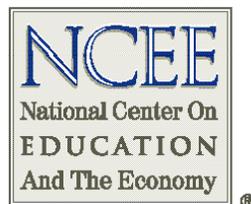


**Overview of Education Ministries in Selected Countries:  
Roles, Responsibilities and Finances, 2005**

**Lynne Sacks and Betsy Brown Ruzzi**

**Paper prepared for the  
*New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce***

**February 2006**



## Overview of Education Ministries in Selected Countries: Roles, Responsibilities and Finances, 2005

Lynne Sacks and Betsy Brown Ruzzi

Education Ministries around the world vary widely in the roles they play and the responsibilities they have to educate their citizens. From directing the development and implementation of education policy to administering systems of schools, the authority and responsibilities of Education Ministries impact the quality and effectiveness of a country's education systems and ultimately the performance of students in those systems. This paper provides a brief overview of Education Ministries in seven countries and, in some cases, regions within those countries. The countries and regions studied include: Australia and New South Wales, Belgium (Flemish community), Canada and Alberta, England, Finland, The Netherlands, and New Zealand. For each country, the paper describes the lead education authority and its relationship to other levels of government, the major responsibilities that agency is tasked with, the budget and staffing level of the Ministry, its role in curriculum and assessment, and school evaluations. A summary of each Ministry can be found at the end of the document.

### **Australia**

#### *Administrative structure/lead education authorities*

The administration and financing of education in Australia is shared between the federal government and the states and territories. The federal government is primarily responsible for developing national education policies, whereas the states and territories are responsible for delivering education. The federal government provides significant funding for education and administers some national programs.

The lead national education authority is the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). DEST's responsibilities include:

- advising on and implementing education policies,
- carrying out research, analysis and evaluation,
- working with the states and territories, industry, other agencies and the community in support of the government's objectives,
- identifying and addressing Australia's current and future skill needs,
- encouraging international cooperation and the exchange of ideas, students and expertise with other countries,
- implementing initiatives to enhance individual, team and organizational performance, and
- ensuring accountability and value for money in delivering government-funded programs.

Consultation between the federal government and the states and territories occurs through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). MCEETYA was established in 1994 by the merging of the Australian Education Council (AEC), the Council of Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training (MOVEET) and the Youth Ministers Council (YMC). MCEETYA's membership includes federal, state and territory ministers as well as New Zealand ministers responsible for education, employment, training and youth affairs. MCEETYA works closely with the Ministerial Council on the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA MINCO), which has responsibility for some aspects of vocational education and training. New Zealand abstains from voting on issues related solely to Australian internal policy.

Functions of the Council include:

- coordination of strategic policy at the national level,
- negotiation and development of national agreements on shared objectives and interests,
- negotiations on scope and format of national reporting on areas of responsibility, sharing of information and collaborative use of resources towards agreed objectives and priorities, and coordination of communication with, and
- collaboration between related national structures.

Australia is moving toward closer national cooperation, direction and outcomes reporting. MCEETYA is coordinating the development of:

- a set of common national goals,
- continuing efforts to establish national measurement and reporting of student outcomes (including through national sample assessments in some key areas), and
- national taskforces, working parties, committees, studies and reports addressing particular topics and reporting on progress in implementing the goals and attendant strategies.

#### *Administrative budget and staffing*

The Department of Education, Science and Training budget for the year ending June 30, 2004 was approximately Aus\$275 million (US\$209.8 million), according to the DEST Annual Report 2003-04. As of June 30, 2002, DEST staffing was 1,522.

#### *Curriculum and assessment*

There is currently no national curriculum in Australia, although there is movement in that direction. In 1996, the ministers of education in each of the states and territories agreed to establish national literacy and numeracy benchmarks for years 3, 5 and 7. These were developed by the Curriculum Corporation in conjunction with the states and territories and approved in 2000.

### *School evaluation/inspection*

There are no national school inspections.

### **New South Wales**

New South Wales provides an example of the functioning of a state education system within Australia.

