



Transversal competencies in foreign language education

(Online workshop organised by ECML)
8-9 February, 2022

Stella Kourieos
Scholi Omodous



Aims of think tank

- Explore ways in which language students' TCs are being developed as part of FLE.
- Provide an overview of current educational policy and practice in member states.
- Find solutions to the challenges of incorporating TCs in curricula, teacher education programmes, and classroom teaching.



Think Tank programme

- A. Towards a shared understanding of TCs
- B. Taking stock of TCs in European education
- C. Moving forward



Theme A: Towards a shared understanding of TCs

What do we mean by ‘Transversal competencies’?

‘soft skills’, interdisciplinary skills, life skills, 21st-century skills, transferable skills, etc.’

- A combination of values, attitudes, knowledge (and awareness and understanding), and skills (or abilities) which are essential in enabling people to achieve their full potential in their education, their personal and professional lives, and in their role as citizens of an increasingly globalised and unpredictable world.



Where can we find descriptions of transversal competencies?

- EU: Key Competences for Lifelong Learning
- Council of Europe: Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC)
- UNESCO: Global Citizenship Education
- UNICEF: Global Framework of Transferable Skills
- PISA Global Competence Framework
- OECD: Learning Compass 2030
- Council of Europe: Common European Framework of Reference - (CEFR)



Differences across frameworks

- The TCs included and emphasised in the different frameworks vary depending on the context and the aims of the organisation that developed the framework.
- The ways in which values, knowledge, and skills are described also vary. This implies several challenges for education systems, but also plenty of opportunities.



TCs considered important in Participants' educational contexts

- **Personal well-being Cs** - mental and emotional awareness
- **Cognitive and educational Cs** – self-reflection, autonomous learning, self-management, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving
- **Social Cs** – collaboration, communication, and interaction
- **Global Cs** – Intercultural competence, civic participation in democracy, global citizenship
- **Digital Cs** (in combination with other competencies)

////////////////////

How are transversal competencies dealt with in school education?





Theme B: Taking stock of TCs in European education

- An examination of the role of TCs in language policy and curriculum design in member states through group discussions and a pre-tank survey.
- An examination of the role played by Teacher Education in supporting their implementation in school curricula through *group discussions* and a *pre-tank survey*.
- Examples of how TCs are approached and implemented in language teaching and teacher education curricula in three different contexts: Finland, Germany, and Romania.



Challenges identified in implementing transversal competencies

- Gap between the ‘intended’ curriculum, the ‘implemented’ curriculum, and the ‘attained’ curriculum.
- TCs are practically included in all national curricula but different terms are used to refer to them.
- TCs are not dealt with sufficiently in pre-and in-service teacher education.
- TCs are not assessed directly in national exams so they are often treated as less important by teachers, students, and parents.



- Soft skills (i.e. TCs) are frequently perceived as qualities that students should already possess and bring to school, not qualities that should be worked on in the classroom.
- Workload and level of stress may inhibit teachers from focusing on aspects of education not directly related to the subject they teach.
- Cooperation between language teachers and teachers of other subjects, which is a necessity for the attainment of TCs, is sometimes hard to achieve.



Theme C: Moving forward-proposed recommendations

(Taken by ECML report on TCs by David Newby)

TCs in national curricula

- Incorporate TCs into curricula (if this is not already the case).
- Develop strategies for helping teachers to identify with and incorporate TCs into their teaching.
- Involve all stakeholders in curriculum specification. Use a bottom-up, rather than top-down approach to curriculum development.



Selection of TCs to be focused on

- Agree on lists of TCs that are a priority and discuss how to integrate them.
- Apply some guiding principles when selecting TCs, e.g. compatibility with the subject (foreign language education etc.), the future professional needs of learners, the needs of society etc.

Research

- Encourage research into TCs.
- Make research findings readily accessible to teachers.



Teacher education – initial and in-service

- Ensure that TCs are part of all teachers' pedagogical training.
- Include concrete examples of how these competencies can be used in LT.
- Develop adaptable modules for teacher development that draw on a pool of examples of good practice.



Assessment of TCs

- Develop guidelines and materials for assessing any TCs included in the language curriculum.
- Include the assessment of TCs in national examinations and school subject grades.



Collaboration / networking

- Improve practical collaboration, networking, and exchange of ideas and expertise between **university teacher education departments** and **school teachers** and between **teachers of different subjects** (engagement in cross-curricular projects).
- Encourage collaboration between **general education** and **vocational training**.
- Enable students from **different schools/countries** to network with one another e.g. through e-twinning.
- Encourage teacher exchanges.



Structural aspects for administrators

- Address challenges: for example, working on TCs should not mean an extra workload for teachers.
- Consider rewarding teachers – financial, contractual status etc. – to help them acknowledge the students’ and their own achievements in developing TCs.

THANK YOU!

