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THE EUROPEAN LANGUAGE POLICY AND THE TEACHING PROFESSION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Abstract

The present text gives an overview of the European context of language education in the last quarter of the 20th century and presents the main trends in the European language policy conducted by the Council of Europe and the European Union. The impact of the situation on the teaching profession and challenges posed by dynamic socio-political changes are then discussed as well as the support offered by enabling institutions such as the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz. Open questions and controversies are also identified calling for future research. The text ends with a list of implications for the future of the profession as well as for pre- and in-service teacher education.

1. Introduction

The present text aims at:
- presenting the European context of language education in the last quarter century,
- giving an overview of the aspects of the European language policy which are crucial for language teaching and teacher education,
- analyzing the impact of political decisions on pre- and-in service teacher education as well as on the role descriptions and the role enactment in the teaching profession,
- identifying the support language teachers are offered by the main European institutions,
- discussing controversies and difficulties, and
- listing implications for the future of the profession.

2. The context of language education in Europe

The early 1990s saw intense social, political, professional and educational mobility as well as the rise of self-consciousness on the part of language minorities in various countries (Strubell et al. 2007; European Commission 2008; OECD 2008). It is estimated that in the geographical area of the European Union there are now not only the official languages of its member states, but also more than 60 regional and minority languages and that at least 175 nationalities now live within the EU's borders. Also, recent immigrants have brought a wide range of languages with them (European Union 2008).

All these factors raised awareness of the distinction between home languages and languages of schooling as many school children in Europe were not native speakers of the official language of the country they were learning in. The complexity of the situation was presented in the *Valuing all languages in Europe* (VALEUR) project of the ECML, in which the linguistic landscape in the schools of 22 European countries was analyzed. As a result, the research team identified as many as 458 home languages spoken by primary and secondary school students of these countries (McPake, Tinsley 2007). Some of those students were born in the country of their schooling, therefore the language of schooling came as their second language to which they were exposed in natural contexts from birth. Similar was the situation of children from national minorities for whom the language of schooling was the second language, acquired rather than learned. Many, however, especially after 1990 arrived in the new country as teenagers and had to learn the language of schooling from scratch. For teachers this brought a new distinction, this time between first, second and foreign language. Moreover, it soon became not only obvious, but also acceptable that students did not have to speak the so-called literary variety of the official language which had previously been considered the norm, but a local variety considered a dialect or a language in its own right. Difficulties in defining a local variety, a dialect or a language, terms and distinctions emotionally and politically loaded, made it even more important for teachers to be sensitive to learners' ways of communicating and their attitudes to their home languages. As a result this approach has raised awareness of the distinction between regional and official languages, as well as regional and non-territorial ones.

It needs to be stressed that the sense of novelty associated with all those distinctions differed greatly depending on the local context. For instance, the concept of second language acquisition had been well known in Great Britain, a country with great waves of immigrant population, but practically unknown in Eastern European countries. On the other hand, the concept of foreign language teaching had been understood synonymously with second language teaching in Great Britain, but very differently in Eastern European countries which were for a long time cut off from the rest of the world with minimum exposure to languages other than Russian even in the school context (Komorowska 2014).

Over the last 25 years the European language policy has not only been responding to dynamically changing contexts, but also trying to actively shape them (Huber 2011).

3. Main trends in the European language policy in the last 25 years

The main European institutions responded to the changing economic and political situation of the 1970s and the 1980s which developed rapidly after the fall of the Berlin Wall and intensified social, professional and educational mobility.

The number and variety of activities undertaken by various European institutions in this field is impressive, therefore the overview below contains a subjective selection of those steps which altered the image of languages and of the teaching profession. Documents and activities which are the most significant in the European language policy have been grouped here in four clusters related to minority, regional and less widely used languages, to the promotion of language learning, to creating supportive social and political contexts for language education and – last but not least – to developing intercultural competences.

