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A guide to project management
Frank Heyworth



European Centre for Modern Languages
Centre européen pour les langues vivantes

A guide to project management

In 1994, upon the initiative of Austria and the Netherlands, with special support from France, eight states founded the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) as an Enlarged Partial Agreement of the Council of Europe. It was to become “a forum to discuss and seek solutions to the specific tasks and challenges that face them in the coming years and which will play a decisive role in the process of European integration”. At the time of writing, thirty-two states¹ subscribe to the Partial Agreement. Following a successful initial trial period (1995-1998), the continuation of the activities of the Centre was confirmed by Resolution (98) 11 of the Committee of Ministers.

The aim of the Graz Centre is to offer – generally through international workshops, colloquies and research and development networks and other expert meetings – a platform and a meeting place for officials responsible for language policy, specialists in didactics and methodologies, teacher trainers, textbook authors and other multipliers in the area of modern languages.

A guide to project management is the fourth in a series of publications edited within the framework of the first medium-term programme of the ECML (2000-2003).

The ECML’s overall role is the implementation of language policies and the promotion of innovations in the field of teaching and learning modern languages. The publications are the results of research and development project teams established during workshops in Graz. The series highlights the dedication and active involvement of all those who participated in the projects and in particular of the group leaders and co-ordinators.

¹ The 32 member states of the Enlarged Partial Agreement of the ECML are: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, „the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, United Kingdom.

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Frank Heyworth

European Centre for Modern Languages

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The Guide is accompanied by a CD-ROM containing resources to be used in project planning.

Introduction

This guide has been produced to offer assistance to those responsible for, or involved in, educational projects related to language education. It is hoped that it will be of help specifically to participants in ECML workshops and other activities, but also on a much wider scale to those undertaking projects in other contexts. It is the result of a preparatory study and a workshop in Graz on “innovatory approaches to language education” held in November 1999 and two regional workshops held in Budapest and Liechtenstein in 2000. Many of the ideas in it come from the facilitators and participants in these workshops.

Frank Heyworth

1. What's a project?

1. What's a project?



1. What's a project?

The staff meeting is just coming to an end and there's been a lively debate on the school's system for end-of-course assessment. A lot of the teachers are unhappy with the present tests because they find them too grammar based and this doesn't fit with the kind of communicative teaching that is used in class. However no one has any clear ideas about exactly what kind of system to replace it with... So, it's been decided to appoint a project group to make proposals.

International networking for language education

The Languages Foundation invites project proposals from groups interested in and able to promote international exchanges between schools, using Internet resources. The projects should contribute to the enhancement of language learning, especially in lesser-used languages and to increased awareness of other cultures. Project proposals should contain full details of the objectives of the project, the qualifications and experience of those carrying it out and the resources needed.

These are typical examples of how projects start – to deal with a specific perceived problem which cannot be solved within the everyday running of an institution or in response to an opportunity coming from outside.

But what exactly do we mean by a “project”?

It's one of those international words which mean different things in different languages. Here are three dictionary definitions:

German: Projekt – geplante oder bereits begonnene größere öffentliche Unternehmung (*a major public undertaking, planned or already begun*)

French: Projet – Travail, rédaction préparatoire; premier état (*first draft, preliminary description of an undertaking*)¹

English – Plan for a scheme or undertaking²

In the guide we are using a meaning close to the English definition and as used widely in educational contexts. A project is an undertaking designed to examine present practice, to propose change and to test the implementation of change.

1 Source: Rey-Debove, Josette; Rey, Alain. *Le Nouveau Petit Robert*. Paris: Dictionnaire Le Robert, 1993.

2 Source: *Oxford Advanced Learner's Encyclopedic Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

1. What's a project?

Here are some of the characteristics

- Projects are different from ordinary work. They are intended to change things
- Projects have a timeframe with a beginning and an end
- Projects have to be planned
- Projects use resources and need a budget
- Projects require evaluation – the criteria for evaluation need to be established from the beginning
- Projects have an outcome, which is not necessarily known at the outset
- The outcome is very often a “product” of some kind
- At the end of a project, decisions need to be taken about whether to use or institutionalise the outcome
- Projects involve people

Think it over



Reflect on projects you've been involved in or know about. Try to describe them taking account of the characteristics above. What were the most successful features of the project? What (if anything) went wrong? What was the outcome of the project? Did it have any lasting effect?

