

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING PAPER SCHOOLS FOR THE 21st CENTURY

RESPONSE TO THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION¹

Question 1: *How can schools be organised in such a way as to provide all students with the full range of key competences?*

The central role of instrumental learning, the importance of an affirmative action perspective, the significance of providing pre-school education and higher expectations toward students are some of the strategies highlighted. In this sense, the Panel of Experts recommended that schools should not practice paternalism (i.e. teaching crafts to the most disadvantaged students instead of instrumental learning). Schools should promote instrumental learning since it is fundamental with core issues such as math, language, ICT, etc. This education must be of high quality (high level of education) and teachers and staff should have higher expectations for their students.

In doing so, the research reviewed also suggests that schools should be organized with instrumental learning as a central area promoting practices that include students in the same classroom avoiding any kind of segregation, and pointing towards involving volunteers to support teachers. The Panel of Experts supported unanimously this statement. They suggested that better training opportunities need to be provided for teachers and staff in order to eliminate practices of segregation.

Finally, at the Panel of Experts meeting, the promotion of external and public evaluation measures in schools was recommended. This evaluation should be of the social aspects provided by the school such as values and measures of inclusion in addition to other aspects.

Question 2: *How can schools equip young people with the competences and motivation to make learning a lifelong activity?*

Schools may equip young people with the required competences and motivation by promoting comprehensive educational systems (for example the educational system of Finland). It has been observed that the later the tracking² starts the better the academic results. The need for comprehensive systems and comprehensive education was highlighted by the Panel of Experts,

¹ This document has been elaborated as a result of the 1st Meeting of the Panel of Experts of the *Includ-ed*¹ Integrated Project (2006-2011, 6th Framework Programme, European Commission), coordinated by CREA-University of Barcelona, which was held the 29 September 2007 in the Barcelona Science Park. The *Includ-ed* Project goal is to identify the strategies in education that promote more inclusion, and which ones promote exclusion. Within this frame, the Panel of Experts is aimed at contributing with their expertise in particular topics associated to social inclusion and cohesion, assessing the scientific relevance of the ongoing results and providing input for policy recommendations.

² According to the document *Communication from the Commission to the Council and to the European Parliament. Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems* (Brussels, September 2006. COM(2006) 481), the term tracking has been used to explain the separation of students orienting them towards a vocational path or towards secondary education for entering higher education, and the term streaming has been used to explain the separation of groups of students by levels in the same centre.

emphasizing the need of removing the practice of streaming. Thus, it was also indicated the need to prepare young people for the knowledge society and for the use of ICT (for example the UK online centres).

In addition it has been identified the relevance that school provides family education in the school. Providing education and training to families helps to improve children academic performance and help overcoming the connection between low socio-economic background of families and low educational attainment of students. Family training facilitates a transformation of the family environment, creating new interaction models in non-academic environments for children that indirectly influence children's learning and performance, and also motivates students to be more engaged in education.

Question 3: *How can school systems contribute to supporting long-term sustainable economic growth in Europe?*

Widening access to higher education was considered as a long term strategy to pursue major social cohesion levels. For example in Finland, when students choose to study vocational training they may later access university, since there are no dead ends in the system. Another conclusion was to consider achieving diversity as an strategy to enhance quality of education. The idea is that excellence will not be achieved if diversity is not considered (culture, religion, first generation, sexual orientation...). Students and academic staff should reflect diversity like society. These statements were illustrated by examples of ivy league universities such as Harvard or Stanford.

Question 4: *How can school systems best respond to the need to promote equity, to respond to cultural diversity and to reduce early school leaving?*

At the Panel of Experts meeting, it was recommended that schools should resemble and reflect society in terms of diversity. The school system can best respond by overcoming segregation, delaying tracking, and reducing streaming. Some practices to overcome segregation are setting up heterogeneous groups, already implemented in centres of Denmark. Through diversifying adults, welcoming and involving them in the schools, there is a multiplication of interactions with students. The consequence is that the students not only get interactions with a person of the hegemonic culture (teacher).

The education provided should give value to all students and therefore practice equality of differences. That means to provide the same high quality of education to children from all cultural groups, without exceptions. Practices are being implemented, creating spaces for all the cultures to be recognized, in which students do not get less education for that reason; an example is teaching students mother tongue in schools of Sweden and Romania.

