

Yan Wang *Editor*

Education Policy Reform Trends in G20 Members

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Yan Wang

Department of International Cooperation

National Institute of Education Sciences

Beijing, People's Republic of China

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Foreword

Education is a cornerstone that has a decisive impact on the destiny of individuals; educational policy making therefore directly impacts the development of states. As the Chinese saying goes, “stones from other hills may serve to polish jade”. In the context of education policy, many nations have increasingly looked to others’ experiences as these can reveal alternative approaches and strategies that can be applied to solve their own specific problems.

Like other G20 members, China has a significant population; providing its children with quality, sustainable education is a formidable challenge. Rapid economic, technological, and social progress is making this challenge even more complex. Policies need to be continually reformed in order to modernize old traditions, create dynamic new teaching methods, and respond to various emerging issues. Thus, reform itself becomes a learning process: we learn from past successes and disappointments, from grassroots experiences, and from other nations. Today, with increasing globalization, policy makers are taking an instrumental approach; they are seeking inspiration from other countries and collaborating with their counterparts in order to explore solutions to be found in policy studies and reforms. Reform, like learning, is no longer undertaken in isolation.

It is for this reason that, when my colleague Wang Yan told me that she wanted to question multinational experts in order to design a policy study, I gave her my full support. I was convinced that this would be of substantial benefit to China as well as many other countries. I proposed using a structured approach so as to ensure the comparability of the information gathered. This was to be generated by the following questions: What major education policies have been developed in recent years? What are the scope, objectives, and assumptions underpinning these reforms? What was the impact of the reforms? What trends will guide reform in the future? I was fully aware that it would not be easy to obtain responses to this information request, but, to my delight, 19 G20 member experts, all of whom are highly accomplished in the field of education policy in their own economy both from an academic and a practical point of view, accepted our invitation. Thanks to their contribution, *Education Policy Reform Trends in G20 Members* is totally innovative: not only does it distil lessons learned in the field of G20 education reform, but it also serves

as an authoritative analysis of key issues on the subject as there were respondents from every continent.

This publication explores issues relating to equity and the quality of education as well as different strategies and means to resolve a range of challenges. The various approaches stem from political, economic, and social contexts that differ considerably from one country to another. Nevertheless, it is evident that the drive to modernize education systems and to update educational theory, concern over student learning, and demand for skill development all prove to be common trends. I believe that *Education Policy Reform Trends in G20 Members* will inspire and guide policy makers, researchers, and practitioners alike. Consequently, it should contribute to improving the quality of education and thereby bring progress and prosperity to many. Stones from other hills can, and will, serve to polish jade.

Former President, National Institute of Education Sciences of China
Vice-President, Chinese Society of Education
Beijing, China

Zhenguo Yuan

Foreword

Wealth and individual well-being, in turn, depend on nothing more than on what people know and what they can do with what they know. There is no shortcut to equipping people with the right skills and to providing people with the right opportunities to use their skills effectively. And if there's one lesson the global economy has taught policy-makers over the last few years, it's that we cannot simply bail ourselves out of a crisis, that we cannot solely stimulate ourselves out of a crisis and that we cannot just print money our way out of a crisis. Instead, in today's world economy, education and skills are the driving forces for progress. Investing in high-quality education will thus be the key for improving the economic and social well-being of people around the world.

It may therefore seem surprising that there has been no systematic effort yet to analyse and compare the educational policies and practices among the G20 members. *Education Policy Reform Trends in G20 Members* provides an invaluable resource to fill this gap. It reviews major policy trends in each of the G20 members, analyses the rationale and policy imperative of intended and implemented policies as well as their impact and provides an outlook of the future direction of travel.

The volume combines careful attention to the very different political, economic and social contexts in which the G20 education systems operate, on the one hand, with a comparative perspective that facilitates peer learning across countries, on the other. What makes the volume also unique is that many of its chapters extend beyond the remit of traditional educational institutions, seeing education as everybody's business. The volume thus provides a unique instrument for policy makers, researchers, business leaders and practitioners alike to evaluate current policy experiences, to explore new policy options and to build better and more efficient and effective educational systems.

It is important for G20 members to develop the knowledge and skills needed in the twenty-first century, to allocate resources in education effectively to support social and economic development, and to offer everyone the chance to make the most of their skills at every stage of their life when they advance from the largest economies to economies offering their citizens the highest and most sustainable

economic and social well-being. This volume, hopefully, would contribute to such process of transition.

The volume was prepared by the National Institute of Educational Sciences of China, under the resourceful and inspiring direction of Dr. Wang Yan. To support the authentic analysis, each of the chapters draws on contributions from leading specialists in each of the G20 Members with first-hand expertise in educational policy and practice.

Deputy Director for Education and Skills
Special Advisor on Education Policy
to the OECD's Secretary-General
Paris, France

Andreas Schleicher

Preface

Research and learning have at least one aspect in common – both are a means used to acquire knowledge. In my view, they always enhance each other. When China, like many other countries in the world, looks increasingly toward other countries to seek inspiration and learn from their lessons, international comparison becomes an indispensable part of most significant studies. Having worked in policy analysis for years, I was thus curious to know how policies were made in various countries during the rapidly changing times of the past decade. Nonetheless, I failed to locate any systematic analysis of recent policy developments in the major developed and developing nations in the world even after painstaking search. That is why I embarked on this international comparative study of education policies. It turned to be a journey of discovery.

The focus of the study was finally set on the G20, which represents 80 % of the GDP and two-thirds of the world population. To obtain an “insider” perspective of policy reform trends, experts from G20 economies were invited to contribute chapters on the topic. All the authors are specialists with accomplished expertise in policy studies and first-hand experiences in policy making, thus could offer valuable insights into the developments of the past couple of decades among G20 members. A compilation of their responses would be a useful reference tool for policy-makers, researchers, and educators and also point to global education trends on policy-making.

Education reforms are always interwoven with, if not driven by, economic and political changes. Therefore, Part I highlights the education reforms in the recently changing economic and political fabric. The ideological context changes, such as from democratization to meritocracy in France, entail certain changes in how the curriculum is presented, how learning is organized, and even how schooling is structured. Intended or not, all these changes inevitably impact the construction and implementation of the value system, social equity, and economic well-being.

The past decade has also witnessed a dramatic reform in education governance in many countries, and typical examples are presented in Part II. Some countries, like Italy, shifted from a state monopoly to the rise of a system of schools; others have striven to improve the efficiency of the system by persistent endeavors of

decentralization. Yet, both have had to reconcile the principles and acts of decentralization with centralization. Meanwhile, reinforcing autonomy and strengthening accountability, especially by benchmarking, has been a central theme in many countries.

Notably, changing policy paradigms features education reforms in other nations elaborated in Part III. In a federal country, such as Australia, emerging national partnerships and agreements have changed the landscape of education dramatically. The new policy paradigms, such as those transforming the philosophy and aim of educational delivery, have played a key role in translating reform endeavors into results. Such changes are in many cases accompanied by a shift in upper-level developmental strategies, such as the need for a “coherent national strategy for human capital development” (in Saudi Arabia) and a “strive for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth” (in the EU).

Whatever approach will finally fall on the ground of changes in the education systems, the fundamental tasks of the education reform. Part IV narrates typical cases of education system reforms, such as incremental steps to more responsibility and efficiency in an expanding system in Germany. These reforms, either accomplished by reinforcing upper secondary education to build new paths for young people or by improving school trajectories, all revolve around the dual motifs of quality and equity. Yet, in spite of many similarities, every nation must take a unique path that suits its specific requirements. In a stable system such as that found in Canada, quality was seen being attributable to external factors as far as a desired social safety net, whereas in China, the education progress was highlighted for its strategy of building equity into the national basic policy for the livelihood of all the people.

It is noteworthy that this type of study warrants a reliable conceptual framework to thread the stories together from different contexts. Yet, sticking to any framework too strictly might be at the cost of both diversity and originality. Thus, this study has adopted a basic framework that incorporates five key questions: What major policy reforms have been developed? What were the assumptions underpinning these policies? What are the impacts of the reforms? What lessons have been learned? What are the future trends? While all the chapters are largely based on these questions, both originality and diversity in analysis and presentation have been maintained to produce a fuller picture of the educational reforms taken in different countries.

When undertaking a research publication of this sort, it is essential to have a supervisor who is knowledgeable and ready to open new paths to explore. Professor Yuan assumed this role perfectly. Not only did I have his full support in launching the project, but he also extended invitations to the authors and patiently answered all my queries throughout the entire process. He also contributed the chapter on China.

I am indebted to the reviewers, including Ali Alhakami, Andreas Schleicher, Harry A. Patrinos, Eduardo Velez Bustillo, George Psacharopoulos, Dwight Allen, Min Bista, Jee-Peng Tan, Robert J Tierney, Betsy Brown Ruzzi, Mary Stiasny, Manal Quota, Liliana Pascual, Alain Mingat, Martin Gustafsson, Christoph Wulf, Cristina Pinna, Michael Teutsch, and Oliver Rey. Their insights and suggestions have significantly improved the quality of the chapters.

I thank my colleagues, Shen Yubiao, He Mei, Ding Xiaona, Shengxia, and all those who participated in discussions on the conceptualization of the publication and contributed their ideas and inspired the process. Among others, Shen suggested the scope of G20 when the study originally had focused on the major developed and developing nations. My thanks also go to Guo Xiaoying, who provided much-appreciated administrative assistance during the preparation of this publication.

Last but not least, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my husband, Shiming, for his unwavering support of my academic pursuits, and to Shuchen, my young son, who allowed his mother to work over many weekends and holidays instead of accompanying him. Without their support, I would never have been able to complete this work.

Beijing, China

Yan Wang

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Part I
Education Reform in Social
and Political Changes

Russia: Evolutional Changes Against Revolutionary Upheavals

Nikolay D. Nikandrov

Abstract This chapter analyzes the process of education reform in Russia since the disintegration of the Soviet Union with an emphasis on what has happened since 2000. It is argued that the innovative changes in the 1990s were burdened with challenges and problems. They will only be put right if financing education is kept stable and gradually increased and if evolutionary change is accepted as general practice with no more revolutionary upheavals.

Keywords Challenges • Educational reform • Evolutionary change • Innovation • Stable finance • Russia

Over 20 years ago the Soviet Union ceased to exist as a state. It happened in law or, rather, technically on December 21, 1991. The author belongs to most people in today's Russia who deeply regret the disintegration of the great power though being conscious of many things that had to be done to improve the situation in the country and avoid the tragedy.

Since then, an unprecedented sequence of changes in education followed – as elsewhere and everywhere. In fact, this can be said about the twentieth century as a whole and about many countries. Special mention is due to the reform of education announced in the Soviet Union in 1984. Viewed from the present, its importance was in admitting that “the best education system in the world” (the official point of view at that time which I partly share) does need to be changed in several aspects. By the time M. Gorbachev left power in 1991, it was clear that the “reform itself had to be reformed” as many people said and wrote then. What was important, however, is that while reforming education in the Soviet Union occurred peacefully and without changes in the political structure, the reforms that followed

N.D. Nikandrov (✉)
Russian Academy of Education, Moscow, Russia
e-mail: president_rao@mail.ru

were initiated by the people whose declared aim was to change the whole political and social fabric of the country. A detailed and thorough analysis of educational reforms in Russia and the Peoples' Republic of China has been performed by a team of Chinese and Russian academics (Россия Китай 2007). While drawing on and agreeing with the main conclusions of the volume mentioned, this chapter will give a synoptical view of the reforms in Russian education since about the year 2000 up to the present and beyond.

It is worthwhile to mention that educational changes in Russia after the collapse of the USSR were initiated by two very important documents. In July 1991, President B. Yeltsin signed Decree No.1 ("Ukaz" in Russia) on priority measures for educational development (Указ 1991) and a year later the Law on Education was adopted. Both documents made history in Russian education though most measures and norms were proclaimed with a clear understanding that the economy at that time could not support them. In fact, some of them are not realized even now like the requirement that teachers' salary should be equal to the average salary in the industry and the university teachers should get twice as much. But it was good propaganda since both documents were clear indication that those in power consider education as a priority.

1 Pro and Contra

Before passing on to the reform results, it should be emphasized that none of the changes were unanimously and enthusiastically supported. As the first Russian Minister of Education Edward Dneprov puts it, there have been reforms, counter-reforms and pseudo (would-be) reforms (Dneprov 1994). In fact, this way of things can be observed in all spheres of life and in many countries, and the very terms were not coined by the man. He belongs to the most radical-minded people in Russian education who at that time wanted to do away with much of the practice of the Soviet education and in part succeeded in doing so. One other thing to be emphasized is that many changes had begun in the whole social structure of the state and education just followed suit. President M. Gorbachev had put up the slogans of openness ("glasnost") and pluralism. In education that meant so much that it is the first change to be mentioned and evaluated below. In the part that follows, several significant changes in education will be discussed in a similar way: what was the plan, what happened later, what we have now, and what we are planning to do next.

2 Ideology and Education

There is no doubt that the pressure of political ideology on all aspects of life in the Soviet Union was particularly strong. Suffice it to say what it meant in practical terms for education and culture. In fact, it meant that whatever in the contents of

education and culture was considered inappropriate for the Soviet citizens to know and/or discuss was excluded from it. So one could know a whole list of flaws in the philosophical writings of “bourgeois” philosophers like Hegel, Kant, or Sartre without having read a single article by them. Or one could give a very low assessment of some work of art (be it music or painting or literature or anything else) without really having heard or seen or read the work of art itself.

Prominent among the pieces of cultural heritage were jazz music, abstract painting, and various dances which were forbidden. Not to burden the writing with numerous examples, let us limit ourselves to a few. In 1974, “the bulldozer exhibition” of avant-garde nonconformist painters was forcefully destroyed in Moscow, the name calling the instrument actually used to flatten many paintings, while some painters were arrested. People who liked the Beatles music could only enjoy it with hand made low-quality recordings. Dances like rock’n’roll or boogie-woogie could only be learned in small private dance schools but not in larger state-run schools which were quite numerous. People who had a rare possibility to travel abroad had their luggage searched while returning to the Soviet Union to forbid some “anti-Soviet” printed matter from entering the country. Personally the author of the article has little love for abstract painting and admits that all this had a positive side, too, while people knew classical works of art much better than it is the case now. But still there was very limited intellectual and spiritual freedom which was certainly felt by many.

All this began to change under Gorbachev and still more radically under Yeltsin. The monopoly of the Communist Party in matters of culture and education was abolished, while everything which had been forbidden for reasons of ideology was gradually brought to light. Institutions of learning and culture became places of open discussion, content of school and university education was no more dictated by ideological preferences, and teachers and students received much more freedom to teach and learn whatever they chose.

This was certainly a positive development though it was also a challenge. Textbooks, especially in the humanities, were written depending on the authors’ understanding of what is fact and what is fiction. So students of history in a school classroom learned from a textbook that J. Stalin was a genius and brought the Soviet Union to victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945; he was helped by talented generals and brave soldiers. In another classroom of the same school, another teacher using another textbook taught his/her students that J. Stalin was just a dictator, the victory was achieved by immense loss of human life, the generals knew little about military strategy and tactics, and the soldiers were driven to attack solely by fear of brutal repression. If in the Soviet Union there were just a few history textbooks with strict ideological coordination of the content taught, there were more than 60 textbooks at the beginning of this century.

It is to be admitted that finding the balance in recent history is no easy matter especially while the archives were just very slowly made public and very selectively, too. And some of them that shed light on developments prior to or just after World War II are top secret here in Russia and abroad. Of course some of them are really too sensitive to be ever made public. Just another example of the difficulty is “Operation Unthinkable” which was released from the top secret

category in Great Britain at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Reynolds 2006). It is a well-documented story about the plan of the British Cabinet to attack Russia just after Germany was defeated—on July 1, 1945. The plans developed under the supervision of W. Churchill and supported by the American President did not materialize because the planners convinced their superiors that there was little chance of success considering the military and political situation of the time. So what would a teacher of history emphasize in his/her lessons – the close cooperation of the USSR and the Western allies or the preparation of World War III by the latter?

Nowadays, the situation is changing. Special commissions of the two state academies – the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Russian Academy of Education – are to give expert opinions on scientific content and pedagogy of all textbooks that are approved for schools. As always this is criticized from several points of view. Some people call it a hidden form of censorship which is specifically forbidden by the Russian Constitution (article 29). Others insist upon still stricter control being necessary while there are many cases where ideological preferences overrun scientific facts. Still others write complaints to officials and organizations insisting on something being included into or excluded from school curricula.

As head of one of the commissions, I see the difficulties quite clearly and understand why the progress is slow and uncertain. The reason is not in the field of education but in the wider social and economic context. Getting rid of the ideological pressure of the Soviet times was not accompanied by any other system of values which would include values of education and culture acceptable for most people though much is said about the importance of both. As a result, a whole generation of young people grew up with the understanding that money is the only thing that matters and that market ideology will put everything right – and not only in the field of economics. As elsewhere in countries with transition economies, this led to a decline in morals admitted by most people including professional sociologists. A recent analysis of the morality of the young in today's Russia is presented in a short yet informative article by Batchikov and Kara-Murza (2011). The very title of the article is in fact a synopsis of its content: “Chaotic reforms, cultural trauma and pathology of consciousness,” while the whole situation is called catastrophic. I am not that pessimistic though I view it as very serious. I would say that success of reforms in the Peoples Republic of China as I understand them is partly explained by clever balance of tradition and innovation. The explanation is certainly not new and can be easily found in the important volume prepared together by Russian and Chinese experts that has already been mentioned above (Россия Китай 2007). Here, it is perhaps important to recall that too much hope in the market economy endangering the economy itself as well as the morals of the society was criticized by successful capitalists themselves. For example, the book by G. Soros “The Crisis of Global Capitalism: Open Society Endangered” (Сорос 1999) shows this quite well and was translated into Russian at a very opportune moment.

3 Access and Quality

Much has been done as far as access to education is concerned. At the end of the Soviet period, there were about 600 institutions of higher education which were all run by the state. Now there are more than 3,000 universities and university level institutions, though the population of Russia is just half of the USSR population. With over 400 students per 10,000 population, we have surpassed most countries of the world. True, all Soviet institutions of higher education had programs of 5 years or more. Now we go over to the system in which most students will end their university life with a 4-year bachelor's degree and many experts are not happy about this. Still access to higher education has never been that large.

Perhaps the greatest public interest, as far as entering universities is concerned, is the debate on how school-leavers become university students. Since 2009, the all-Russia/unified state examination (national standard examination) is the standard procedure which is similar to those in many countries. The idea is to check the knowledge and skills of school-leavers by a set of written tests which are the same all over the country and administered on the same day by independent commissions. This is a stark contrast with former oral examinations administered by schools and universities themselves. Though Russia has been experimenting with this procedure since 2001, there are many people who oppose it for several reasons. One of them is that this sort of checking knowledge leaves other aspects unnoticed and not evaluated, creativity being one of them. But in practical terms, a more important reason is that intricate techniques of swindling combining corruption and use of modern information technologies result in scandals all over the country. This is yet another example of the criticism of the wider public and a substantial part of the expert community contrasting the staunch position of those in power who are for the procedure. My understanding is that this exam is a good way to get a general assessment of school-leavers' achievement but it is less reliable as the sole criterion for admitting to the university.

As everywhere growth in quantity (in the USSR there were slightly over five million university students, now there are about nine million in Russia alone) is accompanied by problems of sustaining good quality. Motivation to get higher education is steadily rising after the slump of the 1990s. At that time the whole way of life seemed to show that getting an education is not worthwhile for it takes much time and gives little reward. But now university teachers complain about many school-leavers' poor knowledge, still poorer skills and study habits. Accordingly, the Russian President ordered the Ministry of Education and Science to monitor institutions of higher education to check out the ineffective ones. Nobody seemed to oppose the monitoring but the criteria and the swiftness of the procedure called forth massive criticism on the part of university teachers and rectors (presidents). Though as many as 50 indications were demanded of the universities to make judgment, they included those that had always been criticized by the academics, one of them being the cumulative result of the foregoing unified state examination characteristic of the students who entered this or that university. As a result some classical universities as well as some

universities of fine arts were labeled by the Ministry as “having symptoms of ineffectiveness.” The ensuing criticism and sometimes students’ protests led to milder pronouncements and the exclusion of some universities from the list. But the procedure itself will be continued with the declared aim to improve some of the ineffective universities while closing the worst ones. There is at least one point of almost general consent – the understanding that there are too many universities and their affiliations with very poor quality of education.

If access to higher education is certainly the most disputable issue as far as access to education in a wider sense of the word is concerned, there is another problem of interest. In the Soviet period about 80 % of all preschool children went to kindergartens or even earlier level of the creche (maternity school). With the general income of the people slowly rising, most parents prefer to keep their children at home till about the age of three when they could go to kindergartens or similar preschool groups. Since the slump in the 1990s, we have not yet reestablished the network of preschool institutions, though most educationists and most parents agree that even medium-quality kindergartens prepare children for school better than an average family. In fact, it was the low-income argument that stimulated people to send children to kindergartens in the Soviet times. But the Soviet experience was used by the whole world to let women have better career possibilities and better prepare children for school. So many countries now surpass Russia in the percentage of children going to preschool institutions, while for us it is very often a difficult problem to send a child to a kindergarten and parents have to line up for it. Some measures are taken to alleviate the problem and my estimates are optimistic.

In schools of general education, there is another problem – that of school quality. In earlier days children went to school closest to their homes. Rare exceptions were cases of corrective schools for handicapped children and so-called schools “with a bias” (schools with advanced programs of foreign languages, mathematics, physics, biology etc.). Since *the 1992 Law on Education* was adopted, parents have the right to choose schools, and by way of personal contacts and the Internet, better schools are sought. At times of enrollment, it often comes to quarrels in front of the school doors. It is yet another example when an achievement (the right for choice) is coupled with a problem (not all schools are considered “good”). So nowadays schools are obliged to take in children who live in the school area and only then other cases should be considered. In Moscow and some other cities, there is a recent experience with using the Internet for enrolling children in schools with the possibility that the procedure will be used elsewhere.

Strict control of school and university curricula of the Soviet days is now gone. However, the problem of what to teach not only remains but is exacerbated by the newly acquired freedom of choice. As far as universities are concerned, the debate is usually limited to the professional community of university teachers and scientists. However, school curricula have really become a national issue, and since the beginning of the 1990s, the work on national school standards has been going on. At the very beginning it was limited to the content of school education. Since around 2000, the efforts were gradually being shifted to a wider scope of problems. By a 2007 amendment to *the Law on Education* (and since 1992 there have been dozens

of amendments), the national educational standard is a set of three provisions (requirements): the structure of the basic program of education (including an explicit list of the subjects to be taught), the level of student achievement, and the conditions of learning (quality of school buildings, salary of teachers and teaching load, use of advanced technologies). This wider understanding of education standards is also kept in the new *Law on Education* in the Russian Federation adopted in 2012 and signed by President V. Putin on January 5, 2013. The *Law* is to be implemented beginning with September 1, 2013.

The standards for primary and basic school levels have already been adopted and are gradually introduced in schools. The complete secondary education standard (11 years of study now) has been very hotly debated. The most important point of disagreement is how much the new school should keep from the previous days. In my understanding complete break of traditional values and practices is dangerous and destructive. Since the new standard of upper school levels is to be introduced all over the country by 2020 only, there is still time to think and to experiment the standard adopted by the Minister for Education and Science, A. Fursenko, shortly before he left office being the basis, for this discussion.

4 Management and Finance

Education management and finance are so closely interwoven that they can and should be discussed together. A well-known drawback of the Soviet education was a very high degree of centralization. In fact, this was a positive feature in the transition period of the 1920s and 1930s because of the vast territory of the country and stiff resistance to change. It also helped during the immense stress of the war of 1941–1945 and the restoration after it. But it all changed later. The rigidity of the system left little space for creativity of teachers and students as well as for introducing regional features. So the two keywords of the change in educational management at the beginning of the 1990s were decentralization and democratization. That meant giving more administrative powers to lower levels of management including educational institutions themselves and more independence in expenditure. The particular features were embodied in the text of the 1992 *Law on Education*. They are in line with the practices of other countries and are of no special interest.

More important is the issue of finance. Contrary to the decree No. 1 by B. Yeltsin and the 1992 *Law on Education* financing education in the 1990s was very poor. The time was marked by low wages of all workers of education and sometimes by no wages at all for several months. This is why teachers' strikes were then more frequent than other workers' strikes. Compared to those times, there has been a noticeable increase in educational expenses though even now they are about 4 % of the gross domestic product (GDP). Still some innovations were introduced (or at least proclaimed) and partly adhered to. Instead of strict itemizing of budgetary spending, schools were to be financed in gross with greater flexibility and

independence. Schools were allowed to take fees for some extracurricular activities and for education services for people who did not belong to these schools. The money earned could then be used to increase teachers' salaries and develop material resources. Some measures were taken to make teachers' wages dependent on the quality of their work. Unfortunately at that time those were mostly good wishes so these measures are being introduced now with slight variations. The general idea is that "money should follow students." This means that schools have to compete to enroll more students than others, and this is actually applied now.

Another innovative idea (innovative as compared with the Soviet model) was involving parents and sponsors to finance education. The USSR was justly proud of all education being free of charge; short-term courses like tailoring or car-driving were rare exceptions. Since 1990, there exist in Russia thousands of non-government (private) schools, colleges, universities, and other educational institutions. Still more often a part – sometimes a substantial part – of student body in the state-run institutions pay tuition fees.

Since about the same time, there exists the provision that the content of education within the limits of the state standard should be financed by the state, while the parents or older students themselves should only pay for what exceeds this limit. However, until now it was rather rarely the case when private schools did receive the money. Sometimes educational authorities are short of money. It happens, too, that the richer schools prefer not to take money from the state because of stricter accounting when money is allotted from state budgets. But there is strong pressure now to make the provision work. It is partly explained by the demographic pattern. Because of dwindling population there are fewer potential students so less money can be earned as tuition fees. In this situation money allotted by the state becomes more attractive. Many rectors (presidents) of state and private universities have apprehensions that the transition to 3 or 4-year bachelor's and 5 or 6-year master's programs will mean decline in educational spending. There have been many statements to the contrary from the authorities at various levels and I believe in their good intentions. But I think only real practice will show if the intentions come to real money.

5 Socialization and Upbringing

The aforementioned changes (and there have been many more) are of the sort that some achievements are naturally (though unfortunately) coupled with challenges and flaws. Nonetheless, there is an aspect where I would say we have almost failed in Russia. This is socialization or inclusion of the young (and not very young) into the newly formed social, economic, and cultural fabric of life. It was considered of special importance in the Soviet Union but the system of values was quite different from that of the present. Getting rid of the former system of values presented difficulties of two sorts. First, some of the values were dropped not because they were intrinsically bad but because they were specifically valued in the Soviet system, because they were "too Soviet." A good example is patriotism, which was one of

the objectives of education in the Soviet Union and was made a derogatory word by those who came to power in 1991. In the same vein, coordination and mutual assistance gave way to criticism and competition, collectivism was converted to individualism, and cultural values were supplanted by material and monetary gains. This brought about more crime especially among the young people and other societal and economic problems.

There is little doubt that education alone cannot be made responsible for this. Unfortunately, the content of socialization in its wide sense has the same message which has been analyzed in detail elsewhere (Запесоцкий 2008; Никандров 2000). The whole message of the media, posters, banners, leaflets, and advertisements which people find in their post creates a distorted and unattractive image of Russia. With the many drawbacks we have in Russia, it is not that bad but the image forms the mentality of the people.

The other thing of importance is that violence of all sorts, sex in all possible ways, and propaganda of material success, which is reached no matter how, fill the TV and radio broadcasts with understandable influence on the young. This is not to say that parents, educationists, or ordinary people do not understand all that. But on the one hand, the Russian constitution specifically forbids censorship, and any attempt to lessen the number of violence and sex images on the TV screen can be interpreted as censorship. On the other hand, such films and broadcasts bring the most money to TV and other media. The Internet is also full of that stuff. So there have been several attempts to set up supervisory boards which would help to settle the problem, but they all failed. I hope there will be a gradual shift for the better because my personal observations and available statistics show that the situation in Russia in this respect is more serious than in other countries.

As it stands though, the system of education has to cope with the problems presented by the media rather than rely on their help in the process of socialization. In several articles and a report presented at the joint session of all the Russian state academies of sciences, I tried to highlight the messages that are collectively carried by the mass media in present-day Russia (Никандров 2007; Никандров 2010). Though some people in this country may disagree, the report was supported by the session and I will sum up the messages in several statements:

1. The negative or evil ideas and deeds take the upper hand in the world and should consequently be emphasized in the media.
2. Our world is the world of violence of all sorts (physical, military, sexual, psychological).
3. The basic (sexual) instinct seems to be the basis of everything. It is difficult to distinguish between the “normal” and “too much of”, but many observations support the idea that in quantity and the openness with which corresponding visual material is shown in Russia we overrun the whole planet.
4. The cult of the dolce vita (literally “sweet life” in Italian), material success in general and money in particular is natural and necessary, the teaching of “reasonable needs” is an aftermath of the communist times, higher (spiritual) needs are explained either by stupidity or poverty.

5. Market rules the world not only in economy, but also in overall relations of man to man for everything can be bought and sold.
6. Competition and rivalry for profit and resources are natural; mutual help and altruism are exceptions proper to very few freaks or saints, the basic principle being “taking all from life.”
7. The Russian authorities at all levels of government do not take care of the people and are highly corrupt. They were better in the 1990s (i.e., when we strictly followed the US lead in everything – N. Nikandrov).
8. The Russian army, police, and the law-enforcing agencies in general are against the people, cruel, and corrupt.
9. Civil patriotism was possible in the past (e.g., in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945), but now it is impossible because of the relations between the people and those in power.
10. The rights and freedoms of man in Russia are not adequately defended and are purposefully violated by the powers and by the people towards each other, which happens more often than in “civilized,” that is, Western countries.
11. The high dignitaries in the Russian orthodox church were tarnished themselves by their collaboration with the state security authorities in the past, while now by the unashamed use of their special position for purposes of material gains.
12. The development of Russia is extremely low.
13. There are insurmountable contradictions and conflicts between the countries of the Union of Independent States which are called for by the events of the Russian history of earlier days.
14. The Russian authorities are ineffective through being split. There is conflict between the federal and the regional authorities, among the various branches of power as well as in the Putin–Medvedev tandem.

No doubt clever choice of text and visual material (and there is many of both) will produce support for these statements, as for anything else. And – again no doubt – there is also much TV and other media content to support a more balanced view of Russia. But for various reasons, the balance is mostly on the negative side if the number of images, number of repetitions, and their proximity to prime time is considered. This produces excessive anxiety in the people while persons with phobia and other similar psychological problems are more affected.

Apart from the aforementioned joint session of the academies of sciences, I had chances to speak about all this in both houses of the Federal Assembly (the Russian Parliament). I am optimistic because similar pronouncements are made by President V. Putin, Prime Minister D. Medvedev, and other important figures who take decisions. Optimistic, too, because the newly adopted *the Law on Education* in the Russian Federation signed by V. Putin on January 5, 2013 specifically mentions socialization for the first time in Russian law-making practice. Nevertheless, the overall pattern of the socialization which is no less important than education proper is unfavorable for the mentality and behavioral patterns of the young Russian citizens and the necessary changes are yet to come.

6 Other Hopes for the Future

Summing it all up, we can certainly mention important achievements in the sphere of education though they are all coupled with challenges. There is much more freedom in the society and choice in education – but it is often misused. Access to education has never been so easy – but it entails poor quality in many institutions of education. Teachers are free to experiment with the content and methods of education – but the teaching load is too high and some teachers leave schools for better salaries and less stress. There are many moves by educational authorities to change things for the better – but teachers and specialists in education are not always consulted. There is accountability of schools and competition among them to get more and better students – but it does not always help to maintain social justice. People demand good quality of education – but that means more lessons, more study, and poorer student health. Monitoring quality of education is important and necessary – but the principles, methods, and the practice itself are hotly debated and severely criticized.

The educational and state authorities of Russia are certainly conscious of all the abovementioned problems. They are also conscious of much disappointment in the society about all this. So pronouncements about the importance of education are common for all government officials at all levels up to the very top and not only at times of approaching elections. Issues of education also take priority places in various documents adopted at the highest (presidential and governmental) levels for the period till about 2020. In May 2012, the last part of the school standard was adopted and, as already mentioned, the new *Law on Education* in the Russian Federation was signed by the President. Analyzing the all-important document, we can come to several provisions which give an idea of general trends in educational development for the coming years.

The *Law* took several years to be worked out and passed through a very intricate system of debates and corrections. The number of suggestions made by professionals and ordinary citizens amounted to many thousands which is in itself unprecedented. Much of the discussion in the Duma (the lower house of the Russian parliament) was understandably highly politicized for two reasons. First, education does concern everyone in the country. Consequently, second, it is a good chance to make (or lose) points in election campaigns and there have been several including the presidential and the parliamentary let alone the regional and local ones. So in practical terms, the *Law* could not have been made short or consensus-based. In fact, it is almost five times longer than the previous version of 1992 with all the corrections and reference articles of the latter. Some important provisions are there and will uphold social and quality elements in the educational fabric of the country. Some changes while being seemingly formal make a real difference – and not always for the better. Just one example to illustrate the thesis: The new *Law on Education* omits the term “basic professional education” which denotes training factory workers in schools of vocational education. The argument is that now we need fewer workers with only basic training, and this level is to be absorbed by the higher level of the “secondary professional education.” Since the Russian

Constitution stipulates that “basic professional education” is free of charge but “secondary professional education” is not, many poorer students who have some support from the state like free board and lodging may at least for the time being lose the support.

It has many times been repeated that the practice of most education being free of charge is to be continued. Since the promise dates back to the very beginning of independent Russia (1992) and there has been widening practice of taking fees for all sorts of things in education, people do have apprehensions. Some of them are slogans of the political opposition but they are not unfounded. Up to now there have been elaborate strict financial and organizational rules and patterns for which services fees can be taken and how this is to be done. However, they are not strictly adhered to and people often complain that too much money has to be paid for too many things. The new *Law* puts some order into practice and contains specific provisions for the whole school system of education being free of charge within the limits of the federal state standard of 37 h/week.

As far as preschool education is concerned, the most important goal to achieve is to assure full access to it for all families who need and want it. This is to be achieved by 2016. Now just about 60 % children do go to all types of preschool institutions, and by the beginning of 2012/2013 school year, about two million children (or, rather, parents) lined up to get the service. The problem is so acute that special emphasis was made on it in the Ukaz (Decree) of President V. Putin “On the national strategy of action in the interests of children.” The Ukaz was signed on a symbolic day of June 1, 2012, the date being the International Children’s Day celebrated in many countries and just 3 weeks after Putin’s inauguration day. In the new *Law* preschool education is presented as one of its levels, alleviating fears of some people that the provision of preschool education, though reasonable in itself, will introduce a kind of final examination for the very young children.

The *Law* is important, too, for making certain the existing provisions of the new general education standards which are now gradually introduced into schools. As mentioned above what is within the limits of the standards is to be free of charge. This is why teachers and parents are closely watching what is being promised and done in this field. The present-day standards are a compromise between a wider content of education proposed by the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Education and a narrower content (which is understandably cheaper) proposed by another group. It is still more so with the standard of the upper secondary education (years 10 and 11 of the school program). My hope is that since the last mentioned standard is to be fully introduced by about 2020, there will be a bias towards wider education content. The immediate task is to monitor bringing education standards into school practice and introduce the corrections shown as necessary by the school practice. In 2012 the Russian Academy of Education instituted a Commission with the participation of the regional ministers of education to coordinate the procedure.

The government promises to put more money into education practice and the infrastructure of education. As far as the bulk of money and resources is measured, this is certainly true, and the growth in the latest years is greater than in some other

fields. This is the result of the growth of the GDP while the part of it allotted for education is stable and sometimes even dwindles. For example, in 2005 the GDP was 21,609 billion rubles, while it was 54,369 billion rubles in 2011. At the same time the percentage of the GDP spent on education was kept at about 4 % with very slight variations about the figure. The same is true about the “consolidated” budget (the sum total of all the money from the budgets of various levels). The schools of general education are financed mostly by the municipal budgets. This explains a very substantial difference among teachers’ salaries in various regions of Russia. Though some measures are taken to alleviate the problem, the average salary of a teacher in Moscow is 55,600 rubles (September, 2012), in the region of Orel 13,300, in the Altay region 12,300, etc. Steps are also taken to make teachers’ salaries more dependent on the quality of their work, but there is no consensus about how the quality is to be evaluated. The primary task now is still to raise teachers’ salaries to the average level of each particular region. The task is realistic and is sure to be achieved soon.

The *Law on Education* adds certainty to the very sensitive issue of finance in general and teachers’ salary in particular. The teachers’ status is also put up though they are not (as some people hoped) made “civil servants.” The issue of teachers becoming civil servants was being discussed since the beginning of the 2000s. My understanding of the problem is twofold. On the one hand, civil servants in the Russian terminology and practice get high salaries and sometimes higher bonuses of various sorts. However, they are less independent in their professional behavior and this is something the Russian teacher is getting more and more conscious of and accustomed to since the early 1990s.

Many experts foresee some trouble with the introduction of the normalized per capita approach to financing schools and universities. Seemingly this is the only logical way of action: the more students, the more money (“Money follows students”). Nonetheless, the practice of implementing the approach revealed problems. It is difficult to implement in rural schools where the task of teaching is no less demanding than in urban areas, while classes are smaller. The practice of restructuring and merging schools is not easy to implement because of large distances between townships and villages with poor transport and road facilities. And it has been shown that closing a school in a village most probably “closes” the village itself which merely disappears because younger people with children leave for other places with better educational facilities. Still steps are taken in this direction and computer/internet technologies help too.

In the latter respect, considerable progress has been made. All schools are now provided with computers and the Internet facilities. Sometimes this is the only way to make up-to-date knowledge and methods of teaching immediately available in far-off places. Using interactive electronic textbooks is also gaining strength. The new *Law on Education* introduces the practice of distant technologies in education. While they are already being used more widely, the law provision makes it possibility to get almost all education via distant technologies under the obligatory supervision and testing by the teachers.

The *Law* requires more attention to be paid to encourage the gifted students of all ages. Appropriate programs are adopted for gifted children and university students, grants are provided for them and their teachers. With the unified state examination as the main criterion of admission to higher education, the so-called “olympiads” (competitions among schoolchildren in various subjects) provide gifted children a chance to be encouraged for their specific abilities and achievement. Sometimes the success in the competitions overran the poorer results of the state examinations. No less important is provision for learners with special problems in education (physical, psychic or behavioral). The general idea is inclusive education as almost everywhere in the world. It is gaining strength even now, but this is the first time it is stipulated in law.

Important changes are ahead in the Russian higher education system. On the one hand, Russia is country No. 1 in the percentage of people with higher education diplomas (54 % while Canada is second with 51 % and Israel is third with 46 %). It should also be mentioned that most of them studied 5 years or more, whereas the majority of other countries’ diplomas are 4-year bachelor’s diplomas. But not all is that simple. The quality problem is quite real in many universities or university type institutions of higher education. It is acute in many non-government institutions but not only there.

The other problem is that of demography. There are too few school-leavers to fill the many existing university vacancies. And, last but not least, now most students will end their university life as bachelors with about 10 % of them continuing their course of study to become masters. The specialist 5-year programs which were paramount before will be an exception. All those changes considered, the plans are to close or restructure about 30 % universities by 2016.

It is also a benchmark to achieve that at least five Russian universities are among the first 100 in international rankings like that of Quacquarelli Symonds by about the same year. The QS ranking as other similar rankings place particular emphasis on research, number of teachers and students from abroad, and citations per faculty. Though many experts consider the “publish or perish” approach outdated, measures will be taken to raise the corresponding indicators in leading Russian universities including better financing.

Something must be done to improve teacher training. As it is now, just about 5–10 % graduates of teacher training institutions do become school teachers. Others find employment elsewhere. The solution is seen in making teacher training institutions part of better universities to enhance their training in the fields of their future school subjects. However, this may result in lowering their didactic and psychological preparedness which only time will show true or false. Some rectors (presidents) of teacher training institutions have also apprehensions that they will be “Cinderella” (low-placed servants) as part of larger universities. Hopefully the higher status of teachers (“education workers”) in the new *Law on Education* will help attract better students wishing to become teachers.

As mentioned above, higher education standards attract less public attention than those of general education. However, with the introduction of bachelor and

master degrees as levels of higher education working out, the hundreds of specialized standards will also present a serious practical task if not an altogether new problem.

An important feature in the changes to be implemented in the near future is more attention given to moral education. This was considered indispensable in the Soviet times and was all but forgotten in the 1990s. More often than not it is now discussed under the general heading of forming the identity of the citizens of Russia. It is now part of the educational standards at all levels. However, it is crucial at the level of general education (forms 1–11) and it took much time and effort by the Russian Academy of Education to make this happen. The hope for this change is unfortunately slightly eroded by very little progress in positive socialization, that is to say, making the young to adhere to a system of values of good citizenship. As it stands and as shown above, the general pattern of mass media and other socialization instruments working against rather than in cooperation with the education system is kept almost intact since the 1990s. Hopefully the newly formed Committee on Mass Media in the State Duma will have more success in cooperating with various levels and institutions of education in insuring positive socialization and better moral education (Дармодехин 2012). If not, the abovementioned message of the socialization pattern will produce still more harm.

With a lot of criticism on the part of some experts and interested citizens, I am still optimistic. It is very easy to say that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. But hopefully we have passed through difficult times in education not to lose the gains that have been achieved and mentioned above. What we do need is some time of evolutionary change rather than revolutionary upheavals, and in this respect there is a certain consensus in Russia.

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France: Permanence and Change

Marie Duru-Bellat

Abstract The chapter focuses on important evolutions of educational issues nested in a broader ideological and economic context in France since 2000. It first describe these changes, the transformation of the ideological context they reflect, and the new framework they set up for political issues and concrete reforms. Then it analyzes four main aspects of education reform: the growing individualistic perspective on education, the stress put on choice, the development of autonomy and decentralization, and the obsession with evaluation and benchmarking. Lastly, in conclusion, it discusses the anticipated reform trends in France in an ever-changing political context.

Keywords Educational policy • Expansion of coverage • Inclusion of lagging students • School choice • Selective processes • Social disparities • France

Within countries such as France, the State's responsibility for education has been firmly established for many years in a wide variety of political contexts, especially since the beginning of the twentieth century. This is because education is viewed as an important factor in both individual and societal development. The State's responsibility, in this respect, includes a myriad of dimensions, the two most important being a civic concern to educate citizens to participate effectively in public life and an economic concern to equip students with appropriate workplace skills. It could also be maintained that education is the main ideological means used to justify the remaining inequalities in democratic countries where individuals are considered as equal and education-based meritocracy is the rule. That would explain why, whatever the ideological changes, educational issues—especially expanding educational opportunities—have always been very important on political agendas.

M. Duru-Bellat (✉)

Sciences-Po (Paris Institute of Political Science), Paris, France

e-mail: marie.duru-bellat@wanadoo.fr

However, educational issues are nested in a broader ideological and economic context, and important evolutions have taken place, especially since 2000. In the first section, I will describe these changes, the transformation of the ideological context they reflect, and the new framework they set up for political issues and concrete reforms (for a deeper historical view, see Robert 2010; Duru-Bellat and van Zanten 2001). Then I will analyze four main directions in which this broad ideological climate is seen: the growing individualistic perspective on education, the stress put on choice, the development of autonomy and decentralization, and the obsession with evaluation and benchmarking. When empirical research is available, I will shed some light on the effects of these policies. Lastly, in conclusion, I will discuss the anticipated reform trends in France in an ever-changing political context.

1 The Transformation of the Ideological Context: From Democratization to Meritocracy

Until the end of the twentieth century, French education policies were dominated by the expansion and democratization of education in a global post-World War II European context. The general trend was to “go comprehensive,” i.e., unify schooling, especially at the lower-secondary level, both to increase the mean level of education and promote equal opportunity.

1.1 Expand and Unify to Achieve Democratization

In France, several institutional reforms occurred between 1959 and 1975 in order to unify the system of education. Older educational tracks (with vocational short tracks for the poorest pupils from age 14) were discontinued, and a common unified curriculum was made compulsory. In addition, any track selection was postponed to the end of the lower-secondary level (at age 15 or 16). However, it took some time (and subsequent acts) for this to be achieved, and it has only been mandatory for every French student to attend all 4 years of lower-secondary school since the 1980s. In any case, these acts did produce an initial wave of expansion in the number of students attending school (Duru-Bellat 2007, 2008). However, the strong social inequalities that French sociologists (such as Pierre Bourdieu) had denounced in the 1960s continued, especially at the end of lower-secondary school (“collège”) when students were tracked either toward upper-secondary schools (“lycée”) or toward vocational tracks, so that the inequalities were mostly shifted to a higher level.

Thus, a second wave of reforms was implemented in the late 1980s, both to increase the mean level of education and to try to reduce the gap between social groups in this respect. The easiest way to achieve this was to increase access to upper-secondary school, which was done; France has experienced a dramatic educational expansion since the 1960s. After a steady increase in the percentage

of students passing the “baccalauréat” (the exam at the end of secondary school, necessary for gaining access to tertiary education) from about 5 % in 1950 to 28 % in the early 1980s, the political objective of “80 % of a generation achieving the baccalauréat” was set in 1981. This goal gave the evolution a boost, and the figure rose rapidly to 55 % in 1993 and 63 % in 2005 (it has been stuck between 63 % and 65 % since around 2000).

Elevating the educational level of the younger generations was one of the main targets of the socialist government that took office in France in 1981. It was reiterated by all subsequent administrations, in spite of their various political leanings. Amazingly, the educational goals met a consensus seldom observed in this country in political matters. This is because it was grounded on the strong meritocratic foundation of French society, which gives central and legitimate importance to the diploma as a tool for shaping one’s life. Merit and the correlative issue of equality of opportunities were very central themes of Nicolas Sarkozy’s first presidential campaign (in 2007). This consensus concerning merit and education as a conveyor of social justice is also easily understandable because it matches the European discourse about the evolution toward the so-called knowledge economy. Moreover, and just as importantly, it meets the interests of all the actors in question. For the State, expanding education requires significant funds but has the advantage of keeping a mass of young people away from the job market (and thus from unemployment). Of course, teachers themselves are satisfied because this expansion enlarges their labor market and reinforces their influence in French society. For parents, it looks reassuring to have their children increasingly better educated so that they can cope with an uncertain future and job market. The same is true for employers, who are in favor of this expansion of public education since they did not pay anything for it. Thus, the “more education” policy has a large consensus, since no one can overtly go against increasing equality of opportunities.

This educational expansion has resulted in some democratization (Duru-Bellat and Kieffer 2001), but it has been achieved through the development of a variety of baccalauréats and tracks in the tertiary level (diversifying a “product” is one way to attract new customers). An example was the creation of the “baccalauréat professionnel” in 1985, which was created to give access to the baccalauréat-level education to students studying vocational tracks. These students are mostly from low socioeconomic backgrounds and have encountered difficulties in school early on, because these vocational tracks are considered as less demanding than general ones.

Today in France, about 23 % of each generation graduates with a tertiary degree equivalent to a Bachelor’s degree (i.e., 3 years of post-baccalauréat education) and 42 % graduates with a tertiary degree of some level. However, while France, according to the OECD, is among the top countries in terms of the number of tertiary students (South Korea and Canada have more), important social inequalities are still observed (Duru-Bellat 2007; see also OECD 2010). For example, among those students who entered lower-secondary school in 1995, 88 % of socially privileged students received the baccalauréat, compared to 41 % of students from least qualified working-class backgrounds. Moreover, educational inequalities are increasingly taking a qualitative form, with a growing trend toward some “social specialization” of the various tracks. Today, among those students who reach the last year of

upper-secondary school, about 40 % of socially privileged children follow the scientific track, compared to about 5 % of students from least qualified working-class backgrounds. The latter are much more likely to study vocational tracks. And since 1985, the development of the “baccalauréat professionnel” has been an important component of this “segregative democratization” (students from the lowest socioeconomic groups and with unemployed parents account for about 70 % of the students following this track).

Similarly, we are presently facing a segregative democratization at the tertiary level: the percentage of students from working-class backgrounds is increasing across the board, but in the meantime, their numbers in elite schools is remaining stable or is even slightly decreasing. Among those French children born between 1959 and 1968, about 21 % of upper-class children attended an elite school, compared to less than 1 % of working-class children. The most prestigious elite schools in France (e.g., polytechnic and HEC) are able to control (and restrict) the size of their student body, which they have done over the last decades, while French public universities are required to enroll all candidates, since the baccalauréat automatically gives a student the right to enter any track he or she desires. Thus, the democratization at that level has been “absorbed” by the universities.

In general, while we observed a generalized downward trend in the association between education and social origin (because the least advanced students are catching up with the most advanced) in France at the end of the twentieth century, this is compatible with remarkably stable (or even increasing) social inequality in transitions at more advanced stages of the educational system. And the differentiation that was implemented to boost expansion—e.g., the professional baccalauréat—has channeled these newcomers to higher secondary education into specific tracks. In the last 20 years, more children from disadvantaged families have received the baccalauréat, but they have been funneled into the new vocational tracks created at that level, thus diverted from the traditional general tracks. While there would be no sense in saying that the latter are of better value, one thing is sure: these tracks lead to tertiary education with higher chances of success, which in turn generally results in better opportunities on the job market.

1.2 A Shifting Stress to Equity

During the economic crisis of the 1980s, the ideals of the 1960s began to fade, and “going adaptable” (rather than “going comprehensive”) in education in order to face economic competition and boost employment progressively took priority on the agenda. This evolution itself was nested in the spreading global liberal climate and materialized notably in the “New Public Management” principles, which emphasized the individualization and efficiency of previously public goods. This broad trend was embedded in an overall evolution toward more individualism. It also possibly involved a certain resignation concerning the possibility of really reducing inequalities. If such was the case, it would be easier to focus on the reduction of the inequalities of opportunities between individuals rather than on structural inequalities.

In recent years, this is why equity, rather than equality, has been on the agenda more and more often. It is important to underline the meaning of this change, which is not only a semantic slide. Equity differs from equality since it implies the distinction between fair and unfair inequalities. That runs counter to the earlier conception of fairness in France, which has long been equated with sameness, i.e., catering to all the students in a strictly identical manner. Equity amounts to treating students in an unequal way precisely because they are unequal (especially because they face unequal starting conditions). In education, formal equality of treatment is unfair as long as there are “objective” inequalities between families. Thus, at school, some degree of “positive discrimination” (or “affirmative action,” notably allotting more resources to certain students) is legitimated in order to level the playground so that truly fair competition may take place. Thus, equity refers to the current concept of equality of opportunities, which is supposed to justify later inequalities in performance at school and rewards in adult life. Ultimately, some inequalities may be judged fair: whenever a child receives a chance, only his or her merit and effort will justify the result. The notion of equity suggests that we should not stick to the single notion of equality but rather should focus on the question of which inequalities we can consider fair: some inequalities of performance may be judged as fair, under some conditions, if the competition was fair or if equality of opportunities was secured. Following the North American model, the notion of “positive discrimination” is now widely accepted in Europe, while inequalities of achievement between students are often viewed with a certain fatalism; this is one of the notion’s downsides among the many that deserve some consideration (see Sect. 2.1).

2 Some Recent Policies and Some Hints as to Their Impact

2.1 An Individualistic Conception of Education

In France, the neoliberal approach to education has resulted in the increased stress placed on individual success and on the notion of merit (for a comprehensive discussion, see Duru-Bellat 2009). What is at stake then is the detection of brilliant students from lower socioeconomic statuses or ethnic minorities. Starting in 2007 (after the election of Nicolas Sarkozy as president of France), some specific “add-ons” have been offered to these students, such as extra lessons, boarding schools (“internats d’excellence”), and specific “merit grants”.

However, one might ask whether it is truly possible to detect merit. In France, as in most European countries (but to a lesser degree in northern Europe), social inequality of achievement is detected at a very early age, even before primary school. As early as 4 or 5 years old, the gap between children whose parents are mid- or upper-level professionals and those whose parents are unskilled manual workers is about 1.2 standard deviation gap (on the basis of cognitive and linguistic tests). These early cognitive inequalities, which can be tied to varied conditions of upbringing, have a determinative influence over achievement level in primary school, and

both preschool (“*école maternelle*”) and the first years of primary schooling prove insufficient in offsetting them. This is problematic, since it is impossible to detect “merit” if the playground was not level at the outset.

Later in life, these achievement inequalities tend to increase since a cumulative deficit process is generally in place. This is because a student’s academic achievement level at the start of the academic year at all school levels is the main factor responsible for the academic level at the end of the year. Just as prior achievement is linked to a student’s family characteristics, social inequality is “retranslated” into academic level. Nobody would dare, at such an early stage, consider that these achievement inequalities are the outcome of inequality of merit. During subsequent stages of the schooling career, inequalities continue to accumulate even more markedly (Duru-Bellat 2007). One reason for this is that the school organization at the secondary level provides more individual choices, and thus some families develop strategies to draw benefits from what appear to them to be advantageous opportunities. These range from the choice of some subjects, to educational track decisions, and even to the choice of the school itself. Here again, nobody would consider that these mainly strategic and distinctive choices have something to do with merit itself.

Starting in 2008, the overarching neoliberal climate and specific policies gave “deserving” students (those with high achievement levels and a disadvantaged background) more freedom to choose their own school, thus spreading the idea that if you are able to seize those opportunities offered to you, you can succeed. More or less overtly, this suggests that education is no longer a public resource or a universal right that the State owes all its citizens but rather a private good that one may or may not get and whose quality results from an individual’s choices and is that individual’s responsibility. This notion translates into the now commonly used (in the neoliberal climate) term of “empowerment,” which amounts to convincing people that they are responsible for their life and are able to find individual solutions to their problems on their own. From this perspective, that is why school choice is promoted: since it now appears obvious that the State is no longer able to provide equal quality education in all school settings, students simply have to escape from bad schools if they want to maximize their own chances.

This trend toward more choice is too recent for its effects to be estimated precisely. However, in a context of growing employment problems for young people, one might expect that as long as education continues to be a valued positional good, giving students more opportunities of choice will continue to reinforce inequality as long as students and their families have unequal resources and opportunities.

2.2 More Allowance for Individual Choices Generates More Segregation Between Schools

Whenever school choice is promoted (in France as in comparable European countries), research shows that student overall mean achievement does not improve. Rather, quite conversely, it generates a chain of mechanisms that foster inequality. It is now

widely admitted that when the school choice is completely open (as in Belgium), it generates a marked hierarchical academic ranking of schools, which are also more socially segregated. In France, the first analysis of the effects of the school choice option given to families (starting in 2007) shows that it has increased social segregation in a number of schools, especially in Paris and large cities, since only the most privileged families have the resources needed to make the choice (information, money to cover transportation costs or other various arrangements, etc.). Consequently, the policy increases social inequality since segregation itself fosters inequality. A variety of mechanisms are involved here.

First, one should underline the fact that social sorting between schools is associated with larger disparities between students, in terms of both academic results and social origins, while the overall mean performance is not improved. This suggests that the total influence of student background on level of achievement is explained in part by the school attended and not only by some cultural disadvantages. This strong trend—segregation actually fosters educational inequality—results in large part from what is now labeled “peer effect.” Research shows that the composition of the student body itself contributes to creating an environment of uneven quality, because classmates are resources for each other. It also impacts the ambiance of the daily classroom life as well as the teaching practices it allows or not. In fact, students from working-class backgrounds attending mixed-intake schools progress better (for France, see Duru-Bellat 2007). This is because they benefit from contact with students who are better adjusted to school norms and have greater cultural resources and thus are less prone to developing anti-school attitudes. In these environments, they also develop more ambitious educational aspirations.

So, across the board, a balanced social mix improves both student academic progress and attitudes without being detrimental to the mean level of achievement. It especially boosts the weakest students, while putting only a slight brake on the most brilliant ones. Thus, as long as more privileged parents continue to look for social or academic resemblance when choosing schools (knowing that the quest for social resemblance seems more important than the quest strictly for academic excellence), and parents whose children would benefit more from heterogeneity continue to be less prone to choosing, more choice will result in increased educational inequality.

Another group of mechanisms relates to the unevenness of teaching resources provided in these segregated contexts. Often the most privileged tracks or schools attract greater financial resources and, more importantly, more qualified and experienced teachers (since experienced teachers are more effective in teaching). Moreover, teachers develop higher expectations when confronted with more promising students, and curriculum content coverage generally improves, so that all across the board, students have more opportunities to learn. All in all, program provision and, more globally, the quality of a school’s offering are key mechanisms by which inequalities are reinforced. The contrastive environments formed by schools serving advantaged or disadvantaged students provide unequal settings of both learning and socialization. This is because, in any educational setting, social intake is a key ingredient because of the psychosocial dynamics between teachers and students and among students themselves.

Consequently, choice and social sorting between schools raise a problem of efficiency and fairness: while the efficiency of this new style of school “management” remains quite uncertain, it could be maintained that, in France as anywhere else, a common level of knowledge would be better promoted if students were educated together in the same schools.

2.3 Decentralization or “Marketization” of Education?

In the meantime, the growing concern regarding efficiency and State disengagement, as well as the obsession with downsizing costs, has led to recommendations that education systems become more “flexible” (this term is often used by promoters of the European Lisbon strategy) and decentralized. That is the reason why, along with ideological considerations, school autonomy and the decentralization of the education system are promoted. Although decentralization may also be part of a left-wing climate underlying actor autonomy and adaptation to students as they are, over the last several decades, the underlying references here have (again) been the New Public Management principles. What is at stake is increasing competition, with reference to the model of a perfect and very efficient market. One might add that it is this ideology which also led to the higher development of private education in many countries (but not so much in France in comparison with other European countries). Thus, one may use the term “marketization” of education, although it may have rather limited application in France.

Concretely, the expressed motives for educational decentralization are diverse. First, it is supposed to increase efficiency because teachers and staff would have more freedom to adapt their practices to their local student body. Moreover, it aims to limit bureaucracy and allows for a better financial control. And, just as importantly, it is supposed to raise school responsiveness to local communities: consumers would be given more power to push for teacher improvement, so that the latter would have more incentives to improve their own practices. Educational decentralization may affect different levels of decision-making: human resource management (e.g., appointing teachers), student policies (e.g., school admissions), financial resources (school budget), and curricula (content, textbooks). European countries present a patchwork of situations in these respects, but it should be noted that France (and others countries, such as Portugal) is rather resistant to the global trend toward decentralization, compared with other countries that, in different historical contexts, have already implemented strong decentralization, often for several decades (e.g., the United Kingdom and some Eastern European countries).

Across the board, contrary to what was expected—that “marketized” education would be more efficient—the relationship between the various aspects of school autonomy and mean student performance proves to be weak, and the widespread positive expectations that exist in regard to school autonomy and decentralization of decision-making are not supported. Some studies (Wossman 2007) find a positive correlation between higher degrees of school autonomy in certain respects and

average student performance, but the causality remains uncertain, as is always the case with cross-sectional data, such as PISA surveys (assessing student performance at age 15). Moreover, other studies (for a synthesis, see Teese and Lamb 2007; van den Branden et al. 2011) suggest that decentralization proves detrimental to performance homogeneity, fostering larger inequalities.

Today, it is widely agreed that without a centrally geared monitoring system and control of standards, decentralization and the correlative adaptation of schools to their student body are bound to cause increased achievement disparity and different forms of social inequalities. Even if this remains an open issue (see Duru-Bellat and Meuret 2003, comparing England and France), the best way to boost efficiency without damaging equity and social cohesion seems to be to implement, along with decentralization, some national control, notably for setting standards and managing evaluation. This kind of evolution has taken place in some European countries, but in France there is still today some reluctance toward centralized and standardized evaluations, from teachers who fear that it may be used to assess their own efficiency. That makes the present trend toward decentralization even more risky.

In a broader sense, decentralization may also mean opening schools (and more broadly, educational decisions) to other partners. Some global policies used in disadvantaged areas are moving in that direction. Here also, we have been facing an important twofold shift in most European countries (and especially in France): (i) in order to even out the quality of what schools offer to every pupil, it is now widely admitted that some “positive discrimination” must be implemented; (ii) it is no longer considered better to focus on individuals (on the weakest students, as discussed above in this paper), but rather to focus on schools, and still more often on specific larger geographical areas.

This latter strategy has been implemented in France since the 1980s with “Zones d’Education Prioritaire (ZEP)” which were inspired by the former British “Education Priority Action” and defined on the basis of the socioeconomic characteristics of the population. The rationale here is that since the problems encountered by students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are multiple, a variety of partners and institutions must be called upon to help, including street educators, policemen, and social workers. Objective evaluations of the impact of this kind of action focused on whole areas have been disappointing: even if some positive results in achievement and attitudes may have resulted, they were canceled out by the negative impact of the stigma attached to the schools and areas in question. However, some argue that this evolution may have been even worse without this kind of action because of the increased social segregation often observed in those areas as a result of middle-class flight. The public funds may also be targeted too loosely, since as many as one out of four schools at the lower-secondary level were included in the French ZEPs.

In 2006, a new program called “ambition réussite” (operation success) was launched. It is more strictly targeted and attempts to attract more experienced teachers to these areas as well as to provide more individualized help. Moreover, it also helps give students with good results access to the best upper-secondary or tertiary schools through special admission regulations and extra subsidies, with the goal of boosting student motivation during lower-secondary school. Again, the stress is put on

“empowering” actors with the hope of increased efficiency. The risk here is that those students unable to flee their neighborhood’s poorest schools will be still more disadvantaged in contexts still more segregated. In that sense, even if the obsession with performance and testing is a criticized component of “New Public Management”, the central State’s concern with what is learnt at school can be seen as all the more justifiable since the system is decentralized. Actually, it could be argued that this is precisely the case in France, since, in 2005, a special educational act (see www.loi.ecole.gouv.fr) included the concept of a “socle commun de connaissances,” i.e., a common core knowledge that should be acquired by every French student leaving the compulsory schooling. So, despite the (uncertain) feasibility of the objective and the neoliberal climate of this period, the responsibility of the State is reaffirmed.

2.4 The Increasing Obsession with Benchmarking

In recent decades, OECD has attempted to disseminate a way of defining education priorities, and Europe has been increasingly involved in channeling educational policies (Ertl 2006). However, the European Union has no legal way to enforce them. So, these international influences operate on a continual process of “peer pressure” (one might even call it a “naming and shaming” process) based on benchmarking with a search for “best practices.” This process has been institutionalized under the label “open coordination method”, i.e., voluntary cooperation on the basis of the exchange of experiences.

So, monitoring has become crucial, and in following with the Lisbon objectives, working programs have been developed that bring together stakeholders and experts to support the implementation of these objectives through exchange of best practices, study visits, and peer reviews. Concretely, a set of objectives to be reached by 2010 (and now by 2020) was adopted with precise quantitative benchmarks (see “Progress Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training”, SEC 2007, 1284). They include participation in preschool education, civic skills, the percentage of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading literacy, participation of adults in lifelong learning, and the level of educational achievement of the whole population. Regular reports give the figures for the 27 European Union countries, identifying those performing well in particular areas so that their expertise and good practices may be shared with others.

Of course, the risk is to encourage only quantitative targets with unexpected side effects. Such is the case of France. Since the 1980s, France has worked hard to develop its upper-secondary level of education in order to close the gap with other countries in the percentage of students graduating from upper-secondary school. As evoked before, France has faced a dramatic expansion of education since the 1980s in response to the “80 % of a generation achieving the baccalauréat” political objective set by the left-wing government in 1981. The expansion of the education system was one of the main targets of the socialist government that took office in

France in 1981. It was reiterated by all subsequent governments; the last act, passed in 2005, was no exception (reaffirming again 80 % of a generation achieving a baccalauréat and 50 % a tertiary degree). Starting in the 1980s, these objectives met a large consensus, since they were aimed at closing the gap with our neighbors and were also supposed to help reduce disparities among French students while increasing the mean level of achievement. However, research shows (Duru-Bellat 2008) that in recent decades more baccalauréat education has been accompanied by some deterioration of the degree holders' perspectives on the job market: for example, the baccalauréat-leavers' opportunities to avoid a manual or poorly qualified clerk job have declined between the 1970s and 2009 from 60 % to 23 % (Chauvel 2010). A consequence is that social inequalities have been shifting to a higher level rather than being canceled out. France is a very good example of the fact that expanding education may paradoxically be what allows social inequalities to persist. As many sociologists now admit, growth operates here both as a safety valve and as a counterreform, allowing things not to change.

While the French government has continued with the consensual political aim of expanding education (today with the objective of 50 % of a generation achieving a tertiary degree, following European directives), this continuous growth is still accompanied by 8 % of a generation leaving the education system without any degree whatsoever. Obviously, to focus on the benchmark "percentage achieving the upper-secondary level" leads to making some public funding choices, since France is not rich enough to allocate all of its public resources to education. Thus, this precludes spending on other areas for which a better case could be made, such as quality pre-primary schooling for underprivileged students. Here one might underline that a list of benchmarks is not a substitute for a program or a global education policy. One reason for this is that focusing on one area or domain would possibly lead to the neglect of another as long as no priorities have been set.

To come back to expanding the system and increasing access rates, it should be stressed that not only does this policy have monetary costs but it also has poorly assessed and even taboo social and psychological costs. Many studies have shed light on some unexpected and undesired effects of expanding education beyond a certain threshold (generally achieved in European countries). What has been shown is that not only does the fact that degrees have become more numerous and increasingly necessary for employment (which is the case in France) not generate a fairer society but it also progressively spoils the content of education itself. It becomes a commodity, rather than a good, that is extremely useful but not really interesting in and of itself. In 1976, the American sociologist Ronald Dore described what he called the "diploma disease" in developing countries, i.e., examination-oriented schooling, with detrimental effects on the quality of learning as well as on subsequent attitudes toward learning, such as ritualism, and mostly no intrinsic interest in knowledge. In the same way, research in France shows that from the higher secondary school to some university tracks, students seem mostly interested in the grades they get, the exams they pass, and what returns they achieve with it, rather than in the content of the studies themselves. Curiosity or pleasure to learn seems to fade out, and the main objective is no longer to learn but rather to get the certification needed to gain employment.

Moreover, when these utilitarian students enter the labor market, their disillusion is often great. As early as 1978, the French sociologist Bourdieu identified what he called a “deceived generation,” who, facing the gap between their diplomas and the real job market opportunities, would adopt a disillusioned attitude both toward work and political life or even a more offensive one leading to protest. And this is not only a matter of disillusion but also of personal suffering: as competition becomes harsher, education largely becomes a positional good that many students must fail to master, since the winners must not be too numerous if there is something to be won.

Thus, failure must be accepted as a necessary part of the selection process by both students and politicians if some value associated with the degree is to be preserved. At the macro level, the fact is that competition is becoming tougher and tougher and the growing sense of economic insecurity (which is very strong among French young people) is having broader, yet to be identified undesirable effects.

However, despite this competition, one may consider across the board that some symbolic efficiency is achieved if the conviction that you deserve the rank you obtain in a continuous competition remains ingrained; if so, as Bourdieu would say, the inequalities are legitimized. But the hypothesis could be made that the growing gap between degrees and jobs obtained may throw some doubt on the meritocratic way in which the whole system operates (Duru-Bellat and Tenret 2012). Opening schools and developing access to education are supposed to convey more meritocracy and consequently more social justice. Facts and analysis by sociologists of education show that this is fiction (albeit a necessary one). As long as degrees have some value on the labor market and, consequently, as long as education has mainly positional effects, one cannot hope to reduce social inequalities by opening the system. This is because by so doing (and as long as inequalities are maintained within society, with unequal families striving for unequal positions), inequalities will only be perpetuated. Meritocracy and equality of opportunity promise equity in the race for success, not equality in results and certainly not in economic life.

Thus, continuing with “more of the same,” i.e., simply increasing access to education, is not an efficient strategy. First, “openness” may take on the appearance of a less overtly class-biased policy, e.g., school choice. It always sounds generous to give more, and in France, during recent decades, expanding education has been promoted as a means in and of itself. It has taken the form of pure quantitative targets, leading to the neglect of the question of not only the “quantity” of education but also its “quality,” i.e., what kind of education, for whom, and for what purpose. This is more or less because the blind race for benchmarks is prevailing, that is, driven more by economic rationale rather than by true educational concern.

This is not to say that setting quantitative objectives is a bad thing. Quite the opposite, since while doing so, policymakers are required to express precisely what objectives they put forward and show responsibility for whether or not these objectives are fulfilled. Moreover, pressures to define and regulate standards through national curricula and national systems of assessment are rather beneficial to disadvantaged students and, more broadly, preserve some homogeneity within a country’s youth.

3 Conclusion

In France, a new left-wing government was formed in June 2012, and it is too early to make precise predictions of future trends of French education policy. However, the new Minister of Education, Vincent Peillon, quickly announced changes that are supposed to achieve a broad “refoundation” of the school system.

First, the downsizing of the number of teachers will cease, and starting in September 2012, more teachers will be sent to the poorest areas: 1,000 extra teachers have been recruited for primary schools, knowing that 5,100 primary teacher positions were eliminated by the previous government. Second, in order to attract more youngsters to the teaching profession, a training period will be reimplemented (trainings were canceled during the previous government). More significantly, the Minister maintains that the priority will be given to lower school levels (to reduce early inequalities), so that, in a context of scarcity, less weight will be given to higher education. He is also stressing citizen education, with the idea of introducing some civic and moral courses to the curricula. Some issues of debate, such as school choice, school calendar (the length of French holidays and the resulting long school days), and student assessment on the basis of national standardized tests have yet to be documented at this stage; a special consultation is ongoing.

Two remarks may be made here. First, the current economic context and the objective of reducing public spending will obviously limit educational ambitions, and the pressure to assess efficiency will remain very strong even if it is unpopular among French teachers. Second, it is not sure that a broad consensus will emerge on educational issues, which remain in France very passionate and meet diverging private interests (different social groups may benefit from improved pre-primary schooling or more resources in tertiary education). In any case, in France, left-wing parties have always given importance to public education, as expected by teachers and parents. In a rather pessimistic global context, successfully fostering some hopes and achieving mobilization in schools would be a first step toward success.

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India: Reforming Education in the Neo Liberal Era

Jandhyala B.G. Tilak

Abstract India has made significant achievements in education: there has been a veritable explosion in numbers: the education system at all levels was made accessible to a larger number of people. There has also been significant expansion in the number of institutions of excellence in higher education, producing highly specialised human capital. While the achievements in terms of quantitative progress are impressive, the system is also characterised by severe failures on several fronts, including universal elementary education, vocationalisation of secondary education and development of higher education for excellence. In the neo liberal era, India attempts at reforming education and has taken a few significant initiatives. Elementary education is recognised as a fundamental right and following a constitutional amendment in 2002, the *Free and Compulsory Education Act* has been made in 2009. A new programme of universal secondary education has been launched, along with a programme of skill development of about 500 million youth. To address some of the problems of higher education, the government has taken up judicial measures and introduced a series of legislations in the national Parliament for approval. Many of the recent initiatives in policy reforms mark a transition in the history of education in independent India—from a system embedded in the welfare statism to a system based on neo liberal market philosophy.

Keywords Cost sharing • Free and compulsory education • Funding • India • Legislative measures in higher education • Midday meals • Private education • Public expenditure

J.B.G. Tilak (✉)

National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi, India

e-mail: jtilak@nuepa.org

Education system in India has emerged as one of the largest systems in the world in terms of number of students and number of schools. There are today about 280 million students enrolled in nearly 1.4 million schools, colleges and universities in the country, in which there are nearly seven million teachers. The number of students in India outnumbers the total population of several countries.

Education in India presents a saga of both notable achievements and significant failures. In recent years, government has taken quite a few initiatives for reforming education. While the achievements are impressive, the failures are also shocking. The chapter presents a quick review of some of the major policy reforms and developments in education in India over the last couple of decades. It elaborates an array of typical strategies and approaches that the government of India has adopted, with analysis of their impact upon education development. Finally it summarises the achievements and the gaps and concludes with highlighting future prospects.

1 Context of the Reforms

After independence, India has adopted a strategy of socialistic welfare state for development policies, development planning and mixed economy. India also recognised the importance of education and resolved to provide universal elementary education. A few important initiatives were taken by the government. In the first 5-year plan, a reasonably high allocation of resources was made to education sector.

1.1 *Earlier Reform Initiatives*

The 1950 and 1960s were a golden period for education with generous allocation of budgetary resources to education that were marked by overall enthusiasm created by the newly acquired independence. Development planning was adopted as a strategy and several new institutions were set up at all levels of education, including in higher education and higher technical education. Enrolments at every level of education increased at impressive rates. The period coincided with the human investment revolution in economic thought (Schultz 1961) that recognised the relationship between education and economic growth. The first *National Policy on Education 1968* was formulated, following the recommendations of the Education Commission (1964/1966) that emphasized the role of education in national development. The decade of 1970s was a period of setbacks with war, inflation, graduate unemployment and tight budgetary conditions. The growth in education suffered severely. Budgetary resources became scarce. The 1980s marked a slow and steady re-emergence of faith in education and consequent hopes for a smooth flow of public funds to education. The *National Policy on Education 1986* was formulated and several new schemes were launched including the 'operation blackboard' scheme that ensured every primary school in the country to have a minimum level of basic

infrastructure, including teachers; setting up of District Institutes of Education and Training for improving training facilities for teachers; and setting up of Academic Staff Colleges in universities to provide avenues for professional development of college teachers. Several initiatives were also made to improve the access to education in general and to the meritorious students among the marginalised sections of the society (e.g., *Navodaya Vidyalayas*) and to raise the quality of education.

The 1990s heralded an era of budget containment, with the introduction of structural adjustment policies in the beginning of the 1990s. Budgets for education suffered severely during adjustment period. The expenditure of the union and state governments on education has declined fast. Quality of education was traded off for quantitative expansion, as new institutions were opened with declining allocations being spread thinly; and equity was also sacrificed, as the budget allocations for scholarships and welfare programmes waned fast. Private institutions began to increase in number at the cost of growth of public institutions. The budgetary squeeze on education has contributed specifically to a few major developments in education. Important among them include inflow of external aid for education, privatisation of education and cost recovery. Introduction of economic reform policies included introduction of policies of globalisation. Education policy is influenced by domestic and as well international developments. Though inflow of external aid for primary education that began in the early 1990s almost ceased within 10–15 years, some of the other developments have taken strong roots in the system and seem to continue and rather dominate the education policy in the following decades.

1.2 Spectacular Quantitative Progress

It may be pertinent to start with noting the somewhat spectacular quantitative progress India made in education during the last two decades. India has made rapid stride in improving the literacy situation. Nearly three-fourths of the population were literate in 2011, compared to about 50 % two decades ago. Even among the females, the rate of literacy was 66 % in 2011, the gender gap falling to 16 % points from 25 points in 1991. Literacy among youth has improved very impressively to 91 % in 2009–2010 from 60 % in 1983.

In elementary education—primary plus upper primary education—which constitutes the compulsory education phase, as defined in the Constitution, there are nearly 200 million students, with a gross enrolment ratio above 100 %. Fifty two per cent of the population of the age-group 14–17 are enrolled in secondary (and higher secondary) schools. In all, as per the gross enrolment ratio, 87 % of the children of the age-group 6–17 are in schools in 2010–2011. In case of higher education, there are about 600 universities and about 40,000 colleges, with an enrolment of above 20 million. The 20 million constitutes 15 % gross enrolment ratio. In all, the mean years of schooling of the working population (15 years old and above) increased from 4.2 years in 2000 to 5.1 years in 2010 (Table 1). These are quite impressive quantitative achievements for a developing country.

Table 1 Progress in education in India

Literacy in India (%)

	Male	Female	All	Gender gap
1991	64.1	39.3	52.2	24.8
2001	75.3	53.7	64.8	21.6
2011	82.1	65.5	74.0	16.7

Source: Census of India 2011

Progress in enrolments and enrolment ratios in education

	Enrolments (million)		Gross enrolment ratio (%)	
	1999–2000	2010–2011	1999–2000	2010–2011
Elementary	155.9	197.4	81.0	102.5
Primary	113.6	135.3	94.9	115.5 (98.0)
Upper primary	42.3	62.1	57.8	81.5 (58.0)
All secondary	28.0	51.2	30.0	52.1
Secondary	18.6	31.8		65.0
Higher secondary	9.5	19.4		39.3
Higher	7.7	21.8*	8.1	15.2*

Note: () refers to net enrolment ratios

Number of institutions (in thousands)

	1999–2000	2010–2011
Elementary	853.7	1,196.1
Primary	651.4	748.5
Upper Primary	202.3	447.6
All Secondary	117.9	200.1
Secondary	83.3	128.3
Higher Secondary	34.5	71.8
Higher	10.15	46.43*

Teachers in schools

	Teachers (million)		Pupil-teacher ratio	
	1999–2000	2010–2011	1999–2000	2010–2011
Elementary	3.2	4.0	79	
Primary	1.9	2.1	42	42
Upper primary	1.3	1.9	37	34
All secondary	1.7	2.5	32	
Secondary	1.0	1.2	30	30
Higher secondary	0.7	1.3	34	39
Higher	0.4	0.7*	22	24

Source: *Selected Educational Statistics, Statistics on School Education and Annual Report* (Ministry of Human Resource Development); *Annual Report* (University Grants Commission). Relevant years

* Figures exclude open distance learning

Table 2 Growth in Central Government Institutions of Higher Education during the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007–2012)

	2006–2007	2011–2012	Increase
Central universities	19	40	21
Indian Institutes of Technology	7	15	8
Indian Institutes of Management	6	13	7
Indian Institutes of Science Education & Research	2	5	3
Schools of Planning and Architecture	1	3	2
National Institutes of Technology	20	30	10
Other technical institutes	15	15	0
Other universities/institutions	17	31	14

Source: Planning Commission 2012

Apart from universal elementary education, India has set targets in recent years for universal secondary education and a gross enrolment ratio of 30 % in higher education by 2020. It is only during the 11th Five Year Plan period, major expansion of higher education has been attempted. The number of central universities was doubled and so are the numbers of high quality of institutions of technical education, viz., Indian Institutes of Management, Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Information Technology and similar institutions (Table 2).

There has been a substantial increase in the numbers of not only institutions set up by the union government, but also institutions set up by state governments and private institutions. The total number of institutions of higher education increased by 58 % from 29,384 at the beginning of the 11th Five Year Plan period to 46,430 by the end of the period.

The principal objective of the 11th and the 12th Five Year Plans (2002–2007 and 2007–2012, respectively) has been inclusive and faster growth. By strengthening the vast education system, India aims at building up a knowledge society and transforming itself into an advanced economy.

1.3 Persistent Daunting Challenges

However, it faces daunting challenges. One-fourth of the population of the country is illiterate. With 287 million illiterates in 2011, India is still the largest home of illiterates in the world. Elementary education is not completely universal, in terms of the three dimensions, viz., enrolment, completion and attainment of a minimum level of learning. One can identify at least three persistent problems: (a) high rates of dropout, (b) high degree of inequalities in participation in schooling, and (c) low levels of learning. Special measures initiated in recent years have resulted in a significant reduction in dropout rates; yet they continue to be high (DISE 2011). Hardly 50 % of the eligible children are in secondary schools. The

enrolment ratio in higher education is far from the world average, not to speak of it being far below the ratio in the advanced countries. The quality of education at all levels is far from satisfactory; and issues relating to equity in access to education still pose serious challenges. The mean years of schooling of the adult population are hardly 5 years.

An equally, if not more, serious problem refers to the extent of inequalities in education. Although there has been a significant reduction in inequalities in education between different sections of the population, there remains the persistence of a high degree of inequalities. Inequalities in education include inequalities between lower caste groups (Scheduled Castes/Tribes [SCs/STs] and Other Backward Castes [OBCs]) and higher caste groups, between backward minority communities and other religious communities, between males and females, between the rich and the poor, and between regions—rural–urban and interstate inequalities. While there has been a remarkable improvement in gender parity and some reduction in inequalities by caste groups, rural–urban inequalities are quite marked, and inequalities between the poorest and the richest strata of the society are most striking. Another very important concern of all has been the levels of learning in elementary education. According to recent reports (Pratham 2012, 2013), the levels of learning of children in primary and upper primary schools are not only very low but more importantly declining over the years.

Likewise, higher education in India is engulfed with several problems, including low levels of access, stagnant and declining quality and standards and widening inequalities. The system is also characterised with poor governance, high levels of inefficiency in management, unemployment of the graduates and non-availability of sufficient funds. The structural adjustment reform policies introduced in the beginning of the 1990s had a brutal impact on higher education, in terms of severe cuts in public expenditure and introduction of cost recovery measures (Tilak 1996). The last two decades also witnessed a period of rapid growth of private education. It is widely recognised that major reforms are long over due.

The mean years of schooling of the adult population, a summary statistic of education development, are hardly 5 years, compared to the average of the developing countries which is 7; the corresponding figure is above 7 in Brazil and above 8 in China.

2 Changing Strategies and Approaches

The several attempts to reform education scene have to be seen against the backdrop of a few major trends in the strategies and approaches being adopted in recent years. There has been a significant shift in the development paradigm itself. It shifted from one based on welfare state to a neo liberal one. The policies also resulted in weakening of the fiscal capacity of the government. All this has had its own influence on educational policies and strategies. The global campaign of Education For All also impacted the policies of the government.

2.1 National Programmes

Though the *Constitution of India* (1950) has placed a large part of education under the “state list”, the 42nd Constitutional Amendment in 1976 has brought education into concurrent list. However, both before the amendment and after, the union government has been active in the area of education and has launched a few major national programmes.

2.1.1 Elementary Education: SSA

Much before the Jomtien Conference (1990) and the adoption of the *World Declaration on Education for All* at the same conference, the Government of India had resolved in the *Constitution of India* in 1950:

The State shall endeavour to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of the Constitution for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years. (Article 45)

And as the goal has not been reached, the government repeated its resolve to universalise elementary education as early as possible, and also to increase the public funding of education to at least 6 % of national income, so that education, elementary education in particular, does not suffer from paucity of financial resources. The *National Policy on Education 1968* and the *National Policy on Education 1986* have laid special emphasis on the fulfilment of the Constitutional Directive of universalisation of elementary education. Five Year Plans repeatedly promised to take the nation towards achieving this goal. Elementary education was also included in the National Programme of Minimum Needs in the Five Year Plans, and this inclusion has significant implications for allocation of resources. This was expected to ensure favourable treatment in the allocation of resources and to protect it from reallocation of approved outlays away from elementary education. Education is also made an important component of the National Human Development Initiative in the union budget 1999–2000.

Following the end of the external assistance to primary education, in 2002 the government has launched a national programme of education for all called *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) that promised to work on a mission mode to reach the constitutional goal. SSA was conceptualised as a comprehensive and integrated flagship programme. The programme implies massive provision of financial resources by the union and state governments for overall improvement of the schools, including for the construction of school buildings, provision of infrastructure facilities, sufficient number of teachers and improvement of management and delivery structures.

According to the umbrella scheme of SSA, universalisation of elementary education with respect to enrolment and retention was to be achieved by 2010. Quite a few components of SSA aim at improving access, quality and equity in elementary education. Of the many successes, according to the government, the increase in the number of schools and classrooms and rapid fall in the number of out of school

**Box 1: Targets of the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)*
(Target Dates as Originally Set)**

- Enrolment of all children in the 6–14 age group in school/education guarantee scheme centres/bridge courses by 2003
- All children in the 6–14 age group complete 5 years of primary education by 2007
- All children in the 6–14 age group complete 8 years of schooling by 2010
- Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life
- Bridging all gender and social category gaps at primary education level by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010
- Universal retention of children until they complete upper primary education by 2010

Source: *Annual Report 2002–2003* (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Education, Government of India)

Box 2: Midday Meals: Objectives

- To encourage enrolment and retention of children in schools until they complete 8 years of schooling
- To improve the nutritional status of children in grades I–VIII
- To encourage poor children belonging to disadvantaged sections to attend school regularly and help them concentrate on classroom activities

Source: *Annual Report* (Ministry of Human Resource Development)

children are attributed mainly to the ongoing SSA. However, not even a single target set by the SSA (listed in the Box 1) has been reached so far. Moreover, the SSA seems to have no significant effect on the quality of education and the school outcomes in terms of achievement levels of children. Alternative schools and non-formal education centres along with *para* teachers were formalised by the SSA and they are believed to have caused serious adverse effect on the quality of education. Further, SSA, like the externally funded project, the DPEP (Tilak 2008), created parallel structures sidelining existing government structures and systems in administration, possibly weakening the overall government administration.

Much before the launching of the SSA, a national programme of midday meals was launched in 1995 with the twin objectives of increasing enrolment in schools and improving nutritional status of school-going children. The programme covers all children enrolled in primary and upper primary levels of education (Box 2). Very positive and significant effects of the noon meals

programme on participation of children in schooling were reported (Goyal and Drèze 2003). SSA and midday meals account for nearly the total union government budget for elementary education. In addition to SSA, a few other complementary schemes are also launched (see Tilak 2009a).

2.1.2 Secondary Education: RMSA

Secondary education was neglected in India for a long time. Public attention concentrated either on elementary education or on higher education and the link between the two, secondary education, was ignored. It is only recently that efforts are initiated to correct this anomaly, as it was realised that “it is unlikely that the country will significantly succeed in reducing poverty and creating a more equitable society without adequately focusing on improving secondary education” (Planning Commission 2012). Thus, partly recognising the need for expansion of secondary education for development and partly because of the pressures for expansion of secondary education are being felt with rapid progress in elementary education, during the 11th Five Year Plan period the government has launched a programme of expansion of secondary education, the *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan* (RMSA). The scheme is envisioned around four core objectives, viz., universal access, equality and social justice, relevance to development context and structural and curricular aspects. The scheme envisages that no child is deprived of secondary education of satisfactory quality due to gender, socio-economic disability and other barriers. It also promises to improve quality of secondary education. The gross enrolment ratio in secondary education was 65 % in lower secondary (grades IX and X) and 39 % in higher secondary (grades XI and XII) in 2010–2011. Funded on the pattern of SSA—75 % from the union government and 25 % from the state government—the RMSA aims to provide universal access to quality secondary education (Box 3).

Box 3: *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan* (RMSA)

Targets in the 12th Five Year Plan (2012–2017)

- Universal access to secondary education, gross enrolment ratio of 100 %
- Enhancing retention of children at secondary level, so as to reach 100 % retention by 2020
- Achieving the target of 75 % gross enrolment ratio at higher secondary level by 2017
- Establishment of a secondary school within a radius of 5–7 km
- Provision of necessary physical facilities, teaching and non-teaching staff for every secondary school

Source: The 12th Five Year Plan

Another important component of secondary education that was also ignored for long refers to vocational and technical education, though its importance was highlighted by several committees and commissions ever since independence, e.g., the Mudaliar Commission (1952). The *National Policy on Education 1968* and the *National Policy on Education 1986* aimed at providing vocational and technical education to 10–25 % of the students in higher secondary education. But little progress has been made in this regard. While some attempts are made to improve vocational and technical education provided in polytechnics and industrial training institutes during recent years, partly with the assistance from the World Bank, the government has launched a major programme of skill development aiming at covering about 500 million youth in the 12th Five Year Plan period. While it may be welcomed for several reasons, there is an important problem. The massive programme is being planned not as a part of secondary or higher education, but effectively as another tier in the education system that can facilitate segregation of the students into vocational education and higher education, an approach that did not work in the past.

2.2 *Legislative Measures*

In recent years, government concentrated on strengthening legislative framework for the development of education. It has initiated quite a few legislative reforms both in school education and higher education. As the provisions in the *Constitution of India* (1950) and the compulsory education acts that existed in several states had not been very effective, a new act to ensure free and compulsory education was made. Similarly, to correct several inadequacies in the governance in higher education, a series of legislative proposals have been made.

2.2.1 *The Right to Education Act*

One of the landmark developments in elementary education includes the amendment of the *Constitution of India* in 2002 that explicitly recognises education as a fundamental right of every child in India. The amendment makes education a justiciable right. To operationalise the amendment, the *Free and Compulsory Education Act* was made in 2009, familiarly known as the *Right to Education Act 2009* (RTE). Among the several initiatives taken by the union government, this is perhaps the most important one. The *Act* provides for free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality for all children in the age group of 6–14 years as a fundamental right. Free education means no child is required to pay any kind of fees or charges to the school. In addition, children are provided with free textbooks, stationery and uniforms. Special incentives including financial assistance are provided to girls up to grade X. The *Act* promises improved access to schooling facilities, by setting up

Box 4: Salient Features of the *Right to Education Act 2009*

- Free education: no fees, no capitation fee
- All schools are to be recognised schools only
- Admission: no entrance test/screening processes; no detention; no punishment
- Provision of a school in every neighbourhood
- School infrastructure: all-weather school buildings; one classroom per teacher; library; head teacher office room, toilets; drinking water; barrier free access; playground, fencing, boundary walls
- Teachers: Pupil-teacher ratio, trained teachers; no private coaching

Source: *Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009*. Government of India

schools in every neighbourhood. Besides construction of new schools and classrooms, the *Act* also provides for adequate infrastructure and adequate number of trained teachers (Box 4). The *Act* also provides for admission of students belonging to economically weaker sections in private schools to the extent of at least 25 %. The RTE confers a permanent right to free and compulsory education of reasonable quality on the children of India. It also implies a long-term commitment to ensure that education is provided as a fundamental right to all children. The *Act* came into force with effect from 1 April 2010, and most states have developed state specific rules for the implementation of the *Act*. It is too early to make an assessment of its impact and effectiveness. With the *Act*, one could expect that quality education will be available to all truly free.

However, it is clear that the RTE or even the SSA does not seem to be paying sufficient attention to the quality of education; at best they focus on provision of some inputs that can influence quality of education. Other problems relating to the RTE are the *Act* does not guarantee equitable quality of education; it promotes private education and with devolution of responsibilities to local levels of government, the role of the union and state governments has been diluted (Tilak 2010c).

The several parameters of the SSA are upgraded to equal the RTE norms, and additional resources are allocated to elementary education in the 12th Five Year Plan to implement the revised SSA. It is expected that by the middle of the 12th Plan a new modality of implementation of the RTE would replace the SSA, which was originally designed as a time-bound project only.

