Plurilingual education and languages of education / Education plurilingue et langues de l’éducation

J Sheils, Language Policy Division, Council of Europe
• CE approach to language education policy
• Guiding principles for plurilingual education
• Instruments: CEFR & ELP
• Languages of schooling / langues de scolarisation
• Languages of education / langues de l’éducation
European Cultural Convention (1954)

- encourage the study by its own nationals of the languages, history and civilisation of the other Contracting Parties and grant facilities to those Parties to promote such studies in its own territory, and

- endeavour to promote the study of its languages, history and civilisation in the territory of the other Contracting Parties and grant facilities to the nationals of those Parties to pursue such studies in its territory.
European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages [www.coe.int/minlang]
- monitoring mechanism

Language Policy Division (Strasbourg) [www.coe.int/lang]
- policy reviews, European reference instruments....

European Centre for Modern Languages (Graz) [www.ecml@at]
- implementation: good practice, innovation...
‘The Council of Europe does not have a policy-making function independently of its member states’ (Byram)

respect diversity of contexts

agreed policy principles and tools
  – reflect CoE values

decisions as close to point of learning as possible
plurilingualism: all are entitled to develop a degree of communicative ability in a number of languages over their lifetime in accordance with their needs.

linguistic diversity: Europe is multilingual and all its languages are equally valuable modes of communication and expressions of identity; the right to use and to learn one’s language(s) is protected in Council of Europe Conventions.
mutual understanding: the opportunity to learn other languages is an essential condition for intercultural communication and acceptance of cultural differences

democratic citizenship: participation in democratic and social processes in multilingual societies is facilitated by the plurilingual competence of individuals

social cohesion: equality of opportunity for personal development, education, employment, mobility, access to information and cultural enrichment depends on access to language learning throughout life.
A plurilingual person has
- a repertoire of language and language varieties
- competences of different kinds and levels within the repertoire

‘enable individuals to be plurilingual either by maintaining and developing their linguistic plurilingualism or by helping them to develop from monolingualism (or bilingualism) into plurilingualism’

(Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe)

- developing learners’ consciousness of their existing repertoires of languages and language varieties and their ability to develop and adapt those repertoires to changing circumstances in lifelong learning
- developing respect for the plurilingual repertoires and identities of others
Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): learning, teaching, assessment

‘a logical development of the modern languages programme of the Council of Europe over the last forty years’

1971: unit/credit system > feasibility study
‘not appropriate for the CoE to impose arbitrary decisions on the field in this manner or to pre-empt the decisions of others more closely in touch with the needs, interests and characteristics of learners’
systems approach - linking objectives, courses, methods, materials and assessment in a coherent manner

what the learner needs to DO in using the language for communication

The Threshold Level (van Ek), CoE 1975; ‘Un Niveau-Seuil’

‘...make the process of learning itself more democratic by providing the conceptual tools for the planning, construction, conduct and evaluation of learner-centred courses closely geared to needs, motivations and characteristics of the learners and which prepare them for future learning in a lifelong perspective’ (Trim)
Symposium: Transparency and coherence in language learning in Europe: objectives, evaluation, certification (1991)

> common European framework:
- international cooperation;
- mutual recognition of qualifications;
- common basis for all partners to situate and coordinate language provision;
- exchange of information;
- tool for critical reflection
flexible, open, dynamic, non-dogmatic
'We have NOT set out to tell practitioners what to do or how to do it. We are raising questions not answering them. It is not the function of the CEF(R) to lay down the objectives that users should pursue or the methods they should employ.'

CEFR - a tool to be adapted, supplemented and modified according to the context of use and the needs of the learners

‘concertina like reference tool with categories and levels that can be expanded/contracted, elaborated/summarised, adopted/adapted according to the needs of the context’ (North)
Action Plan for Linguistic Diversity

European Indicator of Language Competence

‘the realisation of a pressing need for educational instruments better geared to the variety of language needs in Europe which coincided chronologically with the CEFR providing the basic elements of a solution’

(Goullier, 2007 Forum, Strasbourg)
Report on use of CEFR:

