

8 May 2011
EUN/EC/DOC/025

Main policy lines of international organisations, relevant for education councils

State of affairs December 2010 - May 2011

OECD

1. PISA results

Every three years, the OECD compiles data on the level of performance of 15-years old in reading, mathematics and science. The data show that, on average, European results slightly improved compared to the 2006 survey, especially as regards the share of pupils with low reading competences. However, challenges remain for a number of Member States. Several Members States improved their scores in certain areas substantially since 2006 (Poland, Greece, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Romania and Bulgaria). The best performers, such as Finland, underline that policies which promote inclusive education could also have positive effect in educational achievement. The findings suggest that investing in high quality curricula and well trained educators can significantly improve the performance of our schools. The results, however, highlight a continuing gap between the best performing education systems, and between the best performing schools and pupils within countries.

The emergence of new global centres of excellence, in particular in Asia, highlights the fact that Europe must continue to improve if it is to maintain its status as a knowledge society.

http://www.pisa.oecd.org/document/61/0,3746,en_32252351_32235731_46567613_1_1_1_1_00.html

Executive summary: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/34/60/46619703.pdf>

2. Investing in human and social capital: new challenges

OECD Education Ministerial Meeting, Paris, 4-5 November 2010

Following challenges were discussed:

- Tackling the effects of the crisis on education
- Matching skills to new needs
- Equipping effective teachers for the 21st century
- Reinforcing the social benefits of education

For each challenge, the ministers answered the following questions:

- What are the main issues?
- What have we learned?
- What can we do?

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/53/16/46335575.pdf>

3. The locus of educational decision

OECD Education Policy Committee (INES network for the collection and the adjudication of system-level descriptive information on educational structures, policies and practices).

3-4 March 2011

Education at a glance has established indicators that set out six levels of decision-making for accountability: Central Government, State Governments, Provincial/Regional Authorities or Governments, Sub-Regional or Inter-Municipal Authorities or Governments, and School-School Board-School Committee.

The purpose of the report is to set out some useful principles that can be used in considering a useful hierarchical structure for emplacing particular types of educational decisions.

The following trends in School Developments were identified:

- The movement towards decentralization
- Changing views of educational accountability.
 - ° Instead of measuring the success of schools in terms of their curriculum, teacher qualifications, class size and other input variables, schools are expected to seek the best strategies for improving student outcomes.
 - ° Accountability to families.

Considerable decentralization has been taking place in terms of the choice of inputs, but there is at the same time a movement towards centralization of accountability for outcomes.

In order to review the appropriate levels for educational decisions, one must begin with a clear picture of the goals of an educational system:

- Social cohesion
- Equity
- Efficiency
- Freedom of choice

Each of these goals have implications for all decision levels.

Two other general criteria are important for determining the appropriate location:

- Demography: the size of the national entity
- Geography: the distribution of its population.

There are three guiding economic principles that are also instructive on such placement of decisions:

- Externalities
- Economies of scale
- Transaction costs

It is important to note that no country should adopt a rigid system for allocation specific decisions exclusively to any particular level. Interplay among levels is important.

4. Building a High-Quality Teaching Profession. Lessons from around the world.

Background report for the International Summit on the Teaching Profession (New York City, 16-17 March 2011), organized by the U.S. Department of Education, together with OECD, Education International and U.S. based organizations.

This background report presents available evidence about what can make teacher-oriented reforms effective, and highlights examples of reforms that have produced specific results. The three first themes look at the system features that shape particular aspects of teachers' professional careers. The fourth theme looks at process, and considers what can make reform effective.

- How teachers are recruited into the profession and trained initially
- How teachers are developed in service and supported
- How teachers are evaluated and compensated
- How teachers are engaged in reform.

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/internationaled/background.pdf>