



Consortium of Institutions for Development  
and Research in Education in Europe

35

# CIDREE Brief

Fall 2009

FLASHBACK  
CIDREE PRE-CONFERENCE  
AND GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY 2008 NOVEMBER  
13TH AND 14TH \_ 2

CIDREE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
(GA) MEETING  
NOVEMBER 14TH 2008 \_ 2

EVALUATION OF QUALITY IN  
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY  
EDUCATION IN GREECE \_ 4

CIDREE YEARBOOK 2009 \_ 4

CONTACT PERSONS'  
MEETING \_ 5

INTRODUCING A NEW  
MEMBER \_ 7

'CONCEPTS AND  
IMPLEMENTATION  
STRATEGIES FOR  
OVERARCHING THEMES'  
ONE-OFF EVENT, 13 MARCH  
2009 IN GRAZ/AUSTRIA \_ 8

CHINESE-DUTCH  
COOPERATION  
IN CURRICULUM  
DEVELOPMENT,  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE  
FUTURE \_ 9

CIDREE MEETING ON  
INTERNATIONALISATION IN  
EDUCATION \_ 11

THE CIDREE BOARD \_ 12

## Foreword

During the fall of 1989, now twenty years ago, the very first exploratory talks about initiating a European network in the combined fields of educational research and curriculum development began. One year later, CIDREE was officially established. So, next year we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of our consortium. Such events inevitably lead to looking back and forward. Just a few words here and now.

First, it is good to realize that CIDREE, as a consortium of institutions, involves many individuals -- actually it would be interesting to have a rough estimate of the total number of professionals currently involved. Thus, our network is quite big. It probably also links, through only one or two steps, all educational R&D professionals in Europe. On top of that, CIDREE represents many connections to both policy circles and the world of school practice. And the network is still growing. I have just returned from the European Conference on Educational Research in Vienna, and was pleased to see a number of delegates from CIDREE institutions, wandering through the corridors of the conference venues, within and outside the university. CIDREE really is a vast learning organisation!

The frequency and format of CIDREE contacts and meetings have been evolving. We all know and appreciate some of our core activities: the annual general assembly, preceded by a thematic conference; the annual contact persons meeting; our yearbook (this year we are publishing number 9); the website [www.cidree.org](http://www.cidree.org); our newsletter (this Brief).

Other activities are changing. We see fewer large and long collaborative projects. For some reason these never went very well, with a few exceptions. At the same time, we see a clear increase in shorter events such as 24-hour workshops, where a selected number of colleagues from various institutions come together to exchange information and discuss plans, activities and (interim) outcomes around a specific theme. So, more small scale, flexible, focused and short-term events, with immediate relevance for those participating.

These workshops also help to strengthen the overall productivity of CIDREE. Virtual communication cannot do the job alone, no matter how impressive today's internet opportunities are. We all know that some actual face-to-face meetings are also essential for effective and sustainable interaction. The personal touch remains vital; perhaps even more so in this age of information overload. We need interaction with our peers to identify and make sense of complicated challenges. We seldom strive after consensus, nor standardization of our aims, methods and outcomes. We all cherish our autonomy, but we do realize that there is so much to learn from each other by sharing information, experiences and interpretation. And yes, that implies that we occasionally have to come together. And yes, we know that these gatherings are also very pleasant.

So, yes indeed, I am looking forward to meeting you all at the Dublin meeting, and, with anticipating curiosity, at our birthday party in Oxford in 2010!

**Jan van den Akker**

*President of CIDREE*

*Director General SLO (Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development)*

## FLASHBACK

### CIDREE PRE-CONFERENCE AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2008 NOVEMBER 13TH AND 14TH THE NATIONAL EDUCATION INSTITUTE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA IN LJUBLJANA

#### CIDREE PRE-CONFERENCE 2008

Two years since the adoption of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and Council on Key Competences seemed to be the right time to shed some light on how the recommendations were being implemented throughout Europe, and to exchange views on the role of our institutions in this process. We dedicated most of our attention at the Pre-Conference to exploring how our work and cooperation could support this.

At the same time, the European Commission, the Parliament and the Council of the European Union were about to adopt the decision to declare the Year 2009 the European Year of Innovation and Creativity, and we got together to discuss how to make that decision a framework for our actions in 2009.

