# Improving School Leadership

## VOLUME 1: POLICY AND PRACTICE

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# Chapter 2

## (Re)Defining school leadership responsibilities

*This chapter brings together theory and practice to provide recommendations for countries to clarify the core responsibilities of school leadership. This (re)definition of responsibilities is one of the key policy strategies to improve school leadership. School leaders can only make a difference if they have autonomy and support to make significant decisions and if their responsibilities are well defined. This chapter presents evidence on the specific leadership roles that can positively influence teaching and learning and argues that school leadership responsibilities should be redefined to focus on teaching quality, goal setting and implementing intelligent assessment systems, strategic resource management and collaboration with external partners. It also looks at ways in which leadership definitions or frameworks can be designed and improved to support recruitment, training and evaluation of school leaders.*

School leadership can make a difference in student outcomes by creating the right environment for teachers to improve classroom practice and student learning, as highlighted in Chapter 1. Research evidence shows that there are specific leadership roles that have greater influence on teaching and learning than others. In practice, however, school leaders can only have an impact on student outcomes if they have enough autonomy and support to make important decisions and if their major responsibilities are well-defined and focused on teaching and learning.

The definition of core leadership responsibilities needs to be guided by research on the leadership practices most likely to improve teaching and learning as well as by specific country needs and challenges. In many countries, there is a lack of clarity about the core tasks school leaders should dedicate their time to. Improved definitions of core leadership responsibilities can provide a firm foundation for the profession and constitute a key point of reference both for those who consider entering the profession and for those who are in charge of recruiting, training and evaluating them.

## 2.1 Supporting school leadership autonomy

Much current and emerging national education policy rests on the assumption that increased school autonomy can play a positive role in the implementation of education reform and provision of leadership for improved learning. According to reports by their principals, a substantial proportion of students in OECD and partner countries attend schools in which school leaders have a high degree autonomy in different areas of decision making (OECD, 2007a).

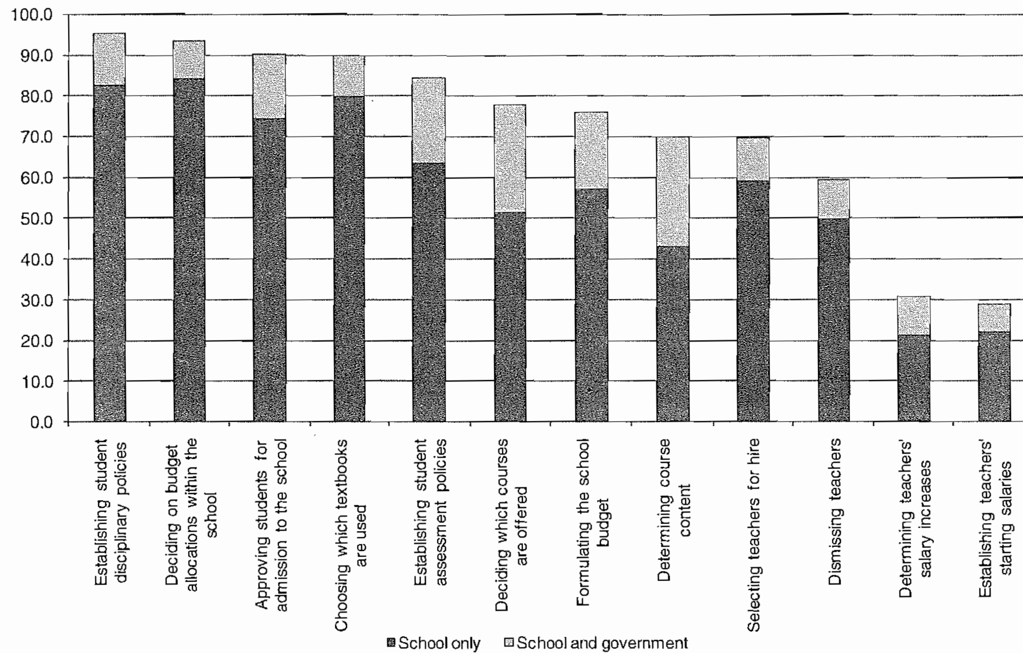
Figure 2.1 shows that on average across OECD countries, schools have high levels of autonomy in resource and curricular decisions and lower levels of autonomy in staffing decisions such as teacher salary levels and teacher recruitment. On OECD average, around 90% or more 15-year-old students are in schools with considerable responsibility in disciplinary policies, student admission, choice of textbooks and budget allocations within the school and around 70% or more of these students are enrolled in schools with considerable responsibility for formulating the school budget, establishing student assessment policies, deciding which courses are offered and determining course content.

Of course, the OECD average masks important differences between countries. While in countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States, school leaders' responsibility tends to be high in most domains, it was much more limited in countries such as Greece, Poland, Portugal and Turkey (OECD, 2007a). Moreover, in some countries, there are high variations between the different domains of decision making.

Looking at cross-country relationships, analysis from OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) indicates that school autonomy in the areas surveyed is positively correlated with student performance. The data suggests that in those countries in which principals reported, on average, higher degrees of autonomy in most of the aspects of decision making surveyed, the average performance of students tended to be higher (OECD, 2007a).

**Figure 2.1 Average involvement of schools in decision making across OECD countries, 2006**

*OECD average percentage of 15-year-old students in schools where the principal reported considerable responsibility of the school (principal, teachers and/or school boards) in decision making*




*Source:* OECD (2007a), *PISA 2006: Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World*, OECD, Paris, *http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/141887160188.*

However, school autonomy alone does not automatically lead to improved leadership. On one hand, in increasingly autonomous schools, it is important that the core responsibilities of school leaders are clearly defined and delimited. School leaders should have an explicit mandate to focus on those domains that are most conducive to improved school and student outcomes. Otherwise, school autonomy may lead to role overload, by making the job more time-consuming, increasing administrative and managerial workloads and deflecting time and attention away from instructional leadership.

On the other hand, effective school autonomy requires support. School leaders need time and capacity to engage in the core practices of leadership that contribute to improved teaching and learning. It is therefore important that the devolution of responsibilities comes with provisions for new models of more distributed leadership, new types of training and development for school leadership and appropriate support and incentives (Chapters 3 to 5).

There seems to be ample evidence from research and country practice on which to encourage country, provincial and local policy to use new understandings of core leadership dimensions as a basis for designing the core domains of responsibility of their future leaders. Recent research employing meta-analyses of data has broadened and strengthened the knowledge base to guide policy reform targeting leadership and student learning (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006; Marzano *et al.*, 2005; Robinson, 2007). This chapter focuses on four broad groups of interrelated leadership responsibilities that have consistently been identified as associated with improved student outcomes.

First, *leadership focused on supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality* is widely recognised as a core component of effective leadership. Teacher quality is perhaps the most important school-level determinant of student performance (OECD, 2005). The leadership responsibilities associated with improved teacher quality include coordinating the curriculum and teaching programme, monitoring and evaluating teacher practice, promoting teacher professional development and supporting collaborative work cultures.

Second, school leadership that concentrates on *setting learning objectives and implementing intelligent assessment systems* has been found to help students develop their full potential. Aligning instruction with national standards, setting school goals for student performance, measuring progress against those goals and making adjustments in the school programme to improve individual and overall performance are the dynamic aspects of managing curriculum and instruction. School leaders' purposeful use of data is essential to ensure that attention is being paid to the progress of every student.

Third, with increased school autonomy policies, school leaders have more and more discretion over human and financial resource management. The *strategic use of resources and their alignment with pedagogical purposes* are key to focusing all operational activities within the school on the objective of improving teaching and learning.

Fourth, recent research (Pont, Nusche and Hopkins, 2008) has highlighted the benefits of *school leadership beyond the school borders*. Various leadership engagements beyond the school, in partnerships with other schools, communities, social agencies, universities and policy makers can increase professional learning, enhance improvement through mutual assistance and create greater cohesion among all those concerned with the achievement and well-being of every child.

While these domains have proved to be important leadership domains in many settings, there should be room for individualisation by size and type of school and by local, regional and country context. Complaints about "designer leaders" produced by highly uniform or central development programmes should be taken seriously (Ingvarson *et al.*, 2006), especially because much of the research on effective leadership stems from a few countries only and is not always easily transferable across contexts.

## 2.2 Core responsibilities of school leadership

This section explores the four core responsibilities of school leadership presented above. It analyses the degree of autonomy school leaders have in these domains across participating countries and it provides evidence on the impact of each area of responsibility on school and student outcomes.

Part of the picture becomes evident by looking at the latest available data from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2006), which asked lower secondary school principals to report whether schools had considerable responsibility in different areas of school decisions (OECD, 2007a). The PISA data is complemented by more qualitative information from *Improving School Leadership* country background reports on school leadership in both primary and secondary schools. School leadership, as discussed in this chapter does not refer only to the principal, but may be shared by several school-level professionals (Chapter 3).

