Introduction

The year 2001 marks both the conclusion of PISA 2000 and the beginning of PISA 2003. A group of non-member countries is also implementing an additional PISA 2000 data collection, referred to as PISA Plus.

This newsletter provides information on progress in PISA, upcoming activities and a summary of recent meetings.

PISA 2000

PISA has been successfully implemented in all of the participating countries, with the cleaning and analysis of the data sets a priority among the Consortium’s activities since August 2000.

The OECD Secretariat is now working with the Board of Participating Countries towards the preparation of the first international report, scheduled to be released in December 2001. Similarly, participating countries are cooperating on the development of national reports. All countries have already received their national data sets and are currently in the process of analysing them within the context of their national dissemination strategy.

PISA Plus

In response to an increasing interest of non-OECD member countries in joining PISA, a second round of PISA 2000 is taking place in the following group of countries: Albania, Argentina, Bulgaria, Chile, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Israel, Lithuania, Peru, Romania and Thailand.

PISA Plus will be implemented in a three-year cycle with the first results expected at the end of 2002. PISA Plus will be a replication of PISA 2000 using the same design and the same instruments, providing the same set of indicators and comparable results, while using a new timeline to accommodate additional interested countries.

PISA 2003

PISA 2003 represents the second survey cycle of PISA. New elements include an assessment of problem solving competencies as part of the cross-curricular aspects of PISA. Some aspects from the cross-curricular domain such as self-regulated learning and computer familiarity were already implemented in PISA 2000. Additionally, some options are under consideration, namely the assessment of reading as a foreign language and a longitudinal component to assess the transition from school to work (PISA-L).

A first meeting of National Project Managers for PISA 2003 took place in February 2001 and an initial draft of the assessment frameworks has been in circulation since March 2001.

Proficiency Scales

PISA will report outcomes in terms of proficiency scales in reading, mathematics and science, in order to ensure that the performance scores are interpretable in policy terms. The development of the PISA proficiency scales for reading included two broad phases [doc. BPC(2001)6].
The first phase consisted of the actual development of the scales. This took place in several steps: i) the identification of possible scales based on the theory underlying the domain; ii) the assignment of items to the scales; iii) an expert analysis of each item iv) the analysis of the field trial data; v) the definition of the dimensions using information coming from steps iii) and iv); vi) the development of descriptions to the proficiency levels; vii) the revision of these results with the main study data; and finally, viii) the validation process.

The second phase of the process was more technical with the purpose of identifying cut-points for the levels, develop a description of the students at each level and understand the meaning of their distribution amongst the levels.

PISA 2000 will describe reading literacy in three sub-scales based on the aspects (process) dimension of the framework. The first reading sub-scale relates to retrieving information and describes the aspect of the framework associated with the identification of a specific piece of information for personal or educational purposes. The second reading sub-scale relates to interpreting information, which is related to the aspects of forming a broad understanding and developing an interpretation. The third reading sub-scale relates to reflecting on information based on the aspects of reflecting on the content and on the form of a text. This involves drawing on knowledge, ideas or attitudes external to the text in order to relate the new information provided within the text to one’s own conceptual and experimental frames of reference.

In mathematics, a single described scale will be reported. The definitions for each level consider two aspects of mathematical literacy: i) the kind and degree of interpretation and reflection that is required; and ii) the kind and level of mathematical skill that is required ranging from single-step problems requiring students to reproduce basic mathematical facts and single computations to multi-step problems involving more advanced mathematical knowledge and complex decision-making, information processing, and problem-solving skills.

Scientific literacy will also be presented through a single described scale based on the four processes described in the framework: i) understanding of science concepts; ii) understanding the nature of scientific investigation; iii) using scientific evidence; and iv) communicating scientific descriptions or arguments.

Reading, as the major domain, will present sub-scales reported through levels of proficiency, including a description of the levels and percentage of students in each of these. The identification of cut-points to identify the levels will be left for when mathematics and science will become major domains.

