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NETWORK A MEETING RECORD

**Network A Plenary Session
November 3-5, 1997, Salzburg, Austria**

Participants

Friedrich Plank, Austria	Rosemary Renwick, New Zealand
Luc Van de Poele, Belgium (Flemish)	Megan Chamberlain, New Zealand
C. Jean Britton, Canada	Marit Granheim, Norway
Niels Plischewski, Denmark	Gertrudes Amaro, Portugal
Kimmo Leimu, Finland	Guillermo Gil, Spain
Dieter Schwedt, Germany	Birgitta Fredander, Sweden
Vasilis Koulaidis, Greece	Uri Peter Trier, Switzerland
Thomas Kellaghan, Ireland	Heinz Gilomen, Switzerland
Lucio Pusci, Italy	Julian Critchley, United Kingdom
Jean-Paul Reeff, Luxembourg	Eugene Owen, United States (Chair)
Fernando Cordova, Mexico	Jay Moskowitz, United States
Arnold Spee, Netherlands	Maria Stephens, United States
Jules Peschar, Netherlands	Judith Torney-Purta, United States
Sietske Waslander, Netherlands	Andreas Schleicher, OECD

Welcome

Friedrich Plank warmly welcomed the Network to Salzburg, and expressed his pleasure at hosting the meeting in Austria. Eugene Owen then opened the plenary session by welcoming several new or returning Network A members, including: Rosemary Renwick and Megan Chamberlain from New Zealand, Fernando Cordova from Mexico, and Vasilis Koulaidis from Greece. He also expressed the regrets of Jana Straková from Czech Republic, Jacqueline Levasseur from France, and Judit Kádár-Fülöp, who were unable to attend because of work schedules, and of Aletta Grisay from Belgium (French) who was unable to attend due to illness.

The agenda was approved with the addition of a report on OECD-related initiatives on the morning of the 5th. The minutes from the plenary session in Portugal and from the sub-group sessions in Budapest also were approved.

Update from OECD

Andreas Schleicher provided an update from OECD. Andreas noted that over the summer, once the criteria for evaluation and the formula to allocate costs were finalized (after the Budapest meeting), the INES Steering Group approved the tendering process. In so doing, the Steering Group emphasized the need for an open and transparent tender review process.

Data Strategy

In June, countries were asked to confirm their participation in the Strategy. Although the process of securing countries' participation took longer than anticipated, currently 25 countries have agreed to participate in the first cycle of the Data Strategy. Poland, Turkey, and Portugal will not participate. Several non-OECD countries have also expressed their desire to participate in the Strategy. These countries include: Brazil, Chile, Malaysia, and the Russian Federation.

Andreas also briefly discussed the tender review procedure agreed to by the Board of Participating Countries (BPC) and OECD. Following the meeting of the BPC in October, the Secretariat circulated a list of BPC-nominated experts, of whom BPC members were asked to select five members for the technical review panel. The experts who received the most votes (in order) were: Neville Posthelthwaite, Guillermo Gil, David Hawker, Ron Hambleton, Walo Hutmacher, Ryo Watanabe, Nadir Atash, Jürgen Baumert, Marilyn Binkley, and Jean-Paul Reeff. Of this group, Mr. Posthelthwaite, Mr. Hawker, Mr. Atash, Mr. Baumert, Ms. Binkley, and Mr. Reeff are available to serve on the technical review panel.

INES Steering Group Meeting

Andreas noted that the INES Steering Group met recently and discussed Network-related initiatives such as the lifelong learning initiative and the Swiss Initiative. The Steering Group also reviewed the pre-publication copy of *Education Policy Analysis (EPA)*, which they strongly supported. The group also discussed future directions for the *Education at a Glance (EAG)* publications. They agreed that in the future, the Analysis document should move beyond INES and include topics such as trends in policy development. The Analysis document will appear at the beginning of the academic year, and Indicators will appear as always in December.