The first group of activities in reaction to those phenomena was geared towards **languages which did not enjoy the official status** and came from the Council of Europe in the form of the *European Charter for regional or minority languages* (Council of Europe 1992). The aim of this document was to protect and promote regional and minority languages as well as to guarantee particular communities their full linguistic rights – action systematically supported by the Council from the very beginning of its activity. The same approach was also adopted by the United Nations within their mission to guarantee human rights to all citizens as witnessed by the *Declaration of human duties and responsibilities* (Valencia Declaration 1998).

The second group of activities was focused on the ***promotion of language learning***. Both its aspects, i.e. protecting linguistic rights and promoting language learning called for a clear distinction between the individual and the social. New terms were, therefore, introduced by the Council of Europe, namely *plurilingualism* meaning the individual competence in more than one language and *multilingualism* referring to a number of languages being spoken in a particular geographical region. Another pair of terms is also used to describe this distinction, i.e. *individual multilingualism* as a synonym of *plurilingualism* and *social multilingualism* as a synonym of *multilingualism*.

The Council of Europe issued three recommendations related to this domain, i.e. *Recommendation No. R (98) 6 of the Committee of Ministers on modern languages* (Council of Europe 1998 a) emphasizing the need to teach more than one language to all the children in the school systems of CoE member states, *Recommendation 1383 (1998) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on linguistic diversification* (Council of Europe 1998b) stating that "there should therefore be more variety in modern language teaching in the Council of Europe member states and this should result in the acquisition not only of English but also of other European and world languages by all European citizens, in parallel with the mastery of their own national and, where appropriate, regional language" and *Recommendation Rec (2005)3 of the Committee of Ministers on Teaching neighbouring languages in border regions* suggesting that governments should "introduce the teaching and use of

the languages of their neighbouring countries, together with the teaching of these countries' cultures, which are closely bound up with language teaching" (Council of Europe 2005b).

These were soon followed by recommendations of the European Council in Barcelona (European Council 2002) where the formula of "the mother tongue plus 2 languages" was accepted. Its practical implementation in EU member states was then presented in the *New framework strategy for multilingualism* (2005) which requested governments of all the EU member states to promote multilingualism and all EU citizens to learn more languages. The European Union set up two groups of experts to help design strategies in this field: the *Report of the group of intellectuals for intercultural dialogue* encouraged citizens to choose, besides their mother tongue, a "personal adoptive language" (European Commission 2007a), while the *Report of the high level group of multilingualism* listed a great variety of ways in which languages can be helped to gain status and visibility (European Commission 2007b).

The third group of activities intended to provide *a supportive social and political context* for both protection and promotion of languages and took the shape of guides produced by the Council of Europe. The most important of these, the *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe* (Beacco, Byram 2002, revised in 2005 and 2007), was designed to assist national and regional governments in language planning and in shaping global or local language education. The document stressed the need and the value of developing plurilingual competences defined by the authors as "the capacity to successfully acquire and use different competences in different languages at different levels of proficiency and for different functions" (Beacco, Byram 2007: 71*)* as well as intercultural competences defined after the *CEFR* as "a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour which allow a speaker to recognize, understand, interpret and accept other ways of living and thinking beyond his or her home culture" (*Common European framework of reference for languages* 2001: 168).

The fourth group of activities focused on *social inclusion and intercultural communication*. *Faro declaration on the Council of Europe's strategy for the development of intercultural dialogue* adopted by the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs (2005a) stressed the role of intercultural education, education for democratic citizenship, human rights and history as well as the role of training educators for that purpose. The role of communication in the mother tongue and in foreign languages as well as cultural awareness and expression as key competences were also emphasized in the Council of Europe's *Intercomprehension. Guide for the development of language policies in Europe: From linguistic diversity to plurilingual education* (Doyé 2005). The European Commission followed with the *Recommendation of the European Parliament of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning* (European Commission 2006) stating that "a solid understanding of one's own culture and a sense of identity can be the basis for an open attitude towards and respect for diversity of cultural expression." The Council of Europe (2008a) strengthened that statement announcing *Recommendation CM/Rec (2008)7 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the use of the*

