

Transversal Case Study



Delegates dining out in Nottingham.

Transversal visits are part of the European Lifelong Learning Programme. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training, providing information on and analyses of vocational education and training systems, policies, research and practice. Applications in England are submitted via Ecorys.

In November 2011, EMFEC hosted a Transversal study visit on the theme of 'Driving up standards in VET through continuous professional development and quality assessment' for 11 delegates from Belgium, Spain, Poland, Latvia, Ireland, Italy, Czech Republic and Romania. The aims of the visit were:

- for delegates to learn about self-assessment and self-evaluation processes within external quality assurance structures
- for teachers to take greater responsibility for updating and developing their own knowledge and skills
- to increase the importance of learner-centered approaches to teaching and learning.

Delegates had the opportunity to hear from a number of people involved in quality assurance, including Ofsted, and to visit a school, a further education college and an independent training provider to learn about and discuss:

- self-assessment, quality improvement methods and continuous professional development in schools and colleges in England
- Ofsted framework(s), processes and practices
- the sharing of best practice in England and other European countries
- with HMI Inspectors (Ofsted) key updates relating to UK and European policies and developments.

The delegates came from various professional backgrounds and included teachers, Head Teachers, teacher trainers and members of the inspectorate. This mix provided a good group dynamic as the diversity of roles; national policies and quality assurance structures generated lively and fruitful discussions and clear identification and evaluation of what good practice looked like. The presentations and visits covered different aspects of the quality assurance theme which were of interest to the group from inspector to practitioner level.

The standard of English ranged from good to very good and most of the group were able to grasp concepts quickly. The group bonded very well and this extended to socialising in the evenings.

On the evening of the first full day, the delegates attended a meal at Sinatra's restaurant in the centre of Nottingham. The meal was also attended by the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive of EMFEC. Delegates were keen to learn about the history of the local area and keen to explore in their spare time.

As part of the cultural aspect of the visit, EMFEC staff took the delegates to the Galleries of Justice museum (based at the site of Nottinghamshire's old Courthouse and County Jail). The delegates enjoyed the visit as the tour guide, in full costume and role-playing the part of a convict who was due to be hanged, gave a lively and enjoyable commentary.

As the world of education is littered with acronyms, EMFEC staff ensured that the delegates were furnished with a handbook that had clear and concise wording, including a glossary of educational terms, to allow them to re-visit anything they did not understand. Visiting speakers and the speakers in establishments visited were



At the Galleries of Justice

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Delegates learning about the English education system

briefed in advance to speak clearly, avoid acronyms and convert pounds to Euros.

The planned programme provided opportunities for delegates to understand the English education system, internal self-assessment and quality assurance practices and the external system, ie Ofsted. The variety of speakers and visits during the week helped to set the scene, and subsequently reinforce and underpin information the delegates had learned previously.

The first day of the visit consisted of an overview of the host organisation and the services it offers, followed by an introduction to the English education system, including

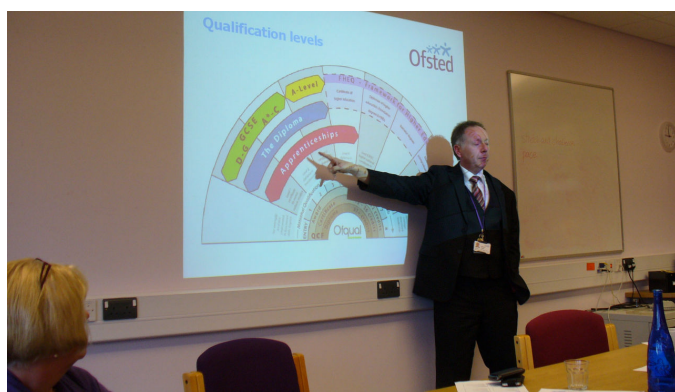
Key Stages, programme levels and the QCF. EMFEC staff also provided an introduction to quality assurance, external quality checks (Ofsted) and professional development to raise standards, in order to ensure the group understood the English system.

The study visit provided the opportunity for the delegates to deliver a presentation explaining the education system and quality assurance systems in their own country. This gave the delegates the opportunity to learn, compare and contrast practices in other countries with their own.

On day two, two senior Ofsted personnel visited EMFEC to speak to the delegates. They were Matthew Coffey, Director of Development, Learning and Skills and Ceri Morgan, Ofsted Inspector, School and College Principals, Quality Managers and Work Based Learning providers. Matthew and Ceri explained the history of Ofsted, the type of provision Ofsted inspects; how self-assessment reports were used and the themes and criteria Ofsted observe, analyse and assess. The delegates were then able to discuss and exchange ideas for improvement in their own educational systems.

Following the presentations and discussion with Ofsted, delegates were taken to visit an independent training provider, Access Training in Nottingham. The Quality Manager explained how self-assessment, quality assurance and peer evaluation assisted the organisation in improving quality and prepared them for inspection. The delegates felt that peer reviews were an example of good practice they could introduce in their own countries.

