

National Foundation for Educational Research

EVALUATION OF CURRICULUM REFORM IN SLOVENIA: TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK

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SECTION 1. BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

The Republic of Slovenije - a relatively new and small country (population = two million) - became independent in 1991 upon the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Today, according to the Central Intelligence Agency (1999), Slovenije exhibits the highest *per capita* gross domestic product of all the transition economies of the region; although growth slowed progressively from 1995 to 1997, a healthy trend in recent exports to the European Union (EU) countries is expected to lead to a renewed upturn. In 1997, Slovenije received an invitation to begin accession negotiations with the EU - 'a further reflection of Slovenije's sound economic footing' (CIA, *op. cit.*).

Basic education statistics (CIA, *op. cit.*) show that under one in ten of the population complete higher education; 'basic education' (presumably equivalent to ISCED 2₁) is completed by about 30 per cent of the population; a further 40+ per cent complete vocational or middle education (presumably ISCED 3); about 17 per cent of the population does not complete basic education. As the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) says (1999), 'the level of educational attainment in the population is a commonly used proxy for the stock of "human capital", that is, the skills available in the population and labour force'. The latest OECD figures show that in most OECD countries more than 60 per cent of the population have completed at least upper secondary (ISCED 3) education; Slovenije is therefore perhaps more like southern European countries in its educational profile, where

more than half the population have not completed upper secondary education. Consequently, Slovenije has been going through a period of intense professional, public and political concern about the role education should play in a democratic polity based on a market economy which needs to be internationally competitive; about the role the state should play in national education provision; and about the extent to which the curriculum should embody new values. '[Changes to the education system] should be based on the common European heritage of political, cultural and moral values reflected in human rights, the rule of law, pluralistic democracy, tolerance and solidarity' (White Paper on *Education in the Republic of Slovenia*, 1996).

¹ ISCED = *International Standard Classification of Education*. According to this classification, ISCED 0 = early childhood education; ISCED 1 = primary; ISCED 2 = lower secondary; ISCED 3 = upper secondary; etc. (see OECD, 1999, Glossary.)

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An ambitious programme of curriculum reform - in the general, vocational and adult education sectors - has been set in train; there is a consequent need to develop methods to enable an expert evaluation to be carried out of the quality and effects of these reforms over the next five or six years. The Pedagoški Inštitut (the Slovenian Institute of Educational Research) in Ljubljana has commissioned the NFER, as an independent research institution based in another European country with a mature democratic system, to assist, in the first instance, with developing an appropriate evaluative framework for use by the National Evaluation Commission and its sub-committees. This commission is fully supported by the Ministry of Education and Sports. What follows is, in effect, a position paper drafted by NFER as a first step in developing that framework. It is intended as a starting-point for more detailed discussions, rather than as a definitive document.

Section 2 below sets out a series of key issues, framed as questions, which the literature suggests need to be addressed as part of an evaluative approach. It concludes with some interim recommendations to the Slovenian National Evaluation Commission.

Section 3 below provides a preliminary generic framework for considering how to evaluate curricular reform, intended as a draft only.

Section 4 below suggests appropriate follow up action.

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SECTION 2. QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE FORMULATION OF A FRAMEWORK

This section takes as its starting point two key policy documents from Slovenije:

- *The White Paper, Education in the Republic of Slovenia* (Krek, 1996)
- *Guidelines to Curricular Reform* (National Curricular Council, 1996).

Numerous other documents have also been consulted or referred to, including several reports and papers related directly to educational provision and change in Slovenije, together with a wide variety of reports, academic articles and books on aspects of curriculum reform (in its broadest sense) and its evaluation. (All documentation consulted was written in, or translated into, English.)

A complete list of references and suggestions for further reading is given at Appendix A. Such material gives a sound basis for developing an evaluative framework in that, on the one hand, there is a clear public account of the aims and values of Slovenian curricular reform; while, on the other, some important lessons from other national systems (including those which, like the UK, have undergone radical reform in recent years) can be adduced. In addition, some of the material consulted provides conceptual clarification of related issues, for example, the role of self-evaluation by schools in quality assurance, or the implications of global economic changes (which require people to apply the skills of flexibility and adaptability) for teaching and assessment models and practices. Overall, the material suggests that there are a number of key questions which need to be addressed as the framework is formulated and refined. These are presented in Section 2 below, with a brief commentary drawing out messages and/or illustrations from the literature as appropriate. As a consequence of the discussion, three general recommendations are made to the Slovenian National Evaluation Commission; these appear at the end of the section.