Council of Europe's Common European framework of reference for languages (CEFR) and the Promotion of plurilingualism and launching a project entitled *Policies and practices for teaching sociocultural diversity* (Arnesen et al. 2009). CoE's *White paper on intercultural dialogue living together as equals in dignity* (2008b) pointed to the need of engaging formal, informal and non-formal education in the process of developing intercultural competences and emphasized the crucial role of language education. Soon the *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education* was issued (2010) providing information on how to link theory and practice in this field and a platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education was set up by the Language Policy Unit of the Council of Europe. In line with this approach the Graz Declaration *Quality education for plurilingual people living in multilingual societies* of 7 January 2010 followed. It stated that "learners with low socio-economic status, special needs, and those whose linguistic or cultural background may disadvantage them in the educational system require special attention and support for the development of the language abilities necessary for their educational success" [http://www.ecml.at/aboutus/aboutus.asp?t=pronetfor].

All the main trends presented above called for more attention given to quality. With the legal and organizational framework of language education and teacher training in place, quality of education became the most important issue to be taken care of by the Council of Europe. In consequence, *Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 of the Committee of Ministers on ensuring quality education* adopted on 12 December, 2012 calls for quality education, i.e. education "accessible for every learner including those coming from vulnerable social groups," but also education which "transparently certifies results of formal and non-formal learning" and "is conducted by qualified teachers ready to engage in continuous raising their professional skills."

All the activities and documents of the European institutions were either based on or supported by research in the field of Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Teaching. Most of the empirical research launched before 1990 aimed at identifying teacher and learner variables influencing differential success in language learning. In the last 25 years striking innovation has been the new focus on **linguistic and non-linguistic benefits of competences in more than one language**. Research helped teachers understand that language education supports verbal memory (Lapkin et al. 1990), problem-solving (Armstrong, Rogers 1997), concentration and creativity (Bialystok 2001; Bialystok et al. 2004; Kharkhurin 2008), language awareness and first language skills (Dumas 1999; Ewert 2008) as well as reading strategies (Hong, Leavell 2006). The overall linguistic, academic and cognitive benefits (Lazaruk 2007; Paradowski 2011) justify efforts to develop bilingual language competences not only in children without any learning difficulties, but also in those suffering from dyslexia or ADHD (Toppelberg et al. 2002). Benefits of language education were also pointed out in research on the degree of economic success and failure of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The *ELAN project. Final report* (2006) demonstrated that financial losses incurred by EU companies due to lack of linguistic skills amount

to 100 billion euro per year, while the *PIMLICO project. Final report* (2011) identified language competences as the main cause of SMEs' economic success.

All this could not leave the teaching profession untouched. Growing mobility, intensified attempts of linguistic minorities to ensure their languages higher status and the European policy guidelines have had a huge impact on language teaching and teacher education. Both pre- and in-service teacher training had to cope with new aspects of this situation (Dumont et al. 2010; Tribble 2012).

4. The impact of the European language policy on pre- and in-service teacher education

Until the end of the 1980s in Europe the language teacher was in the common understanding the teacher of a foreign language, i.e. usually of one of the so-called conference languages. The concept of the second language was known only in the countries with a high percentage of immigration, although difficulties associated with teaching immigrant learners in mainstream education proved to be the concern of teachers of non-language subjects rather than FL teachers. In consequence of all the changes pre- and in-service teacher education faced the challenge of preparing teachers to work in teams in order to contribute to whole-school language education as – considering the fact that each subject depends on the efficiency of communication in the language of schooling – now every teacher became a language teacher.

As less widely used languages were granted respect and status, so were the teachers of those languages. When, with a broader school offer, new languages, i.e. minority and regional languages as well as languages of the neighbouring countries entered the school curriculum, new language teachers and new teaching assistants joined the school staff.

