



EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MODERN LANGUAGES

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Second medium-term programme of activities 2004-2007

Project C7 – TrainEd

Training teacher educators

"Changing roles and responsibilities of language educators"

Central workshop report 9/2004

(Graz, Austria, 7-11 December 2004)

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This report is accessible in English and in French 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 starting point of the TrainEd project is to respond to the changing and expanding roles and responsibilities of language educators in Europe: thus, many language teachers have been asked to become trainers, staff developers, mentors, etc., without actually being trained as trainers. While they may feel confident about the content areas of the training courses, they frequently have to learn the actual training skills the hard way.

This 4-year project aims

1. to provide a training guide or kit that teacher educators can use in their training practice;
2. to train a number of at least 50 multipliers – ‘trainer trainers’ – with training skills, thus setting off a cascading process.

The first central workshop of the project took place at the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML), Graz, December 7-11, 2004. It was conducted by an international team of five trainers and was attended by a number of 26 participants from 25 European countries. The participants were teacher educators for whom the training guide should be useful, who could contribute to its development and who would have opportunities to pilot it in a variety of contexts. All participants had some experience in teacher education, e.g. mentoring, pre-service or in-service teacher education, school-based staff development, etc.

The main objectives of the workshop were:

- to explore the trainer training needs and concerns in the participating countries;
- to pilot and develop materials for the trainer training guide;
- to identify among the workshop participants trainers for the future expert missions at national or local level (the National Training Events).

These objectives were achieved in the above order, chronologically. The workshop had 5 full working days, organised as follows:

- Day 1: Exploring training needs and concerns; discovering the relevance of the workshop and the training kit for participants’ own training concerns/needs; raising awareness of the needs of less experienced teacher educators; conceptual framework of teacher education.
- Day 2: Course design in teacher education: raising awareness of the complexities of course design in teacher education; principles of course design; experiential group work activity: designing a training event/course; reflection on the experience of designing a training event/course; teacher education resources.
- Day 3: Motivation and values in teacher education; introduction to facilitating learning in groups: raising awareness of trainer’s values and trainees’ motivation; what counts as a successful training activity; facilitating learning in groups in teacher education: the concept and practice of facilitation; observation of group facilitation; difficult situations in group discussions in the context of teacher education.

- Day 4: Training, facilitation, development in teacher education; presentation skills for teacher educators; observation and feedback in teacher education; action plans for national training events.
- Day 5: Contents of the trainer training kit (organised in groups, participants presented four possible tables of contents of the trainer training kit); evaluation in teacher education; compiling a list of possible National Training Events; evaluating this workshop.

The project team – although having a clear agenda for piloting the worksheets for the kit – strived to conduct the workshop in a participant-centred way. Throughout the week, we aimed to balance piloting the already-developed materials with group work in which participants themselves would produce other materials or activities that can go into the kit. Moreover, participants experienced many of the activities that we recommend for the novice trainers (who represent the target audience of the kit): for instance, during Day 2, participants, organised in 4 groups, designed different types of training events by using various course design instruments; subsequently, they presented their design outlines to the whole group, as well as providing the moderating team with valuable feedback on the usefulness of the design instruments provided. The design outlines themselves can serve as very practical illustrations of various types of training events – either in pre- or in-service teacher education in various contexts.

During the last session of each day there was a ‘kit session’ when the appointed ‘kit man’ (Uwe Pohl) drew the strands together in what concerned the kit work done during the day. There is still much work to be done to formulate the training kit and progress on this may have suffered as it was placed at the end of each very full day's work. However, the feedback provided by participants on the kit materials is quite substantial, and will be instrumental in the subsequent drafting of the kit by the project team.

Every day of the workshop contained short input sessions as well as small group discussions or more elaborated group work sessions followed by presentation of group results. At the end of each day the moderators elicited feedback on the day's work (every day in a different format); participants' comments and suggestions were processed and presented to the whole group at the beginning of the following day, thus offering a possible way of developmental, on-going evaluation in teacher education. The moderators did their best to take into consideration and follow many of the participants' suggestions, although, as is to be expected when working in such a diverse group, many comments were contradictory.

During the last afternoon of the workshop, team members and participants explored – with the support of ECML director Adrian Butler - possibilities for organising expert missions in participants' own countries (national training events).

As stated in the project description, the objectives – which we believe have been achieved to a good extent – were threefold: consulting the participants as regards the trainer training kit (engaging them in developing kit materials as well as getting their feedback on the already developed worksheets); training the participants using the kit materials (piloting the kit material) and setting off the dissemination process (a cascading process, comprising a series of approximately 6 national training events to take place in 2005, and being co-moderated by workshop participants and team members, in the participants' own training contexts).

Although both team and participants viewed the workshop as challenging and – frequently – exhausting, we believe it happened in an atmosphere of professional co-operation: we thoroughly enjoyed sharing perspectives in the group, and also had many insightful as well as humorous moments (for instance, it will be hard to forget the multi-cultural evening, when we shared traditional stories and songs, as well as traditional food and drinks). Since the workshop, we have continued to communicate by e-mail and hope to continue this informal networking.

Most of the worksheets and materials used during the workshop will be posted on the project website at the beginning of 2005, and we hope that the workshop participants will continue to help us in their consultative roles for the future development of the trainer training kit.

Throughout the workshop the team and the participants were supported impeccably by the translating team and the ECML staff, to whom we would like to convey our deep gratitude.

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Attachments:

1. Course design outlines produced by the participants (group work, day 2)
2. Participants' presentations about the contents of the trainer training kit (group work, day 5)