

## **iStep 2016 Overview**

### **Laura, Guiomar & Magali**

My name is Laura Rossi, I work at Brazil's Ministry of Education, in the Basic Education Department as Director for Teacher Education and Professional Development. Our team is composed by professor Guiomar Namó de Mello, a very well known and experienced professor in the area of teacher education in Brazil, who works in São Paulo's State School for Teacher Education, and at the State's Board of Education formulating teacher education standards and curriculum. Also, professor Magali Silvestre, who teaches in the education department in a federal university, has worked for 15 years as a basic education teacher and now researches the theme with students on her post-graduate and doctoral classes.

We built this team due to the fact that we have been working together, with a bigger group, in one important aspect of teacher education policy ran by the Ministry. So, very quickly, I will go through the three major directives of the reformulation of teacher education policy that we are now undergoing in our country. In 2014, Brazil's national congress issued a law called National Education Plan, which had been vastly discussed in society, with the participation of university associations, teacher unions, private foundations, politicians, school administrators, etc. The National Plan puts forth 20 goals for the decade, and a few of them refer to teacher education. They basically state that we need all teachers to have at least an undergraduate degree in the area of knowledge they teach (today only 32% of middle school teachers and 48% of high school teachers have a degree in the subject area they teach) and that we need to promote post-graduate education for these professionals. Based on these national goals, the Ministry's Basic Education Department is designing a project with three major points:

#### **1. National Strategic Planning**

Firstly, there is the problem of distribution and allocation of educational opportunities and vacancies on teacher education programs. The supply of and demand for teachers is not balanced. We have conducted researches that already demonstrate that a great part of what is considered lack of professionals is in fact a question of regional redistribution of vacancies on teacher education programs in certain areas of the country. Big cities and capitals tend to concentrate educational opportunities, and the teaching career is not valued enough to promote big territorial movements by the graduates. Usually, teachers search for a job in the same geographic region where they graduate, which is different from the medical career, for example. We have been studying forms of incentive so the public and private universities open their course vacancies in the places where they are most needed – that is, where there is demand of local school districts for new teachers – and promote local recruitment of students, following a strategic national plan which is not necessarily the easiest for the university.

#### **2. Curricular reform in teacher education programs**

The second aspect is the need for a curriculum reform in teacher education programs. In scientific areas, for example, retention rates come up to 80%. Teacher education programs are often too theoretical and concentrate on *what to teach*, not *how to teach*, *how students learn*

and *how to manage a classroom*. In order not to be accused of training teachers in an only technical manner, our universities have gone to the other end, where teacher education programs are full of subjects like “*History of Brazilian Education*”, or “*Sociology and Philosophy of Education*”. There is little or no didactics in most courses. Universities are used to graduate only the best students, who then follow up the academic career and don’t become basic education teachers. So the Ministry of Education has selected a group of renowned teachers, of which Guiomar and Magali are part of, to start a study about the curriculum directives for teacher education programs, and propose their reformulation. It is an effort to draw national standards for teacher education, based on common-core curriculum.

### 3. Transition from education to profession

Lastly, the federal government is planning on changing teacher’s hiring systems, which are led by states and municipalities in an autonomous manner. Emergency hires respond to 30% of professionals and sometimes obey political reasons, especially in poorer and smaller districts. Public concursos are not opened regularly – sometimes years go by with no selective process – and a big percentile of graduates don’t enter the career because they find it hard to wait and end up looking for other jobs. So, besides incentives for local selective processes, the idea is to approximate university led programs to the demands of local school districts, to better the passage between education and professionalization. The idea is to promote the creation of school-based internship programs, in which the students can experience professional development while still in teacher education programs, and thus have a less traumatizing transition between their higher education and the start of the career in the labor market.