2

Schooling – Investments, Organisation and Learners

There have been major investments in schooling across OECD countries, including in teacher salaries. Shared patterns exist alongside notable differences such as in teacher beliefs (as charted with the Teaching and Learning International Survey [TALIS]) and in school time use. Since the 2005 study, Teachers Matter, *much OECD work has analysed the characteristics of learners and learning, teachers, and how to improve school leadership. Data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) have permitted specific analyses of aspects of schooling, such as student attitudes towards and knowledge of the environment. Work on the educational role of technology has shown how important is home use for educational outcomes. Policy orientations on schooling have stressed the need to professionalise and innovate, calling for reforms directed at effective learning to be placed at the core of schooling, rather than changing only structures and administrative systems. The OECD continues to analyse and stress the value of good school design and safe buildings.*

INTRODUCTION

The period of compulsory education – primary, lower secondary and even the upper secondary cycle in some countries – is at the core of all education systems. Over recent years, there have been significant investments in this core phase of education, recognised as fundamental for laying the foundation on which so many other social, economic and educational outcomes may follow. Teachers (and the educational workforce in general) are widely recognised as central to the success of schooling, a position reinforced by the major 2005 OECD study, *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*.

OECD work has since then analysed with growing precision the characteristics of learners, teachers and the nature of school practices, including leadership. Policy orientations have stressed the need simultaneously to modernise, professionalise and innovate, while also placing reforms directed at effective learning – rather than changing only structures and administrative systems – at the core of schooling.

The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) was based on the experience of some 90 000 teachers and school principals, representing over 2 million professionals in 23 countries; first results were published in 2009. The OECD's triennial Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) surveys have permitted focused analyses of schooling, ranging from the attitudes and awareness of students, through features of the learning environment, to the allocation of resources. The work of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) on, for instance, learning sciences and on the use of technology in education has offered a complementary set of international studies on aspects of schooling. *Improving School Leadership* has provided in-depth analyses of different approaches to school leadership as well as practical guidelines for improvement. The Centre for Effective Learning Environments (CELE) has continued to identify how best to design and deliver safe, healthy and high quality educational facilities.

KEY FINDINGS

Only a small minority of students do not now complete compulsory education overall, though rising to one-in-ten in some countries: The participation rates in most OECD and partner countries tend to be high until the end of compulsory education, with more than 90% completing this phase in most. Those where more than 10% do not complete this phase of education are: Belgium, Chile, Germany, Hungary, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Turkey and the United States. The age which marks the end of compulsory attendance does vary, however, and in six of these cases is as late as 17 or 18 years of age (Belgium, Chile, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands and the United States).

📖 *Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators*, 2010, Indicator C1

Spending per student in schooling (plus post-secondary non-tertiary) has increased everywhere in OECD countries since the mid-1990s, contrasting with a mixed picture in tertiary education: Using 100 as the index for spending per school student in 2000, this indicator of change had risen to 125 by 2007 in OECD countries, well up from the OECD average 88 in 1995. (This compares with 114 for spending per tertiary education student in 2007 compared with 2000 levels, with the index falling over this time in several countries.) Even in only the short period since 2000, the rise in spending per school student was very marked in some countries, with the index reaching 152 in the Czech Republic, 171 in Hungary, 163 in Ireland, 161 in Korea, 168 in the Slovak Republic and 156 in the United Kingdom and, among parter countries, 186 in Estonia and 182 in Brazil. Only in Italy was the recent per school student spending level lower than in 2000 (and then marginally at 99).

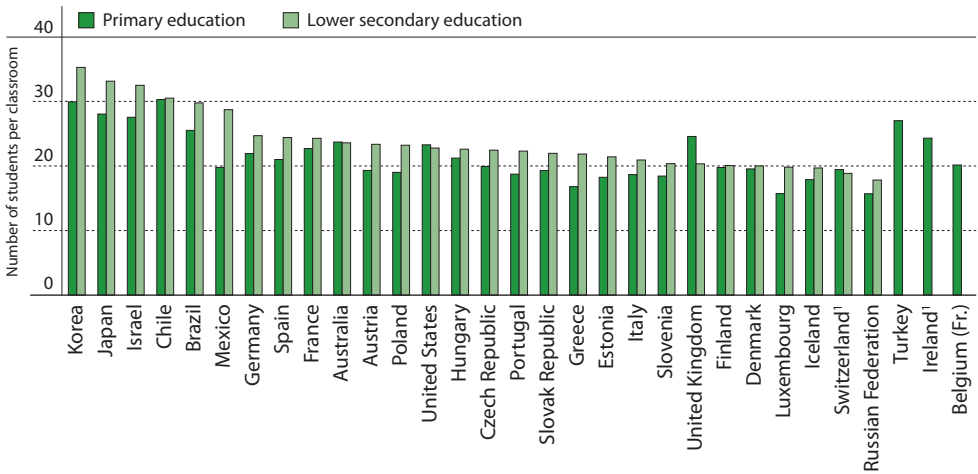
📖 *Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators*, 2010, Indicator B1

