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Commission



Study on governance and management policies in school education systems

Executive Summary

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A report prepared by ICF



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Executive summary

Key study findings and recommendations

Reforms of governance and management policies and practices are crucial to addressing challenges related to the overall quality of school education and particularly with regard to narrowing the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils. When changing governance and management policies and practices, policy makers should take into account existing evidence on their effectiveness, especially that:

- The presence of various elements of quality assurance and higher levels of accountability in education systems has a positive impact on quality.
- Greater autonomy over staff management and curriculum is associated with better quality, in particular when accompanied by accountability measures and higher levels of educational leadership.
- The effective use of additional funding for schools with higher numbers of disadvantaged pupils depends on how these resources are used, which in turn depends on schools' level of autonomy in combination with appropriate quality assurance policies.
- Continuing professional development of school leaders, teachers and other staff which is needs-based, collaborative, links practice with theory, is supported by external expertise and sustained over time has a positive impact on quality.

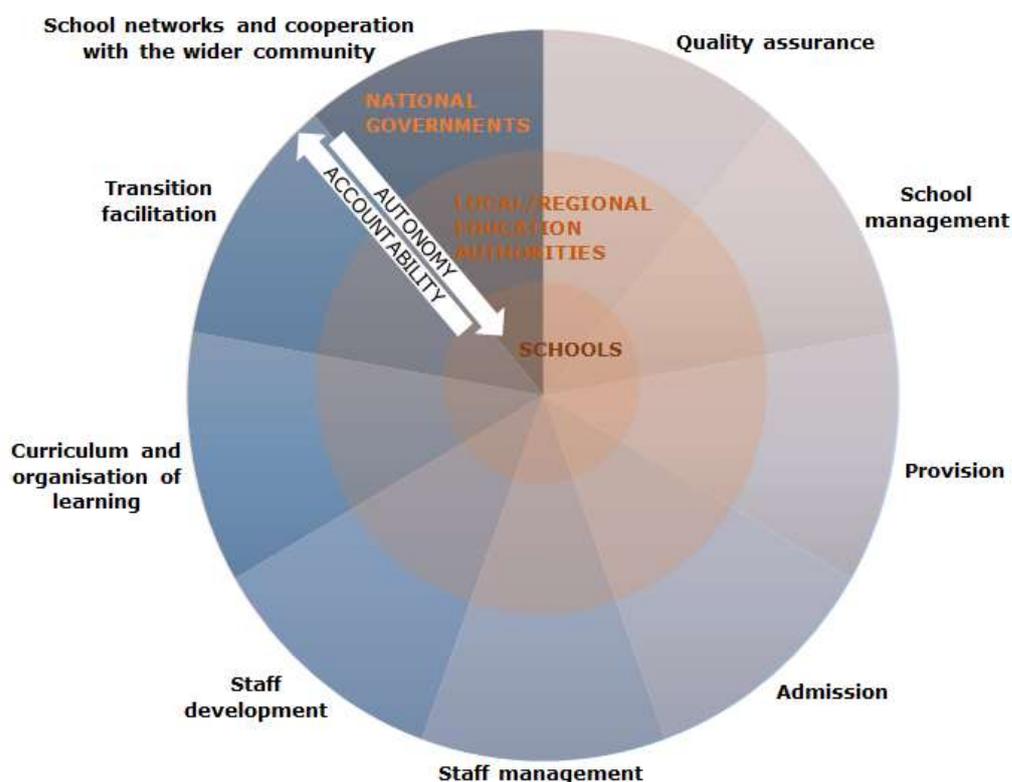
Policy makers should also bear in mind the policy enablers which underpin effective changes to governance and management policies and practices, above all by ensuring that:

- Governance arrangements are unambiguous, with clear lines of delegation and accountability.
- Reforms of governance and management policies and practices are supported with professional development activities for school and government staff.
- Stakeholders affected by the reforms are involved in the design and implementation as early as possible.
- There is room for sufficient flexibility in the implementation in order to tailor reforms to local specificities and needs.

