

Education at a Glance 2006

No media or wire transmission before 12 September 2006, 11:00 Paris time

OECD Briefing Note for the United Kingdom

Questions can be directed to:

Andreas Schleicher

Head of the Indicators and Analysis Division

OECD Directorate for Education

Tel: +33 1 4524 9366, email Andreas.Schleicher@OECD.org

The 2006 edition of *Education at a Glance*

Several indicators in fields other than education confirm the UK's prominence in the global knowledge economy. Among the 30 OECD countries, only eight other nations have higher levels of GDP per capita and the United Kingdom has seen robust productivity growth over the last decade. Between 2002 and 2004, among OECD countries, the United Kingdom is twelfth on a measure of growth in GDP per hour worked.

This year's education indicators also point to strong performance and progress in the UK's education system, in terms of the expected years of education where the UK now tops the OECD countries, in terms of an above-average rise in investments in education, particularly in schools, or with regard to access to and use of new technologies in schools.

The UK has also significantly improved its relative standing in the share of adults with high level qualifications over successive generations, but progress has now levelled off and with below average entry rates to higher education in the UK, there is the prospect that the UK could slip below the OECD average on this measure. The data provide no indication that this is related to poor labour-market incentives for prospective students. On the contrary, the earnings and employment benefits for completing higher education remain well above the OECD average and continue to increase. The high share of fee-paying foreign students in the UK also suggests that the provision of higher education in the UK continues to remain attractive and low drop-out suggest that higher education institutions operate efficiently.

While the indicators provide no clear-cut explanations of the observed decline in the relative standing of the UK in higher education participation, one contributing factor, on which this edition sheds light for the first time, may be that the array of public subsidies for tertiary study in other countries may be better geared to encourage participation. Another, perhaps more important factor may be an insufficient pool of individuals who are suitably qualified to enter higher education, and the related challenge for the UK that lies in ensuring that young people



leave school with strong baseline qualifications. Education participation rates of 18 and 19 year olds remain comparatively low internationally and while upper secondary attainment in the UK has increased over the generations, many other countries have recorded faster progress. In other words, while a relatively large proportion of young people not holding strong baseline qualifications has been manageable for the UK in the past, when the demand for advanced qualifications was not so great, the limited progress at the upper secondary level may now become a serious bottleneck for further educational progress at the higher levels.

Participation in education – high level qualifications

In most countries, educational participation has continued to rise, and most young people can now expect to undertake some tertiary education during their lives.

- In most OECD countries, a child at the age of five can now expect to undertake between 16 and 21 years of education during his or her lifetime either full or part-time, if present patterns of participation continue. Together with Australia, the United Kingdom shows, at 20.7 years, **the highest educational expectancy among OECD countries** (Table C1.1).
- In every country, educational expectancy measured in these terms has risen since 1995 but, at 21%, few countries have seen such a rapid increase as the United Kingdom (OECD average increase 13%) (Table C1.1).
- Much of the increase in OECD countries has occurred at the tertiary level of education, where the expected years increased by 53% on average since 1995, whereas at primary and secondary levels, expectancy increased by a mere 7% on average across OECD countries (Table C1.1). The trend was different in the UK where educational expectancy rose by 20% at the primary and secondary levels and 25% at the tertiary level.

A high rate of tertiary qualifications is now surpassed by a many other countries...

- The United Kingdom has seen an impressive growth in tertiary qualifications over past generations and, with 39% of the typical age cohort completing a full length first higher education course (“Type A” in the international classification), the United Kingdom performs above the OECD average (35%) in 2004 (Table A3.1). Projections suggest that past educational output in the United Kingdom will contribute to a further expansion of the “market share” of 35-to-64-year-old graduates from the United Kingdom in the OECD area from 4.8% in 2004 to 5.0% in 2014 (Table A1.4).
- However, many countries have now caught up: In 2000 the United Kingdom had the second highest graduation rates for tertiary-type A programmes (reported in *Education at a Glance 2002*). However, in 2004, the United Kingdom’s first-degree graduation rate was exceeded by eight countries: Australia, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Poland (Table A3.1).

