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EDC-QA (4)

PROJECT
EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP :
FROM POLICY TO EFFECTIVE PRACTICE THROUGH QUALITY ASSURANCE
(EDC-QA PROJECT)

**First meeting of the project management group
Ljubljana, Slovenia, 20-22 February 2003**

Meeting report

INTRODUCTION

The first meeting of the core group of the project "education for democratic citizenship : from policies to effective practice through quality assurance" (EDC-QA project) was held on 20-22 February 2003 in Ljubljana, Slovenia. It was moderated by Michela Cecchini. The agenda and list of participants appear respectively in appendix 1 and 2 of this report.

Myriam Karela, UNESCO, was particularly welcomed. UNESCO's involvement in the project was seen as essential in ensuring its key objective to help the inclusion of quality assurance for EDC in educational policies in Southeast European countries.

The objectives of the meeting were to

- reach a common conceptual understanding of EDC quality and EDC quality assurance
- review the overall project (rationale, objectives and phases)
- plan in detail the activities of phase 1 of the project.

The core group held in-depth discussions and agreed on the conclusions and decisions set out in this report.

I. UNDERSTANDING QUALITY AND EDC QUALITY

The following elements were agreed to as the basic understanding of quality and EDC quality :

- quality depends on what one wants, it is "fitness for purpose"; it means matching expectations and results. It is therefore essential to start from the definition of what are the goals of EDC and to focus on what is important rather than on what is measurable.
- a balance is to be found between (an) already existing shared definition(s) of EDC quality and interaction processes between stakeholders in defining quality. The issue is who defines quality :
 - > use internationally accepted goals of EDC (Council of Europe, UNESCO, etc)
 - > define locally standards or operational guidelines
- conditions for fulfilling quality should be considered : for example leadership, teacher training, resources
- when defining EDC quality and setting up quality assurance mechanisms, the focus is on schools
 - > identify the characteristics of a school implementing EDC principles
 - > include classroom and non-formal (extra-curricular) school activities
- the holistic approach to EDC is to be adopted, including knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, competencies

The precise categories of the quality of EDC will be identified with the help of the international review of quality assurance models (see below, chapter IV.2).

II. UNDERSTANDING QUALITY ASSURANCE

Cameron Harrison introduced the discussion on quality assurance (QA) in education.

He first indicated that quality assurance is a powerful tool, it is effective, it produces change, even undesirable change depending on how the quality assurance tool was designed.

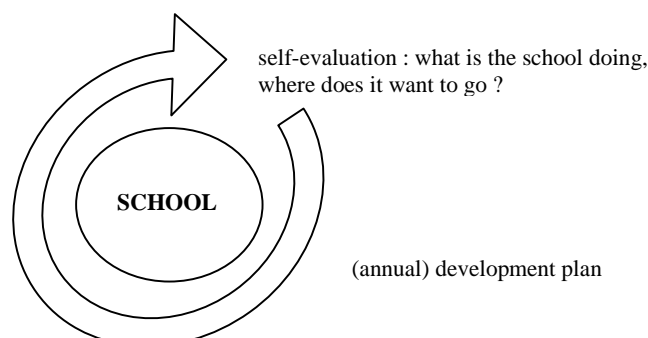
Secondly, he underlined that the school is the natural unit of quality assurance in education. The improvement process has to be driven by the school itself, the process cannot be imposed from outside. The school has to want to change. Quality assurance implies giving responsibility “for quality of the product to the producer”.

He then presented the constitutive elements of a quality assurance system. These are generic characteristics drawn from different experiences across the world. While these elements are always present in a quality assurance system, how they are connected or emphasized varies from one situation to another.

A quality assurance system includes :

1. *a curriculum framework*, as the conceptual frame of reference. It includes the definition of educational goals and of standards (translation of the goals into operational guidelines)
2. *a frame of reference to assess school quality* – how good is my school ? The frame of reference should describe a process which continuously asks this questions, and should include relevant evaluative instruments
3. *support* : schools need support for introducing and implementing a quality assurance system. They need procedural support (how to do quality assurance) and practical support (eg resources to respond to own analysis of needs)
4. *validation of the school development process* : like a mirror, to provide external feedback on what the school is doing, for example through inspection, peer evaluation, performance evaluation (through national examinations)
5. *a dynamics to motivate for change* and ensure accountability for the development process, for example by publishing the performance results or the inspection reports.

The school development process includes self-evaluation and an annual school development plan. It is to be seen as a reflective practice which is increasingly carried out in cooperation and with the support of the local authority and / or an inspector.



In the ensuing discussion, these constitutive elements of quality assurance were agreed to as a basis for the project.

The discussion also highlighted the following issues, in relation to the situation in Southeast Europe :

- the role of education ministries, to be fostered by the project, would be to develop a quality assurance policy
- the role of local authorities needs to be examined, particularly their capacity to support school development
- the relation between a comprehensive quality assurance system and existing inspection policies and practices needs to be examined
- possible obstacles to the introduction of quality assurance systems, eg lack of resources, need to be borne in mind
- when designing the quality assurance instrument, it is recommended to keep it as simple as possible, integrating possible existing practices

III. THE PROJECT STRATEGY

It was agreed that the EDC-QA project would henceforth be a Stability Pact and UNESCO project.

