European Education Area Strategic Framework

Working Group on Schools, Sub-group on Pathways to School Success

Input paper: Lessons from past Working Groups

European Commission

Lessons from past Working Groups

Input paper for the Working Group Schools, 2021-25, strand
Pathways to School Success

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1. 0 Introduction

This input paper aims to provide helpful background reading for participants in the Working Group (WG) Schools 2021-25. It provides a concise overview of the work completed by the WGs during the previous Mandates, including the priority strands or themes that were explored, activities and outputs. It also aims to demonstrate how the WGs have evolved an understanding of school systems in Europe and highlights the ways in which the learning from the previous WGs resonates with the Pathways themes.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows:

- Section 2.0 provides an overview of the Mandate for 2014-16: School policy.

- Section 3.0 provides an overview of the Mandate for 2016-18: Education and school governance.

- Section 4.0 provides an overview of the Mandate for 2018-20: Strong quality assurance systems and Teacher and School Leader careers.

- Section 5.0: considers the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for Pathways and distils relevant learning and insights from studies and monitoring undertaken to date.

- Annex One presents a list of complementary initiatives

- Annex Two presents a selected wider reading list.

Please note: this paper is an internal document and is not intended for publication.

2. Mandate for 2014-16: School Policy

The 2014–16 Working Group on School Policy addressed two key challenges in school education systems. These related to a) reducing early school leaving, and b) improving the quality of teaching by improving teacher education. In this section, we provide an overview of the main activities and outputs.

2.1. Reducing early school leaving

The Europe 2020 strategy set the headline target to reduce early school leaving from 14,4% in 2009 to less than 10% by 2020. Member States set national targets, based on their relative starting position and national circumstances.[1]

Building on the work of the precedent thematic working group[2], the 2014 – 16 WG focused on a '**whole school approach' to reduce early school leaving**, including targeted school-level prevention and intervention measures, as well as cooperation between schools and other relevant stakeholders such as employment and social services, the heath sector, and youth organisations.

WG Outputs and key messages

A whole school approach to tackling early school leaving – Policy messages

https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/document-library/education-training-2020-schools-policy_en

Whilst reaffirming the need for a comprehensive and long-term policy framework at national/regional level (as appropriate), the WG focused mainly on **prevention and early intervention of early school leaving at the school and local level,**. looking at how more holistic and collaborative approaches to early school leaving can be implemented.

Because early school leaving is a multi-faceted and complex problem resulting from a combination of personal, social, economic, education or family-related reasons, schools cannot work in isolation. Different actors, professionals and services, inside and outside the school, need to collaborate and integrate efforts. The notion of a 'whole-school approach' to early school leaving implies active involvement of and cooperation among all members of the school community (school leaders, middle management, teaching and non-teaching staff, learners, parents and families), as well as multi-agency, cross-sectoral cooperation and partnership with a wide range of stakeholders (social services, youth services, outreach care

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[1] Council of the European Union, Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on polices to reduce early school leaving, 2011/C 191/01 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:191:0001:0006:en:PDF

[2] ESL Working Group 2011-13. Final report Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support Final report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving, November 2013, https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2011-2013/esl/esl-group-report_en.pdf

workers, psychologists, nurses, speech and language therapists, guidance specialists, local authorities, NGOs, business, unions, volunteers, etc.) and the community at large.

The WG identified conditions for implementing whole school approaches to tackling ESL, organized around five, interconnected policy areas:

Figure 1: Five policy areas for implementing whole school approaches

Source: 2014-16 Working Group

The WG developed the following key messages:

- The school is a key actor to tackle early school leaving but it cannot work in isolation, as there are factors outside the school that will influence a learner's level of engagement and success. Therefore, a 'whole school approach' to early school leaving is needed. In this approach the entire school community (school leaders, teaching and non-teaching staff, learners, parents and families) engages in a cohesive, collective and collaborative action, with strong cooperation with external stakeholders and the community at large.

- A whole school approach enables schools to respond adequately to new and complex challenges schools are facing, linked to the increasing diversity in society.

- Effective leadership and governance is essential. It is needed to promote a positive school culture, teamwork and collaborative practices within the school community. It is also needed to bring school actors and stakeholders together to ensure educational success and prevent early school leaving.

- School development and improvement processes should include targets to address the underlying factors of early school leaving. They should also involve the entire

school community, stakeholders, multi-professional teams, external local services, parents and families.

- There needs to be a commitment towards investment for continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and other school staff with a focus on awareness of early school leaving processes, and on the competences and skills needed to address educational disadvantage and student disengagement.

- Ensuring each child and young person has an equal chance to access, participate and benefit from high quality and inclusive education is a must.

- Engaging and relevant curriculum together with inspiring and dedicated staff is the most effective way to prevent early school leaving and social exclusion.

- All learners and their diverse needs should be at the centre of education. They should be actors of their own learning and be surrounded by appropriate support and services. The school should offer a caring, stimulating and conducive learning environment and set high expectations for all learners to reach their full potential.

- Education is a shared responsibility between parents and the school – it must be built on a relationship of mutual trust and cooperation between the two.

The WG also launched **the online European Toolkit for Schools** as a resource for school leaders, teachers, parents and other interested stakeholders, hosted on the School Education Gateway. The Toolkit features good practice examples for whole-school strategies to prevent early school leaving and to enable young people to succeed in school in each of the five policy areas identified above.

The Toolkit is maintained with the support of an editorial board, which includes European experts in each of the five areas. Board members review and develop content, identify new resources from around Europe, and support webinars and videos featuring good practices.

Figure 2: European Toolkit for Schools

Source : https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/toolkitsforschools/general.htm

2.2. Relevance for the 2021–23 WG on Pathways

The benchmark set for 2020 – to reduce the percentage of early school leavers to less than 10 % – was just met in 2020 with 9.9 %. A new EU-level target for 2030 is fixed to less than 9 %.[3]

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[3]https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Early_leavers_from_education_and_training#Overview

A 2019 report, *Assessment of the Implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving* included stakeholder feedback on areas where further work is needed. Among recommendation for the EU level which may also be relevant for the WG are that the EU could:

    ☐   *play an important role in the stronger promotion of integrated policies, measures and tools for tackling ESL, which should take into account local peculiarities.*

    ☐   *develop Recommendations (or other policy tools) to incorporate specific reference to action targeted at different marginalised groups in the education system.*

    ☐   *develop recommendations on ESL that can be tailored to national contexts*

    ☐   *increase flexible pathways in the education systems in general and better link them with the rapidly evolving demands on the labour market, to enable pupils and students access to a broader range of options that can be tailored to their needs.*

    ☐   *Increase emphasis on the need for integrated policies and cross-institutional cooperation …to provide a more concrete framework of how countries can adopt and implement integrated policies that address ESL.[4]*

The Toolkit for Schools will continue to be relevant for countries but may also be updated to reflect priorities of the Pathways initiative and the impact of remote learning during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. DiPietro et al. found that "'[c]onservative' estimates for a few selected EU countries consistently indicate that, on average, students will suffer a learning loss. It is also suggested that COVID-19 will not affect students equally, will influence negatively both cognitive and non-cognitive skills acquisition, and may have important long-term consequences in addition to the short-term ones."[5] These factors may contribute to learner disengagement from school, placing the at risk for early school leaving.

