Main Policy Lines in Education and Training

(September 2015 – February 2016)

**OECD**

# Education at a glance 2015

24 November 2015

Education at a glance provides data on the output of educational institutions, the impact of learning across countries; the financial and human resources invested in education; access, participation and progression in education; the learning environment and organisation of schools. The 2015 report also examines first generation tertiary-educated adults’ educational and social mobility, labour market outcomes for recent graduates, participation in employer-sponsored formal and/or non-formal education, readiness to use information and communication technology for problem solving in teaching and learning. The report provides indicators on the impact of skills on employment and earnings, gender differences in education and employment, and teacher and school leader appraisal systems.

Some findings:

* Education is worth the effort, in the labour market and in life. Employment rates and earnings increase as an adult’s level of education and skills increases; the labour market still regards a diploma or degree as the primary indication of a worker’s skills. Increasing numbers of young adults are pursuing tertiary education; the ‘first-generation’ tertiary-educated adults share similar employment rates with those whose parents had also completed tertiary education: being the first in a family to attain tertiary education is in no way a disadvantage. The entry rate into bachelor’s degree programmes is much higher than the entry rate into master’s programmes, there are more opportunities in the labour market and higher earnings for adults with a master’s degree. The benefits of education aren’t only financial: more highly educated adults tend to be healthier and more engaged in the world around them.
* Inequities persist. Women are still underrepresented in certain fields of education (such as STEM), and less likely to be employed (the gender gap is narrower among tertiary-educated young adults).
* Public spending on education fell in many OECD countries between 2010 and 2012 (delayed reaction to the crisis of 2008). The crisis had a direct impact on primary and secondary teachers’ salaries. Salaries are uncompetitive compared to those of similarly educated workers; this will make it harder to attract the best candidates to the teaching profession.

[Full publication, summaries and country-specific highlights](http://www.oecd.org/edu/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm)

# Trends shaping education 2016

12 January 2016

This book is designed to help policy makers, managers and practitioners in education to think about current developments and to support long-term strategic thinking in education. It fills an important need: decision makers and practitioners in education often have only anecdotal or local information on the trends shaping education.

The book contains 25 topics, each illustrated by two figures. The material is organized in five main chapters:

* Globalisation
* The nation state
* Cities
* Modern families
* Technologies

Each chapter is accompanied by visualisations of the interactions between the themes and the interactions between the trends and education.

[The book](http://www.oecd.org/edu/trends-shaping-education-22187049.htm)

# Innovative Learning Environments

CERI, 23 October 2015

Some 26 school systems participated in the final part of the OECD ‘Innovative Learning Environments’ project by submitting their own initiatives for innovating learning beyond single schools or organizations. The synthesis report is published under the title ‘Schooling Redesigned: Towards Innovative Learning Systems’. It describes common strengths around ‘culture change’, ‘clarifying focus’, ‘capacity creation’, ‘collaboration & co-operation’, ‘communication technologies & platforms’, and ‘change agents’.

The publication emphasises the importance of ‘design’, of leadership, that can include, in complex school systems, many more actors besides those usually involved in designing curricula and classrooms (community players, families, foundations, …).

The report elaborates what an innovative learning environment would look like, not just in individual schools, but across a whole system.

[The report](http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/schooling-redesigned_9789264245914-en#page2)

# Starting Strong. Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care

OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, ‘Starting Strong’ Series IV, 28 October 2015

This latest report in the Starting Strong series reviews the monitoring systems of 24 countries; it reveals that not only regulatory compliance is being monitored, but that monitoring is moving towards better understanding what is happening an ECEC setting. The areas that are most commonly monitored are:

* Service and staff quality;
* Child development and outcomes;
* Staff and child interaction.

Monitoring is frequently aligned with the primary school monitoring system, which allows more continuity. Results of monitoring are often shared with the general public, which assures more transparency.

[The report](http://www.oecd.org/publications/starting-strong-iv-9789264233515-en.htm)

# Open educational resources: a catalyst for innovation

1 December 2015

Open educational resources are teaching, learning and research materials that make use of tools such as open licensing to permit their free reuse, continuous improvement and repurposing by other for educational purposes. The impact of OER has become an issue of public policy.

