

Conclusions and recommendations

School system context

A centralised and predominantly public school system with a recently introduced degree of autonomy

Schooling in Luxembourg is highly centralised with the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (MENFP) responsible for the planning and administration of all teaching in public schools. However, over recent years there has been a stronger role for schools in implementing evaluation and assessment policies, notably with the increased emphasis placed on school self-evaluation. The vast majority of students attends public schools and follows the national student learning objectives towards nationally recognised qualifications. Public secondary schools are directly managed by the MENFP, via the direct appointment of a school leader (*directeur*) and the setting of a detailed legal framework. The *directeur* is expected to evaluate the school and report directly to the MENFP. Up until 2009, the MENFP and the districts were jointly responsible for public fundamental schools, but the MENFP now appoints teachers and assigns them to the districts. Each fundamental school is under the authority of a local education authority *inspecteur* who acts as an intermediary between fundamental schools and the MENFP. Fundamental schools do not have school leaders, so the *inspecteur* takes on the role of a “floating” school leader, who also monitors school compliance to laws and regulations and reports back to the MENFP. There is a certain degree of autonomy in fundamental schools regarding the organisation of learning, which is reflected in student assessment activities and school development planning.

First academic selection typically at age 11 and a high incidence of grade repetition

Luxembourg’s proud multilingual tradition is reflected in its school system: fundamental education is taught in *Lëtzebuergesch* in Cycle 1 and in German in Cycles 2 to 4. At the end of fundamental schooling (typically at age 11), children are selected by their academic ability (primarily in German, French and mathematics) and attend either general secondary education (ES) or technical education (EST). A School Orientation Council (*conseil d’orientation*) is responsible for this decision, although parents do have the right to appeal. After three (EST) or four (ES) years of lower secondary schooling, students specialise in particular subjects (ES) or tracks leading to specific qualifications (EST). The Technical diploma (EST) and the secondary school diploma (ES) give students the right to enter university. Grade repetition is a common practice that contributes to a high age-grade discrepancy throughout the school system. In 2010/11, 17.9% of students in fundamental schools, 18.6% in secondary general schools and 63.5% in secondary technical schools were older than the theoretical age for their grade. International comparisons of student performance at age 15 reveal worrying inequities: a larger than average proportion of low performing students; a strong influence of

socio-economic factors over student performance and performance difference among schools; and a major performance disadvantage on average for students with an immigrant background, including particularly pronounced performance differences for certain immigrant groups. National statistics show that students with an immigrant background are more commonly oriented towards secondary technical education.

The introduction of competency-based learning objectives, a new organisational structure in early years and an increased focus on evaluation and assessment

In 2009/10, the first nine years of schooling were reorganised into four pedagogical cycles regrouping pre-primary and primary education into “fundamental education”. For each cycle, there is a defined set of competency-based learning objectives (*socles de compétences*) that students must master by the end of the cycle in order to progress to the next pedagogical cycle. Students who have not achieved all learning objectives by the end of the cycle, can follow a special third year programme. Competency-based learning objectives have been introduced in French, German and mathematics in lower secondary education, but there is an ongoing discussion with key stakeholders to extend the competency-based reform throughout secondary education. Further, new student assessment initiatives have been introduced, including: requirements for teachers in fundamental education to document student learning progress; new standardised national assessments to monitor student outcomes against the learning objectives in French, German and mathematics in fundamental school (start of Cycle 3) and in lower secondary education (Grade 5ES and 9EST); and a national test with uniform content at the end of Cycle 4 of fundamental school (*épreuves standardisées*). The MENFP also collects results from the teacher-developed national non-standardised tests (*épreuves communes*) to monitor outcomes in lower secondary schooling. There has also been a drive to strengthen school self-evaluation, with requirements for schools to produce development plans and national support to build school capacity in this area. At the same time, the MENFP has commissioned and evaluates several pilot studies in different schools to encourage innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

Strengths and challenges

Evaluation and assessment policies aim to improve quality, but the evaluation and assessment framework is not yet complete and coherent

A central drive of recent educational policy making has been to tighten and make more coherent the role for evaluation and assessment in improving school quality in Luxembourg. This has led to the development of evaluation instruments to strengthen the focus on student performance and progress in classrooms, schools and at the policy-making level within the MENFP. However, many evaluation and assessment activities have been developed in parallel and do not yet work together well. This lack of a coherent evaluation and assessment framework is a challenge shared in many OECD countries. In Luxembourg, the framework does not include the key components of teacher appraisal and external school evaluation, the appraisal of secondary school leaders and recent initiatives to strengthen formative assessment of students are underdeveloped, and there is a lack of processes to ensure the validity of teacher grading as part of student summative assessment. The OECD review team found a culture in schools where statements about

the quality and functioning of the school are primarily based on informal exchange of information and observation instead of on formal criteria and the collection of evaluative information. In general, there is no overall conception and shared understanding of “quality”: the *inspecteurs* in fundamental education do not have a common framework of indicators for school quality; there is no profession-wide agreement on what counts as accomplished teaching; the common information reported by secondary schools (*contingent*) is compliancy-oriented and does not speak to the quality of teaching and learning; and varying implementation of the competency-based learning objectives lead to different criteria and goals being used in school self-evaluation.

