

12. Lessons Learned

Some general conclusions and lessons can be drawn from the analysis of the hitherto project implementation and evaluations:

1. Local experts, assisted by UNICEF's expert assistance, have managed to quickly elaborate original concepts of educative interventions adjusted to the local circumstances and addressing the emergency education needs.
2. A good assessment was made of the main available educational resources - the network of schools and qualified staff which can be activated en masse despite the dire economic circumstances.
3. It transpired that a number of teachers could be strongly motivated despite the characteristic state of demotivation and apathy among teachers. It is still unclear exactly how many teachers have the strong motivation for additional involvement.
4. The rigid centralised education system has serious problems in accepting innovations. There are fears these innovations could upset the current situation, that they are alien to the present system.
5. There have been doubts about the strategy of expanding the projects. Is it better to implement them in fewer places and schools, but more intensely, or to apply them throughout the country according to the principle "everyone gets a piece of the pie".
6. Apart from this dilemma, there are rivalries between certain institutions, professional groups and expert teams. Because of them, the first attempts to implement the projects were quite chaotic and there was no coordination among certain projects. Hitherto experience has shown it was good that there was no planned central coordination at the very beginning, because its absence enabled the development of different initiatives and different creative ideas. Now, after the authors' concepts have already formed: each project has created a number of local resource centres and the relatively autonomous model schools should be linked in a national network.
This national network
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would enable the concentration of trained staff and projects and intensive exchange among local education institutions.
7. Rural areas and rural schools have not been covered by the projects yet. The existing urban centres must plan to expand their activities to the neighbouring rural areas.
8. In the initial stages, evaluation was not conducted systematically and stricter valuation models were not applied. Both seem indispensable. However, evaluation demands should at this stage be stricter.
9. These projects, a response to the emergency problems of Yugoslav education, would not have been possible without UNICEF's financial assistance. UNICEF has greatly contributed with its expertise (purchase of new literature, expert visits, enabling the participation of a number of local experts at international conferences). The UNICEF work organisation model and its insistence on project evaluation have been extremely beneficial.

Certain problems in implementing projects were posed by UNICEF's insistence on strict project implementation plans in a crisis in which little could have been planned, rigid funding schemes, UNICEF's resistance to allocate part of the funds to local project foci and insistence on speed and quantitative indicators of project effects, which are complex and long-term.