

REPORT

**ETUCE Round Table, Berlin, March 12-13, 2001:
A challenge to Education in the New Economy - indicators, new skills and
lifelong learning in Europe**

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Preamble

This report is concerned with indicators, new skills and lifelong learning in Europe. These issues are important elements in the discussion at the European Union level since the Lisbon Summit. In the conclusions of that meeting, education, training and research are for the first time integrated into the social and employment policies of the European Union, and investment in education is recognised as a way to increase the competitiveness of the European knowledge-based society.

The ETUCE Round Table on 12-13 March 2001 sought to take one step further in the development of policy concerning quality in education, which has been going on for many years. Quality indicators are now being introduced in all areas of society, and the 16 quality indicators proposed in the education sector last year are under review. The Lisbon concept of new basic skills needs to be discussed in greater depth, and broader awareness of a lifelong learning perspective on education, training and research issues is still to be seen.

The role of teachers and other personnel in this discussion is essential. At the national level, the teachers' organisations are following and taking part in these discussions, in order to lay the foundation of the decision-making process at the EU level. Our professional involvement in this discussion will not only influence developments, but also contribute to the enhancement of the status of teachers.

ETUCE wishes to express its heartfelt gratitude to GEW, Germany for providing its support and expertise, which greatly contributed to the success of the Round Table.

It is the wish of ETUCE that this report will serve as one contribution in the ongoing discussion in all our member organisations.

Jörgen Lindholm
General Secretary

ETUCE's work with Quality Education, Evaluation, Benchmarks, Indicators and New Skills

1. Background

Quality of education and evaluation are at present high on the agenda in EU. The EU has initiated the project *Indicators and benchmarks of quality of school education* and prepared the *European report on quality of education* which was published in June 2000. Also other international organisations have dealt with questions related to quality and indicators. OECD has initiated the **PISA 2000 project** (PISA - Programme for International Student Assessment). The first results from this project will be published in September this year.

ETUCE has actively followed the development and taken several initiatives in the field of Quality Education, Evaluation, Benchmarks and Indicators. One of the first was to organise a colloquium on quality in higher education in Bruges in 1995. Since 1995 a working group has dealt with matters related to quality in education. As a result of its work a colloquium was organised in Rome in March 1996 to discuss the subject. During 1998, the group was converted into an Advisory Panel on Quality, with the task of following developments in the *EU Pilot Project on Quality Evaluation in School Education*. An ETUCE Round Table was convened in November 1998 to discuss matters related to the EU project, mainly school-based evaluation. In November 1999 ETUCE, organised a Round Table on quality in education where the focus was benchmarks and indicators.

On March 12 - 13, 2001, ETUCE will hold a New Round Table on Quality Education, Evaluation, Benchmarks, Indicators and New Skills in Berlin, Germany. The purpose of this paper is to give a background to the items which will be discussed at the Round Table. The paper will set out briefly the reasons, why ETUCE has undertaken work on quality education, evaluation, benchmarks, indicators and new skills and the major policy orientations related to these issues.

2. Quality Education

Since the early 1990's, the issue of quality has become an important part of the education and training agenda. This development should be seen in the light of several other trends. At least three such developments can be distinguished. Firstly, there has been a general development towards deregulation of management, which again has led to the need for stronger central control through detailed curricula and development of different "quality assessment" systems. Secondly, Europe is facing growing international competition and a strategy for meeting this situation has been to focus on the quality of products in order to make them more attractive on the world market. In order to raise the quality of European products there is a need to invest in the skills and knowledge of the workforce. This strategy has implications for the whole education system. Thirdly, in most European countries there has been an on-going discussion about the cost of

education. The interest in quality might reflect not only concerns for the quality of education, but also a wish to reduce costs.

In spite of some doubts about the motives behind the interest in quality education, it must also be recognised that there is a sincere wish among many politicians and decision makers to improve education. From this perspective it is very important for teachers and their organisations to be involved in the discussions which take place at a national level, as well as at a European level.

The concept of “quality” has generated very different responses from teachers and their organisations. While many feel challenged by quality assessment and assurance procedures, they can provide an important tool in the discussion on how teacher unions could shape education and in the fight for continuous professional development. Many unions have taken different initiatives in order to ensure that the concepts of quality education have been used in a way which contributes to the development of schools and are not used against teachers. From that perspective, it has also become important to see that these matters are discussed at a European level. The work of ETUCE has been to point to directions for action that could be undertaken by the European Union to help member countries to improve quality in education.

3. Evaluation

In the work on quality education, it became clear that one of the key elements in many governments' policies was to improve the systems, instruments and methods for evaluation. These observations coincided with the initiative from the European Union to start the so called ***EU Pilot Project on Quality Evaluation in School Education***.

