



Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD

Comité Consultatif Economique et Industriel Auprès de l'OCDE

BIAC Discussion Paper to the OECD Meeting of Education Ministers on Raising the Quality of Learning for All

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INTRODUCTION

1. BIAC appreciates this opportunity to participate in the OECD Meeting of Education Ministers addressing issues relating to the theme of “Raising the Quality of Learning for All.”
2. As we continue to address the significant impact of globalisation on all economies, even given the current more positive economic outlook, many continue to struggle with high unemployment. Thus, business remains focused on policies key to employment creation, while taking into account the dynamics of changing demographics, increasingly diversified work environments and the emergence of a knowledge society.
3. Initial education is essential to a healthy economy. It contributes to competitiveness, enhanced productivity, and the capacity for innovation. Companies depend upon a labour pool that is flexible, technologically literate and work-ready, and have a vital interest in schools turning out young people equipped to take on the ever more technologically sophisticated and knowledge intensive jobs.
4. At the same time it is clear that individuals depend on initial education to maximise their capacity for professional development throughout their career.
5. Education contributes to social inclusion by equipping students with the basic skills and competencies needed to engage in society in both their personal and professional life.
6. It is in this context, and in the context of this Ministerial that BIAC emphasises the importance of quality initial education and lifelong learning.
7. In our view, Government has the primary responsibility for initial education. Employers and companies contribute by working with Government and educational institutions to provide clear goals for education according to the needs

of the market. At the local level, companies provide opportunities for students to learn about developments in industry, services and technology.

8. The increasingly dynamic labour market brought on by globalisation has necessitated an important shift in thinking about goals of education. Rapidly evolving job profiles responding to market needs require employees to have an education that equips them with the ability to respond and adapt to market changes, and new technologies. This need will even become stronger as a result of changing demographics. Likewise, management of companies is increasingly horizontal, requiring teamwork to complete complex tasks, and emphasising entrepreneurship in exploring new business opportunities.
9. Schools need to be managed and equipped to respond to these new market realities. This entails school objectives shifting from only or mostly pure cognitive goals and “ready for use” vocational qualifications, towards emphasising basic knowledge and skills, including practical and ICT-skills, complemented by social and personal skills, interdisciplinary approaches, diversified working methods and the ability to learn throughout life.
10. Many companies are deeply involved in helping education institutions with the assessment of attributes that employers will be looking for in their recruits in the coming years. They consider the skills that will be in demand; the breadth of education required for different areas of work; and the timing of opportunities and the number that are likely to become available.
11. Business and educational institutions benefit from the sharing of this information, which ultimately serves to aid the decision making process of students that will eventually enter the job market. Business should also share experiences and tools with respect to quality systems and organisations of professionals with education. Of course, schools are not companies, but we are convinced that sharing experiences between business and education can support the development of education systems at large and individual institutions in particular.
12. The following sections provide views specific to the two main themes of the Ministerial meeting, “Raising Performance levels for All”, and “Improving Teacher Supply and Effectiveness.”

RAISING PERFORMANCE LEVELS FOR ALL

13. Data shows that performance levels are not simply related to the level of investment in education. While the level of investment is not irrelevant, the focus of obtaining optimal results is of primary importance.
14. In looking at the issue of quality of education, we note that not all aspects of education quality can be easily measured. In particular, social attributes, personal goals and values are important fields, but difficult to measure.
15. Nevertheless, it is important to focus on evaluating the traditional goals of education: knowledge and skills. Through observation and coaching, social and personal goals can at least be assessed and taken into account, although it is less easy to compare and to rank this kind of performance.

16. In the discussion to improve quality performance levels in education, BIAC would like to highlight a number of important issues:

1. The devolvement of responsibility to the frontline -- giving schools more autonomy.
2. Setting clear standards and external evaluation as schools become more autonomous.
3. Provision of support and training for teachers and school management enabling them to take on new responsibilities.
4. The spreading of good practice from school policies via networks and activities for professional development of teachers and school managers.
5. Increasing transparency of school evaluation results for better informed choices of schools.
6. The development of benchmarks from nationwide school data, to stimulate schools to perform more than average and prevent standards from becoming at the same time minimum and maximum.

17. The issue of how to support and improve low performing schools, without creating a reward for low performance, is likewise a critical issue. Without some type of support such schools attract less and less students, and may be forced to close. This should not be excluded, but first such schools should be given the opportunity for improvement. This can be supported by training of management, training of teachers, coaching and consultancy. In the case that the low performance is due to low entrance level of pupils, then additional financial support may be considered. Appropriate monitoring of the effective implementation of such programmes should also be considered.