For the purposes of this document, the 'UK system' refers mainly to England and Wales (except where stated); and means state, i.e. publicly-funded, education (no cognisance is taken of private sector provision in all its various aspects).

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Question 1. How clear and coherent are the values and underlying purpose of curricular reform as these are articulated through the different dimensions of reform?

The values on which the Slovenian curricular reforms are based have been made explicit in the White Paper; they are summarised in the preface to *Guidelines to Curricular Reform* as 'above all, human rights, pluralist democracy, tolerance, solidarity and the rule of law' and listed later in that document as:

□□the individual and his or her development

- freedom and responsibility
- equal opportunity
- tolerance and solidarity
- national identity
- knowledge as a value

These are perceived as 'derived from the European cultural heritage' and provide a clear statement of the perceived ethical and political foundation on which reform is being built.

The Chief Executive of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in England (previously the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, and before that the National Curriculum Council) would presumably applaud this on the grounds that:

We cannot debate education without reviewing our fundamental assumptions about the ends and purposes of human beings; the kind of society or community we wish ourselves to be; the kind of identities we want to foster; our values; and the precious things we want to pass on... It is better to make these explicit... (Tate, 1998) Indeed, one of the criticisms laid against the National Curriculum when it was introduced in England and Wales a decade ago was that it was premised on only the sparsest of value statements, viz., that the curriculum should:

- promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society;
- prepare pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

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As the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority recently (April 1998) recommended, a more explicit rationale for the school curriculum, and the place and purpose of the statutory curriculum within it, is now required. The Authority commissioned a market research organisation to carry out a survey of views about the values which underpin society and thus the education system.

The statement of aims which was devised as a result is attached as Appendix B. On the international front, a study of the role of values and aims in curriculum and assessment frameworks (covering Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and USA) published the following conclusions (Le Metais, 1997), each of which is relevant to the Slovenian situation:

- Changes in and consideration of values may explicitly precede, *or remain implicit in*, other changes (our emphasis).
- The explicit statement of shared values can make a difference to policy.
- The explicit statement of shared values can make a difference to process.
- The explicit statement of shared values may make a difference to outcome.

The potential for a values-based curriculum framework to make a difference not just to policy but also to process and outcome needs to be kept at the forefront of attention. It seems to us that there are two main issues in the 'filling out' of values-based reforms through the various systems and strategies being proposed. The first is whether messages consonant with the espoused values are consistently given throughout the different domains and levels of reform, particularly as their implementation is likely to be undertaken by a variety of different agencies acting on behalf of government - for example, the Slovenian subject and programme curriculum commissions (SPCC).

By 'domain', we have in mind the following:

- curriculum design and content (standards of knowledge; curriculum balance)
- pedagogical methodologies and instructional programmes (teaching and learning)
- textbooks and instructional resources (teaching/learning materials)
- assessment frameworks and procedures (standards and qualifications)
- structures, constraints and options for progression (academic/vocational routes)

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- regulatory and evaluative procedures (quality assurance)
- institutional organisation and management (leadership)
- professional instruction, support and development (teacher training)

By 'level', we mean:

- central government (policy)
- local/regional authority (policy mediation/local decision-making)
- institution (implementation)
- classroom (delivery)

These eight domains of reform and four levels of activity will be used as the basis of the Framework outlined in Section 3 below.

Question 2. How well are the possible unintended consequences of reform understood and allowed for?

This question is chiefly concerned with whether what is proposed and implemented in one domain or at one level has *unintended (possibly negative) consequences* for others.

From the UK experience it is possible to argue, for example, that a key area which is likely to need close scrutiny is the impact of *assessment on curriculum delivery and pedagogy*. Thus Gipps (1998) questions whether 'high-quality assessment programmes' can co-exist with 'high-stakes testing', of the kind instituted as part of the Education Reform Act in England and Wales of 1988.

This is a non-trivial issue because 'in the next millennium, and with the information revolution, it will be important to foster higher order skills and good learning strategies in a high proportion of our students...' The main risks in establishing an assessment framework of a 'high-stakes' kind - i.e. one which uses the performance of individual pupils as a chief instrument in the evaluation of institutional quality - are that such tests of performance must be reliable and therefore simple and standardised, with the result that they may *not* reflect higher order skills and good learning strategies; and that teachers end up, against their own better judgement, 'teaching to the test' in order to maximise the performance of pupils in the test rather than providing the optimal breadth and balance of the intended curriculum.

