CONCLUSIONS FROM THE OECD/NETHERLANDS CONFERENCE OF NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES, EXPERTS AND PRACTITIONERS ON SCHOOLING FOR TOMORROW

Held in Rotterdam on 1-3 November 2000
NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT

1. This Note presents the conclusions from the Rotterdam conference on “Schooling for Tomorrow”, which was held 1-3 November 2000. The conference, with a strong policy focus, was one of the major events in this CERI programme. It was jointly organised by Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Rotterdam municipal authorities, and the OECD.

2. The attached conclusions have been prepared by Ms. Ylva Johansson, former Minister of Education, Sweden, in her capacity as Conference Chair. They were presented to the conference in its final session and identify main orientations for future schooling policies. They refer specifically to fostering and disseminating innovation, which was addressed through the "micro" working groups. The conclusions also refer to the Secretariat analysis of trends and scenarios (CERI/CD(2000)4), and to the need for greater development in education of forward-thinking methodologies for policy and practice. Given the broad, policy-focused coverage of these conclusions, they might usefully inform the preparation for the OECD Education Ministerial meeting, April 2-4 2001.

3. In addition to Ms. Johansson, the Working Group Chairs were: Mr. Jarl Bengtsson (OECD), Ms. Elizabeth Eppel (New Zealand), Ms. Jantien Kriens (Netherlands), Mr. Alain Michel (France), Prof. Akira Ninomiya (Japan), and Ms. Maria Emilia Brederode Santos (Portugal). The Conference Programme is presented in the Annex to this Note.

4. The conference was attended by over 100 national representatives, experts and practitioners from 24 Member countries, with additional observers and participants from the local school- and community-based initiatives in Rotterdam's Delfshaven and Feijenoord districts. BIAC and TUAC were represented as were CERI decentralised innovation networks (ENSI, the German-speaking seminars, PCC), and other international groups (IPN - International Partnership Network; SICI - Standing Conference of Central and General Inspectors of Education). Two students from the ICT Learner Network preparing for the December 2000 Aix-en-Provence conference also took part.

5. The Secretariat draft report on trends and scenarios (CERI/CD(2000)4) was distributed to all participants and discussed in detail in two working groups. It will now be revised taking account of all the comments received with a view to publication early in 2001. There were also around 20 country notes circulated to the conference, outlining school- and community-based initiatives and innovations, including ICT-intensive cases. These notes, plus the outcomes from the Rotterdam "micro" working groups and the seminar on Innovation and Networking that took place in Lisbon 14-15th September 2000, will provide the core material for a second publication to be prepared in spring 2001.

6. The Education Committee is invited to:

   ADVISE on how best the Chair's conclusions from the Rotterdam Conference on Schooling for Tomorrow can be used in preparing the Education Ministerial meeting, to be held 2-4 April 2001.
The CERI Governing Board is invited to:

- **COMMENT** on the Chair’s Conclusions from the Rotterdam Conference as it relates to the CERI work on Schooling for Tomorrow;

- **ADVISE** on how best the Chair’s conclusions from the Rotterdam Conference on Schooling for Tomorrow can be used in preparing the Education Ministerial meeting, to be held 2-4 April 2001.
CHAIR’S CONCLUSIONS OF ROTTERDAM CONFERENCE ON SCHOOLING FOR TOMORROW

Ms. Ylva Johansson

(CEO, @veta, Swedish e-learning organisation; Chair, European Schoolnet Strategy Forum; former Swedish Minister of Education)

Rotterdam, 3rd November 2000

1. We have been privileged to be part of the Rotterdam "Schooling for Tomorrow" Conference. I would like to thank the City of Rotterdam and the energetic team of conference organisers and educators, the Dutch authorities, and the OECD. Together they put together a programme that really did allow us to explore the key issues confronting schooling for tomorrow while remaining rooted in the action and realities that we can see today. And, I would like to thank all of you – participants from many different countries, with different responsibilities – for making this conference the success it has undoubtedly been.

2. We need new forms of governance and policy-making to prepare our schools for the 21st century. Our conference has itself embodied many of the principles we have identified as the basis for this: international in scope and reference but grounded in local action; long-term in vision but relevant today; ambitious and demanding; a dynamic synergy of different partners engaged in networking and dialogue. We also need a very rich and relevant knowledge base. For our conference, the reports produced both through the OECD and the many national case studies have offered us just this. The OECD analytical report provided a particularly useful starting point by reflecting on the nature of childhood at the outset of the 21st century, and a range of vital issues to do with families, communities, values and social cohesion, as well as those aspects of rapidly-changing knowledge-based societies and of education that are more frequently recognised as setting the agenda for schooling in the future.

