European Language Council: TNP 2

Quality Enhancement in Higher Education Language Studies: National Report BELGIUM

CONTENTS

1. General Introduction

1.1 The national linguistic situation

The general linguistic situation in Belgium has not changed in any substantial manner since the SIGMA report on Belgium (http://www.fu-berlin.de/elc/National/Reports/natr-bel.htm) was prepared in 1995. The key factor to bear in mind with respect to the linguistic situation is that Belgium is a trilingual country, with two languages (Dutch and French) dominating, and a small German speaking population. It also needs to be borne in mind that these languages are largely linked to certain geographical regions, and that these regions have a specific status in administrative and linguistic terms.

Flanders (population ca. 5,700,000), in the north of the country, is a monolingual area in which Dutch is the official language. Wallonia (population ca. 3,300,000), in the south of the country, is a monolingual area in which French is the official language. The capital, Brussels (population ca. 1,000,000) is an administratively bilingual region with Dutch and French as the official languages; estimations of the ratio of Dutch and French speakers in Brussels vary, but ca. 80% are French-speaking with 15%-20% of Dutch speakers (many of whom are bilingual in Dutch and French). Brussels also has a substantial immigrant population, with those of Moroccan or Turkish origin being the largest groups. There is also a small German speaking (population ca. 70,000) community in the east of the country.

These aspects of the linguistic situation in Belgium have changed little since the SIGMA national report was prepared. Within this framework, institutions of higher education (HE) therefore have to face the challenge of promoting national integration in linguistic terms with respect to the learning of the two main national languages (Dutch and French) by native speakers of one or the other language. Another challenge has assumed a greater role in recent years as a result of two broader trends. One of these is the increasing globalisation of the economy, which has enhanced the role of English as an international language in the domains of both commerce and scientific exchanges. Another is the increasing impetus towards European integration, which has given rise to the need for the learning of a variety of different European languages to facilitate, for instance, university exchange programmes; this trend also means that the knowledge of different languages is coming to be seen as an asset in terms of the professional integration of graduates. The challenges posed to HE institutions in Belgium thus relate both to the learning of the two main national languages (Dutch and French) within the framework of increased national integration and communication, as well as to the learning of English and of other languages within the framework of enhanced international communication and professional mobility.

1.2 Federal and administrative structures and frameworks for Quality Enhancement (QE)

A first point which needs to be made with respect to the organisation of Quality Enhancement is that Belgium is a federal state organised into three regions – Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels. Each of these regions, and particularly the two largest regions, Flanders and Wallonia, enjoy considerable independence in administrative terms. This regional organisation is cross-referenced by the role played in HE by the two main linguistic Communities, namely the Flemish Community (*Vlaamse Gemeenschap*) and the French Community (*Communauté française*), these Communities being

responsible for global educational planning in the institutions of HE they fund. In this respect, however, it is important to bear in mind that the Communities set overall academic criteria for degree awarding institutions, while the individual institutions themselves are responsible for developing the detailed curricula they offer. Furthermore, while all HE institutions are funded, wholly or at least to a very substantial degree, by the relevant Communities, some have an independent status.

This means that the Flemish Community is responsible for educational planning in HE institutions in Flanders, but also for Dutch speaking HE institutions in the Brussels region; the same applies to the French Community, which is responsible for planning in HE institutions in Wallonia as well as in those French speaking HE institutions located in the Brussels region. For this reason, it is necessary to study the QE measures set in place in Belgium in terms of the choices and strategies adopted by the two Communities. These may, in certain cases, show similarities, but it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the decisions of the two Communities are made independently of one another in administrative terms.

Belgium's German speaking Community (cf. 1.1, above) is limited numerically, and most of its members attend HE institutions of the Flemish and French Communities, with a small number deciding to study in German HE institutions.

1.3 Institutional structures and overall QE strategy

In this respect, it is necessary to bear in mind that there are two main categories of HE institutions in Belgium, and that these two categories of institution are to be found in both Communities.

In the first instance, there are universities, some of which offer a full range of study orientations and others which offer a limited range of study orientations (only applied sciences, for example). Then, there are non-university HE institutions - *Hogescholen* in the Flemish Community, and *Hautes Ecoles* in the French Community. The term "college of further education" was used in the SIGMA report to refer to the latter category of institution but may no longer be fully appropriate: For this reason, the terms used in Belgium will be retained.

The *Hogescholen* or *Hautes Ecoles* differ from the universities in two main ways.

One relates to their perceived academic status. Universities place more emphasis on traditional criteria of academic achievement. For this reason, students who are or who perceive themselves as being less academically able, but who still wish to pursue HE studies, tend to opt for a *Hogeschool* or a *Haute Ecole* as opposed to a university. In this respect, it needs to be recalled that, other than in a very small number of study orientations – applied science, for example, there are no entrance examinations in Belgian HE institutions. Thus, anyone with a secondary school diploma can have access to HE, a situation which almost inevitably results in high levels of failure in the first and second years of HE study programmes. (I will not discuss this point here, but it is an aspect of HE in Belgium which clearly cannot be ignored in terms of QE. The resources invested in students who fail or change study orientation – from one programme to another or from a university to a *Hogeschool* or a *Haute Ecole* – can be significant; furthermore, the sense of perceived failure among students who "fail" or who change orientation after one or two years is a factor which need to be evaluated carefully in terms of the impact it may have on students' self-image and sense of perceived personal efficacy in academic terms, and thus on their willingness to initiate further studies at a subsequent stage in their professional careers.)

The other main difference between universities and *Hogescholen* or *Hautes Ecoles* relates to the professional orientation of the study programmes offered, with *Hogescholen* or *Hautes Ecoles* offering a more directly (some would say "narrowly") vocational / professional type of programme. I do not wish to initiate a discussion of the relative merits or, to use a more appropriate term, the specificities of the two types of institution. In QE terms, however, certain points do need to be addressed, and these points are not unrelated to certain of the ideas contained in the Bologna declaration. Currently, *Hogescholen* or *Hautes Ecoles* have a lower status in Belgium than universities. At the same time, the more directly professional orientation of the study programmes they offer can make graduates of these institutions more immediately "employable" than at least certain categories of university graduates. This means that, in the current climate, there is a downward trend in applications for university programmes in certain areas in favour of the *Hogescholen* or *Hautes Ecoles*, which are perceived as offering a more directly marketable initial qualification. This is certainly the case with respect to language or philology programmes, which many students no longer see as opening up a clear career path. This is an area which merits being studied seriously by certain university faculties. For them, the

challenge is to maintain the specificities of a university education while also adapting this to current societal needs and, thereby, of providing their students with a more immediately marketable qualification. I personally cannot believe that respect for criteria of academic rigour is incompatible with considerations of social relevance and employability.