### *Supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality*

All countries are seeking to close achievement gaps between low-performing and high-performing schools as well as to enhance the performance of all students. In this context, scholars (Elmore, 2008; Mulford, 2003) are suggesting that an essential function of school leadership is to foster "organisational learning", that is to build the capacity of the school for high performance and continuous improvement through management of the curriculum and teaching programme, development of staff and creating the climate and conditions for collective learning.

#### *Managing the curriculum and teaching programme*

Schools have a high degree of responsibility in decisions related to curricular issues. There are differences within the three domains measured by PISA (2006): determining course content, deciding which courses are offered and choosing textbooks. On average across OECD countries, 80% of 15-year-olds are enrolled in schools where the school alone has considerable responsibility for choosing textbooks. By contrast, only 51% of students are in schools where only school-level stakeholders have considerable responsibility to decide which courses are offered and 43% of students are in schools that have autonomy in determining course content.

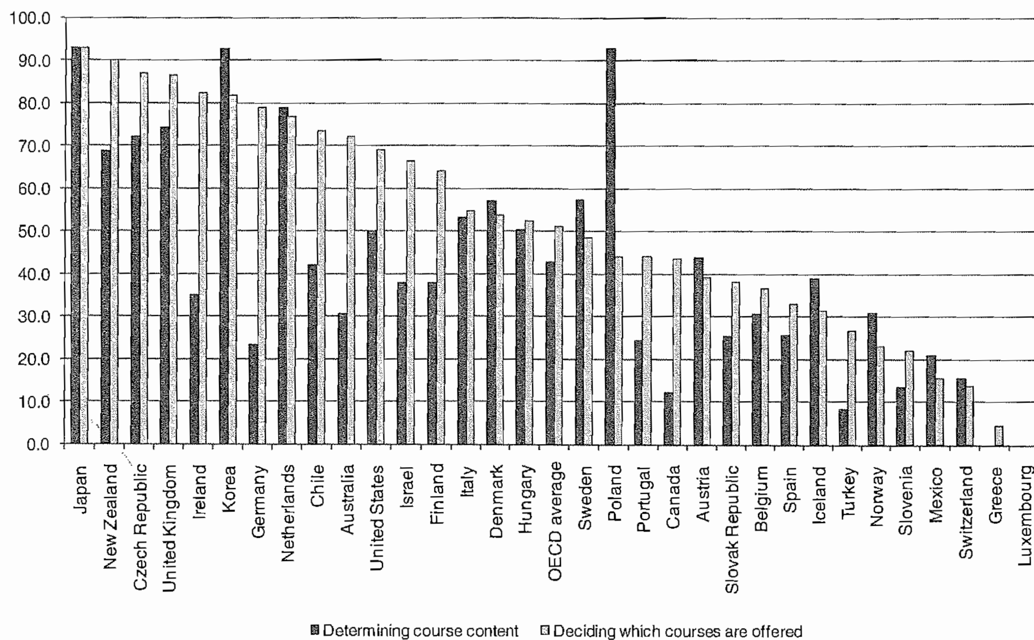
As shown in Figure 2.2 there are important differences between countries. In Japan and New Zealand, over 90% of students are in schools where the school has considerable responsibility in deciding on course offer, compared to less than 16% in Greece, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Mexico. Concerning course content, in Japan, Poland and Korea, over 90% of students are in schools where the course content is set by school-level professionals, whereas in Greece, Luxembourg, Turkey, Canada, Slovenia and Switzerland, it is 16% or less.

PISA data also show that the determination of course offerings and course content is often a joint endeavour between regional and/or national authorities and the school – on average across the OECD, 27% of students are enrolled in schools where this is the case. Most countries participating in the *Improving School Leadership* activity establish a core curriculum or curriculum framework at the national level. Where this is not the case, some form of national curricula direction is often evolving. National policy is often further specified at the regional or municipal level. It is the school leader's job to implement school curriculum and instruction within these policy boundaries in a manner that achieves the policy makers' intent effectively and efficiently.

School leaders generally have a range of discretion in how they design curriculum content and sequencing, organise teaching and instructional resources and monitor quality. Since the curriculum core or framework does not usually specify the entire curriculum, local leaders usually have flexibility to add or give additional emphasis to content. However, in some countries including Luxembourg, Greece, Switzerland, Mexico, Slovenia and Turkey, a large proportion of curricular decisions are being taken by various levels of government.

**Figure 2.2 School leadership autonomy in curricular decisions, 2006**

*Percentage of 15-year-old students enrolled in schools where principals reported that only schools (i.e. principals, teachers and school boards) had considerable responsibility in determining course content and deciding which courses are offered.*




*Source:* OECD (2007a), *PISA 2006: Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World*, OECD, Paris, *http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/141887160188.*

Giving schools a greater say in curricular decision making seems to be positively related to student performance. The data suggest that in countries where principals reported higher degrees of responsibility, performance in science tended to be higher (a statistically significant positive correlation). According to findings from the PISA study (OECD, 2007a), the percentage of schools that reported having considerable responsibility for decision on course content accounts for 27% of cross-country performance differences; for decisions on choice of textbooks it is 26%. Of course these cross-country relationships can be affected by many factors.

Much of the research literature on effective leadership has emphasised curricular decision making as a key dimension of leadership for improved student learning. As Goldring and colleagues put it, "effective leaders understand the importance of rigorous curriculum offered by teachers and experienced by students and the effects of a rigorous curriculum on gains in student achievement" (Goldring *et al.*, 2007). According to their reviews of research, teaching focused on ambitious academic content leads to increases in student performance (Teddlie and Springfield, 1993; Wong *et al.*, 1996) and the performance of low-achieving students can be improved by providing them with better content (Biancarosa and Snow, 2004; McKnight *et al.*, 1987; Peterson, 1988).

In her meta-analysis of research, Robinson (2007) shows that "direct oversight of curriculum through school-wide coordination across classes and year levels and alignment to school goals" has a small-to-moderate positive impact on student achievement. She also shows that school-level professionals in higher performing schools spend more time on managing or coordinating the curriculum with their teaching staff

than leaders in otherwise similar lower performing schools, a finding that is supported by research on instructional leadership (Heck *et al.*, 1990; Heck *et al.*, 1991; Marks and Printy, 2003). Marzano *et al.* (2005) also list school leaders' direct involvement in design and implementation of the curriculum as one of the leadership practices that had a statistically significant correlation with student achievement as measured by standardised assessments in the United States.

### *Teacher monitoring and evaluation*

The country background reports prepared for this study indicate that across participating countries teacher monitoring and evaluation is an important responsibility carried out by school leaders. While the nature and consequences of teacher evaluation vary widely across the participating countries, there are formal provisions for teacher evaluation in 14 countries and no such provisions in 4 countries (of 18 countries reporting specifically on this issue). The form, rigour, content and consequences of evaluation vary greatly across countries and sometimes within them. In most countries where teacher evaluation is carried out, it is conducted as a part of a larger quality review or school improvement process. Purposes of evaluation distribute rather evenly over formative, performance appraisal, professional development planning and support for promotion.

In general, regular teacher evaluations involve the school principal and other senior school staff, but in some countries such as France and Belgium (French Community), they also involve a panel with external members (OECD, 2005). Different criteria for evaluation may involve assessment of teaching performance, in-service training and in some cases measures of student performance. Classroom observation, interviews and documentation prepared by the teacher are the typical methods used in the evaluations.

