

A QUALITY MATRIX FOR CEFR USE: Examples of practices

1 OVERVIEW

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Country: The Netherlands

Institution: SLO (Dutch Curriculum Agency)

Type of context: National

Educational sector: Secondary

Main focus: Resource

SUMMARY

Name: Supporting secondary school implementation

Abstract:

National cooperation to implement the CEFR in Dutch secondary schools by providing common materials

Stage: Implementation

Theme: Teaching, Materials

CEFR aspects used: Levels, descriptors

Main features of this example:

- Initial plan developed at the national, institutional level
- Active collaboration with teachers to produce and share materials
- Creation of a network of language teachers
- Creation of a website with content from the network (ERK.nl)

Quality principles particularly demonstrated: Transparency, Inclusiveness, Sustainability



2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background: The CEFR was introduced and implemented at an early stage in the Netherlands. For example, can-do statements used to illustrate CEFR levels in official documents as well as in textbooks. Cooperation between several partners. However, use of the CEFR is not prescribed by government; it is up to schools and teachers whether they use it or not. In practice CEFR use in daily teaching and assessment practice is in most cases limited to the use of CEFR-related textbooks and preparation for national examinations aligned to CEFR. In many cases, the CEFR is used selectively, that is, it is applied for curriculum development, teaching and/or assessment in different ways in different schools to meet the specific needs or views of individual departments or teachers. Teacher attitude to the CEFR is positive, with support for clarity about target levels in relation to a pan-European framework. 'Teachers seem to associate CEFR with a communicative, competence-based approach to foreign language teaching. More specifically, they perceive CEFR as an approach that facilitates their pupils to learn how to use the language in real life, instead of mere formal knowledge of the language. However, this means in practice more focus in teaching on oral skills, which leads to a disconnect with assessment since 50% of the marks for a student's grade come from a test of reading. (From Moonen et al 2013).

Stated aims: Developing and sharing teaching materials about the CEFR, to be used by teachers, modern languages coordinators and managers of educational institutes.

Steps/stages: Development of 'Masterplan CEFR', which included different expertise groups. Development of materials (publications, video clips) together with ML teachers; create a network of language teachers. Create the website ERK.nl with content from the network teachers.

Procedures followed: First creating support through National involvement (masterplan) from several expert institutes and the next step creating materials with teachers. We used the speaking skills as an example to create assessments with CEFR. And this co-creation helps to develop a PDCA plan for implementing CEFR in daily learning activities and assessments.

International tests (Cambridge, DELF, Goethe Institute), related to CEFR level, were introduced in some schools in 2011 as a part of the final secondary school examination in secondary education. It is a school decision whether they do this.

Timeline:

In 2008, the Dutch Ministry of Education launched a national project (CEFR Master Plan, 2008–2011) to foster the implementation of CEFR in Dutch secondary education. It was a joint collaboration between various key institutes in the field of foreign language education in the Netherlands.

In 2009-2010 the National Centre on Modern Language organised different activities aimed at developing and sharing teaching materials about the CEFR, to be used in teacher training institutes.

In 2015 the SLO (National curriculum institute) further elaborated the CEFR/Portfolio Can-Do statements; concrete examples for the teachers ("Taalprofielen 2015"), which they use for example in assessment development.

Currently tertiary educational schools are developing a national final exam in CEFR for listening and reading skills. We are considering to rewrite can-do statements for Primary schools.

People/roles:

Teachers and modern languages coordinators and managers of educational institutes.

A network of teacher trainers was created, teacher trainers were directly involved in the project and they gave feedback. Research was an important part.

Publications that have been used or produced related to this example:

Website: www.ERK.nl

Moonen, M., Stoutjesdijk, E., Graaff, de, R., & Corda, A. (2013). Implementing the CEFR in secondary education: impact on FL teachers' educational and assessment practice. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 23(2), 226-246.

Publication: <http://downloads.slo.nl/Repository/wERK-in-het-veld.pdf>.

3 RESULTS

What was achieved: The overall project was successful and is sustainable because the materials are still available through the website ERK.nl

Impact: It was an effective implementation as it was created together with national institutes (Masterplan CEFR) and teachers. But it was hard to motivate secondary teachers who weren't involved in the first years. Since the CEFR was already mentioned in the teachers and learner's books, there was no need for a pro-active attitude to do something with CEFR.

Currently tertiary vocational schools are doing national final exams for English and the teachers are required to develop their school exams according to CEFR standards.

In 2018, a national survey will be coordinated by the Inspectorate aimed at stating the English competence level (according to the CEFR levels) in the last year of primary education (pupils aged 11-12). Reading, listening, spoken interaction and vocabulary knowledge will be tested.

4 ADVICE AND LESSONS LEARNT:

Advice on this theme; things to remember:

National involvement from several institutes and creating materials with teachers.

Advice on this theme; pitfalls to avoid:

Lessons learnt/Issues to watch out for:

Have moderate ambitions from the start

Working with a team of experts from different expert institutes helps to create a national urgency and support each other. But leave opportunity to co-create with the teachers and start with questions and organize opportunities for the teachers.