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Other kinds of conflict have arisen in the English system which it is not proposed to discuss in detail here: a helpful way to articulate and understand, at a generic level, the possibility of unintended consequences is given by Thomas (1998). Thomas uses four categories 'to appraise the UK reform experience and to usefully compare and contrast this experience with other national systems'. Quoting more or less directly from Thomas, we can express these categories as:

- Autonomy, i.e. *who is taking more and/or less control over decision-making?* 'Autonomy is a fundamental concept for the nature of education as well as its management' because '[all nations] must prepare their people for an unknowable future'.
- Accountability, i.e. *has the dialogue of accountability improved or worsened?* 'Accountability is about the responsibility of stakeholders to each other'.
- Efficiency, i.e. *has the match between resources and needs improved or worsened?* "What is got out" of education must be related to educational values and purposes', particularly in a system which is being financially decentralised.
- Equity, i.e. *has reform made the system more or less fair?* An evaluation of equity must include 'examining patterns of benefit between and within social groups'.

These seem an excellent starting point for evaluating both the intentions and consequences of curricular reform taken as a whole, although we would want to emphasise the tensions and trade-offs between them. Incidentally, Thomas'

paper and the rest of the contributions to the British Council Report in question are highly commended for their simplicity and applicability to other countries. Unintended consequences - even to the point of possible negative effects - of reform must be allowed for in an evaluation framework.

Question 3. How are tensions negotiated, and a balance struck and maintained, between the post-modern 'employability and competitiveness' imperative and the Enlightenment-based social and political reform agenda based on a presumed consensus?

As the President of the Slovenian National Curricular Council said: 'Education is closely connected with the fields of production of benefits and services as well as the fields of culture and science'. Whilst this is unquestionably true, there are tensions and conflicts to be negotiated. The issue may take a variety of forms, such as:

- the relative balance between traditional subject disciplines and cross-curricular learning (promoting core/transferable skills);
- support for didactic pedagogy and prescription of study programmes (on the grounds of ensuring 'breadth, balance and entitlement') versus the notion of teacher as facilitator/enabler (on the grounds of ensuring that pupils learn how to learn);
- the drive for accountability in the system versus the need for professional autonomy;
- the desire for equity/entitlement balanced against the requirement for flexibility;
- the demand for summative assessment and external evaluation against the value of formative assessment and self evaluation.

These tensions *can* be fruitfully managed, if the stated purposes of a national curricular framework acknowledge such tensions. According to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in England (Colwill, 1999), the purposes of the English framework - now subject to another stage of review ten years after the National Curriculum was first instituted - are to:

- lay down an entitlement to an agreed broad and balanced curriculum provision regardless of which school a pupil attends;
- set and monitor standards of pupil achievement;
- ensure continuity within the curriculum by establishing a common curriculum language and setting the course content for each subject;
- ensure coherence of the curriculum so that it makes a meaningful whole, especially for the individual pupil;
- increase public understanding of and confidence in the education system.

In fulfilling these purposes, the main issues for consideration are said (by Colwill, 1999, again) to be these:

- manageability
- flexibility

- ownership
- progression
- inclusiveness

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- modernity
- alignment (with other initiatives)

Colwill also makes it clear that a National Curriculum framework is not the same as a curriculum model nor, even more so, a prescription about delivery; thus, although there are ten subject areas for which statutory Orders have been drawn up, this does not imply that ten subjects be separately timetabled in schools. (In England, this has been a welcome elucidation, since schools have been struggling for many years with what was seen as an overcrowded curriculum - some of that overcrowding was undoubtedly due to the notion that ten subjects had to be taught independently, rather than that some of the content of some subject Orders could be incorporated into overall curricular planning.

