

# **The status of language educators**

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## *Introduction*



Project 2.1.1, *The status of language educators* (to be called the Status Project in the publication), grew out of a special event held in June 2000 in Graz. The theme of the so-called ‘Think Tank’, the first of its kind to be followed by other ones with diverse focus topics, was ‘Change in Teacher Education’.<sup>1</sup> The participants of the event (mostly representing teacher education programmes and educational authorities) gathered together to formulate a number of recommendations for future activities to be undertaken, anchored, and supported by the ECML. It would be an exaggeration to claim that any specific proposals were worded during the Think Tank. However, the team of moderators managed to present a draft framework of desirable activities which the ECML subsequently turned into specific projects to be carried out within the first medium-term programme.

The rationale behind the Status Project was a strong conviction which was voiced by Think Tank participants, and has also been confirmed later in several different fora. According to this opinion, the profession of language education and its practitioners face an undeniable lack of status (for a definition of ‘status’ see: *The low social status of language educators: concepts and perspectives*) at several levels:

- language educators have a perceived lower internal and external professional status within education compared to teachers of other, apparently higher status, subjects (e.g. maths, history);
- they (and teachers in general) have a considerably low social status in most countries in Europe, even in those countries where teachers are better paid.

## **Project mission**

Thus Project 2.1.1 was launched with a mission to draw national and international attention to the profession of language education and, even more so, to its implementers, to language teachers all over Europe.<sup>2</sup> In the summer of 2000 the forthcoming European Year of Languages in the coming year (2001) seemed a perfect opportunity to raise awareness of some professional concerns of language educators.

After the project team had been set up, it was our job to identify the main objectives of the project itself, and to make sure that they met the requirements of the Think Tank, as well as those of the ECML.

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1 The Think Tank on ‘Change in Teacher Education’ was co-ordinated by Frank Heyworth (Switzerland), its moderators were Richard Easton (UK), Péter Rádai (Hungary) and Florence Vidal (France).

2 From the onset, we have made an attempt not to use the term foreign language teachers/educators, as the term language educator, in our broadest interpretation encompasses mother tongue teachers as well.

## Project aims and objectives

On the basis of the complex set of expectations and recommendations, Project 2.1.1 has aimed:

- to increase the ‘visibility’ of the profession and of its representatives nationally and internationally;
- to identify a selection of key issues, principles and practices which are believed to contribute positively or negatively to the status of language teaching and teachers;
- to help language educators to attain a higher profile and raised self-esteem in both national and international contexts;
- to call for action to be implemented both by members of the profession and by decision-making bodies at national and international levels;
- to combine the results of all the activities into a coherent format of professional self-definition (see *Vision 1: Language Teachers’ Wonderland*);
- to recommend realistic and feasible action in national and international contexts on the basis of this self-definition and through the identification of areas in which action might be necessary for status improvement.

It can be seen from the aims listed above that the Status Project differs in nature significantly from all other projects within the first medium-term programme. It does not have a specific theme related either narrowly or broadly to language education.<sup>1</sup> The status of language educators is an extremely complex, multi-faceted phenomenon, which has more to do with economic, moral, psychological and general educational issues than with the practice of language teaching or language teacher education.

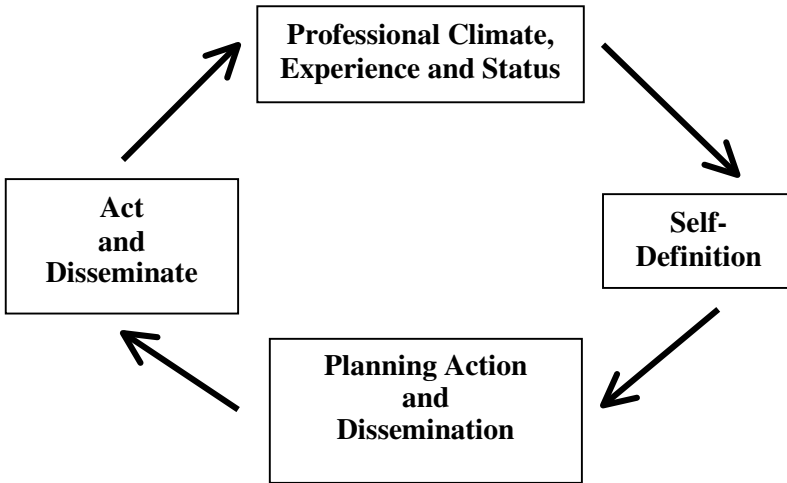
## The project cycle

At the same time, the project has had to rely primarily on the contribution of classroom practitioners and teacher educators. The contradiction on the surface can easily be dissolved. After all, it is the educational and social status of these field-workers that is at stake, they are the ones who need to identify the problem areas, the needs and directions for change. Yet, their specific, individual professional expertise has been pushed aside slightly, and other ingredients of participants’ experience have been drawn upon. In its most ambitious moments, the Status Project presupposed that a series of activities based on professional experience could yield political or, at least, policy results which will, ultimately, affect professional experience again.

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<sup>1</sup> The political nature of the project made the selection and nomination of participants for the workshops even more intriguing than in other projects, since no specific topic or expertise could be given as selection criteria.

This cyclical development process is summarised in Figure 1 below.



*Figure 1*

1. Stage one of the cycle acknowledges a certain 'Status Quo', the professional and social climate in which language educators operate.
2. Throughout the project, attempts have been made to encourage language teaching professionals to give an account of their status and to formulate a metaphorical self-definition of themselves as ever-developing learners and practitioners of the profession in the form of the Language Teachers' Wonderland document.
3. Based on some selection from the desired set of conditions of the self-definition, participants and the ECML identify certain aspects of language education, in which action to generate change could be designed and implemented. This could be achieved through the active involvement and co-operation of teachers, teacher educators, educational and political decision-makers at national and international levels.
4. Should some of the actions planned yield full or partial results, a better, more rewarding professional climate could be envisaged (more likely in local, regional or national contexts), which might lead practitioners towards more rewarding educational experience, and, preferably, an increased status.

## Main activities

In order to achieve the project aims, and to ensure that the process presented above could be promoted, the following major activities took place between spring 2001 and early 2003<sup>1</sup>, each of which will be described and analysed in more detail in further chapters of this publication.

### *April 2001–November 2001*

‘Teacher of the Week’ (TOW): interactive portrait gallery of language educators on the ECML website;

### *September 2001–December 2001*

An Internet Discussion Forum on the ECML website on 5 status-related topics which had been identified, presented and moderated by the project team;

### *December 2001*

A 3-day Central Workshop at the ECML with 25 participants from 24 countries;

### *February 2003*

A 5-day Central Workshop at the ECML with 29 participants from 26 countries.

## The structure of the publication

The organisational principles behind this publication called for a chronological approach, yet, the project team has opted for a mixed one, the division and justification of which are explained below:

*Chapter 1, ‘Status Quo’<sup>2</sup>*, offers an insight into the first year of the project activities, primarily the ‘Teacher of the Week’ and the Forum sub-projects, as well as a description of the perceived status of language educators in most member countries through the eyes of workshop participants.

*Chapter 2, ‘In medias res’*, is the most theoretical section in this book, and it provides a more thorough analysis of how language educators view their own profession. An

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1 Because Project 2.1.1 was only launched in response to the Think Tank in mid 2000, the project’s life span was considerably shorter than that of most other projects in the first medium-term programme.

2 The use of Latin words and expressions in most of the chapter titles arose, to a certain extent automatically, from the Latin origin of the word ‘status’.



article on the changing paradigm in language education, and two research reports strengthen the less scientifically gathered findings arising from other project activities.

*Chapter 3, 'Quo vadis?'*, presents a variety of documents, visions, and the rationale behind them, with the help of which the Status Project intends to contribute to the self-definition of the profession. We also give evidence of how participants identified the activities they had taken part in, as important steps in their own quest for a higher professional status.

*Chapter 4, 'Planning action for status improvement'*, is by far the shortest chapter. It attempts to present and justify the few, but well digested and explored, actions recommended by participants who were involved in the activities, and it also explains how the implementation of these actions could help the profession and its practitioners raise their educational and social status.

## The style of the publication

As far as the genre of most of the texts is concerned, perhaps the reader will find more description and narration than one would expect in a publication like this. The reason for this partly lies in the process-oriented, developmental nature of the whole project, and, partly, in the need to contextualise every activity. We believe this is the only way the outcomes can be put into the appropriate perspective.





***Chapter 1:  
The 'Status Quo'***



In this chapter we wish to present a chronological introduction to certain activities within the Status Project. However, there are several other considerations which connect the issues, the tasks planned and implemented, as well as the data gathered, other than the time factor.

## **Visibility**

Both the TOW project and the Forum intended to draw public attention to the views, perceptions, questions and daily professional activities of language educators. We envisaged an increased awareness of the profession itself, which would partly be created or, at least, supported by and through the constant presence of practitioners and their concerns on the ECML website. Admittedly, the success and the effect of such visibility-enhancing projects largely depend on the number of unsolicited and/or invited contributions, thus, the extent to which our sub-projects have reached their main goals is difficult to gauge.

## **Interaction**

Each sub-project was meant to initiate and maintain a professional dialogue of language educators of all kinds according to a pre-determined period of time. Since both activities were entirely Internet-based, the stimulus for interaction took the form of thought-provoking questions and statements, presented either by members of the project team or by participants themselves. Of the two larger-scale activities, the Forum proved to be more appropriate to keep the flow of dialogue going for a certain period, and it has also provided the team with more processable and concrete data to draw status-related conclusions from (see *Exploring constituents of status*).

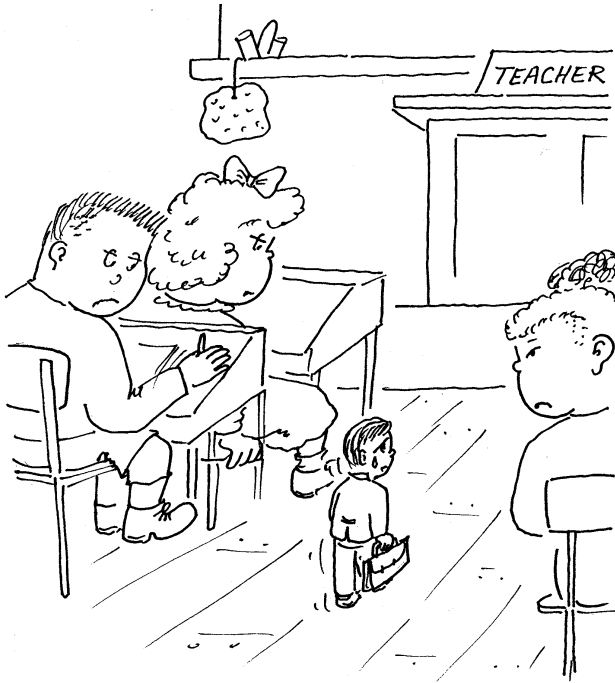
## **Informal descriptions of perceived status**

The question of current status of language educators and language education in national contexts, as well as in an international perspective, has been an on-going source for an exchange of views in the two sub-projects, before, during and after the workshops. At the same time, the team is fully aware that the data collected, processed and analysed on the basis of these processes cannot be considered hard, fully reliable research data. This, however, does not and cannot prevent us from taking this evidence very seriously, after all 'status' as a notion is an abstract one, and, consequently, its manifestations can partly be identified through the arguably subjective perceptions of the professionals who 'experience it'.

## ‘Status quo’

For the ECML and the project team, the status deficit of language education was a condition, which has been taken for granted from the year 2000 onwards. But all of us wanted to achieve much more than simply mapping the status situation in member states. For us, stating a fact also meant deciding to undertake a mission: we accepted the challenge that something should and could be done to decrease the status deficit, and to help language educators become more aware of and raise their own, as well as the profession’s, status. Sadly, how long this would take is still an unanswerable question to most of us.

Nevertheless, the cartoon below succinctly shows how clear the starting point was for everyone involved in the project.



*"My Job is challenging"...*

# Increasing visibility: the ‘Teacher of the Week’ sub-project

Derk Sassen, Gabi Matei and Mercé Bernaus

## Introduction

To draw the attention of fellow professionals and educational authorities to the importance of both foreign language education and foreign language teachers in today’s ever-changing Europe, the ECML launched the ‘Teacher of the Week’ (TOW) gallery (<http://www.ecml.at/interactive/tow.asp?t=11>). Through a web page, language educators were encouraged to introduce themselves in the most visible manner, and to allow interested web-users a glimpse into other teachers’ working background, professional experience. The basic idea was recommended by the participants of the Think Tank, and the concept was based on an ongoing feature of the ECML website, called ‘Proverb of the Day’.

By spring 2003, 55 teachers from 18 European and 3 Latin-American countries have presented themselves and are currently featured in the TOW gallery (see [www.ecml.at](http://www.ecml.at)). They were asked, partly, to provide certain personal and professional data about themselves, and to answer three key questions which were related to the main factors for job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction:

- What keeps me in the language teaching profession?
- What I am not happy about in the language teaching profession?
- My most burning question to my fellow language teachers.

When we present the most important findings of the TOW below, we must rely on output data. In other words, we only possess the responses and questions participating teachers presented in their entries when filling in the basic TOW questionnaire form (see a sample entry in *Appendix 1*).

We do not possess any data or information about whether the responses they provided, or the questions asked stimulated any kind of genuine reaction from visitors of the web page. After all, the teachers who are featured in the gallery did give their e-mail address, so the option for direct communication was available for anyone interested. The only knowledge we have is that the first 10 teachers whose entries were displayed on the ECML website reported – in a quick round of feedback – that they had hardly received any concrete responses to their ideas, thoughts and queries.

## **The data gathered from the TOW**

In the following three sections we intend to present the most characteristic responses to the two questions in the TOW, as well as the ‘most burning’ issues, queries raised by participants.<sup>1</sup>

### **What keeps me in the language teaching profession?**

“No! I’ll never get a Mercedes then”, answered a 17-year-old Dutch student to the question if he wanted to become a teacher. He was not the only one in his class to answer with a decisive no (to this rather ‘stupid question’). In fact, in the class of 26 there was only one girl really interested in teaching because she would like “to work with young people”.

Interaction with their students is clearly one of the main reasons that keeps the participating teachers in the profession. Other key reasons are the importance of language learning and new methodologies. Working conditions (e.g. salary), professional development and external perception (‘image’), defined in the forum discussions and the workshops as key factors for high status, are not mentioned at all.

The reasons language educators gave for staying in the profession can be divided into 3 categories:

- reasons related to the interaction with (young) learners;
- reasons related to the importance of language learning;
- reasons related to didactic innovations.

The three groups of reasons are interrelated and distributed over one or more answers. Should we want to identify priorities, it is the interaction and communication with learners that seems to be the most important reason keeping language educators in the profession. More than half of the answers relate to this factor.

#### ***Reasons related to the interaction with learners***

The issues mentioned by those who provided more elaborate responses to our question, cover the following key concepts, which we will explore in more detail below:

- students’ achievements;
- students’ creativity;
- reciprocity.

---

1 To maintain the authenticity of the communication, we insisted on keeping the original, verbatim quotes, even if some of them are not fully accurate.



The majority of the participants in the TOW gallery mention one, two or even all three aspects of language teaching as crucial for their job satisfaction.

Emphasising the achievement element, a participant from Greece states that language teaching is “a profession, which can offer unique experiences, e.g. see the satisfaction in the eyes of little children expressing themselves in a foreign language”. The irony in the answer of an Austrian teacher shows this key role in students’ achievements: “After 5 years teaching we may observe some results – students know how to ask for a croissant at the baker’s – it’s great!!”.

Students’ achievements and teachers’ self-perception are directly related. What keeps a participant from Sweden in the language teaching profession is seeing “students get the ‘aha’-feeling, to see them learn, have fun, get to know one another, strengthen their self-confidence, be able to express themselves, to discuss, to create and produce and be proud over their work”. Slightly more precise, a teacher from Holland states: “I love seeing the smiling faces of my students in French classes: the laughing in role play, the tears at the end of reading *Cyrano de Bergerac*, the red cheeks interviewing the ‘Parisiens’, the fun in seeing a French movie, the passion in finding the grammar errors in an error list, the confidences in their discussions. The (modest) pride of seeing the result of my enthusiasm and their efforts.”

“There are no boring days”, states a teacher from Spain to prove the creativity of pupils. She could have been a member of the think tank, established by the Dutch ministry for improving the (disastrous) image of the teaching profession. In Holland a mass media campaign has been launched with the slogan “Every day is different”. The emphasis on variety, unpredictability, which in a lot of professions is generally seen as stress factor number 1, is highlighted as a crucial reason for staying in the job among our respondents. It is directly related to working with (young) people: “The daily routine, which is never boring. Going everyday into a class means meeting students, each one with his/her own personality, contributing to the relationships among them (being myself one of the actors), facilitating experiences, which bring knowledge”.

One of the rewarding aspects of teaching languages, however demanding it may be, as one Austrian colleague claims, is the challenge “to meet different (young) adults and coach them in such a way that they are motivated to acquire and learn the English language and culture in their various representations”. Though heterogeneity, mixed-abilities or levels are often seen as a threat to successful teaching, we were glad to see that some professionals disagree with this attitude. In fact one participant emphasised this particular challenge as her reason for staying in language education: “teaching less skilled students, recognising and giving value to their improvements (even the smallest)”.

The third aspect of language teachers’ job satisfaction is reciprocity, the ‘give and take’ element in the teaching process. A participant from Greece emphasised: “I always learn something new from my students”, similarly to one of the Austrian TOW gallery members: “To have the chance to work with young people and to attract their interest, which permits to stay young and to learn from them”. As this last quote indicates, we

could probably summarise the description of the three aspects above with the one word answer that a participant from Croatia gave to the question about what keeps her in the job: “Children”.

### ***Reasons related to the importance of language learning***

The affective element and the relevance of language learning is stressed by a participant from the Slovak Republic: “I love children and teaching them new things and the foreign language gives the possibility to get to know people and gain friends in the whole world”. A similar interpretation of the role of language learning for intercultural understanding and acting in an international, multicultural environment is emphasised by a most articulate colleague from Brazil: “I love languages and young people. Since I was a child, I’ve been very lucky to learn and be in contact with many languages and belong to a multicultural ‘milieu’, which has enriched me a lot. Even though I only teach English, I can compare it to other languages, think about its impact on different people and cultures and stress how important it is to learn several languages for a better understanding of the world we live in”. Several other participants stress the importance of language learning and the role of language teachers in the learning process.

### ***Reasons related to didactic innovations***

There are no boring days in the teaching profession also because of the quick development in didactics, applied linguistics and language pedagogy, after all “it’s a profession, which is always challenging because of new approaches to teaching”. Some examples for the development in language teaching, which are important for the teachers’ job satisfaction, are enumerated by a participant from Austria: “The idea of autonomous learning (Portfolio) at various levels appeals to me to a high degree. The introduction of new technologies in language learning and teaching (language learning software and Internet resources) has offered new ways of preparing lessons and integrating the new media into my every day work”. It can be very hard to keep pace with the gradually changing professional paradigm, it inevitably comes with the job and forces us to develop, as “the new learning environment in language learning is something that students welcome and look forward to and we, as teachers, should accept it and study it and try to keep pace with it”. Sometimes innovation is highly rewarded. After years of promoting German in Holland a Dutch teacher started the organisation of a German bilingual stream in his school, the first such initiative in the Netherlands, and was honoured by the Federal Republic of Germany (“Bundesverdienstkreuz am Bande”).

## **What I am not happy about in the language teaching profession**

Analysing the second question in the TOW gallery, the most striking issue emerging from participants' contributions is status itself; they are mostly discontent about their status as language teachers and the status of the language they teach. Other important sources of dissatisfaction are the inertia of authorities and of students, as well as the lack of appropriate facilities. A few participants mention their dissatisfaction concerning intercultural misunderstanding and national contexts.

### ***Working conditions***

Teachers feel that their low salary “which is poor compared to my level of expertise” does not adequately reflect their qualifications and expertise. This seems to apply, in particular, to central and eastern Europe, where the conspicuously low salaries lead to the necessity of having more than one job, at least “two jobs to make ends meet (Czech Republic)”, in other words to moonlighting. The results of this are constant lack of time (especially to pursue personal and professional development), insufficient amount of preparation, stress and teacher burnout.

