

Choose and Curate toward Commitment to Capable and Committed teachers (5Cs): A Set of Principles for Teacher Career Reform

Overview

Classroom teaching is complex. This means that pursuing a vision of *empowered, highly respected, strongly performance-normed, contextually embedded teaching professionals who cultivate student learning* requires a systemic approach to teacher career reform. One such approach is a set of principles called the 5Cs: choose and curate toward commitment to capable and committed teachers.¹

- Education authorities must initially **choose** prospective teachers based on the best available information.
- Education authorities should also designate the novice phase as a period of **curation** involving extensive support for teachers' pedagogical development and careful identification of those teachers who are most likely to make sustained, careerlong contributions to student learning.
- Such teachers must be technically **capable** and equipped for cultivating student learning in their specific school, classroom, and curricular contexts.
- Additionally, teachers must also be motivationally **committed** to the systemwide purpose of cultivating children's learning.
- After these teachers have demonstrated their capability and **commitment**, education authorities should make a long-term employment commitment to them.

Classroom teaching is a complex professional craft, and teacher career structures must reflect that

The most common model of teacher careers is a civil service approach in which teachers receive permanent employment contracts from the beginning of their careers, and promotions and pay are influenced mostly by seniority.² This career model could be effective if teaching were a straightforward task and if the most important factor in teaching quality was how much time a teacher had spent in the classroom.

However, classroom teaching is instead a complex professional craft. Classrooms are open systems. Children's experiences of the teaching and learning process are affected by many factors, such as interactions between their knowledge, the teacher's knowledge, and the content to be taught; as well as classroom-level factors such as the social and disciplinary atmosphere and every student's mood; and broader environmental factors in schools and in children's homes. Teaching is a specialised craft that requires teachers to balance all these factors to best cultivate children's learning.

¹ Hwa, Y-Y. and Pritchett, L. 2021. *Teacher Careers in Education Systems That Are Coherent for Learning: Choose and Curate Toward Commitment to Capable and Committed Teachers (5Cs)*. Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE). https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-Misc_2021/02.

² Crehan, L. 2016. Exploring the impact of career models on teacher motivation. IIEP-UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000246252>.

The **5Cs** are a set of principles that recognise this complexity: **Choose and Curate toward Commitment to Capable and Committed teachers**. One way in which the 5Cs recognise the complexity of teaching is by treating the novice teacher career phase as a distinct stage for developing and identifying teachers who will make the biggest careerlong contributions to students' thriving. This differs from the typical civil service approach, where identifying teachers for careerlong employment often takes place only at a single point and is only based on pre-service paper qualifications rather than in-service pedagogical capabilities and motivational commitments. Some other differences between the 5Cs and the typical approach are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Unlike the typical 'civil service' approach to teacher careers, the 5Cs approach recognises the distinct complexities of classroom teaching.

	The typical civil service approach	The 5Cs approach
Initial selection criteria	Teachers are hired based on formal qualifications and pre-service assessments (which may have little or no correlation with actual teaching capability).	Teachers are hired based on the best available measures of their potential for capability and commitment to cultivating student learning (see the 'Choose' section below for some examples).
Duration of employment contracts	Permanent employment is awarded from the beginning (perhaps after a nominal probation period).	Permanent employment is awarded after teachers have demonstrated this capability and commitment in the classroom over time.
Factors affecting teacher compensation	Almost all aspects of teacher compensation—including the non-financial benefits of different assignments to districts, schools, subjects, and classes—are determined by seniority and/or formal certifications.	If teacher compensation is variable (which may not be the case), it varies based on contributions to student learning and to the goals of the education system.
Compensation across different career phases	Compared to similar professions, wages are relatively high early in the career and relatively low late in the career (see Box 1, Figure 1). Pensions and retirement benefits encourage teachers to remain in the profession even if they no longer feel committed to systemwide goals.	Early-stage compensation may be relatively low, to encourage voluntary separation of those who are not capable or committed to teaching. After the novice phase, compensation packages are designed to appeal the most to the most capable and committed teachers.
Similarities to other career structures	Teacher career structures are very similar to career structures in other areas of public service—and are very similar across contexts.	Teacher career structures reflect the distinct purpose and specialised technical practices of classroom teaching—and they look different depending on the context.

