

ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL TEACHER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN ARMENIA

Executive Summary



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Executive Summary

The Analysis of School Teacher Management System in Armenia was commissioned by UNICEF within the framework of the Education Sector Plan Development Grant (ESPDG) to the Republic of Armenia from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The study was developed through close consultation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports (MoESCS). The study was conducted by an expert team, peer reviewed by independent reviewers, and reviewed by staff/consultants from UNICEF and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), respectively, the Grant Agent, and the Coordinating Agency, selected by the Local Education Group (LEG), which was established by the MoESCS within the framework of partnership with the GPE.

Acknowledgements

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This report was prepared by a core team consisting of the following consultants: Hasmik Kyureghyan (Team Leader), Lilit Nahapetyan (Senior Expert), Ashkhen Hakobyan (Junior Expert), and Syuzanna Petrosyan (Junior Expert) and an assistance team consisting

of two independent sociologists (Anna Khachatryan and Arevik Hambardzumyan) who jointly with the core team carried out the focus group discussions and individual interviews with school principals and transcribed the data. We are thankful also to our former core team members Zhanna Gevorgyan (Senior expert) and Arpine Baghdasaryan (Junior expert) for their contribution at the beginning of the project. The work was carried out under the overall guidance of Alvard Poghosyan (Education Specialist, UNICEF) and Arman Gasparyan (Education Officer, UNICEF). Jutaro Sakamoto (Education Specialist, UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia) conducted the peer review of the report.

The team is extremely grateful to Adrine Babloyan (Research and Evaluation Officer, UNICEF), Astghik Martirosyan (Child Rights Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, UNICEF) for serving as peer reviewers and to Zoya Andekyan (Programme Assistant, UNICEF) for her support with administrative issues, as well as to Christian Garbis Adanalian, for proofreading the English version of the final report. The team would also like to thank Gohar Mousaelyan (Project Senior Officer, ADB) in her role

representing the ADB as Coordinating Agency in the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Processes) for her valuable involvement in this process.

Our deepest gratitude goes to all the teachers, principals, and key-informants (representatives of MoESCS, the National Center for Education Development and Innovation, and NaCET) who freely

and openly shared their perspectives on teacher management policies and practises in Armenia during the survey, focus groups discussions and individual interviews.

We apologise for any omissions and express our sincerest thanks to everyone, whether named here or not, who graciously gave their time and expertise.

Executive Summary

Background and Rationale:

This report presents the analysis of the schoolteacher management system of Armenia, which was commissioned by UNICEF Armenia within the framework of the Education Sector Plan Development Grant (ESPDG) to the Republic of Armenia from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The study was developed through close consultation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports (MoESCS), was conducted by an expert team, and was reviewed by staff/consultants from UNICEF. The Study Protocol (SP) underwent the ethical clearance by the Ethical Review Board (ERB), and the study team revised the SP including the study tools, addressing all the raised issues. The study team received the approval letter on 18 November, 2021.

The end-users of this report are the teachers, principals, pedagogical institutions, government line ministries, namely MoESCS, the Ministries of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure (MoTAI), regional and local authorities, UNICEF, Local Education Group (LEG), European Union (EU), World Bank (WB), USAID, British Council, and dedicated CSOs.

Purpose and Objectives:

The main objective of this study is to support the improvement of Armenia's school teacher management system through comprehensive analysis and policy recommendations. This study focused on three key dimensions of teacher policies, such as teacher recruitment, retention, and continuous professional development. It also explored the existing regulations in terms of their design and implementation.

More specifically, the study aimed at:

- Mapping and analysing the policy to understand what is possible in the education system, where to focus improvements efforts, and how to support a more thorough understanding of implementation gaps.
- Analysing policy implementation to better understand the relationship between policy design and policy in practise by finding its gaps and addressing them through actionable recommendations.

Key Results from Desk-review:

The analysis of the requirements to enter and remain in the teaching profession provides useful information for understanding the quality of

teaching and the existence of teacher shortages or excesses in a country. Armenia has sets of statutory requirements to enter the teaching profession, though there seem to be no requirements to remain in it. The teacher recruitment process includes the following main areas: initial teacher preparation, attracting qualified applicants, selection procedure, incentives, induction, and others (Klassen, et al., 2021, DfE, 2019, TALIS, 2018, SABER, 2013).

Teacher retention is an important area in improving the teacher workforce and represents a different set of policy and strategy efforts rather than recruitment (Klassen, 2021).

