

Centre for Educational Research and Innovation – CERI

OECD case study on introducing standardised tests in Flanders

Presentation to the Education Committee
of the Flemish Parliament

16 December 2021, virtual meeting
13:30 – 14:30



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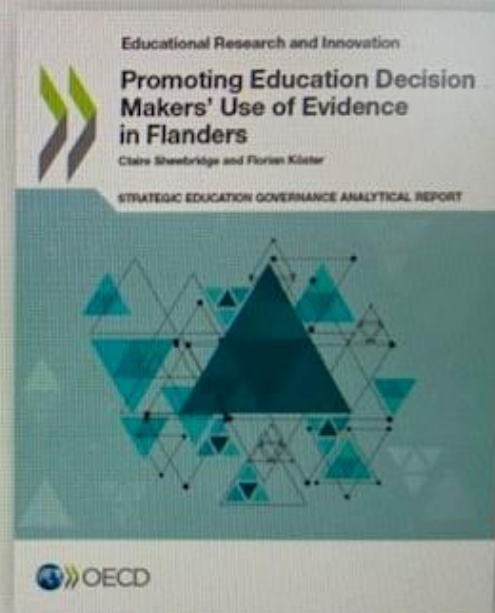


Available via the
OECD i-library:

https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/promoting-education-decision-makers-use-of-evidence-in-flanders_de604fde-en

Presentation webinar organised by the
Department of Education and Training on
10 November 2021

Presentation to the VLOR, 15 December





The Flemish journey from an external perspective

Different contexts and aims

- Only a handful of OECD systems have no central examinations at end of compulsory education
- Over the past 20 years, the majority of OECD systems have introduced census-based standardised assessments in primary and secondary education
 - In 2002, Flanders introduced central sample-based assessments (peilingen)
 - Offers voluntary parallel versions of the central assessments (paralleltoets)

Denmark 2010 census

Context: no common assessment approach, but requirements to follow student progress.
PISA results debate.
Aim to stimulate an evaluation culture.

Norway 2004 census

Context: no common assessment approach.
PISA results debate.
Aim to professionalise culture of feedback.

Australia 2008 census

Context: existing national sample assessments.
Tests systems at state levels.
Aim to harmonise, promote equivalence, professionalise test development.

➤ **The Flemish journey from an external perspective**
An ongoing journey with refinements and public debates

Denmark

Testing: May/June
Danish: Grades 2, 4, 6 & 8
Mathematics: Grades 3, 6 & 8
English: Grades 4 & 7
Physics/Chemistry: Grade 8
Adaptive tests

Optional tests available for schools
Legal provision to not publish school-level results

School quality reporting
Annual reports
Individual student reports

Norway

Testing: Sep/Oct
Grades 5 and 8
Numeracy, Literacy, English

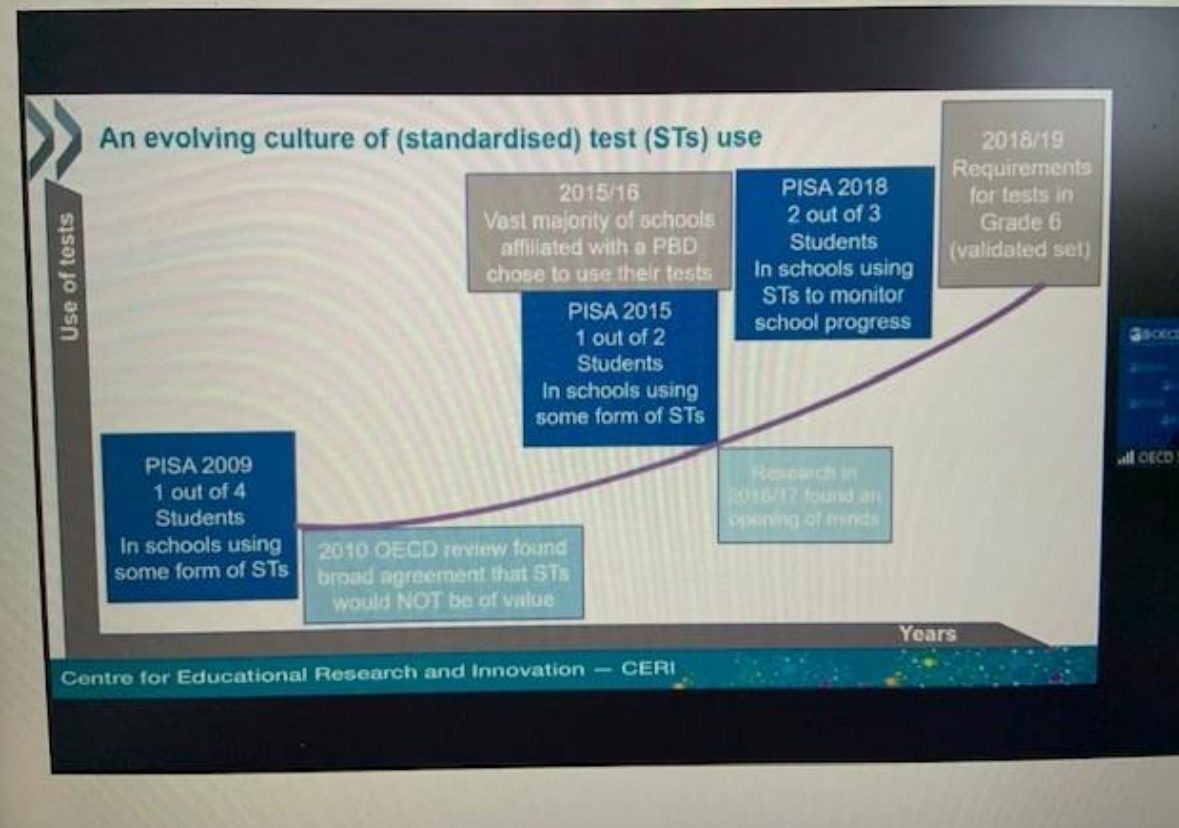
National Assessment for Learning Program
2010-2018
Skills development in networks