This also arguably led to a lack of coherence in the curriculum as experienced by pupils.) A particularly important issue is that of how personal, social and health education (PSHE) - which in England now explicitly includes education for 'citizenship' - can be managed within an already tightly-packed framework. The original suggestion (in the late 1980s) that such elements be treated as 'cross-curricular themes' just sounded like a further attempt to get an impossible amount of teaching and learning into the school week. A key question for the Slovenian Curricular Council and/or National Evaluation Commission is to consider whether, given the values which the curriculum is intended to espouse, 'citizenship' should be an explicit - even separate - aspect of the curriculum. A related question is whether 'citizenship' is a subject which can be taught like other subjects or must be wholly premised on participative questioning and debate, and therefore pedagogically distinct. The potential tensions of perspective and genuine conflicts of interest which a modern curriculum must address and negotiate need to be made explicit.

Question 4. How well have the strengths and weaknesses of the previous system been analysed, in order that radical change can be successfully grafted on to it?

The Guidelines to Curricular Reform document (Slovenian National Curricular Council, 1996), although more or less taking for granted the general premise that 'Slovene schooling has in the past achieved a very high degree of quality', discusses a dozen or so

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specific problems and weaknesses which the new system will need to address. We trust it is not presumptive to summarise these as follows:

There must be a greater emphasis on the needs and responsibilities of the individual learner as a future citizen and active member of a competitive, sustainable and knowledge-based economy. Her/his learning skills in the widest sense, and the motivation to stay involved in 'lifelong learning', need to be enhanced through a better understanding by teachers of learning theory and the role of core/transferable skills and through increasing teachers' personal repertoire of teaching methods and styles.

This is a diagnosis shared by many European countries, who have responded in quite similar but not identical ways through wholesale or piecemeal reforms of the curriculum. It was the driving force behind the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), for example, instituted in the UK during the 1980s. Interestingly, this was an initiative conceived and funded by the ministry responsible for employment (the Employment Department), which at the time was a separate department of government from the education ministry. Lest it be assumed that the goals of TVEI were narrowly vocational, it is worth summarising its main goals:

- to encourage the development of new courses with a more practical bent, especially in science, technology, information/communication technology (ICT) and modern foreign languages;
- to enhance the knowledge, skills and qualifications of young people 'in a highly technological society which is part of Europe and the world economy';
- to ensure that 'young people learn how to be effective adults, solve problems, work in teams, be enterprising and creative through the way they are taught';
- to ensure that young people get direct opportunities to learn about the nature of the economy and the world of work;
- to ensure equality of opportunity for all young people aged 14-19 by developing and providing an entitlement curriculum;
- to enhance progression and continuity for young people through the provision of initial guidance and careers counselling, through closer links between schools and colleges and through the provision of continuing education/training opportunities throughout people's lives.

The TVEI was one of the most intensively evaluated curriculum development projects in the UK. It was responsible for waves of both curriculum and professional development and supported experiments in new styles of teaching and learning (see, for example, GB.DES, 1991; Morris *et al.*, 1992). However, the Education Reform Act (ERA) -

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introduced in the last years of the '80s decade - both developed and displaced TVEI, in perhaps surprising ways. On the one hand, the substantial funds made available through TVEI gave undoubted momentum to 'local management' - i.e. the devolution of financial planning and control to school-level, which was itself a keystone of the ERA. The National Curriculum, on the other hand, with its dominant individual subject base, its (then) very tightly-packed curriculum

load and its emphasis through the assessment regime on testable knowledge, was interpreted by some as running counter to the crosscurricular and skills-based approach promoted by TVEI. It was a challenge for many teachers, especially in upper secondary schools, to create ways of sustaining the curriculum design and pedagogical approaches they had been charged with developing only a few years earlier.

It is important to be very clear about which aspects of the previous system need to be conserved and which must be changed, if the educational aims underlying the curriculum are to be fulfilled; and to judge whether the innovations are capable of complementing (rather than undermining) what needs to be conserved.

Question 5. What is the appropriate degree of central prescription versus schoolbased curriculum development? What areas should be kept 'tight' (i.e. under central control) and what can be kept 'loose' (allowed to develop according to local needs and circumstances)?

This question needs to be answered in the light of what emerges from considering the answers to Question 4. The UK experience of educational reform in the late 1980s was that the central-local axis was made to revolve through 180 degrees. To put it simply, curriculum design and development, which had been locally and even institutionally based, were now to be centrally governed through the statutory Orders for the National Curriculum. This was accompanied by a system of formal national assessment of pupils' performance at four points in their education and by various mechanisms for making individual schools' performance in these assessments the subject of public scrutiny. The watchwords have been 'quality' and 'accountability'. By contrast, large elements of financial control were devolved to institutional level, although still according to formulae determined by central and/or local government. In fact, the role of local policy-making bodies - the local education authorities - was

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markedly modified and curtailed. Reform went so far in this direction as to make it possible to establish different kinds of school - city technology colleges and so-called grant-maintained schools - which were not subject to local financial control but instead received resources from, and were monitored directly by, central government. The 'felt distance' from the centre thus became very different for different schools, although the rhetoric was often about 'freedom from bureaucracy'.