Box 1: One example of what the 5Cs might look like in practice

As a set of principles, the 5Cs can and should look different in different education systems. This matters because every context varies in complex ways that affect teacher careers.

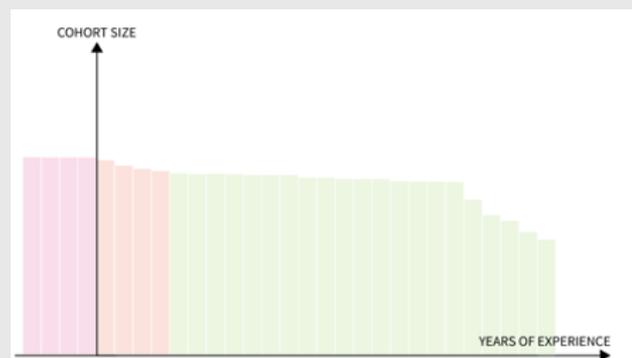
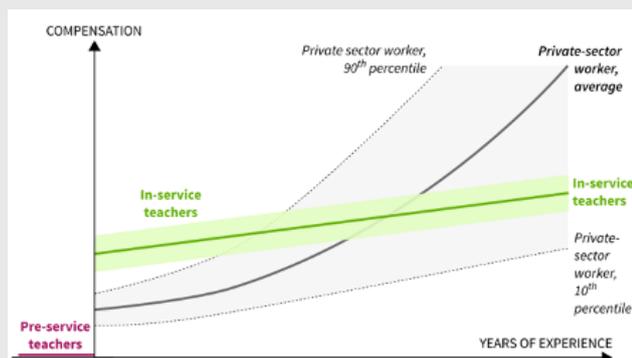
However, for illustration, Figure 1 shows one possible example of what the 5Cs might look like, in contrast to the conventional civil service approach.

Figure 1: Unlike typical civil service approaches, teacher career structures that apply the 5Cs are designed such that each phase of the teacher career cycle optimally serves systemwide goals

(a) Typical civil service approach contrasted with typical private sector compensation

Commitment from day 1:

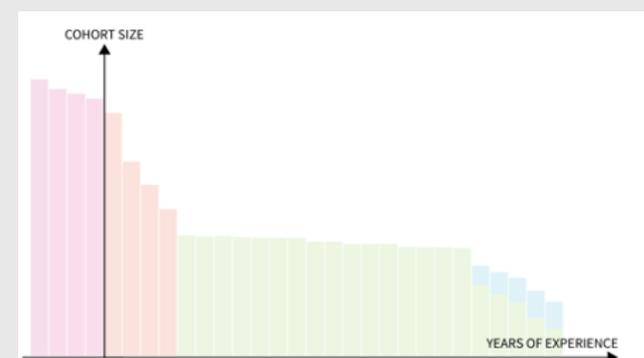
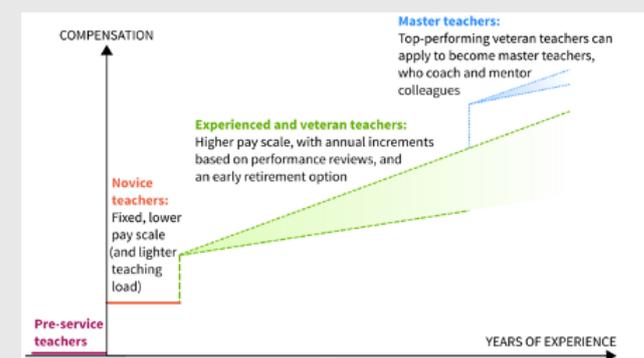
Most teachers stay in the profession throughout their careers



(b) One illustrative example of the 5Cs in practice

Choose and curate...

