Those who can, teach? Issues and challenges in the recruitment, training and retention of teachers of German in the United Kingdom

Norbert Pachler, London

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> "The FL profession is heterogeneous in terms of interests and research agendas. It seems to me, however, that one common interest – and for the survival of the field, maybe the most important one – needs to be the preparation of its teachers." (Schulz 2000: 517)

This paper examines the chronic shortage in the United Kingdom of (foreign language) teachers in general and the short supply of teachers of German as a foreign language in particular. Causes for the current impasse are considered and possible strategies to improve the *status quo* are examined. The paper discusses aspects of the prevailing initial teacher education curriculum in the context of the statutory requirements governing them and considers implications for the teaching and learning of German in secondary schools. The paper concludes that for a complex combination of reasons, unless urgent action is taken, the future for German as a foreign language in the UK as an integral part of the compulsory education of pupils aged 11-16 is at risk.

The wider context

Recent news coverage of schools having to suspend normal curriculum provision and send pupils home temporarily as well as of teachers threatening industrial action because of heavy cover loads has brought to the attention of the general public what educationists have been painfully aware of for some time: the country is suffering from a severe shortage of teachers. According to a report in the *Times Educational Supplement*, in this the UK is not alone: "The four hotspots for teacher shortages are London, New York, Rotterdam and Berlin" (Dean 2000). In his recent study, which draws on 1998 OECD data, Dutch journalist Robert Sikkes posits that the worldwide problem is not only due to bad pay and low status, but the ageing profile of the profession.[1]

Table 1: Teacher workforce in percentage of age group – Secondary (Source: Dean 2000)

[1] For an analysis of the worldwide teacher shortage crisis see e.g. the *Education International Quarterly*, Vol. 7 No. 1, 2001.

	40-49	50+	Total 40+	Shortage
Austria	35	11	46	none
England	43	17	60	big
USA	42	23	65	big
New Zealand	41	26	67	moderate
France	39	26	64	none
Netherlands	42	27	69	big
Belgium	40	33	73	moderate
Germany	49	34	83	none

On the basis of an examination of the demographic structure of London's teaching force the Institute for Policy Studies in Education at the University of North London has been looking at career patterns of teachers in London and the motivations that underlie them (see Ross et al. 2001). The results are sobering. The research found that the proportion of London teachers in their 30s began to fall in the mid 1980s and is still falling.

> The result is that, in London, there are now two distinct populations of teachers. Forty per cent are under 35 and most of these intend to stop teaching in London within the next five years. Fifty per cent are over 40, and most of these will stay teaching in London until they retire in their mid- or late-50s. This mixture of young transient teachers – who are either temporary visitors from overseas, or young teachers who spend a few years at the beginning of their career in the capital – and long-term London teachers – who know the local community and its needs well – worked well while the two elements were in balance. But now the balance has gone. The group of older, long-term London teachers is rapidly declining in size as retirement takes its toll, and London schools are having to try to recruit an ever-larger number of newly qualified teachers to make up the shortfall. But … it is becoming increasingly difficult to find enough young teachers to replace those who move on. (Ross et al. 2001: 8)

As far as foreign languages (FLs) are concerned, one of the reasons for it becoming increasingly difficult to find enough young teachers to replace those leaving the profession is due to fewer young people taking up FL study at post-16 and subsequently as a substantial part of their study at degree level. There is currently a requirement for applicants to a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course in FLs to have spent at least 50% of their degree study – or equivalent – on the language they intend to teach. The trend away from joint and single honours degrees towards combinations such as Biology or Law with a FL and Institution-wide Language Programmes (IWLPs) means that an ever decreasing number of undergraduates confidently meet this requirement. There have also been substantial changes to undergraduate degree courses away from the study of

the target language and grammar towards culture and area studies (see e.g. Reeves 2000 or Coleman 1999). Also, the introduction of fees and an increased scrutiny by the higher education Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) of the year abroad is in danger of leading to fewer and fewer undergraduates on FLs courses spending a sustained period of residence in a country where the target language is spoken. This is, however, often a pre-requisite for acceptance onto a FLs teacher education programme. Ultimately, it means fewer graduates are coming through into FLs initial teacher education. Noticeably also, those who do come through have been taught FLs by way of some variant of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). This, in turn, tends to mean that – whilst often showing a wide range of desirable attributes – their strengths are less frequently in the areas of language understanding and knowledge of grammar than was the case in the past. These characteristics are, nevertheless, arguably very important prerequisites for effective FLs teaching (For a more detailed analysis of these trends, see e.g. Pachler et al. 1999 and Field and Lawes 1999.)

Table 2 shows the worryingly low number of students taking A levels in French, German and Spanish, which – after all – constitute the bedrock on which UK-based FLs teacher supply has traditionally built.

Table 2: Number and results of GCE A level candidates in French, German, Spanish and Italian (16, 17 and 18 year olds)

	French	German	Spanish	Italian
1992-93	25,215	9,548	3,767	429
1993-94	24,169	9,531	3,640	425
1994-95	22,909	9,218	3,595	443
1995-96	22,805	9,358	4,114	511
1996-97	21,326	8,970	4,318	548
1997-98	19,629	8,903	4,499	556
1998-99	17,775	8,527	4,640	556

Source: HEFCE 1999

These figures have to be read in the context of the very encouraging recent trend in uptake of FLs at 11-16 (see Table 3). The perceived lack of usefulness of FLs, pupils' dissatisfaction with their FL learning experiences and, importantly, the considerable

difference in the demands at A level compared with those at GCSE appear to be leading young people to opt out of FL study at the earliest opportunity (see Pachler 1999 and Fisher 2001).

