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Origins of modern language teacher education: The influence of related disciplines on the educational breakthrough of the 1990s. Bridging past and future

Abstract

The article aims at identifying the roots of the dramatic changes which took place in the philosophy, curricula and methods of pre- and in-service teacher education in the early 1990s. Integration of teacher training programmes with university education, balanced introduction of theory and field experience, skills- and competence-based professional development of language teachers based on the concept of the reflective practitioner, trainee-centred teaching methodology, i.e. innovative solutions marking the breakthrough in language teacher education of the last decade of the 20th century were the result of advancements in the educational sciences, sociology, anthropology, psychology and philosophy. The main directions of influence exerted by each of these disciplines on teacher training programmes in the United States, Great Britain and countries of Central and Eastern Europe are discussed with special emphasis on developments which shape the language policy of the main European institutions at present and which are likely to continue exerting an impact in the near future.

Keywords: language teaching, teacher education, educational change, training programmes, related disciplines

Słowa kluczowe: nauka języka, reforma edukacji, kształcenie nauczycieli języków, dyscypliny pokrewne

1. Introduction

Although the first language teacher training courses opened in the London Institute of Education in 1935, it was World War II that marked the beginning of formal language teacher training due to the launch of Army Specialised Training Programs (ASTP) based on behaviouristic and structural principles within the frames of the Audiolingual Method (Kelly, 1969; Rivers, 1968). The advent of the Communicative Approach in 1970, after the first functional-notional syllabuses had been commissioned by the Council of Europe (Trim, 2002), brought considerable changes to the content and format of in-service teacher development, yet pre-service language teacher training was, in most of the countries, still part of post-secondary education, or college training, strongly influenced by theoretical linguistics or general pedagogy departments. Consequently, language teacher training institutions operated under regulations common for the training of teachers of all subject (Corrigan and Haberman, 1990).

The first major reforms started at the turn of the 1980s and the 1990s, when the preparation of language teachers for the profession became part of higher education offered by universities, often gaining their independence from philological or pedagogical departments (Katz, Ratz, 1984). The language teacher education breakthrough of the 1990s was marked not only by the new academic status of teacher education, but also by the shift of training from following a *craft* and/or *applied science* to a *reflective* model (Wallace, 1991). In addition there was a change in the criteria for teacher appraisal in which behavioural were replaced by skills- and competences-oriented aims. These considerable modifications in language teacher education were in line with developments in general teacher education taking place across subject areas toward the end of the 1980s. It was high time for reform, as ways of preparing teachers for their profession were perceived as not having undergone any significant changes since the 1930s (Freiberg, Waxman, 1990). It should be noted, however, that while - due to the fall of the Berlin Wall – abrupt changes in the system of teacher education marked a true breakthrough in Eastern European countries, changes in Western Europe and the United States had started earlier and were being introduced progressively (Hurst, Tan, Sellers, 2003; Komorowska, Krajka, 2021; Whitty, 1993).

After the publication of two reports: A *Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (Carnegie Forum on Education and Economy Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986) and *Tomorrow's Teachers* (Holmes Group, 1986), the *status quo* in US teacher education seemed no longer possible. A large number of unsatisfied needs were identified, such as the need for a higher quality of evaluation procedures for entry and for the licensing of

candidates as well as a more solid intellectual base for the training programme. Postulates related to the need for improvement and replacement of undesirable solutions were ready to be implemented in line with new approaches adopted in general teacher education (Howey, Zimpfer, 1986).

In Europe, language teacher education was separated from general teacher preparation relatively early, due to synergies between leading international institutions whose contribution to the structure and quality of language teacher education cannot be undervalued. New concepts related to the length and content of programmes, the role of foundation disciplines and the types of skills and competences to be developed through the links of training colleges with schools were promoted in numerous documents and workshops by the Council of Europe (CoE) and later by the European Union (EU) as well as the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML), established by the Council of Europe in 1996 (Boeckmann, 2016).

The classical model of implementing educational change proposed by Bennis, Benne and Chin (1969) outlines three possible approaches: the *rational-empirical,* based on knowledge and logic, the *normative-re-educative*, viewed as a function of interaction between members of a given institution or system, and the *power-coercive,*used by political institutions, such as governments, to influence the existing situation. In federal systems, the second option was typically selected, while in Eastern Europe, due to the transformation after the fall of the Berlin Wall, systemic changes were needed, which called for the third option, though based on rational-empirical assumptions. A similar situation could be noticed in Western Europe where at the turn of the 20th and the 21st centuries international arrangements led to the final agreement presented in the Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999 on the common framework of university studies (EURASHE, 1999). While this explains the way changes were taking place, it does not, however, specify their character and origin.