Policy accords a key role for evaluation and assessment in monitoring equity, but the student is not at the centre of the evaluation and assessment framework

Importantly, evaluation and assessment instruments are seen to play a key role in monitoring and shedding light on the reasons behind the large impact that student socio-economic and migrant background has on their school performance. There is strong political support for the need to diversify the public school offer in Luxembourg given the increasingly heterogeneous student population and the MENFP has supported several initiatives to explore alternative pedagogical approaches, notably in lower secondary technical schools. The MENFP commissions evaluations of these innovative approaches and uses results of such evaluations as a springboard to debate different areas of potential innovation throughout the school system. However, the underlying rigid structure of the school system in Luxembourg makes it hard to take actions based on evaluation results. The high incidence of grade repetition in Luxembourg’s school system is an obvious indicator that students are not at the centre of the assessment and evaluation framework. Despite recent progress with attempts to address this structural issue (notably with the introduction of the competency approach and pedagogical cycles in fundamental schooling), the OECD review team noted that students have no say in their orientation or progress at key stages of schooling, little say in their learning and that there is limited account taken of the additional difficulties that the strong emphasis on student proficiency in *Lëtzebuergesch*, German and French poses for students with an immigrant background.

A new focus on learning outcomes with the introduction of a competency approach to learning in schools, but implementation has not been systematic

The introduction of standard-defined competencies to be attained by students at different ages can be a powerful tool to improve teaching and address students’ learning needs. Defined minimum competency levels were introduced in 2007 at the secondary level in basic subjects (languages and mathematics), followed in 2009 in the four major pedagogical cycles of fundamental schooling, plus there is ongoing work to develop standards in other secondary school subjects. At the same time, there has been the gradual introduction of new reporting requirements for teachers to document student learning progress against these competencies. Within fundamental schools, implementation of such reporting has followed the student cohort through each pedagogical cycle and the MENFP has actively sought feedback from teachers and parents on the new reporting tools. While the OECD review team commends the reform, it notes that several aspects of the implementation have not been conducted in a systematic way. Interviews during the OECD review revealed a lack of coherence among key players leading to various

alignment problems: student standardised assessments were developed before the student learning objectives had been developed or clearly defined; the development of the competency-based student learning objectives was undertaken by different groups simultaneously and did not pay adequate attention to the alignment of competencies across different levels and age groups; the engagement of teachers in working groups for competency development appeared rather *ad hoc*; there are no national mechanisms in place to check on the alignment of the teacher-developed national non-standardised student tests (*épreuves communes*) with the new student learning objectives.

The MENFP communicates regularly with schools, but there is confusion over the purpose of and responsibilities for evaluation and assessment

During the OECD review, the team formed the impression that there were close ties between the various stakeholder groups and the MENFP. The relatively small scale of the Luxembourg school system (154 fundamental schools and 35 secondary schools) is obviously capitalised on to foster regular communication between the MENFP and schools, via both formal and informal channels. However, despite the MENFP's strategy to emphasise the improvement function of evaluation and assessment activities, the OECD review team perceived a defensive culture among educators, with many reporting a perception that external evaluation only has an accountability function. This may be fuelled by a lack of clarity on the different roles and responsibilities within the evaluation and assessment framework. For example, at the national level, the Agency for the Development of Quality in Schools (ADQS) within the MENFP plays a key role in school quality improvement, but has fought to build credibility in this area, as schools are aware of its role in monitoring the school system. Within the MENFP, there is room to clarify responsibilities for the development of evaluation and assessment activities and also to strengthen the oversight of standardised assessment development. At the school level, although *directeurs* are expected to observe and evaluate their teaching staff, they do not always do so. However, this may be due to the limited room for *directeurs* to act on the results of their staff evaluations.

