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New Educational Review

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Foreign Language Teacher Education: The Polish Case¹

Abstract

Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges (FLTTC) were established in Poland as an answer to the need for drastic changes in education in 1992. By the year 2001, FLTTC had managed to graduate the number of teachers the market demanded, yet the quality of these programs was questioned. This paper presents an in-depth understanding of the impact of FLTTC on teacher candidates' learning and development, as described by the participants, and the challenges that FLTTC faced during its early development process. A two-way mixed method was used to better understand the purpose, process, successes, and challenges faced by this alternative teacher education program. The data reveal that the teacher candidates mainly applied to FLTTCs to learn a foreign language, and they used their degrees as a springboard to obtain better-paid jobs. Although the teacher candidates had a positive perception of their teaching skills, building true college-school partnerships was necessary for the development and learning of teacher candidates.

Key words: *teacher education, foreign language, college, policy*

Introduction

Foreign language learning is regarded as a European priority, and with this idea in mind earlier candidates for the European Union as well as new candidates initiated important changes in their education to develop foreign language educators. Among those countries, Poland established foreign language teacher colleges to meet the demand of the education market. Nevertheless, there is little

¹ This paper was presented at the AERA, 2006 San Fransisco Conference.

evidence as to their effectiveness. This study aims to investigate the effectiveness and challenges foreign language teacher training colleges (FLTTC) face. It is hoped that an understanding of these challenges may help offer policy implications for the improvement of Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges in Poland as well as in countries which are seeking for models to educate foreign language teachers through a fast track model in Eastern Europe and Asia. In the following proceeding sections, a brief overview of education and foreign language teacher education in Poland is described as background information to highlight the need of the study.

In the spur of democratization of social and political life, Poland embarked on a major economic and political transformation with the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989. The Ministry of Education presented to Parliament a document called "the main direction for improving the National Education System in Poland (Banach, 1998, cited in Salitra, 2003), and in 1999 an education reform was released which aimed at identifying the main educational priorities and a new comprehensive law on education in the country. This reform not only aimed to improve the quality of education by restoring the strict proportionality between transmission of information, formation of skills and development of personalities, but also the interaction of education and upbringing processes (Salitra, 2003; Tomiak, 2000).

Those drastic changes in education brought with it urgent needs in tertiary teacher education institutions, especially foreign language teacher education was ranked as one of the crucial issues (Hamot, 1998). The mandatory language taught at primary level had been Russian until the year 1989. Understanding the importance of introducing a Western language, school authorities prompted by political, social, and parental pressure strived to replace the dominant position of the Russian language with one of the foreign languages, particularly English (Kwaśniewicz, 2000). Nevertheless, the Polish Education system was not ready to supply the demand as there were few teachers with Western language credentials (Pawelec, 2000). Although Pedagogical Universities and Foreign Language Philologies had been training Foreign Language Teachers (Eurydice, 2004/05), the number of graduates was short in meeting this need (Kwaśniewicz, 2000).

To meet the demand of foreign language teachers one solution was to train foreign language teachers in three-year colleges in which the graduates would receive a "licencjat" (that is accepted as an equivalent of a BA degree). Ultimately, Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges (FLTTC) were founded in 1990 (Eurydice, 2004/05, Kwaśniewicz, 2000). These three-year institutions of higher education became sanctioned by the Ministry of Education in 1992 (Kwaśniewicz, 2000), but are not recognized as higher education institutions in the national legisla-

tion (Eurydice, 2005/06). The number of these colleges had increased steadily in number. While it was planned to have 30 English Teacher Training Colleges, the number expanded to 61 in the year 2000. Some of the FLTTCs which were part of Pedagogical higher education institutions currently changed into Pedagogical Universities.

The reforms in the Polish education system overall reflect the need to support Poland's transition to democracy and a capitalist economy, and they are reflected in the training process of foreign language teachers (Pawelec, 2000). The policies adopted by governments or states regarding teacher education, licensing, hiring, and professional development may make an important difference in the qualifications and capacities that teachers bring to their work (Darling-Hammond, 2000). When the Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges were founded the target was to provide 19,000 qualified secondary school teachers of English. As planned, by the year 2001 FLTTC had managed to graduate the targeted number of foreign language teachers. Although the expected number of teachers was educated, the question of quality emerged (Pawelec, 2000, Komorowska, 1995 cited in Kwaśniewicz, 2000).

There are two types of teacher training colleges overall in Poland. The mainstream teacher training colleges are institutions of higher education that primarily educate primary and secondary school teachers that receive a *licencjat* degree when they graduate. This title allows teacher candidates to pursue their studies in an institution of higher education for what some may call graduate school. Graduates of teacher training colleges are recruited as full-time teachers in primary level up to secondary and higher levels school. In Poland teachers with at least a Master's Degree are permitted to teach at secondary and upper levels and graduates of other teacher training colleges such as History Education can only teach at lower levels of education (Nowak-Fabrikowski & Tardif, 1999). The second type of teacher training colleges are the ones that are established under Pedagogical Universities and are called Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges. Graduates of FLTTC have more privileges than the ones that graduate from other Teacher Training Colleges, as they train teachers of foreign languages for all levels of school education: ranging from pre-primary to post-secondary schools, and below the higher education level and are referred to in the legislation as initial teacher training institutions (Eurydice, 2006/07). One more advantageous situation according to the Tertiary Education Act is that FLTTC may offer post-graduate courses if they meet the requirement of having one professor and at least 2 M.A. holders on top of 5 Ph.D. holders for each foreign language.

There is no legislation that defines the curricula for teacher training. Neverthe-

less, FLTTC are required to follow the framework syllabi issued by the Minister of National Education and Sport, which determine the duration of studies, compulsory subjects or blocks of compulsory subjects, the number of hours assigned to these subjects, and the minimum number of hours to be allocated for practical placement in school (Eurydice, 2001). These programs were launched between the academic years 1992/93 and 2006/07 (Eurydice, 2006/07). Apart from other FLTTC in Poland, teacher candidates attending FLTTC are subjected to four modules throughout their training: English language arts, philology, teacher training, and optional subjects such as European studies (Kwaśniewicz, 2000). The purpose of language arts teaching is to take students beyond the Cambridge Proficiency Level with a high level of linguistic proficiency. The changes brought about in the preparation of future teachers in higher education were based on the curriculum in which a greater number of hours is devoted to pedagogical, psychological, and methodological coursework than to the teaching practice in schools (Salitra, 2003). The teaching practice module consists of pedagogy taught in the first year, and methods of teaching in the second and third years.

