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HEALTH RESEARCH FOR ACTION

Mid Term Review

of the Strategic Network Projects Sub- programme of the Third ITM-DGDC Agreement Programme

Draft Survey Report #1 – SN Educational Networking

April 2010



Photo: Katrien De Muynck

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Draft Survey Report

Strategic network on Educational Networking (1.06)

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The team would like to thank the staff of the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp and the Belgian Directorate General for Development Cooperation for providing their views on the design and implementation of the “Educational Networking” strategic network.

The team is very grateful for the valuable contribution of the South partners who have expressed their opinion concerning the “Educational Networking” network by means of the survey questionnaire.

This survey report presents the findings of the evaluation team with respect to the current performance of the network in terms of design, implementation and project typology. Recommendations on the way forward for the next phase of the third ITM-DGDC framework agreement are included throughout the report and synthesised at the end in table format. Many of these recommendations are the reflection of the suggestions made by the network partners and stakeholders.

Birgit Kerstens
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Reet, April 2010

List of abbreviations and acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
BPKIHS	B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, Daran (Nepal)
CR	Clinical research (strategic network)
DGDC	Directorate General for Development Cooperation (Belgium)
DVTD	Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases – University of Pretoria, Pretoria (South Africa)
EDU	Educational networking (strategic network)
EEG	Equity, Ethics and Gender (strategic network)
ESP	Ecole Santé Publique, Lubumbashi (Democratic Republic of Congo)
FA3	Third ITM-DGDC Framework Agreement 2008-2013
FM-GMU	Centre of Tropical Medicine, Gadjah Mada University,
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HS	Health systems (strategic network)
IC	Institutional collaboration
IHP	International Health Policies (strategic network)
IMTAvH	Instituto de Medicina Tropical Alexander von Humboldt, Lima (Peru)
INAS	Institut National d'Administration Sanitaire, Rabat (Morocco)
INHEM	Instituto Nacional de Higiene, Epidemiología y Microbiología, Havana (Cuba)
IPH	Institute of Public Health, Bangalore (India)
IPK	Instituto Pedro Kouri, Havana (Cuba)
ISP-PUCE	Instituto de Salud Publica Pontifica, Universidad Catolica del Ecuador, Quito (Ecuador)
ITM	Prince Leopold Institute of Tropical Medicine, Antwerp (Belgium)
LINQED	Linking up on Quality in Education (network)
LQM	Laboratory Quality Management (strategic network)
MUIPH	Makerere University Institute of Public Health, Kampala (Uganda)
ND	Neglected diseases (strategic network)
SN	Strategic network
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (model)
tropEd	(international network of institutions for higher education in international health)
UMSS	Universidad Mayor de San Simon, Cochabamba (Bolivia)
ZOO	Zoonoses (strategic network)

1. Introduction

The third Framework Agreement (FA3) between the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) and the Belgian Directorate General for Development Cooperation (DGDC) is almost half way its current six-year period. In this framework agreement which has been signed in March 2008, strategic networks have been proposed as a new project typology, aiming “at optimising synergies and cooperation between the South partners, capitalising on each other’s expertise and experiences, and joining forces in the promotion of common viewpoints in international health policies”. Because networking projects were included as a novel instrument, the ITM has decided to carry out an interim assessment with a view of learning lessons from this new instrument and incorporating recommendations in the planning of the second three-year period of the current FA3 which runs from January 2011 until end of 2013.

The mid term review of the strategic network projects sub-programme has **four specific objectives**:

- (1) To assess the performance of the sub-programme in achieving its objectives;
- (2) To assess the performance of a number of specific projects in achieving their objectives;
- (3) To analyse and evaluate the new strategic network project typology;
- (4) To contribute to the planning of the future programmes.

The nine networks which have been included in the FA3 are listed in the table below.

Table 1 – Overview of ITM-DGDC strategic networks

STRATEGIC SUB-PROGRAMME		TRAINING SUB-PROGRAMME
Thematic strategic networks*	Quality/normative strategic networks	
Health systems (3.11)**	Laboratory Quality Management (3.21)	EDUCATIONAL NETWORKING (1.06)***
HIV/AIDS (3.12)	Clinical Research (3.22)	
Neglected diseases (3.15)	Equity, ethics and gender (3.23)	
Zoonoses (3.16)		
International health policies (3.17)		

Source: Terms of Reference for the mid term review of the ITM-DGDC strategic networks projects sub-programme.

