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Education as a global race – or for democracy and solidarity? The side effects of PISA testing.

International studies of education have a Janus face. On the positive side, they may give valuable information, inspiration, show strengths and weaknesses of your own education system. On the negative side, results from such studies may cause anxiety and fear, being used, abused and misunderstood by media and policy-makers. Country rankings produce winner and losers, and the tests are often seen as a global race.

In the presentation, I will give examples on the detrimental effects that such studies, in particular the OECD PISA project, has on national education debates and policies. I will also point to some paradoxical and problematic PISA results that should worry educators and policymakers who want their school system to help young people to develop a sense of well-being and self-efficacy that prepare them for active and happy citizenship.