

## Examining school accountability

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*England is making changes to school accountability. CERP profiles six countries to see how schools are held to account in other parts of the world.*

There has been a recent [public consultation about changes to secondary school accountability](#) in England, somewhat driven by comparisons with systems elsewhere in the world. Part of the rationale for possible changes to the English system is that 'OECD evidence shows that a robust accountability framework is essential to improving pupils' achievement' (section 2.1 of the consultation document).

As a contribution to this debate, CERP [reviewed evidence](#) on the effectiveness of accountability practices in England, some of which contributed to AQA's [response](#) to the secondary school accountability consultation.

The OECD reports focus on features associated with performance in [PISA](#) tests, but are not always ideal resources for identifying the specific features of national systems. CERP therefore examined the assessment and accountability practices of a handful of OECD countries – [Finland](#), [Canada](#), [Australia](#), [New Zealand](#), [Singapore](#), and [Japan](#) – to get an informal sense of how other countries have gone about creating systems of school accountability.

Each country is considered individually, with a [summary](#) of findings and observations from the research included at the end of the document, along with a note on [data sources](#).

The table below shows how schools data is used in the various countries analysed (Source: PISA).

	PISA result	% students at schools competing for entry	% students at schools where achievement data is made public	% students at schools that only use data to evaluate teachers	% students at schools using achievement data to allocate resources	% students at schools where data is tracked by the authorities
Australia	9	95.8	46.6	41.3	61.4	81.0
Canada	6	84.6	55.2	14.7	58.5	89.0
Finland	3	57.5	2.5	10.9	5.2	43.4
Japan	8	90.8	3.7	23.6	3.9	10.8
New Zealand	7	86.6	77.7	48.0	67.9	93.4
Singapore	5	96.7	61.2	84.6	84.8	98.0
PISA average	-	76	36.6	44.8	32.7	66.2

## **Finland**

In 2009, Finland's expected duration of education was one of the highest in Europe, with students spending around 20 years in education. Approximately one third of children in Finland entered pre-primary education at age 6. Finland is amongst a small group of countries where the starting age for compulsory primary education is 7 years old.

Finnish young people transfer from lower secondary education at an older age than in most other nations. Participation rates for 15-year-olds at [ISCED 2](#) were above 90 per cent.

### **Selection and grouping policies**

Finland is one of the OECD countries characterised by low levels of differentiation in selecting and grouping students. Students are not systematically streamed, schools are not selective in their admissions processes, and as a result, classrooms tend to be heterogeneous.

76 per cent of students assessed by PISA attend schools that compete with at least one other school for enrolment. In Finland overall, 57.5 per cent of students attend schools that compete with other schools for enrolment.

### **Resources**

Finland has moderately low levels of school autonomy in setting curricula and assessment practices. It also has comparatively high levels of spending by educational institutions. The priority is small class sizes rather than high teacher salaries.

### **PISA Performance**

Finland was ranked third in PISA 2009, after Shanghai-China and Korea. It performed at higher levels than the OECD average, and showed a weaker relationship between socio-economic background and performance.

### **Assessment and accountability practices**

#### *Forms of assessment*

In the majority of European countries, certification at the end of upper secondary education is based on a combination of internal assessment and external examination. In Finland, by contrast, the certificate is awarded only on the basis of an internal final examination.

It is also rare for achievement data to be used to determine how resources are distributed in Finland. Fewer than 10 per cent of students attend schools that use achievement data in this way.

Sahlberg (2010) says that the Finnish system relies on building professional responsibilities within schools and encouraging lateral capacity-building among teachers and schools, rather than on external accountability structures. Sample-based testing, thematic assessment and reflective self-evaluation are features of the Finnish system, and a culture of mutual responsibility and trust is apparent.

Sahlberg also argues that because Finland does not have test-based accountability applied to schools, teachers are free to teach for productive and worthwhile learning rather than for standardised notions of achievement, or as part of a race for higher public rankings.

#### *Uses of assessment results*

Only 2.5 per cent of Finnish students attend schools where achievement data is posted publicly. The OECD average is 36.6 per cent.

Achievement data is used only infrequently to evaluate teachers' performance, with 10.9 per cent of students attending schools that use data in this way. The OECD average is 44.8 per cent.

An unusually low percentage of students, 5.2 per cent, attend schools where achievement data is used to allocate resources to the school. The OECD average is 32.7 per cent.

A below-average but still significant percentage of students, 43.4 per cent, attend schools where achievement data is tracked over time by the administrative authorities. The OECD average is 66.2 per cent.

