

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT FOR THE OECD-TOHOKU SCHOOL

Background

On 11 March 2011, an earthquake of a magnitude of 9 hit the northeast part, the Tohoku Region, of Japan. It was the strongest ever recorded in Japan and triggered the country's worst disaster of the post-war era. The earthquake was followed by massive tsunamis and the nuclear power disaster. There was an enormous loss of life and many people were affected by this tragedy. The Secretary General of the OECD, Mr. Angel Gurría, [visited Japan](#) about one month after the Great East Japan Earthquake, and he expressed the OECD's commitment to support Japan's recovery/reconstruction efforts. Since then, the OECD's Directorate for Education has continuously provided support. Examples include:

- Swiftly preparing a collection of education policy responses to natural disasters from other OECD countries stricken by natural disasters.
- Preparing a [video](#) to accompany the Japanese edition of "Strong performers and successful reformers in education" that captures important reform efforts in the face of the impact of the Great Earthquake of East Japan.
- Launching the [OECD/Tohoku School](#) towards "creative recovery", in close collaboration with the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEXT) and local stakeholders from the affected regions.

The OECD places a high value on student motivation, curiosity and creativity. The Tohoku School takes a project-based learning approach, which is found to be a great motivator. The mission of the project assigned to the students in the Tohoku School is:

To organise an international event in Paris in 2014 to appeal to the world the attractiveness and creative recovery of their region and of their country.

By organising this event, students will develop valuable competencies and skills and create new hope for the future of their region and their country.

The ultimate goal is to revitalise the region through creative education. The Tohoku School is the embodiment of what creative education can do to revitalise the region with new values and creative visions.

Three strands of opportunities

The OECD Tohoku School offers its students with ample opportunities to:

1. Take initiatives and collaborate

Project-based learning is used to best engage students. To accomplish the assigned mission, students will encounter real-life tasks, which will encourage them to take initiatives and oblige them to collaborate and work in team.

2. Learn from the process

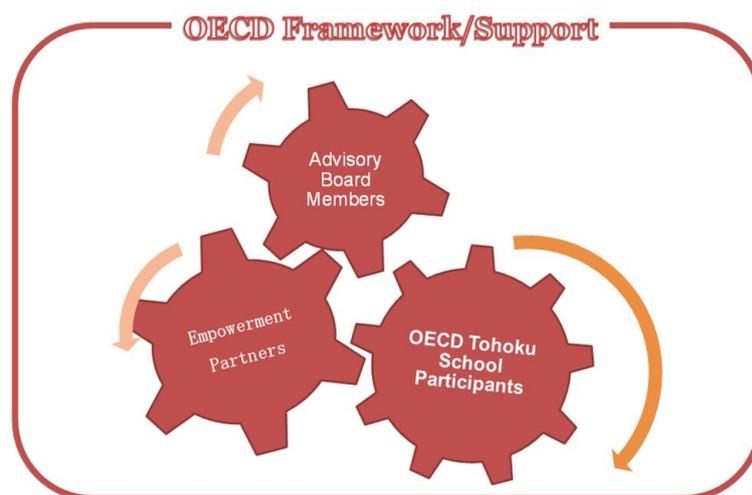
During the process of organising the event, students will learn to develop such competencies and skills as leadership, critical thinking, negotiation and co-operation, creativity and international awareness. These are aligned with the OECD framework of key competencies required for 21st century.

3. Think about the future

Students will be given opportunities to think for themselves about the future: themselves, their family, their community, their region, Tohoku, and their country, Japan. This will help empower the Tohoku region and its communities by building capacity for local policy making and implementation.

Three engines of the Tohoku School within an OECD Framework

The Tohoku School will be mainly driven by three engines within the OECD Framework/Support.



1. Participants – themselves

Students participating in the Tohoku School are at the main driver of the Tohoku School. They are the scenario writers of the story line that they will present at the event in 2014, directors of the activities that they will show at the event and actors themselves in which they will play the key role in the event.

The venue of the event is tentatively scheduled at the OECD Headquarters, however, it is up to participants if they wish to try to organise the event elsewhere Paris. The venue will also depend on whether the budget can be met. The number of “grass-root ambassadors” that will come to Paris for the event is tentatively set at 100. However, it is up to participants if they wish to scale up/down, considering the budgets they are able to raise. The content and style of the event (*i.e.*, what to present and how to present) will be determined by the participants. They will learn to suggest ideas, negotiate and come to a consensus.

2. Empowerment Partners

When people meet and become friends, they create positive energy and power. The Tohoku School will bring these people together to share their knowledge, skills, experiences and social capital. They can be children, adults and the elderly who are willing to share what they have, what they think and what they do. They can be friends, mentors, advisors, learners, mail/pen pals, etc.

3. Advisory Board Members

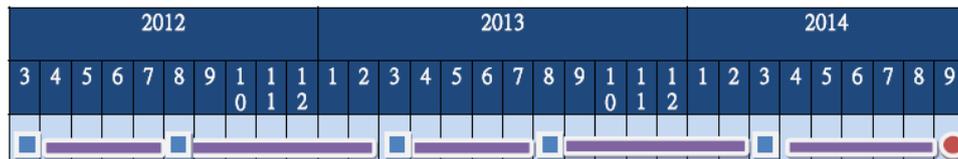
The Tohoku School is an embodiment of a "Community School" that is unique in meeting the local community needs and contexts, while responding to global community needs and contexts. To this end, the Advisory Board acts as a "bridge" between the Tohoku region, other parts of the country and the OECD. The board consists of representatives with various backgrounds, such as school principals/teachers, university sector, business sector, parental organisations, etc.

The OECD Framework/Support

The OECD is expected to add value (AV) in 4 areas, stressing its 3 core principles (CP).

- AV 1: Share the research base on education theories and practices: The OECD will define the conceptual framework for the Tohoku School curriculum.
- AV2: Introduce examples from other country: The OECD will introduce leading examples of education system/practices from other countries.
- AV3: Reinforce an interdisciplinary approach: The OECD will bring together the education sector and the industry/business sector to help work towards the recovery of the Tohoku region, drawing on the OECD's strength in interdisciplinary approaches.
- AV 4: Internationalise: The OECD will provide opportunities for the students of Tohoku to stretch the imagination and go beyond their comfort zone to come up with a vision that connects Tohoku with the rest of the world.
- CP 1: Scale up good initiatives: The OECD will set out a framework which aligns similar initiatives and efforts to establish news values and will create critical mass towards creative recovery.
- CP 2: Support autonomy and independency: The OECD will encourage communities to avoid inviting "dependency" on aides/support and invest in youth who will learn to be independent and lead the communities towards creative recovery.
- CP3: Mobilise knowledge and social capital: The OECD will connect individuals to facilitate empowerment and sharing of knowledge and social capital.

Project timeline



2012-2014: Intensive Workshops will be organised 5 times

- ❖ Participants will meet at the workshops, jointly organised by the OECD, Ministry of Education, the advisory board of the OECD Tohoku School, and the hosting region.



2012-14: Weekend workshops will be organised 5 times

- ❖ Participants will meet separately, depending on the region they come from (Miyagi, Iwate, Fukushima). Local leaders will organise the weekend workshops.
- ❖ For each period, assignments will be given in order to continue to work on the preparation for the event in 2014.



2014: Events in Paris to promote Tohoku/Japan