

OECD launch *Education at a Glance*

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) launched its annual volume of statistics, *Education at a Glance*, at events in a number of cities around the world. Professor Andreas Schleicher, Director of Education and Skills Directorate at the OECD, gave a presentation in London. He pointed out that between 2012 and 2020 most OECD countries had significantly increased spending on schools. The UK was an exception, where spending in real terms had been flat. Yet there had been a 20% increase in spending on further and higher education, with most of that going on the university sector.

Another area of increasing difference between the UK and comparable countries in the OECD was in how spending was allocated. Over the last five years there has been a move away from national formulas to looking at a number of individual special factors, often focused on place. Australia had led the way here, followed by Scandinavian countries. In Britain the pupil premium was a partial move to focusing more resources on the most disadvantaged, but even that was a national figure that took no account of the wide variation of conditions that exist in different places.

The launch, hosted by the Sutton Trust, had a panel discussion following on from Prof. Schleicher's presentation. Much of the discussion focused on the impact of the COVID pandemic on the most disadvantaged, who had suffered the most. Prof. Schleicher surprised many when he said that it was bright children and young children from poor homes who had suffered most.

David Hughes, Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges, had a different take. He thought that it was the lower-level learners from disadvantaged backgrounds that had been worst hit. (Prof. Schleicher stood his ground on this, claiming OECD figures backed up what he had said. The difference may be that the AoC was dealing with colleges while OECD data was from 15-year-olds in schools.)

Mr Hughes had agreement from other panellists when he drew attention to the very small amount invested in the education of adults, which had halved in a decade. Adult education had declined even more during the pandemic, partly because of the difficulties of accommodating social distancing. Mr Hughes called for companies to invest more in skills.

*A fuller report on the OECD report, an article on its launch from John Bangs and a review of the document will appear in the next issue of **Education Journal**.*

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