In both Communities, these two categories of instituion are subject to different administrative authorities and have to respond to different academic and evaluative criteria. For this reason, a close study of QE measures in Belgium has to take account of the existence of four distinct categories of HE institutions. These are:

- Universities in the Flemish Community.
- *Hogescholen* in the Flemish Community.
- Universities in the French Community.
- *Hautes Ecoles* in the French Community.

While a number of similarities exist across these four categories of institutions, each has its own specificities relating in part to the goals of the institution (universities vs. *Hogescholen* or *Hautes Ecoles*), and in part to the approach to QE adopted in the Community in question (Flemish vs. French Community).

No major changes have occurred with respect to the various HE institutions described in the SIGMA report. The only significant change in terms of institutional structures is the move in both Flemish and French Communities to bring about a consolidation among their *Hogescholen* or *Hautes Ecoles*, previously independent institutions (some fairly small) being required to merge with others to constitute larger educational entities. This initiative results in part from organisational considerations (eg. savings arising out of more unitary administrative structures), and partly from strategic considerations (eg. regrouping of teaching resources to create a more focused approach to the provision of educational programmes).

While the distinction among Communities and types of institution cannot be ignored, it is possible to discern a certain general QE strategy which is characteristic of both Communities. This strategy, whether it is a consciously chosen one or rather the reflection of an emergent consensus, consists of two differing but complementary strategies.

1.3.1 Top-down strategy

The first is what one could describe as the top-down strategy, which derives from the QE initiatives undertaken by the two Communities. This finds expression in more or less highly developed QE frameworks which have to be respected by the HE institutions funded by the Community in question (cf. 1.4 below). These are general frameworks designed to ensure a focused, socially relevant, and coherently organised approach to the teaching of the full range of study orientations offered by the HE institutions of the Community in question. They reflect the legitimate concern of the Communities to ensure social and educational accountability from the HE institutions which they fund within the framework of the broader social and educational goals set. These are, however, general frameworks which leave a substantial degree of freedom to individual institutions in terms of the establishment of their own curricula (cf. 1.3.2, below).

These frameworks relate to QE across disciplines. In this way, they do relate to QE in the field of language studies (LS) insofar as LS constitute the main focus of a study programme or a sub-element of a given programme. One possible reservation may need to be made in this respect. When a given programme relates directly to LS in one form or another (a translating programme, or a languages degree, for example), the influence of general QE frameworks may be more direct than when the LS component is a sub-element of another main orientation (eg. the case of languages for students of other disciplines), and where the LS component may, in practice, receive less explicit attention or where those responsible for providing the LS component may have less influence in the relevant faculty etc. For this reason, it may be useful to be particularly vigilant with respect to the practical application of general QE frameworks with respect to the latter type of LS programme.

1.3.2 Bottom-up strategy

As a general rule, it would be mistaken to see the general QE frameworks mentioned above as ensuring simply "the bare minumum". Indeed, some are very detailed and involve thorough consideration of a wide range a factors relating to the conception, organisation, and delivery of educational programmes, including LS programmes. Indeed, it is precisely these frameworks which provide the backbone and the guiding philosophy of QE in HE institutions in Belgium. This having been said, it would be incomplete to consider the broader question of QE in Belgium exclusively

with respect to these frameworks. Indeed, Belgian HE institutions enjoy, within the general QE frameworks set in place by the relevant Communities, a considerable degree of "local" freedom of initiative, and individual institutions make use of this freedom to varying degrees and in various ways to develop initiatives designed to respond to the specificities of their own situations. This means that many of the most striking instances of best practice in the field of LS in Belgium are "local" initiatives, undertaken by specific institutions.

This means that QE in LS in Belgium results from the combination of the top-dowm frameworks set in place by the Communities and which relate to all study programmes offered, and also the bottom-up or local initiatives undertaken by specific institutions. This overall approach has an evident logic. Global frameworks provide general guidelines and a philosophy of QE, and sek to guarantee general criteria of rigour, relevance and good pedagogical governance. Local initiatives, on the other hand, provide for specific responses to local needs and the encouragement of the creativity of individual actors or groups of actors. In this respect, it needs to be borne in mind that, although Belgium has a population of only 10 million, the country is divided into three main administrative regions, two of which (Flanders and Wallonia) are monolingual and one of which (Brussels) is bilingual. This means that the languages which have to be learned, the linguistic preparation of students entering HE institutions, and also the attitudes to the learning of languages varies from one region to another. Effective language teaching clearly needs to take account of these differences, which means that the freedom accorded to and used by individual HE institutions (even if this has to be exercised within the global QE frameworks set up by the relevant Communities) can allow them to respond better to the specific needs of their students, as well as to exploit learning possibilities offered by the specifics of their local situation.

1.3.3 Peer evaluation and peer emulation

One of the defining characteristics of QE in Belgium is the more or less explicit recourse to two forms of peer "review". The global QE frameworks (cf. 1.4 below) incorporate a pivotal element of peer evaluation: faculties or departments are visited by colleagues from other HE institutions. This can clearly touch on and highlight "local" initiatives undertaken by the relevant institution. Bad practice can be identified but, equally well, instances of good practice can be identified and become more widely known either by word of mouth or via the official report drawn up by the visiting committee.

Peer learning can occur on another level, too, namely the more informal sharing of insights from one institution to another or, to put this in another light, there can be an element of peer emulation: "If institution X does things well, we can't afford to be left too far behind". With a limited number of HE institutions in each Community, and thus fairly tight competition for students, it is in the interests of institutions to learn from one another and to emulate each other's instances of best practice. This informal type of peer review – peer emulation, rather – may well not figure in official documents on QE, but I have come to feel that it plays an important role in the day-to-day reality of QE in Belgium. One could describe this as "enhancement by emulation".

1.4 QE frameworks – general organisation and evaluative criteria

In line with what was said above, these frameworks differ to varying dergrees between the two Communities and the two categories of HE institution found in each Community (ie. universities and *Hogescholen* or *Hautes Ecoles*). (These will be discussed in 1.5 below.) Nevertheless, certain general strategies emerge. These are:
- Preparation of an initial auto-evaluation report by the relevant faculty or department of a given institution
- A visit to the faculty or department by a team of experts from other institutions chosen by the faculties or department to be visited under the overall responsibility of the relevant quality assessment (QA) agency. This visit takes the faculty's or department's auto-evaluation report as its starting point. The visit is planned carefully in advance and has to respect a number of strict criteria.
- The preparation of a report by the visiting committee. This report is then communicated back to the faculty or department visited, and contains the recommendations for innovation or improvement which the visting committee feels to be required. This report is also communicated to the relevant QA agency. One good example of the end result of this process is the report of the visiting committee for Romance languages in the Flemish universities published by the the Flemish Interuniversity Council (*Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad* or *VL.I.R*) (*VL.I.R*, November 2000, Brussels). This report provides a succinct (92 pages) but thorough overview of the Romance language programmes offered by four universities in Flanders, and combines both the initial

auto-evaluation report of the institution in question in the relevant area together with the specific recommendations made by the visiting committee.
- There is also provision for a subsequent verification after a certain period of time that the faculty or department has acted upon the recommendations of the visiting committee.

