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15 May 2021

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/108318/>
MPRA Paper No. 108318, posted 17 Jun 2021 06:17 UTC



EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND REFORMS IN LUXEMBOURG

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Abstract

Luxembourg is seen as a unique country characterized by a low number of residents that form a highly multicultural and multilingual population. Despite the fact that Luxembourg has a long-standing tradition with multilingualism, the country faces enormous challenges as regards the national education system. Currently, Luxembourg seeks to introduce various reforms in order to reduce educational inequality that children face at school. This paper focuses on overviewing the key features of educational policy and reforms in Luxembourg.

Educational policy and reforms in Luxembourg

The organization of school system

The central government is in charge of education and takes most schooling decisions at lower secondary level, with two ministries bearing the main responsibility for Luxembourg's education system (Eurydice, 2020). On the one hand, there is the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth (MENJE; ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse) that is responsible for the planning and management of school education. It organizes the educational departments and defines curricula and guidelines encompassing all stages of education: non-formal and formal education in early childhood, school education at primary and secondary levels, vocational education and training and adult education, as well as extra-curricular schooling provision, such as music education (Eurydice, 2020). The MENJE also coordinates government actions for young people and manages accreditations for curricula and validation of learning outcomes. On the other hand, there is the Ministry of Higher Education and Research (MESR; ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche) which is responsible for higher education (Eurydice, 2020).

Luxembourg is characterized by a low level of school autonomy (below the OECD average) for decisions on curriculum and assessment and on resource allocation (including hiring and dismissing teachers) (OECD, 2016). All teachers are required to follow a pre-service teacher-training programme including a mandatory teaching practicum, pass a competitive examination to enter the profession, and do continuing education courses. Teaching conditions for primary and secondary teachers include comparatively low class sizes, expanded teaching time and high salaries (highest salaries among OECD countries) (OECD, 2016). Teacher appraisal is not regulated by law, and there are no specific formal procedures or guidelines to evaluate the

performance of permanent teachers. School evaluations consist mainly of internal school self-evaluations with strong national requirements and support mechanisms to help carry them out (OECD, 2016).

Education policy in Luxembourg

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) aims at helping to promote greater equity in the system. Care for children under age 3 is provided in day-care centres (*crèches*) or day-care families (*assistance parentale*). Starting at age 3, children may participate in an optional early childhood programme (*enseignement précoce*), which municipalities must provide free of charge (UNICEF, 2018). About 71% of 3-year-olds and 99% of 4-year-olds are yearly enrolled in early childhood education (around the OECD average of 74% for 3-year-olds and above the OECD average of 88% for 4-year-olds) (OECD, 2016). Provision of education at that level is mainly public.

In Luxembourg, school attendance is compulsory for all children aged between 4 (before 1 September of the current year) and 16 (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021). There are some 160 public elementary schools. There is no charge for pupils attending public schools, and textbooks as well as transport are provided free of charge (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021). Migrant children, especially newly arrived, are entitled to a certain number of hours of language support classes (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021). For Portuguese-speaking children, there are a number of programmes aimed at placing value on their mother tongue and easing their integration in the class. Teachers are encouraged to organize language discovery activities directed at all the pupils in their class (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021). The primary education in Luxembourg is largely public; private schools are very few and are subsidized by the government

up to 95% (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021). Private institutions do not play a great role in the educational system of Luxembourg. 93% of pupils attend public schools, and only 7% are enrolled in private institutions (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021).

Primary education comprises four cycles including preschool and primary for children aged between 4 and 11. • Cycle 1 corresponds to pre-school education; it is for children aged 4 and 5 (or, optionally, from the age of 3 years). Cycles 2 to 4 correspond to elementary (primary) education. More specifically, Cycle 2 is for children aged between 6 and 7, Cycle 3 is for children aged between 8 and 9, and Cycle 4 is for children aged between 10 and 11 (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021). Children are assessed at the end of each cycle. Performance in mathematics, German and French are used as the key criteria for deciding whether the child can continue in the next cycle, as well as in the orientation procedure.