## Canada

Public education in Canada is divided into two levels, elementary and secondary. Both levels are subdivided into a further two components: primary and intermediate at the elementary level, and junior and senior high school at the secondary level. Junior high school is compulsory and senior high is post-compulsory. In most jurisdictions, junior high school includes Years 7 to 9 – or age 12/13 to 14/15 – while senior high school continues until age 17/18.

In the past, secondary schools were primarily academic and prepared students for university, with vocational and technical schools being separate institutions. Although some of these institutions still exist, there has been a move towards institutions that offer both academic and vocational courses. Completion of compulsory lower secondary education is necessary for admission to senior high school. It is also needed for students who elect, for example, to pursue a course of training in a trade rather than continuing with an academic senior high school education.

### **Selection and grouping policies**

Canada is one of the OECD countries characterised by low levels of differentiation in selecting and grouping students. As we saw with Finland, students are not systematically streamed, schools are not selective in their admissions processes, and classrooms tend to be heterogeneous as a result.

In Canada, 84.6 per cent of students attend schools that compete with other schools for enrolment – more than the PISA average.

### **Resources**

Canada has moderately low levels of school autonomy in setting curricula and assessment practices. It has comparatively high levels of spending by educational institutions, with an emphasis on small class sizes rather than high teacher salaries.

### **PISA Performance**

Canada was ranked sixth in PISA 2009, after Shanghai-China, Korea, Finland, Hong Kong-China and Singapore.

Canada is one of the OECD countries that performed at higher levels than the OECD average whilst showing a weaker relationship between socio-economic background and performance.

### **Assessment and accountability practices**

#### *Form of assessment*

In most provinces, it is the responsibility of individual schools to set, conduct and mark their own assessments, tests and examinations.

A Pan-Canadian Assessment Programme (PCAP) superseded the School Achievement Indicators Programme (SAIP) from 2003. The first PCAP assessments took place during May 2007. They involved a random sample of 13-year-old students from across Canada being assessed in reading, mathematics and science. More than 30,000 students from over 1,500 schools took part in the assessments. It is intended that the programme will also assess 15-year-olds in future iterations, and potentially other subjects.

The purpose of PCAP is to provide individual provinces and territories with a basis on which to examine their curricula and other aspects of their school systems. It also aims to identify whether students across Canada are reaching similar levels of achievement at about the same age.

PCAP is similar to PISA in that one of the three subject areas forms the major component, with minor components from the other two areas. In 2007, reading was the major assessment component, with science and maths as minor components. Representatives from the teaching profession participated in the development and review of the assessment materials.

Although each province receives detailed technical information, the results for individual students, schools or school districts are not reported. Nevertheless, some provinces do provide test result information to parents. For example in Alberta, schools publish the results of standardised tests. These can be used by parents when choosing schools.

At senior high school level, there are no national or provincial standards. Accordingly, there are no national qualifications, examinations or national awarding bodies. Instead, standards are determined by individual high schools, with many provinces conducting and marking their own examinations. But system-wide examinations at the end of high school are administered in core subjects in some provinces, with the results being combined with assigned marks to determine students' standing.

In Ontario, for example, there is a standardised, province-wide numeracy test for high school students in Grade 9 (aged 14-15) and a literacy test for students in Grade 10 (aged 15-16). These are administered by an independent organisation, the Education Quality and Accountability Office and the results are reported to parents and the public. The reporting format enables parents to know how their child is performing relative to provincial norms. Student achievement is also reported across the province for groups identified according to gender, race, ethno-cultural background and socio-economic status.

#### *Uses of assessment results*

In Canada, 55.2 per cent of students attend schools where achievement data is posted publicly. The OECD average is 36.6 per cent.

Achievement data is used comparatively infrequently to evaluate teachers' performance, with 14.7 per cent of students attending schools that use data in this way. The OECD average is 44.8 per cent.

An above average percentage of students, 58.5 per cent, attend schools where achievement data is used to allocate resources to the school. The OECD average is 32.7 per cent.

A large percentage of students, 89 per cent, attend schools where achievement data is tracked over time by administrative authorities. The OECD average is 66.2 per cent.

## **Australia**

There are four 'bands' in Australian school education, corresponding to the following levels of schooling:

- band A – lower primary levels of education (ages 5/6 to 8-9)
- band B – upper primary levels of education (ages 9-10 to 11-13)
- band C - compulsory lower secondary phase of education (ages 11-13 to 15-16)
- band D – post-compulsory upper secondary levels of education (ages 16-18).