The EU project was launched at the beginning of the school year 1997, with the approval and support of the Council of Ministers of Education and involved 101 secondary schools in 18 countries. The principal aims of the projects were to raise awareness of the need to evaluate secondary education in Europe, to enhance existing national procedures, to give a European dimension to quality evaluation and to support the exchange of information and experiences. The final report was published in June 1999 and concluded that the project had helped strengthen the case for evaluation and offered concrete support for school-based work. Based on the experiences from the ***EU Pilot Project on Quality Evaluation in School Education***, the EU Commission produced a proposal for a ***Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European co-operation in quality evaluation in school education***.

ETUCE observed that all European countries were seeking methods and structures in which to report school performance and reconcile diagnostic/developmental purposes with accountability objectives. In ETUCE's analysis of the developments, it was noted that the present trends constituted a risk that evaluation would focus too much on easily measurable school achievement without taking into consideration the complexity of the reality in schools. In relation to this, there was also a risk that teachers, as well as students and parents, could be side-stepped in the evaluation process and made only

objects of the process. From this perspective it became crucial to find alternative methods for evaluation which would allow for the consideration of the complexity of the school environment and which would give teachers the opportunity to be part of the process.

In this context the EU Pilot Project on Quality Evaluation in School Education played an important role in developing alternative models for evaluation. Internal school evaluation has been identified as a critical element in the pursuit of quality and a way of emphasising the professional responsibility of teachers. In order to make developments in these directions possible, schools need resources specially earmarked to support such programmes. Teachers need to be given time to sit down together and plan and implement evaluation activities. In order to help the teachers to find appropriate methods for the school-based evaluation they have to be offered suitable in-service training.

4. Benchmarks and Indicators

The EU Pilot Project on Quality Evaluation in School Education played a significant role in promoting models of school-based evaluation. ETUCE saw it as important that the positive and useful experiences from this project were considered in the future EU work related to quality in education.

Partly as a result of the pilot project and partly as a result of many other developments, the EU Commission raised the idea of developing some types of indicators related to quality education. In the final communiqué of the conference of the Ministers of Education of the EU and the acceding countries held in Prague in June 1998, the EU Commission was invited to set up a Working Committee of national experts with the objective of identifying a small number of key indicators or benchmarks to assist national evaluation of systems in the area of school standards. On the basis of a list of indicators identified in a progress report of the Committee, it was decided to prepare a *European report on quality of education*. This report was presented by the EU Commission in May 2000 and discussed at a conference of Ministers of Education of the EU and the acceding countries in Bucharest in June 2000.

During this process, ETUCE has had regular contacts with the staff within the Commission responsible for this work. In these contacts, ETUCE emphasised that several studies related to different types of indicators in education already existed. If the EU were to take a new initiative in this field, it would be of importance to avoid duplication of work already done. ETUCE saw it as essential that a crucial element in any project on quality of education should be related to internal school based evaluation. It would also be necessary to examine how contacts and consultations between education trade unions, represented by ETUCE at European level and individual unions at national level, could be improved and further developed.

When the work with the indicators proceeded, it was noted that the project had been built to a very limited extent on the experiences from the pilot project on Quality Evaluation in School Education. As the project continued to materialise, ETUCE noted

that the findings in the planned report could play an important role for the European discussion on quality education. The conclusion was that it would be important to continue to follow the developments related to this project.

When the report was finally made public, ETUCE recommended member organisations to contact with the ministries of education in their countries. To guide member organisations, a document outlining some general principles supported by teacher organisations in relation to quality and evaluation, some comments related to the indicators used in the report, some comments related to the conclusions made in the report and some proposals on how the work at European level on quality could be developed were circulated (see the ETUCE document "*Indicators and Benchmarks of Quality School Education*").

5. New Skills

A new area for discussion about the development of education with clear links to the earlier discussions on quality and evaluation is what has been referred to as "new skills". In the Presidency Conclusions of the meeting of the European Council in Lisbon on 23 - 24 March 2000 the following recommendation is made:

"Europe's education and training systems need to adapt both to the demands of the knowledge society and to the need for an improved level and quality of employment. They will have to offer learning and training opportunities tailored to target groups at different stages of their lives: young people, unemployed adults and those in employment who are at risk of seeing their skills overtaken by rapid change. This new approach should have three main components: the development of local learning centres, the promotion of new basic skills, in particular in the information technologies, and increased transparency of qualifications."

The conclusion continues and calls upon the EU Member States, the Council and the Commission to take the necessary steps within their areas of competence to meet a number of targets, among them:

"a European framework should define the new basic skills to be provided through lifelong learning: IT skills, foreign languages, technological culture, entrepreneurship and social skills.."

This raises at least three questions, which are all at present being examined by the European Commission:

- 1) What is to be understood by the concept "a European framework"?
- 2) What do we understand by "new basic skills" and how can its contents be described?
How to define the relevant skills in IT, foreign languages, technological culture, entrepreneurship and social ability?
- 3) What are the implications of this for the education system, quality of education and evaluation?

The idea of a framework can be understood in different ways. There are at least three possibilities:

- a **"clearing house"**: a mechanism allowing the identification of short and long term needs ("watchdog") including a method for the 'distribution' of the institutional responses to those emerging needs between actors in the formal, informal and non-formal sector ;
- a mechanism to arrive at **common understanding and definitions**;
- a mechanism to **link form and functions**: new ways of teaching/certifying for new areas of skills.

