

Curriculum Innovations and poverty alleviation

“GOOD PRACTICE:

An example to prove the rule or a lighthouse to guide our steps ?

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This document is meant to be further developed together, in particular through examples of good practice that we already know of or that other countries may share with the group during the seminar... Let's not forget that we are a community of practice!

We propose hereafter a framework to guide our understanding of good practice so that we are able to share them in a more structured manner, but more importantly so that we may reflect better on their potential for learning and change, by building on all what we already shared in this group.

We propose here several hints and trails for the analysis that you may use to get ready for the seminar in Mauritius. You may choose the one/s that inspire you most or combine them and analyze one or several examples of good (or less good) practice in your country that you would like to share and discuss with us, on the 3 main thematic of this seminar:

- 1) teachers training/education, so that they are prepared to perform their roles
- 2) Articulation between management and pedagogy
- 3) Clusters schools, or schools functioning in network

ATTENTION : we will not have country presentations on the first day, but we ask country teams to contribute and share their analysis with others as the program goes. Most sessions on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday will be fueled by your contributions, those of the IBE and UNESCO staff and the two consultants

1. **Articulation between quality and equity:** in the course of this project on curriculum and poverty alleviation we observed that in every country there was schools (one? several?) that were responding successfully to difficulties and challenges (material, professional, social, institutional among others) and that were developing an on-going integrated and effective educative articulating quality and equity.
2. On which aspect do these examples of good practice focus? These “successful” schools often focus on one aspect that constitute a major problem in the country: articulation between local language and “mastered” language, integration of a local curriculum into the national curriculum, integration of schools into the community, response to school drop out, etc.
3. The issue of good practice becomes more important for several reasons and the question of their status is essential:
 - Are they a “shop window” with a value of examples attracting visitors full of enthusiasm as they can see the impossible becoming possible?
 - Are they a “building site” that asks for analysis (and not only description) to identify the reasons of those particular successes?
 - Are they “exceptions that prove the rule” fueling a sceptical vision (difficulties, failure and abandon, delay in achieving goals of EFA despite overall commitment...)?
 - Are they just a singular case, not to be compared with anything, because “change” created a conjunction of circumstances (people, situations) that are the actual source of success, and that could not be recreated in other contexts?

4. What is the function of “good practice”?

The response given to the questions that follow will orient our action, at the level of our international collaboration and exchange among the nine countries involved in this project as well as the way each country chooses to pursue the work at country level.

It seems to us that we focused much more on registering, spotting and describing than on analyzing them carefully, including the decisions that would be a consequence of this analysis, those being at the political, administrative or pedagogical level.

Case studies (c.f. the IBE publication « *Développement curriculaire et bonne pratique en éducation* » (Abdoulaye and Braslavsky, 2003, www.ibe.unesco.org/AIDS/doc/abdoulaye.pdf, only in French), as well as other studies often remain at the level of thematic description, intended goals and objectives, and attained results. These examples of good practice are collected to constitute a (precious) databank and to document practices that “reveal” schools “unlike others” that have however grown on the same ground and in same situations as other schools in the same countries, although with different results (or is this not the case?)

In the project “Curriculum innovations and poverty alleviation” we have to go further and **analyze common aspects and conditions** which are always present (although situations may be very different) in those examples of good practice, and **document carefully the obstacles** that “other schools” face.

We may, on this basis develop two non exclusive proposals to continue the work:

1st proposal:

Develop together a grid (built upon a set of criteria) for the description and analysis of conditions (minimal and common; and their nature) that can be found in good practice examples. In other words: What are those minimal conditions so that we can say this is a good practice?