The studies of teacher retention suggest that the main factors affecting retention are teaching workload, salary, personal satisfaction, proper school environment, autonomy, promotion opportunities, and others (Darling-Hammond, 2010). In Armenia, teachers' full-time workload comprises 22 hours¹, which however, does not include the hours teachers spend outside school or on lesson preparation. Thus, the law on General Education (2009, Article 27) defines

a multifarious role of a teacher with classroom-related duties, active collaboration with colleagues, and participation in creative and research processes without monetary compensation.

The teacher shortage (STEM, music, art, and craft teachers) and retention remain an on-going issue in Armenia that started in the post-independent period. Furthermore, the recruitment of qualified teachers for rural schools is a common difficulty. After independence the Armenian educational system was functioning in crisis mode and no legislative regulations were in place to address the shortage of qualified teachers. Nevertheless, the adoption of the Law on Education (1999) and the Law on General Education (2009) set the legislative regulations of the educational system.

In Armenia, teacher continuous development relates mostly to teacher training and attestation as well as participating in professional conferences and workshops (Law on General Education, 2009, Decree N 1667-Ն, 2012, Order [N 1031-Ն, 2013](#)).

¹Currently, in the framework of the new national curriculum, an 18-hour full-time workload is being piloted in the Tavush region. The actual teaching hours are intended to be 18 hours, but teachers' salaries will be calculated for 22 hours. Those four hours will be dedicated to feedback writing, which is a new component introduced to teachers within the new curriculum. Starting from 2023 all schools across Armenia are going to follow the new curriculum.

The main Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for teachers in Armenia are provided by the State and are regulated by several legal acts (see Annex 2). Several aspects of CPD are of utmost importance for analysis; CPD types, CPD topics, CPD characteristics, incentives, and feasible obstacles for CPD participation, as well as satisfaction with CPD activities.

Methodology and Ethics:

The analysis of the Armenian School Teacher Management System was conducted through a comprehensive two-stage approach by reviewing the Teacher Policy Framework in terms of its Design and Policy Implementation regarding the topics of teacher recruitment, retention, and CPD. The data were collected and analysed via the desk review, interviews with key informants, a teacher survey, in-depth interviews with school principals, and focus group discussions with schoolteachers. Data about Teacher Policy Design was collected at the very beginning of the fieldwork process via the document and administrative data review which is validated through a questionnaire²



during the meetings with key informants. The data related to policy Implementation was gathered in two phases: firstly, through a self-administered online survey among in-service teachers which was heavily informed by Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) questionnaire (2018)³ and via in-depth interviews with school principals and focus group discussions with schoolteachers.

The study team adhered to the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis⁴

²This questionnaire was heavily informed by System Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) Teacher questionnaire (2013).

³OECD, 2018. TALIS Questionnaire available at this [link](#).

⁴UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT_IV-UNICEF_Procedure_for_Ethical_Standards.PDF

and worked in accordance with the UNICEF Strategic Guidance Note on Institutionalizing Ethical Practise for UNICEF Research as well as the Guidance Document for Protection of Research Data⁵. The SP underwent the ethical clearance by an independent Ethical Review Board, and the study team addressed all the raised concerns.

Main Findings and Conclusions:

Both the quantitative and qualitative data analysis shows that, although there are important policy regulations, there is a need for new regulations in some areas (e.g., teacher career growth) and improvements in the existing ones (e.g., teacher hiring). Particularly, a huge gap is within the dimension of teacher recruitment since predominantly those without other professional options choose to teach due to the comparatively low salaries and poor working conditions as well as lack of career advancement opportunities. According to the teacher survey results, one in four respondents chose to become a teacher since they did not get their ideal job. Furthermore, nearly half of

the respondents (48.3%) think that teachers do not have many promotion opportunities.

Low salaries and little to no opportunity for a pay raise⁶ were big concerns raised in the study both by teachers and principals. Merely 7.8% of the surveyed teachers are satisfied with the salary they receive, and only 8.5% have been paid for overtime work. However, teachers are often guided by social motives when choosing their profession. Additionally, the atmosphere, positive personal relationships, and the working environment were mentioned as possible incentives not to leave the job, though these factors were not prioritized by the research participants. Nevertheless, for many of them, the lack of monetary incentives or bonuses⁷ hinder satisfaction and full enjoyment of the teaching profession.

Another concern is discontent with the administrative burden which negatively impacts teachers' psychosocial wellbeing and causes exhaustion. Teachers are currently expected to stand in for absent

⁵Guidance Document for Protection of Research Data.

⁶This specifically refers to elementary school teachers for whom both the voluntary attestation and qualification ranking is practically 'unreachable'.

