Romania

TEACHERS

Policy Goals   Status

1. Setting Clear Expectations for Teachers

Clear expectations exist for what students should learn and what teachers are expected to do. Moreover, teachers' official duties include nonteaching tasks related to instructional improvement. Although guidance on the use of this time is quite general, teachers either choose to partake in nonteaching tasks or are instructed to by school management.

Advanced ●●●●

2. *Attracting the Best into Teaching

Although primary and secondary school teachers must teach for a year, pass a written exam, and pass an assessment based on practical teaching experience to become professionally licensed, primary school teachers can obtain a teaching position with only a pedagogical high school degree; secondary school teachers, on the other hand, must have a Bachelor's degree.

Established ●●●○

3. Preparing Teachers with Useful Training and Experience

While prospective teachers receive some practical experience during pre-service training, it may not be sufficiently effective in providing them with the necessary skills to succeed. Teachers are not required to be mentored or coached during this process, which limits the skills they ultimately acquire.

Emerging ●●○○

4. Matching Teachers' Skills with Students' Needs

Official legislation is in place to provide some incentives for teachers to work in hard-to-staff schools; however, ambiguity arises in the definition of such schools. Moreover, the monetary benefits offered are insufficient to motivate teachers to work in disadvantaged areas.

Emerging ●●○○

5. Leading Teachers with Strong Principals

Overall, training programs support the development of principals' leadership capacity. Furthermore, principals are expected to support and hold teachers accountable in multiple areas. However, limited monetary awards exist to reward principals for good performance.

Established ●●●○

6. Monitoring Teaching and Learning

Teachers have the option of attending trainings on student assessment, though this is not officially mandated. Additionally, systems are in place to assess student learning and these results are publicly available; however, no formal structure is in place to translate these results into improved quality of education.

Established ●●●○

7. Supporting Teachers to Improve Instruction

Teachers are expected to meet professional development requirements over a period of five years; however, these are not assigned based on perceived needs and no repercussions arise for not meeting them. Moreover, in practice, teachers often finance their professional development through personal means.

Emerging ●●○○

8. Motivating Teachers to Perform

Promotion opportunities are linked to performance and top-performing teachers receive a merit bonus; however, teachers that work with low-performing students are rarely recognized. Mechanisms to hold teachers accountable could be strengthened as teacher compensation is not linked to performance.

Emerging ●●○○

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*Note: This report measures the quality of policy intent, which may differ from the quality of policy implementation in some of the goals measured – particularly with regards to goal 2, "attracting the best into teaching."

Overview of SABER–Teachers

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

SABER–Teachers is a tool that aims to help fill this gap by collecting, analyzing, synthesizing, and disseminating comprehensive information on teacher policies in primary and secondary education systems around the world. SABER–Teachers is a core component of SABER (Systems Approach for Better Education Results), an initiative launched by the Human Development Network of the World Bank. SABER collects information about different education systems' policies, analyzes it to identify common challenges and promising solutions, and makes the results widely available to help inform countries' decisions on where and how to invest to improve education quality.

SABER–Teachers collects data on 10 core teacher policy areas to offer a comprehensive, descriptive overview of the teacher policies in place in each participating education system (Box 1). Data are collected in each participating education system by a specialized consultant using a questionnaire that ensures comparability of information across different systems. Data collection focuses on the rules and regulations governing teacher management systems. This information is compiled in a comparative database where interested stakeholders can access detailed data

that describe how different education systems manage their teacher force. The database also includes copies of supporting documents. It is available at the SABER–Teacher website.

Box 1. Teacher policy areas for data collection

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

To offer informed policy guidance, SABER–Teachers analyzes the information collected to assess the extent to which the teacher policies of an education system are aligned with policies shown by research evidence to have a positive effect on student achievement. SABER–Teachers analyzes the teacher policy data collected to assess each education system's progress in achieving eight teacher policy goals: 1. setting clear expectations for teachers; 2. attracting the best into teaching; 3. preparing teachers with useful training and experience; 4. matching teachers' skills with students' needs; 5. leading teachers with strong principals; 6. monitoring teaching and learning; 7. supporting teachers to improve instruction; and 8. motivating teachers to perform (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Eight teacher policy goals
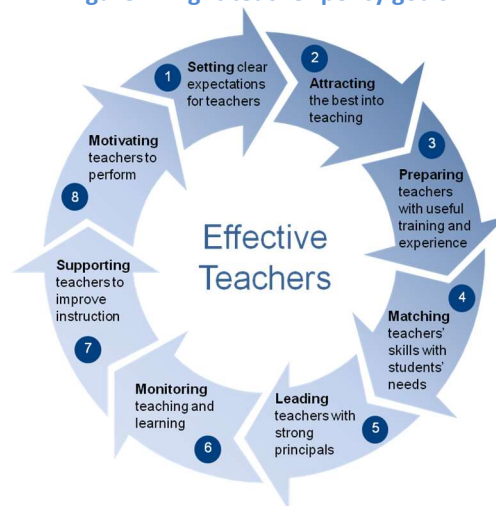
The eight teacher policy goals are functions that all high-performing education systems fulfill to a certain

extent to ensure that every classroom has a motivated, supported, and competent teacher. These goals were identified through a review of evidence in research studies on teacher policies, and through analysis of policies of top-performing and rapidly improving education systems. Three criteria were used to identify the teacher policy goals. Specifically, they had to be: (1) linked to student performance through empirical evidence; (2) labeled a priority for resource allocation; and (3) actionable, that is, open to improvement through government actions. The eight teacher policy goals exclude other objectives that countries might want to pursue to increase the effectiveness of their teachers, but have lacked, to date, sufficient empirical evidence for making specific policy recommendations.

By classifying countries according to their performance on each of the eight teacher policy goals, SABER– Teachers can help diagnose the key challenges that countries face in ensuring they have effective teachers. For each policy goal, the SABER–Teachers team identified policy levers (actions that governments can take to reach these goals) and indicators (measures of the extent to which governments are making effective use of these policy levers). Using these policy levers and indicators, SABER–Teachers classifies education systems' performance on each of the eight teacher policy goals using a four-category scale (latent, emerging, established, and advanced). The ratings describe the extent to which a given education system has in place teacher policies that are known to be related to improved student outcomes (Annex 1). The main objective of this assessment is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher policies of an education system, and to pinpoint possible areas for improvement. For a more detailed report on the eight teacher policy goals, policy levers and indicators, as well as the evidence base supporting them, see Vegas et al. (2012).

The main focus of SABER–Teachers is on policy design, rather than policy implementation. **SABER–Teachers analyzes the teacher policies formally adopted by education systems. However, policies on the ground, that is, as they are actually implemented, may differ quite substantially from policies as originally designed.**

In fact, they often do differ, due to such factors as the political economy of the reform process; lack of capacity of organizations in charge to implement the policies; or the interaction between these policies and specific contextual factors. Since SABER–Teachers collects limited data on policy implementation, **the assessment of teacher policies presented in this report needs to be complemented with detailed information that describes the actual configuration of teacher policies on the ground.**

The Romanian national pre-university educational system consists of four levels: early, primary, secondary, and tertiary non-university (2011 National Education Law No. 1). The early education level caters to students under the age of 6. It consists of ante-preschool (age 0–3) and preschool (age 3–6). The primary education level (age 6–10) spans from the preparatory grade through fourth grade. The secondary education level is divided into two parts: lower secondary (age 10–14) for fifth to eighth grade and upper secondary (age 14–18) for ninth to twelfth grade. Upper secondary is divided into three streams: theoretical, technological, and vocational.

Both parts of the secondary education level have a national exit examination; the National Evaluation Examination is taken at the end of eighth grade and the Baccalaureate Exam is taken at the end of twelfth grade. The Baccalaureate Exam is required to proceed to higher education. The vocational track[1] provides an alternative path for students to access higher education and the labor market.

This report presents the results of the application of SABER–Teachers in Romania. It describes Romania's performance for each of the eight teacher policy goals, alongside comparative information from education systems that have consistently scored high results in international student achievement tests and have participated in SABER—Teachers. Additional information on Romania's teacher policies and those of other countries can be found on the SABER–Teachers website.

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[1] Referred to as the technical and professional education in Romania.

