

# Talking the Future 2010 – 2020 CCN Foresight Think Tank

## **Languages in Education**



# Report Contributors

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# Foreword



The *CCN Foresight Think Tank* set out to identify needs and generate ideas for re-shaping languages in education over the next decade. Participants were drawn from e-learning, educational practice and administration, research, teacher training, publishing, and technology.

The process involved consideration of global forces that are rapidly driving change including:

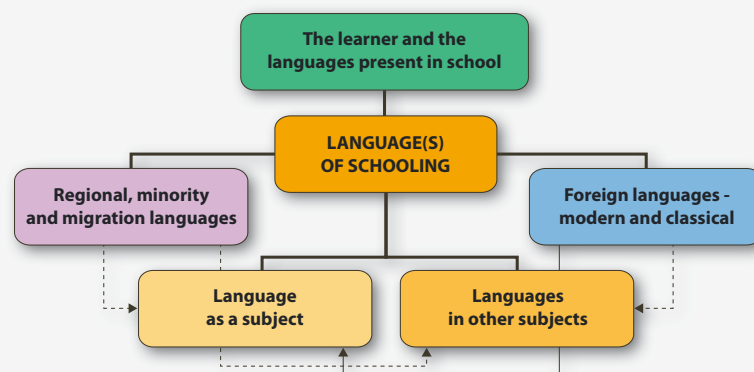
- Socio-demographic shift
- Science and technological innovation
- Re-shaped work and organisational cultures
- New knowledge and competence demands
- Imperatives of sustainable development
- Governance, safety and security
- Globalisation

The Think Tank explored present and future dynamics of languages in education identifying related issues and possible courses of action. The following factors that are driving innovation were considered:

- Neurological, cognitive, motivational and social bases of learning
- Dynamics of lifelong learning and the potential of E-Learning 2.0 / 3.0
- Value-creating networks and clusters of innovation
- Education systems and informal learning
- Human technologies that support learning
- Technology-based working and operating environments
- Private and public sector educational and resources providers

This report is intended for experts in public and private organisations who make decisions about resources and strategies relating to languages in education.

Languages in Education covers:



(Council of Europe, Platform of Resources and References for Plurilingual and Intercultural Education, 2009)

# Executive Summary

The following developments call for sectorial re-shaping of languages in education 2010 – 2020:

- We are entering an age where the added value of learning languages, linked with the development of inter-related electronic literacies, is becoming profoundly important.
- There is a need to further develop and implement language assessment and evaluation systems to better measure what is valued in language competences for the information age, and not just value what is measured.
- Language education increasingly holds the potential to have an impact on many dimensions of social and working life. There is a need to quantify the capital value resulting from enhanced language and literacy competences.
- E-Learning 2.0 / 3.0 (current/future) solutions are leading a substantial shift in educational culture requiring an education leap as significant as the generation leap.
- New insights reveal that Early Language Learning should evolve into Early Languages Learning where adoption of one additional language is shortly followed by another language.
- European educational priorities emphasise the development of key competences for lifelong learning many of which are language-based. This is increasing the importance of languages in education as a foundation for developing competence-building.
- Advanced technologies are convergent and multi-dimensional. These are creating innovative environments which provide new windows of opportunity for combining languages with other parts of the curriculum as with forms of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).
- E-Learning 2.0 / 3.0 provides new opportunities for digital mindset skills to be actively used in the planning and provision of future education. Students have a role to play in enabling teachers to become literate in digital technologies. Teacher education will increasingly need to train teachers in harnessing the expertise of younger generations by creating opportunities for students to use and share their digital competences and personal learning environments. Teachers also will need to be able to help students use their native (digital) expertise in new and more reflective ways.
- As educational practice builds on social connectivity, the development of communication competences becomes a shared responsibility across all disciplines. This requires re-drawing curricular parameters of teacher education so that every teacher supports language learning with respect to first, second, foreign, heritage, minority, regional, subject-specific, and digital languages.

# Think Tank Outcomes

## Languages & Communication

### ■ Language Positioning

Globalisation can lead to changes in the position of specific languages in our societies. This requires that educational systems adapt to newly emerging needs including adoption of appropriate teaching and learning methodologies.



This decade will witness a change in the position of the English language in European societies. This language is increasingly being considered a basic and commonplace competence. Alongside English, competence in additional languages will become more significant in enhancing social cohesion and maintaining a competitive edge. Educational providers will face increasing demand to widen opportunities for languages learning.