The lack of opportunities for teacher development, as a key factor of job dissatisfaction, has been described in linguistic terminology by a participant from Romania: “How easily one can become a pidginised kind of teacher (i.e. stop developing both humanly and professionally)!” Several teachers mention also the lack of facilities, computers and a shortage of adequate materials, e.g. “Not to have at my disposal all the materials in the classroom I would like to have”.

### ***External perception***

Language teaching is not always perceived as a profession, we are confronted with a widely shared attitude that ‘if one speaks a foreign language, one might as well teach it’. A TOW participant from Greece shared this downgrading view with us, confirming that “Almost everybody thinks of our work being easy, without needs of specific knowledge”.

Several featured participants state that they are unhappy about the status of the particular languages they teach, as compared to the status of other subjects and other languages. A teacher from Austria mentions that languages are “not considered very important in this type of school”, while a sad account is offered by a colleague from Holland, who laments the decreasing role of and “the minimal interest in the neighbouring language[s]”, as well as the overrated presence of English.

### ***Authorities' attitude***

One colleague from Cyprus sums up this theme by criticising authorities for their “resistance to change”. The opposite attitude, the implementation of innovative approaches without consulting the teachers, hardly sounds unfamiliar to most of us: for a Dutch colleague “The continuing and not always deeply reflected changes by the ministry of education” add to the factors contributing to her professional dissatisfaction.

### ***Students' motivation***

Students' motivation has already been listed and explained as a constituent of teachers' job satisfaction. However, it seems to be an equally decisive factor for teachers' job dissatisfaction, as well as a key issue in the third part of the TOW gallery, that of the most burning questions to colleagues. Several participants complain about “the increasingly growing lack of interest of the pupils to have contact with books and literature in general”, and towards the learning of languages, in particular: “Children are not aware of the importance of learning a foreign language nowadays”.

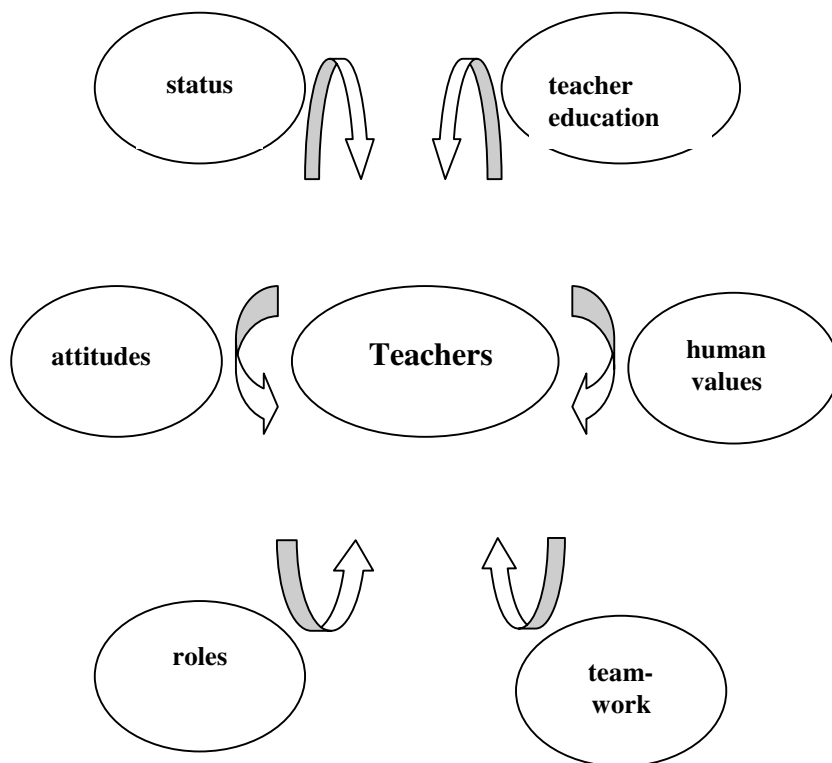
### **My most burning question to my fellow language teachers**

The questions raised by the teachers can be classified in three main categories which are related to:

- teachers (their status, in-service and pre-service teacher education, attitudes, roles, team-work, human values);
- students (motivation);
- didactics, methodology and new technologies.

### ***Language teachers' status***

The questions concerned with language educators themselves may be distributed in the categories shown in Diagram 1.



*Diagram 1: Teachers*

As for teachers' status, a participant from Greece wonders why the government does not give teachers opportunities to raise their status, helping them at the same time to develop their competence, while a teacher from Romania asks, "Why aren't teachers treated as well as other professional categories?". This question contains more social connotations than the previous one.

Another question related to language educators' social prestige, or rather to the lack of it, was introduced by a Spanish teacher, who states: "It is obvious that at present teaching and teachers are left aside by society in general. Why do you think this is so and what do you suggest for a change?". He did not get an answer, but it seems that language educators worry about their social status because "teachers are left aside by society". Educating the future generations places a lot of responsibility on teachers, because the future of any society depends, to a large extent, on the educational model its citizens have received in their primary, secondary or tertiary level education. Nevertheless, it can be observed that governments or the society in general seldom devote the efforts and/or provide the resources which are needed to educate citizens efficiently and, consequently, to improve teachers' conditions of work.

### ***Language teachers' attitudes***

Language educators are very conscious that there are many factors related to teachers' attitudes towards the learners, the acquisition of languages, the status of languages, their own profession. Such factors, if they are positive, may also help to raise language teachers' status. A participant from Bulgaria shows us an example of language teachers' openness towards the learners and the acquisition of languages. Her series of questions also manifests her (our?) willingness to engage in further learning and development, when she asks a series of questions: "Do you sometimes feel like starting learning a new foreign language just to try to step into the shoes of your students? To make sure you have not forgotten what it is like to be 'on the other side'? And if yes, are you fair enough to admit that some of the disadvantages you encounter are due to other reasons than the students themselves? And are you prepared to blame yourself for that?"

Not all language educators have a high esteem for their own profession as it may be shown subliminally in the following question raised by a participant from Greece: "Is it the students or we? (open to various interpretations)" or in this one: "Any recipe for the 'burn out' phenomenon?" However, others are more positive because they ask for advice to improve their teaching, as a teacher from The Netherlands does: "How do you keep being inspired and how do you enthuse?"

### ***Human values***

Our Brazilian colleague wonders if language teachers feel the need to promote human values and asks how responsible language educators feel socially: "What steps have you taken in your language classes to promote co-operation, tolerance, respect towards the other and [towards] individual development? How responsible do you feel socially?". There was a discussion on that subject in the forum and the participants agreed that human values could and should be promoted through language education.

### ***In-service and pre-service teacher training***

Some participants in the Teachers' Gallery raised questions related to in-service and pre-service teacher training, as the following ones asked by a teacher from Italy<sup>1</sup>: "Thinking of your initial training, are you happy with the way in which you were prepared to become a teacher? Which do you think should be the components of a good INSET course for experienced Primary school teachers of modern foreign languages?". From Romania another question on in-service teacher education was raised: "Are you satisfied with the general offer of courses and seminars in your school? Do you think you should get the possibility of developing your abilities in other directions?"

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1 Readers should bear in mind that in Italy, pre-service teacher education as such does not exist, teachers acquire their training while in their jobs, through large-scale in-service teacher education programmes.

Teacher training may be seen as a way for language teachers to be promoted with the prospect of a possible increase of their professional status.

### ***Students' motivation***

Students' motivation is the star question. The only questions raised in the Teachers' Gallery referring to students are the ones related to students' motivation. A participant from Spain asks directly how other teachers can motivate their students. A teacher from France wonders what kind of methods could be used for the same purpose and a Spanish teacher asks how those students can be motivated who have no interest at all in acquiring a second or foreign language. Teachers from the Czech Republic query, more specifically, how to motivate students to make them speak and keep them speaking in the target language, and wonder about how teachers can maintain the necessary level of motivation.

The relatively large number of questions related to student motivation seems to show that this is an issue that worries most language teachers.

### ***Didactics and methodology***

Some of the language educators' worries about didactics and methodology, as expressed in the TOW, concern the following issues:

- how to assess speaking skills;
- how important a good accent is;
- what methods are used at colleges to teach French as a foreign language;
- what materials and methods are used to teach handicapped learners;
- how learners may interact with native speakers of the language being taught;
- how the target language may be taught in 50 minutes with 25 students per class;
- how to create good learning habits;
- what a language class will be like in 20 years time.

Some of the issues above relate, mainly, to specific areas of classroom management. They inquire how fellow-professionals solve certain problems, how they choose the appropriate method for their students, or they quite concretely look for the best way to assess students' oral skills. Responses, solutions to other questions above are expected to be provided by the educational authorities, by reducing the number of students per class, to mention at least one example.

### ***The use of new technologies***

The most notable questions about the use of new technologies are the following:

- how far the technologies may help teachers to promote co-operation, tolerance, respect towards the other and towards individual development;
- how motivating and stimulating the use of video may be;
- how new technologies may help students to pay more attention to the language they are studying;
- whether new technologies are a privilege for only a chosen few;
- whether we are creating “cyber-citizens”.

The questions raised within this topic are interesting, and need answers which every language teacher should find for themselves, while using these new technologies in their courses or classrooms. Nowadays, and in the future, ICT is expected to act as a tool that each language teacher could use in class. The educational authorities should make a concentrated effort to provide the tools and the training for teachers and learners to enable them to become effective appliers of the tools for the benefit of learning and teaching in and out of class.

### **Overall conclusions**

We wish to highlight the main conclusions which we could draw from the reactions:

- job satisfaction is mainly based on ‘internal’ factors which are related to the social, emotional and creative sides of the profession;
- job dissatisfaction is clearly related to ‘external’ factors, identified as the key constituents for high or low status: conditions of employment, the external perception of language educators and factors connected to professional development;
- the questions raised for colleagues are again mainly related to the internal factors, above all, to student motivation.

These findings are also confirmed by the questionnaire-based survey amongst approximately 60 language educators, which was conducted in Project 2.1.2 on the profile of language teachers (see the publication “Heyworth Frank, *Facing the future: Language educators across Europe*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe / European Centre for Modern Languages, 2003”). The significant overlap between the data gathered in a formal questionnaire-based survey in Project 2.1.2 and through some guided, but rather informal, inquiry in the TOW sub-project strengthens the main findings and conclusions, no matter what perspectives are used to analyse them.



# **Exploring constituents of status: moderated Internet discussion forum**

## **Introduction**

In order to be able to establish and maintain a focused, though varied, professional dialogue in the Forum on the status of language educators, the first step was to identify what we called the key constituents of status.

By ‘constituents’ we meant a common core of factors which could exert a positive or negative influence on the educational and social status of language educators. The themes were developed after some negotiation among representatives of the profession but were never considered as if they had been carved in stone. In fact, one purpose of the Forum was to see which factors would be confirmed as undeniable key ingredients of status and which would be questioned and rejected. The five topics launched in September 2001 were the following (the choice of each topic will be justified in detail at the beginning of the specific section below):

Topic 1: Self- and External Perception of the Status of Language Educators;

Topic 2: Employment Conditions and Practices;

Topic 3: Language Educators’ Values and Beliefs;

Topic 4: Professional Expertise and Development;

Topic 5: Action for Status Improvement and Maintenance.<sup>1</sup>

Once the topics had been identified, contributions were invited to engage participants in an exchange of ideas on key issues, principles, beliefs, accomplishments, practices, anxieties, concerns related to the themes, or connected to other themes recommended by contributors. The envisaged outcome of the discussion was the identification of a commonly accepted set of constituents of teacher status, which was to be synthesised and disseminated in national and international contexts.

The data and conclusions presented in the four sections below, each of which describes one of the first four topics of the Forum in detail, were all thoroughly processed and exploited in the two workshops. Thus, the forum discussion has served as a firm foundation for the Wonderland metaphorical self-definition, and for all the actions recommended by the team and participants of the Status Project.

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<sup>1</sup> Topic 5 was virtually ignored within the Forum, thus it will not be dealt with separately in this publication.



## **Forum 1: Internal and external perceptions of the status of language educators**

**Gabi Matei**

Reading the contributions to the forum in this thread of ‘perceptions of language teacher status’, there seems to be general agreement that teachers, and language educators are no exception, suffer from a status deficit in society.

Status is, first of all, a matter of image, of perception, be it internal (self-image) or external (how others see us). In what follows, we shall analyse how these internal and external perceptions have been identified and discussed by the participants in the Forum on the ECML site.

### **Forum threads**

Initially, we proposed 4 threads in this area of the forum:

1. In your opinion, are there any differences between a language teacher’s social status as compared to the status of teachers of other subjects? If yes, what do you think generates such differences?
2. I feel angry when I see the pity on people’s faces when I say ‘I’m a language teacher’.
3. Language teachers are of course not as clever as teachers of maths. Maths and physics are masculine subjects, whereas languages are feminine subjects.
4. Languages in the school curriculum are perceived as a waste of time and teachers in public education as having a poor command of the language they teach.

Eventually, two more threads were added by participants:

5. How to encourage students to become teachers?
6. Learning science versus learning languages.

The participants in the forum mainly discussed the symptoms of language teachers’ low status, evinced in the thread questions, as well as the causes and the consequences of this situation, in their respective working and living contexts.

The main ideas that have transpired from the forum have been that:

- language educators have, in general, a low social status;
- low status is due to various factors, the most important being the low salaries they receive;
- the low status of language teachers has important negative consequences not only on teacher satisfaction and commitment, but also on the educational system.

## **The low social status of language educators: concepts and perspectives**

### ***Status definition***

Position or standing in society; rank, profession; relative importance (Oxford Dictionary)

### ***Perceptions of status***

Language teacher status, an otherwise very complex notion, seems to be mainly a matter of image, namely, of how we, language educators are perceived by society and by ourselves. In other words, our status is a matter of:

*External perception:* How are we perceived by society (community, parents, other teachers)? How are language educators' reputations portrayed in the public eye?

*Internal perception:* How do we see ourselves, either as individual educators or as a profession? How do we portray ourselves in our own eyes?

Is there a discrepancy between the two types of perceptions? What about various geographic or economic contexts? Or the different languages we teach? These were the main questions that were debated by the participants in the Forum.

### ***Status discrepancy***

Soder (1990) argues that there is a high level of *status discrepancy* in the teaching profession (a measure of the relationship between perceived self-value and perceived valuing by others). In other words, teachers believe that their work is important but they also believe that they are not accorded the high status they deserve. Such statements raise important questions:

What do teachers want:

- The *prestige* associated with the 'real' professions, or do they desire the *money* normally associated with these professions, or *both*?

- Are teachers sincere in arguing that elevated professional status will lead to better schools, better students, and a better society?

### **Different subjects: different status?**

The general agreement was that there are differences between teachers of different subjects, although they are unjustified by the quality of teacher preparation and skills, and may only have economic reasons (e.g. the job market, i.e. the work opportunities later on). In spite of the fact that we live in an age of communication, languages are still seen as “a soft option” at school, a teacher said.

As to which teachers are supposed to be cleverer, those of sciences or those of languages, participants agreed that it is a false question. “I think this discussion has no sense”, wrote one participant, as teachers need different skills, different motivations and different types of intelligence in order to teach their respective subjects.

However, most contributors agreed that there persists a prejudice in certain situations in this respect. One participant even made the moot point that “maybe it’s more important for a teacher to be a good person, to have enthusiasm and to transmit it. What do we want, future perfect mathematicians or future responsible and kind persons?” We think both are needed, and they are not mutually exclusive.

### ***Languages – a waste of time?***

As was to be expected, all participants disagreed with this statement, although they were aware that such a prejudice may still exist in certain contexts. The situation is somewhat paradoxical: everyone, especially parents, seems to agree that foreign languages have a particular importance nowadays, in the age of communication and of the Internet, and, on the contrary, language classes are constantly reduced, to the point of becoming eliminated and transferred into the extracurricular areas.

### ***“People pity language teachers”***

That people pity language teachers has not been refuted by participants, however, there were two interesting trends in the discussion.

On the one hand, a student teacher was very bitter about the shameless underpayment of teachers: “The first day I came to the university, the dean told us that he congratulated us for choosing culture instead of money ... Just to make a joke about it, I think that the dean of the Economics Department congratulated his students for choosing money instead of culture ...”.

On the other hand, an experienced teacher stated that “people who want to become teachers never do it with the thought of becoming wealthy. Therefore, these people who pity us do so based on their own definitions of success.” He then agreed that

teachers are under-appreciated and therefore have lost authority and respect. However, he feels “happy that so many people continue to go into this profession and work so hard despite the drawbacks”. One of the student teachers disagreed, finding “that very few idealists want to become teachers these days, given their status and salary ...”.

## **Factors or causes determining the low status of language educators**

Several causes for the low status of teachers can be identified and classified as:

- economic/financial;
- working conditions;
- social;
- historical/political.

### ***Economic and financial factors***

By far the most important cause of low status is considered to be teachers’ notoriously low salaries. But then, teachers also have low salaries because their job is a low-prestige job – this seems to be a vicious circle. Brunton (1995) underlines teachers’ singular position in their quest for status and appropriate salaries:

Teachers are publicly ridiculed for interest in and concern for their salaries Every other segment of the society is perfectly aware that ‘you get what you pay for.’

(Brunton 1995)

### ***Working conditions***

Somebody jokingly said that “Teaching is not just a job. It’s a stress test.” Other participants in the forum mostly complained about the lack of technology in their schools, as well as about the number of classes to teach and the lack of time to pursue professional development.

### ***Social factors***

Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) observed how the lack of understanding, on the part of society, of what teaching really entails contributes to the lowering of teachers' social status:

The fact that many teachers feel a strong commitment to teaching does not mean that they identify proudly with their occupation. The social devaluation of teaching affects all teachers.

(Feiman-Nemser and Floden 1986:511)

Participants in the Forum wrote that the more freedom and respect they have been shown or given, the better they have worked, and the more they have achieved.

### ***Historical/political factors***

Men have tended to turn away from the teaching profession and to seek more status-enhancing careers than that of a teacher.

The prevailing view is of teaching as women's work (starting with the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century). This association has affected the status of teaching and the self-image of teachers.

(Feiman-Nemser and Floden, 1986:511)

## **Consequences of language educators' low status**

From participants' contributions in the Forum, the following negative consequences of the low status of language educators could be highlighted:

- fewer people want to become teachers;
- increased lack of commitment in teachers;
- the relative low academic ability of those who would enter the field;
- teachers leaving the profession for more lucrative jobs;
- teacher dissatisfaction;
- little or no authority, leading to lack of respect, lack of discipline even pity;
- poorer professional development and preparation;
- negative consequences on teachers' (and students'!) values and beliefs.

An interesting discussion ensued in the forum, where changing the mentality of society, learning communities, and lifelong learning for teachers were suggested as possible actions.

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## **Forum 2: Employment conditions and practices**

**Derk Sassen**

### **Introduction**

In this section of the ECML Forum on the status of language educators we discussed the impact of the employment conditions of language educators on their professional and social status. The main goal was to see how language educators perceive the relationship between their employment conditions and their professional and social status.

We assumed that in regular education language educators would have the same employment conditions as their colleagues of the other subjects. Therefore it seemed very likely that the discussion would also generate results on the status issue in general without being language educator specific. To avoid this, we tried to trigger the discussion by describing three hypothetical situations where the language educators did work among other conditions than their colleagues.

The status of language educators is highly determined by the perceived relevance of language education in society. Where it concerns the terms of employment of language educators (e.g. salary, contracts), language education is as relevant as sciences are. Where the curriculum is concerned, mathematics and physics are often valued higher. Some European countries are planning a 'competence reward', a bonus related to skills and effort. We were wondering whether such an initiative would affect the (professional and social) status of language educators.

The first two threads within the topic were triggered by the following two, slightly thought-provoking statements:

- Mathematics and physics are much more important for a student's career than foreign languages. It's not fair that teachers of these subjects do not earn more than language teachers.
- Language educators who fail in teaching the student to communicate in the foreign language, should be fired; they are not doing what they are being paid for.

## **Main conclusion**

The contributions show first of all that our assumption was right that in regular education language educators do have the same employment conditions as their colleagues of the other subjects. At least we did not receive any contribution stating otherwise.

The sharpness of the reactions to the hypothetical change of working conditions in the three described situations show that language educators do relate directly to their status in the context of their conditions of employment. The sharing of the same working conditions for all professionals in the teaching profession is crucial in a sense that a change would directly affect the status of languages and language learning in general (and therefore also the status of language teaching professionals).