Causes of the type of changes leading to the establishment of independent language teacher education are usually sought in the development of applied linguistics, second language acquisition (SLA) research and foreign language teaching (Grenfell et al., 2003). Yet, the roots of early language teacher education programmes can also be found in the contribution of related disciplines, such as the educational sciences, sociology, anthropology, psychology, and philosophy.

2. The contribution of the educational sciences

Pedagogy made a strong contribution to language teacher education, due to the fact that considerable efforts were made in the 1980s to identify the knowledge

base for general teacher education, which later found its way into the training of teachers for particular subject areas in answer to the main questions, i.e. "...what is the program trying to accomplish? What knowledge supports these purposes? How do program components... enhance the program's purposes?... What should beginning teachers who graduate from a preservice program of initial teacher education believe, know and have the capacity to do?" (Barnes, 1989: 20). Research projects informing teacher education investigated school organisation, norms and classroom management (Ball, 1981; Rutter, 1980), teacher decision making (Clark, Petersen, 1986), learners' perceptions of themselves (Wittrock, 1986a), classroom language and interaction (Cazden, Mehan, 1989), to mention merely the main lines of inquiry. The crucial problem was, however, how to transform knowledge into professional competences. This presupposed incorporating conclusions from research and implementing them into the practice of teaching in order to exert influence on the teaching force as a professional group, but also on supply and demand, labour market conditions and salary levels (Darling-Hammond, 1990). Language teacher education concentrated on the former and ignored the latter, most probably due to a sense of powerlessness when it comes to having influence on national economy and policy.

Language teacher education owes its development largely to the work of Shulman (1986), who considered subject-matter knowledge the *missing paradigm*, and called for a refocusing of teacher educators' attention away from general pedagogical issues to ways in which classroom teaching serves the achievement of subject-matter goals. This approach meant that the first step was to separate language teacher education from general education on the one hand and from philological education, on the other. Emphasis on the formerly neglected subject matter knowledge of the trainees, rather than solely on their pedagogic knowledge, did not prevent other components of Shulman's model of the teacher's knowledge base from being included in training programmes, such as knowledge of aims and values in education, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and learning contexts (Shulman, 1987). His generic model of the knowledge base was found appropriate for foreign language teacher training contexts, especially due to the author's perspective on relations between subject matter knowledge, here demonstrated in linguistic and cultural competences, with the so-called pedagogical content knowledge, i.e. skills to develop those competences in learners with the help of foundation disciplines. It formed a solid structure for training programmes for decades to come. Yet, tensions were unavoidable, as time spent on the development of the job-related skills expected by schools were often viewed by academic staff as a factor counterproductive

to the broadening of the academic disciplines that were considered crucial for the preparation of teachers (Corrigan, Haberman, 1990).

Symptomatically, language teacher education institutions that integrated with philological, or educational departments of universities focused on foundation disciplines at the cost of practical language classes and the teaching practicum, while university training colleges, operating as independent academic units, moved to a more balanced curriculum (Howey, Zimpfer, 1986; Katz, Ratz, 1984).

From four conceptions of teaching stated by Scardamalia and Bereiter (1989: 37) as

– cultural transmission,
– the training of skills,
– the fostering of natural development and producing conceptual change,

encompassing views "for which there is support based on current knowledge about structures and processes underlying learning and development" (ibid.), language teacher education *in statu nascendi* opted for the skills approach and concentrated on ways of converting learning goals to task goals, an endeavour difficult enough to take more than a decade before satisfactory results were reached (Bygate et al., 2001; Ellis, 2003).

Language teacher education benefited considerably from the theory and practical experience of general teacher education in organising the trainee's field work. Examples of good practice from the United States were analysed carefully (Zeichner, 1987; Zeichner, Gore, 1990) as well as British regulations, according to which teacher training colleges were to establish links with schools in order to collaborate in planning, mentoring and assessing the work of future teachers (Fish, 1989). Plenty of leeway was left to language teacher education institutions by national administrations in deciding the amount of the teaching practicum, measured in time and contact hours, as well as in selecting organisational formats of school experience. Most teacher education institutions, however, decided to introduce early field experience in various types of schools accompanied by microteaching conducted on the university premises (Freiberg, Waxman, 1990).