...while tertiary enrolment is growing more slowly than the OECD average.

- Rates of current participation suggest that more countries are likely to catch up and surpass United Kingdom graduation rates. The increase in tertiary enrolment between 1995 and 2003, which will influence future graduation rates, was, at 20%, considerably below the OECD average level of 38% (Table B1.5) and well below increases in Australia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Korea, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic and Sweden, that ranged from 33% to 169% during the same period.



53% of today's young people in OECD countries will enter a university level or equivalent programme during their lifetime.

- An examination of today's entry rates in universities underlines this trend. While the proportion of the United Kingdom age cohort entering tertiary-type A programmes was 48% in 1998 – significantly above the OECD average of then 40% (Table C3.1, *Education at a Glance 2000*) – in 2004 it was 52%, while the percentage of today's young people in OECD countries who will enter full-length higher education courses or equivalent programmes during their lifetime has meanwhile risen to 53% (Table C2.1). In Australia, Finland, Hungary, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Sweden and the United States more than 60% of young people will enter tertiary-type A programmes.
- The United Kingdom has one of the highest entry rates for 'vocational' tertiary education ("Type B" in the international classification). Between 1998 and 2004, the United Kingdom improved from 6th to 5th rank among the 15 countries reporting data for both years as its net entry rate increased slightly from 27% to 28% (Table C3.1, *Education at a Glance 2000*; Table C2.1, *Education at a Glance 2006*). Note that due to the way in which these data are calculated, it is not appropriate to add type A and type B data together in order to derive an overall rate for tertiary education.

...although most who enter universities complete their courses successfully.

- In comparing these figures, it needs to be taken into account that a much higher proportion (78%) of those who enter university in the United Kingdom complete their degree successfully than is the case at the OECD average level (70%). In fact, this "survival rate" is higher in only four other countries: Greece, Ireland, Japan and Korea (Table A3.2), providing evidence for the efficiency of the United Kingdom university system.

For the United Kingdom, higher education has a greater pay-off than in most other countries.

- The labour-market and financial incentives for attaining tertiary qualifications continue to remain high for both men and women, despite the rapid growth in qualifications. This can be seen when contrasting the advantages of tertiary education for individuals in terms of higher average earnings, lower risks of unemployment and the public subsidies they receive during their studies, with the costs that individuals incur when studying, such as tuition fees, lost earnings during studies and higher tax rates later in life. In all countries with comparable data, the private rate of return for those who acquire tertiary degrees immediately following school is higher than real interest rates, and often significantly so. In all eleven countries for which data are available – with the exceptions of Denmark, New Zealand and Sweden – the private rate of return for both males and females is at least 9.8% (Table A9.6).
- In general, 25-to-64-year-old people with tertiary qualifications command significantly higher salaries than those with only secondary education. In the United Kingdom, earnings for tertiary graduates are 58% higher on average than those for people with only secondary education, a differential that is higher in only five other countries: the Czech Republic (82%), Hungary (117%), Poland (63%), Switzerland (64%) and the United States (72%) (Table A9.1a). Tertiary graduates also have a much greater chance of finding jobs (Table A8.1a).

Rising levels of tertiary attainment seem not to have led to an "inflation" of the labour-market value of qualifications.

- Rising tertiary education levels among citizens seem generally not to have led to an "inflation" of the labour-market value of qualifications. Among the countries in which



the tertiary attainment grew by 5 percentage points or more between 35-to-44-year-olds and 25-to-34-year-olds, Spain is the only country in which the rapid expansion in tertiary attainment was associated with a significant decline in the wage premium that tertiary attainment attracts during the period 1997 to 2004 (Tables A1.3a and A9.2a). In the United Kingdom the earnings advantage of tertiary graduates in the 25-to-64-year-old population, relative to upper secondary graduates, was 53% in 1997, but had risen to 58% by 2004 (Table A9.2a). Over the same period, the only countries with faster growing relative earnings returns on tertiary degrees were Germany (20 percentage points), Hungary (38 percentage points) and Switzerland (9 percentage points). Similar results can be observed when comparing trends in unemployment among tertiary graduates with the expansion of tertiary education (Table A8.4a).