“I've got this great idea and if we can just get a couple of million dollars sponsorship, we could turn it into a concept”

*(conversation overheard at a Californian cocktail party
in Woody Allen's film Manhattan)*

self-assessment questionnaire



2. Projects and innovation



Projects are designed to promote change and innovation. They provide opportunities to test possible innovations in a protected environment without taking the decision to change established practice until it can be shown that the new ideas work.

2. Projects and innovation

So, a good first question in project planning is “do we need to change?” A good first principle is:

- *Look at present practice*
- *Is it OK?*
- *Yes!! – keep it and reinforce it*
- *No!! – change and innovate*

Are you ready to innovate?

Here are some of the necessary conditions for successful innovative projects

- a) a feeling of dissatisfaction with the way things are done at the moment
- b) a vision of what you would like to achieve (so you need to go beyond criticism of the present situation to describing what would be a satisfactory situation)
- c) a clear idea of the first steps to be taken to initiate change (you don't need to know everything – you wouldn't need a project if you did – but you do have to have an idea of where to start)
- d) an idea of what the cost of change will be (this doesn't just mean money; the cost of a project can be seen in terms of the time it will take, the stress of carrying through change, the other opportunities you miss by choosing this option)

If you look at a possible project and decide that a, b and c are greater than the cost, then you are probably ready to start planning a project.

2. Projects and innovation

- **Here's an example**

- A group of language schools was unhappy with its system for issuing end-of-course certificates. These tended simply to record the level of the class attended and didn't give information about real-life communicative competence or individual progress or achievement. They had a vision of a coherent system of clearly described levels, of interesting communicative kinds of assessment recorded in a certificate which would show – in language accessible to everybody – the learners' language competence. They planned to start the project with a questionnaire to learners to determine what their priorities were for communicative skills and to do a review of available testing materials. They were aware that it was an ambitious project, but found the resources to put a three person team on the job, taking the project leader out of teaching for a six month period. The project turned out to be a very successful one, leading to the development of scales of descriptors and new approaches to using simulations for assessment. It did, however, take seven years instead of six months!



Think it over

Reflect on your own situation. Think of an area where you are dissatisfied with present practice and apply the test on readiness to innovate.

“The need to be right all the time is the biggest bar to new ideas. It is better to have enough ideas for some of them to be wrong than to be always right by having no ideas”