Senior teachers are expected to serve as mentors to new teachers and to teacher candidates during the training, what follows is an account of the challenges (Farrell, 2003). The mentorship system could be supplemented with a more informal system of collegial working relationships. The formal mentorship program can continue but it could be well supplemented by "a buddy system" to help familiarize new teachers with the school routines (Farrell, 2003, p. 107). It is argued that the system of educating teachers and improving their qualifications quite simply was not prepared to take on the instruction, in such a wide range, of all currently employed teachers (Salitra, 2003). Yet, one needs to beware that there is evidence that the teaching and learning process may be established before the teacher candidates attend teacher education institutes (Richardson, 1996).

The Polish example can provide implications for nations that go through similar dramatic changes in political, economic and educational systems. Changes can be dealing with program changes such as in the case of Romania, who went through initial changes in training preschool and primary school teachers through three-year short-term studies (Manolesco, 2006), and graduates were considered to become powerful agents of change. Other changes can be with policy implications for teacher education curricula, such as preparing teachers as researchers (Reis-Jorge, 2005), or evaluating change with Chinese lecturers of English based on teacher education and training in English language development (Lamie, 2006). As Grossman (2008) puts it: if university-based teacher education is to survive, we need to consider the challenges as opportunities for all students and teachers.

This study may provide an incentive for nations that are challenged with the development of foreign or western language teachers. Therefore, as explained above, this study aims to investigate the challenges FLTTCs face with respect to teacher candidates' development and learning.

Method

This study was conducted through a two-phase mixed study in which a survey and a case study was utilized to collect data. Data were collected through a qualitative method including document analysis, field notes, and interview data in a case study, and through a quantitative method via analyzing open-ended and close-ended items in a survey. The data collected through the qualitative means were prerequisite to design a good survey instrument to decide what was to be measured (Fowler, 2002). This case study helped "explore" the context and evaluate how the program operated from multiple perspectives. To reach clues and seek answers, "how" and "why" questions were posed through in-depth observation and collecting rich descriptions of the context to develop more insightful questions (Yin, 2003) to be answered through interviews, and later through a survey instrument. The qualitative data helped the quantitative aspect of the study by aiding the conceptual development and instrumentation, as well as by facilitating the analysis by validating, interpreting, clarifying, and illustrating quantitative findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Consequently, the power of a two-phase design was advantageous in that the two approaches were conducted separately, therefore, it enabled the researcher to conduct a qualitative phase for an in-depth understanding of the phenomena studied and a quantitative phase to triangulate or converge the findings (Creswell, 1994). The phases will be explained in the proceeding sections.

The Case

The first phase of the study was utilizing a case study design in a three-year FLTTC that was popular for the number of qualified teachers they graduated and was recognized as one of the first FLTTCs established right after the reform in 1999. Case studies, as Stark and Torrance (2005) put it, seek to engage with and report the complexity of social activity in order to represent the meanings that individual social agents bring to those settings and manufacture in them. Here, as the authors highlight, social reality is created through social interaction, albeit situated in particular contexts and histories, and seeks to identify and describe before trying to analyze and theorize (Stark & Torrance, 2005). Therefore, the case

study was initiated by observing the methodological and the pedagogical classrooms to gain an understanding of the learning context first. Beside the in-depth field notes of the observations above, the authors also observed TCs' field practice at the cooperating schools. The latter included the feedback sessions held by the supervisors and mentors. I used prolonged engagement and persistent observation at the site and at the cooperating school with TCs to overcome the distortions that may be due to my impact on the context, my own biases, and enable myself to understand the culture in the FLTTC. Persistent observation was helpful to identify the development and learning process of TCs and those events and relationships to interpret their growth as prospective teachers (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Sampling procedures for the semi-structured interviews were conducted purposefully. The power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases in order to understand the needs, interests, and incentives of a small group to deeply probe the questions under study (Patton, 2002). In-depth interviews were conducted with the Teacher Training College Director (Ph.D.), two supervising instructors (Ph.D. candidates), one methodology instructor (Ph.D. candidate), two mentors (M.A. Degrees). Since there were only two supervising instructors for the third year teacher candidates. The focus groups with TCs were also purposefully selected. The criterion was that each group of teacher candidates would be working with one of the two supervisors, and it was expected that each focus group had a sample of teacher candidates visiting different school sites for their teaching practice. The criterion was set so as all TCs with different supervisors and mentors could be represented in the case study. Consequently, two focus groups ($n_1 = 4$, $n_2 = 5$) with nine teacher candidates were formed.

All the educators (supervisors, mentors, methodology teacher), except the Director were teaching in another institution as language teachers to subsidize their income. The faculty ($n = 3$) who were doctoral candidates during this study were challenged to receive their doctoral degrees and conduct publications for tenure track positions. Beside these, among all TCs, four of them were teaching at a private school, and others offered one to one private lessons (tutoring), and teacher burnout was likely to be observed.

All the interviews with the participants as well as the focus groups with TCs lasted between 30–45 minutes, and were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants. The interviews with the participants in the focus groups started with background questions such as age, experience in teaching, and questions such as "What is the main purpose to have selected this FLTTC for your studies?" to understand their motivation toward the college they were studying in. The main interview included questions to understand the development and learning of TCs

as prospective foreign language teachers. Questions were asked related to their pedagogical as well as teaching practice experiences in the cooperating schools. Although there was the risk that the interviewees were sometimes self-conscious and overly aware of the recording (Erlandson et al., 1993) it was not observed in this case. One reason can be that through prolonged engagement during class and field practice the researcher and the participants built trust and confidentiality.

