

Monitoring note 1 : Wallonia-Brussels Federation

The development of the « Décolâge » Community : a strategy aiming at reducing the underperforming at school in pre-school education and in the first two years of elementary education

Context :

In the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (Belgium), since the « Missions » Decree of 1997 that marked the beginning of a new era in the field of management of the educative system, the issues of the effectiveness of the educative system and the issues of equity in the itineraries and achievements of the pupils are at the heart of school policies.

This reference text is accompanied by a set of reforms concerning the school structures and the pedagogical guidelines. Those reforms aim at establishing a common core curriculum for all of the pupils until the end of the first grade of secondary school, as well as at insuring them the acquisition of basic skills (skills base).

Elementary education, aiming at achieving those basic skills, consists of six years of primary education and two years of secondary education. This structure thus reinforces the idea of a core curriculum for all the pupils. For what concerns the organisation of the itineraries, the two years cycle formally becomes the reference in order to organise the teaching on the whole compulsory school itinerary (between 6 and 18 years old). The cycle of the first education years lasts three years, assimilating the third year of pre-primary education (non-compulsory) to the two first years of primary school (between 5 and 8 years old).

Those reorganisations are accompanied by some measures that reduce the possibilities to select the pupils, or the possibilities for a child to repeat a year or to be reoriented inside the cycle. This particularly applies to the outset of primary education and to the outset of secondary education.

Those reforms:

- define and specify the education actors' missions (teachers, administrative bodies, management bodies, pedagogical guidance services, inspectorate,...)
- clarify the profile of the teachers as well as their training, thereby highlighting their reflexive competency so as to set up the learning conditions of the pupils;
- give the administrative bodies and the managements bodies of the schools an important role in the implementation of the decrees;

- adapt the programmes to the notion of *competence* and *skills base*;
- in consistency with those orientations, the reforms re-examine the teachers' and management bodies' training;
- establish a management equipped with both an external evaluation system and statistic indicators of the pupils' performances at the level of the educative system as well as, more recently, at the level of the schools.

Most of the authors agree to say that those measures have led to a more important regulation by the central power of the pedagogical actions within the teaching networks and the schools in a quasi-market context. In regard to those orientations, both the actors and the observers of the system remain attentive to the obstacles hindering greater justice in the educational itineraries.

Despite the reforms that have been implemented, the repetition or reorientation rates remain high. The fact that the educational itineraries of the pupils are marked by their sociocultural and economical origins is particularly worrisome. The school system of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation is, worldwide, one of the school systems where the most important use of repetition is made. At the age of 15, 46% of the pupils have repeated at least one year of their school curriculum. This "pedagogical practice" represents an important financial cost for the system, but also a human cost for the pupils and their teachers. Both of them suffer from this failure and from this difficulty to manage the heterogeneity of the school itineraries. This custom for a child to repeat a year (also called *maintenance*) is already used in the third grade of the pre-primary education, i.e., even before the entry in the compulsory school.

Having made this observation, the Minister of Compulsory education, Mrs Marie-Dominique Simonet, undertook the development of the "Décolâge !" Community, which is the topic of this note. Today, 260 schools (one school out of seven), and 53 psycho-medico-social centres (one psycho-medico-social centre out of 3) are members of the Community "Décolâge!". Despite the difficulty to determine exactly how many teachers and PMS-agents are involved in this dynamic, it is certain that more than 600 from them have taken part to the training. Every group of three or four people "teacher – management body – PMS" was composed of agents from the same school.

Theory of change: Logics of action of the "Décolâge!" Community

The "Décolâge !" Community aims at struggling against the repetition and maintenance practices, and, more broadly, to modify a school culture marked by orientation and selection, which in turn opens the door to failure. In order to reach those objectives, the "Décolâge !" Community intends to change the customs and the representations of the teachers in the sense of an enhancement of their capacity to

act on the apprenticeships of the pupils, rather than on their capacity to orient and select them.

To this purpose, the Community implements a variety of processes, therefore strongly investing in an intermediate and central objective: the professionalization of collective pedagogical habits.