The specific criteria which have to be respected in the initial auto-evaluation report and in the recommendations of the visiting committee differ to some degree across the QE frameworks set up by the two Communities. The framework which has the longest history and which is, to date, the most complete, is that used by the *VL.I.R*. In order not to overburden this report with a detailed desciption of all the sets of QE criteria used in Belgium, I will give only those used by the *VL.I.R*, as many of these criteria are similar to those used by the other agencies responsible for QE measures in the two Communities.

The QE critieria used by the *VL.I.R* are the following (from *Uittreksel uit de Gids voor de Onderwijsvisitaties. Onderdelen aangepast aan de situatie in Vlaanderen: 1. Aandachtspunten voor de zelfstudie. 2. Tabellen en definities ten behoeve van zelfstudie. VL.I.R*, January 1997, Brussels.)
- Teaching philosophy and goals of programme.
- Programme content and organisation.
- Internships and final year dissertation.
- Students (inc. numbers of students following programme, success rates).
- Study support facilities.
- Facilities and infrastructure.
- Former students (inc. areas of employment, levels of employment, follow-up contacts).
- Staff (inc. teaching load, in-service development).
- International contacts (inc. international partnerships, overseas students and staff).
- Internal quality enahancement measures (*Interne kwaliteitszorg**).
- Analysis of strengths and weaknesses.

(* It is relevant to note that the VL.I.R uses the term *kwaliteitszorg* and not the Dutch equivalents of quality management or quality enhancement. The term "*zorg*" may be translated as "concern", and reflects an aspect of the QE philosophy in question, namely that quality should be an ongoing concern in universities rather than the object of periodic monitoring.)

1.5 Brief survey of QE frameworks

The organisation and criteria described above are those set in place by the *VL.I.R*. In other words, they relate to the QE strategy adopted for universities in the Flemish Community. Other QE frameworks are used for the *Hogescholen* of the Flemish Community, and for both universities and *Hautes Ecoles* in the French Community. Describing each of these QE frameworks in detail would lengthen this report considerably. Furthermore, although differences do exist, the general organisation and criteria outlined in 1.4 reflect a similar *general* strategy used in these other QE frameworks. For this reason, this section will contain only a very brief description of the distinctive features of the other QE frameworks in HE in Belgium.

Flemish Community: universities

It is in this sector of HE in Belgium that global QE measures have been established for the longest time. The universities of the Flemish Community have since participated in the QE system in operation among universities in the Netherlands since 1991. A number of specific guidelines have been developed for the practical realisation of QE reports and visits in Flemish universities but, in essence, QE in these universities is comparable to the QE exercise operating in the universities of the Netherlands, ie. one of the best structured QE systems in operation in Europe. The framework described in 1.4 is that in operation in Dutch and Flemish universities.

Flemish Community: *Hogescholen*

The approach to QE in Flemish *Hogescholen* is a more recent phenomenon than in Flemish universities. At the present point in time, each *Hogeschool* has to set up its own in-house QE system, and be able to demonstrate the presence and

operation of this system to the relevant educational authorities. Recent developments have, however, led to the creation of a global QE framework which will be organised in a manner very similar to that described in 1.4, with respect to the preparation of an in-house QE report, a visit by a committee of experts selected by the relevant QA agency, the *Vlaamse Hogescholenraad*, (or *VL.HO.RA.*), and the criteria which have to be respected in both the in-house report and the final report of the visiting committee. The first cycle of this QE exercise is 2001-2006.

French Community: universities

A global framework was drawn up by the *Commission des Recteurs des Universités Francophones* (*CreF*) in 1997 as a basis for a systematic approach to QE in the universities of the French Communities. This approach operates on the basis of a very similar strategy and set of evaluative criteria as that operating in the Flemish Community – an internal auto-evaluation, a visit by a committee of experts chosen by the *CreF*, and an ensuing report prepared by the visiting committee; the criteria underpinning the evaluation are also very close to those described in 1.4 above. Thus, although more recent in origin, the approach to QE in the French Community is very similar to that in place in the Flemish Community.

French Community: *Hautes Ecoles*

The QE measures set in place with respect to the *Hautes Ecoles* of the French Community are less advanced than those established for the *Hogescholen* of the Flemish Community, and those in force in the universities of the two Communities. General provision for QE measures in the *Hautes Ecoles* of the French Community was made in the decree setting up the colleges in their current form in 1995. Practical measures for the realisation of this general provision are currently being prepared and should enter into force in the near future. The *Hautes Ecoles* of the French Community are, however, required to prepare an annual report on their activities.

Overview

To sum up, the situation with respect to global QE frameworks, there are thus differences and similarities among HE institutions in Belgium. On the first count, the approach to QE is better structured and more well established in the Flemish Community than in the French Community, especially with respect to the *Hautes Ecoles* the French Community. On the second count, there is a broad general consensus as to how QE should be approached in terms of the role played by auto-evaluation, the role of the visiting committee, and the type of criteria used in the evaluative process. Thus, even if differences exist, there is, within officially binding general QA frameworks, a substantial consensus as to how this should be organised and the criteria which have to be taken into account.

It is safe to assume that these global QE will exert an influence on various aspects of LS in Belgian HE institutions as part of the general drive to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of HE programmes. The remaining chapters of this report will not, however, focus on the global QE frameworks outlined above, but on the specific instances of best practice which the author has been able to identify in specific HE instituions. The question of whether these initiatives derive more from the top-down global QE frameworks set in place by the relevant governmental agencies or from the more bottom-up or local will of individual institutions to enhance their educational programmes (cf. 1.3.1, 1.3.2, above) will not be addressed. The reality is probably that the initiatives reflect a complex combination of the two – on the one hand, a growing awareness of the need for accountability and effectiveness in the provision of educational programmes encouraged by the relevant educational agencies and, on the other hand, the natural desire of individual institutions to enhance the effectiveness of their programmes in an environment in which there is increasing competition among institutions.