Australia

Testing: May
Grades 3, 5, 7 and 9
Numeracy, Literacy

Public school reporting
Myschool website
Tracking progress across cohorts

National Sample Assessment

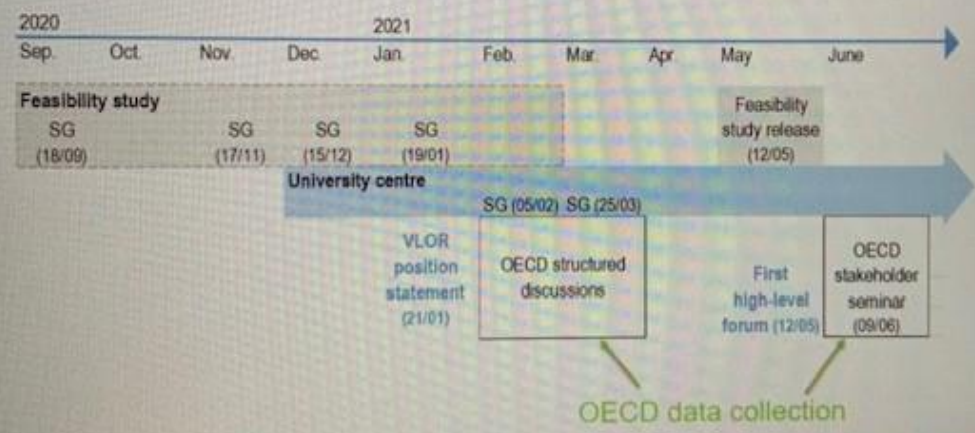


➤➤ OECD case study: seeking feedback from stakeholders
Using the OECD strategic education governance framework



This draws on a body of work by the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) that included research and case studies documenting the complexity of modern education systems and providing insights to evidence on effective governance processes: Burns and Köster (2016) and Burns, Köster and Fuster (2016).

Situating the feedback gathered during the OECD case study





Stakeholder involvement: initial concerns and perceptions



- Broad support for the early focus on scientific expertise for test development
- Stakeholders voice strong criticism of the initial process
- Motivation for greater and more structured involvement
- Unclear communication from the government on the purpose(s) of standardised tests

Stepping back: Thinking strategically and of the whole Flemish system



- A shared concern on the overall quality of education in Flanders
- A complex debate on educational quality and concerns for equity
- Support for standardised tests as tools for school development



A complex debate on educational quality and concerns for equity

- The OECD team noted the most frequently cited points:
 - attracting and retaining excellent teachers
 - teacher education and continued professional development
 - different contexts and provision for schools in terms of student composition
 - Strategic goal to reduce inequities in Flemish school system
 - Highly competitive context and concerns about public reporting of school results
- **Comparatively high expenditure on education and broad satisfaction with salaries**
- However, some evidence points to
 - Perceived decline in attractiveness of the teaching profession
 - Above average levels of reported stress



