



Pioneering policies and practices tackling educational inequalities in Europe

## Deliverable No. 6.5

Evidence-based co-authored and open-access report of most promising pioneering policies and practices

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## Primary education reform 2009 [7]

<b>Country</b>	Luxembourg
<b>Authors of the table</b>	<i>Luxembourgish team</i>
<b>Name of the policy / practice</b>	Primary Education Reform 2009 [7]
<b>Short description and the main characteristics of the policy / practice</b>	<p>This policy aimed to tailor education (teaching and learning environment, support structures) to the students' and schools' particular needs to improve the equality of opportunity and outcome at school-level planning, as well as at the level of individual learning. One main feature of this policy is the replacement of the traditional compulsory school year structure of preschool (préscolaire which is mandatory from the age of 4) and the primary grades from 1 to 6 by organizing it into four two-year cycles (Cycle 1: children aged 4-5; Cycle 2: children aged 6-7; Cycle 3: children aged 8-9; and Cycle 4: children aged 10-11) instead. The curriculum (plan d'études) has also been reformed to modular competency-based learning. The assessment and evaluation are thus also modified based on these competency grids to allow for more intra-individual comparison (progress) rather than inter-individual comparison (between children). The policy involves, in addition, pedagogical measures, e.g., additional teaching hours for underachieving children, psycho-social support structures and support teachers for every school district, and new modes of student assessment aiming to showcase their personal progress rather than categorizing and comparing students with each other). It also sets forth a new supplementary school-financing mechanism (based on the socio-economic and socio-linguistic composition of each municipality) and school plans (Plan de Développement de l'Établissement Scolaire). The latter are to strengthen the school identity and are designed based on the participation of all relevant local school stakeholders. As such, the policy aims to provide more autonomy for schools while also ensuring redistribution of resources among disadvantaged regions, as well as to increase access and participation in life-long learning activities for teachers and more frequent parental involvement, e.g., teacher-parent meetings.</p> <p>The 2009 reform aimed at improving students' learning experiences and reducing educational inequalities and had several objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating continuity between pre-school and primary education, introducing a new cycle structure to account for differences in student development (Teachers would teach entire cycles while students progress through each cycle within e.g. two or three years according to their individual development).</li> </ul>

	<p>This measure was also introduced to reduce the possibility of grade retention to every second school year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjusting evaluation and assessment methods (including the abolition of grades) was to apply less summative feedback and more formative feedback</li> <li>• Adapting learning to students' needs</li> <li>• Encouraging schools and enabling them to act independently by creating school profiles, structures and plans such as the school development plan (PDS) for the leadership and democratic participation of those concerned, including parents.</li> <li>• Establishing a new professional profile of teachers and ensuring their professional growth while involving other professionals at school.</li> <li>• Collaboration of teachers in pedagogical teams.</li> <li>• Reinforcing relations between the State and municipalities.</li> </ul>
<b>Target group of the policy / practice:</b>	As a national policy, it targets all children at primary level in the national school system.
<b>Educational stage or transition phase of the policy / practice</b>	The first 8 years of compulsory schooling in Luxembourg including pre-primary and primary-level.
<b>Level of implementation</b>	<p>Macro: National</p> <p>Meso: Municipal</p> <p>Micro: Individuals students in classrooms</p>
<b>MILC dimensions</b>	<p>Multilevel and life course perspectives</p> <p>This policy aims to better adapt to individual students' needs between the age of 4 and 12 by focusing on their individual portfolio of progress, replacing conventional grades with annual progress reports, promoting equality in opportunities and outcomes, considering individual trajectories and providing positive and inclusive learning experiences for all students with a focus on disadvantaged groups. While it does not address intersectional inequalities explicitly, the policy aims to tackle (the accumulation of) disadvantages related to socio-economic and linguistic background as well as family composition (single parenthood). Thus, it acknowledges three axes of inequality. Furthermore, the focus on individual progress could potentially allow for a compensation of intersectional disadvantages.</p>
<b>Key dimensions of the identification procedure</b>	