The internationalisation of tertiary education is proceeding rapidly, and the United Kingdom remains a prominent destination for international students...

- The United Kingdom remains an attractive destination for international students with 11% of foreign students worldwide enrolled in the country. This is less than in the United States (22%) but the United Kingdom stands ahead of Germany (10%), France (9%), Australia (6%) and Canada (5%) (Chart C3.2 and Web-based Table C3.8).

... the United Kingdom managed to maintain its relative standing over time better than the United States...

- Compared to 2000, the United Kingdom saw its share on the international education market decline by about 1 percentage point and the share of the United States fell from 25% to 22% over the same period. The largest increases in market shares took place in Australia, France, Japan and New Zealand (Chart C3.3 and Web-based Table C3.8).

... despite charging the highest level of tuition fees to its international students from outside the EU and EEA.

- The high standing of the United Kingdom as a destination for international students is remarkable given its policy to charge full tuition to non-EU/EEA international students. The level of fees charged to international students can be up to 18 000 USD per year in PPP terms, a very high level compared to other OECD countries for which data are available. By contrast, in other English-speaking countries, the tuition fees charged to international students, at least on average, are much lower than in the United Kingdom: USD 12 000 in the United States, USD 11 000 in Australia and USD 8 000 in Canada (Box C3.3 and Table B5.1).
- Campuses in the United Kingdom are the second-most internationalised among OECD countries, with 13.4% of international students in total enrolments at tertiary level. In this respect, the United Kingdom is second only to Australia (16.6%) and significantly above the OECD average (6.5%) (Table C3.1).
- The extent of internationalisation is even more pronounced in advanced research programmes, where international students represent 38.6% of enrolments in the United Kingdom, second to Switzerland (42.5%) and more than twice the level observed in the OECD on average (16.1%) (Chart C3.1 and Table C3.1).
- The highly internationalised nature of tertiary education in the United Kingdom also translates into the composition of the tertiary graduate output. In tertiary-type A second degrees and advanced research programmes, more than a third of the graduate output can be attributed to international graduates (33.3% for tertiary-type A second degrees and 36.8% for advanced research programmes). This massive contribution of international



students to the tertiary graduate output needs to be borne in mind when interpreting human capital formation in the United Kingdom as well as tertiary participation rates (Chart C3.5 and Table C3.7).

- It is noteworthy that international students in the United Kingdom enrol in significant numbers in science and engineering programmes (14.7% and 15.2% of the total respectively). Large numbers of international students also enrol in social sciences, business and law (39.8%) (Chart C3.4 and Table C3.5). This latter pattern may result from the fact that a number of countries in Asia and Africa have legal systems based on the British model.

About one third of the UK intake of international students originates from neighbouring European countries, but nearly half come from Asia – a growing share compared to last year.

- Differentiated tuition fees apply in the United Kingdom only to students originating from outside the EU and EEA, that is, the 30% of international students in the United Kingdom who originate from the 19 EU countries that belong to the OECD, pay similar fees as UK students. Among them, large numbers of students originate from Greece (7.6% of the total intake), Ireland (4.9%), Germany (4.0%) and France (3.8%).
- Outside the EU-EEA area, the main countries of origin of international students in the United Kingdom are China (15.9%), India (4.9%) and the United States (4.5%). Compared to last year, the proportion of students originating from Asia has increased markedly – from 40.8% to 46.9% of the total intake – which underlines the attractiveness of the United Kingdom’s tertiary education to full-fee paying students in Asia (Table C3.2 and *Education at a Glance 2005*).

Participation in education – baseline qualifications

In the United Kingdom a significant share of individuals does not complete upper secondary education...