Each cycle has a duration of two years; pupils may though cover one cycle in one year or take three years to acquire the skills bases. In Cycle 1, language learning focuses on the development of oral skills in Luxembourgish (the main language of communication), the introduction of spoken French, and placing value on the language spoken at home. In Cycles 2 to 4, pupils learn to read and write in German, with German being used as the language of instruction for all subjects (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021). The exposure to Luxembourgish which begins at crèche prepares children for learning German, since the two languages are very closely related. Familiarization with French continues in Cycle 2, but only for oral skills. Learning written French starts in Cycle 3 (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021). At the end of each term, an intermediate report (*bilan intermédiaire*) is produced by the teacher and explained to the parents at an individual meeting. This gives an opportunity to see their child's

progress in relation to the desired outcomes. At the end of each learning cycle, the educational team draws up an end-of-cycle report (*bilan de fin de cycle*): this certifies that the pupil has acquired the skills necessary for moving on to the next cycle.

At Cycle 4, the orientation procedure commences. The parents and the teacher discuss their views on the direction the pupil should take after having completed elementary education. At the end of the cycle, they make a joint decision (*décision d'orientation commune*) (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021) by combining the parents' opinion, the results of the *Épreuves communes* (tests at national level) taken by all pupils in the Grand Duchy, the pupil's academic results, and the results of the tests carried out by the school psychologist. In the event of disagreement, an orientation commission (*commission d'orientation*) meets in order to make a decision (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021).

Secondary education is for young people from 12 years upwards. It is organized by more than 50 institutions: public institutions (mainly secondary schools), private institutions applying the ministry's official curricula, private institutions applying a different curriculum, and European schools (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021). The range of courses and diplomas on offer is very wide. There is a distinction between a classical secondary education and general secondary education. Classical secondary education (*ESC - Enseignement secondaire classique*) is general schooling spread over a period of seven years. It aims to prepare pupils for higher and university studies; on successful completion of their studies, they acquire a secondary school leaving diploma (diplôme de fin d'études secondaires classiques). German is the key language for the first three years. During the following four years, all subjects (except German and English) are taught in French. Starting in the second year of classical secondary education, pupils may choose English or Latin (or Chinese in one secondary school). At the end of the fourth year,

pupils may choose one of the eight existing subject areas (sections) (A - modern languages; B - mathematics – IT; C - natural science - mathematics; D - economics - mathematics; E - art; F - music; G - human and social sciences; I - IT – communication). At the end of each term (or semester) as well as at the end of the school year, the transcript (*bulletin de notes*) indicates the marks obtained in the various subjects taught, any remedial measures, absences, and comments on behavior.

General secondary education (*ESG - Enseignement secondaire général*) covers 7 years leading up to the corresponding secondary school leaving diploma (*diplôme de fin d'études secondaires générales*) (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021). This diploma grants the right to start a professional career or enroll in higher education (university or non-university studies). During the first three years (guidance route), the vehicle language is German, except for mathematics, which is taught in French (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021). Thereafter the vehicle language usually remains German, except for certain subjects which are taught in French (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021). Parallel to the guidance route, the pre-vocational route (*voie de préparation*) in general secondary education is for those pupils who, by the end of their primary education, have not acquired the required level of competence (*socles de compétences* - skills base). They are taught in modules, which allows them to progress at their own pace. They are prepared for joining a more demanding class or for vocational training (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021). This pre-vocational route may be followed in either German or French. At the end of the third year of general education, pupils can continue their path by choosing either vocational training or one of the five streams of general secondary education (administrative and commercial stream; health and

social professions; general technology; art stream; hotel and tourist industry) (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021).

Initial vocational training gives young people a general education, including both theory and practice and begins after the third year of secondary education (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021). Some 125 training courses are available, directed at obtaining one of three qualifications (from the least to the most demanding) (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021):

- *Certificat de capacité professionnelle* (CCP; Certificate of professional capacity), with a duration of three years;

Diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle (DAP; degree of professional ability), also with a duration of three years;

- *Diplôme de technicien* (DT; technician's diploma), with a duration of four years.

Vocational training may be carried out :n• under the full-time scheme (*régime à plein temps*): at a secondary school, with periods of work experience totalling at least 12 weeks; • under the concurrent scheme (*régime concomitant*): partly in a company and partly at a secondary school; • under a mixed scheme (*régime mixte*): full-time at a secondary school for one or more years and the rest of the training under the concurrent scheme.

