

The Rise of an Educationalized World: A Global Analysis of OECD's Educational Recommendations, Programmes, and Impact

How can we understand the rise of an educationalized world and how has the OECD promoted education as a means to achieve social and economic prosperity across the globe?

The world of today is an educationalized world. It means that societal challenges are to be solved by education. In fact, every challenge facing contemporary society – e.g. social cohesion, economic growth, and sustainability – has an unmistakable educational component. For decades, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has promoted a global vision of education as one of providing human capital to deal with social challenges and improve the economies of nation-states.

Beginning as the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) in 1948, the OECD gradually took the leading role in shaping a global education space from other international organisations culminating with the launch of the programme for international student assessment (PISA) in 2000. Today the OECD is widely recognised as the global trend-setter in education – and promoter of an educationalized world – because of its educational measurement indicators, its production of norms, and its role in governance by comparison (e.g. PISA).

The OECD's educational recommendations and programmes carry an enormous global impact because 1) they frame and shape the public discourse and the ways decision-makers think about and deal with social and economic challenges; 2) they affect educational access, performance and benefits of different people groups; and 3) they impact the conditions under which education may be realized in different national contexts.

Given this outset – and operationalizing the overall research question – the aim is to determine:

- Background: Which networks and connections of agents, organizations, governments, institutions, and which funding flows influence and mediate OECD educational recommendations and programmes?
- Impact: How do OECD educational recommendations and programmes impact Member States and non-Member States in terms of dealing with social and economic challenges?
- Comparison: What are the differences and similarities across time and place in the OECD's educational recommendations and programmes and how are they reflected in terms of promoting and shaping an educationalized world?

My earlier research – and my earlier involvement in two research projects funded by the Danish research council – has prepared the ground for this project, contributing in three main ways. First, understanding the role of international organisations' recommendations and programmes as transnational phenomena enacted differently in national and local contexts. Second, understanding the role of experts and professionals in crafting global developments. Third, understanding the role of large-scale international comparisons with a particular focus on testing and evaluations.

This is a comparative study that will examine similarities and differences between and among four OECD Member States and four non-Member States, with a particular focus on the OECD educational measurement programmes and their impact in terms of social justice. The identified nations (below) have been chosen

because 1) they are important in OECD history; 2) they hold significant positions in their respective continents; 3) they have different historical and ideological contexts. The countries selected are:

- South Africa (non-Member, working relationship from 2007)
- China (non-Member, working relationship from 1995); Japan (Member 1964)
- Russia (non-Member, working relationship from 1992); Denmark (Member 1961)
- Brazil (non-Member, working relationship from 1998); United States (Member 1961)
- Australia (Member 1971)

Analysis will be undertaken of changes in discourses, concepts, and practices evident in national documents, which can be attributed to OECD recommendations and programmes. Documents sourced will include those available in OECD Archives in Paris and national archives. Archives from non-English speaking nations will be analysed with support of in-country partners. Their analysis will inform development of questions for interviews with OECD officials and experts.

The research project holds the potential of a research breakthrough because:

- The project can fundamentally expand our understanding of the workings of globalization in general and the manifestations of an educationalized world in particular.
- The project can create knowledge useful to decision-makers at various levels in how to deal with international organisations like the OECD and how to develop more adequate policies in the field of education to the benefit of society.
- Merging policy studies, sociology of education and historical studies can serve to develop a ground-breaking methodology for understanding the entanglements between international, national, regional and local contexts