3. Policy-making, not just students, teachers and schools, must be in a process of constant learning. For this, methods and strategies for long-term thinking are needed. Despite the fact that education is par excellence about long-term investment and change, forward-thinking methodologies are woefully under-developed in our field. I found, as others, that the scenarios for the future presented in the OECD report represent a valuable tool for clarifying the strategic choices that our societies are confronting.

4. The OECD has produced five scenarios: "the status quo continues", "schools as key social centres", "schools as focused learning organisations", "the market model", and "technology and the network society". We have given our own assessment through a survey of conference participants of both the desirability and probability of these different futures. A clear viewpoint has been expressed here in favour of the "re-schooling" scenarios – especially Scenario 3, "the school as a focused learning organisation" – and rejection of the market model.

1 It was held 1-3 November 2000 at the Netherlands Architecture Institute, as well as at various other sites in the city, and was jointly organised by the Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Rotterdam municipal authorities, and OECD/CERI.
5. To move to what we would like to happen defines a challenging policy agenda, fostering innovation and dynamism at all levels. My conclusions cover both general directions for policy and support for local-level innovation.

Orientations for Future Policies

6. **High ambitions, strong organisations**: In the knowledge societies of today and tomorrow, schools need high ambitions in order to fulfil their potential and to survive as highly relevant organisations for our societies. It is vital to narrow the achievement gap, within and between schools. Schools, and other places for learning, must be strong, independent, and well equipped. Well-developed systems of assessment and accountability are needed to provide the knowledge that schools’ high ambitions are being met within the larger national goals.

7. **Schools as democratic agents for social cohesion**: An integral element of their ambitious agenda is building cohesion and social capital. Schools are among the most effective avenues of inclusion, and this should be one of the main outcomes on which their success is judged.

8. **Well-resourced schools to meet demanding public responsibilities**: If schools are to meet demanding objectives, they must be well-resourced. They should be confident of their funding to meet their clear public responsibilities, whether this comes directly or indirectly from the public purse. While diverse partnerships are now such an important feature of education, schools should not have to be reliant on them to meet their core funding needs.

9. **Networks and partnerships are critical**: School autonomy goes hand-in-hand with being connected to the community, other educators, and the broader society. Hence, the key role of networks and partnerships. Too much educational practice in OECD countries is characterised by isolation: schools from parents and the community and from each other; teachers and learners in isolated classrooms. Partnerships may address skills and employment, society and culture, or bring together different parts of the educational world; parents are among the most important of schools’ partners.

10. **From teaching to learning**: the curriculum is at the heart of schooling. The focus needs to shift from teaching and towards learning. Guiding this shift in focus should be the underlying aim that schools are laying the foundation for lifelong learning – the knowledge, competences, and motivation to go on learning in the many settings beyond school. Facilities in schools need to be attractive, flexible and fitted for a wide variety of purposes if they are to foster this shifting curriculum emphasis.

11. **Teachers and leadership**: Far from implying any lessening of their importance, the shift from teaching to learning calls for still more demanding professional repertoires. Teachers should themselves be highly motivated and work through networks and teams. It is a matter of the utmost concern that in many countries severe problems of recruitment and teacher supply are emerging. New incentives are needed across the whole range of conditions and rewards, both to attract high-quality recruits and maintain a vibrant, diverse teaching force. Strong autonomous schools meeting high ambitions also call for strong leaders, principals and managers. Professional development for leadership and management is thus vital.

12. **ICT as a learning and development tool**: ICT should be used to the full in school learning, and for this there needs to be a shift from basic investments in hardware to the development of the innovative use of ICT in the classroom. Investments to support teachers working together to use ICT as a learning tool can foster a deeper pedagogy of the whole school. Teachers and students should exploit ICT’s enormous potential for communication and collaborative learning. There must be much closer links in ICT learning strategies between schools, homes and communities in order to bridge any emerging “digital divide”.
Fostering and Disseminating Innovation

13. An important element of the success of this conference has been in the site visits to innovations in Rotterdam - some in schools and others in community initiatives - and their comparison with parallel programmes in other countries. Policies should work to provide the environment in which innovations can flourish and good practice can be disseminated; certain conclusions relate specifically to this.

14. **National standards, school autonomy**: Authorities should set clear and ambitious standards for schooling, but there must be adequate space for local initiative in meeting those standards. Schools should flourish as autonomous learning organisations and educational innovation should be firmly rooted in locally-defined needs and problems.

