

POLICY BRIEF | 1

TEACHING UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Challenges in teacher professional development
in Central America and the Caribbean

Ivana Zacarias

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About this report

Author: Ivana Zacarias, Researcher KIX LAC, SUMMA.

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About the Knowledge & Innovation Exchange (KIX) initiative

The KIX initiative seeks to connect the expertise, innovation and knowledge of Global Partnership for Education (GPE) partners to help developing countries build stronger education systems. Through the sharing and funding of proven solutions and innovations, KIX will: (a) ensure that evidence-based solutions get in the hands of national policy makers and directly feed policy dialogue and planning processes; (b) build capacity to produce, integrate and scale knowledge and innovation in GPE partner countries. For that, KIX has built Regional Hubs in different regions, where partners come together to share information, innovation and best practices. KIX is also a funding mechanism that provides grants at the global and regional levels to invest in knowledge generation and innovation, and to scale proven approaches. The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is the grant agent for KIX.

Led by a consortium integrated by SUMMA and OECS, the KIX for the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) hub will work between April 2020 and December 2023 to support country partners' systems education development and to contribute to guarantee the right to education in **Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent & the Grenadines** (country partners). To achieve its goal, the LAC KIX has defined three pillars: (I) policy agenda setting; (II) knowledge mobilization & exchange; and (III) regional and local capacity building.

About SUMMA

It is the first Laboratory of Education Research and Innovation for Latin America and the Caribbean. It was created in 2016 by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), with the support of the Ministries of Education of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay. Since 2018, the Ministries of Guatemala, Honduras and Panama have also joined. SUMMA works on three strategic pillars that allow the promotion, development and spread of cutting-edge research aimed to address the main challenges in the region and promoting shared work agendas; fostering innovation in education policies and practices to provide solutions for the main education problems in the region; and advance collaborative networks that allow the exchange between policy makers, researchers, innovators and the school community.

About the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)

OECS is an intergovernmental organization dedicated to regional integration in the Eastern Caribbean. Guided by strategic objectives, OECS works in different programmatic areas and in all its Member States to consolidate a common economic space for sustained economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection.



Executive Summary

The goal of this paper is to address the challenges and strengths of teacher professional development (TPD) in Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and propose policy recommendations to improve them.

A first section of the policy characterizes and analyzes the region's main challenges in TPD, which include low requirements to become a teacher, the need of further training and shortage of teachers in certain areas, unequal distribution of trained teachers and limited opportunities for in-service development.

To address those challenges, the policy recommends to raise the requirements to become teachers and to provide incentives to attract top candidates, to develop education monitoring and information systems (EMIS) to collect and systematize better data about teacher education, to improve the quality and length of pre-service teacher education, to improve equity in trained teachers' placement, to implement well-structured induction programs accompanied by regular appraisals, to strengthen professional development opportunities and connect them with diverse benefits and alternative career paths, and to implement attractive career path options to reduce attrition and retain teachers



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1. Introduction

The goal of this document is to discuss the most relevant challenges in teacher professional development policies in the KIX LAC countries (Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines). For that, academic articles, official documents and databases from international organizations and countries were reviewed, which were enriched by multiple interviews and meetings with experts and stakeholders in the region (see Annex I).

Despite the relevant achievements in terms of access, the educational systems in Central America and the Caribbean still face challenges in terms of quality, equity and inclusion (GEM, 2020; USAID, 2015). These limitations nurture the question about what kind of policies would help to improve them. Accumulated evidence in the last decades has shown that, removing the effect of socioeconomic status and other key variables, teachers are the in-school factor that most strongly influences students' learning (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Bruns & Luque, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Glazerman et al., 2010; Hanushek et al., 2005; Hattie, 2009; OCDE, 2005). There are also studies that prove that a good teacher may even impact students' future performance at university and potential incomes (Chetty et al., 2014).

In turn, these findings raise concerns about the policies contributing to the development of a high-quality teacher. According to Glatthorn (1995), teacher professional development (TPD) is understood as the growth a teacher undergoes both as a consequence of his/her experience and by examining his/her teaching systematically, thus being broader than pure career growth from pre-service education to retirement, where the teacher moves from one stage to the next. Alternatively, teacher training only involves both pre-service and in-service educational opportunities.