Secondary education is available for either five or six years, depending on the length of primary education in the state in question. Government policy on school choice stipulates that parents can choose to send their child to any government school or college. However, priority is given to students who normally live in the area. Schools must have the capacity to accommodate additional students within their existing buildings.

### **Selection and grouping policies**

Australia is one of the OECD countries characterised by low levels of differentiation in selecting and grouping students. Students are not systematically streamed, schools are not selective in their admissions processes, and classrooms tend to be heterogeneous as a result. 95.8 per cent of students attend schools that compete with other schools for enrolment.

### **Resources**

Australia has moderately high levels of school autonomy in setting curricula and assessment practices. It also has comparatively high levels of spending by educational institutions. The priority, as in Finland and Canada, is small class sizes rather than high teacher salaries.

### **PISA Performance**

Australia was ranked ninth in PISA 2009 after Shanghai-China, Korea, Finland, Hong Kong-China, Singapore, Canada, New Zealand and Japan.

Australia is one of the high-performing countries that show a steep relationship between socio-economic background and student performance. Two students from slightly different backgrounds tend to show large performance differences.

### **Assessment and accountability practices**

#### *Forms of assessment*

One important feature of Australian schools is that assessment arrangements are the responsibility of individual states and territories. In lower secondary education, all students in Year 7 (aged 12-13) are assessed against nationally agreed literacy and numeracy benchmarks under the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan. In upper secondary education, every state and territory has an external certification system in Year 12, at around the age of 18. This has the purpose of certifying compulsory and post-compulsory school completion as well as ranking students for entry to tertiary institutions.

Although external examinations are a prominent feature, they are by no means universal across the different states. In Queensland, moderated school assessments for subjects are supplemented with additional tertiary entrance data by means of a core skills or scholastic aptitude test. Queensland also prohibits the publication of test results. Schools receive composite performance results and the state's 'average band' for comparison.

Other states, such as Victoria, use a combination of external examinations and moderated school assessments. Victoria first published the results of the Victoria Certificate of Education

(VCE) in 1996. The published tables provided details of the percentage of students from each school passing the VCE as well as the proportion of high-performing students from each school. Since 2003, the tables have included median VCE scores for each school as well as a series of destination measures such as the proportion of students going on to higher education. The purpose of these refinements was to provide parents with more information about schools whilst avoiding the creation of league tables or school rankings which take no account of schools' particular needs or student profile.

*Uses of assessment results*

In Australia, 46.6 per cent of students attend schools where achievement data is posted publicly. The OECD average is 36.6 per cent.

Achievement data is used a little more infrequently than average to evaluate teachers' performance, with 41.3 per cent of students attending schools that use data in this way. The OECD average is 44.8 per cent.

A well-above average percentage of students, 61.4 per cent, attend schools where achievement data is used to allocate resources to the school. The OECD average is 32.7 per cent.

A large percentage of students, 81 per cent, attend schools where achievement data is tracked over time by administrative authorities. The OECD average is 66.2 per cent.

## **New Zealand**

There are three phases of the New Zealand school system:

- pre-compulsory early childhood education (ages 0-5/6)
- compulsory primary education (5/6-12/13)
- secondary education – divided into compulsory lower secondary (13-16) and post-compulsory upper secondary education (16-18+).

Attendance in pre-compulsory education is voluntary, with primary education becoming compulsory at the age of 6.

Most secondary schools are for students aged 13-18. Some state and private schools are single-sex, and others co-educational. The system is comprehensive, with all schools aiming to offer a full range of senior secondary courses, staff permitting.

State and integrated schools at both primary and secondary level must produce a school charter. This sets out the school's aims, objectives and priorities in relation to the National Education Guidelines, including the national curriculum.

### **Selection and grouping policies**

According to PISA 2009, New Zealand is characterised by low levels of differentiation in selecting and grouping students. This means that students are not systematically streamed, schools are not selective in their admissions processes, and students do not usually repeat grades and are not transferred to other schools. As a consequence, classrooms tend to be heterogeneous.

86.6 per cent of students attend schools that compete with other schools for enrolment – more than the PISA average of 76 per cent.

### **Resources**

New Zealand schools have high levels of autonomy in setting curricula and in assessment practices, but the country has comparatively low levels of spending by educational institutions. The priority is small class sizes rather than high teacher salaries.

### **PISA Performance**

New Zealand was ranked seventh in PISA 2009 after Shanghai-China, Korea, Finland, Hong Kong-China, Singapore and Canada.