The educational system of Luxembourg is viewed as highly stratified with the selection between tracks starting at a young age (12 years) (Geyer, 2009). However, special tuition and *classes d'accueil* are offered in some schools to help and support those pupils who enter from another branch of education or change courses within secondary education. Furthermore, it should be noted that the material taught in the 'academic' and the 'technical vocational' tracks is at the same level

of difficulty (except for languages which are less demanding in the latter and that the upper stream of vocational education) and also gives access to higher and university education (Geyer, 2009).

Most training courses are taught in German, although some are taught in French or English (special language classes - *classes à régime linguistique spécifique*) (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021). Teaching is carried out in modules (and not by subject). Each module is designed to develop a number of skills and focuses on real-life professional situations. Assessment is made on a semi-annual basis with transcripts, an intermediate review during training, a final review, and one or two integrated project(s) placing the pupils in a real or simulated professional situation (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021).

Higher education groups the access to Master Craftsmanship (Brevet de maîtrise), Higher Technician Certificate (Brevet de Technicien Supérieur - BTS) or to a University Diploma (Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate) (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021). The higher technician's qualification (*brevet de technicien supérieur - BTS*) is awarded at the end of a short course of higher education (four to six semesters) starting after the high school-leaving diploma. The aim of the course is to provide students with a higher level of vocational training in their specialization. The University of Luxembourg, created in 2003, is the key education institution providing training in higher education. It is famous for its multilingualism (German, English and French), its internationality (students of 125 different nationalities), and its research programmes (including computer sciences, biomedicine, European law, and educational sciences) (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021). Two private higher education institutions, accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, offer higher education programmes: Lunex (sport and physiotherapy) and the Luxembourg School of Business (LSB) (business and management). The Sacred Heart University Luxembourg (business and

management) is authorized to organize courses in Luxembourg. Even if they are not resident in the Grand Duchy, students enrolled for an eligible cycle of higher studies may apply for financial aid for higher studies from the government. The assistance comprises a basic grant plus possibly a mobility grant, a grant based on social criteria, a family grant, and a State-backed loan, and is paid to the student each semester (Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, 2021).

Key challenges in the education system of Luxembourg

Academic discourse, as well as analytical reports, often refer to the three reasons that are claimed responsible for creating educational inequalities in Luxembourg. The first refers to the large number of immigrants whether they are residents or cross-border wage earners commuting from the neighboring regions of France, Belgium and Germany (ASTI, 2004). The pupil population reflects the cultural heterogeneity of the population. In school year 2018/19, the first language of 65% pre-primary and primary pupils was other than Luxembourgish; in secondary education, this proportion dropped to 58.4%, but still remained high (MENJE, 2020). In spite of the fact that foreign nationals are largely present in the pupil population, they are not equally distributed through all pathways. In school year 2018/19, they made up 45.9% of primary education pupils; they represented 46.5% of students in the more vocationally-oriented general secondary education (ESG), whereas their proportion shrunk to 25.4% in the more academically-oriented classic secondary (ESC) pathway (MENJE, 2020).

The second source refers to the fact that Luxembourg is a trilingual country. The national language is Luxembourgish, the legislative language is French and the official administrative and judicial languages are French, German and Luxembourgish. This plurality of languages is reflected in the education system, as well. German is the main language of instruction at primary school and in the

lower grades of secondary education. French is taught at primary school level and is progressively introduced as a language of instruction for most subjects in the higher secondary education. With a particularly high number of foreign residents and its trilingual tradition, this educational system is faced with tremendous challenges. While around 40% of pupils in pre-primary and primary education are foreigners, their proportion drops to around 15% when considering general secondary education. The vast majority follows technical secondary education instead. The performance gap between immigrant and native pupils has consequently been highlighted in the PISA studies (OECD, 2016). Recent PISA studies rank Luxembourg among the last positions not only in Europe but also worldwide (OECD, 2016).

