

Chapter 7

COURSE PARTICIPANTS

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This chapter is about the participants in the pilot courses, who they were, where they came from, and what they thought about the course. The first part of the chapter deals with facts and figures concerning the participants and the second part looks at their feedback.

7.1 Facts and figures

7.1.1 Numbers

The figures below provide basic information about the pilot course participants. Table 1 shows more teachers registered for, started and completed the Debrecen course than the Eger course. Debrecen is one of Hungary's major cities, with a university and a population of 212,000, whereas Eger is a smaller provincial centre with 62,000 inhabitants.

Table 1. Registrations and participants for the Eger and Debrecen courses

	Initial registrations	Started course	Completed course
Eger	17	14	12
Debrecen	27	22	22

There are approximately 130-150 English teachers in Debrecen (personal communication from the County Secondary Advisor, January 2001), so course participants in Debrecen may have represented about 15 per cent of the total. All the participants in Debrecen were women, in Eger three men started and two completed the course.

The time of year the pilots were held may have influenced registration and completion. The Eger pilot was held in the Spring and early summer, when a number of school activities occur that teachers had to attend such as class excursions. Several teachers in Eger were unable to complete the course because of unforeseen school commitments. Teachers' energy levels are also said to be lower in the Spring than in the Autumn, when the Debrecen pilot took place, making course participation less likely in the Spring than the Autumn.

Table 2- where participants who completed the courses came from

	From town itself	From surrounding area
Eger	11	1
Debrecen	16	6

Table 2 shows that participants on both courses came mainly from the town itself, but some also came from outside the town. This suggests that although distance did

not exclude participants, it does seem to be the case that completion of the course was encouraged by proximity to the place the course was held. Feedback comments from a number of teachers (see sections 8.2.4 and 8.3.4) expressed appreciation that the course took place near their school.

Table 3- types of school participants taught in for the Eger and Debrecen courses

	<i>Gimnázium</i>	<i>Gimnázium és Szakközépiskola</i>	<i>Szakközépiskola</i>
Eger	10	1	2
Debrecen	14	4	4

Table 3 shows the type of school participants worked at. *Gimnázium* teachers showed the greatest interest in the course, and a smaller number of vocational school teachers also attended. In Debrecen there are nine *gimnázium*, nine *szakközépiskola* and two mixed programme schools, and there are likely to be more teachers of English in the *gimnázium* as their students tend to study more foreign languages on more academic programmes.

7.1.2 Recruitment

Initial contact for the Eger course was made in early February by the Project Manager, Nagy Edit, with a letter to school directors. In order to establish contact with the host school and local teachers, and to stimulate interest in the course a promotional visit to Eger was made by Nagy Edit, Charles Alderson and Philip Glover in February 1999. This trio visited the host school and two other schools in Eger and met the school directors and English teachers in the school. Recruitment was also assisted by personal contact, with one of the trainers being a local teacher, and through the Project Manager's acquaintances.

Participants for the Debrecen course were initially contacted in June 1999 by Nagy Edit in a letter to school directors. The letter asked school directors to inform the English teachers and to pass the registration forms on to the *vezetőtanár*. This was followed up by a letter to course applicants at the end of August and a letter on September 16 with more information from the British Council adviser responsible for the course. Recruitment was also assisted by personal contact, by one of the trainers being a leading methodologist in the University English department, and by the support of the County Pedagogical Institute (MPI) Secondary Adviser. The number of registrations was more than enough for the course, so a promotional visit was unnecessary on this occasion.

The pilot courses were successful in attracting participants. This is probably due to a number of factors; the subject matter, the way they were promoted, the fact that the course bore the name of the British Council, and because it was free of charge to schools and teachers.

7.2 Feedback

This section aims to build a picture of course participants based on how they responded to requests for feedback. Other chapters also show how participants responded to the course, this chapter focuses on the participants' own words about the course.

7.2.1 Eger

The feedback form consisted of two sections, the first section asking for a numerical rating of 17 aspects of the course, and a second section with six more open questions. The form was designed to give participants the opportunity to comment on many different aspects of the course and was completed by the eleven participants present in the final session of the course.

