

Implementing Education Policies

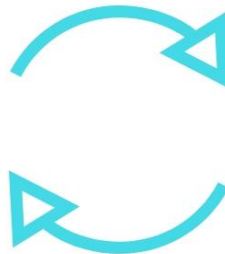
REALISING EFFECTIVE CHANGE IN EDUCATION



Why focus on education policy implementation?

Today's world is changing: globalisation has permeated all sectors, technological innovation is re-shaping our world, the knowledge workforce continues to grow in significance, and social and demographic trends are evolving rapidly. Education systems need to adapt to the fluctuating times, with policies to improve both their equity and quality and prepare our youth for the future.

However, education reforms and policy initiatives often fall short because little attention is paid to their implementation. Piecemeal policy approaches, lack of focus and support, poor alignment, and weak capacity are all factors that can prevent policies from reaching the schools. Giving too little thought to the implementation of proposed education policies may result in expectations for improvement in education failing to live up to the reality, as well as erosion of trust in governments and wasted public resources.



Recent research shows that the nature of education policy implementation is altering, with policies taking shape in increasingly complex environments. Policy processes are moving from top-down structures to horizontal interactions, often built upon negotiation and co-construction between many actors. In this environment, the role of policy makers is increasingly to steer and coordinate different actors in order to arrive at a common vision for education and ensure that everyone is moving in the same direction to accomplish education change.

Through our support programme on Implementing Education Policies, the OECD aims to help countries and jurisdictions close the gap between educational aspirations and performance by providing strategic advice and support to the design and implementation of specific reforms or policies.

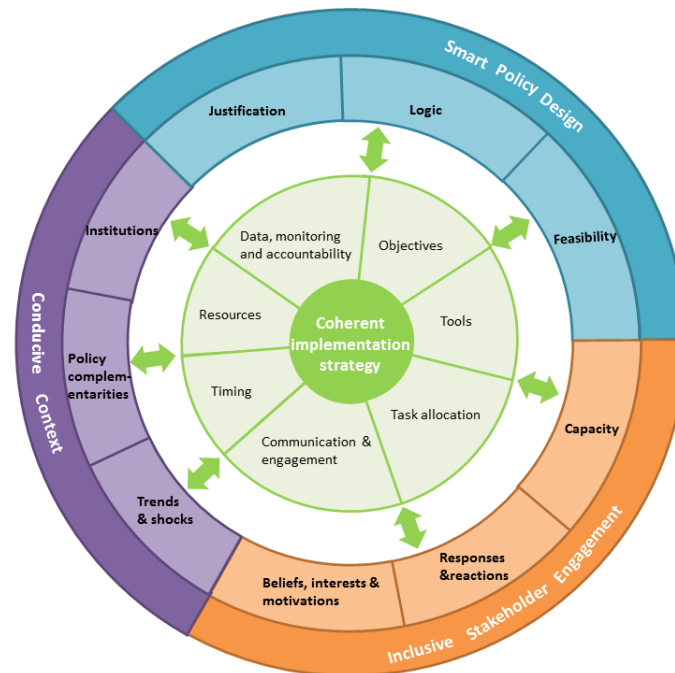
*“The reality is that many good ideas get stuck in the process of policy implementation. Governments are under pressure to deliver results in education services while ensuring that citizens’ tax dollars are spent wisely and effectively. They set ambitious reform agendas and develop strategic plans to achieve them. But in my conversations with education ministers around the world, **the challenges they most commonly cite are ...about how reforms can be put into practice successfully.**”*

A. Schleicher, OECD Director for Education and Skills, in *World Class: How to build a 21st-century school system* (2018) Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/4789264300002-en>

What does the OECD mean by education policy implementation?

Education policy implementation means different things to different people, and has different terms to refer to it: implementation, realisation, delivery, effective change, among others. Based on the literature and on the OECD's work with countries, in education policy implementation we consider the *process that aims to translate specific policy objectives into educational change*.

A generic framework for effective education policy implementation



Source: Viennet, R. and B. Pont (2017), "Education policy implementation: A literature review and proposed framework", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 162, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/fc467a64-en>.

As illustrated in the framework above, four dimensions contribute to effective education policy implementation:



Developing and pursuing coherent implementation strategies



Designing a smart policy that is justified, logical, feasible and adapted to the context



Engaging all key stakeholders in the policy process



Ensuring a conducive context for the policy

What can the OECD offer to support implementation efforts?

Building on this framework, the OECD Implementing Education Policies team offers *tailored support for countries and jurisdictions* to help them achieve success in the *implementation of their education reforms*. Support can be provided on topics the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills has comparative expertise in, including (but not limited to): *introducing new curricula, developing schools as learning organisations, school improvement, school evaluation* and *building educational leadership capacity*.

The Implementing Education Policies support programme consists of three complementary strands of work:

Policy Assessments

Our Policy Assessments take stock of reforms, policies, and change strategies. The resulting publication consists of an analysis of their strengths and challenges, and provides concrete recommendations for enhancing policy coherence and implementation.

Strategic Advice

Strategic advice is provided to education stakeholders and tailored to the needs of countries and jurisdictions. It can consist of reviewing policy documents (e.g. white papers or action plans), contributing to strategic meetings, or facilitating the development of tools that support the implementation of specific policies.

Implementation Seminars

Implementation seminars can be organised to engage and build the capacity of stakeholders in the development or review of policy documents and action plans.

In addition, the findings and lessons learned from the implementation support are analysed by the OECD and can be developed into *case studies* to enrich OECD's knowledge base. They can be disseminated through various means, including peer-learning seminars or in the Education Policy Outlook.

Examples of our work

Our most recent work has consisted in tailored country reviews with an implementation focus, and related policy support activities in the form of Policy Assessments, Strategic Advice and Implementation Seminars. All publications for previous work are available on OECD iLibrary (<https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/>) or upon request.



The Welsh Education Reform Journey (2017)



Wales Schools as Learning Organisations (2017-2018)



Implementing the competence development model for schools in Norway (2018-19)



Reviewing the Senior Cycle in Ireland (2018-2019)



Visit our website:

www.oecd.org/education/implementing-policies

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