



OECD Project

Assessing Progress in Improving Equity in Education

WHY IS EQUITY IN EDUCATION A POLICY PRIORITY?

Educational failure penalises a child for life. The child who leaves school without qualifications faces weaker job prospects, lower income throughout working life and a smaller pension in retirement. The same child is also less likely to take up further lifelong learning opportunities and less able to participate on an equal basis in the civic and social aspects of modern society. And these disadvantages persist to the next generation.

Educational failure also imposes costs of society. It limits the capacity for our economies to produce, grow and innovate, it damages social cohesion and it imposes additional costs on public budgets to deal with the consequences of failure. Reducing educational failure is a critical dimension of improving equity in education.

Improving equity in education is a high priority in education policy agendas. Education and skills are increasingly valued in society, while the economic pressures generated by globalisation and increased migration pose important challenges to equity and social cohesion. These underlying trends increase the economic and social rationale for supporting more equity in education. The current economic crisis adds urgency to the task as unemployment rises and the demand for skills shift. More families have become economically vulnerable and unable to meet the costs of education and need additional support.

THE OECD CAN PROMOTE POLICIES TO IMPROVE EQUITY IN EDUCATION

While most education ministries highlight equity in education as a priority, the challenge is to take action and implement policies that improve equity in education. The OECD provides a setting where governments can compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, and identify and share good practices in this area.

The OECD Review of Equity in Education completed in 2007 recommended policies to improve equity in:

- Educational design for fair and inclusive education
- Fair and inclusive practices in and out of the classrooms
- Resources to strengthen equity in education

However, countries face a range of challenges in adopting better policies for equity in education and need to overcome barriers to implementation. The OECD project *Assessing Progress in Improving Equity in Education* builds on this earlier work and aims to assist countries to improve their policies and practices so as to achieve real improvements in equity in education. The project is designed to:

- help countries in assessing progress in reducing educational failure and equity in education
- strengthen the OECD knowledge base on what policies work and don't work
- understand the challenges of implementing reforms in this area
- identify ways to monitor progress in improving equity

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

This project will be carried out by the Directorate for Education and will combine international comparative analysis and national assessments of progress and actions to improve equity in education. Both dimensions are complementary: international comparative analysis will be used for national assessments and the results of national assessments will feed back into the comparative analysis.

In both dimensions, the project will draw on other OECD work in education, including the Review on Migrant Education; PISA analysis, data and other evidence presented in Education at a Glance; and work on early

childhood education and Vocational Education and Training. It will also draw on relevant work carried out elsewhere in OECD, including in the Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

This dimension includes reviewing the comparative literature and updating the knowledge base presented in *No more failures: 10 steps to equity in education* (OECD, 2007) through literature reviews, national surveys and national assessments.

The comparative analysis will also examine how to develop tools for countries to assess equity and identify which policies have been successful. It will extend the analysis of the key challenges and obstacles in adopting and implementing policies to improve equity in education.

This comparative analysis is designed to engage and provide value for all countries, whether or not they decide to undertake a national assessment.

NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS OF EQUITY IN EDUCATION

This dimension is designed to support countries in the analysis of their equity profiles and challenges, building on the OECD recommendations in *No More Failures: 10 Steps to Equity in Education* (OECD, 2007). Individual countries, together with OECD, will organise a national seminar on equity in education and the OECD will prepare a national assessment report based on the seminar. National assessments will combine international expertise and national dialogue to examine the situation in the host country, drawing on tools and expertise from the OECD.

OUTPUTS

The project will produce a set of outputs designed to assist policy making, including:

- A framework for analysis and tools for evaluating progress on improving equity in education
- National assessment seminars to review progress and share experiences in improving equity in education and individual OECD country reports presenting the results of national assessments
- A comparative report that brings together the collected evidence on progress with improving equity in education and that formulates policy findings.

THE RESOURCES

This project is designed to be financed by a mix of general OECD resources and voluntary contributions.

- The comparative analysis is estimated to cost 400 000 EUR, although the extent of the work actually undertaken depends on voluntary contributions received. To this end, countries are encouraged to support this work through a voluntary contribution of 20 000 EUR each or *in-kind* contributions.
- National Assessments would be fully funded by the countries concerned at an estimated cost of 60 000 EUR per country, including any expert contributions, and the OECD's costs related to the organisation of the seminar.

FURTHER READING AND WHO TO CONTACT

No More Failures: 10 Steps to Equity in Education (OECD, 2007)

www.oecd.org/edu/equity/equityineducation

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