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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

COUNCIL OF THE INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF EDUCATION

Fifty-fifth session

WORKING GROUP FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE 48th ICE

22 - 23 January 2007

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP OF THE COUNCIL

Introduction

The Working Group (WG), constituted by the Council at the time of the fifty-fourth session, met at the Varembe International Conference Centre, from 22 January (10:30 a.m.) to 23 January (1:00 p.m.). Those participating in the meeting were: Mr. Raymond Theberge (Canada); Mr. Luis Manuel Ramirez (Dominican Republic); H.E. Mr. Musaed Al-Haroun, assisted by Mr. Muhammad Al-Shatti and Mr. Taleb Al-Baghli (Kuwait); Mrs. Tatjana Koke (Latvia); H.E. Mrs. Sharifa Maimunah Syed Zin (Malaysia); H.E. Mr. Michael Omolewa (Nigeria). The President of the IBE Council, H.E. Mrs. Bhaswati Mukherjee (India) assisted by Mr. Vijay K. Trivedi also attended the meeting as observers. Mr. Alexandre Sannikov participated in the meeting on behalf of the ADG/ED of UNESCO. The IBE was represented by Mrs. Costanza Farina, Mr. Renato Operti and Mr. Massimo Amadio.

The WG covered all of the points on the agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting by the IBE/DIR a.i. and adoption of the agenda
2. Review of the decisions already taken and election of the Chairperson
3. Mandate of the Working Group
4. Dates of the 48th ICE
5. The theme and sub-themes
6. Planning the Conference's work
7. Involving Member States
8. Financing the 48th ICE
9. Conference documents
10. Other events: Comenius Medal
11. Invitations
12. National Reports
13. Further activities of the WG
14. The WG Report to the 55th session of the Council
15. Any other business

The report which follows resumes the propositions that the Working Group addresses to the Council as a whole for the consideration of point 7 on the Agenda of the 55th session.

1. Opening of the Session

The meeting was opened by the IBE Director a.i., Mr. Pierre Luisoni, who briefly introduced the Agenda. Concerning item 8 of the Agenda (“financing the 48th ICE”), IBE/DIR a.i. proposed to discuss this issue jointly with the members of the Administrative Group on 23 January during the morning session. This suggestion as well as the proposed agenda were endorsed by the WG.

2. Election of the Chairperson and review of the decisions already taken

The WG unanimously decided to elect H.E. Mr. Michael Omolewa (Nigeria) as Chairperson of the Group. The Chairperson briefly recalled:

- a) The decision of the fifty-fourth session (January 2006) of the IBE Council to propose to the Executive Board and the General Conference of UNESCO to reserve 2008 for the organization, in Geneva, of the forty-eighth ICE, and to include the ICE in UNESCO’s draft programme and budget 2008–2009 (34 C/5).
- b) The decision of the Executive Board at its 174th session (April 2006) inviting the Director-General to make the necessary proposals for convening a session of the International Conference on Education in 2008 within the Draft Programme and Budget for 2008-2009 (34 C/5), while seeking additional extra-budgetary resources for the International Conference on Education, and also recommending that the General Conference mandate the IBE Council to organize in 2008 a session of the International Conference on Education.
- c) The decision of the Steering Committee of the IBE Council (July 2006) requesting to initiate without delay the consultation process regarding the theme of the forthcoming ICE, and to establish a close and effective collaboration between the Working Group of the Education Sector and the Working Group of the IBE Council in charge of preparing the ICE. The Steering Committee also invited the members of the Working Group of the Council to: elect the Chairperson from among the members of the WG; initiate a discussion on substantive issues related to the ICE, especially as far as the theme is concerned; and present their report to the 55th session of the IBE Council.

3. Mandate of the Working Group

The Chairperson briefly recalled the mandate of the WG. Ever since it was set up by the Council for previous ICEs, the general mandate of the WG has been “to assist the Director of the IBE in preparing for the next ICE”. The WG is thus responsible for making proposals to the IBE Director and to the IBE Council concerning both matters of substance (the working themes, documents, etc.) and of organization, linked directly (structure, length, working methods, financing, etc.) and indirectly (Comenius Medal, National Reports, etc.) to the forty-eighth session of the ICE.