#### Welcome addresses

*The role of key competences in EU strategies for education and training – implementation of the Recommendation on Key Competences* David Pepper (QCA)

#### Assessment of Key Competences

*Slovene approach to implementing key competences through the national curriculum:*

Milena Ivsek, Amalija Zakelj, Majda Naji

#### Workshops

- Workshops on a theme /several themes related to key competences

#### Feedback from the workshops

#### Innovation and creativity

*Innovation and creativity in EU strategies for education and training, including 2009 as the EU Year of Innovation and Creativity*

*Slovene approach to promoting innovation and creativity in education*

Natalija Komljanc, Katja Pavlic Skerjanc, Zora Rutar Ilc

#### Presentation of the CIDREE yearbook

### CIDREE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (GA) MEETING NOVEMBER 14TH 2008

The President, Anne Looney, opened the meeting and welcomed all participants.

#### 1 Website Presentation

Helmar Vyverman presented the new website consisting of open public areas and password protected member areas. The website will be the main means of communication and exchange between members. Helmar Vyverman and Gerd Portocarero are the website administrators: all changes or contributions must be sent to them.

#### 2 Reports from the Secretariat

Helmar Vyverman and Gerd Portocarero have a formal monthly meeting with the Secretary-General. When contacting the secretariat, please email both Helmar and Gerd, bearing in mind that neither work full-time on CIDREE business.

*Expert meeting:* "Schools for the 21st Century" Helmar commented this had been a useful meeting; a report had been included in *CIDREE Brief*.

*CIDREE Brief:* Two copies are provided to each member. The Brief is available as hardcopy and as a web download.

Helmar invited members to review the CIDREE yearbook.

#### 3 Election of a new Incoming President

Gabor Halasz is leaving the Board, as his term has ended. Anne Looney becomes Past President and remains on the Board. Jan Van Den Akker was accepted as the New President Stefan Wolter has been approached and is honoured by the nomination and has let his name go forward as incoming President. Gabor has worked with Stefan at the OECD; Stefan is a Director of Education in Berne, with a global reputation. Anne Looney proposed Stefan Wolter as the next Incoming President. This was approved by the GA.

#### 4 Reports

*Contact Persons' Meeting (John Halbert)*

Good efficient meeting in Cork. Anne Looney chaired this meeting and found it useful. Zsuzsa Nyiro found it very helpful for the contact persons meeting to be chaired by the CIDREE President.

Contact persons meeting proposed for 27 March 2009 in Enschede.

It was agreed that the President should attend the CP meeting where possible and that the organising institution should provide a minute maker.

*Experts' Meetings*

If any three members can attend then CIDREE will partially fund their expenses under the usual arrangements.

*Meetings attended by CIDREE*

Brdo Conference. Promoting Innovation and Creativity. The Response of Schools to the Challenges of Societies – (Gregor Mohorcic). Anne Looney found the text very interesting.

## 5 'Show case' from CIDREE members

**Christos Doukas** presented 'Quality of Education' in Greece. (*This document is included in this Brief: Evaluation of quality in primary and secondary education in Greece.*)

**Donatella Poliandri** presented an update on INValSI and a proposal to CIDREE. INValSI is an autonomous institution reorganised in 2007.

**Chris Van Woensel** presented a Power Point on the 'Quality of Flemish Education'. The PowerPoint presentation is available from the CIDREE website.

**Sharon O'Donnell** highlighted three of NFER's current international projects which might be of interest to CIDREE members. These were an international thematic probe on the influence of relative age on learner attainment and development (to be published on the INCA website – [www.inca.org.uk](http://www.inca.org.uk)); an international literature review of school inspections (awaiting publication by the client); and an international literature review of transitions (project about to commence).

## 6 Project updates

DCELLS Wales: Learning Outcomes in Upper Secondary Education. No activity due to reorganization in the Welsh organization.

SLO: Chinese Seminar (document on this seminar included in this *Brief: Chinese-Dutch cooperation in curriculum development, opportunities for the future*).

LTS: GLOW: **Alan Armstrong**. Study visit involving eight CIDREE countries was to take place two weeks after the GA. The objective was to learn about the benefits of GLOW. Alan had prepared interesting documentation. There will be a follow-up in eight months.

LEARNING SCHOOL: Expert meeting held. There was discussion as to whether CIDREE should continue with this theme.

NCCA: Exceptionally able students. Project underway with SLO (Netherlands) and SKBF (Switzerland) A meeting has been held and the thinking is quite advanced.