2.3. Improving the quality of teaching by improving teacher education

The ET2020 Rethinking Education strategy[6] highlighted the need to review the quality and effectiveness initial teacher education and continuing professional development to improve pupil attainment and reduce early school leaving. The strategy emphasises the importance for Member States to "introduce coherent and adequately resourced systems for the

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[4] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/72f0303e-cf8e-11e9-b4bf-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

[5] Di Pietro, G., Biagi, F., Dinis Mota Da Costa, P., Karpinski, Z. and Mazza, J., The likely impact of COVID-19 on education: Reflections based on the existing literature and recent international datasets, EUR 30275 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020, ISBN 978-92-76-19937-3 (online), doi:10.2760/126686 (online), JRC121071.
[6] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_12_1233

continuing professional development of teaching staff based on clearly defined competences needed at each stage of a teaching career, and increasing teacher digital competence".
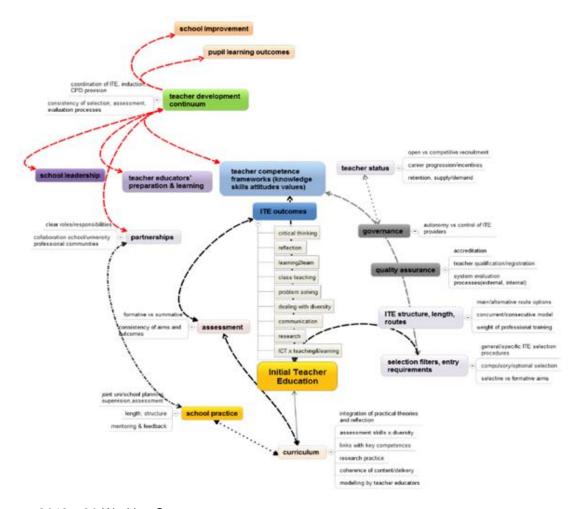
Figure 1: The initial teacher education system – concept map

Source: 2018 – 20 Working Group

WG Outputs

Caena, F. (2014). Initial teacher education in Europe: an overview of policy issues.

https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2014-2015/school/initial-teacher-education_en.pdf

This report, developed as background research for the 2014.- 16 WG identified key issues in research and through peer learning. It argues that a continuum approach to teacher education is required. This entails ensuring cooperation and dialogue between policy makers, education institutions and professional communities. It also means a shift from piecemeal policy actions to consistent, comprehensive teacher policy that spans all stages of teachers' professional lives, with a pivotal place for initial teacher education. A continuum perspective should take into account all key roles and responsibilities: the education ministry,

ITE providers, school leaders, teaching professionals and other education stakeholder groups.

Shaping career-long perspectives on teaching: A guide on policies to improve Initial Teacher Education.

https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/downloads/files/Shaping%20career-long%20perspectives%20on%20teaching.pdf

The report highlighted that Initial Teacher Education (ITE) can support the shift to new, collaborative working cultures in schools, improve the development of teaching practices, attract high quality candidates to the teaching profession, and lay the foundation for teachers to adapt to changes throughout their careers.

2.4. Relevance for the 2021–23 WG on Pathways to school Success

Initial teacher education sets the foundation for teacher careers and professional learning throughout their tenures. ITE programmes may also support incoming generations of teachers to take on new approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. This is especially important as new teachers may be expected to take on approaches that are different than they experienced in their own school years, such as a focus on the ability to use knowledge to address context-based challenges; collaborative work with teaching peers in their schools, school networks and communities; and focus on wellbeing, and not just academic outcomes. In addition, teachers are expected to support all learners to succeed. Formative assessment to identify student learning needs and to adjust teaching appropriately is increasingly emphasised assessment frameworks. ITE programmes support teachers to develop their own competences to support student learning and wellbeing. These are all relevant for the WG on Pathways for school success.

3.0 Mandate 2016-18: Education and school governance

The 2016–18 Schools Working Group (WG) set out a mandate to examine the over-arching theme of the **governance of school education systems[7]**. Building on the results of the Working Group on Schools Policy (2014-15) and set against the backdrop of growing economic and societal challenges in Europe, the mandate started with the understanding that even the best schools cannot function in isolation. It recognised that interaction is needed between stakeholders across different levels of governance to create education systems that are effective, equitable and efficient. Specifically, it identified that:

> *"Governments need to take a broad systemic view of school education that includes the possibilities for large scale implementation of cross-sectoral and inter-school cooperation; better links with families and communities; and improved external partnerships with a wide range of external stakeholders."*

(European Commission, 2016, p.5)

3.1. Challenges

The WG organised around four interlinked sub-themes relating to educational governance, each of which presents specific sets of challenges to be addressed. These included:

The work responds to a number of challenges in key areas of school education governance:

1. **Quality assurance for school development**: types and levels of autonomy and accountability within school systems, and how they are best managed and maintained; the design and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms, including school-level and system-level actions for quality, equity and inclusion, and establishing the right kinds of evidential requirements and feedback loops.

2. **Continuity and transitions in learner development**: ensuring the effective functioning of the education system to ensure successful transitions between educational levels, with consideration of ECEC alongside primary and secondary education; policy and practice measures to ensure that learner pathways are flexible and personalised, and systematising appropriate guidance and support to all learners, with a particular focus on preventing underachievement and ELET.

3. **Teachers and school leaders in schools as learning organisations**: the role of teachers in supporting learner development and a 'change agents' within school improvement; establishing the conditions that promote teacher collaboration, autonomy, and distributed leadership; systemic initiatives for recruitment and

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[7] European Commission (2016). *Education and Training 2020: Working Group Mandates 2016-2018*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available Online: https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2016-2018/et-2020-group-mandates_en.pdf [Viewed: 22.11.21]

progression; diversification of careers, professional development, and measures for effective school leadership and management[8].

4. **Networks for learning and development across school education systems**: the optimisation of resources; methods and criteria for efficient investments within school systems; collaborative and collegiate working between schools and externally with partner organisations and communities; developing a deeper understanding of the purpose and nature of networks for sustainable innovation within education systems.

3.2. Influences and links to other work

The major Commission initiatives framing this work included Member States' action in relation to the Europe 2020 strategy, Digital Single Market, European Skills Agenda, European Agenda on Security, and European Agenda on Migration. The mandate also drew on the findings from the OECD programme on Education Governance in Action which had a similar focus on connectivity between the levels within education systems[9].

As the 2016-18 Mandate had a 'whole system' view, the 2014 European Commission / Eurydice report on the structure of European education systems was another key source. The typologies assisted with considering how the governance themes might be interpreted according to whether Member States follow a single structure, a common core curriculum, or differentiated lower secondary education, and - correspondingly - the duration of compulsory education; whether or not ISCED levels are split by primary and lower secondary phase, and the age at which students are assigned academic or vocational tracks[10]. These system factors will also be highly relevant for the current Mandate.

3.3. Outputs and key messages

The WG produced a series of outputs, including standalone thematic reports for each of the sub-themes, and a 'chapeaux' report with over-arching conclusions for the mandate. This latter report also served as a compendium, incorporating all of the other reports[11].

A number of crosscutting messages were distilled, which have informed the subsequent WGs. They include the central concept of **school education as a learning system** based on collaboration and communication – both horizontally between regions, schools, and the

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[8] Subsequently, the 2017 '*Communication on school development and excellent teaching'* set out how EU support can contribute to enhanced professional development, tools and resources for teachers and school leaders, with the goal of sustainable innovation.

[9] Burns, T., F. Köster and M. Fuster (2016), *Education Governance in Action: Lessons from Case Studies*, Educational Research and Innovation, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264262829-en.