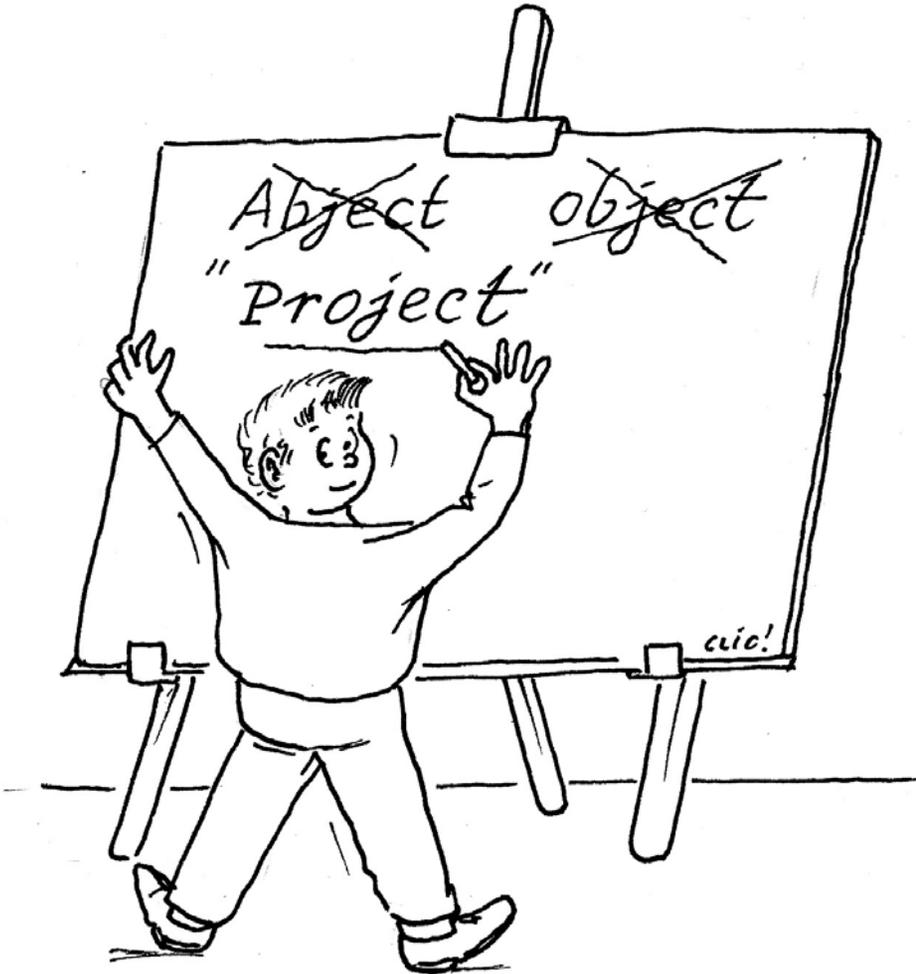
Edward de Bono



self-assessment questionnaire

3. Project planning

3. Project planning



Projects don't just happen; they need to be planned. They usually come in addition to normal work or in a limited period where the project participants are released from their usual duties. They need to be completed within set deadlines and have a limited budget.

3. Project planning

So here is a checklist to help project pre-planning:

Issues	Comments
What's the title of the project?	<i>It's a good idea to find a memorable name for a project. It gets people interested, and helps participants to identify with it.</i>
What are the aims of the project?	<i>State these as accurately and specifically as you can. There is often a temptation to try and do several things at the same time, but projects with a clear focus usually work best. Here are some useful expressions to use in stating project aims:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>To review and assess present practice ...</i>● <i>To survey ...</i>● <i>To make recommendations for...</i>● <i>To develop materials for ...</i>● <i>To provide guidelines</i>● <i>To plan the implementation of ...</i>● <i>To pilot innovatory material</i>● <i>To test the effect of ...</i> <i>A clear statement of objectives is a useful way of keeping clear priorities and avoiding false expectations.</i>
What is will be the outcome of the project?	<i>Projects need some tangible product or they just disappear. This can be a project report, a set of recommendations, a plan, teaching materials, a training programme, a development strategy.</i>
What negative effects do you risk?	<i>Projects can have negative effects – other members of staff who feel excluded; dissatisfaction with the present state of affairs; lack of focus on day-to-day matters etc.</i>

3. Project planning

Who will be involved?	<i>Make the roles of the project team members clear from the beginning. Projects can work as group democracies, but it usually helps to have a project leader who is responsible for organisation and for seeing that deadlines are kept. Project team members will often do a lot of extra work, but putting too much stress will often be counter-productive in the long run.</i>
Who are the stakeholders?	<i>“Stakeholders” means all the people who are affected by the project learners, other members of staff, parents etc.</i>
What are the deadlines?	<i>It’s important to divide the time plan into phases with fixed points for reporting and review (see section 6 for advice on flowcharts and time planning).</i>
How much will it cost?	<i>A project team is accountable for the resources used so it’s vital (a) to plan the budget (see section 5) (b) decide who can authorise payments (c) have a proper tracking system so you know where you are. Costs include time, materials, consumables, meeting and travel costs etc.</i>
Who will assess the project? Using what criteria?	<i>Doing a project involves being accountable to an institution, a group etc. Define the assessment criteria at the outset and taking account of the defined aims.</i>

Your answers to these questions will be the basis for an action plan for the project.

3. Project planning

Making an action plan

This involves translating the plan into a detailed account of the different steps in the project, indicating who is responsible for them, the timescale for the different phases and their outcomes. An action plan can be presented in a table:

Action	Person in charge	Start time	Deadline for completion	Outcome
Initial project meeting				
Phase one				
1.				
2.				
3.				
Phase one review meeting				
Phase two				
1.				
2.				
3.				
Phase two review meeting				
Phases continued until project completed				
Final review meeting and presentation of project report				