⁷Although some teachers might have experience in receiving monetary bonuses, this is not common and highly depends on the school budget and the subjective criteria that the school and principal follows as the process is clearly regulated.

teachers, plan and organize events and performances with their classes, among other responsibilities. They spend their non-teaching hours on lesson planning, completing administrative paperwork, grading student work, participating in extra class activities with students, and attending school/parent meetings, and as a result they become overwhelmed. Teachers' working hours is officially stipulated, but teachers' working time beyond actual teaching is not formally specified. Moreover, according to the study's findings, the average hours spent by the teachers on 5 out of the 12 components of teaching do not differ based on their employment status (part-time or full-time). As a result, it is much less beneficial for teachers to have part-time employment. In most of the cases, part-time employment (two-thirds of the surveyed teachers) is conditioned by the school's incapacity to offer full-time occupation.

The study shows that school principals try to solve or suggest solutions to the problem of workload by combining administrative positions (e.g., operator) with teaching or by hiring teachers from other schools

(teacher survey shows that 12% of teachers filling in the questionnaire worked in more than one school), which was not a preferable option because of the difficulties to match the schedules and the little extent of involvement in school life and collaboration with colleagues.

Regarding the vacancy announcement, although the information about the vacant position should be circulated through 'Education' weekly newspaper, local media, and be available on the MoESCS official website (edu.am), and be posted on the school wall in a visible place, those are not the most common sources from where teachers hear about announcements. The two most popular sources of information for vacant teacher positions are word of mouth and personal connections—friends, relatives, classmates (50.2%), and principals (33.0%).

The teachers are generally aware of the selective aspect of the teacher recruitment process, though their perceptions are that both the test and the interview questions are composed of legislative questions. However, based on the MoESCS minister's relevant order⁸ the interview

⁸MoESCS Minister's Decree N22-U, 2021.
Available at <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=150336>

comprised of methodological and pedagogical questions as well. So, there is a gap between the policy design and its understanding in practise. Meanwhile, there is a consensus among teachers and principals that there should be a probationary period in the selection mechanism to observe the pedagogical skills and competencies of teaching staff. For hiring in hard to staff schools, there is an official regulation that provides certain incentives for teachers in those schools. However, according to some school principals, those are insufficient to motivate teachers to work in such areas.

In terms of retention, there are certain incentives for teachers, such as social packages, basic health insurance, qualification categories, and newly introduced voluntary attestation, which are generally seen as positive motivators to remain in the profession. According to survey results, roughly 80% consider remaining in the profession despite dissatisfaction with salary and workload, which might be explained by the access to social packages and health insurance in addition to their social motives. However, 36% of teachers

are older than 50 years old⁹, who mostly see their profession as more of predestination rather than a choice. Besides, the public perception of pedagogy is that it is more a mission than a job.

The teacher survey shows that about one-third of the teachers do not intend to participate in voluntary attestation (31.3%), 32.9% are considering, and 35.8% are undecided. The lack of appropriate information about the test content became an obstacle for many teachers to participate in attestation, and the variation in complexity of different subjects was emphasized.

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⁹Statistical report generated from <https://reports.emis.am/#/schools-manual-reports>

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Regarding qualification categories, the
respondents have a predominantly
negative perception of the procedure.
More than half of the respondents
tend to agree that qualification

categories are a very ambitious
mechanism and do not indicate
whether the teacher is good or bad,
thus they question the objectiveness
of the procedure. In addition, some
teachers find that the 10% salary
increase based on the qualification
category is not reasonable for
teachers who have only a few hours,
especially for STEM teachers.

Referring to CPD regulations,
teachers in Armenia are not formally
obliged to comply with a minimum
amount of PD hours on an annual
basis. It's defined only for mandatory
attestation training program, which
is 110 hours/11 credits. According
to the current reform, the state
provides the standards and general
topics for the modules and the
external training organizations design
training programs¹⁰. All modules are
mandatory for all teachers: inclusive
education, information technologies,
psychology, subject specific content,
and legislation¹¹. Although this is a
positive move, the fact that the state
mandates critical important topics
and teachers cannot choose what to
study based on their individual needs

¹⁰RA Government Decree N 466-L, 2021 on Making Amendemnts in December 27, 2012 N 1667-U Decree.
Available at: arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docid=151364

¹¹By the MoESCS Minister's Order 367 UJ/2, March 4, 2022, amendments were made in the standards of
teacher attestation and in the exemplary program, according to which appendix 1162-A / 2 of the order "On
approving the standards of teachers' training is subject to regular attestation" was implemented. Changes in
the content of the training were made by defining eight modules.

are drawbacks. There are also issues such as difficulties for older teachers to complete practical assignments on their own due to lack of technology or relevant skills.