Changes in the positioning of languages require educational systems to adapt teaching and learning approaches at an appropriate speed. Slow adaptation leads to learners becoming disenchanted with classroom practice. Timely and appropriate adaptation can have a positive impact on readiness to learn, individual aspirations and motivation.

It is essential that a common understanding of good practice be applied in the teaching of all languages, and that necessary system-wide changes be managed in a coordinated manner.

#### **Recommended Action:**

Facilitate dialogue for sharing good practice in language teaching and learning between experts involved with different languages.

## ■ Attainment Recognition

Language learning has an impact on human experience in a holistic way – from developing individual self-esteem and identity through to knowledge of different ways to express concepts. Although useful frameworks such as the *Common European Framework of Reference* for languages exist, current language assessment and evaluation practices are frequently out of synchrony with the realities of learning and acquisition.



There are signs of *high stakes* accountability cultures being entrenched in languages education. These can lead to testing systems not recognising the full range of learner achievement, especially distinct forms of partial or domain-specific competence. Such testing systems can create artificial knowledge paradigms which are partly estranged from real-life language use. There is a need to further develop and implement systems to better measure what is valued in language competences for the information age, and *not just value what is measured*.

The newly emerging forms of personal learning spaces (environments) give renewed opportunity for the use of personalised testing frameworks. These frameworks which are increasingly in digital format enable a person to take greater interest in and responsibility for their learning. They are tools that use assessment for learning, not just for measuring outcomes. Power and responsibility is shared between the learner and others including peers, teachers and examination systems.

### **Recommended Action:**

Further develop and implement languages evaluation and assessment systems with particular respect to the use of digital platforms.



## ■ Stakeholder Awareness

The main reason most people want to learn an additional language is to be able to communicate in the language, and forge pathways into the wider world. But there are other reasons why *languages are good for you* – and for Europe.

For example, we are now witnessing an exponential increase in research findings showing the ways in which languages have a positive impact on the brain and human performance.



The 2009 European Commission study *The Contribution of Multilingualism to Creativity* reveals that learning an additional language may bring benefits which go beyond the ability to use the language itself. This meta-study of key research examines whether knowing and using more than one language has a structural or otherwise positive impact on thinking and the brain. This report has implications for why, when, and how we teach and learn languages over the next decade.

Incoming research from the neurosciences represents a breakthrough in justifying provision of a range of languages through formal and informal education; for recognising the value of maintaining heritage and other languages in daily lives; and for supporting multilingualism as an asset in capacity-building for the information age.

More people are becoming actively engaged in entrepreneurial activities, especially in small and medium-sized companies. This increasingly requires wider levels of communicative proficiency across populations. Language education increasingly holds the potential to have an impact on many dimensions of social and working life. In the last decade the human capital gained through multilingualism has not been communicated sufficiently across the broad range of stakeholders involved. These stakeholders need to enter into a knowledge-building process that enables them to quantify the capital value resulting from enhanced language and literacy competences.

### **Recommended Action:**

Take steps to further quantify and communicate the value of multilingualism as human capital.

# Learners

## ■ Quantum Generation Leap

In most European countries the digital generation is now in early adulthood. This internet generation has experienced high exposure to integrated technologies. This has an impact on how their minds process and use information. Technologically astute young people are generating their own contexts for and habits of learning.



These transverse traditional boundaries of time, space, form and geography. Young people's identities are expanded by the spaces they inhabit, and there is often a chasm between recognition of their *newly emerging mindsets* and methodologies used in languages education.

New learning environments will not simply involve adaptation of methods, materials, and evaluation procedures, but require a substantial shift in educational culture and application requiring an *educational leap* as significant as the *generation leap*.

### Recommended Action:

Share expertise between specialists in educational psychology, e-learning and language teaching with respect to learning approaches specific to the internet generation.



## ■ Early Language Learning

There is now a strong consensus among stakeholders in education that children benefit from early exposure to additional language learning. Over the last decade some countries have actively striven to introduce an additional language in primary or pre-school environments. Much research has been done on the early learning of languages, and new pathways are now opening up on the advantages of early exposure to more than two languages. Any concerns that early additive language learning would threaten first language development have not been substantiated.

Early language learning is likely to evolve into *early languages learning* through the next decade where adoption of one additional language is shortly followed by another language. Education systems need to prepare for this eventuality.



### **Recommended Action:**

Further develop the means for the introduction of additional language learning in pre-school and early primary education.

## ■ Competence-based Education

There is an ongoing shift in Europe towards competence-based education which suits the socio-political context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This involves developing competences as an amalgamation of knowledge and skills, and encourages a change in academic, vocational and professional educational goals.



