

LOOP PROJECT WHITE PAPER: EMPOWERING TEACHERS – ENHANCING TEACHER INDUCTION THROUGH MENTORING ACTIVITIES

WP4 – BUILDING POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM THE FIELD ACTIVITIES
DELIVERABLE 4.3 – WHITE PAPER FOR POLICY
ACTION ON TEACHERS PROFESSION AND CAREER

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**EMPOWERING TEACHERS PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL
AND SOCIAL CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT THROUGH
INNOVATIVE PEER – INDUCTION PROGRAMMES**

VISION

Education systems are currently facing significant challenges, related, on one hand, to the need to attract a large number of new teachers and, on the other, to continue supporting teachers already within the system, avoiding early dropout.

The European Commission recognises that continuous professional development has a substantial impact on student learning outcomes, progress and the well-being of teachers. Scientific data corroborates that training opportunities shape teaching approaches and competencies.

It is therefore of great importance to create a complementary and comprehensive approach across all levels and domains of teaching and teacher training. This requirement implies the need to ensure teacher induction, supported by quality mentoring, including actions to promote and support professional development, as well as evaluation mechanisms, including ongoing feedback.

Adopting field-tested actions, as was the case with the LOOP experiment, allows policies to be effectively targeted towards access to excellent training programmes that meet the real needs of teachers and students. This can be achieved through the development of well-tested training models, such as the LOOP induction and mentors' capacity programmes and the career management model.

OBJECTIVE

LOOP was an experimental project designed to help restore recognition and confidence in the teaching profession, intervening at all stages of the professional career, through a systemic political action aimed at guaranteeing quality induction into the profession, involving the contribution of experienced teachers trained to act as mentors.

LOOP sought to test, among other premises, that training teacher mentors facilitates the implementation of formal induction programmes and that this translates into improved conditions for teachers. This action aims to increase the attractiveness of the profession and to prevent new professionals from leaving early, as well as to support teachers who are already in the system by positively influencing their motivation levels for teaching.

The main aim of the white paper is to systematise relevant information about the action carried out in the LOOP project in all the countries of the consortium (Portugal, Spain, Greece, Italy, Slovenia and Croatia), seeking to generate innovation at a systemic and political level, thus contributing to the identification of challenges and the consideration of strategies in the different participating countries. All the work developed aims to attract more professionals into teaching careers, provide ongoing support for teachers already in education systems, help them to carry out their duties, recognise their roles and offer support in managing their professional careers.

TOPICS

- Teachers' Policy
- Teachers' Induction
- Teachers Mentoring
- Career Structure and Guidance
- Professional development
- LOOP Model for Teachers' Induction and Career Progression

INTRODUCTION

The situation of teachers in European countries is similar overall, due to professional instability caused by increasingly demanding professional contexts, a lack of resources and recognition, as well as the fatigue they face (the average age is 44 in OECD countries). The TALIS 2018 report reveals that 39% of teachers in OECD countries and economies plan to leave teaching in the next few years. The early departure of these professionals, who are highly knowledgeable in various aspects of their profession, represents an irreparable loss for education systems.

At the same time, there is a relatively low presence of young teachers in education systems (under 30), a proportion that decreases according to the level of education. Research shows that Europe faces the enormous challenge of attracting new teachers and, at the same time, continuously supporting those who are already in their careers and struggling with demotivation.

The OECD reports (TALIS, 2013 and 2018), when analysing the most advanced education systems, including the countries that are part of the LOOP consortium (Portugal, Spain, Greece, Italy, Slovenia and Croatia), indicate the absence or even difficulty of access to teaching practice after initial training, known as the induction period. This training process, crucial for newly qualified teachers or those facing new professional realities, is essential for their integration into the professional context, plays a key role in the continuum of lifelong learning and contributes to improving student success (LINCS, 2015), as well as contributing to the retention of teachers in the profession, reducing dropout and prolonged absenteeism (TALIS, 2018).

The current European framework highlights the urgency of a political perspective underpinned by a shared vision between the different structures that make up the various levels of action in education systems - ministries of education, higher education institutions, teacher training centres, schools and teachers - agreeing on a set of systemic and continuous actions, including professional development opportunities, which include induction processes underpinned by quality mentoring.

The LOOP project, based on a *quasi-experimental* methodology and a bottom-up strategy, outlined a set of policy measures for the professional development of teachers, supported by formal mentoring and induction programmes and a career management model, capable of helping to overcome challenges common to most European Union countries, such as weaknesses in induction and professional development programmes, a lack of attractiveness for the profession and opportunities to develop teaching and pedagogical competencies, to achieve high levels of mastery throughout their careers, incorporate feedback as part of induction, supported by mentoring.

The main objective of this document is therefore to highlight the urgency of adopting policy action solutions, based on concrete data, resulting from interventions evaluated in school environments, before and after the implementation of the policy measure in question, taking into account:

- The information gathered (results validated in the field);
- The intended objectives of the policy recommendations, based on the different conditions of the education system (results of interest);
- The risks and sources of uncertainty (external forces, vulnerabilities, including social conditions in the different countries).

Given this framework, a set of actions is proposed to improve the current state of the four scenarios identified below, which characterize the education systems in the various countries of the consortium and are considered to be of great relevance for systemic and continuous action.

Scenario 1. Unlocking Teacher Development and Career Progression: the aim is to improve teaching careers by supporting teachers at the start of their professional careers through a formal induction programme based on mentoring. This action aims to generate new levels of motivation in teachers, preventing them from giving up the profession prematurely. In addition, it aims to create mechanisms to diversify career opportunities, allowing experienced teachers to take on new roles, thus enhancing their activity.