Its objective is to develop quality assurance systems for EDC in Southeast Europe.

Given the participation of UNESCO and its direct access to the ministries of education in Southeast Europe, agreement was reached on the strategy to embed the project within the ministries of education and to foster ministries' ownership of the project.

In terms of the project activities, this strategy implies

- carrying out the stocktaking study on QA in Southeast Europe in cooperation with the ministries (see below, chapter IV.1);
- ensuring that the national EDC teams be set up by the ministries (see below, chapter VI).

The project will provide

- a research framework for the stocktaking study;
- assistance to ministries of education : guidelines and resources for the national teams, expert support.

IV. THE STOCKTAKING STUDY

The first activity of the project is to take stock of what exists, both in the countries in Southeast Europe and internationally, in relation to quality assurance in education and for EDC.

The objective of this stocktaking activity is to lay the foundation for preparing the specific quality assurance instrument for EDC by :

- knowing the QA context and practices in Southeast Europe,
- collecting information from relevant reports, discussions and practices on quality standards and quality assurance processes, in order to avoid duplication and to facilitate decisions on the best approach to take for EDC specifically.

1. stocktaking study on quality assurance in Southeast Europe

- the stocktaking study will be carried out by one researcher per country¹. He / she will have good contacts with respective ministries of education in order to carry out the study in cooperation with the ministry;
- the study will focus on the elements of a quality assurance system outlined in chapter III above;
- Cameron Harrison will prepare a draft research framework which will include questions to guide the researchers and methodology proposals for collecting evidence;
- all researchers will meet in Ljubljana on **28-29 March 2003**² to discuss the framework and agree on the research process;
- the finalised research framework will be sent out to researchers by **mid April**;
- UNESCO will send a letter to the ministers of education³ informing them about the project and the respective researcher;
- the consultation of a wider group of EDC stakeholders, as part of the research process, was highly recommended;
- the deadline for preparing the national reports was fixed on **30 June 2003**;
- Cameron Harrison will prepare the analysis of the reports in **July**.

Possible researchers and contact channels were agreed to for the countries not represented in the project core group. In particular, the participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was considered essential in spite of the complexity of the education system of this country.

¹ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia

² One and a half day meeting : arrival on Thursday 27 March, meeting on Friday and Saturday (until lunch time) 28-29 March, departure on 29 March afternoon (bus, train) or 30 March (PEX plane tickets)

³ with copy to the researchers

2. international review of existing QA systems/models

- the review will be carried out by Janez Krek, CEPS;
- he will collect QA models, and, with the support of Cameron Harrison, analyse them and draw conclusions : eg. relevance for EDC, identification of EDC quality categories, etc;
- the deadline for the review was fixed at **the beginning of August**.

V. THE QUALITY ASSURANCE INSTRUMENT

The second activity of the EDC-QA project will be the preparation of the quality assurance instrument.

It was agreed that the content, structure and preparation process of the instrument will be discussed at a meeting on **4-7 September 2003**⁴ involving :

- all stocktaking researchers,
- additional experts on quality assurance – eg from Flanders, Norway, the Bertelsmann Foundation, SICI⁵, the Stability Pact IMPACT project⁶,
- UNESCO, the evaluator (see below, chapter IX) and the co-ordinators.

VI. THE NATIONAL EDC TEAMS

It was agreed that the national EDC teams would be set up, by the ministries of education, as from the Autumn 2003, particularly once the budgetary situation allowing for the implementation of the project's second phase will possibly be clarified.

The detailed guidelines for setting up the teams, for their role and activities will therefore be developed at a later stage.

It was already agreed that the teams should include a senior policymaker from government, the country's researcher, the Council of Europe EDC coordinator, a representative drawn from the school administrative system, a representative of the interested NGO's, one school Director and one practicing teacher.

⁴ Two full days meeting : arrival on Thursday 4 September, meeting on Friday and Saturday 5-6 September, departure on Sunday 7 September 2003

⁵ Standing international conference of inspectorates to be invited by UNESCO

⁶ Project submitted and funded within the Enhanced Graz Process and concerned with the evaluation of EDC projects

As indicated in the original project application, the National EDC teams will act as a coordination unit within the countries, will carry out the piloting activities of the QA instrument and contribute to the preparation of the national EDC quality assurance frameworks.

VII. THE PROJECT CONTEXT

Links should be established with the following initiatives :

- *the seminar on school inspection and school evaluation in Southeast Europe*, organized in Belgrade, Serbia, on 17-19 March 2003, by CEPS, OSI, Kulturkontakt, the Swiss Agency for development and cooperation, and the Ministry of Education of Serbia.

It was agreed that the seminar director, Johan van Bruggen would be contacted and informed about the EDC-QA project, and that the seminar participants could provide a pool of resource people for the project;

- *the Council of Europe activities on EDC policies*, and in particular the multilateral seminar on EDC policies to be held on 16-17 June 2003;
- *the Stability Pact IMPACT project* submitted and funded within the Enhanced Graz Process and concerned with the evaluation of EDC projects (including evaluation indicators and training). The project coordinator could be invited at the September meeting to contribute to the discussion on the EDC quality assurance instrument.

