

Network for the Support of the Centre for Second Language in the Labour Market

MANIFESTO

Rationale and Mission Statement

From 1999 until 2003 experts from twenty-two European countries worked together on the trans-national project *Odysseus: second language at/for the workplace*. The project was funded by the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) of the Council of Europe in cooperation with the European Commission.

An outcome of the Odysseus project was to agree on a theoretical framework to use as a parameter for critically analysing actual practice. Based on the experience worldwide Odysseus proposed a specific socio-cultural and social-linguistic approach to second language at/for the workplace and preliminary guidelines and examples of practice. The proposed approach aims at *integration and participation at the workplace and in social life*.

In tune with current research on language (and literacy) the following key concepts were elaborated/agreed upon:

- *language as social practice and not merely as a formal system. This implies a language provision which is going beyond a purely functional/operational language teaching aims at developing the ability of the learner to take active part in the communication (Bill Green, 1998).*
- *organizational approach to the language used at the workplace/communication practiced at the workplace. This implies a holistic approach which recognizes the responsibilities of all communications partners and does not focus only on the deficits of individuals*
- *workplace as community of practice, with its own communicative profile shaped and shaping the company “culture” (norms and rules, power relations, etc. (E. Wenger, 1998)*

Furthermore the Odysseus group concluded that:

“At present there is no delivery model which can claim to be consistent with the insights gained by research. We strongly feel the need for an didactical and methodological framework which systematically and transparently implements the principles stated above” (p.14).

An important task for future work is to investigate, how the proposed socio-cultural and socio-linguistic theoretical framework and the resulting recommendations could apply in different local and national contexts.

Building on the recommendations of the Odysseus Project (see Appendix A), the current project's goal is to create a permanent, European level centre for coordination of research, innovation, guidance and dissemination of information in the area of Second Language in the Labour Market. Furthermore we will establish a network of researchers, practitioners and experts to support the Centre.

The Goals

- 1. Create a network**
- 2. Create the Centre for Second Language in the Labour Market.**

Ad 1. Create a network

Create a network as a stabilising umbrella organisation with a twofold purpose: One to provide support for the design and implementation of projects at the European level, as a source of information and communication among member organisations, to improve dissemination within and outside the network, conduct and support research and development in the area of language in the labour market, and serve as a agency for advocacy.

The Network will:

1. provide the continuity and the sustainability of the Centre;
2. guarantee the coherence of its activities with its stated goals, ethical principles, theoretical framework;
3. ensure the adherence to the theoretical developments in second language acquisition and pedagogy.

The Plan of Action

In the planning meeting in Mainz, Germany 23 –24. September 2004 the founding group agreed on the following actions:

The network will:

1. Finalize a mission paper which describes the goals of the network and structure and purpose of the Centre for Second Language in the Labour Market
2. Identify and prepare for the application for funding for
 - a. Network
 - b. Centre
3. Begin advocacy i.e.:
 - a. Create awareness among:
 - i. Policy makers at local, national and European level
 - ii. Educational and Vocational Authorities
 - iii. Labour Organisations
 - iv. Employers' Organisations and Enterprises
 - v. Vocational Training
 - b. Set up partnerships and collaborative effort to advance the network's goals
4. Apply for specific funding related to the founding of a European Centre for Language in The Labour Market and related activities

Ad 2. Create the Centre for Second Language in the Labour Market.

The Centre will contribute to the development of instruments of access to the knowledge based society for groups which are in danger of exclusion in order to improve the relationship between citizens, institutions, employers and 'social partners'.

Moreover, communicative competence at the workplace means language competence and cross cultural competence as a key for all citizens to contribute to making Europe 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world' and promoting communicative competence at the workplace as a social and economic imperative

Plan of action

Once the Centre is established, we will start by initiating quality development based on the experiences and results of the ODYSSEUS network, investigating and evaluating existing provisions for second language at the workplace and using scientific research to define a framework / standards.

