

Education at Glance 2003.

Briefing notes - Portugal

The outcomes of Education.

A notable progress in upper secondary attainment levels.....

As upper secondary attainment has increased in almost all the OECD countries, Portugal is catching up and the proportion of individuals aged 25 to 34 with at least upper secondary attainment is twice as high as that in the age group 45-54. (Table A1.2. pages 41).

.....but a limited improvement over the proportion of highly skilled people.

Level of educational attainment at the tertiary level show a low rise in the proportion of the adult population attaining tertiary education over the last ten years. In 2001, only 14% completed tertiary qualification compared to 9% in 1991. This result show that the proportion of people holding tertiary education is rather low compared with an OECD average of 28% (Table A.1.4. pages 54).

The performance levels in reading literacy are rather low....

While in five countries, 15 percent or more of student reach the highest level of proficiency in the reading literacy scale, only 4% of the year-olds have acquitted level 5 literacy skill and 10% do not reach the level one.

....and the use of control strategies is strongly related to performance in the reading literacy assessment

Clearly, the students who report frequent use of control strategies outperform those who rarely use the control strategies (Table A10.3 p125).

....with gender differences in the different subject areas and motivation

For all the countries, the gap between scores of 15 year-old males and females in PISA reading literacy is in favor of females. The reverse happens when we consider PISA mathematical literacy scale, is to say that males tend to express more interest in mathematics (p 132). However, in Portugal, females and males express similar level of interest in mathematics.

.....and in the learning style

Females prefer cooperative learning whereas males prefer competitive learning. Precisely, On the competitive learning scale, gender differences are pronounced ((Table 4.11.5b p142).

The labour force participation....

The labour force participation rates for males with low qualifications and males with a higher level of education are equal (ie. 87 per cent). Concerning females, the difference in the rate of participation between upper secondary graduates and those without such a qualification is 18 percentage points (Table A12.1 p150).

.....and unemployment issues

Unemployment rate among those with low educational attainment is quite low : 2.7% for males and 4.6% for females while OECD countries average are respectively of 8.9 and 9.4%) (Table A12.2 p 151).

Concerning the expected number of years in unemployment, females appear to be at a disadvantage (Table A13.1 p155).

The pecuniary returns to education.....

Education and earnings are positively linked since the earnings premium for males aged 25-64 year olds with tertiary level of education is particularly high (around 80%) (Table A14.1 p 165).

....and in terms of productivity...

Compared to the previous decade, hourly labour productivity picked up in Portugal (p 174).

Financial and human resources invested to education

Educational expenditure differ between levels of education....

On average, OECD countries spend 2.2 times as much on education per student at the tertiary level as at the primary level. But Portugal only spent around 1.3 times as much on a tertiary student as on a primary student (Table B1.1).

.....and generally related to national GDP

Beneath a certain level of GDP per capita, poorer OECD countries tend to spend less per student. This trend is observed for Portugal when we are looking at spending as a percentage of GDP per capita (Table B1.2 p 198).

Changes in expenditures on education.....

Expenditure per primary, secondary and post secondary non tertiary student, increased between 1995 and 2000 by over 25% while at the tertiary level, spending on education has not always kept pace with the rapid expansion of enrolments.

An increase of more than 10 per cent in education budgets coupled with a slight decrease in enrolments, has emphasized the increase in spending per primary, secondary and post secondary non tertiary student

On the other hand, expenditure per tertiary student rose significantly in Portugal despite a growth in enrollment of 26% (p194).

...and in overall educational spending

Increases in expenditures on educational institutions amounted to 30% in Portugal between 1995 and 2000. The trend is similar when public investment is considered separately. (Table B.2.2).

Focusing on expenditures on educational institutions by level of education.....

Portugal spend slightly below the average proportion of GDP on tertiary institutions but are among the OECD countries with the highest proportion of GDP spent on primary, secondary and post secondary non tertiary education. Portugal register a high increase in absolute spending on educational institutions between 1995 and 2000, invested the additional resources in similar proportion in primary, secondary and post secondary non tertiary education.

...The distribution of public and private expenditure...

Proportion of private payments to educational institutions (including private payments that are subsidies) is 1.4% which is a low rate compared to the OECD mean (11.6%) (Table B3.1).

....or current and capital expenditure.

At the primary, secondary and post secondary non tertiary levels combined, the proportion of current expenditure is 97% (Table B6.3 p 247).

Access to education, participation and progression.

Overall participation in education....

The main fact is that part time education accounts for 3.3 years of school expectancy although the country mean is 1.2. (Table C1.1 p 257).

(The participation towards the end of compulsory education and beyond....

The compulsory education ends at the age of 14.)

Participation in tertiary education...

Concerning tertiary type A and advanced research program, 29% of the students are enrolled in independent private institution as the mean for OECD countries is 12% (Table C2.3 p269).

