

# Exploring the Belgian, Finnish and Vietnamese recipes for PISA

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# Judging the quality of an education system

- Aims of the specific country
- View on the tasks of education
- Different choices for content
- Significance and influence of families
- Significance of the learning person
- The place of the labour market and economic development

# Every system has its own quality

- Path dependency
- International influences
- Contingency
- Result: a complex system with an amalgamation of a lot of interwoven factors

# Benefits of comparing education systems

- Learning from each other
- Sharing good ideas and practices
- Detection of tendencies
- Better understanding of contexts and the influence of different actors
- Translation of practices in the own settings

# Difficulties with comparing education systems: a lot of interwoven factors

- 1. Characteristics of learners: age, SES, motivation, learning strategies, gender...
- 2. School factors: relations between participants, expectations, discipline, leadership, grouping, extra-curricular work...
- 3. Teachers: training level, Inservice-training, collaboration, teaching capacity...
- 4. Family: structure, parental level, comfort at home, literacy, attitudes towards school...

# Difficulties 2

- 5. Culture
  - Individualistic vs collectivistic: ethnic homogeneity
  - Pressure for results: cramming, ‘tiger mothers’, key role of credentials
  - Structure of the idioms: Vietnamese, Finnish, Dutch
  - Effort vs ability: discipline, motivation for learning
  - History and traditions
  - Family values: ethics, religion

# The place of PISA in comparing education systems

- Indicating tendencies
- Detecting influences of different contexts and actors
- Identifying good ideas and practices
- Delivering data for self-reflection
- No rankings

# Methodological discussions

- Content
- The place of the content in the system
- Sampling
- Elaboration of the tests and the questionnaires
- Statistical questions



# 1. Content

- Three subjects
- A limited sample of contents
- Competencies versus knowledge
- Economic bias
- The lowest common denominator of 65 systems

## 2. Place of the content in the country

- Degree of curriculum dependency
- Contribution of actors outside education
- Place of the subjects in the pre-primary and primary phase
- Difference in importance
  - Importance of economic development
    - In rich countries
    - In countries in economic development (cf Vietnam)

# 3. Sampling of students

- What with children with special needs?
- Repeating pupils at the age of 15
- Range of samples: 95 % (Germ), 61 % (GB), 51 % (USA)
- Early leaving before 15 years (Shanghai 35 %)
- Non accepted youngsters (migrant children in China)

# 4. Tests and questionnaires

- Proportion multiple choice vs open questions
- Use of questionnaires of principals
  - Perceptions vs reality
- Validity
  - Intended curriculum vs factual curriculum
  - Possible cultural bias: : omitting some questions (no look on differences)

# 5. Statistical elaboration

- Complexity of the statistical elaboration
- Not all pupils of the sample respond all questions (partial samples)
- A lot of discussions between experts
  - Indicators for correction of the raw results ( SES, ethnic situation, language at home, neighbourhood, gender, intelligence...)
  - Formulas differ depending on the used criteria for indicators
  - The Rash scale
  - ...

# Conclusion

- Good instrument for reflection on tendencies
- Interpretation necessary depending on the own education system
- Taking in account the assumptions and the limits of the tests, it 's a useful means for learning from each other
- No possibility to make rankings or judgments
- A fortiori, no rankings of the system in totality.