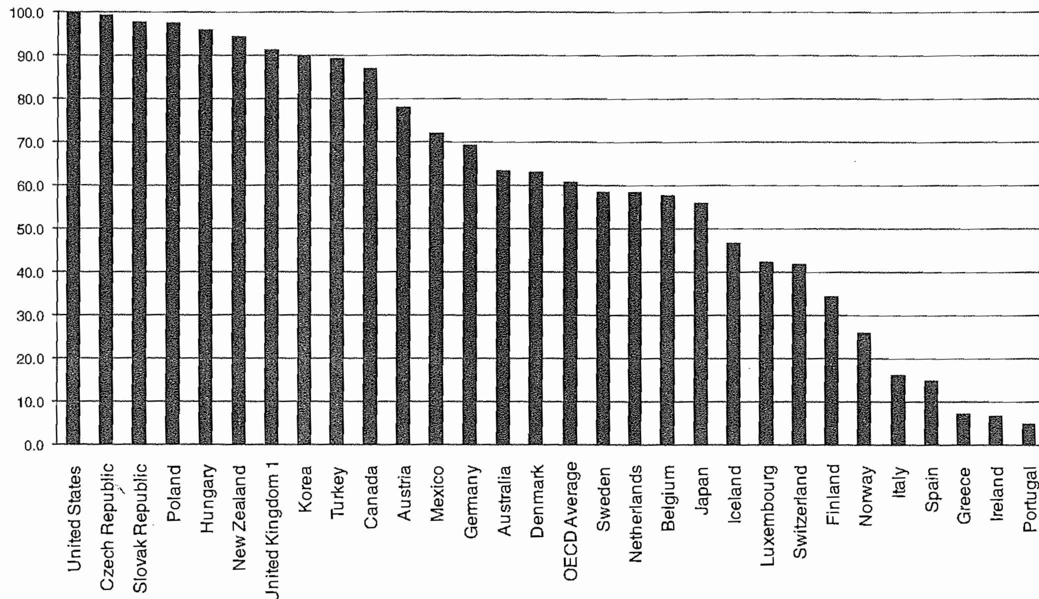
Weight placed on principal observation or monitoring varies from considerable (Slovenia) to slight (Chile, where the principal's input counts for only 10% of the total). Principals can rely almost exclusively on their observations (Slovenia) or on a wide range of other data, such as reviewing teachers' plans, observing in teacher meetings, reviewing teacher communications with parents, pupil performance data, peer review and teacher self-evaluations, among others (for example, Denmark, England, Korea, Scotland and New Zealand). Frequency of observations ranges from as often as three to six times per year in England to once every four years in Chile, with several countries seeming to settle on annual observations. Where teacher evaluation is conducted it almost always entails some form of annual formal meeting between leader and teacher.

Data from the 2003 PISA study gives an indication of the extent to which school leaders engage in the monitoring of lessons (Figure 2.3). The graph below shows that on average across the OECD, 61% of 15-year-olds are enrolled in schools whose principals report that the practices of mathematics teachers were monitored over the preceding year through principal or senior staff observations (OECD, 2004).

Several research studies indicate that school leader involvement in classroom observation and feedback seems to be associated with better student performance. Robinson (2007) cites four studies showing that setting teaching performance standards and regular classroom observation helped to improve teaching (Andrews and Soder, 1987; Bamburg and Andrews, 1991; Heck, 1992; Heck *et al.*, 1990). Woessmann *et al.* (2007) using econometric analysis of PISA data showed that student achievement seems to be higher when teachers are held accountable through the involvement of principals and external inspectors in monitoring lessons.

**Figure 2.3 Observation of lessons by principals or senior staff, 2003**

*Percentage of 15-year-old students enrolled in schools where principals reported that they monitored the practice of mathematics teachers in the preceding year through observation of lessons by the principal or senior staff*




Note. 1. Response rate too low to ensure comparability.
*Source:* OECD (2004), *Learning for Tomorrow's World: First Results from PISA 2003*, OECD, Paris.

In practice, however, school leaders do not always have enough time and capacity to focus on this important responsibility. Although teacher evaluation is becoming more common, in many OECD countries, principals and other senior staff often lack the time, tools or training to perform teacher evaluations satisfactorily. According to OECD (2005), there appeared to be little observation of classroom teaching by principals in secondary schools and teachers often expressed concerns about whether principals and other senior staff were adequately equipped for evaluation and about the criteria used. In a number of countries there did not seem to be coherent and well-resourced systems of teacher performance appraisal. As a result, teachers did not receive appropriate recognition for their work and there was little systematic information to guide professional development priorities (OECD, 2005).

### *Supporting teacher professional development*

School leadership also plays a vital role in promoting and participating in professional learning and development for teachers. OECD (2005) gave an overview of the extent of responsibilities schools have in establishing and funding professional development opportunities. Countries where there is more autonomy at the school level also have greater funding capacities to develop more individualised training programmes for teachers.

Different types of professional development activities exist simultaneously but their relative weight has changed over the years. OECD (2005) notes that school-based professional development activities involving the entire staff or significant groups of teachers are becoming more common and teacher-initiated personal development probably less so, at least in terms of programmes supported through public funds. Most countries now link professional development to the developmental priorities of the school

and co-ordinate in-service education in the school accordingly. School management and in some cases local school authorities, play an important role in planning professional development activities. Some countries, including England, are also ensuring that teachers identify their own professional development needs.

In her analysis of the research on learning-centred leadership, Robinson (2007) identified the promotion of and participation in teacher learning and development as the leadership dimension most strongly associated with improved student outcomes. Robinson calculated 17 effect sizes derived from six studies yielding an average effect size of 0.84, which she interpreted as a large and educationally significant effect. She emphasises that this dimension goes beyond just providing opportunities for staff development; it includes the participation of leaders as the "leading learner" in staff development.

Leithwood *et al.* (2006) also emphasise the importance of "developing people" to improve teaching and learning. They underline the need to complement professional development programmes with less formal support such as individual consideration and intellectual stimulation. Several studies show that the role of school leadership in professional development is especially important in low-performing schools in challenging circumstances (Day, 1999; Gray, 2000; Harris and Chapman, 2002). In their meta-analysis on "school leadership that works", Marzano *et al.* (2005) identify leadership practices that recognise and reward individual accomplishments and demonstrate awareness of personal aspects of staff as core practices of successful leadership.

Another recent study on leadership for organisational learning and student outcomes (LOLSO) also showed the importance of ongoing, relevant professional learning opportunities (Mulford *et al.*, 2004). It emphasised not only organisational learning, but a trusting and collaborative climate, a shared and monitored mission, the capacity to take initiatives and risks and ongoing relevant professional learning opportunities. Yet another study, in three European countries, shows that schools with effective leadership were also found to be schools where teachers were motivated to participate in training, showing connections between school leadership, school climate and willingness to participate in professional development (Rajala *et al.*, 2007).

However, the OECD (2005) activity on teacher policy revealed that professional development is often fragmented, unrelated to teaching practice and lacking in intensity and follow-up. Evidence from that study shows that in several countries there is a lack of coordination between teacher preliminary training and in-service training and often there are concerns about the quality of teacher induction and professional development opportunities. Although in most countries there are many possibilities of in-service training programmes, such training is often patchy and not sufficiently sequenced and aligned.

School leaders can play a key role in providing and promoting in-service professional development programmes for teachers. It is essential that school leaders understand this aspect of leadership as one of their key responsibilities. They can ensure that teacher professional development is relevant to the local school context and aligned with overall school improvement goals and with teachers' needs. To enhance school leaders' capacity to promote staff development, policy makers should emphasise the core responsibility of teacher professional development and consider devolving discretion over training and development budgets to the school level so that school leaders can offer and coordinate meaningful professional learning opportunities for all their teachers.

### *Supporting collaborative work cultures*

Although little internationally comparable data is available, the country background reports indicate that supporting collaborative work cultures is an increasingly important and recognised responsibility of school leaders in several countries. This involves fostering teamwork among teachers and creating environments in which student learning is the central focus. Some OECD countries like Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden (Box 2.1) have more of a history of teamwork and co-operation among their teaching staff, especially in primary schools. Others such as Ireland are shifting to encourage such practice. Denmark reports that content reform is leading to the need for more multidisciplinary teamwork among teachers.

**Box 2.1 Leading learning organisations in Sweden**

In a recent study from Sweden, Scherp and Scherp (2006) illuminate the relationship between the work of the school leader and the way in which the school acts as an organisation. Eleven schools that aimed at working in ways that could be characterised as learning organisations were followed over five years. The more successful school leaders in this context used more of their time giving feedback to the teachers about their work. They also challenged the thoughts of the staff more frequently. By asking questions such as "How do we know that?", "Could we test another way of doing it?" and "What do we know about how people in other schools do it?" the school leaders contributed to a learning atmosphere. School leaders in more learning-oriented schools stimulated the teachers to organise time during which learning-directed discussions could take place. Working teams among teachers were accepted and the school leaders communicated with the staff a great deal *via* the team leaders.

*Source:* Scherp and Scherp (2006).

School leaders are increasingly being asked to promote organisational learning that enhances schools' ability to pursue intelligent learning processes in a way that increases the organisation's effectiveness and capacity for continuous improvement (Mulford, 2003). While teaching has traditionally been practised as a solo art behind closed classroom doors, a large body of convincing research in the last two decades favours teaching that is collegial and transparent, cooperative and collaborative and conducted in teams and larger professional learning communities (Little, 1982; Louis and Kruse, 1995; Louis *et al.*, 1996; Stoll and Louis, 2007).

Research has shown that school leaders supporting teacher professional learning communities use norms of collegiality, collective responsibility and shared goals (Louis and Kruse, 1995), professional development, reflective practice and quality improvement processes. They promote trust among teachers by helping to develop clarity about common purposes and roles for collaboration and they foster continuous dialogue among school staff and provide adequate resources to support collaboration (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006).