Economic Context

Romania's gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 4.8 percent in 2016 – the highest since 2008 and third highest among European Union (EU) countries (World Bank 2017b). In the first half of 2017, economic growth continued to grow to 5.8 percent, making Romania the fastest growing economy in the EU (World Bank 2017b). This growth was primarily fueled by private consumption boosted by fiscal stimuli and increases in the minimum and public sector wages and pensions. Concerns about governance and weak administrative capacity limit Romania's competitive advantages, however.

Despite its growing economy, the country has the highest income gap in the EU. The percentage of population at risk of becoming impoverished (after social transfers) increased from 22.1 percent in 2009 to 25.3 percent in 2016 (World Bank 2017b). This is especially troublesome for Romania's youth population, where nearly 47 percent of children live in a household at risk of poverty or social exclusion (Source: Eurostat, 2016 (ilcpeps01) Table 1: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by age group, 2015). To address this gap, Romania's priorities for 2017–2020 include investments in infrastructure, healthcare, and education, with a particular focus on promoting social inclusion, improving governance, and advancing the growth of the private sector.

Education Context

The general legal framework for the management, operation, and regulation of education in Romania is determined by the Constitution and the 2011 National Education Law No.1. All education levels are primarily overseen by the law, and secondarily by specific regulations and laws. Public education in Romania is tuition-free and schooling is compulsory until the tenth grade. A national central entity, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE: Ministerul Educației Naționale), develops and monitors the implementation of national policies at all levels, including, curriculum, evaluation, school management, school network, social programs, and allocation of human resources to schools. MoNE is also responsible for teacher policies and coordinates all aspects related to the teaching profession, from recruitment, employment, deployment, professional development, and career advancement to evaluation. Pre-service teacher training is provided by universities through accredited programs. Romania's education system currently has 203,032 teachers; 73 percent have

tenured positions while 27 percent are substitute teachers.

In Romania, funds allocated to education are low compared to other EU countries. In 2017, the public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP was 3.1 percent, the lowest among EU countries and significantly below the EU average of 5.5 percent (World Bank 2017a). Moreover, teachers are paid relatively low compared to other professions. For instance, teachers only make 44 percent of GDP per capita, compared to 80 percent or more in advanced countries. Romanian teachers have the lowest salaries in the EU, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Teachers' minimum annual gross salaries in EU countries (ISCED 1)

Country	Salary (€)	Country	Salary (€)
Luxembourg	72,000	Portugal	21,960
Germany	44,860	Malta	19,320
Denmark	44,580	Slovenia	17,117
The Netherlands	34,806	Greece	13,104
Austria	33,157	Estonia	11,264
Finland	32,234	Czech Republic	9,238
Great Britain	30,646	Croatia	9,051
Sweden	30,791	Slovakia	7,362
Spain	28,431	Hungary	6,636
Belgium	28,342	Poland	5,450
France	24,595	Latvia	4,860
Cyprus	23,885	Lithuania	4,580
Italy	23,051	Bulgaria	3,681
		Romania	3,583

Source: "*Teachers' and School Heads' Salaries and Allowances in Europe – 2015/16. Eurydice Facts and Figures.*"

More generally, the low salary may explain why few are interested in joining the education profession and the limited number of experts in education sciences. This is evidenced by the low percentage of graduates who complete education programs: 3.8 percent in Romania compared to 10.4 percent in Germany and 13.8 percent in Poland. At the Master's level, only 3.3 percent of graduates specialize in education, compared to 34 percent who focus in total on Business, Administration, and Law. PhD graduates in education sciences in Romania represent 0.9 percent of all fields compared to 4.4 percent in the United Kingdom, 1.8 percent in Germany, and 1.7 percent in Poland (Romanian Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency 2017).

The quality of education in Romania is significantly weaker than that seen in its EU counterparts, both in

terms of access and quality. Moreover, the early school leaving rate remains high, which could have irrevocable consequences for the labor market and economic growth. While the proportion of early school leavers between the ages of 18 and 24 decreased slightly from 19.1 percent in 2015 to 18.5 percent in 2016, Romania still has the third highest school leaving rate in the EU and is far behind the Europe 2020 target of 11.3 percent.

These disparities are exacerbated in rural areas (26.6 percent) and remain a problem in urban areas (6.2 percent in cities and 17.4 percent in towns and suburbs) (OECD 2015). In addition to regional, urban–rural, and socioeconomic inequalities, Romania is confronted with a rapidly declining school population, totaling about 3 million students in 2017 in pre-university level. The declining school population is due to Romania's acute population crisis, which is characterized by an aging workforce, low birth rate, and an increasing number of young, highly skilled emigrants (Davies and Hinks 2015).

According to the "Education and Training Monitor" (European Commission 2017), Romanians are significantly behind the EU average for basic skills. The 2015 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey found that 38.5 percent of 15-year-olds are below basic proficiency in Science, 38.7 percent in Reading, and 39.9 percent in Mathematics. While Romania's PISA scores have improved since 2006, they are substantially lower than those of other EU countries. About 40 percent of Romanian students are functionally innumerate and illiterate, in contrast to roughly 23 percent of students in the EU.

Figure 2. Difference in PISA Math performance between top and bottom socioeconomic quintile
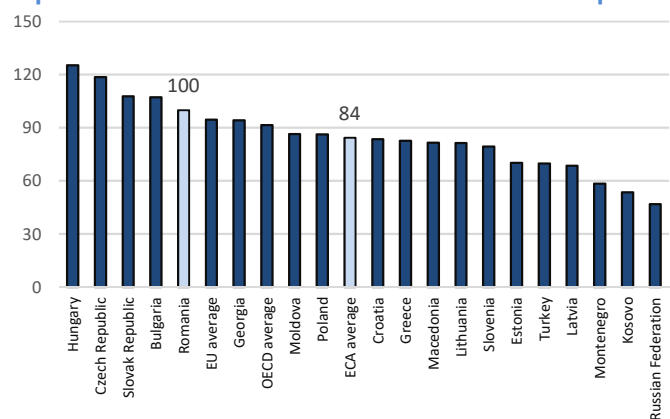
Additionally, 24 percent of students were below basic proficiency in all three subjects. Underachievement among disadvantaged students was almost three times higher than among those in the top socioeconomic quartile (Figure 2; OECD 2015). More specifically, PISA 2015 shows that the performance gap between students from the top and bottom income brackets is nearly a difference of three years of schooling.

Access to a quality education is more challenging for students in rural areas and for the Roma population. PISA 2015 shows that the performance gap between rural and urban students is over one year of schooling. In 2016, 37.5 percent of eighth grade students in rural schools had poor results in the national evaluation exam, compared to 15 percent in urban schools as reported by MoNE. This points to a broader problem – while 45 percent of all Romanian school children live in rural areas, only 24 percent of students from rural areas enroll in higher education (European Commission 2017). Moreover, access to quality education remains an important challenge for Roma children. The percentage of Roma children who participate in early childhood education and childcare programs decreased from 45 percent in 2011 to 38 percent in 2016 (European Commission 2017). Moreover, 77 percent of Roma aged 18–24 are early school leavers (European Agency for Fundamental Rights 2016).

Since joining the EU in 2007, Romania has taken steps to improve its education system and is making significant strides to meet the Education and Training 2020 requirements (ET 2020). The ET 2020 aims to make lifelong learning and mobility a reality, improve the quality and efficiency of education and training, promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship, and enhance creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training (European Commission 2009).

Romania's efforts to achieve these goals focus primarily on tackling high rates of early school leaving, promoting lifelong learning, and improving the quality of tertiary and vocational education through dedicated strategies. These strategies include a series of measures targeting teachers' professional development as a key element for improving education quality. Moreover, Romania is currently in the process of implementing a modernized competency-based national curriculum for all grades and plans are underway to train all teachers to deliver this new curriculum.

Goal 1: Setting clear expectations for teachers

Advanced● ● ● ●

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

SABER–Teachers considers two policy levers that school systems can use to reach this goal: (1) clear expectations for what students should know and be able to do, and how teachers can help students reach these goals; and (2) useful guidance on how teachers can use their time to improve instruction at the school level.

(1) In Romania, clear expectations exist for what students are expected to learn and for what teachers are supposed to do. MoNE is responsible for setting these standards at the national level, which are included as part of the required competencies for early, primary, and secondary students as indicated in the National Curriculum. The curriculum framework, syllabi, and applicable methodologies are made available by Education Ministerial Orders, which are accessible on the MoNE, Institute of Educational Sciences (IES), and county school inspectorates websites, and via hard copy at local schools.