ZRSS: Slovenian Education. **Mirko Zorman** offered everyone a book on Slovenian Education (English/Slovenian).

NFER: Pupil Assessment in Citizenship Education: Purposes, Practices and Possibilities.

This project was nearing completion. Members expressed appreciation to NFER for carrying out the project which is increasingly important.

## 7 New Projects

INValSI: Quality of Schools. A questionnaire is to be issued to participants and the results will be disseminated.

Helmar Vyverman reiterated that for expert meetings CIDREE will help towards the costs.

BIFIE – Management of (CCT) core curriculum themes in schools. Erich Svecnik said that this had been a worthwhile exchange with lots of interest. Erich will lead an Expert Meet-



(CIDREE members visiting a Glasgow school during a Glow presentation)

ing on this theme (*document included in this Brief: Concepts and Implementation Strategies for Overarching Themes*).

NCCA: Reform of maths education, Bill Lynch (Head of Mathematics). This concerns a radical reform involving a 25-school pilot (lower and upper secondary schools). Further information is available on the NCCA website. An expert meeting was proposed for spring 2009; this was intended as a meeting of 'critical friends'.

SLO: Internationalization of Education. **Jenne van der Velde** talked about this issue. What is the situation in other countries and what is the pedagogy? (*document included in this Brief: CIDREE meeting on internationalisation in education*).

ZRSS: European Year of Innovation and Creativity. Mirko Zorman will organize a one-day brainstorm in Ljubljana. More information will follow.

SLO: "CIDREE Academy": A CIDREE Academy could: inform and network across Europe; teach new CIDREE staff; invite keynote speakers from other organizations.

**8 Yearbook 2010. 20th Anniversary of CIDREE. Looking back and forward** Sheila Stoney will be the editor.

*Any other business*

## 9 Announcements from the Board

CIDREE projects are changing; there are more meetings and fewer extended projects. Seminars like the SLO-China conference also offer a new means of collaboration.

Allocation of grants: a new, one-page simple application form is available on the website.

*Publication Policy and use of the logo:* A Publication Policy has been developed based on NFER know how on legal and copyright law. The final version was presented; this is available on the website.

Use of the logo: NCCA will communicate its policy on logo use to the secretariat.

There was a proposal to consider 'alternating the gender of the Presidency.' It was agreed to keep gender inclusion in mind when selecting the next President.

## EVALUATION OF QUALITY IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION IN GREECE

This article concerns the evaluation of quality in primary and secondary education based on a research project which was carried out in 100 Greek schools. The goals of the research were to identify the concept of quality, to establish quality criteria, and to evaluate the Greek educational system according to these criteria. The project was founded on a bottom-up process since the main study was field research grounded in schools. The duration of the project was three years (2006-2008). Quality in education is one of the central issues in current debate and in the implementation of education all over Europe. So far CIDREE has carried out extended studies (yearbooks) on this topic. The Greek project provides a concrete approach on how to incorporate quality strategies in education. From this point of view, it is useful for CIDREE to promote discussion of methodological, conceptual and practical aspects concerning the implementation of quality issues in education among its members.

Phases of the project:

- a. The Concept of Quality in Education: The first Greek study on the topic. Identification of the parameters of quality.
- b. Quality of the Greek Education System: The second Greek study on each of the defined parameters based on research findings. Identification of the main research questions.
- c. Main research in schools: Quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (interviews, observation) research in 100 Greek schools. Teachers, pupils, parents, local education authorities and representatives of local communities participated in the study.
- d. Results and dissemination. Prospects for the project in the near future.

## CIDREE YEARBOOK 2009

### General theme

Emerging challenges for language policy and practice in Europe.

### Introduction to the general theme

The Council of Europe's activities to promote linguistic diversity and language learning in the field of education are carried out within the framework of article 2 of the European Cultural Convention, which commits the states party to the Convention to promote the reciprocal teaching and learning of their languages. In the spirit of this article the Council of Europe's work in the area of language education policy has developed in response to the changing needs and priorities of member states. The Council promotes policies which strengthen linguistic diversity and language rights, deepen mutual understanding, consolidate democratic citizenship and sustain social cohesion. Council of Europe language education policies aim to promote plurilingualism, linguistic diversity, mutual understanding, democratic citizenship and social cohesion. Language education policy makes a distinctive contribution to social policy and in particular to policies which aim to develop a sense of inclusion and of shared democratic citizenship.