Ten years later, the picture has changed again. All schools in England and Wales are essentially being re-integrated into a system of local control (not without resistance on the part of some), although the kind of 'control' being exerted by LEAs now is very different from what it was 20 years ago. The National Curriculum has also undergone several reviews, the latest of which

explicitly admits the need for more diversity and flexibility, especially for 14-16 year olds, which will be managed at local or institutional level.

The debate which has accompanied these changes has been vociferous: much energy has been devoted, by teacher unions and university departments of education in particular, to challenging what they have cast as an unwarranted increase in central, technicist and even undemocratic control at the expense of professional, particularly teacher, autonomy, to the detriment of teachers' morale and status in society. On the other side, government spokespeople have talked almost incessantly about the need to 'raise standards', to remedy the shortcomings of both 'failing' schools and 'failing' teachers (see, for example, Woodhead, 1999) and, in so doing, to stand up for the rights of children and parents as well as the tax-payer. There have been a number of 'stand-offs' between representatives of teachers and government over the years of reform, sometimes culminating in outright strike action but more often than not comprising a series of unresolved skirmishes. This has been unproductive and has obscured the more reasoned and reasonable conversations taking place in parallel.

A more real dilemma is how to manage the requirement for accountability in public services whilst ensuring that creative (and perhaps unpredictable) developments can take root and flourish. A relatively new idea on the part of the Department for Education and Employment in England is that of 'intervention in reverse proportion to success'.

Another way of articulating this is the '*tight*' (*objectives*) - '*loose*' (*implementation*) - '*tight*' (*desirable outcomes*) formula being developed by the Ministry of Education in New Zealand (information based on personal conversation with Ministry officer).

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Thus 'central' and 'local' are not simply pragmatic bases for different levels of decisionmaking; they also function symbolically, as *loci* of different meanings and definitions of 'democracy' in education. The significance ascribed to the kinds of decisions made at government, local or institutional level may be as much a matter of a country's political history - especially the 'story' of reform and resistance - as of the rational merits of current policy.

Given the views already expressed by some Slovenian educationists about the reforms, it will be necessary to manage the debate about central control versus local autonomy with sensitivity towards, and respect for, professional traditions in schools and in teacher training institutions as well as proper concern for the tax-payer.

Question 6. Through what procedures and mechanisms are decisions on curricula, pedagogy, assessment and quality assurance taken, and what is the

extent of consultation with teaching professionals? How well do these procedures reflect the values inherent in policy reform?

To take the previous argument a stage further: 'Reforms can be conceived by policymakers. They can be planned in ministries of education by experts and administrators. But, to have an effect, they must be implemented in the school by teachers and school principals...' (Nevo, 1998).

The role of the professionals in educational reform has, as was noted above, been the subject of change and debate at least as much as the curriculum itself. Without going into great depth here, it is important to note the efforts of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to carry out widespread consultative exercises - often involving questionnaires to all schools, local education authorities and academic institutions - on both the policy and the detail of at least some proposed changes. The charge of 'imposed' reform (levelled by some in the profession against central government) does not, therefore, entirely stick.

The Department for Education has itself undertaken far-reaching reviews of the national curriculum (see Dearing, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997) [*see also University of Durham review of national curriculum literature?*]. These curricular reviews, however, were on the whole commissioned in response to pressures and perceived problems, rather than as part

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of a planned reviewing procedure. Sometimes, indeed, it looked as if the government was engaged in damage limitation or performing U-turns rather than undertaking strategic reviews.

In talking about the latest curriculum review, Colwill (1999) raised important questions about the review cycle and the necessity to have a clear and appropriate timescale in which regular reviews of reforms will take place. He also drew attention to the need to build into such reviews:

- relevance to new and upcoming needs and priorities;
- the relationship with any subsequent curriculum development projects and other policy initiatives;
- maintaining the balance between continuity/stability and the need for revision.