2.2.2 Bills on Higher Education

The higher education system has been characterised with a big policy vacuum for a long period (see Tilak 2010b). It is only towards the end of the 11th Five Year Plan period, the government set out for reforms in higher education; actually there has been a hasty rush for reforms, and a big paradigm shift in education policies could be witnessed. Most strikingly, this has been a period of speedy reforms intended to

be brought forth through a series of legislative measures. There are currently half dozen major bills introduced in the national Parliament by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, relating to reforms in higher education and they are at various stages: some are approved by the Union Cabinet; some have gone to the Parliament Standing Committees; some have been passed by either house of the Parliament; and all require final approval by the Parliament. The several bills are: (i) The *Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill*, 2010; (ii) The *Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical Educational Institutions, Medical Educational Institutions and University Bill*, 2010; (iii) The *Educational Tribunals Bill*, 2010; (iv) The *National Accreditation Regulatory Authority for Higher Educational Institutions Bill*, 2010; (v) The *Universities for Innovation Bill*, 2010; (vi) The *National Commission For Higher Education and Research (NCHER) Bill*, 2010; and (vii) The *Research and Innovation Universities Bill*, 2012. There may be many more bills in the pipeline.

The overall objective of these bills is rapid growth of higher education to reach higher gross enrolment ratio and to improve quality and standards in higher education. Ostensibly, the bills aim at checking corrupt practices, setting up tribunals for speedy redressal of grievances, ensuring accreditation of the institutions, promotion of autonomy, improvement in governance, opening of avenues for modern forms of internationalisation and improvement in overall quality. There is a bill that aims at setting up high-quality research universities or world class universities.

These bills together constitute a package of reforms that the government plans to make for the development of higher education (see Tilak 2010a). There are a few underlying assumptions and features that are common among all these bills. First, they reflect a new understanding of the government on the role of the State in the development of higher education. Traditionally the State has been an active player—in policy making, planning and provision of higher education in India, like in most other countries of the world. The emerging assumption of the present time is that the State can minimise its role in higher education, not because of lack of funds but because of the emerging conviction that higher education is not a sector that the government should be bothered about. Government can adopt a policy of *laissez-faireism*; and at best, it can confine its role to that of an enabler, which provides a loose framework of rules and regulations for those who wish to enter into the business of education. In a sense, the bills assume that higher education can be left to a large extent to the markets. Secondly, formulated in the neo liberal environment, all the bills assume, either explicitly or implicitly, and even encourage, commoditisation of higher education and consequently privatisation and even commercialisation of higher education. Corporate sector is given an enhanced role in higher education. Thirdly, several bills perceive that higher education is to serve more global needs than to serve national social and economic purposes. The bills aim at making India a global education hub that serves global markets. Fourthly, the underlying assumption of all the bills is that the existing institutions cannot be reformed and they need to be replaced by new structures; or that even if they are restructured and revitalised, they will not serve the neo liberal goals, as the existing ones were set up in a period characterised by an altogether different development paradigm.

Hence, it was assumed that better altogether new organisations are established in place of, or in addition to, the existing ones. Fifthly, while some of the bills (like the bill that prohibits unfair practices and the one meant to set up educational tribunals) are ostensibly very well-intended, they mark only a very small step in right direction and they are highly inadequate to solve the problems and innumerable unfair and corrupt practices that the Indian higher education system is inflicted with. Further, the several bills also highlight the lack of cohesion, if not presence of friction, between not only the union government and the state governments but also between several ministries/departments involved in higher education at the central level, as the coverage of some of the bills excludes institutions of higher education run by different ministries/departments, like health and agriculture and even sub-departments of the Department of Education, like teacher education; and some ministries/departments have already proposed parallel legislations. Lastly, the several bills, together, are characterised with absence of a long-term perspective and a holistic vision of development of the society and the role of education therein.

Every bill looks like a quick-fix solution—poor and inadequate—to a specific problem. For example, it is well noted that the present size of the system of higher education is highly inadequate and that the government may not have sufficient resources for large-scale expansion. The Foreign Educational Institutions Bill is viewed as a solution to this, the assumption being foreign universities will come to India and make huge foreign direct investment in higher education, an untenable assumption. The problem of quality of education and lack of autonomy is to be tackled with the setting up of innovation universities as proposed in the Research and Innovation Universities Bill. It is presumed that autonomy or no autonomy, it does not matter to the existing universities. The problem of inadequate and ineffective system of regulation by the existence of a large number of regulating bodies is to be tackled by the bill that proposes to set up a National Commission for Higher Education and Research that will replace some of the regulating bodies in higher education. That there are several unfair and corrupt practices prevalent in our institutions of higher education is acknowledged with the bill that prohibits unfair practices. The problem that our higher education system is vexed with numerous legal conflicts, over burdening the judicial system, is addressed by the *Educational Tribunals Bill*. The *Bill for National Accreditation Authority* is to ensure improved methods of accreditation and assessment and to make accreditation mandatory for all. The *Educational Tribunal Bill* and the *National Accreditation Authority Bill* are also expected to meet the requirements of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the *General Agreement on Trade and Services* (GATS) that insists on setting up methods of transparency and grievance redressal mechanisms before higher education is fully “committed”. Thus, the several bills view higher education in small fragments, and not as a holistic process. Further, the solutions sought in the form of the bills are inadequate in some cases as they are not necessarily based on sound thinking. It is also noticeable that no effort relates one bill to the other.

Education is a “concurrent” subject according to the *Constitution of India*: both the union government and state governments have responsibility with respect to policy making, planning and funding of education. In recent years, the union

government has been more active than state governments in taking policy initiatives in education, though state governments have joined the consultation process with respect to some of these initiatives.

2.3 Reforms in Funding and Cost Sharing

Public funding for education has been under strain in India since the beginning of the 1990s. While during the 1990s, there had been severe cuts in the total public expenditure, the situation did not improve much in the following decades. Though in absolute terms the expenditure at current prices has increased remarkably, in real terms per student expenditure has declined. More importantly, the relative priority accorded to education registered a sharp decline. This is clear when one examines public expenditure on education in terms of percentage of national income or of total government expenditure. As a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP), it has declined from 4.3 % in 2000–2001 to 3.8 % in 2010–2011 (Fig. 1). It is important to note that the government has a goal of allocating 6 % of GDP to education and during the last 10 years, the government has repeated its promise. Even as a proportion of the total government expenditure, the share of education declined from 14.6 % in 1999–2000 to 13.6 % in 2008–2009 and as per tentative (budget) estimates, it is likely to decline further to 11.7 % in 2011–2011 (Fig. 2).

As a corollary to the declining public expenditure, there has been an increased emphasis on direct measures of cost recovery in education. In the beginning of the 1990s two government appointed committees (UGC 1993; AICTE 1994) have

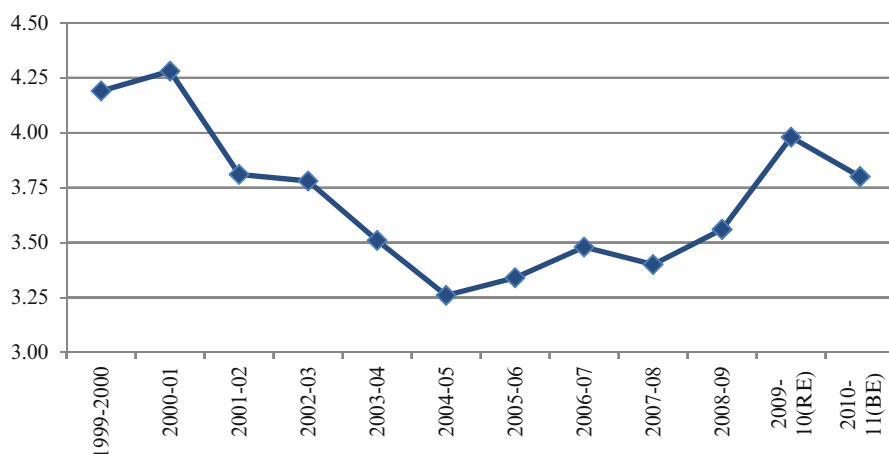


Fig. 1 Public expenditure on education as % of GDP (Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development)

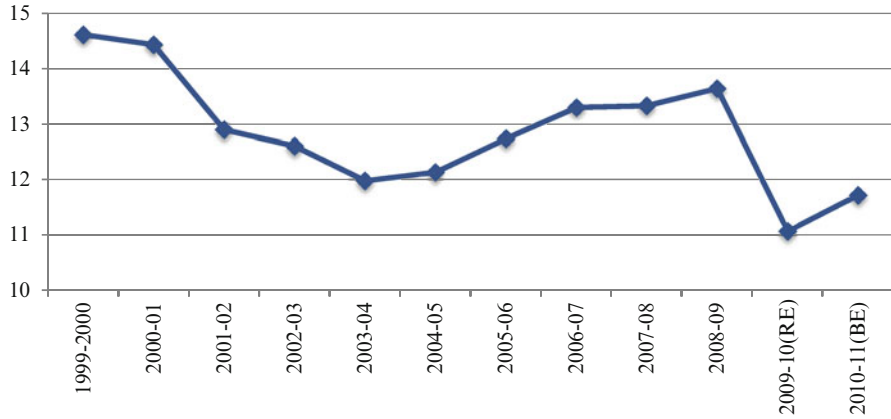


Fig. 2 Public expenditure on education as % of total government expenditure (Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development)

recommended increase in cost recovery through student fees and other sources to the level of about 20 % of the total expenditure on higher education. The committees have also recommended restructuring of the education loan scheme. Ever since, these two proposals have been seriously acted upon by the government and the universities. Institutions, accordingly, have increased student fees erratically and randomly by several times during the last 15–20 years, many generating fee revenue accounting for much more than 20 % of their budgets. Government approaches seem to encourage indiscriminate and steep increases in fees in education. In technical education, the fee increases have been very steep even in public institutions. For example, the fee in the Indian Institutes of Technology has been increased in 2013 from Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 90,000 per year—a steep 80 % increase within 1 year. There was a recommendation by a committee to raise it to Rs. 250,000 per annum.

Student loan programme has been thoroughly revamped and it is now the responsibility of commercial banks. Almost all commercial banks nowadays offer educational loans with varying terms of conditions including interest rates and repayment periods. The role of the government is confined to offering interest subsidy for the study period to students from lower socioeconomic status. The banks do not bother about merit or the need of the students. While the numbers of student borrowers are increasing, they are still small, compared to the total enrolments in higher education, and the problem of access to loans for the weaker sections is still a major problem (Tilak 2009b).

The trend towards heavy reliance on cost recovery measures raises questions on their regressive effects on the demand for education of the weaker sections, neglecting non-revenue generating discipline of study and trading off educational considerations for financial ones by the institutions. In the absence of effective student aid mechanism on the one hand and low levels of living on the other, and given the overall low enrolment rates and lower enrolment rates among the lower

socioeconomic strata, it may be neither desirable nor feasible to aim at substantial cost recovery through increase in fees, unless welfare considerations are sacrificed. Scholarships or loans rarely counterbalance effectively the regressive effects of increase in fees.

2.4 *Growth of Private Institutions*

Though for a long time, it was strongly felt in India, like in many other countries, that education should be mostly in the State sector due to (a) “public good” nature of education, (b) externalities (and dynamic externalities) associated with education, (c) market inefficiencies and (d) the State’s intentions of expanding access to education to all, these aspects are ignored presently in the context of the global wave of privatisation, liberalisation and globalisation; and privatisation of education has been strongly advocated in recent years in India. Such an approach is not just confined to higher education. Even primary education, which was promised to be provided “free” by the State, according to the Constitution, is not exempted from attempts relating to privatisation. Privatisation became the buzzword and the public policies seem to be encouraging privatisation of all types education at all levels.

There has been very rapid growth in private institutions at all levels of education during the last couple of decades. In 1993–1994, private schools (that do not receive any direct state funds) were small in number; they accounted for hardly 5 % at primary level. The figure increased to 7.8 % by 2005–2006. Similarly, private upper primary schools increased in proportion from 11 % to 22 % during the same period. Since primary and upper primary levels together constitute the compulsory phase of free and elementary education, these numbers are small and there was no significant growth. As the policy discussions on legislation on free and compulsory education took momentum, there was no further growth in them in the later years; in fact there was a marginal decline in proportions, though there was indeed a marginal increase in the absolute numbers. But in secondary and higher education, the growth has been very high. Private secondary schools doubled in proportion, increasing from 15 % of all secondary schools in 1993–1994 to 36 % by 2010–2011 (Fig. 3).

The situation is more phenomenal in higher education. There has been not only a higher rate of growth in private universities and colleges than government institutions; the relative size of the private sector today excels that of the public sector, accounting for a majority in the number of institutions and in student enrolments (Table 3). Particularly the growth of private engineering and medical colleges has been very high. These institutions have actually displaced public institutions, as they account for about 90 % of all the institutions. The tuition fees in these colleges are several times higher than in government colleges (Carnoy et al. 2013). On the whole, the growth of private education has been fastest in India during the last two decades. It seems that the higher education system in India is more privatised than most other systems of the world, with very few exceptions.

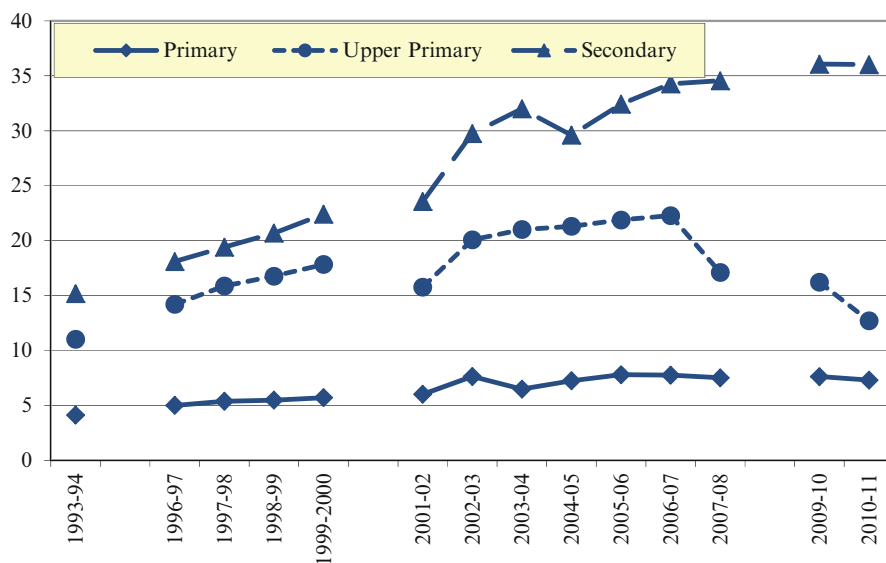


Fig. 3 Growth of private schools in India (% of all schools). Data was missing for some years (Source: *Selected Educational Statistics and Statistics on School Education*. Ministry of Human Resource Development. Various years)

Table 3 Growth in private and public higher education during the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2006–2007 to 2011–2012)

	2006–2007		2011–2012		% increase
	No	% share	No	% share	
<i>Number of institutions</i>					
Central government institutions	145	0.49	221	0.48	52.4
State government institutions	11,094	37.76	16,547	35.64	49.2
Total government institutions	11,239	38.25	16,768	36.11	49.2
Private institutions	18,145	61.75	29,662	63.89	63.5
Total	29,384	100.00	46,430	100.00	58.0
<i>Enrolment (million)</i>					
Central government institutions	0.31	2.24	0.56	2.57	80.6
State government institutions	6.03	43.54	8.4	38.57	39.3
Total government institutions	6.34	45.78	8.96	41.14	41.3
Private institutions	7.51	54.22	12.82	58.86	70.7
Total	13.85	100.00	21.78	100.00	57.3

Source: Planning Commission 2012

The limited evidence available indicates that private schools and colleges have grown largely in response to the prospects of making quick profits, and/or for political power, and are detrimental to all but few. The private institutions, particularly the fee-reliant private schools and colleges, practice exclusiveness through charging

high tuition fee and alarmingly large capitation fees or compulsory donations and through selection of children on the basis of intellectual aptitude. There are strong disequalising forces inherent in private education system. It is widely acknowledged that private schools turn out to be socially and economically divisive; and that the government school system was not adequate to counteract these forces; as a result, the whole educational system was found to be a disequaliser accentuating income inequalities (Tilak 2011).

However, the government policy is highly in favour of the growth of private institutions (Tilak 2012). The government has stated its intentions of encouraging private sector in education clearly in the 11th and the 12th Five Year Plan documents (Planning Commission 2007, 2012). The government strongly feels that “private sector growth in higher education (including technical education) should be facilitated”. It promises “removal of entry barriers to private participation” in not only higher education but also in all levels of education, and in this direction, the present existing condition that private education institutions should be “not for profit” will be “re-examined in a more pragmatic manner”. Further, the government proposes to encourage “innovative public–private partnerships (PPP)” in higher education. The Ministry of Minority Affairs proposes to set up five new “minority” universities under the PPP mode. The Ministry of Human Resource Development has already initiated such partnerships in secondary education during the 11th Five Year Plan period and many are in the pipeline in higher education.

3 Concluding Observations

This paper presented a quick review of some of the recent major developments in education in India concentrating on the last couple of decades. India has made significant achievements in education: there has been a veritable explosion in numbers—students, institutions and teachers. Enrolments and enrolment ratios in every level of education have increased very fast. Secondly, the education system at all levels was made accessible to a larger number of people—rich, poor and middle income classes, men and women, rural and urban populations and backward and non-backward segments of the population. Thirdly, in recent years, there has been significant expansion in the number of institutions of excellence in higher education, producing highly specialised human capital, such as central universities, Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Management and other technical and general education institutions. On the whole, the quantitative progress has been impressive.

At the same time, the system is characterised by severe failures on several fronts (see Tilak 2006). Failures refer to universal elementary education, vocationalisation of secondary education and development of higher education for excellence. Despite substantial improvements, inequalities—gender, regional and religious/caste, though declining—are still high both in the education system and correspondingly in the labour market. Lastly, quality of education at all levels is depressingly low. On the whole, the system is found to be highly inadequate in terms of numbers,

quality, equity and other dimensions for rapid economic transformation of the nation and to face new challenges of globalisation and development. With globalisation and liberalisation of the domestic economy, demand for skilled manpower increases significantly and education sector has to respond to the increasing demands. It is being increasingly realised that success of socioeconomic reform policies critically depends upon the human capital base created in the country. Without a large human capital base in the form of literate and highly educated workforce, major economic reforms might not be successful.

There have been a few significant initiatives that the government has taken during the last few years to reform education system at school and higher levels. Elementary education is recognised as a fundamental right and following a constitutional amendment in 2002, the *Free and Compulsory Education Act* has been made in 2009. Most of the existing policies, programmes and schemes are revised so as to meet the requirements of the *Act*. It is hoped that quality education would be made accessible to all free in the near future and the targets with respect to access, equity and quality, including learning levels of the children would be reached. A new programme of universal secondary education has been launched, along with a programme of skill development of about 500 million youth. While expansion at every level of education has been rapid, it has been more rapid in higher education. The rapid growth of higher education also necessitated the government to be concerned about quality of higher education, governance, graduate unemployment and other aspects. After all, few Indian institutions of higher education figure in the top 100 global university rankings.

To address some of the problems of higher education, the government has taken up judicial measures and introduced a series of legislations in the national Parliament for approval. While some of them may be well-intended, it is feared that they might not contribute much to reforming higher education. Some of the measures initiated in the recent past are in right direction, but many are not. On the whole, the recent initiatives in policy reforms mark a transition in the history of education in independent India—from a system embedded in the welfare statism to a system based on market philosophy.

What Needs to Be Done?

Education needs to be transformed into a powerful instrument of social change and national development. Development of education—both quantitatively and qualitatively—requires more and more resources. Government should strive to allocate more than 6 % of GDP to education. It would be desirable to fix certain short-, medium- and long-term norms regarding the proportions of central and state budgets that should be allocated to education. Resource flow to education—to any level of education, including higher education—needs to be augmented, not retarded.

Heavy reliance on privatisation and on cost recovery measures for public goods like education might be counter productive; it might hinder the growth of education

and its equitable access. Correspondingly, it would affect growth and social justice. The limitations of private sector in education are well known. The most important limitation is that equity and welfare considerations go into oblivion, and commercial and profit motives dominate development of private education. The case for privatisation of education is extremely weak; the role of the private sector can at best be marginal. Given the public good nature of education and the externalities it produces, government should play an increasingly dominant role in education. Specifically, the government must finance 100 % school education. In case of higher education, the government must play a dominant role, and resources from non-governmental sector may be generated to marginally supplement government efforts. In other words, development of education should not be hampered by the unavailability of resources. After all, there are several virtues of public financing of education.

It is necessary to aim at the development of education sector as a whole and not just elementary education or higher education or secondary education. To view primary education and higher education as competing alternatives is not proper. After all, all levels of education are interdependent on each other, and one level cannot be developed at the cost of another level. An integrated approach for the holistic development of education is essential.

If one were to identify the single most important long-term sector of human development, it figures out to be education. A cycle of educational process itself is of about 20 years, and if one were to include early childhood education and life long education, the span of the cycle is much longer, if not limitless; and the effects of an educational cycle can be felt over generations. Hence, there is need for a long-term perspective on the development of education. Further, the interdependence of education and other development sectors on each other on the one hand, and the diverse contribution of education to various sectors over a long period on the other, necessitate formulation of a coherent and responsive long-term social policy on education in a framework of inter-sectoral planning.

Finally, short-term financial compulsions should not lead to introduction of long-term policies that adversely affect the quality, equity and efficiency aspects relating to education and the overall egalitarian fabric of the welfare state. Inclusive growth has been the most important stated objective of the 11th and the 12th Five Year Plans. Development of education should be planned in such a way that it serves the goals of inclusive growth—social equity and economic growth over the long run.

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South Africa: The Education Struggle Continues

Martin Prew

Abstract There has been a plethora of education legislation and policies gazetted in South Africa since the end of apartheid and white minority rule in 1994. This chapter focuses on three main policy thrusts. These are structural and systemic changes, financial and pro-poor measures, and curriculum reform. This chapter argues that there remain gaps in the delivery of the policy framework, including the professionalisation of school management, use of national tests diagnostically, empowerment of education districts, and linking education and skills training. Finally, the author suggests some areas where change could improve performance of the system, including opening the debate on the future and purpose of education in South Africa and closing the gap between policy and practice.

Keywords Curriculum reform • Education system • Post-apartheid education • Pro-poor measures • South Africa • Structural reform

1 Introduction

South Africa, at the time of the 2011 census (Statistics South Africa 2012), had a population of 51.77 million, with 29 % of the population being under 15 years old and 5.3 % over 64. The vast majority of the population is therefore of working age. However, South Africa has one of the highest unemployment rates in the world at well over 25 % and over 40 % amongst post-school youth. Although the weak education system is often blamed for this high unemployment rate, an uncertain investment climate, high crime rate, corruption, and erratic public policy are also

M. Prew (✉)

School of Education, Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg, South Africa
e-mail: martinprew@gmail.com

significant factors. The consequence is that South Africa will struggle to take advantage of this ‘demographic dividend’ unless the education system improves dramatically and opportunities for youth employment increase.

The change of regime from white minority rule to a democratic dispensation in 1994 had a radical impact on education policy in South Africa. Prior to the 1994 election, South Africa had 17 separate education departments, each race-based and each with its own bureaucracy (Kallaway 1984, 2002; Nkomo 1990). As a result, the African National Congress (ANC)-dominated government which took power after the election in 1994 inherited a deeply fragmented and divided schooling system, with the formerly all white schools being as well resourced as any in Europe and the schools serving black African populations in rural areas and blacks-only townships being as badly resourced as schools in the poorest African countries.

The policies that have been introduced since 1994 have focused on three main areas of operation: systems and structures, financing, and curriculum. This paper will examine these three areas of policy development.

2 Structural and Systematic Reforms

The African National Congress’ education manifesto prepared for the first democratic election in 1994, known as the “Yellow Book” (African National Congress 1994), projected a South African education system that would achieve improved learning results while becoming more accessible and equitable and able to meet the needs of the labour market.

Following the 1994 election, two key education acts were promulgated: the National Education Policy Act (NEPA) and the South African Schools Act (SASA), which were both passed at the same time as the new Constitution was enacted in 1996. The Constitution had declared that full access to basic education was an absolute right. The two acts, which came into effect in 1997, were meant to allow that right to be realised. They were the result of compromise between the ANC and the other parties in the Government of National Unity.

The main provisions of the NEPA were related to the concurrent powers enjoyed by the nine provincial departments of education and the national department of education. According to the NEPA, the national department would set national policy in consultation with provincial and other relevant structures and monitor the implementation of the policy across the system. Meanwhile, the provincial departments of education would own and manage the schools in their province, employ the teachers, and set policy (as long as it did not contradict national policy).

The NEPA also created the key decision-making bodies which would oversee the education system – in particular the Council of Education Ministers, chaired by the national Minister of Education and including all the provincial Ministers of Education (Education MECs), and the HEDCOM, which is chaired by the national Director-General of Education and involves senior bureaucrats from all the provincial departments, including the Superintendent General for Education from each province.

These bodies and a number of statutory consultation forums were to manage the overall system and make sure tensions between the various levels of the system would not disrupt the core business of the departments of education: delivering education in schools, adult basic education and training centres, and early childhood development centres.

Provision was also made by a number of subsequent acts for the regulation of the sector and the key relationships and structural functions within the sector. The Education Labour Relations Council was established in terms of the Education Labour Relations Act of 1993 (which was modified by the Labour Relations Act of 1995 and the Employment of Educators Act of 1998) to allow the teacher unions and the education departments to interface over labour issues. The South African Qualifications Authority was established in legislation in 1995 to introduce and manage a qualifications framework, which was established through the National Qualifications Framework Act. The 2001 General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act established an exam oversight body.

At the same time, the 1997 Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997) was put in place to regulate the higher education sector, and in 1998, the Further Education and Training Act was promulgated to regulate the FET subsector. In addition, the skills training sector – which from 1994 to 2009 was managed by the Ministry of Labour and so was not integrated with the education system – was regulated by the 1998 Skills Development Act with delivery through Sector Education Training Authorities (SETAs), which were established to manage the development of skills nationally.

3 Pro-Poor Financial Measures

The cornerstone legislation of the post-apartheid schooling system is the South African Schools Act (Act no. 84 of 1996). The SASA focuses largely on school governance, school funding, and private schooling. From the SASA, a number of subsidiary pieces of legislation and policy were passed during the 2000s. These include the Religion in Education Policy, the Language in Education Policy, and a series of White Papers dealing with, inter alia, inclusive education and early childhood development.

Since the SASA was promulgated, there have been attempts by the Department of Education to reduce the school resourcing gap which was inherited from the previous regime. The so-called ‘ex-Model C’ schools, which were well resourced, mainly served the white middle class, while under-resourced schools served poorer black African communities (Christie and Collins 1984). Historically, each white learner received many times the state subsidy of each black learner. This legacy of a highly differentiated system was sustained after 1994. To tackle this class-based two-tier school provision, the government has implemented pro-poor measures since 1997. These include differentiated grants related to poverty, fee exemption for poorer learners, and, since 2006, ‘no-fee’ schools, whereby the children in the poorest 60 % of schools are freed from paying fees.

There have also been a slew of policies which have financial implications. The stated intention is usually to assist the schooling system to offer a more equitable learning experience irrespective of the student's background. The ANC's intention, stated clearly in the Yellow Book, was to introduce a system of free public education (ANC 1994). However, there was concern that the public fiscus could not support free schooling. This argument won the day as is clearly illustrated in the SASA. It required all schools to raise fees and supplement them through fundraising. No cap was put on the amount a school could charge and raise. The only limitation was that the fees had to be agreed at the school's Annual General Meeting and should be based on the operating costs of the school. Implicitly this allowed the wealthier schools to employ additional teachers above their post provisioning norm (PPN). These teachers were employed by the school governing body (SGB) which paid their salary.

The government modified the SASA's school funding policy, with the introduction of National Norms and Standards for School Funding in 2004 and the implementation of pro-poor skewing of school funding based on a quintile system (Kanjee and Chudgar 2009). Every school was assigned a quintile by the relevant provincial department. In each province the 20 % of schools serving the very poorest communities and with the least internal school resources were assigned to Quintile 1, the 20 % serving the next poorest communities and with limited resources assigned Quintile 2, through to the wealthiest 20 % of the provincial schools which were assigned to Quintile 5. School grants, from the provincial education budget, were paid based on an equation, with the Quintile 1 schools getting more per learner than the Quintile 2 schools and so on. The Quintile 5 schools got the least.

In theory this pro-poor measure was meant to redress some of the inequalities of the past. However, the impact of this policy was reduced, because in the larger and more rural provinces the whole education budget for years after 1994 was swallowed up in salaries, leaving little for school grants whatever their quintile status. Also the quintiles were set at provincial level, so 20 % of each province's schools had to be assigned Quintile 1 status, even if those schools were serving much poorer communities than Quintile 1 schools in richer provinces such as Gauteng. This meant that the system was not equitable on a national scale, with schools in larger rural provinces being disadvantaged relative to those in more urbanised provinces. In addition, as the salaries of teachers were not included in the calculations for allocation between schools based on the quintile system, the urban richer ex-Model C schools with the best qualified staff got a much larger allocation than the schools which depended on low-paid underqualified teachers. Hence, the quintile system had little or no impact on the gap between richer and poorer schools (Veriava 2010).

In the legislation there was some relief for poorer parents faced with high school fees which they could not afford. They were allowed to fill in a form stating their household income to claim exemption from paying all or part of the school fees. However, most parents remained ignorant of this fee exemption provision and schools blocked its implementation as government did not compensate schools for income loss through fee exemption. This left schools which informed parents of their right to fee exemption struggling to pay mounting electricity, water, and other

bills and buy additional materials. The fee exemption policy was eventually overtaken in most schools by the no-fee policy which is discussed below.

Sections 20 and 21 in the SASA laid down the level of authority and self-management schools were allowed. All schools had limited self-management as Section 20 schools while using a paper budget (their allocated funds being dispersed from the provincial office). However, better functioning and managed schools could claim Section 21 status from their provincial department of education. This allowed them to draw down their allocated funds into their own bank account. With these funds they had control over all expenses related to paying for services for the school including utility bills (electricity, water, etc.), purchase of learning and teaching materials, maintenance and improvement of the school buildings, setting the extramural curriculum and determining subjects to be offered, and any other activity and cost which is accepted by the provincial department.

By early 2000s it was clear that the intention of the Department to close the wealth gap between schools was not succeeding. The reason for this was related to the existing differentiation which defied a simple solution that did not involve major redress with the physical movement of resources from wealthier schools to poorer schools. This has been considered too difficult an issue politically. The funding model used could have made a difference if it had included teachers' salaries in the equation (Karlsson et al. 2001). By the 2000s about 80 % of school spending was related to salaries meaning that only about 20 % of the budget was available for redistribution. Within that small section of the budget the impact of the redistributive model was not radical. However, even were it to have substantive pro-poor impact this would be reversed by the SASA requiring schools to set their own fee levels and raise funds from the parents and community. In many ex-Model C schools the income from fees is in excess of R5 million with each learner paying over R10,000 per year. In township schools, before the no-fee policy was activated in 2007, learner fees were often about R150 per annum. However, many township schools had a payment rate of under 50 %; this meant that many of these schools were surviving on fee-related income of below R100,000 per annum. When the fund-raising efforts are added to this, the gap is even greater. The parents who have a deciding vote in the school governing bodies in the ex-Model C schools ensured that they remained well supported and well funded, in a way that poorer parents who sit on SGBs of poorer schools cannot do.

The result of this is that the learners in these two different types of schools have totally different experiences of education and naturally achieve very different outcomes. It is therefore considered normal that all ex-Model C high schools get Matric rates of over 90 %, while those of township and rural schools fluctuate from lows of under 50 % to around 70 %, with a small number getting over 90 %. Furthermore, the children in these schools often face greater safety and security problems and see much less of their teachers than those in ex-Model C schools.

The Minister of Education in 2002, Kader Asmal, aware of this situation, commissioned a review of the cost and funding of education. This led to an influential report, the Review of Financing, Resourcing and Costs of Education in Public Schools (Department of Education 2003), which later that year led to the development of the

Plan of Action for Improving Access to Free Quality Basic Education for All. This created the foundation for the decision to introduce fee-free schooling for the poorer school communities. To ascertain what the real costs of schooling were, a study on the cost of education was commissioned in 2004 (Deweese and Musker 2004). As a result of this study and a review of the funds that could be reallocated to no-fee schools, a notional funding allocation was set per learner.

National table of targets for the school non-personnel grant allocations 2006–2009

Quintile	% of total	2006	2007	2008	2009
Q1	30	R703*	R738	R775	R807
Q2	27.5	R645	R677	R711	R740
Q3	22.5	R527	R554	R581	R605
Q4	15	R352	R369	R388	R404
Q5	5	R117	R123	R129	R134
Average	100	R469	R492	R517	R538
Adequacy benchmark		R527	R554	R581	R605

Source: Department of Education 2006

*In January 2006 US\$1=R7 and in December 2009 US\$1=R7.5. During the period it once increased to US\$1=over R10

All Quintile 1 schools were included in the no-fee policy when it was introduced in 2007. In 2008 it was extended to Quintile 2 schools and gradually to Quintile 3 schools in 2009/2010 depending on the affordability at provincial level. Equally the allocation has been increased per learner annually.

The policy has not been free of controversy. ‘No-fee schools’ are not allowed to charge any fees so when provincial departments paid their allocation late, as often happened, the schools were left facing serious financial difficulties. Most reverted to charging fees. This undermined the policy and led to tension between some provincial departments and their schools. In addition, research has shown that much of the cost of schooling is contained in the transport, uniform, feeding, and the opportunity costs of a child being in school rather than earning an income: these costs are not covered by the no-fee grants (Social Surveys Africa and CALS 2009). So the financial burden of sending a child to school for a poor family has been relieved but not removed.

By 2010 the quintile system was reset nationally yet not provincially (Veriava 2010), and the basis for setting quintiles deepened to include literacy rates, employment rates, and household income in the community served by the school. This removed some of the misallocation of school quintiles and made the system more equitable. It meant that Gauteng has very few Quintile 1 and 2 schools while the poorer and more rural provinces have large numbers of such schools. In addition, the provisions for fee exemption in schools which still charged fees were strengthened and extended to all orphans and children on social grants (Veriava 2010).

So, at present, about 60 % of schools nationally have been declared ‘no-fee schools’. They get grants paid on a per capita basis by government and do not charge user fees. They have some flexibility in spending those funds, particularly if they have also claimed Section 21 status. However, as the amount a no-fee school receives per learner is below R1,100 per year, and as the fees that Quintile 4 and 5 schools

charge go on increasing with many now charging considerably more than R10,000 per learner per annum, the income gap between schools continues to grow.

4 Curriculum Reform

Following any form of regime change the first target in education tends to be the curriculum. In the South African case, a democratic government took over from a white supremacist regime. Inevitably there was pressure for the curriculum and the individual subject syllabus to reflect that change. Prior to 1994, the structure and form of the curriculum was firmly rooted in the tenets of apartheid philosophy: segregation, perceived differences in ability based on race, and the need to reproduce labour supply patterns that would result in the continued economic dominance of a single race. After 1994 the core principles of the inherited curriculum were therefore at odds with the principles on which the new regime was founded. Furthermore, there was a pressing need to make changes to the content of the curriculum which Jansen (1999) notes was 'racist, Eurocentric, sexist, authoritarian and prescriptive' and for it to be 'cleansed of its racist and sexist elements' (Chisholm 2004).

In addition to the need to make significant changes to curriculum structure and content, there was a need to change methods of teaching and learning (Taylor and Vinjevold 1999). During apartheid, rote learning and uncritical reproduction of facts was the norm in many schools, particularly schools for black children administered by the Department of Education and Training. The teaching and assessment of higher order reasoning skills occurred in 'white' schools, as these skills were deemed appropriate and necessary for a future managerial class. However, as the maintenance of the political and economic status quo was one of the primary objectives of the National Party government, even in historically white schools these skills were taught in a way that did not challenge the political ideology of the day (Centre for Education Policy Development 2011). Part of the philosophy of Christian National Education, which prevailed under the National Party, was that education was delivered in a way that sought to promote respect for authority, conformity, and reproduction of existing social and economic patterns of segregation. It was all of these features of teaching and learning that the post-election curriculum, Curriculum 2005, sought to address in order to build a new generation of South Africans who would be active citizens, respect human rights, prize social justice, and display acceptance of different cultures, views, and beliefs (Centre for Education Policy Development 2011).

Under apartheid, patterns of educational attainment reflected racial and class divisions. The reasons for this are well documented (see Kallaway 1984; Nkomo 1990) and are largely associated with inequitable levels of expenditure on education and the availability of appropriate educational inputs, the quality of professional preparation offered to teachers of different race groups, and the desire to reproduce labour supply patterns that required large numbers of unskilled or low-skilled workers for the mining, agriculture, and manufacturing sectors of the economy. Unfortunately, the legacy of unequal distribution of resources and the systematic

inadequate preparation of black teachers has resulted in differentiated distribution of achievement scores, with more advantaged schools far outperforming schools located in less economically advantaged rural areas and townships.

The intention to replace the previous curricula, which for most grades had been different for different race groups, with a single national curriculum, named Curriculum 2005, was broadly supported. However, at this point a series of apparently unrelated processes conspired to lead to a curriculum problem that still bedevils South Africa. The events were a political decision that there must be an immediate symbolic change in South Africa's curriculum; the arrival in South Africa of an American educationist, William Spady; a belief that outcomes-based education (OBE) would make a good model for South Africa's curriculum changes; the growing influence of the technicians developing the National Qualification Framework (NQF) on the schooling policy makers; and the loss of many of the 'anchor' teachers in the system (Fiske and Ladd 2004). The mistakes that would emanate from this series of situations were compounded by a strong belief that South Africa had nothing to learn from the post independence successes and failures in the schooling systems on the African continent.

On 24 March 1997, the national Minister of Education, SME Bengu, officially launched Curriculum 2005 (C2005), which was described as a curriculum for the new South Africa (Fiske and Ladd 2004). The launch of this curriculum was a very important symbolic – and substantive – break with past educational traditions that had reflected discriminatory values. Fiske and Ladd (2004) noted that the new curriculum had three core requirements: (i) to reflect the social values that defined the "new South Africa", (ii) to promote a non-authoritarian approach to education that acknowledged and valued local and indigenous knowledge, and (iii) the need to be delivered in a democratic fashion. In this respect, the development of C2005 was arguably the most significant curriculum reform undertaken by South Africa over 100 years.

The decision to adopt an outcomes-based approach to education was strongly influenced by the establishment of the National Qualification Framework (NQF), which in turn had been shaped by debates on competency-based education and the need to bridge the divide between education and training (even though, as already noted, the Ministry of Labour had responsibility for the training arm of the education system). The development and formulation of C2005 was driven by the desire to align school-based education with the language and structure of the NQF. The association with the NQF has been retained throughout all subsequent curriculum reforms – the critical outcomes (or critical cross-field outcomes) appear in all curriculum policy statements from 1997 to 2012.

The confusions among teachers and education system managers were manifest from the start. There was a conflation of the underlying conceptual framework and philosophy of the curriculum (OBE) and the content of the new curriculum (C2005) in the minds of teachers and even in national documents (Fiske and Ladd 2004, p. 159). At this point William Spady was brought in to assist. He was one of the world's most ardent advocates of OBE (Fiske and Ladd 2004) and he set about assisting the Department to put in place a rigid system of outcomes (famously,

66 of them) and pedagogical approaches. The rigidity and absolutism of the white regime's Christian Nationalist Education supported by pseudo science of teaching called Fundamental Pedagogics¹ was being replaced by an absolutist OBE and C2005. At the same time, many of the longest serving and most influential teachers were being retrenched and the teacher unions were trying to sort out what their new role would be in a democratic state. So the teaching profession was in no state to challenge these changes stridently.

The result was problematic. Teachers were underprepared and did not understand the new curriculum which seemed to devalue their teaching skills and referred to them as 'facilitators'. Perhaps the most damaging result was that many teachers lost their enthusiasm for teaching and believed that they no longer needed to teach even the basics (Department of Education 2000). For a workforce which had in many places already been traumatised by apartheid and needed to be reassured and supported, this was disastrous. An already shaky and low-performing schooling system went into free fall. The following years were of immense embarrassment to South Africa, as the international comparative studies found South African learners' content knowledge and deductive abilities to be very poor (Howie et al. 2012; Mullis et al. 2007; Reddy 2006).

As the Centre for Education Policy Development (2011) noted, OBE – and C2005 in particular – has its educational roots in constructivism and progressivism. Many of the ideas associated with these approaches can be seen as a counterpoint to the ideology of the previous curriculum in that:

- The curriculum would specify the broad outcomes to be attained by children (learners) but teachers would have a large degree of professional freedom to determine exactly how to teach the content.
- All outcomes could be attained by all children (irrespective of race or class); however, children may take different lengths of time to do this.
- Teachers were encouraged to promote indigenous knowledge and draw on phenomena that were readily observable in children's immediate environments before presenting more abstract concepts and to promote conceptual linkages across disciplines.
- Assessment and monitoring practices were designed in a way that were supposed to enable teachers to follow the individual progress and performance of each child through the creation of learner portfolios, regular (almost daily) assessment, and detailed record keeping.

¹Fundamental Pedagogics (FP) was the dominant theoretical discourse in teacher education and in schools under apartheid (Enslin 1990, p. 78). It claimed to be value-free and apolitical (De Vries 1978). However, with its own language, techniques, and instruments, it was political, endorsing the status quo (Enslin 1990). FP started from the assumption that babies are born sinful and that the teacher is knowledge provider and moral guardian of the helpless, ignorant, and incompetent child: this justified authoritarian methods. Christian Nationalist Education (CNE) was the white supremacist ideology underpinning FP which condemned blacks to a subordinate place in society and the economy. It was the prevalent ideology in most black teacher training colleges until the early 1990s.

Another feature of C2005 was the extent to which it, as a curriculum reform, became associated with particular teaching methodologies. Teacher training on OBE often focused on methods of classroom delivery and usually centred on the use of group work, activity-based learning, and the promotion of higher levels of learner participation. This led to what was described as a preoccupation with *how* teachers are teaching and not *what* they are teaching (Potterton et al. 2008). Compliance with the outward performance of teaching became the focus of many development programmes and assessments of teaching practice, with content knowledge and the conceptual focus of lessons often taking second place.

By 2000 it became clear to the education department that there were serious problems with the way that C2005 was being interpreted and implemented at school level. Minister Kader Asmal set in place a Curriculum Review Committee. The report (Department of Education 2000) found that there were multiple problems with C2005 which prevented teachers introducing it as anticipated, including its opaque and confusing language and terminology and its complexity. The report recommended radical changes. This led to a rethink of the curriculum halfway through its initial implementation cycle and resulted in a modified version, the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS). This was implemented from 2004 in the foundation phase. It still used OBE as its core philosophy, but it was less rigid and complex in its language and approach while being more supportive of teachers in how to interpret the approach. There was also a deliberate attempt to ensure that the school principals and education district officials, including subject advisors, were included in the training. They had not been involved in the C2005 training and so felt marginalised, which undermined its implementation in many schools and districts.

The RNCS was rolled out across the country for Grades 1–9 in 2003–2005 through mass workshops. It included activities and modeling of good practice as well as discussions about implementation. However, such a conference-based approach left many teachers unable to transfer what they had learned into the classroom. This iteration of curriculum reform was as criticised as the first one. This led to some immediate modifications and a rename to National Curriculum Statement (NCS) when it was rolled out for the Further Education and Training (FET) phase (Grades 10–12) from 2006 to 2008. One change during this period was that it became compulsory for all students in the FET band to study either Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy as few learners had been taking mathematics in the FET phase, which was starving technical professions of new recruits. The production of curriculum statements which provided clearer content specification marked the start of the tensions between the espoused intentions of C2005 to devolve decision making with respect to curriculum content to the local level (in particular to the level of individual teachers) and the centralisation of control over the specification of curriculum.

Researchers found that many of the misconceptions which had crept into schools and classrooms during the implementation of C2005 remained and perpetuated the findings that the new curriculum was not living up to its transformative potential as “some of the central pedagogic principles built into the new approach worked

well only under the physical and fiscal conditions found in wealthy schools” (Fiske and Ladd 2004, p. 163). Worried about South Africa’s continued poor performance in international comparative studies, the third post-1994 national Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, established a Review Committee in 2009 to investigate the continued inability of many teachers to implement the curriculum. This led to a national debate about OBE and the previous curricula. The result was a fourth reform of the curriculum in just over a decade, with the emergence of a modified Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The core recommendations of the Review Committee are summarised as follows:

- Greater clarity is needed in curriculum policy documents. It was recommended that unclear and vague terminology be removed.
- There should be greater specificity of content in curriculum documents as teachers experience difficulties in knowing exactly what content should be taught in each grade.
- There should be greater articulation across the system, ensuring better grade-to-grade progression in the work that is taught and more systematic development of concepts and skills.
- Teachers’ workload should be reduced, in particular many of the administrative requirements associated with curriculum implementation should be eliminated.
- There should be a rationalisation of policy documents, processes, and administration. There should also be a rationalisation of the number of subjects taught in the intermediate phase (Grades 4–6).
- District officials should provide greater support for curriculum implementation, assisted by the supply of good quality teaching and learning materials from such sources as the Department’s own dedicated e-learning portal, Thutong (Centre for Education Policy Development 2011).

The new national Minister of Basic Education² in 2009, Angie Motshekga, implemented many of the recommendations immediately, such as reducing the teacher workload by getting rid of the need to keep portfolios of learners’ work, while also implementing some fundamental changes to the curriculum, insisted that what she was doing was refining and rationalising the NCS. The resultant CAPS is being introduced into all schools between 2012 and 2014. The CAPS provides detailed guidance to teachers on delivering their subject syllabus and puts in place much clearer assessment processes. It brought to a head a long-time discussion about how prescriptive the curriculum should be and how much leeway should be provided to teachers. South Africa has moved from C2005, with its prescriptive philosophy of education with very clear objectives for each stage of the syllabus and laying down teaching methods while allowing the teacher to define the content, to the CAPS which is more prescriptive in the content and more flexible and less authoritarian in the methods and outcomes required. This includes simplification of the language used in the CAPS documents for each subject,

²The Department and Ministry of Education was divided in 2009 into the Department and Ministry of Basic Education and the Department and Ministry of Higher Education and Training.

directions on how to teach and assess each topic, and greater articulation of the content taught between grades and between topics, to ensure stronger concept development.

In summary, the curriculum development process in South Africa since 1994 has seen a series of innovative and creative curricula introduced, driven by OBE without adequate training and support for the teachers and without the necessary resourcing for effective implementation. The infrastructure to implement OBE effectively was missing. While OBE was not going to be the solution to South Africa's inherited curriculum problems, if implemented effectively, it could have moved South Africa towards more flexible and creative schooling. The problem is that any kind of curriculum which departs from the traditional memorisation of a narrow range of facts is difficult to implement and requires a higher level of teacher competence and resourcing. Without the necessary training, support, and resources, many teachers became immobilised or simply gave up, with the unintended – but predictable – result that scores on traditional measures went down.

The effective implementation of these various curriculum changes has been somewhat compromised by the difficulties involved in implementing an Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) which was designed to link the appraisal of teachers' performance to personal and school development plans.

Recent research (Department of Basic Education 2011; NEEDU 2013; Zenex Foundation 2012) has shown that many curriculum delivery problems remain. Findings show that many teachers:

- Set very limited amounts of written work and tend to set tasks with low cognitive requirements
- Avoid topics in the curriculum that they do not fully understand and spend considerable time teaching topics that they do understand
- Fail to recognise and compensate for learning and language difficulties that learners in their class exhibit
- Fail to cover more than half the syllabus content each year, so leaving learners with partial knowledge; this problem is compounded year on year
- Struggle with the complexity of home languages in their classrooms

5 What Has Been Missed? Major Gaps in the Education Reform Process

The Department of Basic Education has made it clear in the document *Schooling 2025* and the accompanying document, Action Plan to 2014 (Department of Basic Education Department of Basic Education 2010a, b), that the main thrust for this decade must be on ensuring existent policies are implemented effectively within strengthened institutions and procedures rather than developing new policies. However, it is acknowledged that there are a few areas of the system where policy clarity is still needed.

5.1 Empowering Education Districts

The aim of the policy on education districts, which was gazetted in 2013 (Department of Basic Education 2013), is to define how districts are to relate to the rest of the education system and how they are to support schools effectively. The starting proposition is that fully staffed and functional education districts are critical to the improvement of the schools that they have responsibility for. Although there are only 86 education districts nationally, any changes to their functions and the way they operate have serious financial implications, as education staff at district offices are senior educators and so relatively highly paid. For this reason, the extension of increased responsibilities to education districts and the setting of norms and standards, such as setting a maximum of 30 schools per circuit (a sub-unit of the district) and 300 schools per district, are to be achieved gradually. These increased powers, norms and standards are aimed at allowing education district offices to support their schools more effectively, and to be more responsive to their professional needs, rather than being enforcers of policy compliance, as is often the case at present. Therefore the policy also lays down that there should be a multi-skilled team available to assist schools at the circuit level, and the team should consist of subject advisers, management and governance specialists, and administrative personnel.

5.2 Professionalising School Management

Future policy on school managers is likely to revolve around the implementation of an entry level qualification for principalship. A prototype has been trialed over the last few years and has shown to have a positive impact on both the individual who does the practice-based course and their schools (Bush et al. 2011). Further, the policy is likely to professionalise the role of principal by making changes to the way that principals are appointed and held accountable for the performance of their schools. At present, under SASA, the SGBs have the power to appoint teachers including the principal in their school as long as they advertise the post, interview, and provide the provincial department of education with their recommended top three candidates. The head of the provincial department usually rubber stamps the recommendation and appoints the first name on the SGB's list, unless there is a dispute over the appointment. Once SGBs have had this power reduced, there is a possibility that their powers to appoint teachers will also be reviewed, as this provision means that there is limited ability across the system to deploy teachers to where they are most needed. In addition, the present system tends to maintain the status quo of higher qualified non-black teachers being appointed mainly in ex-Model C schools and black teachers staffing the poorer township and rural schools.

5.3 Utilizing Annual National Assessments

Another possible area of reform in the schooling system is with the management and use of Annual National Assessment results. Since these annual tests were implemented a few years ago they have had a major impact. For the first time, an individual teacher's performance can be appraised through the performance of their learners. Generally teachers have reacted positively to this form of testing, partly because it provides teachers who do not teach Grade 12 with some feedback on their performance. However, the impact of such testing and accountability measures often declines over time, as they get increasingly bureaucratized and teachers find ways of circumventing their impact, as occurred with the IQMS. Changes are likely to focus on requiring schools to use the ANA results diagnostically in planning school improvements and holding schools and districts responsible for improving ANA results.

5.4 Linking Education and Skills Training

Most of the legislative and policy changes over the next few years will come in the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). Since having a separate identity and getting the link re-established between education and skills training the DHET has been redesigning the sector. This has included a number of complementary processes.

The process started with three summits being held – for universities, further education and training, and skills development. These were supplemented with smaller seminars on such areas as humanities and social sciences. All these summits were informed by research. The resultant reports helped inform the development of a Green Paper on Post-school Education and Training. This Green Paper was developed through a consultative process during 2011 (Department of Higher Education and Training 2012). In 2012 it was refined and exposed to public comment, prior to being developed into a White Paper. While the intention behind the Green Paper was to open possibilities and debate, the White Paper will define the specific policy directions that the DHET intends to take. Ultimately this will lead to legislation.

It is likely the White Paper and therefore future legislation will promote the following:

- Articulation between the various post-school institutions
- A more flexible National Qualification Framework
- Expansion and greater access to post-school provision particularly for students from poorer communities
- Increased access to tertiary education through the development of a number of community education and training centres

- Making the fit between post-school education and the world of work tighter while ensuring that post-school education is about more than skilling for work (hence the focus on humanities and social sciences)
- Greater use of indigenous languages in higher education courses
- Revival of an apprenticeship system through the SETAs
- Consolidation and rationalisation of the SETAs with much greater oversight by DHET
- Differentiation of the roles of the 23 universities
- The building of two new universities
- Interventions to ensure higher throughput and success rates in post-school education and training institutions

5.5 Application of ICT in Teaching and Management

In both basic and higher education, possibly the most significant changes over the next decades will be in relation to use of technology in both the pedagogical process and in institutional and system management. This was already recognised in the White Paper on e-Education (Department of Education 2004) which was never fully implemented. The present school data system (which includes four different platforms – EMIS, DEMIS, SA-SAMS, and LURITS) is fragmented and often collects data which is inaccurate as it is not used at school level for planning.

The use of technology in the classroom is patchy and limited, as many schools lack electricity or face teacher techno-phobia, which leads to assumptions of high costs and complexity of implementation. Early experiments with widespread use of ICT were based on provision of hardware. These projects were generally expensive and poorly conceived. The lessons from these pilots is that schools, with guidance, should set their own requirements for ICT, and the focus should be more on the provision of software and training rather than installing expensive hardware. In addition there is a need for eco-friendly schools and classrooms which reduce water and electricity bills by using green technologies. Whichever route is taken, security will be an issue: computers, solar panels, and batteries in schools attract thieves.

Inevitably at a policy level, the focus on ICTs is likely to be mainly related to advancing science and mathematics education, in part to improve results and in part to cover for the shortage of qualified teachers.

South Africa could benefit by an audit of what is already in place across the schooling system (as many private companies have worked with individual schools) leading to the development of an overall national education ICT database, strategy, and master plan, in line with policy recommendations in the 2004 White Paper (Department of Education 2004). The rule must be that any ICT provision should be cost effective, sustainable, and used. More controversially, the guidelines on use of ICTs in schools should be expansive and should open the space for risk and innovation, and they should allow for the production of relevant knowledge.

6 How Does South Africa Move Forward?

Having reviewed the development of education legislation and policy since 1994, with particular focus on structural and systemic, pro-poor financial and curriculum policies, as well as the gaps in the policy framework, the last two sections look forward and examine the direction that policy and education development is likely to take over the next years.

The rationale for further reform is driven by the high cost and low performance of the schooling system. The cumulative impact of the policies discussed in this paper has been to reduce the effectiveness of the schooling process. This is widely acknowledged by commentators and the government itself. The key indicator illustrating this is that only about 30 % of each cohort of learners reaches Grade 12 and then passes the Matric exam. Over two-thirds of youth leave school with limited literacy and life skills in an economy with urgent skill demand which they cannot meet.

The focus of this section is on reforms that are needed to make the education system more functional and to improve performance. It is proposed that this requires improvements in teacher knowledge, language teaching, school management, and provision of ICTs in education.

6.1 Teachers

The quality of teachers appears to be the nub of the problem the South African education system faces. When 154 intermediate phase ‘master’³ teachers from three provinces were given a mathematics test, based on Grade 6 outcomes and learning area knowledge, 96 % failed to get a pass mark (set at 50 %) and the highest score was only 71 %. The mean across all the 154 teachers was a miserable 26 % (JET Education Services 2007). Tests in science and language written by Foundation and intermediate phase ‘master’ teachers show similar knowledge gaps. Other teacher tests have indicated most teachers cannot manage high-level language and mathematics tasks included in the grade syllabus they are teaching (NEEDU 2013). In secondary schools many teachers are not properly qualified to teach their subjects – particularly mathematics and science. This problem is a legacy of the apartheid era but exacerbated by the closure of teacher training colleges in the late 1990s.

South Africa needs to train more teachers and ensure that initial and inservice teacher training courses are competence-based, lead to real skills in the classroom, build strong subject knowledge, and do not just promote theory.

Teacher knowledge levels should be checked regularly so that the capacity building is specific to the needs of each teacher. This should be linked into the national IQMS

³ These were teachers who had been selected by their provincial departments of education for the project, on the basis that they were good teachers who could teach their peers once they had passed through the course.

and an existing national professional development point systems, which requires teachers to undergo a certain amount of training each year.

6.2 Language of Teaching and Learning

There is increasing awareness that poor ANA and Matric results are rooted in the limited language capacity of many learners who are learning from Grade 4 in an exogenous (foreign) language (Department of Basic Education 2010c). Many learners struggle with this early exit to English, which is the language of teaching in most schools. While the policy encourages bi- and multi-lingualism, most teachers lack the skill to manage a multilingual class. The next years need to either see home language teaching extended through the primary phase or improved teaching of English in Grades 1–3 in preparation for the transition to English in Grade 4. Either way it is essential that South Africa responds to the present reality that many learners cannot understand their teacher well enough to learn.

6.3 School Management

Management of schools needs to become a priority. Without effective school management – and particularly effective curriculum management – which ensures that teachers attend class and teach effectively, it is unlikely that children will learn more and better. This is especially critical in primary schools where the basics have to be learned. The basis for taking this forward as a priority is in place: there is a draft national education management policy and ‘Standard for School Leadership’ creating the policy framework; the conditions of service and appointment built into the Occupational Specific Dispensation will professionalise the school principal’s job, particularly when supported by the qualification for principals, which is being implemented across all provinces now but needs to be legislated as a prerequisite for all future appointments to principalship.

6.4 Investment into ICT

Substantial investment is needed to make sure every school has electricity and high-speed broadband access. This would allow schools to offer a range of services to their communities. It would also require all schools to have a bank of computers, which are accessible during and outside school hours, and welcome the use of smart-phones on site. The educational spinoffs could be massive. It would allow learners in remote schools access to the internet and to information which at the moment only urban middle class learners can generally access. The weak teacher would cease to be the barrier to learning that she often is at present, and it would allow learners a

constructive base for support groups, with the ability via such sites as Khan Academy to teach themselves, do tests, and check and extend their knowledge.

From a governance viewpoint the ICT improvements would require partnerships between the Department of Basic Education and computer companies, local social network providers, and cell phone network providers, on a much larger scale than at present.

7 Envisioning the Future

The government has acknowledged that education is in crisis and that concerted national attention needs to be paid to improving it. It is not solely a matter of more funding, but is also about how money is allocated and spent within the context of a national plan for education. This plan, if it is to make a real difference, would need to foreground basic teacher subject knowledge, ability to teach reading and other basic literacy skills in the vernacular and the language of teaching, and classroom management within schools which are equipped with appropriate ICT and are safe. Policy should be utilised to reinforce that process. If that means rewriting some policies, and particularly the cornerstone SASA, then this needs to be done.

At the same time the policy-making process needs to be better informed by what South Africans want out of their education system. For too long the national debate on education has been seen as the preserve of the educated middle class and those involved in education. However, education touches the very core of the collective future as a society and as a developing nation. It is time that this debate is opened up and involves as wide a range of people as possible. The starting point needs to be what the people of South Africa want and expect from their education system. This conversation needs to be a structured and informed debate: many South Africans do not have a vision of what an effective schooling and education system would look like, having never seen one. This means that it needs to be an information-rich process and also involve both bottom-up and top-down approaches. The result may take education in a direction which is not entirely in line with the development plans of the Ministry, but this should be accepted. This process should then become the basis for fundamental reforms in the legislative environment and real actions to effect that at school level. This should involve serious changes in the way that communication technology is treated and managed in schools. ICT should not be seen as a threat by teachers and principals but as an ally and tool in the educative process. Lessons can be learned from countries where this has been implemented effectively. This should be supported by development of eco-friendly schools and classrooms with sustainable access to electricity and water through use of solar power and other appropriate technologies.

For too long there has been a gap between policy and practice, with symbolic policies which avoid upsetting powerful interests, such as the IQMS, and well-intentioned policies which lack a well-designed and implemented training model or strong outcome indicators and monitoring and evaluation plans. As a result, the policies rarely speak to those people working in schools, education district offices, and in

communities who are meant to implement them. This gap needs to be closed. There needs to be a process of rationalising and simplifying the present plethora of laws and policies governing education and empowerment of school managers and governors to take risks within policy and embrace new technologies which can be used to enhance the learning and school management processes. This will be a 'back to basics' endeavour led by courageous leaders with a vision. It will also need to link into other government reforms such as the rural electrification, government-on-line initiatives, as well as rural development and even anti-corruption drives. Without this, the drift towards parents seeking 'better' schooling for children from the burgeoning private schooling sector (CDE 2012) will continue, with long-term negative impact on the state schooling sector and the confidence and success of that system.

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England: Restructuring Education and the Demise of the LEA

Mel West

Abstract This chapter focuses on developments over the past 25 years in England, where almost 85 % of the population lives. The review goes back to 1988, when there were 107 Local Education Authorities in England. The number of local authorities has increased to 152 today, as the result of various local government reforms, yet the local authorities' powers and responsibilities have diminished. The chapter illustrates such a continuing process of reform by three distinct but unequal phases, which largely followed the changes of the essentially two-party political system. The chapter describes the reform conceived and implemented by each government and analyzes their assumptions underpinning the reform and the evidenced-based impact. Finally, it delineates external factors that have contributed to development of education standards in England and potential lessons for replication.

Keywords Educational reform in England, the 1988 Education Act • New Labour education policy • Creating an education marketplace • Education and social disadvantage • Education intervention strategies • Checks and balances in public education systems

The United Kingdom embraces four jurisdictions. The UK national government sets education policy for England, but Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland each have their own National Assemblies that develop and oversee education policy. Of course, there are many similarities; Wales in particular closely follows the policies established in England, while Scotland too follows many of these, although typically some time later and with modifications. The position in Northern Ireland is again different, with the complexity of two parallel school systems—one Catholic, one Protestant—that need to be coordinated.

M. West (✉)
University of Manchester, Manchester, England, UK
e-mail: mel.west@manchester.ac.uk

This chapter focuses on developments of public education in England, where almost 85 % of the population lives. There is also a private education sector, but currently this accounts for only about 6 % of school-age children; the overwhelming majority in England attend state schools.

This review goes back to 1988, when there were 107 Local Education Authorities in England, each of them responsible for providing and then overseeing the provision of education within their local area. The number of local authorities has increased to 152 today, as the result of various local government reforms, which seems to suggest an increase in local democratic influence. In fact, however, quite the reverse is true, as these authorities have very few remaining powers and greatly limited responsibilities regarding education.

Education reform in England has been a continuing process over the past 25 years. This time span, however, is divided into three distinct but unequal phases, because the essentially two-party political system means changes from time to time in the government party, and when governments change, policies change too. Thus, the first period of significant change in education can be seen to date from the then Conservative government's Great Reform Act in 1988, the second from the election of the Labour government in 1997, and the third from the Conservative-dominated coalition government that was formed after the 2010 elections.

Before these reforms commenced, although both the education system and educational entitlement were national, and largely funded by the national government, there were significant local differences in education provision. These conflicts arose partly because the responsibility for organising and managing the system locally was distributed among more than 100 Local Education Authorities, and partly because determining and overseeing the content and conduct of the curriculum was the responsibility of each school's individual governing body. However, despite increases in the numbers of children participating, in the average number of years of schooling received, and in the resources devoted to education during the previous 40 years, the Thatcher government of the 1980s thought that the system was in need of a major overhaul, with less emphasis placed on the processes of schooling and much greater emphasis placed on the outcomes. The resulting 1988 Education Act precipitated fundamental changes in the educational landscape, bringing the education system under direct national influence and thus beginning the major erosion of local authority powers that has continued to this day.

1 Conservative Government Reforms 1988–1997: The Creation of an Education Marketplace

Essentially, the 1988 Education Act had four key components (West and Ainscow 1991). The first was *prescription*, introducing a National Curriculum, accompanied by national testing, that all schools must follow. The second was *devolution*, transferring many of the management functions previously carried out by Local Authorities to schools, and thereby significantly changing the role of the headteacher.

The third related to *competition*, altering the basis on which schools were funded. Essentially, this changed the basis on which schools had been funded, away from the numbers of teachers employed to the number of pupils the school attracted, allowing popular schools to grow at the expense of less popular neighbouring schools and creating a local education marketplace. It also embraced the creation of a new category of schools directly funded by the government, *grant-maintained schools*. The fourth was *privatisation*, breaking the Local Authorities' monopoly on the supply of services to schools within their areas and opening these up to competition from private companies.

1.1 Development of the Policy Reform

The driving force for these reforms, rooted in the White Paper "Better Schools" (DfES 1985), which had identified the need to provide a better return on investment in education through increasing standards of attainment at all levels of ability as the overriding priority for education policy, was the notion that replacing the supposedly 'cosy' Local Authority environment with simulated marketplace conditions would lead to improvements in standards. Although this notion was popular with right-wing politicians, who saw public ownership as the enemy of enterprise and efficiency, it was an ideological rather than an evidenced proposition. Opponents pointed out that free market systems often lead to quite as much duplication and inefficient resource use as centrally planned ones. But the primacy of the market is deeply engrained in Conservative philosophy, and objections from schools and teacher associations were portrayed as self-serving rather than serving the interests of pupils and were swept aside.

Certainly a case could be made for ensuring that there were common components prescribed within every child's educational experience; too many children had, for example, been able to opt out of science subjects or modern languages at a relatively early stage of schooling. Nevertheless it was questionable from the outset whether a single curriculum model could be expected to meet the needs of all pupils, regardless of aptitudes, interests, or ability levels. Critics argued that a core curriculum, identifying perhaps a half-dozen key subjects and accounting for about 70 % of the time children spent at school, could achieve the objectives of a national curriculum but still allow some flexibility to tailor the curriculum towards individual needs. But the government insisted on a rigid 100 % model, prescribing both the subjects—ten in all—and the balance of time to be allocated to those subjects from age 5 to 16, although it was clearly impossible from the outset that this single, heavily traditional, and academic curriculum model could have equal utility value to all pupils.

There were similar doubts about the wisdom of unbridled competition between schools. Studies were beginning to demonstrate that in England the poverty gap was increasing, and with it the gap in attainment between children from different socioeconomic backgrounds was widening, with children from the poorest families falling ever further behind national average attainment levels. It was evident that

competition between schools would further favour children from middle-class backgrounds, whose parents were much more likely to shop around for the ‘best’ schools, leaving already disadvantaged schools even more disadvantaged as numbers fell and the social mix of the pupils became even more heavily weighted towards the poorest groups in the community. The newly established—some would say liberated—grant-maintained schools were a particularly important stimulus to competition. Under the provisions of the 1988 Act, schools could ‘opt out’ of the local authority altogether. Such schools would receive their funding directly from government, which was a significant incentive, as this would mean budgets were not ‘top-sliced’ to fund local authority services to schools before distribution. Thus those schools that responded to the government’s invitation to switch to grant-maintained (GM) status enjoyed the competitive advantage of increased resources levels that, in turn, would make it easier to attract pupils who brought with them even more resources. At the same time, as the government made a corresponding reduction in the education support grant paid to the local authority to fund schools, the provision of high-quality local services that might persuade a school not to apply for GM status became more difficult.

Controversy over these issues continued into the 1990s, by which time there was a new prime minister, but not a new party in government. Initially, it was hoped that this change might see a softening in the hostility towards local authorities and teacher associations, but instead this hardened. Post-16 (years of age) education provision was removed from local authority control and placed under a newly formed national funding council, further diluting local influence on education provision. New legislation was passed giving the Secretary of State (minister) for Education extended powers in relationship to teachers’ pay and conditions of service, and, least popular of all, the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) was established. OfSTED is an agency set up by the government to oversee the inspection of all maintained schools on a regular 4-year cycle and was central to the government’s determination to increase the accountability of schools for the performance of their pupils. Inspection reports would be published and, along with the ‘league tables’ of school performance now emerging as the first cohort of National Curriculum pupils reached assessment points, would stimulate debate within the local community about the quality of schooling provided. The government’s assumption—substantially correct—was that parents would see raw scores attained by pupils as an indicator of school quality, rather than, as was and is more often the case in developed countries, a reflection of the socioeconomic status and social capital of parents. Thus, new forces to increase competition between schools and for school places were unleashed at a local level.

Following an election that again returned the Conservative party to power, the government produced a new White Paper: “Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools” (DFE 1992). This document, in arguing that the needs of all children were not the same, and that schools must pay more attention to individual interests and aptitudes, set out a formula for relaxing the National Curriculum and its punishing testing regime without acknowledging that its introduction had been a mistake. Instead, it proposed to introduce *specialist schools*, whose curricula would be skewed

in favour of particular subjects. Thus, there would be designated Science schools, Performing Arts schools, Modern Language schools, and so on. The issue of how these schools might recruit children whose interests or abilities coincided with these ‘specialisms’, or indeed how children might access schools whose specialisations matched their interests, was largely overlooked, although such schools were permitted to admit a small proportion (5 %) of their intake on the basis of established interest in the area of specialisation.

A further loosening of the National Curriculum came in 1993, when the government-commissioned review, “The National Curriculum and Its Assessment” (DfES 1985), was published. This paper concluded that the curriculum as legislated was impractical: a national curriculum required national staffing in the proportions the curriculum implied, and this was not available. Further, it warned that assessment had become the main focus in the classroom, distorting and reducing the quality of teaching and learning activities. This seemed to be a voice of reason, asserting itself in the face of reforms driven by political dogma rather than educational wisdom, and a number of the report’s proposals were adopted. Among these were the scaling back of the National Curriculum to an 80 % model, restoring schools’ discretion regarding how best to fill the remaining time; reductions in the amount of content prescribed for and the time allocated to testing; and greater flexibility in the 14+ curriculum, allowing some traditional academic subjects to be dropped in favour of more vocationally orientated programmes.

However, although these policy shifts were generally welcomed by the education community, the government pushed further ahead with its accountability measures. OfSTED became increasingly intrusive, designating some schools as ‘failing’ and requiring their closure, spreading alarm everywhere it went and severely damaging teacher morale. The publication of school performance tables became an annual ritual, with schools increasingly fearful of slipping down the league. OfSTED reports and league table positions became marketing tools for the strong, threats to the weak. Competition between schools was thoroughly established. But a change was also taking place among school headteachers. The generation of 1988, who had found themselves thrust, largely unprepared, into the role of school managers were gradually being replaced by a new and altogether more pragmatic generation, who accepted competition and indeed thrived on it. In 1988 very many headteachers had been reluctant to take on this new role, especially aspects associated with managing the school’s budget. Ten years later, by the time the Conservatives were swept from power in the 1997 election, very many would be reluctant to give it up.

1.2 Assumptions Underpinning Conservative Government Reforms

One starting point for the reforms undertaken during this period was a belief that there are areas of knowledge and basic skills that all children should acquire through schooling. Once that concept is accepted, some national curriculum guidelines seem

inevitable; surely, if we agree that all children should be offered access to a common core of experiences, we must agree that all schools should be required to make these available. Indeed, it may seem strange to many countries that England did not introduce national curriculum guidelines before 1988.

A second assumption was that competition is the best way to organise the provision of goods and services within society. The increasing size of the public sector had long been a concern to right-wing politicians and voters. It seemed that key public sector services—such as education and health—had insatiable appetites for resources, yet showed little by way of increased productivity. This feeling made these sectors irresistible targets for reform; obviously schools and hospitals cannot be closed, as no elected government could expect to be returned after taking such action. But if these services could be forced to operate in the ‘real world’, where survival depends on performance and providing value for money, that is likely to play well with voters. Thus, competition between schools through the simulation of market conditions is seen as a force that will induce schools to improve quality and efficiency. Further, establishing an education market transforms parents—the effective ‘consumers’ of education in that they make the consumption decisions on behalf of their children—into customers, empowering them in the education marketplace. This notion also plays well with voters.

A third assumption was that public sector management was less effective than its counterpart in the private sector. Public sector management was represented as overly large and bureaucratic, slow to react to changes in demand, inefficient in its use of resources, and ineffective in achieving its goals. Decision making in education was ineffective because decisions were being made in local town halls, remote from the schools and by people who were not fully aware of the real problems and priorities. Surely, the transfer of decision making into the school, moving it closer to the point of implementation, would improve the quality of decisions made?

1.3 What Evidence Is There Regarding the Impact of These Reforms?

There is no doubt that this reform programme brought about a sea-change in the English education system. In a single decade the carefully calibrated checks and balances provided by local education authorities that had previously moderated direct political influence over schools were removed and a new relationship between central government and schools established. In fact, it is probably relationships within the system that changed most during this era of reform. The close relationship between schools and local authorities was broken, and schools were increasingly contracting services—from the provision of school meals to provision of in-service training—from alternative providers, thus creating new markets for educational services. Relationships between schools, especially large secondary schools, and

government changed, as direct funding was accompanied by direct dialogue, and a select band of headteachers who supported government reforms found themselves brought into the policy-making circle, further distancing local authorities from the point at which education policy decisions were made. At the same time, relationships in schools began to change. Schools, rather than local authorities, were now the teachers' employer; the headteacher had become chief executive of 'The School Ltd', with a broader role and much wider powers. Relationships between parents and schools changed, as parents were increasingly seen as customers who needed to be attracted, as was evidenced by the huge increase in school-level marketing activities, and the transformation of the 'school brochure' from a collection of stapled, photocopied sheets into a glossy advertisement for the school.

Of course such changes were uneven, spreading at different rates in different areas. Generally, the fragmentation of local authorities as schools opted out was more evident in the south of England, traditionally the location of Conservative Party strongholds, than in the north, where local political control was more often in the hands of the Labour Party. And the changes, especially 'opting out' and the imposition of the OfSTED Inspection regime, alienated many teachers, eroding morale and reducing job satisfaction levels (Scanlon 2001). Demographic change exacerbated the situation as school rolls fell during the 1990s, placing even more pressure on those already squeezed by competition. But closing schools is not easy, so that unpopular schools tended to remain open, with extra places, unhappy staff, and high costs, thus undermining the government's drive to increase efficiency.

In terms of schooling outcomes, although test results increased modestly over the period, there was no dramatic leap forward, as gains in one school were largely offset by disappointing performance in another. Indeed, many argued that the gains recorded in the most successful schools were a consequence of the reallocation of pupils across the stock of schools, rather than the dramatic increases in performance that were trumpeted (Gorard 2005). Meanwhile, important questions about the curriculum and assessment systems continued to be asked. Did the curriculum reflect the needs of an increasingly global employment market, or did vocational education need to be improved? Was the national examination 'fit for purpose'? What could be done to reduce non attendance? In many inner-city areas there were schools where as many as 10 % of the pupils were missing on any given day, at least in part, it was argued, because the curriculum on offer did not seem relevant to their lives.

For these reasons it seems fair to conclude that the major impact of reforms in this period were structural, altering (irreversibly) the architecture of the education system in England and changing relationships within it, but having relatively little overall impact on either the efficiency or the effectiveness of the system. By 1997, the Conservative government had reduced the influence of local authorities and teacher associations, and had established an education marketplace that would require its political opponents to rethink their own position and policies, but it had also begun to run out of ideas and lose public confidence.

2 Labour Government Reforms 1997–2010: Tackling Social Disadvantage Through Educational Intervention

2.1 *Development of the Policy Reform*

Few were surprised when Tony Blair famously described New Labour's key priorities as 'Education, education, education' in the run-up to the 1997 election. After almost 10 years of sweeping reforms from a Conservative government that had dramatically altered the balance of powers within the education system, many (especially teacher associations) assumed this signalled that local influence would be restored. However, they were soon to be disabused of this notion, as the new government embarked on a series of policy initiatives that were in many respects even more prescriptive than those of their predecessors, and set in place mechanisms for 'micro-management' of almost every aspect of schooling. The new government publicly endorsed the key role of headteachers as the 'transformational leaders' who would ready the nation's school system for the twenty-first century, while simultaneously indulging in unprecedented levels of prescription about what should be taught, how it should be taught, how it would be assessed, and even how heads should manage their schools. Indeed, specific ideas about how to ensure educational quality became the very last thing headteachers needed to worry about. Knowing how to organise the school to satisfy the measures, targets, and inspection criteria imposed were much more useful attributes, as it became clear that this was a government that believed the best way to raise standards was to intervene directly in the ways schools went about their business. The overriding policy goal during this period, and the primary focus of intervention policies, was to increase standards while reducing the 'gap' between the highest and lowest attaining pupils. International studies such as PISA had indicated that while overall education performance remained relatively strong, other countries were catching up, with some pulling ahead. At the same time, these studies also suggested that the impact of socioeconomic factors on attainment levels was higher in England than almost any other country (Machin 2006).

The White Paper "Excellence in Schools" (DfEE 1997) set out the initial policy objectives. All schools would set targets to raise standards. School performance league tables would provide more detail, showing not only the attainment levels pupils had achieved but also their rates of progress over time. Secondary schools would be encouraged to become 'Specialist' schools, favouring a particular curriculum area; in return they would be given limited control over pupil admissions. Primary school class sizes would be reduced, and all primary school children would spend at least 1 hour each day learning English and 1 hour each day learning maths (National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies). *Education Action Zones* (EAZs) would be established in areas of high social deprivation, with targeted strategies, resources, and support. Other forms of disadvantage, for example, ethnic minority status or special educational needs, would also receive additional resources. In schools, setting children by ability—anathema to a generation raised on the ideals of comprehensive schooling—would be encouraged. All headteachers would be trained in

school leadership. This agenda was enlarged upon in the subsequent White Paper “Achieving Success” (DfES 2011), which reduced still further the now modest funding level and influence of local authorities over the schools in their area, loosened further the constraints of the National Curriculum, actively promoted the involvement of groups and organisations, both public and private, in the governance of schools, and targeted disadvantage even more closely. The Children’s Act of 2004 was perhaps the most ambitious piece of legislation during this period. An attempt to bring coherence to the separate activities of the different services involved in child health, welfare, and education, it sought to integrate these more strongly, portraying schools as natural centres where service delivery might be coordinated. The act was accompanied by a powerful statement setting out the government’s beliefs about the entitlement of children and young people, “Every Child Matters” (DFEE 2004).

2.2 Four Types of Interventions

In addressing these goals, government actions became focused around the identification of targets for every school, the measuring of school performance against these, and the imposition of ‘solutions’ to improve the school if targets were unmet. In fact, the government was so convinced by the efficacy of its ‘solutions’ that these were quickly spread out across schools in the most extensive programme of interventions ever seen in the English education system. Promoted under the slogan ‘raising the bar, narrowing the gap’, the government had a view on how all aspects of schooling should be conducted. The preoccupation with setting and hitting targets meant that the scope and pace of interventions to ‘improve’ schools accelerated rapidly, sometimes moving further in directions already signalled by the previous government, sometimes identifying new aspects of schooling that would benefit from central direction and control. This unprecedented array of interventions can be grouped into four basic types: general interventions, targeted interventions, within-school interventions, and structural interventions (Kerr and West 2011).

2.2.1 General Interventions

These interventions aimed to improve the overall quality and effectiveness of all schools, particularly in relationship to the strengthening of leadership and teaching quality. The underlying assumption was that (at least part of) the reason for differences in educational attainment levels lies in the limited effectiveness of some schools. Improving schools generally can therefore be seen as a way of improving the outcomes of those serving disadvantaged pupils, leading in turn to an improvement in their life chances. This type of intervention was particularly popular during the early period of the New Labour government in the late 1990s, for example, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Subsequently, these were incorporated into the National Strategies, a set of system-wide improvement approaches commissioned by

government from a private sector education service provider, supported by teams of ‘consultants’ employed nationally, regionally, and within each local authority, to ensure their implementation. Soon, the really quite modest improvements in test and examination scores occurring in those years levelled off, and these ‘one-size-fits-all’ approaches were phased out. Officially, they had done their job and were no longer needed, although many would say that in truth they were expensive but relatively ineffective strategies and that funding such interventions could no longer be justified.

2.2.2 Targeted Interventions

These initiatives were aimed directly at improving the performance of schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas. The underlying premise was that in such areas, ineffective schools ‘fail’ pupils who are already disadvantaged by personal or family circumstances, and so merely perpetuate existing inequities. As a first consequence, such schools were often identified by OfSTED as unsatisfactory and became subject to direct interventions and regular monitoring, coordinated by the local authority but dictated by central government. In some areas, groups of schools were targeted simultaneously in more sweeping interventions. This process began with the identification of *Education Action Zones*. It was continued into the Excellence in Cities (EiC) programme, which required groups of secondary schools in deprived inner-city areas to work together for the benefit of all the pupils in all their schools. Such collaborative arrangements which was exactly the sort of function previously coordinated by the now-disempowered local authorities continued to develop under a variety of names throughout the period. As they developed, interventions began to focus on collaboration beyond the school, for example, between schools, parents, and community groups. Arguably the most significant example of this approach was the London Challenge, which, during the 7 years from 2003 on, focused particularly on raising the attainment levels of disadvantaged learners in Greater London, while at the same time improving the overall performance of all schools and pupils in the area. The perceived success of this intervention led to its extension to the City Challenges established in the Black Country and in Greater Manchester, and finally the ‘National Challenge’. This intervention targeted more than 600 ‘low-performing’ secondary schools located across the country in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage. Unfortunately, this caused the government some embarrassment, as many of these schools had previously been praised by OfSTED for the quality of their provision.

2.2.3 Within-School Interventions

Although the first two types of intervention focus on improvement at the whole-school level, this third type was aimed at improving outcomes for underachieving groups within schools. These approaches are therefore rooted in the view that pupil outcomes show significant within-school variation. This differential attainment of different pupil groups implies that many schools do not work equally well for all

their pupils. In national policy documents these approaches were usually referred to as being about ‘narrowing (or closing) the gap’ between high- and low-performing groups. So, for example, there have been interventions that have specifically focused on the underachievement of boys, particularly those from white working-class backgrounds; on learners from certain minority ethnic backgrounds; on bilingual learners; on children in local authority care; on traveller children; on gifted and talented children; and on children with special educational needs. Specific attention was also given to improving access to university education amongst students from disadvantaged backgrounds through the Aim Higher initiative. This plan involved universities working closely with local schools to help raise both awareness and aspirations and to open up pathways for young people from communities that have no established tradition of university education.

2.2.4 Structural Interventions

The final years of the Labour government saw the introduction of a number of new categories of schools. A particularly important ‘new’ category of school, City Academies, was introduced in 2000. These schools, modelled on the Charter Schools operating in inner-city areas in the USA, were proclaimed as a radical new approach to the problems of education in deprived urban environments. The creation of new categories of school typically involved changes in school governance arrangements such as Academies, Federations, Trusts, and All-through Schools. Increased freedom from the already severely diminished influence of the local authority became a key feature of such schools’ governance, with ‘sponsors’ replacing traditional school governing bodies as the ultimate decision-making body for the school. In particular, ‘Faith Groups’ were encouraged to come forward to act as sponsors. Sometimes such schools were established as a result of local ambitions, and sometimes as a result of central government’s dissatisfaction with existing local arrangements. These interventions seemed to operate from the assumption that a partnership of strong schools and strong government is all that is needed to improve schooling outcomes. Curiously, a feature of the ‘new’ schools created by these policies is the relative freedom granted to these schools in relationship to the curriculum. Although government has never conceded officially that one factor generally holding back attainment among disadvantaged groups may be an inappropriate National Curriculum, which meets neither the needs nor the interests of many pupils, it is interesting that greater freedom to abandon National Curriculum prescriptions is typically available within the new categories of schools.

2.3 Assumptions Underpinning Labour Government Reforms

As already noted, all these interventions see the school as the primary focus for national improvement efforts. They also imply a central role for the school in

improving equity within education systems. This view resulted in a strong emphasis on the accountability of individual schools for the performance of their pupils, leading to what some have seen as unreasonable pressure on schools to solve the wider problem of social disadvantage (Muijs and Chapman 2009). Emphasis was also placed on support for schools through the involvement of 'expert' advisers and consultants, professional development opportunities, targeted financial support, and support in terms of human resources. Different interventions varied with respect to how much they emphasised support as opposed to expectations, and can be located along a continuum, from those that were mainly supportive (e.g., improving school programmes) to others which were substantially punitive (e.g., various forms of school reconstitution and closure), but all underlined school-level accountability.

Interventions also differed in terms of the degree of prescriptiveness. Some, such as those provided through the National Strategies, came with detailed guidelines and training regarding how they were to be implemented. Others allowed rather more local discretion and encouraged schools to innovate, resulting in strategies such as 'lending' one another teachers, as happened under the Leadership Incentive Grant initiative (West 2010). Indeed, an important strand within these intervention policies was an emphasis on school-to-school collaboration. On the surface this may seem strange within a policy context in which competition between schools remained the key strategy for 'driving up standards'. But there was increasing research evidence that collaboration between schools has enormous potential for fostering system-wide improvement, particularly in challenging contexts (Ainscow and West 2007), by both transferring existing knowledge and, more importantly, generating new knowledge that is context specific.

Further, this period saw increasing recognition of the need to link school improvement efforts to wider social action. This argument positions schools as hubs of such action—a 'universal service'—through their collaboration with other agencies that work with children. In addition, schools have been encouraged to take on a more extended role within their communities and with the involvement of community partners (Dyson 2011) through the creation of new structures such as trusts and academies.

Reflecting on all this, the interventions reported here seem to be driven by two key underlying assumptions: first, the traditional governance arrangements do not enable schools to overcome the disadvantages that children in areas of economic and social deprivation bring into school with them; and second, boosting academic attainment levels among these children will increase their life chances, and thus help reduce inequities within society.

The notion that increased attainment is itself life changing is perhaps overly simplistic. In reality, examination success is at best a proxy for educational quality, and there is ample evidence that improving the 16-plus qualifications of young people by a few percentage points hardly influences either post-school choices or opportunities. Equally, it can be argued that the attainment gains themselves are not attributable to the new forms of governance, but rather to the substantial additional resources that have accompanied such interventions. Had the schools that have been closed down and replaced enjoyed the facilities and resources available to the new Academies, who

can say they would not have achieved as much, if not more? However, few can question that additional resources are justified: these schools tend to be located in areas of high deprivation, with a much greater proportion of pupils qualifying for free school meals, having special needs, or with English as a second language.

However, as already noted, the notion that at least part of the reason for the differential achievement of different student groups lies in the quality of the school provision they experience is a general assumption driving the educational reform process during this period. There is some evidence to support this, but there is also evidence that points to its limitations. There is strong evidence that the school effect on attainment is significant and is similar in effect size to that of pupil social background (Muijs 2006). However, this school effect must not be overstated, as it has sometimes been by national policy makers. According to studies in the UK, typically between 10 % and 20 % of the variance in attainment outcomes between pupils can be explained at the school level, although this does not mean all that variance is the result of school factors (see, for example, Sammons 2007; Muijs 2006; Teddlie and Reynolds 2000). However, it is a mistake to assume that the remaining variance, at the student level, is all associated with social background. In fact, whenever researchers use actual measures of social background, such as mothers' education level (the measure that best predicts outcomes among measures of social background), parental income, or job classification, the variance explained is typically less than 10 %. Rather, the research suggests that the largest factors associated with learner outcomes relate to measures of general ability and prior learning. Of course, both social factors and school-related factors contribute to these factors too, so separating out the effect size of individual variables is an impossibly complex process. Additionally, it must also be noted that the poor quality of many of the measures used in education means that a fair proportion of the variance is simple measurement error.

Some research evidence suggests that the impact the school has on students from disadvantaged backgrounds is greater than on all students generally, the 'school effect' being up to three times greater on the attainment levels of those students (Muijs and Reynolds 2003). This suggestion implies that interventions to improve school effectiveness will bring greater proportional benefits to these students, thereby improving educational equity too. However, there is also some evidence that schools in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage face greater operational problems, for example, in recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers (Maguire et al. 2006), which may further disadvantage students in these schools. This is one of the reasons put forward to explain why various national school improvement interventions have used relatively prescriptive approaches in an attempt to develop teacher competence and to ensure there are tight management arrangements for consistent implementation and monitoring.

Some researchers draw attention to the built-in limitations of improvement efforts that focus solely on within-school factors. Some argue that schools reflect the massive inequalities that exist within British society, an analysis that offers little encouragement to school improvement as a means of breaking the link between home background, educational outcomes, and life chances. Others take a more optimistic line, suggesting that efforts to improve individual schools are needed but that these must be linked to wider actions to break down the additional barriers faced by disadvantaged groups.

2.4 *What Evidence Is There Regarding the Impact of These Reforms?*

The Labour government came to power at a time when the Conservative reforms of the previous decade had altered the landscape in which schools operate but had then run out of steam. As noted earlier, many educational commentators thought that the changes achieved reflected the ideological beliefs of the political right more than they improved schooling. In this context, the Labour government had both public expectations and the goodwill of the education professions on its side when it took office. Unfortunately, this was an opportunity they largely squandered. Mortimore, summing up their period in office, wrote:

Much needed to be done when this government came into office in 1997. And many teachers wanted to help improve schools and make our society more equal. But instead of the formulation of a long-term improvement plan based on the two big questions-what sort of education system is suitable for a modern society, and how can excellence and equity be made to work together-schools got top-down diktat. Successive ministers, and especially their advisers thought they knew 'what works'. They cherry-picked research, suppressed evaluations that gave them answers they did not want, and compounded the mess.... (Mortimore 2009)

This is perhaps an overly bleak view. The Labour government itself asked to be judged on its capacity to deliver the targets it set, for the most part, targets involving the percentages of children reaching given levels in the various national tests and public examinations. In the event, some of these were met, others were not, but there was increasing scepticism about the relevance of these targets to either improving schooling generally or enhancing life chances for learners, specifically those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Predictably, government statements point to improvements in test and examination scores, arguing that the impact has been significant. Within the research community, however, there is a variety of views, including some who argue that there has been very little real impact, particularly on learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, and that even the apparent improvements in measured performance are not always supported by a detailed analysis of national data (Gorard 2005). Concern has also been expressed that such improvements that have been achieved in test and examination scores may have been achieved by the use of dubious tactics, such as orchestrated changes in school populations, the exclusion of some students, the careful selection of which courses students follow, and the growth in so-called equivalent qualifications that may inflate reported attainment levels. Another problem is that where strategies do work, they may well work just as well for advantaged students, so that overall improvements may even widen the 'gap'. There is also a proposition that improvements in measured performance do not necessarily result in increased access to higher education, particularly to more competitive universities, or in improved employment opportunities. Such views cast doubts on both the authenticity of improvement claims and the value of continued investment in such initiatives.