### Aim:

The audience for the yearbook is policy makers, planners and others working in school administration, research and evaluation. The yearbook will focus on how each country is developing policy in response to the changing linguistic landscape. Articles could include research results showing the impact of language policy on the education sector or details of specific initiatives undertaken in light of the shifting linguistic climate.

### Issues/topics that will be discussed in articles

- What changes in the language profile have occurred in the country in recent times?
- How has this impacted on the school system in general?
- What has been the response of language policy in the country?
- What has been the response of language policy in the education system?
- Have there been any curriculum controversies?
- What are the current and future challenges?



## CONTACT PERSONS' MEETING

**At the offices of SLO Piet Heinstraat 12 Enschede,  
27 March 2009**

Jan van den Akker, president of CIDREE, opened the meeting and welcomed all participants. In particular he mentioned Robert Gjedia who was attending as an observer on behalf of ICTr, Albania and Natalia Gil, new contact person for CIDE, Spain.

On behalf of all colleagues, the CIDREE president asked Sharon O'Donnell to pass his thanks and regards to Sheila Stoney, who had sent a farewell letter to the contact persons as she is retiring as an NFER contact person. CIDREE is very appreciative of Sheila's agreement to edit the 2010 Yearbook on the special occasion of CIDREE's 20th anniversary.

### State of Affairs / New Members....

Natalia Gil introduced herself briefly.

Robert Gjedia informed participants about his institution. ICTr has two directorates, one for curriculum development and one for in-service training. Robert invited CIDREE to organize a meeting in Albania. He handed a gift to SLO director Jan van den Akker and Programme Director Helmar Vyverman.

Helmar Vyverman reported on contacts with potential new members: Lithuania, Latvia, Denmark, Portugal, Finland, Germany (Berlin and others) .... He asked for support from the member institutions.

There has been now news from the Slovak delegation that attended the meeting in Cork. The Board will decide their future within CIDREE.

Anne Looney is trying to keep Wales on board.

### Guidelines for CIDREE Yearbooks

The schedule on the website is intended for the information of those who edit the Yearbook. It is to be used as a general guideline for this CIDREE publication; it is intended that member institutions will refer to the website rather than ask questions by mail/email.

### Yearbook 2009 by NCCA: Language Policy

John Halbert reminded contact persons of the topic of the 2009 Yearbook. He stated that the schedule for the 2009 Yearbook would be shorter than that proposed by the secretariat and, due to the tightness of the timetable, urged contact persons to show their interest as soon as possible, providing information on the area in which they would be interested in providing an article.

### Update of the format 'CIDREE MEMBERS' on the website

- Helmar Vyverman explained that the Board wanted to unify the way institutions present themselves on the website. A template is therefore proposed. The tags are intended to optimize the search function.

## China Conference (SLO)

Jenne van der Velde reported that 16 out of 18 registered CIDREE participants attended the meetings. 15 contact persons or representatives attended the conference in The Hague; one contact person was also present for the two days in Enschede.

- Jan van den Akker stressed that the 'bottom line' for this project was not commercial, but to learn from each other. He confirmed that China is interested in decentralization and in modernizing the curriculum and in ensuring more people are active in this process. The Chinese delegation was keen to be in contact with European education policy makers. He pointed out that the differences in education between Beijing / Shanghai and the North of China can be larger than those between Europe and the large Chinese metropolis.
  - Ulla Lindqvist commented that the conference had been well organised and interesting from many different points of view. It had provided her with a completely different picture of China. She had been especially surprised by the evolution towards a more individual, maybe more European, way of thinking. She also commented that the contributions from fellow CIDREE participants had been highly instructive in addition.
  - Donatella Poliandri agreed with Ulla Lindqvist. She had found the informal conversations with the younger Chinese delegates to have been particularly worthwhile.
  - Several participants mentioned the presumed gap between rhetorical speech and practice.
  - Others underlined that such meetings encourage participants to clarify their own vision and to test this against the opinions of other – European – institutions.
  - Participants in the China Conference had been especially interested in the Chinese way of teaching maths.
  - Jenne van der Velde thought that contacts in other parts of the world could strengthen the position of CIDREE towards the EC.
  - Jan van den Akker added that to be a centre of expertise in your own country (an SLO aim) you have to be aware of what is happening elsewhere in the world.
  - Bart Maes said that both the conference and the informal contacts had opened his colleagues' eyes.
- David Pepper commented that CIDREE had demonstrated its value as a forum to QCA staff attending the conference.