And upper secondary evolment by type of institutions

17% of upper secondary students are enrolled in private institutions (mean 5.6%) (Table C2.4).

The situation of the youth population with low level of education mainly shows....

That a larger number of young females aged 15-19 year olds are neither at school nor in the workforce) compared male situation.

The learning environment and organization of schools

The national authorities establish curricula for all types of schools, grades and subjects.

Compulsory instruction time in classroom settings in the formal education system

For the 12 to 14 year-olds, the average number of hours of total intended instruction time is equal to the total compulsory instruction time while county mean shows a little advantage to average number of hours per year of total intended instruction time. (Table D1.1 p 318).

For the 12 to 14 year olds, there is 10% of flexibility in the compulsory curriculum (Table D1.2.b) This figure is above the country mean (7%).

Ratio of students to teaching staff for all secondary education (8,9%) is below the OECD mean (13.9%). The same result is found for primary education (Table D2.2).

The most serious obstacle to the use of ICT in teaching is the insufficient number of computers for student's use. It's common for all countries under the analysis. On average : the principals of 17% of upper secondary students reported this as the most serious obstacle. In case of Portugal, this figure reaches 24% (Table D3.2).

The characteristics of pre-service teacher training.

Generally, for primary education and beyond, a tertiary qualification is required for entry to the teaching profession. In Portugal, both tertiary type A and tertiary type B are possible for entry to the teaching profession in primary education (Table D4.1).

In primary education, the model of pre-service training pedagogical studies can be taken as the same time as the completion subject matter studies while the concurrent model is mostly adopted in OECD counties. In lower secondary education pre-service training in Portugal can be followed either concurrently or consecutively.

To access a permanent post in public education, more of a qualification for teaching is sometimes needed. It is the case in Portugal where mandatory work experience for licensing is required and can last between one and three years.

Professional development of teachers

It is budgeted and organized by professional authorities (Table D4.2) and teachers are entitled to a certain number of days of professional development activities. By contrast, a budget for teachers' professional development is provided to all or most schools in others countries.

Observational visits to other schools are a frequent practice in Portugal where 82% of students attend schools where the principal reported that at least one teacher participated in such activities (Table D4.3).

Concerning upper secondary teachers who participated in professional development activities, 26% of them are involved in ICT-related activities and 37% in other professional activities. Compared to these figures, the country mean is fixed respectively at 32 and 48% (Table D.4.3).

Teachers' salaries

Despite of the fact that Portugal has a relatively low GDP per capita, teachers' salaries are comparable to those in countries with much higher GDP (Table D5.1).

In most OECD countries, salaries increase with the level of education. In Portugal, upper secondary and primary teachers' salaries increase with the level of education in absolute terms.

Teachers reach the highest step on the salary scale after 26 years of service (Table D5.1).

Teachers start with a relatively low salary level, but the ratio of the top to the starting salary is 1.5 (Table D5.1).

Schools have at least some responsibility in deciding on the levels and extent of compensation for special tasks and additional activities undertaken by teachers payment of allowances for overtime work, management responsibilities and special tasks and activities. But there are fixed rates of compensation for management positions and administrative tasks. Principals receive an increase in salary for the duration of their assignment, while heads of curricular departments, class tutors', co-ordinators and class tutors have their teaching time reduced, during the time they hold the position. The school board makes the decision regarding the reduction of teaching time for middle managers.

Allowances are also paid for outstanding performance and after 15 years of teaching , and after receiving an appraisal of "Good" given by the head teacher, teachers may apply for a special appraisal of their curriculum vitae and receive an increase of two years in their career progression, although this rarely occurs.

Teachers' working time

Regulations of teachers' working time vary widely among countries. The working time for which teachers are required to be available at school, for both teaching time and non-teaching time is specified). As the same, the total working time that teachers have to work per year is specified (Table D6.1).

Teacher supply and demand...

The percentage of less than fully qualified teachers employed full-time is 22% (Table D7.1) and the average of OECD countries is 14.3%.

On average among countries, 12% of all full-time teachers are employed through temporary contracts and 22% of teachers are employed on a temporary basis.

At the upper secondary level, 20% of the students go to schools where the responsibility of hiring teachers lies with the school (Table D7.2). And 94% of students attend schools where the principal reported that a fully qualified teacher could be hired. Adding sections to other teachers' normal teaching hours is relatively rarely done in Portugal (Table D7.2).

The average number of classes cancelled is 6% (mean 3.5%) and the percentage of classes covered by another teacher is 2% (mean 6.6%).

In Portugal 60% of primary teachers are over 40 years of age (Table D8.1). This figure is closed to the OECD country mean. Secondary teachers are younger than primary teachers : 63% are less than 40 years olds against which is much more than the OECD country mean .

Female dominate the profession in pre-primary and primary education as well as in the upper secondary level (Table D8.2). Data are not available for the tertiary level (Table D8.2). This result is systematically above OECD country mean.