Teachers who formerly considered themselves FL instructors in relatively homogeneous classes now discovered the need of skills to teach students with a variety of educational and language experience in the same class where some learners were bilingual, some spoke the language of schooling as their second language and some started learning it from scratch. With the advent of the plurilingual approach, teachers who had been working on the separation of newly acquired languages from the former linguistic skills of the learner were now facing the need to draw on their students' plurilinguistic competence.

Research results also exerted great influence on the overall aims and content of teacher education. They made it quite evident that teacher training from now on had to concentrate on the early start, special educational needs (Enever 2006), multicompetence (Cook 1992, 2002; Herdina, Jessner 2002), transferable competences (Pellegrino, Hilton 2012) and intercomprehension (Doyé 2005; Hufeisen, Marx 2007). Both the *ELAN* and the *PIMLICO* projects which have been mentioned above also confirmed the need to equip teachers with skills to analyze learners' needs, design syllabi for vocational contexts and teach languages for specific/occupational purposes.

New challenges arising from this knowledge increased the self-esteem of language teachers, but at the same time called for changes in the way they should be trained for the profession.

A new framework for language teaching and teacher education became necessary for both pre- and in-service teacher education. This arrived in the form of two basic documents: the *Common European framework of reference for languages – teaching, learning, assessment (CEFR)* of the Council of Europe and the *European profile for language teacher education – A Frame of reference (EPLTE)* of the European Union.

The first draft of the *Common European framework of reference for languages* produced in 1996 when the Modern Languages Project Group of the Council of Europe formed by delegates of all the CoE member countries continued their annual meetings in Strasbourg, exerted strong influence on attitudes of all the ministries of education. The publication of the *CEFR* in book form by Cambridge University Press in 2001 had a direct impact on language teachers. For the first time a complete list was provided of both general and language competences stressing aspects formerly undervalued such as interaction and mediation. The concept of language levels ranging from A1 to C2 was soon reflected in international language examinations and certification as well as in school leaving examinations of many countries. The document itself as well as the washback effect of high stake examinations changed the teachers' approach to syllabus design and modified both aims and methods of language teaching in ways which were almost immediately reflected in curricula for pre-service teacher education.

The *European profile for language teacher education – A frame of reference* (Kelly, Grenfell 2004) looking at teacher education from a top-down institutional perspective helped to compare teacher training programmes across Europe and in this way facilitated the selection of the modules of pre- and in-service teacher education which were considered most appropriate for particular training institutions in various national and regional contexts. In an innovative way the tool introduced two new spheres, i.e. structure and values which were added to the commonly acknowledged spheres of knowledge and skills. The aim was to ensure the formation of a reflective practitioner with high language proficiency, intercultural competence and skills to use information and communication technology. Authors of the *EPLTE* claim that the tool "could be used as a checklist for institutions with longstanding strengths in language teacher education, and as a reference document providing guidance to institutions with plans to develop their language teacher education programmes" (Kelly, Grenfell 2004: 3). In line with the main trends in the European language policy new aspects were stressed in the document such as study and links with partners abroad, integration of academic study with the practical experience of teaching and the value of experience in the multicultural environment.

Both frames of reference presented above helped to modify national and regional programmes leading to teaching qualifications and changed the structure and content of modules offered in the professional development of active teachers.

5. Enabling institutions – support offered to language teachers by the Language Policy Devision of the Council of Europe and the European Centre for Modern Languages

Positive psychology puts institutional support high on the list of its pillars, though the role of enabling institutions is not often given sufficient attention (MacIntyre, Mercer 2014).

Fortunately, European institutions such as the Council of Europe and the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz offer immense support to schools and teachers. This comes not only in the form of tools and instruments, but also as ready-made, generic activities to be implemented in the course of in- and out-of-school language teaching and teacher development.

Some of the tools are specifically designed for teachers and are meant to help them in their professional development, while some are designed for learners and facilitate the teachers' job by encouraging learners' self-reflection.