The concluding part of the interview included questions such as whether they would become a teacher or not and how they evaluated themselves as prospective teachers. Prompting and probing questions were employed to gain a deeper understanding of the teacher candidates' development and learning. Since the researcher was an external evaluator, the focus group interviews with the teacher candidates were conducive to environments in which genuine conversations emerged among the teacher candidates who were destined to a similar learning and/or teaching environments. All the subjects were given pseudonyms in reporting the findings for confidentiality reasons.

Next, a document analysis and expert (teaching staff) opinion based on the teaching practice and the curriculum were used to validate the interview data and compare the curriculum in the FLTTC with the national requirements. Based on the interview data and document analysis, close-ended and open-ended items were constructed to obtain more detailed information of the issues reported in the development and learning of TCs via a survey questionnaire.

The survey

The second phase deals with the survey. The issues that emerged during the case study (through interviews and observations) as explained above were analyzed to construct a baseline for the survey questionnaire and reach a larger sample of TCs in several FLTTCs. The sampling process for the survey embarked by selecting six FLTTCs in four big cities through convenient sampling based on the criteria to reach FLTTCs with the largest number of student populations and having graduated teachers over the last year. Among those FLTTCs, three were English, one German, and two were French medium colleges. All the FLTTCs were contacted for permission to conduct the survey in their school with the teacher candidates (TCs), who were in their final month of the sixth semester since this period was close to their graduation and the TCs could be considered as novices already. Nevertheless, one of the FLTTCs had to be excluded from the study because the students were celebrating a special feast, and the number of TCs ($n=3$) available for the research was too small.

A total of 205 TCs were administered the survey questionnaire by the researcher.

Nevertheless, six of the questionnaires were cancelled due to the internal validity considerations as they included a large amount of missing data. As a result, the sample consisted of 199 teacher candidates (Female = 161, male = 34, 4 did not indicate their gender) in their final semester at various Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges ($n = 5$) in Poland. Among those who participated, 138 were English, 36 German, and 25 French language teacher candidates.

The Survey Instrument

The survey questionnaire consisted of two five-point Likert-type scales and one four-point rating scale, and open-ended items aiming at obtaining richer information. The background questions included items such as gender, teaching experience, hours of supervised teaching sessions, purpose of attending the FLTTC, future career plans, and international student exchange experience. The main questions included the following scales: Teacher candidates' self-assessment [$\alpha = .83$, $N = 125(16)$] (items rating a four-point scale from not successful at all to very successful) of their teaching skills and their perceptions of the teaching practice [$\alpha = .67$, $N = 181(16)$] and TCs' perception of the variables that contributed most to their development and learning (items rating a five-point Likert-type agreement scale) they went through [$\alpha = .65$, $N = 175(13)$], and TCs' Expectations from supervisors [$\alpha = .85$, $N = 148(22)$]. The survey instrument was pilot tested with the TCs who participated in the focus group interviews. The TCs were asked to answer the questions, and reflect on items they had difficulty in understanding. Next, two professors, one of whom was one of the main agents in the establishment of FLTTC in Poland reviewed the data collection instruments for its content validity. Also, two instructors, one with a Master's of Art Degree and one as a prospective Ph.D. candidate validated the items based on their experiences and the teaching practice curriculum.

Data Analysis

As described above this study is a mixed method design that was subjected to descriptive and content analysis. Descriptive statistics of the close-ended items were described in percentages, means, and standard deviations. The open-ended items were subjected to content analysis, and frequencies and good quotes were obtained. The responses to open-ended items provide more in-depth information to interpret the findings through descriptive statistics. All the qualitative data (interviews, field notes, document analysis) were thematically analyzed through

content analysis to understand the curriculum of the FLTTC: the pedagogical courses, the language development courses, the cultural courses (e.g., democratic values, European studies), and the teaching practice overall.

The thematic content analysis was conducted as follows: 1) themes in the open-ended items were examined and thematically coded; 2) these codes were utilized in coding one of the transcribed interview data, and additional codes were included; 3) themes were constructed and organized and data were recoded based on the themes that yielded. Next, themes were defined and interpreted to provide evidence of the theme. The main themes that emerged were: "Emergence of teacher training colleges;" as it included issues of the need for establishing colleges and the admission process. Next, "FLTTC as springboards" as participants refer to using the foreign language as a means to get better paid jobs; "internationalization in FLTTC" as the college tried to adapt its curriculum to the European context with subjects such as European Studies, and its deep involvement in student/staff mobility." The next themes emerged as "TCs' development and learning;" and "building college school partnership." Finally, data were *triangulated* with the thematic content analysis results in the transcribed interview data, and extracts from field notes, and the open-ended items. For instance, the challenge to use FLTTC as springboards was evidenced in the interview data with TCs as well as in the survey data that revealed TCs' main intentions about attending these institutions. The findings obtained through the case and the survey were triangulated to report the entire study from a holistic perspective.

Triangulation of data can be described as one of the best ways to elicit the various and divergent constructions of reality that exist within the context of a study. It enables the researcher to collect information about different events and relationships from different opinions and understandings of a topic (Erlandson et al., 1993). Ultimately, the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data collection means and the triangulation of data sources (teacher candidates, instructors, teachers, director, and mentors) provide evidence for the construct validity of the study (Thomas, 2003; Yin, 2003).

Results

The results are explained with regard to the five challenges that emerged respectively: emergence of Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges; FLTTC as springboards; internationalization in FLTTC and mobility; TCs' development and learning; and building college school partnership.

Theme 1: Emergence of Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges

During the transition period into the European Union, FLTTC were established to meet the dramatic needs of foreign language teachers. Therefore, the number of FLTTC both private and public increased dramatically between the years 1999 and 2001. The director of the FLTTC in which the case study was conducted indicated that the Minister of Education realized with the changing political situation in Poland that there was an urgent need for training a lot of language teachers. These were supposed to be Western language teachers, and highlighted that these were languages other than Russian. Since training language teachers in five years was too long a process, policy-makers debated on the issue of having three year colleges rather than the master programs. As a result, FLTTC were established. The curriculum of these institutions was similar to that of the four-year licentiate degrees, but were squeezed into an intensive three-year program. According to the Director, this change was especially difficult for the Poles who came from a strong traditional education background with a Master degree in becoming a foreign language teacher. There is evidence that this change in implementation inevitably made the stakeholders question the quality of the FLTTC graduates (Pawelec, 2000).