In addition it has been analyzed the access facilitation of disadvantaged groups, such as in Romania or Greece, by following a quota systems for disadvantaged communities. Similar to this initiative it has been noted the practice of affirmative action for example The Posse Foundation, Percent plans (ex. USA) and comprehensive admission processes.

Question 5: *If schools are to respond to each pupil's individual learning needs, what can be done as regards curricula, school organisation and the roles of teachers?*

With regards to responding to each student's individual learning needs, the project results indicated on disabilities and special education that there is the need to eliminate segregation and the need for inclusion in regular classrooms and schools. It has been observed the need to adapting without stigmatization. That is, following a curriculum as a basis, not stigmatizing students with specific characteristics.

A good practice observed has been the implementation of interactive groups. In these groups, students are clustered according to a heterogeneity criterion regarding ability, gender, culture, etc.; also, more adults are included in the classroom to help students to develop the activity and promote interaction among them. Therefore, instead of removing the student with difficulties, more attention can be provided to all the students. This practice has been shown to be effective for students with disabilities as well as with other groups of students with disadvantaged background.

Question 6: *How can school communities help to prepare young people to be responsible citizens, in line with fundamental values such as peace and tolerance of diversity?*

Teaching citizenship and solidarity should start by offering the same high quality education to all the students without any exception, and tracking and streaming are preventing this to happen. School communities can help to prepare young people to be responsible citizens by making solidarity and democracy real in school, by being coherent in discourse and practice and including the practice in the classroom. In order to learn democracy, children should be together and not separated by level groups to learn to live together. It is using daily opportunities that the value of solidarity and democracy can be taught, it is through these processes that children will learn values for citizenship. By giving voice to each other in schools, children learn that everyone have a time to speak.

One of the good practices analyzed has been the development of communitarian model of conflict prevention, where everybody (mothers, sisters, cousins, neighbours, alumnae, etc.) can define what the model of conflict prevention is, for example on gender based violence or creating procedures on how to overcome a violent situation. Finally, it has been observed the need to create anti-bullying measures for example by developing and promoting new models of masculinity to prevent bullying.

Question 7: *How can school staff be trained and supported to meet the challenges they face?*

The results stated that it is the teachers' responsibility to look for community resources to be able to provide education for all students. Some of the practices observed were having people to

support the teachers in the classroom as volunteers, and that Finish teachers training is based in scientific research.

The Panel of Experts recommended that teachers should be able to suggest the kind of training they want and need. Besides, teachers' training should be comprehensive integrating multiculturalism. Another proposal was to invite teachers to become agents of change in their particular settings and networking, a suggestion was to get involved in action research. In addition they pointed out the importance of teachers' attitude with their students.

Question 8: *How can school communities best receive the leadership and motivation they need to succeed? How can they be empowered to develop in response to changing needs and demands?*

The results of Project 1 stated that schools should be organized democratically with examples from Estonia, Spain, and Cyprus. And it is encouraged for the school to be part of the community and to be open to it.

The INCLUD-ED Panel of Experts recommended to promote democratic organization in the school in which all the community voices are included in equality (if schools want parents and families to participate, they should value equally an idea from a teacher than from a mother) in the decision-making processes. An egalitarian dialogue means that each part (professionals and families) contribute to the dialogue with their own expertise; then, expert knowledge of teachers is not rejected, but it can be contrasted with the knowledge provided by families. Usually there is a hierarchic organization and voices of society are not included. In this case, another recommendation was to establish certain structures, a protocol that enable all voices to be heard and tells everyone how to do it. An example is the model of integrated community schools based on some US schools programs (e.g. *Success For All, Accelerated Schools, School Development Program*) in which the community is connected with the school. In addition the use of ICT can play a key role in multilayered communication processes.

ADDITIONAL CLAUSE

The INCLUD-ED research team and the project Panel of Experts strongly recommended the EC to add a section on community since it appears to be a transversal issue that is not considered. There are manifold benefits that are reported by extended research conducted on the positive effects of family involvement. Some of the relevant aspects reported are the positive impact on students' learning, improvement on the family school relationship and a betterment of the atmosphere at the school. A special case has been made for immigrant families. Schools are an avenue for immigrant families to get involved with the community.