

Second medium-term programme of activities 2004-2007

**Project C2 – Qualitraining –  
A Training Guide for Quality Assurance**

**Report of the regional workshop**  
(Sofia, Bulgaria, 8-10 December 2005)

**Coordination team**

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The report can be accessed on the ECML website: <http://www.ecml.at>

The Executive Director of the ECML should be informed about any full or partial translation of the report and a copy of the translation should be sent to the ECML for information.

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The second Regional Workshop within the QualiTraining Project took place on 8-10 December 2005 at the New Bulgarian University in Sofia. It was organised by Optima, the Bulgarian Association for Quality Language Services, and was co-sponsored by the ECML, the New Bulgarian University (NBU), Optima, Longman-Bulgaria and Oxford University Press-Bulgaria.

At the opening of the Workshop welcome speeches were made by Dr Boris Naimushin, Head of Foreign Languages and Literature Department at NBU, Ms Vesselina Popova, Head of Pre-Accession Activities and Priorities Department at the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science and also Member of the Governing Board of the ECML, and by Ms Raina Andreeva, Optima Chair.

The ECML was represented by Michael Armstrong, who greeted the participants on behalf of the institution. He also introduced the ECML to the audience by making a presentation on its aims, current activities and publications.

The team of workshop facilitators included members of the Project team – Laura Muresan, Frank Heyworth and Galya Mateva. Mary Rose, the fourth member of the team, unfortunately was not able to attend.

There were 9 international and 19 Bulgarian participants who attended the regional workshop. The following countries in the region were represented: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, the FYR of Macedonia, Romania and Slovakia. There was a participant from the United Kingdom who had attended the previous Workshop in Bath and whose main purpose was to link the two events and encourage fruitful exchange of experience between North-West and South-East Europe. There was a self-financing participant from Spain who has professional interest and rich experience in the area discussed. The international guests occupy leading positions in English teachers' associations, Pedagogical and Training institutions, Inspection and Consultancy bodies, National associations for quality language services. The Bulgarian delegates came from the public and private sector and included language school managers, university lecturers and experts, senior teacher trainers, senior experts from the Ministry of Education and Science and educational consultants.

After a brief introduction session, the co-ordinator of the project team, Laura Muresan, presented a detailed overview of the project, describing its aims, stages of work, expected outcomes and by linking it to the previous project and familiarising the audience with the CD-Rom on "Quality Management in Language Education". The team of facilitators had decided previously that the overview should be longer and broader during the second regional workshop and in this way the participants gained a deeper insight into the underlying philosophy and practical applications of the project framework.

The first session focused on more general issues related to building a quality culture in educational contexts (materials prepared by Mary Rose) and was presented by Frank Heyworth. The participants were encouraged to discuss not only the input sections but also whether the material works as a set of activities and whether it fits into their work as trainers. The reflection cycle was highlighted – reflection-input-resources-application and again reflection. The implications of quality culture were considered at both personal and institutional levels. A lively discussion centred around the essential qualities of a successful leader and the problems institutions in Bulgaria and the region encounter in relation to the issue.

Judging by the feedback received, materials in this section of the Guide were considered highly informative and inspiring, the tasks and questions provoked discussions and naturally led to reflection, and, on the whole, were deemed appropriate for staff development. Suggestions were made for more activities to be added and secondly, for questions to be included which imply negative answers and problem areas (e.g. what will happen if quality performance is not recognised?)

On Day Two, the project team decided to hand out the end-of-course questionnaire designed by Frank Heyworth in order for the participants to have more time to reflect after each session and complete the respective part of the questionnaire. The second session was delivered by Frank Heyworth and focused on Quality Models and Systems. Each group had to choose a model to discuss, and it turned out that the least preferred one is the process model. In the whole group discussion of different models the following issues were raised:

- The need to take into account all models and their complex interrelations
- The contrast between values and means of achieving values (questions regarding this difference need to be added)
- The relation of values to age, different national contexts and other variables
- Tasks related to European values, national values and personal identity
- Values and public statement of one's value system
- The importance of non-stated values.

The second session was presented by Laura Muresan and dealt with "Skills and Techniques for Quality Management". The participants worked in two large groups – one group discussed observation procedures and the other self-evaluation procedures. There was a very lively discussion (led by the representatives of the private language schools) on who should observe, how often and what should be observed. The following issues were debated:

- How to link observations to self-assessment
- Should we relate observations results to promotion or pay increase? What are the potential dangers?
- How to make better use of observations for different purposes - quality assurance purposes. Developmental purposes, self-assessment purposes, for observer development, etc.
- The role of peer-observations, participant-observation, team teaching
- More emphasis should be put on self/peer observation models in the Guide.