Questions in the second, more open section asked participants to identify three things they liked about the course, to identify three things that could have been better, to offer suggestions for future courses and to comment on any other matter they would like to.

In addition to the form, informal feedback was elicited through a discussion at the end of each day of the course. The Debrecen form can be found in the appendix, and was similar to the Eger form.

The average numerical ratings given by participants to the 17 aspects of the course are shown in table 4 in rank order, highest approval at the top. They show a high level of approval for all aspects.

Table 4- average ratings of 17 aspects of the Eger course

Question	Average rating Eger n=11
Refreshments	5.0
Being in Eger	4.9
Organisation	4.9
The training skills of the trainers	4.8
Teaching ideas proposed	4.6
The length of the course at 60 hours	4.5
The number of days	4.5
The course library	4.5
The materials	4.4
Course content	4.3
Training procedures	4.3
The room	4.2
Information about the new exam	4.2
The time of the day from 08.30 to 1500	4.1
The days Fri Sat	4.1
Homework assignments	4.0
Course publicity and other information	3.8

It is interesting to note that information and publicity about the course was regarded as relatively less satisfactory, despite the efforts made to contact teachers both in person and by post. This suggests that communication is a problematic area and even more attention to it is needed.

Homework assignments were also identified as a less satisfactory area, and as a result of the Eger pilots the trainers made major changes to the assignments to make them clearer, more precise and with a more limited time requirement. Further discussion of these ratings, and the ratings given to the Debrecen course, appear later in this chapter.

The results are grouped below into three areas, content, procedures and general arrangements.

7.2.2 Course content

Participants rated course content as very good (seven) or good (four) in the numerical section, supported by comments in the second section such as;

Excellent ... Learnt a lot ... Quite interesting tasks, useful ... It's high time to introduce those new concepts ... Provided a lot of info ... I liked the topics.

Participants felt that the course had a positive effect on them in terms of both knowledge and skills. Answers to question 19, "How was the course useful to you as a teacher?" referred to examinations and teaching. One comment referred only to examinations;

I got to know information of English examination reform. I could try some tasks with my students.

Four comments referred to teaching;

Changing ideas with other colleagues, getting their thoughts, personal experience, revising and learning new teaching methods

Made me think about my teaching routine (perhaps dull)

Now I feel much more task-conscious. I very much enjoyed talking to very clever colleagues having the same problems

I revised some of my teaching concepts, there were some interesting tasks to try with my students, it is very useful to meet colleagues to change ideas.

Six comments referred to examinations and teaching together, or made general remarks;

I was put in the picture about the imminent changes in examination practice. It also made me think seriously about the discrepancies of the present érettségi and the inadequacy of my own teaching.

I learnt quite a few things that make me change my 'practice' and 'preparing' methods.

I got new ideas and it was good that we were forced to use them and I could see the results soon.

It confirmed that changes are needed. It raised awareness of developing different skills using our every day course books.

I have become more conscious about my work.

Has changed my attitude not only to my main activity but to many other things in different fields of life.

Participants gave the teaching ideas in the course an equally high rating (seven very good, four good). Six commented on the teaching ideas, all in a positive way;

Always accepted with great enthusiasm.

I really agree with these ideas.

I like them.

I think I have learned a lot.

Made me think.

Some things were well-known, but it was good to brush up these ideas.

Teaching ideas were seen as new by some teachers and not by others, but do not seem to have been rejected by participants. Differences in the knowledge and experience of participants clear from many of the discussions during the course, for example the one on pre-teaching vocabulary (see Chapter 5).

Participants rated the materials highly (four very good, seven good), four provided positive comments;

Quite up-to-date.

Well-planned.

Useful, various.

I liked them and they are usable.

Two comments asked for more;

You can't ever get enough.

We could have been given more.

Two asked for less or for them to be presented differently;

Sometimes we were lost.

Sometimes I got lost in the handouts.

In Eger handouts were distributed individually in sessions rather than in packages.