Table 3: Number of GCSE candidates in French, German and Spanish

	French	German	Spanish
Year	Number of candidates	Number of candidates	Number of candidates
1988	269,033	76,320	19,125
1989	256,737	80,456	21,091
1990	280,890	84,306	24,870
1991	304,587	91,277	27,406
1992	322,653	101,388	29,468
1993	319,642	108,398	32,145
1994	328,306	118,985	36,335
1995	350,027	129,386	40,366
	Number graded (A*-U)	Number graded (A*-U)	Number graded (A*-U)
1997	335,997	134,604	43,468
1998	337,577	131,286	47,406

(Source: SCAA; http://www.qca.org.uk/gcse-results/)

In the current climate of pragmatism and utilitarianism as well as given the market-driven nature of the UK education system, in which studying and qualifications have become a commodity, young people can increasingly be seen to be choosing their subjects post-16 very carefully indeed in order to maximise the likelihood of their desired outcome, and often at the same time as carrying out paid employment in order to be able to sustain their study.

In such a climate the fact that FL study is perceived to be difficult and potentially yielding comparatively low examination results – which are, after all, the pre-requisite to gaining a place at the desired university – as well as the fact that teaching not only requires four years of undergraduate study (including a year abroad) as well as a further, very intense fifth year of post-graduate study leading to a comparatively badly paid job frequently characterised by challenging pupil behaviour, limited status and restricted scope for professionalism can

all be seen to be putting off a large number of young, capable people from choosing a career in (FL) teaching.

Evidence for the hypothesis that pragmatism is increasingly outweighing a sense of vocation can, for example, be found in recent research funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and carried out by colleagues at the University of Leeds (see Edwards 1999) which suggests that the widely-held belief that most teachers enter the profession through a sense of vocation is a myth. According to the study, conducted among some 500 History and Science teachers, the vast majority of teachers have no long-term ambition to work in education. The report suggests that, rather than planning their job paths, people found that the job grew on them and that it had characteristics they hadn't expected. Other, pragmatic, reasons include people following their partners to different parts of the country. Worryingly, the research also found that the recent government recruitment campaign 'Nobody forgets a good teacher' had been "misguided as most of the interviewees did not actually consider any of their own teachers particularly memorable" (Edwards 1999).

Teacher supply

On 7 March 2001 the then Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) issued a press release in which the government proudly announced that teacher training applications for England and Wales were "up again" (DfEE 2001a). In particular, figures form the Graduate Teacher Training Registry (GTTR) appeared to show a 19% increase. Unsurprisingly, the Secretary of State for Education of the day, David Blunkett, welcomed the news and interpreted the figures as evidence that his government's policies, such as better pay for teachers and financial incentives to train, were encouraging more people to apply to join the profession. In particular, the press release noted, applications for shortage subjects had seen large increases with FLs being up 7 per cent. The press release also noted that there would also be some additional FL teachers entering the profession through the Fast Track route, the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP), which provides on the job training, and the new Open University course. However, at the time of writing no precise figures are available. In any event, the numbers involved in the first year, i.e. 2001-02, are likely to be rather small.

However, a closer look at the GTTR application statistics, updated once a month at http://www.gttr.ac.uk/appstats/ shows a different and highly disturbing picture as far as applications for German are concerned. For 7 March 2001 the figures show that, compared with the same time the previous year, there is a shortfall of 20.3% of applications for German; and the figures for March are not the worst for the current year! Whilst for French the March statistics show no change, for Spanish they record an astounding increase of 60.2% with the net effect in terms of actual numbers of applicants that there are now more people applying to become teachers of Spanish as a FL than there are for German. Tables 4-6 show that, whilst the exact percentage figures vary from month to month, the trend towards Spanish seems sustained. As a consequence, German is in danger of losing its status as second FL behind French.

Table 4: Numbers of applications for German February – August 2001

Language: German	2001			2000			
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Change % + or –
February 7	24	73	97	22	105	127	
March 7	29	93	122	28	125	153	–20.3
April 4	35	126	161	32	156	188	–14.4
May 2	45	149	194	45	182	227	–14.5
June 6	56	181	237	52	216	268	–11.6
July 4	65	201	266	56	236	292	–8.9
August 1	72	218	290	70	271	341	–15

Table 5: Numbers of applications for Spanish February – August 2001

Language: Spanish	2001			2000			
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Change % + or –
February 7	27	71	98	5	55	60	
March 7	39	102	141	13	75	88	60.2
April 4	52	140	192	21	86	107	79.4
May 2	58	164	222	24	107	131	69.5
June 6	65	188	253	39	133	172	47.1
July 4	70	218	288	42	152	194	48.5
August 1	80	244	324	51	192	243	33.3

Table 6: Numbers of applications for French February – August 2001

Language: French	2001			2000			
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Change % + or –
February 7	64	265	329	70	299	369	– 10.8
March 7	97	369	466	89	377	466	0
April 4	139	500	639	117	454	571	11.9
May 2	168	611	779	144	552	696	11.9
June 6	196	711	907	176	678	854	6.2
July 4	228	822	1050	197	776	973	7.9
August 1	251	892	1143	245	935	1180	– 3.1

It is important to note that these figures say nothing about the quality of applications, which are scrutinised locally by admissions tutors. If a recent report in *The Guardian* from the annual conference of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) is anything to go by, the signs are not encouraging. In his article, Will Woodward (2001b) quotes a school manager who expects a very difficult recruitment time later in the year:

> I am not entering this phase full of optimism. It's a tight market and adverts bring very little. There's very little of quality as well. Many of the teachers that have come forward are of extremely poor quality.

