

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FOR IN-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION IN POLAND

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1. The social context of teacher education

1.1. Foreign languages in Poland today. The teacher shortage. Measures adopted.

It was as late as 1990 that Poland became acutely aware of the FL teachers shortage. The reason for that lies in the fact that before 1990 no more than 20 per cent of the population of secondary school students took curricular courses of a foreign language other than Russian. 4,000 teachers of Western foreign languages seemed enough to serve secondary general schools providing four-year language courses with a total number of contract hours below 400.

As far as the teaching of English is concerned, 1,600 teachers employed full time provided instruction for about 8 per cent of the population of 15-19-year-olds at two to three hours per week. Formally speaking this was enough as English did not form part of the curriculum for primary and secondary vocational education. The situation, however, was not considered satisfactory by the society, hence much voting with the children's feet was going on in the form of optional, parent paid courses organized at schools or in the form of private tuition thriving in spite of low living standards (Komorowska 1992).

When equal status was granted to all foreign languages taught in the school system and a free choice of languages was encouraged - the need for teachers of western foreign languages soared high and was assessed at the level of the number of Russian teachers employed in the school system. For English the minimum number of teachers needed was assessed at the level of 20,000. It soon became clear that most of the Polish students chose English as their first foreign language, which undermined early projections.

Now that an early language start is being encouraged and foreign languages are being promoted throughout both full and non-full vocational education - the

latter serving up to 55 per cent of the Polish adolescents, who had never had access to language education before – the need for Western languages teachers is being assessed at the level of 100,000, the need for the teachers of English for about 70,000.

The academic track of 5-year one subject university studies toward an M.A. which automatically carries teaching qualifications, though valuable, proved insufficient with only 11 departments in Poland, each producing no more than 30 graduates a year. Steps had to be taken to find new channels for pre-service teacher training.

A parallel system of training teachers at colleges was established in 1990 with the aim to help satisfy the demand for new teachers. Colleges offer a 3-year course of 24 hours per week taught the medium of a foreign language with 60 per cent of time given to practical language skills, 20 per cent to compact courses of linguistics and literature.

Today the college system is in the third year of its functioning with the total of about 7.5 thousand students (4.5 thousand at colleges of English) and with the first 2.5 thousand (1.5 thousand for English) about to leave the college with an equivalent of a B.A. diploma carrying qualifications to teach primary and secondary schools.

1.2. Unqualified teachers. The need for accreditation. Dangers involved.

With needs assessed at the level of 70,000 teachers of English – the college system is likely to solve the problem for the future rather than for the present day. In order to provide foreign language teaching – schools find themselves obliged to employ large numbers of unqualified outsiders or teachers qualified to teach non-language subjects. These teachers are not likely ever to go through the system of day studies at colleges. Till now they have been granted one-year permission to teach in state schools on the basis of language exams organized by local educational authorities. A more permanent solution is now being sought by the Ministry of Education.

Unqualified teachers now employed in the school system are, according to our legislation, expected to pass Cambridge First Certificate and Advanced Certificate examination, which will then form a *sine qua non* condition for their application to participate in a one-year course of 280 hours. On successful completion of the course to be organized by Teacher Training Colleges or local educational authorities they will receive qualifications to teach primary or secondary schools. The exact type of qualifications granted to applicants will depend on the amount of their education combined with language level.

The set-up of the course was presented by the Ministry of Education in 1992. The total of 280 hours is to be divided into 140 hours of tutorials and 140 hours of individual observation, study and project work. Syllabus planning was delegated to universities.

The course will contain four components:

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| Component 1 | will be devoted to practical and pedagogical grammar with 20 teaching hours of individual study. |
| Component 2 | will be devoted to history and culture of the English speaking countries with 20 hours of teaching hours and 20 hours of individual study. |
| Component 3 | will cover elements of psychology and educational sciences with 20 teaching hours and 20 hours of individual study and project work. |
| Component 4 | will be devoted to English language teaching methodology with 80 teaching hours and 80 hours of individual study and project work. |

It is feared that courses for unqualified teachers employed at present in the school system designed for those who have spent a considerable amount of time teaching, who obtained valuable practical experience and who are certain to stay within the system rather than become attracted by the private sector, i.e., typical INSET courses will become intertwined with courses for those who enter the school system instrumentally in order to take a short-cut into the qualification/accreditation system.

Some dangers lie in the format of the course which is to be provided as a combination of a pre-service and in-service course with pre-service oriented syllabus and in-service oriented methodology.

2. EFL methodology syllabus component for TTCEs running inset courses for unqualified teachers – Dilemmas in curriculum planning

2.1. The framework for syllabus planning. Factors given and the margin of freedom.

According to the guidelines presented by the Ministry of Education, the methodology component embracing 160 hours with 80 hours of formal teaching and 80 hours of individual study and project work should be prepared as a framework for all the foreign languages involved.

The syllabus is supposed to contain

- a list of aims,
- a list of curriculum items,
- a list of recommended reading available in Poland,
- suggestions for individual study and project work as a form of assessment.