Four participants rated information about the new exam as very good, five as good and two as satisfactory. Some comments expressed satisfaction;

We got the general idea.

Most of it is clear.

Others were not satisfied;

There are still quite a few dark points or areas.

We were not given enough background information, exam boards etc.

There are some questions.

More background information, what organisations will be planned in connection with the exam.

We could have been given more detailed answers about the new érettségi, although I know it is impossible at the moment.

The homework assignments were rated as very good by three, good by five and satisfactory by three participants. They received both appreciation and criticism, sometimes from the same participants; *the tasks are very good, given period of time is short.*

OK (the last ones were a bit demanding).

Not enjoyable but useful in fact.

It took too much time.

Necessary to try out everything with students but the given time was short.

I felt it too much.

Very interesting and useful, but sometimes I think it was too much.

Possibility to try the tasks with my students.

7.2.3 Course procedures

Participants rated training procedures highly, with seven very good and four good. The procedures themselves received less positive comments than other aspects of the course, for example;

Very enjoyable at times.

In general it was interesting.

Suitable to the materials.

Interesting and well organised.

The trainers made us take part actively, so it was very useful.

Under things liked about the course participants wrote;
Group work and not just lectures.

On the other hand there were also comments like these;

As a trainee, I am not a devoted fan of workshops.

I don't really long for 'warming up' games.

Sometimes too slow or fast.

These serve as reminders of personal preferences, that not all teachers enjoy the same types of activity, so a variety is needed.

The highest ratings connected with the delivery of the course were for the training skills of the trainers with nine very good ratings and two good. Many comments referred specifically to the trainers, most of them positive in identifying things they liked about the course;

Hard efforts, well done, they have been working very hard.

Well-prepared, they did very well.

Trainers were very helpful and worked very hard.

The training skills of the trainers.

It was good for me to see (and enjoy) how well prepared the trainers were.

The enthusiasm of the trainers from Szeged, Székesfehérvár, Eger.

Kindness of trainers.

The trainers' enthusiasm.

The trainers made us work hard (there and at school too).

Some added positive comments under the 'could have been better' heading;

All good, one is satisfactory.

Most of them are excellent teachers and good performers.

Sometimes we did not know what we were expected to do.

Participants' views of course procedures are also reflected in the comments made about the atmosphere in response to the question asking for three things that were good about the course; *"The course had a nice, friendly atmosphere," "Each participant contributed." "The atmosphere." "The friendly atmosphere." "Professionalism." and "Friendly and ambitious atmosphere."*

Under comments about the room (five very good, four good, two satisfactory) two commented that layout could have been better, and one supported the arrangement;

Equipment and furniture not properly placed. Sometimes I could not catch those sitting aback, that is the furnishing and placing of the desks.

Everybody should see everybody, round table.

Suitable for group work.

7.2.4 Course arrangements

The fact that the course was held in Eger was very popular with participants, with ten rating it very good and one good. Comments were all positive in this respect;

I couldn't have taken part somewhere else out of Eger, it is easier to take part in, I did not have to travel.

I advise you to hold local courses like this one. Few people would spend their time travelling and bother staying away from home.

Course organisation was also rated very good by ten participants and good by one, and received several comments;

Well-planned and well organised.

*Punctual start and end.
A lot of effort was put into it.
Perfect.*

Participants generally approved highly of timing issues, but some identified points that were felt to be less satisfactory. The time of the day from 08.30 to 15.00 was generally well received (six very good, four good, one satisfactory), only two comments were made, one clearly for and one against, “*Sometimes too long,*” and “*Perfect.*”

The length of the course at 60 hours was rated highly (five very good, six good) and received three comments, “*It’s all, but for less experienced teachers it could be more*” and “*If it is not the end, good.*”

The number of days was also rated highly (five very good, six good), with 6 comments that mixed satisfaction with this course and a desire for more; “*It’s all, but for less experienced teachers it could be more.*”
Enough for the time being.
A session is missing.
Could have been more.
Enough.
It was enough to discuss a lot of things.