- The proportion of individuals in the population who have successfully completed upper secondary education (see notes on definition at the end) has been rising in almost all OECD countries, and rapidly in some. In more than half of all OECD countries the proportion of 25-to-34-year-olds with upper secondary qualifications now exceeds 80%, and in Canada, the Czech Republic, Japan, Korea, Norway, the Slovak Republic and Sweden it exceeds 90% (Table A1.2a). Ranked by upper secondary educational attainment in the population, the United Kingdom occupies the 13th position among 55-to-64-year-olds in the 30 OECD countries (*i.e.* those who completed school some 40 years ago) but only the 23rd position among 25-to-34-year-olds, who completed school a decade ago. By contrast, Korea ranks 24th among 55-to-64-year-olds but 1st among 25-to-34-year-olds (Table A1.2a). So, whilst upper secondary attainment rates have increased in the United Kingdom, the increase has been greater in many other countries. Note that the individuals (25-to-34-year-olds in 2004) in this analysis passed the age of sixteen in between 1985 and 1995.

...and face considerable and increasing penalties in the labour market, more so than the OECD average...

- Employment rates among both university and upper secondary graduates in the United Kingdom are above the corresponding OECD averages. However, for those who have not completed the upper secondary level, employment rates are, at 60% for men and 47% for women, below the corresponding OECD averages of 72% and 49% (Table A8.1a).



Differences in the employment probabilities accruing to different levels of educational attainment have grown over the last decade. For individuals with upper secondary education the employment rate remained stable between 1991 and 2004 at 79%, and for tertiary graduates it grew from 86% to 89%. In contrast, for individuals without upper secondary education, it decreased from 61% in 1995 to 53% in 2004 (Table A8.3a).

- The penalties from not completing upper secondary education are also visible in the distribution of earnings. While the share of 25-to-64-year-olds with low incomes (defined here as half of the country median or less) is in most countries significantly higher among those without upper secondary qualifications than among upper secondary graduates, this share for upper secondary graduates is the seventh highest in the United Kingdom, behind Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Switzerland and the United States (Table A9.4a). Among 25-to-64-year-olds in the United Kingdom without upper secondary qualifications, 38% earn half or less than the national median (the OECD average is 26%), while only 1% (OECD average 2%) are in the group of top earners, whose average earnings exceed twice the country median (Table A9.4a).

...even if some progress has been made in raising school enrolment rates in the immediate post-compulsory school years, i.e. among 17-year-olds...

- However, while the United Kingdom still has comparatively low levels of participation among 15-to-19 year-olds, recent years have seen some progress. In 1998, among OECD countries, only Mexico and Turkey had a lower proportion of their 15-to-19-year-old population enrolled in education than the United Kingdom. However, in 2004, at 79%, the United Kingdom had moved close to the OECD average level of enrolment among 15-to-19-year-olds of 80.5%, with seven countries reporting lower enrolment figures. Looking at the situation of 17-year-olds, in 1998 the United Kingdom, at 66%, was significantly below the OECD average level of 78% enrolment. By contrast, on the same variable, in 2004, the United Kingdom, at 81%, is only slightly below the OECD average of 82% enrolment among 17-year-olds. (Much of this improvement is, however, due to the inclusion in the statistics for the first time of young people taking part in Apprenticeship and Advanced Apprenticeship programmes, which now have a strong formal education component.) (*Education at a Glance 2000*, Tables C1.2 and C1.3 and *Education at a Glance 2006*, Tables C1.2 and C1.3).

...and some catch up later in life...

- While enrolment rates among 18 and 19 year olds in the United Kingdom are still well below OECD average levels, the rate of enrolment in the 20-to-29 age group, at 27.8%, is above the OECD average of 24.7% (Table C1.2). Among 30-to-39-year-olds, the United Kingdom shows the highest participation rate, at 15.6% (OECD average 5.6%) and the same holds for 40-year-olds and older, at 7.8% (OECD average 1.6%) (Table C1.2). As a result, the United Kingdom is first among OECD countries, along with Australia, in terms of lifelong participation, according to the “expected years in education” measure which makes a projection on the basis of today’s enrolment rates at different stages of education (Table C1.1).