Besides the mandatory attestation training, teachers participate in CPD programs both locally and internationally. According to the survey results, one-fifth of the respondents have participated in programs overseas. Among those who have participated in international CPD programs, 12.6% have arranged CPD on their own, most likely with personal funding.

As there are neither career growth opportunities nor higher pay grades¹² (no incentives) due to the participation in PD, continuous improvement willingness is left to the individual teacher's decision. According to the survey results, although roughly over 80% of teachers acknowledge the usefulness of CPD, time taken for CPD is reported to be a challenge; 63.8% answered that "It took place over an extended period of time" and every second respondent considers that PD conflicts with

their work schedule. One-fourth of the respondents (26.2%) have ever received release from teaching duties for activities during regular working hours. Furthermore, the data shows a high degree of discontent with conducting PD trainings after working hours, leaving no time for the teachers to rest. In general, 41.1% have never received any incentive for CPD participation. Moreover, as there is no teacher performance evaluation mechanism, good performance is not measured and consequently is not linked to any compensation or bonus.

Along with effective and supportive CPD mechanisms, a pre-service education is a basic important contributor to teachers' knowledge and skills. In Armenia, student teachers gain some practical experience in teaching¹³ in an assigned school during their pre-service education, but it seems that is not enough to prepare them for real teaching, though student teachers are usually required to have a university professor to mentor them during this process. Another concern is the admission of students that do not have a true desire to become a

¹²Though the voluntary attestation provides the opportunity for a salary increase, there is no CPD component in it.

¹³In BA practical teaching is a mandatory component. The third-year students have a three-month practical teaching internship. According to the ASPU regulations, a Methodist, a psychologist, and an educator are formally assigned with the group of students going through this mandatory internship.



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teacher but go through the program in order to receive a diploma. As a result, the system ends up with low quality and less motivated graduates.

Induction and mentoring programs are often applied in order to ensure successful recruitment processes for teachers. In Armenia there are no mechanisms for induction or mentoring of new teachers; it is left to the individual schools. According to the survey results, only 7.5% of the respondents have had any induction activities during their first employment. About half of the respondents (46.3%) have not participated in any induction activities. The survey showed that only 12.4% of the respondents are currently assigned as mentors for other teachers. Thus, whether a

novice teacher can have a mentor could depend on the number of other teachers in the school. In a small school, senior teachers could be fully occupied without time to mentor other teachers.

Thus, the study findings revealed that although in Armenia there are important teacher policy regulations in place, there is a need to review some of regulations and introduce new ones. Therefore, the recommendations derived from the main findings would support the further improvement of the existing regulations and the introduction of new ones to contribute to a well-designed and implemented schoolteacher management system for the success of the whole education system of Armenia.

Recommendations:

Based on the main findings of the study, a list of recommendations¹⁴ is introduced.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION			
Responsible authority		Recommendation	Advantage/Justification
Teacher hiring process			
1	MoESCS	Introduce probationary period and practical teaching into the hiring process.	To ensure that candidates with practical pedagogical skills and competences are selected.
2	MoESCS	Develop an induction program and require it in all schools. For quality assurance purposes, a formal standardized induction program should be developed, or at least guidance should be provided.	To provide inexperienced/new teachers with the necessary guidance on performance standards for beginning their teaching careers or their job in a new school and to foster a collaborative environment among teachers.
3	MoESCS	Introduce a mentoring and coaching system within the school and the whole system ¹⁵ .	To ensure that high quality teaching and collaboration takes place at school. This can motivate teachers to participate in non-teaching tasks that enhance student learning. This will particularly be useful for both the system in general and for the novice teachers in a school.
4	MoESCS	To address hiring and teacher shortage issues, consider creating city and regional database of all qualified specialists.	To make more targeted announcements of the vacancies.

¹⁴See the full list of recommendations in the full report.

¹⁵In the framework of the new curriculum, a mentoring system is currently being piloted in Tavush.

5	MoESCS	Circulate the announcements of the vacancies in teacher training colleges/universities given their network of teachers/graduates.	To increase the number of applications from interested candidates.
Salary and monetary compensation			
6	RA Government, MoESCS	Improve the existing mechanism ¹⁶ of teacher pay raises by introducing new components of measurement, such as practical/pedagogical knowledge assessment and an anonymous feedback collecting mechanism from peers, students, and parents.	The work and quality of teachers are not solely composed of subject knowledge, especially for teachers who are not doing private tutoring.
7	MoESCS	Improve the qualification ranking mechanism, its criteria, and requirements ¹⁷ .	To ensure that teachers, with high performance, apply and get the rank and pay raise. Also, to allow elementary school teachers to apply as currently the criteria are not manageable for most of them.
8	MoESCS	Reconsider the standards and the content of voluntary attestation for middle school teachers as the existing regulations leave them out of the processes, which are content wise unavailable for them ¹⁸ .	To encourage middle school teachers to participate in voluntary attestation and create fair conditions for them.