Classes are larger in lower secondary compared with primary schools (on average, just over two students more per class), alongside marked differences between countries with big and small classes: Lower secondary average class sizes of 30 or more in Chile, Israel, Japan and Korea contrast sharply with Denmark, Iceland, Luxembourg, and the partner country the Russian Federation where both primary and lower secondary classes are, on average, at or below 20 students per class. Primary school classes (21.6 per class OECD average) are generally smaller than in lower secondary schools (23.9 per class). There are minor exceptions to the "primary school classes are smaller" finding, but the most marked is the United Kingdom, with average primary class size of 24.6 compared with 20.4 at the lower secondary level.

📖 *Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators*, 2010, Indicator D2

Figure 2.1.

Average class size in educational institutions, by level of education (2008)



1. Public institutions only.

Source: OECD (2010), *Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932310491

The investments made in teachers, as indicated by teacher salary levels, have gone up in real terms over the past decade in most countries: Teachers' salaries have risen in real terms in both primary and secondary education in most of the countries for which the OECD has trends data (comparing 1996 and 2008 in 22 systems covering 20 countries). The biggest increases – approximately doubling – have taken place in Hungary and the partner country Estonia, in both where teacher salaries have been and remain relatively low. More generally, the increases have tended to be largest in those systems with still relatively low teacher salaries. Largely static or even falling salary levels are only found – but note that not all countries supply data on teacher salaries – for experienced teachers in Australia, lower and upper secondary teachers in the French Community of Belgium, top salaried teachers in Japan, starting teachers in Norway, teachers at the experienced levels in Spain, and starting primary teachers and those with 15 years of experience in Switzerland.

📖 *Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators*, 2010, Indicator D3

Some countries use a "career-based" model of teacher employment and others a "position-based" model, each with its own strengths and weaknesses: In "career-based" systems, teachers expect to stay long in the public service after early entry and once recruited are allocated to posts according to internal rules (*e.g.* France, Japan, Korea and Spain). These systems tend to avoid problems of teacher shortages but with concerns about how far teacher education is connected to school and student needs, and with lack of incentives for continued professional development and of responsiveness to local needs. "Position-based" systems instead tend to select the "best" candidate for each position, whether by external recruitment or internal promotion, with wider access to the profession in terms of age or previous career experience (*e.g.* Canada, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). The problems typically encountered in these systems are shortages, especially in mathematics, sciences, etc., difficulties in ensuring a core of good older teachers, and wider teacher quality gaps between attractive and unattractive districts/schools.

📖 *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*, 2005, Executive Summary

Substantial differences exist between countries in teacher beliefs about how teaching should be delivered: In most countries teachers see their job as helping students actively to develop and construct their knowledge rather than concentrate on transmitting content only (among the TALIS countries, the exception is Italy where only a minority endorses this view). Whereas a clear majority of teachers support a constructivist approach in Australia, Korea, North-Western Europe and Scandinavia, belief in direct transmission is much more in evidence in Malaysia, South America and Southern Europe. Teachers in Eastern Europe lie in between in the balance of teachers having mainly constructivist or mainly transmission beliefs.

📖 *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS,* 2009, Chapter 4 and Executive Summary

Teachers are positive about the appraisal and feedback they receive, but in some countries a significant minority or even majority of teachers have not received any in recent years: Teachers across the different systems surveyed by TALIS tend to be positive about the appraisal and feedback they receive, reporting that on the whole it is fair and helpful for their work, and increases their job satisfaction. Approximately 13% of teachers surveyed by TALIS reported that they had received no feedback or evaluation in their current school in the previous five years; this average level rises to much higher levels in Ireland (26%), Italy (55%), Portugal (26%) and Spain (46%).