In the past five years, several policy reforms have targeted the curriculum.[2] These include the introduction of a new curriculum framework for pre-university students and a revised curriculum for early education, primary, and lower secondary students. The curriculum for upper secondary schooling is in the process of development and is expected to be completed by the end of 2018. Student evaluation standards, which are also developed by MoNE, are designed to help teachers benchmark student achievement to the competencies

outlined in the curriculum. Thus far, these standards have not been updated to reflect the recent changes to the curriculum and syllabi since 2003. At the same time, while some attempts were made to develop standards for teachers in previous years, they are still not in place.

The tasks teachers are expected to carry out are officially stipulated in the 2011 National Education Law No. 1 and require primary and secondary teachers to undertake responsibilities inside and outside the classroom. In addition to tasks related to classroom teaching, including the grading of assessments and supervision of students, teachers can participate in activities outside the classroom. As per the 2011 National Education Law No. 1, teachers are allocated time to mentor other teachers, partake in professional development activities, attend afterschool programs, and collaborate on the school plan (e.g., by helping design the school-based curriculum). Although the law provides additional opportunities for teachers, they are often not adopted in practice as teachers are overloaded with administrative paperwork and other responsibilities. Because the time is officially allocated but not stipulated, only some partake in mentorship, while others are primarily involved in school-based curriculum design.

Top-performing systems reveal that many tasks outside of the classroom, such as providing and receiving teacher support, improve teacher effectiveness inside the classroom.

(2) Guidance on teachers' use of time could focus more on tasks related to instructional improvement. In Romania, teachers are considered public sector employees and are thus expected to work 40 hours per week. Of those 40 hours, they are expected to devote about 18 hours to teaching (i.e., 45 percent of working time), leaving the remaining 22 for nonteaching tasks.

Global experience suggests that a definition of working time as the total number of hours at school may be more conducive to learning, because it recognizes that teachers normally need to devote some time to

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[2] Primary school curriculum and syllabi revised in 2013/14, lower secondary curriculum revised in 2017; the upper secondary curriculum and syllabi are currently being revised, with an expected

delivery date of late 2017 for the curriculum framework and 2018 for the new syllabi.

nonteaching tasks, such as lesson planning, grading of students' work, learning support, and professional development, as well as administrative and educational tasks outside of the classroom, such as collaborating on school plans and participating in school evaluations. The time allocated to nonteaching tasks is crucial, especially if agreed upon and monitored by the school principal, to achieve better educational outcomes.

Successful education systems, such as those in Ontario, Finland, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore, devote considerable time at the school level to activities that are related to instructional improvement. These include collaboration among teachers on the analysis of instructional practice, mentoring, and professional development (Darling-Hammond and Rothman 2011; Darling-Hammond 2010; Levin 2008). At the same time, these systems tend to devote a smaller share of teachers' time to actual contact time with students, and a larger share to teacher collaboration, on-site professional development, and research on the effectiveness of various teaching strategies. Japan, for example, devotes about 40 percent of teachers' working time to these types of activities, while Ontario currently devotes 30 percent (Darling-Hammond and Rothman 2011).

Notwithstanding, reducing classroom time is not a recommended strategy, especially for low-performing countries. What is fundamental is to ensure that teachers maximize the benefit of their nonteaching hours and other professional development opportunities to improve instructional quality. While Romanian regulations incorporate several types of nonteaching tasks, as presented in Figure 3, in practice, educational outcomes do not reflect this situation.

Figure 3. Types of nonteaching tasks related to instructional improvement

	*Romania	Bulgaria	Georgia	Serbia	Singapore
Mentor peers	✓			✓	✓
Collaborate on school plan	✓		✓	✓	✓
Design the curriculum	✓		✓		✓
Participate in school evaluation				✓	✓

Source: SABER–Teachers data; *Note: Not all teachers participate in these tasks; only a subgroup is selected.

Goal 2: Attracting the best into teaching

Established●●●○

The structure and characteristics of a career in teaching can help determine whether talented individuals opt to become teachers. Talented people may be more inclined to take such a career path if entry requirements are on par with those of well-regarded professions, compensation and working conditions are adequate, and attractive career opportunities are in place for them to develop as professionals.

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

(1) In Romania, the requirements to enter the teaching profession are more stringent for secondary school teachers compared to primary school teachers. Most high-performing education systems require that incoming teachers have at least a minimum amount of practical teaching experience, or that they pass an exam, in addition to their teacher training program. In Finland, for example, all teacher graduates are qualified at the Master's level and only a fraction of initial applicants are admitted to training. Consequently, teaching is a relatively popular profession.

Many high-performing education systems offer two types of teacher training programs: consecutive and concurrent. Concurrent programs teach subject knowledge and pedagogic skills simultaneously; consecutive programs include a first phase of one or several years of knowledge acquisition in a particular subject, followed by a period of professional skills and knowledge acquisition. Romania employs both models.

In Romania, a primary school teaching position can be obtained by completing a degree from a: (i) four-year pedagogical high school; or (ii) Bachelor's program. Since 2012, the legislation has required primary school teachers to graduate from a Bachelor's program (GO 92/2012). Despite this change in policy, over one-third of primary teachers held only a pedagogical high school degree as of 2016, due to associated expenses and bureaucratic obstacles (Source: WB staff calculations based on data received from MONE, 2017). Because this legislation did not work in practice, it is now possible for

primary school teachers to instruct with only a pedagogical high school degree.

To become a fully licensed secondary school teacher (*profesor cu drept de practică*), on the other hand, requires: (i) a degree from an accredited Bachelor's program in one's subject/specialty, which includes coursework in psycho-pedagogy, (ii) one year of practical professional experience as a debutant teacher; and (iii) passing the *definitivat* degree exam, which consists of an on-the-job assessment and written exam.

For both primary and secondary school teachers, there is no formal institution that awards licensure once a teacher graduates from an accredited university. However, after completing their degree program, primary and secondary school teachers are required to student-teach for one year (during this time, they are referred to as "debutant teachers"). After they have completed one year of student-teaching, prospective teachers are given five years to pass the *definitivat* degree exam, with a minimum score of 80 percent. If they do not pass this exam within a five-year timeframe, they are not considered fully licensed teachers but they can continue to teach as substitutes indefinitely. This policy cannot contribute to education quality in Romania, as the share of substitute teachers in the system represents over one-fourth of the total (27 percent) (Source: WB staff calculations based on data received from MONE, 2017).

In addition to the *definitivat* degree exam, teachers must pass another exam to be eligible for tenure. This exam is not compulsory and can be taken anytime, including immediately after the completion of university studies. Once a teacher passes the tenure exam, she/he is eligible for an open-ended contract; in the event a teacher passes the tenure exam but not the *definitivat* degree exam within the five-year time span, she/he loses the tenure position and open-ended contract, but remains eligible to work as a substitute teacher on a short-term contract.

(2) Teacher pay is not attractive compared with that of other professions. In Romania, teachers' salaries represent 44 percent of per capita GDP,[3] a figure that is not as competitive as other sectors (i.e., communications, finance, or insurance). Moreover, it takes 40 years of experience to advance from the minimum to maximum salary level and pay does not vary based on teacher performance. This is particularly problematic for teachers who work with low-achieving students. Because teachers who help their students achieve higher levels of comprehension are not recognized for their efforts in under-resourced settings, few are incentivized to help these students achieve.

(3) Working conditions are not appealing enough to attract talented individuals to the teaching profession. Working conditions may play an important role in the decision to become a teacher. Talented candidates who have opportunities in other professions may be encouraged to become teachers if working conditions are good. In Romania, standards exist for infrastructure, hygiene, and sanitation of schools. In fact, almost 80 percent of schools comply with these standards (Source: WB staff calculations based on data received from MONE, 2017). However, no data are available for compliance with infrastructure standards and most buildings lack modern facilities and adequate space for instruction. Oftentimes, teachers prefer to work in private schools because of the better conditions, including building standards, access to auxiliary materials, and smaller class sizes.

Moreover, a recent analysis conducted by the World Bank to inform strategic decisions in education infrastructure reveals infrastructure shortages in Romania, as well as sizable gaps between urban and rural schools. For instance, 72 percent of rural schools do not have laboratories compared to 30 percent of urban schools; similarly, only 32 percent of rural schools have gyms compared to 71 percent of urban schools. The Bank analysis concludes that a considerable amount needs to be done to ensure public schools are equipped with safe,

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[3] In 2015/16, the annual gross salary of a fully qualified secondary teacher ranged from €3,810 to €10,124, with an average of €6,967 (European Commission 2016).

modern, and secure learning environments (World Bank 2017a).