The implemented processes can be classified in five, mutually linked, logics of action:

- Firstly, **collaborative management** logic between the different institutional partners of the educative system: the Education general administration, the Networks and administrative bodies¹, the Inspectorate Service, the Institute for lifelong training, the teachers' unions, parents' associations, foundations, etc.;
- Secondly, a **development of resources based on scientific contents** logic. Those resources may be as well pedagogic tools as formation modules;
- Thirdly, a logic of **networking and stimulation of a practices community** between teachers, between PMS agents, between an educative team and its partners, or between several educative teams;
- Fourthly, a logic of support to the development of an **self-regulated process of pedagogical conception and leadership** by the networks and organizational powers, through collaboration between their educative advisors, their school managers and their educative teams, in order to develop efficient professional practices;
- Finally, an **evaluation and feed-back logic, in the service of an educative system teaching**, thanks to the Inspectorate services and the university studies allowing to monitor the management.

1° A « collaborative management »

After more than a decade of educative system management, reinforced around the "Missions" decree, it appears that many of the changes that had been expected are not arising. As in several other educative systems, the main decision-makers encounter trouble obtaining the expected changes by structural reforms and by a governmental action that is mainly concentrated on the orientation of budgets and on the writing of decrees. Efficacy and equity improve only with difficulty. Many experts explain this troublesome improvement by the complexity to obtain the changes in the necessary pedagogical practices.

¹ In the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, education is managed by 4 Networks, or organisational bodies federations, recognized and subsidised by the state, but that autonomously manage the schools which they are responsible for.

Management mainly consisted in giving the actors a frame (the “Missions” decree and the competences-based approach) and norms (defined by evaluation tools and external evaluations). The management that was implemented also provided the educative system with indicators, through the indicators of education, the results to external evaluations, whether they are certificate or not, through university research and analytic reports provided by the Management Commission.

The observations that have emerged are now shared by most of the actors, in particular by the members of the Management Commission. The processes and logics of action have to be defined, in order to diminish the inequalities that we observe every year but that keep resisting reforms. In other words, those observations still should be translated into concrete actions in the field.

One might think that the decentralised structure of our educative system – which goes hand in hand with an pedagogical freedom enshrined in our school history and in the Constitution – stands in the way of the possibility for the central management body to provoke the changes in the professional practices that are necessary. The Government, and more particularly the Minister of Compulsory Education’s Cabinet, cannot pursue a “top – down” political action, which obviously does not suffice to modify the local actors’ practices.

One must also admit that the school actors do not seize upon neither the results of the researches, nor the experts’ analyses, nor the Management Commission’s opinions, nor the educative reforms, in order to adapt their practices. The question that arises here concerns a problem that the analysts of the educative reforms know very well: i.e., the problem of the “translation” developed by Callon (1986), called “innovation” by Dupriez (2007) or “cre-action” by Donnay and Charlier.

As Donnay and Charlier would say, it is now time to re-examine the relation between practitioner and change, practitioner and formation, practitioner and educative research.

One should activate, or reactivate, for the practitioner the feeling that he controls his work by reinforcing its autonomy, starting from the analysis of its practices. Indeed, it finally belongs to the teacher to judge what is best adapted in order to favour the evolution of the practices.

This conception implies that one recognizes the teacher as a “cre-actor”, someone who invents, constructs and reconstructs solutions to answer the problems that he encounters. This autonomy does not exempts the teacher from a reflexion on the adequate objectives and measures, but, on the contrary, opens the door to other modalities of professional formation, among others based on its interactions with the Other (colleagues, pupils, parents, management bodies,...). The philosophy inherent to the “Décolâge!” project is to make the teacher aware of his responsibilities by investing in its capacity to become more professional.

The main issue here is to find an agreement on the role that the Government should play. The Government should develop a new type of management, in which, in addition to its role of norms and rules definition, of evaluation of the state of the system, and in addition to its subsidies grantor role, it will have a supportive role in translation, innovation or cre-action, through new processes of reforms and new logics of action. This will be made by relying on the teacher's desire for further professional development.

The development of the "Décolâge !" Community, since the beginning of the 2009-2014 term of office, aims at experimenting a new type of management, which we could qualify as "collaborative management".

The importance of this challenge – especially in its attempt to modify the culture of failure, which remains the basic objective for many of the school system actors – requires to take the necessary time, for the "Décolâge !" Community to be founded on strong bases.