Furthermore, policy makers should invest in a systematic monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the reforms they initiate, including specifically their impact on various groups of disadvantaged pupils.

How do governance and management policies and practices operate?

Granting schools more autonomy over policies and practices or the use of financial resources gives them more opportunities to adapt to their specific needs and local context. However, its benefits depend on the capacity of schools to plan effectively and manage their own development, as well as on how accountable they are to parents, local communities and education authorities. Systems of accountability operate – to a various degree – in all school systems to check that the devolution of decision making from national to regional/local authorities and schools themselves is operating efficiently and effectively as illustrated below. The definitions of the governance and management policies and practices analysed in this study are provided in annex 1.



Source: ICF

What effects can different governance and management policies and practices have on the quality and inclusiveness of educational provision?

The literature review conducted for this study revealed certain limitations and gaps in the evidence base on the effectiveness of governance and management policies and practices for improving quality and inclusiveness. Nonetheless, the table on the next page summarises what can be concluded based on the empirical evidence that was identified in the literature review and additional evidence from the case studies.

Many issues addressed by the types of governance and management policies and practices investigated by this study are common to school education systems in Europe. In principle, they are in general transferable but they may need to be adjusted to reflect historical traditions and educational cultures in which school education systems operate, as well as specific local contexts. Consideration needs to be also given to whether complementary changes to other governance and management policies and practices are needed, as well as to the degree of autonomy necessary for the effective use of individual policies and practices.

Overview of evidence on governance and management policies and practices

Type of policy/practice	Effects on quality and inclusiveness	Unintended consequences	Mitigation of risks/Success factors	Efficiency	Transferability
Quality assurance	<p>Strong evidence that the presence of various elements of quality assurance in education systems is associated with better quality.</p> <p>Positive effect on quality of externally managed exit examinations; less clear cut effect on inclusiveness.</p> <p>Positive effect on quality of monitoring quality of teaching.</p> <p>Higher levels of accountability in the education system through performance data and inspections have positive effect on quality and inclusiveness.</p>	<p>Schools teach to the test and inspection standards lead to narrowing of curriculum that is being taught.</p> <p>Too strong a link between internal and external evaluation may undermine internal evaluations' potential to initiate innovation within the school as schools start losing ownership over the evaluation framework.</p>	<p>Trust between teachers and leaders in schools and government authorities.</p> <p>Staff development (building capacity for use of formative approaches).</p> <p>Proportionate external testing, and inspection supporting school development.</p> <p>Synergies between external and internal evaluation.</p>	High costs and high impact.	Elements of quality assurance systems are generally transferable to other educational systems if tools, processes and evaluation criteria used are adjusted to the particular context of the education system.
School management	<p>With regard to inclusiveness, education systems with publicly funded private schools have smaller differences in pupils' outcomes between public and private schools than systems in which only public schools can receive public funding.</p> <p>Mixed evidence on the impact of moving schools from public to private management.</p>	<p>Changes to who is responsible for the management of schools can alter relationships and roles within the education system and negatively impact accountability.</p> <p>Risk of segregation if private and public schools compete for advantaged pupils.</p>	<p>Funding for private and public schools on the same basis with additional funding for disadvantaged pupils.</p> <p>Adequate regulatory framework in relation to admission and tuition fees policies.</p> <p>Applying robust quality assurance systems to all publically funded schools irrespective of whether they are publically or privately managed.</p>	Low cost and uncertain impact.	Changing public into private schools and vice versa can be introduced in principle in all contexts. There clearly needs to be an acceptance at all levels that schools which receive public funds do not have to be publicly managed schools. Changes in school management can be facilitated by adjusting relevant regulatory frameworks in relation to admission so that they apply to both

