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Equity and Equality of Opportunity

Analyses of developments and policies that influence equity have been an underlying priority in much of the OECD educational work. The persistent patterns of inequality have been highlighted, with the increasing quality of international data permitting analyses relating to many pertinent groups of learners and their educational experiences. The dimensions and groups include gender, age, migrant status, special needs and social background, and cover adult formal and non-formal learning, as well as schooling, vocational education and higher education. OECD analysis has also charted the nature of the "digital divide". Findings and recommendations from a major international review of equity in education that resulted in two publications – No More Failures *and* Equity and Quality and Education *– are presented. The chapter reports promising policy directions from studies, including those on immigrants' education, cultural diversity and teacher education.*

INTRODUCTION

Analyses of developments and policies that influence equity have been an underlying priority in much of the OECD educational work. The persistent patterns of inequality have been highlighted, with the increasing quality of international data permitting analyses relating to many pertinent groups of learners and their educational experiences. OECD analysis has shown that there need be no contradiction between equity and efficiency, and indeed has underlined how damaging to economic as well as social goals is the phenomenon of exclusion and widespread under-achievement.

A major international review of equity in education resulted in *No More Failures,* published in 2007, which outlines ten broad policy directions around the design of provision, practices and resourcing. The second report of the review – *Equity and Quality in Education*, published in 2012 – provides five core recommendations for preventing school failure and promoting the completion of upper secondary and a further five for supporting the improvement of low-performing disadvantaged schools. The charting of the outcomes of, and opportunities and policies for, different population groups has been undertaken across the many sectors of education and training, including longstanding work on special educational needs.

Ethnic and cultural diversity makes society richer, but reaping the full benefits requires special efforts from the education system. The OECD *Thematic Reviews on Migrant Education* have examined the education outcomes of the children of immigrants in five OECD countries. *PISA 2009 Results: Overcoming Social Background* complements this work as it provides rich insight into the equity in learning opportunities and outcomes of students with different socio-economic backgrounds. Diversity in the classroom can enhance learning and prepare students for the outside world but major challenges are facing many schools and teachers to make this happen; work on "Teacher Education for Diversity" has examined how countries educate teachers to respond to increasing cultural diversity and the educational challenges faced by indigenous populations.

KEY FINDINGS

There is no contradiction between equity and efficiency in education: Equity and efficienty are complementary, in contradiction to the widespread argument that the redistribution of resources to those in greatest need helps equity but damages efficiency. The complementarity is clear within basic education where school failure has large costs not only to those involved, but also to society, because the welfare costs of social exclusion are large. Successful secondary education completion gives individuals better employment and healthier lifestyle prospects resulting in greater contributions to public budgets and investment. More educated people contribute to more democratic societies and sustainable economies, and are less dependent on public aid and less vulnerable to economic downturns. Reasonably-priced, effective measures to address failure benefit both efficiency and equity.

Some analyses even suggest that an equitable distribution of skills across populations has a strong impact on overall economic performance.

Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools, 2012, Chapter 1; *No More Failures: Ten Steps to Equity in Education*, 2007

Investing early enhances both equity in education and economic efficiency: Strengthening equity in education is cost-beneficial, and investing in early years yields high returns, since it makes it possible to reap the benefits and reinforce equity efforts made at subsequent education levels. Early acquisition of skills and knowledge makes it easier to acquire skills and knowledge later on. So, strengthening equity includes investing in the very early years as well as ensuring that students complete upper secondary education.

Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools, 2012, Chapter 1

The countries with high quality and high equity have embraced student heterogeneity and avoided premature and differentiated structures: Early tracking is associated with reduced equity in outcomes and sometimes weakens results overall. In countries with early selection of students into highly differentiated education systems, differences among schools are large and the relationship between socio-economic background and student school performance stronger.

No More Failures: Ten Steps to Equity in Education, 2007, Chapter 3

Choice may stimulate quality but with risks for equity: There are quality arguments to be made in favour of creating a degree of choice as a vehicle for stimulating improvement. When choices exist, schools must then look beyond their own walls at what others – their potential "competitors" – are doing; without some room for exit to be exercised, parents and students have no threat to back up voice. OECD work confirms that better educated, middle-class parents are more likely to avail themselves of choice opportunities and send their children to the "best" school they can find, widening the gaps between the sought-after schools and the rest. Across countries, greater choice in school systems is associated with larger differences in the social composition of different schools.