Finally, the third source is the high level of income inequalities and hence the tremendous impact of socio-economic status of parents that affects opportunities of their children in the education system of Luxembourg (UNICEF, 2018). Although Luxembourg has the highest disposable income per capita in the EU, poverty has risen steadily since 2000, and at a faster rate than in any other EU member state (MESA, 2020). Without social transfers 47% of the population would fall below the poverty line but, even with income inequality at 0.30 after transfers (2016 Gini ranking), slightly below the EU average, 21.5% of people in Luxembourg are living at risk of poverty or social exclusion, with children and adolescents especially at risk (23.6%), as well as single-parent families (MESA, 2020). 18.7% of working people in Luxembourg are considered as working poor (MESA, 2020), with this proportion being one of the highest in EU. The working poor, mainly people aged 18-24, are increasing faster than in any other EU Member state. Luxembourg is considered as the worst performer in the European Union, with around 40,000 households being below the risk-of-poverty threshold and unable to compete in the housing market (MESA, 2020).

A brief overview of educational reforms in Luxembourg

This section addresses the measures that have been taken to remedy the challenges and inequalities in the education system of Luxembourg. With regard to the philosophy of integration, Luxembourg follows an ‘assimilation’ model. It previews the use of integrating measures that address *all pupils* and avoid such measures that might lead to a polarization of society by singling out pupils into individual groups. Nevertheless, it has been widely recognized that this approach is insufficient for the case of Luxembourg and there is a need to introduce appropriate measures to meet the special needs of migrant children (Geyer, 2009).

Minority language tuition has been introduced into the mainstream curricula of primary education in 1983-84 and enforced in 1992. Since then, two hours of teaching in the mother tongue addressing also the culture of the country of origin are included in the normal timetable each week. At pre-primary level, where Luxembourgish is the language of tuition, the framework for early childhood education stresses the importance of a positive approach as regards children and their culture of origin. In addition, some of the teaching books written in German used in primary education have been translated into French or were even made available in Portuguese or Italian to help Romance-language migrants to better follow mainstream education.

Since 1990, a circular asks teachers to set aside time for short but regular teaching sessions in Luxembourgish (Geyer, 2009). In addition, optional pre-primary education has been extended to provide 3- year olds with the possibility to better learn Luxembourgish. Since 1999 special staff was employed by the Ministry of Education to help at the request of teachers, e.g. with translation or reception, performing the role of mediators. Initially designed for refugees from ex-Yugoslavia, Albania and Russia, this measure has been extended in 2004 to cover also Cape Verdian and Portuguese children (Geyer, 2009).

Despite intense debates about reducing stratification in the education system of Luxembourg, the Parliament in 2000 refused to follow OECD's recommendations to introduce a two-track system with stronger differentiation between French and German (ASTI, 2004). This was seen as a decision that touches at the heart of Luxembourg's national identity. The alternative path was chosen, which aimed at adhering to the traditional system while providing additional measures to assure equity. A *règlement* of July 2003 eventually established reception and integration classes at primary and technical secondary classes (Geyer, 2009). There is no legal definition of 'newcomer' eligible for these classes; the decisive criterion for the schooling system in Luxembourg is less nationality or formal resident status than it is language. The general reference therefore is 'child of foreign mother tongue'. Accordingly, reception classes mainly stresses learning the instruction languages German and French. For children over the age of 10, it is considered difficult to reach sufficient levels of the instruction languages. Intensive tuition is therefore focused on French (Geyer, 2009).

Some schools of general secondary education provide special German tuition for children that are good in French and mathematics but somewhat weaker in German. German in these classes is treated as a foreign language. The aim is to enable pupils to join mainstream German-language lessons from the fourth year of secondary education. At lower technical secondary level, newcomers receive intensive language teaching either in German or in French or in Luxembourgish within the mainstream education. The availability of French courses in technical secondary education has been increased and textbooks have been produced in bilingual (French and German) (Geyer, 2009). The overall situations remained however difficult especially for children with the migrant background or of disadvantaged social origins.

In 2008, the parliament introduced the reform of vocational education and training (amended in 2014) aimed to improve the quality of VET provision in secondary schools. Changes included simplification of student progression and better access to modules preparing for technical studies in higher education; extension of basic training to all trades and professions; and the introduction of financial compensation during internships or apprenticeships. The state and the private sector collaborated in the Committee for Vocational Training to ensure that VET programmes meet labor market needs. Curricula were developed by National Training Commissions and included representatives from secondary schools and the business sector. The school of the second chance (*École de la deuxième chance*, E2C, 2008) was introduced to provide additional opportunities for early school leavers (age 16-30) to obtain adequate qualifications to enter the labor market or continue on to higher education.

