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NETWORK A MEETING RECORD

**Network A Plenary Meeting
October 26-28, 1998, Brussels, Belgium**

Participants

Friedrich Plank, Austria
Christine Mainguet, Belgium (French)
Luc Van de Poele, Belgium (Flemish)
C. Jean Britton, Canada
Niels Plischewski, Denmark
Kimmo Leimu, Finland
Jochen Schweitzer, Germany
Gella Varnava-Skourea, Greece
Judit Kádár-Fülöp, Hungary
Michael O'Leary, Ireland
Chiara Croce, Italy
Jean-Paul Reeff, Luxembourg
Fernando Cordova Calderon, Mexico
Arnold Spee, the Netherlands
Jules Peschar, the Netherlands
Lynne Whitney, New Zealand
Jan Peter Stromsheim, Norway
Guillermo Gil, Spain
Birgitta Fredander, Sweden
Erich Ramseier, Switzerland
Eugene Owen, United States
Jay Moskowitz, United States
Maria Stephens, United States
Andreas Schleicher, OECD

Observers and Presenters

Dianne Pennock, Canada
Sylvie Daigneault, Canada
Niels Egelund, Denmark
Dominique Rychen, Switzerland
Laura Salganik, United States
Ann Borthwick, United States
Marilyn Binkley, United States
Scott Murray, Canada
Jane Schubert, United States
Tom Healy, OECD

Regrets

Jana Straková, Czech Republic
Jacqueline Levasseur, France
Gertrudes Amaro, Portugal
Uri Peter Trier, Switzerland

Welcome and Introduction

Luc Van de Poele welcomed Network A to Brussels for its plenary meeting and announced that a dinner would be hosted on Tuesday evening by the Ministry of Education, Flemish Community for members and their guests. Eugene Owen then welcomed members, as well, and reviewed the agenda for the three-day meeting.

Update from OECD

Andreas Schleicher provided an overview of various OECD activities, including the publication of EAG Indicators and Analysis, the World Indicators Project, and PISA:

- The EAG Analysis volume was published in September;

- The EAG Indicators volume will be published in November, presenting fewer indicators, but incorporating valuable trend indicators;
- The World Education Indicators Project has been very successful in meeting standards for high data quality, and the results are reflected in this year's EAG;
- There is a final proposal on a test design for PISA, although there is still much debate about the relative weight of different domains;
- There have been some deviations from the original Strategy (e.g., greater proportion of open-ended responses); and
- Much effort has been put into finalizing the set of frameworks, which members strongly support.

Related to PISA, he reiterated the need for Network A to serve as a development driving force for future cycles [an idea that was revisited throughout the meeting].

EAG Indicators 1998 and 1999

The Network then briefly reviewed and discussed the indicators for 1998, noting that one additional round of revisions had been made updating the copy provided in the briefing book. Andreas made a copy of the revised indicators available for members to review during the breaks.

The Network then turned to a discussion of possible indicators for 1999. Eugene expressed concern about a lack of fresh and current data for the next set of indicators. He offered the IEA Civics case studies and secondary, national analyses of TIMSS data as two possible sources of data. He also suggested that the Network weigh the option of preparing indicators that might be outdated or repetitious against the option of not preparing indicators at all. Judit Kádár-Fülöp suggested that the Network explore the data on teachers and instructional practices from the reading literacy study as a third possible option.

Andreas then announced that OECD was considering a six-month delay of the publication of the next EAG to the Spring of 2000. There were three reasons for the possible delay: 1) to accord with the implementation of the new ISCED classifications, 2) to coincide with the General Assembly meeting in the year 2000, and 3) to capitalize on end-of-the-school-year interest in outcomes information. Andreas also noted that the delay would allow for the reporting of more recent data, and he strongly urged that the Network focus on that goal. He announced that the decision about the delay would be made at the end of the month. Many members were supportive of the delay.

A discussion ensued, with many members voicing suggestions for the next set of indicators. Several ideas included: revisiting possible uses of TIMSS Population 3 data; exploring uses of TIMSS video data and, more generally, relating outcomes data with "best practices" data; preparing thematic presentations of older data; and using this next preparation of indicators to prepare the public for PISA (e.g., using preliminary PISA data).

