

Chapter 5

School evaluation

The evaluation of individual schools constitutes a key element of the evaluation and assessment framework in Luxembourg. The focus lies on school self-evaluation and strong national requirements and support have been put in place in recent years to drive this, particularly in fundamental schools. A number of initiatives have been taken that have the potential of contributing to a strong improvement-oriented school evaluation in which local decision making in schools is enhanced. Based on an analysis of strengths and challenges in the current approach to school evaluation, the chapter presents a set of recommendations to further develop and strengthen the evaluation in and of Luxembourg's schools, including the introduction of an external school evaluation mechanism.

This chapter analyses approaches to school evaluation within the Luxembourgish evaluation and assessment framework. School evaluation refers to the evaluation of individual schools as organisations. This chapter covers internal school evaluation (*i.e.* school self-evaluation) and external school evaluation.

Context and features

The evaluation of individual schools constitutes a key element of the evaluation and assessment framework in Luxembourg. In Luxembourg the focus lies on internal evaluations of schools, but strong national requirements and support have been put in place in recent years that drive these internal evaluations. National standardised student assessments have also been implemented and these are designed to provide results to both fundamental and secondary schools which are useful data for the analysis of school performance as a basis for improvement. These requirements and support systems are most prominent in fundamental schools, but are being introduced to secondary schools.

The components of school evaluation in Luxembourg

School evaluation in Luxembourg includes five major elements that were developed over the past years and are currently still being implemented and refined, particularly in secondary education (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Implementation of major elements of school evaluation in Luxembourg

	Fundamental schools	Secondary schools
Competency-based school reform defining student learning objectives ("standards")	2009 – four sets of student learning objectives for pedagogical Cycles 1 to 4 (each cycle is two years)	2007 – French and German (first two years of general and technical secondary education) 2008 – Mathematics (first four years of general and technical secondary education) 2009 – being progressively introduced to different subjects and year levels ²
National standardised student achievement tests (German, Mathematics and French)	Cycle 3 (first trimester) ¹ Cycle 4 (end)	Third year of secondary education (first trimester)
Internal evaluation responsibilities	<i>Inspecteurs</i>	School principals (<i>Directeurs</i>)
School development plans	Schools must set and evaluate goals every four years	Recommended from 2011 (most schools starting to set goals and action plans)
Requirements to implement internal structures for co-operative school development	School committee Cycle co-ordinators Pedagogical team co-ordinator	From 2011, a School Development Unit (established in most schools)

Notes: 1) Tests are conducted in German and mathematics only.

2) All available competency-based learning objectives for general and technical secondary education can be found on the Ministry's website www.men.public.lu/publications/postprimaire/socles_de_competences/index.html.

These elements (standards, standardised student tests, internal evaluation, school development plans and new internal structures) are designed so that together they constitute a school internal quality assurance system in which evaluation criteria are drawn up, evaluative information and data are collected and evaluation findings are used for school improvement.

For fundamental schools, the school development plan and the competency-based school reform together set the criteria to address in evaluating their performance. The actual evaluation of these criteria is provided for in the school development plan and through the functioning of the local authority inspector (*inspecteur*) who supervises the school (as there are no school principals in fundamental schools) and, within the school, the school committee. The national standardised student achievement tests provide schools with structured performance data. The restructuring of the internal organisation of schools should contribute to the use of evaluation findings and to the further development of the school (see below).

The framework for evaluation of schools in secondary education is less well developed. Secondary school principals (*directeurs*) are entitled (and expected) to evaluate and inspect teachers in their school. Starting in 2011, it is recommended that secondary schools have and implement a school development plan and most secondary schools are starting to set goals and action plans, but the school development plan is not compulsory. Further, as of September 2011, secondary schools are obliged to establish a School Development Unit (*Cellule de Développement Scolaire*). Units typically have three to ten members, comprising the school management and teachers with an advisory and co-ordinating role with respect to school development. Similar to fundamental schools, the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (MENFP) started to implement competency-based student learning objectives (see below).

Competency-based school reform

Competency-based student learning objectives were first introduced in 2007 for the first two years of secondary schools (*Cycle Inférieur*) in French and German. Student learning objectives for mathematics followed in 2008 for the first four years of secondary education and the MENFP continues to progressively introduce learning objectives in other subjects and at different year levels and tracks in secondary education. In the academic year 2009/10 these were set for the first two years of both general and technical secondary education in six subjects (French, German, mathematics, art, sport and sciences). These will be completed for all subjects during 2012.