This report aims to highlight the state of the art of developments and practice in OER, but also to serve as a basis for exchanges and discussion that lead to cross-country peer learning on how to improve teaching and learning.

According to the report, OER contribute to the following educational challenges:

* Fostering the use of new forms of learning for the 21st century;
* Fostering teachers’ professional development and engagement;
* Containing public and private costs of education;
* Continually improving the quality of educational resources;
* Widening the distribution of high-quality educational resources;
* Reducing barriers to learning opportunities.

Policy support is needed; policy should focus on the following four areas:

* Existence and discoverability of OER;
* New role of teachers;
* New quality assurance procedures;
* More research.

[The publication](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/download/9615061e.pdf?expires=1449592686&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=8CDA8F64755F7ED458BDFC123D6FD0E3)

Read also the [report and statements of the EUNEC seminar on learning in the digital age](http://www.eunec.eu/event/learning-digital-age), Athens, May 2014.

# Immigrant students at school: Easing the journey towards integration

17 December 2015

This publication reveals some of the difficulties immigrant students encounter – and some of the contributions they offer – as they settle into their new communities and new schools.

Results from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) indicate that students with an immigrant background tend to perform worse in school than students without an immigrant background. Several factors are associated with this disparity, including the concentration of disadvantage in the schools immigrant students attend, language barriers and certain school policies, like grade repetition and tracking.

Successful integration is measured in more than academic achievement; immigrant students’ well-being and hopes for the future are just as telling. The report includes a special section on refugees and education.

[The report](http://www.oecd.org/edu/immigrant-students-at-school-9789264249509-en.htm)

# Low performing students. Why they fall behind and how to help them succeed

10 February 2016

This PISA report offers an in-depth analysis of low performance at school and recommends ways to tackle the problem.

Tens of thousands of students in each country, and millions of students around the world, reach the end of their compulsory education without having acquired the basic skills needed in today’s society and workplace. In fact, not even the countries that lead the international rankings of education performance can yet claim that all of their 15-year-old students have achieved a baseline level of proficiency in mathematics, reading and science. Apart from the obvious damage this does to individual lives, failure of this magnitude has severe consequences for economies and societies as a whole.  
  
Analyses show that a combination and accumulation of factors contribute to the likelihood that some students perform poorly in school. Coming from a socio-economically disadvantaged family is the most obvious and perhaps strongest risk factor of low performance at school, but it is not the only one. Students with an immigrant background and those who speak a language at home that is different from the one spoken at school, rural students and those living in single-parent families are, in many countries, more likely to perform poorly. Interestingly, gender stereotypes affect girls and boys differently, depending on the subject: whereas girls are more likely than boys to be low performers in mathematics, boys are more likely than girls to be low performers in reading and science.  
  
Students’ educational opportunities, attitudes and behaviours also matter. Students who had no or only brief access to pre-primary education are more likely to be low performers than those who attended more than a year of pre-primary education. Low performers are also more often found among those who have repeated a grade – whether because low performance led to grade repetition or because grade repetition in earlier grades led to disengagement from school and low performance at age 15 – or who are enrolled in vocational programmes. But students who make the most out of available opportunities – attending school regularly, working harder at school, spending more time doing homework, and participating in extracurricular activities available at school – are less likely to perform poorly.

School-related factors can also contribute to students’ low performance. For example, students are more likely to acquire at least basic proficiency in their school subjects when their teachers have high expectations for them, have better morale, and respond to their students’ needs. Schools where there is more socio-economic diversity among students and less grouping by ability between classes tend to provide a better learning environment for struggling students.

The first step for policy makers is to make tackling low performance a priority in their education policy agenda. Tackling low performance requires stepping in as early as possible. That means, among other things, offering pre-primary education opportunities and remedial support in early grades. Providing schools with language and/or psycho-social support (e.g. psychologists, mentors, counsellors) for struggling students and their families, offering extracurricular activities, and training teachers to work with these students can also help. Students, too, can help themselves make the most of their schooling – and their own potential – by showing up at school – on time – and investing their best efforts in learning.