No More Failures: Ten Steps to Equity in Education, 2007, Chapter 3; *Demand-sensitive Schooling? Evidence and Issues*, 2006

Boys with disabilities and receiving additional resources outnumber such girls by approximately 60 to 40, and the gap is even wider for those with learning and behavioural difficulties: These are consistent results, repeatedly found in different studies with different methodologies. There is a consistent majority of males over females in special needs education provision or in receipt of additional resources for disabilities and learning difficulties. Whether looked at by location (special school, special class, regular class), cross-nationally or nationally, age of student or stage of education, boys outnumber girls. For learning difficulties, the difference is even larger with males outnumbering females by two-thirds to one-third.

Students with Disabilities, Learning Difficulties and Disadvantages: Policies, Statistics and Indicators – 2007 Edition, 2008, Chapter 4

The digital divide defined by technology access has faded in schools but a second one based on digital competence more stubbornly remains: In almost all OECD countries, students attend schools equipped with computers and most of these are connected to the Internet (though there do remain some gaps in digital home access). A more stubborn digital divide is that between those who have the necessary competences and skills to benefit from computer use, and those who do not, which competences are closely linked to students' economic, cultural and social capital. School use of digital media can help to reduce the digital divide, and computer use is associated with improved academic skills and competences.

Are the New Millennium Learners Making the Grade? Technology Use and Educational Performance in PISA, 2010, Chapters 4 and 5, and Executive Summary

Immigrant students largely face greater difficulties in education than their native peers: The performance of immigrant students in reading, science and mathematics in compulsory education is for the most part lower than that of their native peers. This is despite generally positive attitudes towards learning among immigrant students. In some countries immigrant students (first-generation) are less likely to attend early childhood education and care, and more likely to repeat a grade, attend vocational schools and drop out from secondary education. They have more limited access to quality education. They are more likely to attend schools that are located in big cities that serve students who are on average from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds and with higher concentrations of other immigrant students.

*Closing the Gap for Immigrant Students: Policies, Practice, and Performance, 2*010, Chapter 2; *Where Immigrant Students Succeed: A Comparative Review of Performance and Engagement in PISA 2003,* 2006, Chapter 2

Language is an obstacle to school achievement for many immigrant students: The most obvious challenge for many students with immigrant parents is adapting to a new language and a new learning environment. PISA results suggest that the older a child is at arrival, the less well he or she does in reading at age 15. However, at least as far as reading outcomes are concerned, there does not seem to a be a critical age for language learning – i.e. there is no arrival age after which there is an abrupt fall-off in performance. Not all the decline with age of arrival is related to the language barrier itself, but rather to the fact that some students have spent significant time in an education system in the origin country with different standards, curricula, and instructional characteristics. For many, immigration means not only learning a new language, but also adapting to a more demanding education system.

Untapped Skills: Realising the Potential of Immigrant Students, 2012, Chapter 3 and Executive Summary

Young adults born abroad are much more likely than the others to be already out of education and not to have completed upper secondary education (but with notable exceptions): Many more young adults aged 20-24 years old have low educational attainment – as indicated by having already left education without having completed at the least upper secondary education – when they are born outside the country. Across the OECD, a quarter

of this age group born abroad has low attainment on this measure as compared with only 15% of those born in the country. The gap is 20 percentage points or more in Austria, Greece, Italy and the United States. Yet, not everywhere do immigrant young adults lag behind the rest of the population in educational attainment: a higher proportion of foreign-born 20-24 year-olds are still in education or already have upper secondary education in Australia, Canada, Hungary, Portugal and the United Kingdom than those born in the country.

