Overview

The growing focus on evaluation and assessment

There is widespread recognition that evaluation and assessment arrangements are key to both improvement and accountability in school systems. This is reflected in their increasing importance in national education agendas. As countries strive to transform their educational systems to prepare all young people with the knowledge and skills needed to function in rapidly changing societies, some common policy trends can be observed in one form or another in most OECD countries, including decentralisation, school autonomy, greater accountability for outcomes and a greater knowledge management capacity. Decentralisation and school autonomy are creating a greater need for the evaluation of schools, school leaders and teachers while greater IT capacity allows for the development and analysis of large-scale student assessments as well as individualised assessment approaches. Results from evaluation and assessment are becoming critical to knowing whether the school system is delivering good performance and to providing feedback for further development. Evaluation and assessment are instrumental in defining strategies for improving practices within school systems with the ultimate goal of enhancing student outcomes. These developments are having a strong influence in the way in which policy makers monitor system, school, school leader, teacher and student performance.

Countries increasingly use a range of approaches for the evaluation and assessment of students, teachers, school leaders, schools and education systems. These are used as tools for understanding better how well students are learning, for providing information to parents and society at large about educational performance and for improving school, school leadership and teaching practices. Strong emphasis is being placed on better equipping and encouraging teachers to carry out self-appraisal and student formative assessment, on providing the incentives and means for school self-evaluation, on encouraging "value-added" evaluation and on more regular standardised testing of students and national monitoring of the overall system. However, countries often face difficulties in implementing evaluation and assessment procedures. These may arise as a result of poor policy design, lack of analysis of unintended consequences, little capacity for educational agents to put procedures into practice, lack of an evaluation culture, or deficient use of evaluation results.

This report is concerned with evaluation and assessment policies in school systems that can help countries achieve their educational goals and student learning objectives. It draws on a major study, the OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes.

Main trends within evaluation and assessment

Although not all countries are in the same position, a number of trends within evaluation and assessment emerge.

Educational evaluation in school systems is expanding

It is apparent that education policy is increasingly conferring a central strategic role to evaluation and assessment as indispensable tools for improvement, accountability, educational planning and policy development. In the last two decades, most countries have introduced a wide range of measures intended to improve evaluation and assessment at all levels from the student to the school system itself. The expansion of educational evaluation results from increased demands for effectiveness, equity and quality in education so new economic and social needs are met. The greater importance of evaluation and assessment in education policy has involved the creation of specifically dedicated agencies which assume a central role in the governance of the evaluation and assessment framework. This recognises the need for specialised expertise, the imperative of building adequate capacity to deliver evaluation and assessment policies and the necessity of introducing some independence *vis-à-vis* education authorities.

There is a greater variety of evaluation and assessment activities

The expansion of educational evaluation has been accompanied by considerable diversification of evaluation and assessment activities. Although educational evaluation within school systems is not a recent concern, it has traditionally focussed mostly on the assessment of students. In recent years, countries are increasingly developing more comprehensive evaluation and assessment frameworks. These involve more responsibility given to the school itself, through greater emphasis on school self-evaluation; greater importance of external school evaluation as accountability requirements increase; more emphasis on school leadership and its appraisal as the pedagogical role of school leaders is consolidated; the emergence of formal systems of teacher appraisal; the expansion of student standardised assessment to monitor learning outcomes; the growing importance of performance data, particularly relating to student outcomes, to inform school and classroom practices as well as system-level policies; and the growing emphasis on the use of data for formative assessment.

Educational measurement and indicators development are rising in importance

The introduction of national standardised assessments for students in a large number of countries reflects the stronger focus on measuring student outcomes. These make data on student learning outcomes available, providing a picture of the extent to which student learning objectives are being achieved, and they grant the opportunity to compare student learning outcomes across individual schools, regions of the country and over time. Also, for the purpose of monitoring education systems and evaluating school performance, data are increasingly complemented by a wide range of education indicators based on demographic, administrative and contextual data collected from individual schools. Most countries have developed comprehensive national indicator frameworks. It is now common practice to report statistics and indicators in education in an annual publication. International benchmarking is also increasingly common.

