

# Scenario Writing in Teacher Education

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## Introduction

The aim of this paper is to provide an introduction to the use of scenario writing in education and the conditions required to run a successful course using scenarios. The use of scenario writing has been found to promote creative and flexible thinking and adaptation to change in staff in industry and lead to improved future strategic planning. The scenario method has also been attempted with education students, head teachers, and tutors in higher education institutions. Reviewing this project gives colleagues suggestions for the successful running of similar courses and also analyses the process we attempted. The results of this course for the participants were two fold; the production of a scenario and also the process they underwent, which involved analysis, creativity and reflection.

This paper therefore presents a reflective evaluation of a Comenius funded project on Scenario writing. The project was the result of work by members of ATEE's RDC *Curricula in Teacher Education* (RDC 19) over a number of years from February 2000 during ATEE conferences and interim group meetings. Initial ideas were to examine the possible future for Teacher Education in Europe, based on an agreed set of common trends emerging in all the countries represented in the group. After working through the process and finding it very useful for reflection on and anticipation of developments, it was decided to offer the same experience to other educators from across Europe by applying for EU funding to develop and run a pilot course for teachers and teacher educators on the use of scenario writing in relation to (teacher) education.

## Scenario Writing

The OECD (2001) and The Global Business Network (1995) examples of the use of scenarios provided initial illustrations for the group. As Snoek (2003: 13) asserts 'there are hardly any scenario studies that focus on teacher education'

though that of the OECD (2001) can be related to teacher education. Scenario making has a variety of approaches and the group used methods adapted from Kleiner (1999) and Van der Heijden (1996). Reaching a consensus was a difficult and time consuming process, but one that proved to be very rewarding, if not inspiring (Cautreels 2003). The group's enthusiasm from experiencing this liberating process culminated in a presentation of the scenarios at the Stockholm ATEE conference 2001 through the use of role plays, followed by experts' analysis and a discussion. The reception by the audience to this innovative method of presentation was generally enthusiastic.

The steps to achieve the scenarios are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Four Steps to develop scenarios

Step 1	Identifying the fields of change
Step 2	Selecting the most important fields of change
Step 3	Identifying the scenarios to be developed
Step 4	Describing the scenarios and bringing them to life

(Adapted from Snoek, 2003)

Arriving at a consensus for this was a difficult process, but one that the participants admitted stretched their thinking and created a learning community, removing them from the bureaucratic demands of present day work in universities and providing thinking and discussions that were considered valuable and refreshing (Cautreels 2003, Snoek 2003). The final decision to produce a two dimensional (axes) model may be criticised as being limited (Linde 2003), but provided a workable tool to produce a deeper understanding of the issues and for bringing the scenarios to life. It was based on the premise that there are tensions between forces of neo-liberalism and those proposing social-coherence (Linde 2003). The final model resulted from

...the combination of two fields of change, one about the dominant motivation for decisions and change, a motivation based on idealism or based on pragmatic considerations (Linde 2003). The other field of change focussed on the dominant social values in society, emphasising either social coherence or individualism in society (ATEE-19, 2003, 22).

The final presentations were achieved by the RDC19 members, working in groups on one of the quadrants of the agreed scenario model (Fig. 1), namely Individualism/Pragmatism, Individualism/Idealism, Pragmatism/Social coherence and Idealism/Social coherence (ATEE-RDC19, 2003). A common set of characteristics was agreed for the groups to work on, related to the quadrant they were using. These were the structural dimensions of the quadrant namely; the characteristics of the society, the learning process, teacher educators and risks and opportunities involved. Finally a story was constructed to illustrate the scenarios. These were made deliberately extreme and controversial to stimulate discussion (ATEE-19, 2003).