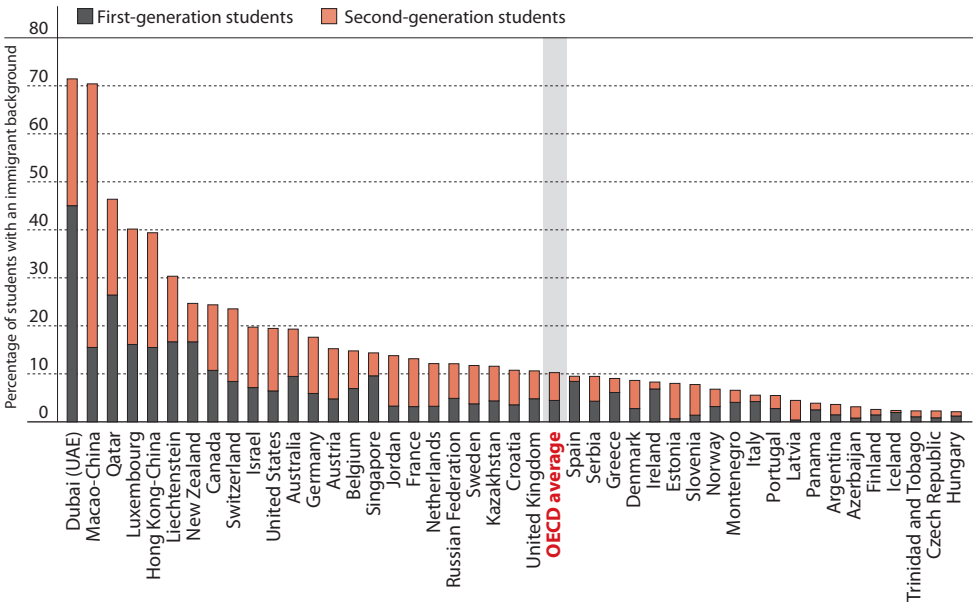
Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators, 2010, Indicator C3

Students' attainment is typically lower in schools where most of the students come from disadvantaged backgrounds: In most OECD countries, students' attainment is typically lower in schools where most of the students come from disadvantaged backgrounds. The primary reasons for this are that students' socio-economic background has a strong impact on their performance, which many disadvantaged schools are unable to counteract; indeed, they may accentuate it. Lack of systemic support and flexibility and limited or ineffective use of resources including staff, make imposing the challenges facing low-performing disadvantaged schools.

Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools, 2012, Chapter 3

Figure 7.1.

Prevalence of first- and second-generation immigrant students (2009)



Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of students with an immigrant background (first- or second-generation students).

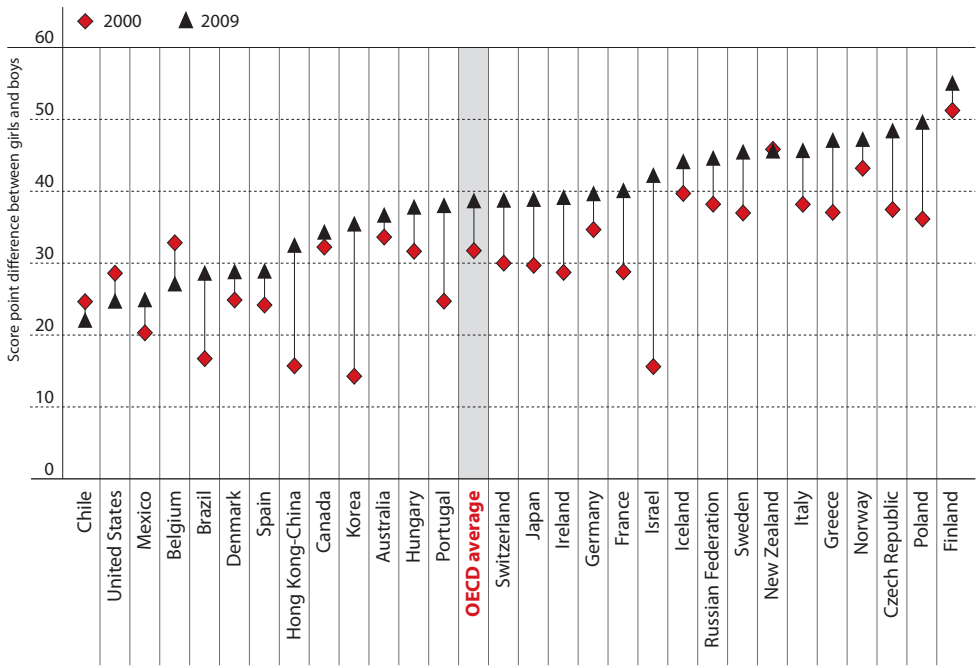
Source: OECD, *PISA 2009 Database*, Table II.4.1.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932343608