It is a feature of the most recent review in England that the need to gain insights from face-to-face discussions with school and local education authority managers has been acknowledged; the review process is this time intended to be formative.

It is important to decide the extent, level and type of consultation exercises which will be needed (i) to assist with establishing a sense of ownership of the reforms and (ii) to take account of suggested modifications before they become unmanageable pressures.

Question 7. How well developed are the insights into, and processes for, *managing change* in order to implement policy?

This is a complex and difficult area. If we agree that 'To change education is to change the school' (Nevo, 1998), then what happens at the institutional and sub-institutional level is of key importance. We know from school effectiveness studies that there are real differences, both between and within schools, of relative 'effectiveness' (see, for example, Sammons, 1996). This is one reason why the main thrust of educational policy in England and Wales in the late 1990s has become 'school improvement' rather than curriculum reform. As Hill (1998) says:

... talk of reform is increasingly motivated by the recognition that many schools are fallible institutions when it comes to managing student progress

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and ensuring that all students reach minimum standards of achievement in the key learning areas. It is also motivated by the frustration that educational leaders experience in achieving systemic improvement... most reforms are short-lived or fail to penetrate beyond the classroom door to eliminate ineffective classroom practice and to bring about widespread improvements in standards

Hill (*ibid.*) goes on to discuss Stringfield's work on schools as 'high-reliability' organisations, and offers the following criteria for an educational system characterised as 'high reliability':

- The rate at which students learn remains relatively constant over the years of schooling and for all groups of students.
- The transitions from one phase of schooling to another (e.g. primary to secondary) are smooth.
- The spread in achievement levels narrows or at least remains relatively constant over the years of schooling (i.e., initial differences in achievement levels are not further magnified).
- Differences between and among classes, subjects, and/or departments within schools in terms of the value they add are relatively small.

But Hill points out that the complexity of schooling 'has so far defeated all attempts to achieve high reliability on a systemic basis when it comes to managing student progress' (*ibid.*). This is similar to conclusions drawn by Reynolds and Farrell (1996) when attempting to account for the disparities in English pupils' achievements compared with those in Pacific Rim countries.

We need to set this fact in the context of insights provided by the 'management of change' commentators like Michael Fullan. An understanding

and evaluation of how change and innovation are actively managed is now recognised as a vital accompaniment to policy direction. With the widespread curricular and system reforms of latter years, the management of change has become an area of enquiry in its own right, since 'the process of planned educational change is much more complex than had been anticipated' (Fullan, 1982). Government-funded evaluations of programme reforms in England like TVEI (see above) included explicit reference to the quality and effectiveness of the management of change. Unfortunately, perhaps, this was not true of the National Curriculum itself. For Fullan's achievement has been to show, in some detail, why the

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route from policy to implementation is not self-evident; for example, he has explained that:

Educational innovations are unreliable at least as often as they are reliable - that is, they do not work out either because they have been ill-conceived (they are inappropriate or underdeveloped), or because resources to support implementation are missing, or too frequently for both reasons. (*ibid.*)

The management of change literature in education is now well developed, of course, and needs no further reviewing here. What perhaps needs emphasising - if the notion is true (see the Nevo quotation above) that only principals and teachers can actually implement reforms - is the need to articulate exactly how and why teachers change (or fail to change) what they do and how they do it: what, for example, the inhibiting and supporting factors are, in terms of teachers' professional traditions, personal beliefs, fears and aspirations. (So in order, for example, to get an answer to the question: 'why is there still a feeling within the profession that aspects of educational reform in England are undemocratic?', one would have to look to see how seriously perceived threats to teachers' identity and professional status have been taken, and how well they have been managed at institutional and local levels as well as centrally.)

A concomitant development has been in models of and approaches to *self-evaluation* by schools, including discussions of the relationship between internal evaluation and external evaluation and inspection. Much of the recent work of the Department for Education and Employment in England has focused on developing a systematic approach to self-evaluation by schools as part of the government's raising attainment agenda. The White Paper *Excellence in Schools* (GB.HoC 1997) and the related documents on school improvement, target-setting and benchmarking (e.g. GB.DfEE 1996, 1997; OFSTED 1998) have together provided guidance for a five-stage cycle of review and target-setting by schools.