The figures also say nothing about how many applicants will be invited for interview, how many will be offered a place and nothing about the actual number of applicants taking up offers made. Applications have to become offers, offers to be turned into acceptances and places to be taken up. The hope amongst training providers is that the recent introduction of training salaries of £10,000 for FLs beginner-teachers will help applicants who have been offered a place decide to actually take it up. At the Institute of Education, for example, prior to the introduction of the training salary as many as 30% of applicants offered a place on the Secondary Partnership PGCE in Modern Foreign Languages did not take up the place offered to them. This represents a considerable wastage of time and effort on the part of all those involved in the selection and interviewing process.

There is, however, the danger that the training salary will entice some people to apply for a career in teaching, who do not necessarily show the requisite dispositions. Experience of the first year of the training salary suggests, though, that such fears were, by-and-large,

unfounded. Nevertheless, whilst admissions tutors need to be flexible and prepared to take certain 'calculated risks', i.e. give suitable candidates a chance who do not necessarily meet the traditional entry requirements and profile, they need to guard against succumbing to potential pressures brought to bear on them of meeting their institution's income targets at the cost of taking on unsuitable candidates. Financial penalties for under-recruitment and overambitious intake targets might, in certain instances, lead to unsuitable applicants being allowed onto training courses. In the absence of any research in this field, one has to rely on anecdotal evidence which strongly suggests that admissions tutors are very aware that it is neither in their short- nor long-term interest to risk taking on unsuitable candidates. In the short term unsuitable candidates tend to cause an inordinate amount of extra work and in the long term they tend to jeopardise partnership arrangements with (established) placement schools.

Whilst it is not entirely clear how exactly applicants are allocated to the various language categories by the GTTR because many FL applicants offer more than one teaching language, it seems likely that the first language of applicants is used. If this is indeed the case the chances are that there is a considerable number of candidates offering a first FL other than German, in particular French, who might also be able to offer some subsidiary German.

The increase in the number of applicants for Spanish is undoubtedly excellent news for Hispanists, but it is rather worrying for those interested in the future of German as a FL in the UK. Many secondary schools will hopefully continue to offer a diversified FLs curriculum rather than 'play safe' and offer only French, because it is easier to find teachers with at least some level of French. Unfortunately, there is growing anecdotal evidence which suggests that head teachers increasingly make use of the option offered by the 1999 National Curriculum Orders, to disapply those students in Key Stage 4 from FL study:

- who make significantly less progress than their peers: they are able to study fewer National Curriculum subjects in order to consolidate their learning across the curriculum;

- who have particular strengths and talents: they are allowed to emphasise a particular curriculum area by exchanging a statutory subject for a further course in that curriculum area; or
- for whom wider work-related learning is deemed desirable than is possible alongside the full statutory requirements: they are able to carry out extended periods of work experience etc.

Sometimes the decision to disapply pupils appears to be made in view of staffing difficulties; on other occasions it can be made to enable more able learners to get better grades in other subjects in order to improve a school's league table standing. Given the (perceived) difficulty inherent in FL learning in general and in the study of German in particular, it can only be hoped that school managers and heads of department take account of the fact that the spirit of the original National Curriculum Orders, which first entitled students to the study of FLs between ages 11 and 16, is upheld in the 1999 Orders and that disapplication will involve only a very small number of students. Shirley Lawes (2000: 18) is not very hopeful:

> The real irony is that in recent years there has been considerable emphasis placed on making modern languages more accessible to the full range of learners at Key Stage 4. Some commentators have argued that in so doing, mfl learning has lost some of its intellectual challenge and become more of a skill-based, functional activity. GCSE has undergone changes to reflect the functional emphasis and to enable more learners to aspire to examination success. Now, it is arguable that the very learners whose needs the Key Stage 4 curriculum has striven to meet, may no longer be there. Will Curriculum 2000 succeed in inspiring the rest?

The positive trend in applications for Spanish make its introduction alongside / in addition to French, and sadly often instead of German, an attractive option for those school managers and heads of department struggling to keep German on the curriculum but interested in maintaining a diversified FLs curriculum. For reasons I examine in detail elsewhere (see Pachler and Field 2001: 1-9) a diversified FLs provision is rightly seen by many FLs teachers as much preferable to a narrow curriculum of one compulsory language. The fact that Spanish is perceived by many pupils to be the easiest FL of French, German and Spanish, particularly in the early stages (see e.g. Kenning 1993), and that Spain is a popular holiday destination, provide useful extrinsic motivation for pupils. Any the decision to introduce a new language does, however, require careful planning: parents'

views need to be canvassed, suitably qualified staff need to be appointed, i.e. FL teachers with the relevant language combinations, relevant course books and resources need to be purchased, schemes of work need to be written etc.

Whilst it goes beyond the scope of this paper to analyse and speculate about the reasons for the considerable increase in GTTR applications for Spanish in 2000-01, the question as to where these applicants are to be trained is, nevertheless, a pertinent one. The current statutory requirements governing initial teacher education, DfEE Circular 4/98 (see DfEE 1998), require beginner-teachers to spend at least two-thirds of their 36 week long course in school and on classroom-related tasks. There is, however, currently only a finite number of schools with enough Spanish on the curriculum to accommodate the actual number of candidates with Spanish applying to become FLs teachers. It is, therefore, likely that not all eligible applicants for Spanish can be accommodated by providers due to lack of suitable placement schools and the constraints of Circular 4/98 and that the increase the DfEE press release of 7 March celebrates remains academic.

On 2 May 2001, for example, the TES Jobs online[2] featured adverts for 324 posts requiring some level of German. On the one hand this demand is good news for beginner-teachers and potential applicants for teacher education with German, the difficulty evidently experienced by schools in recruiting suitably qualified staff to teach German might, however, well accelerate the move away from German.

