ratings

The SABER-Teachers team has identified policy levers (actions that governments can take) and indicators (that measure the extent to which governments are making effective use of these policy levers) for each of the eight policy goals referenced in this country report. For example, for Teacher Policy Goal 1, Setting Clear Expectations for Teachers, the SABER-Teachers team has identified the following policy levers and indicators:

Table A1.1 Setting clear expectations for teachers

Policy Levers	Indicators
A. Are there clear expectations for teachers?	1. Are there standards for what students must know and be able to do?
	2. Are the tasks that teachers are expected to carry out officially stipulated?
B. Is there useful guidance on the use of teachers' working time?	1. Are teachers' official tasks related to instructional improvement?
	2. Does the statutory definition of working time for primary school teachers recognize non-teaching hours?
	3. What is the share of working time allocated to teaching for primary school teachers?

In the country report, each goal is defined in the first paragraph of the section relating to that goal. Policy levers for achieving that goal are identified in the second paragraph. The remaining text in each section provides details about the indicators that measure each of the levers.

Using the policy levers and indicators, the SABER-Teachers tool evaluates the performance of an education system on each of the eight teacher policy goals using a four-tiered scale (latent, emerging, established and advanced) that describes the extent to which the system has put in place teacher policies associated with improved student outcomes.

This four-tiered rating system represents a continuum of education systems, from education systems with no teacher policies at all (or, in some cases, policies that are detrimental to the encouragement of learning) to more comprehensive, developed systems with teacher policies oriented toward learning. SABER-Teacher ratings can be defined in the following manner:

- Advanced systems, rated on a particular policy goal, have put in place multiple policies conducive to learning for each policy lever used to achieve that goal.
- Established systems have at least one policy and/or law in place that uses those policy levers.
- Emerging systems have only some appropriate policies in place to achieve the policy goal.
- Latent systems have no or few teacher policies.

See Vegas et al. (2012) for more details about these definitions as well as a detailed review of the policy levers and indicators used by SABER-Teachers.

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The **Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER)** initiative produces comparative data and knowledge on education policies and institutions, with the aim of helping countries systematically strengthen their education systems. SABER evaluates the quality of education policies against evidence-based global standards, using new diagnostic tools and detailed policy data. The SABER country reports give all parties with a stake in educational results—from administrators, teachers and parents to policy-makers and business people—an accessible, objective snapshot showing how well the policies of their country's education system are oriented toward ensuring that all children and youth learn.

This report focuses specifically on policies in the area of teacher policies. It was produced by the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, hosted within UNESCO, with support from staff of the World Bank Group.

Teachers for Education 2030

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