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**Methods of Teacher Assessment and the EAQUALS Profiling Grid
for Language Teachers**

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The *Profiling Grid for Language Teachers* developed for EAQUALS by North & Mateva (2006) was inspired by the impact of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching & Assessment*, or CEFR (Council of Europe 2001), on the world of foreign language learning, and in particular on the ways in which key aspects of language learning, for example achievement levels and curricula, are now described and referenced. Like its counterpart, *the European Profile for Language Teacher Education* (Kelly and Grenfell 2004), which is a framework of reference for universities providing initial training courses for language teachers, the *EAQUALS Profiling Grid for Language Teachers* was not originally designed as an assessment tool but as a means to enable EAQUALS schools to describe the 'profile' of practising language teachers, particularly when the school is preparing for inspection or re-inspection by EAQUALS. As explained in North (2009) and Rossner (2008), given the disparate nature of language teaching organisations accredited by EAQUALS, and the fact that between them they teach a wide range of languages in 20 or so different national contexts, it is necessary for EAQUALS and its team of inspectors to have common points of reference when considering the experience, training, awareness and competence of teaching staff in different organisations. Thus, prior to an inspection, managers of a school might describe their teachers' proficiency in and awareness of the target language, or their qualifications and experience, in one of the ways indicated in table 1 below in order to enable inspectors, whose interest is in the quality of the teaching as a whole, not in the quality of individual teachers working there, quickly to get an overview of the teaching team without reviewing all their C.V.s.

| | | BASIC | | INDEPENDENT | | PROFICIENT | |
|-----------------------|--|-------|----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------|
| | | T1 | T2 | T3 | T4 | T5 | T6 |
| LANGUAGE | Language Proficiency | | Teaching assistant 1 | Teachers F, H | Teachers B, D, G, K | Teachers A, C, J | Teacher E |
| | Language Awareness | | | Teacher B, H T. Assistant 1 | Teachers F, C, D, K | Teacher G, J, E | Teacher A |
| QUALIFICATIONS | Language Teacher Qualifications | | ✓ | ✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓✓✓ | ✓✓ | |
| | Language Teaching Practice | | ✓✓ | ✓✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓ | ✓ | |
| | Teaching Experience | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓✓✓✓ | ✓✓✓ | ✓ |

Table 1: part of the EAQUALS Profiling Grid as if completed by managers to provide an overview of the teaching team's qualifications and competence in the target language (two methods: the first indicates the 'spikiness' of given teachers' profiles, the second is a simple scattergram)

Potential for assessment

Clearly, a manager undertaking a 'descriptive' exercise as illustrated in table 1 is in some senses automatically making an 'assessment', however, subjective, of her teachers. It would thus be a short further step for her to ask teachers to assess themselves against the descriptors in the Profiling Grid, and in one-on-one discussions with them, to seek to harmonise these self-assessments with the assessments she has made of teachers. However, to serve such a purpose adequately the EAQUALS grid would need to be used to generate an amplified and further developed set of descriptors which are conceived with assessment in mind.

Another counterpart to the EAQUALS Profiling Grid, the *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages, EPOSTL* (Newby et al 2006), is designed with the purpose of enabling student teachers of language on pre-service university courses to assess themselves against a range of descriptors, and to record their progress during and beyond their course. It is, however, not intended to provide a vehicle for 'third party' assessment of - or even self-assessment by - practising language teachers.

The remainder of this paper outlines some different purposes of teacher assessment, provides some examples of how an EAQUALS language teaching framework could be developed for assessment purposes, and discusses how appropriate teacher assessment procedures could be developed.

Types of teacher assessment

At least three different related purposes of teacher assessment can be distinguished:

1. Assessment related to obtaining a qualification, job and/or career progression, for example:
 - o the assessments made by training providers to decide whether trainees should 'passing the course' and obtain the qualification, or
 - o informal assessments made by managers to decide whether a teacher can be promoted to 'co-ordinator', or
 - o the kind of assessment made by interviewers when appointing a new teacher, especially where the selection process involves a demonstration lesson.
2. Assessment that forms part of ongoing quality assurance (internal or external), for example:
 - o Assessment of the competence of the whole teaching team during an internal or external inspection of the school (such as an inspection by EAQUALS), or
 - o Assessment (and self-assessment) focusing on the competence and performance of individual teachers, as part of 'performance management', or in preparation for appraisal by a manager.
3. Assessment (and self-assessment) for continuous professional development. This may be closely related to assessment for appraisal purposes but focuses on the individual teacher's 'gaps and strengths' in order to plan individualised professional development in line with the needs both of the institution and the teacher.