All those skills, which have been described as "new skills", need to be further examined and elaborated. What is the difference between "skills" and "knowledge"? What are IT skills and technological culture? To what extent are they about using IT and to which extent are they about a broader approach incorporating a large number of other skills? How are skills in foreign language improved? How can methods for language teaching be improved? Which languages should be emphasised? What do we understand by "Entrepreneurship"? Should it be taught in school or elsewhere? What do we understand by "Social skills"? Can social skills be taught? What is the responsibility of the school?

Obviously, these matters may have several implications for education and are of course also highly correlated to the discussion on quality in education. If these skills are seen as essential educational objectives, it means logically that quality education should help students to acquire this skills. The question is how "new" the "new skills" really are. Could it to some extent be a matter of reviewing priorities in the existing curriculum or is it a matter of introducing a whole new set of skills into the curriculum? Does the introduction of "new skills" also imply new structures for schooling, teaching methods, teacher education and evaluation?

6. Next step?

The crucial question for ETUCE now is what the next step will be in the work related to quality education, evaluation, indicators and benchmarks? The work started with a general approach to quality education and has, over the years, dealt with evaluation, with a specific emphasis on internal school-based evaluation, and then indicators and benchmarks. What should be emphasised in the future work and should the question of "new skills" be integrated into this work?

7. Summary

- I. Quality has become an important part of the education and training agenda. This should be seen in the light of at least three trends: 1) the general development towards deregulation of management, which has led to the need for stronger central control through detailed curricula and the development of different "quality assessment" systems, 2) a European strategy to face growing international

competition is to improve the quality of products, which demands investment in skills and knowledge, and 3) there is a wish in many circles to reduce the costs of education.

- II. It must be recognised that there exists a sincere wish among many politicians and decision makers to improve education. From this perspective, it is extremely important for teachers and their organisations to be involved in the discussions which take place at a national level, as well as at a European level.
- III. An important aspect of the discussion on quality in education has been how to improve the systems, instruments and methods of evaluation.
- IV. In many cases evaluation has been focused too much on easily measurable school achievement, without taking into consideration the complexity of the reality in schools. There has also been a tendency that teachers, as well as students and parents, have been side-stepped in the evaluation process and made only objects of the process. From this perspective, it is crucial to find alternative methods for evaluation which will allow for the consideration of the complexity of the school environment and which would give teachers a possibility to be part of the process. The pilot project on Quality Evaluation in School Education has been seen as an important step in that direction.
- V. ETUCE saw it as essential that a crucial element in any EU project on quality in education should be related to internal school- based evaluation.
- VI. ETUCE noted that the project on indicators and benchmarks was to a very limited extent built on the experiences from the pilot project on Quality Evaluation in School Education, but assumed that the project could play an important role for the whole European discussion on quality education.
- VII. ETUCE recommended its member organisations to be in contact with the ministries of education in their countries to discuss the **European report on quality of education**. To guide member organisations, a document outlining some general principles in relation to quality and evaluation, some comments related to the indicators used in the report, some comments related to the conclusions made in the report and some proposals on how the work at European level on quality could be developed were circulated.
- VIII. The Presidency Conclusions of the meeting of the European Council in Lisbon on 23 - 24 March 2000 called for a European framework defining new basic skills (IT skills, foreign languages, technological culture, entrepreneurship and social skills).
- IX. A European framework defining new basic skills raises at least three questions; 1) What is understood by the concept "a European framework"?, 2) What do we understand by "new basic skills" and how can its contents be described? and 3)

What are the implications of this for the education system, quality of education and evaluation?

- X. The crucial question for ETUCE now is what will be the next step in the work with quality education, evaluation, indicators and benchmarks?

REPORT FROM GROUP 1: MULTILINGUAL GROUP

Group discussion 1

Chair: George Vansweevelt

Rapporteur: Marit Dahl

The two speeches by the representatives from OECD and EU formed the basis for the discussion. The main points of view can be summarised as follows:

1. Partly, at least, as a reflection of the fairly complex composition of the group (ten countries, of which several are federations; many languages and cultures, etc.), it was underlined that ETUCE has to take account in its future work of all the differences that exist between member organisations and countries. The variety will increase even more with the entry into the EU of the Central and Eastern European countries.
2. Mobility was an important issue, related to both students and teachers. The need to establish mutual recognition of qualifications, in order for students to be able to take at least part of their education in a country other than their own, was emphasised. It turned out that this is a national problem in some federal countries, as much as between countries, and can thus be regarded as a challenge to national unions and ETUCE alike.
3. Quality was mentioned by many speakers. It was agreed that an open and structured debate on quality is important in itself. Several questions were raised: What do we mean by quality? Is it possible (or, indeed, desirable) to agree on one definition? How can we secure quality for all, i.e. a combination of equal opportunities, equity and quality? How does appraisal of teachers and, possibly, the introduction of merit pay, affect the quality of education? What consequences do we see for teachers? Based on several concrete experiences, it was agreed that increased market-orientation in education will undoubtedly increase inequalities. How can teacher unions address this issue, nationally and at European level? What is in the interests of children and young people in this respect? How can we defend quality in the public sector?
4. The importance of social dialogue and consultations between authorities and trade unions was strongly emphasised. Even in this area the experiences of the group members differed widely, the extremes probably being represented by Spain and Norway. In Spain, there was said to be "absolutely no consultation", in Norway, on the other hand, there is a consistent and strong tradition of social dialogue and consultation. As an example, unions were at present taking part in the preparations for the meeting of OECD Education Ministers in April.