The days of the course were rated quite highly, (three very good, six good and two satisfactory). Five participants were not happy with Saturdays; “*If I don’t have any family problems, Saturday is all right as well.*”
I am not at all happy with the Saturdays.
It would have been better on weekdays.
Thursday and Friday would have been better.
Saturdays were a bit tiring.

The Friday- Saturday pattern was chosen in order to reduce the need for substitution in schools which can cause conflict with head teachers. Several teachers in Eger would have preferred a course on weekdays. On the other hand, this might have caused new problems with different teachers, schools or with availability of trainers.

The time of year was also felt to be difficult, placed by several participants in the “could have been better” or suggestions for the future sections; “*Maybe the whole course should have been held a bit earlier (because of the érettségi).*”
The timing (end of academic year).
The date (last on 29 May), because we are very busy at school at the end of the academic year.
It was not the perfect time to try out tests with 4th graders.
Don’t organise the course in the second half of the second term.
March, April, May are too tiring and busy for both students and teachers.
October, November, December would be better for the next course.
Sooner or not in such a busy period of the year.
Sept or Oct could have been better as those months are not so busy part of the term.

7.2.5 Summary

The Eger participant, then;

- was very satisfied with the course and enjoyed it
- worked hard and enthusiastically

- appreciated the hard work and organisational efforts of the trainers
- enjoyed the enthusiastic and positive atmosphere of the course
- liked the procedures used during the sessions
- felt the course was very much about the new examinations **and** teaching
- enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on teaching
- felt the course benefited their teaching
- felt that concrete information concerning the final form of the new examinations was somewhat lacking
- generally enjoyed the group work with some reservations and a feeling that the seating arrangements could have been better
- felt the homework assignments were rather onerous but useful
- liked the idea of the course library, but only borrowed one or two books from it
- appreciated the course being run in Eger
- approved of the duration and timing of the course, but was not so happy about the Saturday sessions or about having the course in the Spring
- gained a positive view of the proposed examinations, whilst retaining some concern about its actual implementation
- is looking forward to future training in connection with the new examinations

7.2.6 Debrecen

The Debrecen feedback form was completed by the 21 participants present in the final session of the course and consisted of two sections, like the Eger form, but with some revisions. The first section asked for a rating of 19 aspects of the course, with a space for additional comments next to each rating and at the end of the section. The second section asked seven more open questions and also included a request for an estimate of time spent on the assignments. A blank feedback form is included in the appendix. As in Eger, in addition to the form, informal feedback was elicited through a discussion at the end of each day of the course.

The average ratings given by participants to the 17 aspects of the course are shown in table 5. They show a high level of approval. All the aspects of the course that were rated highest in Eger (refreshments, being in Eger/ Debrecen, organisation and training skills) were also rated highest in Debrecen. One more aspect in Debrecen joined this group, the course content. This may be the result of changes after Eger as a course booklet replaced the individual handouts, and greater cohesion was added to the course.

Table 5. Pilot, numerical responses to feedback, average ratings

Question	average rating Debrecen n= 21
Refreshments	4.9
Being in Debrecen	4.8
Organisation	4.9
The training skills of the trainers	4.8
Teaching ideas proposed	4.5
The length of the course (60 hours)	4.7
The number of days	4.6
The course library	4.3

The materials	4.3
Course content	4.9
Training procedures	4.5
The room	4.6 (MPI) 4 (<i>Gimnázium</i>)
Information about the new exam	3.9
The days Fri Sat	4.4
The time of the day from 08.30 to 1500	4.5
Homework assignments	4
Course publicity and other information	4.2

In view of the introduction of the materials package, however, it is perhaps surprising that the rating for materials did not also rise. Trainers felt that the presentation of materials in a clearly laid out booklet represented an improvement, as did the number and quality of the sample examination tasks available. However, the participants were not in a position to compare the two courses and they felt there were a number of flaws in the materials (as described more fully below) both in the quality of reproduction (for example photocopies of pictures or the tape recordings) and in the quality of the tasks. This could explain why materials were rated highly, but not as highly as other aspects such as organisation or content.