Type of policy/ practice	Effects on quality and inclusiveness	Unintended consequences	Mitigation of risks/Success factors	Efficiency	Transferability
Provision	<p>Early immersion of newly arrived migrant pupils (NAM) and integration of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) into mainstream classes is generally believed to have a positive effect on inclusiveness, especially when language support and effective teaching practices are used (although robust quantitative evidence is still lacking).</p> <p>Positive relationship between smaller class sizes and pupil-teacher ratios (under 20) on inclusiveness in pre-primary and primary schools.</p> <p>Grade repetition has only a limited impact on quality.</p>	<p>Large schools can have an adverse effect on attendance, behaviour and pupil well-being.</p> <p>Streaming (separation of pupils of the same ages based on abilities in different schools) has an adverse effect on inclusiveness.</p> <p>Some studies find a similar effect for tracking (selection of pupils for inclusion in a teaching group by ability), but this is not conclusive.</p> <p>Grade repetition has an adverse effect on inclusiveness.</p>	<p>National requirements e.g. for maximum class size or timescale before immersion.</p> <p>Additional funding for NAM and SEN pupils.</p> <p>Individualised support for pupils.</p> <p>Adverse effects of streaming and tracking on inclusiveness tend to be reduced if ability grouping is done at a later age (e.g. between lower and upper secondary education) and if permeability between tracks after selection is ensured.</p>	<p>Early immersion of NAM pupils is an organisational strategy with low costs (i.e. no/little additional costs as compared to separate classes). The impact can be expected to be moderate (based on practitioners' views, no robust evidence available).</p> <p>Class size reductions are associated with high costs and moderate impact overall (higher for disadvantaged groups). Reorganising schools to increase school size can provide cost reductions but impact is mixed.</p> <p>Grade repetition has high costs and only limited impact.</p>	<p>private schools receiving public funding as well as to publicly managed schools.</p> <p>The barriers for reducing school and class size are mostly financial and practical. Aspects of provision that are more organisational can be considered to be easily transferable to other education systems, although changes to practices of streaming and tracking tend to be difficult to implement because school leaders and teachers need to be convinced of the benefits of change and trained to manage the change successfully.</p>
Admission	<p>Parental preferences for schools at transitions (school choice) have a small positive effect on quality.</p> <p>Increased/universal access to</p>	<p>Meeting parental choices tends to increase social segregation with a negative effect on</p>	<p>Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils/areas.</p> <p>High accountability quality assurance</p>	<p>School choice: few direct financial costs; additional costs when admission requires prior assessment tests</p>	<p>Few financial barriers to adjusting admission systems. Changes to parents' choices can be controversial if they</p>

Type of policy/ practice	Effects on quality and inclusiveness	Unintended consequences	Mitigation of risks/Success factors	Efficiency	Transferability
	<p>high quality affordable early childhood education and care (ECEC) has a positive effect on quality and inclusiveness.</p> <p>Targeted management of school admission by education authorities can attenuate competition between schools and limit its negative effects on inclusiveness.</p>	<p>inclusiveness.</p> <p>Low income families fail to take up ECEC provision because they are not aware of benefits or it is provided at times which do not fit with work with negative effects on inclusiveness.</p> <p>Selection tests for streaming and tracking tend to have a negative impact on inclusiveness.</p>	<p>systems in place.</p> <p>Provision of stricter guidelines to local authorities and schools on admission criteria.</p>	<p>and/or when administered across areas following complex rules.</p> <p>Access to high-quality ECEC: high costs and high impact, especially when targeted at disadvantaged children.</p>	<p>reduce options or discriminate. Policy measures to alleviate the negative effects on disadvantaged pupils have to be considered at the same time which may require additional funding for schools with more disadvantaged pupils. Measures to open up ECEC to children from low income families also require additional funding.</p>
<p>Staff management</p>	<p>Positive effect of more autonomy over staff management in schools on quality provided that quality assurance systems with greater accountability are in place.</p> <p>Robust evidence of positive impact of teachers' pay on recruitment and retention and reasonably strong evidence of impact on pupils' outcomes.</p> <p>Mixed evidence of effectiveness of different forms of performance pay on quality.</p>	<p>Performance based pay for individual teachers can create barriers to team working.</p>	<p>Careful design of performance based pay for individual teachers to mitigate potential negative effects, or use of group and school based approaches instead.</p>	<p>Costs associated with some aspects of staff management (e.g. higher pay) may be high. Given the strong association between the quality of teaching staff and pupils' outcomes the costs are likely to be (at least) offset by long-term savings if higher pay is effective in attracting, deploying and retaining high quality teachers.</p>	<p>Introducing greater autonomy for schools in how they manage their staff can be introduced in all education systems in principle. There can be difficulties in implementing such changes where these significantly differ from current custom and practice.</p> <p>Setting appropriate pay levels to attract/retain staff depends on the current relative pay levels of teachers.</p>