In sum, the Network agreed that, if the delay is approved by OECD, the Network A Secretariat will prepare a proposal for the next set of indicators (EAG2000) for the Spring plenary meeting. Countries agreed to send national analyses to Jay and Maria by early December, so that these could be incorporated into the proposal. The Network A Secretariat also agreed to return to its promise to explore possible uses of TIMSS Population 3 data.

Volume of Essays for 2000

Eugene then called for discussion on the volume of essays on the preparation, progress, and future of indicators of student achievement. The Network agreed to refer to the volume of essays as *Network A 2000* to avoid confusion with the next set of indicators that are now being called EAG2000. Eugene announced the six countries that had volunteered to prepare chapters (Belgium-Flemish, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Portugal, and the United States) and called for additional country support. Several additional countries expressed interest in participating but were unable to commit at the time. Eugene shared some concern over the lack of a minimum of 10 countries participating and noted that, unless commitments were made within the next few weeks, the project would be dropped for lack of interest.

A revised timeline was outlined as follows:

- Final deadline for countries to volunteer is December 15
- Countries prepare a full outline of their chapters by January 1999
- Countries prepare a first draft of their chapters by the Spring meeting 1999
- Countries prepare a final draft of their chapters by the Fall meeting 1999
- Final volume is prepared for the General Assembly meeting in 2000

The Network A Secretariat also agreed to prepare an introduction for the volume describing Network A's work and the role of PISA for the future of indicators of student outcomes.

DeSeCo Project Update

Dominique Rychen (Swiss Federal Statistical Office) and Laura Salganik (American Institutes for Research) then provided Network members with an update on activities in the DeSeCo project. Dominique gave a general overview of the workplan and timeline. The project, which aims to identify and define key competencies, has several activities: analysis of OECD work; analysis of concepts and categorizations of key competencies; solicitation of expert opinion; gathering country reports; and convening experts for several workshops. She named the experts, who come from various disciplines, with whom they plan to work: Jean-Pierre Dupuy, Jürgen Baumert, Jack Goody, Richard Murnane, Frank Levy, and Philippe Perrenoud. She also asked for Network input into the expert group.

Laura then provided some contextual information about the project and what has been learned so far. She noted that the project aims to look not just "where we are" but "where we can go" and

how the various pieces of existing work fit together. In examination of existing OECD and other projects (e.g., CCC Feasibility Study, Human Capital Indicators Project, IALS), several preliminary conclusions have been drawn. Past work in this area has:

- Focused largely on indicators and measurement;
- Shown limited theoretical and conceptual development;
- Drawn on a broad conception of indicators; and
- Contributed to an increased information base and interest in this type of information.

She noted that future work should draw upon further involvement of the scientific community. She then called for members' comments. Members asked questions about planned products and dissemination, the overarching goal or purpose of the work, and its relationship to OECD and Network A activities. In responding, Dominique and Laura noted that:

- Future versions of the paper the Network received will be revised to reflect to cast a more positive tone about past activities;
- Two publications are planned which, among other methods, will be placed on the OECD-Network web-site;
- The purpose of the work is to develop a framework that allows us to better understand the work that has been accomplished so far and to guide future work; and
- Such a framework might identify the relationship of various Network A products to each other and to a broader picture of the competencies necessary for productive and successful life.

Update on CCC/Self-Concept Option

Luc Van de Poele then made a presentation on the CCC Self-Concept option. He reported on the final development work that had been undertaken in the past few months by Jules Peschar, Jürgen Baumert, Petra Stanat, Helmut Fend, and Harry O'Neil. He described how the Self-Concept option has evolved into a broader conceptualization—into an assessment of students' preparation for lifelong learning. He described how self-concept is one of several components which experts believe to be essential to successful lifelong learning.

Experts believe that the lifelong learners:

- Have appropriate learning strategies;
- Want to learn new things;
- Know that they can learn new things;
- Work hard enough; and
- Like to work with others.

Luc described how the selected scales mapped to this “basket” of important competencies. He noted the emphasis on viewing these components as outcomes themselves, as much as explanatory variables.

Several members shared concerns about the individualized, context-dependent nature of some questions; implications for the pilot test of having three separate booklets that would later be re-combined into one booklet; and possible overlap with other components of PISA. Overall, however, most members were very supportive of the developments. Eugene emphasized that countries interested in participating in this option must participate in the upcoming field test.