In order to address the issue of the decreasing use of maintenance or repetition of a school year at the very beginning of compulsory schooling (last year of pre-primary education and first and second year of primary school), the first step has been to build a common, scientifically validated, vision of the representations of the local actors, of their difficulties, but also of their needs and expectations. The research that has been led by the Université de Liège highlights the unjustified use of maintenance and repetition, simultaneously with the local actors' conviction that they are acting right. In the meantime, the action research led by the Université Libre de Bruxelles pointed to the processes on which one could act, beyond the issue of the local actors' representation: namely, on the issue of the transformation of attitudes and pedagogical practices, through a material and intellectual set of tools.

Both of those researches, accompanied by a committee composed of Inspectorate's members, and of representatives from the networks, the administrative bodies, the Cabinet and administrations, have given rise to a "collateral effect". Indeed, they thereby revived a common pedagogical vision enshrined in the Missions Decree but hardly ever implemented in the field: a vision of a differentiated pedagogy that gives everyone equal chances of emancipation. The support of those researches, as well as the discussions that they provoked, enabled to formulate a central observation: the necessity – and the emergency – to valorise the capacity of teachers and of all of the school actors to act on the pupils' learning and to manage the classes' heterogeneity. This valorisation would be a better solution than resigning to their helplessness and their tendency to over-orient and over-select the pupils on the basis of their difficulties.

After those two years of support of those researches – and only after this essential step –, it became possible to stimulate the pedagogical reforms that were identified as necessary, through new management processes.

Since its creation, the “Décolâge !” Community organized a collaborative work process between the system’s different institutional partners within two committees:

- The first one says “Coopère !”, which is, in French, the contraction of “Comité opérationnel”, i.e., “Operational committee”. This committee gathers the Inspectorate, the Networks and Administrative bodies pedagogical coordinators, the IFC, the Management general service, and the Minister of Education’s Cabinet. The “Coopère !” regularly publishes an information letter that provides the schools with information about the decisions that have been taken.
- The second one says “Copilote !”, which is, in French, the contraction of “Comité de Pilotage”, i.e., “Management Committee”. This committee gathers the unions, the parents associations, the Networks and the Administrative bodies, the FWB’s Vice-Presidents Ministers, in addition of the Inspectorate, the In-service Training Institute, the Management’s general service and the Minister of Education’s Cabinet.

Those committees are the ideal location to identify the needs and to construct the resources that will reflect a common vision and shared objectives, as well as a place where practices and regulation processes can be shared.

The decisions are made unanimously and by consensus in the committees, in order to constantly respect the field for action and the partners’ competences. Those committees support the development of the “Décolâge !” Community, both through the validation, diffusion and implementation of the decisions with their institution, and through a “horizontal” reflexion between the members of the “Coopère !”, in order to take a critical look on its dynamics.

In spite of this desire to collaborate in the management of the “Décolâge !” Community, one must recognise that some central actors of the school system, namely the parents and the pupils, are poorly taken into account. This is in no instance the result of an omission, or of a refusal to see them becoming partners of the “Décolâge !” Community. Our wish, on the contrary, is to involve them and to give them the place that comes down to them. We therefore intend to clearly define their role and their field of action. But such a change in consideration cannot be done hastily, which is the reason why we give ourselves some time for thought. It appeared essential to us to begin with the creation of a collaboration between the institutional school actors (among which appear the parents associations’ representatives) in order to improve the collective pedagogical practices, before to open the collaborative management to parents and pupils.

2° Pedagogical resources based on scientific contents

As from the subvention of the researches led by the Université de Liège and the Université Libre de Bruxelles on the maintenance in the pre-primary education, it appeared essential to provide local actors with intellectual and material tools that will

give them the opportunity to improve their management of the heterogeneity of the classes, and to put pedagogical differentiation into practice.

Numerous new tools have been created and distributed since several years by the Administration, both in the form of booklets sent in the schools, and in the form of an identification of pedagogical resources on the enseignement.be website. In addition to those tools, the research teams proposed a complete and coherent “pedagogical kit”. The spirit of this kit, as well as the approach and the articulation between pedagogical tools and theoretical frames that underlie its creation, may be transferred from the educative teams to other tools, that they already use, or that they wish to experiment. The scientific foundation of those tools, in addition to the effort to integrate them in the professional questioning of the teacher, is recognized by all the participants as essential and as a token of quality.