[10] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2014) *The structure of the European education systems 2014/15: schematic diagrams*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available Online: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/eurydice-publishes-new-report-structure-european-education-systems-201516-schematic-diagrams_en [Viewed: 23.11.21]

[11] European Commission (2018a) *European ideas for better learning: the governance of school education systems. The final report and thematic outputs of the ET2020 Working Groups Schools (2016 – 2018).* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

wider community, and vertically between different levels of the system, within which **schools function as learning organisations**. A graphical illustration of these concepts is presented on the next page, from the compendium. The first diagram was adapted from the OECD/UNICEF (2016) model; the European Commission Study on supporting school innovation across Europe[12]; and WG discussions on the aims of education systems.
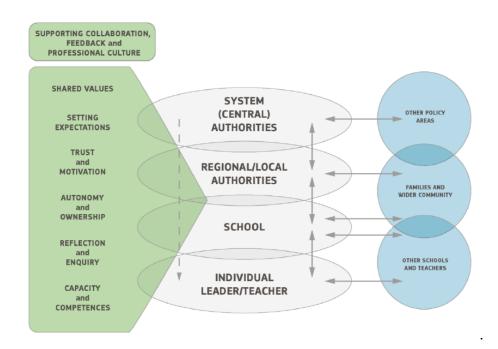
Figure 2: School education as a learning system

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[12] European Commission (2018b) *Study on supporting school innovation across Europe – Final report.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
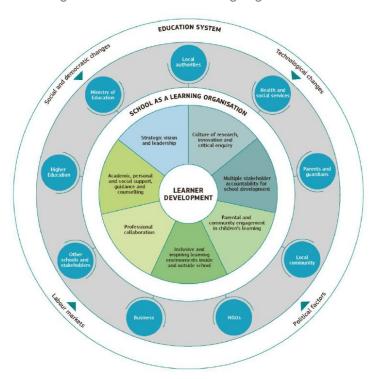
Figure 3: Schools as learning organisations

Source: European Commission (2018a)

The mandate resulted in sets of guiding principles for each of the four sub-themes, along with examples and case studies from across Europe. These were further summarised into an over-arching set of **eight guiding principles** for school education governance in Europe, which were presented within the compendium[13]. These are:

1. A **clear vision** for quality in education with shared values concerning school, teacher and learner development.

2. A learner-centred approach to decision-making in order to create **meaningful learning experiences and environments** that contribute to the development of the whole child.

3. **Collaborative decision-making processes**, involving the trust and supported dialogue of a range of stakeholders at all levels of the system, and fostering a **sense of ownership, responsibility and accountability**.

4. Developing schools as **learning organisations** that support effective decision-making and become contexts for a process of inquiry and **continuous development**.

5. Policies that support highly **competent and trusted professional communities**, recognising teachers and school leaders as key change agents, and investing in capacity-building that will motivate their continued development to ensure **high quality teaching and learning**.

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[13] Op. Cit. European Commission (2018)

6. Generating and using different **types of data** in different parts of the system, which can help to better identify strengths and areas for improvements.

7. Making well-timed policies, meaning that they directly respond to evolving needs across the system, with focused implementation processes of an adequate duration, and a coherence with other current policies, for sustained and renewed change.

8. Making **well-timed policies**, meaning that they directly respond to evolving needs across the system, with focused implementation processes of an adequate duration, and a coherence with other current policies, for sustained and renewed change.

3.4. Relevance for the 2021 – 23 WG on Pathways

Under the theme of **continuity and transitions**, the 2016-18 WG provided a reminder of the importance of pathways between different stages and levels of education. The WG report highlighted the need for continuity in *all* aspects of the school system – from teaching methods and curricula to assessment and data sharing, to parent information, to the planning and delivery of social and psychological support.

The WG report identified the challenge presented by 'systems mismatch' – where two otherwise well-functioning systems suffer from a lack of synchrony to the detriment of the learner experience[14]. The collaboration between institutions, including transition planning, joint professional development, professional exchanges, and co-location were all examples of how this challenge has been overcome in contexts in Europe.

The transition from primary to secondary school is a key point at which students who are experiencing socio-economic disadvantage are most likely to fall behind their peers. However, the WG had a central message that educational pathways are non-linear – schools need to provide sufficient flexibility to include and integrate pupils who enter or leave at different stages, who have difficulty in accessing formal education, or who become vulnerable at certain '*moments of risk',* whether due to displacement, physical or mental health problems, or following a family crisis. These considerations are particularly resonant for the 2021–23 WG in planning for educational recovery from the Covid-19 crisis.

Under the theme of **teachers and school leaders**, the 2016-18 WG built upon and updated the conceptual model describing effective policies to support teachers throughout the profession that was first developed under the 2014-15 mandate[15]. It made a particular contribution to the fifth dimension within this framework –'*the impact of local school culture'.* The WG drew attention to the critical importance of school leaders, and their interface with

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[14] Downes, P. (2016) *Developing a School System Governance Framework to Promote Quality for Transitions: Key Issues to Consider for a Differentiated, Holistic Strategy for Transitions.* Keynote Presentation, ET2020 Working Group on Schools, European Commission, Directorate-General, Education and Culture, Rue Joseph II Brussels, Sept 15-16, 2016.

[15] This model links five interrelated perspectives, those of teachers' learning needs (a continuum of teacher education/professional development); (instrumental) support structures; career; professional competence levels; and the cultural (local) perspective of a school

system leaders at national and regional levels; the benefits of distributed leadership within schools, and of networks and cooperation with external partners[16].

The WG concluded that schools must be embedded in a supportive community to function effectively as learning organisations[17][18]. Where teachers and school leaders are respected and feel fully integrated into the system, they can be motivated to improve that system, at local level, and potentially beyond. They will feel valued and committed to their own professional development as part of a learning community, with the capacity, freedom and time for inquiry, innovation, and exploration[19]. In this scenario, professional development becomes local to a significant extent, generated from within the school and its immediate network, giving rise to the "*self-improving school system*" concept of Hargreaves[20].

The WG also identified that co-creation in school education and empowering teachers and school leaders to shape education policy can have a considerable impact on their well-being. Teacher wellbeing is a consideration for Pathways, alongside learner wellbeing, and so there is an opportunity to further update the conceptual model for the current Mandate.

Under **networks for learning and development**, the 2016-18 WG aimed to establish when and how best to harness the potential of networks within different educational contexts, and to understand the potential benefits and challenges of doing so, drawing upon examples from across Europe. To these ends, the WG concluded that networks perform both structural and cultural roles in policy-making processes within complex education systems[21], and that they can be established at and between all levels of governance within the system[22].

The potential advantages of networks for education that were identified and illustrated by the WG included firstly supporting a more efficient allocation of resources across school systems, and secondly enabling innovations to evolve more quickly through collaboration and multiple stakeholder involvement in policy design and implementation. Given that educational networks can "…*help collaborators to move beyond paradigms and worldviews*

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[16] European Commission (2015b) *Shaping career-long perspectives on teaching. A guide on policies to improve Initial Teacher Education.* Report by the ET2020 Working Group on Schools (2014/15)

Available from: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/reports/initial-teacher-education_en.pdf

[17] OECD/UNICEF (2016) *What makes a school a learning organisation? A guide for policy makers, school leaders and teachers*

Available from: https://www.oecd.org/edu/school/school-learning-organisation.pdf

[18] OECD (2014a) *TALIS 2013 Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning, TALIS*, OECD Publishing, Paris
Available from: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264196261-en

[19] Op. Cit. OECD/UNICEF (2016)

[20] Hargreaves (2012) *A self-improving school system in international context,* Nottingham, National College for School Leadership

[21] Sliwka, A. (2003) Networking for Educational Innovation: A Comparative Analysis, Published

in Networks of Innovation, OECD/CERI.