These realizations underline that the evidence for impact of these interventions is, at best, mixed, not least because of the limited extent to which reliable evidence

has been systematically collected and analyzed. Where systematic quantitative evaluations have been carried out, what is often found is that impact is patchy, with evidence of progress in some schools, but little overall improvement in learner outcomes, particularly learners from disadvantaged groups, that has been sustained (Tikley et al. 2006). At the same time, there is an accumulating volume of qualitative accounts, from both individuals and networks of schools in socially disadvantaged areas, which report significant progress in improving student performance.

The positive examples reinforce the importance of factors that are now well established within the school effectiveness research base, such as raised expectations, the strengthening of teaching practices, the systematic use of data to guide classroom-level strategies, and the way change is managed at school level. These examples also suggest the need to develop strategies that relate to the immediate contexts, both inside and outside the school. In the case of schools that are relatively low performing, for example, initial emphases on strengthening systems and procedures through the tightening of management arrangements and the standardizing of classroom practices seem most effective. Here, the partnering of schools where a relatively stronger school provides support to a weaker school has also been found to be a useful approach. But for schools that are performing more effectively, further standardization seems less helpful: engagement with specific data about aspects of school performance, investigating within-school differences in performance, and encouraging experimentation in the classroom seem to be more successful approaches.

Turning to specific initiatives, there has been little in the way of systematic, rigorous evaluation of the impact of targeted interventions. However, such evidence as exists suggests limited success, in terms of both outcomes for children and increased understanding of the key process and management factors that influence the impact of interventions. Perhaps the strongest evidence emerges from interventions that were targeted at preschool and early years education. The evaluation of the impact of a parenting programme on children aged 3 to 5 years showing conduct disorder (Hutchings et al. 2007), for example, showed significant improvements in most measures of parenting. Another study of early intervention (Evangelou et al. 2005) considered a project supporting a range of approaches trialled by voluntary organisations across the country. Some of these offered curriculum variations, whereas others focused on guidance for practitioners. The key findings were that the initiative developed both skills and understandings among practitioners. Similarly, the national evaluation of the Sure Start programme (Institute for the Study of Children, Families and Social Issues 2008), which supported the transition to school of young children from disadvantaged backgrounds, reported improved child behaviour, increased self-esteem among parents, improvements in health, and a reduction in levels of Social Services involvement with targeted families. The official evaluations (DfES 2004, 2006) of the Children's Fund initiative reinforce many of these findings. It reported that local initiatives had often been able to respond to previously unmet needs of children and their families. However, sustaining parental involvement and breaking down barriers to social inclusion in the wider community proved more problematic.

However, as already noted, findings are often contradictory, as is the case with evaluations of the early years' numeracy and literacy strategies. Here some studies show positive results, indicating improvements in teacher effectiveness and pupil outcomes, whereas others are sharply critical of the limitations of these strategies, seeing them as encouraging impoverishing teaching, being based on poor and limited evidence of what constitutes effective classroom practice, and leading to even greater divergence between low- and high-achieving students (Smith and Hardman 2000; Wyse 2003; Earl et al. 2003; Millett et al. 2004). A problem here for the researcher is the variation in approaches used in the different interventions, which makes it difficult to identify those factors to which learning gains might be attributed.

Consequently, specific evidence of the impact such interventions have on breaking the link between poverty and achievement is scarce, and the scant evidence that is available is not always encouraging. Looking at new models, in the case of Federations, an analysis of national student and school level datasets found little difference between student attainment levels in Federated schools and comparable non-Federation schools. The new arrangements, however, have a second major implication for schools: they brought the opportunity to incorporate the wider children's services agenda Every Child Matters into school-level planning and practices. This point may be significant, because structures and processes can be developed that may bring local communities into schools. Trust schools also have the potential to bring in partners involved in the wider children's services agenda, although as yet there has been little research into their potential to do so.

The government maintained that Academies were more successful than traditionally governed schools in improving attainment standards in socially deprived communities. Again, however, this is not always supported by research findings, with some studies finding that Academies do not perform any better than other schools in the area. Even where there are clear increases in attainment levels, it may be that this is related to factors other than improvements in teaching quality. For example, in Academies up to 10 % of the student intake can be 'selected' (although not formally on ability); some Academies have deliberately 'widened' their intake of students to include 'a more diverse pupil profile', while others attract a wider profile of students because of initial success or increased parental confidence, so it is hard to make true comparisons without looking at overall system performance. Indeed, some argue that improved outcomes may be attributed as much to a fall in the proportion of students eligible for free school meals (FSM) as to any improvements in teaching and learning. However, the impact of this factor is hard to gauge, as student numbers in Academies typically increase, which is not surprising because they have typically replaced failing schools. Although the numbers qualifying for FSM also increase, the increase is not proportional, making it hard to refute even this claim. There is undoubtedly considerable variation in student populations among Academies. For example, one of the first opened started with 51 % of its students eligible for FSM, and this has decreased to 12 %. In contrast, a later Academy opened with 9 % of students eligible for FSM, and this has subsequently increased to 41 %. This finding indicates that the social mix in Academies may change both

rapidly and dramatically, not in itself a bad thing, but a confounding variable, nonetheless, when trying to evaluate impact on children from particular socioeconomic backgrounds.

The new structural arrangements can perhaps be configured to meet the needs of the communities they serve and the challenges confronted more effectively than the schools they replaced. A number of case studies reported on the DCSF Standards site offered good examples of local practice developing to meet local problems, for example, drawing in support for smaller schools in rural environments, or pooling staff and other resources in urban areas, or building a more positive local image.

Despite these examples, the apparent lack of overall impact from so many initiatives is somewhat surprising, particularly if the contention that schools make a difference is true. There are, however, a number of possible explanations for this, some of which relate to methodological matters. For example, many of the evaluations carried out to date are based on relatively short-term output data, perhaps completed too soon for any effect to show. Among policymakers there is often an expectation that interventions will have an immediate impact. However, most of the school improvement research suggests that at least 3 to 5 years are needed for an intervention to lead to measurable changes in output at the school level.

This is a further example of the point made earlier: the methodologies used in evaluations are often weak when it comes to detecting impacts and attributing these to particular interventions. Only rarely is there any attempt at random assignment, or is there effective use of comparators, making it very hard to discern the impact of particular interventions. The impact of individual schools on students also differs, depending on which outcomes are studied. They tend to have their strongest impact on cognitive development, and on social behaviours and dispositions. Impact on students' affective outcomes is more limited, however, with even a factor such as 'attitude to school' being substantially determined by non-school factors.

Ironically, even where the intention is to reduce disadvantage, the differential capacity of schools to implement interventions effectively can lead to increased differences in performance between schools, compounding equity problems. This disparity underlines an important limitation of the single school focus approach adopted by the Labour government for many of its interventions, which is that too often improvements in one school in an area of widespread social disadvantage are achieved at a cost to surrounding schools. Research provides examples of how, as a school improves, it will tend to attract a greater number of students from families more committed to education. Sometimes, too, a school that becomes oversubscribed may also decide to become more selective. As a result, other schools in the area are left with less-motivated students from less ambitious backgrounds, locking them into a spiral of decline. Unfortunately, this phenomenon seems to have been an unintended consequence of Labour policies. Thus, in the end, despite their undoubted commitment to improve standards in schools and reduce the impact of social disadvantage on attainment levels, there is no compelling evidence that Labour government reforms made much difference to either. The lasting impression of this period is the unprecedented level of interference by

politicians in the detail of schooling, fuelled by an inability to grasp that teachers have a fairly good idea of how to improve schools, if only you trust them enough and let them get on with it.

3 Coalition Government Reforms Since 2010: The Pendulum Swings Back?

The outcome of the 2010 election was close, so close that for the first time since wartime a coalition was needed to form a government. Once again, the Conservatives were the largest group in Parliament, but to achieve the majority necessary to govern, an alliance with the much smaller group of Liberal Democrats was necessary. This need meant that conservative policy objectives, including education, would need to be tempered to ensure Liberal Democrat support.

The Conservatives had outlined priorities for education in the run-up to the election. These ideas seemed to imply even greater ‘freedom’ for schools: having freed them from local government influence in their previous term of office yet with increasing central government control, this time central direction would also be loosened. Academies, the self-determining schools established initially against considerable public resistance by the Labour government, would not be scrapped; in fact, all secondary schools would be encouraged to apply for Academy status. Further, so-called Free Schools would be established. Free Schools are schools funded by the government, but established in response to local demand from parents, charities, or indeed businesses that are unhappy with the quality of schools already available within the local area. This schooling is free of charge and not academically selective (although priority in admissions may be given to the children of those groups that set up the school). Before the election the Conservatives proposed that several hundred free schools would be opened in the first year of office, although in fact only 24 materialised, and in the second year, only about 50 more are expected. However, the main significance of the acceleration of the Academies programme and the introduction of Free Schools lies in the final elimination of local authorities’ influence on schooling.

Inevitably, this has been a contentious issue, and one that was difficult for the Coalition partners to sign up to, because before the election they had been calling for a restoration of local authority coordination of and control over schooling. A key issue here is the impact of self-determining schools on the prospects of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. If schools find their performance is measured and their activities are resourced according to the attainment levels of their pupils, and are given a degree of freedom to ‘select’ which children attend and to exclude children who cause difficulty, one might expect to find that there are pupils that no school is keen to accept. Thus, the argument goes, new ‘freedoms’ associated with current government policies are likely to make it even more difficult for children already suffering from social and economic disadvantage to access quality schools, because they would be the most difficult and least cost effective for whom to provide.

To secure agreement for this policy, the Conservatives had to offer their Liberal Democrat partners something in return: this something was the pupil premium. The pupil premium is an additional payment made to schools that admit children from disadvantaged homes, meaning that schools will get additional resources for every such child on roll, as funding follows pupils.

The White Paper “The Importance of Teaching” (DFE 2010) sets out the government’s policy agenda for this parliament. This agenda is somewhat curtailed by current economic policies. As in most European economies, public debt reduction is the overriding priority. Consequently, this is not a time for plans that require significant resources; indeed education budgets have seen dramatic cuts, particularly to the ambitious school building programme of the last government. Several policy shifts are signalled, including further slimming down of the National Curriculum, and an end to the prescription of teaching methods, tougher criteria for entering teacher training, and a sharpening of accountability. Further light has been shed on accountability measures, with the publication of a new Framework for School Inspection (DFE 2010), which details changes in the OfSTED regime. Schools that are considered ‘outstanding’ by OfSTED can apply to become ‘Teaching Schools’, which will allow them to sell services to other schools, further squeezing the residual local authority role, and under the new ‘Schools Direct’ arrangements, schools can take a much more significant role in the recruitment and training of new entrants into teaching.

Perhaps the most contentious reform signalled was the introduction of a new examination system to replace GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education), the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). In truth, the need to reform GCSE has been discussed for some years. Many have doubts about the ‘improvements’ in attainment standards GCSEs seem to indicate, and instead point out that the examinations have become easier, that multiple attempts to improve grades are now possible, that ‘coursework’ completed outside examination conditions has artificially inflated grades, and so on. In addressing these concerns, the government proposed that from 2015 the EBacc will substantially replace GCSEs by providing a new ‘core curriculum’ of five subjects, English, mathematics, science, a modern language, and either history or geography, together with a new examination system that is ‘more rigorous’, that will exclude marks awarded for assessed coursework in most subjects, and require instead terminal examinations taken simultaneously in a single sitting.

3.1 Assumptions Underpinning Current Policies

Current policies display the traditional scepticism Conservatives have about the public sector and their continuing belief in competition and choice as sources of improvement, influenced by what is perceived as ‘successful’ practice overseas. Similar to other parties on the political right, such as the Republicans in the USA and the Christian Democrats in Germany, conservatives are suspicious of ‘big government’ and favour markets over intervention. Their dislike of local authority influence is

long standing, and the fact that most of the lowest performing local school systems are in areas where the Labour Party has local political control does nothing to allay suspicions that local authorities have little to offer. Coupled with this is a desire to shrink the ‘nanny state’ and to encourage individual citizens to take more responsibility for their own lives and decisions, including what type of schooling they want for their children. The role of government is to ensure that parents have effective and efficient local schools from which to choose. Of course this is a principle that is easier to expound than deliver, but it lies at the core of Conservative government ideology. Indeed, in this context, the 2010 White Paper seems clearly underpinned by a belief that a privatised system of education would be most effective, and so any national system should try wherever possible to simulate privatisation.

And, as with most governments in the global village, educational standards are seen as a barometer of international competitiveness and a key to economic growth. Thus the measured outcomes of education must at least keep pace with improvements elsewhere, as reported in international comparisons. Hence governments change school systems in order to try and achieve ‘results’ that boost national performance and are very interested in finding out schools systems that appear to perform well in such comparisons. Recently, both Sweden and Finland have regularly scored highly. It is not surprising therefore to find Conservative education policies that are rooted in developments in these countries. Sweden has ‘free schools’ and Sweden is a relatively high performing system. Finland has placed great emphasis on the quality of teachers and Finland comes out best of all.

3.2 What Evidence is There Regarding the Impact of These Reforms?

It is of course too early to do more than report the early response to current policies. The transfer of schools to academy status has certainly accelerated, and the number of Academies created by the Labour Government between their inception in 2000 and the 2010 elections was around 200. Two years later, this number is approaching 2000. Introduced as alternative secondary schools in inner-city areas with a record of school failure, Academies can be considered an improvement over the schools they replaced, although the rates of improvement are certainly not dramatic and a number of Academies have failed, being placed in special measures following OfSTED inspections. However, the modest increases in exam results coupled with the opportunity to involve faith groups (Labour Party) and industrial and commercial organisations (Conservative) in the governance of schools has resulted in support from across the political spectrum. The Coalition government have opened up Academy status to primary and special schools as well as secondary, and have also put in places measures to compel failing schools to become Academies. They have also diluted the consultation process significantly, so that the ability of local communities and parents to resist this change in status has substantially evaporated, which many have criticised

as anti-democratic. Despite these criticisms the spread of Academies seems irresistible, and in some areas local authorities are actually pressing local schools to apply, possibly because they are finding it impossible to sustain any services to schools with so many already released from local influence and making no financial contribution to service provision.

The progress of Free Schools has been less impressive, although there was no established procedure here on which to build. Nevertheless, there has been less demand for Free Schools than the government would like, and quite a number of those that have been established are operating well below capacity. Inevitably, because they draw resources from the system as a whole, such schools increase inefficiency in education and reduce the resource levels to conventionally funded schools. Given that Free Schools are largely an aspiration of articulate middle-class parents whereas the children from the poorest families remain in the system, this could hardly be seen as a strategy likely to reduce the attainment gap. It is too early to offer any judgements on the pupil premium, although the suspicion is that its relevance is more symbolic than substantive.

The new OfSTED inspection framework sharpens judgements on school quality and puts more schools at risk of finding themselves in need of improvement that is at the mercy of government policy. But more worrying than the changes in criteria and process seems to be the tightening of standards applied: schools that were satisfactory in previous OfSTED inspections are at real risk of being found unsatisfactory under the harsher judgements that seem to have accompanied the new Framework.

As already noted, the proposal to reshape both curriculum and assessment regimes for 14–16 year-olds by introducing the EBacc met with great hostility, and there has been criticism from all sides. Those representing subjects included in the EBacc, even some science and maths teaching associations, have argued that the timescale is unrealistic, and that the proposals were hastily conceived and seriously flawed. Others criticised the lack of consultation, and saw the timescale as a cynical attempt by government to force through changes before the next election so that the reform cannot easily be unpicked should there be a change of government. Those representing creative and arts subjects were also very critical, arguing that an EBacc would marginalise such subjects, resulting in a less varied curriculum and creating more disaffection among students. The National Union of Teachers and the National Association of Headteachers, with the support of other teaching unions, called on the government to rethink its plans. The Examinations Boards questioned whether the imposition of the so-called EBC (the English Baccalaureate Certificate) infringed the regulations on competition defined in EU treaties, and even Ofqual (the national agency established to regulate and quality assure examinations, qualifications, and assessment in England) indicated that the scheme seemed impractical. In the end, the government bowed to this chorus of opposing views and duly announced that the EBacc would be scrapped. However, elements of the proposal relating to increasing the rigour of the examination system and developing broader, value-added measures for assessing school performance will be retained.

Despite this setback, the implications of the current reforms would seem to be a further and final dismantling of local authority influence, and an increase in competition

between schools and between categories of schools that would seem designed to invite private companies to enter the 'market' thus moving towards a publicly financed but privately managed education system, resulting in greater inequities in the quality of schooling available, in which the pupil premium becomes an irrelevance. At the same time, the hounding of those schools unfortunate enough to have pupil populations that cannot be manipulated to meet the 'floor targets' set by government will increase apace, leading to yet more closures and 'takeovers' accelerating this strategy of covert privatisation. Ideologically, this sits well with traditional Conservative party prejudices, but it seems likely that association with this policy will damage beyond repair the standing of their Coalition partners; the Liberal party may long regret this fleeting flirtation with the levers of power.

4 A Note on the Training of Teachers

As might be expected, in a period of such compulsive meddling with schools and schooling, the training of teachers has also attracted much government attention. In fact, the then Conservative government began to reel in the relative freedom available to teacher training providers who were previously able for the most part to determine the content and pattern of their training programmes themselves, in 1984, by introducing the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE). This Council drew up a set of competencies against which ITT (Initial Teacher Training) trainees could be assessed, which was initially voluntary, but became formalised through subsequent legislation that also established 'training partnerships'—significantly increasing the role and influence of schools in initial teacher preparation, and bringing the partnerships under purview of OfSTED, who were granted powers to inspect providers much as they inspected schools.

In 1994, CATE was replaced by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), which had broader powers to oversee and allocate places to providers and also formalised the competencies into National Standards in 1997. Standards were specified in four broad areas: subject knowledge, planning and teaching, monitoring and assessment and professional attitudes and attributes. These Standards were revised in 2002, by which time they had become the major criteria for both the direct assessment of trainees and the indirect assessment of teacher training provider quality.

In 2005, the TTA became the Teacher Development Agency (TDA), with a further expansion of its remit to include the training of all staff employed in schools, and also responsibility for overseeing the continuing professional development of teachers. This role was reinforced in 2007, when National Standards were again revised, and this time standards indicating competence levels expected of teachers at various points throughout a teaching career were added to sharpened standards for beginning teachers. In 2012, following a change of government, the National Standards were again revised, and tied closely to career development stages. The net result of these changes has been to produce unprecedented levels of central control of teacher preparation and development, with highly detailed descriptions of what teachers should know, be able to do, and even what they should believe. Inevitably critics and

the universities whose influence has been eroded as central control increased, are in the forefront have described the impact of these changes as reductionist and ultimately de-skilling. Some have warned that the changes have reduced teaching to a rational-technical process that stifles individual creativity and discourages initiative, while others see them as driven by political motives rather than research evidence.

Those worried about the direction of travel have not been reassured by more recent developments. In 2002, the government introduced the 'Teach First' scheme (modelled on 'Teach for America'). Overtly, this scheme seeks to attract into teaching for a short period (at least 2 years) particularly able young graduates in subject areas where it has proved difficult to attract sufficient numbers through conventional training routes, such as mathematics and physics. These recruits are then 'fast-tracked' into schools via a 6-week summer training school, which is supplemented by in-school support once they start teaching and a further summer school at the end of the first year. There is no doubt, although the numbers recruited via this route are relatively small, that some highly motivated and inspirational young people have been tempted into schools, some of whom choose to stay on in teaching. But the fact that after a few years the government decided that completing the Teach First training programmes would lead to the same accreditation as conventionally trained teachers, and the remarkable career progress made by some of those who remain in the profession, has led some to think this is devaluing the efforts of those who are trained and indeed those who train teachers through the conventional route.

Most recently, the government's proposal to designate some schools as 'Training Schools' that can then offer professional development to other schools on a commercial basis, and introduction of the 'Teach Direct' route into teaching, through which schools, or groups of schools working together, can recruit and train their own teachers, has done little to reduce anxieties among conventional teacher training providers. Many believe that, similar to the local education authorities, they too are being moved to the margins of teacher training activity, and will see activities that have traditionally been their own transfer to ever more powerful and autonomous schools, that are being encouraged—'bribed'—even by government to usurp their role.

Currently, the numbers of teachers recruited through these initiatives remain small, and it is questionable that conventional training can ever be wholly replaced by such school-based or school-centred provision. However, there is a clear pattern here, and we can see that this government, despite political differences with the previous one, shares the belief that a partnership of strong government and strong schools is the best recipe for educational improvement, and teacher trainers who may believe that their legitimate involvement in education provision is being displaced by this approach are unlikely to see any change in policy direction.

5 Conclusions

This review of education reforms during the past 25 years may seem to imply that the education standards in England are lower now than they were when the process started in 1988, but this is not the case. Apart from the impact of aforementioned

policies and interventions, there are other factors that have contributed to education development. There has been significant economic and social change, which has led to important changes in patterns of education and educational expectations. There has been a significant increase in the quality of teachers and teaching, the quality of resources available, and the role played by digital learning technologies. In 1988, only one third of 16-year-olds achieved the examination threshold set for further academic study; by 2010 this had increased to two thirds (although with girls outperforming boys by about 10 %). Several factors contributed to this improvement, including changes in the examination and testing systems, away from a normative system operating as a rationing device for higher education towards a normative system, in which all can succeed; movement away from a series of examinations squashed into a couple of weeks of memory-based tests towards a regime that included various forms of modular and continuous assessment; an increase in the numbers of young people wanting to stay on at school and then go on to university education; and more sharply focused and outcome-oriented teaching. But despite these factors and the increases they have brought about, this still appears to have been a time of both missed opportunities and misguided interference from governments that took an overly simplistic view of ‘standards’, and often good ideas were undermined by the way they implemented.

A national curriculum was clearly both sensible and desirable, but the unwieldy and over-prescriptive academic model drawn up and inflicted on schools was never going to serve the needs of all children. Similarly, some national monitoring of school performance is desirable, but the burden of the national testing regime that accompanied the National Curriculum was a major distraction: as the saying goes, ‘no child ever grew faster for being measured.’ Above all, the introduction of school performance tables was problematic. It is inevitable that such lists, once drawn up, will be seen by the public as representing the quality of schooling, although typically they tell us much more about the sort of pupils we will find in the school than they do about the quality of the teaching. But the very existence of these tables is a distraction: not only do they become a stimulus to competition and parents’ choice of school, they also invite teacher behaviours that do little to improve either education or equity, such as teaching to the test rather than for understanding, and focusing on ‘borderline’ pupils who can improve the school’s league table position rather than those most in need of support. Indeed, probably the most intelligent measure the government might now take is to ban the publication of these spurious tables that conceal more than they reveal.

Despite these criticisms, this brief analysis suggests a number of lessons can be drawn from the reform efforts of recent years, which might inform future policy and practice. These include the following:

1. Although it is clear that schools cannot by themselves overcome social disadvantage or eliminate the inequalities apparent in schooling outcomes, the evidence clearly suggests that they can make some impact and that school-focused actions remain an important part of wider solutions. However, education policy needs the

support of appropriate social and economic programmes if inequity is to be eradicated.

2. School improvement interventions must be designed carefully, based on the available evidence about what underpins effective schooling and also on what we know about how successful schools develop. This means being clearer about the outcomes expected and their value in the real world—and let us not continue to delude ourselves that any combination of examination results will ever be more than a proxy for effective schooling—while permitting greater latitude for appropriate ends and means to be determined at school level by those most acquainted with the needs and interests of their pupils.
3. Educational improvement efforts need to better reflect the local contexts within which schools work. As we have seen, initiatives that lead some schools to improve at the expense of others in their neighbourhood will not lead to overall improvements in equity, which implies that central government needs to allow greater space for locally determined action, based on a local analysis of challenges and opportunities. Thus, policy makers must recognise that the details of policy implementation are not amenable to central regulation. Rather, these have to be handled by those who are close to and, therefore, in a better position to understand, particular contexts and opportunities. All of this raises important questions regarding the need for effective local coordination: maybe we do not need to reinvent local authorities, but something more than the operation of market forces is needed to ensure that duplication and wasteful competition are avoided and that so-called sink schools, filled with the children none of the other schools want, do not become a by-product of covert selection procedures.
4. There is evidence that collaboration between differently performing schools can help to reduce the polarisation of the education system, to the particular benefit of pupils who are on the edges of the system and performing relatively poorly. Incentives need to be provided that will encourage such collaboration. More efforts should also be made to understand the conditions that are needed to make such approaches effective. It needs to be understood that collaboration is at least as important as competition in raising overall attainment levels.
5. We need to pay more attention to what we know does not work. In particular, there is a need to focus on those aspects of disadvantage and under-attainment that schools can influence and not attempt to make schools responsible for solving problems that evidence suggests they influence only marginally. Piling too many responsibilities on schools distracts them from concentrating on what they can do well.
6. The political desire for ‘quick fixes’ notwithstanding, there is a need to allow reform initiatives time to have an impact. The constant imposition of new initiatives is destabilising and also hinders development of the consistency in learning and teaching practices that research suggests best fosters positive outcomes for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

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Part II
Pushing Forward Governance Reform

Italy: From State Monopoly to Rising of a System of Schools

Luisa Ribolzi

Abstract In the last 25 years, the Italian school system has moved from a centralized, monopolistic, and standardized one to a more autonomous “system of schools.” In that new form, private accredited schools (“paritarie”) have a recognized space, and regional and local authorities play a greater role. This chapter describes how this process has been developed and fulfilled, starting with the cultural and political processes that have determined the educational structures. Three main trends are discussed: from standardization to autonomy, from state monopoly to legitimation of private schools, and from centralization to local empowerment. Then it elaborates an array of rolling reforms concerning the teachers’ qualification and career, the assessment of the system, the vocational versus general education, the changes in organizational models, and so on. Finally, future reform directions are projected.

Keywords Italy • Autonomy • Centralism • Evaluation • Public/private • Teachers

1 Retrospect of Structural Reforms

In her seminal book on *Social origins of educational systems* (1979), Margaret Archer demonstrated that the structure and functioning of any school system is connected to the forms of the society where it has been originated. So it could be useful, or even necessary, to highlight some characteristics of the Italian school history.

L. Ribolzi (✉)
ANVUR (National Agency for the Evaluation
of University and Research Institutions), Rome, Italy
e-mail: luisa.ribolzi@anvur.org

1.1 The Starting Point: A Centralized, Standardized School System

Until the end of the twentieth century, the Italian educational system was entirely school centered, and school was very rigid, with a highly centralized, standardized curriculum leading to a legally recognized diploma.

In 1861, when Italy became a nation, it was essentially a puzzle made up of a great number of previously independent states (at least nine of them had some relevance) with different cultures, languages, and levels of social development: in the southern regions of the country, barely 10 % of the population was even able to speak Italian, and 78 % was illiterate. The unification process involved a small minority of the population, namely, the élites and the middle class. Then the government, aiming to create a common culture and provide a modern education system, adopted an interventionist educational policy.

Following the French example, the Italian government identified nationwide homogeneity as a crucial standard for schooling. As a famous politician and writer, Massimo D'Azeglio, declared: "Italy has been made, now we have to build Italians." Italy pursued homogeneity in this sense through administrative interventions. At the very beginning of the Fascist Period, the so-called Gentile reform (after the name of the Minister of Education in office in 1923) enhanced the idea of the State being the sole educating agency, and a common curriculum for all the schools was put into effect, based on the memory of the past Italian glory, but at the same time aimed at improving the poor quality of the existing school system so as to cope with modernity. The Gentile reform remained in force, almost unchanged, until the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The postwar Constitution, adopted in 1947, though reacting against the Fascist ideology, maintained, and even enhanced, the idea of a single centralized state school system. The main idea taken for granted behind that structure was that all schools had to be alike for the purpose of promoting equality and protecting the poor. Nonetheless, equity was not guaranteed by the monopolistic state school: an analysis of dropout rates reveals that within this centralized, standardized model, dropout affects the working class children much more than those belonging to the middle or upper classes (Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione 2008). We can add that the labor market asks for more differentiated competences and skills, and the importance of nonformal and informal ("tacit") competences requires greater flexibility in schooling, in order to counter the (existing) separation between general education (run by the state) and vocational education (run by local authorities), which is peculiar of the Italian educational system.

1.2 Educational Policies Since the 1960s: The Myth of Equity

In the last two decades, the educational reforms were based on the policies of the 1960s, which could be summarized, in principle, into the slogan "from élite to mass

school.” The most important element of change was, in 1962, the law which abolished students’ early streaming in favor of a delayed choice. Up to that year, children could choose, at the end of the primary school, whether to stop their school education (compulsory education lasted only 5 years, by then), or continue their education in a vocational school (3 years ending with a low professional qualification), or go on with their studies, after having passed an exam at the end of the primary school cycle, in the lower secondary, which opened the way to the upper secondary higher education. It was not only a difficult choice, at the age of 11, irreversible as it was, but actually it was not even a real “choice,” because it was strongly connected to the socioeconomic status of the family. When Law 1859, Dec. 31, 1962, established the comprehensive lower secondary school (*scuola media unificata*), 65 students out of 100 left the school at the age of 11, after the primary school; at the age of 14, more than 70 % students—a real crowd of young people—became school dropouts. The new *scuola media* was free, compulsory and comprehensive, and strictly connected with the primary school, where not only the basic skills and notions (literacy in Italian, mathematics, science, and so on) were taught, but also the fundamentals of citizenship.¹

The choice between working or studying was delayed: the first 8 years of schooling had a general aim, preparing students to this choice through civic competences and participation. At the same time, the new lower secondary school provided adolescents with basic education in arts, music, and technology. The motto was “the person at the center,” but unfortunately these words remained only good intentions.

During the 1970s and until the end of the 1980s, the number of students’ withdrawals remained very high: though it had considerably lowered and gradually disappeared at a compulsory education level, it grew instead in the upper secondary school. The reason was that the greater number of young people who completed their lower secondary education cycle led a greater number of students to enroll in the upper secondary school. However, both for lack of guidance and due to a lower qualification level, the dropouts’ rates increased to a worrying 15–20 %.² To restrain the number of dropouts, many projects were developed and carried out over time, but until the Lisbon Council,³ they proved only partially successful.

¹ In this comprehensive school, anyway, there were some “special classes” for children at risk who needed specialized aid. Since some of these special classes had become, over time, a sort of ghetto for children with social problems, they were closed down in 1977 (Law 517).

² http://www.fga.it/uploads/media/L__Ribolzi_In_medio_stabat_virtus_-_FGA_WP42.pdf

³ The Lisbon Special European Council of 23–24 March 2000, aiming to transform Europe into a “knowledge society,” developed the so-called “Lisbon strategy”: one of the five educational aims for 2010 consisted in eradicating withdrawals and raising the rate of young people holding an upper secondary diploma to 80 %. Being Italy far from attaining these goals, with a rate of dropouts around 10–20 % at the age of 16, a new strategy, called “EU 2020” was launched in 2009 (see http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/general_framework/c10241_en.htm)

In the same period, the secondary school became increasingly “lycealized,”⁴ meaning that technical and professional education was becoming less important than academic education, both in terms of social prestige and in terms of schooling quality. As a consequence, a growing number of students continued their studies to higher education, which in Italy was limited to university, since only less than 3 % upper schools belonged to the university area. Furthermore, in 1969, access to university was liberalized, and every student holding a 5-year highschool diploma was entitled to apply to any university faculty. Graduates’ ratio in Italy was in average 1/3: only 30 % freshmen succeeded in graduating, while the remaining 70 % used to give up their studies during the university cycle. This was a terrible waste of human and economic resources.

This was the situation in the mid-1990s, when the last season of educational reforms began.

1.3 Reforms at the Turning of the Century: School Structure Reform

The School Structure Reform has a long history. It is possible to find some indicators of the malfunctioning of the system (do not forget that basically the Italian school was working with the Gentile Law of 1923) since, at least, the end of the 1960s. Some formal changes allowed it to survive until when, in the mid-1990s, the negative aspects of the school system began to become unbearable.

The ruling centralist model clashed with an ever-growing users’ differentiation, connected both with an increasing presence of foreign students, and with the different social and economic conditions characterizing the Italian territory. The merely executive role played by the school was rejected both by teachers, who aspired to greater independence, and by students’ families, which aimed at becoming more involved. In addition, the ever-growing deterioration of basic education did not allow reducing the dropout phenomenon in the upper secondary schools and universities. The debasement of technical education and its separation from vocational education, run by the regions, contributed to further worsening the mismatching between qualification demand and offer.

There was by then a widespread opinion that it was no longer possible to continue through minor adjustments, and it was instead necessary to completely reform the system. In January 1997, a paper entitled “Ipotesi per una riforma dei cicli” (A Working Hypothesis for a Reform of the School Cycles) was circulated, which started a never-ending reform, passing through five ministers and three laws that were never put into effect (2000 and 2003), until the reform was finalized between 2008 and 2010.

For a foreign reader, it is not only a long story, but also a story difficult to understand. This could happen because, in Italy, any law, to be effective, requires several

⁴The Italian “liceo” was, and is, a mainly academic form of upper secondary school, providing general education to students who are expected to continue their studies in the University.

decrees, which in turn were not enacted, since in the meantime the government changed. Before getting into the heart of the matter, a reconstruction of the events would be advisable.

The first reform bill was changed into Law 30 in 2000 (the so-called Berlinguer Law after the name of the former Minister of Education of the center-left government). However, this law underwent a slowdown when the minister resigned and was replaced. It was finally repealed in 2001, when the center-right coalition won the elections and a new government was established. A new law (Law 53, the so-called Moratti Law, after the name of the minister in office) was passed in 2003, but was only partly implemented through the law decrees concerning the preprimary and primary school. In 2006 the center-left coalition won the elections again, and the new minister Fioroni decided not to enact his own law, but rather to “dismantle” the previous law through the so-called screwdriver method. However, after less than 2 years, a political crisis led to new elections, won this time by the center-right coalition, and the new minister Gelmini, resuming the unfinished process begun by the minister Moratti, who belonged to her political party, chose instead to enhance some elements introduced by the previous center-left government and succeeded in enacting in 2008 a new law (Law 137, the so-called Gelmini Law), which came finally into force between 2008 and 2010. Thirteen years had passed from the beginning of the debate, and 10 years from the first law had been necessary for carrying out the structural reform which gave rise to the Italian school as today is (Fig. 1).

The “Gelmini” Law 137 has reorganized the compulsory education cycle, lasting 8 years for the 6–14 age segment, which today is virtually attended by all. School year repetitions in the primary school have to be justified, because the new pedagogical model considers them useless or even capable to lead to children’s social and educational marginalization. In the first level of the primary school, which is part of the compulsory education cycle, students who repeat a year can be more frequently found, especially those belonging to the most underprivileged social groups (foreigners, gypsies, children coming from families in poverty or in difficult conditions, and special-need children), but in general, we can affirm that almost all students attain the minimum required level.

Law 137 has also extended the right of education up to the age of 18, thus introducing an important element, since students can exercise this right not only as regards general education in the traditional school, or regional vocational education, but also as regards apprenticeship. Educational achievement and success are no longer limited to academic courses, but have also been extended to other kinds of education and training, and this could perhaps reduce the number of dropouts. The upper secondary cycle was reorganized too: there are currently six kinds of general high school (*Liceo*) in all, and on the other side, nine different kinds of technical schools and two kinds of vocational schools. It was calculated that in the previous system, the number of possible specializations was more than 700, while in the current one, they roughly total 40.

By 2010/2011, about eight million students were attending the Italian school: one million the infant/preprimary school, 2.6 million the primary, 1.6 million the

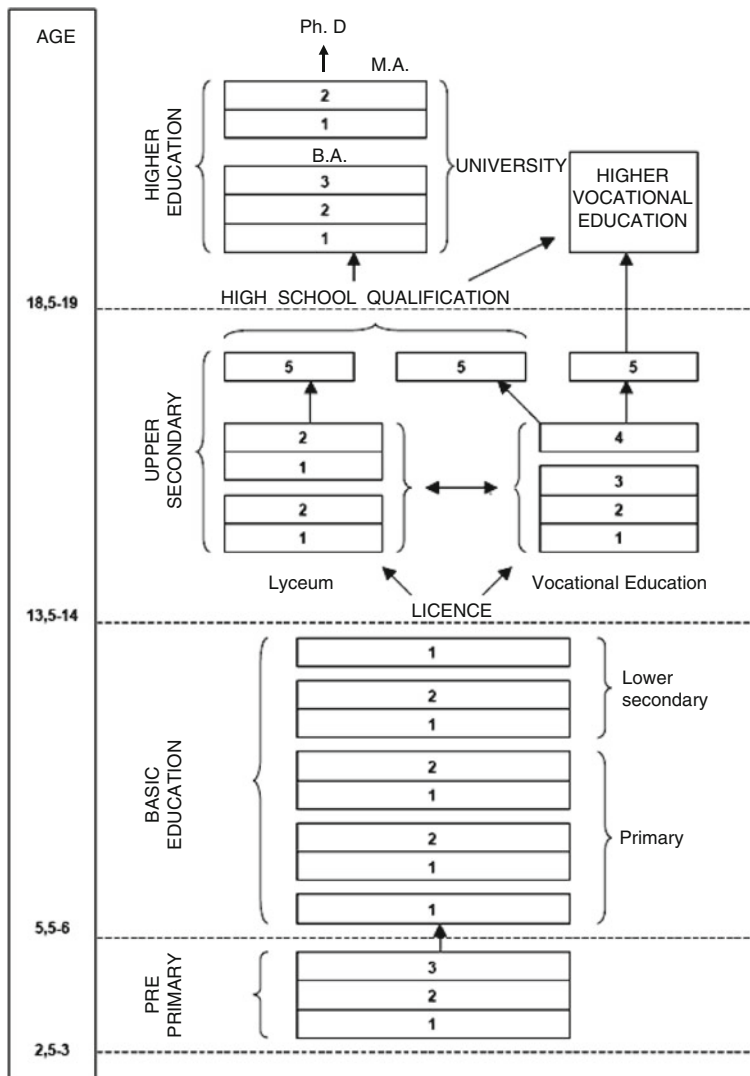


Fig. 1 The structure of the Italian school

lower secondary, and 2.5 million the upper secondary.⁵ Girls are considerably over-educated: in 2009 male students totaled 80.2 % of the cohort in the 15–19 age segment, while girls totaled 83.5 %; in the 20–29 age segment, men totaled 18.5 % and women 24.3 %.⁶

⁵For more detailed information, see OECD (2011). Data refer to 2008/2009.

⁶As for higher education, in 2010/2011, there were 1,781,786 students, 14.8 % of which holding a high school diploma, decreasing compared to a maximum of 1,823,000 units reported in 2005/2006.

2 Beyond the Structures: Three Fundamental Reforms

However, during the years in which the great reform of the school system was discussed, the school did not stand still. On the one hand, schools were carrying out an “innovation without reform” in everyday practice, and on the other, three important reforms were introduced, which respectively concerned the management of schools, the relations between the public and the private sector, and the relations between the State and regions.

2.1 *The Rising of Autonomy: Towards a “System of Autonomous Schools” (1997–2000)*

As previously noted, at the end of the twentieth century, one of the main problems of the Italian school was its centralized structure, in which any decision was centrally made, and schools acted as mere executors. At the end of the nineteenth century, centralism had had the main purpose of joining citizens who came from profoundly different realities. After the end of World War II, in a period of social and economic breakdown, centralism intended to reconstruct in the population a sense of democratic participation after two fascist decades, to radically change the curricula, and improve the education level of the population through direct State interventions. In the late 1990s, however, centralism had completely lost any reason of being and was showing two extremely serious limits:

- Standardization made it difficult to meet the educational demand of an increasingly differentiated population and was one of the main causes of students’ noncompletion of their school education.
- Centrally made decisions increased the weight of bureaucracy, and teachers’ propensity to innovate and participate decreased accordingly.

Resistance and opposition to this innovation, which in some way is at the base of many changes occurred in the following years, were very strong and still are. Grimaldi and Serpieri define it as “the resilience of routines” (Grimaldi and Serpieri 2012). The central bureaucracy (the Ministry of Education counted in the late 1990s about 8,500 employees) was in some way asked to “commit suicide” in favor of schools and renounce many of its prerogatives. This may be the reason why autonomy principle does not result from a law concerning the schooling reform but rather from a law focused on the reform of public administration: Law 59, March 1997, on the Reform of Public Administration. Article 21 of this law grants autonomy to state schools. Moreover, the same law established the issuing

57.3 % of them were women. Freshmen were 288,286 (vs. a maximum of 301,376 units in 2006/2007), 10 % being students of a ripe age. The so-called fuori corso (students who have not passed their university exams in due time) totaled a heavy 600,000.

of regulations, which were published in 1999, and provided for a gradual 2-year testing period. School autonomy became effective as from school year 2000–2001.

At the end of that period, the school system, such as we know it today, was no longer a centralized system, but rather *a system of autonomous schools*, in which every school enjoys *didactic* autonomy (i.e., it can change its objectives and methods within a set of general regulations established by the central administration and shared by all schools); *organizational* autonomy (i.e., it can change its teaching and lesson timetable, on condition it ensures the national minimum level to all; it can change its class organization; and it can change to a small extent the teachers' service timetable); and *financial* autonomy, which, though, is rather limited. In the Italian school system, over 90 % of the overall spending devoted to education is reserved to teachers' wages, and the amount of money schools are allowed to have freely at their disposal, which by then was already very small (4–5 % out of the overall education spending), has been further cut down over time.

The key issue for the autonomous school was the *definition and fulfillment of the educational offer*: in practice, each school (within a set of common general guidelines effective all over the country) pointed out to its users the goals it intended to reach and the way in which they had to be achieved, while making a sort of pact with the families and the community. It was provided for that the headmaster and the teachers, families, labor market, and local authorities were involved in drawing up the offer program. To allow reaching these objectives, the school headmaster was supposed to become a real manager, responsible for project fulfillment.

It was a real revolution, and therefore many teachers, faced with a sudden growth of their responsibilities (if in the past they had been mere officers who carried out a task established by others, in consequence of school autonomy, they were actually becoming professionals who had to understand the needs of their students and properly meet their requirements) opposed their resistance, or even began to dream about a return to the past. However, regardless of these cultural reasons, two were the main obstacles to the fulfillment of a real autonomy:

- The first and most serious fact was—and still is—that schools cannot freely choose their teachers, who are appointed by the central administration. In business language, this means that managers are asked to guarantee the quality of a product, but are not allowed to control and monitor available resources.
- The second obstacle consisted in the lack of an evaluation and appraisal system capable, first, to detect whether schools were keeping the promises made to users and, secondly, to reward the best and penalize the worst. Resistances to the evaluation method remained very strong, and as we shall later see, the introduction of a quality evaluation and control system still remains one of the major current problems in the Italian school.

In spite of these limits, the introduction of autonomy has to be considered an acquired achievement, and a fundamental reform at the base of the innovations and changes brought during the first decade of the Third Millennium.⁷

2.2 *State Versus Private School: The National School System (2000)*

The status of private schools in Italy is very peculiar.⁸ Non-state, private education has been considered as opposed to state-supported, public education, and until recent times, even the schools run by municipal authorities were considered private bodies, such as the schools run by religious or other non-state organizations.⁹ The question concerning “the choice of the school” as a right of citizenship, like in other European countries, had strong nationwide ideological implications. Up to now, most Italians assume that this term pertains specifically to the Catholic culture. The same could be said about other, apparently religiously neutral words and phrases, such as “participation” and the “common good.” An actual distinction between private schools in general, and Catholic schools, has only recently emerged. To date, non-Catholic religious schools are few in Italy, and they are prevalingly run by the Jewish communities.

This approach, though predominant, is not formally recognized by law, and the current debate is based on different interpretations of the Constitution. In fact, Article 33 of the postwar Italian Constitution, adopted in 1947, reads that “public and private bodies shall be entitled to establish schools and educational institutions *with no financial costs for the State.*” This phrase catalyzed a seemingly endless series of political confrontations. To make a long story short, we can say that, in the Italian school system, whatever was not State was private and had no public role, and for this reason was not funded and was paid by families. In addition, private schools were considered “schools for the rich,” reserved in particular to affluent families whose children were unable to cope with the standards of public school. Actually, as private schooling was paid and public was free, only a small number of families had obviously the possibility to send their children to a private school and, namely, affluent families or families that, to protect their cultural

⁷The process of autonomy has been extensively studied by researchers, but unfortunately English literature in this connection is rather poor. For Italian-speaking readers, I wish to remind that the “Osservatorio sull’autonomia” of the LUISS University in Rome published three volumes of *Rapporto sulla scuola dell’autonomia* (2002, 2003, 2004), Armando Editori, Roma. In English, see Landri (2009).

⁸See “Italy” in Glenn and de Groof (2003).

⁹ISTAT (National Institute for Statistics) included the schools run by municipalities within the private sector until 1984.

identity, accepted to renounce other forms of consumption, in order to get education in a school in which they trusted, both in terms of ideology and in terms of quality.

As the debate was mainly of an ideological nature, in 1994 the proposal to introduce school vouchers in order to facilitate and promote the choice of private schools aroused violent opposition. However, something new was coming out: not only an uncritical rejection, but also a general awareness that this proposal was the result of a different conception of the role of the State. One year later, on March 15, 1997, the Law 59 was passed, introducing the principle that schools are evaluated and validated not so much because of their belonging to the State, but rather because of their educational planning strategy, since only the State is responsible for establishing the essential guidelines concerning school performance and achievements. The stated principle of accountability has a logical consequence for private schooling: the non-public status of non-state schools is no longer tenable when they have and keep all along the same requisites and standards as state schools (established and assessed by the State itself). In some way, autonomy and choice opportunities were a winning combination.

Nevertheless, the ideological debate became inflamed, and only 3 years later, Law 62 was passed on March 10, 2000. Law 62 contains “regulations for school equality and measures concerning the right to schooling and education and training.” Article 1 states, “The national educational system, under art. 23, paragraph 2, of the Constitution, consists of State schools and *paritarie* (acknowledged) schools, whether private or established by the Local Authorities.”

This law introduced the concept of “equality,” which is granted to the schools complying with eight specific conditions, ranging from “an educational plan conforming to the Constitution principles” to “the appropriate premises, furniture, and educational equipment.” For the time being, funds are allocated only to private primary schools and to private sector interventions in favor of handicapped children. It also envisages a progressive allocation of funds, depending on state budget priorities. At the end of the third year of testing, in June 2003, the Minister of Education was supposed to submit a report to the Parliament and at the same time, gather all the circulars issued on this subject into a single Consolidated Act.

Neither the report was made nor the funding was decided,¹⁰ except for some regional laws that introduced school vouchers, or for a reduced number of schools and subjects (preprimary/infant, primary, special-need children, etc.). Nevertheless, this law embodies a real step forward in terms of cultural point of view and education policies, because for the first time, public and private are no longer opposed, and the country’s educational system is identified as a *national* (and no longer as a *state*) system, since autonomous state schools and acknowledged private schools are considered equally worthy. For the purpose of overcoming social inequality, several proposals were put forward, both in the field of *school funding* (agreements with schools, refund of expenses for teachers’ wages, etc.) and *family funding* (school vouchers, tax deductions, etc.), but they did not prove successful. That is the reason why the supporters of the choice of the school talk about an “unaccomplished parity.”

¹⁰Concerning the impact of economic crisis on education funding, see Van Damme and Karkkainen (2011).

2.3 State Versus Regional Policies: The Reform of the Constitution (2001)

The analysis made in the previous paragraphs entails another key issue related to reforming the Italian schooling system. On October 18, 2001, the Reform Law concerning several articles of the Italian Constitution was issued. Article 114 states that “the Republic is organized into Municipalities, Provinces, Metropolis, Regions, and State,” and Article 118 transfers several competences to the regions as regards many aspects (school location, vocational training and education, right of study, etc.), while Article 117 grants the State exclusive competence on the “General Measures for Education,” whereas “education is subject to concurrent legislation, apart from the areas of school autonomy and vocational education and training,” which are already included within the competence of the regions. This means that regions, provinces, and municipalities are entitled to amend any regulation as long as the General Measures for Education—measures that actually need a further definition—are not contradicted.

It is evident how complex the situation is and how rapidly it is developing after decades of immobility. Though the Fifth Title of the Constitution had aroused great expectations in a period in which a transition of Italy to federalism was envisaged, very little has actually changed. The separation between vocational education assigned to the regions and general education reserved to the State has remained unchanged, and in general, the transfer of competences to the regions has not been carried out at all, except in some places where innovation has always been widespread for many years. Furthermore, we should not forget that the situation of the Italian regions (which are 20) is extremely diversified, ranging from regions that can be placed among the European “driving forces,” such as Lombardy and Veneto, to quite underdeveloped regions, as a fair number of southern regions. However, since the law did not provide for any differentiated or delayed start and only few regions were in a position to take charge of the new tasks laid down by the law, everything stopped and only some experimentations could start. Nevertheless, in this case, too, as in the case of the law that regulates private schools, a significant cultural step forward has been made, which underlines the importance of the close relation existing between schools and reference territory.

2.4 Financing of Education

The proportion of national wealth spent on education is an investment that can help foster economic growth, enhance productivity, reduce social inequality, and contribute to personal and social development. The percentage of GDP given to education indicates the priority a nation gives to education. Given that expenditure on education comes largely from public budgets, it is the result of choices made by the Government and only partially from enterprises and individuals (families and

students). These choices are problematic at times—as now in Italy—when the Government is being urged to cut spending. In 2008 (OECD 2012) the average expenditure on educational education was for the EU 21 5.5 % of GDP and for OECD countries 6.1: in Italy, it was 4.8 (0.5 for preprimary, 2.0 for primary and lower secondary, 1.3 for upper secondary, and 1.0 for tertiary). Only 0.3 % came from private sources: it was 0.5 for EU 21 and 1.4 for OECD.

It is possible to say that almost all the money for educational institutions in Italy comes from public sources: it was 91.4 % in 2008 (ibid.), the average expenditure being in EU 89.1 % and in OECD 83.5 %. The remaining came from other private sources (1.6 %) and mainly from household expenditure: 7.0 %. In tertiary education, the State paid 70.7 %, 7.8 % came from private sources and 21.5 % from household expenditure. The consequence of that composition of the expenditure is that if and when the public expenditure has to be cut, education suffers more than other sectors, where the private funding is higher.

Let's have a look at the composition of these public payers. In 2005¹¹ less than 10 % (9.8 %) of the expenditure for the school was paid by the families: the remaining 90 % was public—State 65.6 % (quite all by the Ministry of Education, with a very small contribution of other ministries), regions 4.9 %, districts 5.1 %, and municipalities 14.7 %. This is an average range: due to the differences in levels, the rate of different public payers varies considerably (i.e., the districts, *province*, only pay for upper secondary and for vocational education; municipalities pay for preprimary and primary). As for the household expenditure, we lack recent information, but it was estimated around 10 % of the total, increasing from infant to upper secondary.

The greatest part of the expenditure (about 76 %) goes for the salaries of teachers, who are civil servants and are paid by the State: this is a great cause of rigidity. Schools are funded depending on the number of classes, neither on the number of students nor the quality of teaching. The schools, even if “autonomous,” actually can use freely between 1 % and 2 % of the total. As a consequence, the possibility to realize specific programs is reduced.¹²

Private school, including the authorized ones, are paid by the families: there is a state contribution for infant schools, a lump sum for primary schools (about €35,000 for a class of at least 25 pupils: in public school, each student in primary costs about €9,000 per year), nothing for secondary, both lower and upper: private schools can apply to have funds for disabled students, or to participate in state programs.

¹¹ Invalsi–Mipa, *Aspis III. Linee di ricerca sull'analisi della spesa per l'istruzione*. Roma, Nov. 2005. The *Aspis* research (<http://www2.invalsi.it/RN/aspis3/sito/docs/Rapporto%20finale%20Invalsi%20-%20Aspis%20III.pdf>) is the only systemic analysis of the expenditure for education, but it finished in 2005, and never more repeated.

¹² Recent data on costs for salaries in http://www.corteconti.it/export/sites/portalecdc/_documenti/controllo/sezioni_riunite/sezioni_riunite_in_sede_di_controllo/2012/delibera_13_2012_contr_cl.pdf

3 The Future of Reforms: From “Big Narrations” to Rolling Reforms

As from the unification of the country, two different trends have always characterized the Italian educational and school policies. On the one hand, efforts have been made to devise and develop extensive global reforms¹³ involving the whole school system, which have ambitious and general aims (i.e., granting the right of education to all, raising and improving schooling levels, promoting equity and equality, developing and shaping a school system capable to ensure both one’s personal growth and the economic competitiveness of the country, and so on). On the other, as these reforms—which could be defined as “great narrations”—are becoming more and more difficult and lengthy (and expensive) to carry out, they risk to become outdated and obsolete even before being fully developed and implemented. For this reason, more flexible provisions are currently spreading in view of the so-called rolling reform, that is to say, a reform process capable to continuously change and transform itself depending on the feedback it receives from the environment. Since the schools keep producing best practices, partial reforms (as those I previously mentioned, but not only them) become increasingly important, as well as *innovations without reform*, which are adjustments coming from the bottom, from everyday practice, and allow the school keeping up the pace with society and answering, though actually not in real time, but at least with a tolerable delay, the requests coming from society.

Are then *great reforms* useless or out of date? This question is not easy to answer. It is plain that the “rhetoric of teaching rationalization and educational policies effectiveness” has to confront itself with the actual conditions of the school and with teachers’ mediation, because, despite the efforts made by the political decision-makers, “teachers selectively decide whether putting into effect or changing the reforms” (Novoa 1998). However, there are still some open questions, which have been only partly dealt with, so far. Many of them will not become the object of a reform, but rather the object of administrative decisions only; other problems, instead, will be dealt with and solved individually by each school.

3.1 *Quality Assurance and Loss of Quality*

Referring to mass schooling, I mentioned the need for any country to ensure education to all citizens. It may be useful to add that this term does not mean

¹³As mentioned, these reforms bear the name of the minister who devised them and made them effective and are substantially two: Casati Law, issued in 1859, which established the characteristics of the school system in the newborn Italian state, and Gentile Law (actually a set of laws issued between 1922 and 1924), which laid the foundations of the modern school and, with many adjustments, has survived up to nowadays, as well as the set of laws I described at par. 2.1, which were formalized by Ministers Moratti and Gelmini (2003; 2008/2010).

education whatsoever, but rather quality education. The quality of an educational service cannot be measured in terms of number of school years, but rather in terms of ability of the school to develop and improve citizens' knowledge, skills, and expertise and enhance their attitudes. Equity and quality are not placed in a zero-sum relation (that is to say, if quality grows, equity decreases accordingly, and vice-versa), and a really effective school model makes quality grow without affecting the equity level. Within the Italian school, which had remained "academic" until the mid-1960s, a strong pedagogical and political movement began to develop as a reaction. This movement promoted socialization while often overlooking the transfer of the necessary knowledge and abilities. This approach had such seriously negative consequences on learning, that in the early 1980s, Norberto Bottani¹⁴ felt the need to recall teachers to the fundamental task of the school, the task to transfer and spread knowledge.

The idea that the Italian school had particularly worsened from the point of view of learning was rather widespread, but it remained rather unspecific until 2000, the year in which the results of the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) survey launched by OECD to assess 15-year-old students' literacy abilities¹⁵ (mathematical literacy, reading literacy, science literacy, problem solving) were published. The results concerning Italy proved unsatisfying and very poor and, most of all, revealed that a single "Italian school" did not exist, since there were profound differences among regions, to the detriment of the south (a gap of almost 100 points between northeast of Italy and south and islands in all four indicators), among the courses of study, where the different kinds of "liceo" were on top of the list, followed by the technical schools and by the vocational schools, and finally, between female and male students. To make a long story short, we can say that from the point of view of learning, there was a continuity line connecting the male students attending the vocational schools of the south with the female students attending the "liceo" in the northeast. These data gave evidence that the Italian school's organizational and teaching model was producing negative results both in terms of quality (since the average values of the related three indicators placed the country in the lower half of the sample) and in terms of equity (since the different population groups reached quite different learning levels).

The results of the first survey had few consequences: only through the second survey, carried out in 2003, and even more through those carried out in 2006 and 2009, the outcomes of PISA (which had the same characteristics as those of the first survey) were extensively discussed, processed also at a regional level, and taken as a starting point for drawing up new educational policies. In practice, these data revealed the urgency to introduce the Italian school quality assessment policies, capable to keep

¹⁴ Bottani (1986). Bottani was the director of OECD CERI and started with the compared assessment of school systems through the indicators of *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators*, first published in Sept. 1992.

¹⁵ OECD affirms that PISA does not assess what is taught in schools, but rather that "the acquisition of literacy is a lifelong process taking place not just at school or through formal learning, but also through interactions with peers, colleagues and wider communities" (OECD 2004).

under control the “production factors” of education. A small proportion of budget was devoted to programs aimed at improving learning results. At the same time, a still ongoing debate broke out between the supporters of the need to systematically assess the learning levels and the detractors of this method, who were concerned about the possibility that a “teaching for testing” didactics they considered reductive gained ground and established itself in the school.

The reduction of funds made available to education, connected with the lack of an assessment tradition and the impossibility to incentivize or penalize teachers basing on the results achieved by their students, even in terms of value added to the school, has however heavily reduced the possibilities to balance the most visible learning distortions, though some regions (e.g., Puglia), by adopting regional policies aimed at teachers’ retraining and requalification, have succeeded in filling their gap to a great extent.

3.2 School Evaluation and Teacher Appraisal

Quality assurance is an issue strictly connected with the appraisal of schools and teachers. Up to recent years, in the Italian school, assessment concerned only students through marks and evaluations. Teachers’ resistances to the assessment, in particular, were—and still are—very strong, while the so-called table leagues, already widespread and effective in other countries (France, UK), were becoming increasingly popular. Rankings help families in the choice of an appropriate school not only basing on what is taught in it (see our previous remarks on the “educational offer plan”), but also on students’ performance and results and, in the case of upper secondary schools, on students’ opportunities of being successful in the university or in finding a good job.

At the end of the 1990s, a certain number of schools decided to meet these requests through the attainment of ISO 9000 quality certification, which however referred to the conditions required for carrying out a good educational project, but not to the characteristics of the project itself. Some other schools developed and put into effect assessment projects, often in partnership with companies. Nonetheless, a common proposal was still lacking, and in particular, these projects did not envisage any teachers’ assessment. The opposition of the teachers’ unions was so strong that in 2000 the minister who had tried to introduce an assessment program was obliged to resign. Likely frightened by this event, the subsequent ministers all talked about rewarding merits, to motivate the teachers who, though working more and better than others, received however the same wage and no acknowledgement, but they did not take any real measure in this regard.

Several experimental projects for school managers and teachers were launched, and in some cases they were actively boycotted, but at the moment when I am writing this paper (October 2012), no comprehensive teacher appraisal strategy exists, so far. A recent decree on teachers’ appraisal provides for strengthening and improving the tests supplied by the National Institute for the Evaluation of Educational

System (Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema Educativo—INVALSI), while a test project for the school (VALES), though providing for support mechanisms to failing schools, is of a voluntary nature and does not provide for disciplinary measures for the less-effective ones. Furthermore, assigned inspectors are absolutely too few, and an open competitive exam for state-level employment announced in 2010 has not yet come to an end.

3.3 *Teachers*

The key elements certifying the quality of an educational system are teachers. No system can be better than its teachers' quality. Teachers in Italy are government employees with an employment contract providing for 757 teaching hours a year in the case of primary schools and 619 in the case of lower and upper secondary schools (the average OECD value being, respectively, 779 and 771 h). OECD teachers spend on average 1,660 h a year in the school (OECD 2011). As a consequence, Italian teachers have less workload than their foreign colleagues or, at least, less instruction time. The teacher-student ratio is also below average: 10.7 in the primary school compared to 16.0, 10 in the lower primary compared to 13.5, and 11.8 in the upper primary compared to 13.5. Therefore, the number of teachers in the Italian school is very high (it is however difficult to determine their exact number, they are about 840,000, 90,000 of which reserved to special-need students), and they are paid less than teachers in other European countries, because their time of work is much less than the normal 36 h per week.

However, this is not the real problem. Many young people, especially those who hold a scientific or technological degree, consider teaching a “second best” choice if they cannot find another more suitable job opportunity. Moreover, since this profession does provide neither for any kind of career nor for any kind of reward or incentive for those who work well, it actually keeps the best elements away from the school. Targeted training and university courses for teachers began to be held, with an enormous delay, only in 1999 (Italy being the last OECD country to adopt them); then they were suspended and finally restarted in 2012, yet with rather vague procedures. Primary and infant school teachers must hold a 5-year university degree, which includes also a training period. Secondary school teachers must hold an M.A. degree concerning the teaching matters and attend an additional 1-year training period in a school. The lack of clear mechanisms for coming on duty (the last national exam took place in 1999!) and the impossibility for schools to choose and keep their teachers have led to the creation of many “temporary” teachers lying for years and years in wait for a permanent job, who live in the school with short term or renewable from year to year assignments without ever being assessed. According to estimates, they are in all about 150,000 units.

Inquiries focused on teachers (one of the most frequent subjects in education sociology) point out a prevailing female component exceeding 90 % in the primary school and close to 100 % in the preprimary/infant school, as well as an average age

among teachers, which is the most advanced within the European Union: more than half Italian teachers were over 50 year old in 2011/2012, while in France, Germany, and Spain, three out of ten teachers are above 50 years old. On the other hand, the share of less than 30-year-old teachers is below 3 %. Quite surprisingly, despite so many difficulties, teachers do not seem to regret their choice, since 82 % of them would make it again (Cavalli and Argentin 2010). For this reason, and “regardless of everything,” a real policy addressed to the teaching staff would be necessary, a policy capable to reward and enhance the human resources of the school in all working stages (initial and in-service training, recruitment, career, etc.), though no solution seems imminent for the time being.

3.4 *Transition to Work*

The Italian school has always followed an extremely theoretical orientation. Within a hierarchically devised framework, the “liceo” (the Italian academic high school) was placed on top, followed by the technical school or vocational school, and finally, the short-term vocational education, managed by regions, which was considered a kind of residual education, a second chance for those who had been unsuccessful in the school. In their guidance and orientation activities, teachers tended to suggest the most successful students to attend the “liceo,” going gradually down to the regional schools, which they used to suggest to those who had experienced a failure in their studies. There was a close relation between the social and economic status of students’ families and the choice of the secondary school type. When in 1969 universities opened out to all students who held a 5-year secondary school diploma, the most successful students who were attending the technical schools, and even some of those who were attending the vocational schools, preferred to continue their studies in the university rather than entering the labor market. This provision represented a positive element, in some respects, as it also allowed students who belonged to the lower classes to attend a university course, but on the other hand, it further decreased the prestige of the technical and vocational education, while spreading the wrong idea that, to increase equity, it was necessary to allow any student to remain in the school as long as possible.

The idea that application-oriented education is “inferior” to academic education, as well as going against all modern theories on competences and skills, has resulted in further mismatch and imbalance between job offer and demand. Even in a period of economic crisis and widespread youth unemployment (the youth employment rate in October 2012 dropped to 44.6 %), almost one offered job position out of four meets with recruitment difficulties.¹⁶ The law in force provides for the possibility to complete one’s education and training with an apprenticeship contract, but the young people who benefit from this kind of contract are less than 15,000, so far! To change these conditions, it would be necessary to improve the

¹⁶Progetto Excelsior, *Indagine 2012*, in excelsior.unioncamere.net.

orientation and guidance service in the school, increase relations between school and companies, assign the best teachers to the technical and vocational school, and make it possible to put experimentation and research into effect. But unfortunately “the division made by Gentile between ‘big leagues’ (the different types of “liceo”) and second-class schools (technical and vocational schools) continues to inspire a significant part of the behavior of the educational system actors” (Gentili 2007). For instance, affluent families normally choose the *liceo* for their sons/daughters in spite of their previous results.

The production system also relates to ICT. In this area, the Italian school still suffers from many problems. The application of ICT is not only restricted by considerably decreasing budgets, but most of all, by teachers’ insufficient qualification and, in some cases, by their resistances against application of ICT, as they were afraid of “being replaced by a machine.” Teachers’ advanced average age is likely one of the causes of this hostility. The entry into the school of younger teachers, whose education included IT technologies and who, in particular, make extensively use of communication technologies in their everyday life, should be able to reduce the distance between the so-called native digitals and the immigrant digitals, in a school where kids, and even children, are today much more skilled than their teachers. Nonetheless a serious research activity is necessary in order to understand how the use of new technologies can change students’ learning mechanisms and in which way didactics has to take them into account. It is therefore important that the political decision-makers understand that it is not only a matter of quantity (more computers, more Internet connections) but also a matter of culture.

3.5 Governance and Participation

When school autonomy was established (1997), the law provided for a reform of the governance system of schools, which substantially were managed by a headmaster and by the ministerial bureaucracy, up to the Minister. Schools had also a complex set of bodies called “collective bodies,” which were partly representative and partly elected, with the purpose of ensuring the link between educational system and territory. These bodies, established by Law 477, July 1973, and by the implementing decrees issued in 1974, were enthusiastically welcomed, because they were expected to put an end to the centralist bureaucratic model and start a real stakeholders’ participation.

However, two serious limits emerged quite soon: the first one depending on the consultative function of these bodies and their non-binding opinion, which gave rise to frustration among members; the second limit was that, in the composition of these bodies, parents coming from the middle and upper-middle classes were over-represented and that political choices prevailed over educational ones. As a

consequence, the number of voters fell down, and most of these bodies actually remained only on paper. In 1997, the need for a new governance system began to be felt in the presence of a school that was changing and had to cope with much more tasks than in the past. After 15 years, this reform has not been made, so far.¹⁷ The two main reasons which have determined the opposition to this reform are the difficulty of the central structure to renounce its powers and the fact that a transition from bureaucratic governance to managerial one is not welcomed by teachers. There is also a heated debate on the space to be reserved to students' families.

A relevant aspect of participation consists in the relationship with the "territory." On the one hand, there is the traditional idea that the territory should coincide with the administrative division of the country (i.e., municipalities, provinces, and regions) and with its formal organizations (trade unions and associations). On the other, the opinion of those who talk instead about "civil society" and aim at improving and enhancing all available (even if non-organized) forces, starting from families, is gaining ground. In their opinion, a strong social capital coming from families and from functional communities is an asset for educational success and gives greater opportunities to share civic values and enhance learning.¹⁸

However, the previous governance form continues to survive, and the Ministry of Education has in every region a regional school office, which is assigned to keep the links between the central and peripheral administrations, even if, logically speaking, regions should be independent and provide for a specific office assigned to keep the relations with the central administration, as happens in some autonomous provinces, such as Trent. The dismantlement of the central administration envisaged first by school autonomy, and then by the reform of Title V of the Constitution, has never been really carried out, and perhaps the goodwill of the political decision-maker in this direction is lacking.

3.6 *Organizational Models and Networking*

A final perspective for educational reforms in Italy should be focused on organizational model and networking possibility. Italian schools were reorganized 10 years ago by discontinuing or merging small schools up to reach an average number of 800 attending students, while their overall number could be reduced in case of small islands, mountain villages, or linguistic minorities. In 2011 the size of these schools was further increased up to include 1,000 or 500 units, respectively, and all schools had to become *comprehensive*, i.e., including infant, primary, and lower secondary school. Municipalities and schools opposed obviously this law, which in June 2012

¹⁷To date (Oct. 2012), a bill was recently approved by one of the branches of the Parliament, and it is expected to be approved in the forthcoming months by the other one.

¹⁸See the seminal paper by J.S. Coleman (1998), A. Portes (1998).

was finally repealed and declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court. In October, a new law lowered the threshold to 900 students. In any case, about 1,000 schools should be merged.

The problem is not only—as trade unions complain—that a number of teachers and principals would lose their job. In larger schools, small communities risk to lose their identity, and the social capital they represent would get lost. In addition, the Italian territory is characterized by a great number of small municipalities (more than 8,000), spread in the mountains, in small islands, and in badly connected areas, and the costs to move students would be greater than savings.

The solution to this problem seems to consist in increasing networks, which are already informally widespread. A recent inquiry, carried out in more than 5,000 schools located all over the country (Cocozza 2012), detected the presence of more than 3,000 networks: schools are cooperating in the development of projects, in carrying out training courses, and in making scale economies as regards services. Encouraging this tendency would allow more effectively organizing the system though keeping the specific characteristics of small schools, which are often the only meeting opportunity for the inhabitants of those places. For the time being, decisions have been made on a regional scale, but undoubtedly, a more general provision should regulate this model in the future.

Within schools (which are about 10,000 and include 40,000 individual school units), the organizational model continues to remain bureaucratic, and the principal is the repository of the decision-making authority. A new model of widespread or participated leadership is beginning to take place in many schools. According to this model, the principal leads a sort of “governing board” (usually elected by teachers, but also trusted by the headmaster), which shares control over the different operation areas (didactics, relations with the territory, management of laboratories, etc.) (Barzano’ 2008). In this case, too, the Reform Law which assigned school management to principals (Law Decree 59 of 1998) did not provide for actually increasing their control power and did not change the school managers’ recruitment and training system. Today, within the Italian school, an effective leadership could be defined a *proactive leadership*, but, as a matter of fact, the principals currently in office and the new ones who are entering the school are still highly traditionalist.

4 Conclusions

In conclusion, is it possible to outline the prospects of the reforms regarding the Italian school system? After having underlined that the time of great system reforms is likely over, there are however some directions the political decision-makers should follow.

Basing on the assumption that any educational policy should start from the consciousness that education, at all levels and in all forms, is an *absolute priority* for our country and requires not so much and not only to tackle and solve individual problems (such as teachers, structure of the sets of lessons, and appraisal), these policies should first of all *promote a real investment for society in the school*. The aim should be to identify some priorities and invest in them regardless whether it would be necessary to make even unpopular decisions or decisions that would be effective in the long run without bringing political rewards to those who make them.

The first problem to be tackled, in a period of economic crisis, is the *cost* of innovations. To increase system efficiency, it is possible both to reduce costs, results being equal, and improve results, costs being equal. Considering that today the results of Italy are not stirring if we compare them to those of other European countries (non-attainment of diplomas, persistence of high dropout rates, insufficient number of graduates in technical and scientific matters, etc.), efficiency increase should be sought by improving results, costs being equal, and consequently, in a different way of spending.

The second objective, still not fully met, is an increase in equity, which translates not so much into breaking the entry barriers, which have already been broken to a great extent, but rather into the possibility to complete students' educational paths, and the construction of not merely academic paths, but also technical and professional paths of excellence at all levels. The idea that school and university cannot be conceived any longer out of an enlarged and more and more integrated system connoted by the expansion of communication is increasingly spreading worldwide. School and university would achieve better results at lower costs and in a shorter time if they cooperated within functional networks.

The best practices of schools should be circulated, improved, and enhanced also in terms of *innovation without reform*. Political choices have often ignored people's experiences and needs and have built reform models based on more or less topical theories, but not on the attention that should be carefully paid to the needs expressed by civil society. Today, any reform, in its complexity, presents itself as a *renewal process* beginning from a careful analysis of educational needs and a common agreement on the most qualifying issues; reforms should develop in a *dynamic, interactive way* and be capable to change and transform themselves over time. This model, which is also called *rolling reform*, that is to say, a self-regulating and self-adjusting reform, is perhaps the most interesting lesson North European countries have taught us.

Educational research is, for the time being, scarcely spread in Italy and needs to be enhanced and rewarded adequately. It should be developed also to determine, as well as priorities, their order and the minimum time required for implementing the whole project, by setting the intermediate objectives that have to be

assessed. To develop this reform action, politicians should take the following two main actions:

- Try to get consensus as regards these objectives and commit themselves to keep them even in case of political changes. A reform exclusively devised to protect the interests of a single party would condemn the school to a subordinate and precarious position and burn out any possibility to transform it into a development lever.
- Foresee a *resistance to change* resulting from the centralistic view of the administrative and didactic government of schools and universities, which are accustomed to expect “programs” launched by the central administration, and from a negative attitude against innovation by those who would *exclusively* convey knowledge consolidated by tradition, and refuse to organize knowledge focusing on the actual problems that have to be solved.

The *European objectives* can be met only in this way, from the Lisbon and Barcelona processes for the school to the Bologna process for the university, which aim all at increasing the competitiveness of Europe, by increasingly changing it into a *knowledge society*, where persons in a position to actively and flexibly introduce themselves in society and in the labor market created by technological innovation are acting.

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Korea: Fostering Competition and Securing Excellence in Education

Jeongwon Kim and Taewan Kim

Abstract The Lee administration's guiding principle for national strategy is fully reflected in educational policy planning. Upon diagnosing the preceding government's education policies as "having placed excessive emphasis on the equality issue," the Lee government set forth a series of new education drive that focused on "fostering competition and securing excellence in education."

Keywords Lee administration • Korea Competition • Excellence • Education reform • Policies

Recent education reform initiatives implemented in Korea are closely tied with the incumbent government's key visions for state administration. President Lee Myung-Bak, elected by the people in the expectation that he will reverse Korea's economic slowdown, had promised to "cut down on tax rates and ease government intervention and regulations, so as to achieve a 7 % average annual economic growth, raise Korea's per capita income to 40,000 USD, and ultimately advance the country into the world's 7th largest economy." This economy-focused presidential election pledge is often referred to as "MBnomics," coined after the initials of his given name (Seoul Economy 2007. 12. 19).

The Lee administration's guiding principle for national strategy is fully reflected in educational policy planning. Upon diagnosing the preceding government's education policies as "having placed excessive emphasis on the equality issue," the Lee

The chapter refers to education reform in Korea of Lee Administration and it was written when President Lee Myung-Bak was in office.

J.W. Kim (✉)

Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI), Seoul, South Korea
e-mail: garden@kedi.re.kr

T.W. Kim

Keimyung University, Daegu, South Korea
e-mail: taewan@kmu.ac.kr

government set forth a new education drive that focused on “fostering competition and securing excellence in education,” thereby distinguishing itself from the previous administration (Han, Yoo-kyung 2010). The core objective of education policy that was stressed from the very inception of the Lee government was to allow for a diversity of discourses and systems to compete in a free market by streamlining regulations at the central level and thereby maximizing qualitative excellence in education. In turn for deregulation, more school autonomy and a boost of educational diversity, the government declared a strong will to raise accountability standards for all parties involved in education so that no single student may fail to acquire basic academic ability (Prime Minister’s Office 2008). In sum, the Lee administration’s policy paradigm for education was constructed on the two pillars of “enhancing the competitiveness of school education by reinforcing autonomy and diversity” and “strengthening accountability and ensuring that each and every one secures basic educational attainment levels.”

Contradicting the objective of “economic recovery” which rests at the heart of the current administration’s initial promises, Korea’s economic growth rate stood at a mere 2.3 % in 2008 in which the Lee government was inaugurated, far below the presidential pledge of 7 %. In 2009, the rate dropped even lower to 0.3 % (Statistics Korea 2012). Added to that, the income inequality problem which had been spiraling since the IMF supervision period continued to aggravate, and the number of middle-income families decreased in contrast to an increase of poor households (Kang, Kong-ku 2012). What is more, the poverty ratio of highly educated income-earning couples started to mark a rise (Hyundai Research Institute 2010). This provided cause for the government to fundamentally overhaul its national policy philosophy. The Lee administration’s national slogan switched from “market-orientation” and “pragmatism” to “people-friendliness and equal-opportunity society,” according to which a more active policy interest was placed on supporting social minority groups including educational aid for children of rural areas, low-income households, and immigrant housewives.

Into the year 2011, as Korea’s economic health saw little signs of improvement amid a prevailing global economic slump, a number of educational issues that reflected the country’s financial struggle emerged as subjects of hot political debate. Of particular interest were arguments that primary and middle school students should be given free lunch meals and that university tuition rates should be cut by half, issues which developed into a political war between ruling and opposition parties. The political row over free meals even led to the resignation of the Seoul City Mayor who was replaced by an opposition party mayor-elect. Even now, as part of policy commitments for the upcoming presidential election in late 2012, both ruling and opposition parties have promised to halve university tuition rates.

Against this backdrop, this article introduces the core education reform initiatives that comprise the election pledge of the Lee Myung-Bak administration, with focus on primary and secondary school policies. Explanation is provided on the ultimate objective that the incumbent government’s key education strategies aim for, and the direction according to which those strategies are being implemented. The major achievements and limitations identified in the course of policy execution are then described, ending with a presentation of implications for ways to address future educational challenges.

1 Key Policies for Education Reform

Of the wide range of education initiatives carried out by the Lee administration, a number of core policies represent the government's two basic directions for educational advancement, that is, to "enhance the competitiveness of school education by expanding autonomy and fostering diversity," and to "identify accountability standards and ensure that all students acquire basic academic ability" (Kim, Jeongwon et al. 2011). These are policies that were set forth as presidential election pledges and carried out with intensive force for the following 5 years. They are, in other words, the centerpiece of education policies that represent the incumbent government's mandate (Table 1).

Representative policies pursued under the target of "expanding school autonomy" include a major step to minimize the central government's role in school education. Following a policy to "revise the local education administration system," Metropolitan and provincial offices of education were designated as the immediate and ultimate authority responsible for primary and secondary education. "School autonomy expansion plans" (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) 2008. 4.15) were implemented to abolish rules and regulations restricting primary and secondary education and to boost school autonomy for curricular operation and teacher personnel management. A policy to "promote autonomy for curricular operation" accompanied those policies. The role of school inspection, evaluation, and teacher management, which had previously rested with local education offices, was transferred to city and provincial offices of education with the

Table 1 Outline of the Lee administration's major initiatives for education reform

Policy	Major policy tasks
Direction	
Autonomy/diversity	Revise the local education administration system Enhance autonomy in school management and curricular operation Expand autonomy in university admission by facilitating the Admissions Officer System Implement a project to nurture 300 diversified high schools (100 private self-governed high schools, 50 Meister vocational high schools, 150 public boarding high schools) Strengthen vocational secondary education through public autonomous high schools and specialized high schools
Accountability/guarantee of basic levels	Leave no student lagging in basic academic ability (carry out the National Assessment of Educational Achievement, support schools that have a significant number of under-achieving students) Identify and assist students in crisis situations (Wee project) Implement Teacher Evaluation for Professional Development

“revision of the local educational administration system.” Local education offices were instead imposed with a new responsibility to focus on supporting individual schools. To match their new role, the offices changed name to “Educational Support Offices” (MEST 2010. 5). The government also abolished a great number of rules that had regulated school management and devised a “plan to expand autonomy for school curricular operation,” which was announced in the form of the “2009 national curriculum revision” (MEST 2009. 2). This enabled schools to add or reduce teaching hours for subjects according to their own needs, within 20 % of requisite annual instruction hours stipulated in the national common basic curriculum. At the high school level, students were given more opportunity to choose electives. And for students between grades 7 and 12, schools were required to offer courses that had previously been taught over several semesters in just one or two semesters in any grade year, under the title “concentrated subject completion system.” That policy was claimed to support to reduce the students’ burden of learning by assuring that students do not undertake more than eight subjects per semester. Meanwhile, in the higher education sector, the government introduced a plan to “expand autonomy for university admission procedures,” which caused quite a stir throughout Korean society. The “Admissions Officer System” is a representative policy that was introduced as part of this strategy. It was not until the current government that the system saw a fast and full-fledged application nationwide though the system had been carried out in partial attempts by previous governments. The idea of the system is to place weight on a candidate’s various academic experiences, rather than college entrance exam scores, when conducting admission screening. This is to help higher education institutions select students that possess qualities and potential that fit in with the direction of the university or program (Park, Je-Nam 2008).

The government’s target of “diversification” is best characterized by the “project to nurture 300 diversified high schools.” The project grew out from criticism of Korea’s high school equalization policy which had been in place since 1975. Underlying the project were assertions that varying new types of high schools should be developed so that students may choose schools according to their abilities and aptitudes. The idea was that this will induce sound competition between schools and lead to fostering excellence in education. The project comprises three components. The first task is to increase the number of “private independent high schools” to 100 nationwide within President Lee’s term in office. These schools are granted a certain level of autonomy in teacher appointment, curricular operation, admission fee rates, and student selection. Second, the government is developing 150 “boarding high schools” in rural areas in a bid to prevent excellent students from leaving their hometown for urban schools. The third plan is to nurture 50 “Meister high schools” which will take the lead in cultivating a highly qualified vocational workforce (Prime Minister’s Office 2008). Another policy that is being stressed side by side with the Meister high school project is to “facilitate vocational secondary education,” specialized high schools in particular, though this was not necessarily a core policy focus in the early stages of the current government. The policy comes as a countermeasure to the decrease of technically skilled manpower in Korea as a rapidly growing number of vocational high school graduates seek advancement to

university. The aim is to “revise all vocational high schools into specialized institutes by sector” and provide multi-layered support to foster an “environment that encourages youths to get employed first, build a career, and pursue academic studies later on when needed” (Relevant Ministry 2010. 5). Alongside, the government also started to select public high schools in 2009 that would be run autonomously in terms of curricular operation and teacher appointment. These “public independent high schools” are not allowed to select students, but can formulate the curriculum as they find suitable, just like private independent high schools. Principals at these schools are granted the right to teacher appointment. And the schools receive additional budgetary aid for their education programs. Having started with the designation of 21 schools in 2009, a total of 97 public independent high schools are in operation nationwide as of 2012, and 19 schools were additionally designated in the second half of that year (MEST 2012. 8).

In the policy area of “identifying accountability standards in education,” the government’s representative initiative is the “zero under achievement student plan” which shares the objective of the US *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act* in an attempt to leave no student lagging behind in basic academic ability. To the purpose, the government introduced in 2008 a yearly National Assessment of Educational Attainment (NAEA) that is conducted among all students in grades 6, 9, and 10 (changed to grade 11 starting in 2010). Results of the assessment are reflected in identifying academically under-achieving students and directing special support into schools that have a significant number of such students, in view of inducing each and every student to break away from low achievement (MEST 2011. 7). The decrease rate of under-achieving students is also included as a core indicator when evaluating school principals. Another policy interest that runs together with this is to assist students who are facing crisis situations. The “Wee project” is designed to prevent dropouts, crime, and violence at school by placing professional counselors personnel at schools, local education offices, and Metropolitan and provincial offices of education. The project works in a way to build a three-stage safety net to aid students experiencing difficulties. In the first stage, “Wee Classes” are set up at schools, and professional expert counselors are placed in the classes to function as a window of communication for students in need. The second-stage safety measure is to establish “Wee Centers” at local education offices. The Centers use local networks to provide one-stop assistance for students who require continuous monitoring and support from expert counselors or for cases where student guidance requires expertise beyond a school’s capability. In the final third stage, “Wee Schools” are built within Metropolitan and provincial offices of education in the form of boarding schools. These are long-term con-signed educational institutions where students live and study together and are provided with psychological treatment, school adaptation guidance, and subject instruction. As of 2011, “Wee Classes” were set up at 4,497 primary and secondary schools, accounting for 39 % of all schools in the country. “Wee Centers” were set up at 136 or 77 % of all local education offices nationwide. Three “Wee Schools” were in operation, and four more schools were preparing for opening (Kim, Jeongwon et al. 2011).

Another policy aimed at strengthening accountability is the government's move to appraise all primary and secondary school teachers starting in 2010. Teacher evaluation, which had been discussed and tried out as a pilot project in the preceding government, expanded into a nationwide project in 2010 under the current government. Named the "Teacher Evaluation for Professional Development," the evaluation scheme has its focus on raising the quality standards of teachers and is not tied to promotion decisions. Teachers who receive fewer than 2.5 by fellow teachers (perfect score is 5.0) and 2.0 by students' satisfaction are required to attend professional training for a 6-month period (MEST 2010, 12).

2 Achievements and Limitations of Major Education Reform Policies

The incumbent government's policies for education reform have been creating varying outcomes and also confronting different limitations. Even so, certain general features can be commonly found across all policies. Drawing from the findings of a recent related research (Kim, Jeongwon et al. 2011), this article describes below the major achievements and limits of governmental reform measures in education.

2.1 Policy Achievements

2.1.1 Diversification Fostered in Secondary Education Through Meister High Schools and Public Independent High Schools

The Meister high school policy, introduced in a bid to nurture high-quality technical human resources among high school graduates and to improve the climate of academic elitism in society, is evaluated as having contributed to diversifying secondary education by offering industry-customized curricula. Credit is also given to the schools for developing employment MOUs with industries, inducing industrial partners to donate equipment, and offering students with practical training opportunities (Kim, Jong-Woo 2011). For example, Hyundai Motor Co. signed an MOU with Meister high schools agreeing to employ 1,000 graduates from the schools during the next 10 years. Of all the major education policies laid out by the Lee administration, the Meister high school policy attracts the most positive response from teachers, parents, and education professionals alike, as revealed in a survey of policy approval ratings (Kim, Jeongwon et al. 2011).

One of the policies that are given affirmative evaluation by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2011) is the "employment first, study later" policy that targets specialized high school graduates. The ministry points to the steady rise of graduate employment rates as a result of the policy (17.5 % in 2008 → 21.9 % in 2009 → 29.5 % in 2010). Also noted are the facts that banks,

conglomerates, and local governments are increasing their recruitment of high school diploma holders, students are showing more eagerness for employment, and social awareness is improving for vocational education.

As for public independent high schools, notwithstanding the fact that these schools do not enjoy the same right of student selection that is granted to private self-governed high schools, they are viewed as an important contribution to the effort of diversifying general high school programs. Research indicates that the number of parents who choose public independent high schools for their distinctive curriculum doubles the number of parents who make the choice in the belief that the schools will help their children get better scores on the college scholastic aptitude test. The schools are also acknowledged for gaining higher satisfaction levels from students and parents and revamping their previous image as least-favored schools in underdeveloped regions (Hong, Chang-Nam 2010).

2.1.2 Year-by-Year Decrease of Students Who Lack Basic Academic Ability

Under a special support project launched in 2009, the government identified schools that have a large number of students who lack basic academic ability and designated them as “creative management schools to lead academic ability enhancement.” Research (Lee, Hwa-Jin 2011) finds a number of positive outcomes produced by the project including a decrease in the overall ratio of under-achieving Korean students, an increased ratio of students who demonstrate average or higher academic ability, and a sharp drop of under-performing students at the designated creative management schools. According to the research, the proportion of students who lack basic academic ability as of all Korean students decreased from 7.2 % in 2008 to 4.8 % in 2009 and again to 3.7 % in 2010. The proportion of under-achieving students at the designated schools showed a steeper decline, from 17.4 % in 2008 to 10.8 % in 2009 and to 6.2 % in 2010.

2.1.3 Declining Cases of Study Interruption and Un-notified Absence Among Students in Crisis

At schools that adopt the “Wee project” to assist students in crisis situations, the rate of satisfaction for students’ personal and school life shows an increase, while the rate of dropouts and absences without leave marks a decrease, as revealed by related research (Choi, Sang-Geun 2010). The research notes that the rate of student dropouts decreased by 5.6 % between 2008 and 2010 at schools that run “Wee Classes.” The rate remained unchanged during the same period at schools that do not offer “Wee Classes.” The same tendency is found in terms of absence without leave, with the rate of un-notified absences dropping by 7.35 % between 2008 and 2010 at schools with “Wee Classes” and rising 11.94 % at schools without “Wee Classes.”

The “Wee Project” has been carried out rather quietly, without arousing much of a social repercussion or attention. But over the years, public support for the project has grown relatively higher than other government education policies (Kim, Jeongwon et al. 2011).

2.2 Limitations of Policy Implementation

With all the achievements, however, the Lee Myung-Bak administration’s education reform initiatives hold a varying dimension of limitations, as elucidated below.

2.2.1 Hasty Implementation of Policies in the Absence of Sufficient Infrastructure

Evidence points to the fact that a systemized survey of policy demands had not preceded the government’s development of policy objectives, which basically created difficulty in pushing policies through to the point of desired goal attainment. Good examples of half-baked policies are those to “nurture 100 private independent high schools” and “50 Meister high schools” under the overarching objective to “diversify 300 high schools.” The Meister high school project halted with 28 school designations, mainly due to the schools’ inability to build contracts with the most competitive industries in major fields. The number of students at these schools being contracted for employment upon graduation fell far shorter than the number of admissions. In the lack of such a practical cooperation system to support students’ employment, the government had little choice but to suspend any further rapid expansion of Meister high schools (Kim, Jong-Woo 2011). Likewise, the government has failed to attain the goal of nurturing 100 private independent high schools. A total of 51 such schools have been designated across the country, of which 26 are concentrated in the Seoul capital area. But at several designated schools, the number of newly enrolled students reached lower than the admission quota, forcing one school to switch status to a general high school. As a result, only 50 private independent high schools are currently in operation (MEST 2012). These 50 schools are not without worries over student recruitment. Three designated schools have, out of concern that they will not be able to recruit an adequate number of new students, requested a reduction of classes and received approval so far (Joongang Daily 2012, August 9). Another problem is the tendency among enrolled students to transfer to other schools, citing reasons that the private independent schools’ education programs do not offer distinctive quality commensurate to tuition levels. As of 2011, 852 students out of a total of 17,296 students enrolled in private independent high schools are found to have decided to transfer to other schools or discontinue study (The Seoul Shinmun 2011, September 20).

The lack of sturdy policy infrastructure has also manifested itself in the course of efforts to “expand school autonomy.” The autonomy policy is structured on the idea of delegating core primary and secondary education responsibilities, previously held by the central administrative authority, to Metropolitan and provincial offices of education and to encourage individual schools to assume a key role in administration. But little effort was provided before planning policies to develop an institutional basis that would clearly define roles and responsibilities between the central government, Metropolitan and provincial offices of education, and schools. This naturally led to a great amount of confusion when implementing policies. In the 2010 election of superintendents that was held in time with local elections, in particular, opposition-leaning superintendents were elected at six out of the total 16 Metropolitan and provincial offices of education, signaling a rise of collision between local education offices and the central Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Conflict between both sides continues to date over various policies. Another controversial policy is the “2009 national curriculum revision,” carried out in view of granting school more autonomy in curricular operation. A central issue is the “concentrated subject completion system” which limits the number of subjects a student can take to eight per academic semester. The original intention of this policy was to alleviate students’ study burden by reducing the number of subjects they must take in a semester. But the policy was introduced in the absence of any change in the national curriculum, which states a definite description of what should be taught for each grade year and subject. As many argue, this resulted in a situation where students and teachers had to shoulder an additional teaching and learning burden. That is, under the pretext of “expanding autonomy,” the government had pushed forth with the policy without fully preparing for the problem of teacher quota changes that will occur with subject hour changes. For these reasons, the policy is often evaluated as a typical example of “forced autonomy” (Kim, Jeongwon et al. 2011).