The main tool developed by the European Centre for Modern Languages to help future teachers is the *European portfolio for student teachers of languages (EPOSTL)* which takes the bottom-up, individual perspective on teacher development (Newby et al. 2007; Newby 2012). The *EPOSTL* is an instrument designed to help future teachers to self-assess with regard to their didactic competences, encourage reflection on their knowledge, competences, skills and values as well as to enable them to plan their future development. The self-assessment section contains 195 descriptors grouped into 7 broad categories of didactic competences related to the curricular and institutional context, methodology, resources, lesson planning, conducting a lesson, independent learning and assessment of learning. Descriptors come in the form of CAN DO statements, which demonstrate how strongly the *EPOSTL* is rooted in the *Common European framework of reference for languages*. As descriptors are accompanied by open bars to be coloured in while charting progress, the instrument assists trainees in their teaching practice and facilitates communication with mentors.

Because teaching was viewed in the *CEFR* mainly as supporting learning, tools which would help learners to self-assess and encourage their reflection on the learning process were needed. The Council of Europe provided several instruments of this kind which could assist teachers in providing a learner-friendly environment for language education, the most important of which were the *European language portfolio (ELP* 2001) and the *Autobiography of intercultural encounters* (*AIE* 2009) developed under the auspices of the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.

The *European language portfolio,* a self-evaluation tool, enables learners' self-assessment. On the basis of a general format designed by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe various local versions addressed to different age groups could be designed. Although the new instrument was prepared for learners, teachers found it helpful in their endeavours to develop learner autonomy and – due to skilfully formulated process-oriented questions – to provide extra learning strategy training.

Soon teachers received another tool which could be offered to their learners, i.e. the *Autobiography of intercultural encounters (AIE)* (Byram et al. 2009). The Council of Europe meant this as a learner-owned document. Its aim was to raise awareness of intercultural contacts and benefits springing from them, thus promoting tolerance and positive attitudes to otherness. For teachers it meant stressing links between language and culture as well as devoting more attention to the development of intercultural communicative competence.

Day-by-day practical support came from the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz, an institution established in 1994 as partial agreement of the Council of Europe with countries which, valuing linguistic and cultural diversity, decided to co-finance the institution and contribute to the implementation of its programme. The ECML in its long-term vision stresses the empowerment of language teachers, the promotion of innovation and good practice through creating professional networks and training multipliers who would promote ideas and methods worked out by teams in particular projects. These projects are launched within 4-year medium term programmes (Komorowska 2013a).

The work of the ECML in its first medium-term programme of 2000–2003 started by helping to raise awareness of the value of plurilingual and pluricultural education in secondary schools. In the second programme of 2004–2007 it went on to cover other age groups engaging in the promotion of the early language start and professional mobility as well as in raising the quality of curriculum design in tertiary education. The third one (2008–2011) focused on content and language integrated learning, evaluation, continuity and plurilingual education as well as on incorporating new technologies in teacher education. The on-going programme (2012–2015) aims at supporting mobility, informal language learning, teaching languages other than English and communicating the work of the Council of Europe together with the results of the ECML projects to a wider audience. Results of all the projects are published in the form of books and brochures and presented on the ECML website to be downloaded free of charge by all users [www.ecml.at].

Practical activities are offered by each of the teams. As mentioning all of them here is impossible, I will only provide a handful of examples. Those designed as "the awakening to languages" were offered by Michel Candelier in the project entitled *Janua Linguarum – the gateway to languages* (2003) and by Ildiko Lázár *Mirrors and windows. An intercultural communication textbook* (Huber-Kriegler et al. 2003), as well as in the booklet *How strange!* (Camilleri Grima 2003). Recently a large portal with activities for all age groups and levels has been launched for the *Framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures* (FREPA/CARAP) [http://carap.ecml.at].

Content-based activities for the primary context have been offered by Renate Krueger's team in a project entitled *Content-based modern language teaching for young learners.* Practical examples are presented in the form of modules from the area of music, history, arts, geography and sport together with didactic support for teachers of French, German and Russian [http://eplc.ecml.at]. Twenty-six English, French and Spanish activities linking language and culture and integrating foreign

languages with non-language subject areas were offered by Mercè Bernaus in the project *Content based teaching + plurilingual/cultural awareness* (Bernaus 2011).