In 2009, the MENFP (in collaboration with teachers and *inspecteurs*), developed national student learning objectives and competency levels of students for the four cycles of fundamental schools. The learning objectives include, for each cycle and subject, what students should achieve in order to be promoted to the next cycle.

The learning objectives are expected to address the high incidence of grade repetition in fundamental schools and to promote the equality of opportunities for all students, improve the skill levels of students and increase students' motivation to learn. The student learning objectives and levels also include a description of the curriculum, the skills to be developed, and learning content that schools and teachers can use. However, schools may decide on the teaching materials and instruction methods to implement the student learning objectives and, in general, schools have chosen to adopt their own curricula and programmes.

School development plan requirement for fundamental schools

The MENFP aims to strengthen evaluation and local decision making in schools to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The 2009 law for fundamental schools obliges school committees to write and implement a school development plan every four years in which they describe their strong and weak points, define the goals they want to

achieve, identify the means to achieve these goals and evaluate the progress they are making in achieving these goals. The school development plan is made up of a pre-defined standard form designed by the Agency for the Development of Quality in Schools (ADQS, a division within the MENFP). Schools are required to define two to five goals related to either “the organisation of teaching and learning”, or “living in the community”. Implementation was swift with approximately a third of the fundamental schools having already written a school development plan in 2010, and all other fundamental schools doing so in 2011. The ADQS accompanies schools in their school development planning by offering data, assessment tools, advice, training and analytical expertise and analysing data.

The school development plan is subject to the recommendation of the *inspecteur*, the agreement of the parents and the approval of the MENFP and the local district authority. There is no external evaluation to measure the extent to which fundamental schools implement their school development plan and they face no consequences for failing to implement the school development plan. The implementation of the school development plan should, however, be annually evaluated by the school team. This implies reviewing the achievement of annual school objectives and adapting those to be implemented in the following year. The *inspecteurs* assist the school’s pedagogical team during this phase, plus methodological support and training are offered throughout the process by the ADQS and the Institute for Continuing Training of all School Personnel (IFC) within the SCRIPT to help schools follow up their plans. A final evaluation after four years should include a discussion with all partners of the school on the extent to which the original objectives of the school development plan have been reached. The school is also strongly encouraged (although not obliged) to inform the society (particularly the parents) on the implementation of the school development plan, for example through a forum discussion or through the website of the school.

Schools in secondary education are not required to implement a school development plan, but the MENFP has strongly encouraged them to do so since 2011. The ADQS reports that as at early 2012, two-thirds of secondary schools have defined and are implementing annual school action plans aiming for school development.

Restructuring of internal organisation of fundamental schools

The MENFP requires fundamental schools to adapt their internal organisation and structure to enable co-operative school improvement, needed to implement the school development plan. They are expected to instate a school committee, cycle co-ordinators and a co-ordinator of the pedagogical team. The school committee consists of three to nine members, including at least two-thirds of teachers who are elected by and amongst the school staff. The school committee is responsible for the daily management of the school; it develops lesson plans, approves the teaching materials and is responsible for the school development plan. The school committee is chaired by a president who is elected by the school teachers for a period of five years and appointed by the Minister. The president of the school committee is expected to co-ordinate the writing and implementation of the school development plan.

Fundamental schools organise their teaching in four learning cycles of two years; the first cycle is part of pre-school. Each cycle should be co-ordinated by a teacher. The pedagogical team consists of teachers of one cycle; these teachers may also be co-ordinators of one cycle. The pedagogical team meets every week to discuss ongoing matters related to pedagogical questions, teaching methods and progress of individual students.

The pedagogical teams are chaired by a co-ordinator who is nominated by the pedagogical team and is responsible for organising and running the meetings. The co-ordinator may be partially discharged from his/her teaching task.

Feedback of student performance results to schools

The ADQS within the MENFP sees itself as “a partner to develop quality in schools and provides the necessary data to assist in policy making” (ADQS, 2011). The current emphasis is clearly on the use of results by schools for their own evaluation and analysis. The MENFP does not publish rankings of school performance results. Mechanisms are in place to provide schools with comparative performance results from both the standardised and non-standardised national tests.

