



Educational Policy Institute - better analysis for better policy

The Educational Policy Institute (Inštitút vzdelávacej politiky) is the main analytical unit of the Slovak Ministry of Education. The Institute's mission is to provide analysis, forecast, and strategic policy preparation. It's efforts in 2013 are focused primarily on creating a strong analytical team.

Better education is key challenge for Slovakia

Knowledge has become a crucial driver of sustainable economic development. Slovakia shall therefore concentrate on quality improvement of all levels of educational provision. The state must devote particular attention to supporting access to education for pupils from vulnerable social groups and take actions to increase their completion rate. Access to good quality education for all and its successful completion are the key factors that contribute to accumulation of the human capital on which a knowledge-based economy relies.

Benefits of having an educated society go far beyond the economic dimension. Especially for a country like Slovakia, positive effects regarding political and community participation are of particular importance. Namely, engaged citizens are the essence of civil society and statehood building. They are crucial for development of a cohesive society and a vital democracy.

Institution building

The Educational Policy Institute was established at this impetus of the Minister of Education. It was in line with the European Union's recommendation to strengthen the analytical capacities at the key ministries in Slovakia. In addition, the Slovak government's National Reforms Program included the proposal to establish analytical units at economic and social ministries. In recent years, similar

analytical or policy units at some other ministries have already been established.

The best systemic change and delivery begins with the right conceptual analysis. One of the interesting things I discovered is that although much of politics is conducted in a completely non-intellectual atmosphere, the best policy actually comes from a clear, rigorous intellectual approach.

Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of Great Britain

Experience from other countries shows that the best policies and learned conclusions are built on an expert approach. The EPI's job is to prepare analysis, to forecast, and to give expert advice concerning strategic policy decisions in cooperation with relevant ministry's departments. Their analytical effort in 2013 will concentrate on the evaluation of primary and secondary education funding systems, with the main accent on efficiency promotion. Last but not least, they search for best practices

from other countries and try to implement them into national education policies. From the managerial perspective, the institute is currently in the process of creating and developing a strong analytical team. The main priority for 2013 therefore remains capacity building.

Evidence-based policy

The Educational Policy Institute fills the gap for provision of better evidence-based policy in Slovakia. Evidence-based policy builds on a scientifically rigorous data analysis and utilizes best practices from other countries. Data-driven policy making produces measurable outcomes and at the same time provides a platform for a more rational public debate on sensitive topics.

Solutions that would improve education systems are of a complex nature. Their implementation requires a public policy that is transparent, accountable, and effective. A data-based approach to policy-making offers suitable tools to arrive at responsible solutions and at the same time helps to create a sound public policy. It is therefore vital for key ministries to develop sufficient analytical capacities.

Through data analysis, they are able to capture and describe only a part of reality. It is not possible to measure and quantify all of the important factors of an educational environment. Decisions regarding new policies aimed at quality promotion of schools are especially difficult to make using hard analytical data only. It is necessary to take into account soft drivers of quality at schools, such as teachers' and students' motivation and class climate as well. The Institute's goal is to always consider the mutually complementary roles of the hard and soft aspects of education and to find a balance between them when shaping new policies.

Conclusion

The Educational Policy Institute promotes effective educational policies that enhance individual social and economic prospects, provides incentives for greater efficiency in education, and mobilizes resources to help meet rising demands. Discussion with professionals is important to improve the quality of output. Therefore they are open to expert discussion and to exchange of views with all relevant stakeholders from Academia, the business sphere, and NGOs.



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