Examination information and homework assignments were the least highly rated. The trainers had tried to make major improvements in both these areas for the second pilot, so these results were rather surprising. They made major changes to the homework assignments to make them clearer, more precise and with a more limited time requirement. In spite of this some participants were not happy with them. The reasons for this are discussed later in this chapter.

As for examination information, more information was provided in the second pilot in the form of updated sample procedures, item samples for all skills, rating scales and results from pilot examinations. What seems to have been absent, though, was official information about the implementation of the examinations, because no such information was available, and consequently participants did not feel entirely confident that the examples they were experiencing would be implemented. Indeed, trainers frequently reminded participants that final decisions were yet to be taken, and that all aspects of the examinations would certainly be revised before their implementation.

In addition to course content, other aspects of the course in Debrecen received higher ratings than the one in Eger. Both the time of the day (08.30 to 15.00), and the days the course were held on (Friday and Saturday) were rated more highly in Debrecen, even though they were exactly the same. Course publicity and information were rated more highly in Debrecen, but were still one of the least highly rated aspects of the course, indicating the importance of attention to this matter in order to gain participants' approval. Finally the school classroom received the same rating in both Eger and Debrecen, but the carpeted and better-furnished MPI meeting room was more highly rated.

The comments from the form are divided below into three categories, procedures, content and general arrangements. The respondents are coded R1, R2 etc, to show which comments are made by the same participant.

7.2.7 Content

Eighteen participants rated the course content as very good and three as good, and written comments were;

R15 Lots of areas have been covered.

R17 For me it was interesting.

R13 I highly appreciate such kind of in-service seminars, they always have practical and theoretical advantages.

R2 I was very much interested in it and I think I will benefit from this a lot.

R7 It was really useful, thanks a lot.

R9 It was very useful.

Specific aspects of content referred to relate to materials, the classroom and teaching, the new examination, homework assignments and others.

Eleven participants found the materials very good, six good, three satisfactory and one poor. Those who liked the materials found them

R15 Interesting, helpful.

R17 Varied.

R4 Useful topics.

R8 I find the handouts and other material valuable.

Participants liked;

R11 the rating scales (written, oral).

R14 The review sessions (conclusions).

R16 Interesting topics/ questions raised.

Others were not happy about the

R1 Small print, low quality of recording.

and five commented on the listening materials, saying for example;

R8 Quality of recording and photocopying should be improved.

Referring to classroom-related aspects of content, eleven participants found the teaching ideas proposed very good, eight good and one satisfactory, adding the comments;

R15 Great help.

R17 They were useful.

R21 Sometimes a bit utopistic (not enough time in school).

In reply to the question “How was the course useful to you as a teacher?” two comments concerned just teaching or ideas,

R1 New teaching ideas plus refreshing methodology.

R5 I met new ideas, views, different problems. I've become a bit more confident.

Other responses concerned both the classroom and examination matters. Comments in the “useful to you as a teacher section” included;

R12 I was told a lot about the tendency I have to adapt and I have to adapt my students to.

R16 It helped me a lot to rethink my teaching methods and be prepared for the new exam. I heard a lot of useful ideas/ teaching tips.

R17 Firstly I have some information about the new exam and also I've learnt a few techniques that I can use in the classroom.

R20 I received very useful information on the new coming érettségi, it also made me reconsider the task tips that I use in the classroom.

R3 It gave a lot of new ideas. I have already known a lot more about the new 'érettségi'.

R6 I wanted to know more about the new érettségi. Besides, there are very few occasions for us, teachers of English, to come together and share ideas on hot issues. This aspect of the course was the most relevant for me.

R10 It was very useful, because now I think I've got a slight idea about what kind of things to emphasise, what to make students practice more.

Another group of responses referred exclusively to examination matters. Three participants found the information provided about the new exam very good, twelve found it good, four satisfactory and one poor, commenting;

R1 It's a bit too experimental at this stage.

R6 Some questions would have needed ministry people to attend and answer.

R8 There are still questions unanswered.

R15 So far I know it will be more precise later.

R17 Everything is vague a bit.