[22] The sixfold typology presented within the WG thematic report included: a) international support to policy and practice development; b) Supporting national policy development and implementation; c) developing national and regional structures of governance; d) connecting schools for school development; e) connecting teachers for professional development; and f) multi-stakeholder networks targeting specific groups of learners.

of a particular community[23]", their role takes on a new dimension with the enhanced digitalisation of education systems post Covid-19. The 2021-23 Mandate will explore this.

For the theme of **quality assurance**, the 2016-18 WG formulated eight principles to guide policy-making and, in particular, to ensure a productive synergy of external and internal quality assurance mechanisms.

The WG concluded that, where used effectively, quality assurance mechanisms, data and interventions, can empower teachers and school leaders, and the wider school as a learning organisation, to develop and enhance the quality of education. It found that *most* European countries have created frameworks that integrate some combination of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms, generating data on the performance of systems as well as the quality of schools and of the teacher workforce, as measured against learning outcomes and standards[24]. Many countries are increasingly allowing schools greater autonomy so they may better respond to local contexts and individual learner needs.

There was a central message that quality assurance is important for *accountability* as well as to support the ongoing development of schools and of teaching and learning. Well-functioning systems have mechanisms to support and balance vertical and horizontal, internal and external accountability. Where this balance is not achieved, there are concerns that 'high stakes' approaches to accountability can undermine school development[25]. Reliance on a limited number of high-visibility evaluations and assessments and 'league tables' can be a concern, where there are punitive repercussions for schools and teachers. This balance is important to consider for Pathways, in striving for achievement and school success without tipping the balance and procuring unintended negative effects.

With regard to *success factors*, WG concluded that approaches to quality assurance must be sufficiently flexible to adapt over time to meet evolving needs for feedback and decision-making across education systems. Multiple stakeholder cooperation is also important, to ensure continuity of standards across sectors and a common understanding of what 'quality' looks like[26]. Both quality assurance and educational research have roles to play in supporting reflection on effective school development and combining the two can provide deeper insight to '*what works, for whom, and under what circumstances*[27]. Where this is achieved, the purpose of quality assurance is not only improvement but also innovation – that is, the development or experimental testing of approaches in different contexts.

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[23] Fazekas, M. and T. Burns (2012) *Exploring the Complex Interaction Between Governance and Knowledge in Education, OECD Working Paper No. 67.* Paris: OECD.

[24] These may include: Inspectorates, National student assessments, School self-evaluation and Teacher appraisal. These mechanisms defined in National Qualification Frameworks.

[25] O'Day, J. (2002) Complexity, Accountability, and School Improvement. Harvard Educational Review: September 2002, Vol. 72, No. 3, pp. 293-329.

[26] Cedefop (2013). *Quality: a requirement for generating trust in qualifications*, Briefing Note, 9078 EN Cat. No: TI-BB-13-003-EN-N ISBN 978-92-896-1222-7, doi: 10.2801/21748.

[27] Cedefop (2015). Ensuring the quality of certification in vocational education and training. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop research paper; No 51.

Available from: http://dx.doi.org/10.2801/25991

4. 0 Mandate 2018-20: Strong quality assurance systems and Teacher and School Leader careers

Under its 2018-20 mandate[28], the WG addressed themes related to quality assurance processes and mechanisms, with the aim of embedding strong evidence-based policymaking and decision-making at all levels of school education as well as creating a balanced and holistic understanding of learner development across the system, and the theme of teacher and school leader careers.

4.1. Quality assurance

The WG explored the role of quality assurance in embedding strong evidence-based policy making and decision-making at all levels of school education as well as creating a balanced and holistic understanding of learner development across the system. The Group focused its work on exploring how policy makers can support school self-evaluation as a key mechanism for school development. Meaningful school self-evaluation can lead to improved school quality and to the identification of priorities for school development; it can also encourage collaborative professional learning among teachers, and lead to improved academic and non-academic outcomes for students. The work included a focus on stakeholder engagement in school self-evaluation,

WG Outputs:

Stakeholder Engagement in Quality Assurance Processes: Interim Report by the Education and Training 2020 Working Group Schools (**April 2019**)

https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/downloads/files/news/May%202019%20-%20Quality%20assurance%20stakeholders%20interim%20report.pdf

Stakeholder engagement in school self-evaluation is seen as important to supporting the quality of learning and wellbeing for all children and young people in schools. Effective stakeholder engagement may also contribute to building trust and ownership. Stakeholders are individuals, groups, or formal organisations that have an interest in and/or responsibility towards improving school education. They include students, parents, teachers, school leaders, local authorities, social partners, employer organisations, researchers, non-governmental organisations, and others. This report, which was developed as part of a Peer Learning Activity held in Zagreb, Croatia, highlights key messages for policy makers on the conditions for meaningful stakeholder engagement, as well as stakeholder responsibilities. and includes examples of stakeholder engagement in school self-evaluation in different countries.

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[28] https://secureservercdn.net/160.153.137.14/q8h.86d.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/et2020_mandates_2018-2020_final.pdf

Supporting school self-evaluation and development through quality assurance policies: Key considerations for policy-makers

https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a08583f0-c18f-11ea-b3a4-01aa75ed71a1

This report is the final output of the strand on school self-evaluation. The Group focused its work on exploring how policy makers can support school self-evaluation as a key mechanism for school development to support student achievement and wellbeing. Meaningful school self-evaluation can lead to improved school quality, including a positive school climate, and to the identification of priorities for school development; it can also encourage collaborative professional learning among teachers, and lead to improved academic and non-academic outcomes for students.

Figure 4: Supporting school self-evaluation and development through quality assurance policies – focus of the WG 2018 – 20 final report on quality assurance

Source: 2018-20 Working Group Schools

4.2. Teacher and School Leader careers

The WG explored the idea that teachers' and school leaders' careers depend on their individual choices as well as education system priorities. The idea of choice leads aligns with the idea that the teacher career path is not an inevitably a hierarchical progression through to school leadership but can take many twists and turns. The WG explored ways to prepare and support teachers who want to take leadership roles in schools or other parts of the school education system.

In addition, the WG explored the need for clarity and purpose in teacher and school leader competence frameworks. The purposes and processes of evaluation and feedback of educators' competence development need to be transparent; teachers need opportunities to

build on their own talents while also ensuring professional development is coherent with the school development plan. The WG suggested the notion of a "career competence" to support teachers and school leaders to explore bold and interesting directions that are also of benefit to their schools.

WG Outputs:

Supporting teacher and school leader careers: A Policy Guide

https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6e4c89eb-7a0b-11ea-b75f-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

In considering how to better support teacher and school leader careers, the ET2020 Working Group on Schools sought to understand better the lived experience of individual teachers and school leaders. The starting point was to focus on what teachers may want from their careers as they enter the school education profession, and how these ambitions may change as their career is sustained. Importantly for policy makers, the Group has considered how support mechanisms can benefit these individuals and, at the same time, benefit schools and the wider system in a coherent manner. The Policy Guide explores new perspectives and approaches to teacher careers, and ways to support teacher career progression.