New Zealand is one of the high-performing countries that show a steep relationship between socio-economic background and student performance. This means that students from slightly different backgrounds tend to show large performance differences.

### **Assessment and accountability practices**

#### *Forms of assessment*

The National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) was introduced in 2002 and is available at four levels. Each level involves externally moderated internal assessment, combined with external assessment. It is based on the National Certificate in Scotland and has credits available in vocational and technical subjects as well as for school curriculum subjects such as mathematics.

- NCEA level 1 is aimed at students aged 15-16.
- NCEA level 2 is aimed at students aged 16-17.
- NCEA level 3 is aimed at students aged 17-18.

- A further level, known as the New Zealand Scholarship, aims to extend the most gifted students.

*Uses of assessment results*

77.7 per cent of students attend schools where achievement data is posted publicly. This is far above the OECD average of 36.6 per cent.

Achievement data is used to evaluate teachers' performance at about the OECD average, with 48 per cent of students attending schools that use data in this way. The OECD average is 44.8 per cent.

An above-average percentage of students, 67.9 per cent, attend schools where achievement data is used to allocate resources to the school. The OECD average is only 32.7 per cent.

A large percentage of students, 93.4 per cent, attend schools where achievement data is tracked over time by administrative authorities. The OECD average is 66.2 per cent.

## Singapore

In Singapore, there is an average of ten years of formal general education, comprising six years of compulsory primary school (from age 6/7 to 12/13) and four years or more in the secondary sector. The latter is not compulsory, although attendance is close to universal.

Children take school-based examinations in English, the mother tongue, mathematics and science at the end of Primary 4 (age 10). On the basis of their performance in these examinations, they may go on to study these subjects at 'Standard' or 'Foundation' level, or 'Higher' level in the case of the mother tongue. At age 12, the end of primary education, the school decides at which level to enter the child in each subject in the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE).

Lower secondary education caters for students aged 12/13 to 16/17. Upper secondary education caters for students aged 16/17 to 18-20 in three different types of school: the junior college, which offers two-year pre-university courses; centralised institutes, which offer three-year pre-university courses; and polytechnics, which offer three-year courses leading to a diploma.

PISA found that Singapore was one of a group of nations, which also includes Croatia, Serbia, Hong Kong and Liechtenstein, where more than 80 per cent of students attend schools whose principals reported that they always consider academic records or recommendations from feeder schools when making admissions decisions.

### Selection and grouping policies

Singapore, along with Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and the Slovak Republic, applies horizontal differentiation at the level of the school system. These school systems are characterised by their use of streaming and early selection based on students' academic performance.

76 per cent of students assessed by PISA globally attend schools that compete with at least one other school for enrolment. Singapore has high levels of school competition by these standards. 96.7 per cent of students are in schools whose principals reported that they compete with at least one other school for students.

### Resources

Singapore has moderately low levels of school autonomy in setting curricula and assessment practices. It also has comparatively low levels of spending by educational institutions. The priority is high teacher salaries rather than small class.

### PISA Performance

Singapore was ranked fifth in PISA 2009, after Shanghai-China, Korea, Finland and Hong Kong-China.

In Singapore, the joint influence of socio-economic background and the learning environment on performance is particularly large, with almost 18 percentage points being attributable jointly to these two factors.

### Assessment and accountability practices

#### *Forms of assessment*

School ranking was introduced in Singapore in 1992, with student performance in the GCE 'N' Level, GCE 'O' Level and GCE 'A' level examinations being used to measure the performance of schools. The assumption was that competition between schools would make them improve.

This approach was modified in 2004. Instead of ranking schools based on exact academic scores, schools with similar academic performances were banded together and exact positions were not made known to the public.

In September 2012, the Ministry of Education abolished the banding of secondary schools by academic results, arguing that a school's effectiveness in academic education is better measured by its academic value-added than by its absolute academic band.

In addition, the School Excellence Model was introduced in 2000. This is a self-appraisal quality assurance model which gives schools the power of internal appraisal and continuous improvement. Nevertheless, this model also spells out the broad key performance indicators to be achieved and involves a one-in-five-years external validation of the self-appraisal results.

A third accountability mechanism is the School Awards System. There are four levels of awards, which range from the basic Achievement Awards, given to schools each year for the year's achievement, to the prestigious School Excellence Awards, which give recognition to schools for overall excellence in education processes and outcomes.

#### *Uses of assessment results*

In Singapore, 61.2 per cent of students attend schools where achievement data is posted publicly. The OECD average is 36.6 per cent.