3. Project planning

Each phase can then have its own action plan

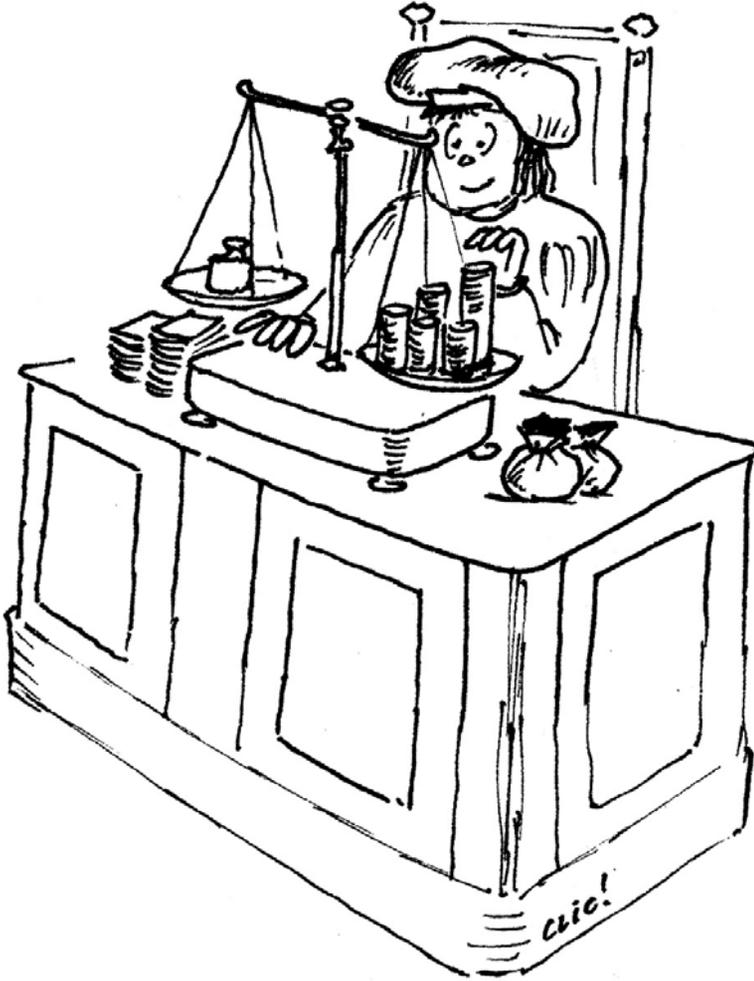
Tasks	Participants	Target Audience	Deadline	Assessment
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

*self-assessment questionnaire
template of these tables*



4. Budget and cost control

4. Making a budget and cost control



What does a project cost? When you're doing a project proposal, especially if it's a competitive bid, you need to make an attractive budget proposal. When you come to the end of the project you usually have to justify what you have spent, so it's important to make it realistic in the first place.

4. Budget and cost control

So, what kind of costs are there in a project?

Cost type	How to calculate it
Project participants' time	<i>Calculate either in hours or days allocated for doing the work. The easiest way is to take an annual salary and to divide it by the number of working days in the year (e.g. someone with 5 weeks holiday a year works for 47 weeks x 5 days a week = 235 days). If you want an hourly cost divide this by the number of working hours per day, say 8.</i>
Meeting and travel costs	<i>If the project involves participants travelling to meetings, you need to calculate (a) the average cost of travel (b) the average cost of overnight accommodation and (c) fix a sum for a daily meals allowance.</i>
Communications	<i>The costs of phones, letters and faxes can sometimes be absorbed by the institution; if not, you'll need to calculate the likely costs.</i>
Printing and publication costs	<i>Will your project lead to materials production or a publication? If so, you need to get an estimate from the printers or the organisation producing the materials. Don't forget the costs of distributing the materials if this is part of your aims. CD-ROMs are often cheaper than print nowadays.</i>
Hardware and software	<i>Do you have access to the computers and other hardware you need for the project? Some publicly funded project sources will contribute to buying what you need.</i>

4. Budget and cost control

Calculating and recording the costs

The most important thing is to make sure you record each expenditure when you make it, keeping a receipt, if possible.

You can do your bookkeeping with a pencil and a little blue notebook, but it's much easier if you do it with a computer. There are lots of simple accounting programmes. Bookkeeping programmes, such as Quicken, are not expensive, are easy to use and allow you to post expenditure according to budget categories and generates a range of different reports.