Figure 5: Six types of teacher and school leader career paths[29]

Moving upwards
Gaining a position of increased decision-making and responsibility
e.g. teacher to school leader; school head of a larger school

Moving up and along
Becoming a more competent teacher or school leader
e.g. teacher gains pedagogical expertise; leader improves leadership qualities

Moving sideways
Taking a different (temporary or permanent) role within school *e.g. special needs co-ordinator; acting as a mentor to new teachers or school leaders*

Changing contexts
Making a choice to work in a different context
e.g. teacher of a different age group; school leader moving from rural to urban school

Adding layers of system
Networking/contact with local, regional or national stakeholders, which requires broader expertise
e.g. teacher as a project leader of a regional initiative; school head acting as advisor to ministry

Moving in and out
Crossing border of school community *e.g. temporary post with NGO; becoming a researcher; changing profession to become a teacher; school head returning to classroom teaching*

Source: 2018 – 20 Working Group Schools

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[29] Note that these paths are not exclusive and may be experienced at the same time, or one after the other, by an individual.

4.3. Relevance for the 2021 – 23 WG on Pathways

The 2018 – 20 WG strand on quality assurance highlighted the intersection between external and internal school evaluation, and the important role of stakeholders in setting school priorities and supporting a more holistic approach to school quality. School climate and student wellbeing are an important focus of school-level evaluation. Increasingly, schools focus on supporting student agency and voice. Policy makers (including external school evaluators) can empower bottom-up change by helping schools to develop a culture of self-reflection and self-evaluation,

The themes of positive school climate and learning environments, student wellbeing (including agency and voice) and stakeholder engagement are relevant to the 2021 – 23 WG on Pathways focus on whole-school approaches and ensuring that all voices are heard, and that learning focuses on the "whole child", and not just their academic success.

The 2018 – 20 WG strand on teachers and school leaders highlighted the need to recruit, retain and develop teachers and school leaders. These will be important and ongoing challenges as countries address teacher shortages in the coming years. They also intersect with teacher well-being, which is an important element of positive school climate and school success.

CONCLUSION

Taken together, the different WG mandates explored in this input paper have focused on the Commission's commitment to supporting quality and equity in school education, on building trust and transparency between education systems in Europe and taking a future-oriented approach. Various dimensions of school governance, teacher and school leader quality, quality assurance, and prevention of early school leaving have been explored. The Working Groups set a firm foundation work on Pathways for school success. There are also a number of areas within each of these themes for further work. These include (and of course are not limited to):

- Further work on integrated systemic, and whole school approaches to improving quality and inclusiveness of education.

- Teacher education (initial and continuing) to support inclusiveness and school success.

- Access and accessibility of schools

- Permeability of education pathways

- Learner wellbeing as a core aim for education.

- Teacher wellbeing (and its relationship to learner wellbeing)

- Learning environments

  - Broad stakeholder engagement in all areas of education policy design and implementation

- Collaboration beyond schools to support learners' competence development (e.g. community organisations, businesses, etc.).

- Diversity of education providers, including the range offers, curricula, etc.

- Teaching, learning and assessment of competence-based curricula following COVID-19

- Transitions

- The role of parents in supporting learning

5. 0 Implication of the pandemic

The Covid-19 crisis frames the work of the 2021-25 WG and will be an important backdrop to the implementation of Pathways. In total, around 58 million primary and secondary school children across Europe faced disruption to their education during the school closures that started in March 2020[30]. The impacts on education systems in Europe are still unfolding but monitoring and research undertaken during this time has provided insights to how governments, schools, learners and families are responding, and with what success.

5.1. The landscape within the EU

The overall picture suggests that the **impact of the pandemic has experienced very unevenly across Europe** and that these trends are set to continue. There is concerning evidence from that the crisis has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities within national education systems. SES was already a predictor of the attainment gap prior to the crisis, and these effects have almost most certainly been compounded as a result of missed education.

Research conducted during and following the school closures of 2020 point towards variations in the extent to which schools across Europe were able to adapt to the shift online, with disparities in access, digital skills of teachers, parents and students, and the quality of home learning environments. A major survey on perceptions of remote schooling by parents and children in 9 EU countries[31] plus Switzerland and Norway reported wide differences in students' access to teachers during the 2020 school closures[32]. Whereas three quarters (75%) or more of children in Italy, Norway, Portugal and Romania reported having daily online interactions with their teachers during this time, the figure falls significantly in Germany, Austria and Slovenia, where it ranged from 34% to 41%[33].

A survey carried out by OECD in spring 2021 found that countries with the lowest historical educational performance (based on PISA) had implemented longer school closures during 2020[34]. This indicates that education systems that were already underperforming on Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests in 2018 experienced disproportionate missed schooling in 2020, with the implication that the crisis widened the gap in educational inequalities *between* countries as well as within them.

Analysis of national responses to the crisis show that many countries underestimated and / or were unprepared for the scale of the digital skills gap, and that focussing on ICT access

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[30] Blaskó Z., and Schnepf, S. (2021) *Educational inequalities in Europe and physical school closures during Covid-19.* Joint Research Centre of the European Commission. Available online:

[31] AT, FR, DE, IE, IT, PT, RO, SL and ES

[32] Kids' Digital lives in COVID-19 Times (KiDiCoTi)

[33] Vuorikari, R., Velicu, A., Chaudron, S., Cachia, R. and Di Gioia, R. (2020) *How families handled emergency remote schooling during the Covid-19 lockdown in spring 2020*, EUR 30425 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020, ISBN 978-92-76-24519-3, doi:10.2760/31977, JRC122303.

[34] OECD (2021) *The state of school education, One year into the COVID pandemic.* Paris: OECD.

alone was insufficient in the rapid shift to remote learning. EU Member States that had experienced a greater degree of success in maintaining continuity in education during the crisis were characterised by *system leadership*, with broad and inclusive governance arrangements and an action plan aligning education, welfare and economic objectives; the *smart use of data and feedback* to target resources, based on monitoring and evaluation and supported by consensus-building and public dialogue (including large-scale learner, parental, teacher and school leader surveys, linked to follow-up action), and *pedagogical activation* – the development and scaling of teacher and learner digital education and professional development measures to support remote learning[35].

5.2. Addressing the challenge of learning loss

One of the main areas of concern relates to potential **learning loss** experienced during the pandemic. There is evidence to suggest that students spend less time learning on average during Covid-19 remote learning, that conditions of confinement can give rise to higher levels of anxiety, affecting concentration levels, and that reduced in-person contact with teachers can result in lower levels of motivation engagement in learning[36]. The literature shows that, on average, these effects are more pronounced for children at primary and lower secondary stage – especially at 4th grade (9- to 10-year-olds). This is attributed to a greater dependence on teacher and parental guidance and less autonomy than older students[37].

Studies carried out during the crisis indicate that more vulnerable students, including from lower socio-economic status (SES) families, those of migrant birth, indigenous backgrounds, LGBTQ+ students, and those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) are at a greater risk of poor learning outcomes[38]. A number of factors are involved.

- First, learners from a disadvantaged background have lower levels of access, on average, to resources and support that are known to be strongly associated with positive learning outcomes, including computer and internet access, parental involvement in education, reading opportunities and access to study space.

- Second, they are less likely to attend digitally well-equipped and well-resourced schools, or to have access to teachers with higher levels of digital skills.

