



Regional Framework for Action Europe and North America

Adopted by the Conference on Education for All
in Europe and North America
Warsaw, Poland, 6-8 February 2000



Preamble

At the invitation of UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Bank, government representatives of thirty-nine European and North American countries, and representatives of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations met in Warsaw from 6 to 8 February 2000. The participants read and took note of the preliminary document concerning the action framework to be adopted at the World Education Forum (Dakar). Discussion was based on the report presented by the Consultative Forum on Education for All, a report based on contributions from thirty-one countries, as well as on two syntheses: one on Central and Eastern Europe, and the other produced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on its member countries.

Ten years ago, the Jomtien Conference asserted the need to implement the right to education that was provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to meet basic educational needs in each country in the world. Over the past decade all European countries have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

A number of international conferences have since then repeatedly insisted on the importance of basic education in social and economic development. The World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) fixed 2015 as the ultimate date for Universal Primary Education and this is now the time reference for the EFA movement.

Learning and the learner are at the heart of lifelong learning, itself a cyclical, episodic and continuous concept that involves both intended and unanticipated episodes of learning of both informal and formal nature. Basic education is a part of lifelong learning. The importance of valuing the learners' experiences in order to create both the curriculum and opportunities for learning is paramount: education from all as well as for all. Participation in learning builds self-confidence, citizenship and autonomy.

Evolution over the past ten years

Throughout the world, the trend is towards the development of free market economies and globalization; this is accompanied by an awareness of the importance of education and training. For most of our countries, common characteristics include declining demographic trends. This in turn increases the importance of the quality of education, be it for children, youth or adults of all ages, and the need for education throughout life.

The Jomtien assertions have not always been properly taken into account in Europe and North America: basic education was considered to have been implemented, since primary and lower secondary education were practically universal. However, although our region remains the one in which the outcomes of basic education are the closest to the Jomtien 'enlarged vision', the past decade has been marked by regressions and difficulties linked in particular to an increase in social inequities and violence, and in some countries to war.

In the Eastern part of the European continent, the political and economic system is being transformed. However, from a basic education viewpoint, the transition of these countries towards the free market economy has not been positive:

- in financial terms, in most cases there has been a reduction in expenditure on education;
- in terms of quality and non-discrimination for teachers, whose salary levels have led them to seek supplementary resources; for pedagogical equipment, in particular textbooks and computers; and for teaching conditions related to teaching premises and their facilities;
- in terms of equity, the increased contribution requested from families and from local communities is leading to inequality to the detriment of the most underprivileged families and of the poorest areas, in particular rural areas. In the context of societies where social inequalities are increasing, this is especially true with the education of young children, whether it concerns access to educational institutions or parents' available resources.

These difficulties have not significantly reduced the percentage of children in full-time education, which remains high, despite a slight decline in a number of cases. However, in the long term they are certain to have a negative influence on the results obtained.

In West Europe and North America, an already universal schooling in primary and lower secondary education has provided a basis for development drives on the other levels. Educational expenditure has continued to increase, in line with GDP and often more rapidly. The education of young children has been reinforced in many countries, even though situations remain quite varied.

However, in Central and Eastern European countries, concern has been expressed with respect to quality and non-discrimination. Disturbing signs are emerging: increase in numbers of drop-outs; low motivation of a number of pupils resulting in endemic truancy; weaker performance of the most disadvantaged pupils – 10 per cent, 20 per cent, sometimes more – who do not have access to the level required, in particular, for satisfactory work integration; and development of social exclusion phenomena, of disaffiliation, of drug addiction, of violence, at increasingly young ages. Not only has progress failed significantly to reduce inequality in education according to social, geographical and

ethnic origin, but the gap is widening between the majority of young people and a fringe made up by children from the most underprivileged backgrounds with increasing difficulties. This gap also exists among adults, in particular those who have no professional qualification or who are functionally illiterate.

