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FINAL REPORT
covering the work done by the Open Education Centre
DG/BUL/97/005 Business Education Project
Period: April - December 1998

The Business Education Project held as an experiment in 10 Sofia secondary schools, initiated by UNDP and endorsed by the Ministry of Education and Science was crucial for constructing the model for the dissemination of business knowledge among high school students throughout Bulgaria.

1. The Open Education Centre was involved in carrying out the project relatively late, only in April 1998, in its course - for reasons we have stated before, beyond its competence and responsibilities . By this stage the selection of teachers from .9 Sofia schools was already completed . Two training courses on business and social skills were also held with them - in the months of September and November 1997, based on the manual of Professor Robert Nelson, a consultant to the project. Some teachers had also already started educating their students on the manual's basics since January 1998.

2. A specific program for the teachers participating in the project was designed because of several reasons: most of them had no economic background, they were not trained in using interactive educational practices nor in elaborating social skills. This program, combined with the materials elaborated by Prof. Nelson formed a well developed model of project educational basics used further on for the educational modules for future participants.

3. The teachers' curriculum was actually started in the beginning of 1998.

3.1. In the end of March and the beginning of April an 8-day training in Motivation, communication skills and conflict resolution skills was held with the participation of 16 teachers.

3.2. From 5 through 8 May s 4-day training in Retreat facilitation and team-work skills as well as on topics # 10-15 from the Business Development Course (Prof.Nelson) was organised with 17 teachers participating.

3.3. From 2 through 5 June a teacher training with 16 participants on the business topics # 16 - 25 (after Prof..Nelson) was held.

3.4. From 13 through 18 July a 5-day teacher training in basic Economic skills attended by 10 participants was held.

3.5. From 7 through 11 September a training on the use of computer software to enable the teachers to work effectively with the software on the Business Simulation Game; 17 teachers attended.

3.6. From 21 through 25 September a training seminar on the Simulation game conducted by a UNIDO consultant took place with 18 teachers participating.

3.7. From 29 June through 4 July a 6-day summer camp was organised with the participation of the students involved in the project. Here the teachers could complete the teaching of all topics included in the Course. 138 students and 18 teachers participated in this most successful event.

4. A teacher training program was designed and implemented.

4.1. A group of 10 educators was selected comprising teachers from the target schools. They were basically trained by specialists from the Open Education Centre and by experts on Economic Education. This same group of people served not only as further trainers of teachers, but also co-operated in working out of the manuals and in finalising the curriculum of business education teachers training.

4.2. The trainer of trainers group also underwent 5-day educational courses in Social skills training in September (22 through 26) and in Business skills (November, 19 through 23).

5. The preparation of the manuals essential to the development of the Business Education Course was completed most successfully.

5.1. Because of the delay in the UNDO sub-contract signing and the ensuing delay in opening the financing (September 1998) some difficulties in group formation and the start of activities had to be overcome.

5.2. The Social Skills in Entrepreneurship manual was at hand on November 15, and the Student workbook - on November 30. This set was based on adapting some topics proposed by Prof. Nelson in the project's workplan and on developing a considerable number of new topics in the field of Conflict resolution, Business negotiating, Creativity, Retreat facilitation, Problem solving, Communication skills, Team work, etc. This manual was worked out by a group of 8 professionals in social skills and interactive methods of education headed by Dr. Roumen Valchev and Ms. Virginia Valova.

5.2. The other set of manuals - Business Knowledge and Skills, teacher and student notebook, were prepared by 20 December 1998. This group of specialists was headed by Ass.Prof. Petkan Iliev from the University of National and World Economy in Sofia and by Ass.Prof. Roumen Valchev.

5.3. The Business Simulation Game was adapted on a later stage - only in September as the simulation itself could not be organised earlier and the copyright was acquired from UNDP even in October.

Thus the major components of the program were successfully completed and reported in 1998.

1. The teachers training was completed and the teachers in their turn successfully completed the students' training, which was the first -experimental - stage of the Business Education Program.

2. A team of 15 trainers of trainers was formed able to instruct teachers in Business Education in case the program will be in further operation.

3. The materials necessary for the continuation of the program are ready and can be easily and quickly duplicated or printed. The manuals contain these mentioned: in Social skills and Basic business knowledge and skills, the adapted Simulation game. All materials concerning the program have been presented to the Ministry of Education and Science and to UNDP.

4. We have also developed the format of interaction between the Ministry of Education and Science as user of the project and the schools involved, UNDP as contracting authority and donor and the Open Education Centre as general contractor.

What conclusions can be drawn from the work on the Business Education Project done so far.

As a whole the project has been successful in terms of both conceptualising of ideas and realisation of the draft curriculum and training program. The lack of similar forms of practical training's arouses student' and teachers' interest in training in business environment. The school principals back up the idea because having the Program is an opportunity to improve the image of the school and increase enrolment.

The Ministry of Education and Science promotes the realisation of such a practical project that demonstrates the implementation of new educational ideas.

For the teachers themselves to participate in the project is both a challenge and an opportunity. They not only try to develop their teaching skills in a completely new field, but also become more competitive in their basic field using the knowledge acquired in the course of complementary training's in Social skills and Interactive teaching

The project provides a practical opportunity for the students and their parents to accumulate necessary and interesting knowledge for future opportunities, to get into a new world, to experience attractive and highly motivating teaching methods, to get involved in practical activities.

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