### *Lead Education Authorities*

The New South Wales Department of Education and Training is the lead education authority. The Department:

- coordinates all public education and training services in NSW, from early childhood through post-compulsory,
- provides advice to the NSW government on higher education, and
- promotes lifelong learning,
- provides students with a smooth transition from school to work or further study.

The New South Wales Board of Studies was established by law in 1990 as a separate entity from the Department of Education and Training. It is supported by the Office of the Board of Studies. The Board of Studies:

- develops curriculum and curriculum support materials for all schools from Kindergarten to Year 12,
- develops and conducts examinations leading to the award of the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate,
- advises the Minister for Education and Training on applications from non-government schools seeking to operate in New South Wales,
- accredits non-government schools to present candidates for the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate.

### *Administrative budget and staffing*

The Department of Education and Training budget for 2003 was Aus\$20.9 million (\$16 million) The number of full-time equivalent DET staff as of June 30, 2003 was 2,487, according to the NSW Department of Employment and Training Annual Report. The Office of the Board of Studies budget for 2004 was Aus\$93.7 million, (US\$71.5 million) according to the Board of Studies Annual Report 2004. The average number of staff during the 2003-2004 year was 247.

### *Curriculum and assessment*

There is a common curriculum for all government schools, with a curriculum review and revision process currently in progress. Students in NSW participate in national literacy assessments in year 3, 5 and 7. Students earn a School Certificate at the end of year 10 if

they complete course and attendance requirements. Students earn a Higher School Certificate at the end of year 12 based on passing the course as well as end of year assessments.

*School evaluation/inspection*

There is no external evaluation of schools in New South Wales. Schools are, however, required to produce an annual report providing assessment results and other information about the school's activities and performance.

**Belgium (Flemish Community)**

*Administrative structure/lead education authority*

For the purposes of education, health and culture, Belgium is divided into three nearly autonomous communities: the Flemish (Dutch-speaking) Community, the French Community, and the German Community. The information in this overview is specific to the Flemish Community. Federal involvement in education in Belgium is limited to determining the beginning and end of compulsory schooling, the basic requirements for awarding qualifications, and the rules governing the teachers' pension plan. Otherwise, the Flemish education system is autonomous. The Department of Education is the lead education authority in the Flemish Community.

*Administrative budget and staffing*  
unavailable

*Curriculum and assessment*

An important principle in Flemish education is the use of attainment targets and developmental objectives. The attainment targets and developmental objectives define which knowledge, insight, skills and attitudes society regards as necessary or desirable for students at different educational levels. The government uses attainment targets and developmental objectives for quality control. They are represented in the curricula, the schools' work plans and the textbooks used by the schools.

Schools have the autonomy to develop their own curricula, as long as they meet the developmental objectives and attainment targets. The educational inspectorate evaluates the curriculum on the basis of whether the curriculum corresponds with the attainment targets and developmental objectives and advises the Minister for Education on whether to approve a school's curriculum. The curriculum is developed by the organizing body or by the umbrella educational organization of the school. The schools belonging to the umbrella organizations usually adopt the approved curricula. Assessments leading to school certificates are conducted at the school level, and are approved by the inspectorate.

*School evaluation/inspection*

School inspections are the responsibility of the Inspectorate, which is part of the Department of Education. The Inspectorate examines whether the schools are

fulfilling their societal mission and whether money is being spent responsibly. Based on the results of the inspection, the inspectors issue a statement on whether they will continue to recognize and subsidize the school. In addition, the inspectors have an advisory function with regard to policy.

The Education Inspectorate is responsible for:

- supervision of curriculum development and implementation,
- determining whether the curriculum-based goals are being achieved,
- the control and use of school time,
- the control of hygiene within the school, the language laws, and the educational and school equipment,
- giving advice about the financing of the educational institutions,
- issuing policy recommendations about education.

The Inspectorate does not merely determine whether legal provisions regarding education are being observed, but also evaluates the broader school context, such as the atmosphere of the school, the relations between the different groups, and the infrastructure. The Inspectorate does not evaluate the school's pedagogical methods.