Larger and more varied uses are given to evaluation and assessment results

Countries are giving a more varied use to evaluation and assessment results. There is a growing interest in using evaluation results for formative purposes. School leaders, teachers and policy makers are more and more using evaluation results to identify areas where schools are performing well, and where they may need to improve. These data may help shape policy and/or school management decisions on resource distribution,

curriculum development and definition of standards, or strategies for professional development. Another increasingly marked focus is the use of evaluation and assessment results to hold policy makers, school leaders and teachers accountable.

Accountability as a purpose of evaluation and assessment is gaining in importance

Countries are increasingly using evaluation and assessment for accountability purposes. This can take a variety of forms. First, there is a growing trend of public reporting, including the publication of standardised student assessment results at the school level for use by parents, government officials, the media and other stakeholders, the publication of school inspection reports, school annual reports, and system level reports providing an assessment of the state of education. Second, evaluation and assessment results are increasingly used to reward or sanction the performance of individual school agents. This goes alongside the expansion of school external evaluation and teacher appraisal procedures. A number of countries have instituted systems whereby either schools, school leaders or teachers receive rewards for their good performance or are the subject of sanctions for underperformance.

There is greater reliance on educational standards

The focus on student learning outcomes has, in many countries, driven the establishment or underlined the importance of educational standards for the quality of the work of schools and school agents, and encouraged means for monitoring progress towards those standards. Educational standards refer to descriptions of what students should know (content standards) and be able to do (performance standards) at different stages of the learning process. In many countries, there is growing emphasis on the development and use of ambitious educational standards as the basis of assessment and accountability. By creating a set of standards against which student performance can be measured, countries aim to assess students against a desired measurable outcome.

Assessment is becoming more international

National education debates are increasingly shaped by international comparisons, particularly of student performance in international student surveys. The growing availability of internationally comparable data on student performance has, in important ways, influenced national discussions about education and fostered education policy reforms in countries. International comparative data put countries under pressure to attain higher levels of performance building on policies identified as potentially effective in high-performing countries. The expansion of international assessment has also significantly contributed for some countries to introduce national standardised assessments.

Assessment involves greater technological sophistication

The expansion of assessment, particularly the spreading out of standardised student assessment, as well as the management of the data it generates has greatly benefited from greater capacity of information and communication technologies. Improvements include more individualised assessment approaches, better assessment of cognitive skills such as problem solving, capacity for rapidly marking large-scale assessments, reliability in marking and reduced cost to administer student assessment. Other examples include the development of rapid-assessment – a computer-facilitated approach to frequent, brief

formative student assessment, more sophisticated value-added models to determine a school's or a teacher's contribution to student learning, and data information systems providing new opportunities for information sharing across school agents.

Main policy challenges

In all countries, there is widespread recognition that evaluation and assessment frameworks are key to building stronger and fairer school systems. Countries also emphasise the importance of seeing evaluation and assessment not as ends in themselves, but instead as important tools for achieving improved student outcomes. However, there are a range of challenges in ensuring that evaluation and assessment reach such ultimate objective. Although each country context is unique, some common policy challenges emerge. These are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Main challenges in evaluation and assessment

Domain	Main challenges
The evaluation and assessment framework	Building a coherent and integrated evaluation and assessment framework Balancing the accountability and development functions of evaluation and assessment Ensuring articulations within the evaluation and assessment framework Securing links with classroom practice Finding a desirable measure of national consistency as against local diversity Developing competencies for evaluation and assessment and for using feedback Overcoming the challenge of implementation
Student assessment	Aligning educational standards and student assessment Finding a balance between summative and formative assessment Balancing external assessments and teacher-based assessments in the assessment of learning Developing fair assessments to all student groups Designing large-scale assessments that are instructionally useful Ensuring fairness in assessment and marking across schools Securing informative reporting of student assessment results
Teacher appraisal	Developing a shared understanding of high-quality teaching Balancing the developmental and accountability functions of teacher appraisal Accounting for student results in the appraisal of teachers Developing adequate skills for teacher appraisal Using teacher appraisal results to shape incentives for teachers
School evaluation	Aligning the external evaluation of schools with school self-evaluation Ensuring the centrality of the quality of teaching and learning Balancing information to parents with fair and reasonable public reporting on schools Building competence in the techniques of self-evaluation and external school evaluation Improving the data handling skills of school agents
The appraisal of school leaders	Developing school leadership appraisal as an integral part of the evaluation and assessment framework Developing a clear understanding of effective school leadership Placing pedagogical/learning-centred leadership at the heart of school leadership appraisal Combining the improvement and accountability functions of school leadership appraisal Ensuring that all school leaders have opportunities for professional feedback Using appraisal results to shape incentives for school leaders
Education system evaluation	Meeting information needs at the system level Monitoring key student learning outcomes Securing comparability over time and across schools Developing analytical capacity to use education system evaluation results for improvement Communicating education system evaluation results clearly and comprehensively Maximising use of system-level information