The group also agreed that there should be an overall reduction in the number of indicators in *EAG* (to about 35-40). They also noted the importance of providing sufficient information in the "interpretation" sections and the importance of development projects (such as CCCs) to future editions.

World Indicators

Another major undertaking for the OECD will be an OECD/UNESCO pilot project to explore the OECD indicators method in a worldwide context. Twelve countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, and South Africa) intend to participate. The goal of the project will be to develop a critical mass of countries using policy indicators around the world and to build national capacity in these countries to develop indicators of education on a regular basis. The project will be guided by development groups and a strong commitment to achieving consensus among the participating countries.

Update on the Data Strategy

Heinz Gilomen gave a presentation updating the Network on the Data Strategy and the results of the October BPC meeting. Heinz commented on the contents, management, tendering process, and timeline of the Data Strategy. Specifically:

- Target age (15) has been decided.
- The 13 year-old option will not be available in the first year.
- There will be a national option to have a grade-based sub-sample (in which entire classes are selected).
- The executive group was elected in October, with USA as Chair, and Switzerland, Japan, and Norway as Vice-Chairs. The Secretariat also will be a member of the executive group.
- The executive group has the power to take selected decisions in between meetings without consultation of the BPC. Decisions regarding the program of work or yearly budget, however, must be made in consultation with the BPC and a two-thirds majority. Likewise, decisions regarding the operational rules, scale of cost share, and project design structure must be made in consultation with the BPC and must be unanimous.
- The participation of non-OECD countries should and will not detract from the aim of the Strategy; instruments will be tailored to OECD countries.
- The **technical review panel will meet November 20-22**, with the report generated by November 27. The BPC will meet to review the report and the bids on December 15-16.

Following the presentation and discussion, Eugene congratulated the Network on its hard work. He also emphasized that the participation of non-OECD countries, while a bonus to the Strategy and the analysis, would not affect the timeline, the cost, or the development or content of the instruments. Also, he emphasized the importance of consensus and discussion during the review process.

Eugene then opened the floor to questions.

Several members commented that they would like to have more transparency in the Network and INES in order to better understand the relationship of various development activities, the Data Strategy and the BPC, and other OECD initiatives. Andreas commented that the OECD-NWA web-site is a good place to find and transfer such information. It was suggested that the Network be kept informed directly of BPC actions during the tender review process. In terms of understanding the Network's role and relationship to other projects, Eugene tabled the discussion in anticipation of the agenda item on the future of the Network.

Network A Future Plans

From this discussion naturally flowed the next agenda item: a discussion of future plans of Network A. Eugene circulated a draft strategic plan, which was meant to spark conversation and

present initial thinking on how future Network activities may fit together in the context of other international initiatives.

Members were pleased that such a document was developed and found it useful in thinking about the future of the Network. Comments centered around two of the responsibilities—development and evaluation—culminating in a discussion of the role of the Network vis á vis the BPC.

Some members were concerned that the development responsibility not be limited to CCC work, but be left open to additional possibilities.

Some members also felt that the evaluation questions were not thorough enough and focused on questions that were perhaps within the realm of the BPC. There was a rather extensive discussion on the role of the Network and the BPC and who would/should have responsibility for an evaluation component. In the end, it was decided that evaluation is a task for the Network so long as it is summative (as well as formative) in nature, asking such questions as: has this strategy produced results useful to policy makers and the education community? Does the Strategy continue to be relevant?

In distinguishing the role of the Network, Eugene and Andreas made the following points:

- A major role of the Network historically has been and can continue to be to conduct development work, whereas this is not a mandate or an interest for the BPC.
- The Network has a charge to develop indicators, whereas the BPC monitors the collection of data for such indicators and may guide the preparation of reports and analyses.
- Concerning the implementation and evaluation of the Data Strategy, the Network has a reflective role and the BPC a productive one.

Members asked for a short summary describing the Network and BPC roles.