Factors given are the following:

- the profile of the user,
- the general set-up of the course,
- time allotment,
- division into formal teaching and individual study,
- need for assessment and certification.

Margin of freedom covers

- course content,
- assessment format.

Thus, the format and the content of the course will be strongly determined by the need for certification and by cooperative supervision constraints as no school-based teacher-trainee contact will be feasible.

2.2. Curriculum development rationale.

Considering the three possible models of teacher training and development, i.e.,

- **the craft model** whereby the trainee learns by imitating the expert techniques and by following the expert's instructions and advice,
- **the applied science model** whereby the trainee learns by putting into practice the findings of scientific knowledge and experimentation conveyed to him by those who are experts in the field and
- **the reflective model** whereby received knowledge derived from research findings is combined with experiential knowledge which relates to trainees' practical on-going experience to form the so-called knowledge-in-action (Wallace 1991:6-17).

it seems justified to leave out the **craft model** not only on the grounds of its professional inadequacy but also for technical reasons as no possibilities will be provided to imitate the classroom practice of the teacher trainer. The remaining two models can usefully be adopted with **the applied science model** to be used for more general and abstract topics providing the framework for the course and with **the reflective model** prevailing throughout more practical topics connected with the development of language skills, classroom management and lesson planning. Technically speaking, **the applied science model** as well as **the received knowledge component** will be provided during the 60 contact hours as well as through recommended reading, while **the reflective model** will be promoted through consultation hours, individual study and project work leading to accreditation.

Five basic features of teacher education will be incorporated in the course, thus, rendering the teacher development

- **school-based** with strong links between the training and the teaching practice in school where the unqualified teacher works,
- **experiential** whereby the theory and principles can be immediately tested out in practice, documented and reported,
- **problem-centred** whereby the program is clearly related to problems which exist in the real classroom with a strong emphasis on the identification and resolution of such problems,
- **developmental**, i.e., taking into consideration the fact that unqualified teachers will be at different stages of development,

- **open-ended**, i.e., catering for lifelong learning and professional renewal (Nunan 1989:102).

Considering the assessment/accreditation progress on the one hand and the time constraint topped by the lack of cooperative supervision in schools, i.e., for two features which hinder the process of open learning (Edge 1992:64), a considerable degree of **teacher-centred learning** (Brindley 1989:73-4) has to take place during the formal teaching hours. A maximum amount of **learner-centred learning**, however, will be promoted during the time devoted to individual and project work.

A **top-down training model** will prevail at lectures provided during formal teaching hours, while a **bottom-up training model** is expected to prevail at seminars, tutorials as well as in project work.

In order to eliminate possible disadvantages of teacher-centred top-down training – the formal teaching hours will entail the following procedure,

- presentation of theory or description of skill and strategy,
- modelling or demonstration of skills or models of teaching possibly in the form of microteaching or video sessions,
- structured and open-ended feedback,
- coaching for application with the transfer of skills and strategies to the trainee's classroom (Joyce and Showers in: OECD REPORT: 1982:56).

Typical drawbacks of **surface approaches to learning** such as relatively high number of class contact hours, an excessive amount of course materials, a lack of choice over the method of study or a threatening and anxiety provoking assessment system (Gibbs 1992:10) can most certainly be avoided due to the present format of the course. A **deep approach to learning** will be promoted through the attempts to provide a well structured knowledge base during the 60 contract hours as well as through learner activity and interaction with others in a motivational context (Gibbs 1992:10).

2.3. Syllabus planning. Procedures and techniques.

Three clear-cut curriculum development models have been promoted so far and, although much controversy has been going on over the values of particular solutions, results of comparisons do not seem conclusive.

The Tyler model, often referred to as the **objective model**, concentrates on the clarification of objectives formulated in behavioural terms, on the identification of learning experiences indispensable to achieve the objectives, on organizing these experiences to reinforce one another and produce commulative effect and, finally, on evaluation geared toward the examination of the degree to which the objectives have been attained and to modifications to be introduced in further curriculum development (Taylor and Richards 1985:59). The advantages of the model seem to lie in its coherence due to which the model can provide a solid basis curriculum planning and syllabus design.

The Stenhouse model, commonly referred to as "**the process model**", aims at

avoiding the disadvantages of the Tyler model through eliminating the separation of means and ends as well as through moving away from strictly behavioural clarification of educational objectives. Basing on the idea that “means presuppose ends and vice versa”, taking into consideration the unpredictability of outcomes and distrusting measurability of behaviour – the process model replaces behavioural objectives by a careful analysis of the principles of procedure (Taylor and Richards 1985:67-8).

The Skilbeck model, often referred to as “**the situational model**” forms a wider curriculum planning framework rather than an alternative to the other models and, therefore, concentrates on broad, social and cultural contexts in which curriculum is supposed to operate. It contains five basic components,

- the situational analysis,
- goal formulation,
- programme building,
- interpretation and implementation,
- monitoring, assessment, feedback and reconstruction (Taylor and Richards 1985:70).