Main policy directions

To meet the challenges outlined above, a number of policy options are suggested across the areas analysed – the evaluation and assessment framework, student assessment, teacher appraisal, school evaluation, school leader appraisal and education system evaluation. Table 2 summarises the main policy directions (see Annex B for a complete list of policy directions). Not all of the policy directions apply equally to all countries. In a number of cases many, or most, of the policy suggestions are already in place, while for other countries they may have less relevance because of different social, economic and educational structures and traditions. This is a challenging agenda, but tackling one area without appropriate policy attention to inter-related aspects will lead to only partial results. Nevertheless, it is difficult to address all areas simultaneously, and resource constraints mean that trade-offs are inevitable.

Table 2. Main policy directions

Policy objective	Main policy directions
The evaluation and assessment framework **Embracing a holistic approach**	Integrate the evaluation and assessment framework Align the evaluation and assessment framework with educational goals and student learning objectives Secure links to the classroom and draw on teacher professionalism Promote national consistency while giving room for local diversity Establish articulations between components of the evaluation and assessment framework Place the students at the centre of the evaluation and assessment framework Sustain efforts to improve capacity for evaluation and assessment Engage stakeholders and practitioners in the design and implementation of evaluation and assessment policies
Student assessment **Putting the learner at the centre**	Ensure a good balance between formative and summative assessment Establish safeguards against an overreliance on standardised assessments Draw on a variety of assessment types to obtain a rounded picture of student learning Support effective formative assessment processes Ensure the consistency of assessment and marking across schools Ensure that student assessment is inclusive and responsive to different learner needs Put the learner at the centre and build students' capacity to engage in their own assessment Maintain the centrality of teacher-based assessment and promote teacher professionalism Engage parents in education through adequate reporting and communication
Teacher appraisal **Enhancing teacher professionalism**	Resolve tensions between the developmental and accountability functions of teacher appraisal Consolidate regular developmental appraisal at the school level Establish periodic career-progression appraisal involving external evaluators Establish teaching standards to guide teacher appraisal and professional development Prepare teachers for appraisal processes and strengthen the capacity of school leaders for teacher appraisal Ensure that teacher appraisal feeds into professional development and school development Establish links between teacher appraisal and career advancement decisions
School evaluation **From compliancy to quality**	Ensure the focus for school evaluation is the improvement of teaching, learning and student outcomes Evaluate and adapt external school evaluation to reflect the maturity of the school evaluation culture Raise the profile of school self-evaluation and align external school evaluation with school self-evaluation Develop nationally agreed criteria for school quality to guide school evaluation Strengthen school principals' capacity to stimulate an effective school self-evaluation culture Promote the engagement of all school staff and students in school self-evaluation Promote the wider use of the results of external school evaluation Report a broad set of school performance measures with adequate contextual information

Table 2. Main policy directions (*continued*)

Policy objective	Main policy directions
The appraisal of school leaders **Fostering pedagogical leadership in schools**	Promote the effective appraisal of school leaders within the broader assessment and evaluation framework Develop a common leadership framework or set of professional standards for school leaders Promote the appraisal of pedagogical leadership together with scope for local adaptation Build capacity for effective school leader appraisal Ensure school leader appraisal informs professional development Consider career advancement opportunities to reward successful school leaders
Education system evaluation **Informing policies for system improvement**	Ensure a broad concept of education system evaluation within the evaluation and assessment framework Ensure policy making is informed by high-quality measures, but not driven by their availability Develop a national education indicator framework and design a strategy to monitor student learning standards Ensure the collection of qualitative information on the education system Ensure collection of adequate contextual information to effectively monitor equity Establish and secure capacity for education system evaluation Strengthen analysis of education system evaluation results for planning and policy development

Common policy themes

Despite the major differences and traditions across countries, they share some common policy priorities.

