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THE SCHOOLING FOR TOMORROW
“TOOLBOX FOR FORWARD-THINKING, INNOVATION, AND SCHOOL
SYSTEM CHANGE”

This Secretariat Note outlines the aims and contents of the Toolbox on Forward-thinking, Innovation and School System Change being developed in the OECD project on Schooling for Tomorrow. It gives information on the work being carried out in the "inner core" systems - reported in more detail in the separate notes relating to England, the Netherlands and Ontario, Canada - as well as the foreseen schedule for implementation over the 2003-5 period.

THE SCHOOLING FOR TOMORROW "TOOLBOX FOR FORWARD-THINKING, INNOVATION, AND SCHOOL SYSTEM CHANGE"¹

1. Educational Policy and Practice - New Challenges, New Demands

All OECD countries now face a demanding new situation for schools and schooling. They are seeking to raise standards for all students, quantitatively and qualitatively. All are thus faced with searching questions about the nature of schools and their suitability to meet these demands. The broad aim of lifelong learning for all has come to be widely shared among countries at least as a desirable future; if it is to be realised it implies major shifts of thinking and practice with schooling playing a pivotal part, (ref. the paper on schooling and lifelong learning). There is the need to inject longer-term thinking into decision-making that too often is highly constrained by short-term considerations. Rapidly evolving geo-political forces are at work, with globalisation in many spheres and yet also the need for greater local action and participation. New forms of governance are needed, based more on professionalism and dialogue and less on bureaucracy and control, in the face of complexity, rapid change and uncertainty. Indeed, these are concerns facing the public sector in general.²

2. An Ambitious International Project

This note outlines an international project addressing these pressures and needs - the *Schooling for Tomorrow* Toolbox. Its starting point is that a great deal of educational policy and practice continues to be dominated by the short term, which makes them ill-equipped to respond to the complexities and change; the necessary "tools", even the vocabulary, of long-term thinking are often lacking. It builds on the CERI knowledge management analysis that has identified the significance of the tacit, often fragmented knowledge base in education (OECD/CERI 2000). Such fragmentation provides further reason for the growing interest in innovative networks and the "meso" level between individual schools and teachers, on the one hand, and the macro level of national/international policy, on the other, (as analysed in OECD/CERI 2003 forthcoming and available to the Forum). More generally, the predominance of the short term and the tacit argues for the compilation of approaches, techniques and methods that can foster informed dialogue, professionalism, and the strategic and long term.

This is the aim of the *Schooling for Tomorrow* "Toolbox for Forward-thinking, Innovation, and School System Change". Some of the tools are analytical and methodological, compiled by the OECD Secretariat from a variety of inputs. Some are operational tools, and their development and field-testing depends crucially on the participation of the volunteer "inner-core" systems: currently, England, Netherlands and Ontario, Canada. They are using and evaluating forward thinking as part of change management in policy and practice and the active involvement of the relevant stakeholders in the countries. Their participation is designed to be integral, not additional, to the policy formulation and evaluation process. It will produce results with significance for public sector policy making in general, not only education.

Both the core countries that develop and test the toolbox, and the broader international community that will be involved in identifying and sharing its general lessons, will benefit from these tools. The main international events are the annual Forums, the first of which in Poitiers in February 2003. There will be at least two further Forums (see section 4). Within the OECD, the project is a collaborative enterprise

¹ To simplify presentation, the words "toolbox" and "tools" are hereafter written without inverted commas.

² See the analysis by Halász in the forthcoming *Schooling for Tomorrow* report - provisionally entitled "Beyond Bureaucracy" and available in pre-publication format the Forum (Document).

between the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) and the International Futures Programme (IFP). IFP is the unit within the OECD advising its Secretary-General and other senior officials on long-term prospects and has just completed a comprehensive assessment of the potential for major technological, economic, social and governance transformation in the 21st Century.³ (see OECD/IFP 2001, 2000, 1999, 1998).

3. The Tools in the *Schooling for Tomorrow* Toolbox

Thus, the tools to be compiled, developed and evaluated will need to combine a number of dimensions. They will be analytical, methodological, and operational, and hence be tools of very different kinds, serving different purposes. They will be of relevance for both policy and practice, and indeed will contribute to blur the distinction between the two. They will have different time horizons, from using historical and recent-past data to long-term futures thinking. They will be both qualitative and quantitative. Some of the tools will be dependent on ICT; others will use ICT more incidentally. They may be specific to education or be drawn from different sector or disciplines. They will draw on OECD tools/sources and there will be country-based approaches/strategies.

The Toolbox will involve all countries as well as those working intensively on *Schooling for Tomorrow* - through the annual Forums, through the input of the CERI Governing Board, and through a specific instrument for gathering country material that may be developed after the Poitiers Forum.

Building on OECD Tools and Sources

The existing OECD tools consist of those already developed by CERI and the IFP; other tools may be gathered and reviewed through different OECD projects. These are still in the process of refinement and compilation rather than complete. Further inputs from countries may be sought in fashioning these tools.