The *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning in Europe Framework* (European Commission 2006) has been designed to influence educational systems and national/regional curricula. The recommended key competences for lifelong learning concern communication in the first and additional languages; mathematical, scientific and technological competences; digital competences; learning skills; interpersonal, intercultural and social competences; entrepreneurship; and cultural adaptability. More than half of these link to the importance of languages in education particularly with respect to communication and learning skills.

### **Recommended Action:**

Examine and communicate how languages in education can support the development of the European key competences across the curriculum.

## ■ Convergence & Integration

Convergence and integration will be hallmark characteristics of education and life over the next decade. Convergence usually involves breaking the 'status quo' and introducing change and innovation. This has been referred to as the *Cirque du Soleil* phenomenon where you see long-standing expertise and traditions being combined in different ways leading to the creation of new and highly innovative outcomes.



The information age is one of social, technological and educational convergence. This invites education systems to thoroughly implement long-standing educational philosophies whereby teachers work in teams, and parts of the curriculum are integrated.

There is evidence that languages should be taught in an integrated way, and not only as a separate subject. Language learning partly requires authentic content learning which fosters critical thinking and leads to the generation of meaningful communication, as opposed to *learning language just for the sake of language*. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) provides an opportunity for convergence, and the improved learning of content and language.

### **Recommended Action:**

Enable research funding to be available through the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community (2007-2013) on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

# Resources for Learning

## ■ E-Learning 2.0 / 3.0

One key feature of E-Learning 2.0 is that it involves social learning. It is primed for the use of a constructivist approach, and is already part of the connectivity lifestyle of young people in Europe. E-Learning 2.0 opens up new opportunities for achieving types of best practice in education which have been previously difficult to introduce into mainstream education. The speed and scale of change is posing significant challenges for educators.



E-Learning 1.0 involved widespread missed opportunities. Even with significant investment in the purchasing of hard and software, the development of pedagogical skills in using such equipment often lagged behind. Research shows that this investment did not have sufficient impact on school-based practice. Young people are often considered *digital natives* who outperform their teachers with respect to their ability to use the new media. Their new media skills set is a significantly under-used resource. Students are not being sufficiently supported in using this new media in new and more thoughtful ways.

With the advent of E-Learning 2.0, educational systems face even a greater challenge. Whereas E-Learning 1.0 was largely about electronic means for transmitting information, E-Learning 2.0 involves socially-constructed learning; collaborative peer learning; autonomous but shared learning; multiple learning pathways; individualized diagnostic assessment; and new multimedia literacies.

The advent of E-Learning 3.0 will start in this new decade. E-Learning 3.0 is likely to involve increasingly convergent and universally present mobile technologies that impact greatly on how information is packaged and transmitted, and on how knowledge is created. Knowledge-building will increasingly be a power sharing experience. E-learning 3.0 will also offer much greater opportunities for converging information and augmented reality. However, knowledge building and perceptions of reality will potentially be more fragmented.

Educational systems now need to explore systemic change which will manage the impact of E-Learning 2.0 / 3.0, and facilitate its integration into teaching and the formal learning process involved with languages in education.

### **Recommended Action:**

Foster cooperation between experts on integrated language learning approaches and developers of E-Learning 2.0 / 3.0 in the creation of language-supportive digital learning environments.

## ■ Human Resources

The shift towards widespread competence-building for the information age, and the speed of societal change, is placing ever greater responsibilities on teachers and others involved in education. Teaching is a demanding and at times under-appreciated profession.

The emergence of new literacies, and the importance of communication, and therefore the role of languages, is gaining in significance. There is a need to support the development of a holistic and dynamic view of what education means in the information age.

As educational practice builds on social connectivity, the development of communication competences becomes a shared responsibility across all disciplines. This requires re-drawing curricular parameters of teacher education so that all teachers support literacy development with respect to first, second, foreign, heritage, minority, regional, subject-specific, and digital languages.

Teacher education is notoriously slow to adapt to change. Traditional in-service teacher education can be a relatively ineffective means for enacting change in schools. Yet the need for swift adaptation and change is now paramount. Complex solutions need to be considered which break the *status quo*. Cross-generational inter-disciplinary and inter-organisational teamwork is one vital competence which could partly be developed through further combining initial and in-service teacher education.

The European Union requires considerable educational change within the next decade if it is to meet socio-economic and environmental challenges. This means that partners in education such as governments, universities and schools need to work together to re-think teacher professional development.



### **Recommended Action:**

Fostering the integration of initial and in-service teacher education in order to achieve cross-generational and inter-disciplinary competence-building for languages in education.



# Key Reference Coordinates

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