- This “pedagogical kit” is available to all on the website enseignement.be. The teams of the formation “Décolâge – Taking the pupil’s déjà-là as a starting point”, organised by the IFC, have been working on the kit. Follow-up formations will enable to deepen some didactic or pedagogical dimensions during the school year 2013-2014.
- In the project to extend the “Décolâge !” Community to the following years of primary education (P3-P6), some pedagogical tools will be developed, within a similar thinking.
- The Educative system management Service aims at articulating the didactic approach that arise from the extern, non-certificate, evaluations of the “Décolâge !” Community’s dynamics.
- During the “Laboratory of pedagogical change” seminar, organised by the CERI/OECD, it appeared essential to clarify, for the local actors, the notion of “efficiency feeling”, as much for their own personal development as for the pupils’ apprenticeship progression. Indeed, this notion is at the heart of a culture of success, which starts from the learner’s capacities. We would like to replace the failure and selection culture by such a success culture.

Those tools play two distinct and complementary roles: on the one hand, they provide the teachers, PMS agents and school management bodies with concrete elements which they can experiment new professional practices with. Those new practices might be individual or collective. On the other hand, the tools enable to define some common pedagogical norms and attitudes, as well as a pedagogical philosophy shared by all.

3° Networking of a community of practice

Numerous experts and observers insist on the importance of teachers’ teamwork – insufficiently implemented – in order to improve their professional practices and in the

meantime pupils' results. This teamwork appears particularly beneficial to exceptional, and would thereby contribute to reduce the inequalities and to favour everyone's success.

“Encouraging the teachers to work together within the schools relies on the idea that this work is going to raise a bigger coordination of their practices, and that it is going to reinforce the continuity in the pupils' apprenticeships. Such a collaborative work would also give the teachers an opportunity to think collectively and to put their practices into question. Those opportunities could then lead, in given conditions, to the improvement of those pedagogical practices. (Marcel, Tardif, Durpiez, & Perrisset-Bagnoud (2007); Corriveau, Letor, Périsset-Bagnou et Savoie-Zajc, 2009. » (Letor, Enthoven et Dupriez, 2013).

This is the reason why, simultaneously to the implementation of a collaborative management, the “Décolâge !” Community develops and supports a logic of networking and of stimulation of a community of practice. As Letor, Enthoven and Dupriez (2013) recall in the intermediary report on the institutional and organisational analysis that they are leading on the impact of “Décolâge !” :

“The practice communities are defined as a form of collaborative work in a formal or informal professional frame, characterised by a strong degree of interdependence between the participants, of adhesion to the defined missions by or for the group and of engagement in the tasks (Wenger, 1998). If the entry in those communities may be the subject of an admission or co-optation process, it is always free to join it, or escape it.”

Networking the local actors and stimulating communities of practice may be done only through relying on the voluntary work of local actors. The main issue is for everyone to find resources in the network he chooses to belong to, as well as a vision of the partners who he feels in harmony with. Everyone should bring its competences and receive support from its partner, in a collaborative context.

The “Décolâge !” Community invites the teaching teams to intensify the collaborative work, or at least to articulate it harder to the pedagogical practices favouring the pupils' apprenticeships. The teams are invited to form communities of practice within the school, with another school, or, more globally, with all of the teams engaged in that project.

Different resources have thus been proposed to the local actors:

- A training module organised by the IFC, “Décolâge - Taking the pupil's déjà-là as a starting point”. They must register in groups of three or four people from the same school, amongst which there must be a PMS-centre agent. The group must be supported and extended by an e-learning platform enabling remote exchanges between all the members of a group.

- The King Baudouin Foundation intervision days : pre-primary education and disadvantaged families, relationships to be developed: The King Baudouin Foundation is a partner of the “Décolâge !” Community. It organised, for 28 schools, intervision days on the topic: “Pre-primary education and disadvantaged families: together to support the child in its school itinerary”. As for the training organised by the IFC, the teams that took part to those intervision days engaged together, in order to share experiences. The King Baudouin Foundation will organise, in November 2013, in collaboration with the Minister of Education’s Cabinet, a day to broadcast experiences and actions analysed during those intervision days, in order to share information with all the schools of the “Décolâge !” Community that are concerned by this issue.
- A digital work environment, “mENTEos-Décolâge !”, enabling local actors to build their social network, according to plots that they determine and control (the plot of their school, of a companionship with another school, or the plot of participants to a same training module, etc.).
- Guidance and support by pedagogical advisors.
- A moment of meeting and conviviality in order to enable everyone to identify the Community which he/she belongs to, and to share information with its members.
- A support to networking by the M-ECETT package, thereby favouring exchanges between actors, through visits and formalisation of identified and experienced good practices.