Activities for students, teachers and parents within the frames of the content and language integrated learning [CLIL] for German as a FL are offered in *CLIL-LOTE-START*, a project coordinated by Kim Haataja, [http://clil-lote-start.ecml.at], while ways of integrating the French language and content in the book *Enseigner une discipline dans une autre langue: méthodologie et partiques professionnelles* (Geiger-Jaillet et al. 2011) resulting from the project *CLIL-LOTE-GO* coordinated by Gerald Schlemminger.

Teachers were also provided with professional self-development materials in the form of training guides such as *QUALITRAINING – A training guide for quality assurance* (Muresan 2007), educational institutions were offered assistance, e.g. in the form of *Whole-school language profiles and policies* (Camilleri Grima 2003) and school managers in *Quality training at grassroots level* which provides materials for group discussion, self-reflection and sharing best practices [http://qualitraining2.ecml.at]. Teachers who want to become acquainted with the *CEFR* receive a kit with 107 worksheets for teacher development workshops demonstrating how to link class activities to the levels of the *CEFR* in the project entitled *Pathways through assessing, learning and teaching in the CEFR* (Piccardo et al. 2011). The level estimation grid for teachers helps to build banks of activities and to create school archives of useful materials per level [http://cefestim.ecml.at]. Teachers interested in plurilingual and pluricultural education might like sample activities promoting reflection and intercomprehension. These can be downloaded from the website of the project *Regional/minority languages in bi-/plurilingual education: Languages from near and far* [http://ebp-ici.ecml.at] coordinated by Claude Cortier and Marisa Cavalli. Ways of combining first and second language teaching as well as incorporating all the languages spoken by learners in the classroom are presented in MARILLE – *Promoting plurilingualism. Majority language in multilingual settings* (Boeckmann et al. 2011).

Teachers interested in new technologies can benefit from 30 activities for self-training with the use of Moodle, wikis, forums, blogs and audio-conferencing which are offered in *Developing online teaching skills* [http://dots.ecml.at] coordinated by Ursula Stickler. More materials and advice can be found in *E-VOLLution: Exploring cutting edge applications of networked technologies in vocationally oriented language learning,* a project finalized in the form of a book (Fitzpatrick and O'Dowd 2011) with examples of how to create teachers' own materials and how ICT can be integrated with language courses.

6. Difficulties, controversial issues and open questions

In spite of the recommendations issued by the CoE and the EU there are still problems that need to be solved. Main difficulties at the international level are connected with attempts to offer common guidelines for training future language teachers

and providing in-service teacher development. A demarcation line runs between the so-called "old" EU member countries and "new" member states, and – more precisely, as Malta is also a new member country – between Western and Eastern European countries. It can be seen quite clearly that teachers from Western European countries are obliged to cope with multilingual and multicultural classrooms and need support in solving problems springing from insufficient competences in the language of schooling in large learner groups, while teachers from Eastern European countries more frequently face monolingual groups of students with minimal exposure to the new language outside school. Therefore, training needs declared by both groups of teachers vary considerably. What is more, terminology used to express those needs does not seem to be helpful: *Eastern Europe* is often considered a politically incorrect term in the "new" EU member states which strongly prefer to be called Central Europe, while *foreign language* is a term considered incorrect or even impolite in many "old" member countries (Komorowska 2013b).

Most of the difficulties, however, seem to be common for all member states of the European Union and the Council of Europe as well as by some of the non-European countries cooperating with the latter. Individualization, for example, is extremely difficult to achieve in the context of administrative requirements which aim at accountability, but envisage it as a set of micro-management and the reporting procedures resulting from it. Teacher autonomy is also endangered as educational authorities oblige teachers to fill out increasing numbers of forms and demonstrate adherence to detailed syllabi and administrative guidelines. Introducing learners to autonomy is even more difficult when teachers are supposed to pre-plan their teaching activities and prepare lesson scenarios ahead for the whole term or school year. Even implementation of the communicative approach is seriously endangered by evaluation reduced to paper and pencil tests, often focused on comprehension, lexico-grammatical aspects or writing skills.