4. Dates of the forty-eighth ICE

The WG took note that the International Conference Centre of Geneva (CICG) is available for the week of 15–20 September 2008 or the week of 24–29 November 2008. Considering that the September dates fall during the Month of Ramadan, **the WG proposes to organize the 48th ICE during the week of 24–29 November 2008. The arrival and registration date would be Monday 24 November and the departure date would be Saturday 29 November.**

5. The theme and sub-themes

The discussions on this issue have been very elaborate and rich. The WG revisited the themes of the last six sessions of the ICE (1990 to 2004) and also took note of the communiqué of the 16th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (Cape Town, South Africa, 11 to 14 December 2006).

The representative of the ADG/ED recalled that the Working Group set up within the ED Sector to prepare for the forty-eighth ICE, chaired by the ADG/ED Mr. Peter Smith, met in Paris on 21 November 2006 and proposed the following theme for discussion within the WG: “*From access to success: the right to an inclusive and effective education*”. Other possible themes proposed during the 174th session of the Executive Board were also evoked, such as ‘pluralistic models of education’, ‘peace education’, or ‘early childhood education’. After a lively and enriching discussion, and taking into consideration the need to engage Ministers of Education in a forward-looking debate, **the WG proposes the following theme: “Inclusive education: The way of the future.”**

UNESCO defines inclusion “as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. [...] It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children.” (UNESCO. *Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All*. Paris: UNESCO, 2005.)

Under the general theme of “inclusive education” and assuming UNESCO definition of inclusion as a reference framework, **the WG also proposes four sub-themes as follows:**

- (i) Sub-theme: **Inclusive Education: Approaches, Scope and Content** (to broaden the understanding of the theory and the practice of inclusive education).
- (ii) Sub-theme: **Inclusive Education: Public Policies** (to demonstrate the role of governments in the development and the implementation of policies on inclusive education).
- (iii) Sub-theme: **Inclusive Education: Systems, Links and Transitions** (to create education systems which offer opportunities for life-long learning).
- (iv) Sub-theme: **Inclusive Education: Learners and Teachers** (to foster a learning environment where teachers are equipped to meet the learners’ diverse expectations and needs).

The sub-themes above cover key issues related to the conceptualization and implementation of inclusive education. **The diagram showing the proposed structure of the 48th ICE is attached at the end of the present report.**

6. Planning the Conference's work

The WG took note that it is not possible to change the category of the Conference before the forty-eighth session. At the same time, **the WG considers that it is important to conceive the next ICE as an opportunity for promoting dialogue among Ministers of Education, highlighting some interesting and complex issues, engaging the audience (for example, through a presentation by a keynote speaker, and speaking about the future. The ICE should play a pivotal role in orientating and clarifying the debate on inclusive education.**

Concerning the duration of the 48th ICE, **the WG proposes 3 ½ days, from Tuesday 25 November a.m. until Friday 28 November 2008 at 13:00.**

As regards the structure of the 48th ICE, **the WG proposes to maintain the same structure adopted for the 47th ICE. The introductory debate should focus on the theme “From inclusive education to inclusive society” starting with a keynote speech to the Ministers providing an in-depth look to the future and raising societal and educational challenges. The four workshops—which would be chaired by Ministers of Education—should focus on the sub-themes mentioned under point 5 above, while the theme of the final debate would be ‘Inclusive education: from vision to practice’, focusing on the sharing of proposals and practices.**

Concerning the working methods, it is important that the debates are as dynamic as possible so that the ICE becomes a true global forum where participants not only listen to each other but are also able to respond. In this conjunction, **the WG proposes that presentations by keynote speakers and panellists should be based on evidence and should engage Ministers of Education in enriching discussions on evidence-informed policies.**

Finally, concerning the issue of “parallel sessions” during the ICE, **the WG considers that the organization of parallel sessions during the ICE has many implications and need not be encouraged. If it becomes absolutely necessary a stakeholders' forum might be organized a day before the ICE.**

7. Involving Member States

The WG considers that it is of critical importance to involve Member States both intellectually and financially. Being informed well in advance about the themes and the sub-themes of the 48th ICE, Member States can propose for example the names of keynote speakers, panellists, experts, or national institutions, or can finance the workshops. Additionally, Member States can include in their delegations more participants in order to ensure that they are appropriately represented in the discussions taking place during the four workshops.

8. Financing the 48th ICE

This issue has been discussed with the members of the Administrative Group during a joint working session on Tuesday 23 January at 11:00 a.m. In introducing the theme, the IBE Director a.i. briefly recalled the decisions already taken by the IBE Council (January 2006) and the Executive Board (April 2006), and also suggested that the ICE can be viewed as a project and not only as an ‘event’. This means that, in addition to the holding of the Conference, also the preparatory and the follow-up phases must be considered in terms of financing. As far as the 47th ICE is concerned, the total direct costs have been around US\$900,000—an amount that has been covered as follows: IBE budget 2004, US\$150,000; IBE budget 2005, US\$120,000; IBE reserves, US\$247,000; Education Sector, US\$40,000; Japan funds-in-trust, US\$100,000; and voluntary contributions, US\$255,000.

