DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION

INTEGRATION OF MIGRANT STUDENTS

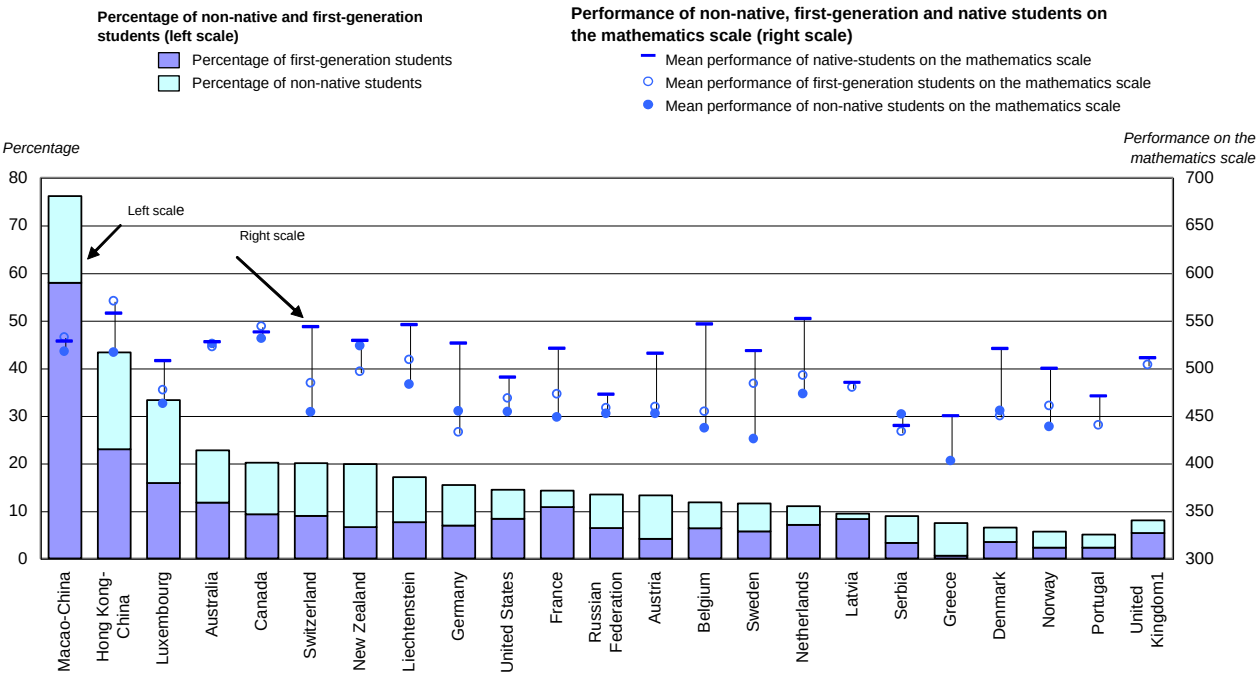
The 2003 assessment of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) spotlighted the challenges that education systems face integrating immigrant populations into their host societies. It showed that more than one-third of second-generation immigrant children in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Norway and the United States perform below the point necessary to actively use mathematics, despite, at the age of 15, having completed all schooling in the host country. It also showed that, in many countries, the odds are weighted against students from immigrant families right from the start. These families tend to be directed to schools with lower performance expectations, often characterised by high shares of disadvantaged students and, in some countries, disruptive classroom conditions.

Second-generation 15-year-old students tend to perform better than their first-generation counterparts, as one would expect as these students have been born in the country of assessment and thus benefited from the education system right from the start. However, the gains vary widely across countries. In Canada, Luxembourg, Sweden, Switzerland and Hong Kong-China, second-generation students perform significantly better than first-generation students, while in Germany and New Zealand second-generation immigrant students born in these countries perform worse than foreign-born students.

In all but four countries under review, at least 25% of second-generation immigrant children attend schools where immigrants make up more than 50% of the roll-call. By comparison, this is the case for less than 6% of native children in all but two countries. In a number of countries, second-generation immigrant children still perform as badly as their first-generation counterparts. On the other hand, in some countries with high levels of immigration, the performance of second-generation immigrant children is much closer to that of native children and close to the national average. This suggests that public policy can make a difference.

www.pisa.oecd.org

Place of birth and student performance



1. Response rate too low to ensure comparability (see Annex A3).

Note: Only countries with at least 3 per cent of students in at least one of these categories.