Scenario 2. Transforming Knowledge into Action in Teacher Education: aims to implement and renew immersion (induction) programmes in teaching activity for early career teachers, focusing on different dimensions of professionalism - didactic-pedagogical, administrative/bureaucratic, sociocultural and emotional and scientific - using peer mentoring.

Scenario 3. Unleashing Teachers' Potential through Mentorship: the aim is to implement formal mentoring programmes for teachers, duly certified and/or accredited, to support the implementation of induction programmes. These mentors' capacity programmes can result in improvements in the delivery of induction programmes, providing new career diversification opportunities for teaching professionals.

Scenario 4. Support Mechanisms in Organic Structures for Induction: aims to translate the different measures into the design of an action plan and a strategy for its implementation, clarifying the role of school management and entities associated with training, as the structures responsible for defining, organizing and making available the resources that are essential for the success of induction and training programmes for mentors. This plan aims to contribute to the development and improvement of the quality of the services provided by schools and to ensure that teachers are accompanied, trained and integrated into the school culture.

Throughout the white paper, you can learn about the participatory approach and the experience gained on the ground over three years of implementing the LOOP project, resulting from the induction opportunities offered to teachers and their implications for education systems. The document also presents a systematization of recommendations that are expected to have a positive impact on the different European educational contexts, because they are the end result of an in-depth reflection of the whole process in which the various LOOP partners were involved.

The recommendations for each of the scenarios proposed as a reference for formulating new policies are also aligned with European objectives, as detailed in table 1.

Objectives	European Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contribute to the development of policies that attract new teachers, reduce early leaving and increase the motivation of career teachers ▪ Implement, improve and innovate teacher induction processes, using mentoring ▪ Increase career options by recognizing the role of mentors, and implementing mentoring programmes in context 	<p>Policy agenda ET2020 working group¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At least 15% of adults should participate in learning ▪ Promote initial education and continuous professional development of teachers of high quality ▪ Provide access to professional support throughout teachers' careers <p>Policy agenda ET2020 working group-schools²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and support attractive and sustainable careers – in particular on staff evaluation, required competencies and

¹ European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2020)

² European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, ET2020 working group (2019).

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase the capacity of organizational structures to provide support to teachers 	<p>professional development</p> <p>Council conclusions on school development and excellent teaching (2017/C 421/03)³</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shifting towards a comprehensive teacher policy that spans all stages of their professional careers ▪ Making teachers’ careers more attractive by enhancing support, feedback & guidance, namely to new teachers ▪ Offering quality initial teacher education by promoting induction activities and, where appropriate, guidance by trained mentors ▪ Investing in teacher’s continuous professional development and growth during all phases of their careers <p>European agenda for adult learning⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase adult participation in formal, non-formal and informal learning whether to acquire work skills, for active citizenship, or personal development and fulfilment <p>Resolution on improving the role of lifelong guidance in lifelong learning strategies⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Invest in career guidance and counselling as a strategy to reinforce lifelong learning
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TABLE 1 – OBJECTIVES OF THE LOOP PROJECT AND THEIR ALIGNMENT WITH EUROPEAN OBJECTIVES

³ Council Conclusions on school development and excellent teaching (2017).

⁴ European Commission (2020).

⁵ European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training - CEDEFOP (2019).

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THE PROJECT LOOP

BACKGROUND

The LOOP project is based on the development of a **model** for teacher induction and career progression, which is a benchmark for the implementation of induction programmes based on mentoring. This model aims to promote teachers' professional development in the scientific, didactic-pedagogical, administrative/bureaucratic, socio-cultural and emotional dimensions.

LOOP was developed in three phases, with different but complementary objectives, determined by a *quasi-experimental* methodology, to test the **hypotheses** based on the following lines of action and their respective premises:

- **Diversification of career options** - the role of mentor increases motivation and contributes to the retention of teachers with several years experience;
- **Induction supported by mentoring activities:**
 - Supports the professional development of early career teachers;
 - Contributes to the retention of early-career teachers;
 - Contributes to the social and cultural inclusion of teachers;
- **Mentor training** - increases teachers' interest in participating in the implementation of induction programmes, as it supports their action;
- **Induction resources and actions** must be planned, taken care of and adjusted to the needs of the professional contexts and their actors.

THE PROCESS

The three phases of the project's implementation are briefly described below and their presentation is intended to give context and meaning to the content of this white paper.

1ST PHASE: PREPARING THE SOIL

LOOP's activity began with an analysis of the current state of the induction processes in the consortium countries, verifying the need to:

- Reviewing the teaching career, with a clear commitment to enhancing it, to increase the attractiveness of the profession at all stages, by guaranteeing:
 - Valuing teaching roles, including mentoring, with benefits, for example, in terms of career progression;
 - Support for teachers at the start of their professional activity, with the implementation of a structured induction programme, supported by experienced peers who can reconcile these responsibilities with their teaching duties;
- Improve supervisory practices, namely through the implementation of induction programmes, continuing their professional development by:
 - Providing induction practices, not only for teachers starting but also for mobile and/or contract teachers;
 - Changing the evaluative perspective of induction programmes, giving them a more formative slant;

- Investing in mentoring offered by experienced teachers from the same school or subject group, trained to act as mentors and adopt a collaborative and constructive attitude;
- Creation of new career opportunities for experienced teachers, allowing them to take on the role of mentor to their peers;
- Relevance of the role of mentors, through certification and professional enhancement of this status;
- Creation of a training programme for mentors, aimed at planning and implementing actions that effectively support the immersion of new teachers in the profession;
- Developing a system for evaluating the impact of mentors' capacity programmes on the integration of teachers into teaching.