The easiest way to record overall results is to use a spreadsheet programme like EXCEL. This will do the additions automatically and compare your actual costs with the budget. Here's what a spreadsheet looks like:

Materials development project	quantity	unit cost	actual cost	budget	difference
Staff costs					
Project team member 1	12	80	960	880	-80
Project team member 2	6	75	450	525	75
Project team member 3	9.5	60	570	540	-30
Total staff costs			1.980	1.945	-35
Meeting costs					
Meeting 1	6	50	300	250	-50
Meeting 2	10	50	500	450	-50
Meeting 3	15	50	750	700	-50
Total meeting costs			1.550	1.400	-150
Overall project spending			3.530		
Overall budget				3.345	
Budget compared with results					-185

4. Budget and cost control

sample budget spreadsheet



Some useful tips on managing budgets

- It's a good idea to have one person responsible for authorising expenditure, so that the budget isn't overspent because different team members have spent the same money
- Budgets never work out exactly – some things cost more, occasionally less than you think. If you can convince those who are providing the money, try to build in an extra 5% for "unforeseen expenditure"
- Budgets never work out exactly; you need to be flexible, perhaps saving in one area to cover extra costs in another
- If you are over budget, don't try to hide the facts – present the problem as clearly as you can to those in charge
- Build in a financial review into every progress review meeting

*Anyone can make a mistake, but remember:
"Les bons comptes font les bons amis"*

5. People make projects work

5. People make projects work



Projects almost always involve teams so promoting good teamwork is essential to success.

5. People make project work

Are any of these complaints familiar?

- "I'm not sure exactly what I'm expected to do."
- "Everyone works in her own little corner; there's no sharing of experience."
- "It's just a lot of extra work, without any real reward."
- "The rest of the staff resent the project time we have – they think it just means extra work for them."

The pillars of successful teamwork

Communication

Motivation



Involvement

Commitment

5. People make projects work

Communication

Some tips for project leaders

- *Transparency is a first principle – open, full information for everyone. Don't have secret agendas. If there are problems, talk about them*
- *Don't drown team members in paper, but you need some basic documents – a project description, an action plan which states who does what and by when, a timetable for the different phases of the project*
- *Informal communication is fine, but it doesn't replace meetings where everyone is informed at the same time*
- *Write minutes of meetings so that you don't rely on each individual's recollection of what was said.*
- *If you make lists with more than five items, people stop reading; so organise information into manageable chunks*

Motivation

There are two kinds of motivation – (1) which stimulates people to want to do something, (2) which enables them to stick to a task, even when it becomes routine and boring.

(1) People are motivated to want to make projects work if:

- *they understand the aims of a project and think it has value*
- *they can see a meaningful role for themselves*
- *they can visualize what it means for them*
- *they perceive a reward in taking part – professional development, prestige, opportunity to travel, payment*
- *they don't feel confused or insecure about their role*

(2) Project members will stick to the task, provided that:

- *they can always keep a vision of the overall aim*
- *they feel that their personal contribution is valued*

5. People make projects work

- *all the members of the team contribute and take part*
- *they can express frustration and raise problems*
- *the work load doesn't get impossible*
- *hard work is accompanied by relaxation and good humour*

Involvement

No project team ever agrees about everything, but involving everyone keeps the project focused. Some tips on how to make sure everyone is involved:

- *be flexible and willing to adapt plans (so long as the main aim is not lost) to take account of different people's ideas*
- *criticism, argument, wrestling with problems are part of team work and can make a project better in the long run*
- *everyone needs an opportunity to present what they have been doing*
- *acknowledge other team members' contributions*
- *listening skills are a way of involving oneself with others*

Commitment

If you get the communication right, and team members are motivated and involved, commitment to the project will be generated.

Commitment goes in two directions – the commitment of the institution or sponsoring body is needed, too. This means making time and resources available, taking note of project progress, acknowledging and rewarding achievement.

the questionnaire is on the CD-ROM



6. Presenting and “selling” your project

6. Presenting and “selling” your project



To be a successful project manager, you don't just need to do the work, you have to convince or persuade a lot of different people:

- Those who take the decisions on whether to go ahead with the project
- Those who provide the money (sometimes, but not always the same people)
- The colleagues you want to have on your project team
- The colleagues who won't be on the project team, but who may have to do extra work to cover for team members
- Those who are going to provide input or support

6. Presenting and “selling” your project

It's worth putting effort into effective presentation of your project.