R21 A lot of questions are not yet answered.

Participants felt the information provided could have been better;

R19 More specific information.

R7 I am still uncertain about a lot of things in connection with the new exam.

R14 We need even more information about the exam.

R12 An official from the Ministry of Education who'd justify all these efforts.

R14 Someone from the ministry could have been invited.

On the other hand others felt the information provided had been useful, stating;

R14 Now I know quite a lot about the new exam, the materials were very interesting especially the sample tasks and rating scales.

R15 I like being up to date and this course helped me a lot to get to know lots of pieces of information about the new érettségi system and let me contribute to its making.

R21 I found it very useful, some of my colleagues have already asked me several questions about the 'new érettségi', and I could answer them!

Participants also liked;

R1 Its being informative.

R7 We could have a general view of the coming exams.

R8 It was very much informative.

R13 The topic- we badly need any info in connection with the reform.

R18 Learning about the new exam.

As was noted above, the homework assignments were relatively less highly rated. In the numerical ratings, four participants felt they were very good, twelve good and five satisfactory. Three made quite positive comments;

R15 Interesting, lifelike.

R17 I enjoyed the classroom activities.

R10 Though it felt a bit too much, but it was necessary.

Most of the comments that were made about the assignments were critical, however;

R1 A bit time-consuming.

R8 At times the working load was too strenuous.

R21 They were not evenly distributed and sometimes it was difficult to be carried out (speaking task didn't fit in the syllabus).

Eight identified homework as something in the course that could have been better;

R2 It is difficult to do the assignments with 20- 25 lessons a week.

R3 The assignments took a lot of time.

R4 We could have more days and less homework.

R7 Less homework!

R8 The amount of workload in homework assignments.

R13 Homework assignment was too lengthy (we have a lot of things to do at school).

R19 Less homework.

R21 Less homework.

Advice for the next course included;

R1 Less time-consuming homework assignments/ counting percentages, detailed worksheets.

R21 Distribute homework evenly.

Many participants clearly felt the homework assignments were an unwelcome imposition, and the main constraint appears to be time, as the actual content of the assignments is hardly mentioned, and the call is for less homework, not different homework.

Question 25 in the feedback asked; “Write an estimate below for how long each homework assignment took you”. The average amount of time participants claimed to have spent on assignments was 20.5 hours. The longest time claimed was 42.5 hours, the shortest 4 hours 55 minutes. The course lasted just over ten weeks, from the arrival of the pre-course tasks to the final day, so the average amount of time spent on assignments was just over two hours a week.

The course was advertised as a sixty-hour course consisting of 35 contact hours and 25 hours at home or in school. This means that on average the participants completed four and a half fewer hours than specified in the course requirements, and seven participants, a third of the total, exceeded the required 25 hours.

Participants claimed that the assignments were not spread evenly, that the assignments between days four and five took longer than those between days two and three. The writing, speaking and use of English assignments took on average 10 hours 21 minutes, nearly twice as long as the reading and listening assignments at 5 hours 42 minutes. On the other hand, that is still only two and a half hours per week in the month allocated.

This is an important issue that requires further reflection and enquiry. It is difficult to imagine a course having much classroom impact if it does not involve an important element of classroom study.

7.2.8 Procedures

Participants’ views on the training procedures were generally positive, twelve rated them as very good, eight good and one satisfactory. One comment recognised the value of the ‘loop input’ approach, stating the procedures “*R17 Have given me some ideas.*” Another teacher felt that conducting the sessions in English was useful for her as a teacher, stating “*R1 Talking practice in English for myself, I mean it. I haven’t spoken in English outside classroom for a long time.*”

The trainers’ skills were very highly rated by participants, with sixteen rating very good and five good. Six participants said they liked aspects of the trainers’ approach, for example;

R1 Your enthusiasm, dedication.

R2 The great variety of their work.

R9 Well-prepared trainers.

R17 They’ve worked really hard.