The trend towards reflective and co-operative practices in language teacher education encourages a broader, more collegial approach to teacher assessment, whatever its purpose. This is indicated in table 2 below:

| ASSESSMENT FOR: | QUALIFICATION, CAREER PROGRESSION | QUALITY, PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT | CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT |
|--|--|--|--|
| WHO PARTICIPATES IN ASSESSMENT? | | | |
| External agency (training course provider, inspectors) | ✓ | ✓ | (✓?) |
| Employer | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Peer | (✓?) | (✓) | ✓ |
| Self | (✓) | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 2: potential contributors to (language) teacher assessment, depending on the purposes and circumstances.

The existing grid can already be used in such a way. However, while judgements may be relatively easy in the area of (say) target language proficiency because there is reference to the well-established levels described in the CEFR, the descriptors for language awareness or core competency are at a 'global' level and need further amplification to be used in assessment for qualification or professional development purposes.

Examples outside language teaching

Several descriptive frameworks have been produced to describe general teacher competency at schools and further education level. These are not specifically related to language teaching but apply to language teachers working in the relevant system. For example, the UK's Teacher Development Agency for Schools in its *Professional Standards for Teachers* (2007) has produced cumulative descriptors of standards for teachers of any subject at school level in England and Wales across five levels or career stages, and covering the three areas:

- "Professional attributes" (e.g. relationships, communicating, professional development)
- "Professional knowledge and understanding" (e.g. teaching & learning, subjects & curriculum, achievement & diversity)
- "Professional skills" (e.g. planning, teaching, learning environment)¹.

The assessment purpose of the TDA framework is quite clearly outlined in the introduction (page 2):

"The standards provide the framework for a teacher's career and clarify what progression looks like. As now, to access each career stage a teacher will need to demonstrate that he/she has met the relevant standards. The process for this varies depending on the standards concerned. Teachers seeking Excellent Teacher or AST [Advanced Skill Teacher] status need to apply and be assessed through an external assessment process. Teachers seeking to cross the threshold are assessed by their head teacher. The standards for Post

¹ These headings are almost identical, except in their order, to the headings of the three sections of the European Profile for Language Teachers: 'Knowledge and understanding'; 'Strategies and skills'; 'Values'. Both can be seen as reflecting the distinction in French between 'savoir', 'savoir faire' and 'savoir être', and are again to be found in a further example from Australia (see below)

Threshold Teachers, Excellent Teachers and ASTs are pay standards, and teachers who are assessed as meeting them also access the relevant pay scale”.

Thus assessment of teachers against this framework is intended to be related to career development, performance management, appraisal and ultimately pay.

Another example of a framework of assessment for general education comes from the Western Australia Department of Education and Training. Their elaborate *Competency Framework for Teachers* over three phases of development (2004), summarised in fig. 1, has ‘competency standards’ at its core, complemented by ‘professional attributes’ and ‘professional knowledge’.



Figure 1: *Competency Framework for Teachers* (Department of Education, Western Australia)

This Framework is less explicit than the TDA one in its objectives:

“The Framework was developed to:

- “provide a structure and language within which statements of professional standards are defined. By setting out essential elements of effective teaching it acts as a common reference point for dialogue between members of the profession and the community;

- promote and support quality teaching by making explicit knowledge, skills and attributes that characterise good teaching practice. Understanding what teachers know, do and value is an important step in enhancing the profile and standing of the profession;
- give teachers a tool that outlines a continuum of abilities and responsibilities central to professional excellence. This enables teachers to make informed decisions about the direction of their professional learning as they aspire to a higher level of performance;
- identify knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to assist practising teachers move along their chosen career path" ... (page 2).

Here, any assessment (or self-assessment) objective is less explicitly related to performance and more focused on personal professional development and setting out what teachers need to be able to do in order to meet public (and employer) expectations. In this respect the aim is akin to that of the EAQUALS grid.