Type of policy/practice	Effects on quality and inclusiveness	Unintended consequences	Mitigation of risks/Success factors	Efficiency	Transferability
Staff development	<p>Comprehensive new teachers' induction has a positive effect on quality.</p> <p>Continuing professional development (CPD) which is needs-based, collaborative, links practice with theory, is supported by external expertise and sustained over time has a positive impact on quality.</p> <p>Leadership training can have a positive effect on quality and inclusiveness.</p> <p>Inter-school collaborative CPD tends to support improvements in quality.</p>	None identified.	<p>For staff development to be effective, it also needs to in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - draw on best practice supported by evidence of what works to improve teaching practice and leadership/management skills; and - provide school leaders with the knowledge of system-wide policies and processes and the competences to work with teachers to build pupil-centred schools with capacity for continuous improvement. 	<p>Costs range from low to high for different forms of staff development.</p> <p>Staff development which raises the quality of school teaching and leadership has the clear potential to contribute to increased efficiency in achieving positive outcomes for pupils.</p> <p>Staff development policies and practices such as induction programmes for new teachers can also contribute to increased efficiency if they help to retain staff, and thereby reduce expenditure on recruitment.</p>	<p>Staff development can generally be widely implemented in all education systems. Transferability may be mediated by the level of autonomy that schools have to design, develop and fund staff development activities.</p>
Curriculum and organisation of learning	<p>Greater autonomy for schools over curriculum and the organisation of learning has a positive effect on quality, especially when accompanied by accountability measures and higher levels of educational leadership.</p> <p>Increasing instruction time positively impacts pupils' academic achievement but there are indications of decreasing returns to instruction time.</p>	Intensive programmes focused on literacy and numeracy can impinge on the teaching of other subjects, such as arts or physical education.	<p>Staff development on effective pedagogies to reduce the need for extra teaching.</p> <p>Retaining balance in curriculum.</p>	<p>Moderate costs for increased flexibility with regard to the curriculum and organisation of learning (including associated resources for staff development or additional instruction time) and moderate impact.</p> <p>Extending the school day with extra-</p>	<p>Introducing greater autonomy and flexibilities for schools in organising learning and the curriculum can be introduced in all education systems in principle. There can be difficulties in implementing such changes where these significantly differ from current custom and practice. Extending the</p>