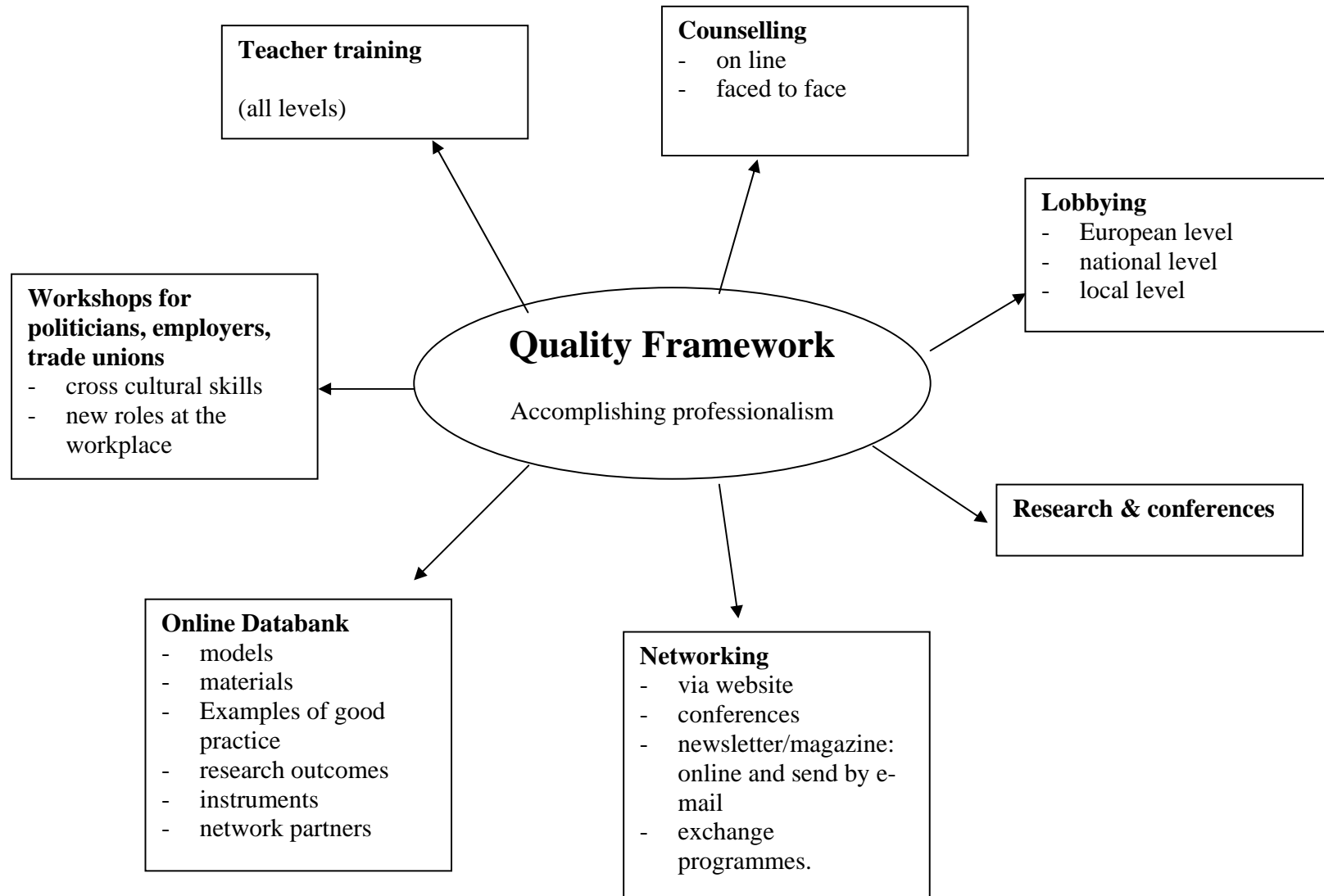
Quality Framework

We will work towards a Quality Framework with core elements and recommendations for second language provision at and for the workplace. It will focus on concepts of provisions, teacher's profile, forms of evaluation and the organisational approaches, including core elements like the three dimensions of language and the idea of communities of practise in the enterprises and at the workplaces.

The quality development of the Centre will keep on working on improvement of the Quality Framework, using new insights, new research results, new experience, new input, etc, contributing to the professionalism of the issue.

Activities of the Centre

On the basis of this Quality Framework this Centre will establish and develop different areas of work and networking:



Target groups of the Centre

The Centre will be offering support for and counselling of different target groups:

- Course providers: public and private adult education centres
- Teacher trainers
- Policy makers: at European, national, regional level
- Employers: top management of the company, personnel managers, managers at the workplace
- Trade unions
- Curriculum developers
- Vocational institutes, vocational trainers and other (company) trainers
- Teachers for L2 at the workplace
- Employer organisations
- National or local (governmental) institutions or services responsible for employment, employment services, unemployed people, support of refugees
- Commercial local employment service organisations
- Support Agencies
- Publishing houses, authors of vocationally oriented textbooks and teaching aids,

The Centre will be meant to function as a platform for those involved in a political level as well as those involved in content level, involving decision makers and key persons and stakeholders. Their involvement must enhance 'ownership' of Second language at the workplace initiatives in their own country or region.