5. Other topics and issues touched upon included:
 - the training of teachers, both initial and post-qualification
 - the relationship between financing and quality of education
 - the importance of having basic education publicly funded

Group discussion 2

Conclusions, areas of importance

1. The reduced status of the teaching profession is giving rise to for concern, as is also the lack of teachers in many countries. Both teacher salaries and working conditions affect recruitment. What can teacher unions do to improve the situation?
2. Increased workload and stress characterise the working life of many teachers, as governments demand more and more, in the name of efficiency and effectiveness. How can unions build strategies to meet these problems?
3. It is necessary to build closer partnerships with parents, who should be very important allies. There should also be closer partnerships with industry, not in the form of sponsorships but in a wider context. Unions must be active and, at the same time, realise the strength of various partners. For the unions and for ETUCE to increase in strength, it is necessary for all member organisations to recruit more members.
4. Educational research is important. Both national unions and ETUCE should make more use of existing research results and should also be in a position to commission relevant research projects.
5. In an era in which the quest for effectiveness and efficiency tends to limit the scope of education, the teacher unions should be active proponents of the broad objectives and (moral) purposes of education (Bildung!). At the same time, teachers must be willing to open our schools, to have transparency, and to encourage a dialogue nationally.
6. It is necessary to pay special attention to conditions that obstruct quality. In this connection, both utilising research and building partnerships are fundamental.

REPORT FROM GROUP 2

Group discussion 1

Rapporteur: George Mc Bride

1. The group agreed firstly that the appropriate definition of lifelong learning was that in which early education, school education, third level education and all later education should be perceived as an integrated coherent experience.
2. The group recognised that Ministers of Education met within a number of frameworks - EU; EU/EFTA/candidate countries (35), OECD ad hoc groupings - and that these meetings provide a number of agendas for action; some ad hoc, some long term.
3. The group recognised also that other ministers made decisions on education, again within various frameworks.
4. To some extent, ministerial agendas were set by the extent to which data were readily available; in reality, such agendas were often set by the need for governments to be seen to be taking action which would lead to short term visible gains or successes.
5. In this context, it is crucial that ETUCE contributes to setting the agenda, rather than responding to the proposals of others. It is important that we are not simply drawn into debates on the details of proposals by others (e.g. the EU 16 indicators) but rather seek to develop our views on the principles underpinning sets of indicators - a political process, not a technical one.
6. In the first place, we will have to consider our conception of quality in education.
7. Central to this concept is the role of the teacher. While the OECD ministers in April will be considering the issue of teacher shortage and could have been considering cheap ways of ensuring new entrants without regard to quality, we must agree on the importance of initial teacher education and of continuing professional development in ensuring quality - indeed, as others are entitled to life long learning, so also are teachers.
8. Also a quality school system cannot depend on making such demands on teachers that many (indeed in some countries a majority) suffer from stress, exhaustion and burn out.

9. In addition to initial education and continuing professional development, teachers can be supported by programmes aimed at new teachers, by investment in the teaching environment, by the provision of resources, and by staffing levels which allow the development of new and more productive teaching methodologies.
10. Teachers can also be supported through the establishment of curricula which ensure a minimum of common sets of outcomes for all learners, but which allow teachers the autonomy to develop the best means of reaching the outcomes.
11. Teachers can also be supported by evaluation systems which combine external evaluation and internal evaluation - the model developed within the 101 schools project should be built on. Reflection on our own practice within a school is essential but teachers can set up networks to consider issues of pedagogy: of curricula of continuing professional development (CPD).
12. Teacher autonomy should not be defined solely in terms of the individual teacher working with a class in a closed room; teacher autonomy operates also at the level of the team or the school, developing and evaluating new practice.
13. ETUCE and member unions can contribute to this in various ways - through drawing on the research of others, especially these outside OECD; by commissioning research; by promoting educational debate within their own membership. Such processes become all the more important with the threat of privatisation, justified on ideological grounds and all the more important given the genuine need for curricular and pedagogical reform. In this context, the relationship between the promotion of new basic skills and quality becomes clearer.
14. The development of new methodologies, new pedagogies and new ways of working with colleagues in school and out of school, new ways of involving learners in planning and evaluation requires resources: materials, support, CPD but most of all time (in other words staffing). While we must demand investment in education, we have to recognise the possibility of redirecting existing resources.
15. There are risks in such developments - additional workload for teachers; challenges in classroom management; emotional pressure on teachers; risks of de-skilling; risks in opening up cheap options for employers who seek to replace teachers. Unions must control this process.
16. Therefore ETUCE and individual unions must be part of this dialogue, must support members and must reassure teachers that they are capable of carrying out their central role effectively.
17. In managing change, we can recognise that some new developments are not entirely new and that we can build on existing practice, thereby drawing on the strengths of teachers while providing reassurance that they are the key players.