High levels of immigration do not inevitably, as often assumed, lower the mean performance of school systems: In New Zealand, Canada and Switzerland, 20% to 25% of students are from an immigrant background while the proportions are even higher in Liechtenstein (30%), Hong Kong-China (39%), Luxembourg (40%) and Qatar (46%). In Macao-China and Dubai (UAE), that percentage is at least 70%. There is no positive association between the size of the immigrant student population and average performance at the country or economy level, and there is also no relationship between the proportion of students with an immigrant background and the performance gaps between native and immigrant students.

PISA Results 2009: Overcoming Social Background: Equity in Learning Opportunities and Outcomes, 2010, Chapter 4 and Executive Summary

Figure 7.2.
Gender differences in reading performance in PISA (2009)



How to read this chart: The chart shows the difference in reading performance between girls and boys and the trend observed between 2000 (diamonds) and 2009 (triangles). Countries are ranked in ascending order by the difference observed in 2009. For example in Sweden, girls obtained 46 score points more in reading on average in the 2009 PISA assessment, which is roughly equivalent to one year of schooling, while in 2000 the difference amounted to only 37 score points. Non-OECD member countries and economies are included for comparison.

Source: OECD (2010), *PISA 2009 Results: Overcoming Social Background: Equity in Learning Opportunities and Outcomes (Volume II)*, PISA, OECD Publishing.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932560892

Among the 13 countries that showed clear improvements in average reading performance since 2000, most can attribute those gains to improvements among the lowest performing students: Among the 26 OECD countries with comparable results in the 2000 and 2009 PISA assessments, Chile, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Korea, Poland, Portugal, and the partner countries Albania, Brazil, Indonesia, Latvia, Liechtenstein and Peru all show overall improvements in reading performance. With the exception of Korea and Brazil, the gap in reading scores between the highest- and lowest performing students narrowed in all of these countries; and in some the impact of socio-economic background on performance weakened between 2000 and 2009. Most commonly, the reading performance of girls improved, while boys' reading performance improved in only five of the countries. While the percentage of low performers changed only slightly on average across OECD countries, it dropped from nearly half (48%) of all 15-year-old students to below one-third (31%) in Chile, from 26% to less than 18% in Portugal, and from 23% to 15% (and below the OECD average) in Poland.

📖 *PISA in Focus No. 2,* March 2011

Girls outperform boys in reading, and the gap is growing: The educational gender gap in reading performance has widened in most OECD countries since the year 2000. On average across OECD countries, 15-year-old boys are about one-and-a-half times more likely to have low reading scores than girls. The difference in score points is equivalent to one school year. Differences between boys and girls in attainment appear early on and boys are more likely to repeat school years than girls. Boys predominate among early school leavers and a higher proportion of girls receive an upper secondary school qualification. Girls usually obtain higher grades and higher pass rates in school leaving examinations, which, in turn, helps them to enter desired university programmes.