These developments could be interpreted as a shift of emphasis from previous administrations, in the sense of giving schools a more explicit role in the processes of improvement (as distinct from those of external inspections and 'market forces'). Even so, there remain some important unanswered questions

such as whether - beneath the rhetoric - there really is a culture of self-evaluation in schools on which to build; as the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (St. John-Brooks 1995) put it:

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Although evaluators in most countries would like to develop a 'climate of review' in the schools they are assessing, this is hard to achieve □□except in schools which already have a self-confident staff and effective leadership □□without a substantial input of professional training. But the act of collecting data for the indicators and more general criteria used in evaluations, and discussing their use, can help schools to focus on and analyse their task; this important aspect is ripe for development in many countries.

Fundamental questions of values and ethics have to be taken account of in the practice of school 'self'-evaluation, as commentators like MacBeath (1996) and Saunders (forthcoming) have argued. A European project on quality evaluation in schools currently being undertaken (see MacBeath *et al.*, 1997, European Commission, 1998) is helping to develop a wider understanding of such issues, as well as the more technical ones about which performance indicators schools can use across a range of areas.

When all is said and done, we need to know what we can sensibly expect from reforms in the real world. Evaluation methodology has accordingly needed to incorporate qualitative as well as quantitative approaches and to go far beyond the measurement of pupils' test scores (which was how 'evaluation' has in the past been narrowly understood). Evaluators need to understand schools as micro-political organisations; this is because: an understanding of the way schools change (or stay the same) and therefore of the practical limits and possibilities of educational development, must take account of intra-organizational processes. Ball, 1987.)

What is known and understood about the management of change should inform the training and support provision, for all levels of staff within the profession, which is developed to assist with the implementation of educational reform.

Question 8. How are the relative timescales for the different developments to be decided and managed? For which areas/activities is it necessary to have indicators in the short term, and which can and should wait for the longer term, in order to enable effective planning and implementation?

The need for government to maintain the political drive for visible results when the cycle of social development and evolution is rather longer has led to an ingrained sense of

'initiative overload' in England and Wales. Hindsight has often revealed, however, that 'short planning time-scales led to some unfocused work and a waste of resources.'

(GB.DES, 1991.) There are no easy answers to this problem, but it is as well to be aware of the limitations of curtailed timetables on successful implementation.

So far as evaluation and review of educational reform are concerned, it is probably useful to make some additional distinctions of timescale. For example, a system for assessing the impact of the reforms on, say, young people's learning outcomes will take some time to establish; assessment of performance will require to be detailed enough to investigate effects on different ages/stages of education and on different subject/skill areas at the very least. For the purposes of equality of opportunity, it will also be necessary to obtain information on the performance of different gender/ethnic/social class groupings and probably in different regions/locations.

But in the meanwhile there are some important issues to be evaluated which may contribute to, and throw prospective light on, those eventual outcomes. These can be thought of in terms of resources and processes respectively. In the evaluation framework set out below, we therefore propose three meta-categories - designated *input*, *process* and *impact* - in order to reflect those distinctions.

In the longer term, as was indicated above, the nature and frequency of the review cycle will need to be decided, so that subsequent reviews are planned rather than brought about through pressures on the system. Clear but realistic timescales and timetables are necessary to allow developments to embed before being evaluated.

Question 9. To what extent will the Slovenian Ministry wish to develop indicators which will give trans-national comparability, for example with other OECD countries? It is understood that Slovenije has participated in International Educational Assessment (IEA) studies, such as the third international mathematics and science study (TIMSS), which provide 'headline' information on standards of performance.

But it may well be that, in addition, Slovenije will feel a need for 'a more informed and educative set of international indicators' such as those developed by the countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (see, for example, Bottani, 1998; MacBeath, 1993). The development of international indicators is not straightforward: Education is a very sensitive domain: it concerns the survival of a community, the well-being

of a country and the capacity of a nation to generate knowledge, to understand its historical and political context, and to produce and transmit an image of its identity. Therefore, information about nature and procedures of education is peculiar, highly political and culturally protected. [The process of building a trans-national representation of education] can be envisaged only on the basis of strong mutual trust among data providers, data producers and data analysts. (Bottani, *op. cit.*)

As MacBeath (*op. cit.*) indicates, OECD began by looking at four broad kinds of indicator:

- demographic and economic background
- educational outcomes
- educational programmes and processes
- expectations of, and attitudes to, education.