Some points to remember:

- An imaginative project title, an attractively presented project description don't make a project any better, but the chances of being accepted are increased
- “What's in it for me?” – relate the overall benefits of the proposal to the potential benefits for the different stakeholders
- Most people – especially busy people who make decisions – won't read long detailed descriptions; they prefer quick clear summaries
- Visual presentations are often more effective than thousands of words

Remember there are other media as well as paper.

For example, an audio or video cassette, an animated PowerPoint presentation, a poster...

6. Presenting and “selling” your project



Try it out

● **International networking for language education**

- The Languages Foundation invites project proposals from
- groups interested in and able to promote international
- exchanges between schools, using Internet resources. The
- projects should contribute to the enhancement of language
- learning, especially in lesser-used languages and to
- increased awareness of other cultures. Project proposals
- should contain full details of the objectives of the project,
- the qualifications and experience of those carrying it out
- and the resources needed.

Think about how you would go about preparing ...

- a) a written project proposal for the Foundation
- b) an invitation to other institutions in another country inviting them to join in the project
- c) a notice to colleagues asking if they are interested in taking part and
- d) a request to your boss asking for some time released from other duties to work on the project proposal.



examples of project proposals & proposal forms

7. Keeping to deadlines

7. Keeping to deadlines



"Time is the stuff of which life is made" *Benjamin Franklin*

7. Keeping to deadlines

How long is a piece of string?

How do you work out how long a project is going to take?

Flowcharts are good ways of tracking progress in a project. Here's how they work.

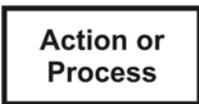
Projects consist of the following features:

- Parallel actions – actions which can be carried out at the same time
- Sequential actions – actions which can only begin when a previous action has been completed
- Decision points – when you need to choose how to take the next steps, on grounds of information or experience gained during the project
- Report periods – where you have to present a report or other documents

You can make a simple flowchart using the conventional signs below to indicate the different steps; there are computer programmes like Microsoft Project which you can use, but you don't need to. A flip chart or a fold out calendar showing the different weeks can be used and you can indicate the steps in the project by using sticky "Postits". Here are the conventional symbols used.



The terminator symbol marks the starting or ending point of the system. Usually contains the word "Start" or "End".



A box can represent a single step ("add two cups of flour"), or an entire sub-process ("make bread") within in a larger process.

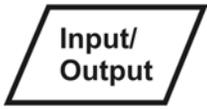


A printed document or report.

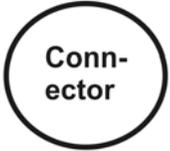


A decision or branching point. Lines representing different decisions emerge from different points of the diamond.

7. Keeping to deadlines



Represents material or information entering or leaving the system, such as a customer order (input) or a product (output).



Indicates that the flow continues on another page, where a matching symbol (containing the same letter) has been placed.



Lines indicate the sequence of steps and the direction of flow.

* Alternative text for input / output box

Input / output represents information entering or leaving the system, such as a report (input) or some sample test results (output)

Summary

A basic flowchart identifies the starting and ending points of a process, the sequence of actions in the process, and the decision or branching points along the way.

Flowcharts use special shapes to represent different types of actions or steps in a process. Lines and arrows show the sequence of the steps, and the relationships among them.

Try it out



Try constructing a simple flowchart for an every day project. Getting up and going to work, for example.

sample flowcharts and time management software



7. Keeping to deadlines

Most projects are completed with a panic rush and midnight working as the deadline for delivery approaches. Setting intermediate deadlines, with “deliverables” – completed parts of a project that have to be delivered to the project sponsor – can reduce the last minute rush to manageable proportions. It’s a good idea to make the regular review meetings coincide with a deliverable.

“In the process of change, as in any other process, each step must be taken in turn. To attempt step two before completing step one is like trying to wax your car before you have washed it. The result will not be pretty.”¹

Harry Forsha

1 Harry Forsha. *The Pursuit of Quality Through Personal Change*. Milwaukee: ASQC Quality Press, 1992.

8. Approaches to project evaluation



In a way, a project is in itself a form of assessment. A project is undertaken to improve or change present practice and it always asks an implicit question – “is this (the outcome of the project) a better way of doing things than the one we have at present?”.