1. **What do we consider to be a “good practice”** (roughly said, it would be organizational, pedagogic and educative concretizations that would contribute to solve a given problem, for instance: a response to school exclusion and drop out, particularly of girls and “bad students”, or a response that establishes sustainable and operational links between schools and communities (transforming school in a resource for the community), or a solution to articulate quality of learning and equity in contexts of social conditions of inequality, etc.
2. Is there a **“pedagogic project”** (a shared vision, strong intentions with objectives that are clear for all involves partners,) that provides sense to scattered actions?
3. Are **minimal material conditions** present? What would be these minimal conditions in each context?
4. Is the **time available adequate** with regard to the process for a pedagogic project to be built?
5. Is there a strong component of **autonomy** in the interpretation and development of the curriculum?
6. Does **strong, valued and formalized links** exist with the community as a educative partner (we have to remember here the role and importance of policy dialogue for the building of education policies)
7. Have we foreseen **supervision** (including pedagogic support, linkages between schools to exchange experience and on problems and solutions) from political and administrative authorities, at the national and decentralized level (and not only normative inspection)?
8. Have we planned for **pedagogical teams** with some stability and that elaborate common projects
9. Is a **regulatory evaluation** foreseen, that allows improve the work of learners and teachers?
10. What is the already existing practice in the field (reality of schools)?
11. What are the remaining obstacles? And what is their nature?
12. What is the perspective for “anchorage” and sustainability of such “good practice” (from consolidation to disappearance...) beyond the time of support to specific (pilot) temporary projects, as this is often the case?

All in all, we would elaborate a grid of analysis of common aspects that can be found in “good practice” examples, beyond their diversity, at central, decentralized and local level and this for the administrative and pedagogic aspects, for the organization of work and obtained results, and going beyond generalities.

These common aspects may appear as responses that are diverse and adequate to the contexts, but nevertheless, the most important point is that we need to know more about the **CONDITIONS** that allow the building of a “good practice”, as well as those that will secure sustainability and consolidation.

2nd proposal:

The second proposal, presented below addresses the analysis of obstacles during implementation, including the obstacles that we already know, but developing at the same time proposals to solves them (see the document called « 10 obstacles au succès et à l'apprentissage des élèves qui découlent du modèle de l'école traditionnelle » - not yet translated into English). For instance, we could address the following obstacles:

1. Lack of coordination of central services (with innovation on one side and bureaucracy/management on another other, or yet on another one, inspection).
2. Status and logic of competitive selection and hiring of teachers that then decides their assignment on schools and stability of their employment (in terms of practices and relationships).
3. Conception, development and role of pre-service and in-service education and training of teachers, and its articulation with already initiated innovations (we agree that change may happen “outside” our will and be positive or negative, and that innovation is not fortuitous but desired, and aims at positive outcomes).
4. Issue of the minimal material and pedagogical conditions required so that a State can call a school a school (as an organization and not a “crowd” of students)
5. Pedagogies – i.e, time and space allocation and management, learning and teaching strategies: are they the same in “good practice” education and in so-called “traditional” education? If there are differences, what are they (in school activities, in the roles of teachers and learners, in the diversity of the modes of evaluation, etc.)?
6. What is schooling time and how is it organized (time allocation, school calendar?)
7. Homework: is there homework, how, when and where do learners do their homework? Do teachers take into consideration homework done by learners? How?

And we may add many obstacles to this list...

5. What is the role of “good practice” in pre-service and in-service teacher education and training?

Teacher education in Europe is academic and professional and may follow different institutional patterns, but it is always questioned regarding its adequacy to the “teaching practice” (see the 10 page summary document of a study by OECD called “Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers - Final Report: Teachers Matter”.

(http://www.oecd.org/document/52/0,2340,en_2649_34859095_34991988_1_1_1_1,00.html)

Teacher education is of course linked to the “OECD scenarios for schooling in the future up to 2020” (www.oecd.org/document/10/0,2340,en_2649_34521_2078922_1_1_1_37455,00.html, see appendix 1 for summary in French), although this is not openly said.

Teacher education is shaped by our vision of schooling and of teaching and learning processes and our internalization of practices and routines as well as by the internal and external academic offer for education.

The relative “divorce” between teacher education institutions and schools for basic and secondary, and the problems as they are experienced in the every day life in these schools is a problem common to several countries.