## **Canada**

### *Administrative structure/lead education authority*

Thirteen provincial ministries of education have primary responsibility for setting education policy and overseeing schools in Canada. The Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC) provides a structure for the provincial ministers to consult and act on matters of mutual interest.

The CMEC has identified the following areas for joint action:

- Focusing on education outcomes
- Sharing information on best practices
- Collaborating on curriculum initiatives
- Promoting policy-related research
- Strengthening the postsecondary sector and increasing access
- Supporting international activities
- Promoting mobility
- Enhancing CMEC as a forum for effective and fruitful cooperation with the federal government

A recent review of the role of the CMEC and its Secretariat was undertaken to address concerns about the CMEC's function and effectiveness. The review concluded that there is broad support for the CMEC to take on more of a policy and national coordination function, while in reality its current role is often to provide information.

#### *Administrative budget and staffing*

The Secretariat of the CMEC has 39.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff members as of July 2005. The average budget of the secretariat, which fluctuates annually, is approximately Can\$6 million (US\$5 million).

#### *Curriculum and assessment*

The Council conducts pan-Canadian SAIP (School Achievement Indicators Program) for 13 and 16-year olds in math, reading and writing, and science at an annual cost of Can\$3 million. All individual provinces have established mechanisms for assessing achievement and for accountability.

#### *School evaluation/inspection*

The CMEC does not conduct inspections or evaluate schools.

### **Alberta**

Alberta provides an example of education administration at the provincial level within Canada.

#### *Administrative structure/lead education authority*

The Alberta Ministry of Education oversees K-12 education in Alberta. Its responsibilities include:

- curriculum development and revision,
- development and implementation of assessments,
- school oversight and inspections, and
- budget development and oversight.

#### *Administrative budget and staffing*

The Ministry of Education administrative costs were Can\$28.5 million (\$23.4 million US) in 2004, according to the Alberta Ministry of Learning's Consolidated Financial Statements of March 31, 2004 and has approximately 820 staff members in 2005.

#### *Curriculum and assessment*

Alberta has a province-wide curriculum specifying what students are expected to know and be able to do in each subject area as well as the amount of instructional time to be spent on each subject area. Alberta Education takes the lead in developing curricula, determining when they need revision and updating the curricula. Schools must choose materials from those approved for instruction by Alberta Education. Students are tested in core subjects in grades 3, 6 and 9, and aggregated results of these assessments are made publicly available. In addition, students take provincial diploma examinations in grade 12.

#### *School evaluation/inspection*

Schools are required to prepare annual reports of their achievements and progress. In addition, inspections may be undertaken in relationship to accountability in order to verify student and financial performance according to

established standards; assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the education system; and/or ensure that operations, revenues and expenditures comply with provincial and school authority performance goals.

The inspection team prepares a report based on analysis of information and data, not direct school inspections. The report includes the school authority's response to the inspection, which is made available to the public. If, as a result of an inspection, a school authority is found to be non-compliant with legislative requirements, corrective action will be required and may be detailed in the school authorities education plan.

## **England**

### *Administrative structure/lead education authority*

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) is the lead education body in England. While the DfES has overall responsibility for all aspects of public education, many responsibilities are delegated to local education authorities and school governing bodies.

### *Administrative budget and staffing*

The DfES administration costs were 225 million pounds (\$395 million) in 2003-2004, according to the DfES 2004 annual report. Current DfES staffing is approximately 3,700, but DfES has announced plans to cut this number by 1,460 (31%) by April 2008. This is projected to save 70 million pounds (\$122.7 million) a year.

### *Curriculum and assessment*

England has a compulsory national curriculum for students in government schools up to age 16. The national curriculum includes a framework for important knowledge and skills in core subject areas as well as performance standards. There are national assessments of the performance standards at ages 7, 11 and 14. In addition, students planning to continue their studies beyond age 16 generally take courses and assessments leading to the GCSE.

A Standards and Effectiveness Unit was established in the DfES in 1997 to lead the Department's drive to raise pupil achievement. The Unit's current focus is on working with schools and other stakeholders to build processes that transform teaching and learning and strengthen leadership. The *Schools Standards and Framework Act* (1998) established various monitoring programs to chart the achievement of specific targets for student achievement, as measured by Standard Assessment Tasks and national examinations.