The Director emphasized that Teacher Training Colleges had a lower status quo in society due to the above-mentioned five-year track to become a secondary grade teacher. Nevertheless, he claimed that the graduates of FLTTC received certain privileges over graduates of the former colleges. One privilege was that the Ministry of Education legislated that teachers who graduated from FLTTC were allowed to teach from primary to secondary levels. While any other teacher training college graduates could only teach at the primary level. This finding was also evidenced in the literature (Nowak-Fabrykowski & Tardif, 1999). Consequently, such implementation by the Ministry facilitated the dramatic increase in the demand for establishing new FLTTC as their graduates could be hired early on the market. However, this raised a different consideration: the challenge to meet this demand, and inevitably the challenge for student admission in these colleges.

In Poland, application for higher education was traditionally based on the Matura exam, which is similar to the French Baccalaureate. Policy documents indicate that the Matura examination was expected to gradually replace entrance examinations to universities and will have an external character. According to the School Education Act, the external Matura was introduced in the Spring of 2005 (Eurydice, 2004/05).

The data obtained from the director and TCs revealed that teachers in secondary schools train students intensively toward the *Matura Exam* and are likely to ignore the formative curricular requirements. The participants highlighted that the level

of difficulty of the Matura Exam might vary based on educational opportunities and this might lead to inequality of opportunity for rural and urban students when the Matura Exam scores were considered as a priority in student selection into higher education institutions. The director argued that to guarantee equality of opportunity they would conduct their own entrance exam for the applicants holding a successful Matura score.

On the other hand, the participants in the case study, argued that this method did not guarantee overcoming equity concerns for urban and rural students with unequal educational backgrounds. The participants stated in interviews that they thought that the applicants in big cities were more advantageous than students from the country because the former had better foreign language learning opportunities, and could easily be selected into universities. A female TC complained, "The more increased the demand for foreign language teachers, the harder it gets to receive acceptance into the university or college." Alternatively, the literature gives evidence that private universities or colleges have become more accessible to young people from the country and from working-class families. Figures revealed that, for instance, in a college the number of students coming from the country exceeded 20% ($n = 20$), and those from working families were about 60% ($n = 119$) of the student population (Szablowski, 2001).

Theme 2: Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges as Springboards

Although the demand for FLTTCs was important, the findings resulting from the quantitative and qualitative data indicate that FLTTCs were preferred as mainly springboards to attend five-year higher education programs or find jobs with better salaries than the teaching profession. Descriptive statistics reveal that the first aim of teacher candidates (TCs) was to learn a foreign language when they applied to their institution. More than half of the TCs (63%, $n = 125$) wanted to learn a foreign language, one out of eight (12%, $n = 24$) wanted to become a teacher, and fewer (11.6%, $n = 23$) wanted to become a translator, and the remaining (13%, $n = 26$) wanted to learn a language either to enter a Foreign Language Philology that offers a Master's Degree, or to find a better-paid job. This finding correlates with the interview data in that the TCs confessed that well-paid jobs were incentives not to choose the teaching profession.

At that moment, when the TCs were in their last month of graduation, only 30.2% ($n = 61$) of the participants were determined to become a language teacher, one-fifth (25.1%, $n = 50$) were not determined, and almost half of the TCs (44.7%, $n = 89$) were still uncertain if they wanted to become a foreign language teacher. As for the reasons the TCs reported in the open-ended questions that they would

become teachers if they were not able to find better-paid jobs, or if teachers' wages rose. Others reported that they were already teaching as full time teachers, but were not satisfied to teach without a Master's Degree as a master's degree would increase their salary.

As a result, only 12% of the participants ($n=24$) wanted to become foreign language teachers when they first entered the FLTTC, and only 30% ($n=60$) were determined to enter the teaching profession when they were about to graduate as foreign language teachers.

The data obtained from the survey are in line with other data obtained through the case study. For instance, the Director in the case study underlined that it was more prestigious to teach with a Master's Degree in the education market. Fortunately, one point was that TCs graduating from language departments stood out among other graduates that graduated from teacher training colleges. Since learning and teaching a foreign language was regarded as a very reputable issue during and after the transition period, so were the teachers who graduated from FLTTC. Nevertheless, the faculty believe that the TCs' teaching skills are sufficient to teach in a qualified way, and should not feel obliged to receive a Master's Degree unless there are other requirements.

Theme 3: Internationalization of FLTTC

The Republic of Poland was a strong candidate of the European Union in 2001, and traces of globalization were evident in every section of education. FLTTC seemed to be the most advantageous ones among other higher education institutions in the internationalization of education. Polish education program became eligible to participate in some European education and research programs from 1989 on. TEMPUS was one of the first programs to impact on the development of higher education enormously. Next came INCO_COPERNICUS, which mainly dealt with research (Filipkowski, 2003).

It was with the SOCRATES-ERASMUS, LEONARDO DA VINCI, and with the start of the Bologna Process that student and teaching faculty mobility dramatically increased. Also, the successful attempts of the administrative boards in higher education made it possible for FLTTC to make bilateral agreements for the exchange of teachers and the TCs in other Western countries for a semester or two. The increasing number of exchange students from different countries was an incentive for the FLTTC to establish beginner level Polish language classes, and modify their curriculum based on the demands of globalization. Courses such as "European studies" were included in the curriculum of FLTTC. The Director stated that courses like European Studies were helpful for students to learn to live in a democracy and

a Western World. In other words, FLTTC were more than institutions that offered TCs the essential skills for teaching, but also were institutions that offered TCs learning opportunities as democratic citizens. Nevertheless, the number of outgoing students and teaching staff is lower than the number of the ones coming in the internationalization process (Eurydice, 2004/05; Filipkowski (2003).