Upgrading of subsidiary FL skills

The upgrading of subsidiary FL skills can be seen to be one of the most likely strategies to ensure the sustainability of a diversified FLs curriculum in secondary schools in general as well as a future for German as a FL in particular. A coherent strategy supported by all relevant stakeholders as well as government agencies is urgently required. Those beginner-teachers who need it must be given enough time and space each week of their training to follow a coherent programme of language study. However, they and their providers find themselves under an inordinate amount of pressure to implement a highly prescriptive and

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[2] Available at http://www.tes.co.uk.

bureaucratic curriculum for initial teacher education, which does not allow sufficient flexibility to cater for the individual linguistic or, for that matter, other needs of beginner-teachers. At the Institute of Education beginner-teachers are currently able to follow a subsidiary language course which, due to financial and timetable constraints, lasts merely six to eight weeks in the Autumn term when beginner-teachers spend a day a week at the university and has to take place outside an already overloaded programme of study. Experience suggests that refresher courses are most successful if they relate to the language needs experienced by beginner-teachers in the context of classroom-based work.[3] Whilst the government agency responsible for teacher supply and education/training, the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), has been providing some funding for pre-sessional refresher courses in German, no financial support is currently available for courses taking place during the training year despite the fact that emerging evidence suggests it is then that beginner-teachers find them most helpful (see Phillips 2001). Policy makers need to ensure, as a matter of priority, that there is sufficient flexibility in the new 2002 statutory framework for initial teacher education to allow providers to cater effectively for the linguistic needs of their FL beginner-teachers. Also, and importantly, financial support is required in order to enable providers to offer sustained language refresher courses. Due to financial stringencies it is very likely, for example, that at the Institute of Education we will have to require beginner-teachers to (part)fund refresher courses from the academic year 2001-02. It remains to be seen what effect this will have on uptake. In the current statutory framework it is simply assumed that training providers are able to cater for the individual linguistic needs of beginner-teachers by internally vying funds for this purpose. In addition to offsetting the cost for tuition on methodological issues as well as administrative support etc., a considerable proportion of the training grant providers receive tends to go on payments to placement schools. Schools are not currently required to co-operate in the training of beginner-teachers and expect a financial contribution for the work they carry out with beginner-teachers. As of late an increasing number of schools are finding partnership in initial teacher education provides them with an invaluable source of potential recruits. It remains to be seen, however, whether this will have a noticeable impact on schools' service

[3] For a detailed discussion of subsidiary FL courses see Phillips 2001.

level agreements with training providers. Furthermore, the training grant goes *inter alia* on the maintenance of the partnership with schools, on recruitment as well as on quality assurance, such as external examiners and the preparation for Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) inspections. Training providers are not currently given due recognition for their work on developing beginner-teachers' linguistic skills under the OFSTED initial teacher education inspection framework.

Flexible, work-based routes into teaching

The TTA is responding to the teacher shortage crisis by promoting flexible routes into teaching in a bid to address recent fundamental changes in the labour market where a lifelong career is increasingly less common than several career changes (see e.g. Tabberer 2000). Also, people at different stages in their professional lives are considering teaching as an option. This observation is borne out by a steady increase in mature students in recent years. In response to these changes, training providers have become increasingly sensitive to addressing the individual training needs of beginner-teachers. Needs analysis and personalisation of provision have become more and more important, in particular in relation to ensuring beginner-teachers' subject knowledge is up to the required level. The particular challenge for training providers is to take on a broader range of beginner-teachers without jeopardising the quality and rigour of their training.

Flexible routes into teaching have so far tended to be conceived of by government predominately as work-based routes with rather tentative links to postgraduate HE-level study. Therein lies the danger that beginner-teachers neither have sufficient time and opportunity to engage with educational issues beyond highly situationalised concerns nor to engage critically with their own teaching and their learning about teaching with reference to theoretical frameworks. Theorising can be seen to be essential in enabling beginner-teachers to think strategically about issues beyond the 'here and now' (see e.g. Pachler and Field 2001: 20-2). Given the current climate, "there is a real danger that (work-based routes are) seen by some schools as a stopgap for acute teacher shortages at the expense of high quality learning experiences" (Pachler and Field 2001: 17)

It seems imperative, therefore, to ensure that flexible routes do not lock trainees into what Tickle (2000: 6) calls 'survivalist discourse', that is a preoccupation with coping rather than personal and professional growth. Beginner-teachers need exposure to and opportunity to engage with conceptual and theoretical frameworks which have traditionally been provided through discussion with peers and HE-tutors as well as background reading. Rather than moving towards purely work-based routes, which tend to offer beginner-teachers fewer opportunities for continuous support from a tutor or mentor as well as to observe the teaching of more experienced colleagues and critically reflect on their own teaching, new technologies can, for example, be used meaningfully and effectively for collaborative knowledge construction at a distance (see e.g. Smith 1999).

Making teaching more attractive

In their research, Ross et al. asked teachers of all subjects why they leave teaching and not surprisingly the data confirms what anecdotal evidence gathered by talking to many colleagues in numerous different schools and of various levels of seniority suggests: many teachers joined the profession because it used to offer them autonomy, creativity and the ability to use their initiative.

