

## Chapter 8

# CONCLUSIONS

Együd J. Györgyi, Gál Ildikó and Philip Glover

This chapter summarises the achievements and outcomes of the course by relating them to course aims and then goes on to consider future action.

### 8.1 Achievements and outcomes

According to the trainers' plans (see Chapter 1) the main aims of the course were:

- to inform teachers about the principles, content and procedures of the new examination system
- to encourage teachers to have a positive view of the new examinations
- to develop teachers' awareness of teaching and testing techniques
- to study and analyse classroom implications of the new examinations and to apply some in the classroom
- to support teachers in their aim of raising standards of student performance.

All these main aims were achieved by the course. Teachers received a great deal of information about the possible new examinations, as Chapter 3 in particular shows, although, as the teachers and trainers were very well aware, specific aspects of the course as it now stands may not apply when the exams are finally implemented.

Teachers were encouraged to have a positive view of the new examinations and to see that the new examinations could represent a big improvement compared with the current school-leaving examination. Chapters 3 and 7 in particular show this.

Awareness of testing techniques was raised throughout the course through contact with the specifications, sample tasks and the connected terminology, as described in Chapters 2 and 3. Awareness of teaching techniques was also raised throughout the course, but especially in the teaching implications sessions and in the homework assignments, shown in Chapters 4 and 5.

The teaching implications sessions and homework assignments also served the aim of studying, analyzing and applying teaching and testing in the classroom. Chapters 4 and 5 provide several examples of how this was achieved.

Finally the course supported teachers by providing information and opportunities for raising awareness about teaching and testing, and also by providing a cooperative and encouraging atmosphere in which to work and develop ideas. Chapter 7 in particular brings out the participants' responses to the atmosphere generated by the course.

As a result of the aims listed above, the following course outcomes were hoped for:

- teachers would be well-informed about the new examinations
- teachers would be supportive of the new examinations
- teachers would use better teaching and testing techniques (positive washback)
- students' language skills and test performance would improve

Whilst it is quite easy to show that the course aims were achieved, it is much harder to show whether the expected outcomes resulted. This is not surprising, as the outcomes concern the complex issues of innovation, change, teaching and learning. Change is only likely to occur over a period of time, and the NETT course is likely to have an effect in combination with other factors such as examiner training, the administration of the new examination, the reporting of results to teachers and students, and the general setting the reform occurs in.

We do believe, however, that the course has contributed to the outcomes listed above in a number of specific ways. The satisfaction that participants expressed with the course shown in chapter 7 indicates that teachers who took part in the course are well informed and supportive. However, the effect on teaching and learning is much harder to identify, and can only be ascertained through research. All that can be said at this stage is that the teaching issues identified in the Baseline Study and elsewhere are addressed in the course, and it remains to be seen whether the approach the course adopts can have an effect in this area.

Since the course was a pilot course, it also aimed at the following:

- trialing materials and procedures devised to support the successful introduction of the new examinations in Hungary
- enabling course designers and writers to develop materials and procedures further
- developing trainers' training skills and providing experience that can be shared with future trainers
- examining the responses of a sample of secondary school teachers in a real training situation and collecting views for future use

These aims were achieved in a variety of ways. Materials and procedures were extensively trialed and developed, as Chapters 2 and 3 show. The skills of the trainers were thoroughly developed, as Chapter 6 testifies. The responses of the course participants were monitored, collected and analysed, as described in Chapter 7, and the training team responded accordingly.

## **8.2 Future steps**

So far the course has been developed and piloted. Much work remains to be done in the future.

### **8.2.1 Course content and procedures**

The content and procedures of the course will need to be constantly updated. Changes will occur to the specifications and the administration of the examination,

and the course will need to take those into account. New course books will also be published, and the NETT course will need to update its course book samples.

The tasks themselves will also benefit from revision in the light of experiences gained in their delivery. The homework assignments in particular will need to be carefully looked at in order to overcome the negative responses they received from participants in the pilots, particularly in Debrecen. An important aspect of the course that will need to be examined is how the classroom is approached. At the moment classroom study is done through self-observation, but mutual observation is encouraged as an option.

### **8.2.2 Course delivery**

In the future the hope and expectation is that the course will be delivered to a large number of secondary school teachers across Hungary. The course will therefore need to conform to in-service requirements within the Hungarian system.

Having been prepared for delivery nationwide the course will need to be promoted. Trainers will need to be trained by the training team, who are keen to pass on the skills and knowledge they have acquired.

### **8.2.3 Coordination**

The implementation of the new examination system will also be supported by a number of other training activities, most notably the training of assessors and interlocutors for the speaking examination and raters for the written examination. Care will have to be taken to ensure that the NETT course is coordinated with these other training activities. For example, if large numbers of school teachers are trained for assessing and interlocuting, many teachers will start the course with knowledge of the speaking examination.

In the future other training courses may also need to be developed, as it is unlikely that the 60-hour course will be able to cover all skill areas in a satisfactory way. Contact with providers of initial teacher training courses may also be helpful. Experience gained through the NETT course, along with materials and procedures, may help to inform courses in the Universities and Training Colleges.

The NETT course contains a great deal of information about the new school-leaving examinations that are being prepared in Hungary, but it goes further than that. It also covers principles and practice of the examination, and of teaching and aims to make connections between all these aspects. The most important connection the course attempts to make is between the test, the teachers and the classroom. The work that has been done so far has been successful and the future will show whether the course can have an impact in the classroom.