

IMPACT OF THE CEFR ON EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

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Abstract

The author of the article discusses the impact of the CEFR implementation on educational policies across various countries and educational contexts. In addition the author discusses the implementation process of the CEFR in Uzbekistan's education system and brings the examples of successful implementation of the document.

Key words: CEFR, impact, educational policy, education system, implementation

УМУМЕВРОПА ТИЛ БИЛИШ КОМПЕТЕНЦИЯЛАРИНИНГ ТАЪЛИМ СИЁСАТИГА ТАЪСИРИ

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Аннотация

Қўлланма муаллифи “Тил билишнинг умумевропа компетенциялари: ўрганиш, ўқитиш, баҳолаш”нинг турли мамлакатларда жорий этилиши ва унинг мамлакатлар таълим тизими ва таълимга оид сиёсатида кўрсатган таъсирини таҳлил қилади. Шу билан бирга мақола муаллифи Ўзбекистон Республикаси шароитида “Тил билишнинг умумевропа компетенциялари: ўрганиш, ўқитиш, баҳолаш” жорий қилинишидан кўзланган мақсадларни келтиради.

Калит сўзлар: “Тил билишнинг умумевропа компетенциялари: ўрганиш, ўқитиш, баҳолаш”, таълим сиёсати, таълим тизими

ВЛИЯНИЕ ОБЩЕЕВРОПЕЙСКОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ ВЛАДЕНИЯ ИНОСТРАННЫМ ЯЗЫКОМ НА ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНУЮ ПОЛИТИКУ

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Аннотация

В статье автор приводит анализ влияния внедрения «Общевропейские компетенции владения иностранным языком: изучение, преподавание, оценка»на образовательные политики нескольких стран. Также автор приводит цели и задачи внедрения документа в образовательной системе Республики Узбекистан.

Ключевые слова:Общевропейские компетенции владения иностранным языком: изучение, преподавание, оценка, образовательная политика, контекст, влияние

The CEFR had a major impact on language learning and teaching policies across the European countries since its publication and application in 2001. Moreover, it had a major influence on the development of language learning and teaching programs across North American countries as well. (2, 24).

Since its first introduction and application in 2001, the CEFR has undeniably influenced language policies in many countries and informed language instruction reforms. This influence and impact is considerably seen at the level of language education curriculum design and assessment reforms in a number of countries in the world (2, 14).

A survey conducted in more than 30 European countries informed that the CEFR was used and considered as a useful resource tool in planning and developing language teaching curricula, in developing language assessment and evaluation tests, and designing language education materials (11, 113).

In 2013 a study conducted by the European Parliament's Committee on Education and Culture yielded similar results following a study of CEFR implementation in six European countries. According to the results of the report, most of the participating countries' foreign language policies and curricula are informed by the CEFR. Most of the language tests, examinations and school textbooks and language teaching materials are linked to the CEFR (4, 16).

Large scale survey conducted by European Commission among language teachers, learners and school principals of 16 European educational systems enabled to compare language policies, language teaching approaches and learning of languages in different contexts (6, 74). The survey results reported that in all educational systems, except two of 16 participating systems, the CEFR was mandated or recommended by but two educational systems the CEFR was either mandated or recommended by educational authorities for the purpose of curriculum development, teacher training, language testing and assessment and finally for the selection and development of language teaching and learning materials.

In Uzbekistan, the CEFR was the primary document in reporting language policy reforms in all stages of education, starting from primary education to higher education since its adoption in and serving as a basis for the development of new educational standard in 2013. The reform of national curricula and language teaching standards in Uzbekistan resulted in the development of unique and common standard for all stages of education, namely State Educational Standard. Requirements to the Level of Preparation of Graduates in Foreign Languages at All Levels of Education (1) which is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (5, 18). The new standard describes learners' expected proficiency with CEFR reference levels

(students are expected to achieve A1 level in their first foreign language by the end of primary schooling and B2 level by the end of baccalaureate). The new standard also employs the terms and metalanguage used in the original CEFR document for the purpose of defining and describing competences, knowledge, and learning strategies (1).

Major examples of successful language education policies informed by the CEFR include France, where language learning outcomes and levels linked to the CEFR and by which language pedagogy mainly informed (3, 18; 8, 29); Germany, where language education standards and competence based curricula were developed on the basis of the CEFR (2, 27); Central and Eastern European countries, where several projects are carried out with the view of aligning school leavers' language examinations with the CEFR descriptors and levels.

Over the 20 years impact of the CEFR has gone beyond the borders of Council of Europe countries and became one of the major referencing documents in developing language education policies and carrying out reforms in this area. The CEFR has penetrated into the foreign language education systems and language education discourse. Now the document is used, consulted, referred or studied in a number of countries around the globe. The countries include New Zealand, Taiwan, USA, Argentina, Colombia, China, and Japan, (2, 13).