As for the “zero under achievement student plan,” though some research presents evidence that it has helped to reduce the ratio of students who lack basic academic ability, an ample amount of criticism is also voiced on its negative effects. Critics raise question on whether a diagnostic tool designed in consideration of the national curriculum for each grade year can also be used as a tool to assess “basic academic ability.” Another major issue is that even though a large portion of students identified as lacking in basic academic ability also have difficulties of behavioral and emotional disorder, schools only focus on raising their academic performance and offer little else than helping them do workbook exercises. In particular, the decision to consider a school’s decrease rate of under-achieving students as an indicator for principal appraisal eventually brought about unhealthy between-school competition and even some worrisome instances where schools would welcome the transfer of under-performing students. Reports on such educationally detrimental cases have also sparked debate on whether the National Assessment of Educational Attainment needs to be conducted among all students in target grades and whether assessment results should be disclosed. In all, together with the “private independent school” scheme, this policy is one of the least publicly approved initiatives in place (Kim, Jeongwon et al. 2011).

2.2.2 The “High School Diversification” Policy Leading to School Rankings and a Deterioration of Educational Environments at “General” High Schools

Private self-governed high schools have emerged as elite schools side by side with special-purpose high schools including those focused on foreign languages and science, which had previously dominated the selection of excellent students. This is because private self-governed schools use their limited student selection rights and high tuition rates to attract students of top quality mostly from middle-class families (Cha, Sung-Hyun 2010). They also take advantage of the curricular flexibility granted for independent schools to help students prepare for college entrance. For these reasons, the “high school diversification” policy is often criticized as having aggravated uniformity in education programs rather than bringing in more variety. In contrast, general high schools that have no special title are entitled to a relatively less extent of budgetary support and enjoy rather restricted rights in curricular operation. And since students in the middle and low ranks of academic performance usually enroll in general high schools, their overall educational environment is in the face of deterioration. That is why the “high school diversification policy” is assessed by many as having given rise to the “ranking of high schools” (Kim, Jeongwon et al. 2011).

2.2.3 Collision Between Policies

Within the same education sector, policies are being pursued in directions that contradict each other. So shaded by other policies that stand out for the visible pressure they shoulder and also due to various social circumstances, the government’s original policy intentions have often been mistakenly delivered. For example, the initiative to grant curricular autonomy is fundamentally aimed at diversifying education programs so that they better tailor to school and student needs. But as critics point out, due to policy measures such as disclosing results of the National Assessment of Educational Attainment and tying the ratio change of under-achieving students with principal appraisal, school education is increasingly switching its focus on preparing students for evaluation. In yet another aspect, when the high school diversification policy and curricular autonomy policy overlap, schools secure a differentiating degree of rights over providing curriculum centered on college entrance preparation. The controversy is that schools which are granted more rights to curricular operation use that authority to provide concentrated preparation for the college scholastic aptitude test, which eventually has the effect of aggravating uniformity in the high school curriculum (Kim, Jeongwon et al. 2011).

3 Future Challenges

The achievements and limitations identified in the Lee Myung-Bak administration’s education policies over the past 5 years present implications for future educational policy planning, especially in terms of the following tasks.

3.1 Establishing a Long-Term National Education Policy Framework and Presenting a Simplified Outline Direction for the National Curriculum

However sublime a policy's objective may be, unless that policy is carried out on top of a systemized infrastructure basis, it becomes virtually impossible to attain the very essence of the intended policy goal. This is evidenced in the past 5 years of the Lee administration's education policy procedures. When establishing fundamental policies, the first task to consider is to develop a long-term forecast and present a road map to implement policies in accordance with that outlook. Farsighted plans should be formulated upon conducting systemic discussions on how we wish to shape our future society and what kind of education we need in order to realize that ideal. Only then will education policies be carried out in a sustainable manner, regardless of government changes.

A policy that particularly requires a long-term approach is the school curriculum policy. In the current Korean context, what is most demanded of education policy planning is to grant teachers the right to develop and operate curricula upon their own decision. Allowing schools more curricular autonomy is not enough, since in actuality, the national basic common curriculum states a detailed prescription of what to be taught in each grade year and for each subject and thus leaves the value of "autonomy" impotent. This is why much supports the need to present just a simplified outline of contents within the national curriculum and instead secure conditions that will enable teachers to develop a curriculum customized to the characteristics of their students (Cho, Nan-Sim 2010). In line with this, the current subject instruction-oriented teacher development system should also be revised to a method that helps teachers better understand students and nurtures teacher capacity to self-formulate the curriculum in the light of individual student needs.

3.2 Diversifying Education Programs Based on a Horizontal Variation of Social Values

The current government's high school diversification policy, while being assessed as having contributed to raising social recognition for vocational education, is at the same time criticized for having prompted the ranking of high schools. This implies that what Korean society calls for is a diversification of social values, not "various" mechanisms to solidify the existing social hierarchy built on educational credentials. The kind of school education that Korean society demands is one that opens children's eyes to the "various values of life" that coexist in this world and help them find a value of their own to pursue (Kim, Jeongwon 2004). To meet this demand, all high schools in Korea should be operated as autonomous institutions, not just a selected few, so that they may flexibly develop programs that consider the characteristics of entering students. Schools should also be "diversified" so as to help students who have early decided on life and career paths to intensively build on their field of interest from high school years.

3.3 Empowering the Role of Schools as an Inclusive Support System for Children's Development

Policies aimed at supporting educationally disadvantaged groups, which had been launched by the preceding government, have continued throughout the Lee Myung-Bak administration in the name of "expanding infrastructure for educational welfare." This comprises support for students from low-income households, special aid for children of immigrant housewives, and the establishment of a national scholarship scheme. In some instances, the policy to ensure basic academic ability in students (zero under achievement student plan) is classified as a welfare policy in that it targets academically needy students who constitute an educationally vulnerable group.

But the need to develop an inclusive support system for underprivileged children, a policy agenda that has been proposed time and again since the previous administration, has not been sufficiently addressed by the current government. The reality is that different government ministries and offices have their own system of carrying out welfare policies, and the lack of policy coordination creates a situation where a student who has differing layers of difficulty such as household poverty, emotional disorder, and academic incompetence has to access assistance separately from different implementation systems. This not only hinders a comprehensive understanding of the student's needs but also makes it difficult to identify the major mechanism that may bring changes to the student. Even so, uncoordinated policy systems have continually been created anew under the current government.

This all implies the need to develop future policies in the direction of advancing the role of schools, imposing them with a central responsibility in the country's social welfare system and encouraging their function as an inclusive support system for children's development. Policies should aspire beyond merely promoting the subject instruction role of schools. They should be able to nurture schools into a holistic growth-supporting system that comprehensively understands and addresses the everyday needs of each and every student.

3.4 Defining the Different Roles of Educational Stakeholders and Promoting Communication

The "school autonomy expansion plan" places the ultimate responsibility for primary and secondary education on Metropolitan and provincial offices of education. But because of this very policy, aspects of conflict are frequently arising between the central government and local offices of education. What is lacking is a clear set of standards to define what authority the central government holds and what rights may be executed by local offices. Mutual conflict can be minimized when the authority over primary and secondary education is divided pursuant to those standards, and a legal basis is provided to back the role division.

Aside from this, recent education reform initiatives are often questioned for their rapid speed of implementation. Many argue that policies are being pushed unilaterally, without allowing time for teachers to fully understand their objectives or directions. Schools also have little choice than to just adhere to the government's policy rules and regulations. Little opportunity is given to apprehend the background and aim of each policy before carrying them out. Schools therefore tend to negatively respond and resist all government policies, regardless of any value that a policy might hold. Henceforth, less focus should be placed on how fast a policy is being implemented. Instead, active opinion sharing with schools and teachers should be given priority so that policies can be planned practically from the bottom up.

3.5 Improving Linkage and Coordination Between Policies

Policies that point to different goals should not be carried out simultaneously. If synergic effect is to be secured between policies, a system of coordination and cooperation among relevant ministries should be activated all throughout the stages of policy planning to policy implementation. The presence of such a cooperative system will enable the government to assess the value of every education reform initiative in consideration of its long-term vision for education. When setting up implementation strategies, inter-ministerial coordination will also boost the development of linkage with other policies, which will not only ensure consistency in educational policy planning but also facilitate the effective exercise of administrative capacity.

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Indonesia: Overcoming Challenges of Decentralization

Bambang Indriyanto

Abstract Although the idea of decentralization in Indonesia's education management is not new, it only gained a formal recognition since 1998, triggered by the economic crisis that followed the fall of a political regime. This chapter discusses the decentralization reform in Indonesia's education system, illustrated by reform in the field of basic education. As decentralization is both political and managerial phenomena, the reconciliation between central and local governments is proposed to be a solution to overcome the challenges. Nonetheless, complexities of reforms increased given the dual management of basic education by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. As a result of trade-off, the decentralization grants full autonomy to district governments; in the meanwhile, the central government still plays substantial roles in the provision of education budgets to ensure achieving the target of universalizing basic education.

Keywords Basic education • Education decentralization • Education management • Education system • Indonesia

Decentralization has been the name of the game in Indonesian bureaucracy since 1998. It was triggered by the economic crisis that followed the fall of a political regime which had been in power since 1966. Initially the idea of decentralization was very political when students practically all over Indonesia demanded democratization in areas where people's voices should be heard by the government. This demand was followed up by the promulgation of *Law on Decentralization* (No. 32, 2004, known as the *Law of Autonomy*). The *Law* stipulates that all central government functions, including education, are devolved to local governments. In Indonesian bureaucratic context, local government consists of provincial and district

B. Indriyanto (✉)

The Center for Policy Research, Ministry of Education and Culture,
Jakarta, Indonesia

e-mail: bambang.indriyanto@kemdiknas.go.id

government. Under the *Law*, the provincial government is representative of the central government at the local level. The devolution takes place at district government level and the provincial governments play as mediator between central and district governments.

Although this decentralization has been implemented for a decade, the idea had started long before that. One crucial factor relates to the vast geographical area of Indonesia which expands over more than 12 thousand islands, though geographical area was not the sole consideration for the decentralization (Gie 1993). Among the 12,000 islands in Indonesia, there are five big islands consisting of Sumatera, Java, Borneo, Celebes, and Papua. Area-wise, Papua is the biggest, but economic-wise, Java is the most developed island compared to the rest of Indonesia. Being the most developed, Java attracts many people with higher education qualification. Besides, although Java does not have as many natural resources as the rest of four islands, about 60 % of wealth and about the same proportion of Indonesia's population concentrates in Java.

There were also considerable cultural as well as political differences that influence the decentralization policy. Decentralization is intended to strengthen political integration of Indonesia. It is a scenario of giving local governments and schools autonomy and unites them at the same time. Specifically speaking, there are at least three main missions of decentralization: first is to bring public services closer to the beneficiaries; second is to build democratic atmosphere in public policy agenda settings and implementations; and third is to increase effectiveness and accountability of policy implementation (Parera and Koekerits 1999; Busoni 2002; Brodtkin 2006).

1 Context of Decentralization

This part describes the context of decentralization: the system of basic education. The policy targets that measure progress of the reform are also discussed.

1.1 *Dual Management System for Basic Education*

According to the Education Law No. 20 of 2003, basic education consists of 6-year primary schooling and 3-year junior secondary schooling. The management of the basic education is the responsibility of the Minister of Education and Culture. Article 50 of the *Law* states that "the management of the national education system is the responsibility of the minister." As articulated by article 1, the term "the minister" is a minister who controls and manages education, namely, the Minister of Education and Culture. This article, however, does not indicate that the minister has a direct control over the schools offering basic education services.

Dual management characterizes basic education in Indonesia. According to the *Law*, the primary schools consist of general primary schools called *Sekolah Dasar*

Table 1 Number of enrollment in basic education, 2011

Level				
Primary	SD	MI	Non formal	Total
Enrollment	27,208,693	3,302,789	87,715	30,599,197
Ratio	88.9 %	10.8 %	0.3 %	100.0 %
Junior secondary	SMP	MTs	Non-formal	Total
Enrollment	9,458,533	2,890,272	256,307	12,605,112
Ratio	75.0 %	22.9 %	2.0 %	100.0 %

Source: Indonesia: *Educational Statistics in Brief 2011/2012*. Jakarta: Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012

(SD) and Islamic primary schools called *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI). Likewise, junior secondary schools consist of general junior secondary school called *Sekolah Menengah Pertama* (SMP) and Islamic junior secondary school called *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MT). The Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) directly manages the *madrasahs*. This includes appointing teachers and principals to them.

MoRA has the authority to manage *madrasahs* since historically *madrasahs* were community-based education institutions as part of the Islamic teaching. Local Islamic leaders (*Ullamahs*) have played a pivotal role in establishing the *madrasahs* especially during colonization era. As Indonesia became an independent nation in 1945, the *madrasahs* reoriented their pedagogical missions towards academic matters. The progress of industries and other formal economic sectors encourages the graduates of *madrasahs* to enter the job markets competing with their peers from general school tracks.

As a consequence, modern approach to education administration is applied in *madrasahs*. Teachers with university attainment are recruited. As far as curriculum and evaluation of academic achievement are concerned, MoRA refers to those developed and managed by MoEC. Academic-oriented curriculum is employed as the basis of teaching in addition to Islamic teaching. Their curriculum consists of about 60 % Islamic teaching, while in general schools the portion of religion in the curriculum is less than 20 % since they also give equal portion to other religions as subject matters. Likewise, the student achievement is assessed by standardized academic test.

While *madrasahs* and general schools are formal tracks, Indonesia's basic education system also involves non-formal tracks consisting of Package A equal to primary schools and Package B equal to junior secondary schools. These programs are intended to provide basic education to school-age children who cannot attend school on a regular basis, such as street children and children living in isolated areas.

In terms of the number of students, general schools (SD and SMP) outnumber both *madrasahs* and non-formal education institutions. Table 1 shows that 88.9 % and 75 % are enrolled in SDs and SMPs, respectively, and only less than a quarter of the students are enrolled in *madrasahs* and non-formal tracks.

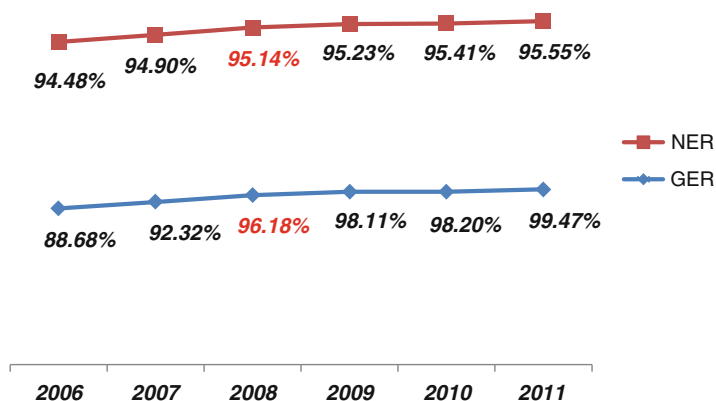


Fig. 1 Trends in NER of primary schools and GER of junior secondary schools: 2006–2011

1.2 Target of Universalizing Basic Education

Compared to other education programs, basic education program has a target comparable to international initiatives, i.e., universalization of 9-year basic education. This target is aligned with the goal of Education for All (EFA) initially declared at Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 and the Millennium Development Goals. Both initiatives set the target that all the school-age children are enrolled in primary schools. Thus, the target of the universalization of 9-year basic education is to enroll children of 7–15 years old. Specifically speaking, those between 7 and 12 years old are enrolled in primary schools while those between 13 and 15 years old are enrolled in junior secondary schools.

There are two types of enrollment rates used as indicators of success of the universalization of 9-year basic education. The one used for the primary schools is Net Enrollment Rates (NER), and the one for junior secondary school is Gross Enrollment Rates (GER). It had been targeted that 95 % of NER and 95 % of GER be achieved by 2008. Figure 1 presents aggregate data regarding the achievement of the target at national level. It shows that both targets of NER and GER have been achieved. The figure also shows that starting from 2006 both NER and GER have been increasing slowly. Those who have not been enrolled yet are typically children who live in isolated areas, street children, or children with disabilities. It needs extra efforts to get them into school. The government has extended nonformal programs and non-conventional schools such as Open-SMP to cater to this need. These programs are flexible programs intended to suit the conditions of these children.

Further analysis of 2011 data on GER and NER shows that although the targets have been achieved at national level, some districts have achieved the targets of neither NER nor GER. The districts that fall under quintile 20 on NER and GER are typically the districts outside Java Island or less developed districts with low fiscal capacity. Having low fiscal capacity, these districts tend to lack education facilities (Fig. 2).

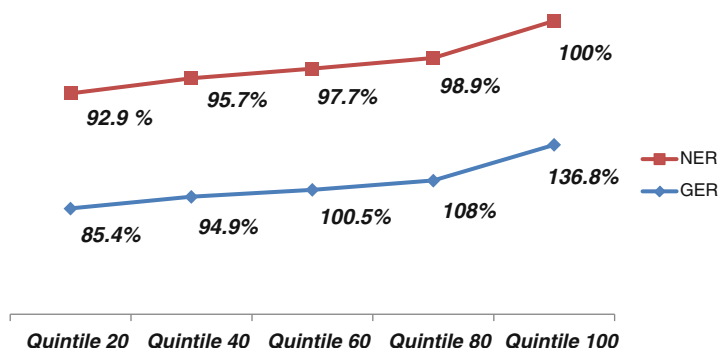


Fig. 2 Trends in NER of primary schools and GER of junior secondary schools: 2011–2012

2 Decentralization and Governance

The following discussion elaborates on the approach to decentralization and related governance strategies at two levels: central level and district level. The discussion does not intentionally skip the role of the provincial government. As mentioned previously, provincial governments are part of central government; they are representatives of central government at local levels. Their roles are more relevant to the topic of governance at central level.

2.1 The Approach to Decentralization

Education decentralization is a part of grand scenario of decentralization of government (Toha 1999). Two features characterize the decentralization of government. First, it does not give full autonomy to local governments, rather it devolves some autonomy of central government to district governments. If the autonomy is granted to provincial governments, some argue, it may lead to the formation of federalism, as the provincial governments are considered significant enough to set their own policies which are not in line with central government's policies. Second, the devolution practically includes all areas except religion, foreign affairs politic, defense, security, judicature, national monetary, and fiscal policies.

Although education is decentralized, religion is still held by central government. This results in complications in the decentralization. Logically, once education is decentralized, all components of the education system including schools, teachers, and education facilities are devolved to district governments. Nonetheless, this is not the case for *madrasahs* since they are centrally managed by MoRA.

This has been the consequence of the fact that religious affairs are centralized while education is decentralized. The proposal to integrate the management of *madrasahs* under one roof management, namely, MoEC, was not accepted by MoRA

and *ullamahs*. They argued that *madrasahs* should still maintain Islamic teaching. MoRA has its district offices under direct control of MoRA at central level. MoRA's district offices have the function of managing the religious affairs at district level including *madrasahs*. These include recruitment and deployment of teachers in *madrasahs* as well as providing education facilities and equipment for *madrasahs*.

In contrast, MoEC does not have their counterpart district level. Education offices at district level, under the direct control of district governments, are responsible to the mayor. It is the mayor of the district who appoints the heads of the offices. They in turn recruit and deploy teachers and provide education facilities and equipment to schools in its jurisdiction. Likewise, the power over the appointment of teachers and principals except for those of *madrasahs* is in the hand of the mayor.

2.2 Governance at Central Level

Thus, education is decentralized to district governments, but MoEC still manages about 80 % of education budgets. And MoEC still holds authority in such areas as funding for education facilities and equipment, provision of School Operation Subsidy (SOS), and provision of teacher professional allowance.

2.2.1 Funding for Facilities

MoEC had decided to provide funding for education facilities ever since the decentralization was established. Over the period between 2005 and 2010, the central government has built new classroom and rehabilitated classroom of about 65 % of SDs and SMPs all over Indonesia. With 65 % out of total budgets for SDs and SMPs, about 70 thousand and 45 thousand classrooms in SDs and SMPs were built each year. Besides, the budgets are also allocated for the rehabilitation of 4,500 and 1,750 classrooms in SDs and SMPs per year over the period of 2005–2010. The allocation is made by the central government. The local governments with lower fiscal capacity get more allocations than their counterparts with higher fiscal capacity.

2.2.2 SOS Program

The program started in 2002 as a continuation of Social Safety Net Program in Education, which was launched in 1999, a year after the economic crisis in 1998. To push forward universalization of 9-year basic education, the government provided subsidies for students from low-income families who were hit severely by the crisis. It was found that this intervention had remarkably positive impact on the increase of enrollment both in primary and junior secondary schools, So in 2002 it was established as a policy to ensure the increase of enrollment.

The School Operation Subsidy (SOS) program is essentially a funding policy aimed at giving subsidy to all the schools at basic education level including both *madrasahs* and general schools (private and public). For the distribution of subsidies, the MoRA directly manages the *madrasahs* while MoEC manages general schools. The scheme of the funding is based on a flat-rate approach that offers each student the same amount of subsidy each school year regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds. The subsidy only varies by level of schooling: for the school year of 2012/2013, each student of primary schools receives 580 thousand IDR per year, while that of junior secondary schools receives 710 IDR per year.

When the subsidy under Social Safety Net Program was converted to massive subsidies under SOS program, each student in primary schools received 235 thousand IDR per year, and that in junior secondary schools received 324 thousand IDR per year. These amounts were considered far from enough, but the central government was not able to increase them since it still had to provide funds to build new classrooms and rehabilitate classroom. A study (Gozali 2005) found that SOS subsidies only cover about 30 % and 25 % of total operational costs of primary and junior secondary schools, respectively, on the average.

Even as the government has increased the subsidy per student up to 580 thousand IDR per year and 710 IDR per year for each student in primary and junior secondary schools, respectively, the proportion of the SOS to the total education expenditure has not increased significantly. Using the data of Gozali's study (2005) and taking inflation rates from 2005 up to 2012 into account, it is estimated the proportion of SOS subsidies out of total operational cost of schools is still less than 40 %. This is true for both primary and junior secondary schools in both *madrasahs* and general schools.

In 2003, a problem arises when there was pressure from political parties and interest groups that the universalization of 9-year basic education should be free. Their pressure has a legal basis since the *Education Law* of 2003 stipulates that basic education shall be free of charge. The debate revolved around the term "free." The term "free" is only imposed on public schools (*madrasahs* and general schools), not for private schools. The former has been fully supported by the central and local governments (both provincial and districts). Except for the SOS, private schools do not receive other forms of subsidies.

The term "free" does not mean that the school should refuse any contribution either from parents or from other community members. In order to clarify this, the Minister of Education and Culture issued the Decree No. 44, 2012, which clearly distinguished between fee and contribution. The term "fee" refers to two criteria distinguishing from contribution: first, the amount of fee is decided by the school, while that of contribution is decided by parents; second, the due date for paying the fee is also decided by the school, but there is no due date for the contribution. Schools have to guarantee that contribution will not affect student academic performance, which means that schools should treat each and every student equally, no matter their parents pay a contribution to school or not.

In order to ensure the public schools are free of charge, the central government encourage local governments (provincial and districts) to provide similar subsidies to compensate for the differences covered by the SOS funding. The subsidy is called

Provincial SOS if it is provided by the provincial government and District SOS if it is provided by the district government. Up to now, approximately 70 % of provincial and 60 % of district governments provide the subsidies.

The education decentralization takes places at two levels: district and school levels. The unwillingness of some district governments to pay for SOS results in low enrollments in both primary and junior secondary schools. To overcome this problem, central government provides financial aids to schools for students from low-income families—"The Subsidy for Students from Low Income Families." It started from 1999 when economy recession hit Indonesia. As the program has a positive impact, especially on preventing student from dropping out, it was extended by targeting on the average 3.7 million and 2.3 million students in primary schools (SDs and MIs) and junior secondary schools (SMPs and MTs), respectively, from 2005 to 2013. These aids can be used by students to buy books and school uniforms.

To ensure that SOS funds and financial aids reach the targeted schools and students, the funds are directly transferred to schools' accounts. Schools are granted autonomy to manage their budgets so they can achieve their target efficiently and effectively as well as accountably. At the school level, it is established through school-based management system. This system becomes a part of Indonesia's education decentralization.

2.2.3 Teacher Professional Allowance

The teacher professional allowance was instituted through the *Law on Teachers* (No. 14, 2005), the issuance of which became a celebrating moment for teachers. The purpose of the *Law* is to improve the quality of teaching. Since then their job status was established as a professional status similar to other professionals like lawyers, doctors, and accountants. But to achieve this status is not a natural process. Teachers should hold at least a bachelor's degree. In addition they have to teach minimum 24 h per week and meet the minimum teaching competences. To measure the competence, a set of tests is developed by MoEC. Once they have met all three requirements, they will receive a professional allowance every month. The amount of the allowance is equal to their monthly salary.

MoEC controls the distribution of the budgets of these professional allowances. In doing so, it ensures that the distribution is effective in two senses: first, all teachers who receive it have fully met the requirements; second, the allowances reach the targeted teachers. Therefore, it is sent directly to teachers' bank accounts.

Although MoRA has the authority to recruit the teachers for *madrasahs*, all the procedures and criteria of recruitment have to follow the requirements set up by MoEC. Otherwise there would be big gaps of quality between teachers of *madrasahs* and general school. Having had equal quality, the teachers of *madrasahs* receive equal treatment including that regarding the professional allowance as long as they meet all the professional requirements. The way MoRA distribute them is also through centralized mechanism, that is, it sends the allowance to the religious district offices, and then the religious district offices distribute them to teachers. This mechanism proves effective since MoRA can hold the offices accountable to them.

2.3 Governance at District Level

Since the decentralization is put into effect, district governments cannot be held accountable by both provincial and central governments as they are autonomous bodies. In general the running of provincial and district governments is supported by local revenues and General Allocation Funds (GAFs). The latter is called the equity funds provided by central government, to balance the revenue between rich and poor districts (Rasyid 2002). The uses of GAFs are delegated to district governments. The provision of these funds is to subsidize development programs targeted by district governments in case the local revenues are not enough to fund them.

In addition district governments receive Special Allocation Funds (SAFs). These funds support development programs targeted by the central government including education, infrastructures, and natural disasters. Unlike GAFs, the SAFs are earmarked funds, that means the central government decides upon the use of them, and district governments do not have any leeway to reallocate them but can only implement them. In order to ensure the allocations to achieve the target, they are typically accompanied by a document called the *Technical Guidelines*. A series of meetings inviting representative from district governments are held to ensure them to fully understand the target of development program allocated through SAFs. The relevant ministries are responsible for preparing the *Technical Guidelines* and convening the meetings.

The distribution of GAFs and SAFs is carried out by the Ministry of Finance. Both GAFs and SAFs are generated from national budgets but are not considered sectoral budgets allocated to relevant ministries. On the contrary, they are specified as overall government grants to support local governments.

In addition to GAFs and SAFs for education, MoEC, as noted above, also provide some funds for education facilities and equipment, School Operation Subsidy and teacher professional allowances. SAFs and the fund for education facilities and equipment are typically aimed at the same targets. For example, both of them could be allocated for the classroom rehabilitation. They are complementary rather than overlapping since the targets of classroom rehabilitation are so large that one source of budget will not be enough.

3 Reconciliation and Trade-off

Education decentralization is both political and managerial phenomena. When education decentralization is considered a political phenomenon, the most difficult business is to build a consensus on priorities over a certain period of time between central and local government. In Indonesia district and central governments have equal bargaining position. This is especially true for the naturally rich districts. They are practically self-sufficient without financial support from the central government. They can set their education policies which are in many cases not in line with the MoEC policies despite that the *Education Law* has stipulated that MoEC is

the party who is responsible for the national education system. In many cases, MoEC has to reconcile its policy with theirs as long as the period of achieving the targets are agreed upon. This issue of reconciliation is becoming serious, especially when the district governments pay less attention to education, which results in the delay of achieving the universalization of 9-year basic education and the improvement of teacher quality.

The fact that education decentralization involves planning and targeting implies that it is a managerial phenomenon. Differences in a level of development between districts are taken into consideration when decentralization is designed as a scheme of public sector management. Typically districts in western Indonesia are relatively more developed as compared to other parts of Indonesia, especially eastern Indonesia. According to the Law of Autonomy, all the districts had to implement the decentralization scheme, even though some districts may not be equally ready. This unequal readiness results in different phases of achieving the targets set forth by the national government. Such targets include participation rates of basic education as well as secondary education.

There are many evidences showing that to achieve both NER in primary schools and GER in junior secondary schools, such factors as fiscal capacities both in district and national governments have to be taken into account. Miscalculations about those factors may result in ineffectiveness. Maintaining more than 30 million students spreading out in about 12 thousand islands, the central government runs the risk of discriminating them from having good quality of basic education. At the same time the government faces a perennial problem of having no enough budgets to support the universalization of 9-year basic education. Consequently the central government has to trade off the improvement of quality of both senior secondary and higher education.

Other concerns relate to the coordinating lines between central and district governments since as stipulated by the *Law of Autonomy*, there is no longer direct order from the central government to district governments. A problem rising from this type of relation is the difficulty of holding districts to comply with national policy. It also poses difficulties in resource sharing as far as the implementation of development programs is concerned (Ahmad and Hofman 1999) which requires district governments to provide counterpart budgets to the subsidies allocated by central government. While decentralization scenario impedes some districts, it facilitates others to achieve the targets.

4 Future Direction

Despite the national target of the universalization of 9-year basic education to be achieved by the year 2008, some districts have not achieved the target yet. Central government encourages them by providing subsidy such as for classroom rehabilitations and for students from poor families; it also requires them to provide

counterpart budgets at least 30 % out of the total subsidies allocated to district governments. MoEC allowed some districts which had not achieved the target to delay achieving the target, which will sacrifice children's opportunities to attain basic education. At the same time, MoEC has to move forward to other education policy agendas. Starting from 2013, there will be two policy agendas to be launched—the improvement of quality of basic education and the universalization of secondary education. These policies are based on the achievement of the universalization of 9-year basic education.

The improvement of quality of basic education and the universalization of secondary education are agendas that could only be well-implemented through the involvement and support of district governments. These include financial support and managerial involvement. There will be some tough negotiations to get district governments committed to the policies. King (1998) and Toha (1999) propose that schools should be involved to pave the way of the implementation of the policies. This seemingly will not be an effective solution, given the fact that schools are still fighting against the controls from the district governments. Their fight will not be successful at least for a short period of time without interventions from stronger hands like politicians and/or central government.

Reaching a common consensus between central and district governments will still be a long and winding road for both governments to go through. District governments might have their own reason for not giving priorities to education. In realities many districts may still have to overcome many competing agendas, for example, between education and health or between education and infrastructure; in the meanwhile they still struggle to increase their revenues. Therefore, it is justifiable for MoEC to subsidize them in order to ensure the national education policy goals be achieved timely.

The issues of recentralization of education are indeed reviving ever since the idea was initiated in 2005. This idea came about due to the assumption that education is under political domain rather than managerial domain. As a consequence, the justification to set the targets in certain period tended to be political rather than empirical, which results in mistargeting and delaying of achieving targets.

While waiting for the *Law of Autonomy* to be amended, education policies have to be implemented continuously. This certainly will not be easy as it is thought. Therefore, this mechanism will go through, as Lindblom (1959) coined it, a muddling-through process. The process needs some fine-tunings which accommodate both the interests of central and local governments. The central government still controls most of education budgets and thus can exert its power over district government through the incentive–disincentive mechanism. It gives more education subsidies to district governments who comply with central government policies and provide counterpart budgets accordingly. On the other hand, it gives less subsidies to district governments who do not comply.

Maximum utilities should be the success criteria of the incentive–disincentive mechanism.

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The United States: School Choice and Test-Based Accountability

Kevin G. Welner

Abstract This is an unusual time in the USA for policy concerning primary and secondary education—kindergarten through 12th grade. The forces shaping K-12 policy are remarkably aligned with both major political parties devoted to two fundamental approaches: test-based accountability and school choice. While these lawmakers differ over details, including the proper role of the federal government, there is little disagreement regarding reliance on these basic approaches. While individual states and school districts have embarked on enough different reforms so as to decorate this remarkably aligned political landscape with a variety of interesting gardens worthy of notice, this chapter focuses on explaining the history and current import of the two dominant policies.

Keywords Test-based accountability • School choice • US policy

This is an unusual time in the USA for policy concerning primary and secondary education—kindergarten through 12th grade. The forces shaping k-12 policy are remarkably aligned with both major political parties devoted to two fundamental approaches: test-based accountability and school choice. While these lawmakers differ over details, there is little disagreement regarding reliance on these basic approaches. Yet even within such an aligned political landscape, individual states and school districts have embarked on enough different reforms so as to decorate the landscape with a variety of interesting gardens worthy of notice.

This chapter therefore describes the nature, appeal, and consequences of the two primary strands of policy even while making note of the complexities and diversity co-existing—and often standing in tension—with the dominant policy agenda. The first section sets forth the basic legal structure for public schooling in the USA. This is followed by a very brief presentation of historical eras of education policy and

K.G. Welner (✉)

University of Colorado Boulder, School of Education, USA

e-mail: kevin.welner@Colorado.edu

then an overview of recent changes to that policy and to underlying principles. The bulk of the chapter then focuses on test-based accountability and school choice, the policies that now dominate schooling in the USA.

1 The Legal Structure of, and Recent Changes to, US Educational Policy-Making

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), schools in the USA enroll 55 million students in grades prekindergarten through 12 (aged approximately four through 18), with 50 million of those students enrolled in public schools (National Center for Educational Statistics n.d.a). Most students persist through graduation; students categorized as Asian graduated at the highest rate (79 %), while Black and Latino students had graduation rates of 60 % and 58 %, respectively (Chen 2012). Nationally, almost half (48 %) of all public school students are from low-income families. Over one-eighth (13 %) are identified as having disabilities, and a growing number—again 13 %—are Limited English Proficient (National Center for Educational Statistics n.d.b).

Across the USA, there are almost 93,000 public schools serving grades kindergarten through 12, and these schools “will spend about \$571 billion for the 2012–2013 school year. On average, the current expenditure per student is projected at \$11,467 for this school year” (National Center for Educational Statistics n.d.c). Because of great variation in the cost of living, in needs such as transportation, in student poverty levels, and in a given state’s ability and level of commitment to funding education, state-level annual per pupil spending averages vary from \$6,064 (in Utah) to \$18,618 (in New York) (National Center for Educational Statistics n.d.a).¹

Meaningful international spending comparisons are difficult, since the US has an employment-based system of health care and retirement pensions. For instance, the \$18,618 figure for New York includes \$4,658 just for employee benefits—which is in addition to \$10,895 for salaries and wages. Nonetheless, comparisons are available, including an NCES determination that “In 2008, the United States spent \$10,995 per student on elementary and secondary education, which was 35 % higher than the OECD average of \$8,169” (National Center for Educational Statistics n.d.d).

US spending figures are based on the addition of spending at federal, state, and local levels, reflecting a comparable distribution of authority and responsibility. Education of k–12 students in the USA is primarily a state-level responsibility, but the federal government has made inroads over the past half century—and particularly over the past decade. The following is a brief discussion of the federal and state roles in policy-making as well as the authority exercised at other levels.

As a legal structure, the system has many layers of rule-making. At the ground level are individual classrooms, where teachers were formerly able to exercise a great

¹ See Table 8 at http://www2.census.gov/govs/school/elsec10_sttables.xls, for school year 2009–2010 (most recent data).

deal of discretion. This was true in the 1970s and 1980s but, as discussed below, has changed over the past couple decades. Beyond the classroom level, different school systems distribute authority in a variety of ways. In high schools, for instance, additional decision-making sometimes takes place at the department level, where there may be a mathematics or sciences or English chair who is vested with some authority over instruction and supervision. At the school level, the principal generally exercises considerable personnel and budgetary authority as well as some authority over curriculum and instruction. District-level governance differs from state to state, but there is typically a school board—which is usually elected by community members—which hires a district superintendent, who in turn hires other district staff and school leaders. The school board and superintendent are usually vested with ultimate authority over district-level policies, including key budgetary decisions and broad policy-making.

Recognizing these more local levels of decision-making is important because the educational system is loosely coupled (Weick 1976). Dictates from higher levels of the political system do not make their way down to classrooms with perfect fidelity; for better or worse, they are often watered down and adapted to localized needs and preferences (Welner 2001).

But an increasing number of critical educational policies—arguably most major policies—are now determined at the state and federal levels. At each of these two levels, there are statutes, constitutional provisions, and departments of education with rule-making authority. Because the USA was created as a federation of states, the federal government is akin to national governments in most countries. Yet the US Constitution, which is the ultimate law of the land, includes nothing specific about education. In fact, throughout most of the nation's history, the federal government played only a minor role in k–12 education. This limited role was focused on efforts such as data gathering and research and then, starting in the 1960s, civil rights and equity concerns. Courts, at both the federal level and in the states, have also played a key role over the years, as they were called upon to interpret and give teeth to protections set forth in constitutional and statutory provisions (Welner et al. 2010).

Until very recently, the most important decisions were largely left to the discretion of the legislators and governors in each of the 50 states, who created a patchwork of different systems. These various state systems certainly had many commonalities, which has been important because families often move from state to state. Such similarities facilitated such things as college applications across state lines as well as a relative continuity of curriculum progression for, e.g., a 10-year-old child who moves from New York to Pennsylvania.

But many elements were also different, including the ages of mandatory schooling, the required qualifications of teachers, and the treatment of students with special needs or with a first language other than English. To a considerable extent, these variations still remain, but federal interventions have resulted in greater consistency. Most recently, and as discussed below, the US Department of Education has pressured states to adopt academic standards to ensure that all students are “college and career ready”—in furtherance of the so-called Common Core State Standards movement. Note that although these are designated “academic standards” rather than “curriculum standards”, almost all states are also adopting one of two high-stakes assessments (also discussed below), which are very likely to drive more uniformity in curriculum.

This dynamic has, over the past couple decades, yielded an uneasy and ever-changing relationship between the states and the federal government. During that period of time, the nation has seen the two main political parties come into alignment on education issues. That is, this alignment is a relatively recent phenomenon. From the 1960s through the 1980s, the parties staked out substantially different positions. Democrats pushed for an equity-focused and expanded federal role. The main civil rights laws came out of this effort, as did the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the main source of federal educational funding.² Most of ESEA's funding is allocated through Title I of the Act and is designed to provide compensatory resources for students in low-income communities. Republicans, in turn, pushed back against many of these efforts. They contended that the federal government should not interfere with the states' historically dominant role in education.

This all changed with a series of bipartisan federal laws, including the two most recent reauthorizations of ESEA: the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. NCLB in particular illustrates the new landscape for US educational policy. Title I compensatory funding was increased, which pleased most Democrats. And, as discussed more fully below, Republican legislators as well as President George W. Bush were exceptionally keen to install test-based accountability systems that made extraordinarily ambitious demands on the public schools.

2 Shifting Principles

This abbreviated history hints at changes over time in the nation's dominant policy approaches to schooling. When the twentieth century began, education was still largely for the elite. Many states did not even require children to attend elementary schools. Compulsory education laws, as well as laws forbidding child labor, were part of the so-called progressive-era reforms during the first 30–40 years of the century. The universal schooling that arose out of these reforms was, however, highly unequal. Wealthy, white, male students were commonly prepared for college, but the same opportunities were regularly denied to Native American, Latino, Asian American or African American students, as well as to female students, poor students, those with special educational needs, or immigrant students who did not speak English (Tyack 1974). Slow progress was made in some of these areas, but it was not until 10 years after the US Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which prohibited intentional racial segregation in k–12 schools, that change began to occur at a more rapid pace.

The era of equity reform in education, which lasted from approximately 1964 to approximately 1980, saw enormous strides for all these groups of students. This era

²Notwithstanding the differences between the parties, many of these efforts received substantial bipartisan support.

correspondingly saw enhanced outcomes, with less segregation, greater access, and improved test scores and graduation rates (see Darling-Hammond 2007).

To understand what has happened since, however, it is important first to understand the underlying principles behind the nation's different reform approaches. "Almost every educational policy that finds support in the United States advances one or more of the following ideals: excellence, accountability, equity, innovation, social cohesion, security, efficiency, choice, and meritocracy" (Welner and Oakes 2007, p. 93). Sometimes these goals reinforce one another, but sometimes they exist in tension.

One tension in particular is important to tease out. In the years from approximately 1964–1980, equity and fairness were pursued through policies broadly increasing access to opportunities to learn. Examples include funding and resource equity, civil rights and anti-discrimination protections, reforms of special education policy and language access policy, and class-size reduction. In the years since, however, the policies put forward to enhance equity and fairness have taken a different approach. They have focused on increasing access to individual choice, along with test-based accountability systems that publicly label schools, teachers, and others as succeeding or failing. That is, the nation saw a policy shift from one addressing structural inequalities at a societal level plus large-scale compensatory programs that emphasize inputs to one focused on enhancing individual choice options within a more market-based and deregulated system that emphasizes outcome measures.³

This shift has not been complete, and the past decades have also seen additional, and sometimes countervailing, reform agendas. These include ongoing funding equity lawsuits, policies designed to increase safety and access for gay and lesbian students, class-size reduction and teacher quality initiatives, and early reading intervention programs, as well as pushes for early childhood education and for the reduction or elimination of curriculum tracking. But the movement toward policies emphasizing testing and choice is stark, clear, and overwhelming.

Advocates for this shift spotlight low-income families living in communities with poor schools that serve as little more than "dropout factories"—with few graduates and even fewer students who matriculate to college. The status quo for educational results in such communities is unacceptable. Accordingly, severe accountability rules have a gut-level appeal, particularly at a time when state budgets are strapped. That is, if we cannot invest in schooling, at least we can demand more of the students, teachers, and principals in those schools. There is also a gut-level appeal to school choice policies that give some of these families the opportunity to seek out and enroll in schools that sometimes have more resources and better outcomes. Examples of such policies include charter schools, open enrollment, vouchers to attend private school, tax credits for private schooling, protection of families that choose to home-schooling, and (most recently) online or cyber schooling.

³Note that while Title I funding has continued to increase and while this money continues to be spent overwhelmingly on compensatory needs in low-income communities, the policy conditions attached to this spending now emphasize test-based accountability and, to a lesser extent, school choice.

As discussed below, neither testing policies nor choice policies have found substantial support from research, but they both remain popular among lawmakers. School choice policies in particular have seen unprecedentedly rapid growth over the past decade.

Underlying testing and choice policies are deeper changes to fundamental values and beliefs. In particular, this shift reflects a shift in thinking about the importance or unimportance of larger societal inequalities. The basic concepts of fairness and opportunity have long been deeply embedded in the nation's core values about public education (Oakes et al. 2000). Further, Americans have long looked to public schools as the main institution of social mobility, an idea that can be traced back at least as far as Horace Mann's celebrated call in the mid-nineteenth century for schools to be the "great equalizer" and the "balance wheel of society" (Mann 1848/1868, p. 669).

When a lawmaker is paying attention to larger inequalities, it makes little sense to pursue equity through parental choice. In such a system, parents with less education and less wealth are generally in a relatively worse position to secure advantages for their children (Yettick et al. 2008; see also Wells and Serna 1996). Better educated parents with more resources have more social capital and capacity to "work the system". Accordingly, choice mechanisms will often lead to a situation where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. While there certainly are disadvantaged families who use choice policies to find better schools for their children, the broad trends are not encouraging (Miron et al. 2012).

3 Choice and Accountability: The Current Trends in US Education Policy

At first glance, school choice policies and test-based accountability policies appear to be separate and distinct. Each one certainly could be pursued in the absence of the other. But as designed and implemented in the USA, the two policies have become intertwined. When schools' test scores are too low, what should be done? Lawmakers are increasingly turning to school choice. How do parents decide whether to choose a school outside the immediate neighborhood? Many look to test scores and the "school grades" based on those test scores. In ways such as these, the two policies have become mutually reinforcing.

3.1 Standards and Test-Based Accountability

Back in the era of equity reform in education, school improvement was primarily driven by inputs. Additional resources, supports, and access were expected to yield gains in outputs, but it was those inputs that garnered the attention of lawmakers. In contrast, the current reform agenda is focused on outputs. In particular, tests are expected to drive school improvement. These policies are often called "accountability

reforms” and are linked to curriculum standards, performance standards, and standardized assessments. Further, as discussed below, these standards-based accountability policies are now being connected to teacher quality policies, grade retention policies⁴, a movement toward a nationwide “common core” set of academic standards, and of course to school choice.

The allure of standardized tests is nothing new in the USA (Gould 1981). They have been used for everything from admission into graduate and professional schools to undergraduate college admissions, to civil service and military appointments, to placement in gifted programs and into different levels (or “tracks”) within schools, and to employment decisions made by private companies. The current testing and accountability push is remarkable in part because of its scope; the amount of testing of k–12 students has increased markedly. But even more remarkable is a key change in use. Prior to 2002 NCLB law, such tests were used to understand the learning needs of, and to make decisions about, the test-takers themselves. They are now being used to make decisions about teachers, principals, schools, and school districts. That is, students’ test scores are being imputed to those around them, to hold those adults and institutions accountable for student learning.

These accountability policies have impacted almost everything we now see in US schools. Decisions about governance, funding, attendance, personnel, curriculum, and instruction have all been transformed. School years even start earlier, so as to squeeze more learning days in, prior to the spring testing period. Keeping in mind the variation between each state’s laws, the systems generally include the following nine elements:

1. Standards that set forth the curriculum at each grade level
2. Standards that set forth what each student should be able to know and do at each grade level
3. Standards that set forth what each teacher should know and be prepared to do
4. Assessments for each grade level
5. Standards (or “cut points”) setting forth proficiency on each assessment or setting forth a system for measuring growth
6. A set of rules for holding teachers accountable for the test scores of students in their classes
7. A set of rules for holding principals accountable for the test scores of students in their schools
8. A set of rules for holding schools accountable for their students’ test scores
9. A set of rules for holding school districts accountable for their students’ test scores

⁴Grade retention and exit (diploma) exams are the only major student-level policies arising out of the recent movement for greater reliance on test scores. While not discussed further below, it should be noted that the retention push has been strong in recent years. As a way to address the importance of early reading skills, Florida and other states have adopted test-based grade retention policies. Student with low scores on the third-grade reading assessment must repeat the third grade. In Florida, these retained students are also provided with intensive reading interventions, which complicates attempts to measure the effectiveness of the grade retention itself. But a great deal of other research concludes that retention is not an effective intervention and, in fact, puts students at a substantially greater risk of later dropping out of school (see studies cited in Moreno 2012).

An additional element calls for these various components to be aligned with one another and with other factors, such as textbooks and teacher preparation programs at college and universities (Smith and O'Day 1990).

Under NCLB, each state was given the discretion to set its own standards, assessments, and cut scores for proficiency, with very little input from the federal government. Each school was, however, required to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets, meaning that they would have to post ever-increasing test scores—up to the point that all students would be proficient by the year 2014 (with several limited exceptions). In fact, the test scores were required to be reported for various disaggregated subgroups (e.g., special needs students, English-language learners, and African American students), and each of these subgroups was also required to show the necessary progress (AYP) toward 100 % proficiency.⁵

When schools failed to clear the NCLB hurdles, they were forced to march through a series of escalating interventions. According to the law, in their first year of “needing improvement”, these schools must provide their students with options for attending nearby, better-performing public schools. The next year, the schools must also allow for a diversion of their Title I funding to pay external service providers for students’ tutoring. The third year, they must implement certain listed “corrective actions”. The fourth year, they must make plans for a change in governance. Then, in the fifth year of “needing improvement”, the school must implement a mandated school restructuring (see discussion in Mathis 2009).

This all gets very complicated; suffice it to say that the Obama administration was aware that more and more schools were swept into this system of escalating sanctions and saw the need to grant waivers to release states from the sanction requirements. Not surprisingly, most states have indeed submitted plans that have been approved by the US Department of Education in exchange for these waivers. Importantly, and controversially, the department did not simply issue waivers; it insisted that these state plans include provisions to promote the administration’s own favored policies—in particular the adoption of “college and career ready standards” plus teacher and principal evaluations linked to students’ academic growth. (Both of these policies are discussed below.) That is, while NCLB’s system technically remained the law of the land, the administration was able to use the waiver process to neuter the AYP sanction system and replace it with a set of different policies—but the replacement policies are again linked to standards and testing.⁶

NCLB requires⁷ that public school students be tested annually in reading and mathematics in grades 3–8, tested twice in the elementary grades in science, and tested in reading, math, and science at least once in grades 10–12. This is much

⁵This requirement of disaggregated subgroup reporting and accountability was one of the elements of NCLB that brought together Democrats and Republicans.

⁶As of July of 2013, eleven states were still operating under the old system, having either not applied for or not been granted a waiver. These include the large states of Texas and California.

⁷The focus herein on NCLB’s accountability provisions. It also includes many other elements, including a provision requiring that teachers be “highly qualified” and teach classes within their area of training.

more testing than had existed in most states before the law, yet the trend in more recent years is still upwards. The Obama administration's policies for the evaluation of teachers and principals call for students' academic growth to be measured in all grades and in all subjects—that is, for all teachers. While the administration cannot directly mandate such policies, it has been successful in coercing states into making the desired policy changes. The conditions imposed on NCLB waivers, noted above, are part of this. Additional leverage has been exercised through competitive grants such as the “Race to the Top” program funded by the so-called stimulus money allocated as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Academic growth can certainly be measured in ways that do not depend on standardized assessments. But in practice the states have turned to these tests as a means of complying with the administration's demands. They have used two approaches for measuring growth: either value-added modeling (VAM), which attempts to isolate classroom learning effects, or the “Colorado Growth Model”, which is based on student growth percentiles, descriptive measures of relative growth (similar to the children's growth percentile tables used by doctors). Each of these two approaches has problems in terms of measurement and validity, although most published critiques have focused on VAM, which is the approach most states are using (see Baker et al. 2010; Braun 2005; Corcoran 2010; Rothstein 2009).

Each approach also raises serious concerns about the effects of test-driven reform on curriculum and instruction. Perhaps the most important lesson offered by our experience with No Child Left Behind is that schools placed under an incentive system linked to test scores responded by narrowing the curriculum and teaching to the test (Nichols and Berliner 2007). There is no question that high-stakes testing creates powerful incentives and thereby changes behavior, but the key question for lawmakers considering a test-driven reform is whether the exact nature of the incentives will result in beneficial change (Welner 2013).

Implementation is just the beginning of policies that use student test scores as part of teacher and principal evaluation systems. The school districts in Washington DC the state of Tennessee, and a few other jurisdictions have been implementing such systems for the last 2–3 years, but many other states began these systems in 2012–2013 or will begin in 2013–2014. We can expect that empirical analyses of their effects will soon be published.

Test scores have also been used to “grade” schools. Some states expressly attach grades of A–F to schools. In Louisiana, for example, these A–F grades then connect to the state's school choice policies; students attending schools with grades of D or F are given priority to participate in the state's voucher program funding private school tuition. Other notable policies similarly connect assessment results to school choice. As mentioned above, NCLB's escalating sanctions include open enrollment (intra-district public school choice). In addition, one of the listed school restructuring options available to schools that hit the fifth year of “needing improvement” is conversion to a charter school. Similarly, charter conversion is one of four options available under the federal “school improvement grant” program for schools with low test scores and other evidence of low achievement. The new “parent trigger” laws in California and other states also promote charter conversion as an option for

certain low-scoring schools. *What all these laws have in common is a logic model connecting students' test scores to the need for drastic interventions and then turning to school choice as a preferred intervention.*

As noted above, the Obama administration has pressured states to adopt what they call “college and career ready standards”. Owing to the historically limited educational role of the federal government, the administration has kept the development of these standards at arm’s length. Instead, an effort to create “Common Core State Standards” (CCSS) has been led by the National Governors’ Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, accompanied by fiscal support from the Gates Foundation and other organizations (see Mathis 2012).

The CCSS are set forth at a fairly general level; for example, the “Phonics and Word Recognition” standard for third-grade students (approximately 8 years old) reads in its entirety as follows: “Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words. (a) Identify and know the meaning of the most common prefixes and derivational suffixes; (b) Decode words with common Latin suffixes; (c) Decode multisyllable words; and (d) Read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words”. The task of putting curricular flesh on these bones is left to the states and, as a practical matter, to the developers of the high-stakes tests based on the CCSS.

A primary impetus for this effort is a concern that many states have been lax in creating rigorous standards and in setting rigorous thresholds for proficiency. Holding students across the nation to the same high standards could, the argument goes, result in the ability to compare results across states—information that is currently supplied by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) but that is not provided very well by the hodge podge of state-level assessments. Two national assessment consortia (the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) are developing computer-based testing⁸ and expect to begin administration of those tests in the 2014–2015 school year. In fact, another anticipated advantage of widespread adoption of the CCSS is the creation of economies of scale for, e.g., private and public organizations that will supply professional development, instructional materials, and standardized testing.

In some ways, this brave new world presents exciting possibilities. But all of the above-described efforts over the past couple decades have been built on the same set of reform assumptions, few if any of which have proven to be correct. With regard to test-based accountability, six main assumptions are as follows:

1. We can design and implement a series of paper-and-pencil (or computer-based) tests that do a good job in capturing what we as a nation think is important for students to know and to do.
2. The results of those assessments can precisely, accurately, and validly distinguish between different students so well that we can make high-stakes decisions about those students.

⁸Smarter Balanced is using adaptive testing, whereby questions vary depending on a student’s prior answers, as part of this computer-based model.

3. In fact, we can look at the changes in those students' test scores and validly attribute the changes in those scores to specific people (teachers and principals) and institutions (schools) and again make high-stakes decisions based on those results.
4. By putting these test scores at the center of high-stakes accountability systems, we will create improvement incentives for students, teachers, principals, and others.
5. At the same time, we will not create incentives that undermine our overall educational goals, such as incentives to eliminate or reduce non-tested but still important content and types of learning.
6. The end result of all this will be improved academic outcomes.

Each of these six assumptions deserves some attention before this chapter shifts to an examination of school choice.

Scope of Test Coverage: Standardized testing in the past has overwhelmingly focused on mathematics and the language arts, excluding goals related to citizenship and the arts as well as the social sciences and, to a large extent, the sciences. These tests have also focused on readily tested knowledge and skills, to the exclusion of applied knowledge and deeper skills that are more likely to emerge and be used in project-based endeavors. A goal of the two new CCSS testing consortia is to assess a deeper and more applied set of knowledge and skills.

Precision, Accuracy, and Validity: States have used tests to retain students in grade, to place students in gifted programs, to grant admission to competitive schools, to assign students to high- or low-track classes, and to grant or withhold a high school diploma. For all of these uses, the assessments undoubtedly provide useful and relevant information. But the measurement error and the issues addressed above regarding test coverage raise serious issues about whether the assessments can be validly used for these purposes. The Joint Standards for testing, published by the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education (1999), caution that when test scores are used for such high-stakes purposes, “empirical evidence documenting the relationship among particular scores, the instructional programs, and desired student outcomes should be provided” (American Educational Research Association et al. 1999, p. 147). The Joint Standards also warn, “As the stakes of testing increase for individual students, the importance of considering additional evidence to document the validity of score interpretations and the fairness in testing increases accordingly” (American Educational Research Association et al. 1999, p. 141).

High-Stakes Attribution of Changes in Test Scores to Teachers and Principals: As noted above, students' test scores cannot be validly used for such purposes (Baker et al. 2010; Braun 2005; Corcoran 2010; Rothstein 2009). Classroom-based factors such as teacher quality likely account for no more than 20 % of the observed variance in students' test scores (see Hanushek et al. 1998; Rowan et al. 2002). Isolating that effect and then attributing it to the teacher—rather than to such features as peer effects, class size effects, or classroom resource effects—are beyond the capacity of any existing regression model. While current policies base high-stakes personnel evaluations on multiple criteria, using test-score growth for 20–50 % of

the overall score, the range of scores arising from the other criteria (e.g., classroom observations) tends to be less than the forced range of scores derived from the growth models, meaning that those models tend to have an outsized effect over final ratings.

Improvement Incentives: When NCLB was first being implemented, there were already concerns that it would impel schools to “teach to the test” (see discussion in Nichols and Berliner 2007). In response, the law’s defenders pointed out that prior to the law’s passage, many schools were almost completely ignoring the academic needs of their disadvantaged students. Teaching to the test would be a substantial improvement, particularly if states adopted tests worth teaching to. Supporters of test-based accountability systems also push back against the premise of this critique, arguing instead that schools will attempt to improve test scores by improving instruction, not by trying to “game” the tests.

Unintended Consequences and Counterproductive Incentives: According to Campbell’s Law, “The more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it is intended to monitor” (see Nichols and Berliner 2007). That is, as higher and higher stakes are attached to students’ test scores, two things can be expected to happen. First, the validity and usefulness of the scores themselves are undermined. Second, the teachers and others who are subject to the high stakes will change their behavior to respond to the new incentives, often in ways that are not beneficial to teaching and learning.

These two outcomes are interrelated. When teachers and principals are told that their success will be overwhelmingly judged by test scores, they will change classroom instruction and the allocation of learning resources in order to raise those scores. Some of these changes are straightforward: find out what will be tested and how it will be tested, and prepare students to master that material and those skills. Another change is completely unacceptable, no matter how predictable: cheating. But the most radical changes are deep and structural: an imbalance in curriculum and instruction. Curriculum is changed to add extreme focus on the tested content, primarily reading and mathematics. Instruction is similarly changed to add extreme focus to the type of knowledge and application demanded by the tests. Project-based, authentic learning is squeezed out, as is applied, deep knowledge.

Given such changes, what is then measured by the high-stakes tests? Students attending a school that resists these pressures and continues with balanced curriculum and instruction will be administered the same assessments as those attending schools with a laser-like focus on those tests. All things equal, the second school will show higher scores, but would lawmakers be correct in assuming that the second school is providing a better education? Or would much of the difference be best understood as a clear illustration of Campbell’s Law?

Schools and Educators Will Drive Better Outcomes: The pattern typically observed when high stakes are attached to a test is a quick improvement in those test scores followed by little or no subsequent improvement (Bowie and Green 2012). When academic performance is measured, however, on a different (low-stakes) assessment—in the USA, the relevant test fitting this description is the

NAEP—the early, quick improvement does not show up. It seems, then, that the early improvement is due much more to teaching students how to excel on a given high-stakes test than to any meaningful improvement in teaching and learning. The post-NCLB trends on the NAEP have been very similar to the pre-NCLB trends (overall, these are upward trends), suggesting that reform had very little effect on student learning (Fuller et al. 2007; but see Dee and Jacob 2011, suggesting some positive effects in math for some younger students).

3.2 *School Choice*

School choice comes in a wide variety of forms, including magnet schools, home-schooling, cyberschools, charter schools, open enrollment among schools within a public school district, inter-district public school choice, vouchers, and what I call “neovouchers”, which provide private school tuition assistance through a complex tax credit mechanism (Welner 2008). Almost all of these choice approaches are on the upswing, with neovouchers, cyberschooling, and charter schools showing particularly steep curves (Miron et al. 2012). Currently, more than 13 million US students exercise one or more types of school choice.

However, while school choice is discussed here as a “policy”, it is probably more accurately thought of as a “policy tool”. There are large differences between these different types of school choice. Further, for any given approach, there can be large and important differences depending on how the particular policy is structured (see Arsen et al. 2000; Welner 2008). When thought of as a policy tool, therefore, school choice can be crafted in ways to help accomplish the larger goals of the broader policy.

Yet the reality is that lawmakers in the USA have generally been pursuing school choice as an end in itself. The strongest choice advocates share much of the late economist Milton Friedman’s faith in the power of the free market to drive greater efficiency—as well as higher quality and even equity. Seven primary assumptions underlie this advocacy:

1. Increased choice will lead to innovations that are then used to improve the larger school system.
2. Increased choice will lead to competition that drives improvements in the larger school system.
3. Parents will choose schools that are better fits for their families and their children.
4. Parents will choose schools that increase their children’s academic achievement.
5. Increased choice will address inequity by providing new options for disadvantaged families.
6. Increased choice will not undermine our overall educational goals by, for example, increasing segregation and stratification.
7. In a choice system, market forces will hold schools accountable to families and will deter fraudulent or negligent behavior.

Briefly consider the evidence regarding each of these assumptions.

Choice Driving Innovation in Curriculum or Instruction: School choice has led to greater options for many parents. For example, models such as Montessori and Core Knowledge are often adopted by choice schools, giving more parents access to these schooling approaches. These are, however, not innovations of the sort imagined by early advocates of, e.g., charter school reform. The schools are adopting existing innovations. Professor Christopher Lubienski of the University of Illinois contends that the relative lack of innovation in the charter school sector is predictable, since each school's success depends on convincing parents to enroll their children (Lubienski 2012). A recognizable approach or model (Montessori and Core Knowledge being prime examples) will send a more attractive message to these parents: "We've come up with a great new idea, so please send your children to us so that we can try it out on them". That said, charter schools have been in the forefront of some true innovations, most notably the technology-based idea of "blended learning" (see Pandolfo 2012). Whether this new approach is beneficial is still an open question, but it is reasonably described as an innovation.

Competition Driving Improvement: Several studies have suggested small test-score benefits of competition in some states or cities. Others have found no effects of competition, even in areas with considerable school choice. Still others have found that competition has forced schools to devote limited resources to non-instructional purposes such as advertising. And still others have raised concerns that competition for students does not play out equitably. That is, in a competitive system, some children cost more to educate or are less likely to have high test scores or other desired outcomes—many high-quality schools will therefore not compete for them. Others might, but the result would be an increasingly stratified system. Overall, the research results studying competitive effects of school choice "are mixed and inconclusive" (Arsen and Ni 2012, p. 194). Because the more aggressive forms of school choice are still relatively small in scope in most communities, it is difficult to say how many of these hopes and concerns will play out. For example, "while charter schools have garnered considerable attention over the past two decades, they only account for around 4.1 % of the national enrollment in public schools" (Miron and Welner 2012, p. 8).

Parental Choice of Fitting Schools: Research has consistently shown that parents are generally happy with the choices they make (see Mayer et al. 2002). It is also reasonable to assume that many choosers seek out schools with curriculum and instructional approaches that are good fits with their parenting philosophies.

Parental Choice of Academically High-Quality Schools: Parents are more likely to seek out schools with high test scores, but preferences and perceptions of quality appear to be influenced by race and other social demographics (Lacireno-Paquet 2012). That is, parents may view the race and poverty of children at a school as a proxy for quality. Even achievement test scores are a problematic proxy for quality of instruction, given that students' entering test scores—and their existing knowledge and skills—are a better predictor of subsequent test scores than any differences in

instructional quality between schools. In fact, there is little evidence to support even the basic assumption of a benefit to actively choosing a school other than one's assigned neighborhood school. The achievement results of school choice have been studied extensively for two prominent policies—charter schools and private school vouchers—and neither appears to be associated with appreciable improvements in average achievement outcomes (Miron and Urschel 2012).

Choice as Beneficial for Disadvantaged Families: As discussed above, some lawmakers in the USA have looked at equity from the perspective of the individual: do we have laws that treat all individuals equally? From this perspective, school choice can advance equity by removing some financial barriers for disadvantaged families. But if equity is framed as overall opportunities to learn, the picture is less rosy. As already noted, there is little evidence that exercising school choice provides academic benefits, so school reforms focused broadly on improving neighborhood public schools appear to be a wiser use of resources. Moreover, as discussed immediately below, school choice systems can exacerbate overall inequalities, segregation, and stratification.

Possible Unintended Consequences: School choice can take a variety of forms, and the specifics of any given policy can result in large differences in the policy's effects. School choice can, for example, be constrained so as to give priorities to low-income families or to families who live in given neighborhoods. Although unconstrained choice will likely lead to balkanized schools—with racial segregation as well as stratification by wealth, special needs status, and English learning status (Mickelson et al. 2012)—approaches that deliberately shape constraints can increase diversity in schools. More broadly stated, if school choice is used as a tool within a larger policy designed to accomplish broader societal or learning goals, the chances of unintended negative consequences can be greatly reduced.

Accountability Through Market Pressures: Ideally, a fully informed and efficacious set of school “consumers” will hold choice schools accountable by choosing only the highest-quality operators. In reality, many sketchy and low-quality operators have run choice schools and even thrived within the marketplace (see, e.g., Coutts 2011). Some of the worst offenders, who have committed fraud and other crimes, have eventually been shut down by regulators. But the overall marketplace reflects a wide distribution that includes a large number of high-quality, mediocre, and low-quality choice schools. This should not be surprising. People respond to incentives, but those incentives do not always play out as lawmakers might hope. Market incentives can, for instance, drive greater efficiency and even innovations. But the best efficiencies might come from screening out or pushing out students who are more challenging or expensive to educate, and innovations might be focused on lessening costs in ways that actually undermine learning goals. Market “accountability” can be effective, but so can bureaucratic accountability, accountability tied to performance goals, and accountability through professional standards of practice (Garn and Cobb 2012). Each approach comes with strengths and weaknesses.

4 Conclusion

The above summary of research, if written by a scholar more receptive to the current US reform agenda, would surely leave a somewhat more positive impression. Each researcher or author will bring his or her own perspective. But as long as we all stick to the overall body of research evidence, the differences in our summaries would only be at the margins. The truth would remain that the evidentiary record for test- and choice-focused policies gives us little reason to believe that either approach will yield substantial benefits. In fact, for those of us who are more skeptical, the evidentiary record provides clear warnings of unintended, negative consequences.

Yet these two reform locomotives show few signs of decelerating. Some backlash against test-based accountability is now developing (see Bui 2012), but even after the wave subsides, it is likely to leave behind considerable debris. Already, both reforms have reshaped the US educational system, and choice policies in particular become more pervasive and influential each year. When we look back after another decade, we will undoubtedly see considerable testing and choice; the open question is whether additional efforts—ideally focused on opportunities to learn—are on the ascendency.

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Brazil: Shift of Accountability Incentives

Fernanda da Rosa Becker and Luiz Claudio Costa

Abstract An analysis of the Brazilian indicators clearly shows that there has been a positive evolution in the educational scenario over the last two decades. The country has seen a shift of accountability incentives from finance and management accountability to a new assessment and monitoring. This chapter discusses the finance and management reforms and the introduction of a new assessment and monitoring system in Brazil to illustrate the shift of accountability incentives. Much has been done, but there are still obstacles to overcome, such as the proper use of the information provided by the exams and the indexes, to conclude a management and finance reform but also a learning reform based on equity and quality assurance.

Keywords Accountability • Assessment and monitoring • Brazil • Finance and management • Education • Policy reform

Brazil has a federal system with three governmental levels: federal, state (27 states), and municipal (5,560 municipalities). There are around 47 million students in the basic education system (early childhood education, elementary education, and high school) in different education networks. Each level of government is responsible for an educational level; municipalities usually provide early childhood education and elementary education; states usually provide high school education. Each educational network is autonomous both administratively and pedagogically, especially concerning curriculum.

F. da Rosa Becker (✉) • L.C. Costa
National Institute for Educational Studies
and Research Anísio Teixeira – INEP, Brasília, Brazil
e-mail: fbecker13@gmail.com; presidencia@inep.gov.br

In the 1990s, a cycle of reform processes began in Brazil in light of a belief that it was necessary to change the institutional and organizational design of educational systems. One of the main justifications was the low record of accountability for results in the traditional administration. The past two decades have seen a shift of accountability incentives from finance and management accountability to a new assessment and monitoring system.

This chapter discusses the finance and management reforms and the introduction of a new assessment and monitoring system in Brazil, to illustrate the shift of accountability incentives. The chapter is divided into three sections: reforms in basic education, reforms in higher education, and future trends.

1 Management and Finance Reform

In Brazil, management reform is closely connected to finance and expenditure reform. Owing to the geographical size of Brazil, local demand sometimes cannot be presented to central government. Unless the relationship among different government is adjusted, the way that basic services are provided will not be changed. Management reform entails not only an administrative adjustment but also a new relationship among different governmental levels that changes the way that basic services are provided. Thus, management and finance reform is designed to improve efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness in the provision of educational services and to encourage local participation.

Currently, each school has its own budget according to the number of enrollments and the service provided. Information is available at the student level that is updated every year together with specific goals to be achieved by each school principal. Every person has access to a complete diagnosis of the educational networks via the Internet. This is the main method used to promote the education quality in Brazil: accountability focusing on results and responsiveness.

1.1 Basic Education Management and Finance Reform

The management of basic education has changed in the last two decades. The responsibilities were redefined, finance reform was implemented to provide resources to all levels of education, and decentralization was both a cause and a consequence of the whole process.

1.1.1 Reform of Education Funding System

The Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988 defined the administrative responsibilities in the area of education and the minimum percentage of the public revenue for

Table 1 Legal responsibilities

	Municipalities	States	Union
Early childhood education (0–5 years)	To guarantee the supply to meet the demand as it is not a compulsory period	Technical and funding cooperation with the municipalities	Technical and funding cooperation with the municipalities
Elementary education (6–14 years)	To guarantee it in collaboration with the states	To guarantee it in collaboration with the municipalities (LDB, art. 10)	Technical and funding cooperation, seeking to guarantee the equalization of educational opportunities
High school education (15–17 years)	Offered only after meeting the demand of the previous levels	Prioritizing attending	

Source: Brazilian Federal Constitution and LDB

the funding of public education. The mandated amount was 18 % of the budget of the federal government and 25 % of the tax revenues of the states and municipalities. Later, the 1996 *Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education* specified administration responsibilities per level of government (Table 1).

As such, the municipalities are responsible for the provision of early childhood education and elementary education. In terms of the education funding, a minimum percentage to be spent on basic education is determined, but there is no specification of a minimum to be spent on the different stages of education. Moreover, a detailed specification of responsibilities of each sphere of government in respect of technical cooperation is lacking. As a result, the municipalities, the sphere that is nearest to the population, are under a great deal of pressure and are regularly forced to respond to local demands, which are not always their duty.

Throughout the 1990s, subject to the budget availability, the majority of the municipalities directed a large percentage of their resources to elementary education and early childhood education, which at that time was not compulsory. In places where the state provided almost all of the elementary education, such as in the metropolitan region of the São Paulo state, the municipalities invested mostly in early childhood education.

Supplementary to constitutional contributions, there are other sources for the funding of education. The most noteworthy is the *Salário-Educação* established in 1964. It is not a tax per se but rather a social contribution by enterprises generated from 2.5 % of companies' payroll. Until 2006, the *Salário-Educação* resources were largely spent on elementary school. Two thirds of the resources are returned to the state where the tax was collected, and a third is retained by the Federal Government for distribution among states and municipalities according to the principle of equity. The share of federal resources is used to support the National Fund for Education Development (FNDE).

FNDE is an autarchy of the Ministry of Education (MEC) whose mission is to provide resources for development of the educational system. The FNDE spending

Table 2 Enrollments in basic education per level

	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012
Early childhood education	3,783,905	4,270,376	5,338,196	6,903,762	6,719,261	7,295,512
Elementary school	30,177,447	33,131,270	35,717,948	34,012,434	32,086,700	29,702,498
High school	4,104,643	5,739,077	8,192,948	9,169,357	8,366,100	8,376,852

Source: INEP

represents approximately 10 % of the MEC's budget. With the creation of the Money Direct to School Program (*Dinheiro Direto na Escola*)¹ in 1995, a part of the resources of FNDE is passed directly to public schools with 150 students and above. These funds are allocated for teaching activities, the distribution is made according to the number of students enrolled in schools, and largest amount is transferred to the poorest region. Currently, programs funded by Salário-Educação and run by FNDE include the National School Meal Program, National Program of Schoolbooks, Money Direct to School Program, National School Library Program, and the National School Transportation Program.

1.1.2 FUNDEF: Minimum per Student Expenditure

Despite the mandate that the provision of education should be decentralized according to the 1988 *Federal Constitution*, the main decentralization only occurred in 1996 after the creation of a new fund: the Fund for Maintenance and Development of Fundamental Education and Valorization of Teaching (FUNDEF). It has played a leading role in the increase of net enrollment rates since 1998 (year of implementation).

Table 2 presents the enrollment evolution in the last 20 years. As shown in the table, there has been a great improvement in the number of enrollments in early childhood education. The gross enrollment rate in preschool is around 70 % according to Basic Education Census 2011, and there is a goal to achieve 100 % by 2016. However, the same variation is not observed in elementary school. There was a growth between 1992 and 2000, and then the number of enrollments started to decrease, with a large number of students being retained and thus spending more time in school. In this scenario, the decrease of enrollments suggests a better school flow and higher graduation rates. The net enrollment ratio is around 98 % in elementary school according to Basic Education Census 2011. High school presented some variations, but clearly the number of enrollments is growing, which is very positive as it is a level of education with an unsatisfactory attendance rate. According

¹ "Money direct to school" is a program that transfers money from the federal government directly to schools without passing through the other government levels. For example, a municipal school receives money from federal government without passing through the local government. It is a way to accelerate the funding process and reduce bureaucracy.

Table 3 Elementary school enrollments share

Administration	1992 (%)	1996 (%)	2000 (%)	2004 (%)	2008 (%)	2012 (%)
Municipal	31.08	32.96	46.74	52.81	54.36	54.96
State	57.56	55.74	44.25	37.33	34.28	30.58
Federal	0.11	0.10	0.08	0.07	0.08	0.08
Private	11.25	11.19	8.93	9.79	11.28	14.38

Source: INEP

to Superior Education Census 2011, the net enrollment ratio in high school is around 55 %, and the attendance of students aged 15–17 years is around 86 %.

Before FUNDEF, there was no equality of the sharing of tax revenue and the sharing of educational services, especially in the supply of elementary education among states and municipalities that lacked incentive for the collaboration regime mandated by the *Federal Constitution*. Then Brazil faced two challenges: (1) the way the system favored noncompliance with the constitutional requirement of revenue allocation; and (2) the existence of disparities between the state and municipal educational networks, countering the principle of equity in providing a basic service to the population. FUNDEF produced a shift in the enrollment distribution per level of government and guaranteed a minimum amount per student as a mechanism to reduce inequalities among the education networks. This criterion of redistribution of resources—based on the number of students in municipal and state-managed education networks—stimulates the effort of the educational systems to enroll all school-age children.

Table 3 presents the share of enrollments per level of government. It shows that in the period before FUNDEF (1992 and 1996), more than 50 % of total enrollments were at the state level. In contrast, 2 years after the fund implementation, there was an increase of 14 % in the participation of the municipal level. This municipalization of elementary school is largely attributable to FUNDEF. Management reform decentralized education and legal responsibilities were redefined at each governmental level, but only after the creation of a fund (financial and expenditure reform) did the municipalization actually occur. The fund essentially served as the main link between the management reform and the finance and expenditure reform in Brazil and incentivized the decentralization of elementary education, the sharing of responsibilities between states and municipalities, as well as the redistribution of revenue among municipalities (according to the number of students served by their respective educational networks).

In practice, Brazil had rich municipalities with few students in their networks because state schools provided that service, while at the other extreme, poor municipalities could be found with many students and with insufficient funds to ensure the supply of compulsory schooling with a minimum of quality (UNESCO 2000). For the municipalities of the North and Northeast regions, the poorest regions in Brazil, the redistributive impact of FUNDEF was most effective. The innovative criterion in sharing resources was also translated into wage increases for teachers as 60 % of the fund was bound to teachers' wages.

Moreover, the strategies implemented to increase the net enrollment rate were accompanied by social programs to remove the socioeconomic obstacles and boost school retention. The most consolidated of these programs is the school meal program; through this instrument, federal, state, and municipal resources guarantee at least one meal a day for all children attending elementary school and for those in early childhood education. Providing a meal at school is an important incentive for poor families to enroll their children and to keep them attending classes.

1.1.3 Basic Education Fund (FUNDEB)

Although the fund was redistributed according to the number of enrollments in elementary school, other levels such as early childhood education and high school still suffered from the lack of investments. This changed in 2007 as a new fund was created to replace FUNDEF: the Basic Education Fund (FUNDEB).

FUNDEB assumes that education is a basic right. It encompasses different stages and types of education such as nursery, preschool, elementary school, high school, and youth and adult education. Similar to the previous fund, 60 % of the funds must be used to pay teachers and the remaining 40 % should be spent on the maintenance of teaching. In this sense, the fund expanded the range of FUNDEF and promoted equality not only of schools and students but also within the education levels.

The FUNDEB resources are distributed among the Federal District, states, and their municipalities, relating to enrollments in their respective fields of responsibility. The fund will be valid until 2020 and is considered the largest amount of investment for education to date. Over R\$ 100 billion has already been spent by the fund, sourced from states and their municipalities' own resources, which constitutes 20 % of their compulsory taxes for basic education.

In short, the management and finance reforms promoted the access to education and the equality in the provision of basic education service as the funds established a minimum amount per student.

1.2 Higher Education Management and Finance Reform

In higher education, the management reforms were also based on legal changes introduced by the 1988 *Federal Constitution* and the 1996 *LDB*. The Constitution established the full autonomy of universities, initiating the discussion on the *LDB* by which institutions of higher education in Brazil are legally organized and accredited as university centers, integrated faculties, federal institutes, or universities.

The universities are institutions of multidisciplinary education of high-level professionals, research, and extension. In this sense, they must meet the following requirements: (1) intellectual production, through the systematic study of the themes and issues relevant to cultural needs at a regional and national level from a scientific standpoint; and (2) a third of the teaching faculty with at least a master's and/or doctoral degree; and (3) a third of the teaching faculty employed on a full-time basis. The university has didactic and scientific autonomy as well as autonomy for administrative and financial management.

Table 4 Higher education institutions evolution in Brazil

	Total	Universities			University centers			Integrated faculties			Federal institutes		
				%		%		%		%		%	
2001	1,391	156		11.2	66	4.7		1,143	82.2	26		1.9	
2002	1,637	162		9.9	77	4.7		1,367	83.5	31		1.9	
2003	1,859	163		8.8	81	4.4		1,576	84.8	39		2.1	
2004	2,013	169		8.4	107	5.3		1,703	84.6	34		1.7	
2005	2,165	176		8.1	114	5.3		1,842	85.1	33		1.5	
2006	2,270	178		7.8	119	5.2		1,940	85.5	33		1.5	
2007	2,281	183		8	120	5.3		1,945	85.3	33		1.4	
2008	2,252	183		8.1	124	5.5		1,911	84.9	34		1.5	
2009	2,314	186		8	127	5.5		1,966	85	35		1.5	
2010	2,378	190		8	126	5.3		2,025	85.2	37		1.6	

Source: INEP

Table 5 Higher education institutions evolution per administration level

	Total	Public						Private	
		Federal	%	State	%	Municipal	%		%
2001	1,391	67	4.8	63	4.5	53	3.8	1,208	86.8
2002	1,637	73	4.5	65	4	57	3.5	1,442	88.1
2003	1,859	83	4.5	65	3.5	59	3.2	1,652	88.9
2004	2,013	87	4.3	75	3.7	62	3.1	1,789	88.9
2005	2,165	97	4.5	75	3.5	59	2.7	1,934	89.3
2006	2,270	105	4.6	83	3.7	60	2.6	2,022	89.1
2007	2,281	106	4.6	82	3.6	61	2.7	2,032	89.1
2008	2,252	93	4.1	82	3.6	61	2.7	2,016	89.5
2009	2,314	94	4.1	84	3.6	67	2.9	2,069	89.4
2010	2,378	99	4.2	108	4.5	71	3	2,100	88.3

Source: INEP

The university centers are institutions that offer education and have autonomy in their courses and higher education programs. They are similar to universities in that they are exempted from requiring permission to open new courses; however, they are not required to have academic research and extension programs.

The integrated faculties are organized to act in a common way and under a unified system. They have a plan of studies under the control of a central administration. They do not have autonomy and must ask for permission to the MEC to start a new course.

The federal institutes are institutions of basic and professional higher education, specialized in offering vocational and technological education in different learning modalities, based on a combination of technological expertise and practical experience. Tables 4 and 5 present the evolution of higher education institutions in Brazil during the last decade which shows an expansion both in the public and private sectors.

The *LDB*, on the one hand, introduced flexibility in the organization of curricula and programs through decentralization. On the other hand, the *LDB* established new

forms of control through external evaluation processes for accreditation and reaccreditation of the institutions and for the recognition and renewal of recognition of courses (Barros 2010). Moreover, the *LDB* regulates the functioning of higher education through mandating compulsory attendance of students and a school year of 200 days, and academic qualifications for professors, preferably at master's and doctorate levels.

1.2.1 University for All Program (PROUNI)

Comparatively speaking, finance reform was more related to expansion than to management in higher education. The reform entailed programs and financial alternatives created for students without condition to pay for higher education. A typical example is the University for All Program (PROUNI) instituted in 2005 that grants full and partial scholarships to undergraduate students in private institutions of higher education. As noted in the basic education section, there is a need to connect the expansion of access to quality. In this sense, PROUNI links the granting of scholarships to students of private institutions to the performance indices of the national system of evaluation (to be presented in the next section), forcing adherence to the system as well as changing the relationship between the public and private sectors.

The institutions that join the program provide scholarships in exchange for the exemption of income tax and contribution to social security. A candidate is eligible for a scholarship provided he or she meet the following criteria: having completed high school education in a public school, having completed high school at a private institution with a full scholarship, having special needs, or being a teacher of a public elementary school or high school who is seeking additional training and pursue for a bachelor's degree. In the latter case, it is not necessary to prove household income per capita. Figure 1 shows the expansion of the program; there are currently thousands of active scholarships.

1.2.2 Federal University Expansion and Restructuring Program (REUNI)

The expansion of access occurred not only in the private sector but also in the public sector. In 2007, the program REUNI was instituted and was joined by all federal universities. It provided funding for the expansion of the number of campuses, jobs, and courses, preferably on the night shift. It was the responsibility of each institution to develop proposals for the growth of undergraduate education and to reach a total of 90 % of undergraduate degrees in relation to the total number of entrant students (Fig. 2).

To summarize, the goals of REUNI are to expand access, generate new vacancies on the night shift, to reduce school dropout, and to increase the supply of courses in different areas. The number of municipalities served by universities increased from

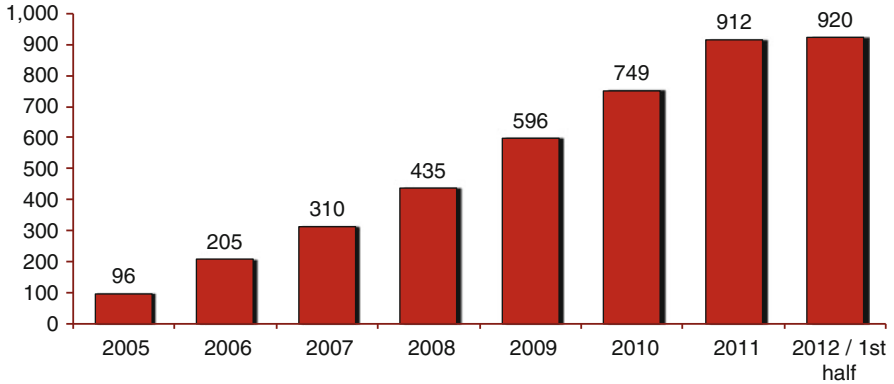


Fig. 1 PROUNI scholarships evolution (Source: MEC)

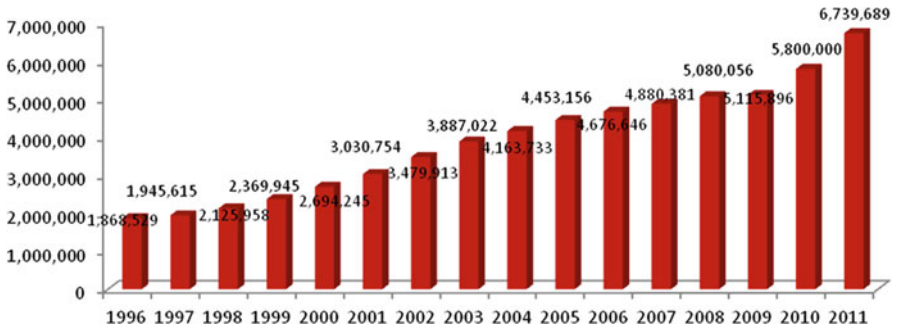


Fig. 2 Expansion of higher education (Source: INEP)

114 in 2003 to 237 in 2011. Nevertheless, it is not desirable to expand a system and provisions of such a service without quality assurance. Hence an entire system of assessment and monitoring was designed during the last few decades to promote the quality of higher education in Brazil.

2 Education Assessment and Monitoring Reform

Accountability in education formed just one part of the broader movement of public management. One reason for the change of focus of accountability is that Brazil, like many countries, was faced with the challenge of expanding the system while ensuring that the quality also improves. The more detailed information on the educational system’s final product a government obtains, the more effective measures can be taken. That’s why reform on education assessment and monitoring was commenced.

2.1 Basic Education Assessment and Monitoring Reform

Since the early 1990s, Brazil has instituted three types of evaluation, in other words, three generations of large-scale evaluation. The first generation was SAEB, which was characterized by the diagnosis without direct consequences for the school and the curriculum; the second generation was *Prova Brasil*, which expanded SAEB and returned results for schools, and started to have some intervention in the curriculum and the school unit management; and the third generation involves assessments that relate to accountability policies, such as sanctions or rewards according to the school's results (Bonamino and Sousa 2012). The three generations and their relationships to basic education policy reform in Brazil are presented in the following sections.

2.1.1 National Assessment of Basic Education (SAEB)

The first large-scale assessment of basic education in Brazil was the SAEB. The system was coordinated by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP) and was implemented in 1990. The SAEB is essentially a sampling survey and evaluates students in the 4th and 8th grades of elementary school and the 3rd grade of secondary education. The samples are representative of all federal states (in 1990, 25 states took part in the study; in 1993, 26). In addition to measuring school performance, the SAEB collects data on the students (socioeconomic and cultural status, and learning practices), principals (profiles and management practices), teachers (profiles and teaching practices), and the schools' infrastructure.

The SAEB continues to improve, both from the methodological and procedural points of view. The first survey, conducted in 1990, evaluated only public elementary schools, assessing Portuguese language, mathematics, and science areas. Both SAEB 1990 and 1993 assessed students in the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th grades of elementary school.

In 1995, a concern about the comparability of data prompted a change in procedure. The assessments that then followed began to focus on the end of each cycle of study, i.e., the 4th and 8th grades of elementary school (or 5th and 9th years) and the 3rd grade of high school. The "Construction" and "Analysis of Items" techniques were introduced and the classical test models were replaced by the "Item Response Theory" and the model of "Matrix Sampling of Items." Operational changes also occurred. An outsourced party was hired to carry out the evaluation, which was initially performed by the MEC directly, and thereafter, the scope was expanded to all public education networks (federal, state, and municipal) and private schools.

In 1997, new areas were assessed such as high school physics, chemistry, and biology for high school students. This edition of SAEB started to use Reference Matrices (Frameworks). The Reference Matrices was based on a wide consultation on the contents taught in elementary school and high school, aggregating the

analysis by teachers, researchers, and experts on scientific production in all areas assessed. The same model was applied in SAEB 1999, which introduced history and geography evaluations.

The SAEB 2001 involved a new consultation with teachers and education specialists, and consequently the Curricular Reference Matrix was upgraded. The final Reference Matrices not only delineated the content to be assessed in each subject and grade but also defined the expertise and skills expected from students. It is noteworthy that the evaluation also built articulation between descriptors and items of exams with a view to coherence and consistency, so that it could assess the learning actually attained by pupils and their knowledge gap at conclusive stage of each cycle of education (INEP 2001) more accurately.

In 2003, the exam was again altered. With the intention of an improved understanding of the educational phenomena affected by interventions of all kinds, the SAEB 2003 entered new areas of interest. A new set of variables was introduced into the questionnaires, aimed at obtaining information that could shed light on new aspects of the targeted population and, to a certain extent, understand whether such aspects interfered or not with the learning process. Accordingly, the questionnaire began to collect data on violence in schools and the subjectivity of the teachers (INEP 2003).

2.1.2 Prova Brasil

The most significant change in the assessment of schools occurred in 2005 when *Prova Brasil* (Test of Brazil) was launched. *Prova Brasil* adopted the same Reference Matrices as SAEB, evaluating students in the 4th and 8th grades of elementary school. Nonetheless, it focused on public schools in urban areas. In addition, unlike SAEB, which is a sample-based test, *Prova Brasil* encompasses all the public schools in urban areas that offer education to the target grades. Because of its census characteristics, *Prova Brasil* can obtain average performance results for all the students in Brazil, including the five geographic regions of the country, the units of the federation (26 states and the federal district), the municipalities, and the participating schools.

A study of SAEB indicates the difficulty of analyzing the performance of students of a particular state, because there is no way to separate the influence of state policy from the initiatives of municipal managers and the actions within the school (Cotta 2001). Clearly, the state manager does not have power over all actions that affect the quality of education. This paradox constrains the users of assessment information from relying on the SAEB to hold public managers accountable to society. Whereas *Prova Brasil* offers the possibility to conduct an analysis at the municipal level or even to measure the performance of each school individually, which somehow resolves the aforementioned dilemma.

In 2005, *Prova Brasil* was carried out in 5,387 municipalities of all units of the federation and evaluated 3,392,880 students attending 4th and 8th grades of elementary school, involving 125,852 classes of 40,962 schools in urban areas (INEP 2006).

In 2009, *Prova Brasil* was expanded into rural public schools. The latest edition, *Prova Brasil* 2011 was implemented in 55,924 schools in all the 27 units of the federation. With the data collected, it is now possible to evaluate schools and districts to identify areas that warrant improvement. Thus, the MEC and the State and Municipal Education Boards may formulate policies and take actions aimed at improving the quality of education and reducing inequalities, for instance, to direct their financial and technical resources to areas identified as priorities.