Student–teacher ratio can be another indicator of teacher working conditions as classrooms with more students are generally more challenging for teachers. While on average, the student–teacher ratio in Romania is 20:1 in primary schools and 12:1 in secondary schools and close to ratios in performing countries (Figure 4) in metropolises like Bucharest this ratio can be up to over 40 students per teacher.

Figure 4. Student–teacher ratio, primary school
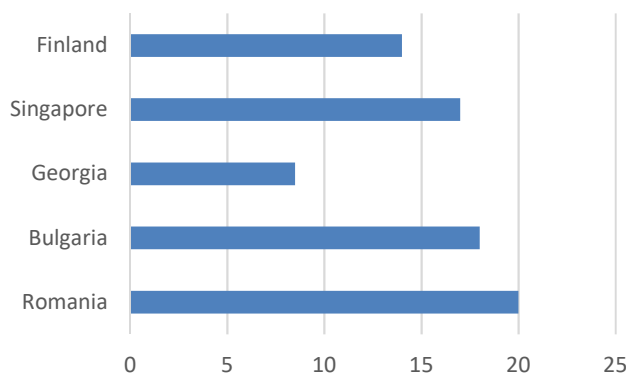
Source: SABER–Teachers data and UNESCO Statistics.

(4) Opportunities for career advancement may be appealing, but are ultimately not enough to attract the best candidates to the profession. Teachers in most education systems have opportunities to seek promotion to principal positions at some point in their career. In addition to these "vertical" promotion opportunities, most high-performing education systems offer teachers the possibility of "horizontal" promotions, to academic positions. Taking an academic job allows teachers to grow professionally and yet remain closely connected to instruction, without taking a managerial position (OECD 2012; Darling-Hammond 2010).

In Romania, teachers have several opportunities to advance their career as they can apply to both administrative (principals and inspectors) and professional leadership posts (e.g., Head of Commission, responsible for curriculum area etc.). Moreover, promotion opportunities are linked to performance; however, no standardized system is in place to promote high-performing teachers, this is largely done on an ad hoc basis.

Goal 2: _Gaps in Policy Implementation_

Although the SABER rubric concluded that Romania is "established," based on an extensive policy analysis, in practice the system is far from where it needs to be. Oftentimes, only those without other professional options choose to teach due to the comparatively low salaries and poor working conditions.

For instance, some career advancement opportunities are linked to performance in Romania, though these performance metrics can be biased due to the use of subjective observation protocols. This diminishes the link between performance and career advancement opportunities and discourages prospective candidates from entering the profession.

According to the survey results, student–teacher ratios are quite low (less than 30 students per teacher). However, in Bucharest and in other large cities, teachers are often responsible for 40+ students, implying a significant workload for teachers. This reality, coupled with low salaries compared to other professions, often deters prospective candidates from joining the profession.

Goal 3: Preparing teachers with useful training and experience

Emerging●●○○

Equipping teachers with the skills they need to succeed in the classroom is crucial. Teachers need subject matter and pedagogic knowledge, as well as classroom management skills and lots of teaching practice to be successful. In addition, preparation helps put all teachers on an equal footing, giving them a common framework to improve their practice.

SABER–Teachers considers two policy levers that school systems can use to reach this goal: (1) minimum standards for pre-service training programs; and (2) required classroom experience for all teachers.

(1) There are minimum standards to enter pre-service teacher training programs in Romania. Virtually all high-performing countries require that teachers have an educational level equivalent to a Bachelor's degree

(ISCED[4] 5A), and some, such as Finland, also require a research-based Master's degree (OECD 2011). Compared to better-performing education systems, the minimum level of education required for teachers to become primary school teachers in Romania is below ISCED 4A (i.e., pedagogical high school degree). For secondary school teachers, the standards are aligned with better-performing systems, requiring ISCED 5A (i.e., Bachelor's degree). While the 2011 National Education Law No. 1 stipulates that graduates of higher education choosing to become teachers are expected to complete a two-year Masters in Didactics, this has not yet been implemented, primarily due to financial and procedural constraints.

(2) Practical classroom experience is required for all teachers in Romania, but it is not as effective as it could be. Practical experience is an important factor in determining teaching quality. The more teachers test their pedagogical theories, subject-matter knowledge, and classroom management skills, the better prepared they will be for their job. Most high-performing systems require prospective teachers to have a considerable amount of classroom experience before becoming independent teachers, and some of these systems provide mentoring and support during the first and even second year on the job (Darling-Hammond 2010; Ingersoll 2007). In Romania, pre-service teacher training programs include practical classroom experience (pedagogical practice), but only require a limited number of hours. According to the 2011 National Education Law No. 1, debutant teachers must complete one year of student-teaching before they enroll to take the *definitivat* exam [5] to become professionally licensed teachers (Figure 5). However, during this time they are not systematically mentored, coached, or supervised.

Figure 5. Required classroom experience, primary school teachers

	Romania	Bulgaria	Georgia	Serbia	Singapore
3 months or less				✓	
12 months or less		✓	✓		
12-24 months	✓				✓
More than 24 months					

Source: SABER–Teachers data

Goal 4: Matching teachers' skills with students' needs

Emerging●●○○

Avoiding teacher shortage in any given grade, education level, or subject, and ensuring that teachers work in schools where their skills are most needed are important for equity and efficiency. Furthermore, these actions can help guarantee that all students in a school system have an equal opportunity to learn. Without purposeful allocation systems, it is likely that teachers will gravitate toward schools that serve better-off students or that are in more desirable areas, deepening inequalities in the system. SABER–Teachers considers two policy levers that school systems can use to reach this goal: (1) incentives for teachers to work in hard-to-staff schools; and (2) incentives for teachers to work in critical-shortage areas.

(1) Insufficient incentives are in place for teachers to work in hard-to-staff schools. Many countries face challenges in attracting effective teachers to work in hard-to-staff schools, such as those in disadvantaged locations or those that serve underprivileged populations. Thus, they often must put in place a specific set of incentives, such as monetary bonuses or opportunities for promotion, to attract teachers. Romania has some incentives for teachers to work in hard-to-staff schools (Figure 6). For instance, monetary

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[4] International Standard Classification of Education, 2011 version.

[5] Upon passing the exam, they become eligible for a formal teaching position, referred to as *Profesor cu drept de practica* in Romanian.

incentives are granted to teachers that work in isolated areas (up to 20 percent of base salary), schools with students with special education needs (15 percent of base salary), and schools in prisons (up to 15 percent of base salary). However, the parameters of what constitutes a hard-to-staff school are somewhat ambiguous and the monetary incentives for working in remote, isolated, or rural areas are insufficient to motivate teachers to relocate and work there.

However, models such as "Teach for Romania," an NGO belonging to the "Teach for All" network, are training professionals to teach in the most vulnerable communities where they become change agents and inspirational teachers at the school level. Within this program, more than 60 primary and lower secondary teachers continue to be actively involved in addressing equity and quality issues in education, teaching in 60 of Romania's most-disadvantaged schools across 12 counties. This program promotes cooperation with parents, principals, and school inspectorates, as well as with the business community, to incentive highly motivated individuals to teach in hard-to-staff schools.

(2) Romania has identified critical-shortage subject-areas, but policies do not exist to address such areas. Critical-shortage subjects, where there is a shortage of teachers to meet student needs, are present in many education systems. Many systems develop policies and offer incentives aimed at encouraging teachers to teach these subjects. Incentives may include monetary bonuses and subsidized education or scholarships in those subject areas. In Romania, IT, technology, English, and music have been identified as critical-shortage subjects; primary school teachers are also in demand and are included in the shortage. However, insufficient incentives are in place to motivate qualified candidates to teach in these subject areas or in primary schools.

Goal 4: _Romania's Chronic Teaching Shortage_

Romania faces a shortage of qualified teachers. Despite this situation, no significant policy measures have been put in place to improve the attractiveness of the teaching profession. This is partly due to budget constraints. The 2013 OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) found a high proportion of Romanian teachers (58 percent, versus the EU average of 36 percent) work in schools where a shortage of qualified staff was reported.

Figure 6. Incentives for teachers to teach in hard-to-staff schools

	Romania	Bulgaria	Georgia	Serbia
Promotion				
Higher basic salary in hard-to-staff schools		✔		
Monetary bonus	✔		✔	
Subsidized education			✔	
Housing support			✔	

Source: SABER–Teachers data.