National strategies for numeracy and literacy, which integrate teaching frameworks with research-based pedagogy and intensive staff development, are now embedded and are securing significant improvement in pupil attainment in primary schools. A more recent strategy aims to achieve similar improvements in the 11-14 age range.

There have also been policy initiatives to ensure that a greater proportion of young people achieve educational qualifications. A national framework for vocational qualifications was developed in the 1990s (currently under review), and the National Council for Vocational Qualifications merged in 1997 with the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority to form the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). QCA has a wider remit than any previous education or training body, including pre-school learning, the national curriculum for 3-16 year olds, national tests for 7, 11 and 14 year olds, GCSEs, A-levels, NVQs and higher level vocational qualifications. The QCA coordinates education and training, bringing together academic and vocational qualifications.

#### *School evaluation/inspection*

The inspection of schools and of teaching by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) is part of the strategy to raise standards. Ofsted is a non-ministerial government department responsible for the inspection of all schools, public and private. School inspections are required in law and are governed by the *School Inspections Act 1996* and later amendments. Schools are normally re-inspected within six years of their previous inspection, and the school receives 6 to 10 weeks' notice of an inspection. Inspections are conducted by teams of trained inspectors, led by a registered inspector, and result in a published report. Ofsted's budget is approximately 20 million pounds (US\$34.8 million) and it employs 2,714 people.

School inspections involve a process of evidence gathering to provide an assessment of how well a school is performing. The inspectors review data on attainment, observe lessons, interview teachers, analyze student work, and meet with parents, students and governors. Schools that do not meet the required standards may be identified as "underachieving" or "having serious weaknesses," or in extreme cases placed in "special measures." They are then subject to a system of more frequent inspections to identify their progress towards meeting prescribed development targets.

This inspection structure has met with some criticism from teachers, whose perception was that inspections were made too often, were bureaucratic and required too much preparation time. Ofsted suggests that much of the preparation that teachers make for inspections is generated by the schools themselves, and is not required by the inspectors. Since 2000 a 'light touch' inspection has been introduced for those schools (about a quarter of the total number) that are judged to have performed well in exam results and have received very favorable reports in previous Ofsted inspections.

### **Finland**

#### *Administrative structure/lead education authorities*

The Ministry of Education is the highest educational authority in Finland. The Ministry of Education prepares education legislation and makes the necessary decisions for submission to the Government. The purview of the Ministry of

Education includes education and research: compulsory school, upper secondary school, vocational schools and colleges and universities. The National Board of Education is responsible for the development of educational objectives, curriculum frameworks and methods in basic, general upper secondary, vocational and adult education and training. The Board prepares and adopts the curriculum framework and is responsible for the evaluation of the Finnish education system. There is no separate inspection department for schools in Finland. For the purposes of regional administration, Finland is divided into six provinces. The Education and Culture Department of the Provincial State Office is responsible for education.

The National Board of Education:

- develops core curricula for basic and upper secondary education, the framework for vocational qualifications and competence-based qualifications,
- evaluates learning results and improves the efficiency of training,
- provides information services, maintains the financing system for the education sector, and publishes training guides,
- produces support services for education.

#### *Administrative budget and staffing*

The Finnish Ministry of Education had approximately 350 staff members in 2004 and had a budget of 244 million euros (\$294.78 million) in 2004. The National Board of Education employed 350 staff members in 2004 and had a budget of 69.7 million euros (\$85 million), according to the Finnish National Board of Education Annual Report 2004.

#### *Curriculum and assessment*

The national core curricula for basic education and general upper secondary education are currently being reformed. The new National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools was completed in 2003 and it will be introduced in the fall of 2005. The revised National Core Curricula for Basic Education will be introduced no later than in 2006. Upper secondary vocational qualifications were reformed in 1999–2001. There is a national matriculation exam at the end of secondary school.