In 2009, the Reform of Fundamental Education (2009) replaced the traditional organization by academic year with two-year learning cycles. This new structure was supposed to help teachers adapt learning settings to their students' individual rhythms and needs and give students more time to develop the required competences. In addition, the reform introduced standards on providing information to parents on their children's progress, and parent representatives were expected to be consulted on decisions concerning school organization (Eurydice, 2020).

In parallel, the standardization process was launched as a result of which learning standards were defined for each cycle which allowed to offer a guide for teachers at each level of education regarding their expectation of progress for each cycle. These standards were set at the basis of assessment of student progress at the end of each cycle. In addition, this allowed to create a clear picture about learning content that was expected to be covered within each cycle.

Additionally, the reform introduced the evaluation of students both during and at the end of a learning cycle and creating individual student portfolios documenting students' progress. Finally, the reform offered greater school autonomy, allowing schools to develop individual initiatives and choose their didactic material in addition to the requirement to prepare a school development plan (mainly at pre-primary and primary level) defining schools' objectives according to student needs.

As part of the Reform of Fundamental Education (2009), school administration was ensured by a partnership of municipal authorities, teaching staff and parents. Under this reform, each school could set up its own School Committee, composed of elected members from its teaching staff. These committees were entrusted to issue proposals on school organization and budget, prepare the school development plan and determine the needs for teacher training. Parents' representatives were expected to meet with the School Committee at least three times a year for discussions or organized joint events.

In 2009, there was also a response to the impact of socio-economic conditions on the creation of educational inequalities. The school law from 2009 foresaw the cost-neutral offer of additional lessons for children from underprivileged families. The additional lessons were supposed to be allocated to the communes in need by using the actual class-size and socio-economic index and can add up to 1.95 additional weekly lessons per student in an average class size of 13.33 students.

To improve the counselling service in schools, the *Educational and Professional Orientation* pilot project (2015) was introduced in six upper secondary schools. The *Luxembourg Youth Guarantee* (2014) was launched by the MENJE following *EU council* recommendations. The scheme proposes individual programmes to 16-24 year-olds to continue their education or enter the labor market (Eurydice, 2020).

In 2012 there was an evaluation of *the Reform of Fundamental Education*, conducted by the University of Luxembourg. This process included an online survey and interviewing of educational stakeholders in Luxembourg, including teachers, parents and inspectors. The evaluation team found positive perceptions on this reform, along with a need for adjustments on way the reform was implemented. In response to a recommendation of the evaluation report, the MENJE developed a new model of *intermediary assessment report*, through a consultative process involving pedagogical teams of fundamental schools. In 2014/15, the new intermediary assessment plans were piloted in 30 schools.

The recently created *Luxembourg Centre for Educational Testing* (LUCET) aims to strengthen assessment and evidence-based policy and to advise the government on education reform (Eurydice, 2020). An *education report* is supposed to be prepared every five years and is expected to facilitate stocktaking of Luxembourg's education system and services as a basis for public discussion. The 2018 report was prepared by SCRIPT and the University of Luxembourg and demonstrated the persistence of educational inequalities in the Luxembourg educational system.

Post-reform data on the performance of the education system in Luxembourg

The last wave of the PISA survey provides multiple evidence of persisting educational inequalities in Luxembourg suggesting that the recent measures were insufficient. Students in Luxembourg scored 470 points in reading on average in PISA 2018, below the OECD average (487 score points) and below the average performance of almost all European countries (OECD, 2019). Performance in science, 477 points, on average, was also below the OECD average (487 score points) and was one of the lowest observed across European countries. Students in Luxembourg scored 483 in mathematics, below the OECD average (489 score points). Luxembourg ranked between 25th and

29th in average mathematics performance, on a par with Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, the Russian Federation, the Slovak Republic, Spain and the United States (OECD, 2019). Mean performance in reading and science in Luxembourg was lower in 2018 than in the most recent assessments (2012 and 2015): performance declined by 11 score points in reading and by 6 score points in science between 2015 and 2018. By contrast, mean mathematics performance in 2018 was close to its level in 2015, but 10 score points lower than in 2003.