Fostering synergies within the evaluation and assessment framework

The full potential of evaluation and assessment will not be realised until the framework is fully integrated and is perceived as a coherent whole. This requires a holistic approach to building a complete evaluation and assessment framework in view of generating synergies between its components, avoiding duplication of procedures and preventing inconsistency of objectives.

At the outset, it might prove useful to develop a strategy or framework document that conceptualises a complete evaluation and assessment framework and articulates ways to achieve the coherence between its different components. The strategy should establish a clear rationale for evaluation and assessment and a compelling narrative about how evaluation and assessment align with the different elements in the education reform programme. It should describe how each component of the evaluation and assessment framework can produce results that are useful for classroom practice and school development activities. The strategy could also contribute to clarifying responsibilities of different actors for the different components and allow for better networking and connections between the people working on evaluation and assessment activities. As such, it should also create the conditions for a better articulation between the different levels of educational governance, including evaluation agencies and local education authorities.

Furthermore, the process of developing an effective evaluation and assessment framework should give due attention to: achieving proper articulation between the different evaluation components (e.g. school evaluation and teacher appraisal); warranting the several elements within an evaluation component are sufficiently linked (e.g. teaching standards and teacher appraisal; external school evaluation and school self-evaluation); and ensuring processes are in place to guarantee the consistent application of

evaluation and assessment procedures (e.g. consistency of teachers' marks). This is in addition to proper links to initial teacher education and strategies for professional development; situating education system evaluation in the broader context of public sector performance requirements; and ensuring references for evaluation and assessment are well aligned with student learning objectives.

Aligning student learning goals with evaluation and assessment

A critical aspect in the effectiveness of the evaluation and assessment framework is its proper alignment with educational goals and student learning objectives. This involves a range of aspects. First, it requires evaluation and assessment procedures to align with the main principles embedded in educational goals and student learning objectives. For instance, if educational goals are based on principles such as student-centred learning, collaborative work, achievement of competencies and assessment for learning then there should be greater emphasis on the developmental function of evaluation and assessment, involving more attention to student formative assessment, greater emphasis on self-reflection for all the school agents, greater focus on continuous improvement in teacher appraisal, and better use of results for feedback.

Second, evaluation and assessment procedures require direct alignment with student learning objectives. This implies designing fit-for-purpose student assessments which focus on the competencies promoted in student learning objectives, ensuring the overall evaluation and assessment framework captures the whole range of student learning objectives, and developing teaching and school management standards which are aligned with student learning objectives. Third, it is essential that all school agents have a clear understanding of education goals. This requires goals to be clearly articulated; the development of clear learning expectations and criteria to assess achievement of learning objectives; room for schools to exercise some autonomy in adapting learning objectives to their local needs; and collaboration among teachers and schools to ensure moderation processes which enhance the consistency with which learning goals are achieved. Fourth, it is essential to evaluate the impact of evaluation and assessment against student learning objectives on the quality of the teaching and learning. Particular attention should be given to identifying unintended effects as evaluation and assessment activities have considerable potential to determine the behaviour of school agents.

Focussing on the improvement of classroom practices and building on teacher professionalism

To optimise the potential of evaluation and assessment to improve what is at the heart of education – student learning – policy makers should promote the regular use of evaluation and assessment results for improvements in the classroom. All types of evaluation and assessment should have educational value, and be meaningful to those who participate in the evaluation or assessment. To this end, it is important that all those involved in evaluation and assessment at the central, local and school level have a broad vision of evaluation and assessment and of the need to bring together results from different types of evaluation and assessment activities to form rounded judgements about student learning, performance of school agents and practices within the school system and use evaluation and assessment information for further improvement.