[The report can be downloaded here.](#)

2ND PHASE: COLLABORATIVE DESIGN OF THE MAIN INSTRUMENTS

This phase covers the development of induction and mentors' capacity programmes, designed to fill gaps identified in existing programmes in the LOOP consortium countries, ensuring that the needs expressed by teachers starting their professional career and with more than 20 years of experience, as well as school leaders, are met. These programmes can be consulted in full on the project's website, however, given the high relevance of their approach in the context of this white paper, the essential aspects that characterise them are summarised below.

LOOP'S TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAMME

This programme consists of 14 modules covering the didactic-pedagogical, disciplinary, bureaucratic administrative, emotional, social and cultural dimensions of teaching professionalism. It is characterised by its flexibility and adaptability to contexts and mentees. Its **objectives** include the need to i) offer a quality induction opportunity to new teachers, ii) reduce the anxiety felt in the first years of professional activity and/or when faced with new challenges, iii) empower teachers with the knowledge they need to carry out their duties adequately, promoting positive relationships with their peers and responding to the needs of the organisation and the context, iv) facilitate the transition from initial training to working life and adequate integration into the school team and v) increase teachers' motivation to carry out their duties and, consequently, their retention rates in the profession.

[The programme can be downloaded here.](#)

MENTORS' CAPACITY PROGRAMME

This programme is made up of three sequential blocks, interconnected, complementary and distinct from each other in terms of their specific theoretical content, developed to support experienced teachers and school leaders. Throughout the programme, teachers have the opportunity to i) understand the duties, responsibilities and expectations associated with their roles, ii) identify priorities, actions and competencies relevant to carrying out the mentoring role, iii) develop standards and protocols to guide the mentoring action, iv) develop competencies in the various areas of teaching professionalism, and v) offer effective back up to support interventions in the context of professional performance.

[The programme can be downloaded here.](#)

3RD PHASE: VALIDATION OF THE INSTRUMENTS IN REAL CONTEXTS

The programmes developed in the second phase of the project were applied in all the countries in the LOOP consortium by designing an action strategy based on two groups of teachers, an experimental group and a control group.

Both groups included schools with similar characteristics, taking into account two factors: level of education (preschool, primary and secondary) and location (urban and rural). Concerning the criteria for setting up the control and experimental groups, it should be emphasised that during the implementation phase, it was found that:

- The difference between the two groups was based on the fact that the experienced teachers in the experimental group were trained to perform the role of mentor, while the experienced teachers in the control group were only informed about the structure of the induction programme;
- The new teachers in the experimental group took part in a training workshop and the new teachers in the control group only an information session;
- The experimental group was systematically supported during the field trials, while the control group had no support;
- The teachers in the control group implemented the teacher induction programme without any support, relying only on the material provided during the information sessions;
- The mentor/mentee pairs were formed, whenever possible, based on the following assumptions:
 - An experienced teacher (mentor) was matched with one or two mentees;
 - Whenever possible, work schedules were shared;
 - Providing the support of technological resources whenever the mentor and mentee(s) were from different schools;
 - Mentor and mentee(s) belonged to the same scientific area, whenever possible.

The project was implemented between June 2022 and October 2023, allowing 1017 teachers to take part in the field trials, distributed as shown in the table below.

	CONTROL GROUP	EXPERIMENTAL GROUP
Experienced teachers	207	217
New teachers	235	358

TABLE 2 - PARTICIPANTS IN THE LOOP PROJECT FIELD TRIALS

[The report can be downloaded here.](#)

GLOBAL COORDINATION MECHANISM

The LOOP project was implemented for several months, which included clarification meetings with school management, mentor training, information sessions for mentees and the implementation of the induction programme.

ACTIVITIES	NUMBER OF SESSIONS	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Train the Mentors' training course	33	234 experienced teachers – experimental group
My induction programme workshop	14	368 new teachers – experimental group
Info session for New Teachers	12	262 new teachers – control group
Info session for mentors	12	208 experienced teachers – control group

TABLE 3 - FOLLOW-UP AND PREPARATION ACTIVITIES AND PARTICIPANTS

Monitoring and support were ensured through the distance organisation and face-to-face meetings⁶, involving mentors, mentees and school headmasters, to clarify doubts, analyse the programme, support the mentor/mentee relationship, monitor the implementation of the programmes, define activities and ensure that they are adapted to the needs and expectations of the mentors/mentees, as well as to the school contexts.

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES

The action plan relied on the following overarching principles and approaches:

- **Policy on teaching profession**

It refers to the set of principles, guidelines, goals and strategies formulated during the project and supported by education authorities, education organisations and other stakeholders, to support the education system of a country, region or institution. The definition of a new body of policy aims to support the development, implementation and evaluation of implementation, targeting certain objectives and improving the quality of teaching and learning.

- **Teachers' Induction**

Addressing the critical issues faced by teachers during the induction period and exploring effective policy instruments to overcome these challenges, shaping the future of the teaching profession.

- **Teachers' Mentoring**

Exploring measures to support mentoring, analysing characteristics and organization of induction programmes, with a focus on the role of mentoring and the need for formal mentor training, bridging theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

- **Career Structure and Guidance**

Empowering teachers to navigate the education system effectively through innovative approaches to career development and guidance.

- **Professional Development**

Focusing on the expansion of learning opportunities for teachers to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, encompassing intellectual, scientific, personal, interpersonal, and socioemotional competencies.

- **LOOP Model for Teachers' Induction and Career Progression**

Presenting and analysing the model, highlighting its multidimensional nature, to address national differences and support teachers.

⁶ Only in the experimental group.