The descriptive data showed that about one third (31.7%, $n = 63$) of the TCs sample had been abroad for at least one semester for educational purposes. While six percent of them joined the Erasmus/Socrates programs, the rest (62%, $n = 123$) found other means to leave the country for educational purposes, mainly learning a foreign language. Three of the TCs in the focus group stated that two of them had attended the Socrates exchange program for at least one semester, and one female TC said that she had attended the program for two semesters. All the TCs indicated that they had opportunities to join an exchange program. They emphasized that it offered them more than teacher training opportunities. It enabled them to reconsider the instructional process they went through as TCs, and the instruction their prospective students would expect from them as novices.

Four TCs in the focus groups indicated that it was important for them to learn about the politics, geography and history of the countries whose language they teach, yet, they complained that they had difficulty in relating those to their development as foreign language teachers. In addition, the teaching staff mostly preferred traditional methods in their classes, and the TCs found that those did not relate to what they had been taught to do (Holt-Reynolds, 2000; Jadallah, 1996; Kroll & Laboskey, 1996). This result might have been an outcome of the dominating teachers in the Polish traditional school culture (Tomiak, 2000). There are several reasons that may have led to such a conclusion.

First, the teaching staff were devoted to their self-development, and attended Master's and Doctorate programs to obtain a tenure track position as a qualified faculty member as indicated by supervisors and the mentor teacher in the case study. Nevertheless, the small number of tenure track faculty led to burnout among the teaching staff. Especially, the number of the teaching staff with a master's degree is higher compared to the ones with doctorate degrees in FLTTC, and this causes various problems. For instance, the intensity of the classes at the FLTTC as well as moonlighting in other schools as part-time teachers are some of the main problems of the teaching staff as to why they may not complete their doctorate studies in a required period. Inevitably, cases of burnout were easily observed. Consequently, some experienced and well-qualified teaching staff did not receive their Doctorate Degrees in due time and had to leave the institution. For instance, one of the supervisors in this case study was to quit the FLTTC as she could not

fulfill her doctorate requirements in time. This led to vacancies in the experienced teaching staff. Also, the ones with doctorate qualifications were likely to transfer to universities as one of the supervisors and the mentor indicated.

As a result, there was a risk that qualified faculty transferred to better-paid jobs, and this requires the administration to make the teaching profession at FLTTC more attractive and awarding. Another reason could be the excessive academization as Komorowska (1995, cited in Kwaśniewicz, 2000) highlighted. Colleges that have had close links to universities may tend to focus on academics or pure science rather than educating well-prepared teachers with practical teaching skills.

Theme 4: Development and Learning of TCs

The data with regard to TCs' development and learning were based on understanding how they constructed a teaching and learning environment, how they evaluated their teaching skills and what variables contributed most to their development and learning as teacher candidates. The TCs' perception of their own teaching skills indicated a positive tendency. The data based on five-point Likert-Type scale (five = completely agree, three = undecided, one = completely disagree) reveal that the classroom environment the TCs constructed was positive ($M = 4.04$, $N = 196$, $SD = .65$); the students participated in activities that the TCs assigned during sessions ($M = 4$, $N = 195$, $SD = .74$), and these activities were rather student-centred ($M = 3.99$, $N = 192$, $SD = .85$); yet, it was likely that more than half of the students were involved in off-task behaviour ($M = 2.76$, $N = 193$, $SD = .89$). In sum, TCs can be claimed to have comparably high or more than average self-efficacy beliefs about their teaching ability, but require more practice or experience in their classroom management skills.

While the TCs reported in the open-ended items that they were powerful in building a positive classroom environment (10.56%, $n = 21$), preparing interesting activities (10.06%, $n = 20$) and coping successfully with time management issues, a large number of the TCs reported a difficulty in time management skills (23.62%, $n = 47$) and lesson planning (22.62%, $n = 45$). The TCs suggested they needed more feedback (18.10%, $n = 36$) in order to overcome their weaknesses. Yet, they reported mainly their concerns regarding the skills of the mentors they observed in the training school (15.08%, $n = 30$). Research provides evidence that both mentors and university supervisors play a key role in the development and learning of teacher candidates. The most important seemed to be the quality of the dialogue that was maintained during practice teaching. The more open and divergent the views were allowed, the more satisfied the student teachers were (Talvitie, Peltokallio, & Mannisto, 2000).

As for what variables were most effective in the TCs' learning process, they reported that the number of successive classes was most effective. More specifically, the TCs reported that their development and learning as prospective teachers were mainly based on "teaching classes successively during teaching practice ($M=4.38$, $N=195$, $SD=.82$), teaching a whole session in the cooperating school ($M=4.06$, $N=197$, $SD=1.21$), observing student attitudes toward certain activities ($M=3.90$, $N=193$, $SD=.93$), discussing teaching issues in methodology classes ($M=3.94$, $N=197$, $SD=.85$).

The TCs were asked about their expectations from the supervisors with regard to their development and learning in teaching skills in the survey. The highest expectations were reported as "give individual feedback on my performance ($M=4.27$, $N=171$, $SD=1.09$), which is parallel to their written statement; ask my opinion about my own teaching performance ($M=4.16$, $N=170$, $SD=.98$); provide suggestions to improve their weaknesses ($M=4.32$, $N=169$, $SD=.93$); discuss the weaknesses in my teaching skills ($M=4.17$, $N=169$, $SD=.91$); discuss the strengths in my skills ($M=4.26$, $N=168$, $SD=.86$); give constructive feedback on my classroom management skills ($M=4.10$, $N=169$, $SD=.96$).

On the other hand, the TCs reported they completely disagreed or disagreed that their supervisors gave feedback in the presence of their classmates ($M=2.43$, $N=172$, $SD=1.48$) and asked for peer feedback about their teaching performance ($M=2.87$, $N=171$, $SD=1.46$). Thus, even if reflective feedback is expected by the faculty on evaluating TCs' own performance, teacher candidates expect this to be realized in privacy. Such findings may indicate two aspects. One aspect is that the competitive environment in the FLTTC influences the TCs' expectations about the type of feedback given. Therefore, the feedback offered may look critical rather than constructive.

In addition to the above, the interview data indicate that the TCs in the case study benefit most from the reflections after teaching practice in the schools they visited. They reported that classroom observations and reflections of how they taught helped them a lot. Their reflections on the teaching practice also enabled them to see a difference between how they had been taught to teach and how their teacher taught them at the secondary school.