4° Self-regulation of pedagogical guidance and leadership

The “Décolâge !” Community started its development a year ago, and many educative teams have joined its dynamic (260 schools and 55 PMS centres). Today, it seems essential to build regulation processes of the pedagogical design and leadership. According to the logic at the root of the “Décolâge !” Community, which is a logic of collaborative management, the intention of the Cabinet of the Minister of Compulsory Education is to proceed to a regulation from above, demanding the educative teams to be accountable. Only a self-regulation logic appears compatible with collaborative management logic of the “Décolâge !” Community.

As Letor, Enthoven and Dupriez (2013) analyse, the “Décolâge !” Community’s development is a reform centred on an adaptive – unscheduled – and professional approach :

« The research on the promotion and implementation of the changes in pedagogical practices has highlighted several approaches followed by the reforms.

Berman (1980) distinguishes, amongst the reforms, between two types of approaches: scheduled approaches and adaptive approaches.

A **scheduled approach** seeks to promote the compliance of effective practices to defined practices. It mainly bases itself on two organisational processes :

- On the one hand, on the development of an **explicit orientation** of the pedagogical practices (guidance), associated with an **important compliance control** of the effective practices with the defined practices (control);
- On the other hand, on a **support to the implementation** and a coaching by the intermediary of local leaders. The main goal is to maximise the implementation of the programme's compliance. In this case, the **teachers' autonomy is strictly restricted**.

An **adaptive approach** seeks to arouse innovations enabling to adapt the injunctions to the local conditions:

- By **encouraging the professional communities to discover and disseminate the effective local practices**;
- By **leaving them a large share of autonomy** in order to adapt those practices to their own conditions »

If the adaptive approach favours the teachers' motivation to engage in the reform, enables them to attach value to it, and fixes the implemented practices in their context, it also involves risks of discrepancies between the prescribed changes and the changes effectively adopted by the teachers.

Those discrepancies may arise from a variety of factors, but may be corrected by several actions:

- A gap or discordance in the values between the protagonists may be corrected by a **clarifying of their key values, in such a way as to increase the local actors' engagement and to align their points of view**.
- If the problem is linked to an aversion to risk taking by the teachers, the risk taking may be alleviated by developing an **organisational culture that facilitates autonomy and encourages risk taking and innovation**.
- If the gap stems from a lack of mutual comprehension between the management body's intentions and the teachers' actions: this gap may be alleviated by **detailed procedures that enable to structure the work** and by a **more important guidance** during a training or a support. A **strong leadership**, aiming at changes promotion and regulation, will soften the asymmetry of the information.

Letor, Enthoven and Dupriez (2013) sum up this statement as follows:

“Starting from these premises, Rowan and Miller (2007) identify a range of variables that characterise the measures that promote pedagogical change at large scale:

- Pedagogical guidance (degree of orientation of the practices, teachers' set of tools, degree of support to change);
- Pedagogical leadership developed at school (role of the school management body in the pedagogical activity and the follow-up of practices);
- Teachers' training to change;
- Collaborative work between teachers as well as the autonomy that is given to them”.

Therefore, and despite the necessity to respect the intermediate and local actors' pedagogical autonomy – Networks and organizational bodies –, the experimentation of a collaborative management in developing the “Décolâge !” Community must sustain guidance and pedagogical leadership. In order to reconcile the respect of autonomy and the support to guidance and pedagogical leadership, regulation processes of the actions that have been led must be built.

As it did with the pedagogical tools proposed to the teachers, the Education Cabinet's and its administration's role is to supply those regulation tools on the basis of processes implemented in other school systems, and on the basis of validated scientific knowledge.

- An action plan model: an educative team's first resource is its own conviction, cohesion, and collective strength. But the energy of a team that is engaged in the dynamics of the “Décolâge !” Community will be even more efficient if it can be mobilised around an action plan. A project that is well thought out and defined by the team, under the responsibility of the school management, will guide the action and enable the cohesion of the team around objectives that have been collectively fixed. One might also work with the help of a pedagogical advisor (cf. § 9 below). In order to support the teams in the redaction of their action plan, the circular 4110, sent in August 2012, proposed possible focuses for thought and action, as well as a form model that may serve as assistance for the redaction of the team's action plan. This form is shown in the Annex 2 of this circular.
- Three big focuses for thought and action have been suggested to the pedagogical teams:
 - o “collective awareness to the issue of maintenance and repetition”
 - o “enhancement of the teamwork, through a better understanding of our school”
 - o “enhancement of our pedagogical practices, to the benefit of all of the pupils' success”.
- Collegial processes and methods to the benefit of the exceptional pupil are tried out by 50 educative teams. Amongst those teams, some are members of the “Décolâge !” Community, in the participative training “TravCol”, organised by the IFC that will

enable the evaluation of the collective work process, as well as the difficulties and needs that arise from this process, etc.