Emphasis on learners' needs and partial competences is often ignored due to the predominance of level-based international examinations, when e.g. reception desk employees who are interested in developing listening and interactive skills are obliged to take exams across all language skills or else risk being refused the certification document.

Additional difficulties arise from the teaching profession itself. In times of increasing variety of expectations vis-á-vis the teaching profession and in the post-method era with no clear-cut guidelines, many teachers ask for straightforward recipes to run a typical lesson, hence the popularity of various kinds of teachers' books and ready-made internet materials.

Constant modification of legal frameworks offered by particular national or regional governments, though understandable in the times of dynamic social and political changes, does not create a sense of security in the teaching profession nor does it encourage autonomy or creativity. Administrative procedures do not facilitate changes in the traditional perception of language and non-language subjects as separate entities; negative consequences of "decompartmentalization of disciplines" (Cambra Giné, Cavalli, 2011: 301) are difficult to avoid. What is more, frequent calls

for enthusiasm rather than professionalism of teachers put them in a *double bind* situation well known to therapists (Bateson 1972).

Along with well identified difficulties some open questions and controversial issues appear. Some of them, for example, arise from the international survey of language competences of 15-year-olds conducted by the European Union in sixteen educational systems on the sample of 50 000 students, i.e. *Surveylang – first European survey on language competences. Final report 2012* (European Commission 2012). Although the results obtained confirm a large number of common beliefs, for instance about the value of the early start and cultural content, curriculum time for languages and amount of exposure or learners' attitudes and motivations, they also question many others, e.g. the use of new technologies does not correlate with learners' proficiency. "Whether schools have access to a multimedia lab does not show clear effects on the average school scores on the language tests. This is true for all skills" (*First European survey on language competences. Final report* (European Commission 2012: 83).What is more, time spent on preparing students for tests does not correlate with test scores (European Commission 2012: 78–79). Much more research is, therefore, needed to clarify these issues.

7. Conclusions

As it can be observed in the above, recommendations and guidelines of the European language policy are clear. They strongly stress valuing all languages, the promotion of language education, broadening of the offer of language programmes, teaching less widely used languages and awareness of the role of languages in mobility and social inclusion. The Council of Europe and the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz offer immense support in the form of tools, instruments and activities in line with the positive psychology approach to promote plurilingual and pluricultural education, to facilitate the teaching job, provide a favourable learning environment, empower the teaching profession and ensure high quality of language education.

Obstacles can still be found in the immediate context of educational institutions employing teachers and in the administrative sphere which often stifles autonomy and creativity. More quantitative and qualitative research is, therefore, needed to investigate stress in the teaching profession and strategies to prevent burnout (Piechurska-Kuciel 2011).

Yet language teacher education in Europe seems to be coping quite well with all the changes and difficulties. Training programmes more and more often introduce reflective teacher education paradigms (Newby 2012), harmonize academic study and the teaching practice as well as teach language skills in parallel with psychopedagogic and intercultural competences. In the course of their studies future teachers develop readiness to respond to didactic situations, create an inclusive learning environment, select methods to target each learner and systematically reflect on and evaluate their own practice (Gabryś-Barker 2012). In the post-method era both teacher educators

in colleges and mentors in schools help trainees to arrive at contextualized judgements made in diverse settings (Komorowska 2011, 2014).

But – just like language teaching and learning – teacher education is a dynamic system. In the period of economic recession accompanied by a crisis of values and increased intercultural tensions it is going to face many more challenges. The future will call for more flexibility in teacher education programmes and for more emphasis on preparing teachers for whole-school language education, for teaching across all age groups, including kindergarten children and senior citizens, for more judicious use of new technologies and – last but not least – for a happier professional life free from stress and burnout.

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