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[35] Melstveit-Roseme, M., Day, L., Fellows, T., Staring, F., Vicentini, L., and Looney, J. (2021, forthcoming) *Enhancing learning through digital tools and practices: how digital technology in compulsory education can help promote inclusion.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

[36] Di Pietro, G., Biagi, F., Dinis Mota Da Costa, P., Karpinski, Z. and Mazza, J., (2020) *The likely impact of COVID-19 on education: Reflections based on the existing literature and recent international datasets.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

[37] Fuchs-Schündeln, N., Krueger, D., Ludwig, A., & Popova, I. (2020). *The Long-term Distributional and Welfare Effects of Covid-19 School Closures* (NBER Working Paper Series No. 27773). National Bureau of Economic Research. Available online: https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w27773/w27773.pdf [Viewed: 24.11.21]

[38] OECD (2020) *The impact of COVID-19 on student equity and inclusion: supporting vulnerable students during school closures and school re-openings.* Paris: OECD.

- Third, the removal of access to support services and networks can be problematic, whether in terms of restricting access to necessary practical support (e.g. linguistic, assistive technologies), or to social and emotional support or therapies

These findings are supported by survey data, with one large-scale study finding that children from families with below-average household income had lower confidence in their capacities to cope with online learning than their peers[39]. Such personal capacities are, of course, subject to a wide range of characteristics, including learners' agency during the crisis.

The **cumulative effects of disadvantage** are stark from the data. While one fifth of school age children in Europe lack at least two of the above-mentioned resources and support, this figure arises to above one quarter (28%) of children from low SES status, comparted with one in ten (10%) from higher SES groups[40]. Taken in combination, these factors point towards legitimate concerns that learning loss may be substantial and that inequalities pre-dating the crisis have been exacerbated by school disruption.

5.2.1. Quantifying the problem

Although fully comparable data on learner attainment post-Covid-19 is not yet available at a European level[41], studies have set out to estimate the **potential scale and duration of learning losses**. Based on an analysis of pre-Covid data for 21 European countries from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) achievement scale, one study estimated that the educational gap between children from lower and higher SES backgrounds could have widened by as much as 5%. This was based on the estimated impact of an average of 8 weeks of school closures and considers the known associations between school instruction time, parental education and school achievement[42].

Other research using pre-Covid trends in international student assessment results arrive at similar conclusion. They also corroborate the view that the achievement gap has widened and is on a trajectory to continue to do so. For example, analysts from the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission conclude the following from their analysis of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2019[43]:

> *"Results based on 4th graders' school achievements indicate that throughout Europe educational inequalities between and within countries are likely to increase substantially. Some European countries already… [face] an education crisis".*

A further study suggests that learning loss applies to both cognitive and non-cognitive development and foresees medium- and longer-term consequences. The authors point towards the likely scarring effects of learning loss in terms of the delayed acquisition of socio-

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[39] Op. Cit. Vuorikari, R., et al. (2020)

[40] Ibid.

[41] The main international large scale assessment studies operate to a long timeframe and data is not immediately available. The PIRLS 2021 study is still at data collection phase, with findings expected to become available in November 2022. Data collection for the PISA 2021 study has been postponed to 2022.

[42] Op. Cit. Blaskó and Schnepf (2021)
[43] Ibid.

emotional skills, which are predictors of later educational attainment, and ultimately labour market prospects and pay[44]. These impacts will take some time to appear.

The European Statistical Recovery Dashboard results show some ripple effects from the crisis, while being too early to establish clear trends. The proportion of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) increased slightly during the pandemic from around 12% at the end of 2019 to over 14,6% by mid-2020 during the early stages of the pandemic. Following a slight decrease, it stood at 13.8% in spring 2021.

5.3. Mental health and wellbeing

The impact of the Covid-19 crisis on student's **mental health and wellbeing** is a further cause for concern[45]. Studies and evaluations carried out during the crisis point towards the potentially negative behavioural and psychological effects of periods of isolation from peers and teachers; trauma arising from loss of family members to Covid-19; exposure to stresses within a home environment during confinement, and increased exposure to online risks and harms. As with learning outcomes, there is evidence that these risks are heightened for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, greater exposure to a stressful home environment, arising from lack of space, multi-occupancy and financial pressures. Restricted access to nutrition and risk of domestic violence are also factors in poor mental wellbeing[46].

The issues of teacher workload and stress during the crisis have also been widely reported. Added responsibilities relating to coordination and support for students remotely, up-skilling and increased levels of interaction with parents alongside heightened administrative, health and safety procedures contributed towards poor mental health outcomes according to some country studies[47].

5.4. Participation and student voice

Last, and by no means least, a number of separate studies have highlighted concerns among young people at the lack of **involvement in key decisions regarding their education** during the crisis – from school closures to online learning and assessments. Only 20% of children responding to an international survey of children's rights during the crisis, including European countries, considered that the government listened to them when making

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[44] The authors used literature and evidence from the most recently available international assessments (Eurostat, PISA, ICILS, PIRLS, TALIS), to estimate the likely impacts of school disruption during the Covid-19 crisis on children's learning.

[45] Op. Cit. Di Pietro, et. al. (2020)

[46] Op. Cit. Blaskó and Schnepf (2021)

[47] Op. Cit. OECD (2021)

policy decisions[48]. The same study found that young people's rights to education (Art. 28 and 29 of UNCRC) featured prominently in young people's needs and priorities.

These challenges are echoed in other studies. A recent report on the educational experiences of school students in Europe during the crisis found that many young people had concerns about the level of priority afforded to their education within decisions about the management of the crisis and saw a need for better opportunities and spaces for social and political representation[49]. The work was based on research conducted with school student associations. A further study on young people's lived experiences during the Covid-19 crisis elicited recommendations for clearer and more regular communication between government, schools, and students; and the provision of concise guidelines and strategy on how to manage online teaching, as well as learning from young people about their needs and concerns returning to school[50]. The authors concluded that the guidelines should be developed collaboratively, to ensure they are feasible and effective, with monitoring and evaluation to gauge whether young people's rights are being observed. Nonetheless, it is apparent that many young Europeans mobilised independently within their local communities and online during the Covid-19 crisis, forming new networks of peer support and to engage in civic and social participation. This social and cultural capital is an often-overlooked dimension of young people's agency during the pandemic.

5.5. Silver linings from the Covid-19 education response

While the Covid-19 crisis has contributed towards widening inequalities across Europe, there are also causes for optimism. A review of how digital tools are being used to support inclusive education found that **new cross-sectoral partnerships have emerged**, bringing together public and private sectors with NGOs beyond the traditional domain of "education". It concluded that these developments have helped to ensure a place for educational inclusion within digital strategies and within local and regional development plans[51].

The study also found that **many EU Member States have set in place targeted digital inclusion initiatives for vulnerable learner groups**, where these did not exist prior to the crisis. This has included providing access to ICT devices and internet for students in vulnerable regional zones, many of whom are socio-economically disadvantaged learners, learners from migrant and ethnic minority backgrounds and/or rural learners. Where reforms were already planned or underway, **the crisis pushed digitalisation up the policy agenda and leveraged additional resources**. At a grassroots level, it saw the emergence of new teacher professional networks, and collaborative forms of home-school communication.