European and North American countries have a responsibility towards the regions of the world where education is less widespread. They meet this responsibility by means of co-operation and development provided in bilateral and multilateral forms. In the field of education, this assistance appears now to focus more on basic education. However, despite the commitments for increases declared by Heads of States at Jomtien and Copenhagen, the level of the aid has decreased over the last decade.

Shaping the vision

The World Declaration on Education for All called for an expanded vision and a renewed commitment, by stating the objective of basic education in its Article I. It can be summarized as allowing women and men to develop their personal potential to achieve intellectual autonomy, integrate into society and take part in society's development.

Integration into a society depends on the nature of the society. Education therefore has a national aspect, and even sometimes a sub-national aspect. According to the Jomtien Declaration, 'The scope of basic learning needs and how they should be met varies with individual countries and cultures, and inevitably, changes with the passage of time.'

For the past ten years, we have been increasingly aware of a stronger and stronger interaction between countries, influenced by technical evolution and the sharing of ideas: this is the phenomenon known as globalization. It is characterized, by, among other things, the fundamental importance of knowledge, so as to allow change, and education, so as to make the change acceptable. The evolution mentioned in the Jomtien Declaration should therefore lead to a convergence in levels of education for the countries in the world. However, an education system cannot be severed from its historical, cultural, religious and linguistic roots, which our fellow citizens consider as essential, no doubt in reaction to the threat of loss of identity that globalization can represent.

To ensure sustainable and peaceful development in North American and European countries, renewed emphasis is required on 'learning to live together' in the Education for All context. This should enable individuals to better understand themselves and others, and to contribute to the world's progress towards a unity respectful of and founded on creative diversity. In this context, renewed efforts to fight racism, ethnocentrism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia are needed.

Education for democratic citizenship concerns not only the teaching of democratic norms but essentially the development of reflective and creative persons. It is based on the understanding that democracy is not fixed and immutable, but rather that it must be built and rebuilt every day in every society. Over the past ten years, our countries have joined together in the will to form democratic societies; for such societies, the future is to be invented and built; the mission of education is to prepare future citizens so that they can take part in this initiative.

In the past, basic education was defined in terms of an obligation fixed by the state and covering the childhood period, and therefore meant primary school. Today, such a definition has several deficiencies:

- with the development of knowledge and of its influence on the lives of people, basic education takes more time: in our countries, it covers at least lower secondary education and touches other levels;
- basic education cannot be defined solely by an obligatory duration, but must now be defined in terms of outcomes;
- basic education should indeed become an 'education for everybody' regardless of age, social and economic background, gender and residence, founded on the respect for difference. The problems to be solved concern those who do not reach the level required for successful integration into working life and who cannot take part in social development; children who fail often come from very underprivileged families and, conversely, failure in school often leads to social exclusion; and the solution to these problems is therefore closely linked to anti-poverty strategies;
- the definition of basic education is no longer fixed by the state alone: in many cases, the expectations of society and of families, and the economy, along with the supply of knowledge from outside of the formal education system, have led to the evolution of educational duration and content;
- because as society is rapidly changing, each individual needs lifelong learning: learning how to learn is seen as a fundamental skill for all. The expanding area of adult basic education for out-of-school children, youth and adults is essential to achieving learning throughout life.

The foundation of this process begins at birth. Early childhood education and care must be holistic and integrated to ensure the survival, growth and development of young child. In particular, more attention should be paid to young children under 3 years old, children in difficult and emergent situations and in rural areas for their participation in and access to quality early childhood programmes.

The primary child caretakers are parents, and the family and community environment plays an important role. In this regard, an effort to link early childhood education and care with adult education deserves attention. The learning that parents and grandparents do enhances the learning that children do. In turn, the success or failure of learning at school has an impact on how adults learn later on in their lives. The vision, provision, policy and

system of early childhood education and care can vary across countries, but there is a growing consensus that some form of early childhood programme focusing on the child's holistic development is essential to favour the social, psychological, affective and cognitive development of the young child.