2   Quality measures relating to the training of teachers and trainers professionally engaged in the area of languages.

2.1 Overview

The first point to be made in this respect is that the situation with respect to teacher training (TT) is an evolving one. A number of initiatives exist (even on the basis of the somewhat incomplete information which I have been able to gather) or are in preparation. At the same time, there are also a number of problematic areas and a need for further

reflection and focused action. It needs to be pointed out that the positive initiatives I have been able to identify relate to TT as such and not to the training of teacher trainers: to my knowledge, no initiatives of this nature exist. This chapter will review the initiatives I have been able to identify, and will then look at what I feel to be one particularly problematic area.

To set the general framework, it needs to be pointed out that there is, at present, no general pedagogical qualification for HE language teachers in Belgium. Teaching staff are recruited on the basis of their academic qualifications, with the Belgian first degree (*Licence* or *Licentiaat*) being the minimum required. There is a pedagogical qualification intended for upper secondary school teachers (*Agrégation* or *Agregatie*), and this is sometimes a requirement or, at least, an advantage in applying for a language teaching post in a HE institution, especially in the case of younger teachers who have little or no teaching experience.

2.2 In-service teacher development

I have been able to identify three instances of good practice in this area, at the *Vrije Universiteit Brussel* (VUB), the *Centrum voor Levende Talen* (CLT) of the *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* (KUL), and the *Institut des Langues Vivantes* (ILV) of the *Université Catholique de Louvain* (UCL). This selection does not, however, exclude the existence of initiatives taken by institutions other than those mentioned: the examples of good praqctice provided below should therefore be taken as indicative and not as representing an exhaustive survey of measures in this area.

- The VUB offers general programmes in pedagogical awareness for its younger staff. These are not necessarily linked to language teaching as such, but relate to a range of subject areas. They assume a variety of forms such as one day seminars or study weekends.
- The CLT of the KUL has initiated two initiatives which deserve mention. The first is an "accompaniment programme" for novice teachers involving collaboration between the novice teacher and a mentor. The mentor observes a number of the novice teacher's classes, discusses his or her choices, and offers advice for improvements. The roles are also reversed, with the novice teacher observing classes given by the mentor, with the possibility of discussing the approach and choices of the mentor. This initiative is interesting, in part, in that it offers novice teachers the opportunity of obtaining the input of an experienced teacher; it also has the advantage of giving the mentor the opportunity to reflect critically on his or her pedagogical practice and, thereby, of initiating a critical re-evaluation of their own practice. The second is the system of "pedagogical workgroups". These are made up of researchers (not necessarily teachers) who explore a certain pedagogical question and then present their findings to the teaching staff of the CLT. In this way, the teaching staff can gain access to research findings in a fairly economical manner, ie. without having to do the basic research themselves. It can also have other advantages in terms of QE. One is that it creates a climate of reflectiveness in teaching, namely that practising teachers, even if they may not be personally involved in research activities, are helped to feel that their teaching needs to be informed by recent research findings; another is that it creates an explicit forum within which teachers can exchange ideas and reflect of their own practice.
- The ILV of the UCL has a system mentors (*parrains*) for the support of novice teachers which is similar to that of the KUL, more experienced teachers observing and offering advice to their less experienced colleagues. It should also be pointed out that the UCL has a two year probationary period for its language teachers, subsequent to which they have access to a stable position as *maitre de langue* (cf. 2.4 below).

These are local initiatives undertaken by specific institutions. Others very likely do exist in other institutions, even if they may assume a variety of different forms.

2.3 Towards a pedagogical qualification for HE language teachers

I am aware of two initiatives which merit attention in this respect. Neither is fully operational, but both reflect a growing awareness of the need for the development of the pedagogical awareness of HE teachers.

- *CAPAES* (Certificate of Pedagogical Aptitude for Further Education). This is not a formal qualification as such, but a dossier which is required for obtaining tenure in a *Haute Ecole* of the French Community. It can be submitted only after six years of professional involvement in teaching and consists of a listing of the courses taught by the candidate, and a curriculum vitae describing the various academic and pedagogical initiatives taken by the candidate (training programmes followed, conferences attended, articles prepared, projects undertaken, etc.). The

legal decree setting up this initiative has been passed and it should enter into force from September of this year, even if aspects of its content still need to be decided.

- *AESS*. This is the upper secondary school teaching diploma which gives access to teaching in upper secodary schools of the French Community. It is currently being expanded from 180 to 300 hours. Of this, 210 hours are common to all universities, but each university can decide on the content of 90 hours of the programme. The *Université Libre de Bruxelles* (ULB) has decided to devote these 90 hours specifically to preparing teachers for teaching at further education level, thus opening up horizons beyond secondary school as such. In part, this results from the fact that many students taking the AESS have the explicit goal of teaching other than at secondary level (this is certainly the case with respect to languages); in part, too, it reflects the wish to allow students to prepare, albeit in part, for the CAPAES, which may incorporate at least a partial obligation to have followed certain courses relating explicitly to teaching at HE level.

Both of these initiatives relate to teaching in HE institutions in all subject areas. Nevertheless, they do reflect a growing awareness of the need to cater for increased pedagogical awareness (in addition to the traditional criterion of academic achievement) among HE teachers.

In addition, it is important to recall that the global QE frameworks outlined in 1.4 and 1.5 incorporate considerations relating to staff development and in-service training. In the domain of TT, then, the global QE frameworks in operation in Belgium include elements explicitly related to the preparation and ongoing professional development of teachers and thus, logically, of language teachers (cf. however, the points made in 2.4, below).

2.4 The status of HE language teachers

This is a problematic area, especially at university level. (In the *Hogescholen* of the Flemish Community, for example, language teaching staff are recruited on the same criteria as other staff and have the same promotion possibilities.) The problem derives, in part at least, from the tension that exists between the traditional criteria for promotion in universities, in which research and publication play a crucial role, and the specificities (or perhaps "ambiguities" would be a better term) of language teaching. Furthermore, the situation is most marked with respect to those who are involved in the teaching of languages to students of other disciplines. (When the goals of a programme are defined explicitly in terms of languages or language skills, the persons responsible for delivering teaching have a better chance of asserting their centrality to the programme in question and thus of establishing their status in their institution. Indeed, in such cases, there may be no tension between "content" and "language" – someone teaching translation on a translation programme will be teaching the language as such but also developing knowledge and skills central to the stated goals of the programme itself.) In what follows, I will therefore limit myself to consideration of language teachers at university level teaching languages to students of other disciplines (frequently referred to as *assistants chargés d'exercices* or *praktijk assistenten*).