> The ways in which teaching has become 'accountable' and has been subjected to control and direction, have contributed to demotivation. … It is the change in the nature of teaching that is behind the crisis … . Pay is an issue: to enable teachers to stay in the profession, in particular in the areas of high housing costs, substantially more pay is needed. But more pay alone is not bringing new people into training and the profession in sufficient numbers. And more pay is not stopping the haemorrhage of teachers from the profession. (2001: 9)

Ross et al. point out that only 27% of teachers leaving for other careers earn more, 27% the same and 45% less. In answer to the question 'What do you find the major attractions of your new post that you didn't find in teaching?', more than 40% mention 'room for using initiative' as a major advantage followed very closely by 'scope for creativity'. 'Greater pay' features only in 6th place, mentioned by fewer than 20%. Nevertheless, improved pay can be seen to represent an attractive incentive judging by the soaring interest from English and Welsh teachers in working in Scottish schools since a deal to increase pay by 23.1% and to phase in a limit of working hours to 35 per week was announced north of the border (see Woodward 2001a: 6).

Anecdotal evidence from talking to a considerable number of colleagues each year suggests that another important factor contributing to demotivation – if not disillusionment – of teachers is that many of them feel insufficiently valued and perceive there to be *a lack of status*, although the dossier on teacher shortages worldwide in the *Education International Quarterly* Vol. 7 No. 1 (2001: 9-10) suggests that the status of teachers is not as bad as they think.

> The way we view the teaching profession is quite at variance to the way we view other professions, and we have got used to it. We don't raise our eyebrows at things that are really quite peculiar. (Thornton 2001)

Thornton's point of view is borne out by UK-based research, for example by a recent study funded by the ESRC (see Moore et al. 2000).

Beginner-teachers as well as more experienced colleagues frequently mention the issue of *management of poor pupil behaviour* and problems in their relationships with pupils as a mayor concern. Pupil behaviour is perceived to have deteriorated over the years and colleagues report an increase in verbal as well as physical abuse (see e.g. Dean et al. 2001). They also complain about the low status of teaching as a profession in today's society and note that the increased emphasis on teacher accountability has led to *strains in parent-school and parent-teacher interactions and relationships*.

Colleagues furthermore complain about *increasing levels of bureaucracy and paperwork* as well as *increasing workloads*. For example, fundamental changes to as well as an increased emphasis on assessment throughout the system has placed a growing burden on teachers and pupils alike. At times it seems that assessment, not just of pupils but also of teachers, has become such an obsession that very little time is left for teaching and learning (see e.g. Hackett 2001). OFSTED inspections and the recently introduced threshold assessment, introduced to reward experienced teachers on the top of the main pay spine who are judged by external assessors to be doing a good job in relation to criteria such as pupil performance and progress with £2000 performance-related pay (before tax), are indicative of how successive governments have conceived of assessment of teacher effectiveness. Indeed, according to Michael Barber (no date: 15), head of the government's Standards and Effectiveness Unit, the latter is seen as the key to achieving the recruitment of good people

into teaching. Both can be seen to assume a deficit model of teacher competence with the latter having attracted comments such as:

> 'It has created a climate of fear, and that in turn has led to a culture of over-planning, over-teaching and over-recording. What it has really shown is that teaching is fast becoming a health hazard. It has made us realise why we're so knackered.' or
>
> 'It's using a sledgehammer to crack a nut. They're trying to retain experienced staff, but they're terrified of seeming soft on teachers.' (Quoted in Duffy 2001: 27)

In his evaluation of the threshold process Michael Duffy (2001: 27) asks himself and his readers whether it was sensible to "set up a system that highlights so destructively the failure of the minority who have not" and continues:

> Threshold assessment has so far cost the Government £40 million. Given the current recruitment crisis, it is not just those who failed to cross the threshold who will want to be assured that the result is worth it.

Colleagues are also increasingly required to engage in promotional activities to 'sell' their school, such as open evenings, or to organise a range of extra-curricular activities, for example, to compete with the offerings of neighbouring schools.

Colleagues in middle management, i.e. those with a considerable level of responsibility in the academic and pastoral life of schools, increasingly note that the pervading accountability culture has led to a noticeable *change in attitude and approach by many senior school managers***,** who are desperately trying to compete in league tables and have themselves got to cope with an inordinate amount of pressure of meeting a growing number of government targets. In the words of one informant in the study by Moore et al (2000: 12): "management are harder on teachers than they used to be and won't automatically back a teacher up". In the case of this informant – and regular contact with many colleagues suggests he is far from being the only one – the increase in pressure has contributed to a change of teaching style and philosophy, which is increasingly causing concern and can lead to a desire to leave the profession in order to "spend ten years doing something else – anything – I don't know [what], but totally different" (ibid p. 10):

> I have become less progressive: I have become reactionary, I find … I have become less liberal … in my thinking about education. As a teacher, I have become more abrasive. (ibid p. 12)

Compared with commerce and industry, the *conditions of work* of teachers can euphemistically be described as challenging: due to lack of funding, facilities required in the effective discharge of duties and responsibilities, such as office space or access to computers and telephones, and working environments more generally, such as the state of repair of buildings, often compare very unfavourably with those available to people working in other professions.

Negative press coverage about teaching and teachers is legion, and has in recent years repeatedly been fuelled by remarks from Her Majesty's former Chief Inspector for Schools with the net result that teaching has come to be seen as a less and less attractive career choice by young people and as an occupation for those 'who can't'.

What is needed, therefore, in order to make teaching more attractive are not just the financial incentives the government is so keen to promote, such as the training salary for beginner-teachers and the threshold payment for teachers who have reached the top of the main pay spine. Nor is it initiatives such as the Fast Track scheme, which aims to offer teachers in training or recently qualified teachers on the main pay spine an accelerated route through to the Threshold or to Advanced Teacher status in return for undertaking additional responsibilities not usually directly related to normal classroom-based work and in return for accepting amended – and less favourable – conditions of service[4]. Important as financial incentives are, and however hard ministers and representatives of government agencies such as the new Department for Education and Skills (DfES), TTA and OFSTED try as of late to convince the public with upbeat rhetoric[5], *teaching needs to be made a more*

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[4] In the context of this paper it is not possible to provide a comprehensive critique of the Fast Track scheme, suffice it to say that it is questionable whether activities that direct beginner-teachers' and newly qualified teachers' attention away from matters relating to teaching and learning are desirable.