Participation in education – learning throughout life

Initial education alone can no longer satisfy the rising and changing demand for skills...

- In many countries, non-formal continuing education and training now also plays a significant role in raising the stock of knowledge and skills. In Denmark, Finland,



Sweden and the United States, more than 35% of employees take part in non-formal job-related education and training each year. At 27%, the corresponding participation rate in the United Kingdom is also still well above the OECD average of 18%. At the other end of the scale, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Spain provide such training to fewer than 10% of employees (Table C5.1a).

- However, the intensity of participation in non-formal job-related education and training is comparatively low in the United Kingdom. In the United Kingdom, between the ages of 25 and 64, the total expected number of hours in non-formal job-related training per worker is 315, considerably below the OECD average of 389 hours (Table C5.1a). This indicates a lower overall volume of training provision than the participation rate alone would suggest.

...and job-related education and training is still least common among those who need it most.

- In OECD countries, on average, the participation rate in non-formal continuing education and training among employees who have not completed upper secondary education is less than half of the rate among those with upper secondary education and less than a quarter of the rate seen among those with tertiary education. In the United Kingdom these differences are significantly larger than in most OECD countries.
- For example, In the United Kingdom the intensity of participation is particularly low among persons without upper secondary qualifications (103 hours as compared with an OECD average of 210 hours), among older individuals (28 hours among 55-to-64-year-olds as compared with an OECD average of 39 hours) and among the unemployed (14 hours as compared with an OECD average of 38 hours) (Tables C5.1a, b and c). These findings are important because they show continuing inequalities in terms of access to lifelong learning in the United Kingdom, as in other countries. They also suggest that continuing education and training currently do not succeed in making up for skill gaps emerging from initial education but, in first, tend to reinforce disparities that result from initial education.

Gender differences

Across OECD countries, significant progress has been achieved in reducing the gender gap in educational qualifications.

- The balance of educational attainment between males and females in the adult population remains unequal in most OECD countries. However, significant progress has been achieved in recent decades in reducing the gender gap in formal educational qualifications. For the generation aged 45 to 54 years, the difference expressed in average duration of formal study favours females in only eight countries and for the generation around 60 years of age this difference favours females in only three countries. In contrast, the situation of the generation aged 25 to 34 years testifies to a complete inversion. For those around 30 years old, the average number of years of study completed is higher among females in 20 out of the 30 OECD countries, while in the remaining countries the differences between the genders are generally small (Table A1.5).

In the United Kingdom tertiary education enhances earnings more for females than for males...

- For the 25-to-64-year-olds, tertiary education enhances earnings relative to upper secondary education more for females than for males in Australia, Canada, Ireland, Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, while the



reverse is true in the remaining countries, with the exception of Belgium where, relative to upper secondary education, the earnings of males and females are equally enhanced by tertiary education (Table A9.1a).

...even if females still earn considerably less than males with similar qualifications.

- Nevertheless, although both males and females with upper secondary, post-secondary non-tertiary or tertiary attainment have substantial earnings advantages compared with those of the same gender who do not complete upper secondary education, earnings differentials between males and females with the same educational attainment remain substantial. When all levels of education are taken together (*i.e.* total earnings are divided by the total number of income earners, by gender) the earnings of females between the ages of 30 and 44 range from 51% of those of males in Korea and Switzerland, to 87% of those of males in Hungary; in the United Kingdom it is 57%. The gap in earnings between males and females may be explained by many factors, including differences in the amount of time that males and females spend in the labour force, and the high incidence of part-time work among females. To some extent it may also be due to different career and occupational choices (Table A9.1b).

Large gender differences in educational attainment remain between the fields of university studies.