2.1.3 Basic Education Development Index (IDEB)

Soon after initiation of *Prova Brasil*, in 2007, the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB) was created to provide the means to enable the monitoring of schools with low student performance. IDEB synthesizes the information about students' performance with flow (promotion, repetition, and dropout). The index is essentially a combination of standard grades of *Prova Brasil* (indicator of proficiency) and the average rate of approval of the students (indicator of student flow). The calculation of IDEB follows a simple formula; the test scores on Portuguese language and mathematics are standardized on a scale of 0.00 (zero) to 10.00 (ten). Then, it is multiplied by the average rate of approval, as a percentage, which varies from 0 (zero) to 100 (one hundred). As *Prova Brasil* provides data not only for the country and units of the federation but also for each municipality and participating school IDEB can be calculated by state, by municipality, or even by school.

The IDEB is part of the government's Development Plan for Education. The plan sets goals for the nation, states, counties, and schools on the basis of the stage of educational development of the unit (school, county, and state) in 2005. Thereafter, a path for each unit was proposed to reach its goal. As the trajectories are different for each unit considered, approaches will also be different. The construction of the targets was carried out through the development of a logistic function taking into account the initial parameters observed in 2005 and the convergence of IDEBs of all units in 2021, focusing on the possibility of "promoting equity" in the projection horizon. Municipal systems, as well as the state and federal systems of education, all have quality targets to accomplish. It was stipulated that the Brazilian education system in 2021 is expected to reach one IDEB equal to 6 for the early years of elementary school.

Thus, IDEB is currently the main performance indicator of basic education, used in various programs of MEC and in some local programs. For this reason, it is important for municipalities to have IDEB. In light of the analysis of IDEB, the MEC increased the transfer of funds to municipalities with better performance by some programs, such as the Money Direct to School Program, and offered technical and/or financial support to municipalities with the worst results. The IDEB is also used as the criteria for schools to be prioritized to receive technical and financial assistance through the School Development Plan.

As *Prova Brasil* is a component of the index, to take part in this assessment becomes essential for their participation in federal programs. Thus, *Prova Brasil*

began to have an important role in the management of education in states and municipalities; it is used by the Federal Government for tracking and monitoring the public program for basic education. The results of *Prova Brasil* therefore acquire a role that goes far beyond an instrument in the process of educational assessment. It enabled not only a broader view on the educational system but also comparisons among schools in the same network and even among networks. It occurred that the usefulness of *Prova Brasil* was even overestimated for to analyzing potential contributing factors to the quality of education.

2.1.4 Further Thought on the Reforms

The assessment and the index should not be seen as an end in themselves but rather as a tool to correct paths and to look towards the future. It is crucial to ensure that based on the information provided, instruments that could help solve serious social problems that affect the school-aged population are created and put into practice in other words, to “bridge the gap” between evaluation and action. It is not sufficient to merely initiate a process of reflection based on the inadequacies or problems of a school. Without using the necessary resources to overcome such issues the assessment process would remain passive in its reflective or observatory stance rather than informing or catalyzing vital reform.

This struggle in building the “bridge” has parallels within the educational assessment systems in other countries. Kellaghan and Greaney (2004) report the huge gap between what the assessments demand from teachers and the teachers’ understanding of their role in the assessment process in African countries. Another issue is “political will,” as without crucial governmental support, policy recommendations based on evaluation results will simply not be implemented (Ibid.).

A review of educational assessments in Latin America over the 1990s concluded that teachers saw the evaluation mechanisms as a form of pressure rather than a means to improve the quality of education. Teachers may have agreed with the basic concept of assessment, but criticized the way in which it was implemented (Laies 2003). As a result, though the results became instruments of public policy, the impact on education in schools was very low (Tedesco 2003). Therefore it might as well be difficult yet critical to convince all teachers of the goals and empower them to develop strategies to achieve them. In Brazil, despite improvement in monitoring and assessment systems, it is still necessary to build mechanisms to ensure that the results are applied by managers and teachers to boost the quality of the education.

Moreover, concerning impact of the assessment and monitoring system on the scope of the education policy reform in Brazil, another thing that merits a mention is the creation of state systems of assessment (units of federation assessment systems) following the SAEB and *Prova Brasil* model. Soon after the SAEB 1995, some states began to adopt the same statistical technique of IRT as SAEB. The results generated by the state education assessment systems are being used for purposes ranging from the creation of state indicators of educational development (inspired by the creation of IDEB) to benefits and awards to teachers and school principals.

2.2 *Higher Education Assessment and Monitoring Reform*

Similar to basic education, the *Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education* made significant contribution to the organization of the evaluation system of higher education in Brazil. As a result, new evaluation mechanisms were progressively implemented: the National Course Examination (ENC—also called Provão) for graduates of undergraduate programs; Questionnaire on the Socioeconomic Conditions of the Student; Assessment of Teaching Conditions (ACO); and Institutional Assessment of University Centers, etc.

Since 1996, students enrolled in the last period of the courses of law, administration, and civil engineering took the National Course Examination. Each year, four new courses were included in the process aiming to apply the National Course Examination to all courses eventually.

The Assessment of Teaching Conditions that focuses on undergraduate courses is based on the following factors: (i) the didactic–pedagogic organization; (ii) the adequacy of physical facilities; (iii) the adequacy of special facilities, such as laboratories, workshops, and other environments essential to the implementation of the curriculum; (iv) the qualifications of the faculty members; and (v) the libraries. The assessment should be conducted by an external committee designated by the MEC.

In 2004, the National Course Examination was substituted by the National Exam for Evaluating Student Achievement (ENADE), a large-scale assessment of undergraduate student performance in relation to the syllabus provided in the curriculum guidelines and the development of skills and competencies in furtherance of general and vocational training.

ENADE is part of the National Higher Education Evaluation System (SINAES), created in 2004. SINAES consists of three pillars: the evaluation of institutions, courses, and student performance. Each pillar involves several stages and processes that differ among higher education institutions. This is one of the major principles of SINAES “to respect differences and particularities of each institution”. The information obtained through SINAES is used by higher education institutions to improve their institutional and academic effectiveness. It is also used by students, parents, academia, and the general public to guide their decisions about courses and institutions.

Moreover, the CPC (Preliminary Course Rating) was created, an index composed of three elements: the information collected (30 %), the results from ENADE (40 %), and the IDD (Indicator of Difference of Performance) (30 %). The information comprises infrastructure and physical facilities, didactic–pedagogic resources, and faculty members’ education attainment. The IDD is the difference between the average performance of the graduates of a course and the average estimated performance for the graduates of that course, considering the participant institutions as a whole. The courses that were assessed as level one or two will be compulsorily visited by an Evaluation Committee. For courses of level three and four, the visit is optional, and courses of level five will have their accreditation renewal automatically generated.

3 Future Trends and Final Comments

The above analysis clearly shows that there has been a very positive evolution in the educational scenario over the last two decades. The management reform, finance reform, assessment and monitoring systems, as well as the strategy built on programs of assistance and incentives to state and municipal governments have been effective and should be kept in place. As exposed, both reforms (basic and higher education) were focused on access, monitoring, and accountability but mostly on quality. There are still obstacles to overcome, but Brazil is on the way to achieving the goal of equity and quality in education.

Given the net enrollment rate in elementary school, this level of schooling is now considered universal. Brazil's problem today is more regional and rural, which reinforces the importance of the redistribution of resources for education based on the number of students, which is proven to be effective in promoting rapid expansion of education provision, especially in municipalities.

However, it is important not only to expand the access and retention in education but also to improve the quality, and, as presented in this chapter, Brazil has established a large system of monitoring and assessment for this purpose. Consequently, there has been some growth in student's proficiency as shown by national assessment results and a substantial decrease in repetition and dropout rates reflected by IDEB improvement.

These changes are the result of a range of incentives, from technical and financial support from the Federal Government to a consolidated assessment and monitoring program based on clear goals, to a campaign to raise the awareness of teachers of the importance in analyzing their students' results and revising pedagogical practices as well as a campaign to highlight the problem of repetition and the initiative of many states in teachers' education and in the creation of catch-up classes. Nevertheless, regarding the assessment and monitoring systems (federal and state systems), it is still necessary to invest in teachers' education to enable proper use of the information provided by the exams and the indexes to conclude not only management and financial reform but also a learning reform based on equity and quality assurance.

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Part III
Changing Policy Paradigms

Australia: National Change in a Loosely Coupled Federal System

John Ainley

Abstract Over the past 12 years there has been a growth of interest in education policy in Australia. Education policy has become a matter of considerable political interest especially in terms of structures, processes and finances. Even though the constitutional responsibility for education remains with States and Territories, there has been an increasing emphasis on national reform especially in early childhood education, national curricula, assessment and accountability, improving teacher quality, youth transitions, and school improvement. Recently there has emerged a set of proposals for reforms in educational finance.

Keywords Educational governance • Educational reform • School improvement • Australia

Recent years have seen considerable interest in education policy in Australia so that stories about education feature regularly in news media. Education policy has become a matter of considerable interest to both major political parties in terms of structures, processes and finances. Even though the constitutional responsibility for education remains with states and territories, there has been an increasing focus on national reform. This chapter describes the major reform trends that have emerged over the 12 years since the turn of the century. The first section of the chapter describes the context in which educational reforms are taking place. This is followed by a brief description of some mechanisms through which reforms are enacted and which in themselves represent reforms in educational governance. The major focus of the chapter is on a set of reforms intended to improve educational outcomes for students. These include early childhood

J. Ainley (✉)

Australian Council for Educational Research, Melbourne, Australia
e-mail: john.ainley@acer.edu.au

education, national curricula, assessment and accountability, improving teacher quality, youth transitions, and school improvement. The chapter then concludes with a discussion of the possibility of reforms in educational finance that have the potential to shape the immediate and intermediate future even though the detail is not yet clear.

Policy reform in Australian education is guided by a document agreed by all (federal and state) education ministers in December 2008: the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA 2008). It specifies two overall goals for schooling: the promotion of equity and excellence; and the development of successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens. The document outlines more specific goals in early childhood education, teaching and school leadership, curriculum and assessment, accountability and transparency, senior secondary schooling and transitions to further study and work, and improving outcomes for Indigenous young people and those from low socio-economic backgrounds. This set of goals is supported by a 4-year plan that identifies key strategies for each area of action (MCEEDTA 2009). These goals and plans are linked to a *National Education Agreement* (NEA) and related agreements in domains such as those concerned with early childhood, adopted through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) as well as other National Agreements. Under the NEA, Australian governments have agreed “to work together towards the objective that all Australian school students will acquire the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in society and employment in a globalised economy”. This agreement includes a framework for reporting on performance as well as a specification of roles and responsibilities.

1 Context

In 2011 Australia had a population of just over 21,500,000 in an area of 7.7 million square kilometres. Although the overall population density is low, it is a highly urbanised society. Outside the cities the country is sparsely populated; 28 % of primary schools have 100 or fewer students, and 37 % of secondary schools have 300 or fewer students (ABS 2012a, pp. 17–18). Australia is classified as a high-income country. Literacy among adults is nearly universal. In 2011, 57 % of those aged 15–64 years (and 72 % of 19-year-olds) had completed secondary school, and 23 % held a bachelor’s degree or a higher qualification (ABS 2012b). Although the Australian population is mainly of European background, immigration has produced greater ethnic and cultural diversity. In 2011 one fifth of the population (19 %) had been born in a country where English was not the main language (ABS 2012b). About 5 % of Australian school students are Indigenous, and approximately 24 % of the Indigenous population live in remote or very remote locations.

1.1 Education Systems

Australia does not have a single national education system. The states and territories are each responsible for their own educational administrations although the overall structures are similar. Although the role of the federal government has increased in the past two decades, state and territory governments are responsible for providing schooling to all school-age children. They determine curricula, course accreditation, student assessment and awards for both government and non-government schools. They have the major financial responsibility for government schools, contribute supplementary funds to non-government schools and regulate school policies and programmes. State and territory education departments recruit and appoint the teachers in government schools, supply resources and provide limited discretionary funding for use by schools. State and territory governments are also responsible for the administration and major funding of vocational education and training (VET). Some commentators have noted that centralised administrative structures emerged historically to promote uniformity of educational provision for a dispersed population (Kandel 1938).

School attendance is compulsory from 6 years of age in all jurisdictions except Tasmania, where it is compulsory from 5 years of age. However, almost all children commence a preliminary year of school around 5 years of age. Most children continue to Grade 6 or 7 (depending on the jurisdiction) in their primary school so that they complete primary school at the age of 11 or 12 years. Students in Australian primary schools usually have one teacher for most subjects and are promoted to the next grade each year. Secondary education is provided for either 5 or 6 years, depending upon the length of primary education in the state. The first 2 years of secondary school typically consist of a general programme followed by all students. In subsequent years a basic core of subjects is supplemented with optional subjects available to students. Students in secondary schools generally have a different teacher for separate subject areas. In the final 2 years of secondary schools, students have more scope to specialise, and a range of elective studies is provided from which students choose five or six. One of the most marked changes during the 1980s was an increase in the percentage of students who remained to complete secondary school. The percentage of commencing secondary students remaining to the final year of school rose from 35 % in 1980 to 77 % in 1993. It has since fluctuated slightly, and was 79 % in 2011 (ABS 2012a, p. 33).

1.2 Schools

Schooling is provided through both government and non-government schools. In 2011 non-government schools enrolled 34 % of students (31 % of primary and 39 % of secondary school students) a proportion that has risen steadily since 1970 (ABS 2012a). Most non-government schools have some religious

affiliation, most commonly with the Catholic Church (59 % of non-government school students are in Catholic schools). Non-government schools are usually classified as either Catholic or independent. A range of funding sources including government grants supports private schools. In 2004, 43 % of non-government school income was derived from fees or donations, 15 % from state government grants and 42 % from federal government grants. Government grants comprised 72 % of the income of Catholic schools and 40 % of the income of independent schools (MCEETYA 2005).

In 2011 the average sizes (student population) of primary and secondary schools were approximately 271 and 548 students respectively. The figure for secondary schools includes secondary school sections that form part of combined primary-secondary schools; and for separate secondary schools, the average size was 848 students per school (ABS 2012a).

Most government schools are comprehensive and coeducational. Taxation revenues provide almost all the financial resources for the operation of government schools. Although parents are not officially required to pay fees for students to attend government schools, many schools seek voluntary contributions from parents and raise funds from other local sources. There is a small number of selective-entry secondary schools in some states; and in two jurisdictions, the final 2 years of schooling is in separate senior secondary colleges.

1.3 Teachers

Approximately 255,110 (full-time equivalent) teachers were employed in schools in 2011: approximately 130,598 in primary and 124,512 in secondary schools (ABS 2012a, p. 31). In 2010 the ratio of students to teachers was 15.7 in primary schools and 12.0 in secondary schools (ACARA 2012a). Those ratios have not shifted appreciably since 2006. Overall 70 % of teachers are female (81 % in primary and 59 % in secondary schools) (ABS 2011). Salaries are determined at state level and there are differences between states. On average, in 2010 the statutory starting salary for a primary teacher was equivalent to US\$34,029 and that for a teacher with 10 years experience was equivalent to US\$46,318 (OECD 2012). The corresponding figures for secondary school teachers were US\$34,321 and US\$47,455 (OECD 2012). These figures are slightly above the OECD average. Teacher training occurs in universities but states determine acceptable qualifications. Teachers for primary schools normally complete a 4-year post-school course of study that is made up of concurrent academic and pedagogical studies which results in a Bachelor of Education degree. Four years of university education is the normal length of initial training for secondary teachers, typically a 3-year Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree and a 1-year diploma of education. However, a postgraduate Master of teaching degree is becoming more widely provided for both intending primary and intending secondary teachers.

2 National Education Reform in a Federal System: National Agreements and Partnerships

A federal system of government such as that which operates in Australia generates complexities for the implementation of reform on a national basis. Several vehicles have emerged in the past decade that provide bases for educational reform on a national basis in Australia. It needs to be said that there has always been the possibility of joint ministerial action. For some considerable time, ministers of education have cooperated through the *Australian Education Council* (AEC) which, from June 1993, became the *Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs* (MCEETYA) and then, from July 2009, the *Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs* (MCEECDYA). This council of ministers is now, since January 2012, one of several standing councils of the *Council of Australian Governments* (COAG): the *Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood* (SCSEEC). The first set of name changes signifies a broadening of roles, an increasingly national perspective on education and an increased role for the federal government. The most recent change represents a shift to educational governance being seen as one part of a set of national arrangements for government administration. The SCSEEC is concerned with strategic policy on how school education and early childhood development can be coordinated at the national level and through which information can be shared and resources used collaboratively towards the achievement of agreed objectives. It works with and through a number of statutory authorities and ministerial companies to develop and implement reform in specific areas. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) operate as statutory authorities established under acts of parliament. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and Education Services Australia Ltd (ESA) are companies owned by relevant ministers of education.

The COAG reform agenda is implemented through National Agreements, National Partnerships and other intergovernmental agreements. National Agreements define the objectives, outcomes, outputs and performance indicators and clarify the roles and responsibilities that will guide the Commonwealth and the States in the delivery of services. There are currently six National Agreements in place across healthcare, education, skills and workforce development, disability services, affordable housing and Indigenous reform. The overarching aim of the National Education Agreement is that all Australian school students acquire the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in society and employment in a globalised economy. Each year, the COAG Reform Council (a body established by the COAG, focused on reporting of government performance) reports on the performance of Commonwealth, state and territory governments against the objectives and outcomes of the National Education Agreement. The five outcomes of the National Education Agreement are the following: all children are engaged in and benefiting from school; young people are meeting basic literacy and numeracy standards, and overall levels of literacy and

numeracy achievements are improving; Australian students excel by international standards; young people make successful transitions from school to work and further study; and schooling promotes social inclusion and reduces the educational disadvantage of children, especially Indigenous children.

National Partnerships are more directed to specific areas of reform and outline mutually agreed policy objectives, outputs and performance benchmarks for national reform. They are formal agreements that set out objectives, intended outcomes (with specific criteria) and financial commitments. National Partnership payments support specific projects, facilitate reforms and some involve base payments and reward funds (based on meeting established criteria). The COAG Reform Council independently assesses and reports on the achievement of performance benchmarks before reward payments are made.

There are three education National Partnerships in education with reward funding: Improving Teacher Quality, Literacy and Numeracy, and Youth Attainment and Transitions. In this sense reward funding refers to part of the funding from the federal government to the states and territories which depends on reaching agreed targets. The setting of those targets and measuring whether they have been reached have been challenging given that there is uncertainty in the measures used to make those assessments and differences among jurisdictions in the breadth of coverage of jurisdictional initiatives. In practice the concept of partial rewards has been introduced as part of the structure. A further five education-related National Partnerships are also relevant: Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities, Early Childhood Education, National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care, Indigenous Early Childhood Development, and Empowering Local Schools.

3 Key Education Policy Reforms over Recent Years

The past 15 years has seen increased public attention given to education and a greater focus on educational policy reform. It has been a period that has seen the emergence of a national perspective on educational governance with an increasing role for federal structures that link state and territory initiatives with each other and with a national perspective. For example, the annual Report on Government Services (ROGS) includes a substantial chapter of education that integrates information about outcomes and developments in policy and provision (SCRGSP 2013). This section reviews educational reforms in several key areas: early childhood education, national curricula, assessment and accountability, attracting and retaining teachers, improving youth attainment and transitions, and school improvement.

3.1 Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education (ECE) emerged over the past 15 years as an important focus for policy reform. Reforms have involved child care and preschool provisions as well as schools. In the late 1990s state and territory governments moved to

provide for smaller classes in the early years of school accompanied with a renewed emphasis on the formal teaching of literacy in those years. For example, in New South Wales government schools, the average class sizes in 1997 for Grades K, 1 and 2 were 24.1, 25.5 and 26.2, and for Grades 3 through 6, the average was 26.8. In 2011 the average class sizes in Grades K, 1 and 2 were 19.2, 21.2 and 22.6, respectively, compared with an average of 26.1 across Grades 3 through 6 (DEC 2011).

A review of Early Childhood and Care (ECEC) had pointed to the complexity of provision through a variety of organisations, varying patterns of government responsibility and diverse frameworks (Press and Hayes 2000). It was argued that the patchwork stemmed from the late nineteenth-century kindergarten movement that focused on early learning and preparation for school and quality care, being charitable and welfare in nature. Not long after this review, the Australian government established the *Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* through which two nationally representative samples of children (one aged less than 1 year and the other aged 4 years) were followed through life from 2004 onwards (Sanson et al. 2002). This study has provided large-scale, national data on the experiences and outcomes of Australian children, from infancy onwards. There has been a number of publications from this ongoing study. In addition there emerged initiatives to monitor the quality of the provision of child care and to meet the rising demand for preschool education and quality child care (Elliott 2006).

In 2008 the COAG resolved to make substantial improvement to early childhood education through the *National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education* (NPAECE) (COAG 2009; Dowling and O'Malley 2009). This agreement among federal and state governments set out to ensure that by 2013 all children in the year before formal schooling would have access to high-quality early childhood education programmes. This meant programmes delivered by degree-qualified early childhood teachers, for 15 h per week, 40 weeks of the year, in preschools and child care institutions. There was an additional *National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development* which was to deliver integrated services, including early learning, child care and family programmes in areas of high disadvantage and for a high proportion of Indigenous children.

The reform of early childhood education has been supported by several associated initiatives. One of these was the development of a national *Early Years Learning Framework* (DEEWR 2009). That framework stresses developing literacy and numeracy, monitoring children's development and learning, identifying activities that most enhance opportunities for age-appropriate child development, and facilitating cognitive, social, psychological and physical developmental outcomes through participation in formal/informal learning programmes. The importance attached to the quality of provision is evident in "the growing emphasis on regulation and accreditation of early childhood education and care" (Maguire and Hayes 2011). A *National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care* covers day care providers, preschool and out-of-school-hours care programmes. Care providers are required to meet certain minimum standards, such as in staff-to-child ratios and staff qualifications. The *National Information Agreement on Early Childhood Education and Care*, endorsed in 2009, facilitates the collection, sharing and reporting of early childhood education and care information

among Australian governments and key data agencies. It is intended to provide the basis for monitoring and reporting on the provision of early childhood education.

Another parallel initiative has been the introduction of the Australian Early Development Inventory (AEDI). The AEDI was implemented in 2009 to gather data about all children in their first year of full-time school. It is a population measure of young children's development based on a teacher-completed checklist covering five domains of early childhood development: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school-based), and communication skills and general knowledge (Goldfeld et al. 2009). Data from the AEDI are used to facilitate planning the provision of early childhood education and care so as to direct resources to areas of greatest need. The survey was conducted again in 2012.

Data from the *Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* were used to examine participation in early childhood education among two cohorts 4 years apart (i.e. 2005 and 2009) (Maguire and Hayes 2011). Both of these were before the implementation of the reforms in early childhood education. It was reported that the vast majority of children attended an education/care programme with fewer than 7 % of 4–5-year-olds not attending any programme. Most children attended some sort of preschool programme in spite of an apparent decline between 2005 and 2009 (92 % of the older cohort and 81 % of the younger cohort children). In addition children from the older cohort were less likely to attend a preschool programme in a school or in a child care centre but more likely to attend a preschool programme outside of a school, and much more likely to attend a child care programme without also attending a preschool programme. It was also evident that children from more disadvantaged families were more likely not to attend any school or care centre. The first evaluation of the National Partnerships on Early Childhood Education pointed to the limitation of infrastructure on expanding the number of hours of preschool education and sustaining an adequate supply of appropriately qualified early childhood teachers (Urbis 2011).

3.2 *National Curricula*

Although authority for curricula rests with state and territory governments, a key recent reform has been the development of national curricula that set broad content standards to be interpreted and implemented by jurisdictions. An *Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority* (ACARA) was established in late 2008 as a statutory authority that would bring together the functions of national curriculum, assessment and data management, analysis and reporting. This is intended to bring about national reforms in curriculum covering the full span of schooling and a full range of learning areas: English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities and Social Science, the Arts, Languages, Health and Physical Education, and Technologies.

The process has involved developing a statement of the shape of the area, writing materials, and implementation and evaluation. It began with an overall paper entitled *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum* which established broad parameters

(ACARA 2012b). Then curricula frameworks (shape papers) in English, mathematics, science, and history were published. Curriculum materials in these areas were drafted and approved in 2010 subject to validation in 2011. The next phase of the process involves the learning areas of geography, languages, and the arts. Shape papers have been published and writing has commenced. The third phase will include the development of curriculum for health and physical education, technologies (including ICT as well as design and technology), civics and citizenship, business and economics.

In addition to specific learning areas, the national curricula are intended to include general capabilities: knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that link curriculum content in each learning area with cross-curriculum priorities (literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology capability, critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability, ethical understanding and intercultural understanding).

The process of developing a national curriculum appears to have been valuable in focussing on a reappraisal of curricula that had grown through a series of processes of accretion and excision. The shape papers thus far have provided overviews of where those processes have led and how well they match the modern context. However, much remains to be done in terms of developing the curricula in the remaining areas and articulating the curricula in learning areas with the cross-curricular capabilities. The process of implementation is also a work in progress in that the national curricula need to be articulated in the frameworks of jurisdictional authorities and supported in the way they are used by teachers in schools.

3.3 Assessment and Accountability

The first national assessments of student achievement in Australia were sample-based minimum competency assessments of literacy and numeracy among 10-year-olds and 14-year-olds conducted in 1975 (Keeves and Bourke 1976) and 1980 (Bourke et al. 1981). These generated much public debate at the time, and debates about large-scale assessments have continued since then, often focussed on the scope of the assessments and the potential for narrowing the implemented curriculum. Following the introduction of the Basic Skills Tests in New South Wales in 1989 (Masters et al. 1990), most Australian jurisdictions introduced assessment and monitoring programmes focussed initially on literacy and numeracy in selected primary school grades. The programmes gradually extended to secondary school grades and encompassed other learning areas. Those jurisdictions that had initially used sample-based assessments moved to population testing by the end of the 1990s. These assessment programmes made use of modern measurement techniques (item response theory) and approaches to scaling.

In 2000, the ministers of education endorsed a set of national key performance measures as a set of measures that would provide nationally comparable data on aspects of performance against the national *Goals of Schooling* that had been

adopted in 1999. These were specified in the *Measurement Framework for National Key Performance Measures* which was implemented from 2003 onwards to extend to 2011 (MCEETYA 2006). A *National Assessment Program* (NAP) was part of that framework and included achievement data concerned with areas identified in the 1999 statement of national goals: literacy, numeracy, science, information and communication technology as well as civics and citizenship. It encompassed the annual full-cohort tests in literacy and numeracy tests (initially the state and territory tests that were “equated” at minimum competence level), 3 yearly sample assessments in science literacy (2003, 2006, 2009), civics and citizenship (2004, 2007, 2010), and information and communication technology (ICT) literacy (2005, 2008, 2011) and the Australian data from international assessments (PISA for 15-year-olds every 3 years, TIMSS for Grade 4 and 8 every 4 years and from 2010 PIRLS in Grade 4).

From 2008 onwards the NAP included a *National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy* (NAPLAN) as an annual assessment for the full cohort of students in Grades 3, 5, 7 and 9 in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions (spelling, punctuation and grammar) and numeracy. These national tests replaced the former State- and Territory-based literacy and numeracy tests. In 2008 the scales for the assessments in NAPLAN were established. In subsequent cycles, tests were equated to the original NAPLAN scales so that the results could be compared with those for previous and subsequent years. Test equating, using common-person equating techniques, enables the results from NAPLAN tests in different years to be reported on the same scale. The scales are also equated over grades using common-item methods so that any given score denotes the same achievement level regardless of the grade. This means that some items are common between the adjacent levels that are tested (e.g. the Grade 5 assessment contains some items that also appear on the Grade 3 assessment and some that also appear on the Grade 7 assessment). One of the critiques of NAPLAN tests is that the coverage of the areas is too limited because they have too few items and they do not use a rotated test design. Participation in NAPLAN is high, with participation rates around 96 % in Grades 3, 5 and 7, and 92–93 % in Grade 9.

NAPLAN produces a detailed national report each year which provides analyses of results including breakdowns by jurisdiction and student background characteristic such as sex, language background, Indigenous status, geographic location and parental education and occupation. These data are also reported as time series. Individual reports are provided to all students who participate in NAPLAN and reports are provided to schools and jurisdictions. NAPLAN data are used by jurisdictions for planning, decisions about resource allocation and for the implementation of specific initiatives.

NAPLAN results for individual schools are also reported on a public website (*My School*—<http://www.myschool.edu.au>). *My School* provides information about the average achievement of students in NAPLAN, the distribution of performance across performance bands, and indications of progress over time. The website also reports values on the *Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage* (ICSEA) which is based on data about parental occupation and education and other characteristics of the school population that are combined in a way

that generates the greatest correlation with school average performance on NAPLAN. This is used to identify schools serving students from statistically similar backgrounds and to compare the results of schools that have similar scores on the index. In addition *My School* contains financial data on a comparable basis across schools and a profile of the school.

The public reporting of achievement data on My School has been, and continues to be, controversial. It is argued that this process of reporting places unreasonable pressure on school principals and teaching staff and does not adequately take account of contextual differences, and that it results in a narrowing of the implemented curriculum because of pressure to teach to the test. In addition it is argued that the results for small schools are not sufficiently reliable and that differences may be the result of year-to-year fluctuations in the school population. Against this it is argued that these data provide information to schools that helps them judge their performance, to parents that helps them choose schools and to education systems to guide the nature and focus of interventions.

3.4 Attracting and Retaining Teachers

One of the important areas of current activity in education concerns the implementation of a range of reforms that aim to attract, train, place, develop and retain quality teachers and leaders. There has been concern that more students are graduating from teacher education programmes in universities than are required by school systems, that the areas of expertise among those graduates do not match the areas of expertise required in schools, and that there has been a decline in the levels of achievement of those entering teacher education programmes (New South Wales Government 2012). Education Ministers have agreed to the creation of new professional standards, a framework to guide professional learning for teachers and school leaders, and national consistency in the registration of teachers. Other strategies focus on changed pay structures to reward quality teaching, improved support for teachers in disadvantaged and hard-to-staff schools and national accreditation of pre-service teacher education programmes (ACARA 2012a).

Reforms concerned with teaching and teachers are the focus of a 5-year *National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality* that commenced in 2009. Its focus is on attracting better entrants to teaching, including mid-career entrants; more effective training for teachers, principals and other school leaders; placing teachers and principals in ways that minimise skill shortages and enhance retention; developing the skills and knowledge of teachers and school leaders throughout their careers; and rewarding and retaining principals, teachers and school leaders who have demonstrated high levels of competence and improving teacher workforce data (COAG 2009). This is an area in which there is a variety of existing provisions that operate through teacher registration authorities in many jurisdictions.

One of the key reforms has been the development and implementation of a national professional teacher standards framework and an accreditation process for

accomplished and leading teachers (AITSL 2012a). The standards are to provide a nationally consistent basis for recognising quality teaching by making explicit what teachers should be able to do and what is expected of effective teachers across their career. The standards are organised into four career stages (graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead) across three domains (professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement). The stages reflect the continuum of a teacher's developing professional expertise from undergraduate preparation through to being an exemplary classroom practitioner and a leader in the profession.

There is a number of important issues in the development and implementation of national professional teacher standards (Ingvarson 2002). One issue concerns the extent to which content standards need to be specifically concerned with particular areas of teaching (each with its own content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge) and the extent to which more general content standards covering broader areas of teaching are possible. A second issue concerns the ways in which the standards become manifest in certification as discussed in the document *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers: Principles and Processes* (AITSL 2012b). A third issue is the extent to which the development of standards is shaped by the teaching profession and the extent to which it is determined by employing authorities.

In addition to the development of national professional teaching standards, there has been a range of other important activities initiated by individual jurisdictions including the establishment of Centres of Excellence, recognition of Highly Accomplished Teachers, expanding non-traditional pathways into teaching (such as *Teach for Australia* for high-achieving graduates and *Teach Next* for experienced professionals from other fields), enhancing the quality of professional experience programmes in initial teacher education courses and trialling processes for rewarding excellence with pay.

There is a key role in these reforms for the *Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership* which began in 2010. It has responsibility for the development of national professional standards for teachers and school leadership, implementing a system of national accreditation of teachers based on those standards, supporting initiatives in professional development and professional learning for teachers and school leaders, and supporting a national approach to the accreditation of pre-service teacher education courses (AITSL 2011). In addition it engages in research, administers annual awards for teachers and leaders and works with other stakeholders in the field.

3.5 Improving Youth Attainment and Transitions

Improving the educational attainment of young Australians has been a focus of educational reform for some time. A high-level committee had reported a review of post-compulsory schooling to the Australian Education Council in 1991 including

recommended targets (Finn 1991). Over subsequent years there have been a number of initiatives intended to lift levels of educational attainment predicated on the belief that the completion of senior secondary schooling leads to better labour market outcomes. Research based on longitudinal data supports that belief (Ryan 2011). These initiatives have often included vocational education and training (VET) studies as part of general senior secondary school so that by 2006 up to 90 % of secondary schools offered some VET subjects (Lamb and Vickers 2006). Also, some education systems devised whole courses with an applied or vocational focus. In addition there has been a parallel emphasis on providing vocational education in non-school institutions although the evidence for the success of these for labour market outcomes is more mixed (Lim and Karmel 2011).

More recently there has been a renewed emphasis on support for the senior years of schooling and the provision of pathways that facilitate transitions between further study, training, and employment. Under the terms of the *National Partnership for Youth Attainment and Transitions*, the COAG has established a target to increase to 90 % the percentage of 20–24-year-olds who have attained Year 12 or an Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Certificate II or above by 2015 (and by 2020 that 90 % of 20–24-year-olds will have achieved Year 12 or equivalent or an AQF Certificate III or above). Support for this is through requirements for participation in education, training or work until age 17, which extends the period of compulsory education and effectively raises the minimum educational leaving age. The provision also creates an entitlement to an education or training place for 15–24-year-olds, which focuses on attaining Year 12 or equivalent qualifications and includes participation requirements as part of eligibility for income support. Some initiatives that have been developed include trade training centres in schools, school business community partnerships and programmes directed to re-engaging people who had left school.

3.6 School Improvement

A more recent reform focuses on school improvement by incorporating different types of indicator. It includes a national school improvement tool that looks at indicators of school practice as well as measures of student outcomes (Masters 2012). The tool was developed first in Queensland where there was a focus on improving schools that were not achieving satisfactory outcomes in literacy and numeracy. It was then applied in other jurisdictions before being adopted nationally and included in the *National Plan for School Improvement*. It has been made available to all Australian schools for use in their school improvement planning since 2013. The tool involves assessments of the quality of practice (low, medium, high, and outstanding) on eight aspects of school practice: an explicit improvement agenda, analysis and discussion of data, a culture that promotes learning, targeted use of school resources, an expert teaching team, systematic curriculum delivery, differentiated classroom learning, and effective teaching practices. The tool used in Queensland

also included reference to school-community partnerships, but the version adopted nationally does not. The tool does not describe everything that effective schools do, but focuses on those practices that are most directly related to school-wide improvement; nor does it exclude direct measures of student outcomes, and it sees those as part of the process of monitoring school improvement. The experience of its application in Queensland indicated that audited ratings of these aspects of school practice could be reliably measured and applied to monitor improvements (Masters 2012). The challenge is to implement the tool on a large-scale national basis in which the results are linked to funding rewards.

4 Potential Future Reform Trends: School Finance

The approach to school funding in Australia reflects the complexities of a federal system in which finance derives from both federal and state sources. Those resources support both government and non-government schools (making up 72 % of the income of Catholic schools and 40 % of the income of other non-government schools), and the regulatory frameworks, including those covering curriculum, operate under state authority (Keating 2011). These complexities have been compounded by the shift of enrolments from government to non-government schools (Watson and Ryan 2009) with the result that school funding arrangements have become obscure (Dowling 2007).

A review of school financing has recommended substantial changes to the bases for financing schools (Gonski 2011). The review noted the complexity of current funding arrangements and lack of coordination between federal, state and territory governments as well as lack of coordination of infrastructure funding. It recommended substantial increases in school funding with proportionately greater increases to government schools on the basis of the characteristics of their students. It proposed a new schooling resource standard as a basis for funding and an independent National School Resourcing Body to monitor that standard. In addition it recommended planning authorities be established to coordinate new school building and expansions. The schooling resource standard would establish per student amounts (to be indexed and reviewed every 4 years) for each primary and secondary school student, with loadings for the additional costs associated with various educational needs. Non-government schools would be funded at a level that took account of the expected level of income from private sources (with a minimum public contribution of 20–25 % of the standard).

Reforms to school finance following this review have yet to be determined, and the detail of its operation is yet to be spelled out. However, it is clear that the question of school finance has been made a central part of the debate about educational reform for the immediate future. Its recommendations are being considered at a time when the federal governance of education in Australia has become less loosely coupled. The reforms over recent times have been part of an emerging national perspective.

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Turkey: Translating New Policy Paradigms to Results

Batuhan Aydagül

Abstract The extension of compulsory education to 8 years in 1997 had ignited long overdue education reforms in Turkey. Reforms have gained even more momentum during the last decade thanks to political and financial stability. Education was restructured, new infrastructure was built, more funding was allocated thanks to economic growth and compulsory education was extended to 12 years. While progress has been achieved in increasing access and improving learning outcomes, serious challenges exist, especially for further improving quality and ensuring equity.

Keywords Access to education • Compulsory education • Education policy • Education financing • Educational governance • Educational quality • Turkey

Education seldom became a *de facto* policy priority for governments in Turkey during the 1970s and 1980s. An analysis of Turkish education between 1970 and 1997 highlighted an unfavorable political and economic context for education reform during those times (Batuhan 2002). Political and financial instability had shadowed social development throughout the country. The breakthrough has not been made until 1997 when the extension of compulsory education to 8 years

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B. Aydagül (✉)
Education Reform Initiative, Istanbul, Turkey
e-mail: baydagul@sabanciuniv.edu

came as a major driver for focusing on basic education. The Basic Education Reform as a national mobilization campaign ignited long overdue education reforms in Turkey.

In 2003, Justice and Development Party (AK Party) won the general elections and became the majority party within the parliament. The political stability of a majority government together with the economic stability that post-2001 economic crisis macro interventions secured provided positive political economy of reform in Turkey and an opportunity to build on the 1997 Basic Education Reform.

As this article will outline in the following sections, there have been significant policy changes and new initiatives in almost every sphere of education sector in Turkey. While progress has been achieved in increasing access and improving learning outcomes, serious challenges exist, especially for improving quality and equity.

This paper primarily draws from the analytical policy work of the Education Reform Initiative (ERI), a nongovernmental think-and-do-tank in Turkey. ERI's flagship publication for monitoring Turkish education is *Education Monitoring Report*, published annually since 2008. While the first report covered the period between 1997 and 2007, the subsequent ones offer analysis of the previous years. Additional publications by ERI, such as research reports or policy notes, are also used in writing this article.

1 Reformation of Education Management System

Increasing the effectiveness of public management and finance in Turkey has been a priority for the AK Party from the beginning. An immediate step towards this direction was the Public Financial Administration and Control Law, enacted in 2003. This law required all public agencies to adapt a strategic approach to public management and finance, to prepare strategic plans by 2010, and to report their performance to public at the end of every year. To facilitate the implementation, a strategy development unit was established within the ministries. This law provided the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) with critical tools, such as strategic plans and performance-based budgeting that could be used in policy formulations, implementation, and monitoring processes.

1.1 Restructuring Ministry of National Education

Altogether, there have been many innovations as far as education governance is concerned in Turkey. These new policy tools provided an opportunity to operationalize a strategic and systematic approach to addressing policy challenges. A restructuring of the ministry was needed as both the government and nongovernmental actors had been criticizing the existing structure as too big and idle for a long time.

The work to restructure the ministry began as early as in 2003. The Project for Strengthening the Capacity of the Ministry of National Education, funded by the European Union (EU), came in later and was completed in 2010 with a green paper and recommendations on how the ministry should be restructured. Finally, in September 2011, the government adopted an executive order,¹ introducing a new organizational structure for MoNE. Accordingly, central bureaucratic organization was streamlined to cut down hierarchy within the ministry and to achieve more effective coordination among general directorates. New career-track positions were established to train a new generation of policy experts.

According to the rhetoric behind the reorganization, this policy drive would also be a step towards gradual decentralization of education governance in Turkey. Within the new order, the policy-making role and capacity of the central bureaucracy would be increased while running day-to-day operations of schools would be gradually delegated to provincial directorates. All decision-makers, including provincial education directors, would be evaluated based on their performances. However, in practice, no visible step is taken towards translating this rhetoric to practice on the ground.

In addition to a new law aiming at improving overall public administration, various steps were taken to establish an effective education management information system and a new bureaucratic organization. For instance, MoNE undertook many initiatives to improve its education management information systems. The most significant of these initiatives has been what is called the “e-school.” This is a comprehensive administrative database which keeps students’ personal and academic information and facilitates workflows for certain school-based procedures, such as registering and monitoring attendance or selection of elective courses.

The transition to a new organizational structure and redistribution of tasks among various ministry unit are proving to be challenging processes. These challenges could be expected during such radical changes within the education system. A close monitoring and mentoring of change by senior policy-makers and continuous investment on human resources are needed.

1.2 Reorganization of Education Structure in Turkey

The most radical change in Turkish education since the expansion of compulsory education in 1997 happened in April 2012. Back in 1997, primary (5 years) and junior secondary (3 years) schools were merged to create 8-year-long compulsory primary schools. With the recent change, however, the old structure was introduced with a change in durations: Both primary and junior secondary schools are now 4-year long. Also, compulsory education was expanded to 12 years.

The government formulated this new law, which had been highly contested by many stakeholders during the legislation process, on the basis that it was not

¹Executive Order No. 652, adopted on September 2011.

BEFORE "4+4+4"					Stage	Grade	AFTER "4+4+4"					Stage	Grade
17						12	16,5						12
16	General high school	Anatolian high schools (academically selective)	Vocational high schools	Imam-hatip high schools (religious)	Secondary education	11	15,5	General high school	Anatolian high schools (academically selective)	Vocational high schools	Imam-hatip high schools (religious)	Secondary education	11
15						10	14,5						10
14						9	13,5						9
13						8	12,5						8
12	Primary education schools					7	11,5	Middle schools (different program types may apply)			Imam-hatip middle schools	Primary education	7
11						6	10,5						6
10						5	9,5	5					
9						4	8,5	4					
8						3	7,5	3					
7						2	6,5	2					
6						1	5,5	1					
5						Pre-school education					5		Pre-school education
4	4	4											
3	3	3											

Fig. 1 Structure of Turkish education system—old and new

appropriate for students in such a wide range group (6–14) to use the same physical facilities at the same time. Also, the government further argued that this new system would be more flexible and responsive to diverse needs and requests of families and children. In that respect, the government reestablished the *imam-hatip* schools, institutions that provide religious courses in addition to the core curriculum, and introduced a variety of elective courses at the newly formed junior secondary level (Fig. 1).

Together with the modifications to the age of starting primary school, this comprehensive set of changes obliged the ministry to undertake a rapid revision of instruction, especially at primary and junior secondary levels.

1.3 Changing Education Finance Patterns

In terms of education finance, Turkey has been facing twin challenges: The public expenditure on education services is lower than the average of developed countries, whereas the private expenditure is higher. This leads to inefficiencies and inequalities in education spending of the country in general, as pointed out by international organizations several times.

In parallel with the increasing student numbers and accompanying teacher numbers in public sector of education (which comprises 97 % of the education system in terms of student numbers), public education spending increased under the rule of the AKP government. According to recent calculations, which were facilitated by the operation of above-mentioned Public Financial Administration and Control Law, public education spending rose from \$21bn (TL34bn) in 2006 to \$31bn (TL51bn, estimated) in 2011 price level.

Yet, the increase of education expenditure as a percentage of GDP is much more modest, and the government does not plan to increase this indicator in the upcoming years. Compared to the OECD average (5.7 %) and the suggestion of the UNESCO

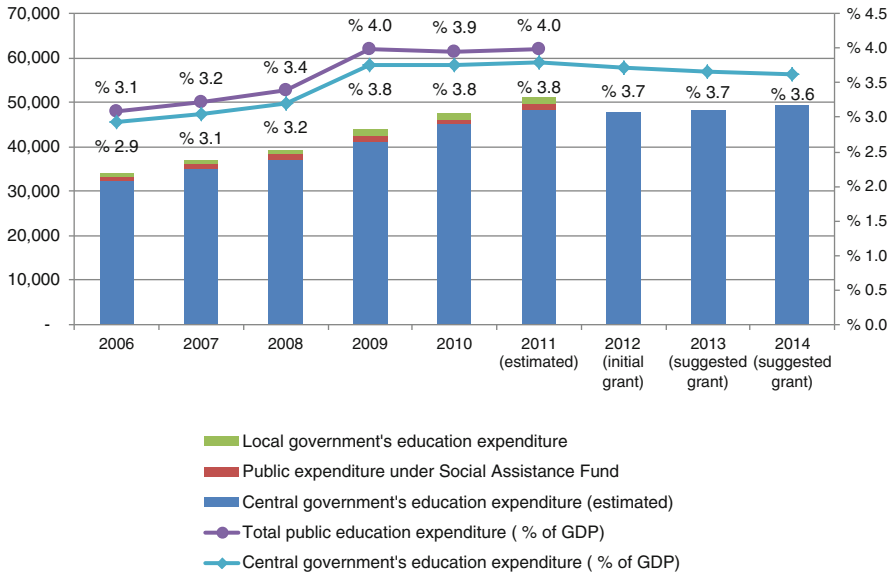


Fig. 2 Public education spending in Turkey (in million TL, 2011 price level) (Source: Education Reform Initiative 2012a)

to developing countries (6 %), Turkey’s public education spending is 4 % of GDP, with more room to develop to achieve providing quality education for all (Fig. 2).

While discussing the education finance, it should be noted that Turkey has a very young population, which is a comparative advantage of the country especially regarding its candidacy status for the EU. Yet, this advantage can only be utilized if the young population is provided with quality education. Taking this fact into consideration and compared to other developing and newly industrialized economies such as Korea, Turkey’s public education spending needs improvement despite the progress achieved under the AK Party rule (Fig. 3).

2 Expanding Access to Education

2.1 Expanding Early Childhood Education

A significant progress in the last decade has been the expansion of early childhood education in Turkey. Following newly emerging scientific evidence on and increasing global visibility of early childhood education and strong civil society advocacy² in

² Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV) in Turkey had conducted a major public campaign titled “7 is too late” to promote early childhood education.

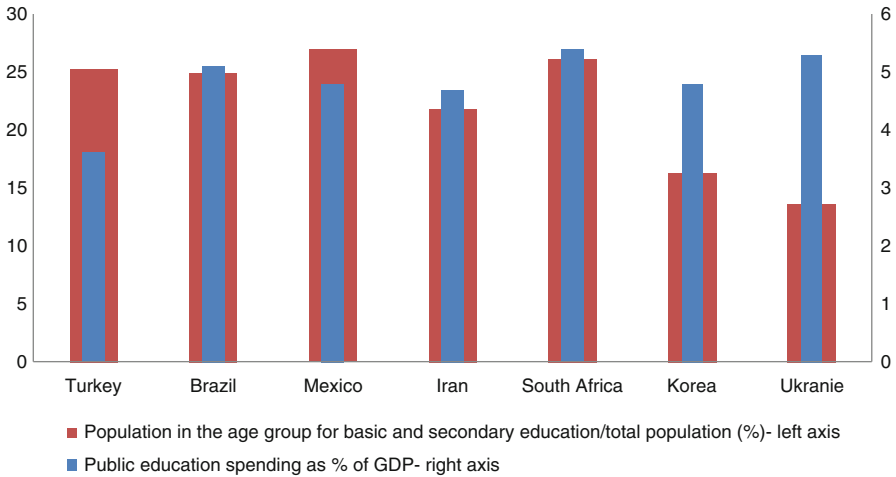


Fig. 3 Demographics and education spending data on selected countries (Source: Education Reform Initiative 2011a)

Turkey, MoNE acknowledged the benefits of investing in early childhood for both individuals and society and initiated a major policy drive to increase access. An incremental plan was introduced to target universal coverage for 60–72 months old age group. According to this plan, universal coverage would be targeted in 32 provinces in 2009–2010, 57 provinces in 2010–2011, and 71 provinces in 2011–2012. The remaining ten provinces were supposed to be included in 2012–2013, thereby reaching universal coverage throughout the country. As a result of this national drive, net enrollment rate for the 60–72 months age group went up to 65.7 % in 2011–2012. On the other hand, the enrollment rate for the 3–5 years age group (36–72 months) jumped to 31 % from a dramatically low 5.4 % 10 years ago. Despite this progress, low enrollment rates for 3- and 4-year-olds also demand a rapid and ambitious action from the ministry (Fig. 4).

This expansion has been criticized on the basis that it did not prioritize an equitable expansion enough. The ministry initiated the expansion from less populated provinces with already high preschool coverage. The six most disadvantaged provinces, including the country's most populated province, Istanbul with 650,000 children in 3–5 age cohorts, are yet to be included in the expansion program.³ Moreover, preschool is not free in Turkey as it is not included within the compulsory education, thus posing a serious risk of exclusion for children who live in poverty and who could benefit most from early intervention. The gravity of this issue can be better understood through research evidence showing that access to early childhood education is associated with household income level in Turkey (World Bank 2010).

³ Other provinces are Ağrı, Şırnak, Gaziantep, Mardin, and Batman.

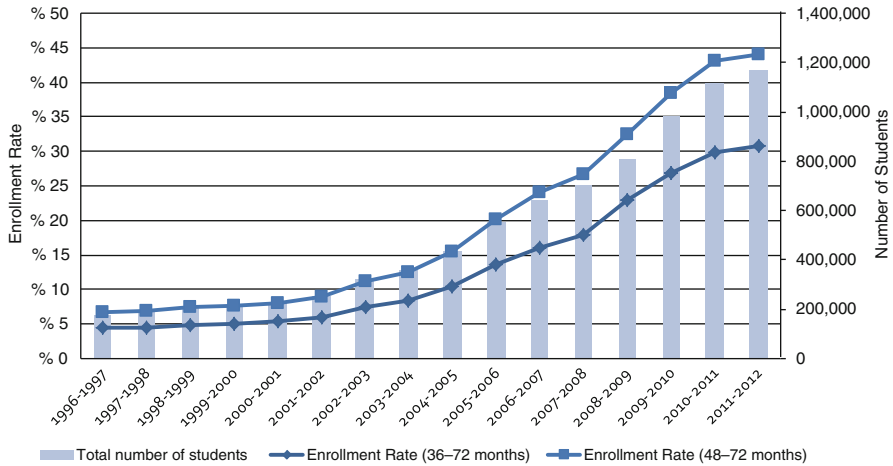


Fig. 4 The expansion of early childhood education in Turkey (Source: Education Reform Initiative 2012a)

There are other challenges before expanding early childhood education coverage further. Enrollment rates show that the increase almost halted during 2011–2012. While MoNE prioritized recruitment of preschool teachers, physical capacity needs still remain. The merger of Directorate General (DG) of Preschool Education with DG of Primary Education to form DG of Basic Education during the reorganization within the ministry could have also limited the bureaucratic attention on the expansion. Finally, early childhood education provision is still predominantly center-based with limited outreach of community-based models. The ministry has been working on this latter challenge through the “Strengthening Preschool Education Project,” a project funded by the European Union and implemented in collaboration with UNICEF Turkey. The project aims to develop models for community-based early childhood education to promote a more holistic expansion.

2.2 Expanding Basic Education

Turkey expanded the compulsory education to 8 years in 1997 together with a national campaign to ensure access to all children in basic education. After coming to power in 2003, AK Party sustained and built on the previous government’s efforts (i.e., promoting civil society support to education, investing in boarding schools and student transportation in rural areas) to increase access.

The “All Girls to School!” campaign, a 5-year-long national campaign to increase girls’ enrollment in basic education (grades 1–8) planned and executed in

collaboration with UNICEF Turkey, was launched in 2003. This was a significant campaign which officially and openly acknowledged Turkey's daunting problems concerning girls' education, and developed and implemented an action plan throughout the country. This campaign also mobilized civil society actors to contribute to girls' education, such as "Father Send me to School" campaign, undertaken by a national newspaper and a big grassroots NGO.

Following the expansion and restructuring of compulsory education in 2012, MoNE also changed its policies concerning age requirements for primary school. The baseline for compulsory education was dropped to 66 months from 69; however, children who were 60 months old by September would also be eligible to start school if their parents thought they were ready. This change was contested by some stakeholders on the basis that three quarters of children aged 60–68 months had no prior early childhood education experience and that their direct transition to primary school could create learning and development disadvantages for them in the future.

The conditional cash transfer program, initiated by the government in collaboration with the World Bank to alleviate the economic effects of the 2001 economic crisis on households in Turkey, proved to be another widely used and effective social policy in increasing enrollment in basic education. As the World Bank financing ended, the government reformulated the program, which is renamed as "conditional education assistance," and continues to implement it through the Ministry of Family and Social Policies.⁴

These policy efforts and investments contributed to increasing enrollments, especially in basic education. However, most stakeholders focused to a large extent on *ensuring enrollment* in school. A research paper published in 2007 aimed at drawing public attention to emerging challenges in education: school attendance and dropouts (Gökşen et al. 2006). The campaigns were successful in making children, especially girls, start school, but there was a considerable risk of dropout awaiting them later on.

MoNE began focusing on attendance and dropouts around 2008 and undertook various policy initiatives in collaboration with UNICEF Turkey to this end. New research on understanding dropouts was commissioned, and based on its findings, a new policy program called "Step-by-Step Monitoring of Attendance" (ADEY) was developed. ADEY was expected to help school leaders and teachers to prevent non-attendance and dropouts by identifying and closely monitoring pupils at risk of dropouts.

Based on the policy performance throughout the last decade, it can be noted that the General Directorate of Basic Education pioneered the efforts to transition to an evidence-based policy-making culture within MoNE. Policy efforts to increase enrollment, especially at the 8-year basic education level, were carefully developed based on outcomes and insights of previous policies or programs and on up-to-date needs analyses. As a result of subsequent and complementary policy efforts, net enrollment rate today has reached 98.67 %, and gender parity ratio is 0.95.

⁴The Ministry of Family and Social Policies is a new ministry, established in 2010 by the AK Party government.

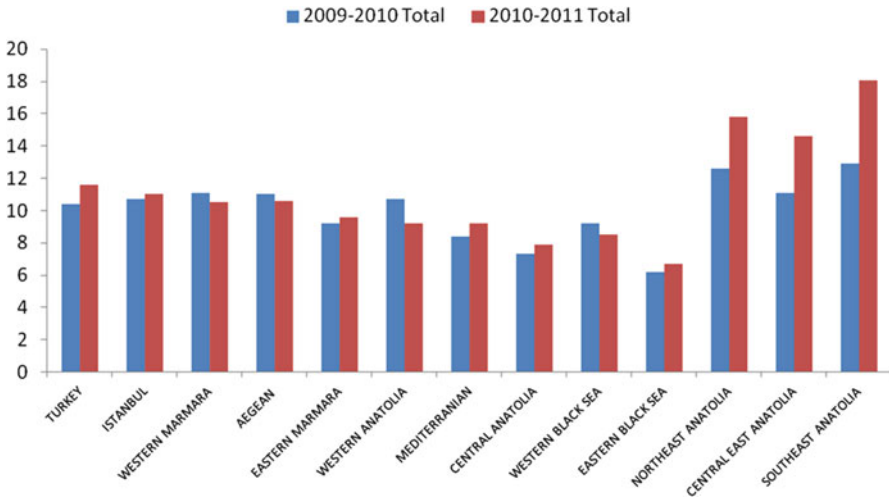


Fig. 5 Nonattendance to basic education across regions (%) (Source: Education Reform Initiative 2012a)

Turkey needs to consolidate its policy efforts to ensure that everyone completes basic education. At the moment, attendance constitutes a challenge, especially after the 5th grade and in the Eastern parts of Turkey. There is both quantitative⁵ and qualitative evidence (Gökşen et al. 2006) which could inform new policies. Findings point to two major factors that need to be considered: poverty and the quality of education. Empirical analysis from e-school data showed that the latest economic crisis in 2008 almost doubled the nonattendance of children living in poverty. Here, the “conditional education assistance” is found to be significantly effective in increasing attendance of these children, especially in the eastern provinces (Fig. 5).

2.3 Expanding Secondary Education

Turkey’s success in approaching almost universal enrollment in basic education and the following increase in the number of graduates drove enrollment rates in secondary education up. As a result, the past decade has witnessed substantial improvements in enrollment rates. The net enrollment rate has increased from 48.11 % in 2001 (53.01 % for boys and 42.97 % for girls) to 67.37 % in 2011 (68.53 % for boys and 66.14 % for girls). However, despite this impressive gains, enrollment rates still remain significantly behind most OECD countries. Also, regional disparities are significantly deep. The net secondary enrollment rate in some western provinces is around 90 %, whereas

⁵“Basic Determinants of Attendance and Non-Attendance in Primary Education in Turkey,” research carried out under the partnership of ERI with UNICEF and the Ministry of National Education (research report forthcoming).

it drops to around 30 % in some eastern provinces. School absenteeism and dropouts are among other persistent and critical issues Turkey needs to overcome. The most recent data obtained from MoNE indicates that 8.2 % of students studying at public and formal institutions of secondary education dropped out of their schools for reasons other than death or leaving the country in the 2009–2010 academic year. Likewise, in the same academic year, 44 out of every 100 public general secondary education students and 49 out of every 100 public vocational technical secondary education students were absent from school for 20 or more days.

These absenteeism and dropout figures point to a serious internal efficiency problem within the secondary education, probably linked to the quality and relevance of education in high school. Furthermore, disparities among schools are also significant where vocational and nonselective general high schools face more challenges. For example, dropout rates from vocational high schools are as high as 9.4 %.

The recent law expanding the compulsory education to 12 years in Turkey is the boldest development in secondary education since duration of high schools were extended to 4 years from three in 2005–2006. Back then, this change was presented as a preparation for adopting 12-year-long compulsory education in Turkey. Seven years later, as previously mentioned in Turkey's Development Plans, the government completed the legal work for 12 years compulsory education. As of 2011–2012, students will only receive a diploma when they complete secondary school.

The law foresees an incremental implementation of compulsory education, beginning with 9th graders in 2012–2013. As already 80 % of students graduating from basic education transitioned to secondary last year, it was expected that the increase in enrollments will not cause serious teacher and physical space needs this year. However, one third of secondary school cohort is out of school so a considerable investment in upgrading human resources and physical capacity will be needed to achieve universal coverage in the 4 years. With that, MoNE's challenge will be keeping children in school given the high rates of absenteeism and dropouts. In 2009–2010, 75 % of students who dropped out of high school during the 9th grade. This is an extremely serious problem in secondary education, one that could jeopardize the success of the compulsory education.

2.4 Education for Special Need Students and Mainstreaming Policies

Turkey has also taken serious policy initiatives to improve the implementation of mainstreaming policies for children with special needs. Inclusive education is among MoNE's priority areas, and it has become increasingly widespread in implementation. In the last decade, the number of primary school students benefiting from inclusive education has nearly quintupled. At the secondary level, the growth has not been as impressive; nevertheless, the number of mainstreamed students has increased steadily. Even with this increase, enrollment figures indicate that many students with special needs fail to transition to secondary schools.

Furthermore, while Turkey's gender parity ratio is 0.95 in primary and 0.88 in secondary education, in inclusive education, the ratio remains at 0.64 and 0.61, respectively, indicating that female students with special needs are experiencing a deeper and multi-layered inequality in the education system. While inclusive education practices reach a broader population each year, the quality of services offered is suffering. In 2011, MoNE has launched the "Strengthening Special Education Project," also funded by the European Union, to address the current problems of special education overall and inclusive education in particular. The project will continue through 2013, working towards raising awareness, better equipping teachers for special education and devising a "School without Barriers Model" to be implemented in schools across Turkey. MoNE has embraced and prioritized mainstreaming policies, but there is still progress to be made regarding the quality of special education services, improving the inclusion of girls with special needs and inclusive education in secondary schools.

3 Enhancing Education Quality

3.1 Curriculum Reform

A major reform was launched in 2003 to revise the national curriculum for basic and secondary education. Within the next 5 years, a new curriculum based on the constructive pedagogy was developed, piloted, and implemented throughout the pre-university education in Turkey. An independent review of the new curriculum for grades 1–5 revealed that "the new programs represent[ed] a great step in supporting the multi-faceted development of students and laying the foundation for the transformation from 'passive citizens' to 'active citizens' (Education Reform Initiative 2005)." Critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, problem solving, and respecting the individual and social values were among the skills that the new curriculum targeted.

More recently, during the restructuring of basic education in 2012, the ministry also decided to expand teaching hours at junior secondary levels to accommodate the newly introduced elective courses without comprising core courses. A review of global practices on teaching hours by the Board of Education had showed that Turkey lagged almost 1 year behind in total teaching hours during basic education in courses such as mathematics and science.

Between the adoption of the new law in April 2012 and the schools' opening in September 2012, MoNE completed a series of changes in education. The following is a summary of these changes in education concerning content:

- Grade 1:
 - An hour of Turkish, free activities, visual arts, and music classes were removed from the timetable.
 - An additional hour of math was added to timetable.

Table 1 New elective courses for junior secondary schools (5th–8th grades)

		5th grade	6th grade	7th grade	8th grade
Religion, ethics, and values	Quran	2	2	2	2
	The life of the Prophet Muhammad	2	2	2	2
	Basic religious knowledge	2	2	2	2
Language and expression	Reading skills	2	2		
	Writing skills	2	2	2	2
	Living languages and dialects	2	2	2	2
	Communication and presentation skills			2	2
Foreign language	Foreign languages (that are approved by the cabinet)	2	2	2	2
Science and mathematics	Science applications	2	2	2	2
	Math applications	2	2	2	2
	Environment and science			2	2
	Information technology and software	2	2	2	2
Arts and sports	Visual arts (painting, traditional arts, fine arts, etc.)	2/(4)	2/(4)	2/(4)	2/(4)
	Music	2/(4)	2/(4)	2/(4)	2/(4)
	Sports and physical activities	2/(4)	2/(4)	2/(4)	2/(4)
	Theater	2	2		
	Intelligence games	2	2	2	2
Social sciences	Folk culture		2	2	
	Media literacy			2	2
	Law and justice		2	2	
	Reasoning training			2	2
Total number of courses to be selected		8	8	8	8

Source: MoNE, Board of Education

- Physical education class was transformed to “Play and Physical Activities,” and its course load was increased to 5 h from 2.
- A 12-week introductory program for children without prior early childhood education experience was introduced to facilitate these children’s transition to primary school.
- Grade 5–8 (junior secondary):
 - The weekly timetable was extended to 36 in 5th and 6th grades and 37 in 7th and 8th grades from 30 h in all grades.
 - An hour of Traffic Safety and 4 h of Free Activities were removed from the timetable.
 - An additional hour of math and science were added to timetable.
 - Eight hours of electives were added to timetable (Table 1).

It needs to be noted that in 2012, the government introduced elective and confessional religion courses in upper primary and secondary schools. As of the

2012–2013 school year, elective courses include “The Koran,” “The Life of Prophet Mohammad,” and “Basics of Religion.” It is said that the third course may include Christianity, Judaism, and Alevism upon demand. However, it is not clear as to how this will be implemented in schools.

These elective and confessional religious courses are offered on top of the Religious Culture and Moral Education (RCME) course, which has been compulsory for grades 4–12 since 1982. The content of this course has been contested by civil rights activists for a long time and was subject to a series of changes as a result of national demands for a thorough revision of its philosophy and implementation. Evaluations of the most recent curriculum acknowledged some progress and recommended further improvement to fully become a non-confessional course.⁶

These comprehensive changes in the curriculum went into effect in September 2012. It will take some time to evaluate their impact on education, particularly on children’s learning outcomes. However, based on early monitoring activities (Education Reform Initiative 2012b), it is possible to suggest that the ministry did not have adequate time to fully prepare for a change of this scope at various levels of education system. The new timetables, the curriculum, and textbooks for the early transition program and the curriculum for elective courses were published between August and September; the Board of Education were still introducing curriculum for elective courses after the opening of schools. This tight schedule also left little opportunity for ensuring teachers to be fully prepared for the new school year. Trainings were often limited to web-based lectures without face-to-face or web-based interactions.

3.2 *Teacher Development*

While the new curriculum was promising, its success depended on the implementation of new changes. The independent review suggested that teachers, principals, as well as families were critical success factors to make this paradigm change effective. The pedagogy of teaching was undergoing a radical transformation, requiring teacher development to be a national policy priority.

Recognizing the need for augmenting teacher effectiveness, MoNE continued to provide in-service training to teachers through existing procedures and regulations. However, there were serious issues concerning MoNE’s teacher development practices, some of which were highlighted by findings from the TALIS⁷ research. TALIS data showed that teachers in Turkey received less training than their counterparts in other TALIS countries and that in fact they were less interested in receiving any.

⁶Mine Yıldırım is a researcher in human rights law with particular expertise in the international protection of freedom of religion or belief. She is expected to be granted her PhD degree from Abo Akademi’s (Finland) Institute for Human Rights Law in 2012.

⁷TALIS research was conducted with a randomized sample of 200 primary school principals and 4,000 branch teachers in these schools.

According to teacher questionnaires, conflict of schedules between trainings and teachers' regular professional and personal tasks and training content irrelevant to their needs were among the reasons why teachers were less interested in in-service training opportunities. Findings from TALIS research also showed that the proportion of teachers who claimed they benefited from training courses and workshops were below the TALIS average.

MoNE's policy response to the need for restructuring teacher development in Turkey was the development of "teacher competencies" and the "school-based professional development model." These two complementary initiatives have advanced in parallel; however, progress has been slow. A full-scale implementation of the school-based model is still depending on the finalization of teacher competencies. This delay in restructuring professional development system and in improving its effectiveness could prove detrimental to efforts to increase quality of education as new waves of education reform further puts more pressure on teachers to constantly renew their skills.

In 2011, when the new minister of education Prof. Dr. Ömer Dincer came to office, he identified teachers and teacher development as a priority and initiated a process for developing a national teacher strategy. While this strategy is still being developed, it is based on challenges related to four pillars of teachers' policies: (1) preservice teacher education, (2) recruitment and assignment of teachers, (3) professional development, and (4) career development. The development and effective execution of a national strategy targeting a comprehensive review and improvement of teacher policies in the near future could catalyze the impact of educational policies of the government.

3.3 Developing Education Standards

A significant policy effort to complement the MoNE's efforts to expand early childhood education was the "Strengthening of Preschool Education Project". Through this project, the ministry plans to develop "learning standards" for preschool in order to establish a quality assurance system. These standards, currently being developed in collaboration with UNICEF and Mother Child Education Foundation, are expected to play a critical role in the expansion process and to prevent further compromises on quality of education in both center-based and community-based early childhood education provision. Within this project, a new curriculum for preschool (36–72 months) is prepared and being piloted during 2012–2013.

In addition, MoNE embarked on an initiative to develop Primary School Standards as a means of quality assurance and school-based development. In partnership with UNICEF Turkey, a comprehensive set of standards were developed and piloted. The implementation of Primary School Standards has been continuing for 2 years now with emphasis on continuous monitoring and evaluation of the new policy.

3.4 *Transforming Secondary Education*

The rapid transformation in basic education following the 1997 Basic Education Reform had put pressure on secondary education to deliver more quality and relevant education to increasingly more students. At the same time, knowledge economy was globally demanding a different set of competencies and skills from graduates, with more emphasis on problem-solving skills, digital literacy, interdisciplinary thinking, and higher levels of foreign languages competency. These factors, combined with the existing quality flaws in secondary education, especially in general and vocational high schools where majority of students attended, called on the government to undertake series of policy initiative to transform secondary education and increase its quality.

MoNE's initial response was to launch two projects to modernize and strengthen vocational and technical education with the support of the European Union. Later in 2005, as mentioned previously, secondary education was extended to 4 years. This has been followed by waves of comprehensive reforms, including consolidation of types of high schools which brought 79 high school types to 15. An overall trend to emphasize foundation skills while postponing specialization to later years was visible. As such, a common curriculum for the 9th grade was introduced into both academic and vocational high schools and a modular system was introduced into vocational schools. Active engagement of private sector was expected in defining standards and competencies which would drive development of curriculum for vocational courses.

While on the one hand MoNE took steps towards consolidating school types, on the other hand, there has been a strong commitment to expanding vocational education within the secondary level. An important barrier before this goal was the negative coefficients applied to vocational secondary school graduates if they wanted to pursue higher education in a field different from their high schools subject matters. The government first revised this policy in 2009 and removed it completely in 2012. Government's commitment to vocational education, catalyzed by private sector's increasing engagement and contribution,⁸ was effective in pulling more students into vocational high schools. The percentage of students attending vocational schools went up to 44 % in 2011–2012 from 31.7 % in 2002–2003 (Fig. 6).

As statistics shows, the share of academically selective high schools within the secondary level has also been increasing. This is a direct result of MoNE's policy to gradually transform all general high schools to Anatolian high schools. Though there is no empirical evidence evaluating this ongoing transformation, the depth of real change occurring in schools is questioned. Whether or not this policy will improve or hold back quality improvements across Anatolian high schools is to be seen.

⁸The establishment of the Vocational Qualifications Institute in 2007 has been instrumental in facilitating private sector's contribution, especially in development of programs and curriculum. There were also other examples of public-private partnerships in education, most notably the "Vocational Education: A Crucial Matter for Nation" project and public campaign undertaken by the Koç Holding, one of Turkey's biggest conglomerates.

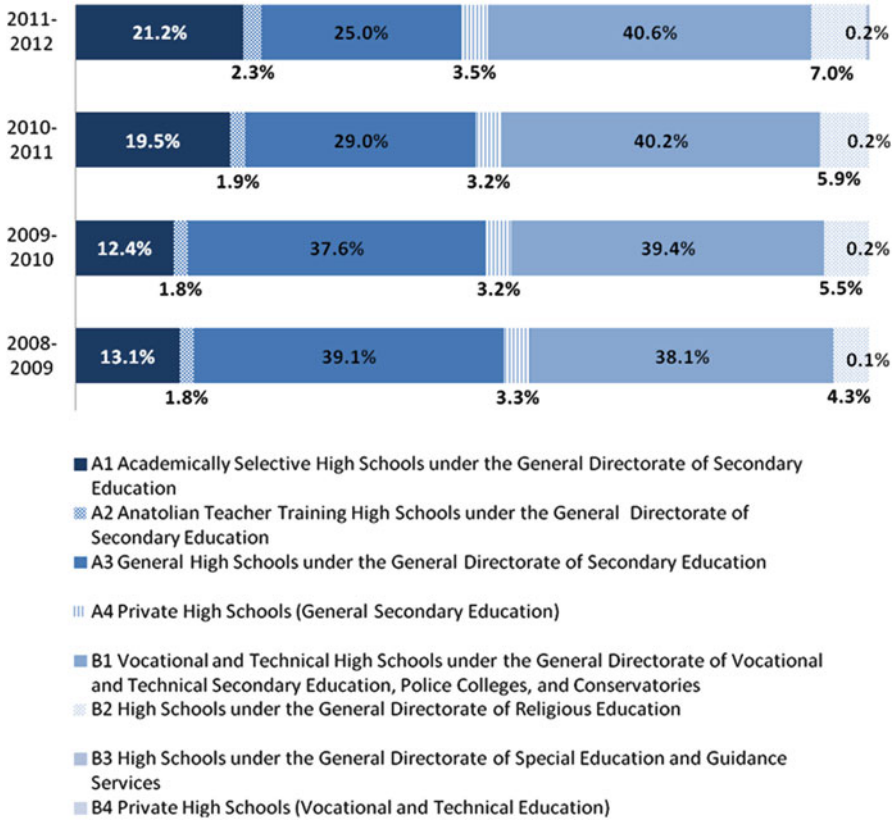


Fig. 6 Distribution of students across different high school types (%) (Source: Education Reform Initiative 2012a)

Tracking students from primary to secondary constitutes a major policy challenge in Turkey because there are serious disparities among school types in a variety of indicators, such as learning outcomes, dropout, and nonattendance. Therefore, government-related policies need to be seriously monitored and evaluated from an equity perspective.

3.5 Application of Information and Communication Technology

The most significant development with regard to learning environments in the last decade or so has been the “Movement to Increase Opportunities and Technology” (FATİH) Project. With FATİH, launched in 2010, MoNE aims to improve

technological infrastructure in schools and encourage the use of information and communication technologies in education. The underlying goal of the project is to equip 40,000 schools and 620,000 classrooms across the country with information technology infrastructure and to provide students at targeted levels with tablet computers. Initially covering secondary education, the project, with an estimated budget of more than \$6 billion, will gradually expand to lower levels. There are five components: hardware and software infrastructure, provision and management of digital content, effective use of the infrastructure in teaching programs, reliable and measurable use of information technology and Internet, and provision of in-service training to teachers.

Teachers are pivotal to the project as they are expected to adapt to technologically enhanced teaching environments and alter teaching methods accordingly. However, an initial assessment with teachers suggested that inadequate provision of in-service training appeared to be a serious flaw in the project design. Unless teachers are equipped with necessarily skills and tools that are compatible with technological infrastructure, to what extent FATIH Project could yield to meaningful improvements in learning outcomes will remain as a significant question. Moreover, the evidence with regard to the impact of technological tools on learning outcomes is mixed, and there are only very few studies measuring such impact.⁹ Given the massive budget it requires, lack of clear evidence, and inadequate focus on teacher development, the FATIH Project stands as a high-risk investment by the Turkish government.

4 Looking into the Impact of the Reforms

Previous sections have shown the various policy initiatives Turkey has undertaken across a wide range of areas in education to increase access to and improve quality of education. While it is possible to evaluate the impact of these initiatives on access through recent improvements on the education management information system, there is a lack of national indicators and assessment mechanisms to evaluate progress in learning outcomes. Placement examinations conducted during transition to secondary and higher education are not designed as assessment tools that could inform policies. The periodical assessment surveys undertaken by the ministry are under utilized and fail to attract any public attention, thereby detached from the policy-making processes. While this lack of public initiatives has drawn private sector's engagement in assessment, so far these initiatives have been used in limited number of schools and in few provinces, failing to reach to a critical mass.

Within this national context, international assessment tests have played a critical and constructive role in Turkey in assessing the learning outcomes of children and informing both public opinion and policies. Turkey has previously participated in PISA (2003, 2006, and 2009), in TIMSS (1999, 2007, 2011), and in PIRLS (2001).

⁹For further explanation, see *Education Monitoring Report 2011*.

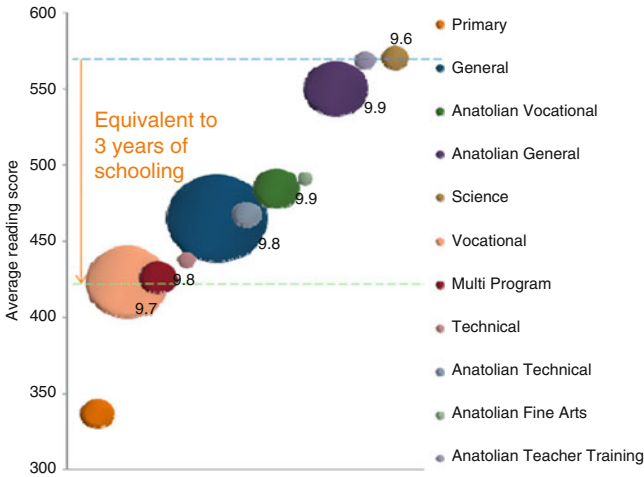


Fig. 7 Average performance in reading among students by school (Source: World Bank 2012)

Thorough analysis of these assessments provides insight into how Turkey is doing in learning in a time trend and across nations.

15-year-old students in Turkey scored 464, 445, and 445 in reading, mathematics, and science tests, respectively, in PISA 2009. With these scores, an average 15-year-old student in Turkey is one full year or more (or 40 points) behind the OECD average (World Bank 2012). Among OECD countries, Turkey outperforms only Mexico and Chile, trailing the other 31 countries, including the newcomers Estonia, Israel, and Slovenia. Among all of the 65 PISA countries, Turkey ranks between 41st and 43rd. In PISA 2006, Turkey ranked between 37th and 44th among 57 countries (Education Reform Initiative 2011b).

The percentage of students who fail to acquire basic level of competencies in reading, mathematics, and science constitutes a serious risk for Turkey. Based on PISA 2009 results, 24.5 % of students who took the test are below the basic competency level (below PISA level 2) in reading. This proportion is 30 % in science and 42 % in mathematics. Given one third of 15–19 age cohort is out of school, it can be argued that more than half of 15-year-olds in Turkey do not have basic competency in mathematics (Education Reform Initiative 2011c).

Serious disparities in learning outcomes exist among income groups and high school types. A gap of 100 points (or more than 2 years of education) exists between students from the richest and poorest income quintile groups (Fig. 7) (World Bank 2012).

Turkey has improved its PISA results in 2009 compared to both 2003 and 2006. A 30 points increase in science following the 2006 test was the best improvement among OECD countries (Education Reform Initiative 2011b). The improvements were mainly due to the decrease in the percentage of students under the basic

Table 2 Percentage of students below competency level 2 in PISA

	2003	2006	2009
Reading	37	32	24.5
Mathematics	52	52	42
Science		46	30

Source: Education Reform Initiative [2011c](#)

competency levels; in other words, low achievers' efforts contributed to improvements in Turkey's average learning outcomes (Table 2).

A recent report offered in-depth analysis of Turkey's 20 points or more increase in PISA test between 2003 and 2009, representing roughly half a year of schooling (World Bank [2012](#)). The progress of low achievers was also quantified in that report: The bottom 1 % of achievers has gone up by 30 points in reading, by 33 points in math, and by 25 points in science. Most of the progress is attributed to a combination of the overall socioeconomic progress being made in Turkey and increased efficiency in the delivery of education (World Bank [2012](#)). The report concludes that "Turkey's education policies over the past decade have lifted the performance of all students, except the very top achievers, and have reduced performance inequalities among students – both important achievements."

5 Conclusion

While the AK Party government has undertaken many ambitious and complementary reforms to increase overall education governance in Turkey, the results so far have been mixed. While the new system produces intended outputs, such as strategic plans or annual reports, the impact on changing the policy paradigm has been limited.

5.1 Synopsis

Compared with 1970s and 1980s, education in Turkey has received the much needed and delayed policy attention from the governments in the last 15 years. Compulsory education was extended from 5 years in 1997 to 12 years in 2012. National indicators clearly demonstrate the increase in access to education, improvement in physical infrastructure, and expansion in teaching force. Disadvantaged children, especially girls, children with disabilities, and child laborers have also drawn more attention both from the government and the nongovernmental actors. Turkey achieved gender equality in primary education in terms of enrollment figures.

A series of new laws were introduced to improve public administration and finance in Turkey, which also affected the public education sector. MoNE adapted its first 5-year strategic plan by 2010. On the finance side, more Turkish Lira was allocated to public education budget thanks to a long-term growth in the economy. Yet, the share of GDP spent on education has not changed. Turkey still falls significantly short of average OECD and EU spending on public education. Given its large student population and major challenges in education ahead, governments need to consider increasing the share of spending up to 6 % in the near future. The inadequacy of public spending requires a radical contribution from private households to maintain a minimum standard of education in school, and this still constitutes a problem for lower-income families despite the governments' ambitious social policies and programs.

The lack of alignment of government's education policies with public investment plans is a major weakness in the education sector. As this paper demonstrated, MoNE has undertaken an extensive range of policy initiatives, including but not limited to expanding low levels of enrollment in preschool and secondary education. These are high cost endeavors assuming the quality of instruction and infrastructure will be increased at the same time. So far, the government has failed to provide the necessary budget to match its policy priorities, thus jeopardizing the quality across all levels of education.

Furthermore, educational development in Turkey suffers from the lack of a holistic, evidence-based education strategy, one which builds on national consultations and consensus. While this paper should have provided various cases to support this argument, the very recent law which restructured the compulsory education stands as the boldest example. The restructuring, which was not mentioned or foreseen in any of the prior national or education plans, was designed without evidence and presented to the parliament without any public consultation. As much as this law was democratically legitimate, its introduction and adoption violated principles of good governance and created serious tensions both among the already polarized stakeholders and within the education sector.

Particularly, the restructuring did not include kindergarten within the compulsory education despite the government's own efforts to expand early childhood education in the recent years. It was widely acknowledged that this move would have been critical in achieving universal access to preschool for 5-year-olds. A substantial benefit would have been removal of tuition at kindergartens, something that impedes low-income children's access to preschool. On a related note, it is important to highlight that the government removed user fees from higher education institutions during the same time. As a result, today in Turkey families pay for preschool while universities are free, a policy choice which is out of touch with the critical role early childhood education can play in tackling existing inequalities.

Finally, the education sector needs to address the implementation deficiency within the system. Series of new laws, institutions, and content in education could hardly be translated to better outcomes, particularly to learning outcomes. Turkey is facing a major crisis vis-à-vis how to attract, maintain, and develop quality teachers. The government has failed to undertake the necessary steps to improve teacher policies and education. This issue calls all stakeholders to action, including teachers themselves.

5.2 Future Prospects

It appears that implementing the new compulsory education law and the FATİH Project will become a priority for MoNE in the near future. In addition, there is ongoing work to finalize and implement national teachers' strategy and to design a new secondary education system. These are ambitious policy initiatives to tackle simultaneously for any bureaucracy around the world. Therefore, it is critical that MoNE is well supported both financially and technically. Equipped with a robust policy-making capacity and adequate financing for providing quality education to all, MoNE should be well-positioned to maintain and advance the progress in Turkish education.

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Saudi Arabia: The Need for a Coherent National Strategy for Human Capital Development

Maha Taibah and Mounira Jamjoom

Abstract Since 2005, education has been a key priority for the Saudi Arabian government. Education appears in almost all the Kingdom's development plans and strategies for building a knowledge society. The steps taken towards building a knowledge economy have been manifested through many policy reforms and initiatives covering the human capital value chain, including mainstream education, technical and vocational education, higher education, and job training. This chapter outlines two key trends that cut across sectors and that have enabled the process of human capital reforms, namely, public–private partnerships and quality assurance. Then it takes a closer look at human capital reforms in Saudi Arabia over the last decade, highlighting the need to a holistic and strategic approach going forward.

Keywords Education reform • Human capital • Public–private partnerships • Quality assurance • Saudi Arabia

Upon ascending the throne in 2005, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz announced that improving education standards will be his government's utmost priority. Since then the plans have been ambitious. A generous budget was allocated to advance reforms across all education sectors to ensure that the nation transitions to a knowledge-based economy by 2020.¹ A new vision and trajectory was set for the Kingdom, one that encouraged diversification away from oil and a focus on human capital development. Achieving this vision meant that many reforms were needed to take place. Prince Faisal bin Abdullah bin Mohammed, Minister of Education, notes in this

¹“Knowledge Society”, Al Aghar Group, 2008.

M. Taibah (✉)
Ministry of Labor, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
e-mail: mkt@mol.gov.sa

M. Jamjoom
The Ideation Center, Booz & Company, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
e-mail: Mounira.Jamjoom@booz.com

regard “We must cultivate a passion for education in our children to develop themselves into an advanced and knowledge-based society where education should be the main ingredient to achieve excellence in all aspects of life.”²

Today, national discourse is replete with “a sense of urgency” for human capital reforms given the nation’s young demographic structure, its considerably high levels of unemployment, and the mismatch of skills between supply and demand in the workforce. According to the latest censuses report, 65 % of the Saudi population is under 30 years of age, and population growth rates are projected at 2.9 % each year.³ Yet, the job market cannot meet the demand. In fact, unemployment rates have reached a high of 13 %. Youth and women are the most affected by unemployment where 48 % of Saudis between the ages of 20 and 24 are unemployed, as are 31 % of Saudis aged 25–29 (Shediak and Samman 2010). Women’s unemployment hovers at 28 % with only 12 % labor participation rate (Shehadi et al. 2011).

Despite these numbers, the Kingdom was reported as one of the top 10 countries in the world spending the most on education. An enormous budget of \$195 billion was allocated for education reform for 2010–2014, almost 50.6 % of the total allocations of the development sectors.⁴ The budget was intended mostly to support several programs and initiatives that promised breakthroughs in knowledge and advancement of human capital outcomes.

The steps taken towards building a knowledge economy manifested through many policy reforms and initiatives covering the human capital value chain, including mainstream education, technical and vocational education, higher education, and job training. With a continuous refocus on designing programs, improving policies, and enforcing quality, these initiatives will better link education outputs with the socioeconomic priorities. Together, these reforms, tying business to education, aim at graduating a globally employable and locally employed workforce.

Reform in human capital over the past years has followed several common trends. One of the most progressive landmarks of this current wave of reforms is building strategic public–private partnerships, either with regional or global centers of excellence. These have allowed government to identify specific needs in research, content development, degreed and non-degreed forms of education, infrastructure, and ancillary support services. This approach not only facilitates solid partnerships between the government sector and the private sector, but also allows for healthy decentralization, granting the private sector more autonomy to deliver performance-based and demand-led results, which ultimately amplify the impact of education on economic growth.

Second, quality assurance sits at the nexus of any impactful endeavor. As such, all major institutions leading education policy have recently established regulation bodies to define standards, enforce institutional quality assurance, and measure quality, either through inspection or imposing standardized testing.

²Minister of Education: Saudi Arabia Transformed into Knowledge-Based Society (<http://www.sauditv2.tv/News/GeneralNews/Pages/gnews1118.aspx>).

³Census Report, 2011 (<http://www.cdsi.gov.sa/english/>).

⁴Ninth Five Year Development Plan, 2010–2014.

In what follows, an attempt is made to address the most salient policy reforms in K-12 education, higher education, and vocational education. Background, assumptions, achievements, and challenges of these reforms will be vetted culminating with a discussion on the need for a holistic and coherent approach to education reform.

1 K-12 Education Reform

Since the 1950s, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has achieved tremendous progress in ensuring accessibility to general education. At the time, the Ministry of Education adopted a “quantitative expansionist policy” with a focus on increasing geographic coverage and accessibility to general education. Since then, accessibility to education grew at a staggering pace where general education enrollment grew in excess of eightfold from 1970 to 2008.⁵

Today, gross enrollment rates are at 98 % for elementary, 96 % for intermediate, and 92 % for secondary stage (*Ibid.*). The expansion phase also improved gender parity where girls now constitute 49 % of general education enrollment and outperform boys in assessments. The advances in terms of infrastructure, textbook development, and teacher training were so rapid to the extent that it later became difficult to evaluate the quality of the efforts expended into education (Abd-el Wassie 1970; Al-Issa 2009).

1.1 Aims and Approaches to the Reform

The impetus for the strong wave of educational reform was due to three essential challenges: First, the need to become globally competitive and not lag behind other nations. While Saudi Arabia has improved its global competitive standing in the past decade, health and education still do not reach the standards of other countries at similar income levels. As a result, the country continues to occupy low ranks in the health and primary education pillar (61st), and room for improvement remains on the higher education and training pillar (36th).⁶ Second, the country faces a set of challenges that stem from local social, economic, and educational challenges. Saudi Arabia’s general education outcomes in terms of student performance place the country below where it is aspired to be. For example, it is estimated that over two thirds of students do not meet international standards (Hanushek and Wossman 2007). Saudi students scored among the lowest in the TIMSS 2007 math and science, with no significant improvement since 2003. The results are below most of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Arab countries (Middle East and North Africa (MENA) average is 370 in math and 423 in science; Saudi scored 329 and 403 respectively).⁷ Students also lack the soft skills which enable them to compete in the

⁵The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Education Sector Benchmarking, Ministry of Education, 2009.

⁶Global Competitiveness Report, 2011–2012.

⁷TIMSS, 2007.

labor market. A third set of challenges stems from the need to create a balanced national identity in an increasingly globalized world. A review of local discourse in the conventional and social media highlights the salient tension between the widening horizons of globalization and the need for a local identity. The Kingdom is in the process of redefining the edifice of an educational paradigm which captures that subtle balance.

In 2003, Saudi Arabia convened its first *National Dialogue* which addressed the question of national unity, identity, and international relations. The National Dialogue was later institutionalized through the creation of the *King Abdul Aziz Centre for National Dialogue* which convenes national dialogue annually that addresses important national issues. In 2006, the Sixth National Dialogue addressed almost entirely the question of “the quality of education.” It was agreed that the overall spending on education had increased rapidly over the past years and an ongoing upward trend can be expected due to growth in student population. However, education spending did not alleviate one of the most important challenges now facing the Kingdom—namely, the problem of unemployment (Moujaes et al. 2008). To this end, a recommendation was put forth to establish *Tatweer*, which is the King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud Project for General Education Development. *Tatweer* is an education initiative, launched to improve the quality of education for boys and girls. This project, with a committed budget of about SR12 billion (US\$3.2 billion), aims to train more than 400,000 teachers in school management, educational supervision, curriculum development, computer skills, and self-development skills (Al Munajjed 2009). While the project is still underway, the question of sustainability of education reform after the project’s completion needed to be addressed. Dr. Ali Al Hamaki, Director General of *Tatweer* project, explains “Then came the discussion on sustainability. How can we ensure the sustainability of *Tatweer*, to be a seed of sustainable development and to build an entity that is able to move the education sector forward in the Kingdom?” As a result, the Tatweer Education Holding Company (THC) was established in accordance with a Royal Decree. THC is a strategic investment company. The purposes of THC include provision of core and support educational services; development, establishment, acquisition, operation, and maintenance of educational projects; and execution of related works and activities. THC is tasked with implementation of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Project for Development of Public Education and any additional educational programs.⁸

1.2 Three Reform Trends

There are three key recent education reform policy trends which are shaping the K-12 education landscape in the Kingdom. First is a salient increase in private sector participation (PSP) to support the Ministry of Education (MoE) in

⁸Personal Communication, Dr. Ali Al Hakami, Director General of *Tatweer* Project.

addressing its objectives. This policy reform is underpinned by the assumption that the private sector could offer a faster way to introduce change and provide more efficient and effective management and increased competition which would drive quality improvements across the system. The increased number of providers would offer parents a variety of educational choices and increase access to specific areas of education such as kindergartens and special education provision. Most importantly, it will reduce the management burden and foster the focusing of the Ministry on core educational activities by outsourcing non-core education activities to the private sector (Moujaes et al. 2011).