The Network agreed that the instrument should be transferred to the BPC for countries to take a decision on their participation in this option during the field test and main study.

Metacognition in Reading

Andreas then presented a paper prepared by Martine Rémond and Wolfgang Schneider, from the Reading Functional Expert Group, on metacognition in reading. The paper described the development of an instrument to measure metacognition in reading that, upon the request of the BPC, is being incorporated into the reading blocks. Andreas explained that the paper was being presented to Network A because, in its role as the “conscience of PISA,” the Network may want to take a technical judgement or further interest in development of this component—especially since it was not originally part of the Data Strategy. Although most members were generally supportive of the metacognition component, some expressed confusion about its place within the reading blocks and some concern over its apparent overlap with the self-concept/lifelong learning instrument. However, members were reluctant to take an immediate technical judgement on the instrument, but agreed that the Network could recommend a process to the BPC as it considers this component for the first cycle. As such, members agreed that:

- They would report to the BPC that, although interesting and promising, additional time was needed for development work;
- Martine Rémond should be invited to attend the next meeting of Network A; and
- Interested members would explore the wider applicability of metacognition and the technical feasibility of such a component.

Deep Translation

Andreas then presented a paper on ensuring the cultural appropriateness and linguistic and psychometric equivalence of translation. He described the paper as a set of guidelines to inform and explain the translation procedures being laid out for PISA. The topic was brought before Network since, as one of the more prominent and controversial issues confronting the BPC, it may be something on which Network members may be asked to give a judgement.

The measures that have or will be taken to ensure the cultural appropriateness and linguistic and psychometric equivalence of translation include:

- Systematic tracking of the feedback of countries to questions about exposure, difficulty, bias, and suitability of stimuli and items;
- Establishment of a cultural review panel, in part to specifically ensure the representation of comments from countries not represented on the FEGs;
- Requirement of two, independent translations (one from English and one from French);
- Establishment of an international adjudication panel for translation issues; and
- Institution of measures to ensure the development of good scoring rubrics.

Several members expressed major concern about the expense and practical considerations of such translation procedures (the so-called “deep translation”). However, Andreas expressed an equally strong feeling that, although rigorous and expensive, such new procedures were essential to obtaining valid, reliable, and comparable results.

Background Questionnaires in PISA

Eugene then introduced a new item into the agenda: a discussion of possible future roles for the Network related to the analysis of PISA data, specifically the use of contextual data.

Most members agreed that the background questionnaires for PISA required further development and stronger relation to the priorities laid out in Network A’s Analysis Plan. Eugene suggested that the APOI group be re-constituted to reiterate the Network’s priorities and intentions and to explore analysis issues now that the background questionnaires are available and in light of the upcoming field trial. The Network concurred, and Eugene agreed to take volunteers for a committee at the end of the meeting.

Technology

Next on the agenda, Andreas presented an instrument on students’ familiarity with technology to be incorporated, as an international option, into the background questionnaires. The instrument, to be given in the first cycle of PISA, was borne of widespread interest among OECD countries and Education Committee members. It was adapted from an instrument developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). Andreas described three objectives related to technology: 1) to learn about students’ familiarity with computers, 2) to work toward the assessment of technological skills, and 3) to explore computer-based delivery of PISA. He noted that, although the variables in the instrument appear simple, they capture a great deal of information in a short amount of time and have been shown, in some cases, to be proxies for technological skills themselves.

Most members were very interested in this type of information, but shared concerns about the instrument, including the recognition that any instrument related to technology is time-bound

(i.e., likely to be outdated by its implementation). Several specific revisions were suggested, including:

- Adding categories on the high end of the frequency scale (e.g., daily);
- Adding additional usage categories (e.g., chatting, programming, taking courses); and
- Requiring specification on location of use for questions 13-15.

A few members also questioned the usefulness of the question about mouse usage, but were reassured that this was an important variable in distinguishing between high- and low-end types of use. A few other members noted the importance of translation for this instrument and shared concerns about the highly context dependent nature of some of the questions. Andreas agreed to take the comments to the BPC and revise the survey accordingly.