Policy makers can promote and encourage teamwork among school staff by explicitly recognising the core role of school leaders in building collaborative cultures and by sharing and disseminating best practice in this domain.

## *Goal-setting, assessment and accountability*

School leadership focused on goal-setting, assessment and evaluation can positively influence teacher and student performance. Aligning instruction with external standards, setting school goals for student performance, measuring progress against those goals and making adjustments in the school programme to improve performance are the dynamic aspects of managing curriculum and instruction. School leaders play a key role in integrating external and internal accountability systems by supporting their teaching staff in aligning instruction with agreed learning goals and performance standards.

Annex 2.A1. provides an overview of the types of accountability frameworks countries are engaged in. In most countries, there is a long tradition of school inspections where leaders have been held accountable for their use of public funding and for the structures and processes they establish. While inspections remain important in most educational jurisdictions, many countries have developed additional means to measure school success, such as school self-evaluations and measurements of student performance (OECD, 2007b).

The majority of OECD countries report that they have or are developing some form of national goals, objectives, or standards of student performance. To assess these, accountability frameworks in most jurisdictions rely on both school information and student information. To evaluate *school performance*, two-thirds of OECD countries have regulations that require lower secondary schools to be inspected regularly and slightly fewer countries have regulatory requirements for schools to conduct periodic school self-evaluations. One-half of OECD countries have both of these regulatory requirements. To obtain information on *student performance*, periodic standardised assessments of students in compulsory education occur in two-thirds of OECD countries and just over half of the OECD countries have national examinations that have a civil effect on lower secondary school students (such as proceeding to a higher level of education).

Recent empirical research emphasises high learning standards and strong accountability systems as key to improving student learning. Hanushek and Raymond (2004) reported a positive relationship between strong accountability systems and student achievement. West and colleagues argue that the purposeful use of data is a key explanation for effective leadership in schools in challenging circumstances (West *et al.*, 2005). According to Woessmann *et al.* (2007), accountability measures aimed at students, teachers and schools combine to lift student achievement scores. Using PISA data, Woessmann *et al.* (2007) indicate that student achievement seemed to be somewhat higher when standardised exit exams exist. These might have an effect on student promotion to incentivise high performance. They also found some evidence that students seemed to perform better if their schools were held accountable for reaching performance standards.

However, just producing data is obviously not enough for accountability systems to have a positive impact on student learning. According to O'Day (2002), accountability systems will only lead to improvement if they "focus attention on information relevant to teaching and learning, motivate individuals and schools to use that information and expend effort to improve practice, build the knowledge necessary for interpreting and applying the new information to improve practice and allocate resources for all the above." Several authors have argued that bureaucratic accountability needs to be complemented by "professional accountability" (Adams and Kirst, 1999; Darling-Hammond and Ascher, 1991; O'Day, 2002; O'Reilly, 1996), *i.e.* the collaboration among

professionals, both teachers and school leaders, to address student needs and to continuously improve their own practice.

According to OECD (2007b), 19 OECD countries use information from student assessment and school evaluation to motivate decisions on school improvement, while only a few countries including Korea and the United States, reported using accountability information to provide financial rewards or sanctions to schools. According to *Improving School Leadership* country background reports, in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland performance data are used to track and monitor student progress and guide ongoing improvement, although Northern Ireland notes that internal assessment data are not used enough to check student progress over time or to modify classroom practice and improve standards of students' work.

To make external accountability beneficial for student learning, "data-wise" school leadership is needed. This involves school leaders developing skills in interpreting test results and using data as a central tool to plan and design appropriate strategies for improvement (Box 2.2). School leaders also need to involve their staff in the use of accountability data. Participatory evaluation and data analysis can strengthen professional learning communities within schools and engage those who need to change their practice to improve results (Earl and Katz, 2002).

**Box 2.2 England: using evaluation information for improving performance**

During an OECD case study visit to England, the study team identified outstanding and effective practices of school leadership for improved learning outcomes. Both case study schools had improved their school performance and results in recent years and presented positive similarities. For example, they used data as a key vehicle to engage the leadership team and teaching body in school improvement and student outcome information to develop strategies for learning with individual students and classrooms. In both schools, information was revisited every six weeks. Data was analysed at the individual level and at the classroom level, providing an overview of where problems lay. Intervention teams could then step in to look into potential underperformance and respond to challenges. This good use of data allows the adoption of personalised learning processes. These schools had the following to be able to respond quickly:

- **The development and use of distributed leadership:** leadership teams are well developed and have clear roles and tasks defined.
- **The creation of intervention teams:** they are able to react quickly and intervene to help and support students or teachers who might be underperforming.
- **A culture of constant assessment:** In both schools classrooms are open and all are ready for evaluation, assessment and action.
- **The adoption of a systemic approach to leadership**, taking opportunities to expand and benefit from external sources.

*Source*: Huber *et al.* (2008).

### *Strategic resource management*

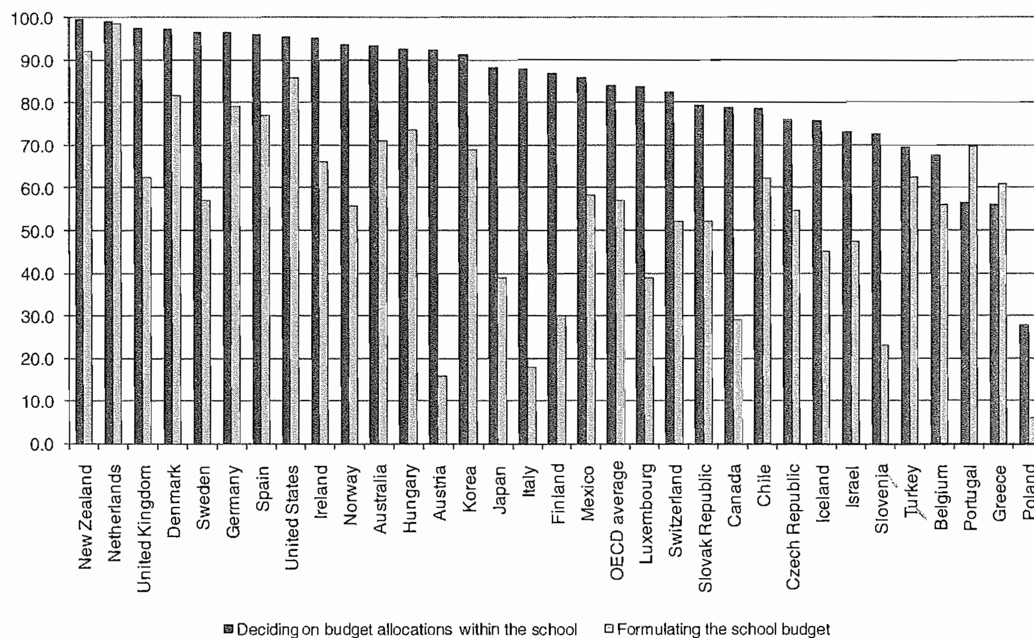
In increasingly autonomous school systems, school leaders have more and more discretion over human and financial resource management. The strategic use of resources and their alignment with pedagogical purposes can help to focus all operational activities within the school on the objective of improving teaching and learning.

*Financial resources*

Figure 2.4 shows that school leaders exercise a considerable amount of discretion over decision making involving financial resources. On average across OECD countries, 84% of 15-year-old students are enrolled in schools that have full autonomy in deciding how their budgets are spent and 57% are in schools that are fully autonomous in formulating their budgets. However, across countries there are important differences in the extent of budgetary autonomy. In Poland, Austria and Italy, fewer than 20% of students are enrolled in schools where the principal reported that only the school has considerable responsibility for formulating the budget, whereas in the Netherlands and New Zealand it is more than 90%. Overall, responsibility for deciding how money is spent within the school is higher than responsibility for budget formulation in all countries except Greece and Portugal.

