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NETWORK A MEETING RECORD

Network A Plenary Meeting March 8-10, 2000, Wellington, New Zealand

Participants

Wendy Whitham, Australia
Friedrich Plank, Austria
Christiane Blondin, Belgium-French
Jean Britton, Canada
Jochen Schweitzer, Germany
Stella Vosniadou, Greece
Chiara Croce, Italy
Kooghyang Ro, Korea
Jean-Paul Reeff, Luxembourg
Fernando Cordova, Mexico
Arnold Spee, Netherlands
Jules Peschar, Netherlands
Lynne Whitney, New Zealand
Jan Peter Stromsheim, Norway
Glória Ramalho, Portugal
Anders Auer, Sweden
Erich Ramseier, Switzerland
John Canlin, United Kingdom
Eugene Owen, United States
Andreas Schleicher, OECD Secretariat
Jay Moskowitz, Network A Secretariat
Maria Stephens, Network A Secretariat

Presenters and Observers

Ryo Watanabe, Japan
Jeffrey Owings, U.S. National Center for
Education Statistics
Eckhard Klieme, Max Planck Institute for
Human Development
Vicki Martin, NZ Ministry of Education
Jasmin Donaldson, NZ Ministry of
Education

Regrets

Luc Van de Poele, Belgium-Flemish
Jana Straková, Czech Republic
Niels Plischewski, Denmark
Pirjo Linnakylä, Finland
Jacqueline Levasseur, France
Judit Kadar-Fülöp, Hungary
Gerry Shiel, Ireland
Guillermo Gil, Spain

Summary of Major Outcomes

- The Network made several recommendations regarding the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the second cycle of PISA, which are summarized on pages 4-5, and they recommended that the TOR be sent to the BPC for adoption.
- The Network recommended that the TOR for the longitudinal option be revised (the suggestions are summarized on page 5).
- The Network decided to re-constitute the APOI Committee as the APODI (Analysis, Presentation and Dissemination of Outcome Indicators) Committee, and it was requested that interested members volunteer for this committee, which will meet in the late Spring/early Summer and make a first report at the next plenary meeting.
- The Network supported the chapters for Network A and made recommendations for their finalization.

- The Network supported an assessment of reading in foreign languages and asked that bidders to the TOR describe implications for countries, as per Option 3 in the proposal from Irwin Kirsch.
- The Network decided that active development of an assessment of integrated communications was not currently feasible, although the committee should continue to track developments in this arena and alert the Network.
- For the development of a proposal for an assessment of information technology literacy, members were asked to submit their comments to committee chairs regarding how to focus such an assessment.
- The Network reviewed a proposal for indicators for Education at a Glance (EAG) 2001 and named six indicators, in order of priority, for preparation.
- Based on members' comments at this meeting, the Network A Secretariat will prepare a draft report to fulfill the request for Networks' self-evaluations for the General Assembly meeting. The report will be circulated to members for further comments before it is submitted to the OECD.
- The Network agreed on a process and team to move forward with the development of test specifications and a draft framework for an assessment of problem solving.

Welcome and Introduction

Eugene Owen opened the Network A meeting and welcomed new and returning members Wendy Whitham from Australia, Stella Vosniadou from Greece, Koogyang Ro from Korea, Anders Auer from Sweden, and John Canlin from the United Kingdom. He also welcomed Ryo Watanabe from Japan, who was observing the meeting and Jeffrey Owings, who would be making a presentation later in the day.

Eugene then introduced Howard Fancy, the Chief Executive of the New Zealand Ministry of Education, who officially welcomed the Network to Wellington and gave a few brief remarks. After going through the agenda for the present meeting and approving the minutes from Luxembourg, the Network turned to the first agenda item: updates from OECD.

Updates from OECD

Andreas Schleicher provided progress reports on various OECD activities.