In recent times, TPD has been seen as a continuum: it begins with a candidate enrolling at a teacher education program, advances during his/her study, induction period and first stages into the profession, and continues along her/his entire career (Ávalos, 2004; Pedró, 2020).

In Latin America and the Caribbean, different aspects of TPD need to be improved in order to elevate the teaching profession to the XXIst century's needs. Different experts have called for longer pre-service programs as well as for more connection between theory and practice, a more important role of practicums, strengthened methodological training, higher use of ICTs, less compartmentalized knowledge, the implementation of mentored induction programs and attractive career paths to qualified teachers, among other strategies (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Gatti et al., 2011; Gatti & de Sá Barreto, 2009; González et al., 2019; OREALC/ UNESCO Santiago, 2013; Vaillant, 2010; Vaillant & Marcelo García, 2015; Villegas & Reimers, 2003).

As it will be argued, although much has been done in the last decades towards improving teachers and teaching practices in the region (as reflected in higher percentages of trained teachers and the expansion of professional development opportunities), many challenges still remain and need to be addressed, especially in the context of scarce resources and heightened



demand for the education system to better equip students to meet the challenges of the 21st century. This article illustrates the most pressing issues, building on the strengths and progresses KIX LAC countries have achieved so far¹.

¹ A first difficulty someone faces when analyzing teacher professional development in the region is what is understood by qualified teachers. Beyond the many different categories within each country, overall, it is possible to differentiate between those teachers who received, at least, pedagogical training or the minimum qualification established by the country (we will refer to them as *trained teachers*) and those teachers who (having received pedagogical training or not) have a bachelor's degree (we will refer to them as *graduate teachers*) (Table 2).

2. TPD Challenges in Central America and the Caribbean

In spite of the new general interest on teachers, their prestige and the social value that society places on them have been decreasing in Latin America and the Caribbean particularly in the last decades where salaries have been traditionally low compared to other professions (Elacqua et al., 2018; Forde, 1994). As a result, data shows a great level of shortage of qualified teachers in certain subjects and specific locations within countries. Moreover, as it will be revealed, research shows the existence of low-entrance requirements to the profession and the presence of outdated training programs in the countries under analysis.

A study carried out by the OECS found four weaknesses in relation to teacher professional development in the Caribbean: (i) high proportion of untrained teachers; (ii) significant number of classes taught by teachers with no training in the specific subject taught; (iii) low retention of qualified teachers; and (iv) mismatch between skill demand and supply for various subjects (Armstrong, 2011; OECS, 2009). These trends seem to be persistent nowadays, as it is analyzed in the paragraphs that follow.



As shown in Table 1, for a more comprehensive analysis it will be important to consider that the variation in teacher population sizes among countries is significant (for instance, the teacher population in Honduras is approximately 65 times larger than that in Dominica).



Table 1. Number of Teachers by Education Level.

	No. of primary school teachers	No. of secondary school teachers	Total
Dominica	525 (b)	496 (b)	1.021
Grenada	807 (b)	713 (c)	1.520
Guyana	3.885 (d)	3.682 (d)	7.567
Haiti	88008 (e)		88.008
Honduras	44.395 (a)	21.756 (a)	66.151
Nicaragua	50605 (c)		50.605
Saint Lucia	1.081 (b)	1.046 (b)	2.127
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	917 (c)	707 (c)	1.624

Source: Own elaboration based on UIS-UNESCO; Ministry of Education of Guyana, S/D; Otero, 2021; Moya, 2021; American Institute for Research, 2021.

References: (a) 2020, (b) 2019, (c) 2018, (d) 2017, (e) 2013.

2.1 LOW REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME A TEACHER

Traditionally, teacher education in Latin America and the Caribbean has been nurtured by two main traditions: one (known as *normalista*) where secondary schools were in charge of certifying –typically– primary school teachers; and a second one, in the realm of higher education, that used to train secondary school teachers (Pedró, 2020; Vaillant, 2013).

For example, Nicaragua still concentrates its primary teachers’ training in *normal* schools through two programs: one directed to high-school students, who graduate with a double-degree (secondary school degree and teacher degree) and a second one directed to in-service teachers who have not taken pre-service courses. In 2017, 3.100 students were under the first option, while 2.904 teachers under the second. For secondary school teachers, although there are five universities offering programs, the great majority receive training at the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (Delgado, 2020), and the program is three years long (Otero, 2021).