Type of policy/ practice	Effects on quality and inclusiveness	Unintended consequences	Mitigation of risks/Success factors	Efficiency	Transferability
	<p>The positive effect of more instruction time depends on the quality of teaching and of the classroom environment.</p> <p>High quality extracurricular activities that match pupils' interests tend to have a positive effect on inclusiveness.</p> <p>No positive quality or inclusiveness effects of block-scheduling compared to traditional scheduling.</p>			<p>curricular activities is associated with moderate to high costs with the potential to have a positive impact on inclusiveness.</p>	<p>school day or instruction time could face funding restrictions.</p>
Transition facilitation	<p>Collaboration and information sharing between ECEC providers and primary schools and between schools at different levels before and after transitions help ensure structural and pedagogical continuity between educational levels and is likely to increase quality and inclusiveness.</p> <p>Targeted support programmes prior to the transition can be beneficial for at risk pupils.</p> <p>Induction and taster days prior to making a transition can help pupils to overcome the unfamiliarity of a new school.</p> <p>Social and interest-specific events during the first year after the transition can foster relationships and protect against any emotional burden for pupils arising from starting at a new school.</p>	None identified.	<p>Interventions facilitating the transition are more effective when starting early and if comprehensive.</p>	<p>Low to moderate costs with the potential to have a positive impact on disadvantaged pupils.</p>	<p>Targeted programmes for at risk children or induction and taster days can be implemented in any educational system. More formal and structural arrangements to improve transitions can be established provided adequate quality assurance systems and the leadership of government or local authorities are in place.</p>

Type of policy/ practice	Effects on quality and inclusiveness	Unintended consequences	Mitigation of risks/Success factors	Efficiency	Transferability
School networks and cooperation with the wider community	<p>Networks of schools increase schools' capacity to deal with immediate problems by sharing resources, developing new responses to shared problems, and by offering mutual support through the exchange of staff (although quantitative evidence of impacts on pupils' outcomes is generally lacking).</p> <p>School-community cooperation improves the utility of what is learnt in the real world by exposing pupils to real-life actors from the community.</p>	None identified.	<p>Successful cooperation depends on school staff's knowledge and skills for effective collaboration and resolving challenges that may arise.</p> <p>Successful cooperation also depends on careful partnership selection, evidence-based planning, and partnership reflection.</p>	Low to moderate costs with potential to deliver efficiency gains, e.g. through sharing of resources, professional support and bulk buying.	Provided schools are encouraged and enabled to collaborate by government and local authorities, there are few barriers to schools working in this way. Collaboration between schools and local communities should also be widely transferable, although it requires sufficient individuals and organisations outside of schools with the motivation and resources to participate.

What initiatives exemplify different governance and management policies and practices?

Ten initiatives from across Europe were selected as exemplars of different governance and management policies and practices and developed into case studies as part of the study:

ESCXEL - Schools network for excellence – Portugal

The ESCXEL network creates new opportunities for school leaders and teachers to share knowledge, practices and experiences with other schools to improve teaching and attainment. School leaders and teachers are encouraged to examine their own practices based on a comparison of the performance of their school with that of other schools in the network. The initiative is based on a bottom-up and evidence-based approach: ESCXEL reports and activities help to identify problems, analyse them and reflect on potential solutions, but it is for schools to determine changes to be made, taking into account the school context.

Lifelong pathfinder centres – Estonia

The pathfinder centres were established by the government in order to guarantee a minimum quality of guidance and counselling services available to learners. Young people's access to guidance and counselling on education and employment issues previously depended much on the financial situation of the municipality or the quality of voluntary sector providers. The pathfinder centres now provide centrally funded access to special education counselling, speech therapy, psychological counselling, and socio-pedagogical counselling. All the centres apply a holistic approach, whereby each individual case is discussed internally by specialists from different disciplines.

Removal of 11+ exam and introduction of inclusive structures – Malta

The removal of the 11+ exam and associated streaming and tracking in secondary education in Malta is an ambitious overhaul of the country's approach to the provision of education. The reform was based on research evidence that previous practices of streaming and tracking had a negative effect on the inclusiveness of education in Malta. The reform has led to less streaming and tracking of pupils in secondary schools, but its implementation has found that such changes need to be accompanied by specific staff development activities to support their implementation.

REP+ (Réseaux d'Éducation Prioritaire +) – France

REP+ has a strong focus on developing the potential of disadvantaged children and is built on a long history of predecessor programmes. The initiative's approach is comprehensive and involves the enhancement of teachers' working conditions, enhanced partnership working within school networks and with the wider community, and additional support for learners in the last year of lower secondary education to help them progress successfully to upper secondary education. There is qualitative evidence that many of the features of the initiative are appreciated by teachers and that better collaboration between schools, teachers and schools and the community have been established.