Notes:

* Networks for malaria and tuberculosis were included in the FA3 but are not (yet) functional and are therefore not subject to the mid term review. ** The numbers of the strategic networks refer to ITM project numbers. *** “Educational networking” has for obvious reasons been added to the training sub-programme although it is designed as a strategic network.

This survey report presents the main observations and findings of the review of the strategic network “**Educational Networking**” with ITM project number 1.06. It assesses the performance of this network in achieving its objectives (see specific objective 2).

For the assessment of the performance of the strategic sub-programme, the analysis and evaluation of the new strategic network project typology and the overall recommendations for future planning, we refer to the synthesis report.

The review of this strategic network made use of the following **methods** for data collection:

- *Desk study* of the FA3 document and the 2008 and (draft) 2009 annual reports of the strategic network,
- *Unstructured interviews*¹ with key informants in Belgium: staff involved in the strategic network at the Institute of Tropical Medicine (network promoter H. Buttiens²), the direction and project management staff) and responsables at DGDC (Mr. D. Molderez and Dr. F. Monet), and
- *Electronic mail survey questionnaire* focusing on the specificities of the strategic networks and completed by the network members.

Section 2 presents the main findings of the performance of the Educational Networking strategic network, based on the data collected through the desk study, the structured interviews and the e-mail questionnaire. Section 3 reports the main conclusions and recommendations for the future planning of this network.

2. Performance of the strategic network “Educational Networking”

The overall objective of the third multi-annual programme of the ITM-DGDC Framework Agreement is to build capacity in developing countries for research, training and policies in human and animal health in order to strengthen the rational basis and the country ownership of health care systems and policies, and in so doing improving the health status of the populations and thus contributing to the reduction of poverty and inequity. Furthermore the FA3 has been labelled “*switching the poles*”, thereby expressing the wish to adjust the imbalance between the North and South in terms of defining health development policies and to raise the ownership and voice of the developing countries in international health policies and donor priorities. With this core theme, the ITM stresses that “its contribution to health development in the South will increasingly assume an indirect, second line character, in which it will act as a partner and supporter of national institutions and organisations rather than to take direct responsibilities for delivering expertise, let alone implementation”³.

The third ITM-DGDC Framework Agreement comprises five sub-programmes: (1) training, (2) institutional collaboration, (3) strategic programme, (4) policy support and advocacy and (5) management. The nine strategic networks are part of the strategic programme, besides eight strategic projects.

The following sections evaluate the design and implementation of the “Educational Networking” network, first of all based on the “objective” results described in the annual reports and by the ITM network promoter (sections 2.1 and 2.2), and secondly through the lens of the South partners (section 2.3). Section 2.4 assesses whether the strategic network deserves the label “network”.

¹ The initial idea was to work with structured interviews and a questionnaire was prepared for this reason. Because of the particularities of each network, some of these questions were relevant to ask and others not, so that the structured questionnaire finally served as a guideline, and not as a directive.

² The network coordinator, An Piessens, is on pregnancy leave and will not resume her job at ITM.

³ See FA3 ITM-DGDC Programme: Volume 1A Programme.

2.1 Design of the strategic network

Rationale

The importance of education for both ITM and its institutional partners was almost instantly acknowledged as a possible network theme. The internal ITM task force discussions and the results of the survey conducted among the institutional partners in early 2008 revealed the different needs and expectations of the network partners which were further dealt with at the kick-off workshop (see below).

Launch of the network

The network, being a formalisation of existing partnerships between ITM and training institutes in the South, has twelve members who each delegated two representatives to the kick-off workshop in Antwerp in early November 2008. At this first workshop, *quality in education* was chosen as the theme for further network collaboration, reflected in the name and logo for the network “Linking up on Quality in Education”, or LINQED.

The 2008 and 2009 workshops aimed at linking partners in activities and discussions centred on *networking to learn* and *learning to network*. Both objectives were addressed in a learning-by-doing approach and used methods of adult and cooperative learning.