¹⁶Voluntary attestation, for details refer to Annex 2 Desk Review.

¹⁷Some changes in the qualification granting system have already been made in the 26th article of amendments in the [General Law on education passed on February 9, 2022](#). Based on the key informants' interview data additional changes are on the way to ensure the effectiveness of the system.

¹⁸Consideration might bring an issue when for example a middle school teacher would like to teach in a high school. Therefore, this should be carefully studied before reconsideration.

Career growth			
9	RA Government, MoESCS	Introduce a regulation on teacher promotion for academic, administrative, and methodological positions which will be based on application (not by principal appointment) and on a set of criteria ¹⁹ .	To make the procedure more impartial and based on meritocracy.
Teacher shortage			
10	RA Government, MoESCS	Provide incentives to teachers to teach shortage subjects, especially STEM subjects ²⁰ , and examine the possibility of creating incentives for male teachers to keep the gender balance. For instance, organize recruitment and advertising by addressing teacher pay and working conditions, also giving teachers flexible schedules and extended vacations, and frame teaching as a profession to start a career with and the availability of a system of clearly set promotion opportunities.	To solve the problem with shortage subjects and to improve gender balance.
Other working conditions			
11	RA Government, MoESCS	Examine the possibility of introducing a special status ²¹ (e.g., civil servant) for teachers with a separate regulation for work contracts, benefits, etc.	To support both recruitment and retention policies.

¹⁹Based on the key informants' interview data the MoESCS is considering the introduction of teacher professional standards which will create certain career growth opportunities.

²⁰Professionals specializing in STEM find jobs in the market that are well paid and have better working conditions. Thus, teaching becomes unattractive for them.

²¹Based on the key informants' interview data the MoESCS is considering the introduction of a relevant regulation.

12	RA Government, MoESCS	<p>Introduce mechanisms for teacher performance reviews with a clear procedure. Those mechanisms should outline clear expectations and objective indicators for measuring teacher performance. Performance reviews can have monetary and non-monetary implications. To ensure the transparency of the performance review, introduce multiple mechanisms (classroom observation, feedback surveys, student results, teacher portfolios, etc.) for teacher evaluation that accurately capture teaching quality.</p>	<p>To provide teachers with feedback and support to facilitate performance improvement.</p>
13	RA Gov., MoESCS, local education authorities	<p>Provide available/clear communication/information stream from educational authorities (state or local) to the direct users (teachers, school principals). Brief information about new regulations and changes should reach teachers and school principals completely and on time.</p>	<p>To ensure that all immediate beneficiaries are highly aware of the newly implemented regulations and changes in legislation concerning their work.</p>

TEACHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Continuous Professional Development

14	RA Government, MoESCS	Consider implementation of a model teacher CPD program, which prioritizes practical teaching experience in school environment employing components such as classroom study ²² .	To create favourable conditions for teachers to practise their autonomy and agency and encourage their creativity and innovation through certain incentives.
15	NCEDI, MoESCS	Although monitoring the supply and demand of PD is done by NCEDI (according to NCEDI's regulation), there should be a clear mechanism for using the results to inform future policy decisions. There must be a mechanism to assess the relevance and effectiveness of CPDs and upgrade them on a regular basis.	To address any challenges and changes that the education system can face.
16	MoESCS, NCEDI	Schools should be given a role to design and provide CPD customized to the needs of their teachers as options.	To provide up-to-date CPD programs based on teachers' needs.
17	MoESCS, NCEDI	Consider linking the teacher PD programs to the teacher performance evaluation results (once those are in place).	To better meet teachers needs and address them through PD.

²²This point is addressed in one of the eight modules of the teacher training for attestation program "Principals of doing research" as an amendment to the annex of the government decree N 367-A/2, 04.03.2022.

18	MoESCS, NCEDI	Provide incentives (e.g., non-monetary) for schoolteachers in all levels to participate in professional development activities (e.g., peer collaboration, classroom research, etc.)	To increase the participation rate in PD programs.
19	MoESCS, NCEDI	To review the standards of selecting the authorized organizations paying special attention to the problem of corrupt offers of the authorized organizations to teachers ²³ .	To provide qualified trainings with qualified specialists and to exclude any possibilities of corrupt arrangements between schools and teachers and authorized training organizations.

²³Corruption risks are discussed in the result analysis section of the research.



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