**Figure 2.4 School leadership autonomy in resources, 2006**

*Percentage of 15-year-old students enrolled in schools where the principal reported that only the school (i.e. principals, teachers and school boards) has considerable responsibility in formulating the school budget and deciding on budget allocations within the school.*



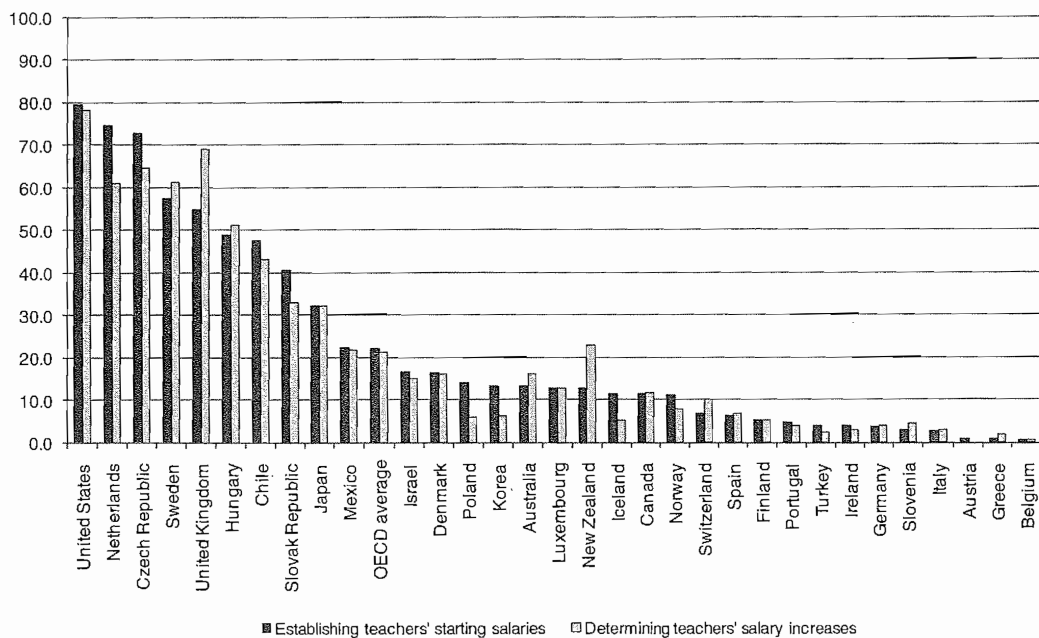

*Source:* OECD (2007a), *PISA 2006: Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World*, OECD, Paris, *http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/141887160188.*

In addition, within the budget, regulations in most countries allocate responsibility for property and facilities management to the principal. The value of school assets is considerable. Where devolution has put even greater decision making discretion for maintenance and repair and even more substantial capital projects in the hands of school leaders, their workload for managing these assets is correspondingly greater and they are asked to fulfil responsibilities that call for expertise many do not have through formal training. Where this is the purview of the governing board, it is often formally or informally delegated to the school leader.

While school leaders across OECD countries have considerable budgetary autonomy, they have a modest role in setting teachers' starting salaries or awarding salary increases in general (Figure 2.5). The OECD country average number of 15-year-old pupils enrolled in schools reporting autonomy in setting starting salaries and awarding salary increases is 22% and 21%, respectively. There are exceptions to this norm: in the United States, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Hungary, schools play an important role in teacher wage issues.

**Figure 2.5 School leadership autonomy in teacher remuneration, 2006**

*Percentage of 15-year-old students enrolled in schools where the principal reported that only the school (i.e. principals, teachers and school boards) has considerable responsibility in establishing teachers' starting salaries and determining teachers' salary levels*




*Source*: OECD (2007a), *PISA 2006: Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World*, OECD, Paris, *http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/141887160188.*

The limited degree of autonomy in teacher salaries somewhat reduces the first impression of large budgetary autonomy across countries. In fact, teacher salaries, over which most school authorities have no control, comprise a great share of local school resources in nearly all, if not all, participating countries. The share of resources over which there is discretion is thus in fact rather small. Moreover, some countries (*e.g* Hungary) report that national economic constriction has reduced the amount of funding allocated to the school level, thus further diminishing principals' discretion over financial resources.

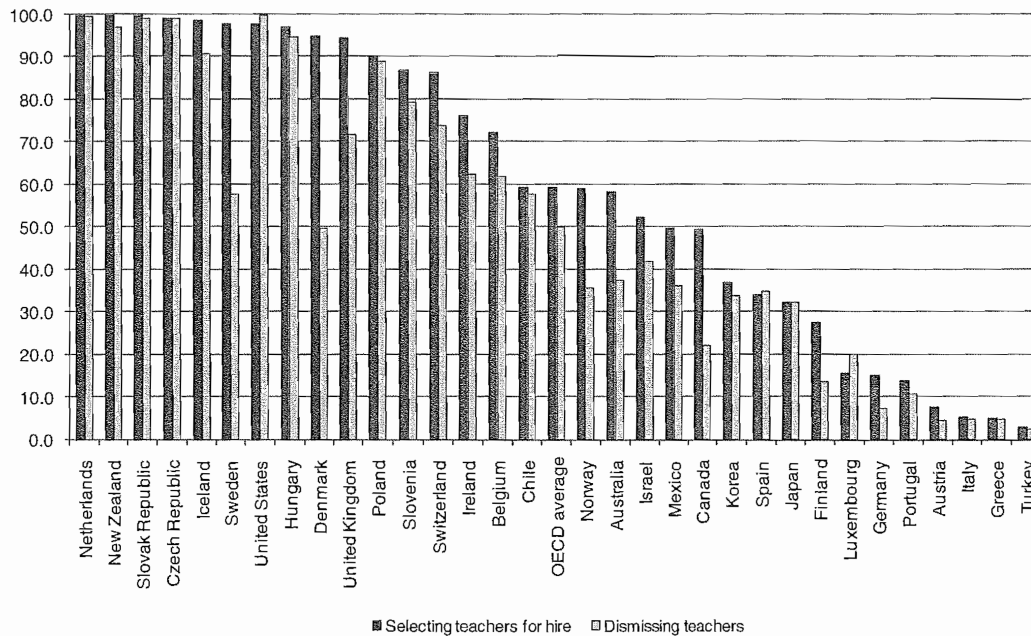
## *Human resources*

Another vital decision in the school's strategic resourcing is the appointment and dismissal of teachers (Figure 2.6). On average, 59% of student enrolments are found in schools reporting discretion in teacher hiring and 50% in schools reporting discretion in teacher dismissal. This is another reflection of devolution of responsibilities to the schools but there are still variations across countries. There is a group of countries

(Netherlands, New Zealand, the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, United States and Hungary) which have almost full responsibility for both hiring and dismissing teachers, while in countries like Turkey, Greece, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Germany and Luxemburg, school leaders have a very limited role. It is worth noting that the responsibilities for hiring teachers are wider than those for dismissal. In some countries, for example Denmark or Sweden, there is a large difference between the two, with 95% and 98% of students in schools with responsibilities for hiring as opposed to 50% and 58% respectively with responsibilities for dismissing teachers.

**Figure 2.6 School leadership autonomy in teacher hiring and firing, 2006**

*Percentage of 15-year-old students enrolled in schools where the principal reported that only the school (i.e. principals, teachers and school boards) has considerable responsibility in selecting teachers for hire and dismissing teachers*




*Source:* OECD (2007a), *PISA 2006: Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World*, OECD, Paris, *http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/141887160188.*

While this data includes the responsibilities of both school-level professionals and school boards, a closer look at qualitative information provided in country background reports breaks this down. In a number of countries, even where the board or council retains the responsibility for teacher selection and dismissal, it is customary for the principal to be involved in those processes, thus creating a greater degree of principal influence than is officially recognised. Among the countries participating in this study, principals are involved in selection and dismissal or are delegated those responsibilities in Chile, Denmark, New Zealand and Norway. On the other hand, principals in other countries, such as the French Community of Belgium, France and Portugal, are as a rule not involved at all.

Although the level of responsibility in teacher recruitment seems rather high, the degree of discretion of school leaders is often limited by complex sets of rules that might reduce their room for manoeuvre in choosing suitable candidates. In some countries, such

as Belgium (Flanders), priority has to be given to the candidate with the highest level of seniority and teachers with permanent status have priority over temporary teachers. Other rules may require that priority be given to those who have worked for a certain number of years and, where two candidates are equal in this regard, priority is given to those who have worked in the same network of schools, or been employed by the same organising authority (OECD, 2005).

Moreover, dismissals may not be possible because of status, or they may be due to redundancies, enrolment decline or subjects no longer offered. In fact, while many countries report that teachers can be dismissed, it appears that public school teachers are rarely dismissed on performance grounds (OECD, 2005). The lack of simple, transparent and accepted procedures for dealing with ineffective teachers means that the problem is often not tackled. This has adverse consequences for the reputation of schools and the teaching profession (OECD, 2005).

School leaders' ability to select their teaching staff is central to their ability to establish a school culture and capacity conducive to better student performance. Lack of school leader involvement in recruiting and dismissing teachers may reduce their capacity to respond and it is difficult to hold school leaders accountable for learning outcomes when they have no say in selecting their staff. The effect of lack of involvement in such a critical area is illustrated by the words of one school director in Austria who compared leading a school to managing a football team: "If I cannot choose the members of my team, I cannot be responsible for winning on the field." (Stoll *et al.*, 2008)

A number of studies support the view that budgeting is a central element of leadership for improved school outcomes. Strategic resource management refers to a leadership dimension that involves securing resources and ensuring that their use is aligned to pedagogical purposes (Robinson, 2007). Especially when resources are used for staffing and teaching purposes, their strategic use has been found to be associated with improved student achievement (Bamburg and Andrews, 1991; Brewer, 1993; Heck and Marcoulides, 1996; Heck *et al.*, 1990; Heck *et al.*, 1991; Hoy *et al.*, 1990; Wellisch *et al.*, 1978).