At a 'global' level the key competencies in the *Competency Framework for Teachers* are described as in table 3 below:

| | PHASE 1 Teachers operating within the first phase should: | PHASE 2 Teachers operating within the second phase should: | PHASE 3 Teachers operating within the third phase should: |
|--|---|---|--|
| DIMENSION 1 Facilitating Student Learning | Engage students in purposeful and appropriate learning experiences | Cater for diverse student learning styles and needs through consistent application of a wide range of teaching strategies | Use exemplary teaching strategies and techniques that meet the needs of individual students, groups and/or classes of students in a highly responsive and inclusive manner |
| DIMENSION 2 Assessing and Reporting Student Learning Outcomes | Monitor, assess, record and report student learning outcomes | Apply comprehensive systems of assessment and reporting in relation to student attainment of learning outcomes | Consistently use exemplary assessment and reporting strategies that are highly responsive and inclusive |
| DIMENSION 3 Engaging in Professional Learning | Reflect critically on professional experiences in order to enhance Professional effectiveness | Contribute to the development of a learning community | Engage in a variety of learning activities that promote critical self reflection and the development of a learning community |

Table 3: 'Professional Practice' from *Competency Framework for Teachers* (p.8)

This *Competency Framework for Teachers* provides an interesting example of a gradually more analytic approach to descriptors (reminiscent of the CEFR) that at the final stage may enable teachers in self-assessment and managers in staff assessment to home in on gaps and strengths in order to respond to or build on these in professional development and team building. Following an intermediate less global description of the progression in competency across different phases at a more detailed level, these detailed 'indicators of effective practice' at phase 1 for Dimension 1 (and similar ones for the other 4 dimensions) are to be found:

"DIMENSION 1: Facilitating Student Learning

Engage students in purposeful and appropriate learning experiences

COMPETENCY DESCRIPTOR:

Teachers operating within Phase 1 are able to engage their students in sequences of purposeful and appropriate learning experiences to promote their learning.

CRITICAL ELEMENT: UNDERTAKE PLANNING TO SUPPORT STUDENT LEARNING

SOME INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE:

A teacher operating within this phase:

- identifies learning outcomes for individuals and groups that are matched to students' developmental needs and are consistent with system, district and school curriculum requirements
- prepares purposeful and sequential learning experiences that integrate learning areas and are responsive to student interests and learning styles
- establishes coherent links between intended learning outcomes, learning experiences and forms of assessment
- makes provisions inclusive of individual students with particular learning needs
- addresses student safety issues and concerns.

CRITICAL ELEMENT: APPLY A PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE BASE TO THE DESIGN OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES

SOME INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE:

A teacher operating within this phase:

- designs learning experiences that take account of the key concepts, principles and theories, including those outlined in the *Curriculum Framework*
- links key concepts, principles and theories across the curriculum and to life applications
- uses knowledge of curriculum materials and resources in designing learning experiences
- applies an understanding of human development and learning theory to the design of learning experiences.

CRITICAL ELEMENT: PROMOTE STUDENT LEARNING

SOME INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE:

A teacher operating within this phase:

- makes the purpose of learning experiences explicit to students and links new concepts to prior knowledge
- employs effective questioning strategies to promote student involvement and critical thinking
- uses varying patterns of interaction within and across learning experiences
- emphasizes language as a vehicle for learning through the use of discussion and by listening and responding to the ideas of others
- offers clear explanations of concepts, relationships, procedures and processes
- implements learning experiences that provide opportunities for student collaboration, problem solving, inquiry and creativity
- encourages students to take increasing responsibility for attaining learning goals
- assumes different roles in the instructional process based on the content and purposes of learning experiences
- promotes students' awareness of their own thought processes and the use of reflection to build new understandings."

(Competency Framework for Teachers p. 16)

As a final example, this time from further education, the UK agency FENTO (now subsumed under Lifelong Learning UK) devised standards for further education teachers summarised in figure 2 below:



Figure 2: Summary of the Key Areas of Teaching (FENTO 2001, p.10).

Again, the assessment purposes were made explicit:

1. "To provide an agreed set of standards that can be used to inform the design of accredited awards for FE (further education) teachers, validated within the national qualifications framework or by higher education institutions or other awarding bodies..."
2. To provide standards that can be used to inform professional development activity within FE.
3. To assist institution-based activities such as recruitment, appraisal and the identification of training needs." (p 1).

