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GOLDEN 5 PROJECT



EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

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Introduction

The Golden Project, from its very beginning, has tried to provide some educational value to the institutional conditions planned to satisfy pupil's diversity. This interim report tries to describe both the conditions and processes in which such aim has been developed and assess its level of success. The report was conceived as an example of diagnosis evaluation, that is an evaluation that seeks to determine the conditions created by a program or a project. We believe that educational diagnosis can play a critic role both to the recognition and assessment of educatividad conditions and to the recognition and assessment of educability characteristics.

“Educatividad” and Educability are thus main concepts for the setting out of the problem we have just consider. The concept of “Educatividad” refers to the general conditions that define a certain way of educate. Such conditions include the Educational System, the school configuration, the elements of the curriculum (syllabus, etc.), as well as many different resources. In other words, the “learning conditions” contains all those issues that Stufflebeam (1989), within his CIPP evaluation model (Context, Input, Process and Product), called “Context” and “Input conditions”. All of them operate together to make the educational environments up. In other words, those conditions that we represent under the concept of Educatividad generate the different learning scenarios, being these ones responsible for educational experiences that people can live, and through them, the apprenticeships can be acquired. Following Stufflebeam's terminology and theoretical model, we can state that the “learning conditions” are socially built from the possibilities and limits offered both by the “context” (specially the Educational System regulation) and the “Input conditions” (specially the specific characteristics of a certain school).

This problem affects the institutionalization of the right to Education and reaches an enormous dimension since the people who get to each scenario are increasingly different and the needs to be satisfied in these scenarios are higher, too. Nowadays, the problem emerges with an unusual force as a result of joining the schools of a widening diversity of students.

Diagnosis evaluation doesn't mean that conditions are given and the only suitable answer is to modify the characteristics of “educabilidad”. On the contrary, just as it will be presented here, diagnosis evaluation may contribute to change the conditions of “educabilidad”. Such ability of the diagnosis evaluation to support initiatives which facilitate the adjustment between conditions educatividad and people educabilidad clearly corresponds with the aim given by Stufflebeam both to the context and the input conditions evaluations.

According to this evaluation approach and to the Golden Project aim to have an external evaluation during its last phase, this report provides a wide description and assesment of the project, as well as some improvements to consider.

1.- Methodology

The methodology of any type of evaluation is defined by the group of methods, techniques and instruments used in the data collection, as well as by the definition and selection of evaluation criteria that will be used to value them. Evaluation always includes a process of data collection, being this one the result of implementing some specific procedures in order to compile some valid and reliable evidence about the way and level in which a group of specific activities produce expected results or effects. In this case, the evaluation was defined by some decisions relating the following aspects:

1.1.- Evaluation fields.

The evaluation fields are the different dimensions in any project. Within the CIPP Model four main fields were defined:

- Context

The context comprises the group of social, economic, educative and cultural conditions that may affect a project success. It's important to appoint that the context is also the field in which the problems that a certain project tries to solve arise. The context evaluation will contribute to prevent some eventual difficulties, as well as to recognise and exploit some opportunities offered.

- Input conditions

They are the group of conditions stated by the institutions responsible for the project. They thus mean the starting institutional situation which support the different processes of the project.

The evaluation of such input conditions will contribute to define the necessary institutional adjustments that will help the project adaptation to the context conditions and to the institutional possibilities.

- Process

This aspect comprises all those processes which have contributed to reach the objectives defined in the project. Their evaluation will facilitate the objectives adaptation to the concrete conditions in which they will be developed and will contribute to their feasibility.

- Product

This issue means the results obtained by the project within any of its fields and includes both the expected results (stated in the objectives) and the unexpected ones that could be worth for the project. The products evaluation can lead the project to some social recognition, due to its contribution to the achievement of the initial conditions and to its contribution to future projects.

During the evaluation process such aspects have been emerging until achieving an agreement between the responsible for the evaluation and the project director.