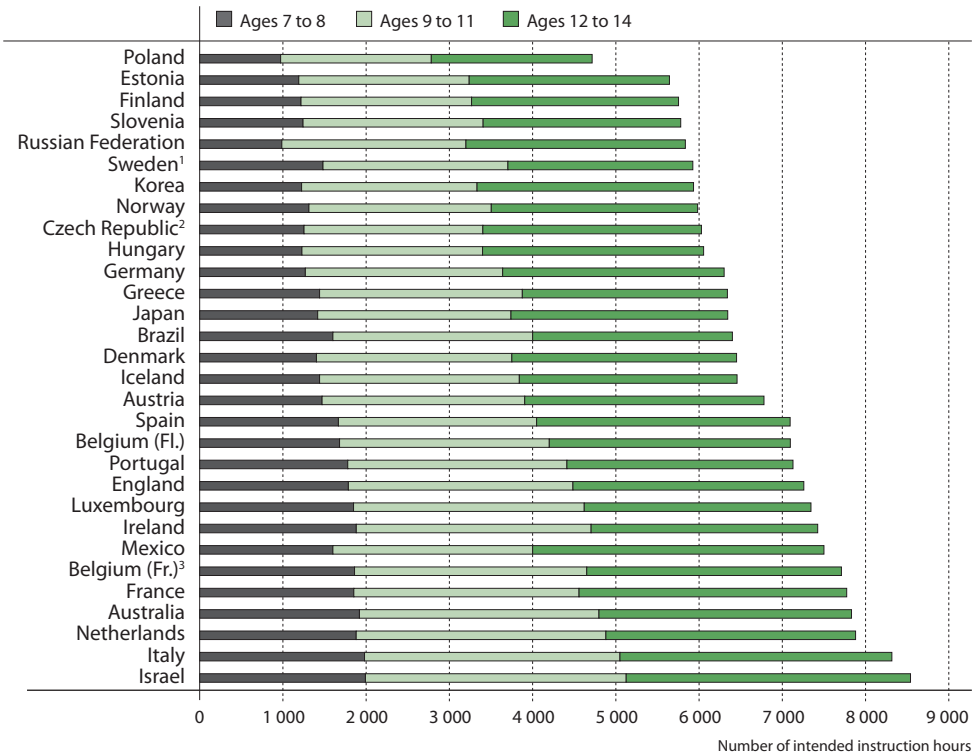
📖 *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS* 2009, Chapter 5 and Executive Summary

High proportions of lower secondary teachers participate in professional development but many say that they would like more: Nearly 9 teachers in 10 surveyed by TALIS reported having taken part in a structured professional development activity in the preceding 18 months, though in Denmark, the Slovak Republic and Turkey around a quarter reported no participation during that period. Despite generally high levels of participation, more than half the teachers (55%) in the TALIS countries overall say that they would have liked more professional development, and lack of suitable opportunities is a significant factor in this. Approximately a third of the surveyed teachers reported a high level of need for training to help them teach students with special learning needs. Other professional development priorities include teaching with ICT and dealing with difficult student behaviour.

📖 *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS*, 2009, Chapter 3 and Executive Summary

Figure 2.2.

Total number of intended instruction hours in public institutions between the ages of 7 and 14 (2008)



1. Estimated because breakdown by age not available.
2. Minimum number of hours per year.
3. "Ages 12-14" covers ages 12-13 only.

Source: OECD (2010), *Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932310472

High "intended instruction hours" for those in school between the ages of 7 and 14 years-old bear no obvious association with higher academic performance at age 15: The average for OECD countries in "intended instruction hours" added up from requirements regarding students between the ages of 7 and 14 years is 6 777 hours, the large majority of which are compulsory. This covers the compulsory and non-compulsory time when schools must offer teaching to school students (actual hours may vary even widely from this, with variations too by region or type of school). Requirements vary very widely among OECD countries, from 4 715 in Poland to 8 316 in Italy, and higher still at 8 541 hours in Israel (Poland thus requires barely over half of intended instruction time [55%] compared with Israel, and only 57% compared with Italy). Poland has seen notable increases in PISA scores, and two countries that achieve particularly well – Finland and Korea – also have relatively low intended hours at 5 752 and 5 934, respectively.

Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators, 2010, Indicator D1

High performance tends to be associated with high relative time in regular lessons and moderate absolute time: The relative balance spent in regular as opposed to out-of-school learning seems to be particularly influential. In high-performing countries, the largest proportion of students' learning time (70% to 80%) happens within regular school lessons, whereas in low-performing countries, half or more of students' learning time occurs outside regular lessons. Longer hours do not by themselves bestow an advantage as in many countries long hours in regular mathematics lessons is actually associated with lower performance compared with moderate hours. As exceptions, in Korea and the partner economies Chinese Taipei and Hong Kong-China, those spending long hours learning mathematics in regular lessons perform significantly better in this subject than other students.

📖 *Quality Time for Students: Learning In and Out of School*, forthcoming, Chapter 4

School leadership is pivotal for the quality of schooling through creating the right organisational and educational conditions for effectiveness and improvement: A large body of research evidence on school effectiveness and improvement consistently highlights the pivotal role of leadership. It is nevertheless a complex role as leaders largely work outside the classrooms where the teaching and learning takes place. Hence, instead of shaping quality directly, leaders do so by creating the right conditions for good teaching and learning through such factors as professional motivations, capacities and working environments. They are especially influential as regards four key dimensions: improving teacher quality; goal-setting, assessment and accountability; strategic resource management; and collaboration with external partners.

📖 *Improving School Leadership: Volume 1: Policy and Practice*, 2008, Chapter 1

PISA data permit the analysis of computer use in schools and at home, and how these relate to educational performance. Based on the 2006 survey data, some key findings to emerge are:

- **All students in OECD countries are now familiar with computers:** less than 1% of 15-year-old students in OECD countries declared that they had never used a computer.
- **Frequent use of computers at home is not matched by equivalent use at school:** The OECD average for 15-year-olds reporting frequently using computers at home is 86%, compared with only 55% reporting their frequent use in school. Exceptionally in Hungary, frequent school use (86%) actually exceeds frequent home use (85%), albeit by a narrow margin.
- **There is a stronger correlation between educational performance and computer use at home than with its use in school:** In most countries, the benefits of greater computer use at home tend to be larger than its use at school. In every country, students reporting "rare" or "no use" of computers at home score lower than their counterparts who report frequent use. But in school, more intensive computer use is not associated with better results.

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

Some countries persist with repetition of school years as common practice despite its cost – to individuals and the system alike: In some school systems (France, Luxembourg and Spain), up to one-quarter of lower secondary school students repeat a year at some point, as do over 20% of primary pupils in the Netherlands and Mexico. But this is not the common situation across OECD countries. Although year repetition is often popular with teachers, there is little evidence that children gain benefit from it. Repetition is expensive – the full economic cost is up to USD 20 000 equivalent for each student who repeats a year – and schools have few incentives to take into account the costs involved.

📖 *No More Failures: Ten Steps to Equity in Education*, 2007, Chapter 4

Leading researchers from Europe and North America have summarised large bodies of research on learning in such a way as to be relevant to educational leaders and policy makers. The transversal conclusions that emerge suggest that to be most effective a learning environment should fit the following "principles" and that ideally all should be present:

- **Recognise the learners as its core participants,** encourage their active engagement and develop in them an understanding of their own activity as learners.
- **Be founded on the social nature of learning** and actively encourage well-organised co-operative learning.
- Be where the learning professionals are highly **attuned to the learners' motivations and the key role of emotions** in achievement.
- **Be acutely sensitive to the individual differences** among the learners in it, including their prior knowledge.
- Devise programme that demand **hard work and challenge from all without excessive overload.**
- Operate with clarity of expectations, **use assessment strategies consistent with these expectations,** and give strong emphasis on formative feedback.
- **Strongly promote "horizontal connectedness"** across areas of knowledge and subjects, as well as to the community and the wider world.

📖 *The Nature of Learning: Using Research to Inspire Practice*, 2010, Chapter 13 and Executive Summary

Students are generally positive about school as a place, with younger and more successful students and girls the more positive: The evidence on student attitudes, from diverse international and national sources, reveals several general tendencies on reported satisfaction: students are fairly satisfied with school in general, although older students less than younger ones; students in higher tracks are more positive than students in lower tracks; and girls tend to be more positive about school than boys. Countries where the measured sense of belonging is lowest among 15-year-olds are the Czech Republic, France, Belgium and Japan, and especially Korea and Poland. The cases of Japan and Korea show that low engagement can go hand in hand with high achievement. Countries where engagement is highest are Sweden, Ireland, Hungary and the United Kingdom.