- An examination of today's graduate patterns shows that, overall, graduation rates no longer show significant differences between males and females in half of the OECD countries with available data. In fact, graduation rates for females exceed or equal those for males in all 22 OECD countries for which total upper secondary graduation rates can be compared between the genders (Table A2.1). However, significant variation still exists across fields of education at the tertiary level. While in the humanities, arts, education, health and welfare, more than two-thirds of university-level graduates are females, on average in OECD countries, less than one-third of mathematics and computer science, engineering, manufacturing and construction graduates are females (Web based Table A3.4). But there are major differences among countries. In Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, the proportion of females obtaining a first tertiary-type A qualification in mathematics and computer science is less than one third, while in Finland, Italy, Korea, Portugal and Turkey, it is between 40 and 44% (Web based Table A3.4).

Overall investment in education

OECD countries are expanding the scope of their education systems, but at the same time trying to contain costs in the context of hard-pressed public budgets. Conflicting pressures have produced varying trends across OECD countries.

The United Kingdom stands out in showing consistent rises in educational investment, in terms of a rising share of GDP being devoted to education ...

- Starting from a comparatively low base by OECD standards, the United Kingdom stands out with consistent rises in its investment in education, not just in absolute terms, where increases were observed in most countries over recent years, but also relative to national income: Spending on educational institutions in the United Kingdom increased from 4.3% of GDP in 1990 to 5.5% in 1995 and 6.1% in 2003, a value that is now slightly



above the OECD average of 5.9%. Only Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Mexico and Turkey have seen larger rises between 1995 and 2003, while in one third of the OECD countries with available data, spending on educational institutions did not match growth in national income, such that expenditure as a proportion of GDP actually declined (Chart B2.1 based on Table B2.1a).

... as well as in terms of a growing educational share in the public budget.

- A similar picture emerges when examining the share of public expenditure that is devoted to education. Alongside an increase in the public expenditure in the UK as a percentage of GDP between 1995 and 2003, the share of all public spending that is devoted to educational institutions, or paid in the form of subsidies to households, increased in the United Kingdom over this period from 11.4 to 11.9% (the OECD average increased by 1.3 percentage points) (Table B4.1).

Most of the additional resources were invested in school education.

- Most of the additional (public and private) resources were invested in school education, where expenditure increased between 1995 and 2003 by 49% in absolute terms (the OECD average increase was 33%), while spending on tertiary institutions increased, at 20%, less than half as fast as the OECD average level (the OECD average increase was 46%) (Table B1.5).

An above-average share of spending on schools comes from private sources...

- The relative proportions of public and private funding for educational institutions providing primary and secondary education range from 99.9% public in Portugal and Sweden to 79.3% public and 20.7% private in Korea. The United Kingdom's funding was 86.5% public in 2003 compared to 88.5% public in 1995 – in both years this was one of the lowest public funding proportions among the 18 OECD members reporting data for both years (Table B3.2a). Note that private spending originates both in households and other private entities and can go to private as well as public institutions.

...and private spending has risen much faster than public spending...

- At all levels of education, private spending in the United Kingdom rose faster than public spending between 1995 and 2003, with an increase of the private share from 11.5% to 13.5% at the primary and secondary level of education (the largest increase in percentage points after Canada, the Slovak Republic and Switzerland) (Table B3.2a) and an increase from 20% to 29.8% at the tertiary level of education (the largest increase after Australia and Italy) (Table B3.2b).

...even if increased private spending has not seen a contraction of public funds.

- As in all OECD countries other than Australia, rising private expenditure on educational institutions has not implied a contraction of public expenditure. However, public spending on tertiary education in the United Kingdom rose by only 6% (compared with a 79% increase in private spending) between 1995 and 2003 – the smallest rise after Australia, where public spending actually declined (Table B2.2).

An exception is the pre-primary level.

- However, at the pre-primary level, where the relative proportions of public and private funding range from 100% public in Sweden to 31.7% public and 68.3% private in Korea, the public funding share in the United Kingdom was 94.6% in 2003, significantly above the OECD average of 81.5% (Table B3.2a).