National standardised tests (épreuves standardisées)

Over recent years, the MENFP commissioned the University of Luxembourg to develop national standardised tests. These measure student achievement against the national student learning objectives and competency levels at the start of Cycle 3 and the end of Cycle 4 in fundamental schools, and the third year of secondary education (fifth grade in general secondary and ninth grade in technical secondary). The test in fundamental schools was not administered in 2009/10 when the competency-based school reform came into effect. This was to avoid over-burdening the teachers who were facing the challenge of implementing the newly introduced reform.

The University of Luxembourg provides teachers with a report in which the overall performance of their students on the national standardised test is described on all the measured student learning objectives compared to proficiency of all the students in their school and in the entire country (corrected for the socio-economic background of students). These reports do not identify individual students but only show the distribution of students’ scores on the test in the different subjects. The *directeurs* and *inspecteurs* are provided with an overview (school level) of the results of all the students in their school in the different subjects.

The University of Luxembourg and the MENFP support schools in using the standardised assessments to draw up and follow-up their school development plan; they constantly improve their technical and organisational infrastructure, for example, to analyse and interpret data and provide schools with feedback. However, at this stage there are no mechanisms in place to ensure that the results on the standardised assessments are used by schools to improve school and classroom practice.

Non-standardised tests (épreuves communes)

In secondary education, teachers currently administer a national non-standardised test in French and mathematics in the third year of secondary education (see Chapter 3). The test is developed by teachers who are part of a national committee and are based on the school curricula; these curricula should reflect the national student learning objectives (but they often do not). The results of the national non-standardised tests are also compiled and analysed by the ADQS. Schools receive summary reports with national, school, class and individual results. Schools receive their own results for comparison with other levels.

Responsibilities for school evaluation

In fundamental schools, the MENFP appoints *inspecteurs* to act as an intermediary between the school and the MENFP. They are the hierarchical superior of the teachers in the schools in their district and they combine administrative tasks (e.g. making sure that schools abide to official regulations, co-ordinating actions of the school committee presidents, etc.) and evaluative tasks of all the schools in their district. *Inspecteurs* are responsible for ensuring that legislation, decrees and directives are executed in schools and educational reforms are implemented. As fundamental schools in Luxembourg have no school leader, the *inspecteurs* are also responsible for and involved in the daily management and functioning of schools. For example, they counsel teachers in pedagogical matters and mediate between teachers and parents in case of serious problems with students or serious complaints from parents.

The evaluative tasks of *inspecteurs* include the evaluation of schools in their local education authority (*arrondissement*) and providing schools with feedback on the quality of teaching and learning in the school; *inspecteurs* also evaluate teachers when they want to transfer to another school. *Inspecteurs* have no nationally established standards, evaluation protocols and reporting guidelines in place for their evaluative work in schools.

Each secondary school has a school principal (*directeur*) who is considered to be external to the school staff (even though he/she is located in the school). The *directeur* has administrative and management duties and is responsible for monitoring lessons, controlling the implementation of the curriculum and inspecting school teachers. However, these evaluations and inspections are not done systematically, except for new teachers who are subject to an intensive two-year appraisal period and are obliged to have regular interviews with the *directeur*.

External assessment of secondary schools only includes overseeing the use of human and financial resources by the MENFP. Secondary schools are required prior to the start of each school year to submit to the MENFP a set of tables (the “*contingent*” report) including information on student and class enrolment, the number and organisation of teaching lessons, number of hours allocated for student support, detailed scheduling for other school and extracurricular activities and number of school staff by qualification and employment status.

Capacity for school evaluation

The capacity to evaluate fundamental schools strongly relies on the expertise and available time of the *inspecteurs* and pedagogical team co-ordinators, and the infrastructure they put in place to carry out evaluations and act on evaluation results. As both the *inspecteurs* and pedagogical team co-ordinators have a teaching background and no formal training in building evaluation and quality assurance structures in schools, their expertise is relatively limited for carrying out these demanding tasks. There are also no formal requirements or professional job descriptions in place that require them to acquire such expertise. As *inspecteurs* are responsible for a vast amount of schools, ranging from five to ten schools per *inspecteur*, their time to carry out evaluations and develop evaluative structures in schools is also extremely limited. The amount of time pedagogical team co-ordinators are discharged from their teaching task (this varies according to the size of the school) is also limited to leave sufficient time to take up any evaluation task or responsibility.