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SCENARIO 1. UNLOCKING TEACHER DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER PROGRESSION

We are currently facing a political, economic, social and cultural context that does not encourage people to choose the teaching profession in most European countries. As a result, some countries face difficulties in renewing and maintaining a stable and motivated workforce in the field of education. Teachers often experience a lack of support, social recognition for their work and adequate preparation to take on the responsibilities assigned to them in the early years of their careers.

Most teachers in different countries, when they choose to enter the teaching profession, are aware that in the first years of their profession, they could face professional instability, lower salaries and uninspiring administrative tasks. However, they don't give up, motivated by the prospect of eventually achieving stability, enjoying additional benefits and performing more rewarding duties. This resilience stems, to a large extent and in many countries, from the considerable disparity in rights that exists between teachers at the beginning of their professional career and those who are more experienced.

Teaching careers therefore face significant challenges in terms of attractiveness, not least because progression is notoriously difficult, often preventing dedicated teachers with exemplary performance from progressing and thus being recognised. What's more, in some European countries, progression over the years discourages teachers from taking on other roles or carrying out other activities in the school, as hard work and dedication are not properly rewarded. This lack of differentiation and stimuli can demotivate education professionals, negatively contributing to them taking on new responsibilities and accepting new challenges.

Some authors and national reports point out that throughout their careers teachers face a phenomenon known as professional loneliness, which is more incisive in the initial years. This scenario is often caused by adverse conditions, which place them in difficult situations that induce feelings of discouragement, disillusionment and demotivation. It is therefore imperative to find ways of correcting this reality, and induction programmes based on mentoring are an effective mechanism for offering the support that teachers need, particularly in the scientific, didactic-pedagogical, administrative, bureaucratic, socio-cultural and emotional dimensions.

Indeed, the experience gained during the LOOP project has highlighted the strategic importance of its action, and it is now crucial to legitimise the project at a political level. This recognition must be translated into concrete actions for its systemic operationalisation, involving the identification of resources, the definition of competencies and the promotion of the active participation of the various structures and professionals.

POLICY OPTIONS

The main aim is to improve teaching careers by supporting teachers at the start of their professional careers through the development of an induction programme based on collaborative work and mentoring. This action aims to generate new levels of professional motivation and prevent teachers from quitting the profession prematurely. It also aims to create mechanisms for diversifying career opportunities, allowing experienced teachers to take on new roles and ensuring that these are reflected in differentiated progression, through a commitment to career restructuring.

Reviewing the teaching career with the perspective of increasing its attractiveness to teachers at different stages of their professional career, looks at:

- Stability of the teaching career, changing the rules for placing teachers, in particular, so that there is less geographical mobility;

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- Definition of a single career path or one divided into stages of progression;
- Progression based on objective criteria for assessing merit, participation in training and job performance;
- Assigning responsibility for pedagogical coordination, guidance and supervision to teachers with appropriate qualifications/experience;
- Inclusion of time for collaborative and peer work;
- Valuing particularly important teaching roles, including mentoring, with benefits in terms of career progression;
- Effective support for teachers at the start of their professional activity through the implementation of:
 - A structured induction programme optimised by experienced peers and leaders;
 - A reduced timetable for mentors and teachers starting their professional careers;
 - Flexible working hours for mentors, so that they can combine their teaching and mentoring activities.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

CONSENSUALISE the concepts of induction and mentoring. This need stems from the fact that the legal frameworks of the partnership countries differ on the definition of *induction* and *mentoring*, and it is necessary to agree on a common⁷ conceptual approach, as the nature of all action depends on it.

ESTABLISH concrete and precise objectives, translated into educational policy measures that can:

- Contribute to the constitution of educational policies that cover all stages of the teaching career;
- Promote peer learning processes as an effective strategy to reduce early leaving of the teaching profession, increase teachers' motivation and improve their professional competencies;
- Strengthen support for teachers by implementing, improving and innovating induction processes at the start of professional activity, using mentoring;
- Increase career options by providing mentoring training for experienced teachers and recognising their role as mentors.

CREATE new career opportunities by supporting the implementation of teacher induction processes and mentor training programmes, with formal recognition of the role of the mentor who is duly trained to carry out the role.

This recommendation implies concerted political action to ensure the adoption of a body of legislation that defines the scope, nature and structure of these programmes, as well as the resources and mechanisms needed to make them a reality.

FOSTER dialogue between professional teachers' organisations, universities, training centres, researchers and national councils associated with education, so that concerted action can be taken by the different decision-making levels in a climate of cooperation between them.

GUARANTEE the participation of all new teachers in induction, in a logic of co-responsibility of the various professionals, ensuring their integration and guaranteeing their professional development, taking into account some essential assumptions:

- Induction programmes as planned and systematic processes, of a collaborative and formative nature, administered by professionals with competencies in the scientific, didactic-pedagogical, administrative and bureaucratic, socio-cultural and emotional dimensions, trained for this purpose;

⁷ See point 4.1 of LOOP Policy Brief 2 - for the concepts of induction and mentoring adopted in the LOOP project.

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- Induction programmes reflect the needs of each context, are structured according to the five dimensions of action and are geared towards achieving specific objectives;
- Organisational conditions require regulation to ensure compatibility between teaching, collaborative work and participation in mentoring activities;
- The training of mentors to support the induction of beginning teachers and the recognition of the importance of their role is vital to the success of the programmes;
- The involvement of the school's various management structures in supporting the implementation of induction programmes is a task for the entire educational community.