The future of the Task Force on education and youth, its working group on EDC and management of diversity, and the group's link with the six (partially) funded projects would need to be further clarified.

VIII. THE PROJECT BUDGET

The following aspects were discussed :

- fundraising remains an essential dimension of the project development, as resources available so far do not secure the full implementation of phase 1, nor of phases 2 and 3 of the project;
- UNESCO agreed to include the project in its internal budgetary discussions on "education for all";
- the budget does not include resources for translating the project products in the languages of the region, which was seen as essential for disseminating the results and for implementing phase 2 of the project. Nor does the budget include resources for publishing the results of the project. A link could possibly be established with the translation activity of the SEE Education Cooperation Network. These items could also possibly be included in UNESCO's regular budget at the end of 2003;

- it was agreed to accommodate the budget, as much as possible and within available resources, to respond to the support needs for the research process in the various countries;
- Michela Cecchini will revise the project budget in line with the decisions of this meeting.

IX. THE PROJECT EVALUATION

The evaluation concept was presented by Bernd Baumgartl, the project evaluator. The following aspects were discussed :

- the evaluation will pursue the following objective : to collect evidence for accountability, in particular to donors, for improving the project itself and for making it a learning experience. The accountability dimension was particularly underlined given the project's current budgetary situation;
- the EDC-QA project will include an accompanying evaluation which is both internal and participative, and whereby the evaluator will be partly within the project (member of the project core group);
- in line with the evaluation's participatory nature, the core group brainstormed and agreed on the following key criteria for the success of the project (by order of priority⁷), which the evaluation will henceforth focus on:
 - i) the process which will ensure the ownership of QA by the ministries of education
 - ii) the project products : the national stocktaking studies, the regional analysis, the international review on QA models, the QA instrument, the seminar, the translations and publications as well as the information on the internet.
 - iii) the actual ownership of ministries of education of quality assurance
 - iv) the incorporation of quality assurance in national policies
 - v) the communication among the project partners
 - vi) the participation of all countries;
- Bernd Baumgartl will prepare an evaluation plan which will include the concept of the evaluation and the methodologies for collecting evidence on the above criteria;
- the first evaluation brief will be prepared after the researchers' meeting in March as a first conclusion of the initial launching phase of the project.

⁷ in the brainstorming process, the following weighing was given to the individual items : i) 6 points; ii) 4 points; iii) 3 points; iv) 3 points; v) 2 points; vi) 2 points.

X. THE MANAGEMENT OF THE PROJECT

The following aspects were discussed :

- the management of the project is based on the high level of trust which exists within the core group⁸ given the common experience shared in the preparation of the stocktaking research on policies for EDC and management of diversity;
- Janez Krek, supported by Mateja Persak, and Michela Cecchini will carry out the core management of the project. They will seek the advice from the other members of the core group when necessary, judging whom to consult and when;
- managerial decisions will be taken by the whole core group; budgetary decisions will be taken by Janez Krek and Michela Cecchini, and by Michela Cecchini and Myriam Karela on budgetary matters concerning Janez Krek;
- for the stocktaking study, budgetary decisions will be based on the presentation by each researcher of a budget proposal;
- Michela Cecchini will revise the project calendar in line with the decisions of this meeting;
- a specific yahoo group has been set up as a communication platform for the EDC-QA project. It is restricted to the participants of the project and is managed by the two coordinators;
- the members of the core group are invited to reply diligently to the coordinators' requests for comments or advice;
- information on the project will be put on the website of the SEE education cooperation network⁹.

⁸ the core group is composed of the application partners : Janez Krek (coordinating institution), Cesar Birzea, Vedrana Spajic-Vrkas, Ilo Trajkovski; Cameron Harrison; Bernd Baumgartl (evaluator); Michela Cecchini (co-coordinator). Since this first meeting, Myriam Karela, UNESCO has also joined the core group.

⁹ www.see-educoop.net

Appendix 1

Agenda

- 1. Opening of the meeting**
 - welcome
 - adoption of agenda

- 2. General discussion 1 : why this project ?**
 - findings of the stocktaking research and follow-up recommendation
 - international context : Unesco (Myriam Karela), EU and Council of Europe (*see introductory discussion paper*)
 - situation and needs in Southeast Europe, in single countries and in terms of regional cooperation

- 3. General discussion 2 : understanding and agreeing on EDC quality and EDC quality assurance**
see introductory discussion paper

- 4. Overview of the originally foreseen project**
see the project application and the introductory discussion paper
 - the overall project objectives and phases
 - the funding situation : Stability Pact, Unesco, other financial sources
 - the activities of phase 1

- 5. Planning the first activities**
see the planning document
 - sequence of activities and overall calendar
 - activities one by one : national teams, stocktaking study, second expert meeting, project evaluation
 - tasks and responsibilities
 - communication
 - deadlines and meeting dates

- 6. Conclusions and closing of the meeting**

- 7. Any other business**

Appendix 2 List of participants

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