15. **Bold experimentation, evaluation, and dissemination**: A climate of experimentation should be fostered within the broad frameworks of national goals, with imaginative solutions devised for the real challenges being confronted on the ground. Evaluation and feedback are critical. Some “failures” are inevitable and must be accepted in order to encourage risk-taking; valuable lessons can be learned from them as well as from the successes. Lessons learned and successful practices should not remain isolated examples, but be disseminated so that they can enjoy a much broader impact. We lack good dissemination strategies, and these are a priority.

16. **The key role of partnerships**: Partnerships are fundamental to schooling for today and tomorrow: they open new learning opportunities and knowledge; they provide the critical links between schools and their communities; they broaden the support base on which dynamic schools and teacher professionalism depends.

17. **Sustaining innovation and improvement**: There should be high levels of support for successful innovation and experimentation to ensure that the benefits are sustainable. Those facing the greatest challenges, in situations of compound disadvantages, most need that support. Local excellence and innovation cannot be sustained simply through the idiosyncratic influence of the charismatic individual – teacher, principal, community leader – though such figures are critical sources of inspiration.

18. In sum, schools have been very important and, in many respects, successful institutions. They were integral to the transformation from agrarian to industrial societies. They represent a very important investment for our countries in making the further transformation from industrial to the knowledge-based societies of today and tomorrow, but for this they must be revitalised and dynamic. We have pointed the way to how this can be done.
ANNEX

Rotterdam Conference Programme

Day One, Wednesday 1st November
At the Netherlands Architecture Institute, Rotterdam

Chair: Ms. Ylva Johansson (CEO, @veta, Swedish e-learning organisation; Chair, European Schoolnet Strategy Forum; former Swedish Minister of Education)

AFTERNOON 14:00-17:00 in Plenary

14h00-15h15
- Opening, Welcome, Introductory Presentations
  - Ylva Johansson, Conference Chair
  - Karin Adelmund, (Netherlands State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science)
  - John Martin, (Director, OECD’s CERI and the Directorate for Education, Employment, Labour, and Social Affairs)

- OECD Perspectives on the Future
  - Riel Miller (OECD International Futures Programme)
  - David Istance (OECD, CERI)

- Schooling for Tomorrow: the Rotterdam Experience
  A short video presentation

15h15-15h45 Tea/Coffee

15h45-17h00
- From Improvement to Transformation
  - Professor Michael Barber (Institute of Education, University of London; Head of the Standards and Effectiveness Unit, DfEE; Special Ministerial Adviser)

- Open Plenary Discussion

EVENING 17h30-19h00
At the Rotterdam Town Hall

- Welcome and address by Ms. Els Kuijper, Rotterdam Vice-Mayor, Alderman of Education
- Reception
Day Two, Thursday 2nd November "Macro-" and Micro-level" Workshops

1. MACRO-LEVEL WORKSHOPS - TRENDS, SCENARIOS, POLICIES
   At the Engels Conference Centre, Rotterdam

9h00 -12h30
•  Trends and Scenarios for Schooling in the Future

12h30 -14h00 Lunch

14h00-15h30
•  Policy Implications and Directions


2. MICRO-LEVEL WORKSHOPS - INNOVATIVE APPROACHES
   Field visits and Discussions
   At centres in Feijenoord and Delfshaven, Rotterdam

   Themes:
   - School-based reorganisation of teaching, learning, and management
   - Out-of-school, community-based models to enhance learning of the young
   - ICT-intensive initiatives, both school- and community-based

9h00 -10h00
•  Introduction to the themes and travelling to different school and community centres

10h00-10h45
•  Presentations of a Rotterdam and an international initiative

10h45-12h15
•  Small group discussion at the field visit site, covering:
  - Forms of the innovation;
  - Conditions for and obstacles to progress;
  - Partnerships and the structuring of change

12h30 -14h00 Lunch

14h00-15h30
•  Larger group discussions around the three themes with particular reference to the promotion of innovation, partnerships, and role of national policy

[For reference: Country notes on innovative approaches and models and Micro-level workshops - Questions for discussion]
EVENING 17h00-21h00
Cruise on SS Majesteit

17h00-17h30
• Welcome
• Policies for Innovation, Networking and Change
  - Professor David Hopkins (University of Nottingham, UK)

17h30 -
• Facilitated networking and social event with buffet dinner and bar

Day Three, Friday 3rd November
At the Netherlands Architecture Institute, Rotterdam

MORNING  9h30-12h45 in Plenary
Chair:  Ylva Johansson

9h30 -11h30
• Panel presentation of Workshop conclusions
• Open Plenary Discussion

11h30 -12h15  Tea/Coffee
• Exposition on Schools for Tomorrow by STARO and the KPC Group / Carmel Stichting

12h15 - 12h45
• “Rotterdam Conclusions on Schooling for Tomorrow” by the Conference Chair
• Closing Remarks from OECD and Netherlands authorities