[5] To be fair to government, it has recently developed a promising strategy for continuing professional development (CPD) (DfEE 2001b) and established a General Teaching Council for England (GTC) to encourage individual teachers to develop their capacities, to promote higher professional standards and to improve the status of the profession. Also, the recent past has seen the introduction of a requirement for all newly qualified teachers (NQTs) to complete a so-called 'induction year' as an extension of their year of initial teacher education with a lighter timetable and some financial support for schools for professional development.

attractive proposition intellectually in order to appeal to more well-qualified graduates. This is also very important in the context of retaining foreign native speakers.

Importing and retaining foreign nationals

As Table 1 and recent press coverage[6] show, importing and 'poaching' overseas-trained teachers is not likely to provide a wholesale solution, because many other countries also suffer from teacher shortage. In the countries concerned this is often predominantly due to an ageing teacher population rather than the profound sense of devaluation and acute systemic weaknesses prevalent the UK. Fortunately for FL teaching in the UK, until recently teacher shortages have not been a concern in European Union countries in which the FLs most widely taught in UK schools are spoken, namely France, Germany, Austria and Spain. This has allowed Secondary PGCE courses in the United Kingdom to recruit from a sizeable pool of French, German, Austrian and Spanish nationals willing to take up residence in the UK. A recent survey by Whitehead and Taylor (1998) of 43 providers of PGCE Modern Foreign Languages courses shows that in 1996-97 26.8% of all those enrolled were foreign native speakers and in 1997-98 34.4%. In London the percentage is higher, namely between 40 and 50%, in some instances even as high as 80% (see Adams 2000: 4)! Many of the foreign native speakers have already been resident for a number of years in the UK, usually three or more[7]. However, some providers pursue active recruitment campaigns at job fairs in France, though – to the best of my knowledge – not so far in Germany, Austria or Spain. Some providers also offer a PGCE course leading to dual qualification in tandem with some French or Austrian institutions. Without this large pool of around 1,000 plus foreign native speakers every year, FLs would no longer be

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[6] A recent mass recruitment campaign in South Africa funded by British recruitment agencies caused an international political row after South Africa's education minister accused Britain of 'raiding' his country: "Such raids on the teaching profession at a critical time in our history are not helpful for the development of education in South Africa. … Our experience in South Africa has shown that it is good, qualified teachers who are lured away from the country. This caused considerable disruption for the schools concerned." (Kadar Asmal quoted in Smithers and McGreal 2001)

[7] One reason for this used to be the fact that after three years of residence in the UK, European Union nationals became eligible for financial support from their Local Education Authority.

sustainable as a compulsory foundation subject of the National Curriculum. It is not clear whether policy makers are sufficiently aware of this fact.

Whitehead and Taylor's survey found that 75% of foreign native speakers were speakers of French, 12.5% of German and 9% of Spanish, with 82% being female and 81% being between the ages of 21 and 30. These percentages go to explain why, compared with German, recruitment figures for French are holding up reasonably well (see Table 6).

The question arises whether part of the solution to the recruitment crisis for German is to actively recruit German native speakers directly from Germany and Austria onto courses of initial teacher education in the same way a number of providers are doing for teachers of French. Anecdotal as well as emerging research evidence (see e.g. Jones 2000) suggests, that – unless they are sufficiently prepared and supported – there is potentially a long list of issues which arise, such as the use of English on the job (e.g. using too much English, not being easily understood by pupils or not easily understanding pupils), cultural problems such as feeling foreign or having difficulties in becoming familiar with the education system. Interestingly, it is often the educational scope of the role of the teacher, e.g. her pastoral responsibilities, which attract foreign native speakers in general and French native speakers in particular to apply for PGCE courses and a career in teaching in the UK.

In order to pre-empt these problems as far as possible, at the Institute of Education we require all foreign native speakers who have not recently worked as FLAs in a UK school to carry out a period of observation of FL teaching in a London comprehensive school and some also to write an analytical report about their experience. Unfortunately, this appears to be more and more difficult as schools – often because of staff shortages and other internal and external pressures – are becoming increasingly reluctant or unable to accommodate visitors for such purposes. In addition, we require them to attend an induction day prior to the start of the course proper in which we provide an introduction to what we deem to be relevant issues, such as recent changes to the UK education system including the 1988 Education Reform Act and its implications, schools as organisations and their management structures, the role of the teacher and her responsibilities as well as the pastoral system.

The extent to which the importing of foreign native speakers, in particular speakers of German, is a viable long-term solution is highly questionable given the age profile of the

profession in Germany (see Table 1). Recent reports from Germany (see Sharma 2001) suggest that a teacher shortage is also looming there and that authorities have been able to stave it off only by allowing class sizes to rise. In addition to the increasing age profile of the profession, Germany is seeing a rise in the number of children of school age. Whilst currently some 20,500 beginner-teachers complete their two-year practical training annually compared with some 18,300 vacancies in the country, more than 50,000 new staff are needed to return to the teacher-pupil ratios of the mid-1990s. It seems very likely, therefore, that not too long from now those colleagues who are currently coming to England to train and work as teachers because of lack of opportunity to find a permanent position in Germany will be able to stay in their own country and pursue their chosen career there. A career, incidentally, which in Germany still offers comparatively high social status, considerable job security, intellectual challenge, good conditions of work and comparatively little challenge in terms of managing pupil behaviour.