RECOGNISE the importance of the experience and training acquired by mentors, through participation in the training programme and the application of the induction programme, translating this recognition into conditions that support the performance of the teaching activity, with repercussions on the career. It is therefore important that these elements are guaranteed by the various players involved:

- With regard to mentors and mentees:
 - The adequacy of the time dedicated to teaching activities and the total number of working hours;
 - The creation of moments for sharing experiences, good practices and peer learning;
 - Participation in professional communities of practice;
 - The allocation of a supplement to remuneration and/or other compensations;
- With regard to the programmes:
 - Accreditation of training programmes by competent bodies, recognising training for performance evaluation and career progression;
 - The certification of induction programmes and the accreditation of teacher training for progression and/or entry into the teaching career;
 - Monitoring the implementation of induction programmes, with a view to continuous improvement and permanent updating;
 - Access to induction programmes on national platforms.

SCENARIO 2. TRANSFORMING KNOWLEDGE INTO ACTION IN TEACHER EDUCATION

The technological evolution and complexity of contemporary society, as well as its political and organisational dynamics, highlight the weakness of initial training to guarantee effective professional performance. Teachers' current roles in schools are multifaceted and require constant adaptation to social, economic and scientific changes. There is therefore an urgent need for articulated actions between institutions at different levels of education, promoting collaboration between supervisors and teachers, as well as the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical skills acquired in the context of academic training.

Therefore, as well as possessing ethical, moral, intellectual and scientific qualities, teachers must develop personal, interpersonal and emotional competencies to intervene appropriately in the social dynamics of the school community. Faced with frequent changes in educational policies, teachers also assume responsibility for bureaucratic and administrative procedures, updating curricular programmes and preparing students to face global challenges.

Support for teachers at the start of their careers is crucial for education reform and involves a review of supervised teaching practice in schools. Initial training cannot be considered complete without the effective integration of future teachers into a given school reality. Overall, teachers in all the consortium countries express this need for support, recognising that entering the profession and fulfilling professional duties represent major challenges.

It is therefore essential to extend learning by providing support in interventions, with an emphasis on getting closer to the contexts of initial training organisations and schools. Teachers should receive support to update their professional competencies, deal emotionally with school pressures, communicate and collaborate with other teachers and leaders jointly take on administrative tasks and legal procedures and, where necessary, receive support in the didactic/scientific-pedagogical field, if necessary.

An effective induction programme, available to all teachers at different stages of their careers, should also enable peer observation, and participation in learning communities that promote reflection and joint learning, and address the quality of teaching and professional development as a collective responsibility. Induction programmes should therefore be understood as processes of systematic, planned and continuous professional development, of a collaborative and formative nature, supported by a network of teachers and specialists from different sectors, with a focus on the school context, the promotion of student learning and the development of the education system.

POLICY OPTIONS

The central aim is to establish a comprehensive programme of immersion in teaching, especially aimed at teachers at the start of their professional careers. In this sense, the importance of implementing, improving and innovating induction programmes is recognised, integrating the didactic, pedagogical, administrative/bureaucratic, socio-cultural, scientific and emotional dimensions, making use of peer mentoring.

It is therefore important to improve supervisory practices and collaborative work, extending initial teacher training and continuing their professional development, paying particular attention to the following aspects:

- Co-operation between higher education institutions and schools, to ensure a balanced combination of theory and practice and adjust training as much as possible to reality;
- The creation of research cultures on and in training, to better understand what is done (or not done) and why, analysing its epistemological foundations, the objectives of training and the implications of the action itself in spaces for co-training and reflection on training models, processes and practices;

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- Induction practices, helping not only teachers at the start of their professional career to face the challenges of the first few years in teaching but also mobile and/or contract teachers;
- The resources and support to be made available to support induction and teachers on induction;
- The formative perspective of induction programmes, based on pedagogical supervision, concerned with promoting excellence in teacher performance;
- Induction programmes based on mentoring by experienced teachers, trained to be mentors and trained to adopt a collaborative and constructive attitude;
- The role and needs of induction teachers, safeguarding the necessary conditions.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

PROMOTE and DEVELOP, through specific actions, induction programmes for teachers, recognising them as indispensable tools for developing competencies and professional development.

Thus, understanding induction as a professional development and training strategy, at a crucial stage of (re)integration into a school, it is considered that the recipients generally have the following profiles: i) little experience in teaching, ii) have changed schools, teaching different levels or different recruitment groups, iii) have not worked in teaching for more than ten successive years, iv) are in their probationary period or v) are in a temporary contract situation.

GUARANTEE access to induction programmes based on mentoring, adopting policies to promote projects such as LOOP, which includes the provision of training, as well as integration and induction into the profession.

Compliance with this recommendation requires the creation of legal mechanisms to regulate access to induction programmes, taking into account certain assumptions, such as:

- The advantages that result from its application, fundamentally about professional development, access and career progression;
- Support for implementation, guaranteeing the necessary conditions, such as the reduction of teaching and non-teaching hours and the provision of suitable workspaces;
- Ensure the principles of:
 - Quality in the provision of significant resources and activities for the training of mentors and mentees in the various dimensions of professional activity;
 - “Intraspecific cooperation” in setting up and certifying a network of "training schools" to support organisations and monitor the implementation of programmes;
 - “Interspecific cooperation” with schools and training centres to structure and support the training of mentors;
 - Personalisation of planning for the mentee, tailoring activities to their needs, potential, interests and preferences through a multi-level approach, thus ensuring integration, acculturation and adaptation to the educational community.

IMPLEMENT induction programmes in a concerted manner, recognising the fact that they present a unique opportunity to transform education, making teaching careers more attractive and their professionals better prepared to respond to today's challenges.

