The Austrian Leadership Academy: OECD case study

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What is the Austrian Leadership Academy?

- Initiative of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture launched in 2004

- **Aims**: to equip leaders with the capacity to lead emerging reform initiatives and help establish new culture of proactive, entrepreneurial school leadership – “working in and on the system”

- System-wide approach to leadership development

- Ambitious and innovative
Why the Leadership Academy?

1. A changing Austrian context

Stable, well-organised, well developed market economy

Pressures for change through:

- economic globalisation
- EU membership
- migration
- changing family structure
- rapid technological changes
Why the Leadership Academy?

2. A changing education system

- Austrian school system highly structured and differentiated
- Many students not developing necessary skills and disparities in student performance leading to greater school accountability and pressure to perform
- Increase in local autonomy brings new opportunity and tensions
- By tradition, system is compliance-oriented
LEA Principle 2: Involve all types of schools and all levels of the system *(connect horizontal and vertical system levels)*
Leadership quality: the starting point for systemic innovation

Content and process interrelated, emphasising:

- leadership for learning – 5 dimensions
- school development and improved schooling outcomes
- system and distributed leadership
- personal change of leaders – leadership competency model
- support within a professional learning community
Innovative programme content and design

- “Generations” (cohorts of 250-300)
- Forums – learning experiences based on learning principles in retreat location
- Learning partnerships and collegial team coaching, supporting projects
- Regional network meetings
- Rigorous assessment, certification + membership
- Website support
- Depth of team planning, monitoring and evaluation
Successes thus far

- 17% of leaders have already voluntarily participated
- High level of engagement
- Positive effects on individual development and improved practice
- On the way towards making system-wide change
- Patterns of thinking and ways of operating seem to endure
Lessons for other countries

1. Policy support and alignment matters

- Involvement of key Ministry officials
- Integration with other national initiatives
- Structural change and national change management
- Addressing leverage points
Lessons for other countries

2. **Sustainability is a challenge requiring attention**
   - Depth – power of personal change and ability to focus on next practice
   - Length – ongoing involvement and support structure for alumni
   - Breadth – critical mass, spreading ideas
   - Capacity for programme delivery