Recommendation 1137 (1990)[1]

Comparative educational assessment

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly wishes to ensure that the large sums of money spent on education, both by public and private entities, are most effectively allocated.

2. Policy-makers, parents and students should have access to independent and internationally comparable means of assessing educational courses, schools and national systems of education. The Assembly recalls its past work in this field and in particular Resolution 874 (1987) whereby it suggested that the Council of Europe should look into the assessment of the effectiveness of teaching and training.

3. The Assembly welcomes the work developed by OECD on educational evaluation and reform strategies and in particular its project on international educational indicators (INES). It also welcomes the pioneering work of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and its international surveys of educational systems.

4. However, educational statistics tend to focus more on quantity than on quality ; no standard educational assessment machinery exists in Europe that might enable proper comparison of educational standards or evaluation of education policies and there is no single politically accountable body overseeing work in this field.

5. Therefore, the Assembly makes the following recommendations to the Committee of Ministers :

a. The Council of Europe should promote the setting up of a panel of assessors who would sit in on the setting and marking of examinations in member states, and prepare a report on how standards compare with other states. Such assessment could be done on a subject-by-subject basis over a cycle covering a number of years. The assessors could meet subsequently on a Europe-wide basis, to discuss and improve their respective methodologies.

b. Initial work should be concentrated on specific problems, for example comparative effectiveness of strategies to deal with low achievers and school dropouts, literacy in mother tongue and levels of achievement in a second language.

c. The Council of Europe should co-operate with OECD, IEA and other relevant bodies to compile a compendium of existing data and to put these in a form that is genuinely comparable and is useful to policy-makers in member states.

d. The Council of Europe should also promote the publication by all member states of annual statistics on examination results, with explanatory material to facilitate informed public discussion.

e. The Council of Europe should in the meantime consider the question of creating a specialised European authority to deal with the comparative assessment of the effectiveness of educational systems in Europe and between Europe and other parts of the world.

1. See Doc. 6333, report of the Committee on Culture and Education, Rapporteur : Mr Bruton. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 22 November 1990.