### BIFIE meeting on the implementation of overarching themes.

Erich Svecnik presented the outcome of this meeting which had taken place two weeks before the contact persons meeting and had been attended by 10 participants from six CIDREE countries. He felt that the contributions had been very helpful because in Austria overarching themes are not known to teachers. The results of the meeting were being presented (27 March 2009) to the minister in Vienna. The presentations demonstrated a huge heterogeneity, rang-

ing from a strict framework including a monitoring system (Flemish Community) to no prescription at all, presuming that schools will then go far beyond basic demand (Scotland). A policy document is in progress; this was pre-existing but is being adapted and enriched as a result of the meeting.

### **Follow-up projects**

*NFER: Pupil Assessment in Citizenship Education*

**Sharon O'Donnell** presented the final publication and confirmed that all information in the publication had been revalidated. The document will be published on the NFER website.

*NCCA Exceptionally Able Students*

John Halbert offered an invitation to join the project team - NCCA, SLO and SKBF. The project will continue but NCCA would like to broaden representation from CIDREE members. Contact persons were requested to consult the CIDREE website for further information.

*INValSI*: Donatella Poliandri reported that, by ministerial decision, INValSI had adopted a new line of research and that quality in schools had become part of its core business. She is keen to involve other researchers from the institution in CIDREE's work and will provide a proposal for a new project. *ZRSS*: One day meeting in Slovenia on Creativity and Innovation. Mirko Zorman announced that he would like to organise a one off event - a brainstorming - in Slovenia in September to prepare a one- or two-year project proposal. Themes could be: Do we know what creativity and innovation is; how can teachers promote creativity and innovation in schools...? ZRSS would like to invite NFER to participate because a similar project is underway in England. It is also interested in representation from Flanders where initiatives in entrepreneurship are being developed. BIFIE would be keen to attend because in Austria progress is being made in peer learning, with links to innovation and cross-curricular activities.

*Helmar Vyverman: Learning School*

Helmar Vyverman re-launched the theme. The basic questions are: Are there countries in which schools are 'learning schools'? How did the transformation from 'bureaucratic school' to 'learning school' happen? What were the successes and challenges? A project proposal within Comenius had demonstrated that, in Europe, at least seven schools are dealing with the topic. The outcome of this 'project' could be a series of case studies showing promising examples.

*NCCA*

John Halbert announced that, over the past 12 months, NCCA had been reviewing the mathematics curriculums. He planned to hold an expert meeting to explain NCCA's approach and what had been learned over the year. The aim of the expert meeting would be to share concerns about mathematics. A formal invitation will follow in May or September.

### **International Education**

Annette Thijs from SLO presented an SLO project that could be broadened to become a CIDREE project: 'Explore what relevant international competences are needed for schools and how these can be integrated in the curriculum. What can we learn from international programmes, the international and European baccalaureate and from CIDREE countries?' The main focus is on preparing learners for life and work in a global society; an exploration of the need to and ways of strengthening the international dimension in primary and secondary education.

### **State of Affairs History Education**

Albert van der Kaap from SLO presented an SLO project which aimed to increase the historical awareness of students by increasing the effectiveness of the way history is learned and taught. An instrument had been created using ICT that can be used internationally; the instrument is not only of use for history teaching and learning but also for other subjects.

### **CIDREE website**

Helmar Vyverman revealed the secrets behind the new website and explained how the administrators (Helmar Vyverman and Gerd Portocarero) access the navigation system.

### **Yearbook and GA 2010**

Sharon O'Donnell presented an early document outlining the NFER's initial plans for the GA and the celebratory edition of the CIDREE Yearbook (2010 – 20th anniversary). She asked for ideas from participants. All past presidents will be invited to make a contribution to the Yearbook.