In secondary schools, the *directeurs* are first and foremost responsible for the evaluation of their schools. The fact that they are, compared to their counterparts in fundamental education, only responsible for the evaluation of their own school should provide them with sufficient time to set up structures and methods for the evaluation of their school. However, as *directeurs* lack formal training in school evaluation, their capacity to evaluate their schools is also limited. Further, they do not have to meet any formal requirements or obligations to have or acquire such evaluation expertise.

As there is limited evaluation capacity in schools, a central agency was established in 2009 (ADQS) to provide schools with evaluative information and to support schools in acting on this information. The capacity of the ADQS to perform these tasks is of key importance. However, the relatively small size of the ADQS (ten full-time and two part-time employees), combined with the breadth of their tasks and responsibilities provides a challenging setting and currently limits their capacity to compensate for the lack of evaluation capacity in schools.

Strengths

The framework for school evaluation in Luxembourg is developing rapidly, particularly in fundamental schools. A number of initiatives have been taken that have the potential of contributing to a strong improvement-oriented school evaluation in which local decision making in schools is enhanced.

Strong central steering of and support to school self-evaluation

A strength of school evaluation in Luxembourg is the strong central steering and support of school self-evaluation and school development planning by the MENFP. The ADQS plays a key role in building school capacity to work with the results for evaluations. The requirement of the MENFP for schools to renew their school development plan every four years is expected to enhance frequent self-evaluation in and improvement of schools and prevent once-off or snapshot evaluations of schools. The central steering and support of this ongoing goal setting and evaluation of goals is expected to create a climate in schools for sharing of evaluation findings and strategising about the use of evaluation findings from the very beginning of the evaluation. Continuous central steering and strong support of school self-evaluations has the potential to ultimately lead to school staff internalising quality standards and applying these to themselves when conducting internal evaluations. The specific, targeted training programmes (such as the ones organised by the ADQS) have the capacity to promote buy-in of teachers to conduct these evaluations and to improve their capacity to act on evaluation findings.

The small scale of the school system in Luxembourg allows close ties between the MENFP, *inspecteurs* and schools which enables a strong coupling and adaptation of education national policy to the specific needs of schools.

The first steps in providing information for school self-evaluation

There have been considerable efforts by the MENFP to stimulate an information-rich environment for schools' self-evaluation. The gradual implementation of student learning objectives as part of the competency-based school reform provides schools and teachers with a basis to judge the progress of student learning development. Notably, efforts to measure student performance against these student learning objectives at key stages in

core subjects (French, German and mathematics) and to provide feedback of results to schools are commendable. Further, there is commitment to collect and compile information on the non-standardised national tests and to feed back comparative results to schools for their own internal use. This signals the importance of a focus on outcomes and should prove to be an effective way to stimulate school self-evaluation.

Restructuring the internal organisation of fundamental schools

In relation to the school development plan, 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. Shared decision making of, and co-operation between teachers and strong leadership in schools have proven to be important conditions for high quality internal evaluations in schools and effective school improvement (Heck and Hallinger, 2009). Participation of teachers in evaluating the school's academic development, making decisions about curriculum development in the school and working together effectively to achieve these goals enhances the type of learning-focused climate that characterises high-performing schools. Teachers who participate in decisions about how to perform evaluations will have greater understanding of the goals and programmes they are evaluating, and greater investment and motivation to use the evaluative information (Turnbull, 1999). The requirements for fundamental schools to reorganise their internal structure are therefore expected to improve teachers' ability and commitment to improve the quality of their school, both individually and as a team.

Availability of objective performance measures from national standardised student assessments

The MENFP has authorised the University of Luxembourg to annually administer the national standardised tests (*épreuves standardisées*) in French, German and mathematics to students in fundamental schools. Teachers are provided with a report showing the distribution of students' scores on the test in the different subjects. The *inspecteurs* are provided with an overview of the results of all the students in their schools. These reports have the potential of providing very valuable evaluative information on output of schools. As McNamara and O'Hara (2005) point out, schools can use this information in setting targets for improvement and in monitoring the introduction of new programmes, the quality of certain teaching methods or didactic approaches. The quality of internal evaluations increases when schools use these types of benchmark information to monitor and improve their own performance. Comparable information on the results of students in other similar schools or classes, as provided by the University of Luxembourg, can bring greater depth and breadth and a broader perspective to internal evaluations in schools.