- The first point that needs to be borne in mind relates to the difference in the career profile of "traditional" academics and the background, experience and possibly also the aspirations of many practical language teachers. The former rests on completion of a doctorate and publication with a view to obtaining a tenured position involving content lecturing in the relevant content domain and further production of academic publications. The latter group does not necessarily have this professional profile. This gives rise to a problem for the personnel departments of traditional universities in that their habitual career and promotional structures do not cater for teaching staff members whose career may be difficult to evaluate in traditional academic terms. In other words, we find a category of university lecturers – language teachers – who do not fit easily into the career structures in place. The result of this situation is that many language teachers at universities have low salaries, unstable contracts, heavy teaching loads, and low status. The question is therefore how universities can cater for a stable and motivating career path for language teaching lecturers whose profile and professional involvement may not necessarily fit in with traditional career structures.
- Another problem relates to the perceived status of language teaching itself. In many universities, language teaching is seen as a matter of skill development or as simply a matter of "teaching the language" (which is often understood in a very naïve and simplistic manner). In my own experience, many university lecturers seem wholly unaware of what quality language teaching involves, and unable to distinguish between the demands of tertiary level language education and the more or less superficial claims of private language schools or of commercially oriented "quick fix" methods. This lack of understanding of the nature of language teaching among many academics is a serious problem in any coherent pursuit of quality in HE language teaching.

- These two sources of difficulty frequently give rise to a third as the result of a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy. Given the generally flat career profile, poor salaries, and low status of *assistants chargés d'exercises* or *praktijk assistenten*, more ambitious and better qualified language teachers tend to leave the profession or look for secondary work which is more rewarding financially. In other words, even motivated and well qualified university language teachers are more or less forced to look outside of their institutions if they wish to attain a respectable salary or find fuller professional recognition.

This situation is clearly not without implications for the quality of language teaching in the institutions concerned. The situation of this category of university language teachers varies from one institution to another, but the overall situation is less than satisfactory. One positive exception is the *Institut de Langues Vivantes* of the *Université Catholique de Louvain* (UCL). Here, a special category of *maîtres de langue* has been created, which offers language teachers a stable and respectable professional status with a tenable teaching load (max. 16 hours a week), and prospects for promotion based on merit. Indeed, this "investment" in the language teaching staff is an integral part of the ambitious *Plan Langues* set up by the UCL (cf. 3.3 below). This is an example which merits being studied by other universities.

3. Defining and designing courses and programmes in the area of languages

3.1 Overview

This aspect of QE is influenced by both the top-down and the bottom-up forces described in 1.3.1 and 1.3.2. In other words, one sees the effects of the global QE frameworks set in place by the relevant Community, as well as of the initiatives undertaken by specific institutions. This chapter will therefore look at one instance of the former and two of the latter.

3.2 Transparency in course content: *Hogescholen*, Flemish Community

The global QE frameworks outlined in 1.4 all incorporate criteria relating to the relevance and the transparency of course content and goals. Specifically, institutions are required to reflect on the social and professional relevance of the programmes they offer. For example, one of the QE criteria employed by the *Hogescholen* of the Flemish Community (*Vlaamse Hogescholenraad KZ-27, Werkgroep Kwaliteitszorg*, 13 December 2000) relates to the design and content of teaching programmes and includes the following criteria.
- Concrete realisation of teaching objectives in the teaching programme.
- Attention accorded in the teaching programme to competences supportive to effective social and professional integration.
- Current relevance of the teaching programme.
- Structural development and coherence of the teaching programme.
- Adaptation to the characteristics of the student population.
- Availability and structure of flexible learning paths in the teaching programme.
- Level and content of sub-parts of the teaching programme.

The presence of criteria of this nature requires institutional actors to reflect seriously on the social and professional relevance of programme content in the design and development of their programmes. While these criteria relate to all subject areas, it is evident that they will also influence LS programmes.

In addition to this, *Hogescholen* in the Flemish Community have an obligation and an option which relate directly to the design and transparency of the programmes they offer. The obligation is for each institution to design its courses in respect of the professional and exit profiles developed by the *VL.HO.RA.*; in other words, all programmes need to respect certain general criteria of relevance and goal-orientedness. One manifestation of these reference / guideline documents are the professional and programme profiles prepared by the Flemish Teaching Board (*Vlaamse Onderwijsraad*): examples of these documents in the field of LS are *Studie 37* (Professional profile) and *Studie 57* (Programme profile) for translation studies. These documents provide a thorough checklist of criteria to be taken into account in programme design and thus serve not simply a control function, but also as practical guidance to socially and professionally relevant programme design.

Each institution is also free, within the framework of goals defined by the general criteria mentioned above, to decide on its own course content and also to present it in a form which the institution itself chooses. This means that considerable scope exists for institutions to develop and to publicise their programmes in a thorough and attractive

manner. In an increasingly competitive educational environment, it is clearly in the interest of institutions to seize this opportunity actively in order not to seem les attractive to students than their "competitors" offering similar programmes: this reflects the strategy which I referred to in Chapter 1 as "enhancement by emulation".

3.3 The *Plan Langues* of the *Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL)*

The UCL's *Plan Langues* is one of the most imaginative and best known LS programmes in Belgium. A full description of the project would be more relevant to the Curriculum Innovation TNP report than the present one. I will therefore limit my treatment to those factors which are most relevant in terms of QE per se. A key point which needs to be pointed out is that the *Plan Langues* represents a large scale, coherently organised programme which rests on clear strategic choices and which pursues clear strategic goals in the area of language learning across the full range of faculties in the UCL. In my evaluation, the elements which merit particular consideration within the framework of QE are the following.