## INTRODUCING A NEW MEMBER

### IKT – INSTITUTI I KURRIKULËS DHE TRAJNIMIT

Address: Rr: “Naim Frashëri” Nr.37

Tirana, ALBANIA

[www.ikt.edu.al](http://www.ikt.edu.al)

### ICTr– INSTITUTE OF CURRICULUM AND TRAINING

#### *Director*

Mr. Robert GJEDIA

[rgjedia@ikt.edu.al](mailto:rgjedia@ikt.edu.al), [robgjed@yahoo.com](mailto:robgjed@yahoo.com)

#### *CIDREE contact person*

Mrs. Dorina RAPTI

[drapti@ikt.edu.al](mailto:drapti@ikt.edu.al)

#### **Key functions**

- Development of the curriculum K-12, including:
  - Pre-school education
  - Compulsory education
  - Upper secondary education
  - Vocational education
  - Socio-cultural education
  - Specific education
- Training and qualification of teachers and school principals, including:
  - Design of standards and national programmes for the professional development of teachers and school principals for pre-university education.
  - Management, monitoring and assessment of the training and qualifications of teachers and school principals in pre-university education.

#### **Education sectors covered**

- Kindergarten
- Primary school
- Secondary school

- Upper secondary school
- In-service teacher training at pre-university level
- Qualification of teachers and school directors for pre-university education

#### **Current educational priorities / projects**

- Analysis, development, review of the Curriculum Framework K -12.
- Analysis, development, review of Standards for curriculum areas K-12.
- Analysis, development, review of subject programmes K-12.
- Design and publication of curriculum documents for pre-university education.
- Design and publication of materials in support of curriculum implementation.
- Analysis, development, review of vocational development standards for teachers and school principals.
- Analysis, development, review of instruments for the identification and assessment of training needs.
- Analysis, development, review of national programmes for the training and qualification of teachers.
- Assessment of teachers and school principals.
- Preparation of the training catalogue.
- Preparation and publication of materials in support of the training and qualification of teachers and school principals.
- Preparation and improvement of the teachers and school principals' database.

#### **Current organisational priorities/ concerns**

- Develop more collaborations and networks, including with central, regional and national educational institutions.
- Preparing and publishing publications of a different kind and nature.
- Training regional education directorates' and educational offices' principals, teachers and school principals.

**‘CONCEPTS AND IMPLEMENTATION  
STRATEGIES FOR OVERARCHING THEMES’  
ONE-OFF EVENT, 13 MARCH 2009  
IN GRAZ/AUSTRIA  
– Erich Svecnik**

**Introduction:**

Schools have a role in preparing young people for their participation in society. In doing so, several themes of societal relevance have to be dealt with in schools. Some of these are part of individual school subjects, some affect more than one subject or do not fit into a single subject. Examples of such themes are road safety education, health education, media education, gender issues, entrepreneurial skills, environmental education, inter-cultural issues and many more. In different contexts, there are many names for this type of content including:

- Cross-curricular themes
- Final objectives
- Overarching themes
- General principles
- Non subject bound themes
- Personal, learning and thinking skills
- ...

Common elements of these topics include that:

- They are highly relevant for participation in society
- They are not (yet) or only partly included in subject curricula
- There is usually no assessment or marking scheme
- More weight is sometimes placed on values rather than on knowledge
- The responsibility of individual teachers is often unclear.

In Austria, there are currently 14 “Unterrichtsprinzipien” (general principles for instruction/education). Some of these are mentioned in the general section of the curricula and most are established by a ministerial decree, but there is no coherent framework, no clear responsibility and they are not competence-based.

**The Meeting in Graz:**

The focus of the meeting was primarily to exchange national experience on how such themes are implemented (and to some degree monitored/evaluated/assessed) in school systems. Short presentations on the current situation and recent developments in their respective countries were given by the 10 participants from Austria, Belgium-Flemish Community, Croatia, Slovenia, UK-England and UK-Scotland focussing on the following questions:

- Is there a list of overarching themes - if yes, what does this include and how concrete is its elaboration, e.g. on the level of competences?
- How are these themes implemented in the school system -

part of curricula or extra-curricular?

- Is there any reference to the European framework of key competences?
- Are there any strategies for evaluation/assessment/monitoring?
- How is the relationship between the central agency/authority (if any) prescribing overarching themes and the individual schools organized (support, monitoring etc.)?
- Are there any recent or planned developments?

After the presentations discussions focused on two aspects:

1. What could a coherent, competence-based framework for overarching themes look like and
2. How could sustainability and teachers’ feelings of responsibility be increased by avoiding ‘diffusion of responsibility’?