Goal 5: Leading teachers with strong principals

Established●●●○

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

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

(1) In Romania, training programs support the professional development of principals (Table 3). Research from high-performing education systems suggests principals can develop leadership skills through supported work experience or specific training courses. High-performing systems, such as those in Japan, South Korea, Shanghai, and Singapore, require applicants to principal positions to participate in specific coursework or a specialized internship or mentoring program aimed at developing essential leadership skills (OECD 2012; Darling-Hammond 2010).

To be eligible to be a principal in Romania, a teacher must be a member of the National Group of Experts in

Educational Management,[6] which requires completion of a 60-credit education management course. Prospective candidates must have also at least passed the 2nd degree (*Gradul II*) career-level qualification. To enroll for this exam, a teacher must have passed the *definitivat* degree exam and have taught for at least four years afterward. The exam assesses practical teaching experience, and methodological subject matter, and includes an oral pedagogical assessment. Most teachers opt to take the 1st degree exam, which requires a 2nd degree certification, at least four years of teaching experience after receiving the 2nd degree, and a dissertation, overseen by a specialist in the field. In fact, 86 percent of Romania's headmasters have a 1st degree (Grade I) and 12 percent have 2nd degree (Grade II) (MoNE, EDUSAL 2016).

Since 2016, a new policy for hiring school principals requires prospective candidates to participate in a national competition that includes a written test and an interview. Although principals are not legally required to enroll in any specific courses, they may participate in regular professional development activities that take place at local level and are organized by the school inspectorates. For instance, half-day meetings are organized every semester for principals working in the same region to discuss topics related to management. Principals can attend professional development courses on topics they are interested in; however, this is not an official requirement.

(2) Principals in Romania are expected to support and improve instructional practice of teachers, but are not given monetary incentives to do so. Principals should be able to structure their time to focus on improving instruction in their schools (OECD 2012; Barber and Mourshed 2007). High-performing education systems, such as those in Finland, Ontario, and Singapore, think of their principals as instructional leaders. Principals are expected to be knowledgeable in teaching and curriculum matters, as well as to provide guidance and support to teachers. They evaluate teachers, provide feedback, assess the school's needs for professional development, and direct instructional resources where

they are most needed (Darling-Hammond and Rothman 2011).

In Romania, principals are expected to evaluate teachers' performance, manage the distribution of time during school hours, provide guidance for curriculum and teaching tasks, respond to requests from local, subnational, or national educational authorities, represent the school at meetings or in the community, maintain student discipline, and discipline and dismiss teachers. Many of these are tasks that research suggests are associated with high student performance and specifically related to teacher performance. Although principals are responsible for these tasks, they are not incentivized for good performance. In fact, there is only one award (*Gradație de merit*) given to principals for high achievements, and this is only awarded to a few from the total number of principals, within the limit of 16 percent of all teaching and management positions in a county (2011 Education Law No. 1 and MO 6161-22.12.2016). This reward represents 25 percent of the base salary and is awarded to each selected teacher/principal on a monthly basis for a five-year period.

Table 3. Mechanisms to support the development of principals' leadership skills

	Romania	Bulgaria	Georgia	Serbia	Singapore
Courses or other training requirements	✓			✓	✓
Mentoring or internship program					✓

Source: SABER–Teachers data.

Goal 6: Monitoring teaching and learning

Established●●●○

Assessing how well teachers are teaching and whether students are learning is essential for devising strategies to improve teaching and learning. First, identifying low-

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[6] Referred to as *Corpul Național al Experților în Management Educational* in Romanian.

performing teachers and students is critical if education systems are to provide struggling classrooms with adequate support to improve. Second, teacher and student evaluation scan also help identify good practices, which can be shared across the system to improve school performance.

SABER–Teachers considers three policy levers that school systems can use to reach this goal: (1) availability of data on student achievement to inform teaching and policy; (2) adequate systems to monitor teacher performance; and (3) multiple mechanisms to evaluate teacher performance.

(1) In Romania, systems are in place to assess student learning and disseminate assessment findings, though results are not effectively used to inform teaching. All high-performing education systems ensure that enough student data are available to inform teaching and policy, but they do so in very different ways. Regardless of the mechanism they decide to follow, high-performing countries ensure that three main functions are fulfilled: (i) a system collects relevant and complete data on student achievement regularly; (ii) a mechanism allows public authorities access to these data so they can use the information to inform policy; and (iii) a mechanism feeds these data and relevant analyses back to the school level, so teachers can use them to inform the improvement of instructional practice.

National large-scale examinations are used to monitor education quality levels to hold government, schools, teachers, and students accountable. They are meant to inform policy and evaluate interventions designed to improve student learning outcomes. In Romania, the results of the two national exams – the Baccalaureate Exam and the National Evaluation – are published on the MoNE website. The results for national assessments at Grades 2, 4, and 6 are not made public, but teachers must communicate them to parents and develop individual learning plans for students. In general, the results are primarily used to develop and publish reports. No system is in place that requires specific actions to be

taken to use these results to inform instructional practices at the school and teacher level, set student objectives, improve school development plans, or develop individual skills enhancement plans for teachers

Similarly, even though Romania is a regular participant in international large-scale assessments (PISA, Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)), the results are merely referenced by experts, educational associations, and the media. There is no evidence that results are taken into consideration to improve school curriculum, inform teacher training, monitor education quality, or develop reform policies on resource allocation or evaluation activities.

Teachers have multiple resources at their disposal to assess students, including documents that outline for each subject the performance level students are expected to reach in different grades and/or age levels. There are also student textbooks with complementary teacher guides that provide support for classroom assessment, scoring criteria for grading student work, and item banks with sample questions and classroom activities to be used for classroom assessment activities. However, it is important to note that these resources are not provided by the state; rather, teachers and parents cover the costs of supplying them in the classroom. Moreover, these tools remain insufficiently used and the evaluation criteria and rubrics applied by teachers to assess students' work are not explicit enough to inform meaningful feedback. Last, although local school inspectorates [7] organize teacher training courses and other professional development activities to help teachers analyze student assessment data, these courses are not mandatory.

(2) A system is in place to evaluate teacher performance, but results are not used extensively to improve teaching practices in the classroom. External teacher evaluations are conducted by inspectors at the subnational level. There are about 1,000 inspectors in 42 county school inspectorates. All inspectors have a

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[7] This is coordinated by local Teacher Training Houses, which are responsible for managing and conducting teacher professional development programming.

teaching background and are assigned by subject, extracurricular activities, school management, and educational projects and programs. The inspectors visit schools and evaluate teachers by observing classrooms and assessing teaching-related documents. They also monitor the use of the curriculum, evaluate school management practices, and assess students' achievement data. As specified in the legislation, their main role is to counsel and coach teachers, yet they are often overburdened with administrative and control work. They report to and are evaluated by the general inspectors at county level.

Internal teacher evaluations are conducted by the principal, heads of departments, and school board members. On receiving a highly satisfactory rating from an internal performance review, a teacher is eligible for public recognition, monetary bonuses, and opportunities for career advancement. An unsatisfactory rating has no salary implications but the teacher is mentored/coached by the head of department to improve his/her performance.

(3) Multiple mechanisms are used for teacher assessment in Romania, though it is unclear how these are systematically linked to one another to objectively evaluate teacher performance. Most high-performing systems conduct teacher evaluations using multiple mechanisms for data collection and varied criteria for assessment, including class observations. Figure 7 highlights some of these.

In Romania, teacher attendance, knowledge of subject matter, compliance with curriculum, teaching methodology, use of homework in classroom, student assessments, teacher–student interactions, student academic achievement, students' participation in class, contribution to institutional development, and teacher–parent interactions are used to evaluate teacher performance. In addition to the above criteria, responsibilities at school level, participation in developing textbooks, guides, and regulations, and professional development activities are also taken into consideration. However, these evaluations are not always accurate, as they are done informally and are not based on objective measures of students' academic and socioemotional progress.

International experience and research suggest that none of these approaches taken separately can produce a balanced and objective evaluation of teacher performance. Research has shown that evaluations

might prove more effective if they combine multiple methods and sources of information, such as student academic achievement, classroom observation, and student survey results. The data from standardized national student assessments could, in theory, be used to relate student results in local evaluations to the average results at the national level.