Three levels of action

In each country

1. Definition of basic education

The definition of basic education must be in terms of levels to be attained, and knowledge and skills to be acquired along the lines of the Jomtien 'enlarged vision', not in terms of a period of compulsory school education.

Basic education allows personal development, intellectual autonomy, integration into professional life and participation in the development of the society in the context of democracy. In order to achieve these aims, basic education must lead to the acquisition of:

- key skills used as personal development tools and, later on, as a basis for lifelong learning;
- initial vocational guidance;
- the knowledge, values and abilities that are needed for individual development, and for the exercise of participatory and responsible citizenship in a democracy.

2. Operational goals for 2015

- All young women and men achieve basic education as defined in their country, through their initial education.
- Young people and adults who have not achieved the set level of basic education, or who have lost the corresponding skills, are offered the means to undergo training in order to attain this level; in particular promotion of literacy is an essential task.
- In the framework of their right to education, children of at least 3 are offered access to pre-primary education on request from their parents.

3. Strategies

3.1. National action plan

Develop, in consultation with all stakeholders, a national action plan with precise goals and objectives, and agreed milestones for assessing progress. This plan should include and deal with very precise questions on all aspects of curriculum. It will pay particular attention to the right of disadvantaged groups to education.

3.2. Allocation of resources

The investment level currently dedicated to education, despite decreasing demographic trends, must be maintained; and if reductions have been made in the level of educational expenditure since 1990, investment should be increased to what it was then. Benchmark resources are needed to increase the efficiency in the use of resources.

Education should be given high priority, and not less than 6 per cent of a country's GNP should be devoted to education, as recommended by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by Jacques Delors.

3.3. Equitable allocations

Ensure that the allocation of public resources for education across sub-sectors and communities serve to reduce inequities in access and quality rather than to exacerbate them, particularly through the use of positive discrimination measures.

3.4. Effective partnerships

Set up the institutional and legal formulas to ensure a real sharing of responsibility among the various levels (central, regional and local) of public authorities responsible for education.

Promote effective and formal partnerships between school-teachers, families, communities, civil society, employers, voluntary bodies, social services and political authorities. This is particularly important for excluded groups: parents must have the possibility to express the difficulties that hinder the educational success of their children and to take part in the definition of solutions so as to achieve this success. Education for democratic citizenship also relies on effective partnership in order to ensure commitment of the whole of society to prevent racism and xenophobia. Partnerships alone allow taking advantage of all the opportunities society provides for learning, especially to ensure that all adults have a right to education. Many adults never participate in learning opportunities after leaving school. Education for all must address this. The development of the International Adult Learners' Week (September 2000) following on from International Literacy Day is one way of encouraging participation in adult learning, increasing international solidarity.

Moreover, partnership contributes to linking education to working life; and to take full advantage of the changing employment environment that community service provides for increasing opportunities for employment (not necessary paid or fully paid employment) and the student's need to be aware of this. Career guidance and consulting services for both young people and adults need strengthening.

3.5. Address specific issues

Identify a specific set of problem issues and develop strategies to address them. The experience of the past decade in this region suggests that these might include identifying children excluded from basic education (rural children, disabled children, girls, street children, ethnic minorities and children affected by conflict or HIV/AIDS), and implementing flexible and creative programmes to restore their right to basic education.

Promising directions include:

- more opportunities for teachers' initiative, creativity and decision-making;
- more attention to cultivating a positive attitude to learning;
- a focus on general skills, life skills and competencies;
- rethinking the content and organization of general education by relating it to contemporary life and student interests;
- improving the quality of education by ensuring that schools are healthy for children, effective with children and protective of children. This implies a broader definition of quality that includes addressing the quality of learners (health, nutrition, etc.), the quality of the curricula including assessment and materials, the quality of the learning process (teachers and technologies to enhance learning) and the quality of the learning environment (child-centred, gender-sensitive, healthy and safe). Furthermore, basic education can play a role in reducing risks of infection by HIV/AIDS and other health hazards;
- intergenerational learning: the learning that parents and grandparents do enhances the learning that children do. In turn, the success or failure of learning at school impacts on how adults learn later on in their lives;
- develop and support awareness of the cultures present in each country, understanding differences, intercultural exchanges and creativity as well as defending democratic and universal values by all forms and practices of formal and non-formal education.
- support lifelong education for citizenship efforts of non-governmental organizations and citizens, associations that participate in the democratic dynamic and cultural development.

