



Some Insights about the Coherence and Diversity of Education Systems

A couple of comments organised in two parts:

- general comments about the importance of comparative studies of education systems, the richness of opportunities resulting from them and also their limits
- More specific comments about comparing national education systems and the cautiousness which is specially needed in that matter.



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- 'Thinking global' is a natural incentive to compare relative performance among countries
- From the nineties, there has been a tradition to engage into comparative analysis of 'National Innovation Systems' and to benchmark the performance of such systems (Nelson, 1992; OECD innovation scoreboard; at that time, there was also the first edition of Education as a Glance, 1992)
- Learning from such attempts is interesting to engage into comparative studies about national education systems and their performance



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As far as the NSI literature is concerned, relevant criticisms were:

- Technological determinism: performing technology at the frontier would imply economic performance (which is not fully true)
- Institutional determinism: adopting the best institutional practices should imply relevant economic growth policy (which is also not fully true)

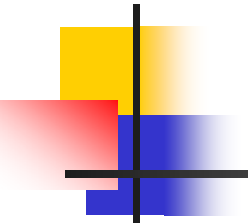


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There is an interest to promote Freeman's view about the coherence and diversity issues of NSI, promoting experience from Japan post WW-II catching-up:

- Performing the interplay between technology improvement and institutional change is a major source of success
- Appropriate innovation policy cannot be but a policy mix including science, technology, industrial, competition, reglementary and... education policies

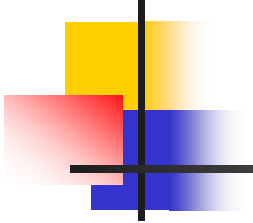
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Translating Freeman's view in Education systems requires to stress the following general issues :

- There is no one best way to reach 'education performance'
- Education performance needs to be addressed through considering the national context (social agreement on education system, economic structure and labour market requirements)
- As a consequence, a difficulty lies in comparing similar criteria and/or variables whereas diversity of institutions matters
- A need to be cautious with international comparisons: an example to illustrate

PISA International Study as an example



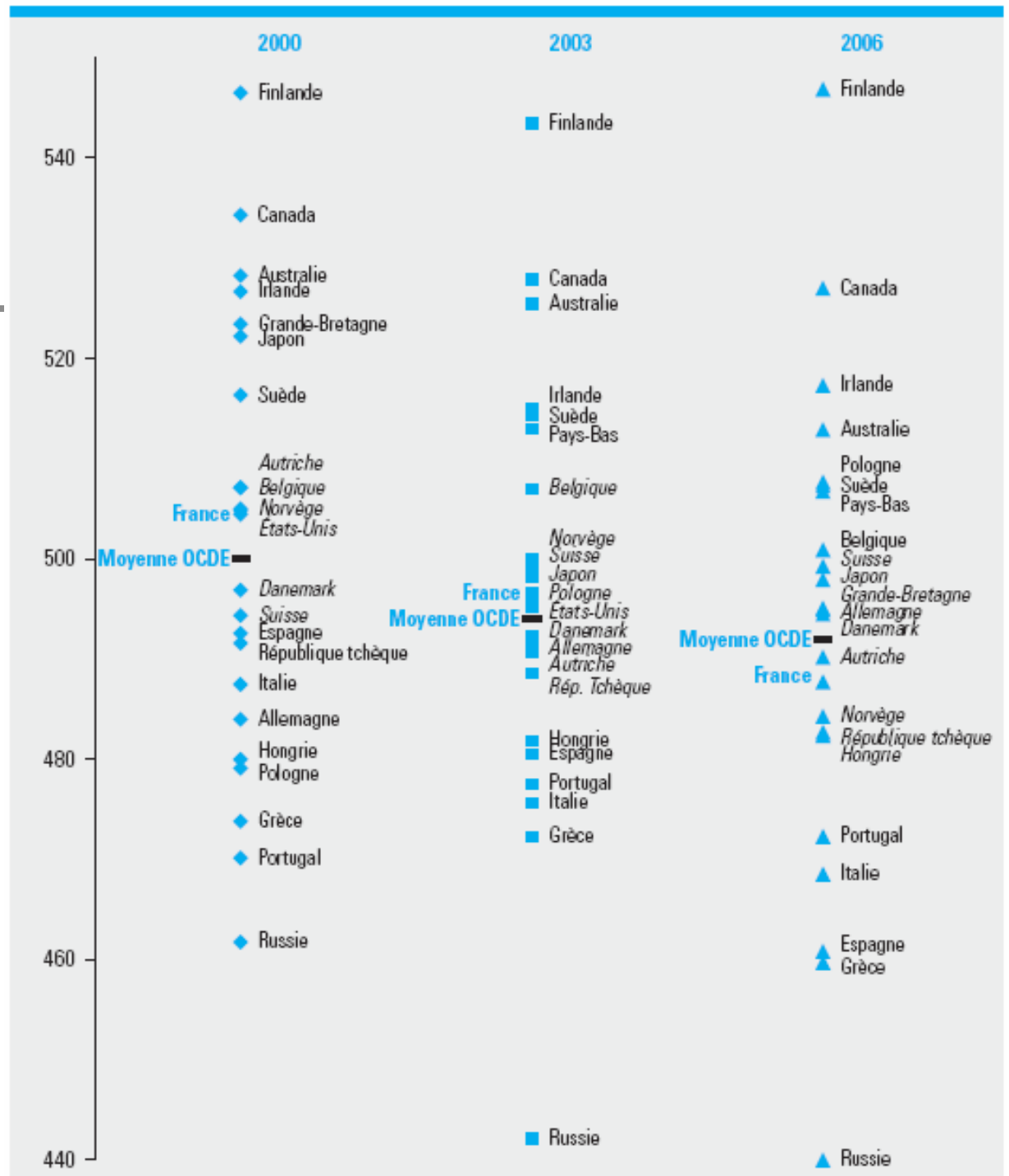
Purpose	International comparison (OCDE) of scholar skills at 15 years old
Level	15 years-old = either 2 ^{nde} normally, or secondary school when late
Panel	A national sample of 5000 students
Disciplines	Reading literacy, mathematics, scientific culture
Periodicity	Every three years with a dominant domain : reading literacy by 2000, mathematics by 2003 and scientific culture by 2006
Remarks	By 2009, a re-itérative process (reading literacy as a dominant domain)

