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European Perspectives on Teacher Education in Multilingual Contexts. Initiatives of the Council of Europe and the European Union

Introduction

European bodies have had a pronounced policy of plurilingualism/ multilingualism for several decades now. In the case of the Council of Europe (CoE), the basis of its work in the field of languages and cultures is Article 2 of the *European Cultural Convention* (1954), which promotes „the study ... of the languages, history and civilisation“ of the contracting parties. The most influential initiative of the CoE in the field of language policy was probably the launch of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) in 2001 (Language Policy Division, 2004). The European Union (EU) also has a long-standing commitment to multilingualism by using all the national languages of its member states as official languages. The *EU White Paper on Education and Training* (EU Commission, 1995) is the first document to mention the often cited objective to „develop proficiency in three European languages“ (EU Commission, 1995, I). This was renewed in the so-called *Barcelona targets* (EU Council, 2002) and elaborated upon in several later documents on multilingualism (EU Commission, 2008a; 2008b; EU Council, 2014).

What concerns us here, though, is the field of teacher education. The focus of this article therefore lies on documents that give special regard to this aspect. On the one hand, I will analyse official policy documents, on the other hand I will present some of the classroom tools in the area of multilingualism/ multiculturalism developed by the Council of Europe.

Policy documents on teaching in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts

Council of Europe documents

The central policy document with regard to language and education that the Council of Europe (CoE) has produced is the *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe* (LPD, 2007). It dedicates only a small sub-section to the topic of „Raising the awareness of and training language teachers“ (op. cit., pp. 77-79). This stresses (1) the contribution of plurilingual education to *democratic citizenship and intercultural education*, (2) the notion of *plurilingual competence* itself, (3) *teaching approaches based on competences with proficiency levels defined according to reference levels* (particularly for mother tongue/ official language teachers) and (4) developing teachers' *own linguistic repertoires* to enable them to teach or at least „approach the description of... varieties used by immigrants, regional varieties and so forth“ (op.cit., p. 78). All of these are to be covered in training future language teachers according to the teaching field they are trained for, be it pre-school

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teaching, language teaching in primary and secondary schooling or subject teaching. Regarding the latter field, the *Guide* calls for „subject teachers who are able to teach their subject in a variety other than the national variety, and are themselves familiar with language teaching issues“ (op.cit., p.78).

Recent European developments in the field of globalisation have led to the compilation of a new document by the CoE, called the *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education* (LPU, 2015). This newer document views language issues in a much more general way and asks, for example

“whether in the case of.. plurilingual children, the right to educational quality is effectively guaranteed. In practice, the competences of plurilingual individuals, in particular children from migrant communities or multilingual regions, are measured solely according to monolingual standards. The risk of them appearing from the start to be deficient, or of not having their specific competences recognised, appears to be high“ (Language Policy Unit, 2015, p. 90).

What are the implications for teacher training? Of course teachers are crucial for any changes in the education system. But the plurilingual approach may encounter resistance on the part of (future) teachers: „languages are often perceived as homogeneous and standardised... heterogeneity and plurilingualism are automatically perceived as negative, as a threat to the purity of the official language“ (op.cit., 91). Therefore, training should focus on

„plurilingualism, repertoire and the corresponding acquisition processes; the language dimensions of all learning processes; the capacity to activate transfer strategies from one language, one competence or one subject to another; reflexivity in the learning process...; a differentiated approach to language norms; mediation and openness to otherness and mobility; other assessment concepts (specifically plurilingual and intercultural cross-cutting competences)“ (op.cit., 92).

The document also stresses that all teachers, those of language and non-language subjects alike, should co-operate as a team, „jointly responsible for pupils‘ plurilingual development“ (op.cit., 92).

Regarding training, it is suggested to apply „a cross-cutting approach, the development of plurilingual repertoires and openness to cultural diversity“ as guiding principles for the training of teachers. Although teachers vary in their specific profiles: „generalists and specialists, teachers of languages as subjects (foreign or classical languages, language(s) of schooling as a first or second language, minority/regional/migration languages and teachers of other subjects“ (op.cit., p. 92); it can be generally said that an *experience-based approach* appears most promising. It is important to have (future) teachers „experience during their... training what they themselves will be encouraging their pupils to experience“. This is to say that the training should be based on the same „principles of plurilingual/ integrated teaching“ as the teaching (future) teachers are trained for. This can consist in „synergetic training in subjects generally taught in a compartmentalised fashion“, „autonomous management of one’s own learning processes“, „plurilingual practices making simultaneous use of several languages“ in the same training unit, „learning an unknown language“ (op.cit., 93-94) to name a few of the examples given. The training can take different forms of organisation according to the

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respective target groups. Austria's *Framework Model for basic competences for language education for all teaching staff* is given as an example of a module „common to all the teachers of a given educational level (language teachers and teachers of other subjects)“. Other organisation models mentioned are „complete curricula for the initial training of teachers incorporating several disciplines that are generally kept separate or are poorly co-ordinated“ and „an integrated curriculum for the teachers of a language as subject plus another subject (e.g. natural sciences and a foreign language) with a specific focus on bilingual or plurilingual education“ (op.cit., p. 94-95).