Figure 7. Criteria to evaluate teacher performance

	*Romania	Bulgaria	Georgia	Serbia	Singapore
Subject matter knowledge	✓		✓	✓	✓
Teaching methods	✓	✓		✓	✓
Student assessment methods	✓			✓	✓
Students' academic achievement	✓			✓	

Source: SABER–Teachers data. *Note*: While all four criteria are included in the national evaluation forms, these criteria are rarely used to improve instructional practices and student learning outcomes.

Goal 7: Supporting teachers to improve instruction

Emerging●●○○

Support systems are necessary to help improve instruction at the school level. To constantly improve instructional practice, teachers and schools need to: be able to analyze specific challenges they face in classroom teaching; have access to information on best practices to address these challenges; and receive specific external support tailored to their needs.

SABER–Teachers considers three policy levers that school systems can use to reach this goal: (1) availability of opportunities for teacher professional development; (2) teacher professional development activities that are collaborative and focused on instructional improvement; and (3) the assignment of teacher professional development based on perceived needs.

(1) Teachers in Romania are recommended to participate in professional development activities for a

minimum of 360 hours over a five-year period. In many countries, participating in professional development is a requisite for teachers to stay in the profession as well as to qualify for promotions. In addition, to advance up the career ladder, teachers in most high-performing countries are required to have participated in a number of professional development seminars or workshops according to their rank.

In Romania, participation in professional development is compulsory for public school teachers to remain in the profession. It is recommended teachers obtain 90 credits of professional development over a five-year period. The 90 credits can be accumulated in a variety ways: (i) as a result of passing one of the career evolution exams (1st or 2nd degree) in the five-year timeframe; (ii) by graduating within the five-year period with a Master's or PhD in a specialized subject or in the field of Educational Sciences; (iii) as a result of graduating from at least a three-semester post-university professional conversion program in education; (iv) by graduating from a Bachelor's program in a subject different from the one he/she is teaching; or (v) by participating in various accredited teacher training programs (in which case the 90 credits correspond to 360 training hours) (Ministerial Order No. 5561/2011-Methodology for Teachers Continuous Professional Development). Those who accumulate the designated credits can apply for a principal or school inspectorate posting.

These training programs are accredited by a Specialized Accreditation Commission within MoNE based on a methodology covering training needs analysis, program curriculum and methods, evaluation procedures, etc. However, regular monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of all training programs is not in place given human and financial resources constraints. Also, no data are available regarding the percentage of teachers who accomplish the necessary 90-credit requirement of professional development.

If teachers do not accumulate these credits within the five-year period, there are no repercussions. Part of the reason teachers do not fulfill the 90-credit minimum is because they are responsible for covering some of their professional development fees. Even though this is not officially stipulated, the funds allocated for professional development are insufficient to cover the 90-credit minimum. On average, a 30-credit course (120 hours) costs between RON 250 and 400 (approximately €80), but this varies depending on the specific training

requirements, their personal interests, and the local financial resources.

(2) Teacher professional development in Romania includes activities that have been found to be associated with instructional improvement (Figure 8). Research suggests that effective teacher professional development is collaborative and provides opportunities for analyzing instructional practice at school level. As mentioned earlier, high-performing education systems, such as in Japan and Ontario, devote as much as 30 percent of school time to professional development and instructional improvement activities. Such activities include observation visits to other schools, individual or collaborative research, and participation in teacher or school networks. Although these policies are included as part of Romania's teacher professional development activities, most courses are lecture-based in practice.

(3) Teacher professional development is not formally assigned based on teachers' individual needs. Assigning professional development to teachers based on performance evaluations is one way of potentially improving instructional practice. Teacher professional development can be targeted to meet the needs of specific teachers. However, in Romania, professional development programs are not customized based on the individual needs of teachers. In some cases, a professional development needs analysis is done at the school level. The results are sent to the subnational authorities, who then organize courses according to the school's needs. However, the bulk of teacher professional development programs do not take these analyses into account, nor do they assess student achievement and observations made during inspection visits.

Figure 8. Formally recognized types of professional development

	Romania	Bulgaria	Georgia	Serbia	Singapore
Observation visits	✔	✔			✔
Teacher networks	✔	✔			✔
School networks	✔	✔	✔		✔
Research		✔	✔		✔

Mentoring/coaching	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: SABER–Teachers data.

Goal 8: Motivating teachers to perform

Emerging●●○○

Adequate mechanisms to motivate teachers are a way for school systems to signal their seriousness in achieving education goals, to make the teaching career attractive to competent individuals, and to reward good performance while ensuring accountability.

SABER–Teachers considers three policy levers that school systems can use to reach this goal: (1) linking career opportunities to teacher performance; (2) establishing mechanisms to hold teachers accountable; and (3) tying teacher compensation to performance.

(1) In Romania, career opportunities are somewhat linked to performance. Although teacher evaluations are in place, limited opportunities exist for promotion. In fact, if a teacher is rated "very well" on a performance evaluation, she/he is only eligible to apply for a principal or inspectorate position. Worse yet, teachers who work with the lowest-performing students are rarely recognized for their achievements and are rarely given promotion opportunities. In the United States, for example**,** teachers' professional paths may expand into other positions besides those of assistant principal or principal if they perform well; in these cases, they are eligible for a Master Teacher, Instructional Specialist, or a coaching position.[8]

Across different settings, on-the-job performance is not considered to grant an open-ended appointment. After the one-year mandatory probationary period, Romanian teachers are eligible to take the *definitivat* degree exam. If they pass they are granted a full-time appointment;

however, if they do not pass, they can retake the exam for up to five years. If they do not pass within this timeframe, they are no longer eligible for a full-time position but can continue to teach as a substitute indefinitely.

(2) Mechanisms to hold teachers accountable could be strengthened. Requiring teachers to meet high professional criteria to comply with national quality standards in the teaching profession can facilitate instructional improvement. In Romania, teachers must undergo a performance evaluation to remain in the teaching profession; however, this exercise is limited to filling out an administrative form and does not include professional feedback. Official mechanisms exist to address cases of misconduct and child abuse; however, teachers are not dismissed for poor performance or absenteeism (if teachers are consistently absent, their pay is reduced but they are not dismissed).

(3) For high-performing teachers, monetary bonuses are linked to performance but compensation is not. Monetary rewards can be effective tools for improving teacher performance, assuming that a valid and well-accepted system of performance evaluation is in place. In Romania, performance reviews carry merit bonuses, but not salary implications, and are either conducted by the school or an external evaluation agency (county school inspectorates). High-performing teachers are eligible for a merit bonus of 25 percent of their base salary, though only a limited number of teachers receive this award.[9]

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[8] A Master Teacher helps create a professional community of support and growth, shares best practices, provides coaching to new teachers, opens his/her classroom for observations, and advises school or district leaders. An Instructional Specialist is a literacy or math specialist that supports other teachers at his/her school by modeling great instruction, providing coaching, helping with instructional

planning, and facilitating skill-building sessions. A coach provides evidence-based guidance to help fellow teachers improve in certain areas.

[9] Only 16 percent of the total number of teaching and managerial positions existing at a county level (2011 Education Law No. 1, Article 264).

Policy and Implementation Options

This SABER country report offers a snapshot of Romania's key teacher policies and how they compare with those of top global performers in education. This section suggests some policy recommendations to further improve Romania's teacher policy framework.

Goal 1: Setting clear expectations for teachers

In Romania, clear expectations exist for what students should learn and what teachers are expected to do. Moreover, teachers' official duties include nonteaching tasks related to instructional improvement. Although the law offers these additional opportunities for teachers, it is often the case that because they are general and decided by the management team at school level, these practices are not exercised on the ground by all teachers. In this sense, policy recommendations include:

- Revise the Students' Evaluation Standards (2003) to be compatible with the revised curricula for primary and lower secondary education.
- Develop professional standards for teachers based on previous initiatives. Provide clear guidance on the allocation of teachers' working time for different tasks. For instance, although the law currently stipulates teachers take part in mentoring, professional development, collaborating on the school plan, and adapting the curriculum to student needs, it does not dictate how much of their time should be devoted to these activities. A monitoring system should be established to ensure high-quality teaching occurs at the school level, which motivates teachers to partake in nonteaching tasks that enhance student learning. Also, efforts should be made to ensure the mentoring program takes place in every school.
- Study the possibility of reducing teachers' administrative workload so that they can increase the amount of time they spend on professional development. Teachers are currently expected to stand in for absent teachers, participate in administrative/ management tasks, and internally evaluate school activities. This translates into a reality in which teachers are overwhelmed and spend their working hours for lesson planning, completing administrative paperwork, grading student work, participating in extra class activities with students, and attending school/parent meetings.