Source: OECD PISA 2003 database, Table 4.2f.

DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION

ASSESSING THE OUTCOMES OF EDUCATION

OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

Developed jointly by OECD Member countries, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assesses how far students approaching the end of compulsory education have acquired some of the knowledge and skills that are essential for full participation in the knowledge society.

In 2006, PISA completed its third survey of the knowledge and skills of 15-year-olds in OECD member countries and partner countries, covering together 90% of the world economy. The PISA surveys examine the performance of students in key subject areas and also look at a wider range of educational outcomes that include students' motivation to learn, their beliefs about themselves and their learning strategies. They examine how performance varies between the genders and between socio-economic groups. They also provide insights into some of the factors that influence the development of knowledge and skills at home and at school, how these factors interact and what the implications are for policy development. Most importantly, PISA sheds light on those countries that succeed in achieving high performance standards while at the same time providing an equitable distribution of learning opportunities.

PISA has revealed wide differences in the extent to which countries succeed in fostering knowledge and skills in key subject areas as well as effective learning strategies. For some countries, the results were disappointing, showing that their 15-year-olds' performance lagged considerably behind that of other countries, sometimes by the equivalent of several years of schooling and sometimes despite high investments in education. PISA also highlighted significant variation in the performance of schools and raised strong concerns about equity in the distribution of learning opportunities. However, the performance of countries such as Canada, Finland, Japan or Korea in PISA also revealed that excellence in education is an attainable goal. It also showed that the challenge of achieving a high and socially equitable distribution of learning outcomes can be addressed (see Figure 1).

PISA revealed common characteristics of students, schools and education systems that do well. These include the strive to individualise learning and to engage constructively with the diversity of student interests, capacities and socio-economic contexts; the shared commitment to professionalised teaching, in ways that imply that teachers are on a par with other professions in terms of diagnosis, the application of evidence-based practices and professional pride; as well as the move beyond systems of external accountability towards building capacity and confidence for professional accountability in ways that emphasize the importance of formative assessment and the pivotal role of school self-evaluation.

OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

The OECD is currently extending the PISA approach to assessing key competencies in adult populations. Through the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), the OECD seeks to: identify and measure differences between individuals and countries in competences believed to underlie both personal and societal success; assess the impact of these competences on social and economic outcomes at individual and aggregate levels; gauge the performance of education and training systems in generating required competences; and help to clarify the policy levers that could contribute to enhancing competences. A first survey is planned for 2011 covering the age group 25-64 year-olds.

Assessing higher education learning outcomes

Policy makers as well as the public devote considerable attention to the outcomes of higher education and the OECD is currently studying the feasibility of developing international benchmarks in this area. The objective is to allow students to make better informed choices, provide institutions with a better