Good initiatives to use student assessment to monitor and promote equity, but summative assessment approaches pose problems for equity

There is clear communication that new student assessment initiatives should be used to monitor progress, support learning and improve equity. In particular, the introduction of a uniform national test at the end of Cycle 4 in fundamental education is an important step in making the decision process for student transition from fundamental to secondary education more equitable. The commitment to feed back results from national tests to schools and classes is also commendable (and will be significantly improved with the reporting of individual student results). However, student performance in French and German at the end of fundamental education counts for two-thirds weight in the decision on which secondary school type they will be oriented to and this disproportionately impacts some student groups. Although parents are allowed to appeal, revised decisions will be based on additional testing in French, German and mathematics. Further, the OECD review team noted a lack of moderation procedures in place for teacher scoring and grading of students in high-stakes summative assessment. Reliable scoring is a

necessity for high validity and comparability of results and the absence of adequate moderation procedures implies a significant challenge to the equity of student outcomes.

The shift to competencies has great potential to strengthen formative assessment and engage students in self-assessment, but this is not yet fully exploited

The recently introduced competency-based approach to learning emphasises the formative aspect of assessments through frequent timely feedback while also providing the appropriate tools for improvement. In particular, the regular reports on student learning progress (*bilan intermédiaire*) in fundamental schools are being used to compare students' performance with the predefined end-of-cycle objectives at the end of each trimester. The 2009 law considers formative assessments as an essential factor in students' motivation, self-confidence and progress. During the OECD review, interviews with parents and students indicated high levels of motivation towards the competency approach. However, the OECD review revealed at this early stage of implementation, several areas where the intended formative function of new initiatives is not currently understood and/or effectively implemented. For example, there was little evidence of the extent to which results from the interim student formative reports are used in a systematic way to guide teaching and improve learning. Further, although some of the standardised assessments carry a formative purpose, results are not immediately available to teachers and do not show performance of individual students. The OECD review team saw little evidence of students setting their own learning goals, assessing their progress and planning how they will improve. However, without the communication and involvement of students during the planning, implementation and review of assessment activities, these may not be effectively integrated into the daily processes of teaching and learning.

A range of professional development support for teachers on student assessment is offered, but there lacks coherence between different types of national assessments

The MENFP recognises the key role that professional development plays in implementing the new competency approach to teaching and assessing students and both directly provides and outsources training. The topics of these optional courses for teachers are often developed in co-operation with schools and teachers and there is high demand. The OECD review revealed concerns over a lack of coherence between the standardised assessments (based on the competencies approach) and the non-standardised assessments developed by teachers. This inconsistency adds confusion and uncertainty to the complex role and purposes of these assessments. During the OECD review, teachers reported that the competency-based student learning objectives were developed without considering the implemented curriculum, challenging their ability to adapt and modify their teaching methods. Teachers are not yet clear on the purposes of the various assessments (in particular the standardised assessments in Cycle 3 of fundamental education and Grades 5ES and 9EST of secondary education) and how results can be used and interpreted to inform further teaching and learning.

Reforms stimulate professional dialogue among teachers, but there is a need for more pedagogical leadership

The recently introduced competencies-based approach to student learning impacts both teachers' teamwork and the way teachers communicate with students and parents. The reorganisation of fundamental education into four 2-year pedagogical cycles means that pedagogical teams typically meet every week to discuss students' learning progress, preparation of lessons and support for students. Teachers can also be part of school committees and therefore have opportunities to share responsibility for the organisation of work within the school. The MENFP also engaged some teachers in working groups to develop the new competencies. Similar structures to promote teamwork exist at the secondary level, including a teacher council for each class to oversee teaching and learning, student progress and discipline, plus a body of all teachers in the school (*Conférence des Professeurs*) produces recommendations to the *directeur* and the MENFP. Further, the requirement for schools to produce development plans is expected to stimulate a reflection on the quality of teaching and learning and how to improve this. However, pedagogical leadership in schools is not a system-wide expectation. *Directeurs* do not have to undergo specific training for school leadership and typically developed competencies on the job. The OECD review team gained the impression that *directeurs* are overwhelmed with tasks at the schools and, in general, they do not seem to have the time to engage properly in the coaching, monitoring and appraisal of teachers. In fundamental education, each *inspecteur* oversees all the schools in his/her district (*arrondissement*) – in some cases, more than ten schools – and assumes a range of roles notably ensuring compliance with national regulations. This considerably limits their capacity to engage in pedagogical leadership.

Teachers have opportunities for professional feedback from inspecteurs and directeurs, but there is no common understanding of what constitutes good teaching

Teachers have opportunities to engage in a professional interaction with *inspecteurs* and *directeurs*. This allows teaching practices, student results and the implementation of reforms to be discussed to the benefit of a teacher's practice. The *inspecteur* has both a supportive function and a monitoring function, as the *inspecteur* represents the MENFP in ensuring that the law, decrees and directives are being enforced in the schools s/he manages. This includes guaranteeing teachers perform satisfactorily and parents' complaints are addressed. Similarly, secondary school *directeurs* are expected to engage in a continuing dialogue with teachers, providing regular feedback for the improvement of their practice, but they also represent the MENFP in ensuring the school and the teachers comply with national legislation. The new position of special support teacher (*instituteur-ressources*), an experienced teacher working closely with the *inspecteur* and assisting a few schools with their development activities, creates additional opportunities for teachers to receive feedback from an experienced professional. However, in Luxembourg, there are no teaching standards or profile of what teachers are expected to know and be able to do. There are no performance criteria or a reference against which teachers are appraised, that is, each *inspecteur* and *directeur* may use a different concept of accomplished teaching and learning. In addition, there is a lack of agreed procedures and instruments to appraise the performance of teachers so standards of reliability, validity and fairness can be met.

