Implementing Education Policies: Ireland
LOCAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN IRELAND'S EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The OECD *Implementing Education Policies* (IEP) project is supporting the development of a model of local school community engagement in Ireland's education policy making and implementation processes (2021-2023). This activity is funded by the European Union and implemented in co-operation with the European Commission DG Reform.

The policy: Local community engagement in Ireland's education policy development

During the last decades, education policy has grown more complex, and governments are increasingly operating in volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous contexts. It is now recognised that the success of education reform depends on a range of factors, including their design, the environment within which they are developed, how stakeholders in the form of local school communities are involved in the process, and the implementation approach. Overall, stakeholder engagement in policy making has taken on greater importance across the EU and OECD countries, but the processes may not always be effective or reach intended outcomes.

The Irish education system is nationally led, and has a tradition and culture of institutionalised organisations that engage in education at different levels. While this approach ensures the ongoing representativeness of identified players to structurally provide inputs to policy making, ambivalence about policy change, lack of agreement on priorities, difficulty in identifying effective policy solutions, or insufficiency of involvement of some important players still feature in the Irish experience of developing and implementing education reform (OECD, 2020). This suggests that efforts to explore other, complementary engagement approaches in education policy making may be welcome in Ireland.

Against this backdrop, this project aims to support Ireland in shaping a local school community engagement model to contribute to national education policy making. Building on evidence, international relevant practice and a pilot, the project aims to support Ireland in defining a local school community engagement model and an implementation road-map fitting the national context.

OECD-DG Reform Project (2021-2023)

The OECD and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG-Reform) are providing support to the Irish Teaching Council who is exploring alternative forms of engagement at the local level. The work is supported by:

- Desk based research on relevant documentation;

- Focus group discussions with key stakeholders to learn their views on current engagement approaches, key challenges, and systemic changes to respond to these;

- Consultations with stakeholders on draft findings and recommendations;

- A peer-learning event with EU countries and international experts on school community engagement models;

- Piloting of two different local school community models.

Outputs

The OECD IEP project is working with the Irish Teaching Council and DG Reform over the course of two years to support the development of the local community engagement model for policy making. This collaborative effort has been customised for Ireland with measures taking place in four stages: research, approaches and experiences of other countries, country stakeholder perspectives to develop and test a pilot, and the preparation of an implementation road map.

Analysis and recommendations for piloting local community engagement models	International peer learning	Evidence-informed, local school community engagement model for Ireland	Implementation roadmap to support scale-up of the model
• **Analysis of existing local engagement approaches**, key challenges, potential role and benefits of improved local school community engagement, and necessary systematic changes • Review of **local engagement models in other EU countries** • Input and insights from relevant stakeholders through **group meetings** • **Tailored recommendations** on the variables of two local engagement models for piloting	• A **peer-learning event** with other EU countries and international experts • Insights from the **experience of other EU countries** on effective local school community engagement models	• **Pilot report** with concrete recommendations for a local school community engagement model • Input and insights from relevant stakeholders through **individual meetings** and **group consultations** • **Irish local school community engagement model** endorsed by key stakeholders	• **Implementation roadmap** to support scale up of the local school community engagement model defined and endorsed by stakeholders

Relevance for other countries

This project and its results can be relevant for countries wishing to strengthen citizen engagement and participation in education policy making and implementation (and other social sectors). This can contribute to enhance policy outcomes by seeking citizens' inputs to help drive innovation, gain support for change, bolster public trust by increasing government accountability and allowing services to be delivered in a way that leverages the power of local stakeholders and networks. Three specific issues addressed in the project could be of particular interest:

i. The process and outcome of defining tailored solutions to strengthen local community engagement in policy making and implementation - with key stakeholders.

ii. Designing and testing local school community engagement models that are inspired by international best practice and fit the national context.

iii. Together with key stakeholders, developing an implementation road map for scaling up local school community engagement to inform policy making and implementation.

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