While strategic resource management is likely to be beneficial for schools, there are widespread concerns about the ability of school leaders to fulfil this responsibility effectively. The capacity of school leaders in shifting financial and human resources strategically may be limited due to lack of training and lack of focus in the field. Often principals report having to engage in operational delivery issues and put aside the strategic planning that is necessary to provide a strategic vision and choice of resources. While hiring may be a possibility, dismissing rarely is and establishing the whole school budget is often limited to a formula depending on the number of students enrolled in the schools.

### *Leadership beyond the school borders*

Yet another role that has grown in recent times to add to the repertoire of tasks to be handled by school leaders is that of collaborating with other schools or communities around them. Schools and their leaders are strengthening collaboration, forming networks, sharing resources, or working together. Moreover, school leaders are becoming more broadly engaged in activities beyond their schools, reaching out to their immediate environment and articulating connections between the school and the outside world.

These wider engagements focus leadership beyond the people in the school leaders' own buildings to the welfare of all young people in the city, town or region. They also focus on the improvement of the profession and its work as a whole – but in ways that access learning and support from others in order to provide reciprocal benefits for leaders' own communities. This articulation and coordination of effort and energy across individuals and institutions and amid common purposes and improvement goals is what Hopkins (2008) defines as *system leadership,* "a systemic approach that integrates the classroom, school and system levels in the pursuit of enhancing student achievement" (Hopkins, 2008) It refers to thinking about the system as a whole as the basis of change management and requires interrelationships and interdependence between different levels of the system.

**Table 2.1 School collaboration in different countries**

| Country | Characteristics |
|---|---|
| Belgium (Fl.) | School communities have been created as voluntary collaborative partnerships between schools. They aim to have common staffing, ICT and welfare resources management. |
| Denmark | Co-operation in post-compulsory education has been promoted by way of the creation of administrative groups that can be set up locally or regionally between self-governing institutions to optimise their joint resources. |
| England | A variety of approaches to co-operation are stimulated by the government – federations of schools, national leaders of education, school improvement partners, etc. |
| Finland | 2003 legislative reform has enhanced school co-operation aiming to ensure integrity of students' study paths. |
| France | "School basins" have been implemented to ensure collaborative partnerships between schools to work together in student orientation, educational coherence between different types of schools, common management of shared material and human resources. |
| Hungary | Micro-regional partnerships based on economic and professional rationalisation were created in 2004 and have resulted in the spreading of common school maintenance in almost all Hungarian micro regions. These networks for co-operation are the scenes of professional and organisational learning in a way that can function as new forms of education governance and efficient frames of innovation. |
| Korea | Small schools cooperate to overcome problems of size in teacher exchange, curriculum organisation, joint development activities and integrated use of facilities. |
| Netherlands | In primary education, "upper management" takes management responsibility for several schools. About 80% of the primary school boards have an upper school management bureau for central management, policy staff and support staff. |
| New Zealand | School clusters based around geographical communities and communities of interest have been facilitated. |
| Northern Ireland | Post-primary schools share provision of courses with other schools and further education colleges. "School Collaboration Programme" focuses on school co-operation for increased curricular access on the local level. "Specialist Schools" model requires post-primary specialist schools to partner with primary schools and at least one other post-primary. |
| Norway | Tendency to merge several schools to form an administrative unit governed by a school principal. It is quite common for principals to network in the municipalities. |
| Portugal | Common patterns of school governance are that schools are grouped together with a collective management structure. Executive, pedagogical and administrative councils are responsible for their areas. |
| Scotland | Important political promotion of collaboration. "Heads Together" is a nationwide online community for sharing leadership experience. Integrated community schools. |
| Sweden | Municipal directors of education steer principals. Most of them are members of directors of education steering groups where strategy, development and results are discussed. |

*Source: Improving School Leadership* Country Background Reports, available at *www.oecd.org/edu/schoolleadership.*

*Inter-school co-operation* ranges from light approaches of networking to formalised approaches of co-operation that change management structures, such as the Portuguese or the Dutch approach, in which schools have management structures above the school level to share management issues. In all countries participating in this study there are some arrangements for co-operation between schools (Table 2.1) and it is school leaders who both have to manage the different arrangements and are also strongly influenced by the new co-operation arrangements. There may be different purposes and reasons for these collaborations, among which are resource rationalisation and greater coherence in educational supply. The Belgian (Flanders) communities of schools demonstrate different degrees of co-operation, in a continuum from no or hardly any co-operation to those school communities which have developed strong networks and upper management structures providing support for principals (Box 2.3).

**Box 2.3 "Communities of schools" in Belgium (Flanders)**

In Flanders, communities of schools for primary and secondary education have been promoted by the government, starting in 1999. The objective was to make schools work in collaboration by sharing resources, to rationalise supply of courses and to promote cost savings across schools. The government's aspirations were that this new system would enable the enhancement of student guidance systems, particularly in relation to their educational career trajectories; the lessening of the managerial-administrative burden on principals so that they become pedagogical leaders; the increased use of ICT; and the rationalisation of resourcing both in relation to staff recruitment, functioning and evaluation and in relation to co-operation in curriculum. The government incentivises participation by allocating additional staffing and other resources (*e.g.* "envelopes" of teaching hours) specifically to be used through collective decision making processes to be established freely by the communities of schools.

While they have had uneven developments, overall, they have been successful in strengthening co-operation in an environment based on school choice and competition. The evaluation undertaken for secondary school communities shows that communities have strengthened co-operation in developing common personnel policies and policies to allocate human resources across the schools involved and that there seems to be informal co-operation with other school levels such as primary schools and special education. Yet there is still scope for co-operation in rationalising education supply and infrastructures across schools and in providing effective guidance for students.

An example of a successful community can provide a better understanding of their function: it appointed a former head teacher of one of the prestigious, respected and high achieving schools as its full-time coordinating director. Under her leadership, the head teachers from the schools began to meet monthly and, though they still described themselves as "scanning", "getting to know each other" and "building trust", they established a clear agenda for improving the individual guidance and counselling services for students, agreeing on a common process for selection, thus reducing competition within the community, negotiating common working conditions for teachers and creating curricula for students with special educational needs. Teachers themselves were described as being, as yet, "barely aware" of changes and despite a collective "vision for integration", different schools still had "distinct visions and interests". The community had recently agreed to provide targeted support (from the envelope of hours provided to the communities) for one of its members which was finding difficulty in recruitment and staffing.

*Source:* Day *et al.* (2008).

School leaders increasingly engage in *collaboration with their surrounding environments*. In England and Northern Ireland, for example, a lot has been done around the "Extended Schools" agenda which aims at ensuring that all students and families have access to a range of services and other agencies such as social welfare and health outside of curricular time. In Northern Ireland, the Extended School model now involves over 500 schools, *i.e.* 40% of all schools in Northern Ireland. Socio-economic conditions such as residential mobility, parent educational background, family health and living conditions are likely to influence the degree to which students can perform well in school. Leaders thus need to reach out to the community to influence the conditions which influence their own work with students (Hargreaves *et al.*, 2008). These engagements can also contribute to the development of the community's social capital as a whole (Kilpatrick *et al.*, 2001).

In a Swedish case study, Hoog *et al.* found that leaders in schools with successful outputs in terms of academic learning and social goals were engaged in changing school structures and cultures in order to open them to their local communities (Hoog *et al.*, 2005). The surrounding community was seen as a necessary resource in the improvement of the schools.

Finally, in some countries school leaders are also becoming *more connected with local or municipal education authorities* to achieve better connectedness to other public services and community development, as well as to improve student outcomes for all students in the local educational system. The approach adopted in Finland (Box 2.4) can provide some evidence on the practicalities of system leadership at the municipal level.

**Box 2.4 School-municipality co-operation in Finland**

A Finnish city visited by an OECD case study team had implemented a pilot programme in which five principals are also working as district principals, with one-third of their time devoted to the district and two-thirds to their own schools. The purpose of this reform was to improve schooling for the municipality children by ensuring that principals are responsible for their own schools but also for their districts and that there is shared management and supervision as well as evaluation and development of education planning.