Strategies such as self-evaluation and reflecting on performance made the TCS set a goal for their follow-up teaching practice. Consequently, the success of the student teachers' achievement relied on the sensitive support given by the mentor in the schools and in the institution of higher education by the supervisor (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 1998). If the supervisor did not give support and provided the student teacher with opportunities to explore dilemmas and contradictions, it

was likely that student teachers would withdraw from the search rather than take further risks (Talvitie, Peltokallio, & Mannisto, 2000).

Finally, as for their self-evaluation report, the TCs indicated that they had a rather high rating on their teaching performance in the survey. The scale ranged from four "very successful" to one "very unsuccessful." The data show that the TCs were satisfied with developing a positive classroom environment ($M=3.27$, $N=192$, $SD=.65$); building successful interactions with students ($M=3.08$, $N=192$, $SD=.67$); teaching new vocabulary successfully ($M=3.01$, $N=190$, $SD=.64$); and making lessons enjoyable ($M=2.91$, $N=188$, $SD=1.73$). Consequently, the findings indicate that the TCs have positive self-efficacy beliefs about their teaching skills for that moment.

The data obtained from the TCs via the survey and the focus group interviews were parallel with those of their supervisors in that the number of observations and teaching practices increased, so the quality of the TCs' teaching improved. The improvement was also parallel to the quality of reflections provided after the teaching. Supervisor A claimed that what they did was just to provide them (TCs) with certain tools from the beginning of their careers. Most of the things they had to learn on their own in practice teaching. Whereas, Supervisor B saw the training of TCs as an in-service training since some of the students did have some outside teaching and experience in private schools already. Yet, she asserted that a weakness was that they should have been doing more teaching hours in the training schools because the TCs had had "hardly got to teach three lessons in a row."

Consequently, the TCs may feel uncomfortable in front of their peers. To enable the student teachers to be more critical and reflective in their practice, Tatto (1998) suggests developing shared understandings or norms within programs and across the field of teacher education. While McIntyre (1994) states that it is important that student teachers receive feedback regarding some criteria as pupil attention, interest, and comprehension. However, critical reflection can trigger off a deeper understanding of teaching. It should also involve examining teaching experiences as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source for change (Richards, 1999).

Reflective supervision of TCs by faculty members leads to higher order thinking skills and TCs become self-directed learners in the long run. TCs' are highly motivated to improve their language competence. Knowledge about the development and learning of adolescents was emphasized and regarded as the essentials in becoming professionals, learning of younger children was emphasized.

As regards of the curriculum content the TCs explained that English was taught at an early age in Poland, and felt that they would find jobs easily at the primary

level. Consequently, the curriculum content is argued to ignore the learning of young learners and this caused a mismatch with the new educational reform for lower levels of education and the legislation that teachers graduating from FLTTC are mainly educated to teach younger learners rather than adolescents.

Many TCs start FLTTCs with little foreign language knowledge and therefore there was much focus on intensive language skills, while there was little time devoted to subjects such as classroom management pedagogy, instructional planning and evaluation, and child development and learning. In addition, although there was a core curriculum for the foreign language classes at secondary schools, each school selected their own course material. With this respect the TCs graduated with lack of knowledge of designing a curriculum and evaluating course-books. The TCs also exposed another concern which was having difficulty in relation to the content of some courses such as geography to their prospective profession.

Although the instructional designs and methodologies introduced were very constructivist or innovative, the instructional delivery used by the faculty staff or by the mentors were rather traditional and the teacher candidates did not feel they were provided with a model that their educators taught. Although the curriculum was established to facilitate the transition process from the old educational system under reform, the content of courses such as geography and history did not reflect the actual needs of prospective foreign language teachers. Moreover, "intercultural knowledge and sensitivity are elementary soft skills for international cooperation" (Vogel, 2003, p. 386), and TCs needed to acquire this knowledge through pedagogical experience, and cooperation with other cultures at university. The recognition of theoretical elements in the field was combined with pedagogical knowledge. Therefore, the methods classes were considered useful for understanding and practising teaching and learning processes according to the participants.

Theme 5: Building School Partnerships

Since the three-year intensive program offered at TTCs aims at preparing TCs for the teaching profession as a fast track model, the issue of quality was of high concern. Therefore, TCs' formal training at the higher education institution and their teaching training through observing an experienced teacher and teaching whole sessions themselves were essential in their development. The figures given above show evidence of how the number of teaching hours and reflections provided might have contributed to the development and learning of TCs. Nevertheless, during the case study the stakeholders pointed at the lack of formal school-college partnerships, whose existence might have ensured the retention of quality opportunities during the teaching practice for TCs. Lesson plans for teaching practice

mostly covered one-two hour lessons. Planning for short duration was considered as a threat as these might not have been formulated into longer hours of lesson planning during actual training. The teaching practice was perceived as inauthentic, or like one of the participants claimed "a 45-minute show."

The male mentor felt that there was a need for more collaboration between the supervisor and the mentor. Both mentors asserted that TCs constructed interesting activities, but complained that those did not match the curriculum. The male supervisor wanted to be asked what was to be done in the teaching practice and decide how to evaluate the teacher candidate. There were various issues that arose due to lack of school-college partnership, the supervisors as well as the director of the FLTTC suggested building a true partnership with a school and contributing to the development and learning of teachers as an investment for the development and learning of the teachers. Since intensive field practice was meant to "not only give the teacher some practice, but to help the teacher understand the organizational school culture and interpersonal relations among various parties" (male supervisor).

Both the mentor teachers and the TCs have some concerns of being evaluated, the inexperienced mentors feel uncomfortable to evaluate the teacher candidates in a reflective session. A positive tendency is that the supervising faculty emphasized that this unwillingness was likely to change since there was a new criterion being introduced that offered teachers who were mentoring TCs with extra scores on their professional performance evaluation documents. They argued that the duration of the formal training could be too short to have TCs internalize the well-proven practices, and improve mal-applications. The male supervisor saw these as challenges for further improvement, and claimed TCs "will go to schools very soon and then they'll be inexperienced teachers. And these [experiences with novices] might be interesting to see what sort of problem an inexperienced teacher can have.