The Initial Report

A detailed outline of the initial report for PISA 2000 was prepared and will be further developed after the BPC meeting in April [doc. BPC(2001)1]. The outline is organised in five chapters.

The purpose of the first chapter is to describe and provide general information about the programme. The second chapter will present the achievement results based on the described proficiency scales. It will show how these results relate to gender and characteristics of students, such as motivation and engagement, students learning strategies, self-concept, and familiarity with computers. The third chapter will

Upcoming Meetings

18-20 April 2001
10th Meeting of the Board of Participating Countries
Paris, France

23-25 April 2001
Network C Meeting
Dublin, Ireland

30 April – 16 May 2001
Workshop on PISA National Reports
Salzburg, Austria

21-22 May 2001
2nd Meeting of the Mathematics Forum (PISA 2003)
Lisbon, Portugal

23 May 2001
Questionnaire Meeting (PISA 2003)
Lisbon, Portugal

24-25 May 2001
Meeting of National Project Managers (PISA 2000)

9-11 July 2001
Mathematics Expert Group Meeting
Dublin, Ireland

12-14 July 2001
Problem Solving Expert Group Meeting
Dublin, Ireland

16-18 July 2001
11th Meeting of the Board of Participating Countries
To be defined

20-22 July 2001
Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group
To be defined
focus on the relationship between the outcomes and additional characteristics of students and schools, including students’ home background, and their home and school environment. The fourth chapter relies on multivariate analysis to describe the interaction between students’ performance and background variables. Chapter five will summarise the findings and address the major policy concerns. The outline also includes a series of indicators, some to be included in the printed form of the report and others to be available in electronic form for further reference.

Extended Workshop on National Reports

The OECD, in co-operation with Prof. Doug Willms and the Austrian national PISA centre, are organising a three-week workshop for national analysts. It will be held in Salzburg, Austria from 30 April to 16 May 2001 with the aim to:

- Assist countries in the analysis of national PISA data, with an emphasis on producing a set of tables and figures constituting the core of two or three chapters on the national reports.
- Provide participants with the methodological background for the estimation of school effects, the application of multilevel statistical techniques, and other important technical aspects of PISA, including the use of plausible values and sample design weights.
- Assist countries in identifying ways to convey relevant findings.

The workshop will be a “hands-on” experience where participants will work with their own national data. Lectures will make up 25 per cent of the programme with the remaining 75 per cent consisting of guided tutorial following techniques on hierarchical linear models. For additional information or registration to this extended workshop, please contact Ms. Lucy Whyte (Tel.: +33(0) 1 4524 1897, e-mail: lucy.WHYTE@oecd.org).

Summary from Previous Meetings

The Mathematics Forum Meeting

The first meeting of the Mathematics Forum for PISA 2003 was held in Berlin on 4-5 December 2000. This meeting:

- Established a stronger link between consortium-based and national expertise.
- Discussed the development work that was proposed to respond to evaluations of the PISA 2000 mathematics framework.
- Reviewed the proposed structure and orientation of the mathematics framework.
- Reviewed and discussed mechanisms and guidelines for item submission and review.

Following a presentation on the mathematics framework, the forum members commented on i) its orientation and ii) its structure and organisation. In addition, members also discussed general issues such as calculator use, the role of context, authenticity and double digit coding.

The outcomes from that meeting were implemented in a second draft, which was sent to the members for review at the end of January 2001, which in turn fed into a further revised version sent to the BPC in March 2001 [doc. BPC(2001)7].

The Dissemination Meeting

The first meeting of national reports for PISA 2000 was held in Berlin on 6-7 December 2000. It was attended by 49 delegates from 24 countries. The meeting:

- Reviewed the international dissemination strategy developed by the PISA Board of Participating Countries (BPC) and discussed the orientation, content and organisation of the international reports planned for PISA 2000.
- Shared ideas on the development of PISA national reports and determined the content and scope of international data products that could support countries in disseminating the results from PISA 2000.
- Reviewed the PISA questionnaires and their analytic potential.
- Reviewed the procedures and timelines for the validation and release of national and international data sets and the development of reports and publications.

