School Management Requires Major Rethinking, says OECD

Running schools is getting more and more complex. School leaders are expected to combine a range of skills in managing knowledge and ideas as well as staff and resources. A new OECD publication, *New School Management Approaches*, reviews innovative initiatives at primary and secondary school levels in nine regions and countries – Flanders (Belgium), Greece, Hungary, Mexico, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, England (the United Kingdom) and the United States. It focuses on 29 specific initiatives in an effort to draw lessons that may be applicable on a broader stage. The first part of the report reviews the main developments and issues in school management emerging from the country studies. The second part provides case studies of innovations and background information on national policy approaches.

In most OECD countries, public education institutions are ill adapted to the demands of openness and flexibility that characterise today’s knowledge-based economy. At the same time, public sector reform has in many cases reduced financial means while imposing higher standards and increased competition within a politically administered system.

Decentralisation requires shared decision-making in order to make those involved responsible agents of change. Reforms in the United Kingdom have made parents and schools active participants while making funding dependent on performance. The recent Beacon School initiative identifies the best performing schools in order to pass on best practices to others. In Mexico, the process of self-evaluation makes teachers and principals in 2,000 schools more accountable for educational results. Each individual school project must also be open to parental participation. In Hungary, the National Core Curriculum of 1995 refers to broad areas of knowledge instead of specific subjects. Each school is free to decide the level of education and grades it will provide, as well as teaching hours and methods. Across most countries there is a growing awareness that students need to be treated not just as recipients of knowledge, but as fully fledged participants in the process of educational development. This is particularly so in the area of information and communication technologies, where pupils often have a better understanding of the tools than their teachers.

Journalists may obtain a copy of the report from the OECD Media Relations Division (request by fax: 33 1 45 24 80 03 or news.contact@oecd.org). For further information, journalists are invited to contact Ms. Motoyo Kamiya in the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (Tel: 33 1 45 24 91 90 or motoyo.kamiya@oecd.org) or Mr. Jacob Arfwedson in the Media Relations Division (Tel: 33 1 45 24 81 03 or jacob.arfwedson@oecd.org).

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