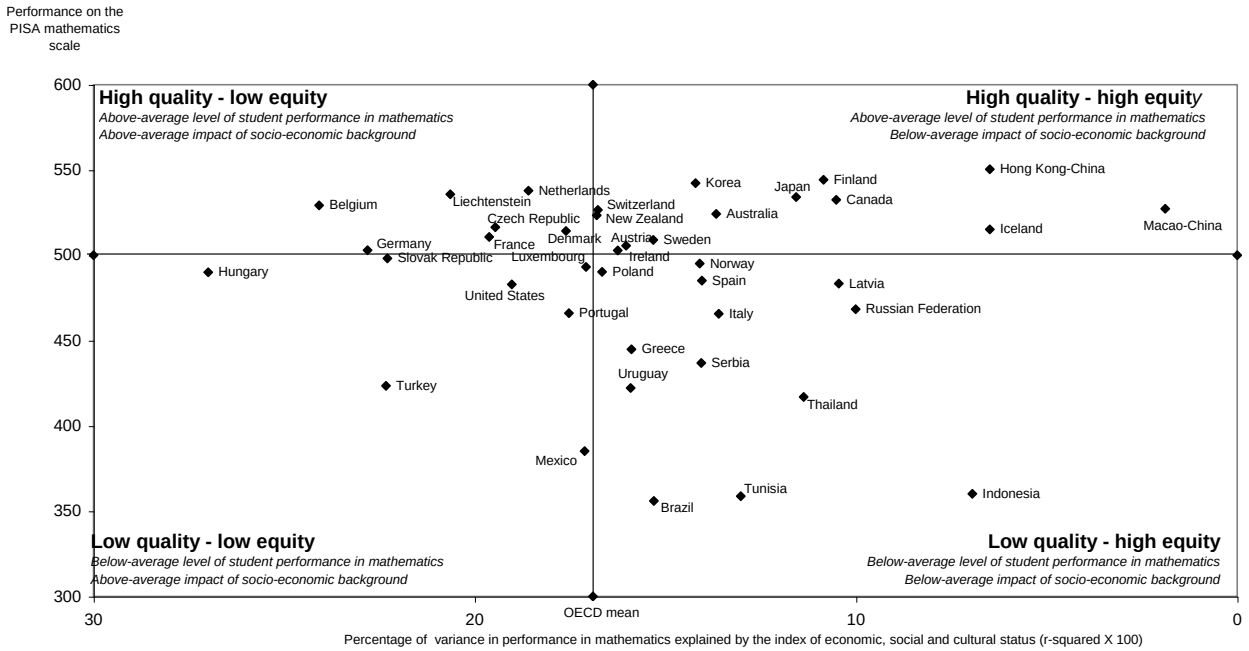
understanding of their comparative strengths and weaknesses and, combined with relevant data on inputs, processes and the socio-economic context of individuals and institutions, give policy makers better insights into the quality, equity and efficiency of higher education services.

www.pisa.oecd.org

Figure 1

Quality and equity in educational performance

Average performance of countries on the PISA mathematics scale and the relationship between performance and the index of economic, social and cultural status



Note: OECD mean used in this figure is the arithmetic average of all OECD countries.
Source: OECD PISA 2003 database, Table 4.3a.

DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION

EDUCATION AND HEALTH

The effects of education are far reaching, beyond measures such as labour market earnings or GDP growth. Our understanding of the links between learning and the social outcomes of learning (SOL) rests on a relatively weak knowledge base. We need coherent models for understanding better these relationships; for gathering and synthesizing what we know and what we want to know; and for drawing out their implications for policy.

Two broad domains were chosen by the Center for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) to form the focus of the first phase of SOL work, namely *health* and *civic and social engagement (CSE)*. They are areas of significant current policy concern, raising a mix of social and economic issues.

The health benefits of learning are potentially extremely large. There is a clear *cost containment* aspect here. The costs of delivering healthcare services are set to rise substantially, for demographic and technological reasons – essentially, the ageing of most OECD populations and the development of new forms of treatment. If education can be shown to have an effect in reducing these costs, it merits attention. Governments need to understand better the potential savings resulting from policy interventions that relate to investments in learning, not only for school aged children but also for adults across the lifespan.

There are a number of areas suggested for action:

- *A review of the public objectives of education*: scrutinising the extent to which objectives such as improving health or encouraging civic participation are articulated as explicit objectives of education systems; and if so what criteria and measures are used to monitor progress.
- *Exploring the implications for pedagogy, assessment and qualification systems*: adult and informal learning play a big part in social outcomes, but often are unacknowledged. SOL work calls for further development of the understanding of how learning achievements of different kinds are recognised and valued and how this might enhance the benefits from learning of different kinds in different contexts: workplace, community, family.
- *Fostering intersectoral dialogue*: crossing sectoral boundaries is always desirable but rarely realised. Using SOL results to promote dialogue across these boundaries would be a useful first step, and further by identifying synergies, and the barriers to realizing them.

www.oecd.org/edu/ceri

.

DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION

EDUCATION AND EQUITY

Rapid growth in education systems in OECD countries in response to increased demand for highly qualified workers has yielded some equity 'winners' - such as much better educated women – and some who have lost out, such as poorly qualified workers working in low-wage sectors facing toughening global competition from lower wage countries.

