



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Executive Board

Hundred and eighty-sixth session

186 EX/INF.20
PARIS, 3 May 2011
English & French only

Item 17 of the provisional agenda

INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF UNESCO

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS BY THE SENIOR EXPERT GROUP ON REFORMS

SUMMARY

This document presents a summary of the conclusions and suggestions emanating from the meeting of the Senior Expert Group on Reforms convened and chaired by the Director-General on 17 March 2011, at UNESCO Headquarters. The purpose of the Group is to advise her on the reform and change management process of UNESCO.

On 17 March 2011, the Director-General convened and chaired a Senior Expert Group on Reforms at UNESCO Headquarters. The following independent international experts, recognized in multilateral affairs and organizational change, participated: **Jacques Attali** (France), **Amina Az-Zubair** (Nigeria), **Musa Bin Jaafar Bin Hassan** (Oman), **Michel Camdessus** (France), **Ahmad Jalali** (Islamic Republic of Iran), **Carlos Perez del Castillo** (Uruguay), **Jo Ritzen** (Netherlands), **Adama Samassekou** (Mali), **Ghassan Salame** (Lebanon), and **Zhang Xingsheng** (China).

The Senior Expert Group emphasized the need for UNESCO to focus its activities more in areas of our comparative advantage. The experts underscored the role of UNESCO in maintaining a dialogue and shift the emphasis more towards international cooperation involving all countries. They considered that UNESCO's uniqueness lies in its policy advisory and normative role and that UNESCO should not see itself as a doer of everything. The Organization's intellectual watch function deserves to be reinvigorated, including the ethical dimension of UNESCO's mandate. UNESCO should concentrate on a few flagships per sector. In particular, the profile of UNESCO's central role in education could be heightened. For a number of activities, the Organization should work with partners to allow doing more with less.

Thematic summary of the Report:

Taking advantage of UNESCO's dual role as an international cooperation agency and a development agency

1. By its mandate, UNESCO is both an international cooperation agency and a development agency. However, it is often seen as a development agency only. UNESCO is expected to provide intellectual and strategic leadership as well as to serve as a reference point, not merely as a development organization. Conversely, development/ funding institutions should not be setting directions and norms in the fields of education, science or culture, which are the core of the agenda of normative institutions. As an international cooperation agency, UNESCO should be more efficient in communicating what it does, that is, addressing the needs and expectations of both developed and developing countries. The role of UNESCO is to assist all its Member States to translate responses to the global challenges into their policies. More generally, UNESCO should promote respect for cultural diversity in development policies.

Making strategic choices based on UNESCO's comparative advantages

2. UNESCO should build on areas of excellence and cases of undeniable and demonstrated expertise, while recognizing that it may not necessarily have a comparative advantage in all its fields of competence. Difficult strategic choices will need to be made, driven by its comparative advantage. The point of departure should be things where UNESCO has a capacity or delivery strength compared to other organizations. If no strategic choices are made and the budget remains constant (declining in real terms), UNESCO will be condemned to a piecemeal approach and a "salami tactic", i.e. it will have to make cuts everywhere, including in areas where it has a comparative advantage. Breaking its inner silos, UNESCO should take advantage of its multisectoral structure to address such complex challenges as climate change in a systemic way, UNESCO must be strategic (a) in selecting what programmes to keep (b) what programmes to create and (c) what programmes it could do with others in strategic partnerships. If too many programmes are implemented on a piecemeal basis, the Organization becomes irrelevant. In this regard, it would be helpful if two to three success stories/flagships could be developed per Sector.

Reinforcing UNESCO's role in policy advice

3. Promoting the inherently qualitative nature of most of its activities, UNESCO should invest in the policy areas of its sectors. Even if policy advice is difficult to measure, it is essential for bringing about change. UNESCO's role is essential for decision-makers, namely to look beyond their national boundaries and for countries to learn from each others' experiences. It is UNESCO's role as a standard setter to convince governments to keep their commitments. UNESCO should build strong monitoring mechanisms and encourage Member States to devote appropriate resources to the implementation of their own decisions. For instance, UNESCO must have the courage to criticize education systems when they do not meet a number of criteria. Additionally, there should be a strong emphasis on communication. Formulating policies is good, communicating on them is better: there will be a cost if no effective communication is undertaken.

Asserting itself as a knowledge organization, a facilitator and a standard setter

4. As change in the world is accelerating, UNESCO does not have to be a doer of everything. UNESCO will need to make choices and take calculated risks. It should avoid dispersion experienced by many organizations which undertake too many activities at the field level without a clear link to a global strategy. In the smaller Sectors, it should focus strongly on normative work (e.g. on information and digital age), knowledge management and benchmarking only, foregoing project activities and implementation to partners. UNESCO can act as a knowledge broker, while relying on partners for the implementation of guidelines and policies at the country level. UNESCO should also have strong regional offices rather than a sprinkling of offices everywhere, taking into account also that, sometimes, field offices end up being less efficient than some NGOs.

Repositioning UNESCO as a leading laboratory of ideas

5. Given its mandate, the danger for UNESCO is not economic austerity, it rather lies in ideas austerity. UNESCO should reinforce its function of intellectual watch, which however does not mean that it should address or engage intellectuals only. Rather, their expertise should be harnessed to foster UNESCO's broad-based mandate. To strengthen its relevance, UNESCO should identify the underutilized dimensions of its Constitution, which needs to be reread and reframed in concert with contemporary challenges but not rewritten. In contributing to the vision for the Organization, the Director-General could also make use of various advisory bodies, such as the International Council of Philosophy and Human Sciences (ICPHS). To reposition itself within the United Nations system, UNESCO should leverage the capacities of the United Nations University (UNU) as its think tank. UNESCO should produce reports that are readable to a wider audience than its staff and delegations. Such reports could also be prepared by independent experts who are not financed by UNESCO but have a strong intellectual interest in its mandate.