1.2.- Evaluation sources and instruments:

Evaluation instruments were selected and they were adapted to the characteristics and current situation of the project. The evaluation sources were provided by the

responsibles of the project, on the one hand, and by the information published in its web page, on the other.

External evaluation was thus based on the analysis of documents and information provided during the different stages of the project, as well as on some interviews to the project leader.

In this sense, it must be stressed that the project included two wide data collection processes which were very important to the final Program structure. During the first stage a pilot project was made that provided an initial structure for the Golden areas, and that allowed the project responsables to take a decision on its feasibility and opportunity. Durign the second stage an impsect study was made which permitted to value the expected effects as well as their best implmentation conditions. In both processes the following instruments were used:

- Teachers questionnaires.
- Students questionnaires.
- Assessment scales
- Sociograms

These instruments were suplemented with a number of technics and statistical models to make data analyses. A cataloguing of several cualitative data referred to teachers opinion was also made.

1.3.- Evaluation criteria.

Evaluation criteria are the elements used to contrast the data obtained by the evaluation indicators. The evaluation judgement is based upon a number of comparisons such as the distance between the expected outcomes and the obtained ones, or between what was obtained and what was desirable, or between the expected outcomes and the compulsory ones. Evaluation critera must be defined and accepted by the evaluated institution before making the final judgement. The evaluation sources used to establish the evaluation criteria of this project were the following:

- Criteria derived from the characteristics and principles of Comenius Program.
- Criteria derived from the CIPP Evaluation Model which was selected as the theoretical framework of the evaluation design.
- Criteria derived from the project characteristics.

Finally, the following evaluation criteria were selected:

- Innovation
Innovation means the projects contribution to the usual resources and practices of educational policies. In this sense, the solutions provided may be completely new, in other words, They may be generated by the own projects, or may be transfered from other approaches and practices developed in other territorial, sector or institutional contexts.
- Transference.
The main objective of European Projects is the contribution of new methods, ideas and solutions to general policies. Transference is the inclusion of a number

of tested best practices in the general policies within the field of Education and Training.

To reach this objective, projects must design a plan to spread their results and to make responsible for the educational decisions aware.

- Equal opportunities.

Equal opportunities between men and women has become a key transverse issue to the European Union policies. This means to face exclusion situations by means of gender by integrating analysis of the reasons into all the work plans and by adding effective mechanisms to fight against them.

- Complementary

This principle seeks to make projects compatible with other actions and projects in order to enhance its effectiveness. In this sense it's very important to assess the coexistence of this project with other ones.

Together with these basic criteria derived, in a great part, from the European programs framework, the following specific assessment criteria have been taken into account:

- Internal coherence, what means that the objectives planned to satisfy the detected needs, as well as the measures and resources planned to reach them are suitable and reasonable.
- Project adaptation to the objectives of the program.
- Improving the usage of the information and communication technologies, as well as their integration into the Project development.
- Implementation of a quality control system through specific evaluation mechanisms from the beginning of the activities.

2- Conclusions: Project characterization and elements assessment.

1.-GENERAL DESCRIPTION
The Golden Project has different elements oriented to the achievement of this purpose: to raise teachers' ability in order to manage a number of special educative situations characterized by the existence of mixed groups of students with many difficulties to achieve succesfull academic performance and under risk of social exclusion.
1.1. Golden Project components
The Golden Project has the following five elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The working assosiation or Network • The Project web page. • The Golden Program. • A teacher training course. • The guide for an efective implementation of the Golden Program. These elements were design to facilitate both the planning and the later implementation of the project. Golden Program characteristics let the teachers play an active role in the project layout because teachers, in all cases, are responsible for building their own strategies to manage the educative situations.
1.2. Golden Program components
The Program components are the five Golden areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom management. • Building relationships. • Social environment. • Adjusted learning. • Family – school relationships. Besides them, some elements of the Project help teachers' access to these areas, as well as to their training and to the exchange of experiences so that some new areas and elements may be included.
1.3. Golden areas components
Theoretical
The Project is based upon a wide range of complementary theories and evidences provided by different investigations. The main theories are Attribution Theory and the Cognitive Balance Theory. They both provide general basis for the project. Investigation evidences are specific to each Golden area.
Technics
The project has a number of technics and/or instruments linked to its differents components . The guide for the project implementation provides the following ones: a self evaluation questionnaire, a questionnaire and some recommendations to make a sociogram. The web page has several instruments for teachers to analyze the information collected and convert into a vision of their own situation.
Practical
The Project includes a series of suggestions and guidance that can help teachers make an educational answer in accordance with their conditions and on the basis of the selection of the many stages (“pasos”) selected in every Golden area. Together with such stages the Project gives a selection of criteria that may help to select students, to form groups, or to choose the criteria that will finally form the teaching strategy in a