This calls for an articulation of ways for the evaluation and assessment framework to generate improvements in classroom practice through the assessment and evaluation procedures which are closer to the place of learning. Evaluation and assessment have no

value if they do not lead to the improvement of classroom practice and student learning. An important step in this direction is a national reflection about the nature and purpose of evaluation components such as school evaluation, school leader appraisal, teacher appraisal and student formative assessment within the overall education reform strategy and the best approaches for these evaluation components to improve classroom practices. Impacting classroom practice is likely to require the evaluation and assessment framework to place considerable emphasis on its developmental function. Channels which are likely to reinforce links to classroom practice include: an emphasis on teacher appraisal for the continuous improvement of teaching practices; ensuring teaching standards are aligned with student learning objectives; involving teachers in school evaluation, in particular through conceiving school self-evaluation as a collective process with responsibilities for teachers; focussing school evaluation on the quality of teaching and learning and their relationship to student learning experiences and outcomes; promoting the appraisal of the pedagogical leadership of school leaders; ensuring that teachers are seen as the main experts not only in instructing but also in assessing their students, so teachers feel the ownership of student assessment and accept it as an integral part of teaching and learning; building teacher capacity for student formative assessment; and building teachers' ability to assess against educational standards.

The central agent in securing links between the evaluation and assessment framework and the classroom is the teacher. This highlights the importance for evaluation and assessment frameworks to draw on the professionalism of teachers in ensuring evaluation and assessment activities result in authentic improvement of classroom practices and student learning. In addition, establishing links between evaluation and assessment and classroom learning requires establishing clear roles for local structures – school management, school supervision, local education authorities – in the implementation of evaluation and assessment policies. The point is that the fulfilment of the developmental function of evaluation and assessment requires articulation at the local level.

Effectively conceiving the accountability uses of evaluation and assessment results

Evaluation and assessment provide a basis for monitoring how effectively education is being delivered to students and for assessing the performance of systems, schools, school leaders, teachers and students, among others. They can serve as an instrument for the accountability of school agents when the results of an evaluation or assessment have stakes for school agents such as linkages to career advancement or salary progression, one-off rewards, sanctions, or simply information to parents in systems based on parental school choice. By measuring student outcomes and holding teachers, school leaders and schools responsible for results, accountability systems intend to create incentives for improved performance and identify "underperforming" schools and school agents.

At the same time, high-stakes uses of evaluation and assessment results might lead to distortions in the education process as a result of school agents concentrating on the measures used to hold them accountable. For instance, if those measures are based on student standardised tests, this might include excessive focus on teaching students the specific skills that are tested, narrowing the curriculum, training students to answer specific types of questions, adopting rote-learning styles of instruction, allocating more resources to those subjects that are tested, focussing more on students near the proficiency cut score and potentially even manipulation of results. Also, when the framework tends to stress the accountability function there is a risk that evaluation and assessment are perceived mostly as instruments to hold school agents accountable, to

"control" and assess compliance with regulations. An additional challenge is that the developmental function of evaluation and assessment might be hindered in processes which stress the accountability function as the high stakes involved will limit the ability of school agents to openly reveal their weaknesses in view of receiving feedback to improve their practices.

As a result, it is important to design the accountability uses of evaluation and assessment results in such a way these undesired effects are minimised. This involves safeguards against excessive emphasis on particular measures, such as student standardised tests, to hold school agents accountable and drawing on a broad range of assessment information to make judgements about performance; communicating that the ultimate objective of evaluation and assessment is to enhance student outcomes through the improvement of practices at the different levels of the school system; building on a variety of evaluation and assessment procedures achieving each a well-identified distinct function; ensuring that the publication of quantitative data is perceived as fair by schools and set in a wider set of evidence; and conceiving individual performance-based rewards for school personnel as career advancement opportunities and non-monetary rewards.