Implications for the development of an EAQUALS framework for assessing language teachers

The various examples provided above show that extensive work has already been on developing standards and criteria for assessing the professional competencies, professional knowledge and professional attitudes of teachers, including teachers of languages, for various purposes: for qualifications and progression (including pay), for recruitment and appraisal, and for professional development. All the frameworks exemplified, and no doubt the many others developed by education authorities around the world, cover similar areas quite extensively. It is therefore important that, in developing an assessment framework

specifically for language teachers, the requirements at different levels are analysed, where relevant with reference to frameworks available elsewhere, and that detailed descriptors are developed to provide 'indicators' for the various most important dimensions of language teacher competency, skills and attitudes. EAQUALS has begun this work in a new special interest project by initially reviewing the coverage of the *Profiling Grid* in comparison with the European Framework and EPOSTL referred to above with a view to identifying any 'missing' elements, and has begun work on descriptors for some of these. A more extensive analysis of the content of other teacher competency frameworks is planned.

As far as assessment for qualifications or for awarding 'credits' to teachers undertaking training is concerned, further work will be needed to 'validate' the levels of language teacher competency proposed in the *Profiling Grid* in relation to national and international qualifications frameworks such as the *European Qualifications Framework* or EQF (European Communities 2008), which national frameworks within the EU are expected to relate to by 2010, and the levels of which qualifications issued in the EU are required to refer to by 2012. Here 'qualifications' are defined as "a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards" (p 11). This eight-level qualifications framework consists of general descriptors in three categories reminiscent of those used in the teacher competency frameworks. An extract in table 4 below contains the general descriptors for levels 5 and 6 (of 8), which are estimated to be where the qualifications of most 'qualified' teachers would sit:

| LEVEL | KNOWLEDGE | SKILLS | COMPETENCE |
|-------|--|---|--|
| 5* | comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge | a range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change; ▪ supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities |
| 6** | advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles | a comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change ▪ review and develop performance of self and others |

* equivalent to the 'short cycle' of higher education

** equivalent to the first cycle of higher education (first degree)

Table 4: extract from *the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning* (p12-13)

This kind of correlation of scales is particularly necessary for those teachers who come into the profession from a different field of activity or without following a 'traditional' training route, and may also add value to further training in the EU by facilitating the award of credits under the international system, ECVET, becomes widely available².

² For further details, see http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc50_en.htm

Means of teacher assessment

Appendix 1 contains an overview of some well-respected language teacher qualifications in Europe and Canada, including, in the right hand column, an outline of assessment methods used. This information was gathered during the second TQAC conference at the Università di Stranieri, Siena in February 2009.

A workshop at the same conference pooled information and experience of various means of collecting evidence of language teacher proficiency for assessment purposes, especially related to teacher qualifications. Those identified were:

- a. Observation by trainers, assessors, mentors of the trainee doing real or 'practice' teaching
- b. Asking trainees to reflect on, comment on & react to recordings or their observations of teaching
- c. Simulations in which trainees react to lesson plans, say how you would present X language feature etc
- d. Written exams or long essays (possibly in the trainee's mother tongue) on one or more selected subject
- e. Oral presentation by the trainee based on a previously written essay
- f. Multiple choice written tests relating to methodology, language awareness etc.
- g. Assessment of trainee's lesson plans, specially prepared materials, tests
- h. Oral interviews with trainees about their work as language teachers
- i. Self-assessment by the trainee using portfolios with competence descriptors

The group also listed some useful assessment tools, which included:

- Scales/grids of competence
- Explicit criteria for each aspect or competency assessed
- A standardisation process to ensure assessments by different people were consistent
- Principles or guidelines for flexibility in assessment according to the context, topics selected, personality of the trainee
- Lesson observation templates for recording assessments of actual teaching (or trainee's own observations of lessons given by others).

Conclusion

Language teaching professionals often bemoan the fact that assessing language competence, especially within the context of a language learning programme, is so complex, and that factors other than language competence creep into the assessment exercise. This is equally true, if not even truer, when assessing language teaching - or general teaching - competence for any purpose. However, important though the methodology of teacher assessment is, validity and reliability are not feasible until an agreed and transparent framework exists for describing the essential components of language teaching proficiency at different levels (whether three, six or more).

EAQUALS' intention is to develop such a descriptive and evaluative framework on the basis of the Profile already used for quality assurance purposes, and to assist providers of teacher training and development programmes in assuring the quality of their teacher training and assessment work. In the process the aim is to ensure that, when assessing language teaching proficiency, the criteria and means of assessment are:

- Valid, relevant and reliable
- Explicit and agreed among those assessing and those being assessed
- Shared, understood and standardised among those assessing.