18. It is necessary to promote a debate on the nature of the curriculum and, in so doing, recognise the range of models that is now available within the ETUCE countries, whether established national models or trial models which are being worked on. This will require us to consider such issues as the relationship between knowledge and skills, the traditional subject boundaries, values and attitudes underpinning curricula, pedagogy and growing knowledge of how children learn. ETUCE and unions must be key players in this debate. ETUCE must share information immediately.
19. As part of our contribution to managing change, as opposed to accepting others' agendas, we have to discuss the nature of employability, rather than treating this as a swear word to be avoided in polite company. In so doing, we should ensure that the public are reminded that structural unemployment is not the fault of schools.
20. Developments such as the above have implications for teachers' conditions of service, particularly in terms of the ownership of time, in terms of the right to CPD, in terms of control of CPD, in terms of relationships with colleagues in school, and in terms of the roles of other stakeholders in contributing to educational planning.
21. If managed properly, such conditions can be attractive in recruiting new entrants, both young and older, and in retaining them in the classroom. This is an argument we should deploy to meet the issue of teacher shortage. This again has implications for teacher educators, who will face this issue of designing entry courses for people with a variety of backgrounds and experience.
22. Change needs to be managed. This is an obligation on governments and ETUCE and unions must encourage management of change which recognises and sustains the values and strength of the public schools and of their teachers.

Group discussion 2

This discussion focused on the role of ETUCE in promoting the views of teacher unions and of teacher unions on issues of quality and of indicators.

1. Mutual support between ETUCE and its member unions is necessary to facilitate social dialogue on quality and indicators at both EU and national level.
2. Much work has been done by unions in individual countries on these issues. There should be sharing among unions of:
 - documents
 - materials
 - good practice
 - experience

ETUCE has traditionally used questionnaires to gain this information: this is not a very effective method.

ETUCE should develop a framework for sharing and disseminating such information more effectively.

3. A key part of this would be the use of the Internet to share experience through:
 - the dissemination of policy papers
 - reports from Round Tables
 - reference to national documents
4. ETUCE should also support networks of special interest groups, members of which could maintain dialogue through e-mail
5. ETUCE could use the Internet to distribute Board/Assembly documents to organisations to inform their decision-making, rather than only supplying paper copies to individual delegates.
6. Such developments would publicly recognise the quality of our public education systems, but would also stimulate critical reflection.
7. Such developments require ETUCE to invest resources at a time when there are other demands on its funds (e.g. consulting with the Commission).
8. Such developments also depend on the development of a culture among all unions which recognises the value of sharing information.
9. Such investment is justified, as the ETUCE must operate in two directions
 - a) externally (e.g. to the Commission)
 - b) internally to national unions

Unions must perceive the links between these two areas of work.

REPORT FROM GROUP 3

Rapporteur: Patrick Gonthier

Our working group focused on addressing the issue of indicators globally, making a distinction between the OECD indicators and those recommended by the European Commission.

We were fortunate enough to benefit from the presence of Mr Hingel, who was able to provide us with additional explanations.

The group as a whole expressed the view that educational systems are faced with far-reaching changes: teachers are raising questions about their responsibilities, the content they teach and teaching practices.

Within this context, indicators are instruments that can enable a more precise zeroing in on what society expects of educational systems. They can be tools for comparison and exchanges on the objectives of educational systems and on practices and their results. Comparing for comparison's sake makes no sense in the long term, however, and observing differences associated with various practices does nothing to help change the public service of education.

The OECD indicators are based on undeniable observations. They attest to what trade unionists have been demanding for years: the importance of investing in education.

Failures, exclusion, damage that has to be repaired throughout a lifetime are more expensive to society than an initial investment in education. The OECD indicators on this point put strategic questions to governments.

The OECD indicators mark a break with earlier positions adopted by this organisation.

They are more than mere indicators, specifying content as well, because it is not results that are to be attained, but skills and capabilities. They therefore demonstrate the importance of what happens in the classroom.

The European indicators enable measurement of what separates educational systems at present and what could bring them closer together.

For Mr Hingel, an action plan formulated by the Commission alone is politics in its most basic form. An action plan must reflect a political ambition shared by the greatest number possible.

Everyone has to know what change will lead to, both individually and collectively.

There is a considerable risk, noted members of the group, of indicators becoming banal. Indicators developed without consultation, used as imperatives ("you must change") or for budgetary reasons ("you cost too much") could lead educational systems into an impasse and would not benefit users of educational systems.