On Thursday 1 December, the delegates visited Ashfield School (a secondary school) which has an innovative approach to delivering vocational skills. Private sector businesses (RAC, Charnwood Training for example) have moved into purpose-built units on the school site where they are able to develop and train their own apprentices. In exchange for the accommodation, the businesses deliver training to students in the school who are studying a vocational programme as part of their GCSE or post-16 studies.



Presentation led by Matthew Coffey, Director Development Learning and Skills, Ofsted

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During the afternoon, the delegates visited New College Nottingham to see vocational education in action and learn about quality assurance within the college. Delegates visited the Construction and Building Services department and the Health and Social Care department. They were impressed by the facilities and the link between employers and education, and the comprehensive and extensive CPD programme and self-assessment process organised by the Quality Manager.

The final day was a review of the week's activities and the presentation of certificates to all delegates by the CEO of EMFEC. The delegates then worked together to complete a group report to be submitted to ecorys.

The study visit provided the opportunity for delegates to discuss all they had observed and learned, to learn from each other and to identify good practice. They identified that some of the good practice (at national level) was beyond their remit, but they could introduce better practice in their own organisations and influence activity at local and regional level.

The Transversal study visit is a worthwhile and useful vehicle for sharing good practice and helping to influence better practice in the UK and other European countries. The meeting with two senior Ofsted personnel has opened a channel of communication which may improve quality assurance and help to standardise external quality assurance across Europe in the long term. As individuals, the delegates have the opportunity to improve their own practice and to raise standards in their respective schools/colleges/organisations.

The delegates were extremely impressed with the visits they made to the school, college and work based learning provider. They found the visit to Ashfield School particularly interesting as the arrangements are unlike anything that exists in their countries. The delegates were particularly impressed with the Skills Centre, a purpose-built area which houses private-sector businesses. Charnwood Training, which trains young people in hospitality, has a teaching kitchen and restaurant on site, and students from the school studying in the Charnwood restaurant prepared a buffet lunch for the delegates. This collaboration between the public and private sector to deliver skills' training was considered to be innovative and an excellent route to driving up vocational standards and employability skills for young people.

The delegates found the presentation from Ofsted very useful. They were particularly impressed with the methods that Ofsted use in England to assure quality. Several of the participants asked to take away copies of the questionnaires and letters that Ofsted use when communicating with parents, so they could implement them in their own organisations. The Ofsted letter, summarising inspection findings and sent to students post-inspection (in a language young people can understand) was considered particularly innovative.

The delegates also liked Ofsted's new online tool, Parent View, which enables parents of learners to make anonymous and direct comments relating to their children's school to Ofsted. All the delegates have an inspectorate system in their country, but most are controlled by government at national or regional level. They liked the English system as Ofsted is a government funded but independent body and its standards apply nationally across early years, schools, colleges and prisons etc.



Presentation of Certificates

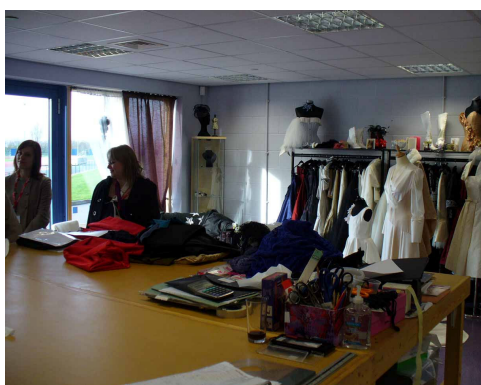
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Presentation at Ashfield School,
Richard Vasey, Head Teacher

The visit to New College Nottingham also interested the delegates as they understood the importance of employer engagement in the FE sector when they learned that private sponsors often supplement the materials and resources needed in the Construction department, enabling the college to achieve a high standard of training in a realistic environment. The delegates were also impressed by the fact that employers 'talent scout' future employees from the Construction Academy. The broad CPD programme and quality checks were also admired.

The national drive to increase apprenticeships in England was considered to be innovative too, as none of the delegate's countries have a national apprenticeship programme; and the concept of Independent Training provision, which was also new to the delegates, was considered to be a valuable resource.



One of the businesses in the Skills
Centre, Ashfield School

The delegates were able to compare and contrast practices in their own countries with those of England. Self-assessment is compulsory in Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Spain and Romania; in the Czech Republic, it is optional but still generally carried out. The representative countries all have development plans arising from self-assessment or as a stand-alone document/exercise against which they evaluate provision. Most countries conduct lesson observations, although currently Italy does not. The participant from Italy intends to introduce the practice locally with a possibility of it becoming more widespread.

All the participants agreed that quality assurance processes needed 'buy-in' from staff, learners, parents, community and stakeholders in order to be effective.

Most of the participants reported that English is now a compulsory second language in their countries and children are taught English from a very early age; whilst standards in second languages in England are lower. However it was recognised that English is the language of business and technology.

EMFEC staff accompanying the delegates increased their own awareness of education systems and also enjoyed meeting new people with a genuine interest in education. The institutions who welcomed the group throughout the week enjoyed the visit and were given information about how their own members of staff could benefit from participating in a study visit.

If you or a member of your staff is interested in applying for a place on a Transversal visit, please [click here](#).



The Hair and Beauty Salon, Ashfield
School

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