- ◆ The CERI schooling scenarios are themselves an innovative tool for forward thinking (the scenarios were first published in OECD/CERI 2001, and presented in somewhat modified form in OECD/CERI 2003 forthcoming). The scenarios themselves will continue to be refined with a view to their analytical operationalisation and the identification of possible indicators of them.
- ◆ The OECD IFP's systematic vision of the potential for, and obstacles against, broad societal change in the 21st century that is the output of a series of inter-related IFP conferences undertaken over the last 4-5 years. This has resulted *inter alia* in the "possibility-space" analysis reported OECD/IFP (2003). This provides a valuable additional set of approaches through being long term in vision and grounded in broader societal changes.
- ◆ The approaches being adopted to introduce stronger elements of knowledge management and networking into schooling can be distilled from a variety of sources. A major analysis of knowledge management has already been published (OECD/CERI, 2000), and there is a further report in preparation on the role of the public sector in the knowledge economy. In addition, reviews of educational R&D policies in New Zealand and England have been prepared in 2001 and 2002 for future publication. The *Schooling for Tomorrow* report on networking is also relevant here (OECD/CERI 2003, forthcoming).

³ <http://www.sourceoecd.org/data/cm/00004143/GenEco2.pdf>

- ◆ The OECD has devoted considerable efforts to developing a system of comparative statistics and indicators (see e.g. OECD/INES, 2002 and OECD/PISA, 2001). For this context, the question is about methods of using such [recent] historical data as an input to forward thinking, innovation and system change, in ways that combine the quantitative with the qualitative.
- ◆ The tools, strategies, and approaches being developed in sectors of public policy other than education. Certain of these have already been analysed in the CERI knowledge management work and in the IFP programme. This could be undertaken on a more systematic basis including through analysis of the work of other sections of the OECD.

The Operational Toolbox for Forward-thinking, Innovation, and School System Change - Activity in the "Inner-core" Countries

The "inner core" volunteer systems are organising dialogues to use and field test tools for forward-thinking and innovation in schooling, in co-operation with the OECD *Schooling for Tomorrow* project and where possible with those from other countries. They have made available the resources to allow this process to take place. Those engaged in the dialogues include education authorities, the different players providing leadership, professional development and policy advice, and educators; ideally, they should bring in stakeholders from beyond the schooling system. Each "inner core" volunteer system is engaging a small study team to record and reflect on the use of these tools, and their value to re-evaluate on-going reforms and inspire strategic reflection.

The participating "systems" represent different levels. The Netherlands case is a national system; England is much the largest part of a United Kingdom that is experiencing increasing devolution in education, and thus has features of both a national and a devolved system; in Canada, education is organised provincially, not federally, with Ontario as the most populous of its provinces. [Further systems that may participate intensively in the *Schooling for Tomorrow* Toolbox could occupy a position corresponding to one of these three or yet another.]

Those volunteered for the "inner core" have identified particular target initiatives or focal points in their education systems for the Toolbox dialogues, as outlined in the papers they have prepared for the Forum. These are: (Ontario) Vision 2020: French Language Education in Tomorrow's Ontario and the Teaching as a Profession Project; (England) initiatives directed at Highly Innovative Schools and Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances; (the Netherlands) 'Initiative-rich' Schools and Educational Opportunity Policy. They will be followed as "laboratories of change" as outlined below. In the case of England, the first main event held in December 2002 was a national dialogue inspired by the scenarios bringing in all the main stakeholders, prior to more specific work with the targeted initiatives (see the country note). Both system-wide dialogue and the specific targeted work are important in building the Toolbox.

Whether system-wide or in relation to the specific "laboratories of change", the starting point is the application of the schooling scenarios, used to identify desirable futures and to analyse on-going developments towards them. As a result of using these international tools, each system may wish to develop their own versions, geared to their particular circumstances. As the dialogues and reflection develop, other tools for forward thinking, innovation, and system change will be used and developed, and they will be analysed for entry into the Toolbox alongside the scenarios. Through this process, the "inner core" systems will benefit from the stimulus of international input into their policy and practice towards stronger forward thinking and innovation, while the international community will benefit from the evaluation of these approaches in action.

4. The Next Phases, 2003-2005

Building on the work already done by CERI and the IFP, the cumulative national and international process of completing the "toolbox" will involve the following main phases.

Phase One (to February 2003):

Dialogue and reflection involving a small number of "inner-core" volunteer systems and the OECD; at present, these systems are England, the Netherlands, and Ontario, Canada. This phase is completed with the Forum being held at Futuroscope, Poitiers, France 12-14 February 2003, to which all OECD countries are invited.

Phase Two (2003/beginning 2004):

Continued intensive dialogue and activity in each volunteer country on forward-looking educational reform and the "laboratory of change" initiatives, and evaluation of the results. Continued analysis and development of the analytical and methodological work on the scenarios, futures thinking, and the links to broader developments in the wider society and economy. Feedback for discussion to the CERI Governing Board in April 2003, drawing on the results of the Poitiers Forum, with detailed plans for all work on *Schooling for Tomorrow* over 2003-5.

As a result of the Governing Board discussion, construction of a possible framework of information to be requested from all countries in addition to the volunteer "inner core". Possible new "inner core" systems begin work, in collaboration with OECD. This phase is completed by a second International Forum at the end 2003/beginning 2004 based on all elements of "Schooling for Tomorrow" project, possibly hosted in one of the OECD countries.

Phase Three (2004/beginning 2005):

Compilation of the toolbox of forward-looking and innovative strategies, methods, based on Phases 1 and 2. Substantial inputs from the CERI Governing Board and the major concluding Forum end 2004/beginning 2005. The latter might be the occasion for a horizontal OECD event on governance and decision-making, with education as the test case and bringing in comparative experience in other sectors of public policy.

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