...toward Commitment to Capable and Committed Teachers



Notes:

1. The different bar heights in the lower graph of each panel are intended to show relative differences in within-system cohort sizes as teachers progress through their careers. Put differently, these different heights relate to the distribution of teacher cohorts within the system, *not* the total number of teachers in an education system.
2. Panel (b) shows a hypothetical application of the 5Cs (out of many possible applications of these principles); adapted from Figure 9 in Pritchett, L., and Murgai, R. (2006). Teacher Compensation: Can Decentralization to Local Bodies Take India from the Perfect Storm Through Troubled Waters to Clear Sailing? *India Policy Forum*, 2006–07. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2006_pritchett.pdf.

The rest of this brief discusses each of the five Cs in turn.



Choose

Education authorities and organisations should initially choose teachers based on their potential capability and commitment to cultivating student learning

In many education systems, novice teachers are chosen for employment based on standardised indicators such as their highest educational qualification. However, these paper qualifications are not a good indicator of a prospective teacher's potential for capability and commitment to cultivating student learning. This is a particular problem in low-performing education systems because prospective teachers have experienced inadequate teaching and learning themselves. For example, in a 2007 survey, 74 percent of Grade 6 teachers in South Africa had completed senior secondary school and above,³ yet only 21 percent of them demonstrated mastery of the primary school maths content that they were supposed to be teaching.⁴

Instead, education authorities and organisations should choose teachers for initial entry into the profession based on assessments and exercises that focus on classroom-relevant capability and commitment. For example, to gauge how capable an early-career teacher may be, a programme in Peru tested teachers on their ability to identify and explain students' misconceptions in mathematics.⁵

Because teaching is a complex craft involving multiple skills and dispositions, selection processes should include multiple, tailored assessments rather than relying on a single assessment.⁶ In addition to improving the quality of the selection process, using tailored assessments rather than generic indicators can also communicate the norm that teaching is a skilled, specialised profession—which, in turn, can attract more capable candidates into the profession.⁷



Curate

Throughout the novice phase, there must be ongoing attention to developing teachers' professional craft—and to identifying the teachers who are most willing and able to make careerlong contributions to children's learning

Choosing novice teachers based on pre-service characteristics is a necessary part of identifying capable and committed teachers, but it is not sufficient. Because classroom teaching is complex, it is impossible to make completely accurate predictions about how a prospective teacher will perform in the classroom until they have actually spent time in the relevant classroom context—even if the predictions are based on classroom-related assessments.⁸

³ Makuwa, D. K. 2011. Characteristics of Grade 6 Teachers (No. 2; SAQMEQ Working Paper). Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality. http://www.sacmeq.org/sites/default/files/sacmeq/publications/02_teachers_final_05dec2011.pdf.

⁴ Venkat, H., & Spaul, N. 2015. What do we know about primary teachers' mathematical content knowledge in South Africa? An analysis of SACMEQ 2007. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 41, 121–130. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2015.02.002>. For similar findings across seven other countries, see Bold, T., Filmer, D., Martin, G., Molina, E., Stacy, B., Rockmore, C., Svensson, J., and Wane, W. 2017. Enrollment without Learning: Teacher Effort, Knowledge, and Skill in Primary Schools in Africa. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(4), 185–204. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.31.4.185>.

⁵ Cueto, S., León, J., Sorto, M. A., & Miranda, A. 2017. Teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and mathematics achievement of students in Peru. *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, 94(3), 329–345. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10649-016-9735-2>.

⁶ Bertoni, E., Elacqua, G., Méndez, C., & Santos, H. 2020. Teacher hiring instruments and teacher value added: Evidence from Peru (Working Paper IDB-WP-01199). IDB Working Paper Series. <https://doi.org/10.18235/0003123>; and Malinen, O.-P., Väisänen, P., and Savolainen, H. 2012. Teacher education in Finland: A review of a national effort for preparing teachers for the future. *The Curriculum Journal*, 23(4), 567–584. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2012.731011>.

⁷ Estrada, R. 2019. Rules versus Discretion in Public Service: Teacher Hiring in Mexico. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 37(2), 545–579. <https://doi.org/10.1086/700192>.