Decline in perceived prestige of teaching profession and high stress levels

Results from OECD's TALIS – Primary and lower secondary

Percentages agreeing or strongly agreeing that:	Flanders	OECD
"The teaching profession is valued in society"		
- Primary teachers	30.8	n.a.
- Lower secondary teachers	25.8	25.8
Change in reports by lower secondary teachers since TALIS 2013	-20.1	n.a.
- Lower secondary school leaders	43.9	36.9
Change in reports by lower secondary school leaders since TALIS 2013	-15.0	n.a.
"The advantages of being a teacher clearly outweigh the disadvantages"		
- Lower secondary teachers	70.2	76.0
- Change since TALIS 2013	-14.4	n.a.
"I wonder whether it would have been better to choose another profession"		
- Lower secondary education teachers	30.0	33.8
- Change since TALIS 2013	+7.3	n.a.
"My job negatively impacts my mental health"		
- Primary teachers	32.8	n.a.
- Lower secondary teachers	32.5	23.7
"I experience stress in my work" (answer 'quite a bit' or 'a lot')		
- Primary teachers	72.5	n.a.
- Lower secondary teachers	69.1	48.7

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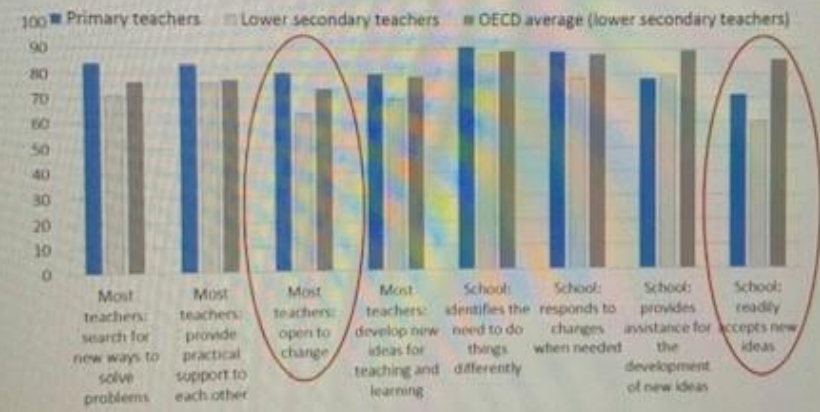
Support for standardised tests as tools for school development

- The OECD team noted coherence in stakeholder expectations
 - Flemish Education Council (VLOR) position statement
 - Research on potential scenarios for standardised tests (Penninckx et al., 2017).
- **A pivotal moment**
 - Evolution in attitudes toward potential usefulness of STs in the educational field
 - Not universal and a need to build trust
- The majority of Flemish teachers and school leaders view their colleagues as open to change and their schools as places that have the capacity to adopt innovative practices



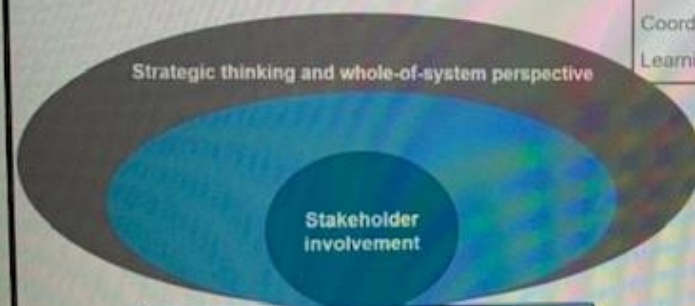
Need to gain trust in the educational field: openness to change

- Results from OECD's TALIS – primary and lower secondary





LESSONS from the OECD strategic education governance case study

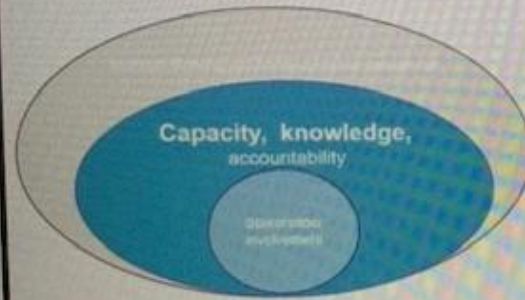


Developing, sharing common goals
Taking a long-term perspective
Coordinating action
Learning from experiences in the educational field

Clear and active communication
Committing to stakeholder involvement
Organising contributions from educational field



Capacity and knowledge: Opportunities the standardised tests bring



- Existing capacity for test development within educational networks is limited
- Expectations for scientific rigour and independence of test development
- Capacity in schools to administer digital tests
- Evidence from inspections that many schools need to improve self-evaluation processes
- Knowledge: Motivations for using standardised tests