Achievement data is used frequently to evaluate teachers' performance, with 84.6 per cent of students attending schools that do this. The OECD average is 44.8 per cent.

Achievement data is also widely used to allocate resources in Singapore, with 84.8 per cent of students attending schools that use achievement data in this way. The OECD average is 32.7 per cent.

Almost all students in Singapore, 98 per cent, attend schools where achievement data is tracked over time by administrative authorities. The OECD average is 66.2 per cent.

## Japan

There are nine years of compulsory education in Japan, from 6 to 15 years old. There is no selection for public elementary schools or junior high schools. There are four phases in the Japanese educational structure:

- pre-compulsory kindergarten education for children aged 3-6 years old
- compulsory elementary school for students aged 6-12 years old
- compulsory junior high school education for students aged 12-15 years old
- post-compulsory upper secondary education for students aged 15-18+.

Junior high schools are co-educational and separate schools for students with different levels of ability, or for girls and boys, do not generally exist. There are some 'Super English Language High Schools' intended to tackle the perceived English language inadequacies of a large percentage of the Japanese population.

### **Selection and grouping policies**

Selection and competition are important in the Japanese system. On average across OECD countries, 36 per cent of students are enrolled in schools whose principals reported that their schools are highly selective. In Japan, the figure is more than 85 per cent.

Worldwide, 76 per cent of students assessed by PISA attend schools that compete with at least one other school for enrolment. In Japan, the figure is 90.8 per cent.

### **Resources**

Japan has high levels of school autonomy in setting curricula and assessment practices. It also exhibits comparatively high levels of spending by educational institutions. The priority is teacher salaries rather than small class sizes.

### **PISA Performance**

Japan was ranked eighth in PISA 2009 after Shanghai-China, Korea, Finland, Hong Kong-China, Singapore, Canada and New Zealand.

Japan is one of a small group of countries that performed at higher levels than the OECD average whilst also showing a weaker relationship between socio-economic background and performance.

### **Assessment and accountability practices**

#### *Forms of assessment*

The Ministry of Education occasionally conducts nationwide achievement surveys. In 2007, the National Institute for Educational Research – a research agency under the jurisdiction of the Ministry for Education – conducted the National Assessment of Academic Ability (NAAA). This was a nationwide assessment taken by students in Years 6 and 9 of compulsory education (ages 12 and 15 respectively). The NAAA had three aims:

- to provide information of the levels of achievement and understanding of students in schools throughout Japan
- to identify ways of improving and strengthening educational guidance in individual schools
- to provide information on the outcomes of educational policies and identify problem issues.

With the exception of the NAAA, there are no national tests at the end of compulsory secondary education. Individual prefectures may set achievement tests in key subjects. There are individual entrance examinations – the fourteen plus – for access to post-compulsory upper secondary. In addition to examination performance, upper secondary schools take into account reports from head teachers of junior high schools. Tests are used for continuous classroom assessment of students and tend to be written, factual and multiple choice in format.

The Certificate of Graduation from senior high school is awarded largely on the basis of teacher assessment, with no external moderation. It does not guarantee access to higher education. Universities set their own entrance exams in addition to a standard nationwide test called the National Centre Test for University Admissions.

#### *Uses of assessment results*

In Japan, only 3.7 per cent of students attend schools where achievement data is posted publicly – much the lowest for any of the nations we review here. The OECD average is 36.6 per cent.

Achievement data is used infrequently to evaluate teachers' performance, with 23.6 per cent of students attending schools that use data in this way. The OECD average is 44.8 per cent.

Achievement data is used only rarely to allocate resources to schools, with only 3.9 per cent of students attending schools that work this way. The OECD average is 32.7 per cent.

A small percentage of students, 10.8 per cent, attend schools where achievement data is tracked over time by administrative authorities. The OECD average is 66.2 per cent.

## In summary

A couple of issues became apparent in compiling these analyses.

The first is the range of ways in which different countries structure their education systems. Japan and Singapore are characterised by their use of streaming and early selection. This means that students are selected on the basis of their academic performance. In contrast, Australia, Canada, Finland and New Zealand all have essentially comprehensive systems with low levels of differentiation in selecting and grouping students. Successive PISA reports have shown that the creation of homogeneous schools and classrooms through selection is unrelated to the average performance of education systems. This strategy is, however, associated with larger variation in student achievement and a significantly larger link between socio-economic backgrounds and learning outcomes.