The last of these was the most interesting and potentially insightful, but also the most problematic; research was carried out on a pragmatic basis by collecting data on:

- perceptions of teacher status and morale
- expectations of, and satisfaction with, school
- attitudes to the locus of decision-making in schools
- attitudes to curriculum priorities.

The point of doing this was to provide:

- rankings of different priorities for particular aspects of school education
- indicators of distance between expectation and satisfaction
- comparisons between different sets of key players (e.g. teachers as against employers)
- illuminative data on 'hard' indicators.

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Towards the end of his paper describing the development of the OECD 'Education at a Glance' indicators, MacBeath makes the point that:

Within the OECD the term 'transparency' has a wide currency. It is about the demystification process whereby a larger and larger public have access to the same measurements which policy-makers and politicians are using, and become increasingly sophisticated in their grasp of them.

The question of international comparisons surely brings the discussion in the present section full circle, in the sense that the aim of educational reform in Slovenije is premised on the notion of increased public participation in all the processes of education. And the intention 'not to value what we measure but to measure what we value' is an important part of that participative venture.

Before proceeding to present the draft Framework, it is worth summarising what we see as critical areas for consideration by the National Evaluation Commission. These are given in the form of three recommendations below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Slovenian National Evaluation Commission perhaps needs to identify even more precisely the relative strengths and weaknesses of the previous system, in order to know and make clear what it is advisable to preserve of that system, as well as what to change - and this needs to be done for each of the eight domains and at each of the four levels.
2. The Commission needs to give thought to what role the curriculum plays in practice (as distinct from theory) in a democracy, i.e., whether and how the central aim of developing young people's political and social awareness and capacities (reflecting the defined values of the curriculum) is incorporated into actual curriculum 21 arrangements; and what implications this has for the related areas of pedagogy, professional autonomy and teachers' relationships with their pupils.
3. The Commission needs to pay as much attention to criteria which can evaluate (i) the relative effectiveness and (ii) the management of change at the institutional and sub-institutional levels, as to those which review the reforms in terms of appropriateness of policy and/or quality of systemic outcomes.

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SECTION 3. DRAFT FRAMEWORK OF EVALUATION CRITERIA

The above discussion suggests a number of key areas where evaluative criteria will need to be developed.

The first set we called 'domains' and grouped them as follows:

- curriculum design and content (standards of knowledge; curriculum balance)
- pedagogical methodologies and instructional programmes (teaching and learning)
- textbooks and instructional resources (teaching/learning materials)
- assessment frameworks and procedures (standards and qualifications)
- structures, constraints and options for progression (academic/vocational routes)
- regulatory and evaluative procedures (quality assurance)
- institutional organisation and management (leadership)
- professional instruction, support and development (teacher training)

Because systemic educational reform operates at government, local, institutional and classroom levels simultaneously, we also said it would be useful to develop evaluative criteria at each of these levels.

At the same time, as we said earlier, it is probably useful to make some additional distinctions of timescale. We therefore propose three meta-categories, designated as follows:

- input or what the intention of reform was;
- process or how reforms have been implemented;
- impact or what has been achieved.

The first category would include evaluation of policy and resources; the second category would include evaluation of organisation and management; the last category would need to comprise various success criteria, for example:

- success criteria for evidence of impact on teaching;
- success criteria for evidence of impact on pupils and their performance, including equality of opportunity;

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- success criteria for evidence of impact on assessment and qualifications, including for vocational pathways;
- - success criteria for evidence of impact on progression and continuity within and beyond compulsory education, including vocational pathways;
- success criteria for evidence of impact on school management and administration;
- success criteria for overall assessment of quality and impact of reform.

These broad categorisations form the draft framework, for which templates are given on the following pages. The discussion and development of precise evaluation criteria within each of these will need to be undertaken by members of the Slovenian National Evaluation Commission, in conjunction with NFER if appropriate.

Finally, we also drew attention to four key issues, which could be used to structure an *overall assessment* of the reforms; these were:

- Autonomy
- Accountability
- Efficiency
- Equity

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SECTION 4. POSSIBLE FOLLOW-UP ACTION

Once this draft document has been discussed by Slovenian colleagues, the NFER would be pleased to do either or both of the following:

- engage by fax, e-mail and/or telephone in further discussion and modification of the framework;
- make a visit to Ljubljana to present and discuss the framework in a meeting, and to take account of Slovenian colleagues' views in an on-the-spot re-drafting and development of the framework.