‘In general, the CEFR seems to have a major impact on language education. It is used – often as the exclusive neutral reference – in all educational sectors; its value as a reference to coordinate the objectives of education at all levels is widely appreciated’
‘One of the aims of the Framework is to help partners describe the levels of proficiency required by existing standards, tests and examinations in order to facilitate comparisons between different systems of qualifications. For this purpose the descriptive Scheme and the Common Reference Levels have been developed. Between them they provide a conceptual grid which users can exploit to describe their system.’ (CEFR, p. 21)
Manual: Relating Exams to the CEFR
- familiarisation
- specification
- standardisation training + benchmarking
- standard setting
- external validation

standardised Illustrative material
- by language
- + cross-linguistic benchmarking

Reference Level Descriptions / Référentiels
the potential of the CEFR not fully exploited
- development of plurilingual curricula
- assessment/recognition of plurilingual repertoire

‘the momentum generated by the CEFR in Europe is starting to bring about a new balance in terms of responsibilities, placing increased weight on horizontal relationships among member states and thus raising the issue of responsibility from a new perspective’ (Goullier, 2007)
danger of a technocratic and restrictive view of education (Coste)

plurilingual and intercultural competences linked to education for democratic citizenship, intercultural understanding and social inclusion

‘..policy instrument that can and must be utilised to serve carefully considered, committed policy objectives that reflect Council of Europe values and principles underpinning its approach to language education’
Encourager les institutions à utiliser le Cadre européen de référence élaboré par le Conseil de l’Europe pour planifier ou réformer l’enseignement des langues d’une façon cohérente et transparente, dans le sens d’un renforcement de la coordination internationale et de la diversification de l’apprentissage des langues.
Encourager le développement et l’utilisation par les apprenants dans tous les secteurs de l’éducation d’un document personnel (Portfolio européen des langues) dans lequel ils pourraient inscrire leurs qualifications et autres expériences linguistiques et culturelles significatives de manière transparente au plan international, en motivant de cette manière les apprenants et en reconnaissant leurs efforts d’étendre et de diversifier leur apprentissage des langues à tous les niveaux et tout au long de la vie.
PEL :
fonction pédagogique : autonomie...
fonction d’information : compétences & expériences
- passport de langues
- biographie langagière
- dossier
97 portfolios validés - 29 pays
2 millions PEL....
Europass (UE)
Le PEL :
- développer le plurilinguisme :
toutes les langues secondes ou étrangères
dans le repértoire plurilingue du propriétaire du PEL

- inciter son propriétaire à réfléchir sur la
manière dont il/elle apprend les langues et
développe son repértoire plurilingue et ses
compétences interculturelles.

apprentissage réflexif... autoévaluation...
autonomie de l’apprenant...
apprentissage interculturel
Language(s) of schooling / langue(s) de scolarisation

-language as a subject/
langue comme discipline

-language across the curriculum/
langue d’enseignement
(des autres disciplines)
extending linguistic repertoire of socially disadvantaged learners

‘internal plurilingualism’ (Vollmer)

right to education:
- depends on language proficiency

curriculum expectations (linguistic, semiotic) + learning experiences = learner entitlement
transversal instrument for learning, personal development, creative expression, developing culture and values, socialisation and identity building, development of critical capacities and autonomous learning and thinking
Languages of Education / les langues de l’éducation
languages in education and for education
langues dans l’éducation / langues pour l’éducation

- the unique and dynamic language repertoire of each learner
- the official language(s) as subject(s) and as means of instruction across the curriculum
- languages of minorities, regional languages, languages of migrants that are part of the plurilingual repertoires of learners and/or part of the school curriculum
- foreign languages as taught subjects and/or as means of instruction for some other subjects
Language Education Policy Profiles
'self-evaluation' in a spirit of dialogue
CE experts act as catalysts

Country Report
1 week visit
Experts' Report
roundtable discussion (1 day)

Language Education Policy Profile
jointly by the authorities and the CE
- Language education must be considered holistically, overcoming the separation between first, second, foreign languages.
- Promotion of plurilingualism and diversity is axiomatic in all planning.
- Curriculum design and pedagogy must reflect and be determined by the holistic vision of a language education.
- Language education is tied to values and in particular education for democratic citizenship.
droit à une éducation de qualité pour tous

droit des élèves à une reconnaissance, à un développement et à une complexification de leur répertoire langagier et de leur compétence (inter)culturelle

description des capacités langagières auxquelles les élèves ont droit à différents niveaux de leur scolarité pour assurer leur réussite et insertion sociale - (attentes)

Le plurilinguisme est pluriel
- toute éducation plurilingue et interculturelle s’actualise dans un contexte particulier