Change –which is the goal of the indicators- requires respect for, listening to and the involvement of teachers.

Trade unions must take up the issue of indicators. Passivity and over-reacting will lead to nothing. We must participate, play a key role. Trade unionists cannot reject tools that enable analysis and anticipation. They might challenge the use made of the results, but cannot be opposed to the instruments as such.

Trade unionists must also recall that education and training, which prepare for employment, also provide training in citizenship, culture (literary, artistic, technical) and the humanist values shared by European educational systems.

But can that be measured with indicators?

General Report

1. Context

Education policies have received more and more attention in international discussions. Earlier these matters were only discussed by ministers of education, but nowadays educational matters occur more frequently on the agendas of meetings of Ministers of Finance and even on the agendas of meetings of heads of states. This is a positive development and shows that education today is regarded as an important policy area.

Education policies are discussed in many different forums, they are discussed within the framework of the European Union as well as in the framework of other international bodies. A recent trend has also been for ministers of education to set up separate structures for educational discussions, such as the Bologna process or the Florence process.

Many initiatives have been taken recently in the field of education at European level. Quality of education and evaluation are at present high on the agenda in the EU. The EU initiated the project *Indicators and benchmarks of quality of school education* and prepared the *European report on quality of education* which was published in June 2000. This report could be regarded as an indication of which policy areas ministers of education intend to discuss.

In the conclusions from the Lisbon summit, educational matters are referred to several times. As a consequence of this, new initiatives have been launched by the European Commission. A discussion on lifelong learning has been initiated, as well as a discussion on what is referred to as "new basic skills".

Also, other international organisations have dealt with questions related to quality and indicators. OECD has initiated **PISA** (the Programme for International Student Assessment). The first results from this project will be published in September this year.

This new interest in educational matters at European level has made it more important for the ETUCE to find ways to improve the social dialogue and to create mechanisms for consultations with the EU Commission, as well as with other concerned bodies and institutions. ETUCE has been successful in establishing a dialogue with the Commission. Generally the opportunities to present views and to exchange opinions with the Commission are now better than ever. This has to be maintained, but it is also essential to elaborate and strengthen these contacts. In order to do so it is necessary to make sure that ETUCE can participate in the on-going European discussions. This means that ETUCE has to be more pro-active in formulating its policy. It also means that ETUCE members must find ways to improve the national dialogue between teacher unions and ministries in general and specifically on European educational matters.

2. Concepts

2.1. Lifelong learning

The updating of knowledge and the acquisition of new skills throughout life has become an obligation and a requirement. The concept which summarise this approach is life-long learning. Lifelong learning must be seen as an entitlement that begins with the entry to early years provision and high quality primary and secondary education, followed by higher education and adult education.

Lifelong learning must be seen as a broad concept. This concept certainly includes learning related to the world of work, but also covers several other aspects of learning. Lifelong learning is related to life as a citizen and to learning for non-vocational and recreational purposes based on the individuals' own interests and preferences. Lifelong learning must include aspects related to employability, but also simply "learning for fun" and for joy. The joy of learning is a very powerful motivational factor.

There is a tendency to discuss lifelong learning as if it was only a matter of adult education. Certainly, adult education is an important part of lifelong learning, but not the only part. Obviously a life-long learning approach puts the whole education system in a new context. This has specific relevance for early childhood education. Research and statistics show that, when early childhood education is of high quality, it stimulates a wish to learn and a desire to continue doing so. Lack of or inadequacy of early childhood education seriously undermines the potential of lifelong learning. If basic learning skills are learned early, this will open up new possibilities for other parts of the education system. People who have received good education already when very young are more able to take advantage of complementary forms of education or training. There is a danger that the development of continuing education might widen the gap between individuals with different social backgrounds. Investment in high quality early childhood education may be one important measure to provide a real opportunity for lifelong learning for all.

2.2. Quality of education

It is probably not possible to come up with one simple definition of quality of education. Quality of education is a complex matter including many different elements. A basic approach must be that a quality education is an education which prepares people in the best possible way for different aspects of life; for the world of work, for cultural life, for life as citizens and for private life. Quality of education is both a matter of personal development and employability.

A useful approach in this respect is a broadly defined literacy concept. Literacy can be understood as a multidimensional concept including reading literacy, mathematical literacy, scientific literacy and technological literacy. This includes the ability of the students to understand, assess, use and reflect on information, in order to achieve their

goals, to develop their knowledge and potential and to try to participate actively in society.

Quality cannot be seen as a static concept. Quality is in fact a *relative* matter - relative to the particular time and place and to particular learners and their circumstances. A key aspect of quality is the relevance of the subjects taught and the objectives of education. Curriculum work probably represents the most comprehensive challenge to schools. Quality education is an education that provides students with the tools to look for solutions to the challenges confronting mankind. In a changing world this means that what was considered quality education yesterday might not meet the standard of what will be understood as quality tomorrow. This is particularly true at present if we take into consideration many of the rapid changes which have affected society. From this perspective there is a need to continuously discuss the relevance of the curriculum and to define and redefine it.