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[48] Queen's University Belfast (2020) *Children's Rights during Coronavirus: Children's Views and Experiences*. Budapest: Terre des Hommes

[49] Isernia, G., C., and Nunes, R. (2021) *Through School Student's Eyes. Impact and Challenges of COVID-19 on Education Systems in Europe*. Brussels: OBESSU. Available online: https://www.obessu.org/site/assets/files/2989/obessu_covid-19_research_for_web-1.pdf [Accessed: 26.11.21]

[50] Day, L., Percy-Smith, B., Rizzo, S., Erskine, E., Monchuk, L, and Shah, M. (2020) *To lockdown and back: young people's lived experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic*. London: Nuffield Foundation.

[51] Op. Cit. Melstveit-Roseme, et. al. (2021)

These findings are consistent with the OECD Special Survey on Joint National Responses to COVID-19 School Closures[52]. Conducted with government officials responsible for education between January and February 2021, the report concluded that many countries had made substantial efforts to mitigate their impact of missed schooling for learners, families and educators, often prioritising young children and students from disadvantaged backgrounds. It also found that many countries had **become more sophisticated and responsive in communicating with key stakeholders at all levels within the system** – from national and regional government, to families, teachers and schools or local authorities.

5.6. Policy and practice – future areas for action

The concluding section of the paper has provided a brief overview of the emerging picture for national education systems in Europe post-Covid-19 with relevance to Pathways. The data and evidence so far points towards a number of areas where actions are being focussed (or where the literature recommends a focus) during recovery. These are:

a) **The adoption of targeted approaches for learning recovery**; prioritising disadvantaged students through personalised support (e.g. tutoring and mentoring).

b) **Resetting the clock** – discounting assessments undertaken during school closures, setting new baselines following school restart and **prioritising formative assessment** that considers a wide range of academic, social and personal progress measures.

c) **Actions to improve the quality and consistency of blended learning** as a longer-term mechanism to minimise educational disruption, while being mindful of the teacher training and curricular adjustments, and adaptations for learners with SEND.

d) **A specific focus on 4th grade children as a sub-group**, who still have many years in the school system and for whom there is greater time available to rectify learning and wellbeing losses, as a priority for medium term policy measures.

e) **A commitment and encouragement for the role of learning communities**, going beyond school and teacher collaboration to include all key stakeholders.

f) **Support for strong and effective school leadership and whole school approaches**, encompassing strategy development, cooperation and distributed responsibilities for adopting digital tools and pedagogies across all areas of school functioning.

g) **Sustained monitoring and evaluation of digital access and inclusion** in planning

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[52] Op. Cit. OECD (2021)

for recovery, drawing on multiple data sources to gain a more complete understanding of educational impacts of the crisis, with robust and nationally representative methods to seek feedback from school leaders, teachers, parents and carers and students

h) **Maximising the benefits of digital tools for learning in ECEC**, laying the early foundations for digital literacy and supporting the pre-school to primary transition

i) **Improvements in parental information and guidance** to support children academically and emotionally during recovery, alongside **improved capacity and access to counselling and psychological support within and around schools**.

Annex One: Complementarity with other initiatives

The initiative Pathways to school success is designed to complement other Commission initiatives that address related challenges for school education, namely the actions presented under the European Education Area and the Digital Education Action Plan:

- the competence development and career paths of teachers, trainers and school education leaders;
- the 2019 Council Recommendation for a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages[1];
- the 2019 Council Recommendation on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems[2];
- the 2018 Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching[3];
- the Council Recommendation on blended learning for high quality and inclusive primary and secondary education[4];
- the structured dialogue on the enabling factors for successful digital education, the development of common guidelines for teachers and educational staff to foster digital literacy and to tackle disinformation,
- the proposal of a Council Recommendation on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training, and the European Digital Education Hub;
- the Skills Agenda for Europe[5], and
- the Council Recommendation on VET[6] which proposes a modernised EU policy vision of VET including its digitalisation and use of blended learning.

Endnotes

[1] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/GA/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32019H0605(02)

[2] 2019/C 189/02

[3] 2018/C 195

[4] COM/2021/455 final.

[5] COM(2020) 274 final.

[6] OJ C 417, 2.12.2020, p. 1–16

Annex Two: Further reading

Additional Resources related to the 2014 - 16 Mandate: School policy

Caena, F. (2014). "Teacher Competence Frameworks in Europe: policy-as-discourse and policy-as-practice", European Journal of Education, Vol. 49, No. 3, pp. 311-331

https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12088

This article analyses the growing focus on teacher competences in European policy discourse against the backdrop of global convergences in education reforms. It traces key ideas, policy recommendations, peer learning and documents which underscore the relevance of teacher quality for education improvement, as recently stressed in the European Commission Communication and Staff Working Documents Rethinking Education. The intertwining of teacher competence frameworks with other areas of education policy is outlined — key competences in school education, the quality of initial teacher education, and the continuous professional development of teachers — teasing out reasons for their central role. Some insights from research and peer learning then explore key implications in the defining and implementing of teacher competence frameworks in national education systems. A comparative viewpoint further analyses current policy trends about teacher competences across European national contexts, in discourse and practice. In order to do so, a framework of analysis takes into account system features as key variables affecting national policy — roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, governance and education cultures, and the status of the teaching profession. Across the variety of policy practices, the analysis endeavours to trace some emerging patterns and trends, highlighting paradigmatic national examples, with some food for thought.

Central European University. Reducing Early School Leaving in the EU project (2013 – 18) (RESL.eu) https://cps.ceu.edu/research/resleu

RESL.eu research aimed to provide insights into the mechanisms and processes that influence a student's decision to leave school or training early; as well as into the decision of school leavers to enrol in alternative learning arena's unrelated to a regular school. In addition to this, RESL. also focused on the students that left education or training early, and are identified as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), for these are the most vulnerable among European youngsters. The research focused on nine European countries (Belgium, United Kingdom, Sweden, Portugal, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Austria and Hungary).

The RESL.eu project also aimed to identify and analyse successful intervention and compensation measures Where the available research data on ESL only explains isolated

aspects of the evolution towards ESL, the RESL.eu project analysed ESL from a holistic perspective.

European Commission, Ecorys (2019). Assessment of the implementation of the 2011 Council recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving. https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/72f0303e-cf8e-11e9-b4bf-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

This study analyses the development of EU-level policy instruments and country-level practices to reducee ESL across Europe. The report highlights the complex factors at play in ESL, the groups most at-risk of ESL, and selected good prevention, intervention and compensation measures.

European Commission, EIESP (2018). *Boosting teacher quality: pathways to effective policies*, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union doi: 10.2766/069297

This study gathers evidence on policies that aim to raise students' learning outcomes through incentives and support measures to enhance teacher quality. A central concern is to identify policies that are effective and efficient. These include incentives and support systems to ensure that high-quality candidates are recruited to initial teacher education, retained and supported to develop and deepen their professional competences (both individual and collective) throughout their careers. This focus on effectiveness and efficiency is particularly important in the context of increasing demands on teachers and stricter limits on education spending.

OECD (2017). "Do new teachers feel prepared for teaching?", *Teaching in Focus*, No. 17, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/980bf07d-en.

New teachers are more likely to feel prepared in the content of their subject field(s), rather than the pedagogy or classroom practice of their subject field(s). However, the levels of their perceived preparedness were lower than experienced teachers in all three domains. In nearly two-thirds of TALIS 2013 countries and economies, the largest difference in reported preparedness between new and experienced teachers was in classroom practice of the subject field(s) they teach, followed by the pedagogy of the subject field(s) they teach.

Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies Directorate-General for Internal Policies (2019). Research for CULT Committee - How to tackle early school leaving in the EU.