Nine participants commented the atmosphere was an aspect of the course they liked. Comments included “R16 Pleasant working atmosphere” and “R7 I like the atmosphere, the meeting with colleagues”

The colleagues at the training are another element that seems to have combined well with the trainers and procedures to produce a good atmosphere, and was commented on by five participants, for example;

R1 My colleagues' cooperation, help, their attitude.

R6 I especially enjoyed working together with the colleagues always reshuffled to be with different ones.

R13 The beloved group work- working together.

Specific aspects of the training that participants said they liked were the tasks, the discussions and the giving and receiving of ideas. Seven comments on the tasks noted;

R8 Practicality.

R11 We could try out some sample tasks.

R19 Group work.

Positive comments included;

R4 Discussing things with colleagues.

R6 I like the workshops, involvement, well-organised discussions.

R16 Lovely discussions.

R18 Having discussions on methodological issues.

R7 The possibility of exchanging thoughts, ideas concerning the new érettségi.

R5 I've learned some new ideas.

R15 Lots of opportunities to ask questions, get answers.

R17 I was asked for my opinion.

Some participants were not entirely happy with the procedures and approach of the trainers, for example one felt the procedures were “R1 Partly repetitive”, another felt “R21 Group work and presentations become monotonous towards the end” and another comment was “R1 Some of you are a bit “aggressive” but it's OK”.

In the “could have been better” section some participants identified different aspects of the course;

R8 At times I felt group work should have been interrupted with some other activity.

R11 We shouldn't have been regrouped all the time, it took a lot of time.

R11 We could have been given more time to do certain tasks.

Two participants did not like the presentation tasks where a group representative had to report on discussions to the whole group, stating “R21 Less presentations” and “R8 I did not feel comfortable about presentations”.

7.2.9 Course arrangements

As the ratings listed in table 6 show, participants generally liked aspects of course arrangements, but some suggestions for changes were made. One participant would have liked the day “R1 One hour shorter please”. The length of each day, the number of days, the days of the week the course was held on, the length of the course, the refreshments and the venues were approved of, as was the general organisation, and having the course in Debrecen, although one participant would have preferred her own home town. Most were happy with course publicity and information, although one did not receive the pre-course tasks.

7.2.10 Other comments

Various suggestions were made for planning a future course. Six related to time and timetabling issues;

R3 The sessions could be longer.

R3 One skill for one day.

R7 It may be better in the summer.

R8 Don't have it on Saturdays, teachers need the weekend.

R20 By the afternoon sessions I got a bit tired, to have only the morning would be better.

R2 The time devoted to certain problems could be longer, the pace was strained.

Other pieces of advice were;

R12 To incorporate our remarks.

R18 Don't say that teachers cheat!

R19 Let grammar school teachers know it's going to be an experimental course.

R6 Re-record the listening task if you want to use it again.

R11 Some experts from the Ministry of Education and from Rigó utca should be invited to the course too. They should give their opinions about the exam too.

Five other suggestions for the future praised the course and encouraged the trainers to continue with comments such as

R5 Carry on.

R12 I do appreciate your work.

R13 It was OK, just go ahead and continue it.

R14 I think it was very good.

Participants were also asked about other training events they would like in connection with examination reform. Four requested further methodology training;

R9 More teaching ideas.

R11 I'd like to observe some "model lessons".

R13 Observation.

R6 Continuous language update courses and use of materials.

Eleven mentioned more training in connection with examinations or assessment;

R1 Training in marking/grading.

R16 Training in assessment.

R17 How to assess students' performance.

R21 Training sessions on assessing students using the rating scales.

R8 I'd like to be part of an examiner/ assessor training programme.

R15 Preparing teachers for organising, assessing the exam and how to prepare students for this exam.

R18 I am interested in how official assessors will be trained.

Twelve answers to the final question expressed gratitude and enthusiasm for future courses;

R3 Thank you for the opportunity.

R5 I expect it to be continued.

R7 I highly appreciate all your work, effort, thank you very much.

R10 It was very tiring and exhausting, but interesting and exciting at the same time.

R15 I enjoyed it very much, thank you for that.

R21 I wish I could participate in another course like this (same people- same organisation) where all the remaining questions would be answered.