Table 2 – Information concerning the design of the strategic network

STRATEGIC NETWORK “EDUCATIONAL NETWORKING”		
Overall objective	To train at postgraduate level health experts and scientists from developing countries in the management of health services and disease control programmes, in health-related research or in the delivery of reference health services	
Purpose	To strengthen postgraduate training capacity in clinical, public and international health in the network partners	
Members	IC partners	Other network partners
	DVTD, Pretoria IMTAvH, Lima INAS, Rabat INHEM/IPK, Havana IPH, Bangalore ISP-PUCE, Quito MUIPH, Kampala UMSS, Cochabamba	BPKIHS, Daran ESP, Lubumbashi FM-GMU, Yogyakarta
Launch	March 2008 Official kick-off early November 2008	
Main means of communication	Workshops	Website, newsletter, workshop report, e-mail

Sources: FA3 Year Report 2008, 2009; FA3 Programme Document.

Coherence with FA3

The purpose of the “Educational Networking” network (see Table 2) is very much coherent with the overall aim of the strategic networks to (i) optimise synergies and cooperation between the South partners, (ii) by capitalising on each other’s expertise and experiences, and (iii) joining forces in the promotion of – not common viewpoints in international health policies but – qualitative education programmes.

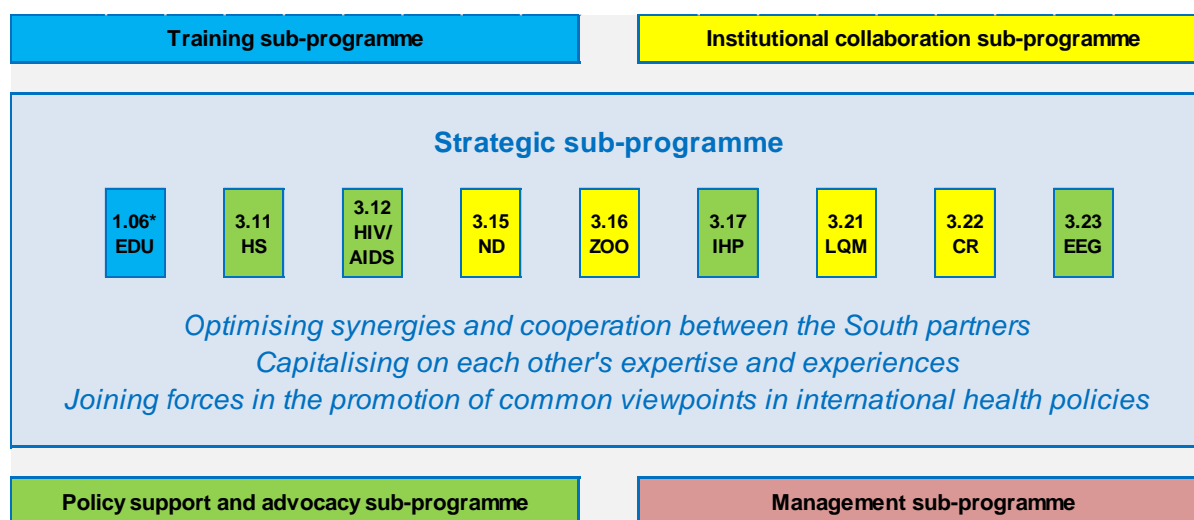
As is reflected in the expected results of the logical framework (see FA3 Part 2 or year reports), the “Educational Networking” network is a *facilitative* network which focuses on the following:

- (1) Opportunities for collaboration, joint learning and mutual support in education are identified based on the specific needs and interests of the different network partners and in function of their specific expertise and comparative strengths.
- (2) Consultative structures and supportive cluster networks on specific themes and/or within a specific region are functioning.
- (3) A common reference framework for educational quality assurance has been developed.
- (4) Complementarities, gaps and synergies of training programmes are identified and modules for exchange are evaluated.
- (5) Additional modules are organised to complete the regional offer by appropriate network partners.
- (6) Interested eligible network partners have joined the tropEd network.