In the Caribbean, historically, entry requirements into the teaching career did not include a professional qualification, which contributed to the high proportion of untrained teachers (World Bank and OECS, 2011). Indeed, the norm still is that the teacher certification is acquired many



years after entering the profession (Mark & Murphy, s. f.). The formal requirement to enter the teaching profession in many countries is five passes, including Mathematics and English, in the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC)/ Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) exams (Gordon, 2020). In Grenada, for example, there is no formal pre-service education training program; since 2019, prospective teachers can apply to a two-week induction program. However, overall, training is available for in-service teachers (Knight, et al., 2021).

Table 2. Academic and professional qualifications in the Caribbean.

	Academic qualifications	
Professional qualifications	I. Graduate trained Associate or Bachelor degree in Education and Teaching Diploma/ Teaching Certificate. OR At least a Bachelor degree and post-graduate diploma in Education <i>Upgrade: Master Degree in Education.</i>	II. Graduate untrained Associate of Bachelor degree only. <i>Program for upgrade: PG DIP ED.</i>
	III. Non-graduate - trained Teaching diploma or Teaching certificate only. <i>Program for upgrade: B.Ed.</i>	IV. Graduate untrained unqualified No training certificate is mandatory. <i>Program for upgrade: ADE or 4 year-B.ED.</i>

Source: Mark & Murphy, s. f.

At present, the Eastern Caribbean Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE)² –created in 2000– certifies teachers in Early Education, Primary Education, Secondary Education, and Technical and Vocational Education. It offers a program that is equivalent to the first year of a bachelor in Education and is recognized by all the ministries of education, to which candidates may apply. In parallel, teachers who do not have pedagogical training (whether graduate or not) are categorized as untrained (Table 3).

² It is the premier certifying body for teachers Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St Kitts & Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines.



The OECS acknowledges in its Education Sector Strategy the need to recruit better candidates to the profession, which will probably entail raising the entrance bar and entry requirements, and will probably aggravate the scarcity of teachers in the region (OECS, s. f.).

In Guyana, the minimum qualification for the profession is the secondary school certification (CXC). Even though teachers without qualifications can be hired, the Ministry of Education prioritizes those who have undertaken teaching training courses. Many available paths (pre-service and in-service) are available for those who want to receive training (American Institute for Research, 2021a).

Haiti presents a different situation. Prospective candidates need to apply for a place at the ENS (Ecole Normal Supérieure), Université d'État d'Haïti. On average, 240 students - out of 3.000 applicants - are admitted every year to a four-year program. However, due to political placements in teaching positions, it seems very likely that there are very qualified trained candidates who are still unhired (American Institute for Research, 2021b).

The general situation of these countries contrasts with the requirements in developed countries and even in other Latin American ones which usually require a four-year college degree and even a master's degree to be considered trained for teaching (Bruns & Luque, 2014; Vaillant, 2013). Moreover, many countries have developed strategies to recruit the best candidates by adding interviews or exams, or establishing scholarships for the best applicants (Barber & Mourshed, 2007)³.

Undoubtedly, the risks of aggravating the dearth of teachers should be considered, so policies with multiple incentives seem to be adequate to stimulate enrollment. In this sense, it is worth mentioning that unlike places with large populations and much larger pool of potential teachers to choose from, for generations, small island states such as the ones in the Eastern Caribbean have had a high demand for a range of teachers and a much smaller pool to choose from, which imposes additional limitations to ensuring that the best candidates are recruited.

2.2 INADEQUATE QUALITY OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHER PROGRAMS

Apart from the challenges mentioned above, pre-service teacher programs do not always have the ideal characteristics for training a 21st century skilled teacher.

In the Eastern Caribbean, Associate Degrees in Education (ADE) programs for primary school teachers are typically two-years or four semesters long, with some slight differences across countries or educational levels. The practicum is extended, at the end of the program, for ten weeks, which seems insufficient (Mark & Murphy, s. f.)