- **Network C** is currently finalizing the instrument for the Survey of Upper Secondary Schools (a draft for which was included in the briefing materials) and sampling plans. This instrument focuses on quality of educational provisions, transition from school to work, teachers, and use of and access to technology. Funding for the project is assured, and the Network expects to have the survey in the field this year. If the survey is successful, it is anticipated that a survey of lower secondary education will be the next area for development. Another area of work is in educational personnel, in establishing a better system of classification for teachers.

- **Network B** is currently working on developing a module on continuing education and training, which countries can integrate into existing national surveys. Other on-going work is in the area of Human Capital Investment. Related to this, a policy seminar was recently convened in Québec, which focused on looking beyond the economic returns to education to the social outcomes and impacts on labor markets, as well.
- Among other activities, the **Technical Group** has been working with UNESCO and the European Union to develop an instrument to collect data on education drawing on the new ISCED classification and has been focused on gathering information related to financial incentives.
- **Education at a Glance (EAG) 2001** will be released on May 16, although countries can expect advanced copies under embargo at the beginning of April. The review process this year included more stakeholders. Related specifically to the chapter on student achievement, reviewers selected indicators that were thought to have the most direct messages for policy. Also, although they liked the new approach, recommended the publication mirror previous editions in order not to preempt the discussions at the General Assembly about new directions for publications. This year, a brochure on EAG has been prepared.
- **Education Policy Analysis** will not be published this year. The next edition is expected to be released in April 2001 and will serve as the central background document for the OECD Ministerial meeting in 2001. The outline for this publication is currently under discussion.
- The **World Education Indicators (WEI) Project** has just released its first publication, which is available now and which has been well received. The format is comparable with other OECD indicators publications, building on previous work without being strictly parallel. Twenty countries now participate, and 10 of the WEI countries—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Peru, Russian Federation, and Thailand have expressed interest in participating in PISA (either as they currently do or would like to in Cycle II). Many discussions are underway regarding next steps and management of WEI. Support of countries such as Australia, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States were cited as important to the success of the project thus far.
- OECD has been engaging in discussions with the new statistical institute at UNESCO, the European Union, and the IEA to ensure **international cooperation** and compatibility on various activities in the field. It was noted that the EU's report from their indicators activity would be available on June 1 and that there was considerable cooperation between the OECD and EU related to information technology issues.
- With the exception of four countries in which the decision-making process is still on-going, all OECD countries have already expressed their intention to participate, in principle, in the second survey cycle of **PISA**.

Strategic Development of PISA

Andreas then gave a brief overview of the results from the evaluation of PISA, citing reports from Jeanne Griffith, Neville Postlethwaite, and Hans-Günter Rolff and a preliminary report from subject matter experts. A third step in the evaluation—an examination of the technical

aspects of the project—remains. Responding to a question from a member about how the results would be used, Andreas noted that the evaluations have yielded recommendations:

- For the short term that have already been taken into consideration—for example, refinements suggested for the marking procedures, the instruments themselves, etc;
- For the medium term that the BPC may decide to incorporate in the TOR for the second cycle—for example, the importance of integrated assessment frameworks and the use of more innovative methods for item and instrument development; and
- For the long term that have yet to be dealt with [later, the Network will turn to a discussion about re-constituting the APOI group, which is one mechanism for using the evaluation results in the long-term development of PISA].

Then, before launching into various related discussions (e.g., review of the TOR, discussion on APOI), Eugene asked each representative to share their countries' views on PISA and any issues related to the short-, medium-, or long-term development. All 18 representatives present shared their views, and Eugene raised an issue on controlling national costs on behalf of Spain, which was not represented.

Longitudinal Studies

Eugene then asked his colleague from NCES, Jeffrey Owings, to give a presentation on the U.S. experience with longitudinal studies, not only as a backdrop for later discussions on the TOR for the longitudinal option but also for thinking about the kinds of questions the APOI group might address.