We can question **pre-service education/training** from a few evidences from education innovations and transformations addressed by this project:

1. Is there a kind of education that would **facilitate change** (for instance: teaching to analyze concrete pedagogic situations, to adopt an open and “decentered” way to look at learners, etc.etc.), or are we working with the idea in mind that all students are “average” and “ideal models”?
2. Is there in pre-service education a specific training aimed at establishing links “to work” together with the communities? Are notions such as “school-family” or “school-community” linkages or “policy dialogue” with partners for daily life in schools part of initial education of teachers?
3. Are the learning of pedagogic diversity and appropriation of diverse teaching strategies part of initial education of teachers?
4. Is there an articulation between pre-and in-service education and training?

For the discussion in our group, we can add many questions, as well as concrete examples, to those proposed above.

Regarding **in-service training**, one essential principle top keep in mind is that this kind of training must have strong link with the practice of teachers (i.e. actual problems, questions and difficulties encountered in the practice of teaching, suggestions and responses adapted to the reality of teachers).

1. How is this from of training organized and managed?
2. Is there any networking, notably in relationship to “school territories”? how does it take place?
3. What roles have coordinators and inspectors for in-service training of teachers? What are the links with existing teacher education institutes?
4. Are there “good practice” examples to share and discuss (for instance such as those discussed with colleague from Xai-Xai, during our seminar in Mozambique last October)?
5. Are there any attempts to develop “inter-training” among teachers?
6. Are the links between practical reality and in-service training taken into account (whatever forms these training opportunities may take: workshops, study circles, etc. etc.)?
7. How could we situate in-service training in the now well known and often banalized trilogy “Learning to know, learning to do and learning to be”. And what about: “learning to learn” that is now increasingly required by all and all over the world?
8. Shouldn’t “good practice” examples be taken into account for in-service training of teachers? (for instance through “open day”, partnerships between schools, etc. etc.).Beyond talking and verbalism (always very present of course in training activities), couldn’t we develop actions and dynamics that would include practical application (learning to do instead of listening how it should be done)?

6. Can “good practice” become a lever for innovation (diversified, or course) in other schools? And under which conditions?

It is important to go back to activities that we already carried out in this project on change and innovation and about opportunities (favourable conditions) and obstacles encountered in the reality.

In education, a domain for which change engage pedagogy and management aspects, all levels of reality must be taken into account when change is intended. Power can be found at all levels and teachers have to be involved in the processes of change. (see document “5 x 3”, only in French at the moment).

Changing practices requests that we also change representations (habits, closing or impossibility effects, prejudice, stereotypes, often not completely conscious) that justify and structure practices.

Indeed, practices are induced and influenced by material conditions, will, skills and competencies and the space for action available to teachers (as we are talking about them here) , but this would be true for any actor of change.

Let’s remember the trilogy of “WILL, KNOWLEDGE, POWER” that are at work in any dynamic of change.

All this does not mean that change in education is impossible, but that it is difficult and that there are requirements (time available, minimal conditions and strategies) that have to be considered.

The analysis of « good practice » (and not only their description) can become a very fruitful domain for training proposals.

1. In education, we “do not copy”, because contexts are very different and above all, because each “copy” is actually always an appropriation, a selective “reading”, **a reconstruction.**
2. In education, (despite the will and illusions of central and decentralized power), we don’t just apply decisions (as generally pretended with orientations coming from above).
3. In education, we work (depending on what we want, what we know and what we can), we interpret, we read again these orientations, we build and rebuild our practices, often following “economy” criteria (i.e. repeating and reproducing what we are accustomed to do).
4. In education, we need to know existing current conditions, to evaluate conditions that we may be able to create to reach the objectives set by the teachers themselves, but also by other partners (set of course by general and common orientations and guidelines)

“Good practice” relies on the will of those who are building them; they need autonomy towards administration, they need competent teachers and they need minimal conditions (not only or always material to reach the expected results.