This focus corresponds less to the purpose of the strategic sub-programme, i.e. “to strategically address global human and animal health research and policy priorities, in complement to sub-programme 2” through institutional collaboration but is fully in line with the purposes of the first sub-programme under which the Educational Networking comes.

Figure 1 shows that the “Educational Networking” strategic network is intrinsically linked to the training sub-programme (blue colour) and complements as such to the first sub-programme.

Figure 1 – Strategic sub-programme of the 3rd ITM-DGDC Framework Agreement



Notes:

* The numbers of the strategic networks refer to ITM project numbers.

The abbreviations refer to:

EDU = Educational networking

HS = Health systems

ND = Neglected diseases

ZOO = Zoonoses

IHP = International Health Policies

LQM = Laboratory Quality Management

CR = Clinical research

EEG = Ethics, Equity and Gender

Recommendation:

The methodological approaches applied by the LINQED network in its design (survey, kick-off workshop, further elaboration of the logframe with the network partners) have certainly laid the foundations for a smooth implementation of the network activities and therefore no recommendations are made with respect to its design.

2.2 Implementation of the strategic network

Assessment of the logframe

Because the logical framework can be considered as the link between the design the implementation of the plan, we first comment briefly on the “operational part” (expected results and activities) of the existing logframe.

Although the logical framework was already developed by ITM for the approval of the FA3, its design and monitoring purposes were introduced at the kick-off workshop in 2008. During the different sessions the network partners themselves were encouraged to explore possible themes and activities, departing from the logical framework, in order to generate more network ownership.

Recommendation:

- Even with the short-lived experience, the SN Educational Networking can further refine the current logframe by keeping the same expected results but quantifying the objectively verifiable indicators and adding a time horizon where possible (determine some minimally wanted outputs and activities for the next three years instead of e.g. “interested eligible network partners have prepared for tropEd accreditation”).

Assessment of the strategic network in terms of outputs/activities

Table 3 lists the main outputs and activities achieved by the Educational Networking network until December 2009.

Table 3 – Information concerning the implementation of the strategic network

STRATEGIC NETWORK “EDUCATIONAL NETWORKING”	
Main outputs and activities	
People	2008: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kick-off workshop (23 participants) at ITM, Antwerp • Curriculum development workshop: 42 participants 2009: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 short course scholarships awarded • 16 short course certificates issued • 32 participants at LINQED workshop at INAS, Rabat • Review workshop: 36 participants • One exchange/mission in June for follow-up on the network and preparation of the 2009 workshop
Publications	(none)
Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website since 2009: www.linqed.org • Two newsletters • Report of the 2008 kick-off workshop

Other activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own logo and label for the SN Educational Networking “LINQED” • Prototype short course on infectious and tropical diseases
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Sources: FA3 Year Report 2008, 2009.

During the last workshop in Rabat in December 2009 the decision was made to use the network structure and budgets for the joint realisation of three concrete projects:

- (1) Exchange of students and staff,
- (2) E-learning, and
- (3) Quality assurance mechanisms.

Recommendations:

- Continue to plan at least one annual network meeting for the next 3-year phase, because it facilitates the mutual contacts between the network partners from the different countries and encourages them to continue communicating in the virtual space (website, e-mails).
- Consider to activate an electronic forum or message board to the LINQED website to foster interim communication about quality issues and the progress of the three network projects among the partners.

2.3 How is the network appreciated?

To get a feel of the actual appreciation of the “Educational Networking” network by its members, an e-mail questionnaire (see annex) was sent to all network participants. The response rate and the main results of the survey are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4 – Response rates of questionnaire regarding the performance of the strategic network

STRATEGIC NETWORK “EDUCATIONAL NETWORKING”		
Number of questionnaires sent to individual members	Number of questionnaires received from individual members	Response rate 1
33	12	36%
Number of questionnaires sent to institutional members*	Number of questionnaires received from institutional members	Response rate 2
11**	8	73%

Note: * Number of questionnaires sent to institutional members = number of institutions involved in the network. ** INHEM/IPK are joint partners in the IC collaboration project with ITM. Only INHEM staff has been surveyed.