8. Approaches to project evaluation

This means that you need to decide on how the project is to be evaluated at the outset, not when it's all over. Here are some decisions that are needed:

Who is responsible for assessing the project?	<p><i>Is it:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>An outside expert?</i>● <i>The institution's management?</i>● <i>The whole staff of the institution?</i>● <i>The project team?</i>
What is the planned outcome of the project?	<p><i>It's important to evaluate the project for what it sets out to do, so will it:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>Assess the effectiveness of present practice?</i>● <i>Make recommendations for new policies or practices?</i>● <i>Provide new syllabi or teaching materials?</i>● <i>Advise on the use of new media or resources?</i>● <i>Establish networks or platforms for communications?</i>
What assumptions are made at the outset?	<p><i>Major projects will often start with a "baseline study", a systematic and comprehensive view of the situation at the moment at which the project is undertaken. Even a modest project needs a statement of "where we stand now" and clarity about any assumptions made – if there were no assumptions you wouldn't need a project in the first place.</i></p>

8. Approaches to project evaluation

What indicators are planned to measure the effect of the project?

Are the indicators qualitative or quantitative?

- *Improved results in standard tests or examinations*
- *Increased satisfaction from students or participants (measured by questionnaires or responses in focus groups)*
- *Acceptance by colleagues (questionnaires)*
- *Innovations in teaching methodology (structured observation of classes etc.)*

In all cases the indicators must be comparative – with a questionnaire, for example, you need “before and after” results, or comparison with pilot groups not subject to the innovation.

a sample questionnaire for self-assessment



8. Approaches to project evaluation

This table (from *Evaluating Second Language Education* - Alderson & Beretta 1992)¹ provides a grid for planning the assessment of larger scale projects.

Project Structure	Indicators of Achievement	How Indicators can be quantified or assessed	Important Assumption
Wider – i.e. on a national level – what are the wider problems with which the project will help?	What are the quantitative ways of measuring, or qualitative ways of judging whether these broad objectives have been achieved?	What sources of information exist or can be provided cost-effectively?	What conditions external to the project are necessary if the immediate objectives are to contribute to the wider objectives?
Immediate Objectives – what are the intended immediate effects on the target group or institution? What improvements or changes will be brought about by the project?	What are the quantitative ways of measuring, or qualitative evidence by which achievement and distribution of effects and benefits can be judged?	What sources of information exist or can be provided cost-effectively? Does provision for collection need to be made?	What are the factors not within control of the project (e.g. availability of staff and resources) which are liable to restrict achievement of the immediate objectives?

¹ Alderson J. C. & Beretta A. *Evaluating Second Language Education*. Cambridge University Press, 1992.

8. Approaches to project evaluation

Outputs What outputs (kind, quantity, by when) are to be produced to achieve the immediate objectives? e.g. new curriculum implemented, people trained)	What are the sources of information?	What external factors must be realised to obtain planned outputs on schedule?
Inputs What materials/equipment or services (people trained etc.) are to be provided at what cost, over what period, by whom?	What are the sources of information?	What decisions out of the control of those managing the project are necessary for it to be carried through?

In project evaluation, there's a distinction between "outcome evaluation" – what should we do with the results of the project? – "accountability evaluation" – has the project team done the job properly? – and "developmental evaluation" – what can we learn from the project about how to do projects better? In assessing a project, it's a good idea to combine assessment of the "product" – the outcome of the project – with the process of carrying it out. This means looking systematically at what went well and what went wrong, at the organisation, the meetings, the reports, the communication and the documentation.

9. Converting projects to every day practice

9. Converting projects to every day practice



As we said at the beginning, the aim of projects is to initiate change, to promote innovation. One of the most difficult parts of project management is the process of implementation, of taking the outcomes of projects and integrating them into the everyday work of the institution. One of the reasons for this is the special status of projects – they have special time and resources allocated to them and those who are involved, both the project team and any students who take part, are motivated by the experimental nature of the work.

9. Converting projects to every day practice

Because of this projects often stay at the pre-implementation stage; of course, this may be because the initial idea wasn't a good one in the first place, or that it has proved not to be feasible. Finding out that a proposal is impracticable or unworkable is actually a useful result of a project as it eliminates mistakes which could prove costly if implemented without experimentation. On the other hand it's very wasteful to lose successful innovations through unsuccessful implementation. A lack of strategies for putting things into practice means we don't know whether failure is due to implementing poor ideas or inability to implement good ideas.