Who we are

1. Birna Arnbjornsdottir, Háskóli Íslands (University of Iceland)
2. Ingibjörg Hafstad, Fjölmennig (a private enterprise in Iceland)
3. Katrien Bultynck, Steunpunt NT2, Centre for Language and Migration (Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium)
4. Elwine Halewijn, ITTA, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
5. Matilde Grünhage-Monetti, Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung (Bonn. Germany)
6. Andreas Klepp, Volkshochschule (Braunschweig, Germany)
7. Petra Szablewski-Cavus (Germany)
8. Fernanda Minuz, Associazione di Donne, 'Orlando' (Private non-profit organisation in Bologna, Italy)

Our approach of second language in the Labour Market

The focus of this centre will be on communication in the workplace where the workplace is seen as a community of practice. We view language as social practice and thus more than a formal grammatical system. How it is used depends on the context and the community in which it is practiced. It is embedded in social, cultural and political relations. All actors share responsibility for the success or failure of communication. This view of language impacts the way we approach teaching second language for the labour market because it emphasises the workplace as a speech community and as a learning community.

We are aware that the usual definition of a second language, meaning the language of the community in which learning takes place, does not necessarily represent the complex linguistic situations of all the member states including the different effects of European economic integration, the mobility of the work force, the relocation of industry, different existing language minorities, all of which create different linguistic situations where the notion of what constitutes a second language may vary. We thus emphasize an approach to teaching and learning as a process of social participation rather than skills development.

APPENDIX A

Odysseus: Second language at/for the workplace **EUROPEAN LEVEL - RECOMMENDATIONS**

European Policy

- Doing research in the size, structure, nationality of the in- flow of migrant workers to be expected with the enlargement of the EU, so that strategy for integrating them can be developed, along with providing assistance for 2nd language provision in the country of origin.

Raising awareness

- Raising awareness among employers, policy makers, general public.

Cooperation between countries

- Bi/multilateral (Regional, Cross-border, etc) programmes / projects on vocational and / or languages provisions
- Working out joint projects of the key issues of the Workshop N° 6/2002 need continuation of this project.
- To develop and implement the new learning arena for language learning without national borders.
- Assisting Eastern European countries set up a network and develop a strategy that will help them share the language problems of migrant workers with the Western countries.
- Collaboration between local partners (Min. of Lab.+ Min. of Educ + Civil Society etc.) and foreign partners on making surveys, need analyses, identification of resources etc. Proposals for joint projects.

Information and support and exchange of expertise at implementation level

- Support exchange of experts and materials- cultural cross-border cooperation (teachers, students + textbooks, magazines, etc.)
- To give recommendations of methods- how to research language/communicative needs at the workplace.
- To develop, implement a method for maintaining the learning process at the workplace.
- How to evaluate and measure communicative language skills.
- Organise events, publications
- Exchange knowledge, information and development across borders
- Make results of experiences and projects about language at the workplace available for language provision for vocational training. Results will bring new interesting perspectives.
- Developing a universal model of competency based curriculum.
- Good examples of explicit made workplace communicative- needs, research, teacher training – provision at workplaces

- To improve education of teachers – e.g. organise language courses for teachers abroad, lectures about culture, policy, economy, seminars, etc.
- Preparing list of competency and skills the migrants should achieve.

Cooperation country of origin and host country

- Bilateral or multilateral projects to develop joint approach by both country of origin and host country.
- To support joint projects aimed at providing language and vocational training both in “importing” and “exporting” labour countries in a perspective of mobility more than immigration.
- Preventive measures with the inclusion of countries providing migrant workforce.

Setting up pilots

- Setting up/ facilitating pilot-projects at and for the workplace (in international cooperation / exchange of expertise).

Change of perspective in looking at migrant workers

- Main objective- train mobile European workforce.
- From: “migrant worker” to “mobile European citizens”. Labour exporting and labour importing countries to share a common vocational framework with training (and money!) shared between both.

Research

Funding comparative research on pilot-projects (LL at the workplace) in different countries.