How to measure quality

Vilnius
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What is the purpose?

In the EEPG, we are convinced that it is important to show decision makers such as governments and ministries of education, school boards and principals as well as teachers and parents that quality of teaching and learning materials is a key feature in good education. We showcase best practice examples.

Are there any comparable competitions? There aren’t many, at least not in Europe, that are so comprehensive. In German speaking countries there are Comenius or Digita. ELTons is organised by the British Council for ELT material and there is also Medea. Another digital one is BETT Award.
History – the beginnings

The competition started in 2009 and was initiated by EEPG and IARTEM. Then, as now, the founders were worried because governments in several countries were starting to interfere strongly with educational publishing and indeed education.

These were the first incidents in Europe (after the changes in 1990) in which “one textbook per subject” were proposed. BESA - as it was then known - started as an initiative to show what good quality textbooks are and promote quality.
History - BESA

In 2009, most main learning materials were still textbooks and workbooks. Even though there were some digital products 10 years ago, they did not play an important role in the classroom.

However, the BESA initiators were aware of the fact that digital was becoming more important and there was a special category for digital products.
BELMA today

In 2014, we decided to change BESA to BELMA (Best Educational Learning Materials Award) to reflect the change in reality (more and more materials had more than one component).

However, this also meant we had to change the criteria because now we had to look at products as a whole, not just a textbook or a CD-ROM.

So, after 2014, we still had four categories as before but they were re-defined according to age bands.

That works well even though we constantly monitor and revise.
Categories

These four categories as well as the criteria are constantly reviewed and revised. We look at the school systems in Europe and adapt the categories accordingly.

**Secondary education (including secondary vocational education)**

The category comprises secondary and single structure education for 12/13 - 16/17 year olds.

- It typically covers the last years of compulsory secondary education and includes vocational training if this falls into the age category, like the *Centre de formation d'apprentis* in France or the *Istituto tecnico* in Italy.
- In countries where full-time compulsory education ends at the age of 14 (Croatia) or 15 (e.g. Czech Republic, Greece, Cyprus, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, etc) materials for 16-17 year olds (at e.g. *Gimnázium, Menntaskóli, Liceum, Oberstufenrealgymnasium*) should still be entered in this category.
Some statistics

During the first years, there were around 30 a year, then in the last few years we had between 40 and 45, but this year we had a record of 57 entries.

Categories 2 and 3 are mostly the fullest, but this year we had 18 entries in cat 1 because there were so many new curricula in different countries.

Almost all titles come as packages now, however there are some special materials that come just as books or (more so) only online.
Some statistics

Over the last few years we have also seen a lot of interesting materials that are different, such as special needs materials, teacher’s manuals for sports, learning to make numbers and letters with plasticine.

These are often candidates for the special prize.
The criteria can be found on the BELMA website but this is an example of the system, 8 main criteria broken down into 25 sub criteria, each with a different weighting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Principles</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance learner centredness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance appropriateness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for Relevance (x 10)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for Transparency (x 10)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for Reliability (x 10)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for Attractiveness (x 8)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for Generativeness (x 9)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for Participation (x 6)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for Socialisation (x 8)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Score (Total) max 201 pts</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Generativeness**: Sustainability 3
- **Generativeness**: Integration 3
- **Generativeness**: Cognitive development 3

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Total for Relevance (x 10) 30
The Jury

- **Jean Claude Lasnier**, former Head of the French CCI Language training centres network, Council of Europe Expert in the fields of languages and quality assurance in education, chairman of the Jury
- **Christoph Bläsi**, Prof. Dr., Institute for Book studies, Johannes-Gutenberg University, Mainz (Germany)
- **Helga Holtkamp**, Director of the EEPG, independent educational publishing consultant and e-learning expert, Berlin (Germany)
- **Diana Kali**, Publisher, MSc International Publishing Management, Stirling (United Kingdom); MA Teacher of Hungarian as a Foreign Language, Budapest (Hungary)
- **Eva Maagerø**, Professor, Vestfold University College, Tønsberg (Norway)
- **James McCall**, Principal Consultant in International Publishing, Scottish Centre for The Book, Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh (United Kingdom)
- **Jaan Mikk**, Doctor of Education, Professor emeritus at the University of Tartu (Estonia)
- **Julieta Savova**, Professor, PhD, University Veliko Tarnovo, former Council of Europe and UNESCO expert on teacher education, textbooks evaluation expert (Bulgaria/USA)
Beyond the spreadsheet

Each title is evaluated by three jurors, sometimes with the help of language specialists (e.g. Hebrew).

Apart from the spreadsheet, there is also a written report, which serves later as the basis for the feedback the publishers get.

At the jury meeting, each title is discussed at length. The jury members who have evaluated the titles explain to the others the merits and shortcomings.