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/629193/IPOL_STU(2019)629193_EN.pdf

This study is a concise update on early school leaving in the EU. It reviews the main developments and causes of the problem since the *Council Recommendation of 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving*, and identifies policy initiatives taken by the Member States to address it. The study explores the interplay between early school leaving and public investment and lastly outlines recommendations to address future challenges. The

study takes into consideration European and national literature focusing on six Member States.

Van Praag, L., Nouwen, W., Van Caudenberg, R, Clycq, N. and Timmerman, C. (Eds.) Comparative Perspectives on Early School Leaving in the European Union.

https://www.routledge.com/Comparative-Perspectives-on-Early-School-Leaving-in-the-European-Union/Praag-Nouwen-Caudenberg-Clycq-Timmerman/p/book/9780367861919

Early School Leaving in the European Union provides an analysis of early school leaving (ESL) in nine European Union countries, with a particular focus on young people who were previously enrolled in educational institutions inside and outside mainstream secondary education. The book includes data collected during in-depth interviews, surveys, and insights from educational professionals, policymakers and representatives from civil society organisations. Iindividual, institutional and systemic factors the prevention, intervention and compensation measures that can succeed in supporting young people's attainment and demonstrates how these can be used to reduce ESL.

Additional Resources related to the 2018 - 20 Mandate on Strong quality assurance systems and Teacher and School Leader careers

Deles, R. and Pirone, F. (2021). "Perspectives on school inequalities through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic". European Journal of Education, Volume 56, Issue 4

https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/14653435/2021/56/4

This editorial introduces the special issue. Perspectives on school inequalities through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic. Each contribution in this issue sheds light on the mechanisms by which educational inequalities were structured in a number of different countries at the time of the COVID-19 disease pandemic in 2020. The issue presents a range of cases by country: Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Italy, Poland, Spain and Sweden. The authors of these articles are part of a research consortium exploring the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education. From the beginning of April, 2020, the authors sought to gather different European studies on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education. They also tried to unify their methodologies: five countries in the consortium proposed a parental survey during the pandemic, using a questionnaire with comparable questions. Seven countries offered a similar and comparable questionnaire for teachers at the reopening of schools. According to a relatively unified protocol, we have also conducted interviews and observations in the context of schools. The findings focus on teacher professional practices, on the relationship between teachers and pupils, on the modalities of parental support and on pupils' work in this very special period.

Fullan, M. (2021). The right drivers for whole-system success.

https://michaelfullan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Fullan-CSE-Leading-Education-Series-01-2021R2-compressed.pdf

The right drivers for education capture and propel the human spirit: 1) wellbeing and Learning (essence); 2) Social Intelligence (limitless); 3) Equality Investments (dignity), and 4) 'Systemness' (wholeness). The set of right drivers requires a depth of understanding and action across many levels. To achieve this kind of radical change we will need to appeal to four different constituencies that I will label *locals, regionals, staters (state and federal),* and *globals* (leaders who work across countries). The drivers feed on each other, and as such stimulate reciprocal action. The difficulty will be how to get the right drivers started into action in a way that drives coordinated, sustained action. This is the focus of this paper.

Niedersächsisches Landesinstitut für schulische Qualitätsentwicklung (NLQ) (2011)Framework of Reference: The Making of Leadership in Education, http://www.leadership-in-education.eu/?id=273

On the basis of the *European Synopsis on Educational Leadership*, research network partners contributed to a survey in which they ranked important leadership issues in their countries. This feedback was evaluated and condensed into a set of five core domains (broad categories of leadership) which, again, were subdivided into components. These components are in turn linked to examples of good **practice qualification modules** from all the partner countries. They should be seen as inspiration and guidance, as national contexts differ strongly, necessitating specific approaches to leadership and the training of school leaders.

OECD Education and Skills 2030 Project

https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/

In 2015 the OECD launched the Future of Education and Skills 2030 project. The project aims to set goals and develop a common language for teaching and learning. Phase I of the project focuses on curriculum redesign and developing a conceptual framework for learning 2030. Phase II focuses on curriculum implementation and creating a conceptual framework for teaching 2030.

A variety of resources are available on the project home page.

Maxwell, B. and Staring, F. (2018). Better learning for Europe's young people: developing coherent quality assurance strategies for school education. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union

https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1361c84b-80c8-11e8-ac6a-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-72794224

This report analyses a range of policy and implementation challenges related to different aspects of quality assurance in school education. It explores how countries can address them in ways which are consistent with the vision of a European Education Area based on shared values about school education and how system-level improvement can most

effectively be achieved in the light of such a vision. Key aspects of this vision on quality education include a commitment to establishing a climate of quality enhancement and trust as the foundation for the effective development of school quality. They also include a commitment to a balanced understanding of learner development which encompasses a future-oriented view of the competences which young people need for their personal fulfilment and development, for employment, social inclusion and active citizenship. The report sets out six main aspects of policy and practice with regard to school quality assurance. These relate to: - School self-evaluation; - External evaluation; - Evaluation and appraisal of teachers and school leaders; - Use of national qualifications and examinations in upper secondary education; - Assessment of student progress at earlier stages; and - Stakeholder engagement. The report concludes that these six areas of policy and practice are highly interdependent on each other. It therefore makes sense for each of the areas to be woven together within an integrated and coherent quality assurance strategy.

Pedaste, M., Leijen, Ä,, Poom-Valickis, K. and Eisenschmidt, E. (2019). "Teacher professional standards to support teacher quality and learning in Estonia", European Journal of Education, Vol. 54, No. 3, pp. 389-399

https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12346

In Estonia, teacher professional standards were first developed in 2005. Currently, they support initial teacher education, the evaluation of teacher competences and the design of continuous professional learning. They also allow teachers to progress to the senior teacher and master teacher qualification level. According to our findings, the standards are successfully used to design pre-service education and award certificates at the end of the studies. However, they do not support building the teachers' career ladder and only in some schools do they support planning of professional learning. In this article, we give an overview of the changes in the professional standards of teachers in Estonia and analyse why they have not found the desired degree of use in teachers' career advancement and professional development in the school context and why they have not had a significant effect on teacher status in society.

Snoek, M. Dengerink, J. and de Wit, B. (2019). "Reframing the teacher profession as a dynamic multifaceted profession: A wider perspective on teacher quality and teacher competence frameworks" *European Journal of Education*, **Vol. 54, No. 3, pp. 413-425 https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12350**

Many countries in Europe use some kind of competence framework to define the quality of teachers. They typically formulate one level of teaching quality which defines the competence level that teachers must have acquired after completing initial teacher education. In addition, most countries provide limited career structures that define career opportunities within the teacher profession itself, resulting in a profession where often the only option for career progression is to move to leadership positions. Competence frameworks that create opportunities for vertical and horizontal career structures can make being a teacher a more attractive profession. They offer teachers opportunities for 'career crafting' and professional growth and supply school leaders with tools for more elaborate

career guidance. In this article, we present a framework that was developed in the Netherlands to support teacher growth and teachers' career development. It has been used as a starting point for creating a shared language and understanding of the teacher profession and as a catalyst for dialogue between teachers and school leaders on professional growth. We elaborate the main characteristics of the resulting model, its limitations, the feedback that has been collected and how this feedback has been incorporated in how the model is used and discussed by teachers, school leaders and teacher education institutes. Finally, we argue that the strength of the framework can be explained by the way it acts as a boundary object, inspiring mutual learning and dialogue between different activity systems (of teachers, school leaders and teacher educators).