The data indicate that the mentors were often selected among the earlier graduates since they were more familiar with the philosophy of the higher education institution they had graduated from and their teaching was more likely to match with the type of teaching and learning environment that the faculty teach TCs during their methodology classes. In the interviews, the female supervising faculty complained that it was difficult to find mentors because they were mostly reluctant as they were either underpaid, or the teaching experience of TCs made mentors fall short in reaching the program goals. In addition, the female supervising faculty explained that some mentors might find themselves offended seeing that TCs may be teaching better than they did. Such data were also supported by the male

supervising faculty. Consequently, the mentors seem to have low efficacy beliefs about their teaching skills and consider themselves as inefficient to be good models. On the other hand, the supervising faculty thought that both the mentors as well as the TCs needed to benefit reciprocally from each other during teaching practice. This expectation was validated by the mentor indicating that when she watched them (TCs) teach, she sometimes learned from them by noticing what was wrong, or what was good. Yet, the mentors had other concerns regarding the feedback sessions.

The director, and both the supervising faculty during field training highlighted a need for *establishing strong cooperation with partner schools*. The director explained that the FLTTC itself was responsible for making an agreement with mentor teachers, and have TCs work with them on the basis of their being full-time teachers. Based on the FLTTCs' budget, it was possible to pay the mentors on an hourly basis. The method teacher suggested there should be one training school where they could meet and talk with the headmaster and the teachers, and train them.

As it can be seen, the process of teaching practice is far more essential than the formal education the TCs received. Therefore, FLTTCs are challenged to establish strong cooperation with partner schools (namely, partners based on a courtesy agreement), providing TCs with good models of mentor teachers, and providing sufficient amount of teaching opportunities for TCs' practice teaching.

Discussion and Conclusions

The findings of this study reveal that Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges (FLTTC) have become crucial institutions in supplying the demand for foreign language teachers in society both before and after the transition into democracy, and have proved successful in meeting foreign language teacher shortages in primary and secondary schools through a fast track model. The success can be evaluated from two perspectives. First, since teacher candidates (TCs) could be hired as full-time teachers after a three-year intensive program and contribute to the needs of the market at a younger age than their counterparts graduating from universities, it can be considered as an incentive for nations that need to train foreign language teachers. Second, TCs have positive beliefs about their teaching ability, but lower beliefs about dealing with off task behaviours. Such a finding is in line with the research that claims that TCs need to master the topics related to classroom management (Chan, 2008; Savran-Gencer & Cakiroglu, 2005) as

classroom management is one of the challenging yet least emphasized subject in teacher education (Darling-Hammond, LePage, & Akar, 2005). Despite the positive quality measures with regard to TCs graduating from FLTTC, the findings show that these colleges are confronted with certain challenges to retain this reputation. Especially, in their spur to more elite education (Szablowski, 2001).

First, although teacher training colleges have been developed to meet the needs of the market, these institutions are likely to be used as springboards to other professions or institutions to receive foreign language competence. Second, the low reputation and consequently the low income rate compared to teachers who graduate from universities may discourage the motivation of the FLTTC graduates to pursue a job in the teaching profession. Fortunately, FLTTCs holding a sufficient number of tenured academic staff have started offering graduate education to meet the needs of their graduates in that respect, which is observed as a positive way to receive a higher public opinion. In this way, the TCs complete their master's degree while teaching at the same time in a primary or secondary school, and gain a reputation as a foreign language teacher with a Master's Degree.

Third, the findings indicate that teaching practice was found to be an important asset in the development and learning of teacher candidates. Especially, the more opportunities the teaching candidates had to experience teaching and receive feedback by their supervisors, the more self-confident they became as prospective teachers. Such applications are likely to increase the self-efficacy beliefs of TCs concerning teaching ability, while less practice may decrease those. For instance, in some colleges TCs had not been observed by their faculty. It can be concluded allegedly that the number of faculty fell short in supervising the teacher candidates during their teaching practice or the faculty may be more interested in the academic development of TCs rather than their practical teaching skills (Komorowska 1995, cited in Kwaśniewicz, 2000). Nevertheless, to generalize this finding I suggest that further research needs to be conducted to understand particularly faculty tenure track positions and the development and learning of faculty.

Next, although the intensive teaching practice program was one of the key elements for the successful development of teacher candidates, it can be concluded that it had some drawbacks. In FLTTC the recognition of theoretical elements in the field is combined with pedagogical knowledge. Therefore, the methods classes were considered to be a means to understand and practice teaching and learning processes. Knowledge about the development and learning of mainly adolescents was emphasized. Unfortunately, many teacher candidates started FLTTC with little foreign language knowledge. As a result, there was much focus on intensive language skills, while there was little time devoted to subjects such

as classroom management pedagogy, instructional planning and evaluation, and child development and learning. The existence of these subjects in the program may not guarantee that the needs of teacher candidates in FLTTC will be met with regard to their future teaching profession. Further research is essential to analyze the existing school culture at the lower levels of education, and analyze textbooks so as to understand their structural accordance with innovative approaches to teaching and learning. The findings are in line with the research that indicates that being well-equipped with content-specific knowledge is crucial in relating it with pedagogical knowledge in teacher education, nevertheless it needs to be facilitated through the coaching of academic staff (Akar, 2007).

Another challenge is that there were no true partner schools. Faculty members at the FLTTC made arrangements with mentors based on personal relations. Therefore, there was the risk that the mentors might not renew contracts with the FLTTC. Urgent new policies need to be developed to increase and develop true school-FLTTC partnerships, and make contracts more attractive to hire mentors. In addition, it can be concluded from this study that mentors might have lacked the essential tools to be involved in the mentoring process; therefore, it needs to be professionally recognized. For instance, mentors were likely to use traditional strategies where the teacher is a dominant figure (Salitra, 2003) and such situations may not serve as good teaching practices for TCs who were subjected to or were recommended to implement more innovative (e.g., constructivist) methods in their classrooms. Therefore, new policies may strengthen the school-FLTTC partnership in order to provide opportunities for the professional development of mentors.