A probationary period for teachers is well established, but there are no career opportunities for effective teachers

A probationary period for newly qualified teachers is well established. They must follow a two-year induction programme at the end of which they are required to pass an examination to gain access to a permanent post as a civil servant. Appropriately, the successful completion of the probationary period is acknowledged as a major step in the teaching career. However, there is no career path for established teachers. The role of *inspecteur* or *directeur* is not regarded as a major step in the teaching career and no other steps exist. There are a few roles with different responsibilities, including cycle co-ordinator and member of the school committee in fundamental schools and head of department in secondary education, but these are not formally recognised in the teaching career. This is likely to undermine the potentially powerful links between teacher appraisal, professional development and career development.

Requirements and provisions for teachers' professional development are not necessarily linked to school development

Teachers are required to undertake eight hours of certified professional development each school year. The MENFP organises professional development activities, determines priority areas and (particularly in fundamental education) may establish certain professional development activities as mandatory for teachers. The Institute for Continuing Training for Teaching and Education Staff in Schools within the MENFP promotes, co-ordinates and organises professional development activities for teachers; provides advice to schools on their professional development plans; and certifies the professional development activities that teachers undertake. Teachers' professional development is intended to respond to teachers' individual needs as well as the needs of schools, local communities and the school system. However, the OECD review team formed the view that professional development activities undertaken by teachers do not necessarily derive from an assessment of needs made through teacher appraisal by *inspecteurs* and *directeurs*. There is scope to better link professional development to school development, as professional development activities are mostly an individual choice of the teacher which is often not associated with school development needs.

Strong central steering and support for school self-evaluation, but elements within the school evaluation framework are not aligned

The framework for school evaluation in Luxembourg is developing rapidly, particularly in fundamental schools, driven by strong central steering and support to schools in their development planning and self-evaluation. The requirement for schools to renew their school development plan every four years is expected to enhance frequent internal evaluation in and improvement of schools. Central support from the ADQS for this ongoing goal setting and evaluation is expected to create a climate in schools for sharing and making strategic use of evaluation findings. Specific, targeted training programmes (such as the ones organised by the MENFP) have the capacity to promote buy-in of teachers to conduct these evaluations and to improve their capacity to act on evaluation findings. Further, close ties between the MENFP, *inspecteurs* and schools enable a strong coupling and adaptation of education national policy to the specific needs

of schools. However, the evaluation criteria, the collection and analysis of evaluative information and data, and the use of evaluation findings for school improvement do not refer to the same underlying goals and vision of high quality schools and teaching and learning in schools. Notably, there was no guidance or incentives for schools and teachers to implement student competency-based learning objectives in their self-evaluation activities. This leads to very different criteria and goals being used in internal evaluation of schools and limits the relevance of results from standardised assessments for school improvement. Further, there is a risk that professional development of teachers is not aligned with the implementation of the school development plan and does not correspond to identified training needs for the school as a whole. These factors are related to a lack of incentives for schools to act on evaluation findings and improve potential weak aspects, a lack of power or authority for schools to implement certain improvements, a lack of useful evaluative information, and a culture promoting intuitive evaluation and decision making instead of structured collection of evaluative information and improvement.

New responsibilities for self-evaluation and school development, but a lack of external evaluation

In relation to the school development plan, fundamental schools are required to reorganise their internal organisation and instate a school committee, cycle co-ordinators and a co-ordinator of the pedagogical team. Introducing a president of the school committee also clarifies who is responsible for systematic evaluation and improvement of the school. The introduction of these bodies and new functions is expected to enhance the co-operation of teachers and to contribute to shared decision making about strengths and weaknesses, goals and necessary improvement actions. The school development units being introduced to secondary schools are expected to bring similar benefits. However, a key challenge is the lack of external school evaluations and external criteria defining and monitoring school quality. Formally, *inspecteurs* in fundamental schools and *directeurs* in secondary schools have the authority and function to evaluate schools, but they also are responsible for management and administrative tasks. This dual task of evaluating and managing their schools poses challenges with respect to resources, and also to the objectivity and reliability of “external” evaluations. *Inspecteurs* and *directeurs* have no common framework or set of standards to evaluate schools. The lack of external evaluations means there is no common basis to judge and improve the qualities of schools and to confront schools with an external perspective, such as national standards, benchmarks or comparative data from other schools to improve. The strong emphasis on (only) internal evaluations of schools through the school development plan may result in schools choosing a narrow local perspective on educational quality and school improvement and may prevent schools learning useful evaluation and improvement approaches from other schools.

