

The education of teachers for multilingual schools in Europe. Introducing ALPME: an Advanced Level Programme for Multilingual Education

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Introduction

One of the outcomes of the *Sigma* group on languages was the creation by the European Language Council of a sub-group within the *Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages* (TNP), 1997-1999, entitled *Language Teacher Training and Bilingual Education*. Its activities culminated in a European symposium organised in Brussels in May 1999. As a result a group of nine universities that had participated in the TNP successfully developed a curriculum development project, with funding from the European Commission. This resulted in the *ALPME* project (2001-2003), jointly co-ordinated by Carmen Perez-Vidal, Universidad Pompeu Fabra, ES, and Piet Van de Craen, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, BE. Other members of the ALPME group are Jyväskylän yliopisto, FI (Kari Sajavaari and David Marsh), Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht, NL (Gerrit-Jan Koopman), University of Nottingham, UK (Do Coyle), Trinity College Dublin, IE (Sean Devitt), Universität Wuppertal, DE (Dieter Wolff), Université Marc Bloch, Strasbourg, FR (Claude Springer), and Università di Ca' Foscari, Venice, IT (Carmel Coonan). The aim of the project was to develop the basis for a European curriculum for teachers in multilingual schools. In this contribution some characteristics of the programme and some ideas for future development are discussed. The ideas put forward here can be said to be the intellectual property of the group just mentioned.

Terminology

From the outset, decisions had to be taken in two areas. The first concerned the title of the programme: why is it called *Advanced Level Programme*? Secondly the terminology related to multilingual education had to be considered: what is it and what is meant by it? The answers to these questions are discussed below.

Education in Europe is multifaceted. In some countries all teachers have to attend university, while in other countries only higher secondary school teachers attend university, and primary and lower secondary teachers are trained in special teacher training institutions. The Bachelor/Master structure has not yet changed this, and in mid 2003 it remains unclear how various member-states will restructure teacher education, if at all. Since multilingual education, preferably, does not start at university level, and since the ALPME group wanted to be open to as many levels as possible, the terminology *Advanced Level Programme* was adopted.

The second point concerns the term "multilingual education". We are aware of the fact that in some Anglo-Saxon literature multilingualism refers to societies where more than one language is spoken, be it officially or not, while plurilingualism refers to the fact that individuals speak more than one language. However, this terminology is not adopted by everyone working in the field. The seminal work of Baker and Prys Jones, *Encyclopedia of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education* (1998), ignores the distinction completely and prefers to use bilingualism throughout the book, referring to multilingualism as something special and giving, among others, the pope and Sophia Loren as examples of good multilingual practice! However, since official European policy is the 1 + 2 rule as laid down in the White paper (1995), we felt that multilingual education would be clear to everyone because it is much more in accordance with reality.

What is meant by multilingual education?

When talking to school authorities throughout Europe, it becomes clear that various countries have adopted various meanings for this term. Some think that everything should be multilingual, including the school administration. Others think that the prime example of multilingual schools are the European schools, while still others only refer to multilingual schools if some form of bilingual and/or multilingual teaching strategy is adopted. In other words, today in Europe, it is fair to say that in many countries confusion reigns with regard to this aspect, including those countries where multilingual programmes are used. Therefore, it is useful to make our ideas as clear as possible with respect to multilingual education.

The ALPME programme has adopted a clear view on multilingual education. It considers as its prime example content and language integrated learning (CLIL) or *l'enseignement d'une matière par intégration d'une langue étrangère* (ÉMILE). We feel that CLIL/ ÉMILE is a generic term referring to all kinds of education, disregarding the level, where languages are used for learning subject matter instead of being a subject itself. In most cases this means that the curriculum is split in two, and that part of it is taught in language A and the other part in language B. However, the number of teaching hours devoted to a particular language may differ from 10% to 80% depending on local circumstances, the availability of teachers, the political or historical situation etc.

Although this type of education resembles the classic immersion type of school, two important differences stand out. First, CLIL/ÉMILE is a very flexible system that can easily be adapted to all kind of circumstances. Second, CLIL/ÉMILE, contrary to some immersion programmes, does give an important role to traditional language teaching.