Numerous difficulties surfaced in the process of evaluating the role of the teaching practicum and its value for particular trainees and even bigger problems arose in assessing their teaching skills. Language teacher educators looked to general education for criteria for the assessment of teachers' professionalism, but these were being prepared in the form of checklists in the early 1990s and later, which is why separate observation criteria for language

lessons had to be designed. Thus the influence remained the impact of the concept rather than of its implementation.

Influences of general educational sciences on teacher education in general, and language teacher education in particular, are undeniable and can clearly be demonstrated in curricula, teaching methods and appraisal procedures, while the impact of other disciplines is less obvious, although it should not be undervalued (Komorowska, 2014). Certain influences are connected with general trends of the time in the humanities and as such it is extremely difficult to ascribe them to particular disciplines. It is interesting to note that this is a phenomenon characterising some of the most significant contributions. Donald Schön is probably the most convincing example here - a philosopher specialising in inquiry, but also a successful urban planner and a renowned consultant in the field of organisational learning, a researcher working in several disciplines, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who developed the concept of the *reflective practitioner* (Schön, 1983) which as such made its way first into field experience and the teaching practicum of trainee teachers and later entered academia in the form of the reflective paradigm in pre- and in-service teacher education programmes (Wallace, 1999). It would be no exaggeration to say that the concept of the *reflective practitioner* reshaped teacher education across the world and exerted a very strong influence on paradigms which have been adopted in language teacher education since the early 1990s and soon became well-rooted in pre- and in-service training curricula (Kelly et al., 2002). Consequently, Schön's ideas became extremely popular in education, for which reason he is commonly presented in pedagogical and linguistic publications as a representative of the educational sciences.

3. The contribution of sociology and anthropology

Sociology proved to be a discipline of crucial importance for teacher education, a phenomenon hardly expected by educators who looked at professional preparation mainly from the point of view of subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical skills. Sociologists, however, provided a new angle by observing relations in classrooms and schools. Sociological methodology was used by Philip W. Jackson in his seminal study *Life in Classrooms* (1968), which was to influence educational research for at least two decades to come. A vast number of studies, conducted by social psychologists and sociologists of education targeted ways in which teachers and learners attached meanings to classroom situations, redefined them, mediated and negotiated them, an approach especially popular in the United Kingdom, but also examined how power structures were built in educational contexts (Delamont 1976).

Research on teachers' roles and styles of leadership (Bennett, 1976) as well as analyses of schools as institutions (Hargreaves, 1984; Woods, 1983) exerted a very strong influence on the general teacher education of the late 1980s. Its impact on language teacher education in the 1990s was even stronger due to the already well-established place of communicative competence in language learning (Shiels, 1986) and to the role of teacher-student rapport and interpersonal relations in encouraging spontaneous interaction, especially at low proficiency and high language anxiety levels in foreign language classes (MacIntyre, Gardner, 1991; Roberts, 1988). Relations in school and the community were analyzed against the background of a broader social and political context (Greene, 1989), yet the understanding of the importance of these issues in language teacher education, was, however, acknowledged much later, as evidenced in the *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages* (Newby et al., 2007). Relations in broader social contexts are, however, rarely fully explicit, and that is why educators, together with sociologists and social psychologists, looked into the meaning of teaching functions (Rosenshine, Stevens, 1986), ways of attributing meanings to classroom interactions and discourse (Cazden, Mehan, 1989), but also into implicit messages in the hidden curriculum in schools and institutions of teacher education (Ginsburg and Clift, 1990; Zeichner, Gore, 1990). Although the concept of the hidden curriculum has not made its way into teacher education directly, issues of implicit curricular messages in schools have since the early 1990s been regularly discussed by future language teachers with their university- and school-based mentors in the course of reflective practice. A different situation can be seen at in-service training courses, where the status of the teaching profession is one of the most important topics addressed by the participants and where the discrepancy between explicit messages of teacher autonomy permeating pre-service courses and the everyday practice of teachers being subordinated to educational administration is pointed out as one of the major problems (Komorowska, Krajka, 2020, 2021).

Sociological analyses of spheres of influence on academic contexts, the knowledge base, quality controls, resources and conditions of practice definitely raised the awareness of language teacher educators, but the impact of research on organisational changes is difficult to assess due to the individual activity of staff members seeking innovation through action research within the frames of the *normative-re-educative model* presented in section 1 above.