As the director of the U.S.' longitudinal program, Jeff described several studies to track students' educational and other life experiences, beginning in secondary school. These studies are quite massive undertakings, as Jeff described a study begun in 1988 that followed students at 2-year intervals beginning in the 8th grade. With cognitive assessment components while in school, as well as principal, parent, teacher, student background questionnaires, and student transcripts (i.e., record of coursework and grades), there are over 10,000 variables per student. The methods used to administer follow-up surveys have included: computer-assisted telephone interviewing and personal home visits when necessary. A great deal of effort goes into keeping track of the students participating in the study.

Jeff noted that the earliest outcome variables (e.g., mathematics achievement) become predictor variables (e.g., attending college). Of note, mother's expectation for a child (as perceived by the child) is strongest predictor of later success. Whether or not a student takes algebra in the 8th grade also has strong predictive powers for later educational success.

Members appreciated the presentation, asking several questions about findings and methodologies. Responding to a question raised by Jay Moskowitz, Eugene noted, however, that despite the wide success of these studies with researchers, they lack identity with policy makers (in contrast with TIMSS). An important question thus will be how can PISA avoid this with its longitudinal component.

TOR for the Second Cycle of PISA

Eugene then asked the Network to review the TOR for the second cycle of PISA and provide guidance to the BPC in finalizing the tender. After some discussion, the Network recommended that the BPC approve the TOR with the following suggestions:

- In response to an issue raised related to the use of “special needs booklets” with special needs students who are integrated into regular classrooms and schools, the Network suggested that the TOR direct bidders to specify the technical, administrative, and cost implications of such an option.
- The Network recommended that the TOR specify that modifications to the program of work that are made after the adoption of the proposal for the second cycle that have cost implications at either the international or national level (e.g., multiple marking) must be brought to the BPC for discussion and decision. The Network also recommended that bidders discuss trade-offs between national and international costs.
- The Network recommended that the TOR specify the role of Network A in PISA.
- The Network recommended that the TOR make explicit countries’ option to include a grade-based sample and should direct bidders/the contractor to provide assistance should this option be exercised.
- With regard to problem solving, the Network recommended that the TOR direct bidders to present two options: in one scenario, problem solving would be a stand-alone assessment and in another scenario, it would be integrated with the major domain.
- The Network recommended that the TOR direct bidders that the role of the NPM’s and the timeline for the national implementation of PISA, as well as the timeline for the operation of the international contractor be stated explicitly.
- The Network recommended to maintain a three-year cycle for the data collection and to start the development of the second cycle as soon as possible.

Longitudinal TOR

The Network also was charged with reviewing the TOR for PISA’s longitudinal option. Several members expressed concerns with the scope of work and the fixed details (e.g., 2-year intervals), urging more time for conceptual development. Andreas reminded members of the history of this option—basically, that it is a response to members’ interest in the Canadian national option, as presented in Tokyo last March. After some discussion, the Network recommended that:

- The scope of work remains limited, as it is in the Canadian option.
- However, the scope of work should not be proscriptive in terms of process.
- There will be increased time to review and revise the scope of work after to bids are received and prior to finalizing the contract.

Andreas will work with Erich Ramseier to re-draft the scope of work.

Re-Constitution of APOI

In response to the need for a group to examine questions related to analysis of PISA data and its long-term development, the Network decided to re-establish the APOI committee and expand its charge to include discussion on how to disseminate and communicate results, as well. Eugene suggested that such a committee, APODI, would examine:

- What data do we now have and how can/should it be analyzed and presented?
- What are the important policy questions for the second cycle and what are recommendations for analysis?
- How can we make full use of the findings from the evaluation for the long-term development of the Data Strategy?

Eugene asked for volunteers for this committee and suggested that the committee meets in the late Spring/early Summer and gives a first report to the Network at the next meeting.

