



OECD Education Ministerial Meeting Investing in Human and Social Capital: New Challenges

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Chair's Summary

Chair: Ms. Claudia Schmied, Federal Minister for Education, the Arts and Culture, Austria

Vice-Chair: Mr. Alonso Lujambio, Secretary of Public Education, Mexico

Vice-Chair: The Honourable Anne Tolley, Minister of Education, New Zealand

INTRODUCTION

Austria had the pleasure of chairing the OECD Education Ministerial Meeting 2010, in collaboration with New Zealand and Mexico as vice-chairs, which focused on the theme: *Investing in Human and Social Capital: New Challenges*. We welcomed the global nature of this meeting with 38 countries represented, including 32 member countries and the European Commission, the Accession candidate countries (Estonia and Russian Federation), two of the Enhanced engagement countries (Indonesia and South Africa), as well as Egypt, Romania and representatives from UNESCO and Council of Europe.

We also benefited from consultations with representatives from business and industry (BIAC), trade unions (TUAC) and input from civil society through an online ideas marketplace called *Raise Your Hand* and an OECD Education Policy Forum.

The overarching theme of the OECD Education Ministerial Meeting was the vital role education and training systems play in our respective countries in preparing our future societies and economies. Education and training are fundamental for economic recovery.

Education and training continue to fuel the engine of social mobility and contribute to social cohesion and integration in our ever more diverse societies and cultures. Equipping our education systems with the best schools and the best teachers will require innovative policies and clear public governance accompanied by a culture of responsibility. Continuous and broad reform efforts will be necessary to maximise education's capacity to foster the human and social capital needed today and tomorrow.

During the OECD Education Ministerial Meeting 2010 we discussed four of the main challenges ahead:

1. Tackling the effects of the crisis on education
2. Matching skills to new needs
3. Equipping effective teachers for the 21st century
4. Reinforcing the social benefits of education

a) What are the main issues?

We discussed the implications of the crisis for education and training systems in their respective countries and exchanged views on ways to improve equity and efficiency.

We recognised that sustainable economic recovery and social progress rests upon maintaining adequate levels of investment in education and training, while making continuous efforts to improve the effective use of limited resources and to encourage innovation.

We also explored the long-term effects of the social crisis, caused by youth unemployment, on aspiration levels, motivation and learning attitudes. Basic education is the basis for future life. We have to ensure that no child and no adult is left behind.

b) What have we learned?

More than ever education has to be seen as an investment and as a driver of long-term growth and social cohesion. We need more and better skilled people to ensure future prosperity in our increasingly global and diverse societies.

Solid comparative evidence on outcomes is among the best ways to justify continued public investments in education. Education is a public good.

c) What can we do?

We agreed we have to do better to prevent failure and dropout and we have to address youth unemployment. We cannot afford to waste any of our human capital potential.

We must start early, take a lifelong approach and should concentrate on key competencies. Teachers are the key.

Business as usual is not enough to increase effectiveness and efficiency: we have to use the crisis as an opportunity to introduce transformation and innovation with higher standards and better assessment. We have seen good examples of how stimulus spending has accelerated educational reform and increased the capacity and quality of education systems.

Continuing international dialogue and collaboration is extremely useful in the search for better solutions. We have to concentrate on better public governance of the education system. We should strengthen the autonomy and the responsibility of school leaders. Schools need a climate of trust.

2. MATCHING SKILLS TO NEW NEEDS

a) What are the main issues?

Education and training systems need to develop competent, connected and active lifelong learners who can respond effectively to unpredicted needs to succeed in a world of rapid technological, social and organisational change.

Basic competencies, self-confidence and an entrepreneurial approach to new challenges are of great importance.

b) What have we learned?

We recognised that getting the right skills is crucial for the ongoing prosperity of both individuals and societies. Forecasting future skill demands is difficult, especially in a rapidly changing economy with a high level of uncertainty.

We emphasised the importance of taking a lifecycle approach in designing policy responses to the challenges of building, developing and constantly improving skills and competencies for our societies.

Success depends both on effective early intervention on the one hand, and ensuring equity and access to further learning, on the other.

We agreed to keep a focus on high standards in foundation skills and emphasised the need for an appropriate balance between professional and job specific skills and generic skills, such as entrepreneurship, creativity and communication, and skills that are developed by young people outside the formal system.