³ Indeed, in the specialized literature is quite frequent to differentiate between candidate recruitment policies (which occurs when a person enrolls at teacher training institution) and certification policies (which occurs when the student finishes all required courses to become a teacher) (Bruns & Luque, 2014; Elacqua et al., 2018; OCDE, 2005). As this distinction is not frequent in the region, we opted for approaching the issue of low requirements in a single section.



Research also highlights other deficits. For example, according to a study carried out in primary schools in Saint Lucia, teachers demanded that their pre-service preparation programs provided them with more practice in real classroom, special education and counseling courses, and demonstration on various strategies, use of technology, and assessment and that teachers’ educators model actual lessons; also they demanded spaces for professional development (to reflect on their own practice or strengthen instructional capacities, manage a classroom, become confident professionals) after graduation (Clifford, 2010). Other authors have also stressed the inadequate training that teachers in Eastern Caribbean receive to deal with students with special educational needs (Armstrong et. al., 2005).

Table 3. Main teacher training institutions per country.

	Teacher training institutions
Dominica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominica State College. • Various community colleges.
Grenada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Education Department at the T. A. Marryshow Community College.
Guyana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE). • University of Guyana (UG).
Haiti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENS, Université d’ État d’ Haïti (UEH).
Honduras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán.
Nicaragua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Normal</i> schools (8). • Universities (5).
St. Lucia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sir Arthur Lewis Community College.
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division of Teacher Education (DTE) at the St. Vincent and the Grenadines’ Community College (SVCC).

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of cited bibliography.

Note: The University of West Indies has franchised its Bachelor in Education program to colleges in Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, among other countries out of the KIX Hub.

More recent publications in this sub-region have acknowledged that teachers need to be trained to better value co-planning, professional collaboration and research, with evidence-based approaches (Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, 2019). There is also concern about the lack of courses in learning assessment, multigrade teaching and literacy (Mark & Murphy, s. f.).



One aspect that is usually mentioned by literature as a measurement of pre-service teacher programs is the quality of their trainers. In the Caribbean, there is no specialization requirement to be a teacher educator (Mark et al., 2005).

In Central America, the situation does not differ. Despite that, in Honduras, pre-service teacher training is four years long (of which 13 weeks should take place in schools). Some studies indicate that teachers candidates declare that, during college years, they don't really learn how to teach basic skills in reading and writing, something that is allegedly associated with lack of practice in a classroom (RedLei, 2019a). Nicaragua is in a similar situation, where future teachers are hardly exposed to international evidence-based strategies to effectively teach children to read (RedLei, 2019b). Even though training institutions count on professors specialized in scientific and pedagogical areas, there seem to be some deficits in relation to educating teachers for multigrade contexts, pre-school education, attention to adolescents and adults, and special education (RedLei, 2019b).

In Haiti, there is the additional problem of the language of instruction. According to the norms, instruction is in French, even though most children speak Créole at home. Moreover, most teachers do not receive specific training in French. Indeed, research suggests that teaching through experimentation and collaborative practices in Creole contributes to improved education in the country, which makes a case for a shift in teacher training (DeGraff & Stump, 2018).

Overall, in the region, teachers tend to enter the profession without basic skills in critical areas such as the use of digital technologies (Swig, 2015).

2.3 IMPORTANT NUMBER OF TEACHERS IN THE SYSTEM NEED FURTHER TRAINING, ESPECIALLY IN CERTAIN DISCIPLINES.

Beyond the challenges mentioned before, an important proportion of the current in-service teacher population still need further training.

In Guyana, for example, although a high proportion of teachers are trained both in primary and secondary levels (70%, according to Guyanese standards), the rates of those having graduated from college is below 19% and 20%, respectively; it is a national priority to have at least 80% trained by 2023 and there exists very ambitious scholarship programs to fulfill this goal. In the meantime, most untrained teachers usually work in the hinterland regions, which are the most socio-economically vulnerable (American Institute for Research, 2021a).