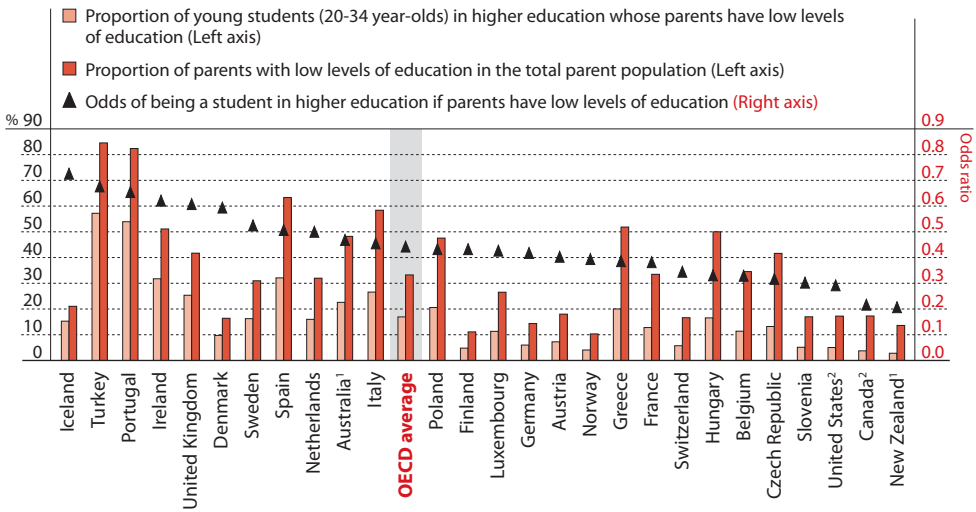
📖 *PISA Results 2009: What Students Know and Can Do: Student Performance in Reading, Mathematics and Science,* 2010, Chapter 2; *Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools,* 2012, Chapter 1

Girls and women have now moved clearly ahead of boys and men in education: The number of expected years in formal education between ages 15 and 29 across OECD countries enjoyed by young women – 7.2 years – now surpasses those of young men who average only 6.9 and is higher in all OECD countries (2010) except Germany, Japan, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Turkey. On average, 74% of girls complete their upper secondary education within the stipulated time, compared with 66% of boys. Only in Finland, Japan, Korea, the Slovak Republic and Sweden is there a difference of less than five percentage points in the proportions of boys and girls who leave school early. Female graduation rates from upper secondary education are higher in 24 of the 26 OECD countries permitting comparison. The female advantage is greatest in Iceland and Portugal, where graduation rates among young women exceed those of young men by 20 percentage points or more. The exception is Germany, where the graduation rate is slightly higher for young men. In entry to university-type tertiary education, only in Japan and Mexico do more men enter than women.

📖 *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators,* 2012, Indicators A2, C3 and C5

Figure 7.3.

Participation in higher education of students whose parents have low levels of education (2009)



Note: The number of students attending higher education are under-reported for Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States compared to the other countries as they only include students who attained ISCED 5A, while the other countries include students who attained ISCED 5A and/or 5B. Therefore, the omission of data on 5B qualifications may understate intergenerational mobility in these countries.

1. Data source from Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey (ALL) of 2006.

2. Data source from Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey (ALL) of 2003.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the odds of attending higher education.

Source: OECD (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing. Table A6.1. See Annex 3 for notes (*www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012*).

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932661934

Top performers in science generally attend schools with relatively privileged students and often private, though in some systems the link to social background is weaker: Top performers in science at age 15 tend to be in schools where others are also high performers and from relatively advantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Many such schools select students according to their academic record and many of them are private. Typically, about a quarter of top performers in science come from a socio-economic background below the country's average but in Japan, Finland and Austria, and the partner economies Macao-China and Hong Kong-China, a third or more of the top performers in science come from such a lower socio-economic background. Male students are slightly more likely than females to be top performers in science (1.0% of girls and 1.5% of boys).

Top of the Class: High Performers in Science in PISA 2006, 2009, Chapter 2; *PISA 2009 Results: What Students Know and Can Do: Student Performance in Reading, Mathematics and Science*, 2010, Chapter 3

Socially advantaged and female students spend more time in regular lessons and individual study in science, mathematics and the language of instruction: In most countries, socio-economically advantaged students spend much more time in regular school lessons and individual study in science, mathematics and the language of instruction than disadvantaged students: about 11.5 hours per week studying those 3 subjects in regular school lessons compared with 9.8 hours per week for disadvantaged students. This overall OECD difference of 1 hour and 42 minutes per week breaks down into around 50 minutes more per week in science, 30 minutes more mathematics and 20 minutes in the language of instruction. In most countries, females spend around 40 minutes more time in regular school lessons and individual study in science, mathematics and the language of instruction than males.

