Migrant Education in Sweden
Pointers for policy development

SUCCESES AND CHALLENGES FOR MIGRANT EDUCATION

- Around 20% of students speak a language other than Swedish, and more than 100 languages spoken in the country.
- Already in primary education, immigrant students read less well than native students. The gap is pronounced particularly for students not born in Sweden.
- At age 15, students who are not born in Sweden perform well below their native peers in reading, mathematics and science; and a little over quarter of these students have not even reached the basic reading proficiency level, compared with only about 3% of native students.
- Immigrant students who are born in the country perform much better than their first-generation immigrant peers, lagging only slightly behind native students.
- Upper secondary education is the most challenging education level for first- and second-generation immigrant students.
- Socio-economic background and speaking a different language at home largely explain the performance gap between immigrants and native students.
- By international standards, Sweden has an inclusive, democratic education system and has undertaken universal and targeted measures to improve the situation of immigrant students.

POLICIES TO IMPROVE MIGRANT EDUCATION OUTCOMES

- Provide training of all teachers – not only language teachers but subject and classroom teachers – to be more responsive to the linguistic and cultural diversity of students.
- Provide leadership training for school leaders to implement a “whole-school approach” to migrant education.
- Strengthen induction programmes for the newly arrived students, especially those who arrived at an older age.
- Build capacity for municipality leaders to successfully exercise autonomy and innovation in migrant education in their own local contexts.
- Alleviate negative effects of concentration on schooling outcomes through a whole-of-government approach.
- Make better use of the available data to advance evidence-based policy and practice.

FURTHER READING

These pointers for policy development are drawn from the Policy Review of Migrant Education for Sweden (www.oecd.org/edu/migration/countrynotes). The policy review in Sweden was carried out within the framework of the OECD Reviews of Migrant Education. The overall findings of this review are presented in Closing the Gap for Immigrant Students: Policies, Practice and Performance, published in April 2010. Policy reviews in 6 countries (Austria, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden), background reports prepared by 12 countries and other documents of the review are also available on the OECD website www.oecd.org/edu/migration.