⁸ See, for example, Cruz-Aguayo, Y., Ibararán, P., and Schady, N. 2017. Do tests applied to teachers predict their effectiveness? *Economics Letters*, 159, 108–111. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2017.06.035>; and Yusrina, A., Bima, L., Berkhout, E. &

Crucially, prospective teachers themselves do not have a full picture of how capable and committed they will be until they have experienced the full spectrum of challenges in real classroom settings. Under the 5Cs, the process of *curation* involves giving frontline classroom experience to a wide pool of novice teachers, supporting them as they adapt to its complex challenges, and facilitating their exit from the profession if they find that they are less well-suited to the classroom than they initially expected.

Besides giving both employers and teachers themselves better information about who will thrive in the teaching profession long term, a period of curation during the novice phase is also an indispensable opportunity to establish strong norms of quality teaching, both for the individual teacher and for the teaching profession more broadly.⁹ This is particularly true when education systems allocate resources for supporting, coaching, and mentoring novice teachers.¹⁰ Low-quality—or non-existent—induction and mentoring of novice teachers is a significant problem in many education systems.¹¹

After the initial curation, education authorities and organisations should make a long-term employment commitment to those teachers who have demonstrated capability and commitment in classroom practice



Commitment

Treating the novice phase as a special period for developing and identifying capable and committed teachers can be a vital starting point—but such curation would not be appropriate for later phases of a teacher's career. Instead, education authorities and organisations should offer long-term employment to teachers who have proven their contributions to student learning. This reflects a mutual *commitment* from employers to teachers who have themselves demonstrated their commitment to systemwide educational goals.

A long-term employment commitment matters because continuous curation is costly, whether for ministries, schools, and students, or for teachers themselves. Keeping teachers on short-term, performance-based contracts throughout their careers would lead to constant turnover across the entire pool of teachers. Such turnover can generate significant coordination problems in allocating teachers to schools and classrooms, which affects student learning.¹²

From a teacher motivation perspective, careerlong curation—rather than curation followed by commitment—would mean that teachers face permanent job insecurity, which can be highly demotivating. It can also communicate the

message that teachers are disposable or, at least, that they are not highly valued as professionals, which can be damaging for professional norms.¹³

Suryadarma, D. 2022. Selecting Teachers in Indonesia: Predicting Teacher Performance using Pre-Employment Information. RISE Working Paper Series. 22/098. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISEWP_2022/098.

⁹ See paragraph 39 in ILO/UNESCO. (1966, 5 October). Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, 1966. http://www.ilo.org/sector/Resources/sectoral-standards/WCMS_162034/lang--en/index.htm. For more on teacher professional norms, see Hwa, Y.-Y. (ed). 2022. Purpose, Pressures, and Possibilities: Conversations About Teacher Professional Norms in the Global South. Oxford, UK: Research on Improving Systems of Education. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-Misc_2022/06.

¹⁰ Ingersoll, R. M., & Strong, M. 2011. The Impact of Induction and Mentoring Programs for Beginning Teachers: A Critical Review of the Research. *Review of Educational Research*. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654311403323>.

¹¹ Akyeampong, K., Pryor, J., Westbrook, J., and Lussier, K. 2011. Teacher Preparation and Continuing Professional Development in Africa: Learning To Teach Early Reading and Maths. University of Sussex Centre for International Education. <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=tpa-synthesis-report-july2011.pdf&site=320>; and Alifia, U., Pramana, R.P., & Revina, S. (2022). A Policy Lens on Becoming a Teacher: A Longitudinal Diary Study of Novice Teacher Professional Identity Formation in Indonesia. RISE Working Paper Series. 22/096. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP_2022/096.

¹² See, for example, Zeitlin, A. 2021. Teacher Turnover in Rwanda. *Journal of African Economies*, 30(1), 81–102. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jae/ejaa013>.

¹³ On the related issue of how employing para-teachers can have negative effects on the status of regular teachers, see Zeitlin, A. 2021. Teacher Turnover in Rwanda. *Journal of African Economies*, 30(1), 81–102. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jae/ejaa013>.