R8 I'd like to have answers to the questions remained unanswered so far (maybe a further informative brochure?)

7.2.11 Summary

The Debrecen participant, then;

- was very satisfied with the course and enjoyed it
- worked hard and enthusiastically
- appreciated the hard work and organisational efforts of the trainers
- greatly enjoyed the enthusiastic and positive atmosphere of the course
- liked the procedures used during the sessions, with some reservations about the quality of materials
- was primarily interested in information about the new examinations, and less so in classroom implications (whereas the Eger participants found these two aspects equally interesting)
- enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on teaching
- would have liked more concrete information concerning the final form of the new examinations, for example from an official representative
- greatly enjoyed the opportunity to talk to and share ideas with colleagues
- felt the homework assignments were too time-consuming
- liked the idea of the course library, but only borrowed one or two books from it
- appreciated the course being run in Debrecen
- approved of the duration and timing of the course
- gained a positive view of the proposed examinations, whilst retaining some concern about its actual implementation
- is looking forward to future training in connection with the new examinations

7.3 Conclusion

This chapter has described the participants and their view of the course using their own words. The views expressed give some indication of the interests and preferences of school teachers in this type of training situation. The feedback shows how successfully trainers, participants and procedures combined. It also shows how positively teachers can respond to new ideas.

Appendix Debrecen pilot feedback form

British Council teacher training course A new *érettségi* teacher training course- looking forward to new exams, Debrecen, Oct- Nov 1999

Feedback form

Please answer these questions about the course and write a longer comment at the end of each line. Please fill in this form and hand it in at the end of the course. Your opinions are highly valued and will help us with future courses.

What did you think of these aspects of the course?

5= very good 4= good 3= satisfactory 2= poor 1= very poor.

1. The content of the course	1	2	3	4	5	.....
2. The materials used	1	2	3	4	5	.....
3. The training procedures used	1	2	3	4	5	.....
4. The training skills of the trainers	1	2	3	4	5	.....
5. The teaching ideas proposed	1	2	3	4	5	.....
6. The information provided about the new exam	1	2	3	4	5	.....
7. The time it was held each day (0830-1515)	1	2	3	4	5	.....
8. The days it was held on (Friday, Saturday)	1	2	3	4	5	.....
9. The number of days (5)	1	2	3	4	5	.....
10. The length of the course (60 hours)	1	2	3	4	5	.....
11. The homework assignments	1	2	3	4	5	.....
12. The books you could borrow	1	2	3	4	5	.....
13. The general organisation of the course	1	2	3	4	5	.....
14. The course publicity and other information	1	2	3	4	5	.....
15. Holding the course in Debrecen	1	2	3	4	5	.....
16. Holding the course at the MPI/ Kossuth Gimn	1	2	3	4	5	.....
17. The MPI room	1	2	3	4	5	.....
18. The Gimnázium room	1	2	3	4	5
19. The food and drink breaks	1	2	3	4	5

Please write other comments here

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Please answer these questions about the course.

20. How was the course useful to you as a teacher?

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21. Write down three things you liked about the course.

- a.
- b.
- c.

22. Write down three things that could have been better

- a.

b.

c.

23. What advice can you give for planning the next course?

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24. What other training events would you like in connection with examination reform?

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25. Write an estimate below for how long each homework assignment took you.

Task title	Task description	Time taken
Pre-course task 1	Preparing for the érettségi- current practice	
Pre-course task 2	Focus on the classroom-lesson report	
Pre-course task 3	Questions, hopes, fears for the new exams	
Reading assignment	Try out one of the sample exam reading tasks with a class, record results and comments	
Listening assignment	Try out a sample exam listening tasks with a class, record results and comments	
Writing assignment	Try a sample exam writing task with class, grade with scales, record results, comments	
Speaking assignment	Prepare a lesson using a sample exam speaking task, observe and be observed, discuss	
U of E assignment	Try out a sample exam use of English task with a class, record results and comments	
Other reading	Working document etc	

26. How many books did you borrow? Which did you find the most interesting or useful?

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27. What other comments would you like to make?

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