Centre for Educational Research and Innovation

Strategic Education Governance

Project Plan

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Rationale

Today's education systems are characterised by multi-level governance arrangements where the links between multiple actors operating at different levels are to a certain extent fluid and open to negotiation. At the same time, ministries of education remain responsible for ensuring high quality, efficient, equitable and innovative education. One of the crucial questions for OECD countries is, therefore, how to achieve national objectives for education systems under the condition of increasing complexity.

The Strategic Education Governance (SEG) project builds on the previous work of Governing Complex Education Systems (GCES), an OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) project that ran from 2011 to 2016 (OECD, 2016[1]). The resulting conceptual and empirical work (Burns, Köster and Fuster, 2016[2]; Burns and Köster, 2016[3]) identified that effective governance systems 1) focus on effective processes, not on structures; 2) are flexible as well as adaptive to change and uncertainty; 3) build capacity, engage in open dialogue and involve stakeholders, 4) pursue a whole-of-system approach; and 5) integrate evidence, knowledge, and the use of data to improve policy making and implementation.

SEG seeks to offer policy makers concrete tools to move towards strategic education governance as well as continue the work of exploring new approaches to education governance.

Project goals

SEG contributes to developing smart and strategic state capacity for reform and problem solving as a way of promoting effective, efficient and equitable education. SEG supports countries in identifying the best ways to achieve national objectives for education systems in a context of multi-level governance structures and complex environments. Using an organisational framework for strategic education governance, it involves:

- Providing overviews of research on the challenges and opportunities for educational policy in multi-level governance structures and complex environments
- Developing policy tools to support strategic education governance
- Mobilising knowledge of effective governance mechanisms within and among countries
- Working with countries to build capacity for strategic education governance
- Collaborating within and outside the OECD to build methodological expertise for development of governance indicators

Areas of activity

In order to reach its goals as outlined above, SEG carries out work on:

- Researching innovative approaches to governance challenges
- Developing concrete policy tools for countries to support strategic education governance
- Designing and delivering "SEG Learning Seminars" to support countries with current governance challenges or reforms

Further information on the SEG Learning Seminars and policy tools development can be found below.

SEG Learning Seminars

SEG Learning Seminars apply OECD's insights on strategic education governance to specific policy challenges. Countries/systems can draw lessons for governance practice by contrasting and comparing their governance approaches and the challenges they face. The seminars will produce 'new' knowledge or make tacit knowledge explicit, by deepening our insight in the design and implications of implementation strategies. Key features of the SEG Learning Seminars include:

- A focus on reconstruction of real-life policy experiences with the help of stakeholders involved
- Each host country or system decides the theme in consultation with the OECD
- Each seminar has an explicit phase of reflection and translation to different contexts
- The OECD prepares a background paper, in close collaboration with the host country, as a basis for each seminar
- The OECD prepares a short final report on the main findings
- Duration of 1.5 – 2 days

Policy tools to support strategic education governance

In consultations on the CERI programme of work and budget for 2017-18, countries gave high priority to exploratory work to develop policy tools to support more effective governance in complex times.

The study of complex systems requires a step back to examine how the various interconnections can form a coherent whole, in what way current structures facilitate or hinder this coherence, and how best to develop new forms of governance that take this complexity into account (Snyder, 2013[4]).

The challenge in developing indicators for strategic education governance is to balance the analytical strength of the complexity paradigm and the need for clear and actionable

indicators. To meet this challenge the project is developing "aspirational" indicators to help identify governance gaps.

These are based on an organisational framework for strategic education governance comprising six domains:

- **Accountability**, to enable local discretion in policy making while limiting fragmentation, and to promote a culture of learning and improvement.
- **Capacity**, to ensure capacity for policy-making and implementation and to foster collaborative capacity building.
- **Knowledge governance**, to engender a culture of using rich data and varied knowledge to improve policy making and realisation.
- **Stakeholder involvement**, to integrate knowledge and perspectives of diverse stakeholders as well as to foster ownership, trust and support.
- **Strategic thinking**, to promote forward-looking policy making and to balance long-term strategic goals with short-term priorities.
- **Whole-of-system perspective**, to mitigate tensions and to develop synergies across the system.

Calendar of activities

2017

- Development of an organisational framework for SEG to guide exploratory work on policy tools
- Survey of existing programmes of public governance indicators outside and inside the education sector
- Advisory group meeting on the nature of policy tools/indicators to be developed (18-19 September); based on a survey of existing public governance indicators and proposed organisational framework for SEG
- Planning and designing an initial series of SEG Learning Seminars: engaging countries
- Desk-based research on emerging challenges for strategic education governance as identified by countries

2018

- Further development of the organisational framework for SEG to guide work on policy tools: focus on priority domains as directed by countries
- Delivering a series of SEG Learning Seminars: peer learning workshops for interested countries
- Publication of main findings from desk-based research in the OECD *Education Working Paper*s series
- Publication of key insights and lessons for strategic education governance

References

Burns, T., F. Köster and M. Fuster (2016), *Education Governance in Action: Lessons from Case Studies*, Educational Research and Innovation, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264262829-en. [2]

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Snyder, S. (2013), "The Simple, the Complicated, and the Complex: Educational Reform Through the Lens of Complexity Theory", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 96, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k3txnpt1lnr-en. [4]