

Director General's Office  
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## CIDREE Expert Meeting, Stockholm, September 2nd – 3rd, 2015

### Pupil participation and the impact of learning



Participants from the left: HM Inspector Susan Duff, Education Scotland; Expert Sasa Kregar, National Education Institute of Slovenia (ZRSS); Expert Jeroen Bron, Netherlands institute for curriculum development (SLO); Prof. Laurent Cosnefroy, École Normale Supérieure, Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (ENS-Lyon, France); CIDREE CNC Charlotte Wieslander, hostess; Expert Balázs Feherpataky, Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development (OFI); Education Officer Ger Halbert, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA-Ireland); Director of Education Eva Minten, Swedish Agency for Education (NAE).

The meeting was held at the Swedish National Agency for Education (NAE) and started with a short welcome-speech by General Director/Incoming President Anna Ekström followed by an introduction by Eva Minten.

The aim of the meeting was to raise the quality of education and promote innovative teaching and learning. Some of the questions to be discussed were the following: How do the CIDREE countries face pupil participation? To which extent do the pupils take responsibility for their own outcome? What is it that teachers do to make the pupils feel engaged and motivated? Which are the tools they use? How do the schools evaluate these soft skills? How does pupil participation correspond with other CIDREE-projects, for example Assessment for learning?

We discussed and analyzed pupil participation as a fundamental component for individual learning and how this participation is articulated in the everyday life in schools within the participating countries.

The first issue was the diversity of definitions used throughout the different countries. What is pupil participation? It is a huge difference between just participation in a student council vs. taking actual responsibility for one's own learning. Most countries seem to struggle with how to get the students to participate. There is also a fear among the teachers to lose control in the classroom. It is important that the teachers don't hand over the leading role to the students.

- In Scotland, it is an issue to raise for the Scottish Inspectorate and the tools are the same for the Inspectorate as for the schools. The inspectorate's toolkit is on the web and the schools use the same material as the inspectorate for shared understanding and improving. One main guiding light is that the stu-

dent shall be “confident, ambitious with high level of self-esteem”. Scotland has an individualistic approach towards the pupil.

- Pupil participation has not high attention in the Netherlands.
- Pupil participation is not in the French culture, but there is a change coming, even if it is slowly. The drop-out rate is so high that measures have to be taken, and one measure might be pupil participation.
- In Slovenia the question is how formative assessment, especially more formative feed-back, can increase the active role of pupil participation. Pupil participation is a component in three projects that Slovenia is participating in.
- Hungary is struggling with bad results and is in the need to change structure. This is going to be a long process, and they are in need of good examples. Teachers often only use one method.
- Ireland, just as Scotland, has the most elaborated system which includes not only the students but also the parents. They are looking for shared learning – shared understanding under the parole “nothing about us without us”. Students are architects in this process. They are also replacing summative assessment with a higher degree of formative assessment.

The issue was followed by a presentation by Henrik Dahl, director of education at NAE, who presented “Pupils’ perception of tuition, participation and motivation”, a report from the Swedish Schools Inspectorate. It showed a set of tools and vocabulary to be used by the inspectorate as well as by the schools. The system is very much focused on solutions and only showing good examples, not excellent ones, because the inspectorate wants to point out where to go, not what is good or bad.

The topic was followed by an in-depth discussion. We discussed problems with the transition from a subject-oriented view to a holistic view and the importance of such an approach. We also discussed teaching vs. learning, evidence-based and proven experience, learning context and 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills. We all agreed upon the importance of key skills, but none of the countries has standards for them. However, it is coming up in Scotland. The expert meeting also showed that the transfer to a competence-based curriculum, which is currently being undertaken in quite a lot of countries, remains a challenge. While some countries have already implemented a new curriculum, most countries find themselves halfway, or still have to make the transition.

During the discussion we also compared the expression “pupil participation” with “student voice”. We agreed that pupil participation causes a dialogue, while student voice not necessarily means that the student is actually listened to.

We also agreed upon that to reach pupil participation there are some criteria that have to be fulfilled, among them self-efficiency, autonomy and relationship including feedback and high expectations. There is a need to connect pupil participation to a theoretical framework, using proven experience and evidence based teaching.

The second day started out with a presentation called “What students want to learn?” by Jeroen Bron. He is also the author of “Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue”, which we all shared.

Students negotiate their social studies classroom curriculum, enhancing 21st century skills, citizenship education and human rights in the study that was presented in the Journal of International Social Studies, Vol 4, No.1, 2014: Curriculum negotiation augments student engagement, giving the students opportunities to practice and so experience citizenship. In the process students develop abilities related to 21st century skills and skills for democratic citizenship while exercising their right to participate. Students involved in curriculum design improve the quality of the curriculum by making it more relevant as they offer unique perspectives on topics to be later ad-

dressed in class. Jeroen pointed out that young people today get more and more responsibility outside school but inside the school it remains the same. He also stressed the importance of responses from adults – the dialogue is a very crucial factor. In an instrumental use, involving students in making decisions on the content of their lessons provides opportunities to bring student out-of-school experiences into the classroom and raise engagement by making learning more relevant and related to their questions and it also reduces disaffection. Participation is one way of getting to know how the society works, and especially valid for students from low socio-economic or marginalized areas.

The next key-note speaker was professor Eva Alerby from the University of Luleå. In “Participation for learning” she identified some issues to illustrate how pupils’ participation can be understood as a continuous process in which both formal decision-making and participation in education are included. Despite the fact that the school is emphasised as an important place for participation and democratic fostering, there are difficulties of attaining this. For the school to really be a democracy fostering institution teachers must be given opportunities and conditions to plan and reflect together the activities and the work which should be performed to increase pupils’ participation. Developing real pupil influence and participation represent long-term work and it takes time before results are visible in the daily activities. For pupils’ participation to increase it is also important to create forums and meeting places in schools where pupils and teachers can meet and provide their view of the education. This helps teachers to provide education where the pupils’ perspectives and experiences have a key role.

During the days, we had really good and fruitful discussions. We are convinced that pupil participation contributes to active learning and that it creates the classroom atmosphere. The students should be responsible for their learning and the teacher is responsible for learning and the process in the classroom. However, it is important that there is a balance between the responsibilities. A main question is what the tools are that we need to give to teachers to get them started, for example in teaching communities. How do we begin the conversation with teachers? Today, pupil participation is most common while working in groups and that is not the meaning. Ireland has a tool-kit that is now being used and Scotland is also trying different ways.

The conclusion is that there is a need to collect good practice and more evidence-based knowledge. For example, how is it possible to connect pupil participation to student motivation and to democracy?

This lunch-to-lunch expert meeting was hosted by NAE and made possible by the CIDREE grants. Finland was expected to join the meeting, but left apologies.