## **The most popular thread: the crucial role of language learning**

The theme which triggered by far the most reactions was the one relating to the role and significance of language learning. Since all members of the project team are involved in language teacher education, we were extremely proud that several contributions came from student teachers of college and university teacher training programmes. Some trainees contributed to the forum with very articulate statements concerning the importance of language learning:

### **Language education v. other subjects**

The quotes below indicate that language educators, including those teaching the mother tongue, do act as indispensable agents, without whom learners' abilities to become effective communicators – regardless of the content of that communication – could hardly be developed.

Don't forget that your engineers will only be able to build their highways and bridges or whatever, till the borders of their own country, after that it's up to everybody.

Languages are essential for communication; if people could not communicate their knowledge, how will we be able to teach and learn? How would communities be able to exchange their scientific and technological discoveries and advances?

I don't think languages are less important than Maths and Physics. We are in the European Union, and therefore, if we want communicate with people from other countries, it's necessary to know a foreign language to be able to establish communication. If we don't know languages, even our mother tongue, we can't express anything, not even Maths. That's why language, in general, is so important.

## **Languages in support of intercultural learning**

Several contributors underlined the importance of language learning for intercultural education:

Any teacher knows that education is not just teaching and acquiring academic knowledge. Teaching  $1+1=2$  is too easy. A child's education must include the knowledge about other cultures, about other views, a child must know what other children from other parts of the world think. Learning languages opens our your mind to other, different cultures and other, different points of view. If we only know our own culture and our own way of living, we're losing the rest of the world

Languages are as important as any other subject, or maybe even more significant in the multilingual and multicultural societies we are living in.

## **Overlaps**

Apparently, despite the clear boundaries and differences between the forum topics, most of the statements above relate very strongly to the internal and external perception of language education and educators, which was the key issue of Topic 1 of the Forum.



## **Forum 3: Language educators' values and beliefs**

**Mercé Bernaus**

### **A theoretical framework of values and beliefs**

We chose this rather broad topic because, in our opinion, teachers' beliefs about their jobs may help to raise or to drop the status of the profession. Teachers' practice is mainly influenced by their values and beliefs about their profession.

A primary source of teachers' classroom practice is the belief systems that they build up over time. They bring with them to the classroom:

- attitudes;
- values;
- expectations;
- information;
- theories;
- assumptions about teaching and learning.

Richards (1998) classifies teachers' beliefs in the following way:

- beliefs about learners;
- beliefs about teaching;
- beliefs about themselves.

These beliefs affect the relationship between teacher and students. If the teacher views students as resisters, raw material or receptacles, s/he will dominate that relationship. If the students are seen by the teacher as partners, individual or democratic explorers, the role of the students will be much more active in the class (Williams and Burden, 1997).

Teachers' beliefs about learners may affect their beliefs about teaching and consequently their methodological preferences. Gow and Kember (1993) suggest that most approaches to teaching/learning can be subsumed under one of the following headings:

- a quantitative increase in knowledge;
- memorization;

- the acquisition of facts, procedures, etc. which can be retained and/or used in practice;
- the abstraction of meaning;
- an interpretative process aimed at the understanding of reality;
- some form of personal change.

Although most methods used in language teaching appear to belong to several overlapping categories, the views of the majority of teachers would incorporate a mixture of these.

To conclude this short theoretical introduction, we wish to point out that teachers' views of teaching mirror their view of themselves, and their teaching behaviour reflects their essence as a person, which may affect the social relationship with their students.

## **Language educators' views on values and beliefs**

The contributions to the forum, related to language educators' views on values and beliefs, show that the participants are more interested in internal than in external rewards. However, some of them express dissatisfaction with the role of families in education, and with the small support they receive from the other agents that should be involved in the educational process, and, last but not least they are discontent with society in general.

### **Forum threads**

The following threads were put online by the moderators:

- In your opinion, what makes a teacher change his/her beliefs?
- Teachers follow their own beliefs about teaching/learning in spite of the official curriculum or the textbooks they are using.
- A teacher's behaviour in the classroom reflects his/her own human values.

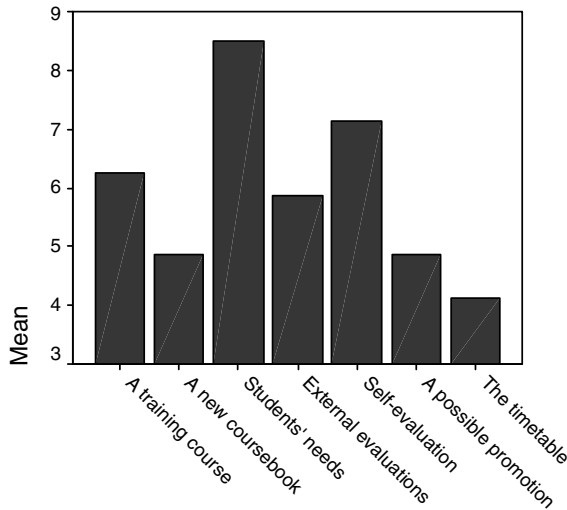
Apart from the three threads above, moderators and participants started new ones in the forum.

***Thread 1: What makes teachers change their beliefs?***

To answer that question, participants in the forum were asked to rate from 1 to 10 (10 means the most influential) each of the following items:

- A teacher training course
- A new course-book
- Their students’ needs and interests
- External evaluation results
- Self-evaluation
- A possible promotion
- The timetable
- Others (specify)

The results are shown in the following diagram:



*Diagram 1: What makes teachers change their beliefs?*

Participants in the forum stated that their students’ needs and a self-evaluation of their performance are the main causes that can make them change their beliefs. Both statements are related to intrinsic values of the profession. Other opinions also related to intrinsic values of the profession were expressed in the following quotes:

I think both a good teacher training course alongside self-evaluation and external evaluation, in a positive and developmental environment over a period of time, so that changes can take place.

Teacher's attitudes about the programme (in other words, evaluation of the teaching programme, the effectiveness of a programme etc.)

None the less, other participants' opinions were related to external rewards, which may contribute to their changing beliefs, such as:

- their relationship with teacher staff;
- the socio-economic factors of the region;
- the socio-economic factors of the students;
- the students' characteristics;
- how the teacher perceives changes which are taking place in our society together with the political educational reforms.

***Thread 2: Teachers follow their own beliefs about language teaching/learning, in spite of the official curriculum or the textbooks they are using.***

Participants in the forum seem to agree with the topic statement. They claimed that their performance is mainly influenced by their beliefs in how students learn, and they maintain that they should follow their own beliefs concerning teaching/learning in order to be competent professionals. They also declared that teachers' attitudes influence students' attitudes toward learning, and consequently those have an important effect on students' language achievement.

The following quotations summarise some of the participants' opinions about that thread:

The textbook chosen reflects, in great measure, the teacher's approach; even when the textbook has been 'officially' enforced, the teachers will organise and censure it according to their values and beliefs.

Teacher beliefs are strongly related to their attitudes and those, in turn, influence the students' attitudes toward the learning situation.

It seems that it may not be a simple matter of using effective teacher strategies, but what matters are the teacher's beliefs in those strategies that have the biggest impact on student attitudes, and ultimately, on their achievement.

***Thread 3: Teachers' behaviour in the classroom reflects their own human values***

This is the thread that received the most contributions and, all in all, the participants considered that human values should be transferred to learners one way or another.



They complained about parents' incompetence in transferring values to their children nowadays and about the helplessness that some teachers feel when facing some students' misbehaviour. Nevertheless, the participants insisted that educators should play an important role in teaching values, together with families.

We would like to illustrate the interest and motivation to transmit values with the following quotes:

Any person in charge of teaching something is also responsible for presenting contents together with values.

Above all, a teacher has to be an example for the students. It is sure that learners will get something from the teacher's behaviour.

Language teachers, as well as other teachers, cannot avoid reflecting their own human values when teaching, as they are linked to the way each one acts.

Language teachers can help students to open their minds, in order to live all together in tolerance, learning from each other.

There is a very important role teachers play, related to values, that I would call 'universal values'. Values like respect for everybody, listening to all kinds of people, developing a co-operative attitude etc. must be transmitted by the teacher in his/her class.

Complaints about the role of families' in teaching values, and the support needed from other educational agents, were expressed in the following terms:

Families are no longer educators (or if they are, it is just to a lesser extent), there must be a new educator role which is nowadays assumed by what used to be a teacher.

I wonder what the boundaries of a teacher nowadays are, and to what extent should teachers play the role of educators alone. If the latter goes on and on, we'll be facing a different kind of education that will have to cover many other fields and therefore will somehow affect the whole education system and the way we teach and what we teach.

We need some help from the other agents who should also be in charge of children's education (parents, tutors, etc.) in order to work together in the same direction and more efficiently.

#### ***Thread 4: Cultural values are not worth teaching***

Participants all reacted to this thread. They considered that language cannot be learnt separately from the culture that any language represents. Many of them stated that language and culture go together: "Language is part of a cultural identity, therefore it cannot exist or be taught independently of culture". Other participants claimed that learning languages and culture may help to value students' own culture and other people's culture, as the following participants' quotations show:

Students may think that cultural values have nothing to do with them, but in fact by learning other languages they may become aware of the cultural values embodied in it,

and this can help to sharpen their criticism and awareness of the cultural values within which they live.

The approach is not by refusing one culture and saying another (usually mine) is a better one, but allow the interaction between them, allowing change to take place.

## Conclusions

Contributions to the forum show similar results to the results obtained in the questionnaires we delivered to the participants in the workshops held at the ECML in December 2001 and February 2003. (see *Beliefs of workshop participants about their career values and job rewards* in Chapter 2).

Participants in Forum 3 emphasised the intrinsic aspects of teaching and education. They insisted that students' needs and interests, respect, tolerance and human values are the most influential factors of their belief systems. These internal aspects related to education were attached much more relevance than extrinsic aspects of their work, such as salary or opportunities for promotion.

The new threads that the participants contributed to the forum were also much more related to intrinsic values of teaching and education than to the extrinsic rewards of the profession. Besides, the large number of contributions in Thread 3, related to human values, is also a good example of the interest shown by the participants in the intrinsic values of the profession.

Thus, we may conclude that the status of language educators related to teachers' values and beliefs reflects the vocational side that our profession still has and is proud of. Yet, a number of worries still prevail:

- the new role of the teacher/educator;
- parents' or tutors' role and their implications to children's education;
- educational policies;
- intercultural (in)tolerance.

Part of these worries might be mitigated if, as Kohonen (1999) suggests, teacher autonomy, the moral nature of teaching, and a collegial culture in school, were better promoted:

The emerging concept of teacher professionalism emphasises teacher autonomy and the moral nature of teaching. Professionalising teaching involves a new collegial culture in school. It involves a commitment by teachers to their own learning and the learning of others.

(Kohonen, 1999: 293)

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## **Forum 4: Professional expertise and development**

**Péter Rádai**

### **Rationale**

In this forum we wished to explore the complex topic of life-long professional learning of language educators, how professional development and educational/social status exert influence on each other during the career of language teachers. We expected the discussion to touch upon the direct and indirect relationships between pre- and in-service teacher education programmes and real classroom or school experience. In the end one of the themes fairly well received by fellow-professionals was that of the value of formal and informal learning through communication between fellow professionals. Participants were invited to interpret notions like professionalism, commitment, success and failure, some of the key ingredients of the presence or absence of a teacher's professional and social status.

### **The threads**

Originally four threads were launched, however, the interest of participants in the discussion focused on three of them only:

1. Can a language educator's profile or status be measured in developmental terms or is it only the acquired certificates, qualifications and/or titles that matter?
2. Is a teacher's commitment to professional development sufficiently known, acknowledged and respected by colleagues within and outside the language department?
3. Language teachers are often viewed as the creative innovators in education. Does this – often stereotypical – image promote their status or works against them?

## **The discussion**

### ***Threads 1 and 2: The value of professional development***

The responses from forum participants cover questions 1 and 2 as if they were more or less the same, after all they are very closely linked. There was a fair amount of agreement between colleagues that the amount of energy, time, material investment going into, as well as, the growth resulting from professional development is hardly ever respected by colleagues, management or parents. Even other, less committed language teachers “who do not have the same interest or energy, may resent the fact that others are at the leading edge and would feel their status threatened”.

Virtually everyone agreed that our profession needs to develop more effective public relations skills, which is one of the key goals of the whole Status Project. We would need to make our work known by “showing it to others” but we would also need to “listen to others, share information, build together. There must be an effort on both sides – support on the management’s side by providing teachers with time and money to develop their experience, to do action research and on the teachers’ side to commit themselves, to risk and to expose their ideas.”

According to a more inward view, which was endorsed by several colleagues, professional development must be, primarily, recognised “by yourself, because you do developmental courses and programmes to develop yourself as a teacher for yourself, for the school and for the students”. Thus, no one would deny that professional development “is a profoundly individual gain, as well as the gain of one’s students and one’s school. But I don’t think it’s a status gain. It should be.” Gabi Matei’s research respondents also confirmed, that teachers’ status “is in no way altered by how much they develop professionally”.

### ***Thread 3: The controversial ‘creative innovator’ image***

We were aware that the statement we used was controversial enough in itself, and the responses more or less confirmed this perception. At the same time, the respondents never questioned whether language educators are often considered as pioneers of pedagogical innovation. The core of the debate was what impact this widely accepted view has on the status of language teachers.

Interestingly, the majority of participants felt that “not only are they [language educators] viewed as creative innovators but also as a little bit crazy, restless and completely disconnected”. The debate turned towards resistance to change, when one colleague stated: “very few colleagues come to them to ask about their experience or advice, because they are basically more conservative and cannot see what languages could help them with maths, for instance, or because they do not approve of such changes in their everyday life and do not want their everyday routine changed or, simply, because [...] they’re not committed to sharing and growing”.

Another example was presented to show how the ‘innovator role’ may backfire. When “they bring these new ideas to school, especially the new methods, which, to a large extent, cut across hierarchies and challenge the structure and certain habits and routine, well, the reaction is not very favourable and they are viewed either like show-offs, plain crazy or utopians”. A conclusion drawn from the shared experience claimed that the “‘creative innovator’ status – if it exists at all – actually deteriorates our status instead of raising it. I am wondering whether we present ourselves effectively or sometimes create the wrong impression unintentionally!?”.

On a more positive note, central and eastern European countries have shown a good example. First, considerable foreign and national material and human resources had been invested into language education, and the newly trained staff was then used, on a large scale, in the training of non-language specialists, without leaving negative aftertastes.

## **Conclusion**

Individual efforts in professional development do not appear to be collectively appreciated, thus, one of the ways forward could be to initiate more collaborative types of development procedures, in which teachers representing a variety of subjects unite for the benefit of institutional growth. Successful examples of such co-operation are referred to in the forum as well. Whatever the investment, the consensual view suggests that the newly acquired knowledge, expertise and/or experience should be better communicated or even ‘marketed’ in and outside the educational setting in order to exert the maximum effect possible.

## **True commitment**

We would like to end this section with a rather poetic quote by Barbara Dieu from Brazil, who turned out to be an exceptionally active and reflective contributor in the forum. At one point in the discussion, she made the following remark to prove how the internally driven commitment of underpaid, underprivileged (language) educators overrides all material obstacles, despite the lack of recognition by the society:

As to money, well... I guess that as we are expected to do our job out of nobility ... people do not care much about how well we are paid ... they take us for granted and know we will do a good or at least reasonable job anyhow ... and we will ... because for most of us ... money counts but not as much as some values most people leave in their closets and only wear in ‘grand gala’. And it is exactly for this reason we do not earn more and do not have a ‘status’. We do not have ‘grand galas’ ... we wear them everyday in class.





# **Glimpses of the status of language educators in Europe: opinions of workshop participants**

**Gabi Matei**

## **Introduction**

Far from claiming to be an extensive and rigorous analysis of the status of language teachers in Europe, this sub-chapter simply presents an enumeration of the brief descriptions provided by the participants in the two workshops of this project. As such, it is not the result of a large-scale survey on language educator status but simply the views of the participants in the two workshops. Their views may be subjective, other professionals may have given very different perspectives, yet, we have decided to include the list, as it does offer glimpses and insights into the status situation in a large number of European countries.

## **Description of status in member states**

Participants' views are very slightly edited, but their original discourse has been kept, virtually intact, in order to show their subjectivity. The entries are arranged in alphabetical order, according to the names of the countries.

### **Country**

### **Workshop participants' opinions**

#### **Andorra**

In my country, the status of language teachers is positive. Andorra is a border state, in which tourism is one of the main resources. Thus, one needs to know several languages in order to provide good services to tourists. I would say some languages have more prestige than others. In Andorra, children can become bilingual or trilingual very early (Catalan, Spanish and French). We also have media in the three languages. We are lucky to live in a multicultural and multilingual country.

#### **Armenia**

There is a kind of discrepancy between the ways the educators (language teachers included) are treated. On one hand, they are doubtlessly respected and appreciated, but on the other hand they don't enjoy all those, let's say, benefits they deserve to enjoy.

**Austria** Teachers have a rather low status, although most people envy them (free time, privileges they don't deserve, etc.). I would say language teachers have a relatively higher status than science teachers.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina** Although the incomes are generally low, more and more people learn foreign languages (mostly English), so if you can work overtime you always have a chance to earn extra money. But this is not a case with history or geography teachers.

**Bulgaria** They are much more respected now than before, but unfortunately they are very poorly paid. They can work in international projects and they can teach private lessons, for instance. The present situation – Bulgaria is a candidate for EU – benefits the language teachers, because society realises that knowing foreign languages is obligatory to communicate with people from other countries.

**Croatia** All teachers are important for the educational system, not just foreign language ones. Not that much low social status, but low income is what makes foreign language teachers give private tuition, do translations and work as interpreters in their free time. A lot of non-teachers (people who speak English) teach English.

**Cyprus** First, it all depends on what language we are talking about. A teacher of English is much more appreciated than a teacher of another language. From the point of view of salary, all teachers are equal. In general, especially during the past few years, one can notice 'hostility' towards teachers from the part of the society ("they don't do anything ...", "they keep complaining ...").

**Czech Republic** Language educators:

- are perceived as teachers of any other subject – no special status;
- score rather high in national survey of material resources; in reality it is a rather badly paid job.

What seems to be changing is the attitude of the authorities – linked to the need to have more foreign language speakers with accession to EU.

- Estonia** While (language) teaching is generally thought of as a respectable profession, there are not many signs of this being recognised at the level of decision making: low pay, teachers have to work overtime to ‘survive’, no time for professional development. There is a shortage of language teachers because they, especially the young ones, can easily find other jobs that better paid and less strenuous. A lot is expected of language teachers, but the conditions are not correlated with the expectations.
- Finland** The status is relatively OK; as especially teachers of English are respected, as compared to other teachers. On the other hand, in schools languages are often considered ‘not so important’. Perhaps languages are considered as ‘something not so important’, but they form an essential part of the curriculum, as they are compulsory (at least the second national language and one foreign language).
- France** It is considered rather too frequently that teachers (not only of languages) have too many holidays: the number of contact hours is not the same as the number of working hours. The teachers who work in educational projects should get better paid or should have less contact hours. At university level, it is difficult to cope at the same time with teaching, administration and research tasks.
- “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”** Language teachers are insufficiently paid. The status situation is slowly changing for the better since the younger generations are starting to acknowledge the importance of the knowledge of foreign languages in the modern era. Learning of two foreign languages *has* become obligatory at primary and secondary levels.
- Germany** Teachers are considered as ‘experts’ in speaking/using a language, perhaps in foreign literature. Didactics are usually not considered a central part of the profession. The social status is not so low in Germany as we earn far enough and we are ‘functionaries’, but as everywhere, I suppose, people blame us for our holidays. People think that teaching is so easy!

- Greece** Language teachers in Greece are seen as professionals who are 'luckier' than all others! They have long holidays and short working hours. Our profession is considered to be 'stress free' in the sense that we have no immediate goals or aims to achieve!! However, since language teachers are not very well paid, it is not a job that is considered 'statusful'. The subject of foreign language is undermined in secondary education, and, many a time, language educators feel under-appreciated, and as if their subject doesn't count as much as the subjects taught by other teachers.
- Holland** *Positive:* The National Curriculum for Upper Secondary allows for compulsory Dutch and English and 2 more optional languages.  
*Negative:* Language teachers tend to be divided amongst themselves: for instance, when English is under threat, only English teachers campaign.
- Hungary** Compared to other teachers, language teachers are in somewhat better situation/position. Although, they are badly paid, as well, at least they have the chance to do some extra work for better payment. There is a certain lack of sufficient possibilities for development. Language teachers are a very 'mixed class' – still many people teach a language without proper qualifications, which might not be good for the reputation of teachers.
- Iceland** Language teachers' status in general is not very high. Society thinks we demand too high salaries, especially if one thinks of our 'long holidays'. In what concerns language teachers, some people think they are even worse than all other teachers of 'serious' subjects (maths, physics, chemistry, etc.), while other people admire their language mastery and acknowledge the importance of multilingual citizens in a country whose language is incomprehensible to the rest of the world.

