Introduction: the Indicators and their Framework

■ The organising framework

Education at a Glance — OECD Indicators 2008 provides a rich, comparable and up-to-date array of indicators that reflect a consensus among professionals on how to measure the current state of education internationally. The indicators provide information on the human and financial resources invested in education, on how education and learning systems operate and evolve, and on the returns to educational investments. The indicators are organised thematically, and each is accompanied by information on the policy context and the interpretation of the data. The education indicators are presented within an organising framework that:

- Distinguishes between the actors in education systems: individual learners, instructional settings and learning environments, educational service providers, and the education system as a whole;
- Groups the indicators according to whether they speak to learning outcomes for individuals
 or countries, policy levers or circumstances that shape these outcomes, or to antecedents or
 constraints that set policy choices into context; and
- Identifies the policy issues to which the indicators relate, with three major categories distinguishing between the quality of educational outcomes and educational provision, issues of equity in educational outcomes and educational opportunities, and the adequacy and effectiveness of resource management.

The following matrix describes the first two dimensions:

	1. Education and learning outputs and outcomes	2. Policy levers and contexts shaping educational outcomes	3. Antecedents or constraints that contextualise policy
I. Individual participants in education and learning	1.I The quality and distribution of individual educational outcomes	2.I Individual attitudes, engagement, and behaviour	3.I Background characteristics of the individual learners
II. Instructional settings	1.II The quality of instructional delivery	2.II Pedagogy and learning practices and classroom climate	3.II Student learning conditions and teacher working conditions
III. Providers of educational services	1.III The output of educational institutions and institutional performance	2.III School environment and organisation	3.III Characteristics of the service providers and their communities
IV. The education system as a whole	1.IV The overall performance of the education system	2.IV System-wide institutional settings, resource allocations, and policies	3.IV The national educational, social, economic, and demographic contexts

The following sections discuss the matrix dimensions in more detail:

Actors in education systems

The OECD indicators of education systems (INES) programme seeks to gauge the performance of national education systems as a whole, rather than to compare individual institutional or other sub-national entities. However, there is increasing recognition that many important features of the development, functioning and impact of education systems can only be assessed through an understanding of learning outcomes and their relationships to inputs and processes at the level of individuals and institutions. To account for this, the indicator framework distinguishes between a macro level, two meso-levels and a micro-level of education systems. These relate to:

- The education system as a whole;
- The educational institutions and providers of educational services;
- The instructional setting and the learning environment within the institutions; and
- The individual participants in education and learning.

To some extent, these levels correspond to the entities from which data are being collected but their importance mainly centres on the fact that many features of the education system play out quite differently at various levels of the system, which needs to be taken into account when interpreting the indicators. For example, at the level of students within a classroom, the relationship between student achievement and class size may be negative if students in small classes benefit from improved contact with teachers. At the class or school level, however, students are often intentionally grouped such that weaker or disadvantaged students are placed in smaller classes so that they receive more individual attention. At the school level, therefore, the observed relationship between class size and student achievement is often positive (suggesting that students in larger classes perform better than students in smaller classes). At higher aggregated levels of education systems, the relationship between student achievement and class size is further confounded, *e.g.* by the socio-economic intake of schools, or by factors relating to the learning culture in different countries. Past analyses, which have relied on macro-level data alone, have therefore sometimes led to misleading conclusions.

Outcomes, policy levers and antecedents

The second dimension in the organising framework further groups the indicators at each of the above levels:

- Indicators on observed outputs of education systems, as well as indicators related to the impact of knowledge and skills for individuals, societies and economies, are grouped under the subheading output and outcomes of education and learning;
- The sub-heading *policy levers and contexts* groups activities seeking information on the policy levers or circumstances which shape the outputs and outcomes at each level; and
- These policy levers and contexts typically have *antecedents* factors that define or constrain policy. These are represented by the sub-heading *antecedents and constraints*. It should be noted that the antecedents or constraints are usually specific for a given level of the education system and that antecedents at a lower level of the system may well be policy levers at a higher level. For teachers and students in a school, for example, teacher qualifications are a given constraint while, at the level of the education system, professional development of teachers is a key policy lever.