Stakeholder motivations for using standardised tests (June seminar)

- Reliable information on outcomes for students, teachers and schools
- Comparative feedback to schools for reflection on their development
- Tools to strengthen and promote a culture of feedback for student learning
- A catalyst to deepen professionals' skills for using evidence and data

PISA 2018		Never or almost never	Some lessons	Many lessons	Every lesson or almost every lesson
Main language class					
The teacher gives me feedback on my strengths in this subject	Flanders	33.9	44.0	18.6	3.4
	OECD average	29.5	36.9	23.7	10.0
The teacher tells me in which areas I can still improve	Flanders	27.5	44.9	23.4	4.2
	OECD average	19.8	37.2	30.0	13.0
The teacher tells me how I can improve my performance	Flanders	26.8	45.4	23.2	4.6
	OECD average	18.6	36.8	30.2	14.3



Some lessons for the further development of STs



- Ensuring technical capacity for standardised test development and administration
 - Strong technical credibility for the university centre
 - Careful evaluation of schools' capacity to administer digital tests (field trials)
- Listening to stakeholder feedback on the necessary preparations
 - A clear, uniform communication strategy
 - Planning time and resources in schools
 - Preparing guidance for schools
 - Supporting professionals

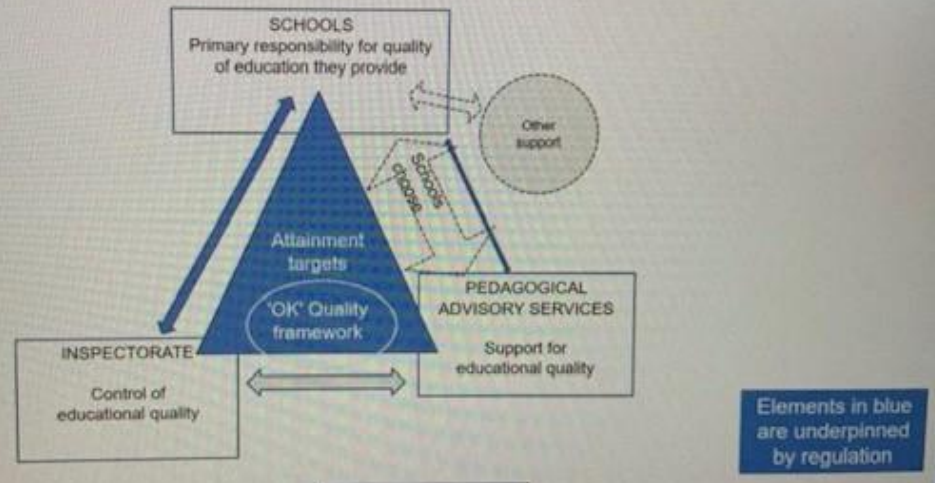


Accountability: How could standardised tests best contribute to this?



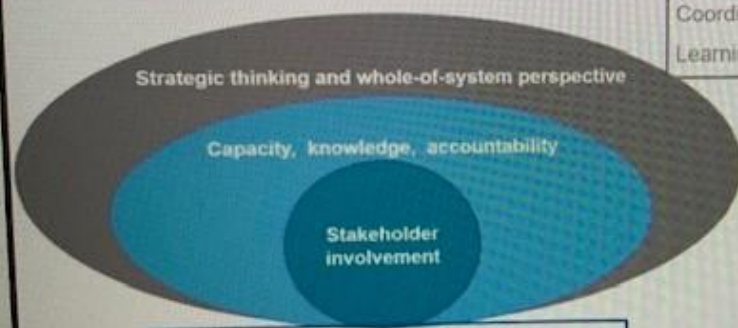
- Understood as a matter of **internal responsibility to provide quality education**
- 'Quality triangle' approach is embedded, but with some frustrations
- Appreciation that accountability is anchored in a **broad definition of school quality**
- Professional dialogue and rich feedback are appreciated in inspection processes

OECD team analysis of the quality triangle





LESSONS from the OECD strategic education governance case study



- Developing, sharing common goals
- Taking a long-term perspective
- Coordinating action
- Learning from experiences in the educational field

- Clear and active communication
- Committing to stakeholder involvement
- Organising contributions from educational field

- Ensuring technical capacity
- Making necessary preparations
- Promoting use of results with:
 - Skills, Availability
 - Organisational processes
 - Interactions, Standards
- Ensuring the 'fit' of accountability mechanisms
- Enhancing critical reflection