Considering that its operationalisation is truly decisive, the following articulation is proposed:

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- Educational authorities promote relevant actions to support its implementation, adopting measures, providing means and facilitating access to induction programmes compatible with the needs of each context and teacher;
- School boards guarantee conditions that ensure the implementation of induction programmes, establishing criteria for the selection and appointment of mentors and mentees, as the management structure responsible for:
 - Defining, organising and providing the indispensable means for the success of induction programmes for mentees and training for mentors;
 - Promoting initiatives aimed at involving the school community, liaising with organisations that support the training of mentors and monitoring the induction process;
- The middle management structures of schools and teachers actively contribute to maintaining a favourable climate for the integration of mentors and a network of collaboration with various stakeholders, thus reinforcing support for the success of induction;
- Training providers recognise the importance of induction programmes and ensure that they are certified and, at the same time, promote awareness-raising activities for mentors and mentees, highlighting some of their characteristics, such as:
 - The concept on which the programme is based, the proactive interaction between each professional, which can be described as an exclusive training opportunity;
 - The organisation of the programmes is highly practical and applicable to each context, guaranteeing individual support for mentees;
 - The programmes are certified and are reflected in progression and/or entry into the teaching career;
- Mentors and mentees ensure the development of the programme based on reflection and collaboration, anticipating and acting effectively on potential risks and challenges, and adopting a collaborative, proactive and empathetic attitude.

ENSURE that induction programmes are a possibility for new teachers:

- To have an opportunity for quality induction;
- Reduce the anxiety they feel when they start in a new school organisation;
- To be equipped with the necessary knowledge to carry out their duties correctly, relating positively to their peers and responding to the needs of the organisation and the context;
- To see the transition from their initial training to working in the profession made easier;
- Feel better integrated into the school community;
- To increase their motivation to carry out their teaching duties, and to improve their retention rates in the profession.

TAILOR INDUCTION PROGRAMMES to educational contexts, allowing them to be adjusted to the needs and idiosyncrasies of each organisation. Several studies show that the professional culture of schools, the combination of values, norms and ways of professional practice, have a strong impact on new teachers and the work of mentors. It is therefore important to adapt the principles and practices of any national and/or international professional development project to local contexts.

MAKE IT POSSIBLE for the mentee to be responsible for all decision-making in the induction process. Thus, in agreement with their mentor, the mentee must:

- Decide on the dimensions⁸ to work on after the diagnosis, drawing up a work plan;
- Decide on the activities to initiate;
- Request support and guidance whenever necessary;
- Have access to a qualified mentor;
- Adapt the induction programme to the profile, needs and interests;
- Request space, time and individual support to guarantee the success of the induction.

⁸ Didactic-pedagogical, scientific, bureaucratic and administrative, emotional, social and cultural.

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SCENARIO 3. UNLEASHING TEACHERS' POTENTIAL THROUGH MENTORSHIP

Teacher-mentors must have a specific set of knowledge and competencies that will enable them to overcome the challenges inherent in the role, facilitating and supporting the complete integration of teachers at the beginning of their professional activity into the school culture. In the course of this process, it is crucial to emphasise that the mentoring relationship proposed for the induction period is based on collaborative actions, so mentors' competencies must also include the ability to deal with this collaborative approach.

Continuous teacher training, as a programme aimed at the personal and professional development of teachers, differs conceptually from initial training: "in-service training is aimed at improving those who already have the basic knowledge, know-how and know-how for exercising the profession, [and] can be certified or non-certified, [...] aimed at preparing for specific positions and tasks in the education system (specialised training) or of a more generalist nature" (Recommendation n^o. 4, 2013).

In this respect, it is crucial to emphasize that continuous professional development of teachers should not be an end in itself or intended only for career advancement. It must be based on the real needs of teachers be aligned with both senior and middle management structures and be in tune with the educational community. At the same time, it is imperative to encourage and support teachers to actively participate in these ongoing training programmes.

Specific training for mentors does not exist in the various countries of the consortium. Given the importance of effectively performing this role, which is based on both acquired theoretical knowledge and the goodwill and desire to help teachers at the start of their careers, there is an urgent need to implement certified and/or accredited training courses. These courses should be designed as an integral part of ongoing training programmes, with the aim of training experienced teachers to take on the role of mentor.

It is therefore essential that the education system prioritises the implementation of mentors' capacity programmes as a key strategy to promote the necessary transformations and expand the support offered to teachers. These programmes are key to establishing truly collaborative practices and reconfiguring the trajectory of the teaching career, as they have demonstrated the potential to improve teacher performance and well-being.

It is also crucial to recognise that to take on the role of mentor, teachers must have a reduced weekly teaching workload, flexible hours, adequate salary compensation, access to a network of mentors and recognition, including career progression. In addition, it is important to emphasise that this configuration can positively affect the motivation of experienced teachers, contributing to the retention of valuable professionals for longer, avoiding their early retirement or leaving the profession, while at the same time encouraging the transfer of accumulated knowledge to younger generations of teachers.

POLICY OPTIONS

The aim is to implement formal, certified and/or accredited teacher mentoring programmes to strengthen the implementation of induction programmes. These training programmes for mentors not only contribute to improving the effectiveness of induction processes but also open doors to new career development opportunities for teachers. It is therefore proposed to:

- Setting up teams of teacher-mentors, defining a profile that includes not only mastery of strategies and practices at the didactic-pedagogical level and experience in teaching but also a willingness to support other teachers in developing their professional competencies;

- Recognising the importance of the role of mentors, through their certification and the professional enhancement of this status;
- Creation of a training programme for mentors, geared towards planning and implementing actions that effectively support the immersion of teachers in the profession, ensuring the development of certain competencies so that they can:
 - Offer concrete and constructive feedback;
 - Establish a relationship of proximity and trust;
 - Sharing experiences, knowledge and responding to challenges;
- Drawing up an evaluation system to measure the impact of mentors' capacity programmes on the integration of teachers into the educational environment, as well as assessing the role played by the various players in the process.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

DEFINE THE MENTOR'S profile, recommending that they show:

- Mastery of didactic-pedagogical strategies and practices;
- Lifelong learning mindset;
- Knowledge of the subject they are mentoring;
- Professional experience in the areas of teaching and learning;
- A strong organisational culture;
- Willingness to support mentees;
- Interest in performing mentoring functions and supporting mentees;
- Ability to listen actively and communicate effectively;
- Ability to share experience;
- Ability to offer constructive feedback.

