

A brief introduction to what we do

“All societies must invest in their most valuable asset: their people. Education plays a critical role in enhancing economic competitiveness and growth, facilitating personal development and building strong and healthy societies. The OECD and its member countries are committed to identify and adopt the best education policies and to promote a fair sharing of the benefits of education.” – *Ángel Gurría, OECD Secretary-General.*

Within the Directorate for Education, the Education and Training Policy Division draws together lessons learned and provides timely, relevant and constructive policy advice to help countries improve educational outcomes.

We carry out our work within the broader OECD setting where governments compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practice and coordinate domestic and international policies, while taking into account country-specific contexts. We also engage actively with stakeholders to draw their perspectives and insights into our work.

We work on projects that are chosen by countries through the Education Policy Committee.

Division Head: Deborah.Roseveare@oecd.org

Projects currently underway

Learning for Jobs – Vocational Education and Training

We are working with countries to make Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems more responsive to labour market requirements. We are doing this by improving the evidence base, identifying a set of policy options and developing tools to appraise VET policy initiatives. Our cross-country analysis includes looking at topics such as costs and benefits of VET and indicators to assess the quality of VET provision and what statistical analysis can tell us about labour market outcomes and future skills needs. In 2008, we reviewed VET policies in eight countries. We are reviewing a further five countries and two US states in 2009-10. These country reviews along with the analytical work will allow us to draw out lessons learned and general messages for policymakers. Reviews of VET policies in participating countries are published on the OECD website as they are completed. A report summing up the broad findings will be published in 2010.

Project Manager: Simon.Field@oecd.org

Website: www.oecd.org/edu/learningforjobs

Education of Migrants

The OECD Review of Migrant Education focuses on the education outcomes of children of immigrants, with an emphasis on schools (pre-school, primary school and secondary school). The main policy question of the project is “What policies will promote successful education outcomes for first and second generation migrants?” The project will provide solid facts about access, participation and student performance of immigrant students in comparison with their native peers and identify a set of policy options based on evidence of what works and examples of experience from many countries. Reviews of migrant education in participating countries are published on the OECD website as they are completed throughout 2009. The overall findings of will be published early in 2010 as a concise, action-oriented handbook for policy makers.

Project Manager: Miho.Taguma@oecd.org

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Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) generates a higher rate of return on public intervention than later stages of education, and even more so for disadvantaged children. Building on existing work and research, this project will strengthen the knowledge base on quality in ECEC, including the most relevant policy options that encourage quality and factors that affect quality. It will develop a box of practical policy tools to help policy makers identify the key challenges, priorities and policy options for improving quality. The OECD will use those tools to work with individual countries to find the best policy options for their situation and get the buy-in needed for successful implementation. Countries also share experience on effective and efficient approaches and practice in ECEC policy through the OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care.

Project Manager: Miho.Taguma@oecd.org

Websites:

www.oecd.org/edu/earlychildhood

www.oecd.org/edu/earlychildhood/network

Assessment and Evaluation Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes

Evaluation and assessment are increasingly used in defining strategies for improving school outcomes and strongly influence the way in which policy makers monitor student and school performance and respond to it. This project will review the range of assessment and evaluation instruments and procedures and how they are used in different countries, including student assessment, teacher appraisal and school evaluation. It is designed to help countries assess how to ensure that different evaluation and assessment techniques fit together effectively and coherently to improve school outcomes and secure accountability; how to ensure that procedures and instruments adapt to the level assessed, adjust to actors involved and are coherent with policy objectives; and how to strengthen the use of evaluation and assessment results to improve learning outcomes. This project will be carried out in late 2009 and 2010.

Project Manager: Paulo.Santiago@oecd.org

Assessing Progress in Improving Equity in Education

This project will assist countries to improve their policies and practices to achieve real improvements in equity in education. It builds on the work of the OECD Review of Equity in Education, published in *No More Failures: Ten Steps to Equity in Education* (OECD, 2007). This recommended policies to improve equity in educational design for fair and inclusive education; fair and inclusive practices in and out of the classrooms; and resources to strengthen equity in education. The project is designed to help countries assess 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; and identify ways to monitor progress in improving equity. It will be carried out in late 2009 and 2010.