certain situation.

1.3 Project fundamentals

They are essentially two: The Attribution Theory and the Cognitive Balance Theory. They both provide the general hypotheses which helped to find the Golden areas and their later layout. In this sense, we must appoint that the theoretical hypothesis acted both as an element to check the theories and as a heuristic resource.

2.- ELABORATION CONDITIONS
The Project elaboration conditions may give us very useful information to understand both its possibilities and its limitations. In this sense, the Project responsables tried always to overcome the peculiarities of the elaboration conditions to reach some processes and results that could easily be transfered beyond the original conditions.
2.1 Context
The Project was developed in two main contexts. On the one hand, the general framework provided by the european program Socrates and especially the Comenius Program. Such framework determined the main purpose of the project, its timing and the elaboration conditions. On the other hand, it was simultaneously developed in five european Education Systems and having a wide distribution of roles in order to make the Golden Program up. The other five countries involved in the project have similar problems in their schools, especially behavioural problems and their consequences, the low level of academic performance for students under risk of social exclusion.
2.2. Input conditions
Schools
The Project was implemented both with Primary and Secondary schools, being greater the group of Secondary ones.
Teachers
Most of the teachers involved in the project were Secondary teachers, apart from the Project responsables and the teacher trainers. They all participated voluntarily and knew the Project conditions and characteristics.
Students
The project was developed with students of minority cultures, like gypsies or migrants and, in general, with students who had behavioural problems. They were selected in small groups and following the criteria provided by the project.
Resources
Since the Project was oriented to the teacher training, the resources needed to its elaboration were linked to such issue. Anyway, the Project didn't require neither extraordinary resources nor very expensive ones. The main resource was the creation of a web site that allowed the communication of all the countries involved in the project. In the future, this site will let the teachers share their knowledge and experiences in the development of the Golden areas.

3.- IMPLEMENTATION CONDITIONS
Due to the Golden 5 project orientation to teacher training and to the final layout of the Golden Program in five areas, schools need no special conditions. Otherwise, the Golden Project was born to value diversity and such a change needs, essentially, to change the teachers' point of view (following the Attribution Theory criteria) and to increase teachers' knowledge of a number of strategies that provide them some behaviour of reference.
3.1 Context
The Project implementation conditions have revealed its flexibility, what means that it can be adapted to different Education Systems. However, data supported by the evaluation processes running show that any decentralized Education System providing a suitable level of autonomy to their schools and to their teachers can improve their effectiveness.
3.2. Input conditions
Schools
General Primary and secondary schools, in other words, those that Education Systems plan for the attendance of students with significant cultural differences, need no important changes to implement the Golden Project.
Teachers
Both Primary and Secondary teachers that want to assume the Golden Project in their schools or classes need neither special conditions nor previous requirements. The kind of training established in the Project and the conditions created for the network seems to be enough for the Golden Program implementation and sustainability.
Students
Any Primary or Secondary student can be a beneficiary of the Golden Project both individually and as a group. However, the Golden Project is specially addressed to students under risk of social exclusion who had learning difficulties.
3.3. Resources
Resources developed so far seem to be enough for the success of the project implementation, specially the Program, the teacher training courses and the Guides . However, such instruments may be enhanced by using them together with other ones which are not specific to this project.