It is also difficult to do full justice to the complexity of the many factors that impact upon learning outcomes. One of the key messages of the PISA reports is that assessment and accountability practices interact with other features in interesting ways. An example is the interaction between autonomy and accountability. In some countries, such as Japan, schools have comparatively high levels of autonomy in setting curricula and assessment practices. In others, such as Canada, schools have comparatively low levels of autonomy in these areas. The interesting finding is that the degree of autonomy in the system relates to the impact that posting achievement data publicly has on achievement. In countries where schools are held to account through posting the results of achievement data publicly, schools with greater autonomy tend to do better than those with less autonomy. However, in countries that do not post achievement data publicly, the reverse is true.

It seems to be the combination of these conditions, rather than each policy in isolation, that is related to student performance. Again, this supports the view that policies need to be considered holistically, rather than in isolation.

The policy history that emerges from the INCA documents and journal articles is also of note. Two points are potentially relevant to the reforms in England. Ng (2010) has described the development of school league tables in Singapore, and this summary relies heavily on this work. Singapore has moved from a system of publicly ranking schools according to raw examination results, first to one where schools with similar academic performances were banded together and exact positions were not made known to the public, and then, as of 2012, to a value-added system. But care must be taken in thinking how this change might be translated to English practice. Singapore has moderately low levels of school autonomy in setting curricula and assessment practices. In such systems, posting achievement data publicly seems to be inversely related to student performance. In England, under the Academies Programme, schools are being given increasing degrees of autonomy, which would seem to support the policy of also posting achievement data publicly. Nevertheless, as the current proposals in England involve including a value-added component into the floor target, Singapore could be a useful model for how such a policy could be implemented.

A further area in which other OECD countries might offer useful lessons for policy implementation is national sample testing, a proposal in the Department for Education's consultation. An example is the [Pan-Canadian Assessment Programme](#) (PCAP). One challenge in England will be to determine the appropriate content for the national test. It is interesting to note that representatives from the teaching profession participated in the development and review of the assessment materials for PCAP.

## Sourcing data

Piecing together information about other countries' education systems is not easy. Unless the country publishes material in English, as with Singapore, it can be difficult to verify information. A second issue is that information becomes outdated quickly. One can never be sure that a policy change has not invalidated your description of a country's policies.

Volume IV of PISA 2009, entitled [What Makes a School Successful?](#) [PDF], contains information about the different uses to which assessment results are put. It shows that most jurisdictions use achievement data for benchmarking and information purposes, and for making decisions that affect the school. Of the countries considered within this document, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Singapore do this. However, not all countries conform to this pattern. In Japan, schools tend not to use achievement data for benchmarking and information, but do use it for making decisions that affect the school. In Finland, schools rarely use achievement data for any of these purposes. As all six of these countries performed significantly above the OECD average in PISA 2009, this would seem to suggest, as so often in education, that there is more than one pathway to success.

This material has been supplemented with other relevant information from PISA, such as how the countries performed in PISA 2009, schools' selection and grouping policies, and the resources spent on education.

The International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks (INCA), which existed until 2013, provided additional data. INCA described government policy in a range of (mostly OECD) countries and was supported by the Department for Education in England, and managed by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). Although the website will not be updated beyond 2013, the content has been [archived](#). As with any data source, there were some limitations. For example, country information had been updated at different times: Canadian data went through to 2012, whereas Singapore had not been updated since 2009, which is more problematic.

A further limitation was that some countries, such as Finland, were not included. In these cases, [Eurydice](#) reports were used, which provide information on and analyses of European education systems and policies.

Given the limitations of the INCA resource, attempts were made to cross-reference the information with the equivalent of the Department for Education in each of the countries, although this wasn't possible in all cases. Most of the published academic research on accountability comes from the USA and the UK, but the work of [Pasi Sahlberg in Finland](#) and [Pak Tee Ng in Singapore](#) was also valuable. Recent editions of the [Journal of Education Policy](#) have also included a variety of papers on accountability, and this work has informed many of these pieces. Similarly, the Oxford University Centre for Educational Assessment's much more systematic [Policy effects of PISA](#) [PDF] has been a very useful resource.

As part of CERP's 'Perspectives' series, David Phillips ([The perils of policy borrowing](#)) and Sandra Johnson ([Leaning into a PISA world](#)) have warned of the dangers of 'policy borrowing' – transplanting policies uncritically from other countries. The goal in this document hasn't been to suggest policies that England should adopt, but to get a sense of the ways other countries have tackled some of the issues England is currently considering.

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March 2013

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