3.6. Monitoring

- Set up a monitoring plan that allows levels achieved to be measured against levels required and in particular to determine, in social and geographical terms, the populations that have the most difficulties in attaining the objectives set. Research-based policies should explore how individuals and their communities can learn, and why they do not.
- Establish quality-improvement systems to enable the responsible education personnel to allocate resources according to locally perceived needs and priorities. Enlisting parents, teachers and community representatives in this process can promote ownership and help to enhance a sense of local responsibility.

3.7. Personnel

Basic education and basic training personnel include all the actors related to the educational, social, cultural and health sectors.

The main objective is to instil in the institutions and the personnel that are responsible for education, the will that is needed in order to attain the goal of the educational success of each pupil and to develop the practices that are required for this purpose. It implies, in particular, training and retraining teachers, assessing schools and teachers, co-ordinating their action, and training teachers and social interveners in how to dialogue with excluded families and with the parents of pupils in difficulty.

The Warsaw regional EFA conference refers to the already internationally adopted documents such as the ILO Convention on the Status of Teachers and the 1996 recommendations of the 45th International Conference on Education. Measures to increase the social status of teachers of all school levels should be taken; this has to do not only with salaries but also with academic qualification and access to post-graduate studies. At the same time it should be emphasized that the nature of the teaching profession is related to decision-making and planning, and to identifying and solving problems, rather than to transmitting knowledge and following rules. The recognition of this fact has consequences for the goals and style of in-service teacher-education programmes. Teachers must have the possibility with their organizations to participate in the process of formulating educational policies.

Moreover, the essential role of universities and other institutions of higher education should also be emphasized both in educational research and in pre-service teacher education.

In the region

1. Sharing information, good practices and interesting experiences in the management and improvement of basic education systems across the region should be facilitated in order to find common convergent solutions. This regional co-operation should rely on existing intergovernmental (Council of EUROPE, UNESCO, OECD, EU, CIS, NAFTA, OSCE, etc.) and non-governmental structures. These exchanges can be encouraged to take place in a variety of ways, including e-mail, written communication, ad hoc meetings and committees.
2. Given the need for further improvement of education systems, particularly in hard-hit economies of Central and Eastern Europe, enhanced flows of financial assistance are needed and should be provided. In this context, bilateral, regional and multilateral agencies are invited to re-assess their priorities and to consider significant increases of assistance to education.

With the whole world

Education must be allowed to play its key role for lasting development in the context of globalization and by respecting the responsibilities of each country. This can be achieved by implementing the following measures:

1. Empower developing countries to identify their needs, and to lead and own their development by working in close partnership towards achieving the goals defined at the Dakar Forum.
2. Encourage international organizations, notably the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, to improve and collect internationally comparable data and develop quality research and thus enable the worldwide community to assess achievement of the goals established in Dakar. This process should be done in concertation and co-operation with national and regional research and statistical institutions. International agencies will be asked to assist in national capacity-building for statistical collection and analysis.
3. Rectify the level of assistance that is provided by the countries in our region and reserve an adequate portion for basic education in order to meet the expectations of all actors in the field of Education for All.
4. Since there is no common model for Overseas Development Aid, an early rethinking of its levels, ways and means by the North American and European countries should be considered in light of the Dakar Forum.
5. The revised draft Dakar Declaration should be made available to all ministries, institutions and authorities concerned by 30 March at the latest to allow for proper consultation and consensus building. ■