A highly eclectic approach has been adopted in the present study. As wider social and political contexts seem to be of utmost importance for curriculum planning and implementation in Central and Eastern Europe, a brief presentation of teacher education against the background of social needs and expectations in the educational domain is attempted in the Introduction, much in the vein of **the situational model** of curriculum planning. In order to provide a well-structured framework for the planning activity **the objective model** will be followed providing four stages of the planning activity. Objectives will not, however, be formulated in behavioural terms, and emphasis will be given to individual and project work as well as to teaching/learning modes in order to ensure a strong orientation toward the principles of procedure along the guidelines of the **process model**.

Curriculum development work has thus been based on the consideration of the four questions:

- What educational purposes should we seek to attain?
- What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
- How can these experiences be effectively organized?
- How can we determine these purposes are being attained? (Nunan 1989:11).

Four sections of the present EFL methodology syllabus component will seek answers to the questions above.

The AIMS section will attempt at providing answers to question 1.

The CURRICULUM CONTENT SECTION will seek answers to question 2.

The TEACHING/LEARNING MODES will attempt at formulating answers to question 3.

The PROJECT section will attempt at providing answers to question 4.

As all the four components of the course, i.e., pedagogical grammar, history and culture, psychology and education as well as EFL methodology are to be taught parallelly – **synchronic coherence** will primarily be sought in order to ensure that various inputs are complementary to one another as the course goes on (Wallace 1991: 153). **Sequential coherence**, however, will also be aimed at in the process of selecting and grading course content.

Both **analytical** and **institute approaches** to curriculum development have been used in the planning procedure as the former tend to prove helpful in planning the content while the latter prove useful in ensuring coherence of items and ideas (Rowntree 1981 quoted by Nuan 1989:54).

In consequence of adopting the fundamental assumptions above the following steps have been taken:

- the existing training courses for teachers have been analyzed,
- some selected EFL methodology syllabi followed at Polish teacher training colleges have been looked into,
- a number of teachers and subject-matter experts have been interviewed.

3. Aims of the EFL methodology syllabus component

The following aims of the course in question have been adopted,

1. to develop in the trainee an understanding of the principles of human communication and verbal/non-verbal interaction,
2. to get the trainee acquainted with basic concepts and theories of language teaching and learning as well as with alternative teaching approaches,
3. to provide the trainee with the range of skills and techniques that could be effectively implemented in primary and secondary classrooms,
4. to assist the trainee to develop a personal teaching and interacting style taking into account his/her self-perceived psychological and pedagogical strengths and weaknesses,
5. to enable the trainee to make decisions about which skills and actions are needed or relevant in given classroom situations,
6. to enable the trainee to evaluate, select, develop, adapt and exploit teaching materials and resources to their fullest potential,
7. to help the trainee to develop the ability to analyze, evaluate and improve his/her own teaching through feedback techniques as well as through the adoption of tools and techniques of classroom observation, self-evaluation and reflection,
8. to enable the trainee to read professional writings in the field of EFL methodology and apply knowledge thus obtained in his/her own instructional practice,
9. to provide the trainee with metalanguage which will enable him/her to describe his/her own teaching practice and reflect on it,
10. to assist the trainee to prepare his/her own personalized learning plans for the future, lifelong professional development.

Goals 1-3 are based on the applied science model and on received knowledge.

Goals 4-7 imply the reflective model and experiential knowledge assisting decision-making processes.

Goals 8-10 are based on a combination of the applied science and the reflective model assisting professional self-development and lifelong education.

At the same time goals cover the full scale of the classical B. Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, i.e., knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation with goals 1-3 functioning at the level of knowledge, goal 4 – at the level of comprehension, goal 5 – at the level of application, goals 6-7 at the level of analysis, goals 8-9 – at the level of synthesis and goal 10 at the level of evaluation. Objectives from the affective domain permeate all the objectives above with goals 1-3 being strongly oriented toward receiving, goal 4 toward responding, goal 5 toward valuing, goals 6-9 toward organization and the formation of judgements and goal 10 toward characterization by value complexes reflected in revising judgements and changing behaviour in the light of evidence (Bloom et al. 1956).

4. The curriculum content

The curriculum content of formal teaching hours is strongly oriented toward the knowledge and comprehension levels of objectives, i.e., to goals 1-3 of the list above. It seems indispensable to provide the trainees with

- the knowledge and understanding of basic concepts in EFL methodology, i.e., concepts of communication, interaction, processes of language teaching and language learning, success and failure in teaching and learning,
- the knowledge and understanding of types of learners' needs, course planning, syllabus types, materials selection and lesson planning,
- the repertoire of conventional and unconventional teaching methods, teaching pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary and structure, developing four language skills,
- the knowledge and understanding of teaching in a variety of contexts (large sized classes, mixed ability groups, young learners, false beginners, first lessons, out-of-schedule lessons, etc.),
- the tools for feedback, observation, self-evaluation and reflection.

It is, however, through individual study and project work that the truly reflective model of teacher education can be promoted and it is on this part of the course that the success of the training programme will finally depend.

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