Heightened political support for education system evaluation, including a new monitoring system, but insufficient analytical capacity

Luxembourg has a political openness to external scrutiny and aligns international work with key priorities for the education system, *e.g.* work on language development assessment items with partner European countries and the present OECD review at a key stage of introducing a monitoring system. There is also support to follow up on results in international studies, including via reporting and analysis and a follow-up national study

after the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006. The introduction of national standardised tests clearly strengthens the evidence base for monitoring the education system in Luxembourg. This is an important complement to international evidence on the performance of the education system, providing comparative information on student development in German and French, which are both of key importance in the Luxembourgish system. The creation of the ADQS in 2009 was a signal of the growing importance in Luxembourg for evaluating the performance of the education system. However, the priority task for the ADQS appears to be supporting schools with their own quality assurance and development. This places great demand on the agency's resources and limits its role in the analysis and interpretation of results on the system as a whole. In general, there appears to be insufficient analysis on the different statistics produced at the national level. Results are presented in a series of different publications, but there is no sense of an overall evaluation of how the Luxembourg school system performs and where the major priorities lie. Within specific publications the analytical component could be strengthened to heighten the relevance for policy development. Further, the OECD review team gained the impression that very little analysis was conducted on the collected results from national non-standardised tests, *e.g.* to analyse and compare teacher grading and assessment.

Growing attention to collecting evidence on wider set of outcomes, but a need to align national reporting to new competency-based learning objectives

As part of the annual standardised tests, students complete a short questionnaire including questions on their motivation to learn and aspects of their class and school learning environments. Although somewhat limited in scope, they have the potential to inform the policy debate on wider learning outcomes. The collection of results from the national non-standardised tests to complement results from standardised assessments also provides a more rounded picture of student performance in lower secondary education. National research funding (FNR) supports the development of a computer-based assessment of complex problem solving (the “Genetics Lab”) which can inform the future development of the national standardised tests. Part of the mandate for the ADQS is to collect and synthesise qualitative feedback from schools, as commissioned by the Minister. This sends a strong signal on the importance of collecting feedback from key stakeholders and analysis of results can lead to further development and refinement of evaluation and assessment tools, *e.g.* the formative reports in fundamental education. A general challenge will be to adapt the current national reporting approach to accurately reflect student progress against the competency-based learning objectives. As these are progressively introduced throughout secondary education, it will be necessary to adjust national reporting on results on student progression and certification accordingly. Currently, the stratification of the education system – and not student competencies – remains the focus of reporting at the system level.

Policy recommendations

Establish a coherent framework for evaluation and assessment with the student at its centre

The OECD review team recommends that at this critical stage of implementation the MENFP devise a strategic plan to complete the evaluation and assessment framework. There should be clear expectations that the results of evaluation and assessment activities are used to inform the improvement of teaching and learning. An important first step in making the framework more coherent will be to adequately align the various aspects that are currently in place or being introduced. Notably, the new competency-based learning objectives (*socles de compétences*) should be at the heart of evaluation and assessment activities, including regular formative assessment activities with students, national assessments, school development plans and the national monitoring and reporting system. Similarly, in further developing and completing the evaluation and assessment framework, the OECD review team recommends: developing a set of teaching standards and importantly ensuring that these are aligned with the student learning objectives; developing a common understanding of school quality in Luxembourg; introducing an external review of schools to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and validate processes in place to organise developmental teacher appraisal. A coherent evaluation and assessment framework would also allow the more explicit detailing of how evaluation and assessment activities at the student, teacher, school and school system level link together to ensure that these are complementary. This can include how the different types of national assessments complement each other, as well as the regular classroom assessment activities set by teachers to inform on student learning progress, and how the results from all these student assessment activities fit into school self-evaluation activities.

Clarify roles and responsibilities within the evaluation and assessment framework

In completing the evaluation and assessment framework, it will be of key importance to clarify the roles played by different stakeholders. This includes a more active role for students in assessing their own progress and heightened responsibility for teachers to ensure regular formative feedback to students and their parents on student learning progress. Further, it is strongly recommended that the MENFP recognise the important role that pedagogical leadership plays in effectively translating assessment and evaluation results to improved student learning. This will require serious reflection and clarification of the role that *directeurs* and their leadership teams in secondary schools play as pedagogical leaders. Further, the OECD recommends establishing an external school evaluation mechanism and this could considerably strengthen the pedagogical leadership of the *inspecteurs*. Finally, within the MENFP, it would be helpful to clarify different responsibilities and to ensure greater coherence in the development of evaluation and assessment policies and tools for schools. Such planning should pay careful consideration to current capacity and assess the need to build and develop evaluation and assessment competencies where necessary.