Table 5 – Main findings from questionnaire regarding the performance of the strategic network

STRATEGIC NETWORK “EDUCATIONAL NETWORKING”		
<i>Common goals</i>		
Main motivation (Q1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-personal and inter-institutional exchange of lessons learnt on how to implement and monitor courses. • Improve skills and hence quality in education by sharing experiences, methodologies and projects. 	
Main goal (Q2)	Knowledge sharing and creation	100% of respondents
	Communities of practice	50% of respondents
	Capacity development	75% of respondents
	Other, please specify: exchange of teachers and students, accreditation of diplomas, standardisation of	25% of respondents

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STRATEGIC NETWORK “EDUCATIONAL NETWORKING”	
	teaching methods
Appreciation (Q3)	Except for one, all respondents were unanimously positive about the current state of the network and achievements so far.
Network governance	
Current structure (Q4)	Network partners are very happy with the fact that there is an executive committee constituted with a specific mandate.
Future structure (Q4)	No changes to current structure required.
Network relations	
Current relationships (Q5A)	Most respondents are very positive, despite some communication difficulties due to language differences and although more interaction could be expected. The professional and personal contacts are considered to be very fruitful and enriching.
Facilitating factors (Q5B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common interest in qualitative education. • Good leadership (of ITM network coordinator and executive committee). • Physical meetings. • Communication technologies (internet, website).
Hindering factors (Q5B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional buy-in. • Time allocation. • Language. • Limited financial resources.
Global/regional? (Q5C)	Except for one, all respondents prefer a global network because of its diversity and opportunity to have a more comprehensive and inclusive vision.
Network outputs	
Current outputs (Q6A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved capacity in learning assessment instruments. • Workshop participation/facilitation.
Future/wanted outputs (Q6B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange of students and teachers/faculty. • Implementation of the three LINQED selected projects. • Build a system of quality in education for public health.
Usefulness (Q6C)	Moderately useful so far: learning methods have been useful and implementation of the LINQED projects will bring plenty of positive and useful activities and outputs.
Network resources	
Sufficient resources? (Q7A)	In terms of human resources: 50% sufficient, 50% limited. In terms of financial resources: majority has limited or insufficient resources to participate in the network.
Efficiency? (Q7B)	Unanimously yes.
How to achieve more efficiency? (Q7C)	Given that all respondents rate the network efficiency very high, some suggestions to increase efficiency are made: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More financial resources. • Increase the physical meetings (workshops, inter-institutional visits).
Network strengths/weaknesses	
Added value, compared to other projects? (Q8A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The “quality in education” approach. • The exposure to its diversity and wider catchment provides an opportunity for a larger pool/source of knowledge and experiences from which to tap for individual and institutional needs.
Added value, compared to other networks? (Q8B)	Apart from those that do not have experience in other networks, the common vision to (net)work on “quality in education”.
Added value of your institute for network? (Q8C)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovations in education, e-learning.
Major weakness (Q8D)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linguistic barriers. • Financial support and sustainability.

STRATEGIC NETWORK “EDUCATIONAL NETWORKING”	
Future planning	
Suggestions for activities/products/coordination (Q9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement work plan and three selected LINQED projects, monitor and evaluate results. • Increase inter-institutional relationships through student/faculty exchanges and joint research programmes and degrees.

The survey results are further discussed and integrated in the next section.

2.4 Can the “Educational Networking” network be labelled as a network?

Given that the strategic networks are a novel instrument in the third Framework Agreement between ITM and DGDC, we introduce the concept of this new project typology briefly and give some theoretical background which will be used later for the assessment of the individual strategic networks.

A network is defined as “an interaction process between several actors in which information, goals and resources are exchanged” with the aim of “realising collective action”⁴. Different types of networks exist but the ITM strategic networks can be categorised as knowledge networks: the rationale for developing **knowledge networks** is centred around sharing information, liaising with ‘like-minded’ partners, collaborating in knowledge creation, developing communities of good practices and (individual and/or institutional) capacity building. These common goals are at the core of each network. Other characteristics of networks focus on the importance of network dimensions such as membership, governance, commitment and trust. All together the underlying principles can be grouped as “*social capital*”, which is the “aggregate of resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or organisation”⁵.