The professional freedom or autonomy of the teacher is of crucial importance in developing quality in education. Teacher autonomy should be regarded as the "guarantee" by the profession that quality work is done. A national curriculum gives the general objectives of education and the teacher, who knows the students, has to decide which methods to use in order to create an optimal learning situation. How the teaching is done in the classroom should never be prescribed by persons outside the classroom reality. This does not imply that authorities should not suggest new teaching methods through in-service training, professional development and other means. For teachers to be given different approaches and models for their teaching is important and necessary, but it must never turn into a process of dictating which methods to use.

Although autonomy and professional freedom are important, there are also reasons to be prudent in relation to these matters. Stress is a problem which frequently affects many teachers. In order to avoid a cynical misuse of teachers' ambitions to do a good job, certain measures have to be taken to regulate the workload and to prevent teachers from becoming burned out.

Teacher education is essential for the professionalism of the teacher. Good teacher education will lay the foundation for good teaching practice and is one of the most important factors contributing to improved quality in education. Teacher education must be seen as a process including both pre-service education, in-service training and professional development.

2.3. New basic skills

A new area for discussion about the development of education with clear links to the earlier discussion on quality is what has been referred to as "new skills". In the Presidency Conclusions of the meeting of the European Council in Lisbon on 23 - 24 March 2000 the following recommendation is made:

"Europe's education and training systems need to adapt both to the demands of the knowledge society and to the need for an improved level and quality of employment."

They will have to offer learning and training opportunities tailored to target groups at different stages of their lives: young people, unemployed adults and those in employment who are at risk of seeing their skills overtaken by rapid change. This new approach should have three main components: the development of local learning centres, the promotion of new basic skills, in particular in the information technologies, and increased transparency of qualifications."

The conclusion continues and calls upon the EU Member States, the Council and the Commission to take the necessary steps within their areas of competence to meet a number of targets, among them: *"a European framework should define the new basic skills to be provided through lifelong learning: IT skills, foreign languages, technological culture, entrepreneurship and social skills."*

These skills, which have been described as "new skills", need to be further examined and elaborated. The question is how "new" the "new skills" really are. Could it to some extent be a matter of reviewing priorities in the existing curriculum or is it a matter of introducing a whole new set of skills into the curriculum? What is the difference between "skills" and "knowledge"? What are IT skills and technological culture? To what extent are they about using IT and to what extent are they about a broader approach incorporating a large number of other skills? How are skills in foreign languages improved? How can methods for language teaching be improved? Which languages should be emphasised? What do we understand by "Entrepreneurship"? Should it be taught in school or elsewhere? What do we understand by "Social skills"? Can social skills be taught?

There may be good reasons to examine specifically and critically concepts such as IT skills and entrepreneurship. Often the skills related to using new technologies are reduced to a technical skill, while it should be regarded as something much bigger. When using new technologies, the ability to search and categorise information, to look for meaning, to draw conclusions, to critically examine, etc. are crucial. These are skills which are much wider than the technical use of a machine. Entrepreneurship is difficult to understand. Is it a matter of transforming everyone into being an entrepreneur or are there specific skills which entrepreneurs are assumed to have which could be considered as useful in general? If the latter, to what extent are these skills different from the skills covered by social skills?

If there are new basic skills which should be seen as essential educational objectives, it means logically that quality education should help students to acquire these skills. Does the introduction of "new skills" imply new curricula, new structures for schooling, teaching methods, teacher education and evaluation?

2.4. Evaluation

If quality is important, there must also be methods to evaluate to what extent quality education is achieved. Much of the discussion about quality of education has been about how to measure and assess quality. Evaluation of schools must serve

developmental purposes, not only as a means of controlling the schools. Governments have experimented with different combinations of inspections and tests. These trends constitute a risk that evaluation would focus too much on easily measurable school achievement, without taking into consideration the complexity of the reality in schools. There must be a balanced approach to evaluation where the method used in a country to evaluate education is a combination of several methods. From this perspective, it is crucial to find complementary methods for evaluation which allow for the consideration of the complexity of the school environment and which would give teachers the opportunity to be part of the process.

Internal school evaluation must be identified as a critical element in the pursuit of quality and a way of emphasising the professional responsibility of teachers. In order to make developments in these directions possible, schools need resources specially earmarked to support such programmes. Teachers need to be given time to sit down together and plan and implement evaluation activities. In order to help the teachers to find appropriate methods for the school-based evaluation, they have to be offered suitable in-service training.

In relation to evaluation, it is also important to mention educational research. There is a general need to have a better founded knowledge about the factors, methods and structures which support learning. In many situations there has been too much speculation about such matters. Educational policy and changes in education must be based on real knowledge about the learning process. A development towards better knowledge in this field can be achieved in many ways. Two important ways are what teachers themselves can notice through systematic observations of the teaching and learning process in schools and the information professional education researchers can gather through scientific research projects. Both ways are important and it is urgent to improve the dialogue between the practitioners in the education sector and the educational researchers. In this context it is also important to find ways to link internal and external evaluation to each other.