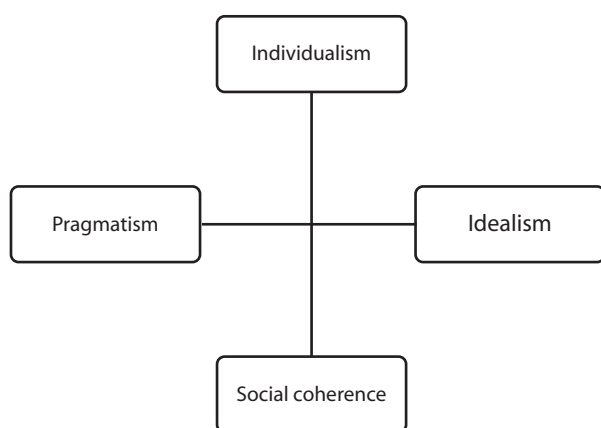


Figure 1 RDC 19's agreed scenario model

Further work was carried out in the field with students and university staff using adaptations of the original idea, demonstrating the flexibility and efficacy of the process (Hilton, 2003: Stomp, 2003). Other colleagues also used the finished scenarios to conduct an examination of their countries' teacher education courses in order to examine recent trends (See the European Journal of Teacher Education Vol.26 No 1 2003). Despite the flaws present in this model the discussions and the further work stimulated by the process were, on reflection, considered to make the activity a worthwhile and stimulating process which the group wanted to share.

## The organization of the course

### The general course conditions

The course was run over five days in October 2004 and was held in a hotel in Vienna which provided all facilities required (that is meeting rooms, secretary equipment) including lunches. The fact that participants and tutors were working and living under the same roof helped them to bond and to work together on a reliable basis.

Participants were sent, in advance, a pack of materials on the use of scenarios.

The thirty two participants of the course came from twelve European countries, they represented a broad range of institutions and positions held in education (teacher, teacher-educator, training manager etc.). Due to the variation of the participants in terms of nationality and profession, important

differences regarding culture and views on education existed in the course.

### The aims of the course

The course was to enhance the competences of participants in innovation, encouraging them to become an agent for change. More precisely the aims of the course were twofold:

1. Increase the participants' knowledge of and attitudes towards *societal and international changes* and how these were influencing their *national education system* within a European context
2. Increase the participants competences in relation to the use of the *scenarios method* as didactic instrument for analysis and reflection. Scenario writing was intended to aid participants in new ways of thinking about the future of (teacher) education in Europe.

### The structure of the course

After a social welcome gathering on the evening of the arrival day the following course programme was carried out (see Table 1).

Table 2 Thematic structure and sequence of the programme

Day 1:	The participants were given: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an <i>introduction to scenario writing</i>, including a short presentation of two of the role plays done by some tutors as an inspiration.</li> <li>• a first idea of the <i>educational systems in Europe</i> by a poster session on education systems in the various countries</li> </ul>
Day 2:	The participants had to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify the main societal and international changes and their influences on the national education system</li> <li>• analyse these changes by finding out the underlying dimensions of these evolutions</li> <li>• select scenarios</li> </ul>
Day 3:	The participants had: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to exchange views on the scenario proposals in different groups</li> <li>• to design the scenarios in groups (free afternoon)</li> </ul>
Day 4:	The participants had : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to prepare the role plays</li> <li>• to present the role plays</li> </ul>
Day 5:	The participants had: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to reflect on the scenarios they identified as most likely and as most favourable and on the consequences for their institutions</li> <li>• to reflect on the method of scenario writing and its usefulness within their institutions</li> </ul>

The evening fare-well party on the fourth day was the highlight of the course: The final scenario show was held on which each group had to give a presentation of one of its four self-designed scenarios to all other participants.

In the morning of the *fifth day* reflections on the presented scenarios and on the scenario methodology were done as well as the evaluation of the course.

The main working principles of the course were *collaborative working* (much work was done in subgroups) and a *tight working schedule*. For more details on the course see the website: <http://intra.ehva.nl/scenariowriting>.

## Evaluation

During the course an evaluative research was carried out to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the course.

### Outline

The evaluation was designed

- to identify the strong and the weak points of the course by daily surveys (formative evaluation) and
- to assess the overall course quality by a final survey (summative evaluation at the end of the course) and
- its effects on the further work of the participants in their

institution by a follow-up survey (summative evaluation 5 months later).

The main results of the final and the follow-up survey will be presented. Both evaluations prove the effectiveness of the course.

### The evaluation at the end of the course

In the final survey all 32 participants took part.

1. *The awareness of societal and international changes and influences.*  
97 % of the participants indicated that their understanding of these changes and influences had been improved by the course and 81 % felt more aware of the similarities and differences in education between their own country and others in Europe.
2. *Competences in respect to the use of the scenarios.*  
Many participants felt a high degree of familiarity with the scenario method after the course: 94 % of the learners were very or quite confident to use scenarios themselves.
3. *Overall satisfaction.*  
80 % of the participants assessed its quality as excellent or as slightly less than excellent. 6 % perceived the course as almost poor. The judgements of 14 % fell on categories which were in between these extremes.