One solution could be that the college can keep in touch with their graduates and make bilateral contracts as mentors to build stronger college-school partnerships. Experienced faculty (especially supervisors) in the college can offer seminars or invite teachers (mentors) in partner schools to attend their methods and pedagogical courses and in turn contribute to the development and learning of teacher candidates in partner schools. It is hoped that in this respect their experiences may have a reciprocal long-term impact in schools as well as in FLTTC to introduce a more student-centred way of teaching and learning environments.

In addition, the findings reveal that the faculty and teacher candidates had various opportunities to experience different school cultures abroad via faculty mobility and student exchange programs offered via education-based international programs such as the TEMPUS, Leonardo da Vinci, Socrates and Erasmus (Fulton et al., 2007). Such mobility may establish new synergy in Polish school culture and teachers' professional life. It is a positive incentive that more and more students are attracted by the exchange programs. One implication is that curricular content

such as European studies, and different cultures and countries and topics such as democratic citizenship will be facilitated through student exchange programs, and allegedly examining the school culture in other European countries may have had a positive impact on the school culture in Poland. Further research is recommended to understand the impact of exchange programs both in higher education as well as at lower levels of education on teachers' teaching practices and student learning.

Policy Implications

Based on the bulk of the data, the following can be concluded for policy concerns: educational policy concerns about teacher development and learning, and economic and social concerns as prospective professionals.

First, Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges need to attract students with good foreign language competences to give priority to pedagogical development rather than foreign language development to keep a high quality of their graduates. One suggestion to attract teaching as a profession can be offering scholarships to TCs who want to become language teachers. Second, the present framework for teacher education in Poland is rather complex. Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges need to construct policies to establish a core curriculum for teacher education institutions to compete with teacher education institutions in Poland and abroad. Therefore, it is suggested that FLTTCs all over the country establish a common mission. One implication is that teacher education curriculum needs to comply with other (e.g., international) teacher education curriculum. Recent publications, such as Darling-Hammond & Bradsford (2005) may be an example of what needs to be included in a teacher education curriculum. Such an achievement can be obtained by further developing partnership at the international arena through exchange programs and student/teacher mobility. The implications of the latter may also affect the candidate countries who are going through a similar teacher education development such as Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia (Eurydice, 1997, Kwaśniewicz, 2000).

Third, FLTTCs are challenged to establish educational policies to construct school-college partnerships and attract their graduates or successful language teachers as mentors. These policies need to satisfy the needs and interests of both the schools and the teacher training colleges. Mentors at cooperating schools are encouraged to engage in reflective training that will improve the professional development of the mentors themselves. Improvement may yield better teaching

and learning environments based on exposure to innovative instructional strategies as well as better foreign language competences.

Research shows evidence that flexibility and openness on the part of mentor teachers are conditions that provide optimal support to teacher candidates and increase the opportunities for learning to occur for both mentor and teacher candidates. Such evidence is important in establishing collaborative inquiry for the mentor teachers involved in partnership with the teacher education institution (Grisham, Ferguson, & Brink, 2004). Alternatively, mentors should benefit from the opportunities offered at FLTTC such as attending pedagogical courses and methodology classes dealing with teaching and learning approaches. In return, FLTTCs may benefit from mentors' descriptions of their authentic experiences in the field and have them visit students in the early years of their training. Next, FLTTC are challenged to teach in diverse cultural contexts and different grade levels, and focus on topics such as classroom management pedagogy, student assessment and grading, and primary school kids' learning more intensively.

Fifth, to make professional development meaningful in a reform environment, deeper coordination between schools and FLTTCs must occur to ensure its relevance (Scribner, 2003). Policy-makers are challenged to establish new policies for considering scholarships or new incentives to attract more foreign language teachers who are graduates of FLTTC. The implication for this is not to restrict the life-long learning process, but to award teachers and provide them with an impetus to complete their master's degrees and seek ways for further professional development. Such policies may influence the traditional public opinion and find FLTTC graduates as reputable as the ones that graduate from universities or foreign language philologies.

Overall, the findings of this study may contribute to the knowledge and research on training foreign languages teachers in teacher training colleges from several perspectives. Assessment of the current status of FLTTC in Poland is important to the development of countries experiencing the transition period such as Romania and Slovakia, who have adopted a similar solution in foreign language teacher training. The Polish experience can be an incentive to the countries that need dramatic changes in their foreign language teaching policy to meet present as well as future challenges.

During this study, there was a limited number of documents printed in English. As a non-speaker of Polish, I came across many difficulties in understanding the official documents and legislations in education and had many of the documents obtained from the CODN and Ministry of Education (MNE) translated by the faculty with English Philology credentials. Yet, I had to frequently ask the faculty

as well as the officials in the CODN and officials in the Ministry of Education to validate my data based on FLTTC policies. Although it may be considered a limitation in the study, my role as a foreign (external) evaluator reveals important implications for program evaluation, especially through exposing the challenges that FLTTC face from multiple perspectives. The nature of qualitative research is that the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, and analyzes words and emics and reports the perception of the informants in the natural setting (Creswell, 2007). During my observations and interviews, I witnessed teacher burnout both among the academic faculty seeking tenure track positions and the teachers due to moonlighting in several jobs. For instance, one consideration could be decreasing teaching workload for the instructors (Dabrowa-Szefler & Jablecka-Prylowska, 2006) at FLTTC to provide opportunities to conduct research and get tenured, or to better pay experienced teachers and have them remain in FLTTC as supervisors or language development teachers. Such unrevealed data provide important implications for policymakers and curriculum developers. I hope that further research will shed light on these challenges through an in-depth examination and develop implications for policy makers with the issues reported above.

Another implication is that FLTTCs have been effective in meeting short-term needs of the nation in meeting the demand for foreign language teachers. Nevertheless, urgent new educational policies need to be legislated to meet the challenges revealed in this study and consider the long-term needs of FLTTC. These are the development of academic and teaching staff and tenure track positions, the development and learning of mentor teachers in training schools, and teacher candidates' future social and economic concerns. In brief, the present study indicates that new educational policies need to be established to address the challenges that Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges face with regard to developing student-centred approaches to learning over traditional teaching methods at all levels and consider the economic and social concerns of teacher candidates.

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