Placing the student at the centre

Given that the fundamental purpose of evaluation and assessment is to improve the learning of the students, a key principle is to place the students at the centre of the framework. This translates into teaching, learning and assessment approaches which focus on students' authentic learning. Students should be fully engaged with their learning, contributing to the planning and organisation of lessons, having learning expectations communicated to them, assessing their learning and that of their peers, and benefitting from individualised support and differentiated learning. To become lifelong learners, students need to be able to assess their own progress, make adjustments to their understandings and take control of their own learning. Student feedback to teachers can also be used for teacher formative appraisal. In addition, it is important to build community and parental involvement and an acceptance of learning and teaching as a shared responsibility. A particularly important priority for some countries is to reduce the high rates of grade repetition. There are alternative ways of supporting those with learning difficulties in the classroom.

In addition, evaluation and assessment should focus on improving student outcomes and achieving student learning objectives. This should be reflected in the priorities for national monitoring, the importance of evidence on student performance for school evaluation and teacher appraisal, the value of clear reporting on student results, and the emphasis on feedback for improving student learning strategies. There is also the increasing recognition that the monitoring of student outcomes must extend beyond knowledge skills in key subject areas and include broader learning outcomes, including students' critical thinking skills, social competencies, engagement with learning and overall well-being.

Going beyond measurement in educational evaluation

As described earlier, measures of student learning are becoming increasingly available (in particular through national standardised assessments) and most countries have developed education indicator frameworks. Performance in schools is increasingly judged on the basis of effective student learning outcomes. This is part of the general shift

to outcome measures in the public sector. The advantage is that student outcomes become the focal point for analysis.

An imperative is that measures of performance are broad enough to capture the whole range of student learning objectives. However, it is not always possible to devise indicators and measures of good quality across all the objectives of the education system. Hence, it needs to be recognised that policy making at the system level needs to be informed by high-quality data and evidence, but not driven by the availability of such information. Qualitative studies as well as secondary analysis of the available measures and indicators are essential information to take into account in policy development and implementation. Qualitative approaches include the narrative provided by external school evaluation reports, key stakeholder feedback on broader outcomes (e.g. school climate, student engagement), and qualitative appraisal of teachers and school leaders. The qualitative aspects can feed into the policy debate by providing evidence on a broader set of student learning outcomes, as well as help shed light on some of the factors associated with student learning outcomes.

Building capacity for evaluation and assessment

The development of an effective evaluation and assessment framework involves considerable investment in developing competencies and skills for evaluation and assessment at all levels. Hence, an area of policy priority is sustaining efforts to improve the capacity for evaluation and assessment. Depending on country specific circumstances, areas of priority might be: developing teachers' capacity to assess against student learning objectives; improving the skills of teachers for formative assessment; improving the data handling skills of school agents; or developing expertise for teacher appraisal and school evaluation, including ensuring that designated evaluators are qualified for their role. Capacity building through adequate provision of initial teacher education and professional development should be a priority making sure provision is well aligned with the national education agenda. This should go alongside the development of training and competency descriptions for key people within the evaluation and assessment framework.

There is also a need to reinforce the pedagogical leadership skills of school directors as their role in many countries still retains a more traditional focus on administrative tasks. The objective is that school leaders operate effective feedback, coaching and appraisal arrangements for their staff and effectively lead whole-school evaluation processes. Peer learning among schools should also be promoted. In addition, there needs to be strong capability at the national level to steer evaluation and assessment. This can be ensured through the establishment of agencies with high levels of expertise which have the capacity to foster the development of skills for evaluation and assessment across the system. Such agencies could provide important leadership in modelling and disseminating good practice within the evaluation and assessment framework.

A further strategy involves initiatives at the central level to build up a knowledge base, tools and guidelines to assist evaluation and assessment activities. These typically include detailed plans to implement student learning objectives, including guidelines for schools and teachers to develop student assessment criteria. Other examples are tools for teachers to use in the assessment of their students (e.g. test items banks), Internet platforms proposing formative teaching and learning strategies, tools for the self-appraisal of teachers, instruments for school leaders to undertake teacher appraisal, and resources for school self-evaluation.