The issues appear to be similar if slightly different as far as native speakers of French are concerned. French foreign nationals applying to come onto the Institute of Education Modern Foreign Languages PGCE often claim at interview that an important reason for applying to become a teacher of French in the UK (rather than a teacher of English as a FL in France) is due to the practically-situated, whilst at the same time theoretically-grounded, nature of initial teacher education in the UK. Many of them appear to find teacher education in France, the CAPES (*certificat d'aptitude professionnelle à l'enseignement secondaire*), to be too theoretical in orientation in its initial stages or have failed to succeed in the highly competitive so-called *concours*, the competitive entry examination. It remains to be seen what impact the recent announcement of reform and re-alignment of initial teacher education in France along more practical lines will have on numbers of applications from French native speakers for PGCE courses in the UK. Initial teacher education in Germany as offered by *Studienseminare*, whilst different in some key respects such as the level of theorising required from beginner-teachers, can be judged to be quite similar to PGCE courses in the UK (see e.g. Pachler 1995).

54% of the respondents in Whitehead and Taylor's study had previous experience in the UK as a FLA and 49% cited personal reasons for wishing to be in the UK. The high percentage of FLAs amongst PGCE students reinforces the importance of this scheme and

demonstrates how important it is for the FLs fraternity that secondary schools continue to invest in FLAs, which – under Local Management of Schools (LMS) – a comparatively small number of schools do. A government committed to FLs in the curriculum has an obligation to ensure not only that schools understand the value of employing FLAs[8] and have the financial means to do so but also that the introduction of tuition fees and pressure from the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) do not put paid to students on relevant British undergraduate degrees spending a year abroad as an English assistant. If our experience at the Institute of Education is anything to go by, each year there is a sizeable number of UK-based applicants who are tempted into FL teaching because of the valuable experiences they have been able to gain whilst working as an English assistant in a school during their year abroad.

One perspective sometimes offered on the deployment of increasingly large numbers of foreign native speakers is the worry that pupils might get the impression that only native speakers can gain sufficient proficiency in the FL for teaching it, thereby providing a negative rather than a positive role model for them. I am not aware of any research into this question, but it is an issue which might warrant investigation.

Worryingly, Whitehead and Taylor's survey suggests that only 87% of foreign native speakers intended to seek a teaching post in the UK upon completion of their PGCE FLs course and only 64% expressed a desire to live and work in the UK. These relatively low percentages raise important questions about the underlying reasons and motivations. One reason, anecdotal evidence suggests, might well be to do with naïve expectations of foreign native speakers about the workloads involved in learning to teach and teaching in the UK.

Amongst many other things, my colleague at the Institute of Education, David Block, is investigating in a longitudinal study why only a relatively low number of foreign native speakers actually stay in FL teaching in the UK for any length of time.

Block's particular interest was, and continues to be, in the foreign native speakers as foreigners, i.e. their cultural problems as well as the question of identity. He rightly notes that whilst foreign native speakers will need the same sort of technical skills training as

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[8] See also Adams 2000: 10.

their British counterparts on the course, they will also need their foreign background acknowledged, ideally by way of discussion of comparative education and culture. However, Block correctly asserts that

> (unfortunately), with the tight timetables imposed on them by the government agencies, those who organize PGCE courses find it almost impossible to put on extra sessions which might help foreign nationals more easily come to grips with British education. The result is that these trainee teachers have to piece together this aspect of their teacher education on their own and in an ad hoc way. In other words, they have to forge an identity for themselves as British modern language teachers, with little or no framework which might make this process easier and smoother. (Block 2001: 2)

Given the increasing importance of foreign native speakers coming onto and successfully completing PGCE courses, the government would be well advised to consider in their current review of the statutory framework governing initial teacher education how providers can be given sufficient flexibility and scope in order to provide the focus on comparative education and culture argued for by Block. Unfortunately, the report on the first phase of consultation gives no indication of an awareness of these issues, although the need for scope for flexibility is mentioned (see TTA 2000).

The urgency of the need for reform is highlighted, for example, in a recent article by Lesley Jones (2001), who points out that many providers have pulled out of initial teacher education – or are considering to do so – because of relentless inspection pressure from OFSTED, which in turn is linked to the allocation of places. Jones, who is head of primary initial teacher education at a London provider, also asserts that the "speed and frequency with which institutions move from being 'good providers' to 'bad providers' and vice-versa shows the unreliability of the system". Furthermore providers are being penalised financially for over- and under-recruitment. To this is linked the introduction of ever more additional requirements, such as the national skills tests, which all place enormous pressure on providers and beginner-teachers alike. However, as Jones notes, "(many) of these mechanisms appear to have been swept aside for entrants from different routes". Implicit in Jones' assessment of the problem is the need for relevant government agencies, in particular the DfES, TTA and OFSTED, to work together with training providers rather than to continue to impose ever new requirements on them.

In his paper, Block describes, analyses and interprets the data he collected from 16 beginner-teachers during the academic year 1999-2000. Whilst manifestly not intending to examine implications for PGCE courses, the study nevertheless identifies important issues for foreign native teacher recruitment and retention, in particular as regards German nationals.