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LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING - METHODS OF ASSESSMENT (draft 2)

Data gathered at the TQAC conference, Siena, February 2009

| TRAINING COURSE | Prerequisites | Course-based? | Content | Assessment methods |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| DITALS (Università di Siena (teachers of Italian) Level 1 basic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secondary diploma ▪ C1 competence ▪ 60 hours of experience | Optional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analysis & use of textbooks ▪ Planning units of work ▪ Interaction with learners ▪ Knowledge about IFL | <p>Mainly written tests, including m/choice etc</p> <p>Level 2 – simulation (without students) based on a teaching situation</p> |
| Level 2 advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Degree ▪ C2 competence ▪ 150 hours of experience | 30 hours required – methodology of IFL | | |
| Goethe-Institut Grünes Diplom (teachers of German) | <p>Little or no teaching experience</p> <p>C1-C2 Language level?</p> | <p>Yes – distance learning & Face-to-face reflection</p> <p>In 'sandwich' mode with observation & practice teaching in between</p> | <p>6 core modules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning ▪ Methodology for teaching 4 skills ▪ Teaching grammar <p>+ Optional modules relating to teaching context (young learners etc)</p> <p>Plus observation (50 hours) Practice teaching (4 hours) German culture & civilisation</p> | <p>Task-based tests e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reacting to & improving lesson plans ▪ evaluating suitability of and adapting teaching materials <p>Assessed observation Practice teaching</p> <p>Essay on German C & C</p> |
| Cambridge CELTA (teachers of English) | No experience – mainly native speakers of English or at least C1? | Yes - minimum 100 hours (on-line under consideration) | <p>Practical skills and teaching approach</p> <p>Practice teaching (6 hours)</p> | <p>Coursework</p> <p>Practical – observation-based</p> |

| | Prerequisites | Course-based? | Content | Assessment methods |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cambridge DELTA (teachers of English) | Experienced teacher of English (1 year FT equ) At least C2) | Modular (3 modules) – no course required except Module 2 Each module has separate certificate 3 certificates = diploma | Module 1: background & 'theory' | Exam at fixed dates |
| | | | Module 2: practical teaching methodology (written assignments & practical) | Assignments and observation of teaching |
| | | | Module 3 : | Written assignment (5,000 words) |
| Cambridge TKT (teachers of English) | No prerequisites - May be experienced teachers with little formal training - mostly not native speakers of English – around B1 minimum | Not required but support materials, practice tests, and glossaries exist, inc. on-line | <u>Module 1</u> : background knowledge and language awareness <u>Module 2</u> : lesson planning <u>Module 3</u> : managing the teaching & learning experience Plus specialist modules on 'knowledge about language' and CLIL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On demand – written test on-line or paper-based (80 mins, 80 m/choice questions) ▪ Answer sheets returned to Cambridge ▪ No failure (bands 1-4) ▪ No practical test of classroom performance |
| CIEP certificate (teachers of French) <i>evolving project: details still being determined</i> | Teachers without experience & teachers with experience – validation/certification of past experience and a framework for assessing the impact of training | General principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ improve quality ▪ CEFR as a resource ▪ Support for CPD ▪ | 1. Portfolio: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ self-assessment and identification of training needs ▪ Personal biography ▪ dossier | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Satisfactory completion of portfolio ▪ Written test of teaching competence >Evaluation of gap between current and required competence ▪ + maybe TCF or DELF/ DALF language test) |

Other key objectives: sensitivity to context, motivation, intercultural approach, co-operative learning, highlighting, learning to learn, learner-centred approach

| | Prerequisites | Course-based? | Content | Assessment methods |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| OISE – CTEP (teachers of language taught at schools in Canada) | Command of the language (e.g. French) verified by test | Yes, 4-5 year programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Language competence (knowledge base) ▪ School-based practice - 120 days, at least half teaching the language ▪ Mentored action-research ▪ <u>Not</u> subject-specialist: pedagogy & curriculum (cross-curricular) – e.g. 500 hrs of which only 70 on the target language ▪ Knowledge of the learners ▪ Standards of Practice for teachers (Ontario College of Teachers website) | Continuous assessment: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitored e- portfolio - 'action-plan' component – how to improve my language/cultural competence; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ dossier with artefacts indicating progress ▪ reflective writing 2. course-based assignments & tests - assessed |
| Ontario – Induction programme (teachers of various languages) | Entering the profession, practising teachers | Induction process – 2 years Format decided by school directors – can include workshops | Focus on established professional standards and the competencies required | Appraisal system with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence log for providing evidence of progress with each competency ▪ Mentor & manager assesses this |