VALUE the specific and specialised knowledge of mentors and their competencies profile to support induction. To this end, it is important to regulate the general criteria for selecting these professionals, safeguarding in particular:

- Teaching experience, knowing that 10 or 20 years of activity translates into accumulated knowledge in the various dimensions of teaching activity;
- The knowledge acquired in other relevant roles, such as participating in innovative projects and supervising internships;
- Specific training, namely participation in the mentors' capacity programme;
- Performance appraisals and motivation to fulfil the role;
- The relationship with "training schools" and the expression of interest in participating.

DEFINE mentors' capacity programmes aimed at experienced teachers, so that they feel better prepared to carry out this role, including monitoring and impact assessment processes. This training programme aims to:

- Access to the theoretical concept that will allow to deepen knowledge;
- Understanding the duties and responsibilities of the mentoring role and managing expectations;

- The identification of priorities and actions relevant to the development of mentoring activities;
- The joint definition of standards and protocols to guide mentoring activities;
- The development of competencies in various areas relevant to the application of the induction programme;
- Access to exercises, activities and material resources.

ALLOCATE teaching time for the role of mentor and ensure that non-teaching time converges for joint work between mentor and mentee. It is essential to ensure that mentor and mentee **have common teaching time** to work collaboratively in the classroom, as this is the only way to accompany the new teacher, especially in classroom management, guaranteeing the conditions for the realisation of a vital dimension of the mentors' capacity programme⁹. This joint involvement includes observing lessons and, desirably, taking part in initiatives in other teachers' classrooms, as these opportunities favour the sharing of knowledge between the various interlocutors, enriching the induction experience.

The **definition of common non-teaching time** is equally important to allow for individual and joint meetings, as well as other activities considered essential to the success of mentoring. Experience in implementing induction and mentoring programmes has shown that the allocation of time is an indispensable condition for the success of the whole process.

⁹ See Policy Brief 2 on the dimensions of the mentors' capacity programme.

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SCENARIO 4. SUPPORT MECHANISMS IN ORGANIC STRUCTURES FOR INDUCTION

The implementation of projects such as LOOP, which aims to expand learning opportunities for teachers encompassing intellectual, scientific, personal, interpersonal, and socio-emotional competencies, contributes to the development of organisations' learning culture by influencing the proper integration of new teachers and the learning of all teachers. Studies show that a comprehensive and integrated approach to induction programmes strengthens the teaching profession, contributing to the success of schools and students.

Research into professional life cycles consistently indicates that the induction of teachers is a crucial moment in the development of their careers and the dynamics of school organisations. Hence the important to look at these projects as catalysts for effective paradigm shifts, since they promote a genuine culture of career-long professional learning, underpinned by formative peer feedback. Specifically, teachers become better able to carry out their assigned tasks effectively, influencing:

- Matching strategies to students' interests;
- Maintaining a positive atmosphere and teacher well-being;
- Encouraging the practice of reflection and curiosity;
- A better classroom management.

Since these conclusions are agreed upon by researchers and those responsible at different levels of the education system, why is this period so neglected? According to Nóvoa (2017), this can be explained by two reasons: firstly, because schools don't have the necessary conditions and resources for this and, secondly, because it is still difficult to differentiate between teachers and recognise the role that can and should be taken on by the most experienced.

However, the conclusions of the work carried out during the LOOP make it clear how important it is to legitimise the project at the political level, as a way of guaranteeing access to this period of training, at the same time as the conceptual definition of the action. This political recognition must be translated into concrete measures that make it possible to put it into practice, a process that requires defining the competencies of the various organisational structures that make up the different decision-making levels. This regulatory framework is essential for creating the conditions in schools that are indispensable for the effective implementation of the proposed measures.

The participants in this project, representatives of ministries, research and evaluation organisations, schools and teachers, recognised the need to set up a strategy to ensure its generalisation, including the resources and guidelines essential to guarantee its successful implementation. This framework for action must therefore take into account the specific needs of national, territorial and individual contexts.

POLICY OPTIONS

The policy options to be adopted are characterised by their pragmatism since the conclusions that have been set out throughout this document are the result of real knowledge about the process of creating and implementing mentoring-based induction programmes on the ground, as well as monitoring them. As such, and in pursuit of the common goal of successively **improving the quality of the service provided by schools**, the following actions should be considered:

- The **definition of an action plan** for induction (ensured by qualified mentors) and peer-to-peer work;
- The **creation of a technical unit (centralised and/or decentralised)** - made up of members of the Ministry of Education, training providers and schools - responsible for implementing the programmes;