- The first point is that the development of the *Plan Langues* involved wide ranging discussion of language teaching across the whole range of faculties offering academic programmes at the UCL. In other words, it entailed a broadly based consciousness raising exercise among the various faculties of the UCL. I feel that this in itself is an element which merits consideration in terms of QE. In language teaching methodology per se, increasing importance is being given to what is referred to as *learner training*, ie. the process of raising learners' awareness of the nature of language learning and of the role which they can play in their own learning: specifically, the goal of learner training is to help language learners to become aware of their potential for self-directive learning and is thus an essential enabling condition for learner empowerment. My own experience has led me to believe that in institutional learning contexts where language teaching is offered to the students of different faculties, a key factor to the successful development of language programmes is what could be referred to as *client training*. I feel that this calls for consciousness raising among client faculties with respect to the nature and requirements of effective language teaching and learning. I have frequently been horrified by the lack of understanding among academic colleagues as to what language teaching actually involves, which is not conducive to informed reflection on programme content or pedagogical decision making. This may, in part, be due to the fact that language teaching is offered by a wide range of institutions of a commercial nature which, for evident reasons, make bold marketing claims for their courses or products (cf. the promises of certain popular self-study materials to teach "Dutch in 30 days", or to guarantee certain levels of proficiency in 40 hours …. or whatever). Many non-language teachers seem unable to distinguish between superficial and commercially driven quick-fix claims of this nature and the often time-consuming process of focused course development and the long-term nature of the language learning process. Engaging client faculties in a serious dialogue on the real nature of their students' language needs and on the means by which these needs can be addressed in learning programmes is, I feel, a crucial factor in the development of effective language programmes. In the first instance, it can influence the faculties' willingness to devote the appropriate resources to their language programme. It can also create a more genuine and informed understanding among client faculties of the nature of language teaching. Students often pick up on implicit messages from their faculties as much as on the explicit messages which are expressed, for instance, in the presence of a language course in their overall academic programme. Thus, if faculty members genuinely understand and appreciate the value of language study, they are likely to communicate this, albeit in very subtle ways, to their students, which can substantially enhance the students' commitment to language learning. Although this is a personal perspective on the UCL's initiative, I feel that the existence of a broadly based discussion of the place of language skills in faculty programmes is in itself a valuable step towards QE.
- Another positive aspect of the *Plan Langues'* extensive preparation of its language courses across faculties is that it rested on a needs analysis based approach to course development, small groups of language teachers and members of client faculties working together to identify the specific needs and learning objectives of the students of each faculty.
- In addition to the use of needs analysis as a basis for developing course objectives, and thus of providing language teachers with clear, pragmatically-driven guidelines for the selection of learning materials and activities, the *Plan Langues* was underpinned by a specific overall philosophy based on motivational criteria. It adopted an explicitly "light" approach to language teaching resting on three main strategies. The first is that students across faculties have only 30 hours per language in each of their first and second years at the university, which is not seen as being a particularly heavy burden. The second is that achievement targets are not set at intimidatingly high levels so that, with a reasonable amount of investment, most students are able to achieve at least a respectable mark. The third is that, in the first two years, the main focus is on receptive skills (listening and reading), which are seen as being

potentially less stressful to develop than productive skills, which are then developed from the students' third year at the university. This aspect of the UCL's strategy merits consideration, especially in terms of the development of large scale language teaching projects. One line of reasoning argues for a "strong" approach with tight goal setting and the aim of achieving high levels of proficiency in closely predefined domains of competence. Such an approach has its own coherence, but can also be "expensive" in that it concentrates teaching resources around a limited number of languages and / or learning goals. It can, of course, lead to high levels of achievement, but can also lead to a more narrowly focused form of learning. The UCL's "lighter" approach may not achieve such high levels of achievement, but offers the possibility of generating a "can-do" attitude among students to language learning, and possibly a more open attitude to subsequent learning. (This point has particular relevance with respect to the setting up conditions conducive to promoting the objective of life-long learning.) I do not feel in a position to evaluate which of these two strategies is better in absolute terms, but the choice is one which merits being taken into account in the planning of large scale language teaching projects. It is, however, likely that a "light", or motivationally driven strategy would be more appropriate in contexts where secondary level language teaching is weak, so that students enter HE either with low levels of language knowledge or with negative attitudes to language learning. It may also be more appropriate in contexts where there is less overall openness to language learning.

- Yet another aspect of the UCL's strategy which merits attention is the choice as to the stage of students' HE career at which resources should best be invested. Even if individual courses are relatively short (30 hours) in students' first two years at the UCL, the very broad provision of language teaching across faculties means that a considerable amount of resources are invested at this stage, in addition to the other courses which students follow in subsequent years. There are two perspectives on this choice. One is that it is more cost-effective to invest more heavily towards the end of students' academic programme, when their professional awareness and their understanding of the linguistic and communicative demands of their future profession is sharper. (This perspective assumes that the input-uptake ratio will be enhanced by a more immediate perception by students of the professional relevance of their language practice activities.) Another perspective is that investment in language teaching in the early years of HE study maintains the language skills students bring with them from secondary school and, crucially, develops positive attitudes and a "culture of language learning" which will contribute positively to subsequent learning, including the learning of additional languages. As on the last point, it is difficult to offer definitive answers as to which of these strategeies is better in absolute terms. They do, however, represent strategic choices which merit being taken into account.

- The *Plan Langues* involves a very substantial amount of language teaching, and the ILV employs more than 70 teachers, with 25 in the English department alone. This clearly represents a major challenge in administrative and organisational terms. One measure adopted by the ILV in terms of the pedagogical organisation of its teaching involves making groups of teachers (generally three or four) responsible for the language teaching programmes of certain faculties or groups of faculties with similar concerns. This allows for a concentration of resources and a specialisation of teachers in certain content domains, which is conducive to more focused teaching and also allows for a more cost-effective use of teachers' time. (I am aware of the problems of a dispersal of energies from the experience of my own department at the ULB. My colleagues in the English department teach across the full range of our courses, so that a given person can, in just one day, be teaching spoken skills to students of business, reading skills to students of psychology, and presentational skills to students of applied science. I feel that this leads to an unproductive dispersal of energies, but the organisational and timetabling structures in place make it impssible for me to organise things differently.) Focused use of teaching resources is a potentially significant factor in enhancing both the quality and the cost-effectiveness of teaching programmes.

- A final point with respect to the *Plan Langues* is that it did not simply happen. The rector of the UCL was personally convinced of the role of language skills in the broader academic programme and future professional prospects of students of all disciplines, and played a strong leadership role in the design and practical realisation of the *Plan Langues*. In other words, one influential change agent played a key role in the project. The lesson to be derived from this point is that, in the planning of change, it is necessary to be attentive to the attitudes and institutional role of potential change agents. Virtually all educational change has implications in terms of institutional structures and the roles played by various institutional actors. The planning of change therefore needs to incorporate an open and honest evaluation of the actors present in the target institution, their current roles and responsibilities, their attitudes to the intended change, and the identification of potential change agents and their ability to influence other actors.

A substantial amount of space has been devoted to the *Plan Langues*. In part, this is because this project is one of the more imaginative LS initiatives in Belgium. In part, it is because I have quite simply been able to gain more

information on the Plan Langues than on initiatives undertaken in other. In broader terms, however, I feel that the *Plan Langues* involves many of the strategic choices which need to be taken into consideration in the development of a coherent, large-scale language teaching programme. In summary, these are.

- Involvement of client faculties in the overall process of reflection on the role and the practical organisation of language teaching.
- Cooperation between client faculties and language teaching specialists in goal setting.
- The development of a coherent pedagogical strategy and philosophy of teaching and learning.
- Strategic decisions relating to the allocation of resources.
- Coherent and focused use of teaching staff and resources.
- Identification of institutional strengths, weaknesses and opportunities, including the role of change agents.

