

Abstract: Waldemar Martyniuk

KEYNOTE ABSTRACT

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Supranational level of language education policies – a Council of Europe perspective on language education

Language use plays a key role in all forms of education. It involves more than just a command of linguistic means of communication. Language is a tool for acquiring and transferring knowledge, an important aspect of the development of the person, as both individual and social being, a means of and factor in understanding and making sense of reality, and a vehicle for imaginative creativity. Language education is therefore a fundamental element of good quality education.

For the Council of Europe, the right to good quality language education, in the form of plurilingual and intercultural education, is seen as both an integral part and a major component of quality education. Nevertheless, education systems also fulfil functions and respond to aims that cannot be reduced to the educational entitlements of those concerned. They have to take account of societal expectations, scientific, technical and economic developments and collective interests, both national and other, that affect education in various ways and serve to modify or guide the exercise of a universal right to quality education.

In my talk, I intend to review recent Council of Europe initiatives to address these issues, and offer some thoughts on shaping a new European language education policy and practice. The presentation will deal with the current project to promote plurilingual and intercultural education, with a particular focus on the right to quality education based on fundamental Council of Europe values. The project aims to raise awareness of the transversal nature of language education and, in a rights perspective, takes into account all the languages and language varieties in, of, and for education.