Many of the above perspectives such as knowledge transfer and social capital can be found as well in the justification for developing strategic networks within the third ITM-DGDC framework agreement. We will assess the strategic networks in terms of the following generic dimensions, which are visualised in Figure 2 below:

- (1) **Cognitive dimension:** what are the shared goals and culture? → *Goal clarity and cultural diversity will influence the transfer of knowledge, capacity building and development of good practices.*
- (2) **Structural dimension:** How are the network ties/relations structured? What are the agreed network governance mechanisms? How is the inter-organisational coordination arranged⁶? What are the tasks and responsibilities of the network partners? What are the resource flow procedures? → *Strong ties through repeated exchanges, multiple connections between the network partners and network stability will facilitate the knowledge transfer.*
- (3) **Relational dimension:** What is done to build trust and create goodwill among the network partners? Is the network the result of the formalisation or institutionalisation of existing relationships? What are the participation and membership rules? What are the stakeholder communication tools? How is the “shadow of the future” perceived

⁴ Based on Kichert, W.J.M., Klijn, E.H. and Koppenjan, J. (1997). *Managing complex networks – Strategies for the public sector*. SAGE Publications.

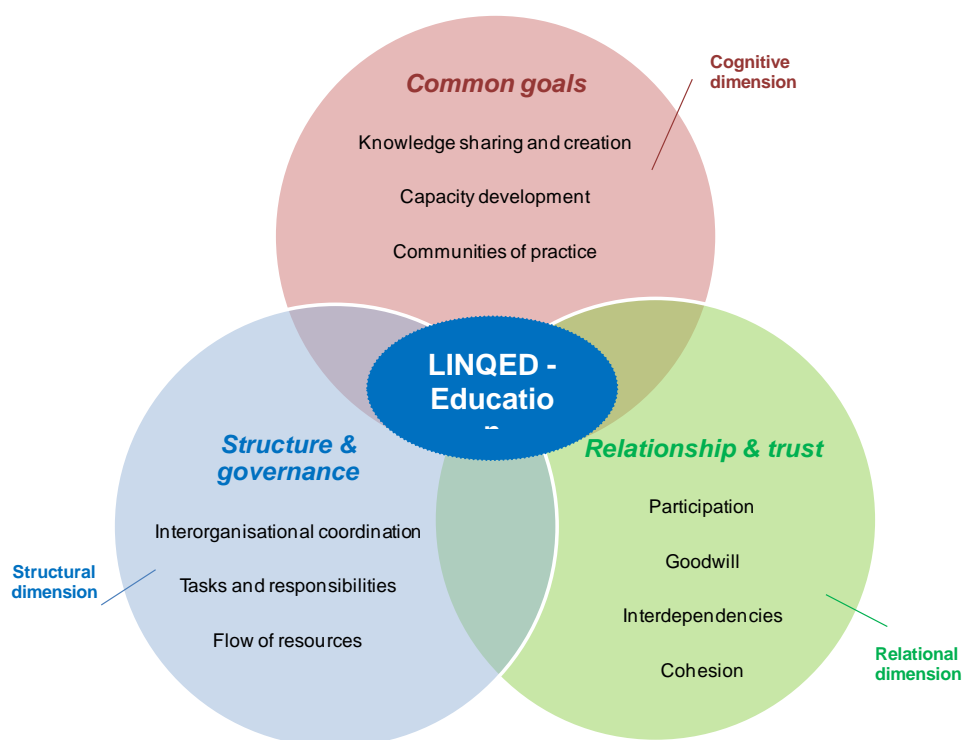
⁵ Inkpen, A.C. and Tsang, E.W.K. (2005). “Social Capital, Networks and Knowledge Transfer”. *Academy of Management Review*, pp. 150-151.

⁶ Easterby-Smith, M. Lyles M.A. and Tsang, E.W.K. (2008). “Inter-Organisational Knowledge Transfer : Current Themes and Future Prospects”. *Journal of Management Studies*, 54, 677-690.

