



OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes

WHY IS EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT A POLICY PRIORITY?

Schools are at the core of the education system and lay the foundation for many other social, economic and education outcomes. Societies typically expect schools to enable each and every child to reach their full educational potential, delivering a high average performance while taking into account the needs of all students whatever their ability. This puts governments under pressure to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of the school system.

Schools are increasingly judged on the basis of learning outcomes, including the capacity of students to apply knowledge and skills in key subject areas and to analyse, reason and communicate effectively as they pose, solve and interpret problems in a variety of situations. Societies also often expect schools to deliver other “softer” outcomes such as working co-operatively, and instil values such as respect and good citizenship.

Information is critical to knowing whether the school system is delivering good performance and to providing feedback for improvement. Countries use a range of techniques for the evaluation and assessment of students, teachers, schools and education systems. Many countries test samples and/or all students at key points, and sometimes follow students over time. International assessments such as PISA provide additional information and useful external comparators. Some also use inspection services to evaluate teachers and/or schools and teacher evaluation is becoming more widely used. Each approach involves a range of stakeholders: students, parents, teachers, school authorities, employers and policy makers.

But among stakeholders, tensions can arise over how evaluation and assessment techniques can, and should, be used. Some see them primarily as tools to encourage teachers and schools to improve. For others, their main purpose is to support accountability or steer the allocation of resources.

THE OECD CAN PROVIDE POLICY ADVICE ON EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS

Many countries already use a range of evaluation and assessment approaches. However, they often face a challenge in bringing these different elements together into a coherent and comprehensive strategy, within which each element is fit for the purpose it is used and contributes effectively to improving learning outcomes. Countries can also face difficulties during implementation: building support among stakeholders, designing instruments, putting them in place efficiently, adapting them on the basis of experience, and so forth.

The OECD provides a setting where governments can compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, and identify and share good practices in this area. This project is designed to help countries assess:

- How to ensure that the different evaluation and assessment techniques fit together effectively in a coherent strategy for improving school outcomes and for securing accountability
- How to ensure that procedures and instruments are “fit for purpose”: that they adapt to the level assessed, adjust to actors involved and are coherent with policy objectives
- How to strengthen the use of evaluation and assessment results to improve learning outcomes

To improve school outcomes, the framework needs to be not only well-designed but also successfully implemented. This can only be done if stakeholders are fully engaged and if an investment is made in building the capacity and competencies necessary to use evaluation and assessment results effectively.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

This project is carried out by the Directorate for Education, overseen by the Group of National Experts on Evaluation and Assessment, and combines international comparative analysis and country reviews. Both dimensions are complementary: comparative analysis is used for the country reviews and the findings of the country reviews will feed back into the comparative analysis. In both dimensions, the project draws on other OECD work in education, including the regular work of INES, PISA and TALIS, previous work on evaluation and assessment policies and relevant country-specific projects.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The analytic phase will review the current state of knowledge and evidence on evaluation and assessment approaches and collect additional information from countries on current policies and practices. It will also bring countries together to share their expertise and experience in developing the analytical approach and to probe the policy dimensions in depth. A set of policy analysis tools will be developed to guide country reviews.

After the completion of country reviews, a synthesis phase will draw out the key lessons for policy makers and policy options available to countries to improve the effectiveness of evaluation and assessment frameworks.

This comparative analysis is designed to engage and provide value for all countries, whether or not they decide to undertake a country review.

COUNTRY REVIEWS

This dimension is designed to support countries in analysing their evaluation and assessment frameworks and identifying areas for improvement. For each country review, the OECD will analyse the strengths and weaknesses of current policies and practices and identify any significant gaps, drawing on the policy analysis tools developed during the comparative analysis phase. Each country review will include a country visit to examine the system and meet with stakeholders. The OECD will prepare a short report proposing priority actions for improving the evaluation and assessment framework.

OUTPUTS

The project will produce a set of outputs designed to assist policy making, including:

- A summary of knowledge and evidence on evaluation and assessment approaches, a stock-take of current policies and practices and policy analysis tools for analysing individual country practices
- Short country reports presenting the results of the country reviews and proposing priority actions for improving the country's evaluation and assessment framework
- A comparative report that will draw out the key lessons for policy makers and policy options available to countries to improve the effectiveness of evaluation and assessment frameworks
- Spotlight reports – a customised summary of the comparative report that puts the country in the spotlight (for a number of countries)

FURTHER READING AND WHO TO CONTACT

Further details are available from the website dedicated to the Review:
www.oecd.org/edu/evaluationpolicy.

For further information, contact the project leader, Paulo Santiago, paulo.santiago@oecd.org.