Network A 2000

The Network then turned to a review of the chapters for the Network A 2000 volume. Four chapters had been included in the briefing book, and four had been subsequently e-mailed. Additionally, the 9th chapter was available at the meeting. As a whole, members were supportive of the chapters and the progress that had been made. However, several members, including the Chair, voiced concerns about the chapter, *Classer ou comparer?* After some discussion, members asked that the chapter be revised in the following ways: (a) to conform to an overall page limit comparable to other chapters; (b) to limit the historical critique, finding some of the arguments unbalanced and questionable technically; and (c) to expand upon the proposals for alternative presentation and analyses, which were seen as the most useful and interesting part of the chapter.

New Development Areas

The next item on the agenda was new development areas.

Reading in Foreign Languages

Eugene presented a proposal that was prepared by Irwin Kirsch and commented upon by the committee, describing four options for proceeding with an assessment of reading in foreign languages. Again, the use of PISA items as the basis of the assessment provides benefits in terms of cost-effectiveness and allowing an anchor to students' reading proficiency in their native language. It was again stressed that this would not be a test of foreign language competence but one of students' skills in reading in foreign languages, and it was noted that participation in this option would require countries to draw a separate sample from the main

study sample. After briefly discussing the different options, the Network recommended that the TOR direct bidders to describe and discuss the implications of Option 3.

Integrated Communications

Jules Peschar updated members on the work done by the chair of this committee, Gerry Shiel, in written consultation with the committee. He directed members to the review presented in the briefing materials that described some examples of assessments that have integrated reading, listening, writing, or speaking. Drawing on the findings of the paper, he noted that the implicit conclusion was that it would be very unlikely an assessment of integrated communications could be done on PISA's scale, unless it was put on a longer developmental trajectory. After a brief discussion, the Network decided to put this activity on hold and asked the committee to keep members informed of any further developments that would warrant active exploration.

Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Jean-Paul Reeff and Fernando Cordova presented to the Network a matrix of the possible areas for assessing ICT. They asked members to think about what the boundaries for such an assessment would be and what areas they would be most interested in. Members noted how vast the possibilities are and reminded each other to consider what the added value of assessing ICT skills at the international level would be, as well as what the criteria for selecting the CCC domains for PISA are. Jay suggested that the committee undertake an inventory of national activities related to ICT and report to the Network at the next meeting. The Network supported this suggestion, and members were asked to send any relevant comments to the committee chairs. A proposal will be presented at the next meeting.

Education at a Glance

The Network then turned to a discussion about EAG: (1) commenting on the final chapter on student achievement and (2) reviewing a proposal for next year's indicators and setting priorities.

Regarding the first charge, some members expressed disappointment that the country profiles were not included in the final chapter. Andreas noted that this decision was made in order not to preempt discussions planned for the General Assembly on the future direction of publications. Some members reiterated concern with the use of margin notes, despite the fact that country names are no longer mentioned in passages citing poor results. Andreas noted that several countries have indicated a strong desire to reduce the overall number of indicators in the future.

Regarding the second charge, Eugene presented a proposal for 19 possible indicators for the 2001 chapter and asked members to set priorities among them, keeping in mind that the overall number in the final version will likely be limited to 3 to 5 indicators. He noted that this would be the first time in several years that new data would be available, from TIMSS-R and the Civic Education Study, and that the proposed indicators were limited to that which would be available in the first wave of international reports from these studies.

Responding to a member's question, Eugene described the timeline: the Network A Secretariat will prepare a draft of the indicators for members' review at the October meeting. The indicators will then be revised and transmitted to the OECD for publication in 2001.

Some members raised concerns about the Civics data—one member being concerned about the quality of the data and another being concerned that the Civic Education Study was “sold” for its non-horse race nature, which might conflict with publication in EAG. It also was requested to place the Civics indicators in the broader context of CCCs. Other members asked if the 2001 indicators could in some way prepare the audience for the following year, when PISA data will be available. However, it was noted that data for more in-depth analyses of TIMSS-R or Civics would not be available.

