

Excellent teachers as inspiring examples

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What can be done to promote excellence among teachers? In this report, the Education Council argues that excellent teachers in schools should serve as inspiring examples, as role models. There are two reasons why this is important for education. Firstly, it will allow pupils to put their talents to the best use. If excellent teachers are able to further develop their own skills and, similarly, encourage their colleagues to do the same, this will benefit the quality of teaching and hence also the performance of pupils. Secondly, it will make teaching a more appealing employment option. If excellence in teaching is recognised and acknowledged, the best teachers will be more inclined to stay in teaching, and others will be more likely to be attracted to the profession.

Recommendation 1: nominate the top 5% of teachers at every school

The Education Council recommends that all schools should nominate one in every twenty teachers as an excellent teacher. Excellence is therefore defined here in relative terms rather than as an absolute standard, as the aim is for the best to inspire the other teachers. Schools should nominate excellent teachers based on an inter-subjective assessment. The selection of these excellent teachers should then be submitted for external validation, for example, by means of a personal test. The nomination would be valid for a period of four years.

Recommendation 2: give excellent teachers time and resources

The Education Council proposes that a sum of 25,000 euro should be awarded annually for each excellent teacher. This money could be used to release excellent teachers from their regular duties one day in the week, allowing them to work on further professional development and school development. From the overall award, a project budget of 10,000 euro a year should be made available for innovations like this, as well as a bonus of 2,500 euro for excellent teachers, and an amount for assessment tests. This could be funded from the budget allocated by the government for performance-related pay.

Recommendation 3: let excellent teachers work on professional development and innovation

The available time and resources must benefit the quality of education: the primary process. Activities to be considered here include the development of pupils (or certain groups of pupils), coaching for teachers (e.g. those new to the profession) and educational innovation (such as the development of learning materials). It will be up to each school to decide exactly what should be done. The school management has an important role in allowing excellence to flourish. Where the current culture in education is characterised by 'equality', this will need to change to an environment in which differences in quality can be openly discussed.