Governance structures and incentive systems must ensure that all actors and institutions involved in education and the labour market work effectively together and adapt efficiently to changing needs.

c) What can we do?

We need a 'whole of government' approach and 'whole of education' perspective to also engage employers and to address skills development for the future labour market.

We recognised the need for appropriate policy measures to:

- Develop effective mechanisms for gathering knowledge about emerging needs for skills and efficiently translating this into the content of instruction;
- Prepare motivated, engaged learners who can successfully meet the unforeseen challenges of tomorrow;
- Establish a strong coalition of governments, businesses, and social partners who can foster motivation, innovation and resources to make lifelong learning a reality;
- Improve career counseling to support learners;
- Anticipate future developments via innovation, creativity and confidence.

a) What are the main issues?

Teachers are the key professionals in our education system. When they succeed, our students are effective and motivated learners. We need to give teachers and school leaders the tools and support they need to do their job well.

b) What have we learned?

The world has become more complex, the student population has become more diverse; teachers face ever increasing expectations while respect for the profession may be falling.

The challenge is how to develop the whole teaching profession to work together effectively.

Several countries pointed to the difficulty of attracting those with the right mix of skills and personality into the teaching profession. We saw the need to raise the status and esteem of teachers. Part of the answer may be salaries, raising teacher entry standards and greater professional recognition. We should create opportunities for teachers' career development (e.g. head teachers, tutors for new teachers) and should boost teaching quality by evaluation.

Many of us face challenges in shifting our teacher education and continuing professional development programmes towards developing the competencies that teachers need in today's classrooms, including intercultural learning.

c) What can we do?

We need more focus on high quality teacher training and professional development, particularly in initial teacher training, teacher induction and early teaching support.

We also need to focus our teacher selection on attracting the best to the teaching profession.

It is essential that an appropriate system of accreditation and continuing regular evaluation is in place to provide teachers with the feedback they need to improve throughout their career. This system needs to take into account teachers' needs, students' progress and wider stakeholder interests. On the job training is important. Results of research should be applied in the teaching practice. We need more team work in and between schools and leadership at schools.

Teachers have to educate for employability and have to convey values of our civil society to students.

a) What are the main issues?

The economic recession has a social dimension, reflected in rising unemployment, especially among young people, affecting not only material living conditions but also the broader well-being and quality of life of many people. In tackling these effects, education plays an important role.

Recent research has improved our understanding of how education not only produces human capital, but also contributes to wider social benefits. Human capital and social capital interact in improving not only labour market outcomes, but also health, civic participation, political engagement, trust and tolerance.

Well-designed educational policy interventions focusing on cognitive and non-cognitive skills, values and attitudes are necessary to significantly improve the impact of education.

b) What have we learned?

The benefits of education go beyond the economic returns to individuals and societies, contributing also to better health, citizenship, lower crime rates, more trust and tolerance.

Education has not yet realized its full potential for everyone and therefore there are still significant inequalities in educational outcomes. Migration, especially in urban areas, continues to pose challenges to schools – but also many opportunities that come with greater diversity.

c) What can we do?

Literacy and foundation skills should be reinforced. At the same time, non-cognitive skills such as creativity, critical thinking, problem solving and team work are important for both economic and social outcomes. We have to take responsibility for children with special needs or learners requiring tailored support.

The best contribution education can make in helping to tackle societies' many problems is to better fulfil its core mission. Here too, we need to work together and adopt a 'whole-of-government' approach.

We recognize the urgent need to address inequality of opportunity and equity issues and to reinforce the capacity of education systems to deliver on their goals.

We also underlined the need to improve our understanding of education's impact on the social aspects of modern life and welcome the OECD's continuing work in this field.

Parents, families and communities should be more involved in everyday school life.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

We recognized the diversity of education systems across the world while reaffirming the value of international policy dialogue and reliable international comparative data on education systems and learning outcomes, such as those provided by the OECD.

We welcomed the opportunity to engage in frank, open and constructive discussions which enrich our own experience and knowledge within the OECD setting.

We appreciate the OECD's plans to explore public governance and management of the education system and the ways that reforms are implemented in different countries.

I would like to conclude my summary by expressing my deep appreciation for the contribution of the Vice-Chairs from New Zealand and Mexico to achieving a successful outcome and by commending the Secretariat for their commitment and support.