Here are some guidelines to help implement new ideas:

- There will always be resistance to change – it usually means more work, a challenge to security and confidence. Acknowledge the legitimacy of questioning and criticism and take account of objections and suggestions for improvement
- The principles of Communication, Motivation and Involvement apply to implementation just as much as to carrying through the project. If people feel they can shape or influence things they will be more ready to accept them. Try to make people agents of change, not recipients of change
- Implementation of projects means getting the details right. The principle of Usability is an important one. It requires developing a new idea to the point where it can be used within the normal resources and working rhythms of an institution
- Implementation usually requires training, adapted to the individual needs of the institutions and people who have to carry out the changes
- Innovation takes time – it's long term and needs to be systematic
- Beware of "false clarity" – just because a person says s/he understands and agrees, it doesn't mean an idea has been assimilated. Make sure there are opportunities to express and clarify problems and issues

10. Managing international projects



Many educational projects involve international co-operation and managing these raises a number of specific issues to be dealt with.

10. Managing international projects

Issues	Guidelines
Do the international aspects give added value to the project?	<p><i>Sometimes people think it's automatically a good thing for a project to include international co-operation. It's worth taking a hard look at whether this is really true. Ask yourself if the project could be done just as well in one country or region. Try to be specific about the benefits of "internationality". Some potential benefits of international co-operation could be:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>Providing a critical assessment of assumptions by being aware of other approaches</i>● <i>Testing the wider validity of proposals by testing them in different contexts</i>● <i>Giving opportunities for comparative piloting</i>● <i>Identifying best practice on a wider scale than usually possible in a restricted context</i>
Is there a common understanding of the project aims?	<p><i>At the beginning of the guide we saw how the word "project", which exists in most languages, has very different meanings in different contexts. It's useful to spend time checking that there really is agreement on basic concepts and what they mean. It's often worth doing a glossary. The choice of working languages is crucial – if there's only one there's a risk of (a) misunderstanding (b) the project being dominated by native speakers. Translation and interpreting are expensive and time consuming, though, so a compromise solution is usually required. It's important to be aware of the issues and to build in time for clarifications.</i></p>

10. Managing international projects

How will communications be organised?

E-mail and the Internet now make day to day to communication easier to organise, but distance makes it even more important to have a clear action plan with proper phases; to plan meetings carefully; to specify deliverables and to keep to them; to be clear from the outset about how outcomes will be assessed.

Conference telephone calls, internet chat rooms, project focus groups are all good ways of improving communications.

Who is responsible for the project?

Issues of project co-ordination often cause sensitive political problems, but it's important to define roles at the beginning of a project. Clear divisions of budgetary responsibility are useful and someone needs to be a "progress chaser", reminding people of deadlines.



Think it over

Do we understand when we think we understand?

Use dictionaries (monolingual ones) or compare notes with colleagues using different languages to check whether you can assume that words which look similar really denote the same concept. Try the following:



10 questions for project managers

1. Why do you want to start a project? What do you want to change? What is the vision of the project outcome?
2. Where is your starting point? Are you going to do a baseline study?
3. How will the project be assessed? Who are your the stakeholders in the project. What assumptions are made at the outset? Are they shared among all stakeholders?
4. What indicators will you use to measure the outcomes?
5. Have you given the project a meaningful, attractive title? How are you going to present it in a convincing way?
6. How is the project team chosen? What steps will be taken to secure motivation, involvement and commitment?
7. Have you worked out a sensible project budget? How are you going to record and check expenditure? Who will authorise spending?
8. Have you done a flowchart to plan the use of time? Are there regular review meetings? Is it clear what must be delivered at each phase?
9. Have you planned a strategy for institutionalising the project? Does it include the necessary training for those who have to carry it out?
10. Have you made provision for long-term assessment of the outcomes of the project? What is the effect in six months, a year?

the questionnaire is on the CD-ROM



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A Guide to Project Management

Frank Heyworth

This guide has been produced to offer assistance to those responsible for, or involved in, educational projects related to language education. It is hoped that it will be of help specifically to participants in ECML workshops and other activities, but also to those undertaking projects in other contexts. It is the result of a preparatory study and a workshop in Graz on “innovatory approaches to language education” held in November 1999 and two regional workshops held in Budapest and Liechtenstein in 2000. Many of the ideas in it come from the facilitators and participants in these workshops.



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