3.4 Cooperation between universities in a bilingual setting

This initiative relates to cooperation between two universities in the Brussels region, the French speaking *Université Libre de Bruxelles* (ULB) and the Dutch speaking *Vrije Universiteit Brussel* (VUB). These universities have strong historical links and their main campuses are only one kilometer from one another – in fact, some faculties of the ULB are housed on the same site as the VUB. This historical and physical proximity of the two universities clearly offers potential for exchanges relating to the learning by students of one university of the language of the other.

The basic strategy involves students whose academic programme is in one university following one or more courses in the other university, where the course is taught in the language of the host institution – Dutch or French depending on the direction of the exchange. The course or courses in question are part of the main academic programme of the students concerned, and the students therefore have to take the relevant examination in the language of the host university. Initiatives of this nature have been undertaken principally in the faculties of Law and of Economics, and in the Solvay Business School.

The main value of this initiative lies in the fact that students are involved not only in studying the target language in the traditional sense of the term, but in using it actively as a medium of study. This involves the active assimilation of academic concepts in the target language, as well as in developing students' ability to structure and discuss concepts proper to their domain of specialisation in this language. On an anecdotal level, one of my students from the Solvay Business School of the ULB once described to me the way in which he prepared for the examinations he had to take in the VUB. This involved rehearsing a summary of the content of the course, talking through the logical sequencing of the different course components, and practising the way in which he would respond to the questions he anticipated being asked in the examination. In this way, the student's examination preparation involved active and conceptually driven language practice, ie. precisely the sort of langage practice which so many coursebooks seek so hard (and not always successfully) to achieve. It is, however, important to bear in mind that the spur for the essential intellectual engagement of students is the pragmatic necessity for them to take and succeed in the relevant examination. Another advantage of this type of initiative, in my opinion at least, is that it makes students aware of the pragmatic reality of the target language within their main study programme, which may be more difficult to achieve if they have no immediate pragmatic need for the language until after the end of their studies. This type of initiative can therefore heighten students' awareness of the relevance of their main language programme and thus, potentially, their involvement in this programme.

Furthermore, in addition to the direct language learning advantages of this initiative, it clearly opens up the possibility for the development of greater understanding of the culture of the host community, a factor whose importance cannot be underestimated even in bilingual countries. In other words, it offers, within a given country, many of the advantages of initiatives such as the Erasmus exhange programme.

4. Quality measures relating to the process of teaching and learning.

4.1 Overview

Two main sets of measures merit attention under this heading. The first relates to the components of the global QE frameworks set in place by the two Communities (cf. 1.3, 1.4), and the second relates to the use of student feedback questionnaires by individual institutions.

4.2 Provision in global QE frameworks

Questions relating to the quality and organisation of teaching are an integral part of the global QE frameworks used in both the Flemish and the French Communities. For example, one of the auto-evaluation criteria established by the VL.I.R. relates to the internal quality control measures used by each institution. Under this heading, institutions are required to evaluate the following points.

- Committees within the faculty and the university (inc. central administrative services) involved in quality control.
- Evaluation system.
- Involvement of students in the quality control process.
- Information gathering on students' progress and success.
- Pedagogical innovation.

(from *Uittreksel uit de Gids voor de Onderwijsvisitaties. Onderdelen aangepast aan de situatie in Vlaanderen: 1. Aandachtspunten voor de zelfstudie. 2. Tabellen en definities ten behoeve van zelfstudie. VL.I.R*, January 1997, Brussels.)

Other auto-evaluation criteria relate more or less directly to the evaluation of the quality of teaching per se, and to the management and organisation of teaching programmes. This aspect of QE is thus an integral part of the global QE frameworks in place in the two main linguistic Communities in Belgium. I am not aware of whether an overall evaluation has been made of the degree to which measures in this area have led to actual improvement in the quality of teaching. Data on this point may be obtained from individual institution / faculty auto-evaluations and the visiting committees' reports. At the time of writing, however, I have not been able to gain a clear overview of the situation.

In this respect, it needs to be pointed out that a thorough and objective evaluation of the quality of teaching is extremely difficult. Instances of bad practice can be identified with relative ease; instances of good practice, too, are identifiable. What "good" teaching actually entails, and how organisational structures can contribute to the quality of teaching, however, are far from straightforward questions. The value of global QE frameworks is probably to highlight (and sanction) instances of manifest bad practice, highlight (and disseminate information on) instances of good practice and, in this way, give rise to a generalised awareness of the criteria involved in quality teaching. In this respect, the concept of *kwaliteitszorg* (quality *concern*) used by the Flemish Community is probably a relevant one. The attempt to operationalise quality of teaching would be a fascinating research topic, but I fear that a purely academic approach to this question would very likely lead to conclusions that would be so general as to be of little practical relevance. The practical response is thus probably to make quality of teaching (and its enabling conditions) an ongoing concern and to avoid the bureaucratic temptation to pin it down to any one set of criteria.

4.3 Student feedback questionnaire

The use of student feedback questionnaires is very common in Belgian HE institutions. They are generally completed at the end of a course. Their content varies considerably from one institution to another and even among faculties within a given institution. Their main purpose, however, is clear, namely to give students the opportunity to express their opinions on the course they have followed and to give their evaluation of the pedagogical skills of the teacher.

The results of the student feedback questionnaire are taken into account in the renewal of contracts of teaching staff on fixed-term contracts and can also be used to influence the promotion of tenured staff. Although the procedures for the analysis of the results yielded by student feedback questionnaires vary from institution to institution, the general practice is for a teacher who has negative comments on a regular basis to receive a warning from his or her hierarchical superior to remedy the weaknesses highlighted. If the teacher fails to do this after a certain period of time, disciplinary measures can be taken.

In less dramatic cases, the results of student feedback questionnaires can be used constructively by teachers to monitor their own teaching and to incorporate students' insights into the organisation of their teaching and / or aspects of their pedagogical repertoire and style. In other words, the student feedback questionnaire is a potentially rich form of input from students, a valuable starting point for dialogue between teachers and students, and a control measure for the individual teacher with respect to his or her pedagogical skills.

This having been said, the results of student feedback questionnaires are not always taken as seriously as they could be. Furthermore, there is a general consensus that teachers who give high marks are more likely to be evaluated positively by their students than those who are less generous with their marks. It needs also to be borne in mind that students may be inclined to evaluate the quality of their interpersonal relations with the teacher more than his or her pedagogical skills and commitment as such, which can discourage teachers from setting achievement targets which are relevant to students but which the students may find too demanding. Thus, while the use of student feedback questionnaires offers a very substantial potential as a means of evaluating the quality and organisation of teaching, the practical realisation of this potential depends on two factors. The first is the establishment of coherent structures for the examination of questionnaire results and effective follow-up of their implications, eg. via shared discussion between students (or student representatives), individual teachers, and other academic staff. The second is the preparation of questionnaires which focus students' attention clearly on different aspects of the teaching process so that their responses can be exploited productively on the basis of objectively relevant pedagogical criteria.