Evaluation Plan

Maria Stephens then presented a proposal before the Network to evaluate the Data Strategy. The evaluation proposal was drafted for Network review and for eventual submission to the OECD for their consideration. Referring to the characterization of the Network as “PISA’s conscience” and to the potential responsibilities outlined in the Strategic Plan, the Network is an ideal group to be involved in an evaluation of the Data Strategy. She reviewed the contents of the document, including the purpose of the evaluation; proposed evaluation questions and activities; and suggested budget. She then turned the floor back to Eugene to solicit comments from members.

Members had several questions and comments. Some members thought the revised evaluation plan should:

- Focus on formative rather than summative evaluation, but incorporate planning for further evaluation;
- Distinguish between external and internal review of documents;
- Look for ways to cut costs;
- Emphasize that this is not an monitoring of ACER’s activities;
- Provide a more explicit rationale; and
- Begin from more concrete evaluation questions.

In sum, although a few members supported the evaluation plan as it was written, most members suggested that in an effort to watch costs and to balance between what is ideal and what is possible, there be a prioritization of activities. As such, the statement of work will be written with activities 4, 5, 6, and 7 as optional and with a directive for respondents to the statement of work to address the implications of leaving out the optional activities. The Network A Secretariat agreed to revise, circulate, and submit the evaluation plan to OECD.

Problem-Solving

Ann Borthwick (National Center for Education and the Economy) presented to the Network an update on the problem-solving development activity and workplan. She described the main goal to arrive at a definition of problem-solving from which the next phase of activity—to explore measurement—could begin. Thus, her activities will cast a broad net over the field, yet focus from the beginning on the practical implications for assessment of selecting various perspectives. Through a series of workshops convening a wide variety of experts, exploration of underlying conceptual frameworks for problem-solving definitions, and examination of related literature, she will produce a draft and final “road map” of the domain of problem-solving. She noted that, although there appears to be a wide divergence in perspectives (e.g., cognitive psychologists v. pragmatists), there are potential similarities in the underlying concepts. Thus, the “road map” will focus on identifying the links and distinctions between and among the various definitions. She also noted that she will furnish the Network with an annotated bibliography of the literature drawn upon for the “road map.”

Members were generally supportive of the plan and there were few questions. Jean-Paul Reeff also described briefly the efforts of the European network for problem-solving and the planned collaborations with Ann and the Network’s work. Members expressed an interest in obtaining written information about the European network’s activities.

Formation of Committees and Next Steps

Eugene then called for volunteers to form committees to oversee and advance various Network activities. He suggested that three new committees be formed and that two old committees be re-constituted. The committees are:

Analysis Plan Committee

This group will provide guidance to the BPC related to the background questionnaires and analysis of PISA data—balancing the political and scientific issues involved and asserting the previously established priorities of the Data Strategy. Friedrich Plank, Luc van de Poele, Jochen Schweitzer, Judit Kádár-Fülöp, Michael O’Leary, Jules Peschar, Jan Peter Stromsheim, Guillermo Gil, and Erich Ramseier expressed interest in participating on this committee.

Self-Concept Field Trial Analysis Committee

This group will think about the types of indicators that might be produced from the CCC option (self-concept/lifelong learning), provide advice on the selection of scales, and generally assist in the analysis of field trial results. Besides Jules Peschar, Luc Van de Poele, Arnold Spee, Birgitta Fredander, and Erich Ramseier, as well as Austria and Germany, expressed interest in participating in this committee.

TOR/Data Strategy Committee

This group will provide recommendations to the BPC regarding future cycles of the Data Strategy. It will provide guidance (gained in part from the evaluation of the Data Strategy) for the preparation of the TOR for the second cycle of PISA and generally ensure that the intentions laid out in the Data Strategy for valid, reliable, and relevant indicators are being met. Friedrich Plank, Jochen Schweitzer, Jean-Paul Reeff, Arnold Spee and Guillermo Gil expressed interest in participating in this committee.

Metacognition

This group will provide guidance to the BPC on the experimental metacognition component currently in the reading blocks. Jules Peschar expressed interest in participating in this committee.

Problem-Solving

This group will do strategic planning for the continuing problem-solving work. Arnold Spee expressed interest in participating in this committee.

Eugene and Andreas also plan to participate in each of the committees.

As a side note, several members asked that the Network A Secretariat prepare a document describing the purpose, timeline, products, participants, and relationship of the various OECD and Network A activities. The Secretariat agreed to prepare such a document.