📖 *Demand-sensitive Schooling? Evidence and Issues*, 2006; *Student Engagement at School: A Sense of Belonging and Participation: Results from PISA 2000*, 2003

Immigrant students are motivated learners and have positive attitudes towards school: Immigrant students report similar or even higher levels of positive learning dispositions compared with their native peers. First generation and second generation students often report higher levels of interest and motivation in mathematics, and more positive attitudes towards schooling than native-born students, and in none of the countries do immigrant students report lower levels on these engagement and interest indicators. The consistency of this finding is striking given that there are substantial differences between countries in terms of immigrant populations, policies and histories, as well as immigrant student performance in PISA 2003.

📖 *Where Immigrant Students Succeed: A Comparative Review of Performance and Engagement in PISA 2003,* 2006, Chapter 4

Fifteen-year-olds across the world report their strong interest in environmental issues and identify their schooling as the most important source of knowledge about the environment: Students across the world report their strong interest in issues related to the environment. They also cite school – particularly but not only in their geography and science lessons – as the place where they learn most

about the environment. Student awareness of environmental issues tends to go hand in hand with their measured level of scientific knowledge and proficiency. On the other hand, those with lower proficiency levels in environmental science tend to be more optimistic that the environment will improve in the future highlighting the important role that education can play in raising awareness.

📖 *Green at Fifteen? How 15-Year-Olds Perform in Environmental Science and Geoscience in PISA 2006,* 2009, Chapters 3 and 4

Certain countries strongly maintain the public nature of schooling by accepting neither private provision nor homeschooling: Most OECD countries report that independent (not government-dependent) private schools are permitted in their system, even if the number of students involved is usually relatively small. However, they are not permitted in the Czech Republic, Finland, the Slovak Republic and Sweden, and for the lower secondary level in Korea, too. Homeschooling is also an option in many countries, albeit under certain conditions, but is not allowed in Germany, Greece, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Spain and partner country Brazil, and not at the lower secondary level in the Czech and Slovak Republics.

📖 *Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators*, 2010, Indicator D5

The closer parents are to schooling provision, the more satisfied they tend to be about its achievements: Parents tend to be more satisfied with their own children's school than with the state of education in general; parents with children in school more satisfied than other parents; those involved in school governance more than other parents; women – who tend to be more active in their children's education and the life of the school – more than men. In evidence from diverse national studies, there is a generally positive level of reported satisfaction with schools by parents and the public. Education appears to be a high public priority, alongside health, and higher than many other calls on the public purse.

📖 *Demand-sensitive Schooling? Evidence and Issues*, 2006, Chapter 2

POLICY DIRECTIONS

Teacher employment and deployment are organised along markedly different lines in different systems: in some this follows a "career-based" model; in others, a "position-based" model. OECD analysis proposes the following directions to inform policy development whichever of the two applies:

- **Emphasise teacher quality over teacher quantity:** There is substantial research indicating that the quality of teachers and their teaching is the most important factor shaping student outcomes that is open to significant policy influence. Key ingredients in the teacher quality agenda include: more attention to the criteria for selection into initial teacher education and employment; ongoing evaluation throughout the career to identify areas for improvement; and recognising and rewarding effective practice.
- **Develop teacher profiles to align teacher development and performance with school needs:** Countries need to have clear, concise statements of what teachers are expected to know and be able to do; these need to be embedded throughout the school and teacher education systems. The teacher profiles should encompass strong subject matter knowledge, pedagogical skills, the capacity to work effectively with a wide range of students and colleagues, to contribute to the school and the profession, and the capacity to continue developing.
- **View teacher development as a continuum:** The stages of initial teacher education, induction and professional development need to be well connected to create a coherent learning and development system for teachers – which they tend not to be in most countries. Lifelong learning for teachers implies supporting them more effectively in the early career stages and then in providing incentives and resources for ongoing professional development.

- **Make teacher education and entry more flexible:** Provide more routes into the profession including: post-graduate study following an initial qualification in a subject matter field; para-professionals and teacher's aides given opportunities to gain full qualifications; and mid-career changers able to combine reduced teaching loads and concurrent participation in teacher preparation.
- **Transform teaching into a knowledge-rich profession:** Teachers need to be active agents in analysing their own practice in the light of professional standards and their own students' learning. Teachers need to engage more actively with new knowledge and with professional development focused on the evidence base of improved practice.
- **Provide schools with genuine responsibility for teacher personnel management:** The evidence suggests that too often the selection process is dominated by rules about qualifications and seniority that bear little relationship to the qualifications needed to be an effective teacher. The school is the key agency for student learning – and hence for teacher selection, development, etc. – but will need highly-skilled leadership teams and support to carry this out.