4.- ASSESSMENT
The Golden Project has revealed, through the running evaluation studies (pilot and impact), that its qualities and results make it suitable for the social and educative group it was planned. Such qualities and results were given in many different contexts and input conditions. This means that the teachers interested in improving his abilities to manage the differences among students and reaching the satisfaction of their educational needs can trust Golden Project to provide them the suitable conditions and resources to reach such aim.
4.1. Recommendations
The Goleen Project is suitable for those schools and teachers interested in enhancing school success of students with low academic performance by means of their personal, social or cultural characteristics. The Goleen Project right implementation can improve the school life in schools and classrooms, as well as the level of academic performance (though this aspect may depend on other issues beyond the participants' control, specially the syllabuses and the school rules).
4.2 Expected outcomes
Schools
The direct effects on the schools could not be valued in any of the evaluations made.
Teachers
The expected outcome relating to the improvement of the teachers' ability to manage successfully educational environments characterized by diversity and learning difficulties was proved within the different Golden areas, though several important differences were found in some areas and in some of he countries involved.
Students
The students involved in the Project have achieved significant improvements relating to their school integration, as well as to their self-estim. However, the changes relating their academic performance were not clear in all the countries.
4.3 Compatibility
The general and specific fundamentals that have oriented both the design and the implementation of the Golden Project evidence the existence of a theoretical complementary principle that make the Project compatible with other projects interested in the improvement of school conditions for pupils under risk of exclusion. On the other hand, due to the Project aim to enhance the teacher training in several areas, it's compatible with those projects or actions oriented to the improvement both of school life and the academic success. The Golden project may improve the expected outcomes of other projects since They may benefit the competences acquired by teachers thanks to the Golden areas. La conjunción de fundamentos generales y específicos que han orientado tanto el diseño como el desarrollo del Proyecto Golden ponen de manifiesto un principio de complementariedad de teorías que le hace especialmente compatible con otros proyectos que tratan de mejorar las condiciones de escolarización de los alumnos amenazados de exclusión.
4.4. Incompatibilities

Incompatibilities have not been found so far. Nevertheless it must be considered that both the project and the Program are incompatible with those other actions or projects that consider diversity as a deviation, as an abnormal situation or simply a handicap or deficit.

4.5 General criteria

Innovation

The way teachers are provided with new skills and scientifically based behaviours (the so called “steps” or “stages”) gives this project an especial innovative interest.

Transference

Plurality of context and inputs conditions in which the Golden Program was developed increase project transference possibilities.

Equal opportunities

The Golden Program can increase and improve educational opportunities to all students in the same group class and, especially, of those who may have less educational opportunities under “normalization” conditions.

4.6 Specific criteria

External coherence (Adequacy of the Project to the objectives of the programa that sustains)

The products and results obtained within the framework of the Golden Project especially the development of its five areas, as well as the teacher training courses and the implementation guides correspond with the aims and rules of the European Programmes Socrates and Comenius.

Internal coherence (Adjustment of Project components to general and specific fundamentals)

Project configuration allowed incorporating different elements to the Golden Program, to the teacher courses and to the Guides. However, the adjustment of those components doesn't seem to be most suitable. It's necessary to introduce some improvements to harmonize the Golden components and all its elements with general and specific fundamentals.

Improving the usage of the information and communication technologies, as well as their integration into the Project development.

The Golden Project is linked to the usage of some virtual spaces and networks. The current development of the project web page shows the clear intention to use ICT to answer diversity challenges.

Implementation of a quality control system, through specific evaluation instruments from the beginning of the activities.

The Golden program, as a final product of Golden Project, has been developed within a combined cycle made up of three control and evaluation processes: (i) one first cycle that included a pilot study and finished with the first Golden areas proposal. (ii) the second cycle included an impact study and finished with the recognition of the first expected outcomes and the Program sustainability. (iii) the third cycle that includes this

external evaluation and that will allow the incorporation of some suggestions to improve the harmonization of all the Program elements.