Quality Time for Students: Learning In and Out of School, 2011, Chapter 3

Taking more science courses benefits disadvantaged students even more than it does their more advantaged peers: In general, more time spent learning science results in better performance for the most disadvantaged students. An extra hour of regular science classes increases the likelihood of being resilient (i.e. they do much better in school than might be predicted based on their family circumstances) in all OECD countries except Denmark, Iceland, Portugal, and Mexico. Across OECD countries, on average, the odds of being resilient for disadvantaged students who spend an extra hour a week learning science at school are 1.27 times greater than the odds of disadvantaged students who do not have that opportunity to learn science at school.Exposing disadvantaged students to science learning at school might thus help close performance gaps.

Against the Odds: Disadvantaged Students who Succeed in School, 2011, Chapter 3 and Executive Summary

In many OECD countries, tertiary education remains dominated by students from well-educated backgrounds: Evidence from the 1990s showed that young people whose parents had tertiary education themselves were between two and six times as likely to complete tertiary studies as those whose parents had only secondary level qualifications. In 2010, these disparities still existed. On average across OECD countries, a young person from a family with low levels of education is less than one-half (odds of 0.44%) as likely to be in higher education, compared with the proportion of such families in the population. This compares with a young person who has at least one parent with a tertiary degree is almost twice as likely (odds of 1.9) to be in higher education. Only in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Luxembourg, Norway and Sweden is this over-representation of students from high educational backgrounds below 50% (odds below 1.5).

No More Failures: Ten Steps to Equity in Education, 2007; *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators,* 2012, Indicator A6

Engagement in adult learning is far higher among those already well qualified compared with those with low attainment, as it is for younger compared with older adults: On average across OECD countries, someone with tertiary education is almost three times as likely to

be involved in some form of formal or non-formal adult learning programme as those with only low attainment levels. It is even more than 20 percentage points higher than those with the upper secondary level attainment. In countries where adult learning is widespread these gaps tend to be less marked. Twenty-five to thirty-four year-olds with a tertiary education are 2.2 times more likely to participate in formal and/or non-formal education than those with low levels of education. In the 55-64 year-old cohort, highly-educated people are 3.3 times more likely to participate in formal and/or non-formal education than less-educated people. This increased gap associated with different educational attainment levels among the oldest adult group is found in all OECD countries.

📖 *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators,* 2012, Indicator C6

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes addresses equity by offering additional opportunities and routes for those who otherwise miss out: First, it can make it easier for dropouts to return to formal learning, giving them a second chance. Second, it can be attractive to groups such as indigenous people and migrants whose competences may otherwise be less recognised, or who have not been able to acquire qualifications through the formal education system. Third, it can help to rebalance equity between generations since a much smaller cohort of older workers had access to higher education and its qualifications than is the case today.

📖 *Recognising Non-formal and Informal Learning: Outcomes, Policies and Practices,* 2010, Executive Summary

Successful school systems provide all students, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds, with similar opportunities to learn: PISA 2009 analysis shows that successful school systems – those that perform above average and show below-average socio-economic inequalities – provide all students, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds, with similar opportunities to learn. Systems that show high performance and an equitable distribution of learning outcomes tend to be comprehensive, requiring teachers and schools to embrace diverse student populations through personalised educational pathways. In contrast, school systems that assume that students have different destinations with different expectations and opportunities in terms of how they are placed in schools, classes and grades tend to show less equitable outcomes without an overall performance advantage.

📖 *PISA Results: What Makes a School Successful?: Resources, Policies and Practice,* 2010, Executive summary

POLICY DIRECTIONS

A recent OECD study has followed up the *No More Failures* report to rearticulate five recommendations that can contribute to prevent failure and promote completion of upper secondary education:

- **Eliminate grade repetition:** Grade repetition is costly and ineffective in raising educational outcomes. Alternative strategies include: preventing repetition by addressing learning gaps during the school year; automatic promotion or limiting repetition to subjects or modules failed when there is targeted support; and raising awareness to change public support for repetition.