- Latvia** I think the status of language educators is higher than that of all other teachers, because:
- they are more appreciated as specialists;
  - they have more associations, resource centres for ongoing development;
  - the methodology of language teaching makes them more reflective, creative, critical, and flexible, etc.;
  - all new things come in through language, especially English, so they are the first to get hot news;
  - they can also make more money using language as a tool.
- We are to blame ourselves for our low status, because we ourselves think it is low.
- Lithuania** The status of language teachers is not higher than that of other teachers. Language teachers have more opportunities to develop, to go to seminars, conferences. But I think that teachers' status remains low in our country on the whole compared to other professions.
- Luxembourg** Teachers are well paid. Acknowledging their status then does not go through their salaries. Teachers demand an acknowledgement of their work by their peers, by their hierarchy, by their students and by society.
- Malta** The status of language teachers is well respected generally. Though no distinction is made (openly) it seems that teachers of the English language are more revered.
- Norway** Teacher status is about average among professions, but status is more dependent on your personal competence. So in the same school, teachers have widely different status.
- Poland** Generally speaking, the status of teachers is rather low. The status of language teachers doesn't differ from other teachers'. Poland is undergoing the reform of the educational system so according to this the status of teachers is supposed to improve. Language teachers have probably more opportunities to work extra hours in schools. A new 'teacher promotion scheme' has been in action since 1999 linked to financial compensation. It is not fully satisfactory yet, but is a considerable step towards the formal recognition of teachers.

- Romania** Language teachers are playing an important role, because everybody wishes to learn foreign languages, but teachers have low salaries (they must help themselves with private teaching). This fact brings other problems with it, for instance: no possibility to learn the language they teach in the country where it is spoken; limited possibilities to buy books etc. Language teachers do more for society than society does for them.
- Russia** Judging by the salary, especially in the public sector, society views language teachers as willing horses everybody can leap on, because they need to be Jack of all trades. They are expected to know the target language well, know how to teach it, keep up with all the latest developments (teaching techniques, new courses, new IT, etc.), must keep the learners motivated. At the same time, since most people who stay in the profession are really committed people, it's believed they do it for the fun of it and don't need any socially or materially important rewards.
- Slovakia** Language teachers are not very much respected by society, although they are becoming more respected compared to teachers of other subjects. Sometimes language teachers are underestimated – “why do they teach when they may have more prosperous jobs?” They should ‘fight’ for their rights, position more openly, not just complain about salaries. They should lead the race to start the reform of education because they are considered to be the most progressive.
- Slovenia** It is a job easily obtained, due to the lack of teachers. Society perceives teachers as people who work only 20 hours a week and have extensive holidays. People think we are privileged, that we can earn extra money working part time, but don't realise we have to do/take part time jobs because we are not paid enough. No division between language educators and teachers of other subjects.
- Spain** In Spain, the middle and lower classes think that teachers are well paid, do not work so much, have a lot of holidays, nobody holds them accountable for the efficiency of their work, and have a permanent job. The bourgeoisie and the liberal professions think that teachers are poorly paid, have no responsibilities in society, are lazy, do not like to take risks, work hard because they have to put up with pupils, and teach because they do not have the courage to do other, higher profile, jobs.

**Sweden**

People in general start to appreciate good teachers more, but it doesn't matter much if they are language teachers or not. Focus has been on education in the political debate the last few years and teachers get much more support. In upper secondary school 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> languages have very low status and each year the number of students who take advanced courses in German, French or Spanish diminishes.

**United Kingdom**

We don't need to learn languages because English will do (that's what people generally think). Languages are considered difficult – parents often say to teachers 'I can help them with their other subjects but not languages'. So in a strange way, language teachers are seen as having an expertise in a very difficult area, but that it's not really a useful area. Career advisors often advise that languages are not a very useful skill for the world of work. Languages have the shortest period on the curriculum and are being taken out of the compulsory curriculum in England to make way for 'more vocational or useful subjects'!

**Conclusions**

Within the educational context, we can conclude from the summaries of language teacher status provided by our workshop participants that:

- language teachers are more respected than other teachers in a few countries (Austria, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia);
- they have the same status as other teachers in several countries (Croatia, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Spain);
- in a few countries, language teachers are perceived as having lower status than other teachers (Greece, Iceland, Sweden);
- within language education, teachers of English seem to have higher status in countries like Cyprus, Finland and the UK.

The more general conclusions we can draw from the summaries provided by our workshop participants could be the following:

- Language teachers have rather low status in the majority of European countries.
- However, language teachers have relatively high status in countries like: Andorra, Armenia, Finland, Germany and Malta.
- In some countries, language teacher status is gradually improving (Bulgaria, Sweden, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia").

- In most countries, language teachers are rather poorly paid. To survive, they usually take other jobs, such as translating or private teaching. There are, however, a smaller number of countries in which language teachers are well or fairly paid (Greece, Luxembourg).
- Low status and low pay determine a shortage of qualified language teachers in several countries, like Latvia, Croatia, Estonia, and Hungary.
- In many countries, the public perception of (language) teachers is not very favourable: teachers are seen as having few working hours (as only the contact hours are visible to the rest of the society), long holidays, and a 'stress free' job.
- A rather recent improvement in language teacher status is happening in a few countries which are candidates for the EU (Bulgaria, Czech Republic).



***Chapter 2:  
'In medias res'***



The title of the chapter suggests that we are going to deal with the middle period of the two-year life span of the project. But as we clarified in the Introduction to the whole publication, our approach is only partially chronological. Thus, the title indicates that we attempt to insert a number of contributions in the middle of the publication itself, which will confirm, strengthen or, simply diversify the less scientifically gathered data, impressions, views, as well as, the conclusions drawn on the basis of those.

The theme of Project 2.1.1, the 'status' of language educators, sounded vague enough to the members of the project team to start searching for a kind of theoretical foundation. Several weeks were spent searching catalogues and the Internet, and at the end of the period, we were able to claim that research and/or recorded, documented data of teachers, of any subject, giving account of their perceived status is rather limited.

In fact, it soon transpired that one researcher who had carried out an extensive investigation into teacher status (albeit restricted to EFL teachers) was one of the team members, Gabi Matei, in collaboration with Professor Péter Medgyes from Budapest, Hungary. It seemed appropriate that we used the findings of this survey in the workshops and have included an abridged version of its written form in this publication.

The first discovery was followed by another useful surprise. Mercé Bernaus brought along to the first workshop a questionnaire designed for another research project in the US. Taking advantage of this opportunity, this questionnaire was administered in both workshops, and the results will be presented in *Beliefs of workshop participants about their career values and job rewards*.

Finally, when we needed some relevant, issue-raising input for the second workshop, we asked the Honorary Member of our team, Frank Heyworth from Switzerland, who was co-ordinating the so-called twin project of the Status Project (2.1.2: *Facing the future: Language educators across Europe*), to deliver this slightly theory-based talk. We wanted Frank to look at how recent developments in language education may or may not have had an impact on the status of its practitioners. The third contribution in the middle of the publication is the written manifestation of his talk and of the tasks the participants carried out with his guidance.



# Teaching English is a political act: A non-p.c. dialogue

Gabriela S. Matei & Péter Medgyes

Motto:

*“A language has nothing to do with politics.  
Or it shouldn’t.”*

A teacher of English

## Introduction

“In our age, there is no such thing as keeping out of politics,” said George Orwell in 1946. This statement rings true in our days more than ever, and we are convinced that education in general and TESOL in particular is charged with political implications. Hence the title of our presentation.

In order to find out whether our belief is shared by others in the profession, we opened it up for international discussion by inviting colleagues to respond to a multi-item questionnaire. We sent out the questionnaire to teachers we knew, but we also posted it on electronic lists, like ELTeCS-L. We received feedback from 103 teachers in 29 countries.

“Political” and “politics” are terms with multiple and often ambiguous meanings. For example, “political” is used to describe particular ideas and allegiances, such as belonging to a political party. “Politics” is used today in contexts like “he resigned because the firm was full of politics”, implying power struggle, manoeuvring for position, etc. What is important is that we perceive these terms as very much connected to *power* and *status*. For the purposes of our presentation, however, we adopted Kirk and Broussine’s (2000:14) definitions:

- Politics = a set of beliefs, principles and commitments which drive our actions and interventions.
- = a means of acquiring and using power to create the societies and organisations we want.

“Political” is also used in the phrase “political correctness”, or p.c. for short. Our presentation wears the sub-title “a non-p.c. dialogue”, because we do not automatically accept current or past orthodoxies in TESOL. Instead of striving to be p.c., in this report we will simply present the views of our respondents and our own on two issues: *Teacher Power* and the *Status of English Teachers*.

In addition, our questionnaire included questions concerning global English, ELT coursebooks and English teachers' associations and conferences, but we decided not to include them in this version of our report <sup>1</sup>.

## **Teacher power**

Our respondents were invited to answer the following questions:

**“In your opinion, is there such a thing as ‘teacher power’?**

**How would you define it?”**

As we were devising the questionnaire, we assumed that “teacher power” would be a provocative term – and we were right. Our survey showed that the concept really existed, even though it generated definitions which were often in conflict with one another.

### **Reactions to the term “teacher power”**

Although most respondents tried to define “teacher power”, some voiced their ambivalent feelings towards the term or even towards the concept itself. Some argued, for instance, that the term was too strong or sounded like a “buzz word” while others perceived it as downright negative; “I cannot really relate to this coinage,” a respondent said.

### **Teacher power: real or imaginary?**

With only four exceptions, all respondents answered “yes” to our question regarding the existence of teacher power. There were nuances of positive responses though, ranging from the enthusiastic “Indeed, there is!” through the firm “Yes, definitely” to the neutral “Yes”.

Those who gave a negative response either expressed their regret that teacher power was no longer what it used to be, or by implication that society no longer accorded “respect for the education process”. “If this power existed,” one of them wrote in a more humanistic vein, “then the best exercise of that power could only be in not exercising it.”

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1 This is an abridged version of a paper delivered at the 35<sup>th</sup> International Conference of IATEFL and published in PULVERNESS, A. (ed.), *Brighton Conference Selections*, IATEFL, 2001.

## Definitions and taxonomies of teacher power

We synthesised the definitions offered by our respondents in the table below, together with a few illustrative quotes for each category:

<b>Teacher power defined as</b>	<b>Quotes from the respondents</b>
<b>1 influence</b>	“Teacher power might be defined as the teacher’s influence (for good or ill) on his/her learners.”
<b>2 control</b>	“Teacher power = teacher’s control over what’s going on in the classroom.”
<b>3 knowledge</b>	“Our power is our knowledge and the ability to transfer it.”
<b>4 personal qualities</b>	“Charisma”, “ability to communicate”, “wittiness”, “sense of humour”, “enthusiasm”, “love”.
<b>5 ability to empower the students</b>	“It is a power to empower students to learn on their own.” “The power to challenge learners to question received ideas.”
<b>6 teacher solidarity</b>	“Lobbying”, “Joining peers to struggle for improved working conditions.”

Although the respondents in our study did not make clear distinctions between the concepts of “power” and “authority” as they appear, for example, in Cohen and Manion (1989, p. 203), it is remarkable that many of them were conscious of the dangers of wielding power. For instance, a respondent warned that power is “a dangerous temptation for the language teacher”; someone else pointed out that “power easily breeds dictatorship”, and yet another teacher warned of the consequences of misusing teacher power: “Teachers can often be thought of by students as terrors!” In fact, several colleagues reiterated that teacher power can become negative, especially when teachers “impose thoughts and information on their students”, or when “teachers manipulate students.”

## Degrees of teacher power

One item in the questionnaire inquired about the degree of power the respondents claimed to possess in the various contexts and communities where they worked and lived. As we expected, the place where our respondents perceived to have the most

power was their own classroom although, as one teacher put it, “It depends on which of my classrooms I’m in.” It is worth mentioning that the place where they felt most powerless was the university: 50 per cent of the respondents who worked in universities claimed to have “no power” in their own institutions.

### **Final thoughts on teacher power**

“Teacher power” is such a loaded term that some teachers did not even feel comfortable using it. Despite such reservations, however, the underlying concept was perceived as very real by the vast majority of the respondents (96 per cent). While some teachers seem to have had no qualms at all about being powerful in their professional environments, others denied the legitimacy of teacher power, unless it referred to empowering students. A third group of English teachers deplored the fact that they did not have enough power, or regretted the loss of teacher power: “I don’t think I wield power any more. At our place the regulations have almost completely rid the teachers of any personal power.”

On the other hand, it was generally agreed that the power teachers had in society was negligible. One teacher wrote: “If you consider teacher power in society, teachers are far from being powerful,” while someone else emphasised that this social disempowerment might lead to the humiliation of teachers: “Once the teacher has left the classroom or the lecture hall, in most cases s/he becomes anonymous, if not even humble or humiliated.” We believe that all these have profound implications for teacher status.

In our dual role as authors of this study and as practising teachers, we argue that teachers need a lot of power for their work and indeed enjoy a good deal of power – in their classrooms at any rate. The point is that, at least in the cultures where the authors of the present study come from, students expect teachers to be powerful figures, not only in terms of professional qualifications, abilities and knowledge, but also in terms of personality: students wish to be impressed and entertained, and they appreciate teachers with strong, if not charismatic, personalities. At the same time, we concede that this power must be exercised in compliance with high ethical and professional standards, mainly to the benefit of the learners, but also to that of the teacher him- or herself. Basically, we agree with a respondent who wrote: “If the teacher is powerful, then the students are powerful as well.”

### **The status of English teachers**

In this regard several questions (and answers) spring to mind. How much are we TESOL teachers worth? How do we compare to other professionals? Why is TESOL held in low esteem in most parts of the world? Who are the lucky exceptions?



Provoked by such puzzling questions, we included two items in the questionnaire to broaden our horizon. Let us deal with them separately.

## **Compared to other teachers**

Seeking information about the relative status of English teachers in the staff room, we asked this question:

**“In your opinion, are there any differences between a TESOL teacher’s social status as compared to the status of (a) other subjects, and (b) other languages? If yes, what do you think generates such differences?”**

As the percentage of “no” responses was less than ten per cent, we thought it would make more sense to restrict the scope of investigation to the “yes” responses.

First of all, it was generally accepted that English is the unparalleled lingua franca of our times, “the language of Bill Gates,” as someone put it. “English is seen as a passport to a ‘better’ life,” said another colleague; the use of inverted commas for “better” may have been an oblique hint that the gate-keeping role of English was not universally welcome. To be sure, English was seen as a vital commodity exposed to fluctuating market forces, with the implication that the face value of TESOL increases if there is a shortage of English teachers and decreases if there is a surplus. “In our country,” said a respondent, “English teachers enjoy a higher status for their scarcity value”.

While most colleagues agreed that “better marketability is the only feature that separates us from other teachers,” others offered a list of professional traits, both positive and negative, to spell out these differences.

Indeed, what advantages do TESOL teachers have over their staff members? Many respondents stressed, not surprisingly, that English was a popular subject and students were motivated to learn it. In several places, TESOL teachers had better opportunities to travel, develop their professional expertise and earn better salaries (even if this involved having to take on second and third jobs). At the same time, there were repeated references to certain virtues characteristic of the TESOL teacher. For example, they were perceived to be streetwise, flexible and easy-going, to have a flair for networking in general and for establishing interpersonal relationships with their learners in particular, to be open to innovative ideas and sustain high standards of craftsmanship. Furthermore, “we are attached the ‘citizens of the world’ kind of stereotype” – whatever this epithet means.

On the debit side, TESOL teachers were often labelled as “the necessary evil in the staff who fluctuate, are part-timers, and not faithful to the classical educational teacherly roles.” This reminds us of a story a young English teacher from Budapest told one of us (Peter) recently. Not long after she had started working in a secondary school,

she was accosted by an elderly history teacher: “Tell me, love,” she asked, “will you be staying long enough for me to try and remember your name?” This turned out to be a prophetic question: soon afterwards the young teacher left the school for a secretarial job where she was offered a salary three times as high as her school salary. Be that as it may, Alan Maley’s comment that TESOL is a permeable job should apply to quite a few countries in the world.

Returning to our questionnaire, a colleague had this to say: “English in the school curriculum is perceived as a waste of time and state school teachers as having a poor command of English.” On the lighter side, somebody remarked that “English teachers are of course not as clever as teachers of maths” (thank you!), while another respondent, rather quizzingly, claimed that “maths and physics are masculine subjects, whereas English is a feminine subject.”

Native speaker teachers formed a distinctive group by espousing a gloomy view. Working abroad as a native speaker teacher, one of them claimed that “there lingers an idea that any backpacker who is fit for nothing else can become an English teacher,” a belief borne out by the intermittent surge of unqualified youngsters teaching English as a temporary source of income. Hence the cynical comment: “In some countries saying that you’re a native speaker teacher is synonymous with a tourist who didn’t want to leave.”

While some expatriate native speaker teachers felt frustrated, their peers working in the UK described a bleak picture. “Employers perceive us as temporary labour rather than as professionals,” someone noted, and this opinion was expressed even more grimly: “We’re seen rather as outsiders, non-conformists, weird.”

### **“Pay us enough to buy a good car!”**

Although TESOL teachers were often found to have better opportunities than teachers of other subjects, they were certainly not assigned a pride of place. To ascertain the validity of this assumption, we asked a second question concerning the status of teachers:

### **“An ELT manager we know said: ‘If you want to raise teachers’ status, pay them enough money so they can buy good cars.’ What do you think about this?”**

This was meant to be a provocative question and, judged by the emotional responses given in the questionnaire, it succeeded in arousing a great deal of interest. Instead of embarking on a thorough analysis of the responses, let us just offer below a sample of quotes arranged in two columns: one for the positive and one for the negative reactions.

## Agree

“Absolutely agree.”

“Certainly, that should be part of the package.”

“Yes, why not? Money is not evil.”

“Tell me where and I’m on my way.”

“In Germany the car is a status symbol, yes. I’m a cyclist.”

“Money is not always the solution – though it helps.”

“I don’t think I understand. It should be: ‘so they can buy enough food.’”

“If people died because they didn’t know English teachers would be paid better.”

“A lot of truth in it, alas! I’m ashamed to be seen correcting homework on the bus.”

“Teaching is an option for desperate situations if the trainees can’t find anything else.”

“If there was a strike at last, I’d be the first to join.”

## Disagree

“Stupid.”

“Nonsense.”

“Must have been an American.”

“Presumably this manager was a ‘primitive new Russian’ type or maybe they were just joking.”

“I can’t drive. I don’t own a car and have never wished to... I still feel I’m criminally underpaid.”

“I couldn’t feel comfortable in a society where the size of cars determines social status.”

“Teaching is a calling, a new monasticism, but the outside world doesn’t understand this.”

“Cynical! But the message about the need for societies to demonstrate that they value teachers is important.”

“A car without a professional is not enough to raise teachers’ status.”

“Whoever loves teaching will stay in the profession irrespective of quantity of pay.”

“A good salary is not going to make bad teachers better.”

To summarise our views on the issue of the status of teachers, we believe that better salaries would make our profession more competitive and more attractive for young people to choose it as a long-term career. After all, it is very doubtful that teachers without adequate financial means can command the respect of contemporary society and maintain a level of self-esteem required to pursue this job. At this point, we can’t help recalling Dry’s wry message: “A sure recipe for low learner performance is to set

up a situation where the learner pities the teacher, and then pities himself for being saddled with a pitiable teacher” (Dry, 1977: 200).

## Conclusion

This paper aimed to demonstrate that TESOL is a political act and very often runs in the face of the dictates of P.C. views and expectations. Our assumptions were based both on our own experience and on the experience of an international group of teachers.

So who are we TESOL teachers? Are we a boon or a curse? Are we the imperialists or the liberators? Do we merely provide a service, or broaden the mind and tend to the soul? Do we have more or less power and status in the school and the society than we deserve? Surely, there are more questions cropping up than clear-cut answers.