Eugene also asked the Network to begin to think about *how* work would be conducted in the future, and suggested the increased use of functional expert groups as a starting point for thought.

Update on the IEA Civics Study

Dr. Judith Torney-Purta, the Director of the IEA Civics Study, from the University of Maryland (USA) provided a brief background and update on the IEA Civics Study. Dr. Torney-Purta noted that 23 IEA-member countries were participating in the Civics Education Study, planning for which began in 1995.

The study has two phases: a qualitative phase of case studies in 20 countries and a quantitative phase (assessment). Preliminary findings from the case studies currently are being drafted. The quantitative phase will assess 14 year-olds in several civics topic areas. There also will be an optional second population of students at the end of secondary education. The quantitative phase currently is in the pre-pilot stage, and one of the challenges has been to develop items that avoid

judgments or assumptions of shared civic values across countries. Publication of final results is planned for 2001. Dr. Torney-Purta noted that the study has emphasized collaboration and active and continual participation of the study countries. Refer to hand-outs for more detailed information.

CCC Development Work

The Network then was briefed on the three phases of CCC development work: Heinz Gilomen gave a presentation on long-range work in key competencies (“Swiss Initiative”); Jules Peschar gave a presentation on short-range work in self-concept; and Eugene led a discussion on strategies to approach medium-range work in problem-solving.

Long-Range Work in Key Competencies

Heinz presented a proposal—the “Swiss Initiative”—to conduct the long-term work to identify key competencies. The initiative was born out of an examination of existing data collections (i.e., reading/mathematics/science; self-concept/civics/ communication; literacy/problem-solving/teamwork) and the perceived need to determine if there are certain key competencies important to success in school and life.

The objectives of the strategy are to: provide a foundation for the interpretation of indicators; identify commonalties in the definition and selection of key competencies; develop guidelines for future development of indicators; and suggest a framework for construction of measures. The initiative will seek to determine what the concept and nature of key competencies are and if there is variability in key competencies across the life cycle, across different cultures, or in the process of definition. Heinz presented an action plan which culminates in the publication of a synthesis of the findings in 2001.

It is intended that the Initiative and the Network will work closely together, establishing a dialogue that will allow interaction and sharing of information and input across all CCC projects.

Short-Range Work in Self-Concept

Jules Peschar began the update on short-range CCC work in self-concept by providing a brief background on the CCC Feasibility study and how the three Network A CCC strategies came into being. A pilot test of the instrument is planned for 1998, and a field test (with the main study) is planned for 1999. Ultimately, the self-concept domain will be included in the year 2000 assessment. Some members expressed a desire for more specificity in terms of the work accomplished thus far and the work still to be done. The discussion was continued at the CCC meeting on the afternoon of the 5th.

Medium-Range Work on Problem-Solving

Finally, Eugene led a discussion on how to approach the medium-range CCC work in developing a problem-solving instrument for the second cycle of the Data Strategy. He suggested that the work be kept as a Network activity (rather than as a sub-group activity) with a small group to

plan strategies and make proposals to the Network. He questioned the capacity of the Network to act as a catalyst for this work, and thought the same reservations might apply to a large subgroup. Marit Granheim and others agreed and supported the notion of countries subsidizing outside expertise who would serve on the planning group. Jay Moskowitz suggested the idea of a one-day symposium, with presentations from multiple perspectives, where Network members could learn about options in problem-solving work and make informed decisions about next steps.

APOI Issues

Jay Moskowitz gave a brief overview of the draft document, *Implementing the Data Strategy: A Plan for the Analysis and Presentation of Outcome Indicators*. He pointed out that the plan was drafted to complement the Data Strategy; to begin to explore ways to improve graphical presentation of outcome indicators; and to provide guidance to the contractor implementing the data collection. He noted that parts of the document or some of the indicators may have to be re-drafted or specified once the data is actually collected. Further, he noted that many of the indicators are complex indicators, representing a combination of variables. The document describes—in fact, mirrors—a stand-alone document which could be developed from Data Strategy findings.