### The follow-up evaluation

Almost five months after the running of the course each participant received a questionnaire asking how much he or she had made use of the learning on the course in his or her own institution. 44 % returned the papers.

- All respondents felt the course had not only given them a better understanding of the changes affecting Teacher Education in Europe, but also a clearer idea of the strategies for change employed in *their own institution*.
- 64 % of the respondents *had already used* the scenario idea (with staff and/or students and/or other persons) and
- all but one intended to apply the scenario idea in the next academic year.  
These results show that for at least half the group of participants the course was effective in their daily professional work.

## Some basic course problems

Despite the evaluation results being very positive there were some fundamental motivational, cognitive and social problems to be dealt with.

### Motivational problems

A course which takes several days and attracts participants of different backgrounds raises motivational problems in at least two directions.

**1. General Work Motivation.** The first basic motivational problem was to make sure that 32 participants worked intensively together over five days and that they would withstand the temptations of an attractive metropolis. The evaluations showed that nobody dropped out of the course and all participants attended every meeting. A positive encouragement to the continuous presence of all participants were contextual features like

- living and working in the same building

- a demanding working programme (see table 1)
- feedback and social control produced by a continuous exchange of ideas and results among different groups.

**2. Specific Work Motivation.** The course's success did not only require the continuous presence of the participants but also their commitment to work hard on the specific assignments. From the theoretical point of view of classic *expectancy-value models of motivation* (Vroom 1964, Rheinberg 1997) three conditions of work must be met to have a good specific work motivation:

1. *The value of the working outcome.* The good preparation of the final assignment (design of scenarios) should be personally important to each participant. This demand was met because the participants had to produce a tangible piece of work (scenarios); its presentation at a social event at the end of the course (*the final scenario show*) made the work socially important to them.
2. *The intrinsic value of the working activity.* The course work in general and the preparation of the scenarios in particular should be attractive in itself. This demand was met because the participants enjoyed the exchanges with colleagues, as they led to a deeper understanding and they felt the preparation of the scenarios had been good, practical, creative and collaborative work.
3. *The instrumentality of the working activity.* To do well at the final assignment and in order to be able to participate in the discussions with the group members an intensive and continuous cooperation on each day of the course seemed to be necessary.

It seems that this motivation structure of the course was a basic prerequisite of its success - all the more considering that motivation theories of teachers in higher education take these three conditions as fundamental to innovative teaching behaviours (Viebahn 2004).

### Cognitive problems

A main cognitive problem of a course with participants from several European countries is the fact that their knowledge about educational systems is quite different. There were two efforts to reduce insufficient pre-knowledge:

- Relevant information was given to the participants before the course started. It turned out that not all of them had read the papers carefully.
- The participants were made aware of the knowledge problem at the beginning of the course so that they were at least prepared to attack the problem. One of the strategies used to overcome this was that the group members exchanged at the first meeting their fundamental knowledge about the subject area, so that the ongoing discussion was based on the same information.

### Social problems: Social Decision Making

Collaborative working with the scenarios implies substantial negotiating. The subgroups have to take important decisions like: Which of the current and future developments are to be identified as the main fields of change in Europe? To agree on issues like this is not an easy matter if the group members are of different national backgrounds. As a working group cannot decide on this kind of questions simply by a vote, a long ongoing discussion was taking place which resulted in the exhaustion of some of the participants and in the dominance of the views held by those participants who possessed the greatest stamina.

A technical solution to the problems of social decision making consists of a change of methodology, resulting in a simplification of the theoretical concept and the societal analysis. This method makes things easier, but the disadvantage is the conceptual changes and the personal insight will not be as deep as in a more challenging course experience.

### Conclusions

Organizing a successful course on scenario writing is not only a matter of choosing good materials. Good planning and running demands as well that the motivational, cognitive and social problems must be thoroughly thought through! That is particularly important if the course is lasting for five days.

If the group of participants is rather large and heterogeneous it is very useful to split up into subgroups some of which are tutored. This is useful for the organizers themselves as well: They must be prepared for the possibility that during the course many unforeseen problems are likely to occur. Sharing problems with several colleagues can be very helpful! That turned out to be true in our course as well!

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