The Finnish pilot programme aimed to align school and municipality to think systemically with the key objective of promoting a common schooling vision and a united school system. The reform had provided some positive results, but one of the key conclusions is that for individual school leaders to be able to take on this larger system role, there needs to be distributed leadership at the school level, with more involved deputy heads and leadership teams who can take on some of the tasks of principals when they are taking on larger roles.

*Source:* Hargreaves *et al.* (2008).

Overall, the research has highlighted benefits from co-operation (Pont, Nusche and Hopkins, 2008). First, many types of inter-school co-operation concentrate on managerial and administrative issues and thus can lessen the school leaders' administrative workload. Co-operation of schools can be coordinated by an overarching upper management structure such as in Portugal and Netherlands, or schools can pool and share human and financial resources to reach administrative increases of scale. As a result, school leaders can be relieved of some of their most tedious administrative tasks and can devote more time and attention to leadership focused on improved learning outcomes.

Second, beyond these more operational issues, leaders' collaboration with other schools and with the local environment may contribute to improving problem-solving through intensified processes of interaction, communication and collective learning. It may also contribute to developing leadership capacity and attending to succession and stability by increasing the density of and opportunities for local leadership in the school and at the local level.

Leadership engagements beyond the school can include partnerships with other schools, communities, businesses, social agencies, universities and policy makers on a local, national and international basis. They can increase professional learning, enhance improvement through mutual assistance and create greater cohesion among all those concerned with the achievement and well-being of every child.

While it seems that many school leaders are expanding their scope to larger networks, some are struggling to respond. When having to make decisions on whether to focus on the school programme or having to work outside, most principals will choose the first, as it is their key concern and the focus of their performance evaluation. System roles come after school issues have been taken care of and may not be prioritised, although there may be long term benefits for the principals and the schools. In addition, leadership may not be well prepared to take on the challenges of leading collaboration with the outside world.

In England, for example, where the system leadership agenda has been moving forward quite quickly (Box 2.5), teachers identified the need for better skills for the management of extended services as their most important future training requirement. Other problems or challenges have been highlighted such as the sheer lack of time for engagement in co-operation, lack of capacity and problems in decision making powers of different bodies.

If collaboration activities are perceived as being imposed from above rather than being pursued out of real commitment, their effectiveness will be limited. In Korea for example, cooperative structure remains a rather ineffective compulsory obligation; there may be divergent interests of the groups involved and collaboration may remain superficial unless change is pushed. The move towards establishing "communities of schools" in Flemish Belgium is understood by some schools as a sort of "contrived collegiality" (Hargreaves and Dawe, 1990) where school leaders are obliged to work together in order to receive increased resources (in the form of staffing points) from the government.

**Box 2.5 System leadership in England**

In England, various ways for schools to collaborate have developed recently with the view that collaboration can contribute to make "every school a good school". Under the concept of system leadership, system leaders are those principals willing to contribute and care about and work for the success of other schools and communities as well as their own. Different approaches have been promoted to this end:

- Developing and ***leading a successful educational improvement partnership*** between several schools, often focused on a set of specific themes that have significant and clear outcomes reaching beyond the capacity of any one single institution. These include partnerships on curriculum design and specialisms, including sharing curricular innovation. While many partnerships remain at a collaboration level, some have moved to "harder" more formalised arrangements in the form of (con)federations (to develop stronger mechanisms for joint governance and accountability) or Education Improvement Partnerships (to formalise the devolution of certain defined delivery responsibilities and resources from their local authority).

- Acting as a ***community leader*** to broker and shape partnerships and/or networks of wider relationships across local communities to support children's welfare and potential, often through multi-agency work. Such system leadership responds to, as Osbourne (2000) puts it, "the acceptance [that] some … issues are so complex and interconnected that they require the energy of a number of organisations to resolve and hence can only be tackled through organisations working together (p.1). … The concept of [a] full-service school where a range of public and private sector services is located at or near the school is one manifestation" (p.188).

- Working as a ***change agent* or expert leader** within the system, identifying best classroom practice and transferring it to support improvement in other schools. This is the widest category and includes: heads working as mentor leaders within networks of schools, combining an aspiration and motivation for other schools to improve with the practical knowledge and guidance for them to do so; heads who are active and effective leaders within more centrally organised system leadership programmes, for instance within the Consultant Leader Programme, School Improvement Partners (SIP) and National Leaders of Education (NLE); and heads who with their staff purposely develop exemplary curricula and teaching programmes either for particular groups of students or to develop specific learning outcomes in a form that is transferable to other schools and settings.

*Source:* Hopkins (2008).

## 2.3 Improving the definition of school leadership responsibilities

The analysis of practice has shown that in increasingly decentralised and accountability-driven environments school leaders take on a much broader set of tasks than a decade ago. In many countries, school leaders report high levels of stress, role overload and uncertainty because many of these new responsibilities of school leadership are not explicitly accounted for in their job descriptions. In many settings, definitions or frameworks for school leadership are not explicitly focused on practices to improve teaching and learning but rather on the traditional tasks of head teacher or bureaucratic administrator.

For school leaders to perform at high levels, it seems essential that their responsibilities be well defined and expectations be clearly spelled out. Some countries have therefore engaged in the development of leadership frameworks, or standards, for the profession (Box 2.6). Such frameworks serve to define the nature and scope of school leadership and the types of responsibilities leaders are expected to fulfil. According the review of research on leadership standards by Ingvarson *et al.* (2006), school leadership frameworks are important for at least three reasons.

First, such frameworks are a way of setting boundaries and making it clear what school leadership does *not* include. Leadership frameworks provide a firm foundation for the profession and they can constitute a key point of reference both for those who consider entering the profession and for those who are in charge of recruiting them.

Second, frameworks defining the wide range of leadership tasks at school level make it clear that certain conditions need to be in place for school leaders to be able to perform effectively. For example, frameworks can be a crucial basis to improve the relevance and effectiveness of professional training and development provided to school leaders. They can be a starting point for the design of improved and consistent professional preparation and development.

Third, frameworks for school leadership provide a reference to evaluate its effectiveness. Unless responsibilities are defined in a clearly confined and feasible way, it is impossible to evaluate leadership quality. Frameworks can serve leaders themselves in guiding their learning and evaluating their progress and/or they can help employing authorities in managing performance and assessing whether school leaders fulfil their contractual duties.

Leadership frameworks or standards can be developed with varying involvement of the profession. In the Netherlands, for example, Professional Standards for Educational Leaders in Primary Education (2005) were established by an independent professional body initiated by the Minister of Education, while in England the government commissioned the responsibility of developing and implementing National Standards for Headteachers (2004) to two non-departmental public agencies (the Training and Development Agency and the National College for School Leadership) and in Scotland it was the devolved government (Scottish Executive) that had responsibility for the development and review of their Standards for Headship (Ingvarson *et al.*, 2006).

While standards provide common ground by which people can perform and evaluate performance, they do give rise to some concerns. If too prescriptive and detailed, they can contribute to increasing "intensification" of the school leader's role and discourage practitioners (Gronn, 2002, in Ingvarson *et al.*, 2006). Critics in the United States fault them for perpetuating dominant conceptions of power (English, 2000). Still, it is vital that they provide definitions of school leadership roles that contribute to improve school outcomes as set out above in Section 2.2.

### Box 2.6 School leadership frameworks across countries

In **New Zealand,** Professional Standards for Principals form part of the regulatory framework. These were developed by the Ministry of Education in conjunction with principals' professional associations and with other education sector input as part of collective agreements. The professional standards reflect the government's interest in ensuring that students have opportunities to learn from high quality professional teachers and that schools are led and managed by high quality professionals. Additional regulations complete the framework, with National Administration Guidelines (NAGS) – including broad regulations about teaching and assessment, staff, finance and property, health and safety that the board must observe in governing the school.

In **Chile,** the Ministry of Education adopted a practical approach in 2005. They defined the Good School Leadership Framework, organised around 4 areas of professional competency that group Chile's 18 performance and professional development standards: leadership, curricular management, management of the school atmosphere and coexistence and resource management. This framework provides Chile with a common benchmark to begin implementing performance assessment of head teachers, other school leaders and technical-pedagogical teachers. It is aimed at increasing professionalisation processes and thereby having an impact on the quality of institutional management and learning for all students. It provides guidance to everyone in the education system as to what is to be expected of school leaders.

In **Denmark,** the Ministry of Education worked in co-operation with head teacher organisations and in 2003 presented the booklet (*Ledelse af uddannelsesinstitutioner – overordnede visioner for ledelse og ledelsesudvikling*) in which general and collective requirements, conditions and criteria for leadership of the institutions are formulated. Ambitions and basic/specific requirements are in five areas: overall leadership, education policy leadership, pedagogical and academic leadership, administrative and financial leadership and personnel policy leadership.