#### *School evaluation/inspection*

The principles of the national evaluation of education and training are determined by the Ministry of Education. The national evaluation system of education and training consists of three sections: the evaluation system of learning outcomes, production of indicators and thematic evaluations with varying topics. Responsibility for the development and implementation of evaluation rests with the Evaluation Council for Education and Training and with the Higher Education Evaluation Council.

At a regional level, the evaluation and monitoring of education and training are carried out by the Provincial State Offices. Regional evaluations support the acquisition of information required for national evaluation. At a local level, evaluation may focus on aspects such as the accessibility of education and training, the financial accountability of educational institutions and the achievement of the objectives of municipal policies on education, training and culture, as well as on the differences between various educational institutions. At an institutional level, evaluation targets include the achievement of objectives, the completion of pedagogical and curricular reforms and the use of resources.

## **The Netherlands**

### *Administrative structure/lead education authority*

The overall responsibility for Dutch education lies with the Ministry of Education, although administration and management of schools is decentralized. In recent years, there has been a trend towards greater local autonomy and decentralization. Many central government powers have been transferred to the level of the individual school or local authority. Central government control is increasingly confined to the area of broad policy-making and to creating the right conditions for the provision of good quality education. Institutions are being given greater freedom in the way they allocate their resources and manage their own affairs, although they are still answerable to government for their performance and policies.

The Ministry:

- makes policies,
- drafts legislation, and
- appropriates public funds.

There is one advisory body at the national level – the Education Council – that advises the government on the main outline of policy and legislation. The Education Council covers a broad field of education, ranging from preschool to postgraduate university education, including education and training provided by companies. All new legislation must be presented to the Council of State before it is presented to Parliament. The Education Council publishes recommendations and reports and initiates seminars and web discussions on relevant subjects.

### *Administrative budget and staffing*

In 2001, administrative spending was 469 million euros (\$595 million) according to a Ministry publication, *Education Facts and Figures 2003*.

### *Curriculum and assessment*

The Netherlands does not have a national curriculum, but does have standards-based performance targets defined in terms of educational outcomes. There is a set of core objectives that form the minimum content of primary education and a three-year statutory foundation curriculum for the beginning of secondary

school. Assessments at the end of primary education determine some options for secondary education, and assessments at the conclusion of secondary education determine post-secondary options. The secondary foundation curriculum is currently under review.

#### *School evaluation/inspection*

The Education Inspectorate has a mandate to evaluate the education process within schools on the basis of quality criteria. The Education Inspectorate oversees the quality of schools. Approximately 200 inspectors make more than 10,000 visits to schools every year to determine whether they are in compliance with statutory obligations and whether they are adhering to their school plans. Schools are generally visited every few years, although those failing to meet standards are visited more frequently through a system known as "proportionate inspection."

When observing lessons, the inspectors also assess the teachers' teaching methods. The advice they give to schools is used to improve the quality of teaching. Every year the Inspectorate submits about 25 reports – including the annual Education Report – to the Minister, the State Secretaries and Parliament. School report cards ensure that information about educational quality in schools is available to the public.

Schools also make use of self-evaluation systems to show that they meet the quality criteria in all respects. If they fail to do so, other parties (the Inspectorate, the Ministry, the representative advisory council) may intervene.

### **New Zealand**

#### *Administrative structure/lead education authority*

The New Zealand Ministry of Education is the lead education agency. The responsibilities of the Ministry include:

- providing policy advice,
- providing information,
- providing learning resources,
- overseeing regulations and funding,
- providing specialist education services.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority is responsible for secondary and tertiary assessments and qualifications. New Zealand also participates in Australia's Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) to allow coordination of regional education and training policy.

#### *Administrative budget and staffing*

As of June 30, 2004, the New Zealand Ministry of Education employed 3,123 employees, translating to 2,279 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. Ministry

expenses for the 2003-2004 fiscal year were NZ\$163.74 million (US\$113.69 million).

#### *Curriculum and assessment*

New Zealand has a curriculum framework that identifies broad skills schools are expected to teach in seven “essential learning areas” and eight groups of “essential skills.” The current curriculum framework emerged from a broad review of education in the 1980’s that concluded the content taught in New Zealand’s schools was not providing the knowledge and skills for all students to succeed in modern society. The curriculum framework also specifies policies and procedures for schools to use in assessments.