Next Plenary Meeting

The plenary meeting then concluded in anticipation of the ILSS seminar on Wednesday. Kimmo Leimu announced that he would be retiring from the Network and bid his fellow members good-bye and thanks. Eugene wished him well and thanked him and all the members for a productive meeting.

The Network agreed to hold the week of March 22, 1999, open for the Spring plenary meeting, which will be held in Luxembourg.

International Life Skills Survey Seminar

On the third day of the Network A meeting, Scott Murray from Statistics Canada and Marilyn Binkley from the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) led a seminar for members on the activities underway in the International Life Skills Survey (ILSS) project.

Scott Murray opened the discussion by providing a detailed overview of the ILSS project. The ILSS project began as an outgrowth of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and the interest of policy makers in the types of information that IALS reported. The original supporters of ILSS knew that the project would need a broad framework and good measurement

technology, and they also knew that the policy interest in this type of survey outstretched the current methodology. Thus, the past years have been spent determining what should be measured (i.e., what skills are policy makers interested in?) and, currently, which of these skills can be measured in valid, reliable, and comparable ways.

ILSS will be a household survey of adults aged 16-65 and will include a 30-minute background questionnaire and a 60-minute proficiency test. There will be 1300 cases in the pilot study and 7000 cases in the main study. At as much as US\$300 per case, the project is an expensive one. The project is co-managed by Statistics Canada and NCES, and Educational Testing Service (ETS) is consulting on the psychometrics. International teams are responsible for development work on the theory and measurement of each of the skill domains, and there is an international team responsible for quality assurance. The project also is discussing forming a strategic partnership with OECD for promotion and dissemination.

Scott then turned the floor to Marilyn for a presentation of the conceptual frameworks and developments in the various ILSS skill domains. She began by recognizing the 50+ people who have assisted in the development work for the skill domains, and noted that the project has tried to be as inclusive as possible in the research and personnel it has drawn from.

ILSS will measure 7 skill domains, including: two literacy scales, one numeracy scale, problem-solving, practical cognition (or tacit knowledge), computer familiarity, and teamwork. Marilyn emphasized that, while some of the skill domains are well developed, others are at the initial stages of development work and should be considered “works in progress.” The skill domains that are well developed are:

- Literacy. There will be two literacy scales—prose and document, much like those in IALS. Marilyn warned of possible translation issues with regard to the literacy scales and noted the importance of maintaining the level of difficulty in the type of information and type of match required and the plausibility of distractors across languages.
- Numeracy. Because adults are likely to have a variety of strategies that are useful in solving problems, the numeracy scale in ILSS will incorporate not only mathematical skills, but also literacy, problem-solving, and beliefs and attitudes. It will be aimed at assessing how adults make meaning of mathematical information.
- Problem-Solving. The ILSS team has decided to use Eckhard Klieme’s approach to assessing problem-solving, which is a task-oriented one (e.g., buy a bicycle, build a space station). The team currently is building an interpretive scheme for proficiency levels, which may include: identification of information at the first level, ordering and evaluating of information at the second level, and analyzing information at the third level.

The domains for which further development work is required are:

- Practical Cognition. The development team has theorized that practical cognition, otherwise known as tacit knowledge or common sense, is largely procedural, relevant to attainment of goals, and acquired with little help from others. Guillermo Gil, who is a member of the international development team, described the current plan for the instrument, which

proposes work-related scenarios, asks individuals to identify positive action steps, and compares their responses to those of supervisors. It currently is being pilot tested in the U.S. and Spain.

- Teamwork. The development of this instrument is in the very initial stages. The measure will be indirect, likely asking subjects to identify positive behaviors in various scenarios, which will then be rated for team behaviors. This instrument is not yet at the pre-pilot phase.
- Computer Familiarity. This instrument seeks to gather information on how and how much individuals are using computers and how integrated computers are into daily life. The development team faces the challenge of designing an instrument that accounts for the great variation among OECD countries in computer access and Internet connectivity of the general population.

In addition to the proficiency test, there will be a background questionnaire. The background questionnaire will solicit the information such as standard demographic information; educational characteristics and participation in continuing learning; wages, income, and employment; and reading behaviors.

Marilyn noted that during the development process, the international teams would be examining the potential overlap between skill domains (e.g., problem-solving and practical cognition). After fielding several questions from members, the seminar was concluded and Eugene thanked Scott and Marilyn for their presentation. The meeting then adjourned.