Anthropology and cultural sciences occupied a niche with problems of multicultural education, teaching immigrants and supporting students with limited English proficiency (LEP learners), a field which has been steadily growing over the last two decades. Difficulties with providing appropriate education for

multicultural and multilingual classes has become a burning issue in Europe in the last two decades, but had been noticed much earlier in the United States and the United Kingdom. Yet, attention of teacher educators in Great Britain was directed mainly towards language difficulties, social constraints on school talk, the value of sheltered English and the Language Awareness (LA) and Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) approaches (Barnes,1976; Hawkins, 1984; James, Garret, 1991). American educators seemed to be more interested not only in the schooling for language minorities (Garcia, 1990; Grant, 1990)), but also in issues of racism and poverty, as educators explicitly stated that "children are 'at risk' not because of inherent deficiencies, but because they are increasingly unserved, underserved, or inappropriately served by the school" (Young, Melnick, 1988: 388). Issues of cultural diversity in education were also researched and the needs to foster cooperative learning (Kagan, 1986), avoid ability grouping and ensure relationship with parents and their local community (Cazden, Mehan, 1989) were stressed. These interests and the numerous publications resulting from the analysis of difficulties faced by teachers and learners found their reflection in the European language teacher training programmes much later, when economic, educational and professional mobility resulted in new challenges which language teachers had to face in plurilingual and multicultural classrooms (Boeckmann, 2016; Kelly, Grenfell, 2004).

4. The contribution of psychology

Psychology in the 1970s and the 1980s was paradoxically a discipline perceived as not being particularly influential in the field of teacher education, in spite of the relatively large number of research projects in the field of the psychology of learning. The reason for this perception lies within the history of the educational sciences, which – although built on behavioural and cognitive approaches originating from the field of psychology–for a long time concentrated on developing sets of practical guidelines for teachers. Recommendations were made to guarantee efficient classroom management and aimed to achieve it by shaping desirable and mitigating unwanted behaviour (Fontana, 1986).

A certain degree of impact on teacher training was exerted by research projects on the effectiveness of mnemonics, especially in contexts where the Communicative Approach was not yet fully implemented. Studies on the effect of imagery on learning and memory (Levin et al., 1980), but also research on verbal processes, such as creating stories containing verbal material to be learnt, or producing associations with lexical items to be memorised (Wittrock, Carter, 1975) were reflected in teaching activities recommended for classroom work on vocabulary growth. The role of attention in educational

attainment was also demonstrated as more significant than time-on-task or time-to-learn (Wittrock, 1986a), however, taking a historical perspective, no direct influence other than the formulation of guidelines on how to maintain classroom discipline could be noticed in that line of research on the teacher education programmes of the time (Komorowska, 2021).

Educational psychology, according to Pintrich (1990), exerted a considerable and visible influence on teacher education much earlier than the breakthrough under examination, i.e. in the 1960s, with studies on child development. In early general teacher education programmes developmental psychology played an important part, although it mainly entered training courses for preschool and elementary school staff (Stallings, Stipek, 1986) with very few research projects informing the academic education of upper primary and secondary school teachers (Sprinthall, 1989). A more significant influence of psychology as a discipline could be seen in the pre-service education of those teachers who were being trained to take care of disabled students and learners with special educational needs (Feuerstein, 1980; Reynolds, 1989). The thought processes of students (Clark et al., 1986) and teachers (Wittrock, 1986b) were also investigated, yet there was no sign of the immediate transfer of this knowledge to teacher education at that time.

The great days of psychology in the field of language teacher education came more than a decade later, when research on individual learner variables started dominating the scene of Second Language Acquisition research and when studies of teacher cognition marked the beginning of the 21st century (Borg, 2003, 2006). This means that the immediate influence of psychology on language teacher education was felt after the most important structural and curricular changes had been implemented. Paradoxically, due to historical circumstances, Vygotsky's *Mind in Society*, the work first presented to the public in 1953 and properly translated as late as 1978, shaped teacher education philosophy after the breakthrough of the 1990s and, being one of the most influential publications in the humanities, brought about the so-called social constructivist turn in psychology, cultural studies, linguistics and education more than half a century after the death of the author whose work, like Schön's, is another example of a contribution difficult to categorise as belonging to a single discipline