- The **definition of the terms of the relationship between mentor and mentee**, which should not obey rigid criteria, but rather a combination that contributes to a better match; in this regard, it is important to consider that relationships between the two evolve and that mentors are professionals with high levels of relational competencies and are therefore able to adapt their actions to different profiles; therefore, it is necessary to reflect on the following aspects:
 - **Mentor and mentee belong to the same subject**, recognising that a mismatch can allow for a more comprehensive exchange of knowledge and promote interdisciplinary articulation processes that can lead to a range of new initiatives and activities;
 - **Mentor and mentee belong to the same school**, a condition that can facilitate the development of activities and the operationalisation of induction, but at the same time if they work in different schools, new ideas and perspectives can be triggered, providing the mentee with a safer and more reserved situation;
 - Ensure that the match **meets the objectives of local educational development**, with a view to induction based on mentoring, not for individual benefit, but collectively and with an impact on the development of wider contexts and working cultures in schools;
 - Matching should be based on **the level of development of the mentor's competencies** in a specific area that is considered important to boost among as many mentees as possible;
- The **training of mentors**, ensuring good preparation for the role, the opportunity to get to know their role (rights and duties) in detail and the induction programme in its entirety;
- **Tailoring the action to the educational context**, respecting its idiosyncrasies and responding positively to the needs of each educational organisation;
- The structuring of a **follow-up and monitoring plan for the induction process**, providing a space for sharing and collaboration between teachers from different schools, sharing procedures and materials;
- **Promoting teacher participation in induction programmes**, such as:
 - Providing for the allocation of **common working time between mentor and mentee**;
 - **Making the group of mentors known to the mentees**, providing time for their presentation, facilitating the creation of relationships and avoiding anxiety and worry, feelings that do nothing to favour the implementation of the process;
 - Providing **information sessions/workshops for mentees** to get to know the objectives and content of the programmes beforehand, the context in which they take place, as well as the tasks that are inherent to them; this action contributes to more informed and conscious decision-making when joining the programme, thus reducing the likelihood of dropping out of the project;
- **Recognising the importance of the participation of the different structures in the implementation and development of the action**, knowing that the performance of this function is very demanding, implies monitoring and the availability of resources, so the responsibility for its implementation must be shared.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Drawing up a strategic and operational action plan to ensure the effective implementation of induction supported by mentoring is primarily focused on improving the quality of the services offered by schools and ensuring that their

teachers feel supported and integrated. This requires defining support mechanisms for the development of induction at all stages of the process.

In this sense, it is important to ensure that training processes are appropriate, taking into account the objective of teachers' personal and professional development, which presupposes a holistic vision, covering the dimensions of knowing, doing and being, which are fundamental to professional practice. It should be emphasised that, in this context, training to enable mentors to carry out this role is particularly important, as it significantly influences teaching professionalism and plays a decisive role in the success of the induction process. It is therefore considered pertinent:

POTENTIATE the development of each educational context through the implementation of induction programmes. Induction programmes should be seen as an **opportunity to reform and update the culture of schools and thus enhance the enrichment and professional development of the teaching community, based on the sharing of knowledge, resources and practices between peers.** The aim is for the impact of these actions to **go beyond the professional development of the individual teachers involved and has repercussions on building a solid teaching culture, on the development of the school as a whole, thus contributing to improving the educational service provided in each context.** This implies that the school's management bodies, as well as its intermediate leadership structures, recognise the **added value of these programmes for the organisation** and, in this way, promote teacher participation and ensure the necessary space and time conditions for carrying out the planned activities.

CONSTITUTE a working group to define/address the guidelines for selecting mentors and participants, as well as identifying the necessary resources, namely training and implementation structures and administrative support. In this regard, the working group should define the terms of correspondence between the mentor and their mentee, bearing in mind that there are no infallible criteria and that combining several different criteria can result in a better match.

PROMOTE the participation of teachers in the implementation of induction programmes, based on a joint plan of actions and players. In this regard, it is considered essential that:

- A working group be set up that receives training to get to know the induction programmes in detail and recognises their value and effective impact;
- The working group, with the support of a communication team, should structure a plan to publicise the programmes in various national structures, and this plan should be presented at different levels - national, regional and local (school);
- Dissemination should involve presenting the programmes through a conceptual approach, explaining their objectives and advantages for teaching careers, providing information on duration, and explaining the activities and human resources required, among other aspects deemed relevant;
- The programmes are not only presented to the teachers potentially involved, but to other relevant players in the school community so that everyone feels motivated to take part in their activities;
- School boards and middle management structures are represented at the dissemination sessions, so that they are aware of the programmes and support their implementation, by providing common times in the teachers' timetable and spaces that allow confidentiality to be safeguarded and collaborative work between mentors and mentees.

TAILOR induction programmes to educational contexts, allowing them to be adjusted to the needs and specificities of each organisation. Several studies have shown that the professional culture of schools, the combination of values, norms and modes of professional practice, have a strong impact on new teachers and the

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work of mentors. It is therefore important to adapt the principles and practices of any national and/or international professional development project to local contexts.

PREPARE a follow-up and monitoring plan for the induction process that makes it possible to establish a continuous evaluation framework, structured in a model appropriate to the characteristics of the action, which defines the methods for monitoring the participants, provides insight into the complexity of the intervention and guarantees the rigour of the activity, including feedback, evaluation of interactions, measurement of the degree of satisfaction and the progress of learning. In this sense, the follow-up and monitoring plan should:

- Define the monitoring objectives;
- Identify the main milestones and targets;
- Specify the monitoring tools;
- Establish a monitoring schedule;
- Define responsibilities;
- Collect feedback and evaluations;
- Analyse the data and identify areas for improvement;
- Communicate the results;
- Implement continuous improvements;
- Evaluate learning progress.

GET TO KNOW the group of mentors, making time for their presentation and allowing contact between the mentors and the new teachers. The sooner mentors and mentees get to know each other, the clearer and more relaxed the implementation of the programmes will be. It is therefore important that **the introduction of each pair takes place as early as possible**, thus overcoming any insecurity, fears and doubts that may naturally exist on both sides.

HOLD information sessions for mentees - in a practical format, such as workshops, to support them in making a conscious and informed decision about their participation in the induction process, thus helping to reduce possible drop-outs.

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