<b>CONDITIONS: Foundational and premise level</b>	<i>Comprehensive</i>	It is a comprehensive reform as it changed the organization of school year teaching and assessment based on an individually-tailored student portfolio; it also provided more autonomy to schools while privileging parental participation.	High
	<i>Coherent</i>	It is coherent because it is based on student portfolio in which students' own progress throughout the year is based on competency grids, rather than grades showing their general progress in school subjects and in relation to other students.	High
	<i>Continuous</i>	It is continuous as it requires schools to prepare School Development Plans (SDP or PDS- in French) defining objectives based on students' academic, social, and psychological needs.	High
<b>ELEMENTS: Structural level</b>	<i>Contextual</i>	The reform was designed in response to educational inequalities related to migration, linguistic, or socio-economic backgrounds that divides the highly heterogenous student population in Luxembourg. It also explicitly takes into account the local (municipal level) compositions of parent/student populations as it links to a new resource allocation mechanism that would redistribute teaching hours between municipalities to provide socio-economically deprived areas with more teaching hours.	High
	<i>Relational</i>	The policy intended to create stronger links between municipalities, school authorities, parents, and teachers.	High
<b>TOOLS: Action level</b>	<i>Autonomous</i>	There is a trickle-down effect on teachers' autonomy within the defined goals of their school's SDP and teachers can organize extra classes for students that need further assistance.	Medium
	<i>Reflexive</i>	Each school committee (elected members of the teaching staff) and parents' representatives meet at least three times a year to discuss school budget, plans (SDP), and teacher training needs.	High
<b>Evidence backing the policy / practice</b>		According to the policy review by Tröhler et al. (2012) the reform has facilitated change towards equality, however for a better realization of the policy objectives, it is necessary to train teachers and headmasters to simplify procedures and to create intermediary school reports which can be drawn upon to develop SDPs. A positive evaluation of the first few years of the reform is also provided by Koeing (2013) indicating some progress towards its objectives.	

	<p>However, the study by Tröhler et al. (2012) and later studies of the primary education system such as the one conducted as part of the project SASAL-School alienation in Switzerland and Luxembourg revealed that the implementation of the reform differs between communities and schools and the understandings of aims and measures are very heterogeneous among teachers. Thus, the reform has yet to achieve its intended outcomes. Likewise, research on the Luxembourgish educational report show (e.g., Hadjar et al., 2015 &amp; 2018) indicate that educational inequalities have remained stable in secondary school track placement hence revealing the persistence of inequalities that continue to affect students' learning and achievement at primary level - despite this reform (Erer et al. 2023).</p> <p>Erer, Sercan, Backes, Susanne, Hadjar, Andreas &amp; Antoine Fischbach (2023). How the Context Shapes Educational Inequalities relating to Gender, Social and Language Background in Luxembourgish Primary Education: A Multi-level Analysis. Deliverable 3. ESICS – Évaluation de l'application de l'indicateur social dans le cadre de l'attribution du contingent par commune dans l'enseignement fondamental. Esch-sur-Alzette : University of Luxembourg.</p> <p>Hadjar, Andreas, Antoine Fischbach &amp; Susanne Backes, 2018: Bildungsungleichheiten im luxemburgischen Sekundarschulsystem aus zeitlicher Perspektive. S. 59-83 in: Université du Luxembourg, LUCET &amp; Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse, SCRIPT (Hg.), Nationaler Bildungsbericht Luxembourg 2018. Luxembourg: University of Luxembourg &amp; MENEJ/SCRIPT.</p> <p>Hadjar, Andreas, Antoine Fischbach, Romain Martin &amp; Susanne Backes, 2015: Bildungsungleichheiten im luxemburgischen Bildungssystem. S. 34-56 in: Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse, SCRIPT &amp; Université du Luxembourg, FLSHASE (Hg.), Bildungsbericht Luxembourg 2015. Analysen und Befunde. Luxembourg : MENEJ/SCRIPT &amp; University of Luxembourg.</p> <p>Koenig, S (2013), La reform de l'école fondamentale : Rapport sur le premier bilan. Available at: <a href="https://men.public.lu/dam-assets/catalogue-publications/statistiques-etudes/fondamental/reforme-ecole-fondamentale-rapport-premier-bilan-fr.pdf">https://men.public.lu/dam-assets/catalogue-publications/statistiques-etudes/fondamental/reforme-ecole-fondamentale-rapport-premier-bilan-fr.pdf</a></p> <p>Tröhler, D; Hadjar, A; Lens, T; Voss, P; Barbu, R (2012). Rapport d'expertise sur le bilan de la réforme de l'école fondamentale. Walferdange : Université de Luxembourg.</p>
<p><b>Brief concluding analysis of policy / practice in the context</b></p>	<p>Concluding from the analysis of this policy and besides the fact that many elements of the reform have not been universally implemented in Luxembourg (e.g., the new cycle structure, competence-based teaching), the main features are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New structures for student progress</li> <li>• Tailoring learning/teaching/support and assessment to students' needs</li> </ul>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Self-progress portfolio</li><li>• Parental participation</li><li>• Needs-based objective setting and school development plan design involving all relevant stakeholders</li><li>• Example for change management, reform management and in some elements weak implementation</li></ul> |
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