In Dominica and Grenada, the proportion of trained teachers at the primary level does not reach 70%. In Grenada, the proportion of trained teachers in secondary schools is less than 40%, and the number of graduates is even lower (34%). In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines only 18% of primary school teachers have undergraduate degrees. Recent studies show that, overall in the Eastern Caribbean countries, the OECS, under its education sector strategy, offered training to an



ample spectrum of teachers in the four countries (Targeted Development Consulting, 2019). If we examine the data per educational level, we find that, overall, training constitutes a big challenge in early-childhood (70% are not trained) and in secondary education (30% are not trained), while 28% of teachers in primary school need to be trained (OECS, 2021), despite there has been a steady increase in the share of trained teachers both in primary and secondary levels in the last years (Mark & Murphy, s. f.).

In the same line, according to a report by USAID (2016), half of the teachers in the public sector in Haiti lack basic qualifications, and almost 80% of the teachers did not go through pre-service training. The situation tends to be even worse in the private sector. At the secondary level, although teachers have more training, there are concerns about the content of the programs (American Institute for Research, 2021b).

In Central America, one of the biggest challenges in Honduras has been getting all its teachers to get their bachelors 'degree. The fact that only two out of eighteen universities in the country are able to issue these degrees does not contribute to achieving that goal (Chacón-Viquez, 2016; Flores, 2020; Menjívar, 2020). Finally, in Nicaragua, 24% of teachers in primary and secondary schools do not have the minimum required qualifications (Castillo et al., 2016).

It is important to add that, even though better training is needed to upgrade the profession, the education sector in the region also has to deal with the fact that teachers with higher academic qualifications might be more likely to exit teaching earlier, as it happens in the Caribbean (World Bank and OECS, 2011). A *deep analysis* of the means to prevent turnovers while also improving qualifications *should be carried out* in order to adequately attack the problem.

Moreover, the need to improve training in the teacher population involves two other problems: on the one side, the specific shortage of teachers in critical areas and subjects; on the other, the majority of female trained teachers compared to men (even though these represent a small proportion of the whole population, most of them are not adequately trained)⁴. In Haiti, for example, there is a lack of teachers of English and Spanish (American Institute for Research, 2021b). In general, in the Eastern Caribbean there is a need of teachers trained in the STEM areas (Knight, Marshall, et al., 2021a, 2021b, 2021c; Knight, Marshall, Jason, et al., 2021).

2.3.1 GENDER INEQUALITY

Many studies stress the inequalities favoring women in the Eastern Caribbean, where girls outperform boys in exams and usually have lower repetition rates and higher graduation rates (OECS, 2016). However, this is not the only sphere of the educational system that does not seem to

⁴ Past studies suggest there may be a shortage of trained teachers in key areas. According to a report by the World Bank and the OECS in 2011, Eastern Caribbean countries had problems attracting and retaining qualified teachers in areas such as Math, Science, English, ICT and Visual and Performing Arts. This also means that a significant number of teachers are deployed to teach subjects in which they are not experts (World Bank and OECS, 2011). Further research is needed to know the current situation.



be directed to men: there are very few men in the teaching profession, specially in the Early Childhood level (Armstrong, 2011) and, what is more, male teachers tend to be less educated than female teachers (according to the latest data, trained men are 66% out of all male teachers in primary level, while that percentage is 73% for women –OECS, 2021–).

Further data confirms these facts. For example, in the primary level in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, female teachers are more trained compared to men (86% to 77%). In the case of secondary school, the differences are 65% to 58%. However, roughly the same percentage have undergraduate degrees in primary (17% men, 18% women) and in secondary (55% male, 58% women). In the case of other countries of the region as Grenada, the situation is similar, with a gap of twenty percentage points between female and male teachers (77% to 57%). The same trend is applicable to the secondary level (Education Research and Information Communication Technology Department, Ministry of Education, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, 2015; Statistical Division, Planning and Development Unit, 2014). In Haiti, there are few women trained in mathematics and physics (American Institute for Research, 2021b).

2.4 UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF TRAINED TEACHERS

Do vulnerable schools receive the most skilled teachers? Are they placed in the first grades? Are there any differences between public and private schools in terms of teacher placement? A close examination of the data reveals some inequalities that, however, need further exploration.