5. The contribution of philosophy

Philosophy, although probably less influential in the field of teacher education after World War II than it used to be in the 19th and the early 20th century, was not without influence on the shape teacher education was given after the

breakthrough of the 1990s. Representatives of this discipline provided inter-pretations of approaches to teacher education (Floden, 1986), analysed moral development of children and adolescents (Kohlberg, 1984) and introduced is-sues of values and ethical dimensions of teaching (Greene, 1986; Oser, 1986, Strom, Tennyson, 1989). Special emphasis was given to, as Strom puts it, 'value choices concerning actions and attitudes that affect more than one per-son or which affect one's own character, thereby affecting others' (Strom, 1986:268). The relatively strong influence of philosophy on general teacher education programmes was not reflected in the field of languages, due to the increasing role of linguistics and psychology. The authority of the discipline which had formerly been the crown jewel of academia has been limited to ethical dilemmas in the teaching profession. Reflective training models and the extended amount of time devoted to lesson observation and teaching practicum after the breakthrough of the 1990s gave ample room for analysing teacher decision-making during mentor-trainee encounters, as well as in the process of the trainee's self-assessment.

On a larger scale, the question of values entered teacher training with the promotion of the *European Profile of the Language Teacher* (Kelly, Gren-fell, 2004) targeting aspects of social and cultural education, issues of diversity and the attitude toward life-long learning. Since then it has found its perma-nent place not only in pre-service teacher education, but also in the continu-ous professional development of teachers. The so called moral virtues, such as fairness, honesty and openness have been propagated in teacher education programmes mainly in the field of assessment, testing and feedback (Spolsky, 1997), and much later the significance of ethical values was also stressed in discussions on the testing of immigrants (Shohamy, 2001).

6. Conclusions

As a result of all the influences discussed above, language teacher education has become part of the higher education system. Pre-service teacher training was founded on a solid knowledge base with four cornerstones, i.e. language proficiency, language teaching methodology, psychology and pedagogy with a strong support of the foundation disciplines – linguistics, literature and cul-ture. Curricular components, based on needs analysis, guaranteed balance of theory and field experience with the teaching practicum supervised by both university and school-based teachers. Teaching methods became more trainee-centred with focus on learner autonomy and project work.

The need for evaluation of teacher education programmes thus modi-fied was signalled very early, almost immediately after the changes had been

planned. The importance of accountability was pointed out, understood as implementing evaluation in ways which would guarantee its meeting accreditation standards. What was also considered important was the potential for institutional improvement in a given social and cultural context (Galuzzo and Craig, 1990). Due to budgetary and organisational difficulties, evaluation tended, however, to concentrate on curriculum and document analysis, compensated by a strong component of institutional self-analysis (Komorowska, Krajka, 2021).

The influence of related disciplines did not stop around 1990 and brought pre-service teacher education an interest of in learner and teacher autonomy (Fenner, 2020; Lamb, Reinders, 2008; Little et al., 2017), formative evaluation (OECD, 2015) and school-based mentoring, (Malderez, Bodóczky, 1999; Nguyen, 2017). The impact of the breakthrough under discussion could also be felt when increasing mobility in the first two decades of the 21st century redirected the attention of the European institutions from language teaching methodology to the growing significance of intercultural and plurilingual education, transparency and comparability of educational institutions and training systems, as well as to the need for support measures addressing language learners with learning difficulties. The Council of Europe, the European Union and the European Centre for Modern Languages reacted with seminal publications (Beacco, 2013; Byram, 2009), research reports (Kelly et al., 2002) and projects (www. ecml.at) finally leading to the powerful recommendation of the Council of the European Union of 22 May 2019 on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages (European Union, 2019).

In Poland, for example, new skills and competences, such as intercultural (Krajka, 2017; Kucharczyk, 2018), digital (Krajka, 2012), inter- and intrapersonal competences (Smuk, 2016) as well as skills to teach learners of various age groups (Jaroszewska 2007, 2013), students with special educational needs (Karpińska-Szaj, 2022) and languages for specific purposes (Gajewska, Sowa and Kic-Drgas, 2020), were successfully integrated with re- and in-service training programmes (EURYDICE, 2017).

Yet, new developments in the field of the educational sciences and psychology will continue to offer important implications for teaching and learning languages (Le Pichon-Vorstman, Siarova, Szőnyi 2020), while philosophy will help to position language education in the world of values (Colgan, Maxwell, 2021).

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