Raise the focus on equity within the evaluation and assessment framework and evaluate the implementation of competency-based learning objectives

While the need to monitor equity is one of the stated drivers behind the initial conceptualisation of an evaluation and assessment framework in Luxembourg, the OECD review team sees a need to further raise the focus on equity within the evaluation and assessment framework. In particular, the OECD review team recommends a thorough review of the procedures in place for the orientation of students at age 11 into different types of secondary education. National and international data clearly demonstrate that the current procedures disproportionately impact certain student groups. The innovative piloting approach taken by the MENFP may also be useful to examine the benefits to complementing the traditional *Lëtzebuergesch* instruction in Cycle 1 with instruction in German and French for certain children. There is room for the MENFP to make better use of the results of both non-standardised and standardised national assessment results to moderate teacher grading in high-stakes student assessment. Finally, the planned review of the implementation of the competency-based student learning objectives should examine to what extent these can be better harmonised across general and technical streams of secondary education. As it stands, the risk is that these simply follow the existing structure of the school system and miss the opportunity to promote greater flexibility for student transition among the different streams. As part of this process, it will be important to review evidence from various stakeholders (students, teachers and parents, notably). In further refining these, the OECD review team would recommend a more formal and systematic approach to the development and implementation of student learning objectives. To ensure greater engagement of teachers it would be important to ensure that teachers feel that they are partners in this process. This means that they have a representative voice and actively work toward the development of student learning objectives and related assessment tools.

Build evaluation and assessment capacity throughout the school system

The development of a coherent and effective evaluation and assessment framework necessitates considerable investment to develop evaluation and assessment capacity at the class, school and school system levels. New initiatives in student assessment and school self-evaluation have generated ample information for teachers, parents and schools. However, the generation of information and results is not of use if these cannot be analysed, interpreted and used to improve the learning situation for students. It is, therefore, extremely important that continued and adequate attention is paid to training teachers, *directeurs* and *inspecteurs* in how to work most effectively with the results of evaluation and assessment. In this context, the OECD review team commends the priority accorded to building school capacity for developing their strategic improvement plans and self-evaluating. The support offered by the ADQS is expected to have a positive impact on the implementation of these new school self-evaluation requirements. Further, the implementation of new internal school structures for school development should be monitored to determine the type of training and capacity building support they require. This will be a good investment to build evaluation capacity internally within schools on a more sustainable basis. Finally, the OECD review team has recommended that the MENFP consider establishing an external school evaluation mechanism. In any case, it is clear that the current responsibilities that fall within the ADQS need to be either

redistributed within the MENFP or that the ADQS be given increased capacity. The implementation of the evaluation and assessment framework is at a critical stage and the continued prioritisation of capacity building at the school and national levels is more important than ever to ensure that the results of evaluation and assessment lead to improvements in student learning.

Establish a coherent framework for student assessment and strengthen oversight of national student assessments

To improve stakeholder understanding and acceptance of the various student assessment initiatives, the OECD review team recommends establishing a coherent framework for current student assessments detailing: how the various assessment initiatives are linked; the rationale, purpose and goals for each assessment; the technical methodology for each assessment; and the reporting scheme and intended use of results for each assessment. A priority would be to provide public documentation on methodologies surrounding the major student tests. A thorough explanation and clarification of the purposes of each type of assessment and the type of inferences that can be made from the results of these will help all stakeholders to understand and work with these constructively. Further, there is room to further strengthen oversight of national test development. This means the co-ordination of any assessment activities, primarily regarding their overall direction, the assessment content and the most appropriate reporting methods. It is of equal importance to ensure the systematic involvement of a balanced and representative range of key stakeholders in the development of assessments and to avoid an approach that may be perceived as *ad hoc*. This may involve establishing an independent body with authority to advise on strategic test development.

Improve teachers' ability to effectively use student assessment results to improve student learning

The OECD review team commends efforts to implement a competency-based approach to learning. Documenting individual student progress and achievement while associating these with a plan to achieve well-established goals provides background for teachers and facilitates their adapting instruction to individual student needs. In further promoting teachers' use of student assessment results, the OECD review team recommends a two-fold approach. First, there is scope to more effectively feed back the results from standardised tests to teachers, notably, by providing results for individual students, but also by providing analytical software packages that teachers can use to compare results for particular groups of students to national, school or class averages. Second, there is room to provide targeted professional development to teachers on how to integrate assessment into their teaching within the competency approach. This can include how to use the results from the national assessments, how to communicate them to students and how to adapt their teaching methods accordingly. It should also promote the use of centrally provided assessment tools and, importantly, help stimulate formative assessment across the system. The ADQS intends to offer schools support in the interpretation and use of national test results in 2012, which is expected to better tailor support to teacher needs and not only the interpretation of results at the school level.