In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the percentage of trained teachers in private schools is lower than the national average (84% in total, 72% in private schools). Nonetheless, the larger differences emerge when comparing regions: while District 13 (the southern Grenadines of Canouan and Union Island)⁵ has on average 60% of teachers who are trained, in Districts 8 and 9 (in the northeastern outskirts of Kingstown) percentages go up to almost 97. In the end, this implies that there is one school with only 8% of its teachers trained (one teacher) and others with one hundred percent. This inequality is reproduced in the case of the secondary level: again, here the variation among the percentage of trained teachers in schools is important. It goes from an average of 47% in District 13 to 90% in District 9 (Ministry of Education, National Reconciliation and Ecclesiastical Affairs, 2020).

It is important to add that teacher placement is not necessarily unfair: for example, District 9 is one of the most challenging considering that 91% of the children are beneficiaries of the school-feeding program (in District 13, that percentage is 63%). Further research is needed in this regard.

In Grenada, the situation is not very different: the distribution of trained teachers is unequal among schools, including two schools with a hundred percent of trained teachers and one

⁵ This implies 40 teachers in 6 schools.



school with zero, according to the latest data available (Statistical Division, Planning and Development Unit, 2014). In the same vein, in Guyana, the distribution of trained teachers in primary education appears to be unequal. Even though the distribution of teachers per student is quite similar in the different regions, numbers vary when it comes to trained teachers; in this sense, it is possible to find a trained teacher for every 20 students in Region 10, but every 94 in Region 8; numbers are similar in the secondary level (Ministry of Education of Guyana, S/D).

2.5 LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES FOR IN-SERVICE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In the Eastern Caribbean, some institutions have been offering distance programs for teachers who are already in-service. Some community colleges offer certificates and diplomas as well. In many cases, those teachers enrolling in a certification program receive a stipend with their salaries. However, reports state that in-service teacher development beyond initial training consists of uncoordinated activities from various agencies. Funding international organizations usually partner with the ministries to carry out some workshops too (Knight, Marshall, et al., 2021b; Knight, Marshall, Jason, et al., 2021).

In the case of Honduras, some authors have pointed out that the incentives and appraisal mechanisms are not enough to get teachers massively participating in in-service education programs (Chacón-Viquez, 2016). Since the transformation of the normal schools into regional centers for in-service training in Honduras, lots of new teachers are being reached (Moya, 2021). In Nicaragua, the late introduction of the State into training teachers still makes massive access a challenge, although the government has been developing a continuous development strategy, with the support of the World Bank (Otero, 2021).

In Guyana, many actors (university, Ministry, the NCERD, unions) intervene, offering workshops and training to in-service teachers, who many times have not received through pre-service education. In general, these trainings are not mandatory, but attendants can earn credits. As in many other areas, in-service opportunities for hinterland teachers are reduced (American Institute for Research, 2021a).

Finally, teacher professional development in Haiti is also included in the government's ten-year plan. In spite of the State's role, many other groups (particularly, the Church) have been key players in the field (American Institute for Research, 2021b).

3. Policy recommendations

In the previous sections, we have introduced a series of challenges of Teacher Professional Development in Central America and the Caribbean.

In spite of them, some promising steps have been given towards building a stronger teaching profession. In this sense, it is possible to underline:

- The region's extensive tradition in formally educating teachers (Miller, 1999; Jennings, 2001).
- Policies and programs that have been recently implemented for improving teacher quality and Teacher Professional Development Model endorsed by member states of the OECS and Caribbean Union of Teachers (Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, 2019).
- Sustained growth in the proportion of teachers who are trained (Department of Education of Saint Lucia, 2018; Ministry of Education, National Reconciliation and Ecclesiastical Affairs., 2020).
- Agreement on new standards for the teaching profession (CARICOM Secretariat, 2020; Ministry of Education of Guyana, 2020⁶; Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, 2019).
- Increasing awareness of the importance of teachers' educators (Menjívar, 2020).
- Revision of some teacher training programs (Alli, 2014a, 2014b; Menjívar, 2020).

On the basis of this progress, some recommendations follow:

1. RAISE THE REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME TEACHER AND PROVIDE INCENTIVES TO ATTRACT THE TOP PERFORMERS

Literature has underlined, on the one hand, the importance of recruiting the best candidates into the teaching profession (Bruns & Luque, 2014) and has found, on the other, correlation between years of training and teacher certification with students' learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000). In spite of these findings, in many countries in the region teachers still can enter the profession by passing high-school exams or taking the minimum training courses (Armstrong, 2011).

