

Contemporary Profile of the Foreign Language Teacher

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The goal of this paper is to treat some issues related to the application of the new strategies for the contemporary education of the new teachers. Basically, it focuses on the European dimension of education. This study reflects on and analyses many documents issued by The Ministry of Education, and the objectives set by the *Common European Framework of References for Languages*, highlighting their importance to the constant professional training of foreign language teachers. Foreign language acquisition plays a decisive role for the creation of a multilingual European identity. Training of foreign language teachers acquires special importance considering their contribution to the improvement of foreign language acquisition, and boosting the interest to learn foreign languages in order to realize the objective of the European Union: all European citizens should develop language skills not only in their native language but also in two other foreign languages. Educational system constitutes a significant link in the chain of the progress of a society. At present, the educational system in Albania has been involved at all levels in a number of reforms which aim at approaching it to the European systems. Application of these reforms constitutes a challenge for foreign language teachers. To realize this objective, all actors involved in the process rely on the educational policies of the European Commission of the Council of Europe with the purpose of unifying the Albanian educational system with European ones. *“The Ministry of Education reflects on these standards aiming at formulating national policies for the professional development of foreign language teachers and writes instructions, orders and regulations upon which govern teacher qualification. The Institute for the Development of Education identifies teachers’ needs for professional development and prepares training programs based on these standards.”*¹.

The standards of learning as instruments that measure the level of foreign language acquisition constitute a very significant element which directly influences the improvement of the learning process. They aim to:²

- increase the level of knowledge acquisition in a foreign language,
- increase teachers’ responsibility for qualitative teaching,
- make educational institutions and other actors involved in this process aware of it.

Standards provide teachers with ways of assessing students’ four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Foreign language acquisition is based on both the creation of long-standing communicative skills and provision of cultural information.

¹ Ministria e Arsimit dhe Shkencës, Udhëzim nr 5, datë 25.02.2013 *“Për standartet e Përgjithshme të Mësuesit”*

² Ministria e Arsimit dhe Shkencës, Instituti i Zhvillimit të Arsimit, *Standartet e të nxëniet*, Tiranë, 2012, <http://ëëë.izha.edu.al/materiale/Standardet%20e%20t%C3%AB%20Nx%C3%ABnit.pdf>

Involvement of Albanian universities in the Bologna process testifies to the renovation of the Albanian university system and constitutes one of the greatest challenges for the Albanian higher education. The Bologna Declaration shows the importance of European dimension for the elaboration of educational national policies and lists some documents related to this educational issue. Some of the most important ones are the following:

1. **Magna Charta Universitatum:** “The role of the universities in an ever more international society” (Bologna, 18 September, 1988).
2. **Lisbon Convention:** “Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region” prepared by the Council of Europe and UNESCO (8 -11 April 1997). This document was also signed by the Republic of Albania.
3. **Sorbonne Joint Declaration:** Harmonization of the Architecture of the European Higher Education” Paris, Sorbonne, 25 May 1998.
4. **Bologna Declaration:** “Creation of a European Higher Education Area” (Bologna, 19 June 1999).
5. **Salamanca Congress:** “Shaping the **European Higher Education Area**” Salamanca, 29 - 30 March 2001.
6. **Meeting of European Ministers in Charge of Higher Education in Prague:** “Re-affirming of the objective *Towards the European Higher Education Area* up to 2010” (Prague, 19 May 2001).
7. **Berlin Conference:** “Promotion of a coherent cohesive European Higher **Education Area** up to 2010” Berlin, 19 September 2003. In the Berlin meeting, Albania officially signed its participation in the process of Bologna and became member of the group which was concerned with the application of the Bologna process from 2006 at national and international level.
8. **The Bergen Conference,** (18 May 2005) which was especially concerned with three study levels, promoted the national frame of qualification. Each country had its national frame which was unified with that of another country through the European frame. The national Albanian frame of qualification has become a law and follows the model of the European frame of qualifications.
9. **London Communiqué** (16-18 May 2007).
10. “World Declaration on higher education”, issued from the World Conference on Higher Education in Paris, Paris 5 – 9 October 1988.