The Network then held a brief discussion on the draft APOI analysis plan, during which several revisions and issues were raised. Overall, members were pleased with the document and thought it reflected a major effort to provide guidance to the contractor and the Network for analyzing and presenting data on education outcomes. Members were asked to send specific or extensive suggestions to the Chair in the next few weeks. The document will then be revised and available once the contractor has been selected, and for circulation before the next plenary session. (A summary of the comments received at the meeting may be found in the attached memo.)

Education at a Glance

Regarding *EAG*, the Network first discussed the process employed in developing and preparing for publication of *EAG97*, and then discussed possible indicators for *EAG98*.

Andreas first thanked the Network for the volume of comments that were received in response to the various pre-publication copies of *EAG97* circulated to members. He mentioned that the number of comments indicated a close cooperation between the Network and the Secretariat and an avid interest in the publication. He also described some of the changes made more recently and not reflected in the version in the information book, including the addition of new data elements suggested by Aletta Grisay and a new formatting style which includes main or transition points highlighted in the margins. The floor was then opened for comment.

Eugene noted that although he liked the idea of “margin comments,” he felt that such comments should be limited to those that truly advance the story and do not point out stark contrasts (i.e., highest country and lowest country). He also expressed a concern that substantial changes were being made to the chapter at a late stage, without input of Network members.

Upon comment from a member, it was agreed that in the future there would be a policy for how to fairly and consistently mark countries as exceptions (multiple asterisks versus varying symbols). There was some discussion over the purpose of the publication, and it was noted that *EAG* is intended to be a reference for policy makers and others, not a policy document *per se*. It also was agreed that in future editions, the Network would move away from regional groupings for presentation to either straight alphabetical presentation or presentation driven by analysis.

Several members wanted more time for internal review. It was noted that every effort would be made to allow more time, but that timelines would always be somewhat tight because of the quick turn-around nature of the production. A mid-February release of the TIMSS population 3 data is expected.

Following the discussion of *EAG97*, the Network reviewed the possible indicators for *EAG98*. Andreas shared information on the planned contents of the publication: chapter 1, demographics; chapter 2, financial and human resources; chapter 3, capital investments; chapter 4, access; chapter 5, achievement; and chapter 6, labor market outcomes. He noted that the INES Steering Group expected that one-third of the 35-40 indicators would be on outcomes. Thus, it also was noted that the Network would have to choose from among the suggested indicators. Those which are not used may be disseminated in another form, such as on the Internet.

In studying the pattern of *EAG* submissions over the years, Uri Peter Trier suggested that the Network and OECD begin to think about an “EAG 2000,” which perhaps would be more in-depth and reflective, compiling and summarizing *EAG* indicators since their inception in 1992.

Other

On the morning of the 5th, in response to requests from Network members, updates on OECD-related initiatives were presented.

- The Life Skills project is being led by Statistics Canada. They hope to administer an instrument in 1999.
- The United States is initiating a repeat of TIMSS (TIMSS R), which will be led by Boston College. Currently, the project is soliciting the participation of countries for the year 1999 assessment.
- Eugene referred to Judith Torney-Purta’s earlier update on the IEA Civics Study.
- A study on computers in education is being proposed at the IEA by the Netherlands, Japan, and the United States’ National Science Foundation. However, it is still in the proposal stage.

Friedrich Plank provided information on the German-language initiative for cooperation in implementing the Data Strategy. Eugene and Andreas offered the advice to keep additional items to a minimum to avoid overburdening the Strategy.

On a final note, sadly the Network said farewell to Dieter Schwedt, as he will retire from the Ministry and the Network to be with his family. He will be missed.

Next Meeting

The group agreed that the next meeting will be held in Boston, Massachusetts the week of April 20th. The CCC medium-range planning group will meet late in January at a location to be determined. The fall plenary session will take place in September at a location to be determined.