Challenges

Lack of external school evaluations

One of the key challenges for school evaluation in Luxembourg is the lack of external evaluations and external criteria defining and monitoring quality of schools. Formally, *inspecteurs* in fundamental schools and *directeurs* in secondary schools have the authority and function to evaluate schools. They, however, also have a large number of other tasks in their schools such as management and administrative tasks. This dual task of evaluating and managing their schools leaves them little to no time to conduct external evaluations. It also poses challenges with respect to the objectivity and reliability of external school inspections as *inspecteurs* and *directeurs* would be inspecting their own work to some extent.

Inspecteurs and *directeurs* also have no common framework or set of standards to evaluate schools; one of the *inspecteurs* expressed during the OECD review that differing viewpoints among *inspecteurs* on what constitutes a “good school” have prevented the development of such a framework.

Also, available performance data (such as generated by the standardised tests) are not used to adapt teaching and learning and schools are not held accountable for outcomes on these tests.

The lack of external evaluations poses challenges to the evaluation and assessment system in Luxembourg as 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. There are no formal checks integrated in the system of school evaluation to ensure that schools achieve their objectives and offer high quality. *Inspecteurs*, *directeurs*, and other stakeholders in and outside of the school (teachers, parents) rely mostly on implicit and informal knowledge and intuition of how the school is performing to make decisions. 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 to benefit from expertise and examples that are generated in other schools or elsewhere.

Lack of alignment of the elements in the school evaluation framework

Luxembourg also faces challenges in the lack of alignment of the elements in the evaluation and assessment framework: the evaluation criteria, the collection and analysis of evaluative information and data, and the use of evaluation findings for school improvement are practically not related and do not refer to the same underlying goals and vision of high quality schools and teaching and learning in schools.

A first example of this lack of alignment is the setting of competency-based student learning objectives and related evaluation criteria. The MENFP introduced competency-based student learning objectives for fundamental and secondary schools in 2008. Schools were expected to align their teaching, curriculum and grading of students to these national student learning objectives. They should for example develop more constructivist didactic and teaching approaches and align the content of their teaching to the national student learning objectives. At the start of this reform there were, however, no examples or guidelines to clarify how these competency-based student learning objectives should be implemented. Also, schools are free to choose their own teaching and instruction methods to implement these student learning objectives. In addition, teachers and schools

do not face consequences when failing to implement the competency-based student learning objectives as there is no external evaluation of their implementation and no evaluation of teachers in schools. As a result, school curricula and teaching methods are not aligned to the national competency-based student learning objectives and to the teaching programmes and practices that have been described by the MENFP during their implementation. Not only does this lead to very different criteria and goals to use in internal evaluation of schools, the evaluative information of standardised student achievement results provided by the University of Luxembourg also becomes to a large extent redundant for school improvement as schools are unable to relate the information to their own curriculum and teaching methods.

A second example concerns the lack of alignment of professional development of teachers with the implementation of the school development plan. Teachers are by law required to annually attend eight hours of certified professional development, training and schooling. Teachers may choose for themselves which courses, conferences or training activities they want to attend. They choose a wide variety of activities that mostly match their personal interests. In general there is no deliberation with the president of the school committee, the school *inspecteur* or the *directeur* on which type of training to follow. As a result, professional development of teachers is generally not aligned to the school development plan and the school-level issues identified as weak and in need of improvement.

A lack of incentives, authority and evaluation culture hinder school use of evaluation findings for improvement

A third challenge concerns the wide range of factors hindering the use of evaluation findings for school improvement. 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 needed 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.