How investment in education translates into spending per student, student learning conditions and teacher working conditions

At primary, secondary and tertiary levels, spending per student is above the OECD average...

- To assess their potential impact on the quality of educational services, the resources invested in education need to be seen in relation to the number of students enrolled. On that measure, spending per student across all levels of education (excluding pre-primary education) in the United Kingdom is, at US\$ 7,376 (equivalent), above the OECD average of US\$ 6,827. Indeed, spending per student at primary (US\$ 5,851) and secondary (7,290 US\$) levels is above the corresponding OECD averages (US\$ 5,450 and US\$ 6,962 respectively). At US\$ 11,866, spending at the tertiary level also exceeds the OECD average of US\$ 11,254 (Table B1.1).

...and the United Kingdom stands out in respect of the high level of spending per child at the pre-primary level, while also raising the level of participation.

- With the exception of the United States, the United Kingdom invests more than any other country per child at the pre-primary level (at US\$ 7,153 considerably larger than the OECD average spending per child of US\$ 4,508) (Table B1.1). This is all the more impressive on account of the fact that, while increasing spending levels since 1998, the rate of participation of 4-year-olds and under as a percentage of the 3-to-4-year-old population also increased from 51% in 1998 to 77% in 2004 (Table B1.2, Table C1.2 and corresponding tables in *Education at a Glance 2000*). Moreover, these levels of spending per child have been achieved despite a higher than average ratio of students to teaching staff at this level in the United Kingdom (Table D2.2).
- Different supply and demand factors have influenced variation in spending per student across countries. In the United Kingdom, spending on primary and secondary education increased by 49% while enrolments rose by 18%, resulting in a spending increase per student of 26% between 1995 and 2003. That is significantly less than the OECD average increase of 33% in per-student spending. However, the United Kingdom, along with Sweden, were the two countries with the equal largest growth in student numbers (the OECD average was 0%) (Table B1.5).

Despite above average spending per student, class sizes in primary schools remain very large in the United Kingdom ...

- Despite above average spending per primary-level student, the United Kingdom has, with 24.3 students per class, one of the largest average class sizes at the primary level of education. Only Japan, Korea and Turkey have larger classes and in all but nine countries there are between 16 and 21 students per primary-level class (the OECD average is 21.4) (Table D2.1).

...which is, in part, accounted for by long annual instruction time...

- This outcome is in part explained by the annual duration of instruction time. At 878 hours, England has the 7th longest annual intended instruction time for a 7-to-8-year-old among the 25 countries with comparable data (the OECD average is 758 hours) (Table D1.1).

...as well as by above-average teacher salaries.

- Another explanatory factor is comparatively high teacher salaries. At US\$ 45,616 for a primary school teacher with minimum training and 15 years of experience, Scotland comes 6th among OECD countries, while England, at US\$ 42,046, comes 9th (Table



D3.1). However, this advantage diminishes somewhat when comparing salaries to GDP per capita.

Teacher salaries have not risen as fast as in many other countries...

- However, between 1996 and 2004, primary teacher salary increases in the United Kingdom have, at 7% in England and 14% in Scotland, been below the average increase of 15.2% among the 20 OECD countries with comparable data (Table D3.3).

...while the teaching load for teachers remained comparatively high.

- In addition, the net teaching time for Scottish primary school teachers is, at 950 hours per year, the third highest among the 27 OECD countries with comparable data (the OECD average is 805 hours) (Figures are not available for England) (Table D4.1).
- All of these relationships are similar at the secondary level of education, although differences between the United Kingdom and the OECD average tend to be smaller at the secondary level.

Average class sizes in lower secondary education are below the OECD average level.

- In lower secondary education, and considering public and private institutions together, there are on average 21 students per class in the United Kingdom, well below the OECD average of 24.1. Of the 21 countries for which comparable data are available, only four have a lower average class size at the lower secondary level: Denmark, Iceland, Luxembourg and Switzerland (Table D2.1).