A recent report policies and practices in several OCDE countries on education and equity developed the following recommendations:

- Limit early tracking and streaming and postpone academic selection.
- Manage school choice so as to contain the risks to equity.
- In upper secondary education, provide attractive alternatives, remove dead ends and prevent drop out.
- Offer second chances to gain from education.
- Identify and provide systematic help to those who fall behind at school, and reduce year repetition.
- Help disadvantaged parents to help their children to learn, strengthening the links between school and home.
- Respond to diversity and provide for the successful inclusion of migrants and minorities within mainstream education.
- Provide strong education for all, giving priority to early childhood provision and basic schooling.
- Direct resources to the students with the greatest needs, so that poorer communities have at least the same level of provision as those better-off and schools in difficulty are supported.
- Set concrete targets for more equity, particularly related to low school attainment and dropouts.

http://www.oecd.org/edu/equity/equityineducation

DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

A newly launched OECD activity in this area aims to provide an analysis of policy and innovation in vocational education and training, yielding advice to countries on how to make education and training systems more responsive to the needs of fast changing labour markets, and analysis which will permit countries to better develop their systems of innovation in this and other educational fields.

The newly launched work will not yield conclusions for some time. However at an informal Ministerial meeting in Copenhagen on 22-23 January, OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría argued for a blurring of boundaries between general and vocational education so that all could experience some vocational training. Danish Education Minister Bertel Haarder argued that we now need to substantially improve OECD statistics on VET, to match the range of data available in other sectors of education. Collectively the informal group also:

- identified the need to challenge the apparent priority given to high status tertiary education rather than vocational training;
- recognized the challenge of persuading employers to provide a sufficient number of good quality apprenticeship places.
- identified good quality and up-to-date qualification frameworks, alongside arrangements for the recognition of prior learning as important policy tools;
- noted the need to upgrade the skills of those providing VET;
- underlined the need for VET systems to provide stronger support to help disadvantaged groups;
- The OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría and European Commissioner Jan Figel underlined their mutual commitment to co-operate closely on all these issues;

http://www.oecd.org/document/40/0,2340,en_2649_33723_37969320_1_1_1_1,00.html

DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION

ADULT LEARNING

Participation in adult learning varies across countries and there are significant inequalities. Evidence points to the fact that under-investment in education and training of adults affects certain disadvantaged groups disproportionately, such as the low-skilled, older age groups or those working in small and medium sized enterprises. This suggests a role for policy intervention, along the following lines:

- Creating the structural preconditions to raise the benefits of adult learning: This includes efforts to improve the visibility of rewards to learning as a way to motivate adults to learn and to strengthen the recognition of acquired skills, making them transparent and easily signalled to both individuals and firms. Recognition of informal and non-formal prior learning can contribute to reducing opportunity costs while certification systems need to be credible and transparent to employers; otherwise, certified skills might be devalued in the labour market. Information and guidance can facilitate access to participation, help improve visibility of the gains, and ensure a better match between demand and supply.

- Promoting well-designed co-financing arrangements: To the extent that it generates considerable private returns, much of adult learning should be financed privately, especially to avoid the so-called deadweight effect. But given the inequitable outcomes, there is a stronger case for governments to offer co-financing and setting economic incentives for low-skilled and disadvantaged groups, as well as for certain types of firms (such as small and medium-sized enterprises). The challenge is to find solutions that address those cases where financial constraints indeed constitute major obstacles to investment and participation in learning. Funding mechanisms that co-finance adult learning expenses by firms and adults, or that allow greater choice to individuals, such as Individual learning accounts (ILAs) and subsidies (vouchers or allowances), can raise the efficiency of provision.

- Improving delivery and quality control; Appropriate and effective delivery methods have to target time constraints by providing flexible alternatives such as part-time and distance learning programmes employing ICTs. Effective delivery of training in the workplace can especially contribute to raising overall participation. In addition, there is a need for quality assurance and programme assessment and evaluation as integral components of adult learning systems. To improve market transparency, governments can set an appropriate regulatory framework for competition among providers and make information on provider quality available to users.