Goal 2: Attracting the best into teaching

Although some stringent entry requirements are in place, the teaching profession is not attractive to the most qualified candidates. Secondary school teachers must teach for a year, pass a written exam, and complete an on-the-job assessment to become professionally licensed (*profesor cu drept de practica*). This is also true for primary teachers, though some of them are still accepted into the teaching profession with only a pedagogical high school degree. This requirement was lowered because teachers were unable to meet the Bachelor's requirement and, consequently, schools had a difficult time filling posts. Moreover, teacher pay is extremely low in terms of GDP per capita, high-performing teachers do not get compensated for good performance, and teachers' salaries increase only slightly over the course of their career. Considering these realities, policy recommendations include:

- Improve the recruitment, training, and deployment of new teachers by tackling salary structure, addressing the prestige of the profession, and tightening the selectivity of entry into the teaching profession.
- Reward good performers to create a system in which individuals with the right skills and motivations are drawn to the profession. This can be done by increasing teaching salaries so that they are comparable to those of other professions with similar qualification requirements. A good example comes from Poland, where salaries for primary and lower secondary teachers increased by 7.3 percent between 2010–2014. Another way is to strengthen the accountability system for recognizing and rewarding high-performing teachers to ensure they are appropriately compensated for their outstanding performance. Finally, teachers working with low-performing students should be properly compensated for making progress on these students' academic and socioemotional needs.
- Disseminate information to boost the prestige of the teaching career and improve the morale of the current workforce. Garnering the interest of prospective candidates is largely dependent on the information at their disposal and expected returns to their career. A national communication strategy, such as a high-profile teaching award (e.g., Varkey Foundation's Global Teacher Prize or a teaching channel), could be

launched to communicate the success of high-performing teachers to the wider public and motivate teachers within the system to perform better.

- Study the possibility of providing adequate housing, and improving incentives for new teachers so that professional responsibilities do not appear overwhelming and deter prospective candidates from joining the profession.
- Ensure all schools comply with national standards for infrastructure, hygiene, and sanitation.
- Review current exams for tenure, teaching license (*definitivat*), and career evolution to ensure relevance for testing competencies for better education outcomes for students.

Goal 3: Preparing teachers with useful training and experience

While prospective teachers receive some practical experience during pre-service training, it may not be sufficiently effective in providing them with the skills necessary to succeed. Teachers are not required to be coached during this process, which limits the skills they ultimately acquire. To bridge these gaps, policy recommendations include:

- Restructure teacher training programs to align to future pedagogical needs, with sessions on content and subject-specific knowledge. To achieve this end, programs should prepare teachers with sufficient practical preparation in instructional practice and assessment. In this sense, a gradual introduction of the Masters in Didactics (already stipulated in the 2011 National Education Law No. 1) should be considered.
- Improve teacher preparation programs to equip future teachers with methodological skills to improve their instruction and harness students' socioemotional capacity. To develop students' creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills, teachers must acquire specific competencies.
- Shift teacher professional development toward a model that prioritizes practical teaching experience in school settings. One of the main findings of the 2013 TALIS survey emphasizes the association between teachers' feeling of preparedness and a formal teacher education that includes a balanced mix of content, pedagogy, and practical components. In

Singapore, for example, the TE21Model produces "the thinking teacher" by developing strong partnerships with schools. In Finland, teachers' preparation includes both courses in subject matter knowledge and pedagogy and a full year of experience in a school associated with the university.

- Ensure teachers are coached and practice to eliminate their deficiencies, as determined through school performance evaluations, particularly during the student-teaching phase.
- Improve the effectiveness and performance of debutant teachers by introducing robust mentoring programs. These programs should ensure new teachers get the support they need through engaging with high-performing and experienced teachers.
- Set up an accountability system that ensures teachers take the *definitivat* exam and pass it within the five-year timeframe. In the event candidates are unable to pass, new regulations should be put into place to bar them from the profession (including substitute teaching).

Goal 4: Matching teachers' skills with students' needs

Official legislation is in place to provide some incentivizes for teachers to work in hard-to-staff schools; however, ambiguity exists in the definition of such schools. Moreover, the monetary benefits offered are insufficient to motivate teachers to work in these areas. Policy options include:

- Identify ways to provide significant incentives to teachers to work in hard-to-staff schools, such as higher salaries, scholarships for education, promotions, and housing support. In Denmark, teachers receive special allowances including free accommodation and home computers for their willingness to teach in remote areas.
- Support models such as "Teach for Romania" that have already demonstrated their capacity to address education equity and quality issues in most-disadvantaged and hard-to-staff schools in Romania. Draw on their experience with teaching, but also to promote a cultural change approach at the school level.
- Provide incentives to teachers to teach critical-shortage subjects like IT, music, English, and primary level subjects.

- Provide incentives for teachers working in challenging schools and remote areas. For instance, in Shanghai, China, teachers who choose to work at rural schools receive priority in admission to graduate schools and accreditation of higher teacher ranks, one-time monetary stipends, and compensation. In the United Kingdom, the government launched a comprehensive program for reversing teacher shortages in disadvantaged schools. The effort included addressing teacher pay and working conditions with a powerful recruitment campaign. Within the scope of the program a generous one-time monetary incentive was offered to students who were planning to become teachers, and salary bonuses were offered to teachers who taught critical-shortage subjects. The advertising campaign also gave teachers flexible schedules and extended vacations and framed teaching as a profession to start the career with. The strategy proved highly effective – the number of applicants for teaching positions rose within a couple of years and shortages were practically eradicated.
- Develop support systems for teachers in addressing challenges that are unrelated to the classroom. Often, teachers placed in hard-to-staff areas must deal with the consequences of student absenteeism, which could be due to health issues or insufficient care at home. To address this problem, grassroots-level organizations need to be identified that can provide support to students and families in alleviating these issues. By building partnerships with these organizations at the school level, teachers get additional support in such schools and do not have to deal with issues unrelated to the classroom during instructional time. This may lead to improvement in working conditions and development of a support system for hard-to-staff schools.
- Train teachers in developing students' socioemotional skills. In hard-to-staff schools, students are faced with additional challenges that diminish the effectiveness of conventional teaching practices. To address this, teachers need to be sensitive to the socioemotional needs of students and help them develop the skills required to succeed in the future – trust, self-esteem, communication, curiosity, grit, gratitude, growth mindset, self-control, etc. For instance, in the United States, organizations like Character Lab use a Character Growth Card and playbooks to guide students through different activities and goal-setting processes to build their socioemotional capacity.
- Create a targeted campaign to advertise vacancies in hard to staff schools and provide scholarships for students enrolled in pedagogical programs or in education-related university studies and studying subject areas with shortages – -for example, IT, technology, music, English, and primary level subjects. This scholarship would be contingent on students' commitment to the teaching profession for a minimum amount of years.

Goal 5: Leading teachers with strong principals

Overall, training programs support the development of principals' leadership capacity. Furthermore, principals are expected to support and hold teachers accountable in multiple areas. However, limited monetary awards exist to reward principals for good performance. The following options could be considered:

- Conduct a needs assessment to better understand the specific needs and issues principals face in their work. The results of such an assessment could be used to inform professional development for principals and develop specialized standards for principals.
- Study the possibility of providing principals with an obligatory coaching program, instructional leadership training, and ongoing professional development. For instance, principals in Shanghai, China, participate in various kinds of leadership programs based on their years of service. A one-year training program focuses on six key topics: school planning, internal management, school culture, instructional development, teacher growth, and adjustment to the external environment. The program takes place once a week and includes group lectures, individual research projects, field visits, and mentoring by experienced principals to new principals.
- Ensure student achievement and teacher performance are factored into school performance reviews and individual promotion criteria, and that such factors carry significant

weight in the evaluation process. Provide school principals with rewards, such as monetary bonuses, based on school performance review to improve student achievement.

- Train school principals in effective practices for monitoring teaching and learning and ensure they provide regular and consistent feedback and mentorship to teachers.