Emphasizing UNESCO's ethical mandate

6. One of UNESCO's comparative advantages lies in the ethical dimension of its mandate. For example, UNESCO should address the ethical dimensions of education indispensable to prepare citizens for their responsibilities. UNESCO must assert itself as a standard setter. Just as the C in UNESCO's acronym came to mean "culture" and "Communication and Information", there should be a push, aided by civil society, to add a new meaning to the "E" in UNESCO and create strong ethical components in the Organization. UNESCO has the potential to provide intellectual and moral solutions to global crises, such as climate change. UNESCO is also uniquely positioned to address the ethical foundations of the solution to the global financial crisis. For instance, UNESCO could organize a conference with the top 20-25 Business Schools of the world to explore what ethical foundations are underlying their decisions and how they are trained to take this into account. UNESCO must contribute to counter the currently dominant idea that the economy can be managed unaffected by ethical values and its long term consequences to humankind.

Identifying and developing flagship programmes

7. If UNESCO were to cut programmes for strategic positioning purposes, it would need to concentrate on highly visible flagship projects for the various Sectors. A flagship programme should be developed in particular for the education sector that would have the same kind of visibility as World Heritage. Also, UNESCO needs to find a common thread between its programmes in order to resume its position as an inventor of original initiatives (such as the Biosphere Reserves Network) or concepts (such as eco-city concept or knowledge societies). It is essential to demonstrate the link between the global vision and actions on the field. This can be accomplished only if the boundaries between sectors are overcome towards more intersectoral and interdisciplinary work and the search for solutions to global challenges are dealt with through systems approaches.

8. In identifying flagship programmes, attention should be paid to key elements relevant for the success of the World Heritage programme:

- it has mobilized the best minds and state-of-the-art expertise;
- it was granted autonomy and independence;
- it possesses teeth: properties can be expelled from the List, representing a "policing" power comparable to that of the United Nations Security Council or the Dispute Settlement Body of the WTO, which all entail steep costs or heavy consequences for non-compliance with agreed commitments.

Heightening the profile of education while recognizing that education is relevant only as a system

9. In connection with the proposed tax levies on financial transactions, education as a potential beneficiary should become more attractive, emulating what has been done in the health sector. Nonetheless, the complex nature of education systems does not lend itself to quick-fix solutions. Raising funds for education should be done in line with an analysis of the real costs of sending every child to school. With UNESCO's lead, the education community should improve how it measures its action and impact.

Due to a lack of strategic and institutional coherence at the international level, education has ceased to be perceived as relevant at the field level. Unintended consequences of action have arisen, inasmuch as in countries like Nigeria the priority assigned to girls' education has resulted in some 9 million boys being left out of school. In light of the recent events in the Arab world, efforts must be made to prevent a gap emerging between education and employment. Consequently, there should be a clearer articulation between the EFA and the education-related MDG agendas.

Identifying UNESCO's interlocutors and their preoccupations

10. To assert its relevance, UNESCO must not only identify clearly and value its stakeholders and interlocutors, it must listen to the needs of these partners.

In a changing world, new actors keep appearing on the world scene. This is the lesson UNESCO should draw from the uprisings in the Arab world. Those events were ignited by the protests of young educated people against unemployment and the discrepancies between the education system and the job market as well as for the right to have a voice in decision-making, for good governance and accountability. As a consequence, UNESCO has to determine whether its activities are reaching the right people – and what expertise to deliver to whom.

Harnessing innovative and strategic partnerships to intervene where UNESCO experiences resources gaps

11. As the Organization is faced with budgetary constraints while having to be efficient at the international, regional and national levels, it should involve partners in a way to address the challenge to do more with less. UNESCO should become a leader in general questions of education, sciences and culture, while implementation and fund mobilization at country level would rely on partnerships with other international, regional and national actors. UNESCO can also leverage the power of networks that could inform and pressure decision-makers.

Developing differentiated strategies corresponding to the role of the state

12. We are in a world where governments lose gradually control over or impact in a number of fields, including in education (a crisis of the State) and where influence is shifting to multilateral organizations. Yet, multilateralism is currently also traversing a crisis – including among the G-20 which is seeking to play a leadership role in many global issues. This offers an opportunity for UNESCO to position itself in fields where the influence of governments is on the retreat (e.g. internet governance, cost of education). UNESCO should elaborate different strategies for specific areas of intervention.

13. Three categories of areas could be considered:

- areas where the State has retained an important presence (e. g. heritage);
- areas where the State has retreated considerably (e. g. the market of ideas);
- areas where the State is in competition with other actors (e. g. Internet governance).

Streamlining the governance of the Organization

14. The experts also discussed the functioning of the Organization as a whole. While it was acknowledged that such issues fell under the responsibility of the Member States, it was concluded that the Director-General could forward relevant propositions to her constituency – the Member States. The boundaries between and the division of labour among governing bodies could also be better defined.

UNESCO in a world reconciled through dialogue

15. While dialogue remains the hallmark of the Organization, it needs to be constantly revisited in order to address the challenges of a fast-paced global environment. UNESCO's role is to promote education, the sciences and culture as unifying factors. For example, it is important to note that, because science is translated into technology with crucial economic and military outcomes, science has become also a factor of division. UNESCO has the responsibility to promote science and all its sectors as unifiers of people across borders and catalysts of reconciliation.