

OECD report urges Switzerland to improve educational R & D

Switzerland needs to improve the organisation and the quality of its educational R&D in order to make it more relevant to policy-making and educational practices, according to a new OECD report.

Noting the hybrid cultural and linguistic character of the Swiss confederation and the complex relationships between power centres at municipal, cantonal and federal levels, the OECD's "National Review of Educational R&D - SWITZERLAND" calls for improved coordination and action to tackle problems of accountability and transparency.

Most researchers enjoy a comfortable professional position with little pressure to compete for funding, limiting opportunities for new researchers and incentives for innovative research, while, compared to other OECD countries reviewed, the overall level of investment in educational R&D in Switzerland is low, the review notes. More quantitative empirical studies, a harmonisation of indicators and datasets, better funding mechanisms, and a sharing of expertise with international specialists would help to improve the quality of research, the review suggests.

Responding to these challenges does not necessarily call for more financial investment, the OECD observes. They could be met by both maximizing current expenditure, and maximizing the performances of existing Swiss educational research and development institutions. Some initiatives have already provided a good path for change. The Swiss Council for Educational Research (CORECHED) offers an excellent avenue for better national coordination and priority setting, while the Leading Houses set up by the Federal Office for Vocational Education and Training might be seen as a model of connecting research, policy-making and practice for other education sectors.

The review is the fifth in a series carried out by the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) since 2001. Previous reviews covered educational R&D systems in England, New Zealand, Mexico and Denmark. The review and a background report by CORECHED, which commissioned the review, can be downloaded from the CERI website at <http://www.oecd.org/edu/rd>.

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