In **Northern Ireland,** National Standards for Headteachers were developed in 2005. The six key areas defined are meant not only for school leaders but also for the professional development of senior and middle managers who may aspire to headship. The standards inform objectives, provide guidance to school stakeholders in what should be expected from the role of the head teacher and are also used to identify threshold levels of performance for assessment within the Professional Qualification for Headship in Northern Ireland. The standards are increasingly used by the employing authorities to provide job descriptions for school leaders. They have provided a framework for self-evaluation by principals and other school leaders, at a personal and whole school level, through a continuous professional development record promoted by the Regional Training Unit.

In **Scotland,** *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century* (2001) introduced distributed leadership by defining the core tasks and responsibilities of the head teachers, deputy head teachers and principal teachers and spelling out remuneration and other additional rewards.

In **Korea,** the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) proposed a set of performance standards for school administrators based on research on conditions of teachers' job performance: managing and evaluating curriculum, guiding and supporting students, supervising and supporting the school staff, supervising and organising school management, handling external co-operation with parents and others and supporting professional development.

*Source*: *Improving School Leadership* Country Background Reports, available at *www.oecd.org/edu/schoolleadership*.

## 2.4 Summary conclusions and recommendations

Research has shown that school leaders can make a difference in school and student performance if they are granted autonomy to make important decisions. However, school autonomy alone does not automatically lead to improved leadership unless it is well supported. In addition, it is important that the core responsibilities of school leaders are clearly defined and delimited. The definition of school leadership responsibilities should be guided by an understanding of the leadership dimensions most conducive to improving teaching and learning.

### *Provide higher degrees of autonomy with appropriate support*

While school autonomy seems to be positively correlated with improved learning as measured by international assessments such as PISA, school autonomy alone does not guarantee school improvement. Unless school leaders have the capacity, motivation and support to make use of their autonomy to engage in the practices that are most conducive to improved learning, school autonomy may have little influence on school outcomes.

- Countries where school leaders do not currently hold considerable decision making authority should explore ways to provide greater degrees of autonomy to school leadership, but keep in mind that certain conditions need to be in place for school autonomy to lead to learning-centred leadership.
- Greater degrees of autonomy should be coupled with provisions for new models of more distributed leadership, new types of accountability and training and development for school leaders.

### *Redefine school leadership responsibilities for improved student learning*

Bearing in mind the need for contextualisation, there seems to be ample evidence from research and country practice on which to encourage country, regional and local policy to use evidence on core leadership dimensions as a basis for designing the job descriptions of their future leaders. To this end, there are four broad groups of interrelated leadership responsibilities that have consistently been identified as associated with improved learning outcomes:

#### *a) Encourage school leaders to support, evaluate and develop teacher quality*

Teacher quality is probably the most important school-level determinant of student performance (OECD, 2005) and school leadership focused on improving the motivation, capacities and working environments of teachers is thus most likely to improve student learning. To enhance the capacity of school leadership in supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality, policy makers need to:

- *Strengthen school leaders' responsibility in curricular decision making* so that they can adapt the teaching programme to local needs and ensure coherence across courses and grade levels to achieve school goals and performance standards.
- *Provide training for school leaders in teacher monitoring and evaluation*, either as part of initial training for school leaders or in forms of in-service professional

training courses. Ensure that school leaders have the time and capacities necessary to fulfil the core task of teacher evaluation satisfactorily.

- *Enhance the role of school leaders in teacher professional development:* School leaders can ensure that teacher professional development is relevant to the local school context and aligned with overall school improvement goals and with teachers' needs. To enhance school leaders' capacities in developing their staff, policy makers should consider devolving discretion over teacher training and development budgets to the school level.
- *Encourage school leaders to promote teamwork among teachers* by explicitly recognising the core role of school leaders in building collaborative cultures and by sharing and disseminating best practice in this domain.

*b) Support goal-setting, assessment and accountability*

Goal-setting, assessment and school accountability are key responsibilities of school leaders in most countries. In order to optimise school leaders' use of accountability systems for school improvement processes, policy makers need to ensure that a number of conditions are in place:

- *Provide school leaders with discretion over strategic direction setting* and enhance their capacity to develop school plans and goals aligned with broader national curriculum standards and responsive to local needs.
- *Promote "data-wise" leadership*: Provide support and training opportunities for school leaders to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to monitor progress and use data effectively to improve practice.
- *Encourage school leaders to distribute tasks related to assessment and accountability within schools* by developing a group of people who are competent and confident in analysing and using data to design appropriate improvement strategies (Earl and Katz, 2002).

*c) Enhance strategic financial and human resource management*

Effective planning and management of resources can improve school outcomes by strategically aligning resources with pedagogical purposes. It is therefore important to ensure that school leaders are better equipped to make strategic use of resources.

- *Enhance the financial management skills of school leadership teams:* This can be done by providing training in this domain to school leaders, by establishing the role of a bursar or leadership team member with budgeting qualifications at the school level (for larger schools or clusters of small schools) or by providing financial support or services to schools.
- *Involve school leaders in teacher recruitment decisions:* School leaders should be given opportunities to influence decision making on teacher recruitment in order to improve the match between the school and the selected candidate. At the same time, it is important that parallel steps are taken within the system to professionalise school-level recruitment process to avoid an inequitable distribution of teacher quality and to protect teachers' rights (OECD, 2005).

### *d) Adopt a systemic approach to leadership policy and practice*

Collaboration with partners external to the school is a new leadership dimension that is increasingly recognised as a clear role for school leaders, as it will benefit school systems as a whole rather than just the students of one individual school. For system leadership roles to be effective, policy makers need to ensure that school leaders have the time, capacities, administrative support and tools to become involved in matters beyond their school borders.

- *Develop opportunities for school leaders to cooperate actively with surrounding schools* and the local community to ensure improved student trajectories, alignment of the curriculum at the local level, coordinated course offerings and sharing of resources.
- *Encourage the distribution of leadership responsibilities within schools* so that other people can ensure continuity in the core leadership tasks within each individual school while school leaders are engaged in activities beyond the school border (Chapter 3).

## *Develop school leadership frameworks for improved policy and practice*

School leadership frameworks can bring needed uniformity by providing a research-based metric for procedures intended to strengthen the field, like preparation and selection. Frameworks can also serve to signal the essential character of school leadership as the provision of leadership for learning. Yet, space for contextualisation is important to allow for local and school level criteria. When developing and introducing leadership frameworks, a number of steps should be considered:

- *Build on commitment not compliance* (Ingvarson *et al.*, 2006): School leadership frameworks can be developed with varying degrees of involvement by the profession. To make frameworks relevant and ensure they become real guidelines of practice, it is important that representatives from the school leadership profession are involved in their formulation and development.
- *Provide definitions of school leaders' major domains of responsibility*: These domains should be guided by evidence on effective leadership practice as reviewed in Section 2.2 as well as by concrete needs of national education systems.
- *Use frameworks to provide coherence to different domains of school leadership policy:* Frameworks should provide guidance on the main characteristics, tasks and responsibilities of effective school leaders. They can and should thus be used as a basis for recruitment, training and appraisal of school leaders.

# Annex 2.A1

## Evaluation of public schools in lower secondary education (ISCED level 2)

| Country | School information | | Student information | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Requirement that schools be regularly inspected | Requirement that schools conduct regular self-evaluation | Existence of national examinations | Existence of periodical national assessment in compulsory education |
| Australia | • | • | | • |
| Austria | | | 1 | |
| Belgium (Fl.) | • | | | • |
| Czech Republic | • | | | |
| Denmark | | • | • | • |
| England | • | • | • | • |
| Finland | | | | • |
| France | • | • | • | • |
| Germany[2] | • | • | • | • |
| Greece | • | • | • | |
| Hungary | | • | • | • |
| Iceland | • | • | • | • |
| Ireland | • | • | • | |
| Italy | | | | • |
| Japan | | • | | |
| Korea | • | • | • | • |
| Luxemburg | • | • | • | • |
| Mexico | • | | • | • |
| Netherlands | • | • | • | |
| New Zealand | • | • | • | |
| Northern Ireland | • | • | | • |
| Norway | | • | • | • |
| Portugal | • | • | • | • |
| Scotland | • | • | • | • |
| Spain | • | • | | |
| Sweden | • | • | • | • |
| Switzerland | • | | | |
| Turkey | • | | • | • |
| United States | | | | • |
| Israel | • | | • | • |

Note.• = exists in the country

1. National testing of newly introduced standards in primary and secondary education will become compulsory in the 2008/09 school year.

2. Response judged to be positive if 50% or more of the reporting Länder provided a positive response

*Source:* OECD (2007a), *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2007*, OECD, Paris. Complemented by additional information from *Improving School Leadership* National Coordinators for Austria, England and Northern Ireland.

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