[The report](http://www.oecd.org/edu/low-performing-students-9789264250246-en.htm)

# Teachers

## Supporting teacher professionalism: insights from TALIS 2013

16 February 2016

The Supporting Teacher Professionalism report shows that although teacher professionalism differs across countries and economies, it has an important relationship with teacher job satisfaction and teachers’ confidence in their ability to teach. Practices supporting the development of teacher knowledge and peer networks are particularly strongly linked with positive outcomes for teachers. This is especially the case in schools with higher proportions of socio-economically disadvantaged students. This suggests that one of the best investments in high-needs schools to increase teacher satisfaction, is providing practices that support teachers’ professionalism.

Policy implications:

* Policies should consider requiring teachers to participate in pre-service formal teacher education programmes that expose teachers to pedagogy and provide opportunities for practice teaching;
* Policies should consider expanding induction and mentoring programmes;
* Policies should consider supporting teachers in conducting classroom-based individual or collaborative research;
* Policies should consider encouraging teachers’ participation in networks of other teachers for information exchange.

[The report](http://www.oecd.org/publications/supporting-teacher-professionalism-9789264248601-en.htm)

Read also the report and statements of the EUNEC seminar on [leading teachers’ learning](http://www.eunec.eu/event/leading-teachers-learning), Dublin, September 2015 (with participation of Katarzyna Kubacka, one of the authors of the above report).

## Teaching excellence through professional learning and policy reform

Background report for the International Summit of the Teaching Profession 2016 (March 2016, Germany)

To help governments make education reform happen, while placing teachers and school leaders at the centre of improvement efforts, the German ministers of education, the OECD and Education International brought education ministers, union leaders and other teacher leaders together for the sixth International Summit on the Teaching Profession in Berlin, Germany, in March 2016. For each ISTP, the OECD prepares a background document related to the Teacher Summit theme. Using international evidence from research as well as from various surveys such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), the reports present relevant education policy findings.

The first chapter looks into the skills, knowledge and character qualities successful teachers require.

A second chapter elaborates which policies can help teachers acquire the knowledge and skills they need. Given the rapid changes in education, the potentially long careers that many teachers have, and the need for updating skills, teachers’ development must be viewed in terms of lifelong learning, with initial teacher education conceived as providing the foundation for ongoing learning, rather than producing ready-made professionals. Effective professional development activities forge a close connection between teachers’ own development, their teaching responsibilities and their school’s goals. The education policies that underpin these activities should aim to:

* + prioritise the activities that have the greatest impact on teachers’ practices
  + include teachers in decision making at school
  + strengthen peer collaboration through induction programmes and mentoring
  + build a collaborative school culture
  + support a culture of student assessment
  + strengthen the links between teacher appraisal and professional development
  + link professional autonomy with a collaborative culture
  + involve teachers in developing professional standards
  + strengthen teacher leadership
  + engage teachers in education reform
  + build teachers’ capacity to use technology innovatively and effectively in the classroom.

The third chapter focuses on education policy reform: what can governments do to implement education policies effectively.

Several policy lessons have emerged from OECD countries that have implemented reforms in education:

* + Policy makers need to strive for consensus about the aims of education reform and engage stakeholders, especially teachers, in formulating and implementing policy responses;
  + External pressures can be used to build a compelling case for change.
  + All political players and stakeholders need to develop realistic expectations about the pace and nature of reforms to improve outcomes.
  + Reforms need to be backed by sustainable financing.
  + There is some shift away from reform initiatives per se towards building self-adjusting systems with feedback at all levels, incentives to react and tools to strengthen capacities to deliver better outcomes. Investment is needed in changemanagement skills. Teachers need reassurance that they will be given the tools to change and the recognition of their professional motivation to improve their students’ outcomes.
  + Evidence from international assessments, national surveys and inspectorates can be used to guide policy making.
  + “Whole-of-government” approaches can include education in more comprehensive reforms. These need to be co-ordinated with all the relevant ministries.

[The report](http://www.istp2016.org/en/documentation/backgroundoecd/)