There is a strong effect of ethnic background on school performance. In 2018, some 55% of 15-year-old students in Luxembourg had an immigrant background, up from 40% in 2009. This is the largest increase observed amongst PISA-participating countries. Among these immigrant students, three in eight were socio-economically disadvantaged, a proportion similar to the OECD average. The average difference in reading performance between immigrant and non-immigrant students in Luxembourg was 17 score points in favor of non-immigrant students, after accounting for students' and schools' socio-economic profile (OECD average difference: 24 score points). Unlike what is observed in many PISA-participating countries, first-generation immigrant students in Luxembourg performed better in reading than second-generation immigrant students.

There is also a link between socio-economic background and school performance. This link is stronger in Luxembourg than in any other PISA-participating country. Advantaged students in Luxembourg outperformed disadvantaged students in reading by 122 score points in PISA 2018 – a difference 33 points larger than the OECD average difference of 89 score points. Only 8% of disadvantaged students in Luxembourg were able to score in the top quarter of reading performance in their own country. This is one of the smallest shares observed amongst PISA participating countries; only in Bulgaria, Peru and the United Arab Emirates were smaller proportions of “academically resilient” students observed. In Canada, Estonia, Ireland and the

United Kingdom, all of which scored above the OECD average, more than 13% of disadvantaged students scored amongst the highest performers in reading in their country (OECD, 2019).

In Luxembourg, 84% of students who are enrolled in a disadvantaged school (OECD average: 34%) and 50% of students who are enrolled in an advantaged school (OECD average: 18%) attend a school whose principal reported that the capacity of the school to provide instruction is hindered at least to some extent by a lack of teaching staff. According to school principals in Luxembourg, 85% of teachers in advantaged schools, but 75% in disadvantaged schools, hold at least a master's degree. Many students, especially disadvantaged students, hold lower ambitions than would be expected given their academic achievement. In Luxembourg, about one in three high-achieving disadvantaged students – while only one in seven high-achieving advantaged students– did not expect to complete tertiary education.

OECD (2019) reports that the career expectations of the highest-achieving 15-year-old students reflect strong gender stereotypes. Amongst high-performing students in mathematics or science, one in four boys in Luxembourg expects to work as an engineer or science professional at the age of 30, while only about one in seven girls expects to do so. One in four high-performing girls in Luxembourg expects to work in health-related professions, while only one in ten high-performing boys expects so. Only 8% of boys and 1% of girls in Luxembourg expect to work in ICT-related professions.

According to school principals in Luxembourg, the parents of fewer than one in two students discussed their child's progress with a teacher (OECD average: one in six), and fewer than one in ten parents participated in local school government (OECD average: one in six). When asked about the factors that hinder their participation in school activities, parents in Luxembourg commonly

cited obstacles that were time-related, such as the need to work (28%) and the inconvenience of meeting times (29%) (OECD, 2019).

Conclusion and discussion

Given the recent PISA results, one still has the impression that the educational system of Luxembourg is in need for further improvement. The fact that a constantly growing number of migrant children try to avoid the trilingual challenge by attending private international schools or inscribing in neighboring French or Belgian schools across the border points out that the current educational policy is ineffective and further reforms should be introduced. Among these reforms the following elements are worth mentioning (Geyer, 2009; Eurydice, 2020; OECD 2016 and 2019; Tröhler, 2013):

- 1) Replacing the system of entrance exams for secondary education with more flexible orientation procedures,
- 2) Granting more autonomy to secondary schools and
- 3) Providing enhanced assistance and support measures for foreign pupils within mainstream education.

Particular attention is paid to the discussion of negative effects that multilingualism produces on the performance at school. Reforms that could provide the possibility to choose between tracks with altered roles of German and French as languages of instruction remain, however, a kind of taboo and often excluded from the discussion. The fear of undermining social unity and social cohesion by creating two distinct language communities has been the major motive to adhere to the traditional line.

Nonetheless, recent assessments suggest that the current measures to adapt multilingualism to the homogenous school population, is severely tested, and hence needs further attention. For foreign pupils the results show that the Luxembourg and German languages seem inaccessible to a great part, while the methods of learning adapted to the Luxembourg situation are either missing or appear to be ignored. Recent PISA studies demonstrate the deficiencies of the Luxembourgish education, with its school system doing little with regard to social inequalities. It provides little opportunities for people with the migrant background or coming from a disadvantaged social strata, hindering their participation in the democratic political process and the flourishing economy of Luxembourg.

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