Policy issues

Each of the resulting cells in the framework can then be used to address a variety of issues from different policy perspectives. For the purpose of this framework, policy perspectives are grouped into three classes that constitute the third dimension in the organising framework for INES:

- Quality of educational outcomes and educational provision;
- Equality of educational outcomes and equity in educational opportunities; and
- Adequacy, effectiveness and efficiency of resource management.

In addition to the dimensions mentioned above, the time perspective as a fourth dimension in the framework allows dynamic aspects in the development of education systems to be modelled also.

The indicators that are published in *Education at a Glance 2008* fit within this framework, though often they speak to more than one cell.

Most of the indicators in **Chapter A** *The output of educational institutions and the impact of learning* relate to the first column of the matrix describing outputs and outcomes of education. Even so, indicators in **Chapter A** measuring educational attainment for different generations, for instance, not only give a measure of the output of the educational system, but also provide context for current educational policies, helping to shape polices on, for example, lifelong learning.

Chapter B Financial and human resources invested in education provides indicators that are either policy levers or antecedents to policy, or sometimes both. For example, expenditure per student is a key policy measure which most directly impacts on the individual learner as it acts as a constraint on the learning environment in schools and student learning conditions in the classroom.

Chapter C Access to education, participation and progression provides indicators that are a mixture of outcome indicators, policy levers and context indicators. Entry rates and progression rates are, for instance, outcomes measures to the extent that they indicate the results of policies and practices in the classroom, school and system levels. But they can also provide contexts for establishing policy by identifying areas where policy intervention is necessary to, for instance, address issues of inequity.

Chapter D *The learning environment and organisation of schools* provides indicators on instruction time, teachers' working time and teachers' salaries not only represent policy levers which can be manipulated but also provide contexts for the quality of instruction in instructional settings and for the outcomes of learners at the individual level.

Reader's Guide

Coverage of the statistics

Although a lack of data still limits the scope of the indicators in many countries, the coverage extends, in principle, to the entire national education system (within the national territory) regardless of the ownership or sponsorship of the institutions concerned and regardless of education delivery mechanisms. With one exception described below, all types of students and all age groups are meant to be included: children (including students with special needs), adults, nationals, foreigners, as well as students in open distance learning, in special education programmes or in educational programmes organised by ministries other than the Ministry of Education, provided the main aim of the programme is the educational development of the individual. However, vocational and technical training in the workplace, with the exception of combined school and work-based programmes that are explicitly deemed to be parts of the education system, is not included in the basic education expenditure and enrolment data.

Educational activities classified as "adult" or "non-regular" are covered, provided that the activities involve studies or have a subject matter content similar to "regular" education studies or that the underlying programmes lead to potential qualifications similar to corresponding regular educational programmes. Courses for adults that are primarily for general interest, personal enrichment, leisure or recreation are excluded.

Calculation of international means

For many indicators an OECD average is presented and for some an OECD total.

The OECD average is calculated as the unweighted mean of the data values of all OECD countries for which data are available or can be estimated. The OECD average therefore refers to an average of data values at the level of the national systems and can be used to answer the question of how an indicator value for a given country compares with the value for a typical or average country. It does not take into account the absolute size of the education system in each country.

The OECD total is calculated as a weighted mean of the data values of all OECD countries for which data are available or can be estimated. It reflects the value for a given indicator when the OECD area is considered as a whole. This approach is taken for the purpose of comparing, for example, expenditure charts for individual countries with those of the entire OECD area for which valid data are available, with this area considered as a single entity.