The Ministry identified several priority areas for PSP including private schooling and private pre-primary education. Indeed, demand for private schooling has increased at a rate of 10 % in the past 5 years (*Ibid.*). Private schools also increased in number between 2004 and 2009 with private school growth outpacing public school growth. The Ministry aims to achieve a 25 % private school enrollment rate by 2025, where private school enrollment currently hovers around 10 %. This policy trajectory does not come without challenges, many private schools in the Kingdom currently suffer from low-quality core and support education services, there is relatively large variability in education outcomes, schools are not always able to attract high-quality teachers, and many do not teach enhanced curricula. In effect, the Ministry should reassess private schooling licensing, standards, and regulations and develop quality assurance regulations.

The underlying assumption is that an investment in pre-primary education helps reduce sunk costs arising during later stages of the education life cycle. The current enrollment rate in pre-primary education is far below international levels. The current gross enrollment rate in pre-primary schooling between ages 3 and 6 is only 12 %. The trends in the Kingdom have not changed since the introduction of pre-primary education in 1980s. The country's young population structure means that there will continue to be large potential demand for pre-primary education. Currently there are around 103,000 children enrolled in 1,392 preprimary education institutions which are concentrated in large and wealthier provinces.

The second key trend in policy reforms involves a reassessment of the centralized model of education, with a long-term aim to transfer specific responsibilities from MoE to provinces and to empower schools and school leadership.⁹ For example, one of *Tatweer's* signature programs, the *New School Project*, envisions a new role for the school of the future. To date, school leadership only conducts administrative tasks with no visible role in planning and no financial or administrative independence. The envisioned future school is a semi-independent learning organization that develops and implements an annual plan, prepares periodic reports on the overall performance, has an effective and innovative leadership, and is open to the community. Dr. Ali Al Hakami notes in this regard that "schools are currently in reactive mode and we want to move them to proactive mode." This emphasis on empowering schools came hand in hand with a reform initiative aiming to improve internal communication and knowledge sharing across different levels of the education sys-

⁹The Strategic Plan for General Education Development in Saudi Arabia, 2011.

tem. For example, the MoE has recently launched two nationwide information system initiatives: the first is a comprehensive enterprise resource planning system (ERP), and the second is a geographic information system (GIS) that links all schools across the Kingdom. Other initiatives involve training and empowering teachers to take on the responsibility of their own professional development. A career pathway scheme is currently being developed. This scheme introduces incentives for teachers to develop professionally and fosters accountability.

The third crucial reform policy trend is towards developing quality assurance capabilities across the system. To this end, on September 10 2012, the Council of Ministers approved the creation of an *Authority for Public Education Evaluation*—an independent legal entity with administrative and financial autonomy.¹⁰ The Ministry is also working collaboratively with the Ministry of Higher Education to set competencies and standards for new and existing teachers.¹¹

2 Higher Education Reform

The demand for higher education in the Kingdom has witnessed rapid growth during the last few years, owing to its slow but steady steps towards building a knowledge-based economy.¹² Student enrollment in higher education is also expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 9 % from 2010 to 2014.¹³ In the higher education landscape, the government remains the major provider.

2.1 Recent Policy Progress

Building a knowledge-based economy also requires building the capabilities of a qualified local workforce to combat the dire unemployment. Similar to the K-12 system, the higher education sector underwent a major expansion phase. Nonetheless, this expansion phase was rather recent. For example, the number of universities in the country increased from 8 in 2003 to 25 in 2011, and more than 20 private universities and colleges were approved (El-Maghraby 2011). Although there has not been a comprehensive evaluation of the expansion phase, the general view within the higher education sector is that the large-scale restructuring has been successful.

In 2009, the King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) was entrusted with a research initiative called *Aafaq* (Horizons). The initiative is responsible for setting a 25-year plan to improve the quality of higher education. The

¹⁰Ministry of Education (http://www.moe.gov.sa/news/Pages/Nh_1433_10_21_11.aspx).

¹¹Personal communication, Dr. Ali Al Hakami, Director General, *Tatweer* Project.

¹²Saudi Arabia's Education Forecast, 2013.

¹³*Ibid.*

Aafaq initiative will conduct studies in various areas such as admission and capacity, job market, cost and financing, and infrastructure. Among the initiative's objectives are to encourage universities to allocate more resources for R&D, boost scientific research, and tackle the country's shortage of scientists in critical fields. Saudi Arabia has a workforce shortage in many areas of science and technology. For example, Saudi engineering graduates meet only a fifth of the country's needs, and 68 % of science jobs are filled by graduates from abroad (Sawahel 2009). *Aafaq* also focuses on enhancing women's opportunities in tertiary education. Women represent more than 58 % of the total number of Saudi university students, although males form the majority of students on external scholarships. For example, government statistics indicate that the total number of female students enrolled at the university level, seeking a bachelor's degree, more than tripled from 93,486 in 1995–1996 to 340,857 in 2005–2006.¹⁴ At the same time, the private sector launched a number of private universities for women, based on the efforts of individuals or private institutions and under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education. There are 10 private colleges and universities for women spread throughout major cities including Riyadh, Al Khobar, Jeddah, and Al Baha (Al Munajjed 2009).

2.2 Three Reform Trends

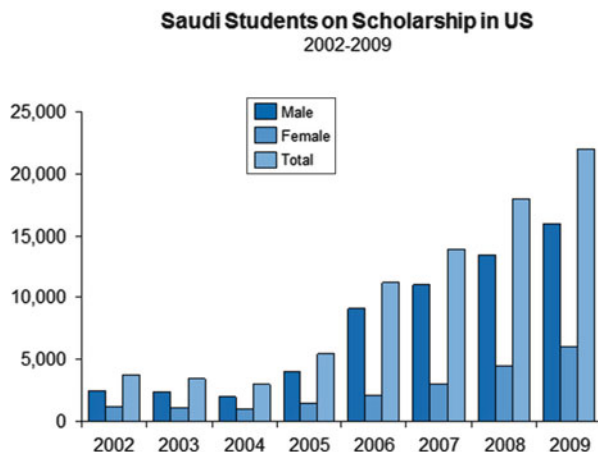
While a great deal has been achieved in a short period of time, the higher education sector in Saudi Arabia is facing many challenges including shortages of well-trained professors, a rising cost of education, and limited higher education infrastructure. In response to these challenges, three policy trends can be identified in the higher education industry: First is an increase in government initiatives offering academic scholarships and focusing on female higher education; second is an expansion of private higher education and the emergence of new institutions such as the King Abdullah University for Science and Technology (KAUST); third is a focus on quality assurance, accountability accreditation, and performance.

Launched in 2005, the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP) is the largest scholarship program in the history of Saudi Arabia. The program began with a 5-year limit and was recently extended to 2020. The program provides full funding for 125,000 students—for both undergraduate and graduate programs abroad. The top 10 host countries for KASP students are the USA, the UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Malaysia, France, India, China, and Germany (Fig. 1).

In addition to the scholarship programs, the government has also accorded great importance to expanding higher education opportunities for women who make up today more than 57 % of university graduates. One example of such expansion is the establishment of the *Princess Noura bint Abdul Rahman University* for women. The university aims to become one of the largest centers of higher education for

¹⁴UNDP-POGAR: Gender and Citizenship, Arabia & SAMA, 2008 (<http://gender.pogar.org/Saudi>).

Fig. 1 Saudi students on scholarship in the USA
(Source: The Washington International Education Council)



Saudi women, presenting them with new educational opportunities to enter the labor market. It includes an academic area of 15 colleges, including the College of Medicine, College of Nursing, College of Pharmacology, College of Physiotherapy, College of Dentistry, and a number of other colleges such as the College of Administrative Sciences, the Computer and Technology College, the Kindergarten College, the College of Science, and the College of Languages and Translation.

Private higher education was recently introduced in the Kingdom, and it has been attracting a considerable number of students. The Council of Ministers in the year 1998 stipulated the authorization of the Minister of Higher Education to prepare a new vision for the establishment of private colleges and enabling the private sector to establish nonprofit educational institutions.¹⁵ Since then, private higher education enrolment in Saudi Arabia has grown at 33 % per annum, making it one of the fastest growing private education segments worldwide.¹⁶ The growth in private higher education is driven by several factors including the need to focus on education for employability, the demand for quality and English-medium instruction, and the need for an alternative for expatriates living in the Kingdom who cannot enroll in public universities. Private universities tend to hire more expatriate teachers with better English language skills—37 % of all teachers in private universities are expatriates in comparison to only 5 % in public universities.¹⁷ Private higher education also represents a prospect for active participation of the private sector into higher education activities. The rise of private sector participation is expected to attract the attention of private equity players who have been keen participants in the education sector.

¹⁵Ministry of Higher Education, 2012.

¹⁶The Parthenon Group, an advisory firm.

¹⁷KSA's USD21bn education push, *Zawiya*, 2012.

Among the different models of private higher education in the Kingdom, i.e., *Universities, Specialized Colleges, For-Profit, and Not-For-Profit Institutes*, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST)¹⁸ stands out as an interesting model. The university is governed by an independent, self-perpetuating Board of Trustees and supported by a multibillion dollar endowment. KAUST was established by the government-owned Aramco to drive innovation in science and technology and to support first-class research in areas such as energy and the environment. Saudi Aramco was best positioned to take the lead in the development and operation management of KAUST given its strong history of funding community projects in the Kingdom, such as several schools, large “high-tech” hospitals, fire stations, etc. The use of new institutions such as KAUST to drive education reform is a model that can be seen more broadly across the GCC region. For example, the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) and the Qatar Foundation were established to circumvent bureaucracies and rapidly implement high-profile reforms. While changes along the KAUST model are very important as they create a better educated populace through a “beacon effect,” they are models that are often difficult to replicate.

Finally, quality assurance initiatives and accreditation systems for tertiary education institutions have been gaining momentum in the Saudi Arabia. In 2004, the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) was established. NCAAA is an independent body both financially and administratively reporting to the Council of Higher Education. The aims of NCAAA are to establish standards, criteria, and procedures for accreditation and to review and evaluate performance of existing and new institutions, thus supporting improvements in quality. Since then almost all institutions developed quality centers or committees to lead and coordinate their quality assurance initiatives. Given that quality assurance system is a recent trend in Saudi higher education sector, the quality and accountability culture is still underdeveloped. There is a marked lack of professional quality assurance expertise. Also, given that most Saudi Universities operate in a centralized manner, most quality assurance mechanisms are top down with little student involvement such as student surveys, committees, and college review panels. Another important initiative is the National Center for Assessment in Higher Education, *Qiyas*, which was launched in 2001 to ensure fairness and equal opportunity in higher education. *Qiyas* prepares and conducts acceptance/admission tests in various institutions of higher education. The center also works on the development of educational measurement methods at all levels of higher education in order to raise the efficiency and promote a culture of “Measurement and Evaluation” in the higher education sector (El-Maghraby 2011).

¹⁸ KAUST was founded in 2009 and focuses exclusively on graduate education and research, using [English](#) as the official language of instruction. It offers programs in life sciences, engineering, computer sciences, and physical sciences.

3 Technical and Vocational Education Reform

Today, technical and vocational education sector has increased its capacity by fully using its current infrastructure and investing in new infrastructures, moving towards a public–private partnership model, establishing a new regulation body, and lastly, changing the perception of technical and vocational graduates in the eyes of students, the private sector, and community at large. These reforms have led to incremental improvements—76 % of the graduates from technical and vocational education streams are employed, study, or own a business.¹⁹

3.1 Restructuring Vocational and Technical Education System

With massive expansions and investment in infrastructure around the Kingdom, strong demands for technical and vocational training emerged. Different ministries took up the initiatives to train Saudis. However, in 1980, a Royal Decree consolidated all technical and vocational education under a unified effort, at that time named the *General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational*, where the Minister of Labor (MoL) served as chairman of the board. The organization went through several transformations until the most recent restructuring in 2007. At this time, the organization went back to focusing on labor market-driven programs that would ensure that students are employable upon graduation. In 2007, the organization underwent a second restructuring and was renamed the *Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC)*. TVTC's vision is "effective participation in economical, social, and environmental development by offering technical and vocational training for male and female citizens to meet private sector demanded competencies and quality in order to achieve global leadership that ensures self sufficiency and independence."²⁰

The TVTC's main mandate is to develop, license, and offer vocational and technical training programs for both boys and girls that meet private sector needs, and to mandate bylaws appropriately specialized in quality and quantity and to supervise their implementation. Additionally, it participates in national programs that build the localization of technology transfer, offers its support for the private sector, and steers investment in technical and vocational training.²¹

The government is keen to promote technical and vocational training for nationals to further develop their employability skills. The budgets allocated to technical and vocational training rose by 41.6 % (SAR23 billion) in the 2010–2014 plan. The current infrastructure has the capacity to absorb only 32 % of the total demand

¹⁹Personal Communication, Dr. Saleh Al Amro, Deputy Governor for Strategic Partnerships, TVTC.

²⁰Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC) (<http://tvtc.gov.sa/English/Pages/default.aspx>).

²¹*Ibid.*

for technical and vocational education. With relatively high dropout rates that can be as low as 10 % in some colleges and as high as in those 40 % operated by strategic private sector partners and only 53 % of the graduates finding a job upon graduation, the TVTC saw the need for rapid and immediate reform. Approximately 170 technical and vocational training institutes are under construction in Saudi Arabia.²²

As a result of the reform, there are two forms of technical and vocational training: First is the *Technical and Vocational Public Training*, which includes programs for Colleges of Technology, Industrial Vocational Training Institutes, Higher Technical Institutes, Military Vocational Training, and Vocational and Industrial Training Institutes in Prisons. Second is the *Joint Training Program* which establishes strategic private sector partnerships with institutions that include private institutes and centers (For-Profit), joint training programs, and institutes (non-profit). Some of these institutes include the Saudi Japanese Automobile High Institute, High Institute for Plastic Fabrication, Saudi Oger Training Institute, and General Motors Program. To encourage alignment with labor market demands, the TVTC runs several *apprenticeship training programs*. These typically last 1–4 years, with students spending, on average, more than 60 % of training time in the workplace pursuing practical training and the remainder of their time in the classroom. Apprenticeship programs were introduced in 2002 under the National System for Joint Training Program. These apprenticeship programs last from a couple of months to 2 years and are divided into two parts. The first is basic and theoretical training, which comprises 25 % of the duration of the program. The second is practical, which comprises 75 % of the duration of the program and is executed in the workplace.

To ensure that every graduate meets high-quality standards and is employable upon graduation, an official regulation body has been established to oversee the quality assurance of technical and vocational education. The National Center for Evaluation and Professional Accreditation (NCEPA) has been mandated to develop National Occupational Skills Standards (NOSS) to take charge of institutional quality assurance and run national centralized student assessments. The Kingdom began developing its National Occupational Skills Standards (NOSS) in 2003. Prior to this initiative, each college developed and delivered their curriculum based on their own interpretation of market demand.

Currently young high school graduates are reluctant to take up technical or vocational jobs, and as a result, only 9 % of the age cohort complete T&V education compared to 44 % in OECD countries.²³ The TVTC realizes that perception is a major factor in this lack of interest and has conducted extensive research to better understand the lack of motivation towards technical and vocational jobs. Results of this qualitative research reveal that many students perceive technical and vocational education as a “last resort,” while others question the quality of education and its relevance to labor market demands. To address this issue of perception, the TVTC has earmarked a hefty budget to spend on rebranding technical and vocational

²² GCC Education Industry, 2012, Alpen Capital.

²³ *National Occupational Skills Standards Report*. International Network of Sector Skills Organization, August 2012.

education and develop methods to attract more students to technical and vocational education, such as building clear career paths, demanding a higher level of professionalism, certifying skills at different levels, and providing platform for continuous practical education where emphasis is placed on practical skills.

3.2 A Focus on Strategic Partnerships

In August of the year 2000, the Council of Ministers and the Royal Court released Royal Decree No. 18M to establish the Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF). The fund is meant to be a stand-alone legal entity and to be administratively and financially independent. Its goal is to fund programs and initiatives that encourage, train, and employ Saudis in the private sector. To meet the goal, since its inception, the HRDF has led several initiatives. One of the key programs established under the HRDF is the strategic partnership program (SPP) that aims at launching partnerships with the private sector to provide Saudis with training and employment opportunities. Currently, the strategic partnership program is leading three major initiatives: employer-driven academies (EDA), functional academies, and the life skills strategy.

Employer-driven academies are partnerships between the HRDF and leading private sector employers to provide an agreed minimum number of training and employment opportunities. The sectors being targeted are those service sectors with large numbers of expatriate employees in jobs that Saudis can be trained to be successful at within less than 12 months, such as retail. HRDF will subsidize the salaries of candidates during training and a portion of the salary during the first 2 years of employment. EDA programs include key features to attract and retain Saudis in the services sector. For example, the jobs may be entry level, but they come with a clear indication of room for growth. This will help curtail resistance to service sector jobs because they are considered to be low status. Also, the training courses include life skills training as well as technical training to help Saudi men and women adjust to the expectations of working in the private sector. Finally, a large proportion of on-the-job training and ongoing coaching is available, to encourage Saudis to persist with the training period and focus on the longer-term benefits.²⁴

Functional academies, on the other hand, focus on delivering short programs in professions and/or skills required across many sectors such as HR, law, insurance, finance and accounting, and IT. HRDF will fund the training through a voucher system issued to qualifying trainees and also subsidize the salaries of candidates during training and a portion of the salary during the first 2 years of employment. Graduates of the HR pool program, for example, will be prepared to serve as HR managers in the Saudi context and, thus, provide better support in implementing Ministry of Labor and HRDF initiatives in training and employing Saudis. A large proportion of HR managers in KSA are expatriates, and it is believed that Saudi HR managers will be more effective in attracting, recruiting, and retaining Saudis in the

²⁴Human Resource Development Fund (HRDF), Strategic Partnership Program.

long term. One of the key features of the program is that it will provide ongoing mentoring for the Saudi graduates once they are hired and on the job. In particular, the program will emphasize structured on-the-job training (SOJT) assignments at HR departments of companies in Saudi Arabia. The SOJT will include coaching and mentoring sessions with detailed plan and on-the-job (OJT) monthly assessments. Upon completion of the program, the participants must pass an exam that will be designed and administered by a third-party certification organization selected by the SPP, and afterwards they will be placed in companies across Saudi Arabia.

Finally, the life skills training initiative focuses on those skills that many young Saudis need in order to prepare for a successful working life. These include communication and time management skills, teamwork, personal responsibility, and grooming. Due to cultural challenges and the limitations of the current education system, many Saudis are leaving school/college without the basic skills needed to compete against expatriate labor in today's world, even for lower skilled positions. This impacts their ability to secure work and progress in their career. It also places a significant financial and operational burden on employers who experience low productivity and high dropout rates among Saudi employees. Moreover, it has a potentially discouraging impact on the young Saudi job seekers who may be totally unprepared for the workplace requirements and find the experience unbearable soon after starting to work. The strong emphasis on the need for life skills training was apparent as many employers experience high dropout rates when hiring Saudi. Even though the exact causes for rapid turnover are varied and still not well understood, misaligned expectations with respect to basic skills is frequently mentioned as a significant reason.

A good example of a private–public initiative in training is provided by the Tamer Group and HRDF. The company urgently needed workers with expertise in logistics and operations but could not find Saudi nationals with the required skills. So it created a training institute in partnership with the HRDF. Specifically, Tamer Group designed the 3-month curriculum to teach logistics and operations skills and to provide some English language education. In this context, the company supplied the training facility, and the HRDF subsidized about three-quarters of the cost, and Tamer Group paid the remainder. The company generally offers jobs to the top 20 % of trainees. The next 30 % receive certificates that they can use when approaching other firms and the remainder fail or drop out. Tamer Group finds skilled workers and reduces its recruitment costs. The company also helps align Saudi nationals' skills with job market needs, thereby enriching the economic environment in which it operates (Sabbagh et al. 2012).

4 Conclusion

The scale and scope of the human capital development challenges facing the Kingdom are well understood by the leadership. The challenges are particularly pressing for the education sector because the current high unemployment levels are attributed to a large extent to a poor quality of education.

In all cases, addressing these challenges requires a holistic and coherent approach. Booz & Company's latest research on successful education transformation leaders around the world identified three roles that these individuals fulfill. First, transformation leaders in education "think ahead," setting the vision and strategy for the education system in order to meet future expectations regarding employment and national competitiveness. In the case of Saudi Arabia, a clear vision for education development has already been set. Second, transformation leaders in education "deliver within," overseeing the education system during the transformation in order to build new capabilities. Third—and most important—these individuals "lead across," directly engaging stakeholders during the planning and implementation phases of transformations, in order to ensure that everyone supports the proposed changes and will work to help them succeed (Chadi et al. 2012).

In the case of Saudi Arabia, the emphasis needs to be on "leading across" and "delivering within." For *delivering within*, local education reform efforts must go beyond structural reforms and focus on human capital development and talent management through further training and lifelong learning while promoting employability, productivity, and social inclusion. This will require an investigation into the system's already existing *capabilities* or potential *achievable capabilities*. Capabilities are set of distinctive factors or key strengths that distinguish a system or an organization. Each capability derives from the right combination of processes, tools, knowledge, skills, and organization—all focused on achieving the desired result. Strategies for education should be clearly aligned with the existing and achievable capabilities of education systems if they are to succeed.²⁵ A second consideration is the *coherence* between strategies for education development and capabilities. Increasing the coherence and consistency between capabilities will increase the likelihood for success. For *leading across*, an enhanced communication and collaboration across various sectors, entities, and stakeholders in the education landscape is crucial. While cross-sector collaboration is beginning to gain momentum in the Kingdom, more strategic partnerships are necessary.

Education reform is by no means straightforward. However, a better alignment and coherence across all initiatives undertaken to transform education in the Kingdom can improve academic outputs in the short term. This can be measured in terms of achievements of the education system and performance of students, usually against national or international standards. In the long term, social and economic gains are expected. Improvements can be measured quantitatively through increased employment rate, higher per capita income, and increased GDP. Improvements can also be measured qualitatively through more entrepreneurship, increased private sector involvement, increased public sector effectiveness, and improved quality of life.

What exists for Saudi Arabia today is the promise of potential. Reforms must unleash the country's considerable human promise, and they must be designed to harness the resources of an increasingly educated and ambitious youthful population.

²⁵"Capabilities Driven Strategy", Booz & Company.

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Japan: Conversion of the Philosophy and Aim of Basic Education

Tamotsu Tokunaga

Abstract In 1983, Japan has dramatically converted the philosophy from “complete education” to “lifelong learning.” Hence, the aim of school education shifted to the formation of the “ability to self-educate” that supports lifelong learning. The new educational policy became firmly established within the law through subsequent amendments that have continued until today. Responsively, the educational ministry has decreased the content that was to be taught at schools as determined by curriculum standards and in the meanwhile shifted the focus onto students’ “ability to self-educate” and onto practical use of basic knowledge, followed by a range of reforms of learning environments. The chapter addresses the background of the conversion, how policies were developed and what measures were taken, and the causes of the insufficiently visible outcomes. Finally, it discusses the future challenges and suggests potential solutions to tackle the challenges.

Keywords Ability to self-educate • Aim • Classroom instruction • Complete education • Curriculum standard • Instruction methods • Japan • Lifelong learning • Philosophy • Revision of course of study

This chapter addresses the main trends in educational reforms carried out at the policy level in Japan since the late 1980s, with a main focus on primary and secondary education, and discusses the main challenges that the current educational policy faces.

In 1983, the Ministry of Education of Japan has dramatically converted the philosophy and the aim of school education. Abandoned was the “philosophy of complete education,” whereby everything needed generally as a member of the society was expected to be taught in schools. Instead, the “philosophy of lifelong learning,” has been introduced, whereby people are expected to keep on learning whatever is needed as members of the society throughout life, and the aim of school

T. Tokunaga (✉)

University of Tsukuba, National Institute for Educational Policy Research, Tokyo, Japan
e-mail: tokunaga.tamotsu.fw@u.tsukuba.ac.jp

education shifted to the formation of the “ability to self-educate” that supports lifelong learning. Since then, school education policies have been developed, and many measures concerned have been taken, including the shift of the basic stance towards instructions in classes “from teaching to learning.”

The article will address the background of the conversion, how policies were developed and what measures were taken, and the causes of the insufficiently visible outcomes. It should be noted that this article is mainly based on my knowledge fostered while serving as top or middle senior officials in divisions and bureaus with the central roles in the Ministry of Education and taking into consideration relevant research outcomes of the National Institute for Educational Policy Research.

1 The Brief History of the Educational Administration Before the Conversion

In this section, I describe the brief history of the development of the educational administration for primary and secondary education before the conversion, mainly based on the facts described in the official histories¹ (Ministry of Education 1972, 1992) and with my interpretation (Tokunaga 2012a).

1.1 *Expansion of the School System Under the Philosophy of “Complete Education”*

Since the modern school system was established in 1872, it was considered that all knowledge and skills required as a member of a nation of modern industry should be acquired through school education, under the philosophy of “complete education.” Therefore, when broader and higher level of knowledge and skills became necessary in response to further industrialization and sophistication of the society, school years became longer and textbooks thicker. The school system, school facilities, qualified teachers, and the curriculum were put in place accordingly. Compulsory education was extended from 4 to 6 years of primary school, then to 8 years of national school (kokumin gakkou) including 6 years of elementary and 2 years of higher level in 1941 and then 9 years including elementary school and junior high school in 1950. Following that, the advancement rate to high schools rose, and practically the course term was further extended by 3 years (Table 1).

At that time, educational policies had been focusing on providing adequate school facilities and qualified teachers. Concerning facilities, the *National Subsidy for Compulsory Education School Facilities Act* was enacted in 1958, which obligates the national government to subsidize expenses of elementary and junior high

¹Japan’s modern educational system: A history of the first hundred years (1972); Japan’s modern educational system 2: A history of the first hundred twenty years (1992).

Table 1 Transition of high school attendance rate

1950	1955	1960	1965	1970
42.5 %	51.5 %	57.7 %	70.7 %	82.1 %

Source: School basic survey (Ministry of Education)

schools facilities to municipal governments. Concerning teachers, the *Act on National Treasury's Sharing of Compulsory Education Expenses by Municipalities* was enacted in 1918, which obligated the national government to share half the teachers' salary. In 1952, the existing *Act on National Treasury's Sharing of Compulsory Education Expenses* was enacted.

1.2 Qualitative Enhancement of School Education

Once the extension of school years and the quantitative expansion of schools reached a certain level, the focus of educational administration shifted to qualitative advancement of school education.

The Ministry of Education made the *National Curriculum Guideline* in 1947 and revised it in 1951. But the Ministry of Education did not have any effective control powers over schools and municipalities which were in charge of school management. In order to maintain the quality nationwide, the Ministry of Education introduced the national curriculum standard system in 1955 with the Course of Study which can legally bind the curriculum organization in all elementary, junior high, and high schools. Since then, the educational ministry has been revising the Course of Study approximately every 10 years, showing its basic policies at that time. The 1958 edition of national curriculum standard emphasized systematic teaching of the subject content.

With the enactment of the *Act on the Organization and Operation of Local Educational Administration* in 1956, the Ministry of Education introduced a new administrative system for exerting its control over local governments and public schools, where the ministry has the legal authority to guide and lead all the local boards of education. The act and another relevant law have shifted from municipalities to prefectures the personnel authority and the financial burden for half the salary expenses of teachers of schools established by municipalities, giving the prefectural boards of education the leading role over the municipal boards of education. In addition, *the Class-Size Standard Act on Compulsory Education*² was enacted in 1958 which fixed the number of students in a class and set the minimum number of teachers in a school according to the number of classes, followed by the enactment of the *High School Class-Size Act* in 1961 when the advancement rate to high school exceeded 60 %.

²*Act on Standards for Class Formation and Fixed Number of School Personnel of Public Compulsory Education Schools.*

In 1971, when the advancement rate exceeded 80 %, a new curriculum standard was adopted.³ It advanced the educational content both qualitatively and quantitatively and increased the number of classroom hours. In response to these changes, with amendments of the *Class-Size Standard Act*, several-year plans were intermittently implemented to lower the upper limit of the number of pupils per class and to raise the lower limit of the number of teachers to be placed per school based on classroom numbers.

2 Background of the Conversion of the Philosophy and Aim of School Education

This section addresses the background that led to conversion of the philosophy and aim of primary and secondary education.

2.1 *Problems in Schools and with Students*

In spite of the efforts to develop conditions, school education under the new curriculum standard adopted in 1971 for elementary schools and in 1972 for junior high schools showed many problems such as “pupils and students left behind,” the so-called *Shichi-Go-San* (753)⁴, and high school dropouts arose. In the early 1980s, situation got worse and more serious. In addition to the left-behind and drop outs, problematic behaviors such as delinquency and violence in school increased, and competition in university entrance exams intensified. It was said that students had to study so hard as to sleep only 4 h a day in order to prepare themselves for the tough exam.

Very concerned about these situations, the Ministry of Education revised curriculum standards for elementary and junior high schools in 1977 and for high schools in 1978. Through these revisions, educational contents were intended to be limited to core issues, and 4 units of class hour per week were converted into nonclass activities which were called the “school leeway time.” However, these symptomatic treatments were not enough, and their revision and implementation in 1980, 1981, and 1982 were too late to improve the situation.

Newspapers and TV news programs called the situation concerning school and students with many problems the “education devastation” and blamed the Ministry of Education for its lack of measures. This made school education a social concern, and its reform became a political challenge.

³New editions of the Course of Study for elementary schools and junior high schools were legally noticed in 1968, and one for high school was noticed in 1970.

⁴A sarcastic expression using the name of a traditional event to celebrate the healthy growth of children, representing a situation where the proportion of pupils and students that manage to acquire what they learn at school, was merely 70 % in elementary school, 50 % in junior high school, and 30 % in high school.

2.2 *Demand from Industry*

In addition, from a very different point of view, there was a pervasive feeling among the industry that there is a need for a fundamental reform of school education for further economic growth. In 1968, Japan's GDP already ranked second in the world. The manufacturing industry maintained its competitiveness by refining the techniques brought in from Western countries and with the precise quality management and efficient production. Nevertheless, economic growth by catching up was seeing its limits, and it was widely acknowledged that hereafter, competitiveness based on independent technological development was needed. This led business groups to make proposals and statements to the government and the ruling party. They suggested to abandon cramming education, which was effective for catching up by utilizing existing knowledge, and now that Japan had already caught up, to shift to education that cultivates creativity necessary to succeed in the competition in technological development. Thus, business groups and industry people had been the strongest supporters for the educational policy shift since 1983 (Keidanren 1996). However, early in the twenty-first century, they turned their stance to blame the educational ministry for the decline of academic ability.

2.3 *Political Situation*

Nakasone Yasuhiro, the prime minister at the time, launching the Ad Hoc Commission for Administrative Reform under the direct supervision of the Cabinet, promoted strongly administration reform, deregulation, and decentralization. The commission, which was composed of experts from outside the government, achieved remarkable success such as the privatization of the Japan National Railways, which in fact ensured the public support to the prime minister and his way to run the policies and implement measures. Under the circumstances described above, the prime minister announced that he recognized the need to promote education reform in the same way as the administrative reform or outside the Ministry of Education. As a result, in 1984, the Extraordinary Council on Education was established under the General Administrative Agency of the Cabinet, indicating that a fundamental reform in school education should be carried out by the government as a whole.

Considering the situation at the time, senior officials worried that they may lose leadership unless they set out to proactively drastic policy change.

2.4 *Recognition of the Rapidly Changing Society and "the Age of Uncertainty"*

Although I mentioned three factors above, I think that the most influential but inconspicuous factor was the senior officials' recognition of the rapidly changing society

and “the age of uncertainty.” They were expected to constantly review the curriculum standard and to provide the most appropriate one so that all knowledge and skills required as a member of a nation of modern industry would be taught in school. Although it could be carried out only if they knew what knowledge and skills would be required in the future, they were conscious that the society was changing rapidly and that opinions of the experts have not seemed to agree on what kind of society would be following the industrial society. “The Third Wave” (1980 Alvin Toffler) and “The Age of Uncertainty” (1978 John Kenneth Galbraith) were very popular in Japan. They thought it better to cultivate the ability to learn knowledge and skills required at that time than to teach what was uncertain to become useful or not in the future.

3 Development of Educational Policies Under the “Philosophy of Lifelong Learning”

Increasing the volume of content of school education responding to the development of industry and sophistication of the society was seeing its limits. In 1983, the Subcommittee on Educational Content of the Central Council for Education, which has the top policy deliberation council established in the Ministry of Education, submitted a groundbreaking report that changed the philosophy and aim of school education dynamically. As a basic philosophy of educational policy, the report proposed to adopt the “philosophy of lifelong learning” instead of the “philosophy of complete education.” That is to say, instead of trying to teach everything needed as a member of the society in schools, we should continue learning throughout life. In addition, the report suggested the shift of the aim of school education from the acquisition of knowledge and skills to the formation of “self-educating ability,” which is the foundation for learning throughout life. Furthermore, they requested to put more emphasis on the acquisition of ability to learn knowledge and skills by students themselves in classroom instructions, to increase problem-solving/problem-exploring type of learning, and to cultivate students’ willingness to learn throughout their lives as well. Since then, the educational policies in Japan have been developed along these lines (Box 1).

Box 1: Excerpt from Council Progress Report of the Subcommittee on Educational Content (1983)

- Acquisition of abilities to learn is important, including how and what to learn.
- School education should put emphasis on students’ solid learning of basic and fundamental knowledge and skills, as well as problem-solving and problem exploring learning methods.
- Students should form the will for lifelong self-education.

It should be noted that this report was written when educational reform had become a political issue and the ad hoc commission was scheduled to be set up led by the prime minister. In these situations together with the sense of distrust towards the educational department, it may be that the Ministry of Education refrained from making this a formal report of the Council with consideration for this situation.

3.1 Revision of the Course of Study Under the “Philosophy of Lifelong Learning”

The Ministry of Education revised the curriculum standard in 1989 and 1998 and implemented them in 1992 and 2002, respectively. For high schools, the curriculum standard was revised in 1999 and implemented in 2003.

In the 1989 revision, the volume of the educational contents was slightly decreased. In addition, the school guidance record, which is a nationally standardized form of recording student attendance and learning assessment, was revised, and included in the evaluation items were acquisition of learning methods, levels of ability to think logically, expressive power and judgment, as well as formation of learning motivation.

In the 1998 revision that followed, the volume of content of educational subjects was reduced by about 30 %, and the “Period for Integrated Study” (PIS) was introduced. This new form of class carries out problem-solving or problem-exploring type of learning, aiming to cultivate skills such as logical thinking ability and expressive power.

3.2 Measures to Support New Classroom Instruction

In order to carry out these new classroom instructions under the new aim, the national government has implemented various measures to support schools and teachers.

The Ministry of Education started the “Open Space” subsidy program in 1984. Through this program, the national government subsidized municipalities the expenses for renovating of school buildings in order to divert surplus areas caused by student decrease into versatile spaces. In 1985, the educational ministry started another subsidy program for municipalities, to promote the installment of PCs in primary and lower secondary schools. In this context, the Ministry of Education tied up with the Ministry of International Trade and Industry to establish the Center for Computer Educating for developing hardware and software suitable for school education in 1986 and set out on research and development of PC programs for school education in 1987.

The national government formulated a new plan for period from 1993 to 2000 for improving the allocation of teachers and revised the *Class-Size Standard Act* in

1991. Based on the “6th Teacher Allocation Improvement Plan,” the Ministry of Education allocated around 15,000 additional teachers to promote small-group guidance within classes and team teaching. Following this, in the 7th Teacher Allocation Improvement Plan for period from 2001 to 2005 formulated in 1999, around 15,000 teachers were allocated for small-group guidance especially for classes of mathematics, Japanese, English, and science (Research Committee on School Staffing 2000).

After disseminating the “philosophy of lifelong learning” as well as the new policies and the new edition of the Course of Study under the philosophy, most of the senior officials of the educational ministry expected that the provision of the time and place for new classroom instructions or development of staff necessary for them or equipment of facilities and devices suitable for them could automatically generate new classroom instructions under the new philosophy and the new aim. However, that was serious misunderstanding.

3.3 *Amendment of the School Education Act*

The school education policy aiming for the cultivation of “self-educating ability” under the “philosophy of lifelong learning” was criticized temporarily that it caused declining academic ability. Nevertheless, in 2010, these aims and objectives of classroom instructions in schools were stipulated in legislation. The *School Education Act* was revised, and paragraph two of article 30 was added in relation to elementary schools, and this is applied mutatis mutandis to junior high schools and senior high schools.

Previously, they were defined through administrative orders of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT)⁵ such as ministerial ordinances and public notices. The provision of the *School Education Act* clarified the basic idea that school education should “form the foundation for lifelong learning.” In addition, as more concrete objectives of classroom teaching (those are commonly referred as academic ability), “development of abilities such as thinking ability, judgment, and expressive power” and “nurturing of a mindset to learn proactively” were placed at the same level as “acquisition of basic knowledge and skills.” This amendment of the *School Education Act* implied endorsement of the shift in educational policies that took place since 1983 by democratic procedures in the Diet (the Japanese Parliament), and thus, the shift became well established (Box 2).

⁵ In 2001, the Ministry of Education was merged with the Agency of Science and Technology and became the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT).

Box 2: School Education Act

Schools, throughout all levels, must let students acquire basic knowledge and skills in order to establish the foundation of lifelong learning and to be mindful and make best efforts to develop abilities such as thinking ability, judgment, and expressive power that are necessary to solve problems by utilizing their knowledge and skills and to nurture a mindset to learn proactively.

Note. Article 30, Paragraph 2

3.4 Revision of the Course of Study in 2008

Right after amendment of the *School Education Act* in 2006, MEXT revised the curriculum standard in 2008 and implemented it in 2011 (for high schools, revised in 2009 and implemented in 2012). This revision increased the volume of instructions in each educational subject up to the level of the 1989 revision. Among the items to be considered when designing instruction plans for the educational subjects were cultivation of thinking ability, judgment, and expressive power, enhancement of language activities, emphasis on problem-solving type of learning, pupils' own choice of learning tasks, and provision of opportunities for students to think about their future. This made clear that the aim to cultivate the "ability to self-educate" under the "philosophy of lifelong learning" would be maintained, and its content was described more specifically.

4 What Has Made the School Education Reform More Reliable: Criticism

Around the year of 2000, there was an upsurge of criticism among university faculty members, industry and economic quarters, experts, and mass media against the shift in the basic philosophy and the aim of school education since 1983 as well as the development of educational policies based on this.

4.1 Criticism Against the Shift in the Philosophy and Aim of School Education

Most of the criticism said that the academic ability of pupils and students had declined due to the revision of the curriculum standards, usually based on the recognition that academic ability is the amount of crammed knowledge. Criticism from university faculty members came from the dissatisfaction that the decrease of

knowledge amount of the freshmen was increasing the burden of those responsible for liberal arts classes, and other criticisms echoed this. Nevertheless, students who entered universities at that time were those who had received primary and secondary education based on the curriculum standard implemented in 1980 or 1992, which is not so different from the curriculum standard implemented in 1961 in terms of the volume of instruction for each subject, based on which most of the faculty members at that time educated.

Critiques called the path of educational policies since 1983 “pressure-free (yutori) education.” However, this naming was based on a misunderstanding. It was taken simply from the popular name of “class of school’s discretion”—“class of leeway (yutori)” —which was adopted when the curriculum standard was revised in 1977 and implemented in 1980. Although criticism was largely based on an inadequate understanding of facts, situations, and backgrounds, the new curriculum standard, publicly notified in 1998 and foreseen to be implemented in 2002, with the reduced volume of instruction of the educational subjects by 30 %, did have inherent risks of lowering academic standards.

4.2 Conciliatory Response to Criticism

In order to respond to criticisms concerning the decline of academic ability, as part of the government’s overall deregulation initiative, MEXT made a flexible interpretation of the curriculum “standard,” accepting “advanced learning” that goes beyond the content defined in the standard. Subsequently, MEXT accepted to partially implement the new curriculum standard, which was publicly notified in 2008 and expected to restore the instruction volume up to the previous level, earlier than originally intended.

Many criticisms arose. Even though they were based on misunderstanding or lack of knowledge, MEXT had to respond to these criticisms through educational policies. I think that there were appropriate reasons: First, MEXT did not present the intent of the shift in educational philosophy and the aim of school education to the public and to the educational stakeholders in a form of a simple and easy administrative document, explaining the problems with the previous educational policies and the goal of the subsequent educational policies. Second, MEXT had not neglected the effort to confirm the effect of policies and measures under the “philosophy of lifelong learning” and verify what the conversion of the philosophy and the aim had brought to school education.

4.3 Shift of the Attitude to Respect the Verification

In 2004, Nakayama Nariaki, the educational minister, announced to introduce a nationwide assessment for academic abilities, and the Cabinet determined in 2005 to proceed the study for conducting a national academic survey. The statement

approved by the Cabinet then said that it “would carry studies forward as soon as possible in order to facilitate understanding and analysis of the academic status of students, and to develop and improve teaching methods based on the understanding and analysis.” It has been publicly considered that the government decided to introduce a nationwide academic survey to respond to criticism concerning the decline of academic ability. Thus, the National Assessment of Academic Ability started in 2007. Prior to this, Japan joined the PISA by OECD in 2000.

5 Impact of Administrative Reform on School Education System

The development of new educational policies based on the “philosophy of lifelong learning” took place at the time when administrative reform and its important parts, deregulation and decentralization, were pushed forward powerfully. Hence, it has impacted upon the education reform substantially.

5.1 Deregulation and Decentralization of School Education System

As I mentioned earlier, the Ad Hoc Commission on Administrative Reform was established under the Cabinet in 1981, and subsequently several succeeding bodies had been established. The Extraordinary Council on Education (1984–1987), which can be called an educational version of the Ad Hoc Commission on Administrative Reform, submitted reports to the prime minister four times. Among them, the first report (1985) and the fourth report (1987) promoted the transformation of the education system from uniform to diversification and from rigid to flexible. The report from the Committee for the Promotion of Decentralization (1995–2001) to the Cabinet and the succeeding report from the Central Council for Education to the educational minister in 1998 introduced the drastic amendment of the *Act on the Organization and Operation of Local Educational Administration* in 1999. As a result, the Ministry of Education, which was scheduled to be merged with the Agency of Science and Technology based on the report of Committee for the Promotion of Reform of the Central Government (1998–2000), has lost considerable parts of the authority for exerting its strong control over local educational boards and public schools (Tokunaga 1999).

Thus, continuous deregulation/decentralization of school education system and educational administration in primary and secondary level was carried out, and the discretionary powers of local school boards and school principals were increased in a broad range of fields including school management, organization of school curriculum and its implementation, instruction of educational subjects and relevant evaluation, and allocation and employment of teachers.

5.2 What Deregulation and Decentralization Has Brought to Educational Administration

In general, deregulation and decentralization contributed greatly to the progress of school education policy. The progress made in school education policy due to deregulation and decentralization can be categorized as the following:

First, as a result, deregulation and decentralization established a system suitable for developing new educational policies dealing with new challenges, as the conventional standardized school management/instruction system or the regulative administrative method was facing limitations in tackling them.

Second, administrative departments whose authorities and assignments were reduced actively took up new administrative challenges and methods in search of their new leading roles that they would have never cared about otherwise. In effect, progress was made in new educational policies.

Third, in cases where there was difficulty in changing conventional orientations and mechanisms to tackle new administrative challenges due to delays in consensus building among stakeholders, educational administrative departments would work with deregulation/decentralization bodies to push forward the educational policy as part of the deregulation/decentralization agenda.

5.3 What Deregulation and Decentralization Has Brought to School Education

In order for the pupils and students to learn how to learn, to cultivate skills such as the logical thinking ability and expressive power, and to cultivate “self-educating ability” under the new philosophy, it should had been necessary to introduce various learning forms and instruction methods such as small-group instruction, group learning, problem-exploring activities using computers, discussions, and hands-on learning, in addition to the traditional classroom-style teaching using blackboards and textbooks (Research Committee on School Staffing 2000).

The flow of deregulation and decentralization was advantageous for introducing the various forms of learning and methods of instruction. Especially, relaxation of the requirement of teaching credential for teaching staff allowed business people and volunteers from the community to contribute to classes as special instructors. Due to the declining birthrate, the number of pupils and students had decreased in majority of elementary and junior high schools, which meant decrease in the number of classes and in effect smaller number of teachers allocated to the school. In order to make up for the decrease in the number of teachers and to introduce various learning forms and instruction methods, it was essential to utilize instructors other than the formal teachers with teaching certificates. The participation of business people with professional knowledge and skills as instructors made the various learning forms and instruction methods more effective as well.

6 From Teaching to Learning: Shift in the Basic Stance of Classroom Instructions and Development of Instruction Techniques

It is not an easy process to translate the policies into actions. The shift in the basic stance of classroom instructions and development of instruction techniques were impacted by various factors.

6.1 Confusion of Teachers over the “Period for Integrated Study”

The implementation of the “Period for Integrated Study (PIS)” that was introduced in the 1998 revision of the curriculum standard involved confusion and difficulty. Teachers were informed of the intent of its introduction through documents and training. However, they were puzzled as to what and how to teach in actual classes. All of a sudden, we started seeing pupils and students visiting fields frequently. There were not a few teachers that could think of nothing else but field visits as activities in PIS. In the light of this situation, the Ministry of Education accepted to use PIS for complementary learning of other educational subjects.

As I mentioned earlier, policy efforts and various measures to support new classroom instruction had been conducted prior to the introduction of PIS, and its implementation was not out of the blue. However, introduction of PIS had missed the critical components. Policymakers did not sufficiently understand that nurturing “self-educating ability” would need a shift in the basic stance towards classroom instruction—the shift from “teaching to learning.” And they neglected to promote research and development, with sufficient fund and staff, for classroom instruction methods appropriate for the cultivation of skills such as logical thinking and expressive power and the ability to learn proactively. As a result, teachers did not receive necessary training in teacher-training courses in universities or in teachers’ training.

6.2 Influence from International Community

However, influenced by the OECD DeSeCo project that was conducted at this time, and struck by the result of PISA, senior officials of the educational ministry were aware of the need of both the shift of the basic stance to classroom instruction and the development of classroom instruction methods.

Japan considered that the shift in educational philosophy and the aim of education in Japan went ahead of the selection and definition of key competencies by the OECD. However, the DeSeCo project had clearly mentioned the shift of

stance from teaching to learning in relation to the acquisition of key competencies OECD (2005). For example, its “executive summary” describes that “Despite the fact that competencies comprise more than just taught knowledge, the DeSeCo Project suggests that a competency can itself be learned within a favourable learning environment” (www.oecd.org/).

The Ministry of Education had thought that the shift of policy since 1983 was in the same line as the DeSeCo project and that the outcome would be reflected in the PISA results. However, in PISA 2003 and 2006, Japan ranked only middle level in literacy (NIER 2007). This was reported in the media as a proof that “academic ability” in the traditional sense had declined and the conversion of educational philosophy and aim of education was blamed for this.

In response to these, the Ministry of Education felt strongly the need to review educational policies, to formulate theories that would support the conversion of the philosophy and the aim of school education and the shift of the basic stance of classroom instruction, and to research and develop the classroom instruction methods and learning style suitable to cultivate skills such as logical thinking ability, expressive power, and ability to learn proactively, and it has set out on them immediately.

6.3 Research and Development by NIER

More concretely, the National Institute for Educational Policy Research (NIER) started theoretical research, case studies of initiatives abroad, as well as practical research and development using the Schools for Research and Development System. This is a system where practical research and development is conducted with the approval of MEXT within a designated school. It allows exceptions to the organization of subjects and the content of instructions defined in the curriculum standard and to teach without teaching qualifications. Researchers from NIER participate in these initiatives. The special creation of “Periods for Learning Skills” from 2007 to 2010 in Niigata elementary and junior high school attached to Niigata University (Niigata Junior High school 2010) and creation of the subject “Language” in Hiroshima High School (integrated junior high and senior high school) are examples (Hiroshima Prefectural Junior High 2010).

Furthermore, many of the initiatives in designated project schools such as Super Science High School Project (SSH) (since 2005) and Super English Language High School Project (SELHi) (2002–2009) were based on the shift “from teaching to learning” and contributed to the research development of an appropriate instruction method. Some results of these research projects have been already reflected in the policies or measures. The 2008 revision of the curriculum standard introduced language activities in all educational subjects that was based on the outcomes, although some of the research projects have not yet finalized (Fig. 1).

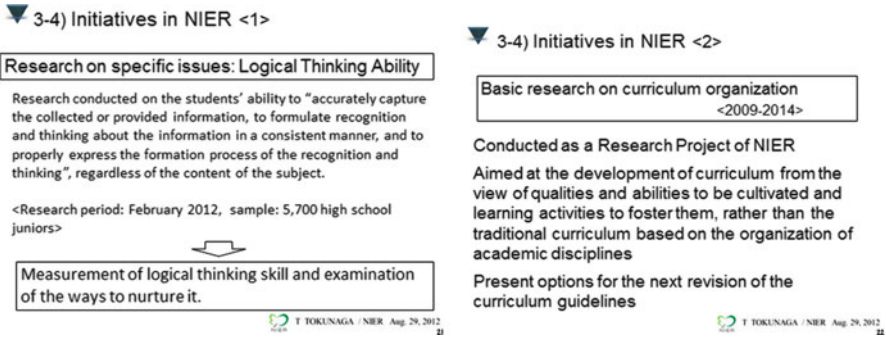


Fig. 1 Initiatives by NIER (Source: Tokunaga 2012b)

7 Results of the Conversion of Educational Philosophy and the Aim of School Education

Although the shift of the philosophy and the aim of school education now provide the foundation which is essential for new educational challenges, such as the cultivation of global talents, enhancement of employability, and development of the twenty-first century skills, it has not necessarily achieved socially acknowledged outcomes.

7.1 Formation of the Foundation for Development of New Educational Policy

The combination of the conversion and the development of policies have formed the foundation of school education which is necessary to respond to the new educational policy challenges, such as the cultivation of global human resources and enhancement of employability. Rich and various technical results of trial and errors since 1983 such as the shift of the aim of school education, the development of curriculum, learning forms, instruction methods, team teaching, and so on must be effective and beneficial for the new educational policy challenges. It could be said that this formation of the foundation in itself is the most important outcome of the shift in educational policy and the aim of school education.

7.1.1 Enhancement of Employability Through Schooling

It has been pointed out that the reason for the increase of instable youth employment or young people not in education, employment, or training—the NEET or

freeter (part-time jobber)—was the increase of temporary employment not only due to the deregulation of the employment system but also due to the lack of employability as seen in the high proportion of high school and university graduates resigning early (Ministry of Health, Labour & Welfare 2009, pp. 17–26). This led to the introduction of career-oriented education in universities since around 2000. Following the global financial crisis in 2008 and the severe employment situation for university graduates, there have been stronger expectations towards the enhancement of career education, the recovery of reality in the instructions, and the introduction/advancement of cooperation between schools and industry in all school levels.

7.1.2 Nurturing of Global Human Resources in Response to the Globalization

As globalization of economic activities and related social systems advanced, stimulated by the adoption of the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines concerning higher education in 2003 and by the selection and definition of key competencies by the OECD, ensuring the international validity of school systems and the educational content became a major challenge for the educational ministry since the early 2000s. Furthermore, since the late 2000s, in response to the expansion of overseas activities by enterprises, qualities and skills for taking up business activities globally became widely expected for those engaged in business (Tokunaga and Momii 2011, pp. 101–138). Thus, the nurturing of global human resources through school education has become a major policy issue for the national government.

It has been realized that human qualities and abilities which are believed to be required in a globalized society would surely match the direction of the shift of educational philosophy and the aim of school education (Tokunaga and Momii 2011, pp. 139–158), with the advancement of globalization and clarification of the image of human resources needed in a globalized society through the media. Today, there is an endorsement from the society that school education aims for the development of twenty-first-century skills such as ability to communicate and expressive power instead of simply cramming knowledge as it used to do.

7.2 *Insufficiently Visible Outcomes*

On the other hand, it seems that the conversion of educational philosophy and aim of education in primary and secondary level and the development of educational policies based on it have not necessarily achieved socially acknowledged outcomes, especially concrete ones.

7.2.1 Situation of Behaviors and Academic Abilities of Students

The comparison of official survey results⁶ in 1988 and 2011 shows that the situation concerning problematic behaviors of pupils and students that triggered the shift of direction has not improved compared to the 1980s. The proportion of pupils and students who cannot follow the classes—the phenomenon that was named “*Shichi-Go-San* (753)” —seems to have decreased (NIER, MEXT 2006). However, this could be an effect of the decrease of the volume of instructions of educational subjects. Rather, as a result of the end of cramming education and the reforms of entrance examinations of high schools and universities, the middle-level students stopped preparing for tough entrance exams. According to the fourth Basic Learning Survey conducted by the Benesse Educational Research and Development Center in 2006, the average studying time at home was 87 min for second-year junior high school students and 70 min for second-year high school students, which was considerably shorter than those in 1990. That led to an outstanding gap between top-level students and middle- or lower-level students in results of various surveys on academic achievement.

7.2.2 Decline of Confidence in Public Schools

Furthermore, the cut back of the content of instruction of educational subjects by the curriculum standard raised the aspiration of top-level students to attend private junior high schools. According to the official statistics,⁷ the proportion of students in private junior high schools has doubled in about 20 years from 3.5 % in 1988 to 7.2 % in 2008. Especially in elementary schools of the urban districts of Tokyo, in general, about one fourth to one third of the graduates continue on to private junior high schools. Many of these junior high schools and affiliated high schools that did not have a track record of good advancement rates adopted the conventional cramming education, and as a result, the shift in the policy did not extend to many of the top-level students. However, after recognizing needs for global talents with twenty-first-century skills responding to the progress of globalization, not a few top-ranked private junior high schools and affiliated high schools are likely to change their direction and educational style, including certified by the International Baccalaureate Organization. Consequently, they seem to be joining the educational policy line from 1983.

7.2.3 Proliferation of First-Year Training in Universities

Since the late 2000s, there has been an increase in universities providing training of skills necessary for university education for freshmen. Training includes remedial

⁶Research report on issues such as student guidance on problem behavior of students by the Ministry of Education/Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology.

⁷School Basic Survey by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology.

classes of high school math and science, or training of basic reading and writing in Japanese and English, and taking notes efficiently and effectively. Today, about 90 % of universities provide such training (Higher Education Bureau, MEXT 2011). The need for such training has increased partly because the entrance examinations to universities have become easier due to the decline in the number of 18-year-olds, which led to the rise in the advancement rate to universities, accepting students that not always have the competence and ability needed for university education.

Nonetheless, it seems that the cut of the volume of the content of instruction of educational subjects by the 1998 revision of the curriculum standard also had some influence. Although the shift of philosophy and aim of primary and secondary education was intended to develop necessary skills for university education, it has not been successful in this regard⁸ (NIER, MEXT 2010).

8 Future Challenges

It seems that the direction taken through the shift of educational philosophy and the aim of school education at primary and secondary level since 1983 as well as the related educational policies adopted continuously were not a wrong one. Today, the challenge is to develop new instruction methods that realize the shift in the philosophy and aim of school education. Especially, important issues are the acquisition of skills such as self-expression skills and thinking ability, as well as development of forms of learning appropriate for this.

8.1 Further Development of Classroom Instruction Methods Based on Research Findings of Learning Science

Classroom instruction methods have been developed in a practical manner in schools. However, this style of research and development needs trial and errors and is difficult to generalize. Currently, research in learning science, incorporating research findings from robotics, is making rapid progress, with several universities playing a central role and NIER participating in it. In the future, it seems necessary and effective to further develop and refine classroom instruction methods based on research findings of learning science.

⁸The National Assessment of Academic Ability and Learning Activities (elementary school, junior high school) consists of questions A, which test one's basic knowledge, and questions B, which test one's capacity to utilize basic knowledge. The percentage of questions A answered correctly is always higher than that of questions B throughout the 4 surveys conducted from 2007 to 2010.

8.2 *Development of Curriculum Standards According to Skills*

Conventional curriculum standards allocated knowledge to be taught in classes to each subject and grade according to academic disciplines. Currently, NIER is working on a possible new style of a curriculum standard, where knowledge is combined with twenty-first-century skills such as logical thinking and communication ability and thus forms a unit to be allocated in it.

8.3 *Further Progress in Research in Learning Science and Development of Classroom Instruction Plans Composed of Diverse Learning Forms*

Classroom instruction in schools will increasingly need to be backed up scientifically. Therefore, in the policy field, the promotion of research in learning science is considered.

Based on existing research findings from learning science (Miyake 2012, pp. 292–294), learning forms that intentionally create a constructive interplay are being introduced. This is effective for the intellectual development of pupils and students. Individual instructions for the formation of proactive learning minds and acquisition of self-educating skills, as well as problem-exploring activities both individually and collectively, are also being introduced. Furthermore, various platforms for learning outside schools are provided by social education institutions and NPOs.

From now on, I believe it is necessary to intentionally create various forms of learning including those outside schools and at home, class lectures using blackboard and textbooks, as well as individual consultation and complementary individual instructions by teachers outside of classes. These should be combined with knowledge and skills that can be learned effectively through the forms and classroom instruction plans that allocate appropriate number of hours for each of the various forms of learning to be developed. The author calls this “the three-dimensional matrix of knowledge, skills, and forms of learning” and is suggesting the development of a sophisticated theoretical framework and a concrete model of classroom instruction plan.

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European Union: The Strive for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth

Gábor Halász

Abstract This chapter aims at presenting the key features of the education policy of the EU as part of its overall reform agenda. It exposes the specific strategic community priorities related with the various subsystems of education (vocational training, higher education, school education, and adult learning) and also the horizontal goals that overarch the subsystems. The main components of the lifelong learning paradigm, as a general policy framework, are presented, with a special focus on the EU's higher education modernisation agenda. A detailed picture of various policy instruments the community uses to support policy implementation is also presented. The final section of the article analyses the possible future developments of education reform policy in the EU.

Keywords European Union • EU2020 • EU education strategy • Education policies • Lifelong learning • Education qualification system • Higher education modernization • Governance • Future of education reform

Policy reform in the case of the European Union has a different meaning from all the other G20 members. The EU, in contrast with the other G20 countries, is not a state. Although it shares many features with “normal” nation states, it is a unique political construct that cannot be described as a “real state”. Even though it has its citizens, its parliament, its government, and its policies, and it does operate specific mechanisms of governance, these are different from those characterising “real states”. The EU is more than an *intergovernmental international organisation* (e.g., in certain policy areas it has full regulatory power) but less than a *federal state* (like the United States, Canada or Germany) because its constituents are not “provinces” with limited jurisdictions but powerful sovereign nations. This unique political construct has, however, highly elaborated policies even in those sectors

G. Halász (✉)
University Eötvös Loránd, Budapest, Hungary
e-mail: Halasz.Gabor@ofi.hu

where its regulatory power is missing or is very limited—such as education—and it has a highly developed repertoire of implementation instruments that are put into operation even in these sectors. It can and, in fact, it does initiate policy reforms, and it does have the capacity to implement them.

The aim of this article is to present the key features of the current education policy of the EU as part of its overall reform agenda. The article intends to show that the EU has been pursuing marked reform and modernisation policies in the education sector which are strongly embedded into and determined by its overall policy of social and economic modernisation. A special focus is given to the question of how reform policies, which had been defined at community level, are implemented in the member states. This focus is justified by the fact that implementing reform policies in the EU context is particularly challenging since the EU consists of sovereign member states which have almost full control of governing their education systems. The article does not have the intention to present specific policy reforms within specific EU member countries: it deals only with community level goals and actions.

1 Education Sector Reform Policies of the EU

In the field of education, the EU has a well-focussed reform policy which aims at enhancing modernisation processes in its member states. This reform policy is directly connected with its broader policy for “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth” as formulated in the so-called *EU2020 strategy* proposed by the European Commission¹ and adopted by the main decision-making and law-making body of the Union: the Council of the ministers.² “Smart” refers to the goal of founding growth on the most advanced technologies, “sustainable” refers to both environment friendly and efficient growth, and “inclusive” refers to the goal of enhancing the maintenance of social cohesion.

The direct antecedent of the EU2020 strategy is the so-called *Lisbon Strategy*, adopted by heads of states of the European Union one decade earlier, in March 2000. The latter set goals for social and economic development to be reached by the end of the last decade. The EU2020 strategy is, in fact, the continuation or the prolongation of the Lisbon Strategy in an enriched and updated form. They both have been urging major reforms in the “European economic and social model” in order to improve the competitiveness of Europe while reinforcing social cohesion and protecting the environment. They both have been translated into specific sectoral strategies, including one for the education sector. During the last decade, this was the “Education and Training 2010” strategy, and its prolongation, currently in force, is called “Education and Training 2020”.

¹See European Commission (2010a). For more detail see also the European Commission’s related website (<http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020>).

²Council Conclusions on Europe 2020, Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN), Brussels, 16 March 2010.

1.1 Policy Reforms and Strategic Goals in the Education Sector

The current “Education and Training 2020” strategy, proposed by the European Commission, was adopted by the ministers of education in 2009,³ that is, prior to the overall “big” growth strategy. This is an important fact because it shows that the education sector is not simply implementing the “big” strategy, but it also plays a kind of forerunner role. The prominent role of the education sector in the Europe 2020 growth strategy is shown even better by the fact that from the eight measurable key policy targets (“headline targets”) approved by the heads of states in summer 2010,⁴ two are directly related with education (early school leaving and tertiary graduation), and three others (employment rate, R&D and poverty reduction) are strongly, although indirectly linked with the performance of the education sector (see Table 1).

According to the text adopted at the highest political level, the goal of the community is “improving education levels, in particular by aiming to reduce school dropout rates to less than 10 % and by increasing the share of 30–34 years old having completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40 %”.⁵ This has sent a very clear message to the member countries: in the context of the current financial crisis, they should restore the balance of their national budgets so that spending on education and training remains a priority.

Table 1 Europe 2020 targets (Source: European Commission (http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/targets_en.pdf))

Targets	Estimated starting value in 2010	Target value by 2020
1. Employment rate (in %)	73.70–74 %	75 %
2. R&D in % of GDP	2.65–2.72 %	3 %
3. CO ₂ emission reduction targets ²	–20 % (compared to 1990 levels)	–20 % (compared to 1990 levels)
4. Renewable energy	20 %	20 %
5. Energy efficiency—reduction of energy consumption in Mtoe	206.9 Mtoe	20 % increase in energy efficiency equalling 368 Mtoe
6. Early school leaving in %	10.30–10.50 %	10 %
7. Tertiary education in %	37.50–38.0 %	40 %
8. Reduction of population at risk of poverty or social exclusion in number of persons	Cannot be calculated because of differences in national methodologies	20,000,000

³Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), Official Journal C 119, 28 May 2009, pp. 0002–0010.

⁴European Council Conclusions. Brussels, 17 June 2010.

⁵European Council Conclusions. Brussels, 17 June 2010.

The specific education sector strategy adopted in 2009 defined four major objectives: (1) “making lifelong learning and mobility a reality”, (2) “improving the quality and efficiency of education and training”, (3) “promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship”, and (4) “enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training”. Three of these four objectives are not new: they have been present in the sectoral strategy since the beginning of the previous decade. The fourth one (creativity and entrepreneurship) has also been supported by the community for a longer time, even if it did not figure among the big sectoral objectives set in the previous main strategy document. Under each of the four priority areas, a number of specific key policy initiatives have been launched.

The policy initiative that might have the strongest and the deepest influence on the development of the education systems in the member states is the reform of national qualifications systems triggered by the adoption of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).⁶ This is a so-called *meta-framework* which aims at orientating national qualifications reforms within the member countries. The latter have committed themselves to establish their own national qualifications frameworks following the EQF principles, that is, linking the level of each national qualification to the European standards and describing specific qualifications in terms of learning outcomes defined as knowledge, skills and competences. The new national frameworks are to mediate towards the national education systems a common way of thinking about learning and about the formal recognition of outcomes of learning. Although this is a fully voluntary process, based on the autonomous decisions of each member country, it would be difficult for any of them to keep away from this harmonisation of national qualifications systems. In fact, the progress of this process shows that voluntary cooperation might often be a stronger unifying force than compelling regulations.

This is also demonstrated by the much better known *Bologna process* by which European countries are creating a *European Area of Higher Education* which also means harmonising higher education systems. It is important to stress that this is an intergovernmental process, launched outside the European Union by countries among which several have never been and will never be members of the EU. While harmonising the structure of educational system of its member countries is formally excluded by the EU Treaty, this is something that can be done and is being done on a voluntary basis. The European Commission supports the Bologna process by its implementation capacities, but it is not the “master” of it. The commission has its own higher education policy priorities that actually go beyond the scope of the Bologna process as they include reform goals related with *funding* and *governance* which are not part of the latter, and they stress particularly strongly the mission of higher education in enhancing *economic growth and competitiveness*.

⁶Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (Official Journal C 111, 6 May 2008).

1.2 Policies Related with the Particular Subsystems

Traditionally *vocational training* has been the strongest component of community education and training policy because this was the only education-related field in which the original *Treaty of Rome* has endowed the Community with formal competences. This was extended to general education only in more than three decades later with the *Maastrich Treaty*. Vocational training is still a central component of the policies of the Union, but today it is strongly embedded into a more general policy of skills and human resource development. This policy area has always been strongly connected with employment policy, and for more than one decade with the policy of lifelong learning which became part of the employment strategy of the Union developed after the conclusion of the *Amsterdam Teaty* in 1997. A key element of vocational training policy has been the efforts to make vocational qualifications mutually recognised and transparent in order to enhance the free movement of labour. The Union has significantly contributed to promoting the value and social recognition of vocational training in the member states.

Since the 1980s, *higher education* has also become a key policy area. Originally the related policies and measures were focusing on mobility, inter-university cooperation and strengthening linkages between higher education and industry, but since the first half of the last decade, the Union has been promoting a general modernisation strategy that goes well beyond the original focus. Linked with the Lisbon Strategy, its departure point is a rather gloomy picture of the state of higher education in Europe, or as the Commission has put it diplomatically in its most recent communication: “the potential of European higher education institutions to fulfil their role in society and contribute to Europe’s prosperity remains underexploited” (European Commission 2011a, p. 2). It has proposed reforms or improvements in three specific areas: curricula, funding and governance. The curriculum reform component aims at making teaching better connected to the needs of the world of work and make European universities more attractive globally. Funding reform aims at enlarging and diversifying the funding basis of higher education and making it less dependent on direct state funding. The aim of governance reform is to make universities more autonomous, more accountable and more entrepreneurial.

School policy is a relatively recent component of community education policies. The strongest element of this is the decision taken by the Council and the European Parliament in 2006 to support the development of eight *key competences* in the school systems of the member countries. Based on a strong mandate, given by the heads of states in Lisbon in 2000, and after years of difficult professional debates and negotiations, the Commission proposed eight key competences that all European citizens should possess (see Box 1). Although the recommendation of the Council and the European Parliament is about key competences “for lifelong learning”, that is, formally they are not linked to any specific subsystems of the education system, and the legal text does not mention the word curriculum, it is clear that this has a major impact on the conception of school education and school curricula. This has been made clear when the commission launched, in 2008, a public debate on the

Box 1: The European key competences

- Communication in the mother tongue⁷
- Communication in foreign languages
- Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
- Digital competence
- Learning to learn
- Social and civic competences
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- Cultural awareness and expression

question of “What should our schools be like in the twenty-first century?” and the theme of key competences was in the centre of this debate. The policy proposal of the Commission emerging from this debate was entitled “Improving competences for the 21st Century: An Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools” (European Commission 2008), and it placed the implementation of the key competence recommendation into the focus of its proposed school policy. The recommendation, although unevenly, has had a significant impact on school policies in most member countries, often supporting ongoing domestic reforms targeted at standards, teaching practices and assessment (Gordon et al. 2009).

Besides the definition of key competences, the professional development of teachers has become a cornerstone of community school policy. In the second half of the last decade, education ministers meeting in the Council have adopted several decisions on this theme,⁸ recognising the strategic role of the quality of the teacher labour force in educational development. The theme of teachers was also the first among the 13 action areas defined on the basis of the Lisbon mandate in the “Education and Training 2010” programme which guided the education policy-related activities of the community during the last decade.

⁷Recommendations of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2006/962/EC), Official Journal of the European Union, 30 December 2006.

⁸Draft Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on efficiency and equity in education and training (2006/C 298/03), Official Journal of the European Union 8 December 2006; Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 15 November 2007 on improving the quality of teacher education on 15 November 2007 (2007/C 300/07), Official Journal of the European Union 12 December 2007; Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 21 November 2008 on preparing young people for the twenty-first century: an agenda for European cooperation on schools (2008/C 319/08), Official Journal of the European Union 13 December 2008; Council Conclusions of 26 November 2009 on the professional development of teachers and school leaders (2009/C 302/04), Official Journal of the European Union 12 December 2009

A fourth area seen as a subsystem of education is *adult learning*. In 2007, after a Europe-wide consultation process, the Commission proposed a separate policy package on adult learning which was backed, later on, by the Council and the Parliament.⁹ This was a kind of renewal of the recognition of “adult learning as a key component of lifelong learning” which has already been well reflected in the fact that participation in lifelong learning of adults is one of the major sectoral benchmarks in education. According to this benchmark, set originally in 2003, by 2020 15 % of adults aged 25–64 should participate in adult learning as measured by the European Labour Force Survey which “asks about participation in formal and non-formal learning in the 4 weeks prior to the survey” (European Commission 2011b, p. 34).

1.3 Horizontal Policies

There are several *horizontal* EU policies and priorities in the education field that are not necessarily linked with any particular subsystem of the education system although in some cases they are connected more strongly with one than with another area. Perhaps the most important of them is supporting *equity* which has been present in education-related community policies since the beginning of cooperation in this sector. It has taken various forms, such as fighting against school failure, facilitating transition from school to work, promoting “second chance schools”, supporting the integration of children with special needs and that of immigrants and ethnic minorities. As referred to earlier (see Table 1), reducing the proportion of early school leavers is currently a major policy goal supported by one of the community benchmarks.

The promotion of *information technology* in education has been a similar horizontal priority. The importance of this was recognised at community level earlier than in most member states, and a number of specific programmes have been launched or supported by the European Commission.¹⁰ *Quality assurance and development* is a further policy priority that is relevant for all subsystems. The European approach to quality has had a major impact on national approaches, especially regarding such principles as the balance of internal and external evaluation, the involvement of stakeholders in quality processes and the use of quality management for strategic improvement.¹¹ Finally, the promotion of

⁹European Commission (2007); Council Conclusions of 22 May 2008 on adult learning (2008/C 140/09), Official Journal of the European Union 6 June 2008; European Parliament Resolution on Adult learning: It is never too late to learn, 2007/2114 (INI).

¹⁰Resolution of the Council and the Ministers for Education, meeting within the Council, of 19 September 1983 on measures relating to the introduction of new information technology in education; Council Resolution of 13 July 2001 on e-Learning; European Commission (1996).

¹¹Council Recommendation of 24 September 1998 on European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education (98/561/EC); Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2001 on European cooperation in quality evaluation in school education (2001/166/EC), Official Journal of the European Communities L 60/51.

cooperation between *education and business* has also been a permanent priority of community policies in education.¹²

Recently the theme of education/business nexus has been strongly connected with the issue of the contribution of education to *innovation*. Strengthening the innovation capacity of the Union has been a central component of community policies that has a strong impact on education sectoral policy. Ministers declared in 2009 the “European Year of Creativity and Innovation” in order to “raise awareness of the importance of creativity and innovation for personal, social and economic development; to disseminate good practices; to stimulate education and research and to promote policy debate on related issues”.¹³ And Now one of the “flagship” action programmes of the Union in the framework of the EU2020 strategy is about innovation.¹⁴

2 Lifelong Learning as the General Policy Framework

Since the beginning of the last decade, all education sector reform policies of the European Union have been ranged under the umbrella of lifelong learning (LLL). The notion of LLL covers all subsystems of education, including informal and non-formal learning outside the formal education system, and it is now seen as a kind of new paradigm of thinking about the world of education and education policies.

2.1 *The Content of Community LLL Policy*

The idea to put lifelong learning into the very centre of community education policy goes back to the 1970s when the first major proposal for a community policy in education was formulated (Janne 1973), but this became a central commitment of the European Commission only following the creation of legal bases for community actions in the education sector in the 1992 Maastrich Treaty (European Commission 1993). The first detailed and coherent policy for LLL was proposed by the European Commission at the very beginning of the last decade following a 1-year-long, active public debate in the member countries (European Commission 2001). It is important to stress that this has been initiated as a “shared policy” of the employment and the education sectors. Making LLL policy highly operationalised and explicitly formulated became inevitable by the launching of the policy coordination process in employment policy following the Amsterdam Treaty in 2007.

¹²See, for example, the “University-business dialogue and co-operation” website of the European Commission (http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/business_en.htm).

¹³See the official website of the year (http://create2009.europa.eu/about_the_year.html).

¹⁴See the “Innovation Union” website of the European Commission (http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm?pg=keydocs).

As we saw, “making lifelong learning and mobility a reality” is the first of the four priorities of the education sector strategy adopted in 2009 for the current decade. Since its inception the LLL policy of the community has been confirmed, extended and deepened by a number of important decisions of the Council and the Parliament,¹⁵ but the main lines of this policy are more or less the same as they were set at the beginning. The so-called building blocks of this policy (see Box 2) together have created a new paradigm that seems gradually to gain ground in the member countries partly due to the use of the community policy instruments (to be presented in more details below) supporting implementation. Since every member state is supposed to devise and implement a national LLL strategy and both the strategy and its implementation are regularly evaluated by the community, there is a high probability that the European strategy has a significant influence on the content of the national documents, and its building blocks do appear in the latter.

Box 2: The key components of the LLL policy of the European Union

- “Valuing learning” (recognising competences acquired in informal and non-formal learning; learning outcomes-based qualifications reform)¹⁶
- “Information, guidance and counselling” (the development of lifelong guidance systems and European policy cooperation in this area)
- “Investing time and money in learning” (promoting regulatory policies that support individual and company investment into learning)
- “Bringing together learners and learning opportunities” (promoting flexibility in employment and education regulations so that they make adult learning easier)
- “Basic skills” (defining new standard frameworks for key competences and redirecting teaching to develop these competences)
- “Innovative pedagogy” (enhancing innovation in education, especially in classroom level teaching/learning so that learning environments become more favourable for lifelong learning)

¹⁵See particularly the following decisions: Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 on lifelong learning (2002/C 163/01), Official Journal of the European Communities C 163/1; Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning (May 2004); Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Member States meeting within the Council on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe (May 2004); Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Member States meeting within the Council on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe (May 2004); and European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning. Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council (April 2008).

¹⁶See European Commission (2001) for the source of the list in quotation marks. The details in brackets are explanations referring also to major subsequent policy developments.

Since it has become the basic framework of community education policy, more than one decade ago the paradigm of lifelong learning has gone through some evolution, but, as mentioned, its basic pillars have remained broadly the same. Lifelong learning has always been understood in a very broad sense in the EU, encompassing all forms of learning from early childhood education (which has recently become a major priority area) to the workplace learning of adults. A key feature of this paradigm is to put the learner (the demand side) into the centre of education and training policies instead of providers (i.e., the supply side), which has far-reaching implications for all policy aspects including legal regulation, funding or pedagogy. Opening the education sector towards the “outside world”, that is, strengthening its connections with the world of work and giving business a greater role, has ever been a major priority in community education policy. This orientation has sometimes been criticised by those who think the education policy pursued by the EU is too “instrumental” or too much oriented by “neo-liberal values” (e.g. Field 1998; Borg and Mayo 2005; Lee et al. 2008).

2.2 A Central Element: Reforming National Qualification Systems

From an EU perspective, the most important component of national LLL strategies and reform policies is, as already referred to earlier, the development of *national qualifications frameworks* (NQF) in accordance with the common European meta-framework (EQF). According to a recent official EU report released in October of 2012, 29 member or candidate member countries were developing or have already designed a comprehensive NQF covering all types and levels of qualifications. NQFs have been “formally adopted” in 21 countries: four of them have “fully implemented” their NQFs and seven of them were “entering an early operational stage” (CEDEFOP 2012).

A particularly interesting element of this implementation process is the so-called “referencing” which aims at checking whether national categories match correctly the corresponding European levels (Coles 2011). This is the condition for national awarding institutions to issue national diplomas or other qualifications containing an indication of their “European level”. Since this is in the interest of the citizens who have obtained these qualifications, there is a pressure on national governments to perform the referencing process even if they are not legally bound to do so. And, since the European framework is based on defining learning outcomes, national frameworks have also to follow the same logic.

One of the most important outcomes of the progression of LLL policies, including the implementation of EQF, is the blurring of borderlines between the various subsystems of education, on the one hand, and between sectoral policies affecting the development of education, on the other. It is now difficult to draw a sharp distinction between policy areas such as education, employment, social care, regional development or innovation policy. The LLL approach has created a kind of common

policy space in which measures taken in the various policy areas reinforce each other and create synergies.

The advancement of LLL policies in the member countries has now reached a stage that we could perhaps describe as a new policy generation often called *skills policy* (European Commission 2010b; OECD 2012). Skills policies tend to put a strong stress on the *demand side* (as opposed to the supply side), they put more stress on *workplace or work-based learning* (as opposed to learning in schools), they see *skills utilisation* as important as skills production, and they shift the attention from *matching demand* towards creating *skills equilibrium* (OECD 2012; Campbell 2012). A new skills policy for the European Union was proposed by the European Commission in 2008, and this became the object of one of the seven flagship action programmes supporting the implementation of the EU2020 strategy.¹⁷

3 The Higher Education Modernisation Agenda of the Community

The lifelong learning paradigm has given a new direction to community policies related to all subsystems of education. There is one subsector policy that deserves being treated in more detail because of its key contribution to the Lisbon Agenda and the EU2020 strategy: this is higher education. The European Commission has continuously supported efforts to make higher education part of the broader lifelong learning system, although European academic circles have been reacting rather ambiguously to these efforts. We can observe both extremely positive and very reluctant reactions. The former can be symbolised, for example, by the emergence of professional networks supporting “University Lifelong Learning”,¹⁸ or by the adoption of the “European Universities’ Charter on Lifelong Learning” by the European University Association in 2008 (EUA 2008). The latter can be symbolised by the high number of “critical” analyses of both the higher education policy of the community and the Bologna process.¹⁹

The higher education modernisation agenda of the Union interacts in an interesting way with the intergovernmental Bologna process, the latter aiming at the creation of a European Higher Education Area. This is a typical pattern of European education policy making which often transfers issues of contention either to other sectors, where the policy environment is friendlier, or outside the Union into policy

¹⁷See the “Agenda for new skills and jobs” website of the European Commission (<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=958>).

¹⁸See, for example, the “European University Lifelong Learning Network” created in 2006 by 100 partner institutions in 31 countries which created an online “Managers’ Handbook” for university leaders intending to open their institutions towards LLL (<http://distance.ktu.lt/thenuce/ebook2006/INTRODUCTION/fcontent.html>).

¹⁹See, for example, Tomusk (2007) and Olsen and Maassen (2007).

spaces with a more favourable dynamics (Corbett 2011). This is also one of the examples of member country governments using the community to legitimate policies that are difficult to get through within their domestic policy-making machinery. In fact a large proportion of the academic community in the member countries seem to be reluctant to accept the higher education modernisation agenda of the EU. As formulated in a recent publication: “there is (...) concern, particularly voiced in some European university systems, that by increasing university dependence on non-state resources and deepening their engagement with industry and commerce, universities will lose their freedom to act in their traditional role as critics of society” (Shattock 2008, p. 14).

In fact, there are leading European academics who think that the EU is going too far in subordinating higher education policy to the needs of economic growth, competitiveness and employment, and they are not happy with the proposal of the Commission “involving employers and labour market institutions in the design and delivery of programmes, supporting staff exchanges and including practical experience in courses can help attune curricula to current and emerging labour market needs and foster employability and entrepreneurship” (European Commission 2011a, p. 5).

Some observers describe the higher education policy of the EU as efforts to reformulate the existing tacit contract between higher education, the society and the state. This is a difficult process supported half-heartedly by a large part of the European academic community which has been often accusing the EU of being too “instrumental” in its thinking about the goals of higher education. This was expressed recently in the following way in the keynote speech of a leading European higher education researcher at an EU conference during the Polish presidency: “European higher education systems will have to find a fair balance in expected transformations so that the academic profession is not deprived of its traditional voice in university management and governance; so that the European professoriate still unmistakably belongs to the middle classes; and so that universities are still substantially different in their operations from the business sector, being somehow, although not necessarily in a traditional manner, ‘unique’ or ‘specific’ organisations” (Kwiek 2012, p. 9).

The higher education policy of the European Union is strongly influenced by its innovation (or research and technology) policy. The latter has ever been a key element of community policies, but it was given a new impetus within both the Lisbon Agenda and—as mentioned above—in the EU2020 strategy. A related study rightly stated a few years ago that “higher education and research are interpreted as subsystems of a larger overall European innovation policy” (Vught 2009, p. 18). The innovation policy of the European Union is very strongly connected with industrial policy. As one of the relevant websites of the European Commission puts it: “Innovation policy is about helping companies to perform better and contributing to wider social objectives such as growth, jobs and sustainability”.²⁰ Most university leaders as well

²⁰See the “Industrial innovation—Innovation Policy” website of the European Commission (http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/innovation/policy/index_en.htm).

as decision makers in higher education policy share the idea that universities should play a stronger role in making European enterprises more competitive through boosting innovation. This has been recently manifested by the creation of a platform entitled “Empower European Universities” by “eminent thinkers and practitioners of higher education” with the aim of putting more pressure on national governments to shape national higher education policies so that they serve better the goals of European competitiveness and innovation.²¹ These “thinkers and practitioners”—led by the Dutch ex-minister and former vice president of the World Bank *Jo Ritzen*, who is one of those politicians who made, during many years, perhaps the most for advancing European cooperation in the education sector—share the idea that universities can “save Europe from its current economic problems” and “universities can contribute to recreating hope and optimism through more innovation in the economy”.²²

4 The Implementation of Community Education Policies

The responsibility for the implementation of community policies is shared between the member states and the European Commission. The common discourse describes the European Commission as the “government” of the Union. It has, in fact, at its disposal a wide range of policy implementation instruments, similarly to national governments, excluding legislation.

4.1 Governance and Policy Instruments

Lawmaking in the European Union is the prerogative of the Council of ministers and the European Parliament which adopt the policy proposals of the Commission and translate them into legal actions. The Commission is not, however, without power and effective competence. The “indirect” or “soft” competences of the Commission are particularly important in the education sector where the law-making competence of the Union is very limited: it is, according to the EU Treaty, supposed to *supplement* and *support* and not to replace the actions of national governments. The European Union, unlike its member states, does not have direct responsibility to provide educational services. Its main function is to promote development and modernisation, and the instruments it uses are the product of a several-decade policy evolution. Today it commands sophisticated institutional mechanisms

²¹See the platform’s website (<http://empowereu.org/>).

²²See Jo Ritzen’s article on 12 August 2012 in University World News (<http://www.university-worldnews.com/article.php?story=20120807141433279>). See also Ritzen (2012).

that one can describe as consisting of the following key elements: (1) structural and cohesion policy, (2) cross-sectoral instruments, (3) educational programmes, (4) policy coordination, and (5) knowledge and information management.

Structural and cohesion policy is probably the most important as it is served by two major funds: the *European Social Fund* and the *European Regional Development Fund*. The Commission uses them to support structural adjustment in the member states and the reduction of development disparities between them. The former is under the supervision of Directorate of Employment and Social Affairs Directorate, and the latter is managed by its Directorate of Regional Development. Since the beginning of the last decade, supporting the modernisation of national education systems figures among the goals of structural and cohesion policy, and these funds can be used for this purpose. Education sector development programmes are planned as part of the multi-annual national development programmes of the member states, typically as a component of multi-sectoral human resource development or regional development programmes. They have to be in accordance with the general regulations of the structural funds which specify the eligibility criteria for community co-funding. Only educational development programmes supporting growth, employability and social cohesion can get community support, in accordance with the strategies mentioned in the first part in this article.

Cross-sectoral instruments or policy instruments of other sectors than education are particularly important in the European Union for influencing developments in the education sector. The “travelling” of policies from one sector to another has always been an important element of the implementation strategy of the European Commission (Halász 2003). Sectoral policies are nowhere isolated from each other, and this is particularly true in the Union. For instance, lifelong learning and skills development are key components of employment policy. Education is seen as one of the most important instruments of community policies aiming at fighting against poverty and exclusion. As noted in the previous paragraph, human resource development is a major component of structural and cohesion policies as well as regional development policies. The policy of common market and competition covers all areas of cross-border flow of products and services, including the products and services of what we call the “learning industry” (e.g. educational publishing, the educational use of information technology or private provision of educational services). Transferring policy issues from one sector to another is very common in the Union: there have been many examples when policy initiatives were launched in the sector where member states were the most receptive for them.

Those within the education sector tend to see the so-called *educational programmes* as the most important sectoral policy instrument, although the resources available here are much lower than those spent directly or indirectly on educational development through the structural or the employment/social policy (Moschonas 1998). Educational programmes are, nevertheless, increasingly important as illustrated by the continuous growth of their budget since the first of them was launched in 1986 (see Fig. 1). Originally there were separated programmes for each subsystem of education—the names of the original programmes, connected to the four big subsystems (i.e., Comenius for schools,

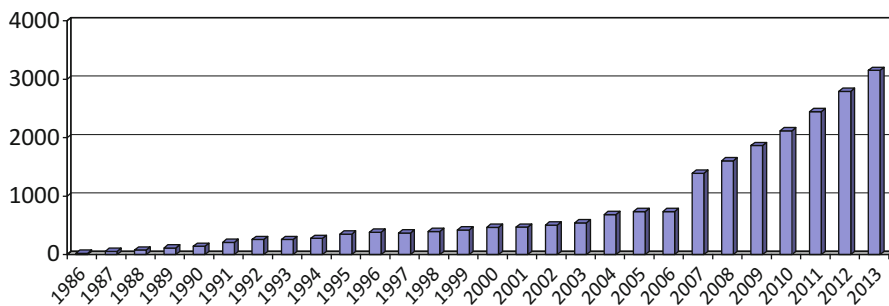


Fig. 1 The total budget of educational programmes 1986–2013 (million euro, current prices) (Source: European Commission 2006)

Erasmus for higher education, Leonardo for vocational training and Grundtvig for adult education), are still in use—but today they are integrated into the so-called Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP).²³ They fund a wide range of actions such as student and teacher mobility, pedagogical innovations, inter-institutional cooperation, various networking or policy development projects. Funding from the educational programmes is typically project based: proposals submitted by institutions or individuals are selected either by the national LLP agencies or by a central agency in Brussels. Proposals have to be in accordance with eligibility criteria defined by the Council decision²⁴ about the new generations of programmes, and the selection is based typically on competitive open tenders.

4.2 Policy Coordination

Since the decision on the Lisbon Strategy, a new *policy coordination mechanism* has been developed and applied also in the education sector. The so-called *Open Method of Coordination* (OMC) is an innovative method of governance in the European Union tested first in the employment and social policy area following the Amsterdam Treaty (1997). In 2000 the decision of the Lisbon European Council²⁵ opened the way to apply it also in the education sector. Normally the OMC consists of four components: (1) the setting of common policy goals, (2) the definition of measurable indicators and benchmarks linked with these goals, (3) member states translating the common goals into national action plans and reporting on progress, and (4) community evaluation of national performance including the formulation of

²³See the relevant website “The Lifelong Learning Programme: education and training opportunities for all” of the European Commission (http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/index_en.htm).

²⁴The current Lifelong Learning Programme was launched in 2006 (Decision no 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning, Official Journal of the European Union, 24 October 2006).

²⁵See European Council (2000).

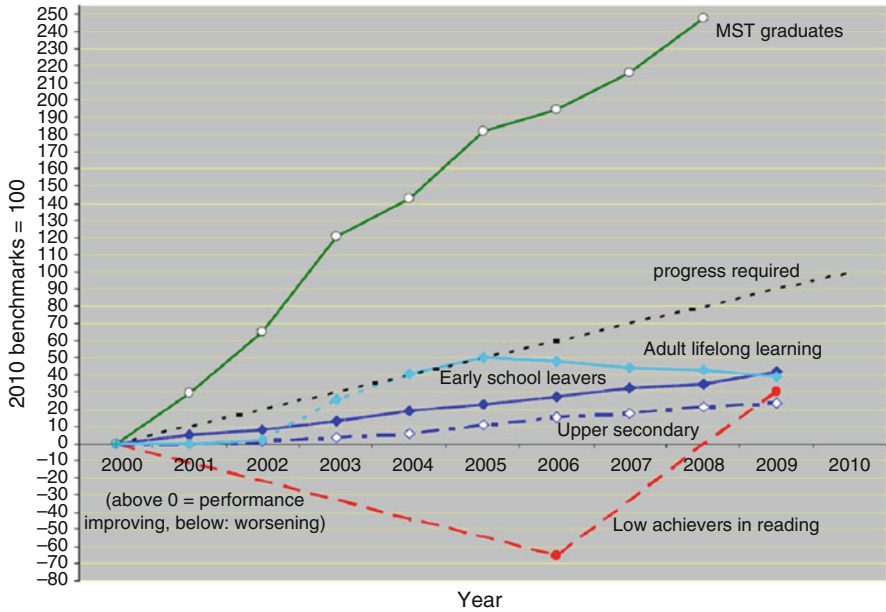


Fig. 2 The average value of education sector benchmark indicators between 2000 and 2010 compared to planned progression (Source: European Commission 2011b)

country-specific policy recommendations. In fact, OMC is applied to education sector in two different, parallel channels. On the one hand, the education sector has developed its own OMC mechanism in the “Education and Training 2010” strategy framework, and, later on, this was prolonged under the name of “Education and Training 2020” strategy.²⁶ On the other hand, education and training-related elements appear also in the “big” growth and employment strategy of the EU (the Lisbon Strategy and, later, the Europe 2020 strategy), that is, sectoral policy coordination takes place also in the overall framework of coordination.