A team from Southampton University, England, in cooperation with a group of teacher trainers and international professionals considered a number of programs for teacher education which are being applied in 32 countries of Europe. According to this study, the foreign language teacher should promote foreign language teaching by becoming ambassadors of the countries whose language they learn. The objectives, content and results of this study have been stated in the document *The European Language Teacher*, (Bern, Peter Lang, 2003). According to this study, it not necessary to make profound changes in the educational system of each country, however, mutual understanding and terminology unification can be promoted. This study was propped up by the European Commission because it includes principles which should guide shaping of the European profile of the foreign language teacher. It consists of 40 elements and falls into four sections:³

- a- Structure
- b- Knowledge and competences
- c- Strategies and skills
- d- Values

This study provides a summary of the main points upon which training of foreign language teachers should be based on.

a-The structure of this study includes:

- A study program that intertwines theoretical education with teaching practice,
- A number of directives on how to conduct the teaching practice at schools,
- The importance of the role of tutors that have to assist future teachers to move from the stage of the practicing teacher to that of the graduated teacher,
- Experience of intercultural and multicultural environment. Practicing teachers gain life, study, work, and teaching experience in a context consisting of different social, cultural, ethnical and religious groups,
- A European system for the evaluation of both university programs and the programs for the long-life training to prop up their accreditation,
- Qualifying programs intended to update the new teaching methods
- The constant education of the trainers who should fulfill their mission properly.

b- With respect to knowledge and competences, it is essential to:

- constantly be in contact with foreign language teaching methods and the most advanced teaching techniques. Their application will assist foreign language teachers to fulfill their teaching and learning objectives.
- appreciate language skills of the foreign language trainee teachers in the frame of their initial training. Through constant qualification they can improve their language skills.

³ Kelly, M., Grenfell, M. 2004. *European Profile of Language Teacher Education*. Southampton: University of Southampton.

- know and understand about information and communication technology in order to use it effectively and productively in foreign language classes.

c- strategy application and skills development require:

- adaptation of the teaching methods to the students' needs in the educational context. The trainee teachers need to clearly know various factors that affect learning individual skills and try to adapt teaching methods to them,
- qualification that **aims at** the development of strategies to the benefit of autonomous acquisition of foreign languages,
- practical utilization of school programs in the function of acquisition. Introduction to the European Language Portfolio to accomplish self-assessment. In the branches of Foreign Language Faculty, introduction to European Language Portfolio is carried out during the initial stages of university education.

e- The section of values puts emphasis on:

- the recognition of the importance of social and cultural values. The trainee teachers need to be aware of their significant role to the promotion of positive social and cultural values.
- the importance of teaching and learning foreign languages and cultures.

Another particularly significant document for the foreign language teachers is the *Common European Framework of References for Languages*. It provides teachers, trainers, program writers and text-book writers with a common foundation and constitute a necessity for all actors involved in the process of foreign language teaching. Its main objective is directly related to sustaining methods based on students' needs to communicate, their promotion to work independently and to practice to accomplish self-assessment.

By reflecting on the goals and objectives of the language policy of the Council of Europe, the *Common European Framework of References for Languages* promotes development research programs aiming at incorporating updated methods and materials that could provide different categories of learners with the possibility of acquiring communication skills to meet their special needs by paying particular importance to interaction in the process of teaching and using foreign languages by evaluating the central role it plays in communication".⁴

In this way students become capable of thinking of their own communicative needs and become aware of independent foreign language learning in order to be part communicative activities. Në

Foreign language teachers are constantly confronting the demands of the time. To develop their professional skills, they have to be involved in professional development programs which aim at:

- increasing teachers' responsibility to know and respect legislation on education, especially the recent innovations of the educational reform,
- improving professional skills and competences of the teaching frame to directly increase the effectiveness of the teaching process towards successful teaching,
- increasing teachers' responsibility to necessarily know the basic concepts and scientific laws of the subject as well as their practical application in conformity with the traits of age and the classes they teach,

⁴ *Kuadri i Përbashkët Evropian i Referencave për Gjuhët*. Përkthyer nga Andromaqi Haloci.

- increasing teachers' responsibility for knowing and applying the rules of the ethics and communication at school,
- improving teachers competences to properly apply the spelling rules of the Albanian language,
- practical realization of the gained skills through concrete demonstration and especially through assessment by means of testing.

Literature

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