- **Avoid early tracking and defer student selection to the upper secondary level:** Early student selection has a negative impact on students assigned to lower tracks and exacerbates inequities, without raising average performance. Early student selection should be deferred to upper secondary education. Where there is reluctance to delay early tracking, suppressing lower-level tracks is an alternative.
- **Manage school choice to avoid segregation and increased inequities:** Providing full parental school choice can result in segregating students by ability and socio-economic background, and generate greater inequities across systems. Policies should be designed and managed to balance choice availability against negative equity consequences. Incentives to make disadvantaged students attractive to high-quality schools, influencing school selection mechanisms, and vouchers or tax credits represent different options. Policies are also required to improve disadvantaged families' access to information about schools and to support informed choices.
- **Make funding strategies responsive to students' and schools' needs:** To promote equity and quality across systems, funding strategies should: guarantee access to quality early childhood education and care, especially for disadvantaged families; use funding strategies, such as weighted funding formulae, that factor in possible higher instructional costs. Local autonomy needs to be balanced with resource accountability so as not to undermine support for the most disadvantaged students and schools.
- **Design equivalent upper secondary education pathways to ensure completion:** Upper secondary education is a strategic level of education for individuals and societies; between 10 and 30%of the young people starting do not complete it. Improving the quality and design of upper secondary education can make it more relevant for students and improve completion. There are different policy options: making academic and vocational tracks equivalent by improving the quality of the vocational tracks; facilitating transitions from academic to vocational studies and removing dead ends; reinforcing guidance and counselling for students; and designing targeted measures to prevent dropout – such as additional pathways to obtain an upper secondary qualification or providing incentives to stay in school until completion.

Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools, 2012, Chapter 2; *No More Failures: Ten Steps to Equity in Education,* 2007

The *Equity and Quality in Education* study identified five further policy recommendations addressing low performing disadvantaged schools:

- **Strengthen and support school leadership:** School leadership is the starting point for the transformation of low performing disadvantaged schools but often, school leaders are not well selected, prepared or supported to exercise this transformation role. Leadership preparation programmes should provide both general expertise and specialised knowledge to handle the challenges of these schools. Coaching, mentoring and networks can further support leaders. To attract and retain competent leaders, policies need to

provide good working conditions, systemic support and incentives, with support for restructuring when necessary.

- **Stimulate a supportive school climate and environment for learning:** Low-performing disadvantaged schools risk being poor environments for learning. Policies for them need to focus especially on prioritising positive teacher-student and peer relationships; promoting data information systems for schools to identify struggling students and factors related to learning disruptions; adequate student counseling and mentoring to support students to continue in education. These schools may benefit from an alternative organisation of learning time or size of groups or institutions: the duration of the school week or year or creating smaller classrooms and schools to reinforce interactions and learning strategies.
- **Attract, support and retain high-quality teachers:** Disadvantaged schools are too often not staffed with the highest quality teachers. Policies must raise teacher quality for disadvantaged schools and students by: providing targeted teacher education to develop the skills and knowledge for working in schools with disadvantaged students; providing mentoring programmes for novice teachers; developing supportive working conditions to improve teacher effectiveness and increase teacher retention; and develop adequate financial and career incentives to attract and retain high-quality teachers in disadvantaged schools.
- **Ensure effective classroom learning strategies:** To improve learning in classrooms, policies need to ensure that disadvantaged schools promote the use of a balanced combination of student-centred instruction with aligned curricular and assessment practices. Schools and teachers should use diagnostic tools and formative and summative assessments to monitor children's progress and their knowledge and understanding. Schools should follow a curriculum promoting a culture of high expectations and success.
- **Prioritise the connections between schools and parents and communities:** Disadvantaged parents tend to be less involved in their children's schooling. The schools should prioritise their links with parents and communities, including communication strategies to align school and parental efforts. The more effective strategies target parents who are difficult to reach and encourage individuals from the same communities to mentor students. Building links with the communities around schools, both business and social stakeholders, can also strengthen schools and their students.

📖 *Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools*, 2012, Chapter 3

Many of the factors involved in improving teaching and teacher education for cultural diversity are identical with good practice in general; others are specific to the challenges of diversity:

- **Develop a shared vision on the nature of increasingly diverse populations**, at different levels and with a variety of stakeholders on how these are reflected in schools and classrooms, and how to accommodate changing landscapes.