Note that both the OECD average and the OECD total can be significantly affected by missing data. Given the relatively small number of countries, no statistical methods are used to compensate for this. In cases where a category is not applicable (code "a") in a country or where the data value is negligible (code "n") for the corresponding calculation, the value zero is imputed for the purpose of calculating OECD averages. In cases where both the numerator and the denominator of a ratio are not applicable (code "a") for a certain country, this country is not included in the OECD average.

For financial tables using 1995 and 2000 data, both the OECD average and OECD total are calculated for countries providing 1995, 2000 and 2005 data. This allows comparison of the OECD average and OECD total over time with no distortion due to the exclusion of certain countries in the different years.

For many indicators an EU19 average is also presented. It is calculated as the unweighted mean of the data values of the 19 OECD countries that are members of the European Union for which data are available or can be estimated. These 19 countries are Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Classification of levels of education

The classification of the levels of education is based on the revised International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-97). The biggest change between the revised ISCED and the former ISCED (ISCED-76) is the introduction of a multi-dimensional classification framework, allowing for the alignment of the educational content of programmes using multiple classification criteria. ISCED is an instrument for compiling statistics on education internationally and distinguishes among six levels of education. The glossary available at www.oecd.org/edu/eag2008 describes in detail the ISCED levels of education, and Annex 1 shows corresponding typical graduation ages of the main educational programmes by ISCED level.

Symbols for missing data

Six symbols are employed in the tables and charts to denote missing data:

- a Data is not applicable because the category does not apply.
- c There are too few observations to provide reliable estimates (i.e. there are fewer than 3% of students for this cell or too few schools for valid inferences). However, these statistics were included in the calculation of cross-country averages.
- m Data is not available.
- *n* Magnitude is either negligible or zero.
- w Data has been withdrawn at the request of the country concerned.
- x Data included in another category or column of the table (e.g. x(2) means that data are included in column 2 of the table).
- ~ Average is not comparable with other levels of education

Further resources

The website www.oecd.org/edu/eag2008 provides a rich source of information on the methods employed for the calculation of the indicators, the interpretation of the indicators in the respective national contexts and the data sources involved. The website also provides access to the data underlying the indicators as well as to a comprehensive glossary for technical terms used in this publication.

Any post-production changes to this publication are listed at www.oecd.org/edu/eag2008.

The website www.pisa.oecd.org provides information on the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), on which many of the indicators in this publication draw.

Education at a Glance uses the OECD's StatLinks service. Below each table and chart in Education at Glance 2008 is a url which leads to a corresponding Excel workbook containing the underlying data for the indicator. These urls are stable and will remain unchanged over time. In addition, readers of the Education at a Glance e-book will be able to click directly on these links and the workbook will open in a separate window.

Codes used for territorial entities

AUS Australia

IRL Ireland

ISR Israel

These codes are used in certain charts. Country or territorial entity names are used in the text. Note that in the text the Flemish Community of Belgium is referred to as "Belgium (Fl.)" and the French Community of Belgium as "Belgium (Fr.)".

ITA Italy

UKM United Kingdom

USA United States

nas	Australia	11/1	Italy
AUT	Austria	JPN	Japan
BEL	Belgium	KOR	Korea
BFL	Belgium (Flemish Community)	LUX	Luxembourg
BFR	Belgium (French Community)	MEX	Mexico
BRA	Brazil	NLD	Netherlands
CAN	Canada	NZL	New Zealand
CHL	Chile	NOR	Norway
CZE	Czech Republic	POL	Poland
DNK	Denmark	PRT	Portugal
ENG	England	RUS	Russian Federation
EST	Estonia	SCO	Scotland
FIN	Finland	SVK	Slovak Republic
FRA	France	SVN	Slovenia
DEU	Germany	ESP	Spain
GRC	Greece	SWE	Sweden
HUN	Hungary	CHE	Switzerland
ISL	Iceland	TUR	Turkey

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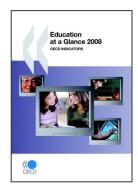
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