Evaluation and assessment systems often include some kind of incentive for schools to use evaluation findings to improve. In other countries, these may include the publication of school report cards including student achievement results in a school, or increased external monitoring by school *inspecteurs* or the equivalent, or the specification of targeted school improvement trajectories and in a minority of cases, financial sanctions for failing schools. Incentives for schools to act on internal evaluation findings are often activated by the school's stakeholders; parents can for example voice their opinions on necessary improvements of certain evaluation findings or they may choose to send their child to another school when the school fails to improve. These incentives are all lacking in Luxembourg. There is no external evaluation mechanism or body to intervene in failing schools or impose sanctions on schools; there is no publication of school report cards with student achievement results as part of a clear policy to avoid the naming and shaming of schools; school choice is regulated by the *carte scolaire* and is limited to specific areas (it is absent in fundamental schools; in secondary education students can only transfer to another school when this school has the capacity to take in extra students). Also, teachers and *directeurs* face no personal incentives to perform well and improve weak aspects of the school as their salaries are unrelated to performance (but follow the seniority-based career path), and they serve on permanent contracts (see Chapter 4). The only exception is newly appointed *directeurs* in secondary education who

serve on fixed-term contracts of seven years. There are, however, no clear criteria to specify when contracts will not be renewed after seven years.

A second limitation to the use of evaluation findings for school improvement is the limited authority of *inspecteurs* and *directeurs* to act on evaluation findings. Even though the law stipulates some autonomy to fundamental schools (*e.g.* with respect to the choice of teaching materials and the school timetable), school autonomy is closely combined with the MENFP's control of financial resources and school organisations. Schools have limited control over the school budget and personnel. Teachers are for example employed by the MENFP and appointed to a school, based on seniority and grades on their examination in initial teacher training. Schools therefore have no means to select teachers that match their vision or match the school's need of teachers in a certain subject. Schools also do not have the authority to replace teachers that do not function well. They also have no means to pressure teachers to improve their functioning as the salaries are paid by the MENFP. Teachers decide themselves on how to use their eight hours of annual certified professional development; *inspecteurs* or *directeurs* have no means to oblige teachers to use these hours to improve their functioning on school-related matters. In addition, decisions regarding resource allocation are taken centrally, not reflecting for example outcome objectives of the school. This limited authority hinders *inspecteurs* and *directeurs* in making decisions to improve the teaching and learning in their school through, for example, redirecting financial and material resources to strengthen certain programmes or initiatives, or to mobilise teachers to work towards the school's shared intentions and goals.

The student achievement results on the national standardised tests (*épreuves standardisées*) have the potential of providing very valuable information to teachers and schools to improve the teaching and learning in schools. *Inspecteurs*, *directeurs* and teachers, however, report a number of difficulties in using these results to improve the teaching and learning in their school. Teachers state that the results of the national standardised achievement tests are not reported in time which makes it difficult to act on the results. A second problem relates to the lack of alignment of the tests to the school curriculum which makes it difficult, for example, to choose the topics that need re-teaching. The results for individual students are not distributed to teachers and this hinders them in targeting their instruction to specific educational needs of students. Also, the feedback reports sent to *inspecteurs* and *directeurs* show the distribution of results for all students on the subjects in the test (instead of for example performance of students in one class or grade), which is too general to decide on specific improvement actions, both on the classroom level and on the level of the school.

Last, the OECD review team found a culture in schools in which statements about the quality and functioning of the school are primarily based on informal exchange of information and observation instead of formal criteria and collection of evaluative information. Teachers and *directeurs* claim to know how well they are doing and how well the school is performing and functioning based on for example informal talks with students, observation of talks between teachers and students, observing work of students and snapshot observation of teaching, and the reputation of the school amongst parents. They strongly oppose the external evaluation of the functioning of schools and teachers as they expect these evaluations to lead to unfair assessment and classifications of schools due to for example the large differences in student populations. During the OECD review, teachers and *directeurs* often expressed a perception of no benefits to external evaluation as these evaluations only have an accountability function that does not contribute to school improvement.

Policy recommendations

On the basis of the analysis of strengths and challenges in this chapter, the OECD review team proposes the following directions for policy development:

- implement an external school evaluation mechanism
- establish reporting requirements to align the school development plan and national objectives
- ensure better use of available information for school improvement
- introduce incentives for school improvement
- build capacity for school self-evaluation

These policy recommendations are presented to create a more structured and elaborate school evaluation framework that takes into account the national and local circumstances in Luxembourg, such as the very centralised steering of internal evaluations in schools, the improvement-oriented function of evaluation, and the lack of an evaluation culture in schools.

Implement an external school evaluation mechanism

As previously described, it is important to include an external perspective in school evaluations and to ensure that the evaluation and assessment in schools is open enough to absorb relevant external influences. The OECD review team, therefore, suggests constructing an external school evaluation mechanism that will on the one hand support and strengthen the internal evaluation and development planning (in both fundamental and secondary schools), and will on the other hand confront schools with a common, external perspective and information on their quality.