The OMC applied in the education sector is a kind of “lightened” version: member countries are not obliged to elaborate specific sectoral national action plans (although, as mentioned above, the education and training sector, together with others, appears in the overarching national action plans for growth and employment). Countries have been, however, obliged—since 2004—to submit biannual education sector progress reports to the Council and the Commission, and the latter has performed a regular evaluation of their policy achievements. This is done for each individual country and also for the community as a whole (see the summarised results of the last such evaluation in Fig. 2). The figure shows time series of values

²⁶See the relevant website “Main policy initiatives and outputs in education and training since the year 2000” of the European Commission (http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/policy-framework_en.htm).

for five key targets: growth of studying maths/science/technology, participation in adult lifelong learning, the proportion of early school leavers, the proportion of those acquiring upper secondary qualifications and the proportion of low achievers in reading. The dotted line symbolises the target values, the five other lines the actual achieved values of the five target areas.

Policy coordination in every sector, particularly in education, is achieved partly through *symbolic instruments* such as giving feedback and enhancing policy learning. The community has devoted significant resources to develop activities that made it possible for national authorities to take part in working groups and clusters aiming at developing common frameworks and standards (such as the European key competence framework mentioned earlier) and learning from the experiences of those member states which have performed better than others in certain areas.²⁷ This leads us to the fifth community policy instrument *knowledge and information management*. In fact, the European Commission, having no direct regulatory power in education, uses knowledge and information spreading as one of the most important tools to achieve its policy goals in this sector. The Commission is an advanced knowledge broker in a perfect position as it sees developments at the same time in 27 different systems. In the eyes of the Commission, the 27 national systems behave as living laboratories, trying out permanently various policy solutions. Some of these solutions fail, but others survive and prove to be successful. The Commission invests much into gathering, analysing and spreading information about these processes. Given the fact that, contrary to national governments, it does not have local executive branches, it is obliged to gather information through various surveys and quasi-scientific analyses, which make it more knowledgeable than most national governments having no similar knowledge management facilities.²⁸

5 The Future of Education Reform Policies of the EU

The future of education reform policies of the EU seems to depend on two main factors: the relationship between the community and its members and the capacity of the community to influence the behaviour of its members, on the one hand, and the relationship between policies in the education sector and other sectors, on the other. During the past decades, we could witness two key trends. One was the continuously growing role of the EU in education policy and its increasing capacity to

²⁷See the website “Exchange of good practice and peer learning” of the European commission (http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/exchange_en.htm) and particularly the website “Knowledge System for Lifelong Learning” of CEDEFOP (<http://www.kslll.net>).

²⁸See, for example, the “Higher education – Studies” website of the Commission for all recent analyses in the field of higher education policy (http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/studies_en.htm) and also its website “Research and Analysis” (http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/analysis_en.htm).

influence educational developments in its member states. The other was the permeability of borderlines between education policies and other policy areas and the continuous possibility for other sectors to influence the development of education. The key question is whether these two trends will continue in the future.

If the answer to the second question is affirmative, we anticipate the continuation of the trend of education being seen as a key factor in supporting Europe to become more competitive in the emerging global knowledge economy while preserving the values of equity, inclusion and sustainability. If the first question is also answered positively, we can predict that the EU as a community, instead of being an abstract entity above the concrete reality of the member states, will remain a real common space for educational policy development on the European continent.

As for the second question, the probability of the affirmative answer is very high. Given the fact that the EU does not have direct responsibility for the daily operation of systems of educational provision, the vested interests of social actors whose fate depends on the specific institutional arrangements of given sectors and of the different subsystems of education do not play a dominant role in determining the content of education policy. Thus, community education policy will remain future- and reform-oriented, and it will not lose its openness to the variety of sectoral agendas and approaches, particularly in employment, social affairs, regional development and innovation. The EU will probably continue to play a leading role in fostering modernisation and educational reforms in Europe.

The first question—the potential impact of EU on the member states—is less easy to answer. We see in several member states the growth of “eurocepticism”: it becomes more and more frequent that political groups opposing the transfer of power from the nations to the supranational entity gain power in national elections. There are strong actors in each national education system that are not welcoming the modernisation agendas—be they national or supranational—and therefore are not susceptible to the current orientation of EU policies. They are, therefore, typically opposed to EU interference into national affairs in the education sector even if they have, in general, pro-European attitudes.

There are perhaps *three factors* that might increase the probability of the influence of the EU growing further. The first is related with the current fiscal, monetary and economic crisis. The crisis has been forcing member states, particularly those using the euro as their currency, to tighten monetary coordination and budget control. For instance, the so-called European semester, which is also described as “new architecture for the new EU Economic governance”²⁹ mechanism, adopted by the member states in September 2010 is now making possible the exante coordination of national budgetary and economic policies. The education sector cannot, naturally, remain unaffected by this, even if the jurisdiction of the EU continues to be very restricted in this policy area, since this process affects all budget areas, without exception. The second factor is related with our second question: the increasingly

²⁹ See a popular explanation on the relevant website “European semester: a new architecture for the new EU economic governance – Q&A” of the European Union (<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/11/14>).

cross-sectoral nature of education policy. If the opponents of the EU modernisation agenda get strength in national education systems and make the dynamics of national education policy shift towards an “anti-European” line, this will not prevent the penetration of education and training-related EU policies into the national systems through doors opened by other sectors.

The third factor is connected with the internal dynamic of the development of policy instruments within the EU. Some of them—such as the instruments of structural policy and those embedded into the educational programmes—are developed and redeployed in a cyclical way through medium term replanning. The rules of the use of the structural funds as well as those of the educational programmes are reformulated every seven years based on the experiences gained during implementation. As evaluations often criticise the existence of parallelisms and the fragmented character of programmes and the lack of strategic coherence, the reformulating exercise typically results in streamlining and in the reinforcement of strategic orientations. One can expect this to happen also in the current revision period. Streamlining and strengthening strategic lines always imply stronger community control and less exposure to the specific fragmented interests of the member states. This would mean in the case of structural policy that member states will have to subordinate their national development goals even more to common strategic priorities, that is, they will have to devise, for example, education development programmes that will be even more linked with the overall modernisation agenda of the Union. In the case of educational programmes, institutions and individuals in the member states will have to make even more efforts, if they want to win community support, to demonstrate that their proposals are in line with the EU priorities.

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Part IV
Changes in the Education System

Germany: Steps to More Responsibility and Efficiency in an Expanding System

Horst Weishaupt

Abstract This chapter first outlines central reforms introduced to education in Germany in the past decade: the expansion of education and care opportunities available for children under the age of three, diverse state reform measures in school education in consequence of findings from the first PISA study 2000, tendencies of change in the vocational education and training system and the implementation of a consecutive structure of study courses as well as new approaches to governance in higher education. Although the field of continuing education remained little affected by reform impetus, developments in the area of educational monitoring are remarkable. The further development of the education system is conditioned by demographic development, labour market demands and family structural changes. Against this background, it is necessary to remove social inequity in education, to further advance endeavours towards an inclusive education system that have recently been intensified and to rebalance vocational education and higher education systems. Furthermore, continuing education needs to be addressed by reform measures in the future.

Keywords Challenges • Education reform • Efficiency • Expansion • Responsibility • Germany • Vocational Training • Pre-primary education • School • Vocational training • Higher education

In an international comparison, the German education system is characterised by some idiosyncrasies. In particular, this concerns the federal system of education: central competencies for education are transferred to the 16 federal states (*Länder*) in the Federal Republic of Germany. The federal states co-ordinate educational policy measures via the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (Kultusministerkonferenz, KMK), a voluntary consultation board of the ministers of culture that has no right to formulate legally binding decisions for the

H. Weishaupt (✉)

German Institute for International Educational Research, Frankfurt, Germany

e-mail: weishaupt@dipf.de

states. Nevertheless, recommendations issued by the KMK, which need to be unanimously decided, are highly relevant for educational political developments in Germany. The federal government (Federation) can only provide financial support to measures in limited areas of education, and its power of legislation is reserved to company-based vocational education and training and early childhood education and care. With the exception of the domain of higher education, the federal states share fulfilment of their competencies with the local governments, which are predominantly responsible for building and maintaining facilities. The federal states are in charge of regulating curricula and pedagogical programmes, the conceptualisation of teaching, learning and care processes.

1 Structure of Education System in Germany

When taking the structure of the education system into perspective, it is necessary to realise that the reunification of both German states in 1990 meant that two systems that had developed differently after the Second World War needed to be reorganised according to a common structure. For example, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) had a well-established, well-developed system of pre-primary education and care facilities, mostly on an all-day care basis, whereas in the Federal Republic of Germany, pre-primary education and care was traditionally not regarded as part of the education system; it was provided as supplementary to family care, and provisions were mostly offered on a part-time basis. Furthermore, the school system in the GDR was a uniform system structured by levels (Stufen), allowing for only a few supplementary special schools. Meanwhile, a multi-track school system has also been introduced to the federal states in the territory of the former GDR, based on the model practised in the Federal Republic of Germany. Following a generally 4-year period of joint primary education schooling, students are allocated to different types of secondary school (tracks) according to achievement-based differentiation. In West German states, attempts were made since the 1960s to substitute the multi-track secondary school system with a comprehensive school, i.e. “one school for all”, which failed not least because of resistance from the parents assisted by conservative political parties. Several federal states nowadays offer comprehensive schools in parallel to the segregated secondary school types. The school system grants a general education certification after 9 years of successful schooling (*Hauptschulabschluss*), an intermediate secondary school leaving certificate after 10 years (*Realschulabschluss* or *Mittlere Reife*), a qualification for entering universities of applied science after 12 years and a full higher education entry qualification (*Abitur*) after either 12 or 13 years of schooling.

After compulsory school education of 9 or 10 years, respectively, students can attend an upper secondary school, either at a general education school preparing for *Abitur* or a full-time school for vocational education and training. The latter mainly prepares students for specific professional segments outside dual training (assistants, nonacademic health professions, childcare and in addition, preparation for civil service). Besides the option of school attendance, vocational education and

training in the dual system is open to students and chosen by more than half of the students in a school year, characterised by paid in-company training in combination with attending a training institution once a week (or en bloc). Vocational education and training courses in the dual system can last from 2 years to 42 months.

The domain of higher education (tertiary sector) can be distinguished by universities of applied sciences (requiring a respective qualification, *Fachhochschulreife*, offering a highly structured and application-oriented curriculum) and universities (requiring higher education entry qualification, *Abitur*, connecting research and teaching).

Continuing (further) education is largely in-company or company based. Parallel to a large number of private organisations in the field of continuing education representing diverse societal groups, adult education centres (*Volkshochschulen*) are operated as public-funded institutions offering further education in all regions. Some of the vocational schools are schools for further vocational training (*Fachschule*) which require a successful completion of an apprenticeship.

This basic information is essential to perceive the reform endeavours undertaken in the past decade which are outlined below.

2 Reforms of the Education System in the Past Decade

Until 15 years ago, educational politics in Germany were highly complacent—it relied on well-trained teachers and well-equipped schools and universities, believing to be in a privileged and internationally competitive situation. This estimation was fundamentally shaken by findings from the TIMSS study published in the mid-1990s, which received broad media coverage; the study revealed that Germany only held an average position in an international comparison. In part, the results were put into perspective in public discussion, and they were challenged regarding their value for school development. Nevertheless, the debate led to an “empirical turn” in education in Germany, introduced by the “Constance Decision” (*Konstanzer Beschluss*) of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs as of October 24, 1997. The decision calls for measures of quality assurance in school education and the development of test instruments for an evaluation of the school systems’ performance across the federal states. At the same time, the intended comparative studies were to predominantly target the development of fundamental competencies, as determined by standards.

2.1 Reforms in the School Sector

The critical discussion of German educational politics received further momentum following the findings from the first PISA study in 2001: Once again, students’ achievements in Germany were only average in the international comparison, and social inequality regarding access to higher levels of education was more pronounced than hardly any other OECD country.

2.1.1 Quality Improvement in Seven Areas of Action

Following the publication of findings from the PISA study in 2001, the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) defined seven fields of action focusing on measures of quality improvement in education, which are still relevant today, i.e. an array of measures targeting at:

1. The improvement of language competence even at pre-primary age
2. The improved interlinkage of pre-primary education and primary education, aiming at early school enrolment
3. The improvement of primary education and continual improvement of reading competence and improvement of fundamental understanding of mathematical and science contexts
4. The effective promotion of disadvantaged children, particularly children and young people from migrant backgrounds
5. Consequent further development and assurance of instructional quality and school quality, based on binding standards and an outcome-oriented evaluation
6. The improvement of teacher professionalism, particularly regarding diagnostic and methodological competence as an element of systematic school development
7. The enhancement of in-school and out-of-school all-day provisions, aiming at an enhancement of educational and support opportunities, especially for students with educational deficiencies and gifted students (KMK decision, December 1, 2001)

In the past decade, different degrees of progress have been reached concerning the measures introduced by the seven fields of action.

To date, measures targeting *the improvement of language competencies* are mostly limited to conducting language level diagnoses, which are meanwhile obligatory in 14 of the 16 federal states—in most cases, they are not succeeded by targeted language promotion programmes.

Interlinking and collaboration of pre-school daycare (kindergartens) with primary schools turns out to be difficult, and it is yet little developed: On average, one primary school corresponds to three kindergartens—children attend the primary school where they live, but in the case of kindergartens, parents might opt for an institution close to their workplace or for a kindergarten offering a special type of pedagogy (e.g. Montessori pedagogy, denominational). Hence, it is hardly possible to link pre-primary and primary education by means of a direct collaboration between institutions. Some federal states have introduced earlier school enrolment, which is generally compulsory for children aged 6 years (if their birthday is before June 30). The respective states have shifted the appointed date for school enrolment from 1 month up to 6 months (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2012, p. 249).

No valid information exists regarding *the improvement of primary school education* in the federal states. However, no recognisable general enhancement of compulsory instruction in primary school can be identified, which might have been an

endeavour taken to improve competencies of students. On an international scale, the number of compulsory instruction periods in primary schools is below OECD average (OECD 2012).

So far, hardly any effect can be identified regarding support measures taken by schools to *reduce social imbalance and improve educational opportunities of children from migrant backgrounds*, even though according to the PISA findings, social differences of competence levels have slightly been reduced between 2000 and 2009, and they are now close to the OECD average. While a growing number of children with a migrant background living in Germany have already been born in Germany, their relative disadvantage in school leaving qualifications compared to German children has not been reduced. Ethnic groups among the migrants differ significantly regarding their aspiration for upward social mobility via their children's education (Baumert and Maaz 2012). Hence, increased endeavours are necessary to reach out to certain groups among the German population and those migrants who do not offer targeted support to their children's education.

The development of educational standards was strongly promoted. Such standards were introduced as early as 2003 and 2004, substituting or supplementing earlier curricula in the states. Standards are outcome-oriented, relating to the average achievement of students. Hence, minimum standards, by which the proportion of students who do not reach these benchmarks could be identified, are not defined. In primary education (grade level 4) such standards exist for German and Mathematics; regarding lower secondary education (year 9) and the intermediate level of qualification (year 10), standards exist for German, Mathematics and first foreign language (English/French); and in the case of the intermediate level of qualification, additional standards also exist for Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Test tasks were also prepared for educational standards regarding university entry qualifications ("Abitur" standards) in German, Mathematics, English and French.

Measures targeting *the improvement of teacher professionalism* are largely focused on the reform of university-based teacher education. Traditionally, teacher education and training consists of subject-specific, subject-didactic and educational science course elements. Generally speaking, reform endeavours have on the one hand targeted the strengthening of subject-didactic training, to improve teacher competencies regarding teaching contents. On the other hand, educational science course elements are strongly oriented towards pedagogical-psychological competencies, and experience-related elements are increased. In the past decade, more effort was put into enhancing job-related further education of teachers and into making such training mandatory. However, this has not altered the situation that as a rule it is impossible to support school innovations by offering complementary further training programmes for teachers.

The enhancement of all-day schools is one of the most salient changes to the German school education landscape in the past decade. In 2002, only one in ten schools was an all-day school while now this is the case for one in two schools. However, full-time attendance of school is compulsory in a small number of schools only. In most cases, the schools are open all day, offering a lunchtime meal and provisions supplementary to school instruction in the afternoon—depending on interests, part of the

students attend the afternoon provisions either once or several times a week. This is why only a quarter of the students take part in the all-day school programmes.

Apart from reforms pertaining to the seven central fields of action outlined in 2001, some other reforms and developments, respectively, are worth mentioning. These include the reduced time allocated to grammar school education (*Gymnasium*), a harmonisation of school structures in lower secondary schooling and the development of private schools.

2.1.2 Consolidation of Grammar School Education

The reduction of grammar school from 9 to 8 years in all of the federal states apart from Rhineland-Palatinate has been a matter of intensive public debate. Regarding the number of school years necessary to acquire a higher education qualification (Abitur), developments also differed between East and West Germany. In the GDR, students spent 12 years at school before obtaining an “Abitur” degree, while in West Germany, 13 years were compulsory (in each case, 4 years of primary education, followed by 8 or 9 years of secondary schooling). After the dissolution of the GDR, the East German states were initially expected to extend school time for grammar schools after a transition period. As two federal states were not willing to agree, the KMK decided to recommend that 265 weekly periods of instruction would be required, which must be completed in either 8 or 9 years. Discussions relating to longer time spent on school and university education in Germany compared to other countries led to a change of mind in the federal states. Meanwhile, all the states offer an opportunity to reach an *Abitur* in either 8 or 9 years. Sometimes, grammar schools offer both options in parallel, or it is possible to alternatively enrol in an 8-year grammar school or a comprehensive school or vocational education and training school that enables students to obtain the degree after 9 years. Owing to higher pressure on the achievement related to an 8-year grammar school, this reform remains highly controversial in the public.

2.1.3 Harmonisation of School Structures in Lower Secondary Schooling

According to an ideal description, school education in Germany consists of 4 years of primary school, followed by a three-track secondary school system of three school types (Hauptschule, Realschule, and *Gymnasium*).¹ Traditionally, these three school types are connected to different educational pathways and related school leaving qualifications: Hauptschule leads to a general secondary education qualification (Hauptschulabschluss), Realschule leads to an intermediate secondary school qualification (Mittlere Reife) and *Gymnasium* (grammar school) leads to a higher education entry qualification (Abitur). Federal states that emerged from the former GDR have in some cases established only one school type besides the grammar

¹ Special schools also exist for children with special educational needs, focusing on different priorities; presently these are attended by ca. 5 % of all students. In Berlin and Brandenburg the primary school consists of 6 years.

school, joining Hauptschule and Realschule in one school form. Meanwhile, most federal states across Germany have adopted this two-track secondary school system. An additional school type is offered besides the grammar school, for which a variety of names exists (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2012, p. 252). This second track of secondary school combines general and intermediate secondary school qualifications (i.e. one school type offering two educational pathways), and in some cases, students can obtain a higher education entry qualification, “Abitur” (school type offering three educational pathways). Moreover, those federal states that have retained the three-track system have introduced an option to acquire an intermediate secondary school qualification at the Hauptschule. Therefore, the type of school that a student attends barely allows for deducing the school leaving degree he or she will obtain.

This development corresponds to the increase in flexibility of educational opportunities, supporting a trend to obtaining higher school leaving qualifications. On the one hand, this trend is due to decreasing demographic developments, according to which it is no longer possible to retain a viable multi-track secondary school system in rural areas. In addition, there is a decreasing level of acceptance regarding Hauptschule qualifications and their sufficiency for transition to the labour market. Meanwhile, the intermediate level of secondary school qualification (*Mittlere Reife*) is obtained by the majority of students after 10 years of schooling. Many students continue their educational career after they have acquired this degree and obtain a degree that qualifies them for entry into higher education.

Grammar schools (Gymnasium) are unaffected by the transformation of the three-track to a two-track school system in Germany. Grammar schools are the only school type present in all federal states, and their existence remains undisputed. One reason for their strong position is that despite a rising proportion of students attending grammar schools, the grammar schools have managed to retain their average level of student achievement, without lowering the standard (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2012, p. 92). Presently, a development towards a uniform school system cannot be envisioned in Germany; hence, a differentiation is maintained at the secondary school level with the grammar school (Gymnasium) as the traditional first choice chosen by middle- and upper-class parents and a lower form of secondary school for lower social strata.

2.1.4 Development of Private Schools

The increase in private schools² should also be mentioned, not in terms of a political reform but as a social tendency. During the past decade, the number of private schools in Germany has grown by 50 % (Kühne and Kann 2012). At the same time enrolment in public schools declined by 22 % owing to a decrease in student population. The rise in private school numbers was particularly high in the area of

² In Germany 85 % of the running costs of private schools are refunded by the tax payer (Statistisches Bundesamt 2012, p. 50).

primary schools, despite the fact that the constitution (Basic Law) of the Federal Republic of Germany restricts the establishment of private schools in the primary sector—children from all social classes are meant to attend 4 years of common schooling. In West Germany, 2.0 % of the primary school children attend a private school; thus, the figure is still rather low, but in East Germany, the proportion has meanwhile risen to 7.1 % in the primary sector. Many private schools develop in small towns in East Germany, where the state closes schools for lack of students. In several big cities, more than 10 % of the primary school children nowadays attend private schools. Principally, the broad variety of organisations offering schooling should be welcomed. Changes in society and altered expectations of parents regarding education are thus expressed, which are not adequately represented in the provisions of public schooling. In many cases, however, the increase in private schooling expresses an interest in social delimitation, in a phase of increasing social differences in society.

2.2 Shift in Pre-primary Education

Since reunification, pre-primary education has continuously shifted from a family-supplementary care and education service to an elementary field of education. Here, the situation of the East German states was important, where an education-oriented provision of pre-primary care already existed. In a first step taken in West Germany, a legal right to attend kindergarten was enacted in 1996 for each child aged 3 years and older—this led to an alignment of kindergarten attendance in West Germany to the situation in East Germany. Nowadays, early childhood care and education can be regarded as a fixed part of an educational biography from a child's fourth year onwards: More than 90 % of children aged between 3 and 6 years attend child day-care facilities. Despite the voluntary character of supply, nearly all of the children participate in early childhood care and education for at least 3 years.

Meanwhile, a decision has been made for a legal obligation to extend child daycare for children under the age of three: By August 2013, capacities must be provided for 35 % of children under the age of three. In 2011, daycare placements were available for only 25 % of the respective children (20 % in West Germany and 47 % in East Germany). In 2006, early childhood provisions reached out to only 17 % of children under the age of three. Still, great efforts need to be made to establish a need-oriented supply of the legally granted right of child daycare.

2.3 Innovation in Vocational Training

Full-time schools play a certain role in vocational education and training in Germany: Beyond the dual system of vocational education and training that is regulated in the Federal Vocational Education and Training Act (*Berufsbildungsgesetz*),

there are a number of assistant professions, particularly in nonacademic healthcare professions, in the field of industrial/commercial clerks and for training pre-school education and care staff. This also applies for training in the civil service and a few specialised professions (e.g. pilots, driving instructors). Nevertheless, the majority of vocational education and training is organised in a dual system. Endeavours are being made to adapt the scope of about 340 official training professions to the change of the occupation system, characterised by an increase in service professions. Still, a large body of vocational training professions is located in the field of craftsmanship, sales and traffic.

Vocational training opportunities of young people depend on the placements offered by private business as only ca. 5 % of the apprentices find a placement in public service. Hence, the supply of vocational education and training (apprenticeships) strongly depends on the rise and fall of the economy, rather than being oriented towards the demand of young people. In the past 15 years, this had severe negative consequences because the demand for vocational education and training was regularly higher than the supply.

In many cases, young people who had completed school had to spend several years in the so-called transition system prior to beginning vocational training in the dual system, attending transition measures of vocational preparation, to either acquire or improve a school leaving qualification. This led to an increase of the age of entry into vocational education and training in the dual system to 19.5 years. Particularly the long pathways taken by adolescents who have left the lower secondary school type of *Hauptschule* (either with or without a degree) have led to a high average age of entry; to a less extent this is due to apprentices having acquired a higher education entry qualification (*Abitur*). A proportion of approx. 29 % of school leavers still enter vocational education via measures offered by the transition system. Predominantly, this is the case for young people in certain West German federal states or with foreign citizenship who have left the lower secondary school form (*Hauptschule*), either with or without obtaining a general secondary school qualification.

Attempts to expand alternative vocational education and training opportunities according to needs have not been successful, also because of resistance from the chambers of commerce and industry. As a consequence, presently a significantly high proportion of male adults aged between 30 and 34 years are not fully qualified in a vocational profession than adults aged between 60 and 64 years. Young people with a migrant background encounter particular difficulties when seeking an apprenticeship in the dual system of vocational education and training, and in this group more than a third of adults aged between 30 and 34 years have not completed vocational education and training (*Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2012*, p. 43 f.). In Germany, completing vocational education is a prerequisite to sustainable integration into the labour market, without the increased risk of unemployment—even more so than in other countries. Hence, further vocational education and training faces particular challenges in the future.

Principally, all vocational and training occupations are open to all young people who have obtained a general school leaving certificate. In fact, however, raising

qualification demands in the majority of apprenticeships have led to a segmentation of the market. Therefore, school leavers with a general school leaving certificate (Hauptschule) will generally only be able to begin an apprenticeship in a limited choice of vocational education and training professions. On the other hand, roughly a quarter of the young people who have acquired a higher education entry qualification (Abitur) opt for an apprenticeship in the dual system, in professions that are only exceptionally accessible to school leavers from a Hauptschule. In many cases, these apprentices acquire the Abitur only to improve their chances regarding the vocational education and training market. The alternative to a university course is attractive because the pay young people will receive for their apprenticeship renders them financially independent. It is thus possible to avoid the continuing dependence on parents or the necessity to apply for a loan (fall into debt).

While the field of vocational education and training has resisted reform owing to a conflict of interest between actors, a certain innovation is recognisable, which might be significant for the relation between vocational education and higher education. Based on the fact that school leavers who have a higher education entry qualification can attend a university instead of a vocational education school in dual vocational education and training, different concepts have been developed for dual courses of study. As a rule, students in a dual study course have signed a contract with a training company. In addition, they receive apprenticeship pay offering financial security, and they are enrolled as part-time students in a university course; thus, they acquire practical skills as well as academic content knowledge. Mostly such courses are offered by universities of applied sciences, sometimes privately organised, that collaborate closely with the private sector companies offering dual study courses. So far, these academic training the courses have mainly focused on industrial, science and engineering and medical professions. In some cases, the students acquire a training qualification as well as a Bachelor's degree or only a Bachelor's degree. So far, only a few of the federal states in Germany can offer a supply that meets the demand for dual study courses. Still, there is a strong increase in the number of students enrolled in dual study courses.

2.4 Restructuring of Higher Education

In the field of higher education, the restructuring of study courses and the governance of the individual universities were central reforms.

2.4.1 Restructuring of Study Courses

The central reform in the field of higher education concerns the restructuring of study courses within the framework of the so-called Bologna Process: Former diploma and master courses at universities were transformed into a two-cycle system

of Bachelor/Master courses, corresponding to a reduction of study time until the first degree is obtained. At the same time, a credit point system was introduced resulting in a far-reaching reorganisation and standardisation of study courses. The content quality of study courses is assured by an external accreditation of studies, carried out by accreditation agencies in collaboration with the German Accreditation Council. Accreditation replaces the approval of study courses by authorised ministries. So far, this does not apply for study courses that require a state examination in law or medicine. No exception is made for prospective teachers: While their study courses also require a state examination, the subjects they study are closely entangled with respective nondidactic subjects. Study reforms have resulted in highly disparate teacher training models between federal states and individual universities, and it is not yet clear whether the targeted improvement in teacher qualification has actually been achieved.

The Bologna Process was more readily implemented at universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen) than the universities because the former often already offered six-semester study courses. Meanwhile, however, the Bologna reform has largely been implemented at universities regarding Bachelor study courses. Currently, the phase of implementing new Master's study programmes is still under way at many universities. Because Master's programmes can now also be offered by universities of applied sciences, the reform process in recent years has led to a structural alignment of universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen) and research-oriented universities. These two types of universities can now only be distinguished by a more or less strong orientation of study courses towards applied science and research respectively. The study reform went along with a hope that study time would be reduced, and graduates would sooner be able to enter the labour market, but this does not seem to be the case: Most of graduates with a Bachelor's degree strive to continue their university career with a subsequent Master's programme rather than immediately entering the labour market.

2.4.2 Change of Funding and Management

In the field of higher education, approaches to new governance have also led to far-reaching changes of university funding and management. It is meanwhile common to sign target agreements with individual universities, and allocate funds according to achievement indicators, instead of budget or incremental governance of universities. Commonly used indicators include the number of students graduating within the assigned time and the number of graduates and acquisition of external funding (research universities only). Allocation of sources within the universities is subject to the same principles. The changed concept of governance corresponds to increased autonomy of the individual universities; control functions are increasingly carried out by university councils, accreditation agencies or benchmarking systems that compare the excellence of universities instead of the ministries of science.

2.5 *Continuing and Further Education and Training*

Political statements and scientific evidence demonstrating the importance of continuous training were unable to increase participation in continuing training in the past decade—figures have stagnated. The figure is slightly rising for older age cohorts, while for younger people the figure has even declined slightly. Furthermore, existing inequality structures have remained regarding further training participation according to status of income, level of education and migrant background. Despite a reiterated emphasis of the importance of continuous professional training with respect to an ageing population of employees in Germany, a decline rather than an increase can be observed in the field of continuing vocational training. Presently no reform motions are worth reporting in the field of continuous and further education and training.

2.6 *Enhancement of Educational Monitoring*

German participation in international student achievement assessments and a central evaluation of realisation of educational standards in a comparison of federal states constitute two components of a general educational monitoring strategy, decided by the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (Kultusministerkonferenz) in 2006.

2.6.1 National Assessment

For the purpose of assessing the achievement of educational standards, the federal states in the Federal Republic of Germany founded the “Institut für Qualitätsentwicklung” (Institute for Quality Development, IQB) in Berlin. The IQB is commissioned to develop task pools, design test procedures and carry out state-comparison assessments for evaluating educational standards. Assessments are timed according to international studies (PIRLS and PISA), and they substitute the enhanced random samples that until 2006, supplemented international achievement assessments for comparisons across states within Germany. They serve to assess school quality and the achieved average competence levels of students in a comparison of 16 federal states.

2.6.2 International Comparative Studies

The centre for international educational comparative studies (*Zentrum für internationale Bildungsvergleichsstudien, ZIB*) was launched in 2011 by the 16 states together with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, commissioned with conducting the PISA studies in Germany as well as connected research and the

promotion of young researchers, respectively. The ZIB as an “international pillar” of comparative educational research collaborates closely with the Institute for Quality Development in Education (IQB, see above) as a “national pillar”.

2.6.3 National Report on Education

In addition, comparative work is conducted regarding the evaluation of achievements of individual schools (full assessment of all schools carried out in grades 3 and 9), as well as a national report on education jointly commissioned by the Federation and the federal states. This educational reporting is particularly remarkable because it is the only component of the monitoring strategy practised by the government and the states that address all areas of education. Since 2006, educational reporting has resulted in a biennial report on education (*Bildung in Deutschland*): This indicator-based report takes education across the lifespan into perspective and analyses individual educational pathways from a systemic perspective (Konsortium Bildungsberichterstattung 2006; Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2008, 2010, 2012). Beyond parts that are continually reported, each version of the education report offers a thematic chapter highlighting a particular field of interest such as:

2006: Education and migration

2008: Problems of transition after compulsory education

2010: Perspectives of the education system in view of demographic change

2012: Cultural-aesthetic education across the lifespan

2014: People with disabilities/special needs

Educational reporting as an instrument of an indicator-based permanent observation of quality development in the education system now exists in several federal states, too (Bavaria, Baden-Wuerttemberg, Berlin-Brandenburg, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein). In many cases, the reports are authorised by the ministries of culture and thus limited to the field of primary and secondary education; responsibility for pre-primary education rests with ministries of social affairs, and higher education is subject to the ministries of science—at the federal state level, not just one ministry is responsible for education.

At the level of municipalities (cities, towns, districts), it is likewise rarely the case that responsibility for all fields of education rests with a single department. Still, municipalities are more strongly committed to collaboration among different disciplines and authorities, because municipalities show a growing interest in offering citizens a comprehensive, well-adapted broad scope of qualified educational opportunities. Regarding the competition among municipalities, a well-developed educational infrastructure is regarded as an important advantage. Against this background, more than 60 districts and towns in Germany have commissioned education reports (corresponding to nearly 15 % of all municipalities)—this includes some local authorities that have published two or more reports, e.g. Freiburg, Munich and Offenbach. This development was strongly supported by a programme launched by

the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, “Lernen vor Ort” (learning in the community), aiming to set up educational management across all areas of education at a local level and support it by a system of permanent education monitoring.

2.6.4 Regular School Inspection

At the level of federal states, the introduction of regular school inspections also constitutes an important measure of quality assurance, implemented by all the federal states as a means of external evaluation. In part, school inspections are supplemented by regulations on the formulation of school programmes and internal evaluation procedures. School inspections are aimed at assessing school quality by means of a structured and standardised procedure, delivering reasoned feedback to schools regarding their strengths and areas of development and thus making the schools aware of their state as it is, providing impetus for further development. Across the federal states, procedures implemented in school inspections differ as well as composition of expert commissions for school inspection, for instance, classroom visits are included to varying extent.

Schools in Germany often find it difficult to get used to accountability and quality assessment. In this respect, it will take time for such procedures to be accepted as a normal part of school routine.

3 Future Challenges

The future challenges to education and the educational system are embedded in central tendencies in society.

3.1 Central Tendencies in Society as Points of Reference

Central tendencies in society provide important points of reference for future challenges to education. These are demographic development, structural changes in the employment system and family structural changes.

3.1.1 Demographic Development

For some decades, the natural population development in Germany has shown a negative trend. Germany has one of the lowest birth rates in the world, i.e. 1.3–1.4 births per woman. Immigration was the only means of increasing population figures since 1970. Owing to demographic processes in Germany, in the next two decades the strong population born in the 1950s and 1960s will successively withdraw from

the labour market, and a generation marked by low birth rates will enter the education system and labour market. Accordingly, the average age of the population will accelerate. By 2025, a third of the population will be older than 60 years. If average years of employment are not increased, at this time one person at working age will account for one other person who is younger or older than employment age. In acknowledgement of this fact, the average age of retirement from employment has risen in the recent past. This process will be continued due to employment policy measures.

Effects of a shrinking population on societal and economic developments in Germany are controversially debated as new, previously unknown societal constellations emerge. The discernible decline in population figures and the increasing average age can no longer be compensated by immigration. Since the late 1950s, labour migrants came to Germany, followed by war refugees, asylum seekers and others who sought entry to Germany for humanitarian reasons. Among immigrants to Germany, the group of native Germans (ethnic German resettlers) is significant: Particularly between 1990 and 2000, people with German ancestors emigrated from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and acquired German citizenship. Immigration to Germany has strongly declined in the past decade, 19 % of the population currently have an immigrant background if applying the minimum criterion of at least one parent having immigrated to Germany. More than half of the migrants now possess German citizenship. One third of the pre-primary school-aged children have a migrant background. This means a great challenge to the education system because the group of migrants is very heterogeneous regarding its language and cultural background.

3.1.2 Change in Employment System

For some decades, the employment system has undergone a transformation towards a service- and knowledge-based society. This involves an increased demand on school and professional qualifications of employees and at the same time, altered qualification profiles, resulting from a reduction of commercial/industrial professions traditionally reserved to men. In order to pay tribute to the qualification needs of the employment system, and owing to the demographic and labour market structural reasons, a significantly higher number of highly skilled workforce and university graduates will need to be recruited from a probably continually shrinking population.

The shrinking number of people at employment age will lead to a release of pressure on the labour market as is already discernible in recent years, resulting in a decrease of unemployment figures. Full employment will only be achieved in the next decade if a larger proportion of insufficiently skilled employees is continually qualified; otherwise, the supply of unskilled labour will exceed labour market demand.

3.1.3 Family Structural Changes

Women are the beneficiaries of educational expansion in Germany. Nowadays, women have on average reached a higher level of school leaving qualification than

men. With an increasing standard of vocational training, they are no longer able to interrupt their employment for longer periods of time if they wish to keep up with professional developments. Even when setting up a family, there is an increasing need for women to continue working, not only to contribute to the family income but also to save up for later in life as the traditional pensions system will no longer be able to cover all costs. Moreover, the phase dedicated to family care is relatively reduced in Germany, given average life expectancy of women of currently 82 years (prospectively rising to 89–91 years by 2060). Women are nowadays less prepared to accept far-reaching disadvantages with respect to their overall lifespan and standard of living. As a matter of consequence, women spend shorter periods of time outside of employment to set up a family and continue to expand their employment phase. This tendency is supported by the fact that women are mostly employed in the service sector where there is a growing demand. The development introduced by the extension of pre-school daycare and all-day school facilities is intended to improve opportunities for harmonising family and employment demands and due to continue. Otherwise, the birth rate would rather decline; as at present; an improved level of education of women corresponds to a lower number of children. Therefore, pre-primary education and care and all-day schools will increasingly be charged with upbringing and care tasks which in the past were regarded as tasks to be fulfilled by the family (at least in West Germany).

3.2 Challenges Ahead

Challenges faced by the future development of education in Germany should be seen in the light of the outlined demographic development and changes in the employment system and the family structures in society. The necessary reforms cover all age groups and the fundamental questions of equity and inclusion.

3.2.1 Reduction of Social Disadvantages of Children and Young People with Migrant Background

Owing to an increase of participation in education in Germany in the past decades, the educational potential of upper social groups in society is nowadays nearly fully exploited. In view of the expected further demand for a well-qualified labour force, stronger efforts are necessary in Germany to remove social differences regarding educational opportunities, thus to enable children from lower social groups and with migrant backgrounds to achieve higher school leaving degrees and qualified vocational training. School organisation measures (school types offering several pathways, all-day schools) and pedagogical measures (language intervention programmes, assistance with homework) have already been taken to deal with the problem. Still, such efforts need to be considerably enforced.

3.2.2 Extension of Care and Education Facilities for Children Under the Age of Three

The demand for institutionalised care provisions for children after their first year of life will probably increase. The legally granted right to a daycare placement will result in a further increase in creating early childhood facilities in the coming decade. In this respect it will be important to ensure an adequate care ratio as well as the quality of pre-school care and education.

3.2.3 Special Needs Support

The future organisation of instruction of children with special educational needs presents an important challenge. Already in 1994 the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs decided that fulfilment of special educational needs is not tied to special schools and that this should be seen as a common task faced by principally all schools. Supported by an amendment to the constitution (Basic Law) expressing that it is forbidden to discriminate against people of a disability, school legislation in all of the federal states now prefers integrative (inclusive) instruction of students with special educational needs against segregation in special schools, provided that organisational, human and material resources exist.

In 2009, the “UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities” came into force, adding momentum to the assessment of common practice in special needs support in all of the federal states in Germany. Reality at the school level however shows an increase in the support ratio from 4.6 % in 2000 to 4.9 % in 2010. During the same period of time, the proportion of students with special needs integrated into general schools rose as well, from 0.7 % to 1.4 %, respectively. Markedly, in most federal states the extension of integrative instruction has not led to a declining proportion of students enrolled in special needs schools; instead, a general extension of the proportion of students with special educational needs has emerged. Moreover, the proportion of children who enter the school system via a special needs school has increased from 3 % (2003) to 3.4 % (2010). Only a fifth of these children are classified as having a mental developmental need.

Discussion as to how the situation can be changed is currently highly controversial in Germany. The differentiated character of special education needs, defined according to eight priorities of special needs, must be considered (visual impairment, hearing impairment, mental development, learning, language, chronic disease, emotional and social development, physical and motor development). It does not suffice to close special needs schools for an inclusive support of children with special educational needs at a general school. If the requirements afforded by inclusive education are to be met, far-reaching changes of instructional organisation are necessary (individualised support); qualification measures are required for teachers, and they need to be willing to co-operate with special needs experts (who themselves need to be trained regarding co-operation with primary and secondary school

teachers). In this respect, the UN Convention presents a comprehensive and inevitable challenge to reforming the education system in Germany in the near future.

3.2.4 Redefining the Relationship Between Vocational Education and Higher Education

The significant increase in higher education entry qualifications in Germany has since 2006 led to an unexpectedly high incline not only of study course beginners but also the ratio of students entering higher education to 55 % of the total age group in 2011. Some temporary effects contributed to this high proportion, but even after 2015, when a decline in absolute figures is expected due to demographic change, the proportion of students entering higher education is likely to remain at 50 %. In the near future, this would suggest the task of readjusting the relationship between higher education and vocational education if universities turn out to be the quantitatively strongest postsecondary education and training sector in Germany's society. In general, conventional, historically rooted separations of initial vocational education and training, continuous training and higher education will become outdated and replaced by new, hybrid formats of study courses requiring new forms of organisation. The increasing relevance of dual study courses and continuing study programmes (often attended by students in employment) should also be perceived against this background.

3.2.5 Extension of Continuing/Further Education and Training

At several points the necessity to improve the role of continuing and further education and training has been indicated, to take on improvement of qualification processes:

- For the assurance and further development of competencies, all persons at employment age (and currently particularly older employees) should be offered improved opportunities for vocational training and continuing training, to enable longer durations of employment in life and close gaps in the labour force.
- Learning accompanying employment at a very high level is particularly relevant for graduates from the dual system and holders of a higher education entry qualification who at first preferred an early entry into professional life against a better qualification at the university level. These groups could and would like to benefit from respective offerings for further qualification. Taking societal and individual needs for qualification into account, universities therefore need to set up additional qualification programmes for people who are in employment.
- Persons with a low level of education constitute another important target group for which forms of qualification need to be sought: For them, deferral of learning to adulthood and the acquisition of qualifications later in life will be an important requirement for social and economic integration. In the coming years, a constantly

high number of low skilled labour force are expected, for whom there is an insufficient demand on the labour market. Hence, there is an urgent need to provide a broad scope of qualification measures to this group of people to enable their sustainable integration into the labour market.

Initial and further training of adults who have already been in employment might present an important task to existing vocational training institutions. Universities should also be viewed as lifelong learning institutions, which would not only result in an increased engagement in further training but also a reorientation of study courses offered in initial academic training. Supplementary in-employment academic qualifications are gaining importance for professional advancement and adjustment of skills to cutting-edge research. Bachelor/Master study courses offer an opportunity to time training and employment phases according to different needs. Universities should therefore provide appropriate structures of study courses.

4 Education and Development in Society

Today, a general consensus in society has been reached regarding the importance of the education system for development in society and particularly assuring Germany's competitiveness in a global market. Education and research expenses enjoy societal priority even in times of financial difficulty. There is a controversial debate in Germany as to whether federalism constitutes a condition or rather an obstacle for improving the quality of education, i.e. whether the federation should increasingly centralise education tasks. The Basic Law reform in 2006 has strongly reduced tasks that were shared by the federal government and the federal states (e.g. building universities), strengthening autonomy of the federal states. Currently a fear is raised that education systems in the federal states develop disparately, leading to distinctly different educational opportunities.

Differences in economic power and sociocultural composition of the population between the federal states, however, result in disparities that should not be regarded as a consequence of educational policy measures but rather present different conditions of action for educational policy. These inequalities are enforced by also taking into account the municipalities as important levels of educational policymaking. While national competency in educational policy would result in educational policy measures that apply across the entire Republic, this would not lead to an improved regional implementation, because existing differences are not removed at this level. Hence, perhaps attention should be focused on conditions for implementing reforms at the local level rather than focused on nationwide framework conditions. In the past decade, local authorities have increasingly perceived their tasks in offering their citizens a comprehensive supply of educational opportunities across all levels of education. Communities will probably need to receive more support regarding these activities, because educational opportunities must be offered to citizens close to home.

A growing flexibility can be observed regarding educational pathways in Germany, and transitions between one area of education and another are increasingly interlinked. At the same time, educational pathways have reached an increased level of diversity; different means of access to educational careers are offered (12 or 13 years of schooling for a higher education entry qualification (Abitur), half-day versus all-day school, public/private schooling, general/vocational education schools, Bachelor's degree at a university of applied science/university, etc.). Thereby, new educational opportunities are offered to individuals participating in education. To avail themselves of these options, parents and young people require information and counselling. In the past, this aspect was rather neglected, and endeavours need to be strengthened in the future, to improve the young people's competencies for planning their educational careers individually. In particular, this is relevant for the phase of entering a professional career.

At the level of educational institutions, there is a growing tendency to realise that they can no longer fulfil their tasks in isolation, but they need to co-operate with institutions engaged in cultural, social and sports education, as well as business enterprises. In as far as these institutions gain importance for fulfilling educational tasks, it becomes evident that educational tasks reach far beyond the field of educational policy and that education should be seen as a cross-sectional task involving society at large. This might in fact present the main challenge to be faced in the future.

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Mexico: Building New Paths to Educate Young People

Lorenzo Gómez Morin Fuentes

Abstract This chapter presents an overview of the Mexican education system—one of the largest in the world—with reference to children and young people’s educational problems and opportunities related to access to education and effective learning. Two education reforms proposed by the Ministry of Public Education are presented: the first is for basic education and consists in the establishment of a Professional Teaching Service program, aimed at improving teacher recruitment and professional development; the second is the Upper Secondary Education (USE) reform that focuses on universalizing coverage for youth (14–17 years of age) and creating a National System of Upper Secondary Education to coordinate USE schools and foster better results in terms of student achievement.

Keywords Education reform • Mexico • Professional Teaching Service • Upper Secondary Education

In Mexico, as in the rest of the world, it is recognized that education is a fundamental human right that promotes freedom and personal autonomy and allows the improvement of social, economic, and cultural conditions of the country. The increase in years of schooling (which includes significant learning) is associated with increased productivity, poverty reduction, and strengthening of social cohesion, among other factors of human development (INEE 2011). The importance that Mexico gives to education is established in the content of article 3 of the Mexican Constitution, whereby compulsory basic education and Upper Secondary Education (USE), free education offered by the state, and secular and democratic nature of national education are established.

L.G.M. Fuentes (✉)
Latin American Superior School of Social Sciences (FLACSO Mexico),
Mexico City, México
e-mail: lorenzo.gomez@flacso.edu.mx

To ensure the right to education, the Mexican Government is obliged to guarantee universal education services for compulsory education at the stage of preschool and grades 1–9 and, more recently, for Upper Secondary Education, hereinafter referred to as USE (grades 10–12). Therefore, since 2012, Mexico compulsory education includes 15 grades (from 3 to 17 years of age).

This compulsory nature of education is not yet translated into equal opportunities for access, retention, and school achievement. In particular, the decision to make USE compulsory (typically attended by the youth of 14–17 years of age) has taken into account the fact that young people who do not complete this education level are exposed to a high degree of vulnerability: their lack of higher skills puts them at risk of being hired in vulnerable jobs with low income and, therefore, being excluded from the full benefits of development Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL 2012). It is important to point out that the obligation of the state to ensure equal opportunities for access to education services should also include the achievement of meaningful learning by students, mandated by a national curriculum.

This paper presents an overview of the Mexican education system, with particular reference to children and young people's educational problems and opportunities. It seeks to explain the reasons that motivated the Federal Ministry of Education to implement the two most recent reforms in the system: the establishment of a teaching professional service in basic education and the reform of USE.

1 Mexican Education System

In 2011, Mexico ranked the 11th among the countries with the largest populations in the world, with a total population of more than 112 million inhabitants (INEGI 2012). The Mexican education system is one of the largest in the world: the third largest in the American continent, surpassed only by education systems of the USA and Brazil (INEE 2012). The Mexican education system has 32,835,292 students, 1,768,983 teachers, and 247,773 institutions of basic education, USE, and higher education. 25,666,451 students are enrolled in basic (preschool, primary, and secondary) education, i.e., 74.6 % of the enrollment of the education system; USE has 4,187,528 students, representing 12.2 % of the total enrollment; and 2,981,313 students are enrolled in higher education, 8.7 % of the total (Table 1).

Mexico has one of the largest education population in the world. In 2010, 33,251,615 children from 3 to 17 years of age (typical ages to attend basic education and USE) attended school, representing 29.6 % of the total population. This percentage seems high in the international arena, exceeding that of the USA (20.2 %), Brazil (26.1 %), and Spain (14.5 %). In Mexico, the high turnout is because of the large proportion of the population of children enrolled in compulsory basic education, compared with the total population (23.8 %). School attendance of these children subpopulations poses a challenge for the national education system and the solutions are not yet satisfactory. Except for children from 6 to 11 years of age, the right to attend school for children between 3 and 5 years of age and between 12 and 17 years of age is not yet exercised fully in Mexico. Attendance at schools was almost universal (98 %) among students

Table 1 Composition of the Mexican education system

	Education level	Grades	Normative age for enrollment (years)	Years in school	School enrollment (2010–2011)	Amount of teachers/schools
Basic education	Preschool	K1–K3	3–5	3	25,666,451	1,175,535 teachers/ 226,374 schools
	Elementary	1–6	6–11	6		
	Lower secondary	7–9	12–14	3		
Upper secondary education	Upper secondary	10–12	15–17	2–3	4,187,528	278,269 teachers/ 15,110 schools
Tertiary education	College or graduate studies	–	–	–	2,981,313	315,179 teachers/ 6,289 schools
Totals				14–15	32,835,292	

Source: INEE 2012

Note: Because tertiary education is not compulsory, it does not have a normative age for enrollment, nor a fixed number of years in school

from 6 to 11 years of age, but fell to 71 % for children from 3 to 5 years of age, and was 92 % and 67.2 % for children from 12 to 14 and from 15 to 17 years of age, respectively. The school enrollment structure in the educational system of Mexico is characterized by a large proportion of children enrolled in basic education, and a small proportion of young people and adults enrolled in higher education.

It is noteworthy that the rural population (those who live in communities of less than 2,500 inhabitants) equals 23.2 % of the total population. To keep this in mind is essential to understand the Mexico's challenge of providing education for children who live in more than 159,000 communities of less than 250 inhabitants. In addition, in 2010, almost a quarter of children aged 3–14 (26.9 %), and of those aged 15–17 (26.7 %), lived in towns of less than 2,500 inhabitants; around 6 % of both age groups declared to be exclusively indigenous language speakers; about 9 % of them had parents or guardians who had not received any formal education.

2 From Administrative Decentralization to School-Related Issues: The Path of Reforms in Basic Education

2.1 Ongoing Quality Issues

In 1992, the *National Agreement for the Modernization of Basic Education* was signed by the federal government, state governments, and the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE); it was a commitment of all parties for a new cycle of reforms, all of them related to both decentralization and improvement of efficiency and quality of the system (Hopkins et al. 2007). Beginning with this process of decentralization, it started a new stage of construction of local education systems that were able to comply with the objectives specified in the National Agreement of 1992.

Table 2 Percentage of Mexican students (aged 15 years) with low achievement (below level 1b; levels 1b and 1a) in reading competency according to PISA 2009

	Reading competence 2000 (below level 1b; levels 1b and 1a)		Reading competence 2009 (below level 1b; levels 1b and 1a)	
	%	ee*	%	ee*
Brazil	55.8	(1.7)	51.6	(1.9)
Chile	48.2	(1.9)	30.6	(1.5)
Mexico	44.1	(1.7)	40.1	(1.0)
Argentina	43.9	(4.5)	51.6	(1.9)
USA	17.9	(2.2)	17.6	(1.1)
Spain	16.3	(1.1)	19.6	(0.9)
Canada	9.6	(0.4)	10.3	(0.5)
OECD	19.3	(0.3)	18.1	(0.2)

Source: INEE 2012

*Estimated error

The first decade of this century witnessed the creation of the National Institute for the Education Evaluation, whose purpose was to take over the application of the international education assessments (such as PISA), in which Mexico participates. In the meantime, a national education quality assessment program was launched in 2005, to assess student achievement from the 3rd grade (elementary) to the 9th grade (lower secondary). This new test is applied annually to every child enrolled in school.

However, after 20 years of education reforms aiming at decentralization, transparency, accountability, and robust quality and efficiency, it must be admitted that the results have been disappointing, because of the low achievement level reached by the Mexican students, according to both the international student assessments (PISA, TIMSS, Latin American Laboratory for the Evaluation of the Education Quality [LLECE]) and the national one, applied together by the National Institute for the Education Evaluation and the Federal Ministry of Education (SEP).

Since 2000, Mexico has participated in the PISA, which shows the quality of basic education by testing academic performance of 15-year-old students. The 2000 PISA results revealed one of the most serious problems at this education level: approximately half of the 15-year-old students in Mexico do not have basic competencies to function adequately in the twenty-first century society.

Table 2 shows Mexico's PISA results for reading competency in 2000 and 2009, compared with other countries such as Brazil, Spain, and USA. The high percentage of young people that do not have the basic level of reading competence (level 2) represents a risk for progress in Mexico, and there is just a small improvement in decreasing low performers between 2000 and 2009. For example, at the current rate, it would take 45 years to lower percentage of low achievers to the level of Spain.

Table 3 shows the percentage of low achievers (below level 1b, at level 1b, and at level 1a) for reading, mathematics, and science competencies in every PISA test performed in Mexico. Unfortunately, results for mathematics and sciences are much worse than for reading.

In addition to the problem described above, another significant concern is the very low percentage of students with high performance in the reading competence as shown in Table 4. The percentage of high-performance students for mathematics and

Table 3 Percentage of Mexican students (aged 15 years) with low achievement (below level 1b; levels 1b and 1a) in reading, mathematics, and science competencies according to PISA results for 2000, 2003, 2006, and 2009

Competencies/year	National competence (below level 1b; levels 1b and 1a)	
	%	ee*
Reading/2000	44.1	(1.7)
Mathematics/2003	65.9	(1.7)
Sciences/2006	50.9	(1.4)
Reading/2009	40.1	(1.0)

Source: INEE 2012

*Estimated error

Table 4 Percentage of Mexican students (aged 15 years) with high achievement (levels 4–6) in reading competency according to PISA 2009

	Reading competence 2000 (levels 4–6)		Reading competence 2009 (levels 4–6)	
	%	ee*	%	ee*
Canada	44.5	(0.7)	39.5	(0.8)
USA	33.7	(2.4)	30.4	(1.5)
Spain	25.3	(1.0)	21.0	(0.7)
Argentina	10.3	(1.6)	7.0	(0.9)
Mexico	6.8	(0.9)	5.7	(0.4)
Chile	5.3	(0.5)	10.6	(0.9)
Brazil	3.6	(0.5)	7.4	(0.7)
OECD	30.5	(2.0)	29.6	(1.3)

Source: INEE 2012

*Estimated error

sciences is lower. This definitively has negative implications in terms of future scientific and economic development. It implies that the education system is not producing qualified human resources.

2.2 Development of Professional Teaching Service

Mexico has received advice from international organizations about education reform to tackle the issues of quality. The main recommended reforms are described in detail in an OECD publication titled “Progress with Educational Reform in Basic Education in Mexico: An OECD Perspective” (2012). Perhaps the most important of those reforms relates to the need to recruit some of the best people in the country and turn them into teachers. It is acknowledged that the quality of an education system cannot be higher than the quality of its teachers and that the foremost education reform is not the decentralization of the system, but the enhancement of the quality of the teacher.

In Mexico, until 2012, both the entry into the teaching profession and retention of teachers have been controlled *de facto* by the National Union of Education Workers (“Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación,” SNTE) and have

been ruled by considerations that have nothing to do with merit nor academic capacity. For instance, it has been common practice over the years for a family member to inherit the teacher's post from their parents. The international assessments do insistently recommend the establishment of a Professional Teaching Service, ruled entirely by professional merit and skill (OECD 2012).

During the last 2 years, the social pressure for the establishment of such a system has increased. Nevertheless, although the first attempts to set it up are dated in 2011, it has been only toward the end of 2012 that this reform has been effectively enacted. One of the first actions of the new Federal Government inaugurated on 1 December 2012, was the promotion of a constitutional reform that included this fundamental education reform. The most prominent feature of this new reform is the establishment of a Professional Teaching Service.

This component of the reform is expected to allow the Mexican state to improve the quality of the public education, by launching and maintaining a national teaching system that could regulate and make transparent the processes of selection and promotion of teachers. These critical processes have for decades been under the control of the national teacher's union (SNTE), and their main dynamic principles have been the group's interests, the control of job positions by the Union, and the rewarding of loyalties. The core ambition of the reform project consists of the regulation of the recruitment and advancement of teachers by no other consideration than professional merit. It is important to add that this expected improvement in education quality tackles one of the most prominent, publicly perceived, educational problems. It is why this component has been, in general terms, well received by the political parties and the public, in a political ambience featured by tendencies toward polarization and radicalization, as well as an incapacity to reach agreements in previous years.

2.3 Creation of National Education Evaluation System

Closely related to the aforementioned component is the project for the strengthening and expansion of the National System of Evaluation of the Education (Sistema Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación). This component is of critical importance, because the objectives of the professional teaching system cannot be reached if there is a lack of reliable and relevant information about the efficacy and efficiency of the national education delivery system. More specifically, the merit of the teachers needs to be objectively and fairly assessed, and this seems practically impossible to achieve because basic information, including the number of teachers working in the country, is not reliable, as has been recently publicly disclosed.

The third main feature of the reform project is its stated goal of elevating these two systemic changes to the legal category of constitutional mandates. The inclusion in the Mexican Constitution seems to be the only efficient way to give stability to the changes in the long term (Presidencia de la República 2012). The reform project was enacted in September 2013. It will be fully implemented next year, with the 2014 budget recently approved by the Congress.

3 Why Upper Secondary Education Reform?

As described above, reforms in basic education have been put into effect over the last 20 years, with varying results though. It was recognized in 2012 that the key catalyst for reform was teacher recruitment and training, as well as an independent evaluation system of the quality of education.

However, USE has not been the focus of public education policy until very recently. This education level has strategic importance for future national development, because of the need to develop the skills and competencies for the twenty-first century for the biggest generation of young people ever in Mexico's history. As explained below, this is a structural reform of the education system, which is centered on youth and their future, and involves new approaches to diversify opportunities for their education and transition to adulthood.

3.1 *Recognizing the Importance of USE*

According to the Latin American Organization for Youth (OIJ), youth has been traditionally conceived as a transitional phase between two stages: childhood and adulthood. In other words, it is a process of transition in which children become autonomous people. Therefore, it can also be understood as a preparation stage in which people are incorporated in the employment process and acquire independence from their families.

In today's world, there are about 1.5 billion young people between 12 and 24 years of age, of whom 1.3 billion live in developing countries. The current situation of youth in the world offers an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate economic growth and significantly reduce the levels of poverty. The World Bank, in its 2007 World Development Report, *Development and the Next Generation*, establishes the need to invest in young people to positively impact on five stages of their lives: the need to keep studying, the beginning of their life at work, adopting a healthy lifestyle, raising a family, and exercising their civil and democratic rights (SEP 2008a).

The reason why international organizations emphasize investment in young people at these stages is based upon the assumption of their positive impact on the long-term cultural and human capital development. In this sense, they also recognize the need to orient policies and institutions toward three strategic sectors: expand opportunities through broader access to health services and a better quality of education, develop the capacities of young people so they can make better decisions based on complete and adequate information, and promote an effective system of compensation programs that generate the incentives necessary to overcome the effects of misguided decisions.

The conditions in which the Mexican youth live in these days could be seen as evidence of the break in the path from education to work and citizenship, which had been the main anchor of the transition to adulthood in modern times. At the beginning

of the twenty-first century, that path has lost its continuity and stability, because of the failure to include the new generations in it.

Within the framework of the redistributive shortcomings of that path, two problems arise. First, many young people do not have access to formal education, and when they have it, some of them drop out because of economic constraints of subsistence living or because they do not like school. Others, who have the possibility of continuing their education, do not show a favorable educational performance. Second, many young people enter the labor market earlier but into precarious sectors, with low levels of qualifications and low wage conditions. Some combine studies with work under difficult conditions that do not allow them optimal performance either in school or at work.

If education and work do not offer enough opportunities for young people to develop, it is clear that young people face problems to fully exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Without sufficient skills and competencies to develop their autonomy, Mexican youth face difficulties in living and participating in a democracy and could be subject to political exclusion and limited cultural self-expression such as anti-systemic militancy, citizen apathy, or political patronage.

3.2 Identifying Key Issues in USE

USE in Mexico is organized into three education models: general USE, technological USE, and professional technician. General USE offers introductory or general preparation for students, so that they can pursue their studies in higher education. The technological USE serves two purposes: to prepare students for admission to higher education and to train them so that they can work in industrial, agricultural, fishing, or forestry technical activities. The professional technician model has also a propaedeutic character that allows students to continue to higher education and, at the same time, it offers a diploma for a short technical career. Students may choose among different schools that offer these three models. Within each model, there are a wide variety of programs and institutions.

Each model also involves different levels of administrative responsibility (federal, state, private, and autonomous). As a result, schools operate relatively autonomously from each other, with unequal stages of development and with different results in terms of quality (Santos and Delgado 2011). Hence for decades, USE has been characterized by both fragmentation and disarticulation and shows a remarkable lack of coherent public policy that could give it meaning and identity. This affects its organization and communication between the schools; the decisions students have to take to enter this system or to continue their studies are very complex. For example, there are more than 150 different academic programs for USE, making both mobility and exchange of students and a homogenous vision of what USE has to offer them very difficult to achieve.

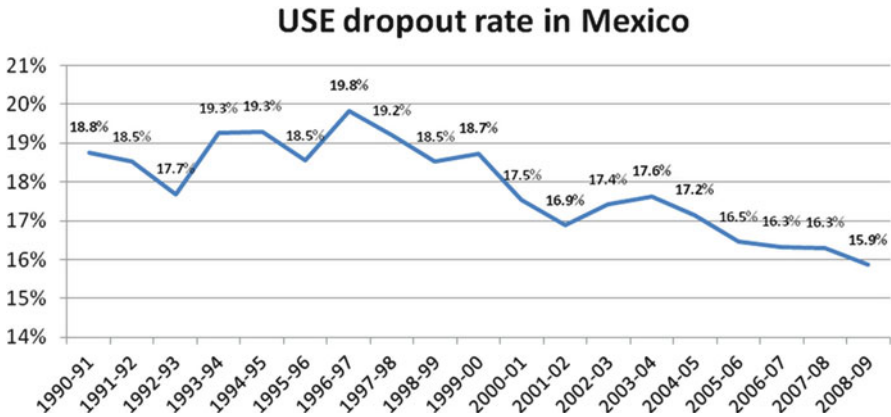


Fig. 1 Student dropout rate for Upper Secondary Education in Mexico (Source: Gómez Morin and Miranda 2010)

Empirical evidence shows that despite its importance, USE in Mexico still has severe problems such as insufficient coverage, high dropout rates, and low student academic achievement as discussed above (OECD 2012; INEE 2012). Perhaps the most dramatic and illustrative characteristic of USE shortcomings is the high dropout rate. Figure 1 shows the dropout rate (%) from 1990 to 2009. As can be seen, the dropout rate has decreased only 2.9 % in almost 20 years. Moreover, in the 2008–2009 school year, the dropout rate was 15.9 %, that is, approximately 630,000 students. If the school year consists of 200 days of school attendance, this means that every day more than 3,000 young people drop out of their USE studies in Mexico (Gómez Morin and Miranda 2010).

In addition, USE has the greatest repetition and failure rate within the education system in Mexico, which is reflected in the subsequent trajectory of its graduates. Among those who do graduate, only 50 % of them continue with their higher education. The highest unemployment rate among the entire population of Mexico is precisely observed among young people of 18 years who graduated from high school (8.5 %); on average, a new graduate from USE spends at least 8 months in finding his/her first job (Székely 2010; Zorrilla Alcalá et al. 2012).

3.3 Reaching Consensus on USE Reform

Quantitative and qualitative indicators of USE indicate that it does not meet the new requirements of the Mexican youth, within the framework of the society of the twenty-first century. The quantitative and qualitative changes that the country and the young people have experienced require, with urgency, a deep transformation of both the education model and the institutional paradigm that have characterized the education system and, in particular, USE.

Furthermore, the challenge now is even greater, because it is in the first decade of the twenty-first century when Mexico has the highest number of young people throughout its history. This implies that there will be a greater demand for these services in the near future. It means not only taking measures and actions for strengthening the academic programs, but also calling for innovation to address the new conditions of educational development, as well as the emerging features of increasingly complex youth in their transition to adulthood and full citizenship.

Faced with this reality of great challenges, a process of structural change of USE started in 2007. This has been possible thanks to the confluence of four groups of participants: local education authorities, higher education institutions, the National Congress, and federal education authorities. All four groups shared awareness of the strategic importance of the USE and the urgent need to modernize it and align it with the demands of today's world.

To achieve the needed transformation in USE, an education reform was proposed, approved, and put into effect in 2008. The objectives and goals of this reform are explained below.

4 New Approaches to Youth Education: Reform Components

USE reform in Mexico is, without a doubt, an act of public recognition of the shortcomings of this education level. At the same time, it reiterates the commitment of the Mexican Government to young people to improve opportunities for access to school and the completion of studies with appropriate levels of educational achievement.

4.1 Scope and Objectives of USE Reform

The design of the reform does not only recognize the main problems of this education level, but also considers the expectations of young people, with regard to their education and their future life path. In this context, the objectives of USE reform were to improve the relevance, equity, and quality of education services and to strengthen institutional coordination and the effectiveness of all the academic programs and management so that young people have access, stay in school, and study in favorable environments of learning for the development of effective competencies (Székely 2010).

The scope of USE reform includes the creation of a National System of Upper Secondary Education, which could provide this education level with identity, academic and administrative order, articulation between different school models, and content relevance. The reform does not seek to develop a single school model for USE or a unique national curriculum, but a common framework of organization for the whole system.

The main objective of USE is to provide young people with the opportunity to acquire skills, aptitudes, knowledge, as well as the ability to continue learning throughout life and that means the possibility of being active, productive, and participative citizens (OECD 2012). To do so, USE needs to incorporate new pedagogical approaches to prepare youth for an era of accelerated change and uncertainty, for them to be flexible and adaptive, to keep abreast of the use of information and communication technologies, and to be capable of responding to the challenges of the knowledge society.

USE reform has an integral approach to implement the needed changes to the system by developing various institutional strategies, whose specific aim is to support and accompany students. This is probably one of the more innovative features of this reform, compared with previous efforts to improve educational outcomes. The reform states that students are both the principal actor and the target of every improvement planned.

4.2 *Components of the USE Reform*

The comprehensive USE reform consists of four innovative transformation components (Secretaría de Educación Pública 2008a; Székely 2010).

4.2.1 **Common Curriculum Framework**

This component encompasses the reorientation of an education model based on memorization to one based on learning in which knowledge is transmitted through the development of skills and competencies. It started with the definition, for the first time in the education system, of a Common Curriculum Framework for USE that offers a common ground for every USE school model. The Common Curricular Framework organizes USE curriculum around three types of competences: generic (common to all USE models), disciplinary (basic and propaedeutic), and professional.

Basic competencies. These types of competencies have three characteristics: (a) they are applicable in social, academic, personal, and employment contexts and are important for life; (b) they are transversal because they are relevant to every academic discipline and for school processes; and (c) they are transferable because they strengthen the capability to acquire other competencies.

Disciplinary competencies. These types of competencies are the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that every student must acquire in school to both develop their scientific and humanistic culture and be prepared for lifelong learning. These competencies are organized in four disciplinary fields: (a) mathematics, (b) experimental sciences, (c) humanities and social sciences, and (d) communication.

Professional competencies. These competencies offer skills and knowledge relevant to a good performance in the professional sector.

4.2.2 Delivery Models

This component encompasses the formal definition of four different ways to deliver education services:

Teacher-led, which is the traditional education where a student attends school and 80 % of learning activities are conducted by a teacher

Intensive program, which is basically the same as teacher-led but, instead of 3 years of schooling, is reduced to 2 years

Virtual education (e-learning), which takes advantage of information and communication technology for learning, with tutorial assistance of a teacher, and after completion of courses, students are certified

Self-planned education and mixed models, which allow students to choose their courses according to their available time and between 30 % and 40 % of learning activities are supervised by a teacher

These delivery models offer the possibility of graduation from USE to all young people with different interests, needs, and contexts.

4.2.3 Implementation Mechanisms

Certain operational processes were required to implement the new Common Curriculum Framework. These processes included teacher training, management skills for school principals, dropout prevention programs, infrastructure and equipment enhancement for schools, school management improvement, scholarships for students, rules for student transfer between schools of different education models, establishment evaluation practices, and finally, design and implementation of mechanisms for linkage with the labor market.

- Management mechanisms that are listed below are indispensable components of the comprehensive reform of USE, because they define standards and common processes that guarantee adherence to the Common Curriculum Framework, under the terms of the National Upper Secondary Education System (NUSES).
- Training and updating of the teaching staff according to the objectives of USE reform. This is one of the most important elements for USE reform to be carried out successfully. Teachers must be able to work in accordance with the competency model and to adopt learning-focused strategies. To achieve this, a teacher profile is required. This profile is aligned to the graduate profile, so it provides the teacher with the tools needed to promote generic, disciplinary, and professional competencies for their students.
- A national strategy to support and accompany students through mentoring and orientation programs designed both to decrease dropout rates and to pay attention to the needs of the students to help them to achieve a successful USE completion.
- The definition of a school management program and the development of a school principal profile, along with training programs for both.

- The development of a school control system and the definition of student transfer rules that would enable the mobility of students between subsystems, which avoids the need to restart from the beginning because of different and mutually exclusive academic programs.
- Expansion of the coverage of USE and an infrastructure investment program to create new schools and adapt existing ones so they could accept more students.
- The provision of economic aid and scholarships to young people who are unable to finance their studies.
- The design and application of a standardized test to verify the degree of progress in the achievement of the graduate profile (ENLACE test for students who are in their last year of USE).

In addition, schools operated by the Ministry of Education at the federal level have introduced some additional transformations including, among others (competitive) selection of principals through examinations, a school management system to establish goals and priorities by staff in each school year, as well as various evaluation mechanisms for transparency and accountability.

4.2.4 School Incorporation to the National Upper Secondary Education System

This component consists of establishing procedures so that each school on a voluntary basis could accredit the operation of the three previous components (i.e., to adopt the Common Curriculum Framework, select a delivery model, and put into effect the mechanisms of implementation) and submits its registration to the NUSES.

In turn, the processes to implement the NUSES are:

The establishment of the Council for the Evaluation of Upper Secondary Education.

A civil association including representatives from the Ministry of Education, the state education authorities, the National Association of public universities, and the National Institute for the Education Evaluation, among others. This Council will coordinate the processes of evaluation of USE schools for membership to the NUSES, as well as the implementation of mechanisms for the accreditation of the quality of the schools participating in the system.

Registration and accreditation of institutions that will assist the Council for the evaluation of Upper Secondary Education in evaluating USE schools that wish to be part of NUSES.

USE school analysis and assessment. This is the process whereby a school principal can voluntarily request to the Council the presence of an evaluation institution to determine whether the school operates under the three components described above and complies with the general principles of the reform. After the assessment, the school is classified according to the fulfillment of the three components: if the school fulfills all components of the reform, it is registered in the system; if not, it is given support to achieve its registration.

The design of the procedure of entry through three previous processes implies:

- For the first time in the country, USE will have clear parameters for quality evaluation and monitoring of the services offered.
- The budget can be prioritized more effectively, directing resources to schools that require greater support and toward the mechanisms of implementation of the reform that present greater shortcomings or needs in each case.
- The school principals are leaders of the education project of their community, because it is they who, with the approval of the appropriate education authority, requested the analysis and assessment to enter the path of continuous improvement for entry to the NUSES.
- The teachers have clear objectives, with information for feedback management and with the competencies and skills to promote the development of the future graduate profile.
- The students of the schools belonging to the NUSES may be eligible to receive an additional complementary NUSES certification.
- The society will have clear parameters to identify quality and improvement in USE schools.

5 Universalizing USE

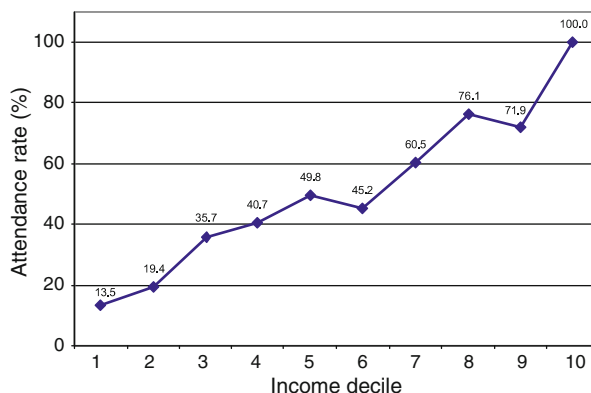
Another feature of Mexican youth is its social segmentation, which is clearly associated with the social inequality that characterizes the country as a whole. Both national surveys for youth in Mexico in 2000 and 2005 and various findings of educational research on youth offer information on a highly differentiated youth population both in its material and symbolic existence. The contrasts and differences are manifest in areas that are crucial in terms of their social, political, and cultural life: they live in different socioeconomic contexts and are characterized by deep structural heterogeneity in their existence, living, and accommodation.

For decades access to this level of education was in fact restricted to young people who had better social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Figure 2 shows the large difference in coverage of USE in relation to the level of income, with lower coverage rates tied to a low-income decile.

USE is fundamental because during this education cycle students acquire critical knowledge and skills, including sociocultural and educational experiences that will define their inclusion in society as participating and productive citizens. Its capacity to offer relevant, sufficient, and appropriate programs that meet the demographic, sociocultural, and educational requirements of Mexican youth will be vital for their training and development, and thus their insertion in the current world of a competitive economy and their participation in the consolidation of democratic development and social welfare of the country.

Given such recognition, in October 2010, the Mexican Congress unanimously approved reforms to articles 3 and 31 of the Mexican Constitution, which declared USE compulsory in the country. Finally, the decree was signed in February 2012.

Fig. 2 Attendance rate in Upper Secondary Education (population aged 16–18 years) by income decile (Source: World Bank. (2005). *Mexico Expenditure Review*. In: *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, 2008)



Implementation of compulsory USE will be gradual; it will begin in 2012–2013 to achieve total coverage in schools by 2021–2022 (Cámara de Diputados 2011, 2012).

6 Initial Results of USE Reform

The USE reform has been implemented for a 4-year period, and there are already encouraging signs that it is on track and producing the first positive results:

1. In 2008, the Ministry of Education published a decree establishing the Common Curriculum Framework, with all its components, as a legal provision in the Mexican education system. The majority of USE schools adopted this framework (SEP 2008b). To implement this Common Curriculum Framework, 47,000 teachers and 749 school principals were trained, which means that one of the most important steps to gain access to NUSES has been completed (Subsecretaría de Educación Media Superior 2012).
2. The Council for the Evaluation of Upper Secondary Education was successfully established (www.copeems.mx). As of September 2012, the Council has registered and certified 206 schools that operate the first three components of the reform. In addition, 320 schools are in the process of being assessed this year to achieve accreditation by the Council (Secretaría de Educación Pública 2012a). According to information from the Ministry of Public Education, more than 4,000 schools are moving forward in the process of incorporation to NUSES.
3. Education indicators of USE registered significant improvement in the past 3 years. Dropout rates between 1990 and 2008 decreased 2.9 % (from 18.8 % to 15.9 %), whereas in only 4 years between 2008 and 2012, dropout rates decreased 1.5 %. As part of the implementation mechanisms, a national strategy was designed to reduce the student dropout rate (Gómez Morin and Miranda 2010), which was launched in over 1,000 schools across the country (Secretaría de Educación Pública 2012b).

4. This strategy combines all the components of a policy focused on supporting young people and includes programs in mentoring, development of reading skills, vocational guidance, and scholarships, among others. The basis of this strategy was the design of an early warning system to identify students who are at risk of dropping out, so that schools can intervene at any time with any of the programs of prevention (Secretaría de Educación Pública 2012b).
5. Finally, another significant advance refers to USE coverage at the national level. According to statistics of the Ministry of Education, coverage in this education level increased from 56.9 % in the school year of 2005–2006 to 69.3 % in the school year of 2011–2012, i.e., an increase of 12.4 %. This indicates that today there are better opportunities for young people in Mexico to finish their USE.

There is still inconclusive evidence of the impact of the USE reform on student academic achievement. It will not be until the end of 2013 that PISA results will be released, allowing us to make a comparison with 2009 results. A national standardized test has shown a lack of progress in students' reading competence. This is a pending matter for further analysis.

7 Conclusion

The experience of Mexico, like many other countries, shows that the success or failure of reforms in education depends largely on how well those involved in the change understand what should be changed and how that change can be achieved in the best possible way. Obviously, education systems have achieved the greatest advances when they have collectively built a solid public idea that justifies and guides change.

To opt for a process of democratic construction of education policies is much more than to encourage citizen participation and gather the opinion of various individuals and interest groups. It means that the decisions taken must be the result of reflection and collective discussion of ideas with regard to *what* should cause a change in education and *how*. However, to make the process truly democratic, the dialogue between actors needs to be informed and evidence-based.

We know that to determine the real effects and results of policy education reforms, we have to wait at least a decade. However, if the education policy initiative has clear objectives and strategies for change and has identified goals to achieve, it can lead to the improvement in some of the conditional factors of lasting change.

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Argentina: Improving Student School Trajectories

Margarita Poggi

Abstract This chapter provides an analysis of the evolution of the Argentine education system from the late nineteenth century up to the present. It starts with a brief historical overview of state consolidation, early educational achievements and the expansion of a modern, open, and free system. It goes on to describe the main regulatory frameworks and most relevant policy guidelines developed in the last decade while analysing the relationship between federal and provincial levels of government. The chapter also examines social and educational gaps, repetition and dropout rates, quality of education and the status of the teaching profession. Finally, promoting diversity and prioritising knowledge are explored as some of the challenges that educational policies should address in the future.

Keywords Argentina • Education system • Federalism • Inequality • School trajectories • Quality of education • Teacher profession

Argentina is organised into a federal system comprising 23 provinces and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires.¹ The population is estimated at about 40,120,000, according to the last 2010 National Population and Household Census. Among them, 49 % are men, 51 % are women, and approximately 90 % of the total population lives in urban areas.

According to the census, Argentina is the third most aged country in Latin America after Uruguay and Cuba (14 % represents the population of over 60-year-olds). Over the decades, the country has been characterised by a gradual decrease of the population between 0 and 14 years old, which represented 25.5 % in 2010. Argentina, together with Chile, Cuba and Uruguay, belongs to the group of

¹ Hereinafter called “jurisdictions”.

M. Poggi (✉)

International Institute for Educational Planning, IIEP/UNESCO Buenos Aires office,
Buenos Aires, Argentina

e-mail: mpoggi@iipe-buenosaires.org.ar

countries within the region with a progressive demographic transition, characterised by populations with a moderate or low birth and mortality rates, resulting in a low natural growth of about 1 %. For this reason, the population pyramid confirms the upward trend in the relative burden of the elderly population, showing in turn lower levels in the birth rate. This trend in the long term has had an impact on the expansion and development of the education system, among other things.

Argentina is a country with a high level of human development in Latin America and ranks among the countries with the highest levels, together with Chile, Cuba and Uruguay.²

It is noteworthy that throughout the twentieth century, the country had undergone long periods of military rule, especially during the second half of the century, until the end of 1983 when a period of democratic government began and continues up to today.

Here follows a series of the most relevant characteristics of the Argentine education system: first, a historical perspective that allows understanding early achievements and more structured characteristics; second, an in-depth analysis of the main policy guidelines during the last decade; finally, the article presents the still pending challenges that education policies should either address or delve into more vigorously in the future.

It should be noted that, due to the length allowed for this chapter, the analysis focuses on policies oriented to regular education, particularly those corresponding to the levels defined as compulsory by the *National Education Law*. However, this does not mean that other aspects not considered herein lack relevance.

1 Main Characteristics of the Argentine Education System

Understanding the achievements of the educational system and challenges for current policies requires a brief historical overview before a general description of the characteristics of this system (education types, processes and attainments).³ This overview takes into account the relationships between the federal and provincial levels of government that have been shaped through different regulatory frameworks (Bravo 1988). Regulations have also established the main topics addressed by educational policies as will be explained later.

²For further information, see SITEAL (2011).

³This section particularly picks up Chap. 4 of the *2010 Human Development National Report. Human development in Argentina: development and new challenges*. Buenos Aires. United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

1.1 *Brief Historical Overview*

The early expansion of the Argentine education system was grounded in the development and consolidation of a state that, since the end of the nineteenth century, took primary education as one of its main projects and that, in the second half of the twentieth century—in spite of interrupted democratic periods and repeated budgetary restrictions—achieved a significant expansion of education at the secondary and higher education levels. This commitment and dynamism resulted in, among other things, economic benefits deriving from participation in the world economy as a raw material producer throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the development of a dynamic industrial sector in light of import substitutions strengthened during the 1940 and 1960 decades, the construction of an active state in terms of the social and economic life organisation, the emergency of a pushing middle class and the early organisation of citizenship strongly demanding more and better state services.

In this context, the Argentine education system experienced an early expansion and consolidation—especially compared with other Latin American countries—between the end of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century. This expansion was evidenced in the following: (i) the accelerated growth of primary education until reaching a stage of universalisation towards the decade of 1980; (ii) the creation of a diversified and strongly expanded level in secondary education as of the decade of 1950 (iii) the establishment, as of 1869, of a quite homogeneous and very dynamic system of teacher training institutions; and (iv) the expansion, during the twentieth century, of a modern university system with periods of strong open admission process and free education delivery.

The education system is based on a structure resulting from evolution over 100 years. The reform dates back to the end of the nineteenth century and has witnessed oscillation of the education structure towards a more consolidated regulatory framework (Albergucci 1996; Almandoz 2000). Two acts have mainly shaped its trajectory. The first one was *Law No 1420* in 1884 that was part of a wider set of rules that contributed to provide the creation and consolidation process of the Argentine state with a final institutional structure. This law, ruling over the Federal Capital and national territories, allowed Argentina to decide on a compulsory, free, universal and lay education system that delivers basic reading and writing skills, mathematics, world and Argentine history and geography, natural sciences, and access to knowledge of the National Constitution.

The difficulties experienced by several provinces in expanding their educational services caused the enactment of *Law No 4878* (known as *Láinez Law*) in 1905. It authorised the Nation to establish primary schools in the territory of those provinces requesting the action. This measure had a rapid impact (Braslavsky & Krawczyk 1988). Thus, in the decade of 1930, more than half of the primary school enrolment in the provinces corresponded to national schools. However, many of them offered four out of the seven grades expected and thus provided rural populations with a short-length primary education programme. As a result, a double education system

coexisted in each province (national and provincial) with strong differences between them, for example, bureaucratic and financial reporting relationship, teacher salaries or curriculum proposals. Also, several provinces closed down schools under their responsibility and transferred them into national schools.

Although there have been several attempts at reform over the 100 years, these acts have established a regulation framework that has served as the basis of expanding and consolidating primary education in Argentina all along the twentieth century.

On the contrary, secondary education was not ruled by a national law in Argentina until the enactment of the *Federal Education Law* in the 1990s. This lack of regulation was partly due to the initial subordination of secondary education to training courses for university admission exams. In fact, the Constitution of 1853 contains a vague reference to secondary education, therefore its expansion developed without a comprehensive legislation providing an organic structure to the array of offers, categories and specialisation courses.

Therefore, specialisation courses that shaped secondary education were the result of the creation of schools that was imposed as a model to pursue. The first secondary school, Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires, was created in 1863 with a focus on elite education and training for university education. Afterwards, technical, productive and commercial specialisation courses were created following a two-stage process. At the first stage, intra-institutional diversification, “annexes” were created in national schools with special courses in response to the productive needs of the surrounding areas. The second, at the inter-institutional diversification stage from 1890 to 1910 approximately, several technical, commercial, agro-technical and art schools were established and taken as a model to pursue each specialisation. Since then, the Argentine secondary school was developed into such categories as general (*bachiller*), commercial, technical, art and agro-technical. These categories survived the different reform attempts throughout the century.

However, the true expansion of technical education was as of the end of the 1940s when a strong subsystem including arts and crafts schools was developed and further reconsidered by the end of the 1950s when the CONET (National Council for Technical Education) was created.

Teacher training underwent a similar process. The *Escuela Normal de Paraná* (a teacher training school in the province of Entre Ríos) was established in 1869. This was the first school oriented to training the necessary teachers to support the growing expansion of the primary education. Early in the twentieth century, other teacher training schools and institutions led to institutional models that would be replicated creating a teacher training system for secondary school level all along that century, thus shifting the central role of universities at the primary and secondary levels of the education system.

1.2 Recent Regulatory Frameworks

In 1968, a process was started to transfer schools created by the *Láinez Law* to the provinces. All primary schools managed by the central government was

transferred in 1978, except the schools for adults that were transferred in 1980. *Law No 24049*, passed in 1992, also transferred secondary schools and tertiary nonuniversity institutions including those belonging to the private sector.

As a result of the aforementioned trends, the Argentine education system was characterised by a sustained education coverage increase, particularly that of primary education, reflected in a sustained and sharp drop of the illiteracy rate until the 1960s. Although this rate was lower as of the 1970s, a remarkably low rate is attained by the end of the previous century. At a regional level, only Cuba and Uruguay show illiteracy percentages in the population over 25 years old lower than Argentina (UNESCO 2007; PRIE 2011).

As far as primary education is concerned, universalisation was attained in the 1980s. In connection with secondary education, a strong expansion process started in the 1950s and 1960s, only scaled down during the military governments. However, it was as of 1983 with the return of democracy that admission tests were eliminated, and secondary education turned into a more open and less selective system. This change resulted in a remarkable increase in the student enrollments.

The following changes were introduced by the *Federal Education Law No 24195* enacted in 1993: system forms of government changed, structure divided into levels and cycles, compulsory education extended to 10 years, curricular contents updated, and education quality evaluation system established. The central government was defined as being responsible for regulating, guiding and evaluating the education system and for the compensation of regional differences, while provinces remained responsible for the management of institutions. This law restructured the Federal Council of Culture and Education (CFE) established in 1970, to gather provincial ministers of education (Almandoz 2000).

The direct responsibility over the education management fell on provincial governments, which had to assume the costs and the transformation of the education. Also, policies that had to be agreed between the National Ministry of Education and provincial ministers within the Federal Council of Education (CFE) resulted in a large body of regulations that were unevenly applied and had a limited legal enforceability due to the ambiguities of the law and the resistance created.

Above and beyond the controversial nature of this reform, extending the compulsory education from 7 to 10 years contributed to expanding the education among the population, especially secondary education.

This regulation was replaced by *National Education Law No 26206*, enacted in 2006 (Filmus & Kaplan 2012). This law especially established a system containing a unified structure throughout the country in order to ensure a better regulatory framework and cohesion, as well as a better organisation and relationship among the different education levels and methods and the national accreditation of degrees and certificates issued by the education system. The law also established compulsory education from 5 years old until finishing upper secondary education and a four-level, eight-modality structure. Coming back to primary education of 6 or 7 years and secondary education of 5 or 6 years—provisional definition containing the real possibilities for adapting to each jurisdiction—entails recognising school traditions that the previous law was unable to change.

In connection with the government and the national education system management, the law maintains the structure of concurrent responsibilities agreed between the Ministry of Education and the jurisdictions. It also reorganises the Education Federal Council and adds a new responsibility that involves issuing compulsory and binding regulations whenever this agency decides.

The law also provides for the debates raised over the last two decades on education quality. Three elements are set forth on this issue, which are stated both in the law and policies implemented: (a) attempt to ensure the development of a set of core learning priorities as a strategy to avoid a perceived trend towards dispersion as a result of the decentralisation process and the regulatory challenges to the system at central level after the enactment of *Law No 24195*; (b) a new emphasis on the improvement of the education quality, focused on the system as a whole and not on schools and (c) the need to reinforce teacher and professor training and improve teacher working conditions.

It is necessary to point out that as of 2004 a set of new provisions was made to redefine the legal system in the context of a social, political and economic framework thoroughly transformed after one of the most serious crisis in the country in 2001. Apart from the *National Education Law*, there have been acts such as a law to guarantee the teacher salary and 180 class days during the school year (No 25.864),⁴ *Teacher Incentive Fund Law (No 25.919)*, *Technical and Vocational Education Law (No 26.058)*, *Education Financing Law (No 26.075)* and *Comprehensive Sex Education Law (No 26.150)*.

In connection with the *Education Financing Law*, for years Argentina could hardly exceed the 4 % limit to education investment vis-à-vis the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The availability of resources largely determined the capacity of the different governments to encourage the various actions over the last decade.

It was necessary to guarantee the increase in total resources allocated to education in order to prioritize this area as one of the core issues of the economic, social and citizen development. The new law established that the consolidated state budget would be progressively increased until reaching 6 % of GDP in 2010, significantly exceeding the allocation to this sector. Concrete actions in terms of resources for the sector were set, together with a division of commitments agreed between the national government and the jurisdictions, prioritised objectives and institutional devices to guarantee the final compliance. Thanks to these actions, consolidated education investment for the whole country had exceeded the barrier of 5 % of GDP by the end of 2006, further reaching 6.47 % in 2011. Also, the law created the Teacher Salary National Compensation Programme (FONID) with the purpose of contributing to compensate for inequalities in the initial teacher salary in the jurisdictions calling for this measure. This allowed setting a legal framework to the salary improvement policy started in 2003.

⁴Calendar later extended to 190 days in 2012.

2 Progress and Challenges of the Current Education System

The Argentine education system is made up of state, private, cooperative and social management education systems. Education is compulsory from 5 years of age until finishing high school. The structure of the education system contains four levels and eight modalities and is undergoing a transition and reorganisation process.

The levels are as follows: preprimary, primary, secondary and higher education, the latter including higher education institutes reporting to the jurisdictions, and autonomous universities.

The eight modalities are as follow: technical and vocational education,⁵ art education, special education, lifelong education for young people and adults, rural education, intercultural bilingual education, education in detention, and home and hospital education.

Approximately 12,000,000 students are enrolled in the system in all levels and modalities (Table 1).

2.1 Access to Preprimary, Primary and Secondary Education

The successive extension of the compulsory school attendance that occurred over the recent years had an impact on the enrolment and set new challenges in connection with the access, retention and graduation of children and adolescents in the Argentine education system.

As far as the primary education is concerned, the universalisation of this level is practically attained in the 1980s. This does not mean that the state should not have made the best efforts to increase the attendance of children from rural areas and from low-income sectors.