- A “practitioner’s guide” and an analysis grid of the conditions of an efficient pedagogical environment, stemming from the CERI/OECD works, will be proposed to the intermediate actors – the networks and the organisational bodies – as well as to the local actors – the school management bodies and the PMS centres – in order to lead a self-evaluation of their measures.
- The “Coopère !” will be extensively working on those issues, always with the CERI/OECD support, but also on the basis of the propositions that each network or federation of organisational body will make. This will take place for purposes of sharing information about design and self-regulated pedagogical leadership practices.

5° Evaluation and feed-backs to the benefit of an educative learning system

If the “Décolâge !” Community tries out a new type of educative management, it must create the necessary conditions to become a learning organisation. From then on, it may produce processes and logics that might extend to the whole system, depending on the necessary adjustments to the different issues and contexts.

If one refers to Letor, Enthoven and Dupriez’s analysis (2013):

“A learning organisation is an “action system that structures itself to permanently learn, capitalise its know-how and competences, to transmit them and voluntarily reach its objectives in function of the evolutions of its environment, resources, culture, actors’ mental representations” (Bouvier, 2004, p. 63). (...) This apprenticeship goes through the individuals and the collectives that compose the organisation and make it live through their interactions”.

Letor (2007) identifies several dimensions of the organisational apprenticeship:

- A collective dimension through the taking into consideration, or the emergence of a framework of representations (vision and culture), in which the people have the feeling to constitute an organised group, define and analyse their action and the produced effects, and seek apprenticeship opportunities”;
- An organised dimension in the intentional establishment, by a recognized institutional authority, of regulation measures that enable to mobilise resources in order to make possible the development of a reflexive collective action, to constitute an active memory of the accumulated knowledge and know-how, and to favour their diffusion among the whole organisation.

Our educative system already contains an institutional evaluation authority: the Inspectorate service. Among its missions, we find:

2° Evaluate within the schools: notably:

- a) Respect of the articles 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, §3, 24, 34, and 78 of the 24th of July 1997 Decree (the “Missions” Decree);
- b) Respect of the study programmes fixed or approved by the Government, in accordance with the articles 17, 27, 36 and 50 of the 24th of July Decree;
- c) Respect of the articles 2, 8, 27, 45, 46, 48, 50, 51, 54, 55 and 57 of the 3rd of March 2004 decree, organising special education;
- d) Coherence of the practices, including evaluation practices;
- e) Match of the didactic material and school equipment with pedagogical purposes;
- f) Coherence of the choices made in the field of in-service training, and the matching of these choices with the pedagogical purposes as well as the impact of these trainings on the pedagogical practices;

(...)

3° Detect within the schools the potential segregation mechanisms, as well as support to the abolition of those mechanisms;

4° Dispense advices and information linked to the account provided in the frame of the missions that are defined in the points 1° to 3° above;

5° Bring their support to the conception, transfer, and correction of the non-certificate extern evaluations, as well as to the analysis and exploitation of the results at the level of the schools;

7° To assist the Management Commission in compliance with the Educative System Management of the French Community Decree of 27 March 2002, article 4, 4°.

The Inspectorate Service carries out evaluations in order to develop reliable, individual or collective, professional practices. It may then contribute to transform the educative system into a learning organisation.

In the “Décolâge !” Community, it appeared to all the members of the “Coopère !” and the “Copilote !” that if the schools that are members of the Community were in no way “immune” against Inspectorate’s visits, they should not either be subject to specific evaluations, linked to the objectives of the “Décolâge !” Community. It appeared indispensable – in order to obtain the actors’ adhesion and to enable their active involvement – to avoid the “evaluation threat” that weighted on them. Such a pressure is very present in a school system where the failure culture is as important as in our system, and has contributed to the emergence of an anxious relationship with evaluation.