New Zealand has developed the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) to evaluate the overall quality of education in New Zealand. NEMP assesses samples of students at ages 8/9 and 12/13. In addition, New Zealand has developed a National Qualifications Framework that provides standardized qualifications from the end of lower secondary education through higher education. Cumulative credits lead to various levels of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA).

#### *School evaluation/inspection*

The Education Review Office is responsible for reviewing education institutions. Individual schools are generally reviewed every three to four years, but low-performing schools are reviewed more often. There is a range of possible interventions the government can take if a school is performing poorly, with a new emphasis since 2001 on using risk assessment as a basis of intervention rather than relying strictly on whether the school is meeting its legal obligations. There are six possible statutory interventions:

- requiring a school's board of trustees to provide specified information,
- requiring a board of trustees to engage specialist help,
- requiring a board to prepare and implement an action plan to address specific issues,
- appointing a limited statutory manager for a board to work on a particular aspect of a school's operation while the board remains in existence,
- the Minister of Education dissolving a board and directing the Secretary to appoint a commissioner, where the school is at serious risk and other interventions would not satisfactorily address that risk, and
- the Secretary for Education dissolving a board and appointing a commissioner where a board is either not functioning effectively or is improperly constituted.

## Summary of Study Findings

	<b>Lead agency</b>	<b>Roles and responsibilities</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Total staff</b>	<b>National standards</b>	<b>National curriculum</b>	<b>National Assessment</b>	<b>National Textbooks</b>
<b>Australia</b>	Department of Education, Science and Training	Most funding flows through the federal government to the states	Aus\$275 mil. (US\$209.8 mil.) (2004)	1,522	No	No	Mostly regional, but some national	No
<b>--New South Wales</b>	--Department of Education and Training  --Board of Studies	--Coordinates all education service  --Develops curriculum and assessments	--Aus\$20.9 mil. (US\$16 mil.) (2003)  --Aus\$93.7 mil. (US\$71.5 mil.) (2004)	--2487  --247	--Yes	--Yes	--Yes	--No
<b>Belgium (Flemish Community)</b>	Department of Education	Determines beginning and end of schooling, sets basic qualifications requirements and rules for pensions			National attainment targets and developmental objectives	No	No	No
<b>Canada</b>	Council of Ministers of Education	Allows provincial ministers to consult and act on matters of mutual interest	Can\$6 mil. (US\$5 mil.)	39.5 FTE	No	No	National assessments for 13 and 16-year olds (cost CAN\$3 mil.)	No
<b>--Alberta</b>	--Alberta Ministry of Education	--Develops curriculum and assessments, oversees schools and develops budget	--Can\$28.5 mil. (US\$23.4 mil.) (2004)	--820	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, teachers must choose from approved

								list of materials
<b>England</b>	Department for Education and Skills (DfES)	Develops national policies and strategies	225 mil. pounds (US\$395 mil.) (2003-04)	3,700	Yes	Yes	National assessments at ages 7, 11 and 14 and 16	No
<b>Finland</b>	Ministry of Education	--Education policy --Research --Oversight --Culture and sports	244 million euros (US \$294.78) (2004)	App. 350 (2004)	Yes	Yes	National matriculation exam – end of secondary school	
<b>Finland</b>	Board of Education	--Development of core curricula --Evaluation of education system --Provision of data --Maintenance of financing system	69.7 million euros (US\$85 mil.) (2004)	350 (2004)	Yes	Yes	See above	
<b>Netherlands</b>	Ministry of Education	--Makes policies --Drafts legislation --Appropriates public funds	469 million euros (US\$595 million) (2001)		Yes	No	Yes, end of lower secondary	No
<b>New Zealand</b>	Ministry of Education	--Provides policy advice --Oversees regulations and funding	NZ\$163.74 mill. (US\$113.69 mill.) (2004)	3,123 (2004)	Yes	Yes	Yes, end of lower secondary	No