

Second *ad hoc* Experts' Group Meeting on Evaluating Quality in Educational Facilities Telchac-Puerto, Yucatán, Mexico, 3 to 4 October 2005

Introduction

Educational facilities are the cornerstones of education systems. Quality education can only take place in quality educational facilities. Students will experience greater difficulties learning in badly-lit, poorly-ventilated classrooms; students' learning can be compromised in learning spaces that are not flexible, accessible or inclusive; and students' lives may even be at risk if their learning environment is unsafe. Some case studies show that involvement of the users – students, teachers and community members – in decisions regarding the design, planning and management of facilities can have a positive effect on student motivation and educational outcomes.

While the relationship between providing quality learning environments and enhancing the teaching and learning process is indisputable, consensus has not yet been reached on how “quality” is defined as it relates to educational facilities, nor how it can be effectively measured. From 1 to 3 June 2005, the OECD Programme on Educational Building and the Ministry of Education in Portugal gathered together 23 international experts – architects, social scientists, academics, school and facility evaluation specialists, representatives of state and national administrations – from 11 countries (Australia, Austria, Brazil, Greece, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Portugal, Switzerland, United Kingdom/Scotland and the United States) and UNESCO to discuss these issues.

The OECD Programme on Educational Building (PEB), and the Administrative Board of the Federal School Construction Programme (CAPFCE) and the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) in Mexico are organising a second *ad hoc* experts' group meeting on Evaluating Quality in Educational Facilities. The meeting will take place before the CAPFCE IV International Congress on the Development of Physical Infrastructure, which will be held from 5 to 7 October 2005.

Objectives

The primary objective of this meeting is to consolidate and advance existing knowledge gained from the first experts' meeting in Lisbon – which aimed to establish an international framework for evaluating quality in educational facilities – in the context of Latin America. To achieve this objective, the *ad hoc* experts' group will seek to:

- Define a set of international principles and criteria for assessing quality in educational facilities, based on experiences in Latin American countries.
- Discuss quantitative and qualitative methodologies that have been used to measure these criteria in Latin American countries, and the positive and negative aspects of implementation of these methodologies in local, regional or national settings.

Outcomes

The principles and criteria for quality in educational facilities and methodology used to measure these criteria, as defined by the experts' group, will provide the basis of an international manual on assessing quality in educational facilities. The manual would provide the internationally comparable guidelines

according to which school facilities would be evaluated in future internationally comparative studies and workshops. The principles, criteria and methodologies defined by the experts' group will be published with the papers presented at this meeting in 2006. The manual will also be published in 2006.

Venue

The conference will be held at the Reef Yucatán Hotel, which is located in Telchac-Puerto Yucatán, Mexico (www.reefyucatan.com), approximately 65 km from the city of Mérida, the capital of Estado. For further information on the meeting venue, please contact grupos@elmundoestuyo.com.mx.

Participation

Participation in the experts' group meeting will be limited to a maximum of 35 to 40 individuals who will represent a core group of experts from a range of professional areas (*i.e.* universities, nongovernmental organisations, national and local administrations, business). Expert group members will be required to submit a paper, which may be published, providing background information on his/her experiences and research concerning evaluating quality in educational facilities. A separate document outlining the requirements for the paper will be provided to all participants in early September.

Working languages

The working languages for the experts' group meeting are Spanish and English.

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