



**MINUTES OF THE FOURTH REMC PROJECT MEETING, MALTA,
18-19 JUNE 2009**

Presentation of initial findings from primary research

Each project team presented initial findings from the qualitative fieldwork, mainly focusing on the material from parents and children regarding the social construction of personal identity. Presenting analyses at this preliminary stage proved very useful in opening up discussion about similarities and differences across the national systems. Emerging issues included:

- The importance of reflecting the complexity of how children and parents label their own religious beliefs and practices; this perspective contrasts sharply with much existing research which frames religiosity as a continuum from 'less' to 'more religious';
- Variation across and within systems in the extent to which children actively question their parents' beliefs;
- The relationship between religious identity and other aspects of identity, including nationality, ethnicity, social class and gender.

It was stressed that, while different approaches to the analysis can be used across teams, a common template should be adopted for describing the cases (schools/parents/children) included.

Action: Each team is to circulate a copy of their presentation after the meeting.

Action: Emer is to circulate a table template for outlining the number and nature of cases included in the research.

School differences in attitudinal outcomes

Silvia presented new analyses of PISA data exploring the differences between private independent, private dependent and public schools in student attitudes to the environment. This approach was designed to supplement existing research on

cognitive outcomes (test performance) to include analyses of non-cognitive (attitudinal) outcomes. The analyses controlled for differential selection into school sectors using propensity score matching. The analyses indicated no evidence of systematic differences in environmental concern and willingness to pay for environmental problems between students in private and public schools.

Action: Silvia will extend this work to look at other non-cognitive outcomes relating to feelings of isolation in the school context, belonging etc. Such an analysis is expected to provide a useful test of the emphasis on ‘care’ in the private dependent/religious school sector.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework was revisited in the light of emerging findings from the primary research. It was felt that the existing framework was useful for analytic purposes. Each element of the framework should be reflected in the write-up of the qualitative data. In particular, a focus on identity/identities as being multiple and fluid was seen as a core part of the framework. Although identity is often institutionalised within the school system, even schools do not have a fixed identity, since what constitutes a Catholic school, for example, is subject to change.

Publication strategy

It was decided that the team would aim to produce a book based on the research. This would include chapters on the individual countries, a comparative chapter on the qualitative research along with work from Silvia and Jaap on the European context and the impact of schools on non-cognitive outcomes.

The UCD team already has a good relationship with Palgrave so they should be explored as a possibility. Other options include Policy Press.

Structure and nature of the final report

The report to the European Commission should be similar in structure to the planned book in order to avoid too much extra work. The structure of the report will include:

- A chapter on the primary schools research from each country team; this should be around 8-10,000 words in length; how this is structured (e.g. school case-studies, separate discussion of parents etc.) can be decided by each team;

- For each chapter, pseudonyms should be assigned to schools, parents, teachers and children; quotes should be translated into English but where certain terms are ambiguous, it may be helpful to indicate the original phrase in brackets;
- A chapter on similarities and differences emerging from the different national systems;
- The EUI paper on religiosity across European countries (prepared for the interim report);
- A discussion of the implications of our research for policy development; this should be placed in the context of a discussion of relevant EU legislation (e.g. on human rights, equality, discrimination, school choice etc.). Advice from UCD Equality Studies personnel would be helpful in this regard.
- Clarification after meeting: The final report must be sent to the European Commission by (at latest) 1st March, 2010. Labour costs relating to the preparation of the final report for January and February 2010 can be claimed from the project budget, but no additional funds will be made available.

Action: Each team is to circulate a draft chapter on their analyses by Friday, September 11th.

Dissemination

Each country team (except EUI) is required to schedule a national seminar on the findings of the primary research. This seminar can only be funded within the lifetime of the project, that is, should take place before the end of December 2009.

Future research

It was agreed that the research raises a number of interesting issues which could usefully form the basis for further research.

Action: It was agreed to investigate possible funding sources for future research, with the following people investigating different opportunities:

- Theresa – European Structural Fund
- Ides – Socrates/Lifelong Learning, Leonardo
- Emer – ESF Eurocores, Norface, FP7
- Merike – Council of Europe.

Next meeting

The next meeting will take place in Vienna, after the ECER conference. It will run all day on Thursday, the 1st of October, and will finish in the early afternoon of Friday, the 2nd.