External evaluations have the potential to build capacity in schools for school-based self-evaluation and will increase evaluation literacy in schools. Schools may be motivated to engage in internal evaluations if faced with an external evaluation requirement, even when internal evaluation is not suggested as an alternative to external evaluation but only as a prior condition and counterpart. External evaluations may also change the culture in schools towards more formalised and extended processes of evaluating teaching and learning and data analysis (Rudd and Davies, 2000). Schools may become more willing to use methods of evaluation that had not necessarily been used previously. External school evaluations can bring greater depth and breadth to internal evaluations in schools when they for example provide useful observations from their inspection region or supply the school with relevant benchmark information, comparative data from other schools or new and challenging ideas that might help the school to expand its evaluation, interpret its own data and assess its quality.

Introducing external evaluation in Luxembourg implies a clear distinction between management, administration, internal and external evaluations. External evaluators should be appointed who are not involved in management and co-ordination tasks in schools and who have the opportunity to evaluate schools in an objective, structured, valid and reliable manner. These evaluators could be part of the department of SCRIPT of the MENFP or they could be part of an independent new 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. The new external evaluators should develop clear external evaluation criteria and use available national

benchmark data to compare and evaluate schools on these criteria. In addition, external evaluators may also evaluate school internal criteria and goals as described in the school development plan, and/or evaluate the school's capacity to conduct internal evaluations.

Box 5.1 External school inspections in Wales (United Kingdom)

Self-evaluation of schools is obligatory in Wales. Schools are free to use any methods or models they prefer as the basis for self-evaluation as long as these focus on standards, quality of education and leadership and management. In practice, most schools use the Common Inspection Framework¹ as the basis for self-evaluation.

The school principal and governing body of the school are responsible for the school self-evaluation and the school development plan. The local authorities have a duty to promote school improvement and to support schools in this process. Also, the Inspectorate provides guidance on school self-evaluation on the website.

In Wales, schools are inspected as part of a national programme of school inspections on a six-year cycle. A Common Inspection Framework is used. For each key question within the framework, there is a table listing aspects of provision to be evaluated and criteria to help inspectors reach their judgments.

For the new cycle of school inspections, to begin in 2010, a more proportionate inspection, a greater involvement of users in self-evaluation and inspection, and an extension of the involvement of peer assessors in inspection are foreseen. Self-evaluation is inspected as part of the Common Inspection Framework. The Inspectorate assesses the quality of the school's self-evaluation process, the quality of the school's self-evaluation report and the extent to which the findings of the Inspectorate match those of the school. The outcomes of school self-evaluation are used to evaluate management and leadership in the school. The report of the inspectorate provides school management with clear and specific indications of the shortcomings they need to overcome in their post-inspection action plans. Schools with the most severe weaknesses are described as needing special measures. Their progress is monitored each term and they are re-inspected one year after being placed in special measures.

Note: 1) This can be downloaded from the National Inspectorate (ESTYN) website www.estyn.gov.uk/english/inspection/overview/.

Sources: European Commission (2010); van Bruggen (2008).

Establish reporting requirements to align the school development plan and national objectives

Structured and well-aligned quality assurance in schools involves a well-developed connection between evaluation criteria, collection of evaluation data and information and school improvement to address identified weak points. 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.

The OECD review team suggests promoting alignment of the school development plan and national objectives by means of reporting requirements to schools. Schools should be required to add 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 will pressure 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.

Ensure better use of available information for school improvement

The student achievement results on the national standardised tests (*épreuves standardisées*) generate very valuable information for improvement of teaching and learning in schools. The usefulness of this information for school improvement is currently limited as results of individual students are not distributed to teachers, and results of classes and grades are not distributed to *inspecteurs* and *directeurs*. The use of this kind of information for school improvement can be improved through providing a common set of analyses and allowing schools to access the data to investigate the performance of their students in, for example, specific curriculum areas, comparing their classes and their school to schools nationally. Examples of tools to support schools in using this kind of information for school improvement can be found in England where the national inspectorate (the Office for Standards in Education, Ofsted) provides schools with an online tool with access to a dataset of student achievement data (see Box 5.2). Schools can use this information to assist teachers in planning their teaching to cater for the individual needs of students and to target school-level resources to subjects and curriculum areas in which student performance is low.