- **Improve the diversity of student teachers and teachers**, calling for holistic policy plans within countries and regions for attracting, retaining and inserting diverse student teachers into the teaching force.
- **Promote awareness of contextual specificity and preparation for teaching diverse student populations in pre-service and in-service teacher programmes**, from general principles of working in diverse educational contexts to teaching specific student populations.
- **Focus on improving the attraction and retention of diverse student teachers and teachers**, who can serve as important role models and bring different perspectives into the classroom.
- **Focus on attracting and retaining well-qualified teachers in diverse schools**, understanding better how to do it and implementing necessary measures.
- **Encourage timely, relevant and coherent data collection about who is in the diverse classroom landscape** for more informed decision-making on how best to respond.

Educating Teachers for Diversity: Meeting the Challenge, 2010, Chapter 13

OECD analysis on the performance of immigrant students has identified policy orientations to address their less favourable outcomes. These include:

- **Learning the host language needs to be reinforced, both for very young immigrant children and for those students who arrive later with little knowledge of the host country language:** There should not be reliance on the "natural" language-learning ability of young children or on the assumption that a basic level of language proficiency will suffice.. The language skills of parents, particularly of mothers, may not be sufficient to allow them to assist their children in their schoolwork. There needs to be intensive exposure to the host country language, both in and out of school, especially as, in the Internet age, media in the language of the country of origin is more accessible in immigrant households than it ever used to be. Parents need to be sensitised so that the home environment contributes to improving outcomes.
- **Address the concentration of disadvantage:** One relatively costly option is to invest heavily in disadvantaged schools on the expectation that educational measures, whether in the form of better teachers, smaller classes or more remedial help, can improve outcomes, even under unfavourable conditions. A different policy choice involves attempting to reduce the degree of concentration through housing or school choice policies, options that are difficult to implement and controversial. A more balanced social mix in schools would make a significant contribution to improving outcomes for both immigrant and non-immigrant students from disadvantaged backgrounds. All of these policies need to be implemented sufficiently early before immigrant children fall too far behind.

Untapped Skills: Realising the Potential of Immigrant Students, 2012, Executive Summary; *Languages in a Global World: Learning for Better Cultural Understanding,* 2012

Actively engaging immigrant parents and communities in education represents an important goal in improving equity: Parental and community involvement involving immigrant groups and families represent key directions for building positive attitudes and conditions for achievement, as well as enriching school systems. Among the promising directions being followed in different countries and localities are:

- Providing adequate information through various communication channels.
- Establishing partnerships between schools and parents.
- Building national platforms for immigrant parents.
- Involving parents in early childhood education and care.
- Involving parents in classroom instruction.
- Assisting and up-skilling immigrant parents.
- Setting up "ethnic mentoring /role model" programmes.
- Encouraging community involvement in providing opportunities for young immigrants.
- Providing additional learning time and after-school support.

📖 *Closing the Gap for Immigrant Students: Policies, Practice and Performance,* 2010, Chapter 3

PISA 2009 analysis of equity in learning opportunities and outcomes suggested certain policy options, to be considered in combination:

- **Targeting low performance regardless of background, either by targeting low-performing schools or low-performing students within schools,** depending on the concentration of such low performance by school.
- **Targeting disadvantaged children through specialised curricula, additional instructional resources or economic assistance for these students**. Policies can address either the school or individual level, depending on the strength of the inter-school social gradient and the extent to which schools are segregated by socio-economic background.
- **Policies targeted at the performance of disadvantaged children can also be used to provide additional economic resources to these students,** for example, free transportation and free lunch programmes or transfer payments for students from poor families.
- **More universal policies aimed at raising standards for all students,** for example, by altering the content and pace of the curriculum or increasing time in language classes. These types of policies are likely to be most relevant in countries with flatter gradients and less variation in student performance.
- **Policies that strive to include marginalised students into mainstream schools and classrooms,** concentrating on including students with disabilities in regular classrooms rather than segregating them in special classes or schools.

📖 *PISA Results 2009: Overcoming Social Background: Equity in Learning Opportunities and Outcomes,* 2010, Policy Implications

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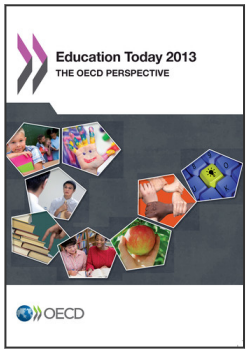

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