We would like to end this journey into the cultures of teaching English by expressing our desire to replace the image of the powerless, passive teacher with an image of the powerful, active teacher, who is ready to assume the role of a decision-maker and a “transformative intellectual” (Giroux, 1988), a “connoisseur” rather than a “proletarian”, an “image of prestige” rather than an “image of disrepute” (Foster, 1997).

Let us conclude with our favourite quote:

A group of 18-year-olds once presented me with a little crown-like object made (by them) of metal and beads. It distinctly reminded me of a crown of thorns. The inscription said: ‘The teacher affects eternity. She can never tell where her influence stops.’ I still treasure this present and I still can’t think of a better definition.

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# **Beliefs of workshop participants about their career values and job rewards**

**Mercé Bernaus**

The team members of the *Status of Language Educators* project moderated two workshops at the premises of the ECML in Graz to discuss the real status of language educators in different European countries, and the steps that could be taken in order to improve language educators' status. Among other activities, a survey was conducted among the participants at these workshops, the results of which we present in this section.

## **Objectives**

The team was interested in:

- identifying language teachers' feelings about their career values;
- identifying language teachers' palpable and concrete status through their current job rewards.

## **Method**

Altogether 52 language education professionals took part in the survey according to the following divisions:

- during the first workshop 23 language educators from 23 European countries completed the questionnaire in December 2001;
- 29 language teachers from 29 European countries completed the questionnaire at the workshop held in February 2003.

## Measures

A questionnaire adapted from the one designed by Kassabgy, Boraie and Schmidt (in Dörnyei, Z. and R. Schmidt, 2001) was used as a tool for this study (see *Appendix 2*). We did not gather demographic data, such as country, nationality, age, length of professional experience, etc. in order to preserve teachers' anonymity.

The questionnaire itself has two sections. The first section includes 36 statements concerning pay/working conditions, recognition and prestige, the need for power/autonomy, self-esteem/self-actualisation/growth needs, achievement needs, affiliation needs, and needs for intrinsic satisfaction. Respondents were asked to rate each statement on a 5-point Likert scale according to "how important this aspect of work is to you personally".

The second section also contains 36 statements that matched the ones in section one, except that the subjects were asked to indicate (on a 5-point Likert scale) their agreement or disagreement concerning how each statement related to their actual job. Besides these, there were four statements related to job and career satisfaction.

The questionnaires were handed out after a presentation at the workshop on teachers' values and beliefs. The participants completed the questionnaires in the same room where the presentation was held. As we have already indicated above, the same questionnaire was administered in both workshops, which allowed us to join the data in the same file in order to have more subjects (N 52) and to be able to run statistic analyses of the data.

## Results and discussion

### Mean scores on values and rewards

In order to have a general description of the data, we ran statistics of location and statistics of scale for each item in both parts of the questionnaire to obtain the mean, the median, the standard deviation, the maximum score, the minimum score, etc. Our overall purpose was to obtain a general view of the participants' beliefs about their career values and the characteristics of employment of those teachers. We have summarised in the following tables the items with the highest and the lowest mean scores from section 1 and section 2 of the questionnaire. Tables 1 and 2 show the most important and the least important language teachers' beliefs about career values. Tables 3 and 4 show the real situation of the language teachers' jobs.



<b>Items section 1</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Having a job that is enjoyable and stimulating	4,7021
Having the freedom to do what is necessary to do a good job	4,6809
Really helping my students to learn	4,6809
Having a job in which I can perform to the best of my ability	4,6596
Being able to work independently and use my own initiative	4,6596
Having a job in which I can learn and develop my abilities to my full potential	4,6383
Having a manageable work load	4,6170
Being evaluated positively by my students	4,5319
Being allowed to deal creatively with students' problems	4,5106

*Table 1: Highest means related to language teachers' beliefs about career values*

The means of the variables in Table 1 emphasise values and goals directly associated with teaching. "Having a job that is enjoyable and stimulating", has proved to be the most important variable. Those teachers' main beliefs were basically related to a good performance in their jobs, to helping their students to learn, to having enough freedom to work independently, to using their own initiatives and to deal creatively with students' problems. They were also interested in being evaluated positively by their students. Those teachers valued the intrinsic aspects of work over extrinsic factors, maybe because – as shown in Tables 2, 3, 4, 8 and 9 – language teaching provides more intrinsic than extrinsic rewards.

<b>Items section 2</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Having a prestigious job title	2,8085
Having a profession that is prestigious	3,3830
Having fringe benefits	3,4255
Working for a reputable organisation	3,4681

*Table 2: Lowest means related to language teachers' beliefs about career values*

Extrinsic aspects of teaching such as "prestige" or "having fringe benefits" were rated as the least important values of a language teacher's career. The participants in both workshops as a whole did not show any interest in prestige, in "having a prestigious job title", "having a profession that is prestigious" or "working for a reputable

organisation”. Similarly, they were not too interested either in questions concerning pay or “having fringe benefits”.

These responses confirm that teachers, as a group or professional community, are altruistic, idealistic and more concerned with the intrinsic, classroom-based aspects of their profession than with the extrinsic aspects. Many of them stated during the workshops that teaching is a vocational profession and that you must be exceptionally motivated to work in education.

However, some of the variables, which illustrate the lowest means obtained from this general group of teachers, show different results in the factor analysis on teachers’ values. A number of teachers were interested in some of those variables in Table 2, such as “Having a profession that is prestigious”, which obtained high loadings in the factor analysis.

Our interest was also in identifying the items that had the highest and lowest means in the second part of the questionnaire, related to teachers’ actual jobs, which would shed some light on the real status of language educators. The following two tables show the results.

<b>Items section 2</b>	<b>Mean</b>
I have a friendly relationship with my students	4,5000
I have good relationships with my colleagues	4,2273
My job provides sufficient variety in tasks/type of activity	4,2045
I am allowed sufficient freedom to do what is necessary to do a good job	4,1818
My job is challenging	4,1818
My students evaluate me positively	4,1818
I know that I am really helping my students to learn	4,1591
I have a job in which I can perform to the best of my ability	4,1591
I have a good relationship with my supervisor(s)	4,0455
I work for a reputable organisation	4,0227

*Table 3: Highest means related to teachers’ actual jobs*

The highest means obtained in section 2 of the questionnaire were lower than the ones in section 1, and aside from this, the items with the highest means also differed from part one to part two. The rewards that teachers got in their jobs were consistent in some cases with what teachers stated was important for them. These similarities appear in items related to intrinsic rewards of teaching: “I have a job in which I can perform to

the best of my ability” and “I know that I am really helping my students to learn”, two items which were also considered very important by teachers.

However, it is quite surprising that the item with the highest mean reward in the real teachers’ job (“I have a friendly relationship with my students”) did not appear as being very important in the teachers’ beliefs about career values. Many of the items in Table 3 are related to teachers’ affective factors, like affiliation, intrinsic satisfaction and self-esteem, while others are related to classroom based aspects: autonomy, self-actualisation and professional growth. The same aspects were regarded equally important by the teachers, when they responded to the statements about career values.

<b>Items section 1</b>	<b>Mean</b>
I have a good salary	2,7955
Independence and initiative are rewarded	3,0000
I receive frequent enough feedback about the effectiveness of my performance	3,1591
Creativity is emphasised and rewarded	3,2045
The emphasis is on team-work	3,2273
My supervisor gives clear guidance	3,2273
I have flexible working hours	3,2273
Teaching accomplishments are recognized	3,2727
I have a manageable workload	3,3182
I have prospects for promotion	3,3636
There are clear rules and procedures at work	3,4773

*Table 4: Lowest means related to teachers’ actual jobs*

The lowest means of the teachers’ job rewards show the flip side of their actual conditions. Taking into account the results in Table 4, it may be considered that those teachers’ jobs do not show a high status of the profession. The lowest score was obtained by the variable “I have a good salary”. These teachers agreed that, in general, they were not well paid, their independence, initiative and creativity were not rewarded. Teachers did not receive feedback about the effectiveness of their performance, their teaching accomplishments were not recognised, they did not receive clear guidance by their supervisors and, besides, teamwork was not promoted. These respondents clearly felt that they did not have flexible working hours, nor a manageable workload or prospects for promotion. Their needs for self-esteem, self-actualisation, professional growth, or autonomy were not fulfilled. These regrettable

results related to language teachers' jobs indicate factors which evince the low status of European language educators.

Nevertheless, those variables that had the lowest overall means appear as salient factors in the factor analysis on teachers' job rewards, which means that some teachers in the sample did appreciate some of those variables in their actual jobs.

Kassabgy, Boraie & Schmidt (2001) report similar results in a study they performed with 107 experienced ESL/EFL teachers in Egypt and Hawaii. Although the number of subjects differs between that study and the present one, the results obtained in both studies on teachers' beliefs about career and job rewards are comparable. Teachers definitely seem to have similar values and job rewards, no matter in which part of the world they are living, because, as Kassabgy et al. (2001) stated, "what it means to be a teacher, perhaps particularly a language teacher, is common across national boundaries and cultural institutions" (p. 220).

### **Factor analysis 1: Teachers' career values and job rewards**

Although the number of subjects in our sample is quite small (N 52), it is unique because of the number of different countries represented by those teachers<sup>1</sup> who attended the workshops at the ECML. That is the reason why we decided to run the factor analysis. We wanted to see if the factors showed clear tendencies or clusters among the teachers, related to their career values and to their current job rewards. We ran two factor analyses, the first one with the 36 assessments on teachers' career values and the second one with the 36 assessments on teachers' job rewards.

The first factor analysis is related to teachers' career values which corresponds to what language teachers would like to attain as professionals of this field. The data from the teachers' questionnaires, related to their career values, showed variables loading in 6 factors that accounted for 67% of the variance. The rotated factor matrix is presented in Table 5 on the following 3 pages:

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1 Since keeping the anonymity of respondents was a key consideration during the administration of the two questionnaires, we cannot specify the exact number of countries, the representatives of which filled out the forms. Taking overlaps and absences into account, we can estimate that the number of countries represented in the complete survey is approximately 28-30.

	<b>Factors</b>					
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
Earning a good salary	,279	,556	,391	,104	,309	-,144
Having flexible working hours	,526	,272	-,224	-,062	,271	-,218
Job security	,158	,579	,401	,087	,311	,073
Fringe benefits	-,075	,763	-,051	,166	,115	,179
Having clear rules and procedures at work	,096	,811	,014	-,010	-,087	,190
Having a manageable workload	,452	,385	,247	,079	,377	,414
Being fairly treated in the organisation	,472	,213	,335	,320	-,004	,025
Having a supervisor who gives clear guidance	,026	,421	,533	,315	-,096	,282
Having a supervisor who's responsive to suggestions and grievances	,388	,113	-,003	,572	-,116	,164
Having sufficient variety in tasks/type of activity	,749	-,079	-,117	-,040	-,082	,171
Working for a reputable organisation	,175	,075	-,166	-,055	,079	,800
Having a profession that is prestigious	,204	,482	-,234	,115	,083	,542
Having a prestigious job title	-,002	,199	,059	,037	,073	,831
Having the freedom to do what is necessary to do a good job	,843	,057	,205	,214	,147	,129
Being allowed to deal creatively with students' problems	,821	-,137	,102	,085	,078	,076
Being included in the goal setting process	,500	,012	,177	,126	,242	,341

Being able to introduce changes	,494	-,011	,294	,075	,369	,111
Having a job in which I can perform to the best of my ability	,735	,236	,220	,282	,263	-,043
Being promoted to a senior supervisory job	,021	,121	-,121	-,029	,830	,179
Having a challenging job	,639	,116	,166	,337	,196	,041
Having a job in which I can learn and develop my abilities to my full potential	,772	,145	,088	,154	,369	-,033
Having contact with professionals in the field of languages	,391	,047	,420	-,048	,599	,101
Frequent feedback about the effectiveness of my performance	,563	,139	-,115	,380	,281	,014
Being able to work independently and use my own initiative	,468	-,013	,281	,167	,567	-,064
Being evaluated positively by my students	,652	,365	,204	,104	-,085	,097
Being evaluated positively by my supervisors	,150	,532	-,068	,465	,234	,406
Being recognised for my teaching accomplishment	,480	,322	,044	,235	,411	,275
Really helping my students to learn	,822	,198	,242	,161	,025	,125
Having good relationships with my colleagues	,325	,338	,217	,573	,091	,084
Having a friendly relationship with my students	,503	,428	,339	,404	-,089	,038

Having a good relationship with my supervisor(s)	,236	,397	-,079	,652	,212	,164
Having a good relationship with my students' parents	,137	-,158	,118	,652	-,008	-,195
Working with other teachers as a team	,106	-,015	,698	,254	,365	,140
Having a job that is enjoyable and stimulating	,731	,119	,389	,305	,086	,065
Having a job that is fun	,342	-,130	,753	-,007	-,016	,029
Having a job in which I'm relaxed and have peace of mind	,138	,473	,580	-,301	-,063	-,036

*Table 5: Values rotated factor matrix*

Factor 1 obtained high loadings (greater than .40) from 18 variables out of 36. The heading of this factor is 'Autonomy and Intrinsic Motivation'. Factor 1 shows that the participants in the 'Status of Language Educators' workshops mainly appreciate values related to their freedom to do a good job. This freedom would let them help the students to learn, to perform to the best of their abilities and to deal creatively with their students' problems. At the same time, freedom would allow them to be able to work independently and use their own initiative and to be able to initiate and implement changes. They also value having flexible working hours that may give them freedom in their job. They clearly regard a job highly in which they could learn and develop their abilities to their full potential, a job that would be challenging and have sufficient variety in tasks, and they would also appreciate being included in the goal setting process. Other loadings in this factor are related to evaluation. These teachers value positive evaluation from their students, as well as being fairly treated in the organisation, having frequent feedback about their own performance and being recognised for their teaching accomplishments. Finally, they welcome having a manageable workload. This factor suggests that these teachers are mostly intrinsically motivated professionals.

We labelled Factor 2 as 'Extrinsic Motivation'. Those teachers' extrinsic motivation is clearly shown by their interest in having a good salary, fringe benefits and job security. Other variables loading high in this factor are also considered as extrinsically motivating, such as having a profession that is prestigious, having clear rules and procedures at work, having a supervisor who gives clear guidance and being evaluated positively by teachers' supervisors. All those variables show values that are external to

the classroom. There are two other variables that received a moderate loading: “having peace of mind in my job” and “having positive relationships with my students”. These language educators are, basically, extrinsically motivated.

The variables loading on Factor 3 represent needs that are satisfied through support teachers obtain within the organisation in which they operate. That is the reason why we labelled it as ‘Institutional Support’. The respondents who score high in this factor emphasise the need for such support, which would include a working environment that allows teachers to feel relaxed and to have peace of mind in their jobs. They evidently crave for facilities which would allow them to work with other teachers as a team, and with other professionals in the field. For them a job has to mean fun, and they need to have a supervisor who gives clear professional guidance. Last but not least, these are teachers who want to have job security. These colleagues, thus, need both institutional support and teamwork to enjoy their jobs.

The highest positive loadings on Factor 4 were obtained by variables related to teachers’ relationships. This factor is labelled ‘Positive Relationships at Work’. The teachers who score high in this factor emphasise their needs for having positive relationships with students, colleagues, supervisors and with students’ parents. They would also need to have a supervisor who is responsive to suggestions and provides positive evaluation as well.

The four variables loading on Factor 5 show clearly that some respondents of the questionnaire have a particular interest in being promoted. They would primarily like to be promoted to a senior supervisory job, to have contacts with professionals in this field, being able to work somewhat more independently and being recognised for their teaching accomplishments. This structure suggests that Factor 5 can be best defined as ‘Promotion’. The wish to engage in collaborative work with other colleagues suggests that these teachers do not necessarily strive for the benefits of promotions, but, rather, for the opportunities to be actively involved in the implementation of professional growth.

Five variables loaded on Factor 6 show those teachers’ needs for prestige. The variables indicating the highest loadings are “Having a prestigious job” (.831), “Working for a reputable organization” (.800) and “Having a profession that is prestigious” (.542). Another variable, “Being evaluated positively by my supervisors”, received a moderate loading (.406). Thus Factor 6 is primarily one related to ‘Professional Prestige’.

## **Factor analysis 2: Job rewards**

This second factor analysis reports on teachers’ concrete job rewards, and it also shows different language teachers’ employment situations. The data of the teachers’ questionnaires, related to their job rewards, showed variables loading in 5 factors that accounted for 58% of the variance. The rotated factor matrix is presented in Table 6.



	<b>Factors</b>					
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
I have a good salary	,078	-,007	-,139	-,247	,389	,388
I have flexible working hours	,001	,061	-,021	,142	,121	,785
I have good job security	,044	-,102	,188	,184	,861	,153
I have fringe benefits	-,009	-,143	,173	,166	,866	,067
There are clear rules and procedures at work	-,032	,054	-,168	,726	,015	,169
I have a manageable workload	,160	,088	,107	,572	,392	,266
I am fairly treated in the organisation	,021	,737	,099	,320	,367	-,198
My supervisor is responsive to suggestions and grievances	,086	,258	,246	,655	,135	-,043
My supervisor gives clear guidance	-,024	,098	,023	,631	,076	-,070
My job provides sufficient variety in tasks/type of activity	,742	,165	,136	,163	-,029	-,129
I work for a reputable organisation	,834	-,037	,053	-,008	,232	,074
Teaching languages is a prestigious profession	-,209	,691	,193	-,063	-,151	,051
My job title is satisfactory	,022	,322	,460	-,031	-,165	-,141
I am allowed sufficient freedom to do what is necessary to do a good job	,104	,344	,345	,004	,335	,458
Creativity is emphasised and rewarded	,242	,769	,210	,187	-,118	,168
I'm included in the goal setting process	,324	,555	-,326	,059	,404	-,290

I'm able to introduce changes	,145	,836	-,056	,045	-,052	,115
I have a job in which I can perform to the best of my ability	,580	,367	,137	,188	,107	,178
I have prospects for promotion	,639	-,075	,138	,235	-,207	-,144
My job is challenging	,789	,139	,293	-,245	,033	-,028
My job provides scope to learn and develop my abilities to my full potential	,754	,184	,270	,090	,127	,179
I have sufficient opportunities for contact with professionals in the field of languages	,298	,408	,230	,204	,055	,432
I receive frequent enough feedback about the effectiveness of my performance	,688	,254	,005	-,024	-,071	,329
Independence and initiative are rewarded	,257	,609	,176	,369	-,161	,192
My students evaluate me positively	,292	,138	,611	,095	,100	,085
My supervisor evaluates me positively	,361	,141	,505	,509	-,040	-,252
Teaching accomplishments are recognised	,328	,646	,340	,129	-,003	,053
I know that I am really helping my students to learn	,558	,048	,435	,080	,097	,002
I have good relationships with my colleagues	,359	,204	,704	,188	,269	,018
I have a friendly relationship with my students	,234	,021	,754	-,129	,113	,079

I have a good relationship with my supervisor(s)	,083	,052	,630	,543	,174	-,140
I have a good relationship with my students' parents	,168	,213	,417	,050	,308	-,027
The emphasis is on team work	,406	,037	-,273	-,121	-,028	,315
My work is enjoyable and stimulating	,781	,182	,340	,076	,159	,035
My job is fun	,681	-,017	,040	-,028	-,009	,002
I'm relaxed and have peace of mind in my job	,059	,058	,505	,470	-,144	,266

*Table 6: Job rewards rotated factor matrix*

The variables loading on Factor 1 suggest that teachers who work for a reputable organisation have a challenging, enjoyable and stimulating job, with a variety of tasks. Teachers receive enough feedback about their performance, which, together with a job considered fun, provides teachers with a scope to learn and to develop their abilities to their full potential, giving them prospects for promotion and for performing to the best of their abilities to help the students to learn. Teamwork seems also to be emphasised in this kind of organisation. The label for this factor is 'Working for a reputable organisation as a factor of personal development'.

We labelled Factor 2 as 'Self-realisation and Prestige'. Staff development is emphasised through creativity, these teachers are able to introduce changes, their initiatives and independence are promoted. At the same time, teaching languages is being considered a prestigious profession, and teachers are fairly treated in the organisation, being recognised for their teaching accomplishments. We can assume that these teachers are valued by their institutions, because they are given enough freedom to develop their creativity and innovative drives in their jobs.