Effective teachers need to be technically capable and equipped for cultivating student learning in their specific school, classroom, and curricular contexts

Capable

Students deserve teachers who are technically capable in the complex task of classroom teaching. Teaching capability includes a range of competencies and knowledge. For example, teachers must master not only content knowledge about the subjects that they are teaching to their students, but also pedagogical content knowledge about how best to help students to understand—and avoid misunderstanding—the content in question.¹⁴ Effective teachers must also be skilled in maintaining a supportive classroom climate.¹⁵

Additionally, teachers must also be capable of meeting the diverse academic and socioemotional needs of the children in their classes.¹⁶ This can be a particularly important capability in the many education systems where formal curricular expectations are far ahead of most students' levels of academic preparation.¹⁷ Aligning classroom instruction with both systemwide learning goals and individual children's needs is a technically demanding competency.

Teachers also need to be motivated and committed to the systemwide goal of cultivating student learning

Committed

Besides technical capability, teachers' motivational commitment to systemwide educational goals is also crucial. Such commitment matters because a shared sense of purpose can be a powerful avenue for change in low-performing education systems.¹⁸

Teachers' sense of commitment to cultivating student learning also matters because the complexity of teaching means that it can be both inefficient and ineffective for education authorities and organisations to try to extensively monitor whether teachers are fulfilling the multiple goals of the education system every day (e.g., developing children's cognitive skills, but also their sense of civic identity). Rather, employers should select and equip capable and committed teachers and to trust them to pursue systemwide goals with some baseline monitoring.¹⁹ Moreover, teacher commitment matters because the goal of cultivating children's learning demands not only technical skill, but also socioemotional competence and effort.²⁰

¹⁴ Shulman, L. 1986. Those Who Understand: Knowledge Growth in Teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4–14. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X015002004>.

¹⁵ DeJaeghere, J., Duong, B. and Dao, V. 2021. Teaching Practices That Support Thinking and Promote Learning: Qualitative Evidence from High and Low Performing Classes in Vietnam. 2021/024. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-RI_2021/024.

¹⁶ Tomlinson, C. A., Brighton, C., Hertberg, H., Callahan, C. M., Moon, T. R., Brimijoin, K., Conover, L. A., and Reynolds, T. 2003. Differentiating Instruction in Response to Student Readiness, Interest, and Learning Profile in Academically Diverse Classrooms: A Review of Literature. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 27(2–3), 119–145. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016235320302700203>.

¹⁷ Hwa, Y-Y., Kaffenberger, M. and Silberstein, J. 2020. Aligning Levels of Instruction with Goals and the Needs of Students (ALIGN): Varied Approaches, Common Principles. RISE Insight Series. 2020/022. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-RI_2020/022.

¹⁸ Kaffenberger, M. 2022. The Role of Purpose in Education System Outcomes: A Conceptual Framework and Empirical Examples. RISE Working Paper Series. 22/118. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISEWP_2022/118.

¹⁹ Honig, D. 2022. Managing for Motivation as Public Performance Improvement Strategy in Education & Far Beyond (CID Faculty Working Paper No. 409). Center for International Development at Harvard University. <https://bsc.cid.harvard.edu/publications/managing-motivation-public-performance-improvement-strategy-education-far-beyond>; and Mansbridge, J. 2014. A Contingency Theory of Accountability. In M. Bovens, R. E. Goodin, and T. Schillemans (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Public Accountability*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199641253.013.0019>.

²⁰ On the links between teacher motivation, teaching effectiveness, and student motivation, see Han, J., and Yin, H. 2016. Teacher motivation: Definition, research development and implications for teachers. *Cogent Education*, 3(1), 1217819. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1217819>.

Unlike a one-size-fits-all approach, the 5Cs are embedded in local contexts

The 5Cs are not a silver bullet for the low-performance, low-satisfaction, low-pay teaching professions in many low- and middle-income countries. Rather, the 5Cs provide a set of principles for navigating a journey of purposeful, systemic, iterative, context-specific reform that pays attention to the complexities of teaching, motivation, and organisational change—toward a vision of empowered, highly respected, strongly performance-normed, contextually embedded teaching professions that cultivate student learning.

Author

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