Nevertheless, beyond the absence of a specific evaluation of the schools that are members of the “Décolâge!” Community, it appears essential, in the framework of a collaborative management, to rely on the Inspectorate’s missions. Those missions provide the “Décolâge !” Community with knowledge, efficient pedagogical practices, or alerts on the implemented mechanisms. The Inspectorate’s evaluation missions, for example on the “remarkable schools” or on the “taking into account of the exceptional pupils in secondary schools”, could benefit to the members of the “Décolâge !” Community.

- For example, the results of the Inspectorate’s mission that was led during the school year 2012 – 2013 on the “remarkable schools” in the management of the exceptional pupils may be distributed to the intermediate and local actors of the “Décolâge !” Community. This distribution may take place through booklets, or through a joint work with the Counselling and Psychological support service.

Moreover, it is obvious that a critical but friendly look must be brought on our own logics, approaches, measures, resources, etc. This is the reason why The Compulsory Education’s Cabinet is subsidising a research team, and has engaged the Brussels-Wallonia Federation into the CERI/OCDE “pedagogical changes laboratories”.

- The subsidy of a research team of the GIRSEF, Université Catholique de Louvain, will enable to identify the conditions favourable to pedagogical practices in the “Décolâge!” Community. This will take place through interviews of the key actors of “Décolâge!”, the extensive case study of 10 educative teams, and a questionnaire that has been sent to a representative sample of teachers.
- Several members of the “Coopère!” are involved in the CERI/OECD’s seminars of the “Laboratory of pedagogical changes”, in order to submit the “Décolâge !” Community as a new management of a reform to the critical analysis from experts and 4 other school systems. This involvement enables to identify the logics, mechanisms, strengths and weaknesses of the reform, and to construct such a “collaborative management”. Analysis and regulation tools of the reform will be proposed by the CERI in order to support the experimentation and to contribute to the understanding of the lessons that should be drawn, to the benefit of the whole educative system management.

Figure 1: Theory of change: logics of action of the “Décolâge !” Community, partners and actions



Legend:

-  Actions
-  Partenaires
- Teachers 
- PMS Agents 
- Management bodies 

Additional financial resources:

Very few additional financial resources are mobilised for the “Décolâge !” Community, as the philosophy of this project is to mobilise all the actors in their function and missions.

The additional mobilised funding is mainly dedicated to the subsidy of the research teams, with an average budget of 100.000€ per research team per year.

Calendar of the “Décolâge !” Community development

Scientific exploration of the maintenance and repetition issues, that have preceded the “Décolâge !” Community development, has begun in the course of the school year 2010-2011, and carried on during 2011 – 2012. The launch of the “Décolâge !” Community took place in March 2012, and the first actions in the field took place as of September 2012.

It is thus way too early to consider the benefits of the “Décolâge !” Community on the pupils’ results, and on the use of maintenance and repetition.

It is also too early to consider the effects of the Community on the teaching pedagogical practices.

On the other hand, several indications witness the on-going dynamics:

- Some 260 schools and 53 PMS centres engaged in the “Décolâge !” Community. During the first school year of activity, the Community thus reached a participation rate of 15% of the schools, and 33% of the PMS centres.
- More than 600 people took part to the hybrid training.
- The coordinators of the pedagogical advisors of the teaching networks involve deeply in the “Décolâge !” Community and enthusiastically adhere with the process.
- The General Inspectorate service also expresses its enthusiasm for the project.
- The teaching unions show a strong interest for the process and signal that they haven’t received any negative resonance from the field yet.
- A new information sessions campaign, which 500 people took part to, followed by a new circular calling to enter the “Décolâge !” Community, could enable the entrance of around a hundred teams in the course of the school year 2013 – 2014.
- For the start of the new school year 2014 – 2015, the extension of the “Décolâge !” Community to the later years of primary school is being prepared.

Besides, it is obvious that the development of the “Décolâge !” Community will have to carry on in the next years, if the next Education Minister and the Education Administration maintain their involvement in this project.

Despite the fact that we cannot predict the success of the dynamics that have been set into motion, it appears that the participative and systemic processes of the project bring about important resources and a close pedagogical guidance, and, therefore, are at the origin of the resulting enthusiasm. Moreover, the importance given to the support of the teachers in what lies at the heart of their profession is very often underlined as being the originality and the quality of the “Décolâge !” Community.

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