An application of these CoE principles is the document *Professional development for staff working in multilingual schools* (Anderson, Hélot, McPake, & Obied, 2010), which defines three significant areas of professional development: *Supporting language acquisition and development*; *Linking language and learning* and *Language policy and social justice*. With regard to the first area, I would like to mention the following statements from this paper: „Professional education must address all staff working in multilingual schools, not only the language specialists. (...) Mainstream staff in multilingual schools need support both to recognise that every teacher is a language teacher, and to understand how they can best fulfil this role“ (op. cit., p. 6). Regarding the second area, the paper states that the connections between language and learning need to be addressed to minimise the risk „of disrupted educational careers, but also build on the potential benefits of diverse experiences and linguistic competences“ (op. cit., p. 7). Finally, the third and last area is important to increase teachers' and educational managers' sensitivity on how to regulate language use in- and outside of classrooms depending on context, purpose and person (op. cit., p. 7). The main part of the paper is dedicated to a list of resources that are categorised according to the three areas mentioned above and to different roles of educational professionals.

European Union documents

The European Union (EU) has adopted a more active stance in promoting multilingualism comparatively recently. The Commission's *Green Paper Migration & mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems* (EU Commission, 2008) mentioned teacher training as an important aspect of improving educational provision for students with linguistic minority backgrounds. In 2009, the Council of the EU adopted *Conclusions on the education of children with a migrant background* stressing the objective of developing teacher education as follows:

„Specialised training in managing linguistic and cultural diversity, and the development of intercultural competences, should be encouraged in order to support school authorities, school leaders, teachers and administrative staff in adapting to the needs, and realising the full potential, of schools or classes containing pupils with a migrant background“ (EU Council, 2009, p. 5).

These *Conclusions* „committed both the Commission and the member states to take positive action“ (EUCIM-TE Consortium, 2011, p. 8). One of the actions pursued was the *Study on educational*

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support for newly arrived migrant children (EU Commission, 2013) which, among many other recommended measures, also puts an emphasis on „Training teachers in diversity“ (op. cit., 109).

The most recent document of relevance dealing with multilingualism in school is the study *Language Teaching and Learning in multilingual classrooms* (EU Commission, 2015). This study focuses on two research questions: (1) How to enable children with a home language different from the „language of school instruction to participate in learning, attain proficiency in the language of instruction, and achieve results (...) that match their potential“; and (2) How to „maintain and develop the multilingual skills of migrant children“ (op. cit., p. 9). In the field of teacher education, the main recommendations are that „teachers who provide language support should have specialist training and qualifications in second-language acquisition“; „that all teachers require training to teach children *without the language of instruction*¹“ and „to be able to value diversity by incorporating cultural diversity within their teaching“ (op. cit., p. 12, 79). Going more into detail, it is recommended to

- „Establish an initial teacher training curriculum to prepare teachers to work in multilingual classrooms and provide qualified mother tongue teachers (...)
- Train staff in reception centres/schools to use good assessment methods which cover language as well as other subject competences;
- Ensure initial teacher training includes intercultural training, experience in multilingual classrooms and approaches to teaching children whose competence in the language of instruction is lower than native children [sic];
- Build the capacity and resources of classroom teachers through in-service training and support from specialist centres, specialist teachers in second language acquisition, and networking opportunities“ (op. cit., p. 14-15).

Here are some of the less prominent statements in the study: One is the idea that „teachers need specific development and learning programmes to teach pupils who are learning the language of instruction“. This should comprise training in „implicit and explicit language support“, *explicit* referring to the effective teaching of grammatical structure which requires teachers to have „strong linguistic knowledge“ (op. cit., p. 73). One of the important aspects is that teachers „need enhanced awareness of the linguistic demands of the curriculum and skills to make it accessible to pupils from a variety of language backgrounds“. But also, they „need cultural competences to successfully teach pupils from other cultures because culture plays a central role in learning (... –) this should include valuing diversity, being culturally self-aware, and adapting to diversity“ (op. cit., p. 74). To encourage teachers to undertake in-service training, „a minimum requirement (...) to undertake professional development (...), linking participation to promotion or recertification“ is suggested (op. cit., p. 76). Interestingly, although the study presents a network of teachers with immigration history in North-

¹ My emphasis. The wording „without the language of instruction“, which is used throughout EU Commission (2015) is not only highly questionable because of its deficit-oriented orientation but also syntactically- semantically confusing: In this quote it could be understood as referring to *teaching* without the language of instruction, for example. I suggest to replace this problematic expression by one of the following: *children with emerging proficiency in the language of instruction* or, still less deficit-oriented, *children with the language of instruction as a second language*. The EUCIM-TE project uses the phrasing *students with a minority language background*, which makes reference to the socio-linguistic situation (EUCIM-TE Consortium, 2011).