5. Quality measures relating to the organisation and management of the process of teaching and learning.

A number of the issues arising under this heading are dealt with in the global QE frameworks developed by the two Communities. These include, for example, the monitoring of student intakes, success rates, and, in the more fully developed QE frameworks, provision for follow-up of the post-graduation career profiles of students.

I have, however, gathered less information on this aspect of the situation than on some of the others dealt with in previous chapters. The reason for this is partly personal, and reflects my own areas of interest and experience, which are more directly pedagogical in nature. In other words, I simply did not focus on the more managerial / administrative aspects of QE. This choice on my behalf in no way implies a denegration of the role played by measures of this nature, and I assume personal responsibility for the limitations which this places on the completeness of the report.

Summary and implications for further action

Chapter 1. General introduction

- A number of global QE frameworks are in place or being launched across all types of HE institution in both Communities. This points to an emerging consensus with respect to the importance for institutions to work within explicitly formulated QE frameworks. There is also a broad consensus regarding the *general* QE strategy to be adopted.
- There are, however, significant differences in terms of the degree of sophistication and pace of implementation of these frameworks, the French Community being behind the Flemish Community.
- Furthermore, one characteristic of QE in Belgium is the combination of top-down and bottom-up strategies, the former deriving from measures taken by the relevant QA agency and the latter from individual institutions exercising their autonomy to respond to local needs.
- The term *kwaliteitszorg* used by the VL.I.R. merits study in that it encapsulates a philosophy of QE relating less to periodic assessment by an outside agency than to the development of an ongoing culture of quality in education.
- *The presence of global QE frameworks is in itself a positive sign, and should at very least help to develop an awareness of QE among institutional actors. This having been said, it would be unsafe to assume that such frameworks will feed through in a linear manner to predictable improvements in the practical realities of teaching and learning. The next stage in QE would thus involve measures to monitor the real effect of the QE measures taken so far.*

Chapter 2. Quality measures relating to the training of teachers and trainers professionally engaged in the area of languages

- There is clear evidence of movement in this area. This may be seen in the reflection currently underway in parts of the French Community with respect to the developrment of a pedagogical qualification for HE teachers, as well as in a number of initiatives undertaken by individual institutions to support the professional integration and development of their staff, especially their younger staff.
- *These developments are positive, but need to be consolidated and developed further. Moreover, such developments should not be restricted to novice teachers.*
- In this area, I feel that reflection is needed with respect to whether emphasis should be placed relatively more on the development of a formal qualification for HE teachers or on ongoing teacher development. The danger with the former is that it can become a formality, whereas the goal of life-long learning (among students but also, by implication, among those who teach these students) would argue more for in-service development becoming an integral part of teachers' professional life. The latter is less a matter of obtaining a formal qualification than of fostering and supporting a culture of innovation and of professional improvement.
- The status of HE language teachers, especially those involved in teaching languages to students of other disciplines, varies from one institution to another, but is often problematic.
- *This point needs to be addressed within a coherent framework of institutional goals for language education with the aim of developing a tenable status for language teachers whose career profiles may not fit in with traditional criteria for academic promotion. The quality of teaching cannot be divorced from the qualifications, competence, status and professional self-image of teachers: Neglecting the latter will inevitably have negative consequences on the former.*

Chapter 3. Defining and designing courses and programmes in the area of languages.

- Three instances of good practice were reviewed in this chapter. One derived from the top-down structures set in place by the relevant QA agency, and the other two were inititiatives undertaken by individual institutions. That these three inititives differ considerably from one another is probably an indication of the complex and multifaceted nature of QE in the area of course design.
- The first initiative focuses on transparency in the presentation of course goals, which is evidently an enabling condition for motivated student decision making in programme choice. The second, the *Plan Langues* of the *UCL*,

relates to an extensive course design project at institutional level: Specific points meriting consideration here include collaboration with client faculties in goal setting, awareness raising among client faculties, strategic choices in the global methodological philosophy adopted, the creation of a stable and motivating status for language teachers, and the institutional nature of educational change. The third relates to the active exploitation of the learning potential of a bilingual setting.

- *All these initiatives are promising in one way or another. Nevertheless, monitoring of their real effect is needed. Educational innovation is a primarily human affair, and real outcomes may not coincide with what was in the mind of the planners.*

- *The latter point raises the question of how improvement in the effectiveness of course structures can be assessed, and it would be unhelpful to suggest that this is a simple matter. My own feeling is that triangulation would be a constructive approach, ie. using input from a variety of sources (eg. different participants such as present and past students, client faculties, employers, etc.) to build up an integrated picture, rather than relying on any one instrument. This is an area which merits serious attention, and is perhaps fundamental to the whole QE exercise.*

Chapter 4. Quality measures relating to the process of teaching and learning

- Two initiatives were surveyed in this chapter. One derived from the top-down QE structures set in place by the relevant QA agency, and the other was a local measure undertaken by individual institutions. In this way, the chapter reflects the combination of top-down and bottom-up strategies which is characteristic of QE in Belgium as a whole.

- *As with respect to the last chapter, the next stage is clearly to set up and operationalise means of monitoring the real effectiveness of these measures. Here, too, this is not an easy affair, but is crucial to the QE process.*

Chapter 5. Quality measures relating to the organisation and management of the process of teaching and learning.

NA.

General summary

- Things are clearly on the move in Belgium in the area of QE. The French Community, however, is well behind the Flemish Community in this area and measures should be taken to speed up and to support the QE process in this Community.

- Perhaps a key element of QE in Belgium is the combination of top-down general QE frameworks with the facilitation of bottom-up or local initiatives by individual institutions. A mixed strategy of this nature offers numerous advantages.

- The term *kwaliteitszorg* merits study, especially within the broader goal of life-long learning. Effective QE is first and foremost a matter of creating a certain educational culture, and needs therefore to become an ongoing concern rather than simply a periodic exercise.

- The monitoring of the real effectiveness of educational initiatives is crucial, and this is probably the area of QE which merits most attention in the next stage of the QE exercise HE institutions in Belgium.

- Neither the difficulties nor, however, the fundamental role of this stage of the QE process should be underestimated. One potentially useful line of exploration in this respect is the use of triangulation, or recourse to multiple channels of information and the consultation of a variety of involved social actors.

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