Although the implementation of the CEFR in national education systems around the world was widespread and significant, it has been partial rather than systematic. CEFR's which is holistic in its vision of coherence and comprehensiveness in language teaching, learning and assessment more and more studies suggest that not all educational systems are benefiting from its innovative approach.

At present, as many scholars note the major influence and effect as well as contribution of the CEFR was on the use of reference levels, which are being widely and effectively used by testing agencies, educational ministries, textbook writers and publishers. These stakeholders' use of the CEFR is justified by the transparent and standardized levels of language proficiency suggested by the document, and which are now part of the commonly used terminology among these stakeholders.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting in a number of contexts the CEFR terminology and its core concepts are used as labels rather than thoroughly studied knowledge of the document and its practical implementations (7, 18). Such as, "curriculum guidelines do not make detailed use of the CEFR's descriptive scheme to specify learning outcomes, so that the link to a particular proficiency level is a matter of assertion only. Similarly, the instruments by which learning outcomes are assessed are not systematically linked to the CEFR" (10, 5).

In this brief article on the impact of the CEFR on educational policies we have studied that the influence of the CEFR on language education policies around the world suggests a promising and at the same time to some extent disappointing picture. On one hand, the CEFR has become official reference document for a number of European and non-European countries. The CEFR and its elements and terms employed in many educational documents in describing language proficiency levels and describing competencies which are used to describe language proficiency in most of the above mentioned countries. In contrast, after almost twenty years from its first introduction, it became apparent that the CEFR has not yet been employed in its full extent which could reveal its full potential.

As it is widely known initially the CEFR was developed to put into practice the European language policy across European countries. However, its implementation in Uzbek educational context has had a great impact and in evaluating the impact of the CEFR in Uzbekistan it is worthwhile to mention that Uzbek context is not similar to that of European educational context. The aim of the CEFR and the philosophy that underlies is to raise awareness of European identity and acceptance of cultural and linguistic diversity across European countries as well as improving mutual understanding between people that live in Europe. Hence, the CEFR's aim and impact on promoting plurilingualism in Uzbekistan is limited. The major impact of the CEFR in the context of Uzbekistan has been on the development of standards on learning and teaching foreign languages, reforming the PRESETT programs and their curricula and promoting transparency and coherence in this process.

From the data analysis obtained from the questionnaire and interview survey it can be summarized that the adoption of the CEFR in the higher education system of Uzbekistan played an important role in teachers' shift from old dated methods of teaching foreign languages to a more communicative and competence based ways of teaching. In addition the CEFR has influenced the ways how teachers' plan their lesson, assess their students' level of proficiency and design language teaching materials. However, there are some problematic points in the application of the CEFR in certain domains.

In order to have an overall idea about the implementation of the CEFR in the context of Uzbekistan's education system further studies that will cover not only the higher education system but the whole system of education should be carried out.

Challenges that teachers face in the process of adopting the CEFR are in most cases similar to those observed in European, Canadian, Dutch, Japanese and other educational contexts. However, teachers' access to the CEFR related documents, trainings and lack of research into the application of the CEFR are

distinguishing features of the Uzbek context. In the follow up interview the respondent mentioned that teachers dealt with the challenges with the help of self-education and referring to the Council of Europe and other website that provide information about the CEFR.

The development of the CEFR and its spread across European countries and beyond without doubt influenced how English language and other foreign languages are taught. First of all, although the impact of the CEFR on classroom teaching still needs further investigation, its impact was immense on the assessment practices in foreign language teaching (9, 29; 11, 24). Therefore, investigating the CEFR from the point of view of TESOL and SLA is of great importance. In the context of Uzbekistan the CEFR has already become an inseparable part of English language teacher education and professional development of FL teachers. Uzbekistan Teachers of English Association has even developed a special Teacher Development Framework on Cambridge framework and the CEFR which is becoming popular day by day. At present, teachers started to refer to the state examinations and attestation procedures using the word “CEFR” which also proves that the CEFR has already influenced the way teachers think of their own language proficiency and professional development. Considering all these facts the CEFR requires even deeper and comprehensive investigations.

With the aim of improving the present situation regarding the use of the CEFR and increasing understanding of teachers’ about the CEFR carrying out the following would be of great benefit both for education policy makers, and language teachers:

- translating, publishing and disseminating the CEFR related documents among teacher educators and teachers of foreign languages, education administrators and policy makers, which is done actually and published by Nargis Qosimova in the Foreign Languages in Uzbekistan Journal (12);
- allowing additional hours of training in the curricula of in-service teacher training programs dedicated for the higher education teachers of foreign languages;
- introducing teachers of foreign languages to good examples of the CEFR use in the classroom settings;
- aligning the entrance and exit examinations to the CEFR descriptors;
- introducing the use of the European Language Portfolio in pre-service English teacher training courses.

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