(sustainability), i.e. what are the long term perspectives of the network and what is done to increase partner interactions? → *Behavioural transparency and trust will increase the cohesion and strengthen the interdependencies among the network partners.*

The figure below also points out where the Educational Networking strategic network can be located at this very moment: in the intersection between the cognitive and structural dimension, signifying that the network in its short life has mainly focused and acted on finding common goals and implementing a network structure. More explanation on this location can be found below.

Figure 2 – Network dimensions of the strategic network “Educational Networking”



Common goals

Shared interests: The thirteen partners of the LINQED network share a diverse world of cultures and perceptions, but also common ground on quality issues in education. The richness and heterogeneity of the network seems to be no obstacle to evolve towards a community of practice in education. Language differences (English, French and Spanish) are not to be underestimated but because English is an important language in academics, the network partners are ready to learn (more) English rather than to have (simultaneous) translations.

Recommendations:

- Activate full participation of partners to work together towards the achievement of the three network projects.
- Build synergies with other normative/quality networks where appropriate (e.g. ethical and gender issues with SN EEG, methodological approaches with SN on Clinical Research or quality assurance issues with SN on Laboratory Quality Management).

Regional vs. global: Almost all survey respondents indicated that they prefer a global network because of the diversity and heterogeneity of the interested network partners which may increase the exchange of best practices, lessons learnt, and possible implementation strategies for quality in education.

Recommendation:

- Language being mentioned as a constraint to fully exploit the discussion dynamism among the network partners and since regional hubs are not seen as an option to overcome the limitations of command of language, the network should consider how to rule out this linguistic network barrier.

Structure and governance

Governance: The LINQED network has opted for a formalised structure by appointing an executive committee (currently five members) that acts as the daily management board of the network. All members, apart from the ITM network coordinator, are from South institutions, thereby reflecting the aim to “switch poles”. The network has decided to keep the participation in network meetings limited by inviting two representatives per institution.

Inter-organisational coordination: In March 2008 ITM appointed a coordinator who has been crucial in designing and running the network, but who recently resigned. Replacement of the network coordinator is planned. All partners accept the coordination role of ITM. In 2009 a task force (with other members than the executive committee) was established as a temporary structure for preparing the 2009 workshop. New task forces will be set up to develop the 3 projects (exchange of students/staff, e-learning and quality assurance mechanisms).

Tasks and responsibilities: None of the South partners seems to be eager to assume the coordination role of the network which is executed in a dynamic and methodological way by ITM. From the start the LINQED network has stressed the importance of lively input from the South partners, not only by participating actively in the network but also by engaging in some network tasks and responsibilities. Partners seem to be rather keen to do take up some responsibilities but no formal request has been placed yet to devolve the tasks of coordinating the network to the South.

Flow of resources: Assessment of the financial sustainability of the strategic networks is not included in this mid term review. In the synthesis report some findings with respect to the use of the available budgets are discussed.

Recommendation:

- The current network structure is highly appreciated by the partners and the only advice is to continue paying attention to network ownership and trust, as has been done until now.

Relationships and trust

Participation and cohesion: The LINQED network has benefitted plenty from the kick-off workshop which has offered opportunities to explore the common ground and discuss thoroughly which priorities to set. The five-day workshop included also *socialising* and networking activities which provided moments to getting acquainted and building relationships. The survey results of this mid-term review reveal that most partners appreciate the bond and cohesion that was created at these occasions, and which still seem to linger on in the participants' minds and provoke them to commit themselves for this network. As was

pointed out rightly by the network promoter during the interview, the strategic network on Educational Networking was successful in creating safety among the partners (they don't consider each other as direct competitors) and this asset needs to be cherished.

Recommendation:

- Try to increase the participation in virtual meetings (through e-mail and maybe e-forum linked to the LINQED website?) but continue to keep the participation in “live” meetings low (small-sized workshops, limited number of topics) in order to sustain or increase the commitment of the current network partners and the cohesion of the network itself.

The above assessment of the three network dimensions of identifying common goals, deciding on a network governance structure and encouraging commitment and cohesion reveals that the strategic network on Educational Networking in its present form is worth being labelled a network based on its achievements and performance during the first two years of its life.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

In order not to create too much overlap with the above findings and because the purpose of this survey report is mainly to brief on the results of the interviews and questionnaires, we present the conclusions in the form of a SWOT table, pointing to the main strengths and weaknesses of the network and the opportunities and threats that may arise in the future. Specific recommendations for future planning of the Educational Networking network are given below. More general recommendations for the way forward with the strategic networks can be found in the synthesis report.