Academy schools – England/United Kingdom

The academy school model aims to improve school performance by taking schools out of the control of local authorities, bringing in external expertise from the charitable and commercial sector, and providing greater financial freedom and control over the curriculum. Multi-academy trusts aim to improve school performance by facilitating greater sharing of best practice and collaboration between groups of schools. The academy programme stands out because of the availability of rigorous quantitative evidence on its impact. However, this

evidence shows that the impact on both quality and inclusiveness has been mixed.

Teacher to Leader – Denmark

The development of the Teacher to Leader part-time diploma course for future school leaders shows how bottom-up initiatives can successfully fill gaps in the training available to schools for staff development. The course was initiated by five municipalities which felt that the management of their schools could be improved if aspiring school leaders had the opportunity to follow a course tailored to preparing for the roles of school leaders. The course has now been running for 18 years during which the number of participating municipalities has grown from 5 to 27.

Education of pupils with Swedish as a second language – Sweden

This initiative was a response to the exceptionally high inflow of NAM children over recent years in the municipality of Hultsfred. This meant that teachers increasingly had to teach pupils with Swedish as a second language, which can be very challenging for teachers without knowledge of second language development. Contacted by the municipality, the National Centre for Swedish as a Second Language devised a comprehensive professional development programme for all school staff in Hultsfred, with a special focus on content and language integrated learning. The initiative was perceived to have had a positive impact on inclusiveness by teachers and other school staff (although quantitative evidence of this is not yet available). Similar initiatives are now being implemented in other municipalities in Sweden.

School experiments Elbinselschule and Ganztagsschule Faehrstrasse – Germany

The school experiments, Elbinselschule and Ganztagsschule Faehrstrasse, in Hamburg show how involved citizens, school staff and a committed school authority can work together towards the provision of a better educational offer in a disadvantaged urban district. While an impact on pupil outcomes has not yet been shown, in both cases an imminent foundation of a competing private school was averted which could potentially have led to further segregation in the district.

Language Support Networks/Netzwerke Sprachförderung – Austria

The language support networks aim to improve children's language learning through better co-operation and linkages between ECEC providers and primary schools. The networks were built around a single primary school and its feeder ECEC providers. This allowed activities to be tailored to the widely differing levels of existing co-operation between primary schools and their feeder ECEC providers in a given area. While school leaders and staff could develop their own workplan, the framework conditions designed by the school inspectorate ensured schools' commitment. Improvements in co-operation between ECEC and primary schools, including the transfer of information on children's language ability and support needs, were confirmed by an independent evaluation. The initiative is planned to be mainstreamed.

Primano – Switzerland

The Primano initiative has developed local approaches to increase the use of ECEC provision by disadvantaged parents. District coordinators who connect the many existing stakeholders within a city district are at the heart of this initiative. The networking activities organised by the district coordinators are combined with a house visit programme to reach disadvantaged families and training for ECEC staff. Primano has been shown to be effective in increasing disadvantaged children's attendance in early childhood education and care. The initiative was introduced as pilot from 2007 to 2012 and mainstreamed thereafter.

Recommendations

The findings from the study suggest the following key recommendations:

Recommendations for national policy makers

Governance and management policies and practices in school education systems impact on the quality and inclusiveness of education. When trying to address challenges related to the overall quality of school education and particularly in addressing the challenges of narrowing the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils, adjusting governance and management policies and practices should be considered.

1. When changing governance and management policies and practices, policy makers should take into account existing evidence on their effectiveness and efficiency (as summarised in the overview table on pages 3-8).
2. Policy makers should also bear in mind the policy enablers which underpin effective changes to governance and management policies and practices.