PISA 2000 National Project Manager’s Meeting

The fourth meeting of national project managers for PISA 2000 was held in Rome on 11-14 December 2000. In that meeting, countries:

- Reviewed the development of the reading, mathematics and science described proficiency scales.
- Reviewed the item characteristics.
- Discussed the construction of the proposed derived variables from the questionnaires.
- Reviewed the outcomes of the rater reliability studies.
- Reviewed the outcomes of the School Quality Monitoring.
- Held sampling and data interviews.

Subject Matter Expert Group Meetings

The subject matter expert groups met in Brussels in February 2001 to finalise the described proficiency scales and to identify a set of items from PISA 2000 to be publicly released. The mathematics and problem-solving groups also worked on finalising the framework for PISA 2003.
PISA 2003 National Project Manager’s Meeting
The first meeting of national project managers for PISA 2003 was held in Brussels on 26-28 February 2001. In addition to the PISA 2000 participating countries, other attendees included representatives from the Slovak Republic and Turkey as well as those PISA Plus countries that also intend to join PISA 2003. The meeting:

- Presented the frameworks for PISA 2003, including the new domain of problem solving.
- Informed countries about the item submission guidelines and timelines.
- Introduced the test design, technical standards, translation and quality procedure of PISA 2003.
- Discussed policy issues to be addressed by the questionnaires.
- Presented a proposal for the possible reading in a foreign language international option.
- Considered country responses, concerns and suggestions on the proposal.
- Discussed possible modifications to the proposal and their resource implications.
- Explored the level of country interest in the project.
- Considered the main features of a proposal developed by an international consortium in response to OECD’s call for tender OECD/DEELSA/SID/BPC(2000) 5A and its cost implications.

A three-day training workshop on data analysis for PISA 2000 followed the meeting addressing the issues of scaling, weighting, variance estimation, and multilevel modelling.

Meeting on the PISA-Longitudinal as an international option
A meeting of interested countries in the longitudinal component of PISA on transition from school to work was held on 6-7 March 2001 in Paris. The meeting:

- Reviewed the potential of a longitudinal component of PISA for policy development.
- Considered the main features of a proposal developed by an international consortium in response to OECD’s call for tender OECD/DEELSA/SID/BPC(2000) 5A and its cost implications.
- Considered country responses, concerns and suggestions on the proposal.
- Discussed possible modifications to the proposal and their resource implications.
- Explored the level of country interest in the project.
- Considered the timeline for the further development and implementation of the longitudinal option at national and international levels.

This meeting was attended by delegates from Australia, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey. The Chinese Administrative Region of Hong Kong participated as an observer.

Contacts
OECD Secretariat
The principal contact for PISA at the OECD is Mr. Andreas Schleicher. He can be reached by e-mail at Andreas.SCHLEICHER@OECD.org or by telephone on +33 1 45 24 93 66.

Mrs. Claudia Tamassia works on the PISA project at the OECD. She can be contacted at the e-mail address Claudia.TAMASSIA@OECD.org or by telephone on +33 1 45 24 19 03.

Ms. Juliet Evans provides administrative assistance for PISA at the OECD. She can be reached by e-mail at Juliet.EVANS@OECD.org or by telephone on +33 1 45 24 99 94.

PISA Project Consortium
The principal contact person for the PISA Project Consortium is the Project Director, Mr. Ray Adams. He can be contacted at the following e-mail address Adams@acer.edu.au or by telephone at: +61 3 9277 5604. Questions or comments for the consortium can also be sent to pisa@acer.edu.au.

Electronic Information
Additional information concerning the PISA project can be found on its homepage www.pisa.oecd.org.

Contributions: We welcome your input for future issues of this newsletter. If you have information that you would like to share with other participants in the project, please contact Claudia Tamassia (Claudia.TAMASSIA@OECD.org).