In the Caribbean, raising the requirements to become a teacher was recommended back in 2005 (Mark et al., 2005). Actually, in its Education Sector Strategy, the OECS has established specific targets. In this regard: (a) pre-service and professional development programs for all candidates, in-service teachers and teacher trainers; (b) regular and systematic teacher appraisal; and (c) the establishment of teacher profession standards (OECS, s.f.). Teacher shortage in the region has been an important barrier for enforcing these kinds of policies; however, other incentives have to be designed to avoid that selectiveness negatively affect the pool of candidates.

⁶ <https://education.gov.gy/>

2. DEVELOP EMIS TO COLLECT AND SYSTEMATIZE DATA ABOUT THE TEACHER EDUCATION SYSTEM.

Finding data and updated research about teacher education in the region is not an easy task. Despite the good information about the quantity of teachers trained, it is hard to get data about the state of teacher educators and deans of teacher colleges, who they are, what requirements they have to meet, among others.

Moreover, even though some authors in the past have stressed the need to match the supply of teachers with shortages in specific areas, there is no updated information about the current situation.

Not only governments but also civil society have to work in the promotion of the use of evidence and data-demand culture.

3. IMPROVE QUALITY AND LENGTH OF PRE-SERVICE TRAINING.

Improving pre-service training is critical for TPD, since it provides the future teacher with his/her foundations for the profession. This implies strengthening the space of the practicums by developing stronger alliances with schools, counting on trained tutors at college plus a mentor at school, offering the student different learning experiences (class observations, small-group teaching, class-teaching) and regular journaling and provision of feedback.

Moreover, high-performing countries are characterized by having longer pre-service training programs (literature recommends programs of at least 4 years) (Bruns & Luque, 2014; Elacqua et al., 2018). Although Latin America (and also Haiti) has been moving towards that model, in the Caribbean the teacher programs remain on average two-years long.

There are content challenges as well. It is important to train teachers, on the one side, on inclusive pedagogies: the GEM Report 2020 has revealed that students in the region face discrimination and bullying by their teachers because of their gender (UNESCO - GEM Report and SUMMA, 2020). On the other side, teachers need to be trained on effective practices such as feedback, promotion of metacognition and collaborative learning. In this sense, the work that the Education Endowment Foundation and SUMMA have done systematizing studies on which practices are proven to be successful can be enlightening⁷.

4. IMPROVE EQUITY OF TEACHERS' PLACEMENT

Considering the best teachers should be placed in the most challenging schools, it is important to have specific data about the characteristics of the schools and students where trained teachers work.

⁷ <https://www.summaedu.org/en/effective-education-practices-platform/>



In some areas, like in Guyana or in the Caribbean, the disparities between the hinterland and the coast, with untrained and trained teachers respectively, show that having more precise information could help to delineate better education policies.

In some high-performing systems (e.g. Shanghai), one of the many policies addressed to strengthen vulnerable schools, is the exchange of teachers with an exemplary one (OECD, 2013). These kinds of examples could be interesting to take into consideration.

5. IMPLEMENT WELL-STRUCTURED INDUCTION PROGRAMS ACCOMPANIED BY REGULAR APPRAISALS.

A better pre-service offer should be combined with a rigorous induction period after placement at a school, which also includes regular appraisals and feedback by a mentor, as well as modelling of effective classes.

In Central America, the need for mentoring programs for teachers in the classroom was pointed out some time ago, for example for Nicaragua (Näslund-Hadley et al., 2012). In Haiti, although teachers are required to have a pre-service internship as a first step in their careers, many people enter the profession directly. In the Eastern Caribbean, teachers should go through an induction program (a week long) before starting the school year; however, many of them report that they don't receive it (Mark & Murphy, s. f.). Considering that teacher training is understood as part of a continuum where after pre-service training teachers enter school but still need to go on with their learning process, not all new teachers are properly accompanied by an experienced teacher when entering their profession.

Regular feedback and appraisals about performance can also help improve practices. In the Eastern Caribbean, there are no common assessment policies for graduating teachers. On the contrary, student teachers are assessed on a course-by-course basis, by their instructors (Mark & Murphy, s. f.). In Guyana, interesting steps have been given in this line, by approving professional standards for teachers, which are assessed on an annual basis. Overall, although many teachers pursue programs for upgrading their credentials, there is no assessment policy that can provide certification for their new knowledge.