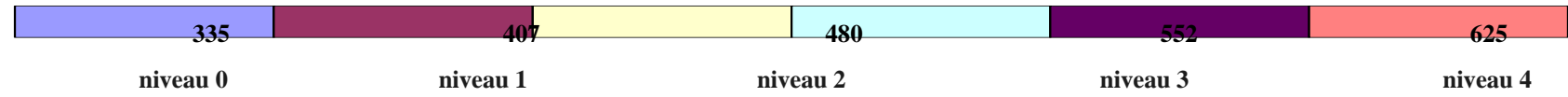
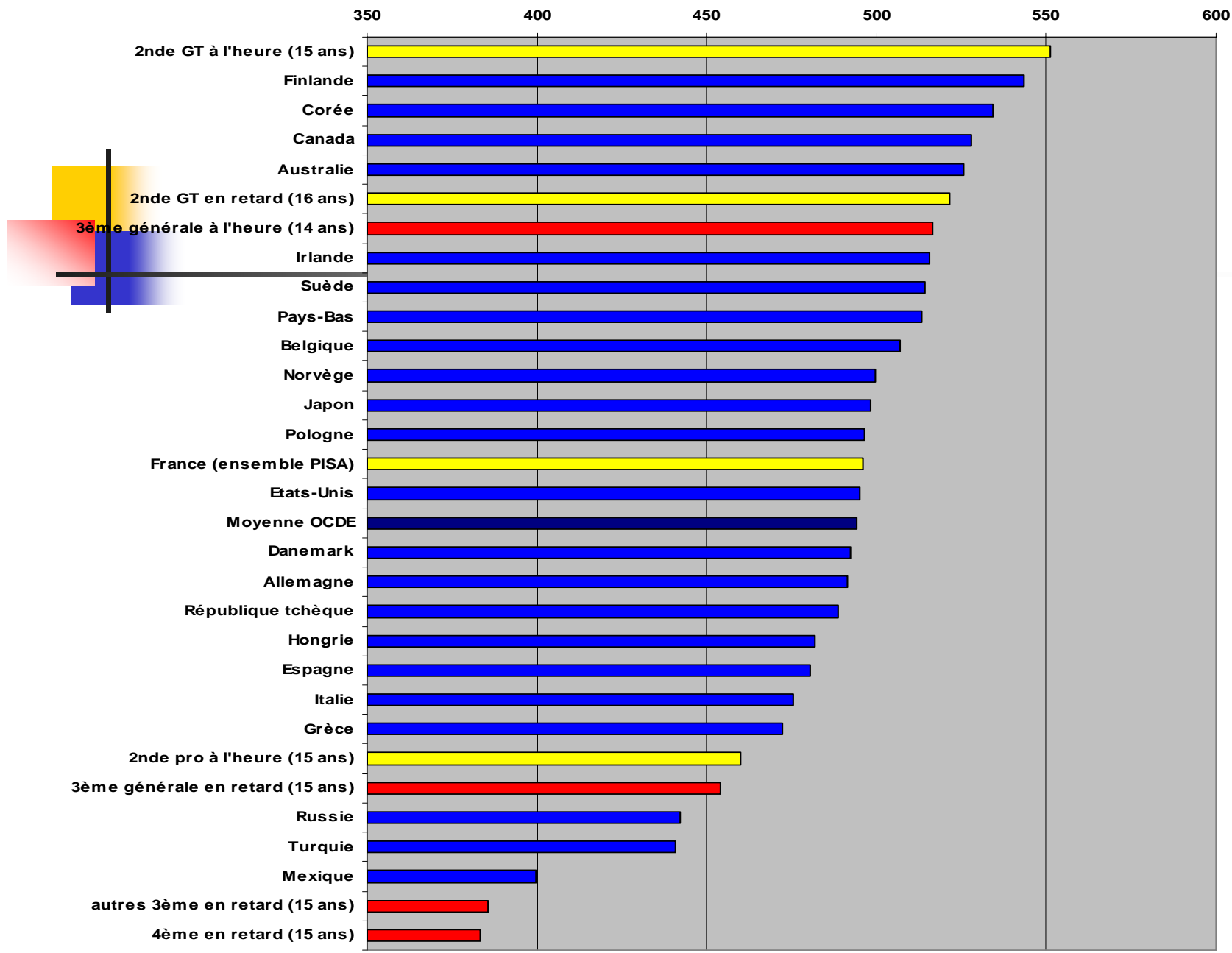
Exemple



PISA Ranking in Reading literacy

2000/2003/2006







Concluding remarks

- There is far from a best practice to perform education systems
- Comparative studies matter much more to think about how identified performing practices can be properly depicted in their institutional environment
- What can be learned from them is not a term-to-term adoption but a discussion about their coherence as regards domestic national peculiarities.
- One more time, the usual motto 'comparaison n'est pas raison' (comparison is not necessarily rational) is a matter of thought.