



Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
Conseil des ministres de l'Éducation (Canada)

DELEGATION REPORT

OECD Education Chief Executives

Copenhagen, Denmark — September 22–23, 2005

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1. At its April 2005 meeting, the Education Committee agreed to convene a meeting of education chief executives on September 22 and 23, 2005, in Copenhagen, Denmark.
2. The meeting focused on the emerging policy concerns of country authorities and offered the opportunity for exchange among senior national education policy makers. The discussion will aid the OECD Directorate for Education in the development of its work programs over the next three to five years, and, more specifically, for the 2005–08 biennial.
3. The chair of the meeting, Niels Preisler, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Denmark, will prepare a summary of the meeting (chair's report), a copy of which can be obtained from the CMEC Secretariat when it is available. All documents prepared for the meeting can also be obtained from the CMEC Secretariat on request. The following documents are available:
 - Emerging Education Policy Issues in OECD Countries, EDU(2005)7 and addendum (country input), EDU(2005)7/ADD1
 - Strategic Objectives, Key Issues and Policy Lines, EDU(2005)8
 - Progress and Output Results of the Programme of Work of the Directorate for Education, 2002 to 2006, EDU(2005)9
4. In attendance were representatives from 31 OECD member countries, the European Commission, four observer countries, and the Council of Europe. The meeting was opened by Bertel Haarder, the Danish Minister of Education and Ecclesiastical Education.
5. Based upon input received from Canada and 24 other OECD countries, the OECD Secretariat identified what it judged to be the most important issues. These were organized according to three broad topics around which the discussion was focused:
 - Quality, equity, and efficiency
 - Tertiary learning and the employment challenge
 - Challenges of globalization
6. As can be expected (and this was evident during the discussions), numerous issues were raised. It was noted in the documentation prepared by the OECD Secretariat from the input received from participating countries that many of the policy issues identified were not new. Some, however, were and are worth noting, for instance:
 - Extending the traditional role of higher education to the new needs of the economy and society (Czech Republic)
 - Shortening and focusing the route of young people in the education system through encouragement and implementation of new incentives (Denmark)
 - Lowering the average graduation age to secure an earlier entry in the world of work (Denmark)
 - Developing a curriculum to reach a more efficient school-to-work transition (Belgium — Flemish)
 - Making initial education more intensive to hasten school-to-work transition and increase the employment rate (Finland)

- Providing at least upper secondary education to nearly the entire age group (Finland, Switzerland)
 - Understanding the dynamics of change within the educational systems (New Zealand)
 - Increasing the diversity of providers, drawing in more private, public, and voluntary agencies (United Kingdom)
 - Closing the skills gap with the main OECD partners (United Kingdom)
7. Education chief executives held a first meeting in February 2003. An outcome of those discussions led to the development of an education work program based upon six strategic objectives:
- a) Promoting lifelong learning and improving its linkages with society and the economy
 - b) Evaluating and improving outcomes of education
 - c) Promoting quality teaching
 - d) Rethinking tertiary education in a global economy
 - e) Building social cohesion through education
 - f) Building new futures for education
8. As part of the documentation for the Copenhagen meeting, the OECD Secretariat outlined the main issues that have been addressed under each of the six strategic issues since the creation of the Directorate for Education and identified “policy lines” that can be derived from the various analyses, studies, and reviews [EDU(2005)8]. Most delegates found the exercise to be useful, although some felt the list of policy lines was too large and not always supported by clear evidence (UK), and that it would be useful for focusing discussion but not for developing recommendations for action (Ireland).
9. A recurring issue during this initial part of the discussion was the need for a better connection between policy and other social and economic policy sectors (USA, Australia, Ireland).
10. The head of the Canadian delegation noted the importance of education and economic development and made reference to the planned meeting of Canadian provincial/territorial ministers responsible for postsecondary education, finance, and labour market on October 6 as an example of intersectoral cooperation and planning in Canada.
11. In the discussions led by Spain pertaining to quality, equity, and efficiency, repeated references were made to the following:
- The positive impact of PISA in initiating change and broadening the debate on quality and equity
 - The significance of immigrant and migrant issues
 - The importance of a well-trained teaching force
 - The need to personalize the education process in order to engage the learner and create an appetite for learning
 - The challenge of teacher relations (labour issues and professional issues)
 - Indigenous education

12. Australia indicated its willingness to host a meeting on indigenous education and invited countries with similar interests (Canada, Mexico, USA, New Zealand, Chile) to become part of the discussion. This proposal by Australia would fit well with current CMEC priorities and provide an opportunity to add an international dimension to CMEC'S Action Plan on Aboriginal Education.
13. The head of the Canadian delegation led off the discussion on lifelong learning and employment. She drew examples from the work of CMEC (literacy and the significant social and economic benefits associated with strong educational training programs) and the learning needs of Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, and immigrants (making reference to Australia, Ireland, Israel, and Korea).
14. She spoke as well about the learning needs of workers as well as those of the unemployed and the under-employed, citing examples of policy concerns in Australia, Denmark, and Germany.
15. In demonstrating the need for cooperation between education and the labour market, Ms. Bard provided the Canadian example of the Forum of Labour Market Ministers and outlined the six priority areas that constitute a draft Canadian Labour Market Framework Agreement:
 - Literacy and essential skills
 - Apprenticeship
 - Workplace-based training
 - Under-represented groups
 - Immigration
 - Aboriginal labour market developmentShe noted that several countries share these same priorities — Mexico, Estonia, United Kingdom, and Hungary among others.
16. In a direct reference to the earlier discussion, she emphasized that Canadian education authorities share the preoccupation with the development of a learning culture for all our citizens and the importance of developing meaningful career partnerships linking education and training to the world of work.
17. As with the first discussion topic, a wide and varied range of issues was identified, among which the challenge of ensuring that employed adults have the opportunity to further their education and training to meet future employment needs.
18. While there was a marked difference in the emphasis each country placed on the range of policy issues identified, it was clear that vocational and technical training was receiving a great deal of attention in member countries. There were several calls for OECD to do more in organizing opportunities for members to share experiences and innovative practices with one another in their field.

19. Japan introduced the discussion topic on globalization and noted the impact of migrants on the education systems in the receiving country and the related challenge of ensuring that our education systems are inclusive. He suggested that our focus on multicultural education was critical for social coherence and prosperity in this era of globalization.
20. The head of the Canadian delegation proposed that OECD could play a fundamental role in providing a clearing-house function on innovative practices dealing with mobility and socialization issues of new arrivals.
21. One delegate suggested that for some countries interest was veering away from foreign student recruitment to new delivery systems.
22. The discussion was concluded by the Director, Directorate for Education, reminding participants that a summary of the meeting will be prepared and circulated to all participants. Once finalized, the report will be submitted to the governing bodies of the various components of OECD's work on education for use as they develop their program of work.
23. Observations/reflections of the Canadian delegation follow:
 - The Danish hosts were personable and generous in the arrangements made for the meeting.
 - Canvassing country education authorities on emerging policy issues was a good exercise, and the documentation prepared by the OECD Secretariat is excellent reference material.
 - The scope and variety of issues identified were far too diverse for a meaningful discussion in the time provided.
 - The time for discussion was far too short, leading one to question the logic of bringing senior executives together from great distances (in some cases) for such a restricted period of time.
 - There was less real dialogue and more delivery of set texts.
 - More attention in planning is required to ensure several orchestrated opportunities for chief executives to interact socially.
 - The CMEC priority agenda matches very closely the interests of a majority of OECD countries and will offer opportunities for Canadian authorities to add to and learn from OECD work in these areas.