Box 5.2 Online analytical tool for school improvement in England (United Kingdom)

In England, a subsidiary of the national inspectorate provides an online analysis tool Reporting and Analysis for Improvement through School Self-Evaluation (RAISEonline) for use by schools, local authorities, inspectors and school improvement partners. By providing a common set of analyses, it supports school improvement and the school inspection process. External users cannot automatically access this dataset, although schools can choose to allow them access. RAISEonline includes functions that allow school leaders to produce their own “what if” scenarios and set targets based on these, to investigate student performance in specific curriculum areas, contextual information about schools including comparisons to schools nationally. RAISEonline allows school leaders to focus on areas or student groups where performance is particularly strong as well as on areas for improvement.

For more information see: www.raiseonline.org.

Introduce incentives for school improvement

Currently, schools in Luxembourg face no consequences for failing and no rewards for improvement or high performance. As several studies have shown, incentives are, however, essential components of evaluation systems as they impose stakes on schools to meet certain evaluation criteria and implement necessary improvement actions (e.g. Hanushek and Raymond, 2002; Elmore and Fuhrman, 2001; Nichols *et al.*, 2006). Students, teachers, and schools seem to work harder and more efficiently when something valuable is at stake; information (such as national standardised student achievement data) alone is often not sufficient to motivate schools to change and perform to certain high standards. In particular, high rewards and medium sanctions, targeted at the actors who are responsible for and in charge of necessary improvement actions or performance are expected to be effective (e.g. Hanushek and Raymond, 2001; Elmore and Furhman, 2001).

In Luxembourg, rewards and sanctions related to (the improvement of) teaching and learning of students could be targeted at teachers, while *directeurs* and *inspecteurs* could 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.

Build capacity for school self-evaluation

The OECD review team advises that the MENFP give strong consideration to building school evaluation capacity by: introducing job requirements on evaluation expertise for *inspecteurs* and *directeurs*; making sure they have the time to evaluate their schools; and establishing the necessary protocols, guidelines and frameworks for the (internal) evaluation of schools. Further, the MENFP, as the direct hierarchical supervisor of *inspecteurs* and *directeurs*, would need to pay sufficient attention to the way these professionals undertake their (internal) evaluation tasks as part of their performance appraisal. Although a decentralised system, Ontario presents an example for consideration of the development of profiles and job requirements in Luxembourg. The “Leadership Framework” is research based and was collaboratively produced with school leader professional organisations (see Box 5.3).

Box 5.3 The leadership framework in Ontario, Canada

The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) in Ontario, Canada, represents a partnership between the Ministry of Education, school leaders and school districts in order to “model high-calibre, tri-level, results-based strategic leadership to support school and system leaders in order to improve student outcomes”. IEL developed a research-based “Leadership Framework” comprising practices and competencies for school principals and district supervisory officers in five major areas: setting directions; building relationships and developing people; developing the organisation; leading the instructional program; and securing accountability.

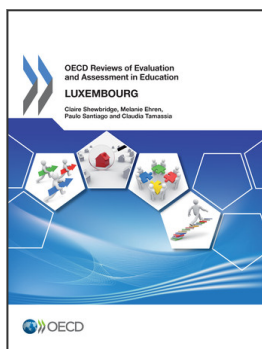
As an example, “Leading the instructional program” includes (not exhaustively) for both school principals and school district supervisory officers:

- **Practices:** ensures a consistent and continuous school/district-wide focus on student achievement, using system and school data to monitor progress; ensures that learning is at the centre of planning and resource management; develops professional learning communities to support school improvement; provides resources in support of curriculum instruction and differentiated instruction;
- **Skills:** demonstrate the principles and practice of effective teaching and learning; access, analyse and interpret data; initiate and support an inquiry-based approach to improvement in teaching and learning;
- **Knowledge:** strategies for improving achievement; effective pedagogy and assessment; use of new and emerging technologies to support teaching and learning; school self-evaluation; strategies for developing effective teachers and leaders;
- **Attitudes:** commitment to raising standards for all students and sustaining a safe, secure and healthy school environment.

Source: www.education-leadership-ontario.ca/content/framework.

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