Prioritise strategies to meet equity challenges in high-stakes student assessment

A major challenge to equity is to improve the opportunities for students who may not master French or German during fundamental education to access general secondary education. In this context, the OECD review team recommends a review of the orientation procedure at the end of fundamental education. Serious reflection is required to identify strategies to reduce the influence of student proficiency in French and German in high-stakes assessment. Formative assessments, continuous feedback and opportunities for self-assessments play vital roles in second language learning as students need to be informed of their progress – particularly in French and German – in order to take control of their learning process. Further, the OECD review team underlines the need to develop processes to increase consistency of grading in student assessments, particularly where these have high stakes for students. The provision of detailed scoring rubrics at secondary level and the involvement of teachers in developing scoring for national assessments need to be complemented with opportunities for professional development, plus importantly, the systematic collaboration of teachers in grading student assessment. Finally, it is important to ensure and carefully document the necessary adaptations of standardised tests for students with special educational needs. Adaptations of assessment materials are not simple and may impact the comparability of results across the student population, but may be necessary in order to obtain accurate and valid information for all students.

Develop teaching standards aligned with student learning objectives and use these as a basis for a career structure

A national framework of teaching standards is essential as a reference for teacher appraisal. The development of a profile of teacher competencies should be based on the national student learning objectives and could benefit from the expertise gained in developing the learning objectives and descriptions of related skills for students. In recognition of the variety of tasks and responsibilities in today's schools and the teaching expertise developed while on the job, teaching standards should express different levels of performance such as competent teacher, established teacher, and accomplished/expert teacher. They need to reflect the sophistication and complexity of what effective teachers are expected to know and be able to do; be informed by research; and benefit from the ownership and responsibility of the teaching profession. Such teaching standards would form the basis for a career structure stating the level of expertise required at different key stages. Each stage would be associated with distinct roles and responsibilities in schools and access to each stage could be associated with formal processes of appraisal through a system of teacher certification. The certification process could be a mostly school-based process led by the teacher's hierarchical superior (*inspecteur* or *directeur*), but it should include an element of externality such as an accredited external evaluator, typically a teacher from another school with expertise in the same area as the teacher being appraised. The latter would seek to ensure the fairness of appraisals across schools. The completion of the probationary period could correspond to the access of the first stage in the career as "competent teacher".

Reinforce the pedagogical leadership of the inspecteurs and directeurs and strengthen focus on developmental appraisal

Teacher appraisal will only succeed in raising educational standards if the *inspecteurs* and *directeurs* take direct responsibility for exerting pedagogical leadership and for the quality of education in their schools. Therefore the recruitment, initial preparation, professional development and evaluation of school leaders are of key importance. This reinforces the case for rethinking school leadership in fundamental education so each school benefits from a dedicated leadership team. Also, the concept of shared leadership needs to be more firmly embedded in schools, to support existing leaders and allow them to concentrate on their instructional role. In particular, deputies, heads of department, cycle co-ordinators and senior teachers should be pedagogical leaders and role models in their own right. A priority is to provide adequate training in teacher appraisal to school leaders, *e.g.* conducting structured interactions with teachers, setting objectives, linking school objectives to personnel development plans, using evidence on teaching quality, developing instruments and strategies to use appraisal results. It is also important to strengthen the focus on teacher appraisal for improvement purposes (*i.e.* developmental appraisal). This would be fully internal to the school, be based on both the national teaching standards and school-specific criteria and developmental objectives. The main outcome would be feedback on teaching performance and overall contribution to school development, which would lead to a plan for professional development. It can build on identified best practices of current interactions between teachers and *inspecteurs* or *directeurs* but would need to be more formalised. Again, shared leadership will be essential here in building capacity for appraisal methods at the school level, in particular, the special support teacher (*instituteur-ressources*) could play a key role. Further, considerations to introduce an external element to school evaluation should include the audit of the processes in place to organise developmental evaluation, holding either the *inspecteur* or the *directeur* accountable as necessary.