In the context of language policy, it is felt that CLIL/ ÉMILE is one of the most important ways to comply with the recommendation of the 1995 White Paper indicating that each European citizen should at least speak two or more languages in addition to his or her mother tongue. For further information on CLIL see <http://www.euroclil.net> and <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/languages/index.html>, where a report on CLIL education in Europe prepared by David Marsh (2002) can be downloaded.

The training of teachers for multilingual schools

The importance of teacher training in general, and of teachers for multilingual schools in particular, cannot be overestimated. An OECD report on teachers' demand and supply states that "teacher quality is a critical factor in determining student learning" and that "the recruitment and retention of good quality teachers is key to the improvement of school systems" (OECD 2002:8). Another aspect which has been the focus of attention is to give pedagogical incentives to future and experienced teachers. It is felt that multilingual education is an important initiative in teaching and teacher training practices. Furthermore a review commissioned by the European Commission on *Foreign Languages in Primary and Pre-School Education* (see http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/innov/foreign_en.html) recommends that teachers should have the following attributes: "proficiency in the target language, ability to analyse and describe that language, knowledge of the principles of language acquisition as well as pedagogical skills specifically adapted for teaching foreign languages to young children".

Moreover, it is felt that teacher training for multilingual schools should be accessible to all kinds of teachers, not only language teachers, since multilingual education is aimed in the first place at subject matter teachers. The above *europasite* argues that "[p]rimary teachers without training in foreign language teaching, and secondary school language teachers without primary training, tend not to have all of the necessary abilities. For both substantial 'induction' courses are necessary".

In the light of the previous comments it was decided that the first modules to be developed would include the following topics: language acquisition; bilingualism and bilingual education; approaches to language teaching for multilingual education; curriculum, syllabus and materials for multilingual

education; content-subject related practical language courses; comparative European studies; classroom research project; and teaching practice at a multilingual school (see also Wolff 2001; 2002).

However, it was also felt that in order to guarantee maximal accessibility it would be best to organise a web-based e-learning environment. For this reason the structure of the programme above was reordered. The programme is divided into two major components: first, a *professional and development zone* and second, a *learning and teaching zone*. While in the first zone general aspects are dealt with, the second deals with aspects related to the pedagogical side of CLIL language teaching. At the time of writing (March 2003), the website is available and most of its content is being written (see <http://upf.es/dtf/alpme>). It is hoped that large parts of the programme will be available by September 2003.

Teacher training for multilingual education on a European and a local level

Since teacher training programmes and traditions are so dispersed throughout Europe, some kind of local organisation is necessary in order to come to grips with a number of specific aspects related to local, often complicated, situations. In this section some initiatives related to the Belgian situation are described. First, while English is, in most countries, the second language, this is not the case in Belgium, where English is the third language after Dutch and French, depending on whether one is a Dutch or a French speaker. At the level of kindergarten teachers, primary school teachers and lower secondary school teachers, an English website would be counter productive. Hence the necessity to create an ALPME subgroup called in Dutch PAVOLEMO (postacademische vorming voor leraren meertalig onderwijs) and in French FORMADEP (Formation d'enseignants pour l'éducation plurilingue). The aim of the PAVOLEMO/FORMADEP group is to guide teacher training for multilingual schools in both the Dutch-speaking and the French-speaking communities. At the same time initiatives at university level are being undertaken. A Joint Master in Language Learning, Teaching and Education is being created which, eventually, should organise the ALPME group and other partners on a more formal basis after the CDA programme expires. Finally, contact is being established with parents' organisations promoting multilingual education. In Belgium TIBEM (Tweetaligheid in Beweging/Bilinguisme en mouvement) is such an organisation. Groups like these have contacts with political and school authorities and can help to overcome existing resistance related to multilingual education.

Towards European multilingual teacher training

ALPME and some local initiatives are the first step in the creation of a European multilingual teacher training programme. Within the Bologna agreement it seems only natural that European masters programmes be created. Hence universities and teacher training institutes are invited to contact the European Language Council on this matter in order to seek collaboration on a European level. It is only through the creation of networks and the exchange of information that long-standing traditions and habits can be overcome. Evolution will be slow but we are convinced that it will happen, and that in the next ten years a European label of good practice regarding teacher training for multilingual schools can be awarded.

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