Regarding the importance of self-evaluation procedures the following problem areas emerged:

- Is self-evaluation imposed or felt as necessary?
- How can we humanise the process?
- Who is the owner of the data in the self-evaluation questionnaire?
- How to link self-evaluation to appraisal systems?
- The advantages and disadvantages of using structured self-evaluation procedures (e.g. checklists) and more humanistic types of self-evaluation (e.g. diaries)
- The need to enclose samples of self-evaluation procedures in the Guide.

At the end of the session, Laura Muresan took the participants on a brief “guided tour” of the CD-Rom to show them where one could find examples of self-evaluation instruments developed and used by different institutions, as well as case studies illustrating practice in various contexts.

The session on “Evaluation and Assessment of Quality” was conducted by Galya Mateva. It dealt with issues like the functional difference between the two terms, with types and methods of assessment and evaluation, with quality procedures such as quality assurance, quality control, and accreditation of educational institutions. Reference was made to the Common European Framework of Reference and to the inspection procedure and criteria of EAQUALS. The session was considered to be distinctly interactive and thought-provoking due to the variety of tasks presented. However, some of the tasks were seen to be too challenging and suggestions were made for simplification of the task format and adding a glossary of terms in the QualiTraining Guide. Some further issues arose during the discussion:

- The importance of proficiency assessment alongside achievement testing. The first step needs to be the formation of a criterion-based assessment culture in the state and private language schools.
- The need for more tasks which interrelate the different sections of the Guide
- The project team to consider the possibility for different format/lay-out, different task design of the different chapters of the Guide
- The need to use a variety of methods of evaluation and to consider ways of transforming one method into another
- The right amount of terminology load taking account of the target audience.

The Benchmarking session at the end of day two was co-presented by Frank Heyworth and Galya Mateva. The typology of benchmarking was discussed and all groups came up with very interesting case studies demonstrating the advantages of functional, generic and competitive benchmarking. The questions in the task design section proved to be stimulating and fruitful. In the second half of the session the importance of measurable indicators for the benchmarking process was considered.

On Day Three, the first session was shared by Phil Dahl and Stephen Hughes. Phil Dahl skillfully used group work to familiarise the audience with the process of public school inspections in the UK. A very rigid system is currently in operation which relies on a comprehensive self-evaluation process externally validated by a team of highly qualified inspectors. Stephen Hughes made a presentation on a continuous improvement framework for language teaching presently applied by a school in Spain. Both presentations were closely linked to the issues dealt with in the QualiTraining Guide and will make valuable contributions to it providing case studies and real life examples.

Finally, the regional workshop participants worked in three groups to discuss possible applications of the sessions and ways of disseminating the information in their countries and institutions. The first group had assembled academic and administrative directors of private language schools. They discussed ways of passing on the information to teachers and academic staff and also of conducting training sessions once the Guide has been published. They also agreed to form a network in the region and visit each other's schools for exchanging best practices and upholding high quality standards.

The second group included managerial staff from the public sector. They discussed the mechanisms for transmitting the information to the regional inspectorates in the respective country and also to teacher's meetings at the beginning of the school year. They invited members of the project team to deliver workshop sessions to target groups of teachers, school principals and inspectors.

The third group consisted of representatives of teachers' associations, teacher training institutions and national quality language services associations. They planned a series of activities to familiarise their members with the Workshop materials, to upload the materials to their websites, to organise conferences on the topic of quality language education, to include a module on the same topic in future teacher training courses.

All three groups expressed their wish to apply for European Projects (Comenius) so that they could continue working in the same area in the years to come.

On the whole, the regional workshop in Sofia proved to be an arena for lively discussions, fresh ideas, networking opportunities, readiness for continuous staff development, all based on the QualiTraining Guide materials.

The professional discussions and exchange of experience took place not only during the formal sessions but also during the informal social events, kindly offered by the Workshop organisers. The first evening was marked by a welcome cocktail party at the Gorna Bania Diplomatic Club, where the Christmas decorations nicely matched the burning fire in the fire place. The second evening was spent in the elegant restaurant of the Grand Hotel Sofia, where the easy-flowing conversation was facilitated by the delicious food and the exquisite atmosphere. For all those who stayed till Sunday, there was an excellent opportunity on Saturday afternoon to go on a sightseeing tour and finish the day by tasting typical Bulgarian cuisine accompanied by lovely music at the Magernitsa Folklore Restaurant. Thus, the social events also brought their contribution to networking and the overall success of the ECML event.

Dr Galya Mateva  
Regional workshop co-ordinator  
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