Implement an external school evaluation mechanism

Introducing an external school evaluation mechanism will both support and strengthen the internal evaluation and development planning (in both fundamental and secondary schools), and confront schools with a common, external perspective and information on their quality. External school evaluations can bring greater depth and breadth to internal evaluations in schools by providing useful observations and evidence from other schools, challenging the school's development plan and self-evaluation criteria, and evaluating the school's capacity for self-evaluation. External evaluators should not be involved in school management and co-ordination tasks to ensure objective and robust evaluations, for example, they could be part of the MENFP or a new independent external evaluation agency. As a result, the role of *inspecteurs* in fundamental schools and *directeurs* in secondary schools should be redefined to focus entirely on management, co-ordination and pedagogical leadership of schools. It is expected that this, together with clear professional requirements to conduct teacher appraisal and build evaluation expertise, plus guidelines and frameworks for self-evaluation, would further strengthen the internal evaluation process.

Improve the alignment between school development plans and national objectives and introduce incentives for school improvement

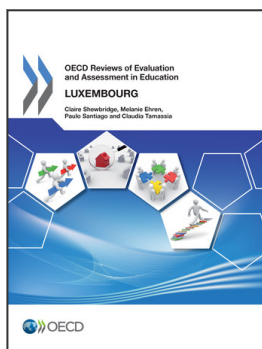
In Luxembourg, the most important challenge is to align the national targets for school improvement and competency-based reform to the school internal goals and evaluation criteria in the school development plan. Such an alignment will enable schools to use the national standardised student achievement results to improve the teaching and learning in their school. Alignment can be improved by: ensuring the full and timely feedback to schools of student results in the standardised tests; introducing reporting requirements for schools, *e.g.* adding a section to their school development plan in which they describe how they will implement national reforms such as the competency-based student learning objectives, how they will align their curricula and teaching to these and how they will evaluate their implementation. These reporting requirements will on the one hand increase awareness in schools of national reforms and student learning objectives and demand schools to strategise and be transparent about how to implement these. The reporting requirements create on the other hand an opportunity for the MENFP to monitor the implementation of the student learning objectives in a structured manner (instead of through informal communication with *inspecteurs*) and to make amendments when necessary. Potential external evaluators can also use these reports to evaluate schools. Incentives are essential components of evaluation systems as they impose stakes on schools to meet certain evaluation criteria and implement necessary improvement actions. In Luxembourg, rewards and sanctions related to (the improvement of) teaching and learning of students should be targeted at teachers, while *directeurs* and *inspecteurs* should be rewarded or sanctioned for improving school-level conditions such as creating a coherent curriculum throughout the school. Rewards can for example include financial bonuses for high performance, or merit-based salaries. Other sanctions may include increased external monitoring and follow-up of schools and targeted external interventions.

Devise an analytical framework for education system evaluation and validate and further develop the monitoring system as necessary

The OECD review team commends the development of a monitoring system in Luxembourg. As a key element of this, the standardised tests should be evaluated to ensure they deliver: valid measures against discrete areas of the national competency-based learning objectives; high reliability of results for comparison throughout the system; and stable core content to allow comparability of results across years. There should also be clear documentation and understanding of the suitability of these tests for students with different developmental needs. Further, it is essential that the MENFP establish an overall analytical framework for education system evaluation. Currently, information is collected and analysed for discrete areas (typically sectoral) and does not allow an understanding of relative policy priorities throughout the system. On the basis of the five-year political agenda and the new competency-based learning objectives, the MENFP should clarify key objectives and set specific goals or targets for the school system (for both quality and equity); systematically map out available measures and include technical notes on validity and/or limitations for interpretation; identify key gaps in data availability and limitations of existing measures; and develop a strategic plan to extend the monitoring system as necessary. This may entail the collection of feedback from students, teachers and parents on different aspects of the reform and the cyclical administration of tests on a wider set of student learning outcomes.

Build analytical capacity and improve reporting of system-level information to show progress against learning objectives

The creation of the ADQS represents a political commitment to the importance of education system evaluation in Luxembourg. To establish credibility for the monitoring system, a key priority is to continue to build analytical capacity at the national level. The MENFP must ensure the statistical, analytical and research competencies to fully exploit existing information on the education system for policy development. The adequate analysis, interpretation and reporting of key results in a way that makes them accessible to all stakeholders will build support for education system evaluation and also promote the discussion of such results throughout the system. The publication of a regular overview report on the state of the education system is strongly recommended. The clear and comprehensive reporting in system-level publications against the national student learning objectives will play a vital role in promoting the acceptance and implementation of the new student learning objectives in schools throughout Luxembourg. In particular, the reporting of results from the national standardised tests should lead the way, *e.g.* by reporting of the proportion of students overall by performance category: standards attained with reserve; standards attained; advance level; level of excellence. Further, there is room to actively promote discussion among key stakeholders of the major results from the national standardised and non-standardised assessments. This would offer an opportunity to promote deeper understanding of the learning objectives and timely feedback to the MENFP and the test developers.



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