After discussion, the Network determined the following priorities, in order:

- Trends in mean mathematics and science achievement in the 8th grade (1995-1999)
- OR Mean mathematics and science achievement in the 8th grade (1999)
- Mean achievement in ‘civic knowledge’ (1999)
- Trends in student differences in mathematics and science achievement in the 8th grade (1995-1999)
- Gender differences in achievement in ‘civic knowledge’ (1999)
- Student differences in mathematics and science achievement in the 8th grade (1999)

Update on DeSeCo

Erich Ramseier then provided an update on activities of the Swiss-led Definition and Selection of Competencies (DeSeCo) project. DeSeCo, which began in 1997 as a four-year project, is scheduled to end next year. During 1999, six expert papers were prepared and an international symposium was held. The papers and the symposium illustrated the wide scope of the field of ‘competencies.’ Future and on-going work will include: finalizing a publication for late 2000; preparation of a chapter for the INES General Assembly compendium; commissioning of additional expert papers; and a second symposium for 2001. Also, the DeSeCo team is planning a country commenting process and will likely target Education Committee members as respondents for a request for information, which will be sent in May. Project organizers are discussing the establishment of two Advisory Groups, one consisting of sponsors and representatives of interested countries and the other consisting of scientific experts.

The DeSeCo project began as a scientific endeavor to provide a theoretical basis for the expanding indicator work (e.g., in CCCs). Several members asked questions about how this work can be fed back into PISA and how it relates to INES. As the project grows to a close, members were asked to consider a possible role for Network A in 2001 and beyond. This issue is still on the table.

Network Self-Evaluation

As a final activity on the second day of the meeting, members were asked to reflect on the Network's accomplishments and areas for improvement in preparation for the upcoming General Assembly meeting. Specifically, members were asked to respond to the questions provided by OECD as guidance in completing the self-evaluation. From this discussion, a draft self-evaluation report will be prepared, which will be circulated to members for additional comments.

Among the accomplishments, some members noted that Network A:

- Has been clearly focused on its goals, namely in the success in designing and seeing the Data Strategy through to implementation; and
- Has been largely effective in engaging political support and scientific expertise for its work, as demonstrated in PISA, although there remain some areas of disconnect; and
- Has had a profound effect on the interest and participation of the developing world in developing indicators and in obtaining and using data for decision making purposes.

Other suggestions were that:

- Dissemination of information about collaboration with other Networks and their activities was currently lacking; and
- Briefing materials should be distributed at least 2-3 weeks ahead of time and that dissemination in electronic form and distribution of room documents are acceptable and desired if that allows for longer periods to review the materials.

The issue of translation, and whether or not simultaneous translation would be provided and under what circumstances, also was raised.

Problem Solving

The last day of the meeting was devoted to problem solving. To begin, Eugene introduced Eckhard Klieme to give a presentation on the results of the German option for problem solving and suggestions for a framework for assessing problem solving in PISA. [His presentation roughly follows his paper on problem solving for Network A 2000; please refer to that paper for a detailed description of the German option and suggestions for a framework.] Furthermore, he noted that, based on the results of the German option, the most promising methodology for separating problem-solving skills from those of reasoning or general intelligence was to have a computer-delivered assessment. Eckhard's presentation was well received by the Network, stimulating the discussion and raising many questions.

Following the presentation, Eugene described the process for proceeding in this area. An expert group would be convened, including John Dossey, Eckhard Klieme, Beno Csapo, Stella Vosniadou, and Ton de Jong to develop test specifications and a preliminary framework. Two meetings would be held—the first in Chicago in April and the second in Paris in June.

Next Meeting

In conclusion, Eugene read a summary of major decisions taken at the meeting. (This summary of outcomes can be found at the beginning of this document.) The next meeting will be held in Bremen, Germany on October 23-25, in conjunction with the Board of Participating Countries meeting on October 25-27. The 25th will be a joint session of Network A and BPC, most likely related to problem solving.

Eugene then thanked Lynne and her colleagues in New Zealand for hosting the meeting, the members for their participation and hard work, Jeff Owings and Eckhard Klieme for their presentations, and the OECD and Network A Secretariats for their support. The meeting was adjourned.