📖 *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*, 2005, Executive Summary

The quality of school leadership needs to be enhanced and it needs to be made sustainable. Four main policy levers, taken together, can improve school leadership practice:

- **Redefine school leadership responsibilities:** Leaders need to exercise a significant degree of autonomy if they are to influence quality, and policy should ensure that they have this. Policy should encourage leaders to: support, evaluate and develop teacher quality; engage in goal-setting and organisational evaluation; enhance strategic financial and human resource management; and operate more widely than within the confines of the school itself.
- **Distribute school leadership:** Leadership is strengthened, not weakened, if the responsibilities of school principals are shared effectively with other middle management and school professionals, and with school boards; policy should support and enable this to happen.
- **Develop skills for effective school leadership:** School leadership demands specific advanced competences that explicitly need development. Leadership development should contribute to the different career stages so policies should distinguish between preparation for leadership, induction programmes, and adequate in-service opportunities adapted to need and context. This career focus will also enhance attractiveness (next point).
- **Make school leadership an attractive profession:** Ensuring that the procedures for recruiting the key personnel of school leadership are highly professionalised is one important route to enhancing attractiveness. Another is to establish salaries at levels commensurate with workloads and responsibilities, compared with classroom teachers and those in other professions, and linked to local factors which influence attractiveness.

📖 *Improving School Leadership: Volume 1: Policy and Practice,* 2008, Executive Summary; *Improving School Leadership: Volume 3: The Toolkit*, 2010

The recent analysis of educational technology use by 15-year-olds and its relationship to achievement levels resulted in a number of policy recommendations . These include:

- **Raise awareness among educators, parents and policy makers of the consequences of increasing ICT familiarity:** Policy makers should recognise that students need technology and access to digital media for learning in 21st century societies. Teachers and the teacher education sector need to hear this clear policy message, as do parents that they also have a crucial responsibility in developing responsible attitudes to using digital media.

- **Identify and foster the development of 21st century skills and competences:** The skills and competences required by a knowledge economy are either supported or enhanced by ICT. Policy authorities should identify and conceptualise the required competence set so as to incorporate them into the educational standards that students should meet by the end of compulsory schooling.
- **Adopt holistic policy approaches to ICT in education:** Many countries have not developed holistic policies for the educational use of ICT. An overall favourable environment, the inclusion of ICT in curriculum design, and strong leadership and commitment from teachers and principals to implement ICT-rich teaching all significantly influence the use of ICT in schools. Current policies and their results should be critically evaluated within such a holistic framework.
- **Adapt school learning environments as computer ratios improve and digital learning resources increase:** Students should be able to locate and use a computer at any time, depending on their specific individual and team assignments. Governments should provide the conditions for innovations to flourish and should assess their effects.
- **Promote greater computer use at school and experimental research on its effects:** The positive gains from computer use at home derive in part because its frequency has passed a critical threshold; it is far above the relatively marginal use often experienced at school. Governments need to create the necessary incentives for teachers to engage with ICT sufficiently that its benefits can be realised, and they should support the creation of the evidence base of "what works".

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

Seismic safety in schools should be recognised as an important goal and national programmes should be established on an urgent basis to assure earthquake safety of new and existing schools. The principles guiding such programmes should include:

- **Establish clear and measurable objectives for school seismic safety,** based on the level of risk which can be implemented and supported by the affected residents of communities and agencies at the local government level.
- **Define the level of the earthquake hazard** in order to facilitate the development and application of construction codes and standards.
- **Specify the desired ability of school buildings to resist earthquakes.** School buildings should be designed and constructed or retrofitted to prevent collapse, partial collapse or other failure that would endanger human life when subjected to specified levels of ground shaking and/or collateral seismic hazards.
- **Give priority to making new schools safe.** A longer timeframe will likely be needed to correct seismic weaknesses of existing school buildings.

📖 *OECD Recommendations Concerning Guidelines on Earthquake Safety in Schools*, 2005; *School Safety and Security: Keeping Schools Safe in Earthquakes*, 2004

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