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Rhine Westphalia (Germany) as a practice example (op. cit., p. 77-78), the increased recruitment of teachers with diverse language backgrounds is *not* included in the formal recommendations of this document².

Another initiative to enhance teacher education strategies in this domain is the EU funded Comenius project *European Core Curriculum for Mainstreamed Second Language – Teacher Education* (EUCIM-TE), which developed „an instrument for training pre- and in-service teachers and educators“ (EUCIM-TE Consortium, 2011, p. 1): a European core curriculum (ECC) for *Inclusive Academic Language Teaching* (IALT). This „strategy document“ (op. cit., p. 20) „moves from a ‘compartmentalised’ language learning for second or *additional language learners* to an ‘inclusive education’ in which second language education is seen as an integral part of a generalised and common curriculum process, i.e. *mainstreamed* second language education“ (op. cit., p. 8). As in many other documents, the connection between language and subject teaching is stressed: „This implies that language teaching is pursued in close connection with knowledge acquisition in subject learning“ (op. cit., p. 10). The key principles underlying the development of the ECC are (1) the acknowledgement of bi-/multilingualism and bilingual education; (2) the curriculum as conversation (meaning that a curriculum is not just a text, but ideally consists of a continuous process of reflection and adaption); (3) inclusion (op. cit., p. 13-14); (4) making meaning: „an understanding of language as a resource for meaning“ (op. cit., p. 15) and (5) multimodality: „communication is multi-modal... and students learn how to use the various modalities most effectively“ (op. cit., p. 15).

The curriculum itself consists of three modules that are listed below with only some examples of the relevant competences.

- *Language and language acquisition in the context of schooling*: „enabling second language learners to learn the language of academic discourse“, „identifying the learning needs of second language students“, „be sensitive to the constitutive role played by language in subject content“, „marshalling the political, cultural and social arguments around whole school multilingual policy“;
- *Methodology in Inclusive Academic Language Learning and Teaching*: „help students learn to use language appropriately in different curriculum/school activities“, „adopt a view of language that relates language form to meaning in discourse (and vice versa) in a systematic way“, „explicit instruction in the different multimodal possibilities of expressing meaning“, „affirm student identities by recognising and building on their existing linguistic and cultural knowledge“;
- *School organisation to facilitate Inclusive Academic Language Teaching*: „collaborative networking in context (sic!) of diversity“, „planning in heterogeneous (...) school settings“, „language assessment in contexts of language (and cultural) diversity“, „counselling in multilingual and multicultural environments“ (op. cit., p. 20-25).

² But the EU recently commissioned a report on diversity in the teaching profession (Donlevy; Meierkord & Rajania, 2016).

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The ECC is supposed to be the basis for national adaptations meeting local needs and relying on available resources. The document discusses the adaptation process using the example of the eight countries represented in the EUCIM-TE Consortium (op. cit., p. 36-41).

Synthesis of teaching competences mentioned in the policy documents

In conclusion, I will list the features common to most of the documents. The amount of overlap and cross-references between the various documents is considerable. Several documents list different groups of teachers/ educators according to the level of education from kindergarten to teacher education and according to their specific function (e.g. generalists, subject teachers or language specialists) which require specific training according to their needs, but all the documents agree that *all* teachers/ educators in the system need initial, pre-service and in-service training especially designed to enable them to cope with linguistic and cultural diversity. Common points cover the following aspects:

- *language learning*: specialist knowledge about the language development of learners growing up with several languages (the notion of plurilingual repertoire developed by the CoE is probably the most advanced concept in this field);
- the importance of an *open attitude towards diversity* and *intercultural awareness*;
- *learning and language*: the language dimension of all learning processes and the resulting need to make subject teachers aware of the role of language in their teaching;
- realising synergies between languages and between languages and subjects by *decompartmentalising* traditional subject boundaries;
- the need to *adapt assessment concepts* to acknowledge the situation of plurilingual/ minority language background students;
- the necessity to manage linguistic and cultural diversity *outside the immediate classroom context*, e.g. in the school or the wider community, including reaching out to parents from linguistic minorities.

Some competences only appear once, but seem worth mentioning as they could have significant impact in re-designing European teacher education in multilingual, multicultural and migrant contexts:

- *re-defining the role of language norms* in a plurilingual context;
- acknowledging the *multi-modality of communication* in addition to its multilinguality;
- teaching *transfer strategies* between languages, between subjects and between languages and subjects;
- an *experience-based approach in teacher education* that comprises multilingual and synergetic training crossing traditional subject and language boundaries;
- developing (future) teachers *own linguistic repertoires* to enable them to teach CLIL-lessons or give language support in minority languages.