3. Proposals

3.1. Good examples

In order to demonstrate what ETUCE believes to be good quality education and good methods for evaluation it is necessary to show good examples. It should be noted that many other actors in the educational arena actively highlight what they think are good examples. One way of doing this could be to create a kind of ETUCE reward.

3.2. The panel on quality education

In its continued work the Advisory Panel on Quality should give special attention to questions related to quality education, evaluation and new basic skills.

3.3. Early childhood education

It was clearly shown at the Round Table that early childhood education plays a crucial role in giving equal access to lifelong learning and equal opportunities later in life. ETUCE must consider taking special initiatives to promote a development in Europe towards a situation where all children have the right to receive free early childhood education.

3.4. Teacher education

Teacher education plays a crucial role in improving the quality of education. ETUCE has already clearly indicated in its policy report of 1994 and in the up-date of the report proposed by the Executive Board in January the changes which are needed in this field. It is important that ETUCE's work in this field should continue and be linked with the growing problem of teacher shortage.

3.5. Evaluation

Evaluation is an essential part of the discussion on how to improve quality. ETUCE must continue to follow carefully developments within EU concerning evaluation, indicators and benchmarks. It is also important that the Internationals follow similar developments in other international organisations, specifically the PISA Project in OECD.

There is also a need to collect and exchange information on evaluation systems in different countries in order to elaborate further the ETUCE view that evaluation systems must be balanced systems containing both external and internal evaluation. Good experiences from schools on how to organise school-based evaluation need to be exchanged and made public. One way of conducting activities in this field could be to use appropriate EU programmes to set up projects for exchange of information and experience, including schools and/or teacher organisations.

3.6. Social dialogue - consultations

Contacts with the EU Commission have improved in recent years, but there is still a need to improve them further. Part of that work must be to improve the mechanisms for consultation, both formal and informal. There is also a need to develop contacts with other bodies within the EU, both official bodies and other organisations.

There is a need to collect and exchange information on the different systems for social dialogue and consultation, in order to help ETUCE member organisations to improve and strengthen the national mechanisms for social dialogue. Information needs to be exchanged. This could be done through the setting up of projects for exchange of information and experiences using appropriate EU programmes.

3.7. Research

In order to strengthen the knowledge of ETUCE and its member organisations on critical areas in educational policy, there is a need to improve the awareness of existing research in these areas. It might also be of interest to examine the possibilities of obtaining funds from the European Commission which will make it possible for ETUCE to commission research on specific topics. Topics of specific concern are quality education, early childhood education, teacher education, evaluation, social dialogue and future developments in the education sector.

3.8. Build Coalitions

To strengthen ETUCE's ability to present opinions and proposals, it is essential to build broad coalitions. Such coalitions may differ from issue to issue, but in order to find allies there is a need to have on-going contacts with a number of other European organisations.

Obvious coalition partners are the parents, as well as the students. It is also important to explore the opinions of employers and to find ways in which co-operation could be organised. From this perspective, contacts with organisations such as EPA (European Parents Association), OBESSU (Organizational Bureau of European Secondary Student Unions) and CEEP (Confédération Européenne de Employeurs Public) must continue. Contacts with the whole trade union movement must not be forgotten in this context. ETUCE's work as a part of and within ETUC (The European Trade Union Confederation) is of crucial importance in building broad coalitions.

Programme

Monday March 12

9.30 - 10.30	Opening of the Round Table: - Host organisation - ETUCE
10.30 - 10.45	Break
10.45 - 12.30	Key note speech: <i>"Monitoring the quality of education - the OECD indicators and assessment activities."</i> Mr. Schleicher (OECD) Questions and discussion
12.30 - 14.00	Lunch
14.00 - 15.30	<i>"EU policy and initiatives on indicators and new skills"</i> Introduction: Mr. Hingel (EU-Commission) Questions and discussion
15.30 - 16.00	Break
16.00 - 18.00	Group discussion

Tuesday March 13

9.00 - 10.00	Presentation of conclusions from the group discussion Questions and discussion
10.00 - 10.15	Break
10.15 - 11.15	The next step: What should ETUCE do now in the field of quality education, new skills, evaluation and indicators? (panel of representatives from ETUCE member organisations) Questions and discussion
11.15 - 12.00	Group discussion
12.00 - 13.30	Lunch
13.30 - 14.30	Presentation of conclusions from the group discussion Questions and discussion
14.30 - 15.30	Preliminary report from the Rapporteur General Questions and discussion
15.30 - 16.00	Closing of the Round Table

Participants list

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Country</u>
Herbert Schwarzer	GÖD	Austria
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Kristina Aaltonen	DLF	Denmark
Stig Lund	BUPL	Denmark
Unni Lind	BUPL	Denmark
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Erik Prinds	GL	Denmark
Hans Laugesen	GL	Denmark
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Patrick Gonthier	UNSA	France
Yves Baunay	SNES	France
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