The label for Factor 3 is 'Affective Job Rewards'. The variables that loaded on this factor are mainly related to affective rewards, such as having good relationships with students, colleagues, supervisors and students' parents, which, jointly with a positive evaluation by supervisors, lead to job satisfaction and, ultimately, to career satisfaction. Two other variables shape this factor: "I'm relaxed and have peace of mind in my job" and "I know that I'm really helping my students to learn"; both having an affective aspect as well. This group of teachers appreciates mainly affective rewards, provided by their actual job as language educators.

Factor 4 is labelled as ‘Institutional Support’, a label which was attached to one of the factors in the first factor analysis. Respondents who score high on this factor are mainly motivated and rewarded by external factors related to institutional support: “clear rules and procedures at work”, “good relationship with supervisor(s) responsive to suggestions” and “being evaluated positively by them”. To have a manageable workload and peace of mind in their jobs are factors associated mostly with effective and considerate management of the respective organisations.

The highest loadings in Factor 5 are obtained by two variables related to job security (.861) and having fringe benefits (.866). Teachers who score high on this factor are also included in the goal setting process of their institution (.404). This factor is labelled ‘Financial Rewards’, because the job rewards of this group of teachers are based on profits that may be obtained through fringe benefits and also by job security.

Three variables loaded on Factor 6: “I have flexible working hours” (.785); “I am allowed sufficient freedom to do what is necessary to do a good job” (.458); and “I have sufficient opportunities for contact with professionals in the field of languages” (.432). This factor is labelled ‘Autonomy’. The key variables loading on this factor are related to teachers’ job conditions. These teachers appreciate flexible working hours which allow them to be autonomous, give them freedom to do a good job, and, at the same time, provide them with opportunities to contact fellow-professionals in the field of languages.

## **Conclusion**

The present study is distinctive because of the number of the different settings represented by the teachers who took part in it. Teachers came from approximately thirty different European countries.

The factor analysis of teachers’ values introduces different types of teachers. Some of them are intrinsically motivated, being interested in autonomy and self-realisation to develop their creativity in teaching, while others are mainly motivated by extrinsic rewards (good salary, fringe benefits, job security). Several responding teachers need institutional support, however, there are still others whose interest lies in career and job reputation.

The findings in the factor analysis showed different employment situations that provide different rewards for teachers. Some teachers work for a reputable organisation, which offers them sufficient facilities for doing a good job and for enjoying it. In a number of institutions teachers’ rewards are based on self-realisation to develop their creativity in teaching, while in other institutions their jobs offer teachers affective rewards. Certain organisations offer their teachers managerial support, others remunerate professionals well enough and, at the same time, ensure their job security.

These results indicate that the respondents in our survey perceive a fair professional status, but the language educators who attend ECML workshops are, in general, experienced professionals, interested in language teaching or language teacher education, and are highly motivated in their jobs, anyway. This is one of the limitations of this study. We would probably have obtained a different picture if the study had focused on younger, less experienced, less trained teachers.

The second limitation is the small number of subjects (52). Other studies should be carried out to confirm the results obtained in the previous study by Kassabgy *et al.* (2001) and by the present one.

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## **Language educators as agents of change: new developments in language pedagogy and their influence on the status of language education**

**Frank Heyworth**

Are language teachers professionals? Is language teaching a profession? The questions are relevant because the issue of status is linked to how activities are perceived and to the prestige they enjoy.

The notion of professionalism covers quite a lot of different concepts:

- professionals are paid (the opposite of amateur);
- they do things in a principled way (the opposite of unprofessional);
- they do things well because they have skill and knowledge (“she’s a real professional”);
- professionals have prestige (“profession” sounds better than “job” or “trade”);
- they often have a code of practice or deontology (doctors and lawyers take oaths to follow the principles of the profession);
- they are often regulated by a professional body (doctors can be prevented from practising if they do not respect the rules of the profession).

From this we can see that teachers have several of the attributes of professionals (they are paid, they have principles, they frequently apply high degrees of professional competence). At the same time they do not have the corporate organisational structure accorded to the liberal professions – doctors, lawyers, accountants. Prestige and self-esteem are sometimes low – who hasn’t heard the phrase “I’m just a language teacher”? In some institutions of higher education, those who teach languages are known as “instructors” rather than “professors”.

This lack of prestige is partly lined to the view that (a) language learning is a practical skill which comes almost naturally and that (b) language is a medium of communication, rather than a subject in its own right. So, in order to raise the status of language education we need to make a case for its educative, social and intellectual value – that is, not just a practical skill to be picked up – and to define the professionalism of the teacher’s role in doing this. This will involve changes in language education.

In a parallel project to the one on the status of language educators, the project team tried to foresee what changes would have to take place in language education to enable it to meet the challenges of a changing society. Teresa Tinsley (2003) drafted this statement of a new paradigm to set beside the existing one:

<b>Existing (19<sup>th</sup> century) model</b>	<b>New model</b>
Focus on nation-state and national language as source of identity	Emphasis on European citizenship and linguistic diversity
Multilingualism is a problem for society	Multilingualism enriches society
Assumes learners start from monolingual base	Takes into account diverse language experiences outside the classroom
Bilingualism and diverse cultural backgrounds ‘silenced’	Bilingualism and diverse cultural backgrounds celebrated
Bilingual children’s education is seen as problematic – focus is on developing national language	Bilingualism welcomed – focus on developing ability in mother tongue as well as other languages
Speakers of other languages are ‘foreign’.	Speaking another language is the norm
Learning another language is difficult	Learning another language is natural
Near-native speaker competence is the ultimate goal	Even low levels of competence are valuable and add to communicative repertoire – to be built on throughout life
Language teaching focuses mainly on linguistic goals. Cultural element tends to be poor, or focused solely on ‘high’ culture	Language teaching has strong cultural element and includes intercultural awareness
Language learning focuses on one language at a time	Language learning focuses on links between languages, and on language awareness in general
Language learning tends to be elitist and problematic for the majority	Language learning can be successful for everyone

*Table 1: A new paradigm for language education*

The new paradigm broadens the task of the language educator, to include a strong emphasis on inter-cultural learning, and, perhaps most significantly, the idea of general language competence and awareness, rather than a narrow focus on a single language.



Language educators will need – in this vision – to become experts in a very broad social and cultural view of language competence.

This corresponds to the aims for language education which have been embodied in the modern languages projects of the Council of Europe for over thirty years.

The Council of Europe and its member States have taken the position that it is the promotion of linguistic diversity which should be pursued in language education policy. For in addition to mobility, intercomprehension and economic development, there is the further important aim of maintaining the European cultural heritage, of which linguistic diversity is a significant constituent. This means, then, that language teaching must be seen as the development of a unique individual linguistic competence ('knowing' languages whichever they may be) and also as education for linguistic tolerance.

Policies for language education should therefore promote the learning of several languages for all individuals in the course of their lives, so that Europeans become plurilingual and intercultural citizens, able to interact with other Europeans in all aspects of their lives.

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

This is a very ambitious agenda for language education and it is easier to state than to put into practice. In order to do so, language teachers will need operational answers to issues such as:

- How can clear learning objectives for inter-cultural competences be defined? How can they be assessed? Can they be appropriately certified?
- How will language teachers reconcile the teaching of a language as a system with the objective of partial competences?
- How will they themselves attain the level of plurilingual and pluricultural awareness and knowledge required? what organisational changes are needed to enable teachers of different languages to co-operate to promote the “unique individual linguistic competence”?

It also supposes a strong educative role for language educators – in linguistic and cultural tolerance, in independence and autonomy for the learner. Margit Szesztay in *Facing the Future: Language Educators across Europe* (2003), describes the challenge of training teachers to fill this role:

It stands to reason that the content of such programmes needs to be built on what good professionals do. In other words, if language teachers are seen as language educators who do more than teach grammar and vocabulary, they need to be prepared for these wider, educational roles. They need to develop the skills required for helping their future students become good language learners, for facilitating their personal and social development, and for guiding them towards intercultural competence.

A note about the use of the word *skill*. I believe that a skilful teacher draws on an extensive knowledge base, and that in the midst of practice she relies on intuition and

sensitivity and a whole range of personal qualities, as well. Still, I prefer to use the word *skill*, as it highlights that what good teachers require above all is what Schön referred to as ‘knowing-in-action’, or ‘professional artistry’ (Schön, 1983). They need to be good at on-the-spot decision making, responding to novel situations, working with real people in real contexts. The kind of analytic knowledge that might help academics write clear and logical papers about our profession is not going to be of much use in the classroom.

(Szesztay, 2003: 112-113)

Here the professional skills described go beyond knowledge to stress the way in which experts have internalised knowledge and can apply them intuitively in action – in the way a doctor does not have to check the whole of his medical textbooks to reach a diagnosis. The problem is that the results are much less easy to identify – how can you pinpoint objectively the learner’s personal and social development?

This is related to the general issue of professionalism in language education – the need to identify principles and rules which can be seen as observable guidelines. Here again the work of the Council of Europe is relevant. Two major initiatives of recent years have contributed to the coherence and transparency required to do this. The first, the Common European Framework provides a coherent description of the activities of language learning, teaching and assessment in the form of a common framework of reference; the second aims to make this description transparent and useable for learners in the form of a European Language Portfolio. The coherent description provides a basis for deciding on criteria and for setting standards. Most crucially it establishes a system of reference levels which can be used to set objectives, and to assess whether the objectives have been attained. It allows comparability, which is an essential feature of quality assessment – it is difficult to define what we mean by “good” without concepts of “better”.

Although it is not to be seen as a manual or a set of rules for language education, it does provide a framework for professionalism. The scale of reference and the descriptors provide objective standards for measuring results, the chapter on “language learning and teaching” gives comprehensive descriptions of the issues and the options teachers and learners can choose from. The different categories of competence are also fully described. All of this supplies a proper basis on which to build professional practice.

When language teachers are described as “agents of change”, we imply that improvement is possible, that change can make things better – in other words it raises the issue of quality.

The word quality is ambiguous. A quotation from a novel by Michael Frayn (*Landing in the Sun* 1991) illustrates this well. The novel imagines a government commission set up to improve the quality of life. It is chaired by a philosopher, who, in a dialogue with the civil servant appointed as secretary to the commission, asks

‘What do you mean by the quality of life?’

‘I think it has something to do with washing machines.’

to which the philosopher responds:

‘I had assumed that it meant the characteristic of being alive, livingness, what it is that makes life life. [...] You are, however using it in a quite different sense – the idea of some kind of grading system for our experience, of some variable level of satisfactoriness to which life might attain, and which might be enhanced by various practical means.’

When we talk about quality in language education, this ambiguity is also present – we have explicit or implicit concepts about the essence of good teaching, combined with practical standards and criteria and the idea that it can be assessed and graded. For “washing machines” one could read “language laboratories” or “multimedia access centres” and quality systems in education suppose practical operational ways of attaining satisfactory results.

This dual meaning of quality is summarised in two of the key questions related to its practical application. “Are we doing the right things?” relates to the choice of what we do and our objectives; “are we doing things right?” refers to how we carry out our activities. Being successful in the second of these steps is of little use if we are doing the wrong things in the first place. In order to judge whether we are doing things right we need to establish criteria by which we can judge quality, and standards which can be measured.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper I have tried to explore the questions “are language educators professionals?” and “what could they contribute to a changed, better view of the role and function of the profession?”.

The answers to both questions are linked. There is a potential, strong role for language education – including the practical one of helping people to communicate, but going beyond it to help foster linguistic tolerance, openness, respect, independence, autonomy. Doing this means a crucial broadening of the language teachers’ task – especially in the transfer from teacher of a language to developers of general language competence. It also implies the development of a high degree of inter-personal and social skill.

None of this is generally recognised, and one of the potential benefits of a project on the status of language educators and the general role of the European Centre for Modern Languages is raising awareness of the issues involved.

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***Chapter 3:  
Quo vadis?***



## **Introduction**

The title of the chapter only partly expresses the full meaning of the concept we wish to explore in the following pages. Before we embark on the daunting task of planning or, at least, recommending any action to any professional bodies and/or authorities, the enlarged project team, which in this case contains all participants of the two workshops as well, will take the slightly over-ambitious role of a professional visionary.

## **The destination**

Supposing that a large proportion of language educators in a large number of member states identify with those who have explicitly expressed their concern with their own professional and social status, we could safely claim that this huge body of fellow-professionals expect some kind of change to happen. The contribution of the Status Project to this effort has been the creation of a vision, a metaphorical destination we, language educators, would like to reach. The product itself is a simple list of categorised descriptors of ideal conditions of the educational context some language educators would like to operate in, the humble name of which is Language Teachers' Wonderland (for more details see *Vision 1: Language Teachers' Wonderland*).

No one intends to claim that the Wonderland metaphor, also considered as a sort of self-definition, is based on a professional consensus of thousands of language educators. It was formulated, extended, modified and, finally, approved of by about a hundred language teachers from all over Europe, who are rather proud of their creation. No wonder that those who have seen its final version feel fairly strongly that Wonderland is an ideal enough destination, where the status deficit of the past and present will have turned into a healthy level of professional and social self-esteem, in other words, desirably high status.

## **The first steps**

As we have already tried to make it clear throughout the whole publication, we are aware of the limitations of the Status Project, we, whoever that word encompasses, have not yet raised the status of language educators. But the second part of the chapter (*Vision 2: Participant Voices*) will prove fairly convincingly that those colleagues who were involved, at least, in one of the workshops, do make a claim that their perception of their own status has been very positively affected and they feel they are in a position in which they can affect the status of their immediate professional context to a certain extent.

The two sections below are meant to prove that we begin to realise where we are heading, and some language educators have taken the first steps towards getting there.



# **Vision 1: Language teachers' Wonderland**

## **The Wonderland story: Part 1**

It would make the project team extremely proud, if we could claim that the Wonderland metaphor was a meticulously planned training activity of the first central workshop (December 2001). However, we have no intention to mislead the reader. The task itself was a flash of brilliance of Derk Sassen's in a moment of professional standstill in the middle of the event. We had known in which direction we wanted to move – towards a guided self-definition of the profession –, yet, the tool to achieve that had still been slightly unclear before Derk introduced the idea.

One might react, immediately, by stating that it was simply another simulation task, of which dozens had been carried out in as many ECML events. It was and it was not.

### **Professional rationale**

Participants were, indeed, required to create an imaginary, fictitious entity, which does not and, very likely, will not exist in the form it was envisaged in. Nevertheless, we did not set up a situation in which participating colleagues were demanded to play roles or simulate actions. All they had to do was focus on their professional ideals. This meant:

- disregarding their local, highly specific contexts;
- considering their current professional settings in which they and their fellow-professionals operate;
- focus on conditions (independent of national and international situations) which they would find ideal for the benefit of all professional stakeholders, primarily, learners, teachers, teacher educators.

### **Setting the task**

The task needed to be structured to help the focusing process. Therefore seven key areas were identified to emphasise that the focal points should cover conditions within and outside education. We did not only want participants to describe the ideal conditions, within their immediate and broader settings, in which they wish to operate and develop. We expected them to produce a fairly coherent description of what they are willing to do themselves, so that they, themselves, will want to contribute to the creation of the ideal conditions as well.

Since both the educational and social status of language educators are at stake, the rationale behind this decision was that all stakeholders (including, for example, parents, the media, etc.) in the process should see language teachers as true professionals. This

means that language educators not only demand that certain conditions should be provided for them, but they are equally demanding, as far as their own personal and professional growth is on the line. On the basis of this approach, the following seven questions, representing seven topics, were formulated, and they were to trigger lists of conditions from the participants, who were carrying out the tasks in groups.

1. Under what conditions do we, language educators, work in ‘Wonderland’?
2. What are learners’ attitudes towards language learning and language educators?
3. What do other teachers and educational professionals think of language teachers?
4. How do language educators develop as professionals?
5. What does ‘society’ (parents, ministries, mass media, etc.) think of language educators?
6. What does ‘society’ (parents, ministries, mass media, etc.) do for language educators?
7. What do language educators do for ‘society’?

The lists of conditions were presented by the smaller groups to the rest of the participants, towards the end of the December 2001 workshop. As an extra assignment, the groups also explored what the various stakeholders (e.g. classroom practitioners, teacher educators, materials writers, decision-makers) will have done to make the conditions possible. Although, the latter task proved useful on the spot, its results have not been used separately, instead they have been worked into the next versions of Wonderland.

## **The Wonderland story: Part 2**

After the first workshop, the Wonderland document lent itself for focused refining, which took place with the second workshop in mind. Participants of the February 2003 event received a fine-tuned, edited, revised version of the original metaphor in the form of a task sheet, in which they could clearly indicate their ideas, suggestions for changing, modifying or omitting words, chunks or whole items. It was fairly reassuring to experience that the seven key categories have never been questioned by anyone during the whole, one-and-a-half-year process.

More than half of the would-be participants of workshop 2 ‘did their homework’, which proved to be fundamentally important. During the event, two half-day sessions were devoted entirely to the final editing, refining of the Wonderland metaphor, partly based on the preliminarily gathered versions of several participants, partly on promptly arising comments and suggestions.

What we call the final version, and we present below, was created by the team after the second workshop, and it has been checked and approved by its participants, who did suggest a couple of minor changes, additions to it.



... very good, competitive salaries ...



... groups of manageable size ...



... we have access to adequate funding ...



... learners are enthusiastic ...



## Language teachers' Wonderland

### 1. Under what conditions do we, language educators, work in 'Wonderland'?

- a. We receive a very good, competitive salary, in order to keep competent teachers in the profession and to recruit new teachers.
- b. Our workload consists of an appropriate balance between number of contact hours and preparation time to provide quality educational services.
- c. We teach groups of manageable sizes.
- d. We have a flexible workload depending on our own career development needs. We are entitled to paid leave at regular intervals, e.g. every 5-6 years, to pursue further professional development.
- e. We are actively involved in professional development (individual and collaborative), funded by the local, regional, national and international bodies.
- f. We are actively involved in research and development activities, for the benefit of learners and all other educational stakeholders.
- g. We have regular, purposeful contact with our learners outside, as well as inside, the classroom, and scheduled non-classroom contact time is provided for such activities.
- h. We teach in classrooms equipped with state-of-the-art technology and facilities.
- i. Purpose-made supplementary materials (e.g. handouts, task sheets, etc.) as well as class sets of reference books and readers are available for each teacher.
- j. We have well-equipped office space with adequate access to information and communication facilities.
- k. A resource centre is available in the school, including meeting space where we can welcome other teachers for professional exchanges of ideas, resources, experience, etc.
- l. We, as well as our learners, can contact native-language speaking professionals, both in person and in virtual space.
- m. Allocation of classes is carried out through discussion and collegiate consultation.
- n. The "doors" to other language groups and to other parts of the school are open. There are no boundaries between the subjects and between departments of subject areas. Time and opportunities are provided to develop networks of representatives of subject areas.

## **2. What are learners' attitudes towards language learning and language educators?**

- a. Most learners show a positive attitude towards language learning: they are mostly motivated, enthusiastic and are learning with pleasure.
- b. They think what they are learning is meaningful to them, satisfying both their short- and long-term learning goals and needs.
- c. Learners are open-minded towards different ways of working in the classroom.
- d. Teachers and learners respect each other and are willing to cooperate.
- e. Learners are ready to become autonomous, taking responsible decisions about their own learning.
- f. They are convinced that language learning is a priority for their own personal and professional development, both short- and long-term.
- g. Learners from various social and cultural backgrounds and with diverse abilities and competencies are willing and able to work efficiently together, and they support each other's learning inside and outside the classroom.

## **3. What do other teachers and educational professionals think of language teachers?**

- a. Colleagues teaching other subjects respect language educators and appreciate their competence and vice versa.
- b. Teachers of other subjects turn to language educators for professional advice and vice versa; we all regularly engage in professional dialogue. This way, a collegial atmosphere is promoted in educational contexts.
- c. All stakeholders in education understand and acknowledge the diverse educational aims of language learning and teaching.
- d. All stakeholders in education are aware and appreciate that we, language educators, do more than teach languages: among other things, we make the learners more effective communicators.

## **4. How do language educators develop as professionals?**

- a. Both language teachers and decision-making bodies share a genuine interest in lifelong professional development.
- b. We are given ample time and opportunity to keep ourselves fully up-to-date: we are not only aware of the most recent developments in the profession, but we can make use of them in our professional context.