**Conclusions:**

Drawing common conclusions from the presentations and discussions was extremely difficult, if not impossible, because of the heterogeneity of countries’ approaches to overarching themes, which ranged from a sophisticated framework including monitoring strategies and guidelines for inspection on the one hand (BE) to the assumption that any prescription could be counter-productive because, if prescribed, schools would do exactly what is prescribed, whereas without prescription, they would do much more than expected (UK-Scotland). The strategies of the other countries sit between these two poles.

One possible general conclusion could be that implementation strategies can only be understood and developed within specific country contexts. But some sort of guidance or orientation such as that provided, for example, by the European Reference Framework for Key Competencies could be helpful. Some countries already use this as a basis for the development of their own strategies and conceptual frameworks. Some consensus was also reached in the conclusion that overarching themes should not be separated from regular subjects. Being separate makes them somehow different and in a sense strange to the “normal” way of teaching and learning. But they should be specified separately in order to raise their profile across the curriculum. In order for them to become usual and something that is done ordinarily, they should be part of school subjects and integrated into them, which also means that strong links between school subjects would be helpful. Teachers should also be encouraged and enabled to look beyond their respective subjects in order to reinforce cross-curricular teaching and learning. For this, CPD (continuing professional development) is seen as highly important. In initial teacher training also the cross-curricular approach should be widened to enable teachers to think (and act) in a cross-curricular way.

Talking about the role of teachers, one factor for success in the Flemish example was the involvement of all players - especially teachers - during the development phase by giving



them opportunities to comment on the drafts. Another possible conclusion could be the shift of responsibility to the school level in terms of enabling schools to develop their own goals in accordance with a national/regional framework, and moreover giving them the responsibility for monitoring their own progress in reaching their goals. In line with this was the statement that a strong tradition of external assessments and/or evaluation needs to be complemented by an internal approach and vice versa. The question was also raised of whether assessment is really necessary or if trust in teachers (and schools) would not be more helpful. Another experience presented was the integration of assessments for overarching themes into tests for subjects, which would be in line with the strategy of not segregating cross-curricular themes from regular school subjects.

Finally there was also some discussion of the content and structure of the overarching themes. It was stated that the integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes as suggested by Weinert, and as illustrated in the EU Reference Framework of Key Competences, could be helpful. To increase their acceptance by both students and teachers, overarching themes have to be relevant to students' everyday life and clearly show authenticity. This also includes that they should be embedded into a variety of contexts so as to facilitate the understanding and development of cross-curricular competences.

## **CHINESE-DUTCH COOPERATION IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT, OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE**

– **Jenne Van de Velde**

For many European countries, international cooperation with China in the field of education is becoming an important issue. The exchange of students from universities has already been taking place for some time. Teacher exchange programmes are also increasingly evident in various European countries. Chinese as a foreign language is offered in more and more schools in different countries, for instance in Ireland, Scotland and the Netherlands. In curriculum development there have been some initiatives for exchange and cooperation, mostly developed by UNESCO, via its International Bureau of Education (IBE).

In the Netherlands, interesting developments are taking place in the field of cooperation with China; the impact of these developments is also visible in other countries. CIDREE plays an important role in bringing China and European countries together. More opportunities for future cooperation between China and Europe are appearing on the horizon.

### **International relations in SLO**

SLO serves as a national expertise centre for curriculum development in the Netherlands. This role is strengthened when SLO's perspective includes experiences and findings from other countries. Jan van den Akker, director general of SLO: "It is for sure that developments in China are very interesting for the Netherlands, but no doubt also for our European colleagues. The CIDREE network is very important for sharing these contacts."

### **Cooperation with China**

It had already become apparent from the initial visits of SLO employees to China what an interesting country China is from the point of view of education. There is booming economic development, with many new and upcoming regions, towns and industrial areas. At the same time, there are other regions which need much more time to develop, for example near Lanzhou in the north-west of the country. Chinese education has to meet many needs in view of all these developments.

Cooperation with China requires a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and of the ways new developments are translated into education. In the last four years, SLO has developed an interesting collaboration with the Chinese National Centre for Curriculum and Textbooks (NCCT) in Beijing and with the University of Lanzhou in Gansu Province. SLO also involved CIDREE in this collaboration between Europe and China. In this article we look back on the beginnings of that cooperation, on what has happened so far and look forward to what the future of this collaboration could look like.