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An important strategy for enhancing cultural and linguistic diversity fundamentally would be to actively *recruit more teachers with increased plurilingual competences*, especially in minority languages. As the selected policy documents were mainly searched for recommendations on the content of teacher education, this aspect did not come so much into focus. To show that European bodies are well aware of the importance of this strategy, I would like to mention the EU's recent *Study on the Diversity within the Teaching Profession with Particular Focus on Migrant and/or Minority Background* which looks at the current situation in the 28 EU countries to find barriers to and support policies for diversity in the teaching profession (Donlevy; Meierkord & Rajania, 2016).

Examples of classroom resources for teaching in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts

This section will illustrate the transition between language education policy and classroom practice by presenting two application projects developed in the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) of the CoE based in Graz (Austria) and, as a third example, an initiative by the Language Policy Unit of the CoE in Strasbourg to complement the CEFR (Language Policy Division, 2004) and the European Language Portfolio (Council of Europe, 2011).

The project *Majority Language Instruction as a Basis for Plurilingual Education* (MARILLE) provides tools for language of instruction teachers to provide a plurilingual curriculum. Majority language is defined as the „first language(s) of the majority of the population in (a defined region of) a country – in many cases this/these will also be the national/official language(s) of the state and the language(s) of instruction in schools“. The use of the term *majority language* stresses the fact that this language possesses a „combination of several features that increase the societal importance of the language in such a way that nobody living in this society can manage without it, even if it is not his/her first language“ (Boeckmann et al. 2009). The project aimed to find out how teachers of the majority language manage to cope with the challenge of plurilingualism, which they usually were not prepared for in their initial training. The project collected and documented different varieties of resources (resources for teaching, academic references, websites, professional networks, a glossary), developed practice examples and provides classroom videos to illustrate implementation of the principles of plurilingual majority language teaching in the classroom. These principles identified by the project were structured and phrased to become easily manageable by teaching practitioners. The project also offers strategies on how to manage the change towards a plurilingual majority language classroom for different players in the school system (Boeckmann, 2012). This was followed up by *Diversity in majority language learning* (MALEDIVE), an ECML project which devises materials and models for teacher education in the field of plurilingual majority language teaching (Aalto, Abel, Gilly, Schnitzer, & Auger, 2015).

The *Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures* (FREPA) (Candelier et al., 2013) project „presents teachers, teacher educators and school managers with descriptors of the knowledge, attitudes and skills considered necessary for plurilingual and

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intercultural education“ (EU Commission, 2015, p 74), thereby offering a basis for planning and assessing plurilingual and intercultural learning. „The term ‘pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures’ refers to didactic approaches which involve the use of several (or at least more than one) variety of languages or cultures simultaneously during the teaching process“ (Candelier et al., 2013) . By giving up the compartmentalised view of linguistic and cultural competence(s), the project is an important step towards implementing the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (LPD, 2004). Although the CEFR introduces the notion of plurilingual and intercultural competence, it mainly offers descriptors for (mono-)linguistic language competence. So FREPA in fact finally closes a gap that has existed from the outset between the CEFR’s theoretical rationale and its practical applicability. The descriptors of the FREPA are organised by head descriptors and sub descriptors in the three areas (knowledge, attitudes and skills) and are even linked with a materials database of classroom materials helping to develop the competences or *resources* as they are called in the FREPA (ECML, 2015).

Another tool that is meant to complement the CoE instruments like the CEFR and the European Language Portfolio (Council of Europe, 2011) in the field of documenting intercultural learning experiences is the *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters* (LPU, 2014a). It basically consists of a collection of questions and impulses for discussion. Learners are led to reflect and analyse concrete intercultural contact situations, thereby using them as learning experiences. The conscious development of the user’s intercultural competence is stimulated. Guiding principles are human rights, interculturality and addressing inequality and conflict. In addition to the standard version (LPD, 2009a), there is a version for young learners (LPD, 2009b) and an autobiography of intercultural encounters through visual media (LPU, 2014b).

Conclusion

It could be shown that there has been a considerable effort on the European level to address the issues of multilingualism, multiculturalism and migration in the school systems and that there is wide-spread agreement on what measures should be taken. In addition to elaborating policies, a lot of work has already gone into developing concrete tools for the classroom along the lines that the policies suggest. Regrettably, a lot of teachers and even teacher educators do not know these tools and are not using them. Since the nature of the challenge is similar in most European countries, it makes sense to develop materials on a European level. But of course, these materials have to be adapted to be applied to local settings. I hope this article contributes to a wider knowledge of some of the materials that are there for adaption and orientation in order to develop context-specific resources in teaching and teacher education locally.

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