18. BIAC underlines the value of international studies like the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and TIMMS. These studies also encourage countries to review their education policy in case of results below average.

IMPROVING TEACHER SUPPLY AND EFFECTIVENESS.

19. The shortage of teachers, and concerns about quality and effectiveness of teachers are important issues that must be addressed by policy makers.

20. We note in the current OECD project on “Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers”, that factors teachers are seeking in their jobs include working with students and colleagues, professional autonomy, and opportunities for personal and intellectual growth. However, those who leave the teaching profession report that they did not find these factors in the reality of their job.

21. On the issue of teacher supply and effectiveness, generally a national and subnational topic, an interesting report of a group of 8 national employers' confederations (in Europe), chaired by Mr. Attilia Oliva of Confindustria (Italy), addresses "The Empowerment the Teaching Profession and Modernizing School Management" (The Oliva Report).¹ The Report proposes a coherent policy of giving schools more autonomy under conditions of quality control and of stimulating school management that facilitates professional development of teachers. The following are a number of points highlighted in the Oliva Report:

1. The starting point in the Oliva Report is that the school itself should become a learning organisation -- "learning schools". It should renew its mission responding to changes in society as pointed out earlier in this statement. This renewed mission includes the enrichment of goals, renewal of teaching methods, and making use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). Education should take on the role of preparation for lifelong learning for not only students, but all educational professionals.
2. The Oliva Report also points out that schools need autonomy to be responsive to the diversity of demands. One of the key elements of the autonomy of the schools should be that they can recruit their own teachers and make arrangements with teachers according to the profile of the school. Learning schools can offer a more dynamic and challenging working environment for teachers.
3. In learning schools, different mixes of activities within the teaching profession will create more job-variety and more career possibilities. Certainly not only or mainly in the sense of new type of management jobs, but in the sense of different roles within the teaching profession, which can be developed, like developing locally connected study projects, coaching young teachers, coaching colleagues in the use of ICT, etc.
4. In learning schools, lifelong learning will apply also to teachers. The management should facilitate service training.
5. Experimentation with differentiation in rewards for schools and teaching -- Present systems are in general very rigid and leave no room for a school policy with respect to rewards. For example, the idea of rewarding excellent performance of teams, ie a school team or units within a school, to in part encourage teamwork, an important element in modern teaching methods.
6. The development of quality-improving self-evaluation systems, including involving teachers in defining and installing this quality process.
7. The specification at national level, of qualification criteria for teachers and for school managers.
8. The importance of the role of school management. School leaders should initiate the process to translate demands in the school environment to educational practice. Not only national standards, but also local and

¹ The Report "Empowering the Teaching Profession and Modernizing School Management" is available on the BIAC Website at www.biac.org. Please note this not an official BIAC position but is a report by a group of individual BIAC Member Organisations.

regional demands and characteristics of the school population should influence the profile and the approach of the school. They should for example, facilitate the professional development of the teachers by Human Resource Management (HRM-approaches), through the use of ICT, software for designing course material, and workplaces for teachers.

TO CONCLUDE:

22. When a company makes a decision to invest, one of the most important factors is the quality of the workforce. This requires quality school and teachers in initial education.
23. While government has the primary responsibility for initial education, business working with governments and educational institutions to assist in providing clear goals for education, that prepares students for today's global market, is essential. In secondary and higher education, this includes companies working with schools to promote an understanding of the current state of the industry through measures such as internship programs, teaching exchanges, provision of case materials, ICT resources, opportunities for company visits and engagement in career guidance.
24. From a business perspective, instilling basic skills and competencies, using a modern curriculum, attractive teaching materials, career guidance support and highly qualified and enthusiastic teachers is essential. However, preparing students to continue learning throughout life should be the major goal of both initial, and also higher education.
25. Schools should be organized and managed to respond to changes in society and in companies. Under the condition of clear targets and good quality-assessment, schools should be given autonomy to make optimal use of the professional capacity of teachers to find answers to the new demands of today's global economy. Such learning schools will be dynamic and inspiring places for pupils to learn and for teachers to work.
26. BIAC considers the development of human and social capital to be one of its strategic priorities. Quality education, incorporating the flexibility needed for achievement, is an essential ingredient to realising the benefits of sustainable economic growth and should remain a top priority for all.