- c. We are involved in a variety of forms of professional development, working in co-operation with other teachers and learners.
- d. Providers of in-service programmes constantly gauge our current professional needs in order to provide the most appropriate form of training for us. Thus, we take part in systematic, tailor-made in-service programmes.
- e. We have time and are encouraged to attend any local, national or international professional events that we consider necessary.
- f. We regularly take part in brush-up courses of our own choice in the country where the target language is spoken. We have access to adequate funding for this purpose.
- g. We engage in learning foreign languages – partly – to experience what our learners experience.
- h. We are encouraged to subscribe to relevant educational publications, and financing for such subscription is ensured on a long-term basis.
- i. We have unlimited access to a 24-hour professional hot-line service (e.g. consultation on specific classroom teaching issues, career advice, etc.).

**5. What does ‘society’ (parents, ministries, mass media, etc.) think of language educators?**

- a. They consider us serious and respectable professionals.
- b. They think we deserve adequate rewards for our work.
- c. Everyone recognises that classroom teaching is not the only duty of a language educator.
- d. Parents consider us as authorities in our own profession, and share the responsibility for educating our learners to become capable and autonomous citizens.
- e. Ministries and decision-making bodies in the field of education trust us, and always consult us, or at least our institutional representatives, before major professional and career-related decisions are to be made.
- f. The media consider our professional issues and achievements important and relevant enough to report on regularly.

**6. What does ‘society’ (parents, ministries, mass media, etc.) do for language educators?**

- a. They show respect for the work we do and acknowledge its importance.
- b. They give us freedom and provide us with sufficient moral and material support (including space, time, and facilities for lifelong professional development).
- c. The way society treats us will help us to develop a healthy level of professional and personal self-confidence and self-esteem.
- d. They share with us the responsibilities for the successful career development of learners.
- e. The media regularly invite us to discuss specific and generally relevant issues involved in language education, thus increasing the visibility of our profession, and creating an adequate, unbiased and reliable image of language educators.

**7. What do language educators do for ‘society’?**

- a. We help learners to become multilingual, to possess at least partial competencies in more than one language.
- b. We enable learners to develop the autonomous and effective language learning skills and positive attitudes that are necessary to pursue lifelong language learning.
- c. We support the concept of multilingualism and multicultural communication, and thus we help to maintain links between different peoples and different cultures.
- d. We educate generations that are characterised by intercultural understanding and are open to ‘otherness’.
- e. We help learners to become effective communicators in social interaction.
- f. We take an active role in educating responsible citizens; we encourage and enable them to explore and learn from other cultures, and to be ambassadors of their own.
- g. Our continuous commitment to personal and professional development provides an example of lifelong learning for the whole of society.
- h. Through our commitment towards learning, our schools have become learning organisations with communal goals.



## **The relevance of Wonderland**

No one, who was involved in the creation, development and finalisation of the Wonderland metaphor, would be bold enough to regard it as a reference document of any kind. Which means that we do not want anyone to see it as such.

Yet, we can safely claim that virtually everyone who has been part of the creation process, or simply knows it in any depth has shown a very high degree of identification with, almost, every statement, every condition listed in its final form. Having made the point above, we are aware that most involved participants also realise the limited possibilities of most conditions described ever to materialise. But this realisation has not, and should not deter responsible professionals, in this case, language educators, from expressing their ideals for all to see. And this is what they or, rather, we have done, nothing more, nothing less.

## **The future of Wonderland**

It would have been nice to make Wonderland known to a wider professional audience over the past year, but it has not happened. Thus, we can simply announce that Wonderland has just been born, and as every born creature, it will grow, develop and change considerably, though the extent of this process is still unknown to all of us. With the technologies available to us, it seems highly probable, that the interaction and further work on the metaphorical self-definition, in order to stimulate the growth and the development, will take place through electronic channels, probably on the ECML website.

Accepting the arguments and the limitations summarised above, the mere fact that Wonderland finally appears in print is a statement in itself, which, at least, could serve as a starting, even reference, point. It proves that despite, or as a result of, a multicultural, multinational and multilingual setting, responsible professionals coming from hugely diverse educational and social backgrounds are able to reach a consensus, as far as their own and their learners' needs, development and, ultimately, future are concerned.

All this concerns the strictly professional considerations of the Wonderland metaphor. Whatever happens to it in the future is more a political matter than an educational one.



## **Vision 2: Participant voices**

This section contains several important references to the various activities carried out during the two-year life span of the Status Project. The focus will be on how participants' involvement has or has not affected their perceived status. Again, we do not wish to claim that hard research data forms the basis of any conclusion drawn from the views expressed by a few, or by a lot of, in some cases, by all participating colleagues.

In part 1, 'Status-raising effects of ECML activities', we present the findings of a principled data-collection process. We used a fairly simple chart to inquire about participants' reflections on whether they found any direct or indirect connections between the various types of activities they took part in or experienced before, during and after the workshops and their own status as language educators. Thanks to dozens of valuable insights from participants, the data gathered from this task provides the ECML with extremely useful evidence of the effect of its activities on the perceived internal and external status of the professionals who take part in them.

Part 2 gives evidence of an even less guided evaluation process. It offers an edited outline of views, reflections and conclusions, which were mostly unsolicited. In other words, some participants seem to have felt an urge to share these perceptions, feelings and thoughts with us. Then we, members of the project team, felt an urge to share some of the contributions received with a wider professional audience, because they reveal the impact of the activities, which we have set up within the framework of the Status Project, on the thinking, awareness and everyday professional activities of some of the language educators involved in them.



# Status-raising effects of ECML activities

**Péter Rádai**

## **Rationale**

The unique, not specifically professional, focus of the whole Status Project raised the important question whether participation in the two workshops and/or in the other, related activities could have affected the internal and external status of the colleagues involved. To that effect, we have collected participants' views on the following issues:

1. What are the most relevant activities they have taken part in which could have had a short- or long-term effect on their status (column 1)?
2. If their involvement in these activities affect their internal (column 2) and/or external status (column 3), in what ways does this impact manifest itself?

## **Content**

When the task was set up, the team had no specific presuppositions or hypotheses about its outcome. Our only conviction was that there definitely were concrete tasks and aspects of professional experience which must have acted as possible stimulators helping participants raise their own status. However, the responses we received exceeded even our wildest expectations. Participants created an extended framework for interpretation by providing a number of rather genuine and idiosyncratic reasons which we, the project team, would not have considered at all. This way, these professionals clearly broadened the predictable scope of reasons of why and how the various activities, the experience, which they were involved in, could have a bearing on their professional and social status. Another, even more striking, feature of the justifications in the second and third columns of the table is variety: there are only very few repetitions. This means that respondents have managed to identify and word fairly subtle differences between the various status-affecting characteristics of their experience.

## **Procedures**

All the points collected in the table below were suggested, explored, modified and extended by the two groups of participants in the two workshops. Only the framework, in other words the table format, was provided by the team during the December 2001 event. The capital X in each box in columns 2 and 3 represent strong positive responses confirming the statements in column 1. The confirmation is then extended by shorter or longer clarifications.

Type of involvement	Possible impact on internal status	Possible impact on external status
Seeing/experiencing an example of effective collaborative planning and “teaching” (moderating)	X: techniques acquired could improve own communication and collaborative skills	X: could be a possible model of professional co-operation worth showing to and sharing with others
Being involved in short, focused co-operative activities	X: reveals own capacity to work with others in focussed way	X: ways of involving others can stimulate collaboration, thus joint efforts could be more effective
Being involved in effective group work	X: confirmation of beliefs about the effectiveness of group work in language education; useful reminder to apply more group work in one’s own practice	X: some methods we used and ideas we discussed could be adapted to different local/regional/national and international settings in order to strengthen collaborative nature of profession
Sharing ideas and experience	X: clear professional gain, enrichment, increased level of awareness	X: disseminating new experience, both content and procedures
Being involved in several product-oriented activities	X: experience triggers the planning and implementation of similar activities for/by ourselves	X: concrete products could be emphatic in showing the strength of the profession to other stakeholders in language education
Feeling a professional identity	X: formation of a sense of belonging; increased self esteem and assertiveness	X: creating a ‘corporate identity’ (see <i>Vision 1: Language Teachers’ Wonderland</i> ), a unifying effort
Confidence building opportunity	X: even if temporary, the feeling of self-confidence acts as ego-booster	X: world outside (professional and non-professional) perceives increased confidence
Self-evaluation/self-examining	X: feeling strong and open enough to exercise these	X: could be a model of self-reflection for others
Learning about how others see us	X: inviting feedback, external evaluation	X: initiating peer-observation and evaluation in various settings

Type of involvement	Possible impact on internal status	Possible impact on external status
Tasks to take away	X: increased teaching/training repertoire	X: pass them on for the benefit of wider target group
Becoming up-to date	X: feeling more confident professionally	X: sharing of new knowledge/skills will contribute to raising prestige; a sign of professionalism, as society places emphasis on lifelong learning
Forced to think about ideas, concepts otherwise overlooked	X: using creative imagination, and critical thinking	X: shows that, as professionals, we are willing to continue our learning; involvement in innovation will increase professional and social status
Learning from each other	X: readiness to learn from others	X: creating a feeling of 'togetherness'
Awareness of own role as agent of change	X: being aware of responsibility for initiating and implementing change	X: increased visibility of representatives of the profession and of their educational roles
Shared ownership of role as agent of change	X: encouragement to ourselves to develop continuously and to show professional model worth following	X: professionalising the teaching profession; acknowledgement of expertise of language educators
Getting together with fellow language teachers to share, co-operate and plan together	X: experiencing the powerful force of shared activities on personal and professional development	X: through effective dissemination activities the awareness of others of this force may be revealed and acknowledged
Refresh one's perspective on foreign language learning in Europe	X: feeling up-to-date concerning foreign language education in Europe	X: advocating the new paradigm (see <i>Language Educators as Agents of Change</i> ), which might work well with others inside and outside language education

Type of involvement	Possible impact on internal status	Possible impact on external status
Knowledge of situation of foreign language learning and teaching in a European context	X: feeling of raised professionalism; awareness of potentially influencing and being influenced by common strategies and practices	X: in a position to inform colleagues in various settings about this knowledge and experience
Starting up professional networks and co-operation with fellow language educators throughout Europe	X: feeling part of an international community of professionals	X: in a position to stress international foreign language learning trends and value of co-operation
Exploring the status of language educators	X: heightened awareness of the issue and its international relevance; feeling better informed, involved	X: in a position to emphasise the importance of this in contacts with fellow professionals in- and outside education
Planning purposeful professional actions (Wonderland, actions recommended)	X: having own voice heard; exerting influence on professional change, which can boost self-confidence and self-esteem	X: raising professional and social status/gaining society's respect
Acquisition of interpersonal/communication and training skills (training and development sessions in Workshop 2)	X: increased awareness of skills/techniques with which status-influencing activities can be implemented	X: planning and implementing activities which may influence, change, public image of profession; enabling a more positive, confident and dynamic presence of professionals
Increased under-standing of important themes of our work, like stress, self-esteem and interpersonal skills	X: the understanding of the shared nature of constituents of professional climate could help us manage to work on these subjects in a positive way	X: higher self-esteem attained, less stress, effective interpersonal skills could lead to gaining more professional and social respect



Type of involvement	Possible impact on internal status	Possible impact on external status
Our work on Wonderland and “actions planning”	X: feeling that our own personal views, ideas, etc. matter, and they are taken into consideration	X: if these ideas go all the way to the Council of Europe or other bodies and will be taken seriously, we could feel a part of the status-raising process!
The crucial fact that each of us represented our country individually	X: being chosen to participate raises your self-esteem, if you feel you deserve it and, once there, participate fully in the activities; then, upon return, you disseminate as much of the experience as possible :)	X: having participated in a workshop of this kind and standard gives you a certain respect among fellow-professionals, but it must not be ‘exploited’ for pure personal gains only!

*Table 1: How do ECML activities affect teacher status?*

The true relevance of the emphatic statements above is that they prove, in no uncertain terms, the value of most activities initiated or supported by the ECML with respect to their direct or indirect impact on participants’ status. It is, however, the task of each individual to make the best use of and exploit this increased status in their own contexts for their own benefit, as well as for the benefit of the widest possible professional community they can reach out to. Fortunately, those who have contributed to this chart are fully aware of this role and responsibility, which is succinctly proven by the very last line of the table.

It can be safely stated that the large majority of the statements regarding the almost unquestionable relevance of such activities on teacher status go far beyond the framework of the Status Project. The justification for such a generalisation lies in the fact that the techniques, tasks, working modes we applied during the whole project and, in particular, during the workshops, are the same as the ones other project teams repeatedly use when implementing their projects. Thus, we can claim, that virtually all ECML activities have had, are having and will always have a significant impact on the internal and external status of participants, at least on their perceived status, which is the first step to materialising this increased status. The ECML clearly has a role to fulfil, then, and how this could be achieved will be a major undertaking of the second medium-term programme.



# Impact of involvement in Status Project activities

**Péter Rádai**

All the quotes in this section are taken from e-mails and attached documents sent by participants of the second workshop, held in February 2003. The reflections and feelings expressed below were mostly accompanying accounts of dissemination activities. The only criterion for selection for the publication was whether they explicitly referred to the impact of the project-related activities on participants' professional thinking, beliefs, concepts and routines.

The following reflective comments were sent to us by a workshop participant only a few days after the workshop. We chose to start this section with them because they show the deep impact of the workshop, as well as, how quickly and actively one participant embarked on the difficult journey of dissemination.

The first experience I want to share with you is my enormously increased feelings of professionalism and self-esteem. In my lessons, and in all my other work activities, I take much more pleasure and pride now, I have a better grasp of what I'm doing and aiming at, and I can approach colleagues with more self-assurance and conviction. Now, how Graz and you all have done this for me, I do not begin to understand yet, but one thing is for sure: our surprisingly coherent work and group spirit didn't fail to hit fertile ground with me, and I hope with many more of you.

Joost Ides, The Netherlands

Public relations at my secondary school: Now, here I've been tremendously successful! My seeking press publicity around a twin towns website project [...] has drawn immediate and constant interest from papers and RTV-stations. To someone as inexperienced as myself in this PR-area this was simply amazing, and all this has given me an enormous drive to continue using the local press for publicity about what we accomplish in the way of language teaching at our school.

Joost Ides, The Netherlands

The same person raised the very concrete question of how the new experience, the focus on status issues could be dealt with in a goal-oriented manner.

[I gave] a 30 minute presentation [...], but now to my fellow teacher trainers at Amsterdam University: A very positive half-hour with a lot of recognition on the part of my colleagues as regards Frank's [in fact Teresa Tinsley's] new paradigm [see *Language Educators as Agents of Change*] and the power of press publicity. It turned out that we all struggle along in the same way, and that it is an excellent idea to focus on status-raising issues

from time to time. Question now is how to turn this very positive response into concrete initiatives (regular team discussions, incorporation into training programmes, etc).

Joost Ides, The Netherlands

Even more concrete issues are touched upon in the fourth contribution. Social skills and interpersonal skills were already highlighted at the Think Tank as potentially effective tools in language educators' quest for a higher status. One of our colleagues from Latvia, herself a long-term, active participant in ECML activities, explored these factors in more details, examining the need to improve such skills.

Social skills are of utmost importance for teachers' status. [...] The topicality of teachers' social skills had already been outlined in 1995 (White Paper on Education and Training), in 1996 (UNESCO); it was restated at the ECML Think Tank (June 2000) and in the Green Paper on Teacher Education in Europe.

But the situation in real life is different; the following problematic areas can be identified:

- perceptions about low status (the lack of higher order thinking skills);
- isolation problems (in fact, teachers feel isolated in the classroom because they lack social skills to adapt to new classroom communities that are in the process of re-socialisation);
- professional and social identity;
- adaptation problems;
- burnout, etc.

The problem is that ordinary teachers don't know what social skills are. Documents and educators speak very cleverly about new education paradigms and corresponding social skills, but nobody has clearly defined the latter, let alone defining teachers' social skills. How can we expect teachers to develop our students' social skills if they themselves don't know what social skills are?

Indra Odina, Latvia

The last two interventions take the issues into 'dreamland', being less concrete and, at the same time, experimenting with a more emotional approach to teacher status and to possible actions.

... I personally found out that dissemination is a powerful mechanism of 'involvement of the uninvolved'. I was lucky to start with the right group – in-service teacher trainers – who, after getting acquainted with Language Teachers' Wonderland, asked for some copies to take home, to show them to their colleagues. One of them said that it would be an excellent Christmas gift for language educators. Well, who knows? People do say that Christmas night is miraculous so, maybe, some teachers will start thinking and doing something for their status.

Nijole Norvaisiene, Lithuania

This closing quote refers to other specific topics of the second workshop, taking an emotionally-loaded look at what we all did during the workshop, and the extent to which it made a difference to this particular participant. It seems appropriate that the section ends with a poem by Nijole Norvaisiene, in which she encourages (language) educators to make their point as assertively and confidently as possible about the importance of language learning and teaching.

As this fast moving and changing world brings us stress which leads to professional burnout, so we must strengthen the main poles of our shelter, and of course, they are self esteem and assertiveness. I myself got interested in these themes and I am looking for more materials to prepare seminars on all the three topics. To conclude, this is my try in “poetry” under the influence of Frank’s new paradigm.

To learn or not to learn another language –  
That is the question.  
Whether ‘tis nobler to use your body language,  
Or not to suffer in your mind, and use your voice.

The answer is: do study languages.  
The more you know – the life’s more open.  
And do remember:  
The language you have learned is a nice pavement further.

When you find yourself in this wide language river  
Which carries you through cultures  
Your tolerance grows into the cultural awareness  
And you can have a dialogue, but not a war.



***Chapter 4:  
Planning action for status improvement***





## **The original plan**

From its onset, the Status Project was expected to produce, as its main outcome, a comprehensive set of recommendations, which would serve as a springboard for future actions in national and international contexts to increase the educational and social status of the profession. We must make it absolutely clear that no such products have been born, which does not mean that the project has failed to achieve its aims. The mapping of the status situation, the abundance of reflections, the Wonderland metaphor, as well as all the tangible and intangible results and impact of the various activities within the project, will probably compensate all interested parties for the lack of a charter, or a set of commandments.

Yet, the publication would not be complete without the presentation of the proposed actions, albeit limited in amount, and the rationale behind them. This last chapter of the book will do just that, by also offering an insight into how the process of action planning was triggered, and what concrete results it has yielded.

## **Wonderland: a means to an end**

In chapter 3, Wonderland is primarily referred to as the ultimate goal, a final document of collaborative thinking. Apart from being that indeed, it also served as the starting point of planning status raising actions. In this section, we wish to illustrate with a concrete example how this process was taking shape.

### **The theme: Peer-observation as part of our workload**

One of the action points arising from the group work on the basis of the Wonderland worksheet was that peer-observation could be made part of every (language) teacher's paid workload in order to facilitate individual and co-operative professional development.

In response to the recommendation, the team worked out the framework for a potential implementation plan, which could be put forward to national or even international bodies of professionals and decision-makers. In fact the idea was that all concrete action points proposed by workshop participants would ultimately be presented in a similar format.

## **Guiding principles**

We designed the table with project planning and implementation principles in mind, attempting to keep the thinking process simple and focused. Thus, the following categories were used for the planning procedure:

### *Selected issue / Justification of choice:*

Participants were asked to list the most important supporting arguments for the action recommended, bearing in mind that some of those reasons could also be made use of in the communication strategy at a later stage of planning or implementation.

### *Stakeholders:*

Classroom practitioners, the community most highly represented among workshop participants, often find it admittedly difficult to imagine all the possible stakeholders who would need to be involved in the implementation of change. That is why we wanted them to focus on this aspect of planning as well.

### *Sequence of actions/Agents carrying out necessary actions:*

Once stakeholders had been identified, the course of action and the acting professional groups were to be envisaged. We also expected participants to consider the logical sequencing of the planned actions.

### *Communication Plan:*

We are fully aware that language educators are full of innovative ideas, but they are not always ready to communicate those effectively to other stakeholders. By including this category, we made workshop participants taking the complex process of communication into account.

### *How will action(s) affect the status of language educators (if at all?)*

Since the ultimate goal of all the actions planned during the Status Project was to help the profession raise its own profile and status, we assumed that this would have to be justified for each main action, as well as for minor activities.