During the discussions, the delegate from Switzerland announced that his government will continue to maintain its voluntary contribution to the IBE for an additional four-year period starting from 2008 and that it has already planned an additional voluntary contribution of CHF100,000 for the 48th ICE as well as additional funding to cover travel costs of some delegations.

The representative of the ADG/ED informed the members of the Groups that the Education Sector has put aside an amount of US\$200,000 for the 48th ICE. Furthermore, Kuwait also expressed its intention to provide financial support for the next session of the ICE.

As an outcome of the discussions, **the Administrative Group and the WG propose to maintain a tripartite subdivision of the budget for the 48th ICE (Education Sector, IBE budget and voluntary contributions)**. The challenge for the new IBE Director will be raising extra-budgetary resources and also ensuring an appropriate diversification of funding sources.

The President of the IBE Council suggested that it might be helpful to think in terms of a sustained, professional fund-raising campaign targeting both developed and developing countries, for example taking advantage of the next session of the General Conference to have a fund raising event (a round-table at the ministerial level on extra-budgetary funds will take place during the General Conference). In this conjunction, **the Administrative Group and the WG propose to invite the IBE and the Education Sector to provide elements for organizing the above-mentioned campaign.**

9. Conference documents

Concerning the documents of the 48th ICE, **the WG proposes to prepare the same set of documents as in the case of the 47th session** (Draft agenda; Draft organization of the Conference’s work; Reference document; Document to support discussions in the four workshops; Overview of the 48th ICE (sent with the invitations); Ministers’ Messages; and Messages from the excluded). **The WG also proposes to invite the IBE to make the ICE more widely known** (Internet site, poster, two issues of INNOVATION, one issue of *Prospects*, etc.), **subject to the availability of funding.**

As regards the short videos introducing the ICE and the workshops, **the opinion of the WG is that the production of video documents for the 48th ICE should be maintained and should give voice to the excluded.**

The WG also proposes to launch a broad regional consultation on the themes and sub-themes of the 48th ICE as well as the sharing of visions, strategies and good practices through regional seminars of the IBE's Community of Practice of Curriculum Specialists, and possibly through a Netforum. It would be also important to discuss the theme of the ICE taking advantage of meetings already planned at the regional and sub-regional levels involving all geographical regions.

Concerning the final document to be adopted by the Conference, **the WG proposes that its content should be sufficiently challenging and outline a 'road map' to achieve inclusive education.** As regards the method of preparing the final document, **the WG proposes that the IBE—in full consultation with the Steering Committee and the WG of the Council—prepare a text identifying the elements that could be part of the final document. This will be considered by the Steering Committee at its next session. Then the text will be taken into account by the Drafting Group of the 48th ICE, consisting of representatives of each of the Electoral Groups, in order to prepare the initial version of the document. The document will be then revised and enriched in the light of the debate and the outcomes of discussions taking place during the ICE before being adopted by the Conference.**

10. Other events: Comenius Medal

The WG proposes to hold the eighth ceremony of the award of the Comenius Medal during the forty-eighth session and to invite the Director of the IBE to initiate the call for candidates in the autumn of 2007, according to the existing procedures.

11. Invitations

The WG proposes to include this item in the agenda of the Executive Board session (178 EX) which will be held immediately after the General Conference in November 2007.

12. National Reports

The WG proposes requesting the Director of the IBE to invite Member States to prepare a report on the development of education by putting forward editorial guidelines in conjunction with the theme of the ICE.

13. Further activities of the WG

Before the next session of the Council (January 2008), there would be two other occasions for the WG to further discuss issues related to the 48th ICE: the meeting of the

Steering Committee of the IBE Council (tentatively planned for the month of July in Paris), and the General Conference of UNESCO being held next autumn 2007.

14. The WG Report to the 55th session of the Council

The WG adopted the normal procedure for transmission of the results of its work in the form of this report, which will be presented and commented upon orally by the Chairperson of the WG when point 7 of the agenda of the 55th session is under discussion.

15. Any other business

None.

The WG finished its session on Tuesday 23 January at 12:30.

48th SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION

24 – 29 NOVEMBER 2008

“INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: THE WAY OF THE FUTURE”