These include:

- Establishing appropriate levels of autonomy for schools in areas where these have been found to improve quality and inclusiveness (autonomy over staff management, staff development, curriculum and organisation of learning, and use of financial resources).
- Enhancing accountability where this supports improvements in quality and inclusiveness (such as through external and internal monitoring of teacher lessons, standardised assessment to compare a school's performance to district or national performance, and inspection).
- Ensuring that governance arrangements are unambiguous, with clear lines of delegation and accountability.
- Taking account of changes needed to other governance and management policies and practices to ensure the success of reforms, in particular:
 - The effectiveness of autonomy over staff management, staff development and curriculum and the organisation of learning depends on using appropriate quality assurance policies;
 - The effective use of additional funding for schools with higher concentrations of disadvantaged pupils depends on how these resources are used, which in turn depends on schools' level of autonomy in combination with appropriate quality assurance policies.
- Ensuring that reforms of governance and management policies and practices are supported with professional development activities that prepare school leaders and teachers, and where relevant, also government staff at local, regional or national levels, for their effective implementation.
- Ensuring that stakeholders affected by the reforms are involved in the design and implementation as early as possible in order to build commitment and mutual trust.

- Allowing for sufficient flexibility in the implementation and providing stakeholders with some room to manoeuvre in order to tailor reforms to local specificities and needs.

3. Policy makers should invest in a systematic monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the reforms they initiate, including specifically their impact on various groups of disadvantaged pupils.

Recommendations for the European Commission

1. The European Commission has an important role in sharing evidence and best practices on the effectiveness and efficiency of governance and management policies and practices in school education systems.

2. The European Commission should:

- Encourage Member States – through the co-operation under the Education and Training 2020 strategic framework and the co-ordination of economic policies in the framework of the European Semester – to adopt relevant reforms of governance and management policies to increase quality, inclusiveness and efficiency of their school education systems. These reforms should be evidence based.
- Provide – through peer counselling – targeted assistance to Member States for the design and implementation of reforms of governance and management policies.
- Continue to share evidence and good practices on the effectiveness and efficiency of governance and management policies and practices in school education systems, especially through the Education and Training Monitor, meetings of Directors-General for School, and the ET2020 Working Group on Schools and related peer learning activities.
- Continue to provide targeted funding, in particular through the European Structural and Investment Funds, to support Member States in their reforms of governance and management policies aimed at increasing quality, inclusiveness and efficiency of their school education systems.
- Support, mainly through the Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 programmes, further research on the effectiveness and efficiency of governance and management policies in school education systems, in particular to address the gaps identified by this study.

Annex 1 – Classification of governance and management policies and practices in school education systems¹

Based on the findings of the literature review element of the study, the following classification of governance and management policies and practices was developed:

- **Quality assurance:** involves the systemic review of educational provision to monitor compliance and improve quality, equity and efficiency of education;
- **School management:** includes who has responsibility for the management of schools (public, private) and their access to public funding;
- **Provision:** includes the planning of places, the control over school characteristics (streaming and tracking), places (size and pupil characteristics), and class sizes/teacher ratios;
- **Admission:** includes the rules for general admission and the admission of newly arrived migrants (NAM) and pupils with special educational needs (SEN), the assessment and placement of pupils where streaming and tracking is used, and access to Early Childhood Education and Childcare (ECEC);
- **Staff management:** includes the recruitment, retention, promotion, severance, pay and deployment of staff in schools;
- **Staff development:** includes the continuous professional development (CPD) of teaching staff, the induction of new teachers to the school, the development of school leaders, and collaboration within and between schools to train and develop staff;
- **Curriculum and organisation of learning:** includes the planning and organisation of teaching, and learning and how it is delivered, as well as the provision of extra-curricular learning activities;
- **Transition facilitation:** includes measures to smoothen the transition of learners between ECEC and primary schools and between schools at different levels; and
- **School networks and cooperation with the wider community:** includes co-operation between schools and with other stakeholders in the wider community to meet pupils' needs and to share resources.

¹ The study covers educational levels from early childhood to upper secondary education.

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