In tertiary education, a below-average increase in spending in the United Kingdom just matched the below-average increase in student enrolment.

- At the tertiary level, a below-average increase in spending in the United Kingdom (20%) exactly matched the below-average increase in student enrolment (20%), such that spending per student remained unchanged in real terms between 1995 and 2003. By contrast, average OECD spending per tertiary student rose by 6% over the same period (Table B1.5). However, there are also countries where spending per student has fallen by about 10% or more, as spending levels have not kept pace with expanding student numbers, such as in the Czech Republic, Poland and the Slovak Republic.
- In the context of this increase in tertiary student numbers, the student to teacher ratio at this level in the United Kingdom increased from 16.7 in 1996 to 17.8 by 2004. Over the same time period the OECD average fell slightly from 15.7 to 15.5 (*Education at a Glance 2006* Table D2.2 and *Education at a Glance 1998* Table B7.1).

The share of capital spending in tertiary institutions is now among the lowest in the OECD.

- Below the tertiary level, the proportion of spending on capital costs is, at 8.1%, very close to the OECD average level of 8.2%.
- In contrast, the share of capital spending at the tertiary level is, at 2.8%, considerably below the OECD average of 10.3%, and is lower only in Belgium (Table B6.2).

Schools in the United Kingdom have above-average resources for non-staff goods and services.

- With only 75% of current expenditure at the primary and secondary levels devoted to the compensation of staff, schools in the United Kingdom have greater capacity to purchase other goods and services than do OECD countries on average, where 80% of current expenditure is devoted to the compensation of staff.



Notes

- “Non-formal education” is defined as any organised and sustained educational activities that are not typically provided in the system of schools, colleges, universities and other formal institutions that constitutes a continuous ladder of full-time education for children and young people. Non-formal education may take place both within and outside educational institutions, and cater to persons of all ages. For detailed definitions, see Indicator C5 in *Education at a Glance*.
- “Tertiary-level education” is defined as higher education (HE). Indicators cover both the current performance of the HE system and the proportion of the adult population (25-to-64-year-olds) who have attained HE qualifications. There are splits by gender and type of course – divided into vocational courses like HND (Type B in OECD parlance) and full-length (duration of more than three years) theory-based degrees (Type A), including bachelor and masters degrees. Graduation rate is defined as the ratio of tertiary graduates to the population at typical age of graduation.
- “Lower secondary education” is defined as schooling between the ages of 11 and 13.
- “Upper secondary education” identifies a level of attainment, not necessarily reached while the individual was actually participating in secondary education. In the United Kingdom it means attainment of at least Level 2: that is, a minimum of five GCSEs/SCSEs at grades A* to C, or an equivalent vocational qualification such as NVQ2/SVQ2. However, the international “upper secondary” band also includes the United Kingdom Level 3: that is, A-levels or NVQ/SVQ3.
- “Statutory salaries”. The data on teacher pay are based on statutory pay (pay scales) in 2004 and do not attempt to capture actual average pay which will include discretionary allowances for extra duties as well as reflecting the age structure of the teacher labour force. Furthermore, the figures are for classroom teachers and so do not reflect the pay of teachers promoted to heads and deputy headships. They also do not include bonuses and supplementary payments, which are considerable in some countries. England and Scotland have separate systems of teacher pay and so, while the publication generally refers to the United Kingdom, the teacher pay figures are shown separately for England and Scotland. The pattern of the Scottish pay comparisons closely follows that for England although Scottish pay levels are slightly below those in England for starting salaries, but are above those for England after 15 years of experience or at the top of the scale.

Education at a Glance 2006 is available to journalists on the OECD's [password-protected website](#). For further information, journalists are invited to contact the OECD's [Media Relations Division](#) (tel. [33] 1 45 24 97 00). Subscribers and readers at subscribing institutions can access the report via [SourceOECD](#), our online library. Non-subscribers can purchase the report via our [Online Bookshop](#).