6. STRENGTHEN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND CONNECT THEM WITH DIVERSE BENEFITS AND ALTERNATIVE CAREER PATHS

Provided that minimum decent working conditions and wages are guaranteed for every teacher, it is desirable to generate professional development opportunities that are linked to bonuses or further career opportunities, as has been proposed in the region by the Caribbean Union of Teachers.

In this sense, it is worthy mentioning that in-service training should be considered as part of the workload (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Although this is the case in some countries (as in the Eastern Caribbean), much needs to be done in others.



7. IMPLEMENT ATTRACTIVE CAREER PATH OPTIONS TO REDUCE ATTRITION AND RETAIN TEACHERS

Many interesting models are being implemented in the world for assuring the teacher is promoted along his/her career. For example, in Quebec or Wales, outstanding teachers are invited to mentor novel ones, while at the same time keeping some time for classroom teaching (Mezzadra & Veleda, 2014).

In the Caribbean, as mentioned before, some steps have been given in this line with the approval of the CARICOM Standards for Teachers , where there is a clear specification of three domains (professional knowledge, practice and engagement) with standards for each one (CARICOM Secretariat, 2020). It is necessary that states accompany schools in implementing these guidelines and that research explores the extent to which these guidelines are used.

On the other side, it is important to mention the importance of mutual learning among teachers in schools, creating communities of practice. Teachers feeling supported is a key component of this process (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Bryk, 2010; Burns & Luque, 2014; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

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Annex I - Methodological notes

A desk-based research was carried out between October and December 2020, which included the review and analysis of:

- (a) Official documents (statistical digests, education sectoral plans).
- (b) Official websites.
- (c) International organizations' databases (UIS-UNESCO, Word Bank, OECS).
- (d) Journal articles, under the search of: "teacher training Latin America", "teacher training Central America", "teacher training Caribbean" and "teacher training" + each of the eight countries.

In parallel, the main structure and findings were discussed and verified with key specialists in the topic in the region.

Annex II – Additional tabel

Table 1. Students' achievement in the region.

Country	Level	Exam	Results (latest)
Dominica	Primary	G6NA (Grade 6 National Assessment)	70% underperformed (got C, D or E).
	Secondary	CSEC	*
Grenada ⁸	Primary	CPEA	Science mean: 67/100 Language mean: 65/100 Math mean: 55/100 Social Studies mean: 64/100
	Secondary	CSEC	Math: 57% (did not pass) English: 22% (did not pass)
Guyana	Primary ⁹	G6NA (National Examination in 6th Grade)	Math: 31% underperformed. English: 20% underperformed. Science: 18% underperformed.
	Secondary	CSEC	40% underperformed ¹⁰
Haiti	Primary	*	*
	Secondary	*	*
Honduras	Primary ¹¹	TERCE 2013 (3 ^o grade)	Math: 55,7% had low-level. Spanish: 45,7% had low-level.
	Secondary	PISA x Development	N/A
Nicaragua	Primary ¹²	TERCE 2013 (3 ^o grade)	Math: 68% low-level. Spanish: 56,2% low-level.
	Secondary	*	*
Saint Lucia	Primary	CEE	45% below the national mean (64.26) ¹³
	Secondary	CSEC	33% passed at least 5 exams ¹⁴

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⁹<https://education.gov.gy/>
or more (2013).

¹⁰ CSEC passes w/Grades 1-3.

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Saint Vincent & the Grenadines	Primary	*	*
	Secondary	CSEC 2020 ¹⁵	Math: 47% underperformed. English: 14% underperformed.

Source: Own elaboration based on Department of Education of Saint Lucia, 2018; Ministry of Education, Human Resource Planning, Vocational Training and National Excellence, 2020; Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations & Sustainable Development Educational Evaluation and Assessment Unit., 2020; Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development, 2019; Ministry of Education, National Reconciliation and Ecclesiastical Affairs., 2020; Ministry of Education of Guyana, S/D; OREALC/ UNESCO Santiago, 2016.

TEACHING UNDER CONSTRUCTION

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