Goal 6: Monitoring teaching and learning

Teachers have the option of attending trainings on student assessment, though this is not officially mandated. Additionally, systems are in place to assess student learning and these results are publicly available; however, no formal structure translates these results into improved quality of education. External teacher evaluations are conducted by inspectors, but these have no fixed frequency. Moreover, although according to legislation the main role of inspectors is to coach teachers, this is hardly achieved as inspectors more often have to perform a lot of administrative work. The following policy options are suggested to address gaps in monitoring teaching and learning:

- Ensure that student achievement data collected are comparable year-on-year, so that it becomes possible to evaluate teacher and school performance over time.
- Ensure compulsory teacher training programs on student assessment.
- Ensure teacher evaluations accurately capture teaching quality and that they are tied to learning outcomes and student achievement. This could mean using multiple mechanisms to evaluate teachers, including classroom observations, student and parent feedback surveys, inspectors' evaluations, and student results as measured by exams and national standardized assessments.
- Strengthen the capacities of local school inspectorates to analyze the results of large-scale national and international assessments. Moreover, recommend and monitor the implementation of policies at the school level so that teachers use the data to drive instruction. Training workshops for inspectors should clarify what each item on the assessment measures, and how to analyze the results at a school, county, and national level.
- Provide support to inspectors both in terms of the requisite coaching skills and workload

management to provide coaching to teachers. Support for requisite coaching skills can come from training and by providing classroom observation tools that can be used consistently across schools. Moreover, coaching time should be incorporated in teachers' work plans as a specific regular activity and it should be ensured that the number of teachers assigned to a coach does not exceed an unreasonable amount (which may require an analysis of coaches' workload at the county level).

Goal 7: Supporting teachers to improve instruction

Teachers are expected to meet professional development requirements over a period of five years; however, these are not assigned based on perceived needs and no repercussions arise for not meeting them. Moreover, in practice, teachers often finance their professional development through personal means. Policy recommendations for this area include:

- Based on a needs assessment at the school level and on student results, implement in-service teacher training systems at the county level with a wide selection of content and methods (coaching; working in networks; groups to analyze practices; class observations and visits; critical analysis of work sequences; use of tutorials, etc.). Moreover, assign professional development based on perceived needs at the teacher level, and prioritize the teachers whose needs are identified during evaluations.
- Analyze the possibility to provide strong incentives for primary and secondary school teachers to participate in continuous professional development activities, such as collaborating on common challenges, analyzing practices, and pooling resources and skills.
- Include subject-specific and content knowledge components aligned with student learning standards and school curriculum as part of teacher professional development.
- Monitor the supply of and demand for professional development activities at the county level to inform future policy directions and make necessary adjustments. For example, carry out regular and local assessments of the professional development impact on student achievement, adjust content and methods accordingly, and monitor the impact of training

activities at the county level. Moreover, ensure the associated financial and human resources at MoNE monitor and evaluate training activities in relation to the 90-credit requirement.

- Introduce coaching and ensure coaches' training goes beyond simply verifying teachers' compliance with administrative instructions. Improve professional development programs for teaching to support new teachers entering the profession. Classroom observations, if implemented as a one-on-one coaching experience, are beneficial for new teachers. The coaching process should support teachers in improving instructional quality, where they can also see the benefit of it in improved academic performance of their students. Skills covered in these coaching exercises could include lesson planning, asking questions to check for understanding, setting systems and routines, creating a supportive classroom environment, and building socioemotional skills in students.

Goal 8: Motivating teachers to perform

According to the 2011 National Education Law No. 1, promotion opportunities are linked to performance and top-performing teachers receive a merit bonus; however, teachers that work with low-performing students are rarely recognized. Mechanisms to hold teachers accountable could be strengthened, as teacher compensation is not linked to performance. Policy options may include:

- Improve mechanisms for holding teachers accountable. Reward high-performing teachers with desirable financial bonuses or nonmonetary incentives, such as teaching awards or bonuses based on student achievement, as well as symbolic forms of recognition. Recognize teachers placed in hard-to-staff areas through fast-track promotion options. Performance of such teachers should be compared with teachers placed in similar schools for comparability purposes.
- Perform annual performance reviews of teachers' activities that use a wider variety of instruments and methods (for example, an end-of-year evaluation meeting with each teacher, etc.) to ensure objectivity and enhance effectiveness. Subsequently, performance reviews should be conducted two to three times per year. This would provide teachers with

feedback on their performance earlier in the year, so that necessary supports can be introduced to facilitate improvement in the remaining part of the year. Moreover, performance reviews should carry salary implications. The Washington D.C. public school system introduced a teacher evaluation system, IMPACT, that awards annual bonuses up to US$25,000 to high-performing teachers. Research conducted on the effectiveness of IMPACT finds that it resulted in improved student achievement.

- Clearly outline teacher performance expectations as well as relevant indicators to measure. These expectations should be contextualized at the county level when training is provided by coaches.
- Set up a fair system of monetary bonuses to incentivize teachers to improve their performance (i.e., bonuses are tied to measures that capture effective teaching and are significant enough to act as an incentive).
- Ensure that teachers are recognized and rewarded for investing time and effort into activities related to instructional improvement by making it a prominent part of the teacher standards and performance appraisals. For instance, if teachers accumulate professional development credits, this should be acknowledged in performance evaluation.
- Develop a culture of achievement at the school level by recognizing teachers who put in additional effort and encouraging their peers to observe their classes. Disseminating teacher awards at the school level could initiate this culture.

Acknowledgments

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Annex 1. SABER–Teachers Ratings

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

Table A.1. Setting clear expectations for teachers

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

For each goal in the country report, the team defines the goal in the first paragraph of the country report, and identifies the levers in the second paragraph. The remaining paragraphs provide details about the indicators that measure each of the levers.

Using the policy levers and indicators, SABER–Teachers classifies education systems' performance on each of the eight teacher policy goals, using a four-category scale (latent, emerging, established, and advanced). The ratings describe the extent to which a given education system has in place teacher policies that are known to be related to improved student outcomes.

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

- Advanced **>3.25** — Systems are rated "advanced" toward a particular policy goal when they have multiple policies conducive to learning in place under each of the policy levers used to define a policy goal.

- Established **2.5-3.25** — "Established" systems have at least one policy or law in place that uses those policy levers.

- Emerging **2-2.5** — "Emerging" systems may have some appropriate policies in place under the policy goal.

- Latent **<2** — "Latent" systems have none or few appropriate policies in place under the policy goal.

Please reference the background paper by Vegas et al. (2012), "What Matters Most for Teacher Policies? A Framework for Building a More Effective Teaching Profession," for more details about these definitions and a detailed review of policy levers and indicators used by SABER–Teachers.

Annex 2. SABER–Teachers Scores

Policy Goals					Policy Levers	
3.33	Advanced	Setting clear expectations for teachers	3.0	Established	Are there clear expectations for teachers?
			3.7	Advanced	Is there useful guidance for teachers' working time?
2.63	Established	Attracting the best into teaching	3.0	Established	Are entry requirements set up to attract talented candidates?
			1.3	Latent	Is teacher pay appealing for talented candidates?
			2.7	Established	Are working conditions appealing for talented applicants?
			3.5	Advanced	Are there attractive career opportunities?
2.50	Emerging	Preparing teachers with useful training and experience	2.0	Latent	Are there minimum standards for pre-service teaching education programs?
			3.0	Established	To what extent are teacher-entrants required to be familiar with classroom practice?
2.25	Emerging	Matching teachers' skills with students' needs	3.5	Advanced	Are there incentives for teachers to work at hard-to-staff schools?
			1.0	Latent	Are there incentives for teachers to teach critical shortage subjects?
2.75	Established	Leading teachers with strong principals	2.5	Emerging	Does the education system invest in developing qualified school leaders?
			3.0	Established	Are principals expected to support and improve instructional practice?
3.16	Established	Monitoring teaching and learning	2.8	Established	Are there systems in place to assess student learning in order to inform teaching and policy?
			3.0	Established	Are there systems in place to monitor teacher performance?
			3.7	Advanced	Are there multiple mechanisms to evaluate teacher performance?
2.11	Emerging	Supporting teachers to improve instruction	2.3	Emerging	Are there opportunities for professional development?
			3.0	Established	Is teacher professional development collaborative and focused on instructional improvement?
			1.0	Latent	Is teacher professional development assigned based on perceived needs?
2.33	Emerging	Motivating teachers to perform	2.5	Emerging	Are career opportunities linked to performance?
			2.5	Emerging	Are there mechanisms to hold teachers accountable?
			2.0	Latent	Is high performance rewarded?

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

This report focuses specifically on policies in the area of teacher policies.

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