## Sample implementation plan: “Making peer-observation part of one’s obligatory workload”

Selected Issue / Justification of Choice	Stakeholders	Sequence of actions/Agents carrying out necessary actions	Communication Plan	How will action(s) affect the status of language educators (if at all?)
<p><u>Issue:</u> Making peer-observation part of one’s obligatory workload</p> <p><u>Quantity:</u> 2 hours a week</p> <p><u>Justification:</u> * peer-observation is a very important learning tool for teachers; * post-observation discussions could be vehicles to initiate and enhance T-T communication; * peer-observation has a strong trust-building effect...</p>	<p>Teachers of all subjects</p> <p>Language educators</p> <p>Head-teachers</p> <p>Teacher educators (both pre- and in-service)</p> <p>Inspectors, advisors</p> <p>Local, regional and national educational decision-makers</p> <p>Materials writers...</p>	<p>1. Language teachers experiment in their institution with peer-observation, and post-observation discussions on an ad hoc basis.</p> <p>2. They turn to a local in-service provider for professional advice to make the experiment theoretically and practically more sound.</p> <p>3. Short in-service course on the topic is provided for 25 participants – financed by participants –, professional literature recommended for further reference and as support to pursue further individual and collaborative development.</p> <p>4. Headmaster approached with request that regular, weekly observations and discussions should count against obligatory workload – request rejected.</p> <p>5. In-service provider (e.g. higher education institution) asked to provide research evidence about the effectiveness of peer-observation and post-observation discussions</p> <p>...</p>	<p>In-house: T ↔ T</p> <p>Ts ↔ Providers of in-service (inset) training; Inset providers plan in-house</p> <p>Inset providers ↔ Ts</p> <p>In-house: Ts ↔ Management</p> <p>Inset providers ↔ Management</p> <p>Management/Inset providers ↔ Local/national educational decision makers...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Teachers prove that they are willing to learn from each other.</li> <li>▪ Teachers show an example that their classrooms are open and their teaching activities are transparent.</li> <li>▪ Teachers express their concrete professional development needs towards inset providers.</li> <li>▪ Teachers show an example of life-long professional learning.</li> <li>▪ The whole process exemplifies a self-initiated staff-development action, which could lead to considerably increased self-esteem ...</li> </ul>



oic!

... peer observation ...

## The outcome

The team planned the table to serve as a guideline for group work, assuming that for each major action point, a similar grid would be filled in with sufficient detail. This is why we did not produce a comprehensive table, there and then, in which every column is fully elaborated, none the less, it could be done with relative ease on the same basis, if it was necessary.

Even though the plan that all actions recommended would be formulated in a similar framework did not materialise during the workshop, the table above could still serve as a sample plan of action, should the ECML decide to take matters any further. And since the peer-observation recommendation has been approved of as one of the key action points for status improvement (see *Recommended actions to raise the educational and social status of language educators*), the ECML can consider one of the concrete implementation plans half done.

# **Recommended actions to raise the educational and social status of language educators**

## **Introduction**

In the closing section of the publication we do not intend to summarise the main findings of the whole project. Partly, because the structure and content have already allowed sufficient repetitions and summaries of the main points and, partly, because we are expected to present concrete actions envisaged by professionals who have been involved in the project activities.

## **Actions and justifications**

The list below reflects a design and finalisation process based on small group work and an extensive discussion in the framework of the whole group at the end of workshop 2 in February 2003. The recommended actions are put forward as they were proposed by the workshop participants. The job of editing is restricted to the formulation of the justification. No further comments will be added by the team, since we are convinced that the main body of the publication will be complete with the list of actions, which should speak for themselves.

### **Action 1: Peer-observation should be part of one's obligatory workload**

#### ***Justification for Action 1***

Peer-observation and post-observation discussions are considered as highly effective tools for teachers' professional development. However, current curricula, time constraints and lack of resources do not support such developmental activities to take place as part of (language) teachers' workload. We are convinced that implementing the plan of allotting 2 hours per week as paid work-time to peer-observation in every teacher's weekly schedule would be a very important vehicle to initiate and enhance professional communication, as well as to build trust between peers. The observation could happen within and between departments of subjects.

### *Effects of Action 1 on teacher status*

Through recommending such action, (language) teachers want to show an example of life-long professional learning. The whole process exemplifies a self-initiated staff-development action, which has not yet been institutionalised in most education systems. Should it be, it could lead to a considerable increase of teachers' self-esteem, by proving to stakeholders in and outside education that (language) educators consider their work, their classrooms open and observable for those who are interested in them.

### **Action 2: Life-long professional learning should be supported through a transparent career structure of mandatory, credited programmes of continuous professional development.**

#### *Justification for Action 2*

The recommendation itself is a lot less innovative than Action 1, it has already been institutionalised in several member states. But it was surprising to learn that even countries with a complex educational system do not have such schemes, and educators representing these countries have expressed a need for them.

It must be made clear that the action planned is not that some sort of standardisation should be imposed on national in-service teacher education systems<sup>1</sup>. What seems to be coveted by professionals is that each member state offers its teachers clearly set career goals, which practitioners can harmonise with their own aims in professional and personal development. As for the format of funding, it has not yet been explored sufficiently. However, there was a consensus that the state should take the responsibility to at least co-fund teachers' participation in these development programmes. According to another suggestion, the number of hours spent in the training programmes should somehow count as part of a teacher's paid annual workload.

The recommended structure could stimulate the development of the whole system of in-service teacher education, even in those countries where the idea promoted here has been in operation for a considerable period of time. If available, evidence of good, proven practice could be gathered and disseminated by the ECML.

#### *Effect of Action 2 on teacher status*

Participants believe that the schemes recommended will help education create a profile of itself as a real profession (see its ingredients in *Language educators as agents of*

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1 Accepting that the ultimate aim is not to standardise practices in national contexts, comparative professional standards could still be set, which would allow the acceptance of credits obtained in other countries. At the moment this is only possible in higher education on the basis of bilateral agreements.

*change*) with a career structure, similar to law or medicine, for example. This will lead to higher social prestige, since society should acknowledge the efforts of (language) educators to continuously raise their professional standards with the help of all stakeholders, and for the sake of all potential beneficiaries. As a result of all this, more teachers would stay in the profession, and pursue a career in education.

**Action 3: An international information, helpline and trouble-shooting organisation for language educators should be established and maintained with the support of the ECML<sup>1</sup>**

*Justification for Action 3*

In today's cyber age, anyone can set up websites, organisations, which provide information or helpline services to any interested visitors. Yet, the idea of a real international trouble-shooting body for the profession was already raised during workshop 1 in December 2001. There can be no doubt that language educators wish to feel a sense of belonging, and they do not appear to be fully content with teachers' associations, which are the primary and, often, the only opportunity to fulfil such aspirations.

As the ECML itself has already created a caretaker image, it comes as no surprise that those professionals who have experienced its caring, understanding and all-encompassing attitude are convinced that such an international organisation should be set up in collaboration with the Centre. As was envisaged, the service organisation could act as a contact point, a source of information which gathers and distributes that information to carefully selected target groups. It could also undertake public relations activities, making sure that the international public is constantly aware of the importance of language education and of its practitioners, of their needs, achievements, contributions to educational and social causes etc.

On a long-term basis, the setting up of this organisation, together with the formation of its national network of partner institutions would create a possible new training focus for the ECML, that of training representatives of local and regional organisations in PR, educational marketing and, above all, in dissemination skills.

*Effect of Action 3 on teacher status*

There seems to be a consensus within the profession that teachers will do a better job if they are well informed, if they know about the current views, concerns, queries of

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1 Support in this case, and in short-term, means spiritual, political and communication support to get through the idea to international decision-making bodies. Details of funding the operational costs of such an organisation are to be negotiated later, though a number of preliminary ideas were already raised in workshop 2.

others working in the same field, among similar or totally different circumstances. The already mentioned sense of belonging, particularly in an international, cross-border context, could lead to the formation of a 'corporate identity', to use a rather unwelcome, but appropriate, term from the world of business. Taking the efficiency of the PR activities of the organisation for granted, the outside world, nationally and internationally, would be much better and objectively informed, while it could also be positively influenced, about the work and conditions in which language teachers operate.

**Action 4: Local and regional language teaching task forces should be established and maintained in order to facilitate the formulation and embedding of a European dimension in language education.**

*Justification for Action 4*

This bottom-up action point is, probably, the least elaborate one recommended, though it can be very well justified. It was the action which was unanimously supported by all participants involved. Classroom practitioners and teacher educators felt a particularly strong identification with the idea, as they were convinced that such an initiative would:

- exert a long-lasting impact on the content and methodology of language education;
- ensure that Council of Europe principles and instruments (e.g. intercultural understanding, partial competences, pluri- and multilingualism, the CEF and the Portfolio) would reach the classroom level;
- create an informal framework of internationally comparative standards concerning the quality of language education and/or language teacher education, which would serve as a basis for trans-border mobility, teacher and pupil exchanges etc.;
- provide language educators with concrete, applicable, adaptable materials and resources which could be used in and out of the classroom;
- create a clearly identifiable, yet very extensive network of individuals and professional groups who can benefit immensely from this web of human resource;
- keep language teachers informed about professional issues and happenings, including those originating from, or related to, the Council of Europe and/or the ECML.

The ECML could be instrumental in setting up and co-ordinating such a task force or network. Examples abound (e.g. local and regional European Information Points [EIPs] in countries waiting for EU accession, or resource points of cultural institutions), and we do not have to think in terms of creating completely new entities from scratch. The most likely solution would be to identify educational agents at local and regional



levels, to which such tasks could be allocated, together with new and well-trained human and material resources. As always, funding is a crucial question, but this initiative would surely be endorsed by cultural institutions and other alternative sources of financial support. Incidentally, Actions 3 and 4 are seen as two key elements of one larger-scale action.

### ***Effect of Action 4 on teacher status***

Since a voluntary shift towards accepting international standards has unquestionably begun, in education in general and in language education in particular, in most European countries, the task force idea is simply the institutionalisation of the process already under way. By harbouring the initiative, national and international decision-making bodies will be able to provide the grass roots of language education with a guiding principle, which is more than welcome among them. The new scheme would entail a wide range of teacher development programmes, and would also force providers of pre- and in-service teacher education to prepare for the new challenges.

Should the action plan to set up such an internationally co-ordinated task force materialise, it would give language educators' status a big boost. The controversial 'creative innovator' image would give way to the role of 'in-depth innovator'. Language teachers could be the transmitters of the European dimension, of international standards of quality. And they would be highly motivated to share this new content, the innovative approaches, and exploit them collaboratively with all other agents in the big game of education. This way, the professional goals will become shared, thus not only the status of language teachers, but that of all teachers should rise considerably!

### **Where do we go from here?**

The description of the four action points above does not intend to provide minute details of how these visionary actions should be planned and implemented. All we wanted to do was present and justify a series of professional reflections, concerns, desires, similarly to those described in Wonderland. Then comes the period of waiting. Waiting for those who are involved in any level of decision-making, where one or more of the recommended actions could be further discussed, explored and, perhaps, taken on board. If the situation ever reaches that point, dozens of us will be available to clarify the ideas, to strengthen the justification, to reach out to individuals and groups of professionals for support, in order to help the dream come true.

But if the waiting takes too long, we'll be back!



# Appendix 1: Barbara Dieu's TOW page


The screenshot shows a web page for Barbara Dieu, a teacher profile on the ECML website. The page is titled "Teachers gallery" and features a navigation menu at the top with options like "News", "About Us", "Activities", "Participant's Area", "Interactive", "Resources", "FAQ", and "Français". On the left side, there are links for "Forums", "Chatroom", "Databases", and "Site Map". The main content area includes a profile picture of Barbara Dieu, her contact information, and several sections of text describing her background and views on language teaching.

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

## Teachers gallery

Teachers Gallery Join teachers gallery Introduction (Adobe Acrobat PDF) Introduction (Word DOC)

### Barbara Dieu



**Country:** Brazil  
**E-Mail:** bwjdieu@sanet.com.br  
**Language Teacher since:** 1974  
**Language(s) Taught:** English

**Personal/Professional Motto:** Never say never  
**Hobbies:** Reading, projects online/surfing on the net/building web-sites, travelling, cooking  
**Age Group(s) of Learners:** 14-18  
**Name of School:** Lycée Pasteur - Cours Experimental Bilingue (Franco-Brazilian school)  
**City/Town/Village:** São Paulo

**What keeps me in the language profession:**  
I love languages and young people. Since I was a child, I've been very lucky to learn and be in contact with many languages and belong to a multicultural "milieu", which has enriched me a lot. Even though I only teach English, I can compare it to other languages, think about its impact on different people and cultures and stress how important it is to learn several languages for a better understanding of the world we live in.

**What I am not happy about in the language teaching profession:**  
Prejudice and intolerance of some people against other languages and cultures and the low salaries of private and public teachers.

**My most burning question to my fellow language teachers:**  
What steps have you taken in your language classes to promote cooperation, tolerance, respect towards the other and individual development? How responsible do you feel socially? How far do you think these new technologies can help us in this?

Source: ECML website <http://www.ecml.at/interactive/tow.asp?t=11>



## **Appendix 2: Questionnaire: ‘Beliefs of workshop participants about their career values and job rewards’**

The original questionnaire, ‘*Beliefs of workshop participants about their career values and job rewards*’ we administered with the participants of the two workshops.

The purpose of this survey is to identify some of the factors that influence, motivate, and empower language teachers in European settings. The questionnaire concerns both job satisfaction and career satisfaction. The survey consists of two sections adapted from Kassagby, Boraie & Schmidt, in Zoltán Dörnyei & Richard Schmidt *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition*, University of Hawai’i Press, Honolulu, 2001.

### **Section one**

Rate each of the following statements according to *how important this aspect of an ideal job* would be to you personally. Indicate your response by circling a number on the scale below each item. The numbers on the scale correspond to the following:

5 = very important

4 = somewhat important

3 = no opinion

2 = somewhat unimportant

1 = not important at all

#### **1. Earning a good salary**

1     2     3     4     5

#### **2. Having flexible working hours**

1     2     3     4     5

#### **3. Job security**

1     2     3     4     5

#### **4. Fringe benefits**

1     2     3     4     5

5. Having clear rules and procedures.  
1  2  3  4  5
6. Having a manageable work to be done.  
1  2  3  4  5
7. Being fairly treated in my organisation.  
1  2  3  4  5
8. Having a supervisor who is responsive to suggestions and complaints.  
1  2  3  4  5
9. Having a supervisor who gives clear guidance.  
1  2  3  4  5
10. Having sufficient variety in tasks / type of activity.  
1  2  3  4  5
11. Working for a reputable educational organisation.  
1  2  3  4  5
12. Having a profession that is prestigious.  
1  2  3  4  5
13. Having a profession that is prestigious.  
1  2  3  4  5
14. Having the freedom to do what is necessary in my teaching to do a good job.  
1  2  3  4  5
15. Being allowed to deal creatively with students' problems.  
1  2  3  4  5
16. Being included in the goal setting process.  
1  2  3  4  5
17. Being able to introduce changes without any kind of problem.  
1  2  3  4  5

18. Having a job in which I can perform to the best of my ability.

1  2  3  4  5

19. Being promoted to a superior job at some point in my career.

1  2  3  4  5

20. Having a challenging job.

1  2  3  4  5

21. Having a job in which I can learn and develop my abilities to my full potential.

1  2  3  4  5

22. Having contact with professionals in the field of English language teaching.

1  2  3  4  5

23. Frequent feedback about the effectiveness of my performance.

1  2  3  4  5

24. Being able to work independently and use my own initiative.

1  2  3  4  5

25. Being evaluated positively by my students.

1  2  3  4  5

26. Being evaluated positively by my supervisors

1  2  3  4  5

27. Being recognised for my teaching accomplishment.

1  2  3  4  5

28. Really helping my students to learn English.

1  2  3  4  5

29. Having good relationships with colleagues.

1  2  3  4  5

30. Having a friendly relationship with my students.

1  2  3  4  5

31. Having a good relationship with my supervisor(s).

1  2  3  4  5

32. Having a good relationship with my students' parents.

1  2  3  4  5

33. Working with other teachers as a team.

1  2  3  4  5

34. Having a job that is enjoyable and stimulating.

1  2  3  4  5

35. Having a job that is fun.

1  2  3  4  5

36. Having a job in which I am relaxed and have peace of mind.

1  2  3  4  5

## Section two

Read the following statements and think about each in relation to your current job. The numbers on the scale correspond to the following:

5 = strongly agree

4 = agree

3 = no opinion

2 = disagree

1 = strongly disagree

1. I have a good salary.

1  2  3  4  5

2. I have flexible working hours.

1  2  3  4  5

3. I have good job security.

1  2  3  4  5



4. I have fringe benefits.

1  2  3  4  5

5. There are clear rules and procedures at work.

1  2  3  4  5

6. I have a manageable work to be done.

1  2  3  4  5

7. I am fairly treated in the organisation.

1  2  3  4  5

8. My supervisor is responsive to suggestions and grievances.

1  2  3  4  5

9. My supervisor gives clear guidance.

1  2  3  4  5

10. My job provides sufficient variety in tasks/type of activity.

1  2  3  4  5

11. I work for a reputable educational organisation.

1  2  3  4  5

12. Teaching English is a prestigious profession.

1  2  3  4  5

13. My job title is satisfactory.

1  2  3  4  5

14. I am allowed sufficient freedom to do what is necessary in my teaching in order to do a good job.

1  2  3  4  5

15. Creativity is emphasised and rewarded.

1  2  3  4  5

16. I am included in my organisation's goal-setting process.

1  2  3  4  5

17. I am able to introduce changes without any problem.

1  2  3  4  5

18. I have a job in which I can perform to the best of my ability.

1  2  3  4  5

19. I have prospects for promotion.

1  2  3  4  5

20. My job is challenging.

1  2  3  4  5

21. My job provides scope to learn and develop my abilities to my full potential.

1  2  3  4  5

22. I have sufficient opportunities for contact with professionals in the field of English teaching.

1  2  3  4  5

23. I receive frequent enough feedback about the effectiveness of my performance.

1  2  3  4  5

24. Independence and initiative are rewarded.

1  2  3  4  5

25. My students evaluate me positively.

1  2  3  4  5

26. My supervisor evaluates me positively.

1  2  3  4  5

27. Teaching accomplishments are recognised.

1  2  3  4  5

28. I know that I am really helping my students to learn English.

1  2  3  4  5

29. I have good relationships with colleagues.

1  2  3  4  5

30. I have a friendly relationship with my students.

1  2  3  4  5

31. I have a good relationship with my supervisor(s).

1  2  3  4  5

32. I have a good relationship with my students' parents.

1  2  3  4  5

33. The emphasis is on team-work.

1  2  3  4  5

34. My work is enjoyable and stimulating.

1  2  3  4  5

35. My job is fun.

1  2  3  4  5

36. I'm relaxed and have peace of mind in my job.

1  2  3  4  5

37. I am truly satisfied with my profession as a teacher.

1  2  3  4  5

38. I am truly satisfied with my present job.

1  2  3  4  5

39. I will change my career if I have the opportunity to do so.

1  2  3  4  5

40. I will change my job if I have the opportunity to do so.

1  2  3  4  5

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## The project team

### *Members of the project core team:*

**Mercè Bernaus** is professor at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona at the Faculty of Education. She teaches English and French Didactics to pre-service primary and secondary school teachers. She has collaborated in different European and international projects related to second language acquisition. Her main interest is the influence of motivation and attitudes on second language learning. She is the co-author of manuals and several articles related to that subject.

**Gabriela Matei** has worked as a senior lecturer and teacher educator at the University of the West, Department of English, in Timisoara, Romania, and is at present embarking on a freelance career as a consultant, trainer and researcher. Her special fields of interest are: teacher development, teacher education, (student) teacher research, reflective teaching, qualitative research, and intercultural and political aspects of TESOL. She has recently been awarded a Ph.D. in Education by the University of Exeter.

**Péter Rádai** started as an EFL teacher in secondary and primary schools in the eighties, and has worked for the Centre for English Teacher Training, Eötvös University, in Budapest, Hungary since 1991. He has been involved in pre- and in-service teacher education since 1989, has co-written resource books and contributed to several publications for foreign language teachers. His professional interests also lie outside language education, he currently pursues his PhD studies in Pedagogy.

**Derk Sassen** has been working as a teacher for Dutch and German as a foreign language in both Germany and the Netherlands. Currently he works as a co-ordinator at the Talenacademie Nederland in Maastricht. He is engaged in several European projects on foreign language education. One of his main interests currently is the teaching and learning of neighbouring languages in border regions. He is the co-author of several publications related to this subject.

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