Censuses carried out in 2001 and 2010 show that the enrolment rate increased from 98.2 % to 99 % in the 6–11 age group (with a difference of almost 0.8 percentage point).

According to the census source mentioned, the highest enrolment increase is shown in ages corresponding to the preprimary level. Indeed, a 16.08 % increase is evidenced in the 3–4 year age group enrolment (from 39.13 % to 55.2 % for a stage that is not defined as compulsory) and another 12.56 % increase in the 5 year age group (from 78.8 % to 91.4 %) that is the age span corresponding to the education defined as compulsory.

⁵The Technical and Vocational Education Law No 26058, enacted in 2005, was the first one created to modify the regulatory structure set forth in 1990. The purpose of this law is to rule and set a legal framework for the vocational and training education at the secondary and nonuniversity higher levels and defines this modality as the one “promoting among people the ability, knowledge, capacity, skill, value and attitude learning related to performances and criteria typical of the social and productive contexts, allowing for a better knowledge of reality based on the systematic reflection on the practice and the application of the theory” (art. 4).

Table 1 Student enrollments according to the type/level of education and year

Type and level	Year					
	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	
Regular—preprimary						
Nursery school	22,525	25,390	39,318	60,986	74,642	
Pre-school	1,255,858	1,256,191	1,324,529	1,364,909	1,452,273	
Regular—primary						
Half-day schools	4,456,124	4,383,100	4,345,371	4,387,561	4,370,581	
Full-day schools	243,866	238,247	252,376	258,282	272,849	
Regular—secondary						
Basic cycle	1,846,136	1,838,779	1,913,868	1,920,661	1,844,898	
Oriented cycle	Technical	242,316	322,069	305,322	291,922	286,843
	Nontechnical	634,027	830,472	839,161	841,711	791,876
Basic and oriented cycles	Technical	221,171	134,229	105,438	118,928	174,173
	Nontechnical	545,913	363,572	302,018	298,516	521,441
Regular—nonuniversity higher education						
Teacher training only	277,546	313,085	277,808	282,514	337,903	
Technical only	180,071	213,472	233,029	249,654	302,712	
Both types of training	23,865	28,598	23,879	38,272	15,581	
Adults						
All levels	602,609	613,194	625,495	661,143	732,751	
Special						
All levels	73,508	74,294	78,797	79,872	100,439 (*)	

Source: Annual surveys 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2009. National Bureau of Education Quality Information and Evaluation (DiNIECE). Ministry of Education of Argentina (MEN)

There is a percentage difference in the 15–17 age group that stands out: while the 12–14 age group shows a 1.4 point increase in the inter-census period, the 15–17 age group attendance grows by 2.15 % (from 79.4 % in 2001 to 81.6 % in 2011).

From a regional perspective, it may be said that enrolment rates corresponding to the primary and secondary levels in Argentina are the highest in Latin America. In the region where primary education is highly extended, Argentina, together with Cuba, Ecuador, Panama, Mexico and Uruguay, is part of a group of countries with rates far over 97 %. At this level, the graduation rate is high for countries in the region, even when there are some countries from Central America with the lowest rates (e.g., Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador) (SITEAL 2009, 2010; PRIE 2011).

At the secondary level, Argentina is part of a group of countries, together with Chile, Cuba and Peru, having high graduation rates. At the age of 17, eight out of ten adolescents are undergoing the final stage of secondary school, some of them have already finished and a small part has undertaken higher level studies. Seven out of ten young people between 20 and 22 years old have already finished secondary education (SITEAL 2010; Poggi 2010).



Fig. 1 Student school trajectories indicators. Regular education. Primary and secondary levels (Source: Annual surveys 2007, 2008 and 2009. National Bureau of Education Quality Information and Evaluation (DiNIECE). Ministry of Education of Argentina (MEN). Repetition, effective promotion, interannual drop out and overage rates: 2008–2009. Graduation rate: 2007–2008)

2.2 Overcoming Hindrances in Student School Trajectories

Regardless of the achievements already mentioned, there are still some hindrances in the education system in connection with the student school trajectories that should be stressed. To clarify this, five key indicators should be analysed: repetition, overage, dropout, effective promotion, and graduation, which refer to problems and effects that are mutually combined. Repetition leads to overage, and both are associated with dropout, which makes promotion, and graduation rates fall, although there might be other independent causes. This also calls for interpreting indicators carefully: for example, overage is also a result of the late enrolment in the education system. Consequently, there are times when the success of school inclusion programmes might increase this rate. The above figure shows each indicator (Fig. 1).

In the case of primary level, inter-annual dropout rate averages 1.16%. Dropout rates increase considerably at the 8th year of schooling (12.08%⁶). This may be due first to the fact that, at that moment, most of students accumulate years as grade repeaters and therefore turn overage. Second, this shows the difficulties faced by secondary schools to adapt to the inclusion of new groups of students. Finally,

⁶ Annual surveys 2008 and 2009. National Bureau of Education Quality Information and Evaluation (DiNIECE). Ministry of Education of Argentina (MEN).

adolescents young people living in less advantaged social contexts are seldom impelled to engage in the informal work force.

The cumulative effect of repetition is evidenced in the overage at the basic cycle of secondary education, which scales up to 38.2 %. High repetition rates imply that there is a growing overage increase every year; however, it is offset by the dropout increase (since most of those leaving school are those who repeated at least once in their career). This has an impact also on the overage rate at the second cycle of secondary education. Overage rate at the primary education level is over 22 % and grows as the students progress in their education as a result of the cumulative effect of repetition.

Another side of repetition and dropout is promotion. The effective promotion rate at the primary school level is over 93 %, at basic secondary school level is over 79 % and at the oriented secondary school level reaches almost 75 %.

There are many very complex causes for repetition. In a context of growing school inclusion, this discrepancy increases due to, among other factors, the access of boys, girls, adolescents, and young people from historically excluded social sectors, and challenges the system's traditions and practices. Schools have not been prepared to disclose inequality and diversity relationships entailed by their profiles.

It is worth mentioning a recent measure adopted by the Federal Education Council about repetition during the first year of primary school where the rate reaches 8.16, when it is 5.18 for the whole level.⁷ In the framework of other considerations about school trajectories,⁸ the agency has resolved that the two first years of this level are a pedagogical unit and therefore the promotion schemes leading to review repetition should be recast. It is also important to implement a promotion scheme for the second cycle accompanied by supporting measures and assistance through specific programmes to encourage continuing schooling, ensure learning achievements and respect the specific processes undergone by boys and girls.

2.3 Decreasing Social and Economic Inequalities

Argentina—after the 1990s and particularly after the 2001 crisis—recorded a strong increase of social and economic inequalities as evidenced also by the cultural level and the possibilities of civic integration and participation. Education has not escaped from this situation. While social gaps increased, the education system presented an extremely heterogeneous and fragmented scenario.

Over the past few decades, employment has been strong in the country, and the society was highly integrated. This situation has been gradually decreasing, social

⁷ Annual surveys 2008 and 2009. National Bureau of Education Quality Information and Evaluation (DiNIECE). Ministry of Education of Argentina (MEN).

⁸ See *Resolución CFE No174/12* approving the document “Federal guidelines to improve teaching and learning and school trajectories at the pre-primary and primary levels and modalities and their regulation”.

groups started to develop different integration strategies and schools played an important role to this end. School difficulties added to this situation, as mentioned above, turning more complex the design and development of educational policies that seek to recover social justice (Filmus & Kaplan 2012).

It was in this scenario that inclusion policies were promoted to provide for the essential material conditions to effectively exercise the right of children and young people to have access to education and remain in the education system. The provision of resources (school and inclusion scholarships, books and educational material, computer equipment), together with the building and refurbishment of physical spaces, has been conceived as a basic condition leading to a broader education proposal to make teaching and learning a feasible fact.

Scholarships granted through the different programmes totalled 690,785 students in 2009 (DiNIECE 2011); all along the 2000s, scholarships were extended from students attending secondary schools to those who did not attend any level at all (primary or secondary) to bring them back to school; the programme was gradually extended to reach also resident foreign students.

In 2009, an unprecedented comprehensive policy was established to replace and exceed both scholarship programmes and other social benefits delivered by several agencies until then. The purpose of the “Universal Child Allowance for the Social Protection” is to improve the situation of boys, girls and adolescents in a vulnerable social situation by granting a single benefit to their parents or tutors on the condition that sanitary controls and attendance at the public education system are complied with during the period established as compulsory.

In 2012, over 3,540,700 beneficiaries received the expected contribution, which allowed improving access and retention of children, adolescents and young people in the education system.

2.4 Secondary Education as a Central State Policy

Secondary education has been assumed as a central state policy (both at a national and provincial levels) to guarantee adolescents and young people the right to access, continue and finish this level of education.

The above-mentioned *National Education Law* has established the compulsory nature and therefore raised the challenge to overcome a selective tradition, typical at this level, in most of the modalities.

To progress in this aspect, a series of political and strategic guidelines has been agreed with the Federal Education Council, principally on the following subjects: jurisdictional plans and institutional improvement plans, guidance for pedagogical and institutional organisation, student mobility guidelines and proposals to include and/or rule students’ school trajectories at the secondary education level.

Indeed, the National Plan for Secondary Education is organised based on three strategies that have to do with major coverage of this education level and the improvement of student school trajectories, better quality of the educational offer in

connection with quality policies and the strengthening of the institutional management, both at a school level and technical team level within jurisdictions.

Defining a secondary school for all is a key issue (Tiramonti 2004). Some of the main characteristics set forth in the strategic documents are the following: quality standards, which entail more teaching in language, mathematics and foreign language; tutors spending more hours at the institution to ensure a better guidance to students at key stages throughout the school cycle and including subjects that contribute to the comprehensive training of students, such as sex education, education on and for human rights. Also, the purpose is to ensure a training environment inside and outside the school including community members and to promote and strengthen student participation.

2.5 Expanding Technical and Vocational Education

The technical and vocational education (ETP) is a modality within the education system coordinated by the National Institute for Technological Education (INET), reporting to the National Ministry of Education. This modality is ruled by the above-mentioned law. The function of this institute in the country is to coordinate and integrate different types of institutions and educational programmes for and into the labour activity. It includes ETP Institutions (both at secondary and higher education levels) and Teacher Training Institutes.

One of the main objectives is to strengthen the technical and vocational training, in terms of quality and appropriateness, to meet social inclusion processes, facilitate the integration of young people into the labour market and the continuous training of adults throughout their working lives, and meet the new demands of technological innovation, economic growth and reactivation of production systems.

It is worth mentioning that during the 1990s technical education was practically non-existent. Since 2003, a decision was taken to reactivate technical education and the *Technical and Vocational Education Law* was enacted, which allowed increasing resources invested in this area. This type of training is currently considered strategic and is recognised in terms of social and economic development.

Coordination actions between technological, technical and vocational training education on the one hand and labour and production sectors on the other are promoted at local, regional and interregional levels; also, international cooperation arrangements are carried out together with actions connected with the different integration processes, particularly, those of the MERCOSUR countries.

In recent years, efforts have been concentrating in strengthening technical and vocational education with the purpose of encouraging educational, social and labour inclusion. Actions taken include the following: national standardisation and validity of degrees, at both the secondary and higher levels; development of family vocational profiles and training programs, and strengthening ETP institutions management by financing improvement projects.

Concurrently, proposals have been developed for initial teacher training and improving science and technology teaching and learning processes by means of continuous teacher training actions in technological areas, production of teaching resources and publications on different contents and basic disciplines.

2.6 Improving the Status of the Teaching Profession

Improving the status of the teaching profession has been a strategic focus of the educational policies during the recent years. From a comprehensive point of view that includes not only the actions leading to improve material living conditions but also opportunities to access the cultural production. Improvement in salary and labour conditions has been accompanied by actions tending to reposition training as an inalienable right of teachers and, in turn, as an obligation of the central government.

In this context, the National Teacher Training Institute (INFOD) was created by the *National Education Law* as a new institutional framework to develop and strengthen teacher training policies.

The creation of this institute allowed defining three priority areas of activity:

- Institutional development: includes working strategies leading to reshape the identity of the teacher training system, facilitating consensus and conditions for its organisation, planning, strengthening, and improvement
- Curricular development: focused on integrating and improving curriculum and curriculum management and on updating teacher training, teaching and learning methods
- Professional development: includes the in-service training of teachers, articulated with their practices and updating contexts, taking into account the heterogeneity of their careers and the teaching and learning problems arising from the different labour contexts.

Also, the Teacher Training National Plan (2007–2010) was formulated in 2007 to develop a set of action guidelines leading to a continuous teacher training and professional development, considered as permanent activities articulated with the effective practices of trainers, oriented to teacher needs and their specific performance.

2.7 Learning Assessment and Improvement Policies

Argentina regularly evaluates learning achievements through a sampling or census process on specific curriculum areas (mathematics, language, natural and social sciences) and at certain key stages of the student school trajectories: 3 and 6 years of primary education and 2/3 and final years of secondary education.

Table 2 Results by level of performance in mathematics, end of secondary school 2007 and 2010. Country total

Performance levels	2007	2010
High	18.5 %	14.7 %
Medium	36.8 %	55.3 %
Low	44.7 %	30.0 %

Sources: Operativo Nacional de Evaluación (ONE, National Assessment of Student Achievement) 2007 and 2010. National Bureau of Education Quality Information and Evaluation (DiNIECE). Ministry of Education of Argentina (MEN)

Results from the evaluation of the Argentine education system are far from being desirable, in contrast with the high coverage rates achieved; therefore, it is important to delve into policies specifically oriented to quality so that this becomes a fundamental aspect to include children in schools. Therefore, learning achievements are a key issue where it is necessary to enhance improvement policies actions.

However, it is to be noted that the national education quality process to finish secondary school corresponding to the year 2010 reveals interesting results that are worth mentioning⁹ (DiNIECE s/f, p. 10):

- The percentage of students in the medium and high performance levels is 65.5 in natural sciences, 70 in social sciences and mathematics and 73.7 in Spanish.
- In mathematics, social and natural sciences, the amount of students with low performance level decreased between 12 % and 21 % points when compared with those of 2007.
- The highest percentage of students corresponds to the medium level of performance for all areas of study.
- In mathematics, the percentage of students in the medium level increases in 18.5 % points in comparison to the year 2007, while the percentage in the high level drops 3.8 %.
- In mathematics, considering high and medium levels of performance as a whole, students reaching satisfactory or outstanding performances account for 70 %, representing a 26 % points increase over those in the same level in the 2007 evaluation survey (44 %).
- In natural sciences, an 18 % increase is also observed in the medium level of performance, and in the highest level, there is a 3.3 % increase.
- In Spanish, there is an increase of 5 % points of students in the low performance level in comparison to the year 2007. Still this area has the lowest percentage of students in the low level.
- Spanish is the area with the highest percentage of students with a high performance level (20.4 %); this area also shows the highest percentage of students with high and medium performance levels (73.7 %).

⁹The principal results obtained in the 2010 ONE corresponding to the census conducted at the end of secondary education. Results of this survey for other years can be accessed through the DiNIECE website: <http://diniece.me.gov.ar>.

Table 3 Results by level of performance in Spanish, end of secondary school 2007 and 2010. Country total

Performance levels	2007		2010	
High	20.2 %	} 78.8 %	20.4 %	} 73.7 %
Medium	58.6 %		53.3 %	
Low	21.2 %		26.3 %	

Sources: ONE 2007 and 2010. National Bureau of Education Quality Information and Evaluation (DiNIECE). Ministry of Education of Argentina (MEN)

Table 4 Results by level of performance in social sciences, end of secondary school 2007 and 2010. Country total

Performance levels	2007		2010	
High	10.8 %	} 55.3 %	17.2 %	} 70.0 %
Medium	47.0 %		52.8 %	
Low	42.2 %		30.0 %	

Sources: ONE 2007 and 2010. National Bureau of Education Quality Information and Evaluation (DiNIECE). Ministry of Education of Argentina (MEN)

Table 5 Result by level of performance in natural sciences, end of secondary school 2007 and 2010. Country total

Performance levels	2007		2010	
High	10.1 %	} 44.3 %	13.4 %	} 65.6 %
Medium	34.2 %		52.2 %	
Low	55.7 %		34.3 %	

Sources: ONE 2007 and 2010. National Bureau of Education Quality Information and Evaluation (DiNIECE). Ministry of Education of Argentina (MEN)

- In social sciences, there is a 6.4 % increase of students in the high level for the whole country compared to the 2007 results (Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5).

Among the aspects of the educational policy promoted by the National Ministry of Education and the provincial ministries that allow establishing hypothesis about improving learning achievements, there are several questions worth mentioning.

First, efforts were undertaken during the last decade to extend the school year in order to guarantee 180 class days established by *Law No 25.864* at the end of 2003, later extended to 190 days, calling for a compensation of days lost to ensure the minimum number of days set forth by law.

Second, equal learning conditions as well as recognition of diversity must be guaranteed in an unequal education system. Working to narrow the gaps led to approving the core learning priorities (NAP) as a cluster of knowledge that should be part of the education of boys, girls and young people to create equal opportunities to access knowledge, which contribute to the full social integration and values in favour of the common good, social coexistence, job sharing and respect for the differences.

Third, school teaching policies and teacher training development policies, through the programmes implemented by the National Ministry of Education, aim at intensifying literacy and numeracy skills at the first cycle of the primary education level and teaching mathematics and sciences at the second cycle. Provincial initiatives developed on this subject should also be considered.

Also, several measures have been implemented in connection with reinforcing educational equipment and material to improve teaching conditions, for example, provision of school textbooks, science labs, working materials for teachers and students in different curriculum areas.

The *Conectar Igualdad* Programme¹⁰ (Equal Opportunity Connection Programme)—driven by different agencies of the national government together with other proposals to provide connectivity—merits a special mention. It seeks to promote social and digital inclusion by delivering netbooks and provide connectivity to every state-managed school and secondary and special school students together with those at Teacher Training Institutes throughout the country.

In 2005, over 75 % of urban schools and 40 % of rural schools at primary and secondary levels owned a computer, serving 81 % of urban enrolment and 54 % of rural enrolment. However, differences were still visible: 86 % of private schools were equipped with computers versus 70.5 % of state-owned schools. By 2005, only 37 % of educational institutions had connectivity, out of which 63.8 % had only a telephone connection and half of them was paying for it at that time. Institutions with broadband connections (ADSL, cable MODEM and satellite) were scarce and in general had to pay for it (DiNIECE 2006).

The *National Education Law* confirmed the importance of this issue by stressing the fact that the access and ICT literacy should be part of the essential curriculum contents to be included in the knowledge society.

The *Conectar Igualdad* Programme has already delivered more than 2,200,000 netbooks for the 2010–2012 period out of the expected 3,000,000 netbooks according to the reported information. This includes a series of pedagogical actions for professional development of supervisors, headteachers and teachers, promoted not only by the central government but also by the provinces, together with the preparation of supporting materials for teaching in the classroom and students' families (*Conectar Igualdad* 2011).

3 Future Challenges

To conclude, some thoughts on the approach of the pending challenges of the Argentine education system will be presented. It is worth noting that these are specifically addressed in the National Plan for Compulsory and Teacher Education, recently approved by the Federal Council of Education (December 2012).

¹⁰For further information please visit <http://www.conectarigualdad.gob.ar/>.

3.1 The Challenge to Narrow Social and Educational Gaps

The Argentine educational system shows profound regional and provincial gaps, some of which are related to social inequalities in terms of the capacity to enroll, retain and promote boys, girls, adolescents and young people throughout the country. A similar scenario that occurs relates to the capacity to provide quality education for all.

In this context, addressing the equity challenge means bearing in mind the need to coordinate government efforts, financing and supply strategies on the one hand and comprehensive and active social policies on the other hand. Equity is a problem directly related to the functioning of the education system, which also requires a steady effort from the nation, the provinces and the city of Buenos Aires to build a society with higher levels of social equality.

Social inequalities in the provinces are juxtaposed with profound school inequalities in terms of coverage, infrastructure, the quality of the equipment and the availability of resources at schools, altogether with teacher training and working conditions. All of the above has a bearing on the quality of teaching offered by schools and what students learn throughout their school trajectories.

Other differences deriving from enrolment segregation processes should be attributed to jurisdictional differences. The difference among schools—which reflects the social differences among the students—is the result of a complex process involving space and social circumstances as well as the scope of policies, the way they are implemented, and the effects produced to face these inequalities.

Overlapping social, regional and school inequalities contribute to a process of fragmentation and differentiation of schools that tends to become fixed. This fragmentation goes beyond the traditional forms of segmentation within the system.

The main issue here is that it is impossible to think of reversing the fragmentation effects on equity without the decisive action of the state in rebuilding the rules to curb them, ensure minimum common guidelines to operate the institutions within the education system and prioritise, in a clear and precise way, the support to schools serving lower income and less advantaged social sectors (Tedesco 2012; Filmus & Kaplan 2012).

Therefore, a further analysis is necessary for distributive educational policies to secure acceptable levels of social cohesion, ensuring common basic levels to guarantee quality education.

3.2 The Challenge to Promote Diversity

At the same time, it is essential to attach its own importance to diversity recognition policies that are increasingly included in the current educational agenda. The new educational laws have made their progress in the regulatory requirements of a broad set of rights for sectors of the society which were unattended by the old universal and homogeneous educational model. However, there appears

to be a considerable discrepancy between these regulatory prescriptions and the effective conditions that the education system seems to provide to ensure those rights. The most evident case is that of the intercultural bilingual education, which has been in the international and national agendas for over two decades, but every day runs up against the limits imposed by the feeble initiatives aimed at supporting this type of education.

It is not only about carrying out actions focused on a certain group of subjects recognised as holders of rights. The multiple articulations of social inequality and cultural diversity challenge the daily functioning of an education system that calls immediately for actions to deal with this context in a more sensitive way (Lopez 2010).

There are two tensions sprouting here: on the one hand, the difficulties to meet traditional socialising mandates that provided meaning to education in Argentina during the twentieth century in a context demanding recognition for diversity and, on the other hand, the difficulties derived from the importance of school tradition—important for the daily functioning of the education system—and the need to search for innovative and viable ways to understand the teaching and learning processes. In both cases, the traditional mandates provide a certain order to the actions taken by schools but limit their capacity to adapt to the ever-changing contexts and the diverse population enrolled. Over the past decades, the changing initiatives have been more prone to destabilise the smooth running of schools than to achieve new practices that are of relevance to school actors and meet the needs of their communities.

3.3 The Challenge to Prioritise Knowledge

The above-mentioned tension that seems to exist between the inclusiveness of the Argentine education system and the attainment of good education performance appears as one of the most difficult core issues to resolve. Deep inside, there is a tension in the relationship among cultural transmission, equity and diversity that calls for the need to think over about the system functioning guidelines.

On one hand, it is essential for equity policies to operate in such a way more access to knowledge is attained together with a meaningful and relevant learning for society and students (Tenti 2008). In this sense, policies should ensure equal learning achievements.

On the other, recognising diversity requires reviewing the curriculum and the daily organisation of teaching practices with the purpose of ensuring the right to education for all without entailing any imposition in this sense. Ensuring equal learning achievements would mean to carefully redefine the goals that everybody should attain. Diversity recognition policies must ensure respect for a cultural identity.

In this scenario, educational policies face the challenge to prioritise knowledge in complex societies where universal certainties keep changing.

Learning achievements are themselves a top priority issue. However, the response should not be to give everybody more of the same, least of all, a strategy that in the name of group identity will segregate and differentiate people.

It is necessary to view the experience of past decades in perspective to combine creative educational policies that focus on the strengthening of fundamental cognitive skills to understand, apply, develop and disseminate knowledge while, at the same time, organise a society that turns coexistence into an experience of tolerance and shared recognition.

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Canada: Quality and Stability

Benjamin Levin and Robyn Read

Abstract This chapter describes policy processes for education in Canada and contributing factors to strong educational outcomes. Canada does not have a national education policy and has not engaged in dramatic education reforms. There are two main reasons for Canada's strong education outcomes. First, social factors outside school include respect for equity and diversity and a reasonable, though deteriorating, social safety net. Second, Canadian schools are reasonably resourced and have strong professional staff with an emphasis on equity and diversity as well as quality of outcomes. These factors explain Canada's strong education performance.

Keywords Canada • Education outcomes • External factors • Internal factors • Quality • Stability

Canada has one of the best K–12 school systems in the world and is consistently among the top performers in international comparisons. Most notably, Canadian 15 year olds have ranked among the top five performers in all four rounds of the OECD's Program of International Student Assessment (PISA). Canada was also recognized by the OECD (2010a) for having very high levels of equity in education and is one of the very few countries in PISA in which students born outside the country achieve as well on average as students born in the country.

To say that Canada has a high-performing education system does not mean that the country does not still face significant challenges in education. In Canada, as virtually everywhere else in the world, there are still systematic inequities in education outcomes (Glaze et al. 2012). Notably, Aboriginal students in Canada, especially those in First Nations communities where the federal government is responsible, lag behind badly. There are large gaps in outcomes based on socio-economic status, and some (but not all) racialized groups also have systematically

B. Levin (✉) • R. Read

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

e-mail: ben.levin@utoronto.ca; robyn.read@utoronto.ca

poorer performance. These remain large challenges, even if Canada's equity performance is, as far as we can judge, better than most other countries.

It is fair to say that Canadians were as surprised as anyone when these results came out and that, while we are proud of our accomplishments, we cannot say definitively what has produced such good results. Given the lack of definitive evidence on these questions, part of what follows could be called informed speculation.

This chapter describes the governance structures and policy processes for education in Canada, then discusses potential contributing factors to strong educational outcomes and finally describes features of recent education reforms. The chapter is limited to school education (ages 6–18); early childhood, adult education, and higher education are not taken up as each of these would require lengthy descriptions in their own right.

1 How Does the Canadian Education System Work?

Canada has an unusual education governance system in that it is the only country in the developed world with no national education policy and no national education ministry (OECD 2010a). Understanding this decentralized system is critical to understanding policy trends.

1.1 Education Governance Structure

Canada is a federal state with ten provinces and three territories (the latter in the far north with very small populations). Under the Canadian constitution, education is the exclusive responsibility of the provinces and territories, each of which manages its own education system. Each province or territory has a minister and ministry of education which are responsible for education policy and finance. Canada has never had a national minister or ministry of education nor is there any prospect of such a ministry being created despite regular calls for it from some national groups. Indeed, unique among major policy areas in Canada, there is not even a vehicle for ongoing federal-provincial discussion or dialogue around education. The federal government plays a minor role in Canadian schools and even then only in a few areas, although despite the constitutional restrictions it has had a significant presence in post secondary education. This means there are essentially no means to have national policies or approaches.

The main mechanism through which provinces collaborate on education, and through which they try to deal with the federal government, is the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). Created in 1967, the Council includes all provincial and territorial ministers of education or post secondary education (which is always more than 13, because at any given time at least some provinces have separate ministers for schools and for postsecondary). The Council operates primarily by consensus, which has made it a relatively low-key organization because there are very few issues on which all provinces and territories agree given not only their vast

differences but also the different parties in power across the country. The CMEC is not, therefore, particularly influential either in shaping provincial education policy or federal activity related to education, although it does play a useful role in coordinating activities, sharing information, and managing some relationships with the federal government.

On the whole, education policy and practice does not vary dramatically across Canada, despite provincial jurisdiction, and most provinces run roughly similar systems.¹ All provinces in Canada have legislation establishing school districts that are governed by locally elected boards. In having a local political body strictly focused on schools, education governance in Canada is different from other countries, though similar to the United States. Local school districts running local schools were the original governance system for education reflecting the process of settlement by Europeans. Over time, provinces came to play a larger role, and powers of local school districts have been steadily diminished (Ungerleider and Levin 2007). Almost all provinces now provide 100 % or close to it of the funding of schools; local contributions through local property taxes, which were once the dominant mode of financing schools, are now minor or nonexistent funding sources. Still, school boards continue to have important responsibilities including hiring all teachers and principals, allocating programs to schools, budgeting for individual schools, and owning and operating school buildings.

Currently, education in Canada is reasonably well resourced in comparison to other countries of similar wealth. Just as importantly, there are no large inequalities in funding across regions or districts. Curriculum is set by provinces, though with varying amounts of specification. Teachers all have qualifications meeting provincial standards—typically at least 5 years of postsecondary education. All provinces run some kind of testing or accountability system, though these vary quite a bit. All provinces also provide public funds to at least some religious or private schools. The Canadian constitution provides for the recognition of minority language and religious rights although these, too, are accommodated differently in each province. About 5 % of Canadian students attend schools outside the public system, primarily for religious reasons. Canadian teachers and most support staff are unionized; bargaining is sometimes at the provincial level and sometimes at the district level.

1.2 Education Policy Process

As already noted, Canadian provinces all have their own policies, and connections across provinces are rather weak. On the other hand, because education in Canada is so decentralized and also because Canada is next to the United States, education policy debates in Canada are often influenced by developments in the United States

¹The most important exception is the province of Quebec, which operates both French language and English language public education systems. Quebec has a unique model with only 11 years of school education instead of 12 as in other provinces but then also has a 2-year college system that provides technical training or is a bridge into university from high school.

or in other parts of the world. The country tends to borrow many education policy ideas from elsewhere.

Education policy in Canada, as in many other countries, is largely influenced by a few important stakeholder groups, notably teachers and other educators and sometimes parents. The status of education as a highly organized and regulated system means that policy processes tend to be quite formalized and involve significant amounts of consultation, which in turn tends to favor groups that are larger, more organized, and better financed. Education professionals, including teachers and principals, are especially important. Teacher unions have played an active political role in Canada, whether influencing policy discussions or, on some occasions, directly involving themselves in provincial politics and elections. As in many other countries, a wide range of other actors, such as business groups, non-governmental organizations, and other community groups are also involved, to a greater or lesser extent, in education policy debates.

Canada also has a relatively weak education research infrastructure, and its impact is further reduced by the lack of national institutions and by huge distances that make it harder for researchers to collaborate. On the whole, the Canadian policy analysis capacity in education is also weak, and Canadian education debates tend to rely on research from other places.

2 What Contributes to Strong Educational Outcomes?

The shared characteristics across Canadian jurisdictions, both within education systems and within Canadian society as a whole, could be seen as collectively responsible for Canada's high performance in education. The following section highlights some of these shared characteristics.

2.1 External Factors

Unlike our American neighbors who value life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, the Canadian constitution affirms the values of peace, order, and good governance. This translates into a belief that it is our collective responsibility to provide a basic standard of living for all citizens. Canadians as a whole enjoy a relatively high standard of living, and Canada ranked 6th out of 187 countries in the 2011 United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) (International Human Development Indicators 2011). Although there is some variation in average income among regions, these variations are relatively small and do not significantly affect overall standards of living (UNICEF 2007). However, despite our high standing on the HDI, Canada actually has lower government social spending per capita than many other developed countries including most Western European states and the United States (OECD 2010b). Yet even with lower spending, our long-standing national identity as a social welfare state has resulted in a strong universal health-care system and a redistributive system of income security programs (Johnston et al. 2010).

Thus, although Canada has a fairly significant child poverty rate, our state runs social safety nets such as universal health care and unemployment insurance to help most children arrive at school, healthy and able to learn. One main exception to this pattern, however, is Aboriginal people in Canada, who typically lag far behind average standards for health and education, especially those who live in remote parts of the country (Wilson and Macdonald 2010).

Additionally, Canada has a strong multicultural identity and is recognized as one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse countries in the world (Fearon 2003). Currently there are 200 ethnic groups represented in our population, and over 19 % of the population was born outside of Canada (Human Development and Skills Resources Canada 2012). In 1971 Canada became the first country in the world to adopt an official policy on multiculturalism which recognized the right of all Canadians to preserve and share their cultural and ancestral heritage, as well as confirming the rights of Aboriginal peoples and further entrenching English and French as the two official languages (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2008). Since multiculturalism is a fundamental aspect of Canadian heritage and identity, citizens tend to have a high tolerance for difference, and immigrants are supported to adjust to life in Canada through settlement programs that offer free language classes, support in accessing social services and finding employment, etc. Of course there are disputes about the appropriate role and level of immigration in Canada, but there is a broad consensus that continued immigration is important and that diversity of population is one of Canada's key strengths.

In order to improve educational outcomes and reduce inequality within the education system, a country must tackle some of the gross disparities outside of schools. Canada's welfare state helps to ensure that young people get a better start in life, are better prepared for schooling, and better supported in their lives outside of schools. Difference is respected more, and diversity is valued as an integral component of our national identity. Although the above examples are certainly not an exhaustive list of the characteristics of Canadian society that support high academic outcomes, these factors have had powerful effects on education in Canada. This is not in any way to suggest that Canada can afford to be complacent. There is still much work to be done to address the many inequalities that exist within Canadian society and also appear in our schools, not only for our Aboriginal groups but also for young people growing up in poverty. So while there are many reasons to be proud of our high international standing on the HDI, we can do more to address the inequalities outside of schools in order to improve school outcomes.

2.2 Internal Factors

As mentioned previously, despite being governed by different jurisdictions, education systems across Canada look very similar in terms of policy, practice, and funding. While nobody knows for certain why Canadian education systems perform so well in international assessments, the following similarities among systems are likely factors.

2.2.1 Well-Resourced Systems

Education in Canada is well resourced, at an average of about \$11,000 per pupil across the country. Even more importantly there are no large inequalities in funding or human capital across regions. Indeed, in Canada the jurisdictions with the highest levels of student need tend to get the most funding; for example, the northern territories, with high levels of poverty and huge challenges of geography, spend significantly more per pupil than southern provinces in recognition of the higher costs of providing education in those areas.

All provincial funding systems for education are based on three main elements: block grants that are given based on numbers of students, categorical grants used to fund particular programs such as special education or transportation, and equalization payments which provide additional funding to areas with higher levels of need (OECD 2010a, p. 2; 2013). Each province has its own formula for funding school districts, taking into account local circumstances such as school isolation, poverty levels, age of buildings, and varying salary costs across the country.

2.2.2 Skilled and Committed Teachers

Within schools, it is well known that teachers and teaching are the single largest influence on student learning and that teaching quality has a great deal of influence over student outcomes (Hattie 2009; OECD 2005). Canadian teachers are highly skilled and motivated professionals. Because teaching continues to be seen as a desirable job, admission to teacher training programs is very competitive all across Canada and therefore affords a high level of selectivity in teacher candidates. All teacher training programs include both theoretical and practical components. Once in the classroom, teachers continue to develop professional skills through well-resourced professional development sessions provided by provincial governments, school districts, and professional organizations (OECD 2004). Additionally, like almost all high-performing countries, Canadian provinces have strong teachers' unions that have negotiated decent pay and working conditions and continually advocate for the rights of teachers and students in public education. The same situation applies to leaders of schools and districts in Canadian education, virtually all of whom were professional teachers. In the present international policy context of "liberalization," none of these positive features can be taken for granted, but at the moment they remain part of the Canadian setting.

2.2.3 Commitment to Collaboration

Education systems do best for children when stakeholders develop and agree on goals for public education and when conflict is minimized and differences are resolved through dialogue. Canada has a long tradition of partnership and collaborative work among governments, school boards, teachers, parents, and the broader

community. Provincial governments frequently consult a wide range of stakeholders including school boards, school administrators, teachers, parent groups, and school councils, "...not only to build relationships but to engage them in the development of our policy agenda" (OECD 2010a, p. 72). Collaboration on educational issues across stakeholder groups reflects the Canadian belief that it is our collective responsibility to ensure that all children have the opportunity to attain high levels of education.

2.2.4 Respect for Diversity

Canadian school systems include a wide range of different kinds of schools even within the public education system. For example, Canadian children and families may choose language immersion schools that provide most instruction in a second language, alternative schools of various kinds that cater to specific community needs, and Aboriginal schools to support the needs of our native population. In recent years urban school districts in particular have experimented with an even wider range of public schools such as those focusing on sports or the arts or specific forms of instruction, such as more conservative or more progressive. And, as already noted, all provinces provide at least some public funding for other kinds of schools, such as those organized by particular religious groups. So although Canada has few formal systems of school choice such as those that have been highly contentious in other countries, there is in fact a considerable amount of choice in most Canadian jurisdictions (Riffel et al. 1996).

Respect for diversity has come slowly, though. Historically, the most contentious debates in Canadian education have been over issues of language and religion. Over time, the system has evolved from one that was primarily sectarian, organized on religious principles, to one that is broadly public and attempts to accommodate diversity in various ways within the public system. The emergence of this approach was the result of much struggles; it took Quebec some 40 years to create a system organized primarily on linguistic rather than religious lines, while changing the denominational education system in Newfoundland in the 1990s required an amendment to the Canadian constitution and direction from the Supreme Court of Canada (Galway and Dibbon 2012). Issues of language and religion continue to be important in Canadian education. Ontario continues to support a Catholic school system, but no other religions, with public funds, an issue that remains contentious (Hart 2012). As noted earlier, Canada does have significant achievement gaps, some of which are strongly related to ethnicity. Nonetheless, Canada's system does seem to accommodate diversity reasonably well, at least in comparison to many other countries.

2.2.5 Commitment to Equity

The commitment to diversity is coupled with a commitment to equity in the form of wanting good outcomes for all students. Indeed, many of the most heated debates in Canada's educational history have had to do with conflicts between these two

values—for example, whether there should be separate public schools focused on particular minority, linguistic, or religious groups. In general, Canadian values give preference to equity.

Canada's distinct multicultural identity is reflected in the student population, with one in five students being born outside of Canada or having both parents born outside of Canada (OECD 2004). Canada is one of very few countries in which there is no significant difference in performance on the PISA tests between foreign-born and Canadian-born students. This is due in part to a commitment to creating a school environment that recognizes and supports diversity and gives considerable attention to effective ways of integrating immigrant and minority children into the school system. Additionally newcomers are supported by programs that support students in learning English or French as a second language (*ibid.*). By supporting diversity in our schools, Canada has not only been able to achieve very high levels of equity in education but also helps to ensure that multiculturalism remains an integral element of the Canadian identity.

3 Recent Education Reforms in Canada

Over the last 20 years, Canadian school systems have witnessed a range of reforms, but little in the way of what might be called policy upheavals. There have been few large-scale system changes, although some reforms have proved highly contentious politically. The main features of the Canadian education system are much the same as they were in 1990. There remains substantial political consensus that our systems are satisfactory.

For the most part, Canadian education policies have focused on efforts to maintain a reasonably high quality system for all students. The issues that have dominated education policy debates in other countries have generally been muted or silent in Canada. For example, there have been no significant efforts in Canada to have dramatic decentralization, or to intensify accountability and testing dramatically, or to introduce more significant elements of choice and competition. There are no examples of takeovers of “failing” schools. There are no active proposals for merit pay for teachers or for firing of staff in poorly performing schools.

In fact, where these ideas have been mooted, they have been rejected by voters. For example, opposition to a proposal to extend funding to faith-based schools played a major role in the 2007 election in Ontario. As another example, the province of Alberta introduced charter schools in 1994. There were originally 10, but 18 years later there are still only about a dozen in the province and no other province has introduced them.

Overall there is somewhat greater attention to student outcomes, teaching and learning issues, and the need for greater equity, but generally without dramatic impacts on the system. Testing systems were increased in the 1990s in many provinces, but have not changed much since then. In general, Canadian provinces have modest amounts of all-student testing, and the tests are low stakes.

3.1 Contention over Funding

In the last couple of decades, public concerns about education have erupted in several provinces over efforts to curb spending in education systems. In the early to mid-1990s, many provinces took actions such as freezing collective bargaining or imposing compulsory days without pay to this end. The result was sometimes considerable turmoil as the attempts met much resistance not only from teachers but also from many parents. Polling data in Canada (e.g., Hart 2012) show consistently strong support for a relatively generous level of public funding for education.

Although these debates were difficult in many provinces and led to strikes and other conflicts, they did not change the basic nature of the system, and when better fiscal times returned towards the end of the 1990s, funding for public education was again expanded in all provinces. Today another crisis in public finance is leading to similar debates about the size and funding of the public education system, with potential for another round of conflict, but once again without much debate about changing basic elements of the system.

3.2 Shifting Provincial and District Roles

In most of Canada, education systems were carved out by pioneers who created and governed their own local schools. At one time, Canada had many thousands of school districts, almost all of which had only one school. For example, Manitoba had 2,400 districts to serve about half a million people. These local districts were in charge of mostly everything, from curriculum to buildings to hiring teachers.

For the last 100 years, there has been a steady trend towards systems with fewer districts and increasing control at the provincial level. Unlike provinces, school districts have no constitutional status in Canada, so exist at the pleasure of provincial governments. Their strength depends primarily, then, on their political legitimacy. Yet voter interest in and turnout for school board elections has been declining steadily, leading provinces to exert more and more control. As well, developments in transportation and communication, and the requirement to educate many more children to higher levels, have tended to work against a strong role for small local districts. As a result, there have been several waves of contraction in the number of districts and their powers. For example, Manitoba now has 38 districts instead of 2,400, to serve a much larger population.

Provinces have exerted control in many areas. At one time almost all funding for schools in Canada came from local property taxes. Provinces then began to provide grants, and gradually their share increased steadily as the costs were simply too great to be borne by local property owners, especially given vast differences in property wealth from one district to another. Beginning in the 1970s, provinces began to take over full control of funding of education; today there is a significant role for locally set property taxes in education in only one province, while in most cases provinces provide virtually 100 % of the money according to provincial funding formulas.

Funding was not the only area of increasing provincial control, either. Provinces have become more assertive about virtually every feature of the education system, increasingly providing direction to local school boards about curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, discipline, and other features. The move to 100 % provincial funding in Ontario, for example, took place in the late 1990s and also took away significant other powers from Ontario school districts, which had until that time maintained quite a large degree of local control. Alberta, British Columbia, and Nova Scotia have adopted similar approaches.

4 Dynamic Provincial Reforms

The best known example of system reform in Canada has been in Ontario since 2004. A consistent effort over 8 years now has produced significant improvements in student outcomes, but also improved teacher morale as shown by declining attrition rates, and improved public satisfaction. These efforts have been described in detail elsewhere (e.g., Levin 2008; Fullan 2010). However, notable features include sustained attention to a small number of goals with strong political leadership, a positive approach that respected and engaged educators without blame or punishment, and a strong focus on building the capacity of educators at all levels to do the specific things necessary to improve student success. So unlike many reform efforts (but somewhat similar to places like Finland or Singapore), Ontario has focused on gradually building a more and more effective teaching and leadership corps with the policy framework supporting that work.

Other provinces have also taken some actions that are worth noting. British Columbia has made a special effort to work with schools and Aboriginal communities to improve outcomes for those young people, with some success (British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation 2011). Alberta has worked to build professional capacity through the Alberta School Improvement Initiative (Hargreaves et al. 2009) which has supported district and school improvement for quite a few years. However, in most cases, as noted earlier, provinces have worked on gradual improvement or individual initiatives rather than bold programs of reform.

Given Canada's current high level of performance, that seems a reasonable choice.

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China: Promoting Equity as a Basic Education Policy

Zhenguo Yuan

Abstract China has the largest population in the world, and delivering education services is therefore a significant challenge. The chapter elaborates on the education reform in China since 1978 and delineates the milestone policies at each stage of reform. It highlights the policy measures taken by the Government of China to achieve the equity, such as universalizing 9-year compulsory education, adjusting the distribution of education resources, setting up an efficient student support system, and implementing nutrition program for rural students in compulsory education, etc. Finally, it enumerates the strategies to achieve the goal of equity and quality in the future.

Keywords Education • Equity • Policy • Quality • China

China's history goes back thousands of years, and its long-standing cultural traditions include a keen interest in education. It has the largest population in the world: in 2012, it was home to 1.35 billion people (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2013); delivering education services is therefore a significant challenge. Since the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Government of China (GoC) has striven to maintain the culture of education. It is committed to fostering creativity and has drawn on international experience in order to achieve this. All of the reforms undertaken during the last 30 years have embraced quality and equity; these considerations have been even more prominent in recent years. As a result, a large number of skilled students have become an important driving force of social and economic development in the country.

This chapter gives an overview of education policies since the 1980s: a period of particularly rapid economic and social development as well as considerable

Z. Yuan (✉)

Former President, National Institute of Education Sciences,
Vice-President, The Chinese Society of Education, Beijing, China
e-mail: yzg@nies.net.cn

advances in the field of education. It focuses on reforms passed since 2000, the assumptions underpinning these reforms, the challenges that lie ahead, as well as development trends.

1 Reform Progress Since 1978

In 1978, a program of reforms was launched designed to open up the country, as a result of which it enjoyed the most rapid period of educational development in its history. In 1978, the average number of years of schooling received by the population was a mere 3.5 years; the figure rose to 9.7 by 2012. Over the same period, the gross enrollment rate in tertiary education soared from 1.55 % to 27 % (Ministry of Education 2011a); enrollments increased from under one million (Chen 2008) to 31.67 million (MOE 2011b).

Since the “reform and opening up” program has been in effect, the government has geared the aims and foci of education development to be responsive to economic and social needs. Four key policy papers issued in 1985, 1994, 1999, and 2010, respectively, document the historical milestones of China’s education reform and development.

1.1 1985: Structural Reform

1977 marked the end of the cultural revolution and 10 years of devastation; at that point the country’s needs were enormous. There was a shortage of resources in all sectors, but the largest shortfall was that of a skilled workforce; the most urgent issue was therefore how to develop this capital rapidly. Consequently, in 1985 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CCCPC) issued “The Decision on Educational System Reform.” The Decision, which aimed to accelerate the development of skills through structural education reform, maintained that planning and structures had to be reformed in order to inverse the mismatch between the education and economic systems; it set out “to reform systematically starting from the education system.” Concretely, it proposed to reform the educational administration system by strengthening the macro-management of higher education at the central ministry level while increasing micromanagement at the institutional level. It ceded responsibility for the delivery of basic education services to local governments. It sought to mobilize local governments and stakeholders to take responsibility to run local schools and to abandon one-size-for-all nationwide model. It granted more autonomy to tertiary education institutions in relation notably to student admissions and the graduate-assignment system. Finally, it made provision to accelerate the development of vocational education, which was to keep pace with basic education. Through these reforms, the capacity of educational institutions of various types and at various levels was substantially upgraded.

1.2 1993: Creating an Educational Framework in Alignment with China's Socialist Market Economy

In 1992, the concept of creating a socialist market economy took shape, and on February 13, 1993, the CCCPC and the State Council issued a new education framework known as the “Outline for Education Reform and Development.” It aligned educational practice with the country’s socialist market economy, the idea being that the structural reform of the market economy called for corresponding changes in the structure of education systems. The Outline proposed “to create education systems that cater for the needs of economic, political and science and technology (S&T) structures, to better serve the socialist modernization.” It detailed the direction, goal, rationale, and content of the reform, namely, the overarching goal for educational development in China by the end of the twentieth century was to develop a basic framework for the socialist education system which took account of Chinese specificities and was oriented towards the twenty-first century. It was designed “to modernize education and develop a relatively mature and adequate socialist education system through several more decades of effort.” With these goals in mind, *the Outline* resolved to deepen education reform, adhere to coordinated development, increase educational funding, improve the quality of teaching, improve education quality, enhance the efficacy of educational institutions, plan by region/area, and engage further with communities. Thus by pursuing the reform of school operating and administration systems as well as teacher-training institutions, a mechanism providing for education development facilitated by market readjustment took shape (CCCPC 1993).

1.3 1999: Quality-Oriented Education and Curriculum Reform

Towards the end of the 1990s, China faced fierce international competition and social and economic development made new demands on education, such as its capacity to produce innovative skills. Against this backdrop, the CCCPC and the State Council (1999) promulgated the “Decision on Deepening Educational Reform and Promoting Quality Education” (1999), which triggered off unprecedented curriculum reform. The Decision aimed to “promote quality education and develop a vigorous socialist education system which incorporates Chinese characteristics, to lay solid foundations for the national strategy of invigorating the nation through science and education.” It also mandated the reform of educational structures, educational institutions and the administrative system, and the creation of conditions for implementing quality education. In response to the notion of “emphasizing textbook knowledge over practical ability and emphasizing intellectual education over moral education,” it stressed “a combination of education and productive labor is an important approach to fostering all-round talent.” By reforming the curriculum, it proposed to update philosophy, education methods, and content at school level,

thereby reforming examination and admission systems as well as the administrative system at various levels of government.

As a result of this reform, China developed the three-level curriculum system (national, local, and school based) that is still in application today; it established curriculum standards for all subjects and developed various versions of textbooks.

1.4 2010: Equity and Quality, Two Strategic Goals

Eleven years after the last major reforms and in view of growing economic globalization, advances in science and technology, and increasingly fierce international competition, it was clear that knowledge had become the most important factor in determining comprehensive national power and international competitiveness. Similarly, a skilled workforce had increasingly become a strategic resource in the drive to push forward social and economic development; in this context, it was evident that education plays a fundamental, leading, and overarching role. Therefore, in July 2010 the Government of China launched the “National Outline for Medium- and Long-term Education Reform and Development” (2010–2020) which established two strategic foci: equity and quality. The Outline introduced a new objective: that of modernizing education, establishing a learning society, and joining the rank of nations that have a highly qualified workforce. It set out to prioritize development, enhance student knowledge, promote reform and innovation, enhance equity, and improve quality. Hence, improving quality and promoting equity, became strategic goals in educational development (CCCPC 2010).

2 Promoting Equity via the National Education Policy

Development in China is characterized by substantial rural–urban and interregional disparities, but they also exist in the field of education. There was, for example, a rural–urban quality gap in the quality of education. In 2004, over 160 million students were enrolled in compulsory schooling (Zhou 2004). While local governments were responsible for funding education, expenditure per student, public education expenditure per student, and public current expenditure per student varied significantly between rural and urban areas, as does the quality of teaching. Rural areas often had dilapidated schools, and this is where there is the highest incidence of student dropout. Also, substitute teachers mainly worked in rural areas. Rural–urban disparities are the primary source of inequity.

Second, there were significant geographic differences in the quality of education, notably in central and western China, compared to the east. In these regions, the disparity was due to lower educational expenditure and inadequate education provision in minority areas. Substitute teachers (who do not have formal qualifications) outnumbered qualified teachers in these regions and were numerous in primary and lower secondary schools (which constitute compulsory schooling). Schools in these

regions had larger classes and less information technology infrastructure. Lastly, there were fewer higher education institutions (HEIs) there, and a considerably lower proportion of their students are admitted to high-ranking universities.

Third, vocational schools were underdeveloped due to the fact that expenditure on vocational education has lagged behind that of academic education. Tuition and fees charged by vocational schools were relatively high, yet their students do not dispose of the same learning facilities and access to higher levels of education as their fellow students in academic schools. In addition, easy transitional pathways between educational institutions of various types were lacking, and vocational students were much less likely to go to university or college.

Fourth, the issue of school choice in urban areas was not resolved. It has been created by demand by social groups with high socioeconomic status. The quality gap between different schools was a serious impediment to the equitable development of vocational education and was also the main reason behind this phenomenon.

Fifth, disadvantaged social groups needed to have greater access to education. In 2005, 5.48 % of migrant children did not complete 9-year compulsory schooling; similarly, there is a big discrepancy between the educational attainment of disabled and nondisabled children (Duan and Yang 2008).

Over the last decade the Government of China has undertaken to promote equity in education as it is critical to improving people's livelihoods, while education figures at the top of people's priorities. The government has pledged to make the issue a fundamental element of its education policy and to implement it via an array of policy actions, thereby narrowing the gaps.

2.1 Promoting Equity Through Development

The prerequisite for educational equity is access to schooling. In order to deliver education to the largest possible number of students, the Chinese government has taken the following policy measures.

2.1.1 Universalizing 9-Year Compulsory Education

In 1986, a law on compulsory education was passed and the law was amended in 2006. The law was put in place the foundations for attaining universal education and guaranteed children the right to 9 years of compulsory education (The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress 2006). This became fully free of charge in 2008, when the enrollment rate reached 99.8 %. In 2000, for every 100,000 people, there were 3,611, 11,146, and 33,961 students with, respectively, either university education, senior secondary education, or junior secondary education; in 2010 these figures rose to 8,930, 14,032, and 38,788. On the other hand, the number of people who only had primary education dropped from 35,701 to 26,779, and the number of illiterate people dropped by 30.4 million over the same period: the illiteracy rate declined from 6.72 % to 4.08 % of the population.

2.1.2 Developing Regular Senior Secondary Education and Vocational Education Equitably

Between 2002 and 2011, the gross enrollment rate in senior secondary education increased from 42.8 % (MOE 2003) to 84.0 %, respectively, approaching the average rate in developed countries (over 85 %), while the figure in some provinces in eastern China actually exceeded 95 %. Enrollments in senior secondary and vocational education are, on the whole, balanced. In 2011, the country's 13,117 secondary vocational schools were host to nearly 22 million students (MOE 2011b), i.e., approximately half of those in senior secondary education. To a large extent, this meets society's needs for skilled manpower and professionals.

2.1.3 The Rapid Rate of Expansion of Higher Education

In the late 1990s, the gross enrollment rate in higher education was less than 10 %. University enrollment started to increase significantly in 1999 and has risen by approximately 20 % every year since then (Research Team for China's Educational Reform and Development Over the Past 30 Years 2008). The rate reached 15 % in 2002, marking the beginning of mass higher education. Since then, the annual figure has grown by some 12 % points, reaching a participation rate of 26.9 % in 2011. The same year, enrollment in regular HEIs reached 6.81 million, and the total number of college and university students exceeded 30 million, thereby doubling the 2002 figure (MOE 2011b). Over the past 10 years, China's higher education enrollment rate has progressively overtaken that of Russia, India, and the USA, and it now has the highest rate in the world. Approximately 119 million Chinese employees have tertiary education qualifications, and the country now ranks second in this domain (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2011). This unprecedented access to higher education has created real opportunities for tens of millions of young people.

2.2 Adjusting the Distribution of Educational Resources

Expenditure and funding mechanisms are the cornerstones of educational equity. For many years, investment in China was concentrated in cities and the eastern part of the country. This imbalance resulted in significant disparities between urban and rural areas, between the east and the west, and between industry and agriculture and was undermining equity in education. Several steps were taken to remedy the problematic situation the imbalance had created.

2.2.1 Allocating Resources in Favor of Rural Areas to Narrow the Urban–Rural Gap

In the early 2000s, the government introduced a policy of allocating the share of newly increased educational expenditure for rural areas, thus bringing about a marked increase in their budgets.

As of 2004, the government began to implement the policy of “two exemptions and one subsidy.” Tuition, miscellaneous fees, and textbooks became free of charge for students from poor rural families, notably in the west. It also provided subsidies that benefited 10 million boarding students. In 2005, central and local governments made further efforts to implement this policy by earmarking 7.2 billion yuan. As a result, some 34 million students became entitled to free textbooks, and 31 million were dispensed with having to pay miscellaneous fees. These figures correspond to 32 % and 30 %, respectively, of the number of students in the central and western regions in compulsory education. A further six million students became entitled to boarding subsidies, bringing the number of boarding students in rural areas to 19 %. Within 2 years, 350,000 rural students who had dropped out because of poverty were able to return to school (Jin 2006).

In 2006, the government set up a mechanism guaranteeing funding for compulsory education. Initially, all students in rural, western areas became entitled to free schooling. Some 49 million students benefited from this policy, and nearly 200,000 dropouts from poor families returned to school (Tian and Zhang 2006). Then, as of spring 2007, rural students in compulsory education throughout the country were exempted from having to pay tuition or miscellaneous fees; some 150 million students benefited from this policy (Jiang 2007). The government began to offer free textbooks to all rural students in compulsory education in the autumn of 2007 and also raised subsidies for boarding students.

In 2010, the policy of offering free textbooks was extended to students from poor urban families. Overall, some 136 million students, i.e., over 89 % of the total number of students in compulsory education (Yuan 2011), benefited from it. Following on from this, the government raised boarding subsidies in 2010 and 2011 for poor students in compulsory education in rural areas of central and western China. The daily subsidy amounted to four yuan for each primary school student and five yuan for each middle school student (Wu and Qu 2011).

Within the framework of “two exemptions and one subsidy,” state funding between 2006 and 2011 reduced the amount that rural families would have had to pay by over 230 billion yuan. This corresponds, on average, to savings of 250 yuan and 390 yuan per family with, respectively, a child in primary school and one in junior secondary school (Ministry of Finance 2010).

In order to increase the number of teachers in rural areas in central and western China, the government implemented a policy to create special posts in primary and junior secondary schools thereby creating a special fund with which to hire urban college graduates to teach in rural areas. By 2009, some 130,000 such teachers were recruited and engaged in over 6,400 schools located in some 500 districts (Du et al. 2012). This policy also encouraged an exchange scheme for principals, headmasters, and teachers in primary and secondary schools, as well as among schools of different levels. By 2010, over half of China’s provinces had established such a mechanism (*ibid.*).

2.2.2 Allocating Resources in Favor of Central and Western Regions to Narrow Regional Gaps

In the early 1990s, the government set itself the goal of universalizing 9-year compulsory education and eliminating illiteracy among young people and adults by 2000. This objective was met in most localities by 2000, but difficulties persisted in western rural areas. In 2004, the central government launched a campaign known as “two basic accomplishments” which intensified efforts to address these difficulties; over 10 billion yuan were earmarked to build boarding schools in rural western areas. As a result, over 8,300 schools were built or renovated, thus ensuring students’ access to schooling. At the same time, the government implemented the policy of “two exemptions and one subsidy,” ensuring that these students were able to complete their education. Between 2003 and 2007, some 10 billion yuan were allocated through the budgets of central and local governments to modernize facilities in primary and secondary schools in rural central and western areas. These funds served to build computer classrooms in 37,500 junior secondary schools and to equip 384,000 primary schools with satellite reception facilities. They also financed CD players and complete sets of CD-based sets of teaching resources for 110,000 primary education units (Yuan 2007). These measures in favor of western and central regions have given rural students there greater access to quality education resources.

In 2008, the Ministry of Education introduced a program to support student enrollment in central and western regions which was specifically designed to enhance their access to education. The policy brought about a steady increase in enrollments in these areas; there were 170,000 new enrollments in 2012 (MOE 2012). The program required 15 provinces and municipalities (such as Beijing, Tianjin, and Liaoning) whose higher education institutions were somewhat better equipped in terms of resources and running conditions to draw up coordination plans with eight provinces and regions (including Shanxi, Inner Mongolia, and Yunnan) that had lower enrollment rates and fewer resources. The aim of the program was to narrow the regional gap, and it did indeed promote equity in access to higher education.

The national training program for primary and secondary school teachers that was launched in 2010 focused on training rural teachers from central and western regions. The central budget allocates an annual sum of 50 million yuan to support a demonstration training project for primary and secondary school teachers and promote teacher training across the country, especially in the western and central regions (MOE 2010; MOF 2010). The program has played an important role in strengthening the ranks of rural teachers and enhancing education as a whole in central and western regions.

2.2.3 Allocating Educational Resources in Favor of Less-Privileged Schools to Narrow the Interschool Gap

Due to the shortage of graduates and teachers and insufficient financial resources, for many years China adopted a policy whereby it prioritized the development of some schools rather than others. Over the last decade this policy has been reduced.

The state has established basic standards on the organization and quality of schools throughout the country; these were determined by various localities in accordance with the provincial government, which is responsible for overall coordination, planning, and implementation. Provincial and higher-level governments now allocate education resources more equitably and are upgrading less-developed schools. Over 20 provinces have published their standards on running schools at the compulsory education level in order to promote common standards. At the same time, teachers in urban and well-equipped schools are encouraged to support those that work in less-developed rural areas. Further training is offered to all teachers. Collectively, these arrangements should gradually narrow the gap between schools.

2.3 Setting Up an Efficient Student Support System

In order to prevent student dropout due to poverty, the state has gradually put in place a system for assisting poor students at different stages of their education. It was launched in rural areas and western regions and was extended to cities and central and eastern regions. The range of students receiving such assistance is being continuously increased, and standards are raised progressively. Every year nearly 180 million students receive such assistance, and now no young people drop out of school due to poverty.

In order to help college students from poor backgrounds to complete their courses, provision has been made to assist them. This includes student loans, government grants and scholarships, special allowances, as well as reduced tuition fees and exemptions. In 2000, the government extended the possibility of obtaining a loan to all college and university students throughout the country. In 2004, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, China Banking Regulatory Commission, and the People's Bank of China collectively carried out a major reform of this policy and the operating mechanism for the loans. They set up a new system based on risk compensation, thus ensuring that loans would be available to all eligible applicants, especially newly enrolled students. In the autumn semester of 2010, over one million students received government grants to the value of 10 billion yuan. The scale of government scholarships and grants has also grown progressively (Yuan and Xie 2011). In 2011, the central government allocated 10.3 billion yuan in special grants from its budget, thereby assisting 5.15 million college students. This sum was boosted by a further 6.5 billion yuan provided by local governments (Ministry of Finance 2011).

2.4 Implementing a Nutrition Program for Rural Students in Compulsory Education

Despite its rapid economic growth, the standard of living throughout China used to be very low, and there are still over 100 million people living under the poverty line of one USD per person per day. These poor families are confronted with severe

difficulties and their children suffer from malnutrition. In order to address the problem, in the autumn of 2011, the state launched a nutrition program for rural students in compulsory education, beginning on a trial basis in poverty-concentrated areas. Since then, the central government allocates over 16 billion yuan per annum from its budget to provide food allowances for these students. The daily subsidy amounts to three yuan per student. Through this policy, some 26 million students in 680 districts have access to healthy food (Jin 2012).

3 Looking to the Future: The Drive to Achieve Quality and Equity

After three decades of efforts, the Government of China has achieved its goal of giving all children access to schooling, yet the quality of education is not yet uniform or ideal. There is still a way to go before all children will have access to good schools. Although Shanghai has ranked well in PISA performance testing, it does not represent the national average. In relation to the development of practical skills and students' capacity to innovate, national education still has many shortcomings. Hence, a new round of reforms will be launched within the framework of the "National Outline for Medium- and Long-term Education Reform and Development" in order to achieve the dual goals of quality education and equity.

3.1 Reforming the Examination and Admission Systems

Examinations first took place in China as early as 1,000 years ago and have since played a significant role in selection processes. However, until now, due to technical limitations, examinations have only been able to measure students' mastery of academic knowledge and cannot evaluate comprehensively their overall proficiency, ability, and personality. Several other shortcomings in the current examination system are widely criticized. The fact that people's lifetime prospects depend on their once-only performance at the gaokao (the all-important national college entrance examination) is one reproach. Furthermore, the chances of obtaining a place in college are unequal from one province to another, and there are sometimes unacceptable cases whereby students can arbitrarily obtain bonus points. Colleges are not given enough decision-making power over enrollments, and the subject matter that examinations test—and how they are conducted—is another source of criticism as they do not encourage all-round education. In response to these reproaches, after resuming the gaokao, the state has begun to reform the examination, and the education authorities hope that this will substantially improve the national higher education selection process. *The National Outline for Medium- and Long-term Education Reform and Development* states that China will "reform its examination and enrollment system and change the status quo whereby one's lifetime prospects depend on

his/her once-only performance at the gaokao so as to encourage education that produces all-round, innovative people.”

According to the principle that the gaokao must be retained but also reformed, the *Outline* states that the education authorities will undertake several reforms. First, they are to develop two distinct sets of entrance examinations for students applying for undergraduate studies or to vocational institutions, respectively, so as to meet their various requirements. Second, they must improve achievement tests and overall quality evaluation for senior high school students so as to encourage them to do well in all subjects rather than just sciences or arts. Third, the authorities are to explore the possibility of conducting several exams a year on particular subjects and including these scores in the final college entrance evaluation so as to ease pre-gaokao student stress. Fourth, they must make sure that the examination and enrollment processes are fair, adjust the distribution of enrollment quota among colleges, and regulate the practice of giving bonus points at the gaokao. Fifth, they need to build bridges for students to pursue further studies so that they will have more choice in terms of study and future career. Since the gaokao influences many aspects of society and is such a sensitive issue, any change to the grading process needs to be carefully studied. As required by the *Outline*, a national steering committee on education and examinations is being created to study in-depth suggestions on how to reform the gaokao. The education authorities will further reform the gaokao completely, give colleges more decision-making power in relation to enrollments, set distinct entrance examinations for undergraduate studies and vocational education, and improve communication about examinations and enrollments.

In order to encourage students to combine integrity and skills, to study both arts and sciences, and to think independently, the reform requires educational actors to update their understanding of education and to reform the education system. More specifically, they should encourage students to combine learning and reflection as well as theoretical and practical knowledge. Teaching staff should be encouraged to teach students according to their aptitude.

Primary, secondary, and higher education should be better linked; there should be close ties between teaching policies, research, and practices, and evaluation and selection processes should be further reformed.

3.2 The Drive to Transform Management Systems and Enhance Government Coordination

Ever since China adopted its policy of reform and opening up, there has been pressure on the government to reform its management systems and approaches. It is also being pressured into streamlining administrative processes and delegating power to lower levels so that schools may use and develop their decision-making prerogatives in line with legislation and can be more autonomous. However, in relation to exercising decision-making, ambiguity still prevails concerning rights and obligations, e.g., the relationship between the state, the school, and the society is

still not clear. The government interferes excessively in educational activities and on occasion gets involved with matters beyond its scope. There are too many administrative admissions to be applied for; for example, the number of administrative departments and senior managers in schools is subject to limitations imposed by the local personnel department. The school's overall organization has to be examined and approved by the administrative department of education of the district concerned. Furthermore, the transfer and recruitment of staff are restricted by policies devised by local governments and must also be approved by the relevant government department. All of these administrative layers have weakened the enthusiasm and initiative of schools and curtailed their development.

If the current situation is to evolve and schools are to become dynamic, the authorities must continue to reform management systems. Styles must change and, in particular, the role of government needs to be reviewed. Attention needs to be given to streamlining administrative procedures and delegating power to lower levels and overall to improve the level of public education. The authorities should also define the duties of both central and local governments at all levels, standardize procedures to run schools, and ensure the independence of management, operation, and evaluation procedures. They should establish a coordinated and methodical management system that draws a line between government administration and public institutions and establish clear frontiers between powers and duties. The basic principle underpinning the reform of management systems is that the government should administer education in accordance with education law, just as schools do.

The key points of the necessary reforms are outlined below. First, the government should improve its management style, i.e., fulfill its obligations satisfactorily and delegate more power to schools. It should reduce the extent to which it intervenes directly in schools and dispense with the need for the administrative department to examine and approve the way each school functions. The government should also develop more guidance by way of policies, regulations, standards, and financial reporting to support the development of education.

Second, the powers and duties of governments at all levels should be defined, and, in particular, the power of provincial governments should be enhanced and coordinated. They should be granted more power to develop educational programs, and there should be a better, rational distribution of educational resources in the provinces. The allocation of resources should be optimized in order to ensure equal access to basic and vocational education, and initiatives to develop local governments' education policies should be encouraged.

Third, the education authorities should make a clear distinction between government and school, on the one hand, and management and operations on the other hand. They should guarantee schools the right to manage themselves, with the support of democratic oversight and community engagement and establish a modern system under which schools can function in accordance with legislation.

Under the leadership and the supervision of the Communist Party of China, the education authorities should strengthen the administration of provincial education structures. Only in this way will the country be able to meet the needs created by the rapid development of its economy, society, and education sector. The development

of compulsory education should be balanced, teaching methods should be reformed, and vocational and higher education should be granted equal shares of educational resources within administrative sectors or provinces.

The government should increase the rights and responsibilities of provincial governments to manage enrollments and award degrees. The distribution of power in relation to personnel matters, financial affairs, and other important issues is unbalanced and is a recurrent problem. The education authorities should be attentive to the recruitment, exchange, and promotion of teachers, and more stringent procedures should be put in place to control the allocation of education budgets and manage educational projects satisfactorily.

The points above are the key to allocating resources properly, improving the quality of education and increasing the extent to which people are satisfied with their education system. Ideally, therefore, the government should launch pilot reform measures on the overall organization of the system. In order to have a better balance of power as regards personnel matters, financial affairs, and other important issues, it should take steps to reform a number of issues, strengthen cooperation between different departments, and clearly define their responsibilities. The education authorities should take a more prominent position when it comes to overall arrangements, clearly define the responsibilities and power of various bodies, strengthen cooperation, and, this way, form a clear and effective mechanism for delivering public education.

3.3 Promoting the Development of Private Sector Education

Building up a sound private sector can help meet the need for diversified and individualized education, increase sources of funding, and inject new vitality into the system. Therefore, *the Outline* devotes considerable attention to devising a blueprint for developing private education and recognizes that it is a major actor in the development of education as well as a powerful force driving educational reform. The Outline therefore urges governments at all levels to put private education high on their agendas and to encourage nongovernmental sectors to invest in, or donate funds to, private schools. These can be run independently or in partnership with the state. Despite the fact that the private sector education is growing fast at the moment, certain problems persist. Proper understanding of the issues is lacking, policies are flawed, and implementation is not always effective. In order to pursue reforms on the way schools are run and thereby promote the development of private education, first of all, efforts must be made to improve the conditions favorable to the development by carrying out pilot reforms in such areas as private schools' juridical person attributes, property rights attributes, the protection of teachers' rights and interests, and, lastly, preferential policies. Meanwhile, relevant policy measures have to be established and fine-tuned.

More specifically, at the policy level, all discriminatory policies must be abandoned or updated, and private school students and faculty should enjoy the same

legal status as public facilities. Well-designed preferential policies should be formulated so as to stimulate various forms of investment in, and donations to, private sector schools, and sound policies must be drawn up that improve public financial support for this sector in general and nonprofit schools in particular.

At the management level, pilot programs should be carried out to oversee profit and nonprofit private schools separately; in addition, steps need to be taken to improve the overall planning and management of private education. Support will be given to private schools to help them improve their juridical person governance structure by implementing risk prevention mechanisms and an information disclosure system. Private schools should be encouraged to have innovative systems, mechanisms, and education models so as to improve the quality of teaching, develop unique features, and serve the community as best as possible. It is hoped that, in the near future, private and public education will work together and flourish.

3.4 Improving Education Funding Mechanism

Since the publication of *the National Outline for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)*, sources of educational funding have been increasing. In 2012, China reached its goal of allocating 4 % of GDP to education. However, if true equity in education is to be attained, educational input needs to be increased. To do this, expenditure must no longer rely overly on special allocations and project funds. Instead, there should be a systematized mechanism for allocating such input. To this end, the following reforms should be adopted.

A study should be conducted to calculate how much students at each grade cost in terms of allocations in order to determine how much the government should provide in total. Education authorities should find out how much governments at the national and local levels need to run their schools and then divide this amount by the number of students in order to identify per-student allocation standards. These standards should be raised to keep pace with developments in the country's economic, technology, and education sectors. They should also serve as a benchmark to see whether the government is providing enough educational funding. Using the pilots undertaken in some provinces and municipalities as a starting point, the practice should be promoted in other areas.

Innovative policies should be introduced to increase private sector investment in education which, in turn, would increase total funding for education. In recent years, although the private sector has invested increasingly in education, of the total amount of funding for education, the share coming from the private sector decreased from 38.7 % in 2005 (MOE 2006) to 26 % in 2009 (MOE 2010). Since at present there is little scope for schools to raise their tuition fees, innovative policies could be as follows. First, nongovernment sectors could be encouraged to donate to, or invest in, schools by offering them preferential conditions in relation to finance, taxes, banking, land, etc. Second, individuals who make donations to the education system should be able to claim income tax relief equal to the net value of the

donation. Third, businesses that donate to or invest in education should be able to deduct the amount they donate or invest from their taxable income that year, which is an internationally accepted practice.

Education budgets should be subjected to greater control to make sure that the funds are used more efficiently and effectively. They need to be monitored closely in order to guarantee that the funds are raised, allocated, and spent as they should be. Every step in the budget process should be supervised, from the moment when it is drawn up through to when sums are allocated, spent, and justified. A sound mechanism must be established to supervise the whole process so that educational budgets will be used more efficiently.

4 Conclusion

Looking towards the future, education systems in China still face numerous challenges. In summary, there is still a gap between increasing societal demand for quality education and a lack of quality resources. Reforms are urgently needed in relation to equity and quality.

Although education has been made a national priority formal, long-term regulatory bodies are now needed. Although educational expenditure has reached 4 % of GDP, it remains a challenge to provide quality education to all, allowing people to improve their skills and knowledge and thereby contribute to social and economic progress.

The influence of traditional Chinese culture, coupled with parents' high expectations for their children given the prevailing one-child policy, has created an overwhelming learning burden for students. A key objective of future reform will be to lessen this burden and improve learning effectiveness. Meanwhile, efforts need to be made to foster social responsibility and the spirit of innovation among students and help them develop practical abilities so that they will be better prepared for the labor market and able to shoulder responsibility for social development in the future.

Another challenge is how to further open up the field of education. On the one hand, China needs to draw upon other countries' experiences in order to advance education reform so that it may join the ranks of top-performing nations. On the other hand, the country needs to upgrade its education system to international standards in order to tempt more skilled people to continue their studies and also attract more international students to study in China.

Although China has the biggest education system in the world and access to education has been expanding substantially over recent years, there is still a distinct imbalance between various levels and types of education. Some sectors such as preprimary education, vocational education, minority education, and continuing education are, to various degrees, lagging behind the others. China's long-term goal, therefore, is to step up development in these areas and construct an education system which is aligned with social and economic development. Access to quality education for all will ensure that, regardless of people's social or regional origins, they will be able to maximize their potential in life.

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About the Contributors

Bambang Indriyanto is currently the Director of Center for Policy Research, The Ministry of Education and Culture, The Republic of Indonesia. This is his second time in this position; he had held it first during 2000–2003. During 2003–2005, he was the Director of Center for Curriculum Development, and from 2005 to 2010 he was the Secretary of the Directorate General of Management of Basic and Secondary Education. From 2010 to 2011 he served as the Secretary of the Directorate General of Basic Education, The Ministry of Education and Culture. In 1982, he graduated from the University of Gadjah Mada with a bachelor's degree in sociology. He got his master's degree in education administration and policy Studies from the State University of Albany, New York, in 1989, and in 1992 he got his doctorate in the same major and university. Since then, he has participated in several research project sponsored by the Ministry of Education, World Bank, UNICEF, ILO, and UNESCO. He has served as a member of Indonesian delegation for the World Trade Organization (WTO) and APEC.

Batuhan Aydagül is the Director of the Education Reform Initiative (ERI), a nongovernmental think-and-do-tank in Turkey. He is an education policy analyst with more than 15 years of experience in education policy and administration in both developing and post-conflict countries. Mr. Aydagül has a BA in Business from Marmara University and an MA in International Comparative Education from Stanford University. He previously served in Finansbank, the British International School Istanbul, Liberia Ministry of Education, and Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV) and was a recipient of a “Distinguished Service Award” from the Liberia Ministry of National Education. Concurrently he serves in the Advisory Board of Mother Child Education Foundation and in the Board of Network of Education Policy Centers.

Benjamin Levin is a Professor and Canada Research Chair in Education Leadership and Policy at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. He has worked with private research organizations, school districts, provincial governments, and national and international agencies, as well as building an academic career. He served as Deputy Minister (chief civil servant) for Education

for the Province of Ontario from 2004 to 2007 and 2008–2009 and held a similar position in Manitoba from 1999 through 2002. He has authored or co-authored eight books and more than 300 other articles on education, conducted many research studies, and has spoken and consulted on education issues around the world. His current interests are in large-scale change, poverty and inequity, and finding better ways to connect research to policy and practice in education.

Fernanda da Rosa Becker is a researcher at National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP). She has authored and co-authored articles and books on education. Her current interests are in large-scale assessment, public policies on education and early childhood education. She holds a bachelor's degree in economics and a master's degree in public administration.

Gábor Halász is Doctor of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He is Professor of Education at the Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology of the University Eötvös Loránd in Budapest where he is leading a Centre for Higher Educational Management. He is the former Director-General of the National Institute for Public Education in Budapest (now Institute for Educational Research and Development) where he is now scientific advisor. His research fields are education policy and governance, comparative and international education, and theory of education systems. As an education policy expert, he took an active part in Hungary's education change process in the 1990s. He is one of the founders of the Hungarian School for Education Management. Since its creation in 1998, he has been member of the governing board of the Tempus Foundation which is coordinating the EU-funded education programs in Hungary. Dr. Halász has worked as an expert consultant for a number of international organizations, particularly the OECD, the European Commission, the World Bank, and the Council of Europe. Since 1996, he has been representing Hungary in the Governing Board of CERI (OECD), between 2004 and 2007 he was the president of this Board.

Horst Weishaupt has been the Director of the Center for Research on Educational Governance at the German Institute for International Educational Research in Frankfurt am Main since 2008. He was Professor of Empirical Educational Research, University of Erfurt from 1992 to 2004 and University of Wuppertal from 2004 to 2013. His research areas cover school organisation and development, educational planning and the monitoring of education, school financing, geographical aspects of the education system, teacher research, the situation of educational science and educational research. He holds a Ph.D. in educational sciences and a diploma in educational sciences from Frankfurt University.

Jandhyala B.G. Tilak is Professor at the National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi. Tilak earned his Ph.D. degree in economics from the Delhi School of Economics (University of Delhi) and had taught in the Indian Institute of Education, the University of Delhi, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, the Hiroshima University, and the University of Virginia. As an economist of education, he was also on the research staff of the World. Prof. Tilak has authored/edited a dozen of books and more than 250 research papers. He is a recipient of the

Swami Pranavananda Saraswati National Award of the UGC in Education, Malcolm Adiseshiah Award, and the Global Education Award – Inspirational Teacher of the Year (2012) of the School of Educators. Prof. Tilak is the Editor of the *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration*, and is on the boards of several national and international journals. He is a member of several official committees on education of the Government of India and also serves the Comparative Education Society of India as its President.

Jeongwon Kim is a Research Fellow in Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) in Seoul, South Korea. Her major concern has been about the educational opportunity of the minority. She served as Director of Research Center for Educational Welfare in KEDI. Now she is Director of Education Support Center for North Korean Migrants. She has authored or co-authored five books and more than 100 articles and research reports. Her current interests are educational policy in social context, inequity in education, and teacher education.

John Ainley is a Principal Research Fellow in the Educational Monitoring and Research Division at the Australian Council for Educational Research. Up to July 2010, Dr. Ainley was Deputy CEO (Research) at ACER. His research interests focus on policy-oriented research in several areas such as information and communication technology in education, civic and citizenship education, and participation in science studies. During his career at ACER, he undertook a number of studies for national and state education authorities including analyses of the progress of young people through school, further education, training and work, influences on subject choice in the senior secondary years and the development of literacy over the first 5 years of school. Dr. Ainley is chair of the Advisory Council for the Centre for Educational Statistics and Evaluation in New South Wales, a member of the Ministerial Advisory Group on Literacy and Numeracy in New South Wales, a member of the Consortium Advisory Group for the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children and a member of the Youth Advisory Group for the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Dr. Ainley is a member of the editorial board of the journal *Education Research and Evaluation*. He has been a visiting scholar at the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research in San Francisco and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Kevin G. Welner is a Professor in the School of Education at the University of Colorado, Boulder, specializing in educational policy and law. He is Director of the National Education Policy Center (NEPC), housed at CU Boulder. He earned both his J.D. (1988) and Ph.D. (1997) from UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles). Prof. Welner's present research examines the use and misuse of research in policy-making and explores various issues concerning the intersection between education rights litigation and educational opportunity scholarship. He also continues to examine issues of tracking and detracking. His past research studied small-school reform, tuition-tax-credit vouchers, and the change process associated with equity-minded reform efforts – reforms aimed at benefiting those who hold less powerful school and community positions. Prof. Welner has received the Early Career Award in 2006

and Palmer O. Johnson Award (best article in 2004) from the American Educational Research Association, and has been made a Fellow of that Association. He has also received the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Residency and the Post-Doctoral Fellowship awarded by the National Academy of Education and the Spencer Foundation.

Lorenzo Gómez Morin Fuentes is Professor at the Latin American Superior School of Social Sciences (FLACSO) in Mexico, an academic institution founded by UNESCO, where he leads the team that has been providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Education of Mexico to develop dropout prevention programs and teacher training in upper secondary education. He has occupied the position of Undersecretary of Basic Education in the Federal Government (2001–2006) and State Secretary of Education and Social Welfare in the state government of Baja California, Mexico (1997–2001). Before that he worked as a professor and researcher at the Autonomous University of Baja California for 15 years. In private sector, he was the first Executive Director of the most influential think tank in education in Mexico called *Mexicanos Primero* (Mexicans First), an NGO lobbying for quality improvement of education in México, and currently he is Executive President and of the *Fundacion Mexicana para el Fomento de la Lectura* (Mexican Foundation to Foster Reading) responsible of the National Reading Survey in Mexico.

Luisa Ribolzi is vice president of ANVUR, Agency for the Assessment of University and Research Institutions. She has been professor of sociology of education in the university of Bari and then in the University of Genoa where she was also teaching sociology of family and has been vice-dean of the Faculty of Education, and chair of the scientific committee of the Ph.D. for the evaluation of educational systems and processes (DOVE). Her research activities are in many sectors of sociology of education: institutional aspects of education and educational policies, i.e. schooling models and public/private education, assessment of schools, teacher as a profession, relationships between education and labour market, both in a national and international setting. She has published four books, co-authored three books and more than 150 papers in scientific reviews or contribution in books, and a great number of short articles in magazines and newspapers. She has been in the Governing Board of AIS (Italian Association of Sociology) and has thrice been coordinator of the Sociology of Education Working Group. She took part in a number of committees for the Ministry of Education since 1995 and has been in the Governing Board of Indire (National Institute for Educational Research and Innovation) and in the board of public and private research organizations. From 2006 to 2011, she represented Italy in the OECD CERI Governing Board.

Luiz Claudio Costa is President of the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP). He entered the Federal University as Professor of the Department of Agricultural Engineering in 1983. From 2000 to 2004, he worked as Pro-Rector for community matters and from 2008 to 2011 as Rector at the same university. He worked as leader of the UNO's specialist team for climatic changes: drought and extreme temperatures. He was Secretary of Higher Education of Ministry of Education in Brazil. He has published more than 300 scientific papers.

He holds a first degree in mathematics and a master in agricultural meteorology and Ph.D. in Agrometeorology from the University of Reading, England.

Maha Taibah was appointed the Vice Governor for Strategic Initiatives at the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation in Saudi Arabia in June 2013. She is charged with raising women's awareness of flexible career options that fit with their professional aspirations and talents. Concurrently, Maha serves as an advisor to the Saudi Minister of Labor where she focuses on educating and employing Saudi youth through driving technology and human capital initiatives that build capacity and further strategic partnerships with the private sector, government and the global community at large. In 2005, Maha was selected to establish and serve as the General Supervisor of the All-Women Business College at Al Yamamah University in Riyadh. In 2003, Maha earned a master's degree in educational leadership from DePaul University and a bachelor's degree in early childhood education from King Saud University. In 2011, she completed the Program for Leadership Development at Harvard Business School and is actively building a global network for an expanded perspective. Maha is currently part of the Official Saudi delegation to the ILO and G20 amongst other global participations.

Margarita Poggi is the Head of the International Institute for Educational Planning, IIEP/UNESCO Buenos Aires Office. She has been a university and postgraduate professor at several national universities. She served as National Director of Information and Educational Quality Assessment at the Ministry of Education of Argentina and formerly as General Planning Director at the Ministry of Education of Buenos Aires City Government. She has also been a consultant to national and international agencies. She has extensive experience in training public officials, supervisors and managers and coordinating educational research teams. She has published widely on educational innovation, evaluation, managers training and schools.

Marie Duru-Bellat is Sociologist of Education, Professor in Sciences-Po (Institute of Political Sciences), OSC. A specialist of education, she has published, from her research, 10 books and about 75 articles in academic reviews. She is associate editor in several academic reviews. Among other experiences, she has been member of the Haut Conseil pour l'Evaluation de l'Ecole (High Council for the Evaluation of School), and has been associated to numerous activities of consulting on educational issues and reforms. She has been elected as a "Consultant Fellow" of the International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO.

Martin Prew holds a visiting fellowship at Witwatersrand University School of Education in South Africa and works as an education development specialist based in South Africa and Uganda. Previously, He was Executive Director of the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD), after spending 6 years in a senior management post in the South Africa Department of Education with responsibility for school management and governance. His teaching and lecturing experience was gained in post-independent Zimbabwe. He holds a doctorate from Exeter University, UK.

Mel West is head of School of Education at the University of Manchester. His work has principally been in the fields of school management and school improvement. In the mid-1980s, he was one of the architects of the influential Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA) programme. This programme, which is still going strong in several parts of the world, has been used by some hundreds of schools, and has become one of the most widespread approaches to school development. He is also co-directing the Leadership Development Unit, set up by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the National College for School Leadership, to support schools and LEAs facing challenging circumstances.

Mounira Jamjoom is a Senior Research Specialist with the Ideation Center, Booz & Company's official Middle East think tank. She is leading the Center's research efforts on education, women's studies and evolving social issues that have important implications for the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. Mounira has published several articles in academic journals and co-authored numerous Booz & Company and Ideation Center publications. Mounira has a Ph.D. in education from Oxford University and a master's degree from Columbia University. She has written extensively on education in Saudi Arabia and on women's role in the education system, among other topics.

Nikolay D. Nikandrov graduated from Leningrad University (USSR) in 1959 and received his doctorate in education there in 1973. Since 1997, he is president of the Russian academy of education – a body of about 30 research institutes which is to advise the authorities on matters of educational development. His main interests are in the fields of comparative education, methodology of educational research and methods of teaching and learning. He is author of over 300 publications on these subjects, among them several books such as *Programmed Learning and the Ideas of Cybernetics*, 1970; *Pedagogics of Higher Education*, 1974; *Higher Education Abroad*, 1978; *Creativity in Teaching*, 1990; *Values Education: The Case of Russia*, 1996; *Russia: Values in the Society at the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century*, 1997; *Russia: Socialization and Education at the Turn of the Millennia*, 2000; *General Foundations of Education*, 2006; *Professional Activity: An Introduction*, 2011. He is also active as a professor of education at the Moscow Pedagogical University.

Robyn Read is a doctoral student in education leadership and policy at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. She has worked and lived in several countries as well as with Canadian NGOs. Currently she is focusing her doctoral work on the role of research in financing of education in developing countries, including the role of the World Bank.

Taewan Kim is currently a Professor of the Keimyung University. Dr. Kim was the President of the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) from 2009 to 2012. Dr. Kim is a member of the UNESCO Educational Committee as well as the Chief Editor of KEDI Journal of Educational Policy (KJEP). Dr. Kim's research is mainly focused on educational administration and higher education. His most recent work includes leading the Policy Advisory Committee for School Autonomy and chairing the Committee on University Enhancement. He serves as a member of

the Special Committee for Teacher Policy and the Self-Evaluation Committee at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Dr. Kim is a member of the Agenda Forum Committee for the Equality of Sexes at the Korean Women's Development Institute. Dr. Kim attained his bachelor's and master's degree in education at Seoul National University and a second master's degree and a doctoral degree from the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) in sociology of education and in educational policy.

Tamotsu Tokunaga served as the Director-General of the National Institute for Educational Policy Research for 2 years from July 2010. Before that, he was an administrator serving as Director responsible for systems of regional educational administration, regional educational finance, teachers and school management in primary and secondary-level education, Director of Budget and Accounts Division of the Minister's Secretariat responsible for the organization of the overall education budget, Deputy Director-General and Director-General in charge of the university system, improving and managing of national universities and academic research.

Zhenguo Yuan is former President of National Institute of Education Sciences (NIES), a research arm of the Ministry of Education. Before joining the NIES, he was Professor of Education and Dean of Faculty of Education at East Normal University up to 2000. He served as Deputy Director-General of Department for Teacher Education of Ministry of Education (2000–2004) and Deputy Director-General of Department for Social Sciences (2004–2007). As an education policy scientist, his research examines the education policy, philosophy of education, teacher education and research methodology, etc. He authored several groundbreaking and award-winning books in the field of education policy, such as *China Education Policy Review*, *Education Policy Science*, *Teacher Education Series*, *New Perspectives of Education*, etc. He also published numerous articles and reports on various topics relating to education policy and reform. Prof. Yuan holds a Bachelor of Literature from Yangzhou Teachers College and a Master of Education and a Ph.D. in Education from East China Normal University. He is honorary professor at Peking University, Zhejiang University and Fudan University.

About the Editor

Yan Wang is Director of the Department for International Exchange of the National Institute of Education Sciences. She is also a research associate with the Wah Ching Centre of Research on Education in China, the University of Hong Kong. In her prior role, she worked as consultant for the World Bank in 2008 and 2010. From 2002 to 2007, she was Executive Director, Department for International Exchange & Cooperation, Beijing Academy of Educational Sciences. Since then, she has designed and implemented a series of qualitative and quantitative research projects in the fields of basic education, vocational and technical education and training, lifelong learning, etc. The research outcomes catalyzed subsequent legislative changes and policy development on national and local levels. She has also conceptualized, initiated and led the implementation of multiple international collaborative research projects on a variety of education issues. She holds a Ph.D. of Education Policy and Administration from the University of Hong Kong, a Master of Educational Economics and Administration and a first degree in English Literature. She has authored, co-authored and edited numerous articles, reports and books on comparative education, education policy and administration in both English and Chinese.

Email: wangy@nies.net.cn; ywang08@live.com

National Institute of Education Sciences of China

Established in 1957, the National Institute of Education Sciences (NIES) is a research arm of the Ministry of Education and a national-level comprehensive education research institution in China. The predecessor of the NIES, the Education Research Division of the Central Research Institute was founded in 1941. For over 70 years since its original establishment, NIES has strived to contribute to the education development in China by advising policymaking process, advancing theoretical innovation and guiding local practices.

Now the institute employs 260 staff, including 176 researchers and research associates, engaged in studies on education policy, basic education, curriculum and pedagogy, teacher development, education inspection and evaluation, physical, health and arts education, higher education, psychology and special education, etc.

The NIES has eleven researcher's center. It also has a center for educational newspapers and periodicals, and a publishing house. The National Planning and Funding Office for Education Research that plans and administers national level educational research projects is affiliated with the NIES. The institute has developed partnership for reform experiments with seven areas located in the north, east, west, south and middle part of China, with which the NIES provide advisory and informative assistance for education reform and innovation.