- Working to improve policy co-ordination and coherence. With a wide variety of needs covered by adult learning systems, and a large diversity of stakeholders in the policy-making process, policy co-ordination and coherence can contribute to improve provision: co-ordination within education policies, in terms of reducing early school dropout rates and developing lifelong learners; co-ordination between education and employment policy objectives, in the use of adult learning to assist the unemployed in finding a job; linking adult learning to social welfare programmes, so that benefit recipients can also develop their skills; and co-ordination with the social partners, in the definition of skills needs and the development of learning opportunities. A way to improve the lack of co- is to create adult learning institutions for policy formulation and programme delivery. Another way is the definition of targets in terms of learners and final output to get a diverse range of actors to work towards common goals.

http://www.oecd.org/edu/adultlearning

DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION

SUPPORTING THE CONTRIBUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Innovation at national and at regional level requires Government, industry and the higher education sector to work together. An OECD study has been looking at 14 regions in order to understand better how these interactions work and what can be done by Governments and universities to improve them.

In many countries, including those we have studied, partnerships are being developed between HEIs and the public and private sector to mobilise higher education in support of regional development – economic, social and cultural. However these are frequently bottom-up initiatives with limited support from central governments.

More active engagement is constrained by a number of barriers: the orientation of public policy, inadequate funding and incentives, limits to leadership within HEIs, and the limited capacity of local and regional agents to get involved with higher education.

In many countries, higher education policy does not include an explicit regional dimension and national higher education systems may impose regulations that reduce the capacity of higher education institutions to engage regionally. Applied research and development and is left to institutions which often lack a well-established tradition in research or infrastructure to support it. Even when engagement with business and the community has been recognised and laid upon institutions as a duty, it has remained a “third task”, not explicitly linked to the core functions of research and teaching.

Funding and incentive structures often remain inadequate. HEIs are faced with competition, new tasks and pressures to reduce cost notably by the central authorities. Research is generally funded on a geographically neutral basis or aims to create localised concentrations. Restrictions on publishing research results can also set constraints.

Traditional academic values give little weight to engaging with local communities. Intra-institutional structures offer limited incentives or resources to pursue activity that promotes innovation. Institutions and firms, especially SMEs, often find communication difficult: academics may be uninterested in tackling seemingly mundane problems and/or delivering solutions on time or to budget, while firms may lack sufficient information to track down the appropriate expertise within the institutions.

Even when it is effective, institutions’ contribution to innovation is hard to measure. Metrics are underdeveloped, retrospective and do not take account of developmental work that may lead to future income or services in the public interest. When institutions are pursuing recognition in the global reputation race there is little encouragement to pursue activities which are undervalued.

Nevertheless there are many promising developments and our report will give examples of good practice and identify pointers for future development for national and regional authorities as well as for higher education institutions. For details of the project see:
http://www.oecd.org/edu/higher/regionaldevelopment

The report will be presented and discussed at a major international conference in Valencia, Spain in September

http://www.cfp.upv.es/oecd/inicio/index.jsp

DIRETORATE FOR EDUCATION

QUALITY PROVISION IN CROSS-BORDER IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Globalisation offers students increased access to higher education and can lead to improvement and innovations in education systems. Such benefits will materialize provided cross-border provision of higher education are appropriately managed in order to minimize the risk of low quality provision, degree mills that offer low-quality education and qualifications of limited validity, accreditation mills, and misleading information.

In this context, there is a need for new international initiatives to enhance quality provision in cross-border higher education at a global level by further strengthening quality assurance, accreditation and recognition of qualifications schemes at both national and international levels.

It is in that objective, that the Guidelines for quality provision in cross-border higher education have been elaborated by the OECD. This was done in close collaboration with the UNESCO Secretariat and input of UNESCO Member Sates.

The Guidelines, which are not binding, do not supersede individual countries' authority to regulate the quality assurance and accreditation of their own higher education system. The endeavor will involve the collaboration of both sending and receiving countries of education services and will have global reach.

The Guidelines, which have been endorsed by the OECD and UNESCO, recommends that Member countries develop appropriate frameworks focusing on:

- Providing students with adequate information to protect them from the risks of misinformation, low-quality provision and qualifications of limited validity.
- Making qualifications readable and transparent in order to increase their international validity and portability. Reliable and user-friendly information sources should facilitate this.
- Making recognition procedures transparent, coherent, fair and reliable and impose as little burden as possible to mobile professionals
- Intensifying international co-operation among national quality assurance and accreditation agencies in order to increase mutual understanding

http://www.oecd.org/document/52/0,2340,en_2649_34859749_29343796_1_1_1_1,00.html