Project Manager: Beatriz.Pont@oecd.org

Transitions for Students with Disabilities beyond Secondary School

This project examines the educational opportunities for students with disabilities and learning difficulties in ten countries as they move from upper secondary school to tertiary education and from tertiary education to the labour market. Country reports will describe the situation of young adults with disabilities in the fields of education and employment in comparison to their non-disabled peers and the existing policies for the transition to tertiary education and employment of people with disabilities. The three-year longitudinal study is designed to identify best practices and what works, in light of individuals' pathways, their consistency and their professional, educational and social impact. Case studies will describe good examples of successful pathways. This project will be completed in 2011.

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Recently completed projects

Improving School Leadership

School leadership is high on education policy agendas as countries strive to reform education systems and improve student results. But in many countries, the men and women who run schools are overburdened, underpaid and near retirement, and few people are lining up for their jobs. Our work identified four ways in which governments can develop and train new generations of school leaders:

- (Re)define school leadership responsibilities, focusing on roles that can improve school results.
- Distribute school leadership, engaging and recognising broader participation in leadership teams.
- Develop skills for effective school leadership over different stages of practice.
- Make school leadership an attractive profession by ensuring appropriate wages and career prospects.

Key publications:

Improving School Leadership, Volume 1: Policy and Practice

Improving School Leadership, Volume 2: Case Studies on System Leadership

We have also developed a toolkit of linked learning materials to support policymakers and practitioners in putting the recommendations into practice.

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Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society

In today's knowledge-driven global economy, countries need to build on tertiary education to generate innovation, sustain competitiveness and boost economic growth. Many OECD countries have recently experienced rapid growth in tertiary education and their tertiary systems are facing new pressures. We studied policies in 24 countries, to understand how the organisation, management and delivery of tertiary education can help countries achieve their economic and social objectives. Our work drew out key policy messages:

- Ensure that tertiary education contributes to economic and social objectives.
- Devise sound instruments to steer tertiary education.
- Develop a funding strategy to optimise the contribution of tertiary education to society and the economy.
- Emphasise quality and relevance.
- Give greater prominence to equity in national tertiary education policy.
- Position national systems in the international arena.

Key publications:

Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society

Volume 1: Special Features: Governance, Funding, Quality

Volume 2: Special Features: Equity, Innovation, Labour Market, Internationalisation

OECD Reviews of Tertiary Education

China, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Japan, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland and Spain

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Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning

This project provides policymakers with useful options for developing effective, beneficial and equitable systems to recognise non-formal and informal learning; to effectively implement the “lifelong learning for all” agenda; and to determine under what conditions recognition of non-formal and informal learning can be beneficial for all. Country reports were prepared by the OECD for 16 countries. The final report lays out the benefits of recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, takes stock of policies and practices in OECD countries and provides general policy recommendations on how to organise recognition of non-formal and informal learning systems. It will be published in late 2009.

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Ongoing work

Knowledge Mobilisation

We make every effort to disseminate our findings on education and mobilise our knowledge to help countries in reviewing their policy settings and inform their policy choices. Our analysts have a broad range of experience and expertise across education policy areas, including early childhood education, teacher policy, school leadership, vocational education and training, tertiary education, adult education and training, lifelong learning, career guidance, parental choice, autonomy and accountability.

Addressing the Challenges of Policy Implementation

We consider not only good policy design but also, increasingly, policy implementation, to help countries carry out the changes needed to get real improvements in education outcomes. We collaborate with individual governments to assist them with policy implementation. For example, we are providing analysis, advice and communication on school leadership, teacher policy and assessment to assist Mexico in implementing education reform. We also recently completed a Review of Teacher Evaluation in Portugal. These projects are undertaken on request from the government and are carefully designed to fit with the country’s specific context, challenges and policy priorities.

Mainstreaming Gender and Special Needs Education Issues

Reflecting the spirit of inclusive education, we include gender and special needs considerations, where relevant, within all our projects.

September 2009