Table 6 – SWOT analysis of the strategic network “Educational Networking”

Strengths	Weaknesses
Well reflected about set-up of network through survey Formalised structure (executive committee) Good geographical spread (also in executive committee & task force) Diversity/richness contributed by each institution; exchange!	Use of website too network-oriented and informative (more use of interactive tools?)
Opportunities	Threats
Implement selected network projects Consolidation of the network efforts in coming years Evolution towards inclusion in TropEd programme	Limited budget to conduct all activities and to realise tangible outcomes for the 3 sub-projects: (1) exchange of staff and students, (2) e-learning and (3) Quality Assurance mechanisms

As for all strategic networks, the year 2008 was a preparatory year for the Educational Networking network, with the launch of the network in November 2008. Moreover it takes time to build a network and to integrate different partners from different countries and cultures and no common language into a solid operational system. The remark made by many of the South partners that this mid term review comes in early days is comprehensible but nonetheless some lessons can already be learnt from the short-term existence of the ITM strategic networks.

Many of the above conclusions have most probably already be drawn by the network members themselves (both in the North and the South), but in view of the upcoming process of planning for the second phase of the FA3, running from 2011 till 2013, we propose the following recommendations for the strategic network on Educational Networking:

- Consolidate what has been achieved so far (in terms of activities, products, participation) and work on creating more dynamism among the current partners.
- Try to increase the communication flows, both virtual (website, e-communications) and face to face (workshops, sideline events at conferences or Joint Partner Meetings).
- Keep the focus on knowledge sharing, capacity building and creation of communities of practice.

ANNEXES

Annex 1. E-mail questionnaire for network partners

QUESTIONNAIRE

Strategic networks – Network partners

Thank you for briefly responding to this questionnaire on the strategic network your institute is participating in within the context of the 3rd ITM-DGDC Framework Agreement. This questionnaire should be completed by the representative(s) of your institute in the strategic network concerned. All the information given by you will be treated confidentially and only used by HERA for the purpose of this external evaluation.

Strategic network:

Institute:

Name:

Position:

Q1. What is the main motivation for you and/or your institute to participate in this particular strategic network?

Q2. What do you hope to achieve with this network?

- Knowledge sharing and creation
- Capacity development
- Communities of practice
- Other, please specify :

Q3. Did this network so far – after a short period of existence – respond to your expectations? Yes/No, please specify.

Q4. *Network governance*: How do you value the current governance/structure of this network?

- Would you prefer it to be more formalised (with Executive Committee, Secretariat,...)?
- Would you prefer a more loose coordination?
- Other, please specify:

Q5. *Network relations:*

- [A] How do you perceive the relationship between/among the network members?
- [B] What are the factors that facilitate or hinder the possibilities to foster network relations?
- Facilitating factors:
 - Hindering factors:
- [C] Do you prefer regional or global networks? Why?

Q6. *Network outputs:*

- [A] Which activities/outputs have you and/or your institute produced so far thanks to this network?
- [B] Which activities/outputs would you and/or your institute like to realise with this network in the future?
- [C] How useful are the activities/outputs of this strategic network for you and/or your institute?

Q7. *Network resources:*

- [A] Do you have sufficient (human and/or financial) resources to participate in this strategic network? Please comment.
- [B] Are the actual/potential outputs of this strategic network in proportion to the time and resource investment of you and your institute?
- [C] How could this network achieve more efficiency?

Q8. *Network strengths/weaknesses:*

- [A] What is the added value of this strategic network, compared e.g. to institutional collaboration with ITM, to projects?
- [B] What is the added value of this strategic network compared to other networks you and your institute are participating in?
- [C] What is the added value of your institute in this strategic network?
- [D] What do you see as the major weakness of this strategic network so far?

Q9. What are your suggestions in terms of planning of activities/products/network coordination for the next 3 years?

Q10. If you have any additional comments, please let us know.