### **How it started**

The collaboration built upon existing contacts between the University of Twente (the former home base of professor Jan van den Akker) with East China Normal University in Shanghai, through Masters and PhD students, visiting professors and joint seminars

As a result of the expanding network of SLO, we were invited to send an expert to a Chinese European conference organised by UNESCO-IBE. For a week Chinese and European experts discussed reforms in Chinese education. As a result of this conference several contacts were established and the Chinese NCCT and SLO began to collaborate by exchanging information, and through visits and discussions.

### **Next step in the collaboration**

During the exchange visits it became clear that we can learn a lot from each other in terms of curriculum reform, school-based curriculum development, evidence-based education, inclusion in education, ICT in schools, maths education, distance learning and many other topics. It also became clear that in the area of curriculum reform in China (for instance, the trend towards more school-based curriculum approaches) Chinese experts felt the need to discuss and to cooperate with other countries. NCCT became an important partner and the University of Lanzhou was also very interested in collaborating. The university is very interested in school-based curriculum development, educational inclusion and education for rural areas. The director of the University of Lanzhou, Prof. Wang, was very inspiring during our meetings and supported the idea of cooperation in the field of school-based curriculum development. The University of Leiden, and its teacher education institution (ICLON) in particular, also appeared to have considerable experience and contacts with Chinese partners, so they became a valuable partner too.

### **Concrete plans for collaboration**

The four partners (NCCT, University of Lanzhou, SLO and ICLON) developed a plan for collaboration. Specifically they intended to establish a Chinese Dutch Educational Center (CDEC) in the University of Lanzhou. This center would support school-based curriculum development in Gansu province, provide teacher training to pilot schools and implement school-based curricula in schools. In July 2009, the Dutch Government agreed to fund a two-year project proposal towards this goal. In addition, NCCT and SLO organized a Chinese-European Conference on Curriculum Development in the Hague, from 9 to 11 March 2009. 90 experts and policymakers from China, CIDREE and the Netherlands participated in the conference. The presentations from the conference are available at [www.slo.nl](http://www.slo.nl).

### **Conferences**

The conference in the Hague was successful from a number of perspectives. It gathered together more than 20 national level experts from China and also more than 20 experts from CIDREE's institutions. Together with around 50 Dutch experts on policy, curriculum, teacher education and assessment, they discussed the state of affairs in the different countries, plans for reform and future cooperation. Taking into account the importance of this event, NCCT and SLO plan to organize another conference in April 2010. This next conference will take place in Beijing and CIDREE members will again be invited. The conference agenda will be set in the autumn of 2009 and CIDREE members will be invited.

## CIDREE MEETING ON INTERNATIONALISATION IN EDUCATION

On 10 and 11 September 2009, SLO organized a CIDREE meeting on internationalisation in education. Participants included CIDREE members from Belgium (Department for Educational Development Flanders), Sweden (Skolverket), the Netherlands (SLO) and the CIDREE secretariat. The meeting comprised a 24-hour conference near the airport and was considered to be a pleasant, fruitful and concise format for exchange. The aim of the meeting was to share experiences and to discuss how the international dimension in the curriculum could be strengthened. SLO provided a conceptual framework for the theme, in which the aim of internationalisation was formulated as developing knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable learners to understand international developments and to work and live with people in international contexts. Based on this aim, internationalisation was referred to as a broad concept consisting of three elements: (i) language education: learning foreign languages, (ii) subject matter content: learning about and understanding international contexts and developments, and (iii) exchange: meeting people with different cultural backgrounds.

The meeting included interesting presentations from Sweden, Belgium and the Netherlands, in which policy, practice, dilemmas and challenges regarding internationalisation in education were outlined. Challenges that were highlighted in these presentations were the need to (i) focus on different contexts of internationalisation, i.e. intercultural issues and contexts within the country, European themes and contexts, and international contexts and global themes, (ii) enhance teacher training regarding internationalisation (foreign languages, international-mindedness), and (iii) develop a more structural integration of exchange projects within the curriculum.

Participants concluded that the cohesive concept of internationalisation which combines languages, content and exchange is a useful framework for further research and to stimulate more coherent curriculum policy on internationalisation. Several issues were mentioned as relevant for more in-depth discussion. These included: (i) formulating key competencies for international-mindedness; (ii) exploring effective ways of shaping bilingual or multilingual education, and (iii) reflecting on the European dimension in the curriculum. The intention is to continue collaboration around these issues.



Participants at the GA in Ljubljana. Photo Jenne van de Velde



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