Designing evaluation and assessment procedures which are fit for purpose

Establishing clarity about the purposes and appropriate uses of different evaluations and assessments is important to ensure that evaluation and assessment frameworks optimally contribute to improvements at the classroom, school and system level. A key goal for countries is to develop, for each component of the evaluation and assessment framework, a clear vision and strategy where different approaches developed nationally and locally each serve a clearly defined purpose and the format of the evaluation or assessment is aligned to that particular purpose. For evaluation or assessment to be meaningful, it must be well-aligned to the type of skills and competencies that are valued. Coherent evaluation and assessment frameworks should aim to align student learning objectives, practices in the school system, and evaluation and assessment around key learning goals, and include a range of different evaluation and assessment approaches and formats, along with opportunities for capacity building at all levels.

More specifically, because standardised central student assessment is a relatively new phenomenon in many OECD countries, it is important to be clear about its purposes, to develop large-scale assessments over time to be able to accommodate the purposes that are reasonable, point out inappropriate uses and provide guidance for the way in which these assessments can be used as part of a broader assessment framework. Also, to build a systematic and coherent system of teacher appraisal, it is important that the aspects it seeks to monitor and improve are clear, that the approaches to appraisal are adapted to the different stages of a teachers' career and in line with the purposes they are aiming to achieve. Similarly, the fundamental purpose of school evaluation needs to be clearly and consistently understood across the school system. For instance, external school evaluation can be part of the strategy to bring about general improvement across all schools or, more narrowly, it can focus on "underperforming schools".

Evaluation and assessment systems also need to underline the importance of responding to individual needs and school community contexts, and design evaluation and assessment strategies that suit the needs of different learner groups or distinct schools agents.

Balancing national consistency with meeting local needs

In order to contribute to national reform agendas, a certain degree of national consistency of approaches to evaluation and assessment is desirable. This is likely to provide greater guarantees that evaluation and assessment practices are aligned with national student learning objectives. However, in certain countries, there are strong traditions of local ownership – at the jurisdiction level (federal systems), local level (region or municipality), or school level. In these cases, a high degree of autonomy is granted in school policies, curriculum development and evaluation and assessment. There is an understanding that shared or autonomous decision making and buy-in from those concerned are essential for the successful implementation of evaluation and assessment policy. It is also clear that local actors are in a better position to adapt evaluation and assessment policies to local needs.

Hence, the evaluation and assessment framework will need to find the right balance between national consistency and local diversity. A possible approach is to agree general principles for the operation of procedures such as school evaluation, teacher appraisal, school leader appraisal and student assessment while allowing flexibility of approach within the agreed parameters to better meet local needs. The principles agreed should come along with clear goals, a range of tools and guidelines for implementation. In

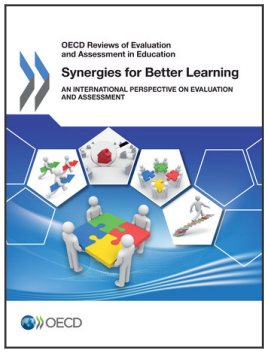
decentralised systems, it is also important to encourage the different actors to co-operate, share and spread good practice and thereby facilitate system learning, development and improvement.

Implementing evaluation and assessment policy successfully

The process of evaluation and assessment policy design and implementation involves a number of challenges to yield sound results. Ideally, evaluation and assessment policy would need to be based upon informed policy diagnosis, drawn on best practice, backed up by adequate research evidence, and consistent – both intrinsically and with other education policies. Of equal importance is consensus-building among the various stakeholders involved – or with an interest – in educational evaluation. This should go alongside the involvement of practitioners such as school leaders and teachers in the design, management and analysis of evaluation and assessment policies.

In order to build consensus, it is important that all stakeholders see proposed evaluation and assessment policies within the broader policy framework and strategy. Indeed, individuals and groups are more likely to accept changes that are not necessarily in their own best interests if they understand the rationale for these changes and can see the role they should play within the broad evaluation and assessment framework. There is therefore much scope for government authorities to foster the chances of successful policy implementation, by improving communication on the long-term vision of what is to be accomplished for evaluation and assessment as the rationale for proposed reform packages.

Other approaches for successful policy implementation include the use of pilots and policy experimentation when needed, opportunities for education practitioners to express their views and concerns as evaluation and assessment policies are implemented, the communication of key evaluation and assessment results to stakeholders, developing expertise and capacity for evaluation and assessment across the system, reducing excessive bureaucratic demands on schools, and ensuring sufficient resources are provided for implementation.



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