The study demonstrates that there is a need for a reasoned response to national stereotyping invariably encountered by foreign native beginner-teachers in placement schools, which was particularly pronounced for German nationals,

> for if there is one nation which has inspired emotional responses in Britain over the past half decade, it is Germany. From the anodyne humour of Fawlty Towers and classic line, 'Don't mention the war' to the recent spectacle of football fans ecstatic because England managed to beat Germany in (an international competitive match) making up for the fact that England had not been able to beat the Germans since their famous 1966 World Cup victory), there is little ambivalence about the Germans: they are the enemy both in the trenches and on the football pitch. (Block 2001: 6)

There is ample anecdotal evidence of national stereotypes and animosities potentially posing considerable difficulties and challenges for teachers of German in general and native speakers of German in particular. For example, one very experienced German colleague saw three years of effort wiped out instantaneously when Germany beat England on penalties in a football match during the 1996 European Championships, knocking England out of the competition; her Year 9 class decided to go on strike the day after England's defeat and refused to utter a single word in the target language! Even after the strike was over, the pupils never really regained their former enthusiasm for the language.

Block (2001: 7) recounts the following exchange with his informants (AA and HA = German nationals, DB = David Block):

> AA: You also feel sometimes that you are some kind of an ambassador or something for German culture, Germany, German politics, German history especially …
>
> HA: Oh, yeah. German history.
>
> DB: Did that come up very much? You know, the whole sort of "German Thing". …
>
> HA: The German thing, yes. …
>
> AA: So you always had to be quiet but I was always quite relaxed about that … Sometimes they would draw some swastikas just to see "what are you doing here?" (imitating dopey student voice) "Ho-Ho-Ho" … … Of course they just waited for me to explode or really be

> upset but I never was. So I really talked to them about it, although they were much too silly. But then in the end, they even listened, so I said "OK, that's the way it is. We have to live with our past history. Imagine it is not always easy for Germans as well …" And I hope, even though it was year 10 and they are 16 and really silly and thick at times … I think they understood it a little … I mean it was just provoking me so they didn't expect that at all, that I would take it seriously and say something. I'm relaxed with that. … I know that they all have some … Well, I have the feeling they have some prejudice and it's really just stereotypes and you just try to … open their mind up and say "OK, … German people are exactly like you… What comes to your mind when you think about Germany? And what do you think is the media influence?" And they actually discuss things with you. …
>
> HA: It's society, it's on TV, and it's every night
>
> DB: And it'll all come out now with the football again ..
>
> HA: Exactly. I'm so glad I'm not at school at that time… And hopefully in two years' time when the World Championship is on …
>
> AA: And no matter if Germany or England wins, I will not be there the next day …
>
> HA: No, no way.
>
> AA: Especially if England wins.

These instances of being 'outed' or 'othered', Block notes, can be quite difficult to deal with for beginner- and experienced foreign native teachers, who have come to the UK because they felt attracted by the country, its people, language, life and culture. Being treated as an unwelcome foreigner, worryingly – as Block's study found – sometimes not only by pupils but also by colleagues, can be seen to pose a considerable challenge for which foreign native teachers need to be prepared in order to ensure they don't leave the teaching profession prematurely. With reference to a Spanish native Block notes (2001: 10):

> Being positioned as an exotic foreigner and excluded from staff social circles did not sit well with someone who considered herself established in Britain. Not only did she find it bothersome to have the subjectivity of foreigner foisted upon her, she also seemed genuinely hurt by it.

The other finding which warrants careful examination for the purposes of this paper, relates to a methodological point, namely the teaching of grammar:

> If the subjectivity of national identity was one whereby participants sought inclusion rather than status as other, discussions of one aspect of language teaching, grammar, found them distancing themselves from British education and ultimately Britain itself, taking on the voice of French, German and Spanish nationals who have had a different and perhaps even superior education. (Block 2001: 11)

Experience suggests that one reason that can stop well-qualified native speakers with lots to offer to the teaching profession pursuing a career in FL teaching in the UK is the perceived lack of professional and intellectual challenge offered by FLs in the National Curriculum as well as the perceived lack of interest on the part of pupils in the subject. A recent assessment of the British education system in the German weekly, *Die Zeit*, gives some indication of how the British education system is perceived by some in Germany:

> Die eiserne Lady war es …, die eine 'Benotung' der Schulen in Ranglisten, den sogenannten Ligatabellen einführte, Labour übernahm das Ranking. Allerdings gibt es Zweifel, ob diese auch in Deutschland oft als Vorbild hingestellten Schulrankings tatsächlich zur Anhebung des Niveaus beitragen oder nur dem Pfusch Vorschub leisten. Wenn eine Schule in dem hoch komplizierten britischen Prüfungssystem ihre Karten richtig spielt, kann sie durch niedrigere Ansprüche einen höheren Tabellenplatz erringen: Sie meldet schwächere Schüler bei weniger anspruchsvollen Prüfungskommissionen an. Für Abiturienten schlägt die Stunde der Wahrheit dann erst mit der Hochschulzulassung. …
>
> In internationalen Leistungsvergleichen fiel England in letzter Zeit prompt immer weiter zurück. … Zwar absolvieren jetzt mehr Schüler eine immer unübersichtlichere Zahl von Abschlüssen und bringen immer bessere Noten nach Hause; doch diese fußen oft auf lächerlich niedrigen Ansprüchen. Jeder leidlich intelligente Grundschüler kann diese Tests ein Jahr früher als gefordert bestehen, sofern der Unterricht halbwegs angemessen ist. Fremdsprachenkenntnisse unter Oberschülern sind nach wie vor erbärmlich. Gymnasien, die ihr Niveau zu halten versuchen, kämpfen gegen eine staatlich verordnete Anspruchslosigkeit. Nach drei Jahren Altgriechisch kommt man in zentral vorgegebenen Prüfungen mit einem Wortschatz von 300 Vokabeln aus. Kein Wunder, dass der Notendurchschnitt landesweit bei Eins liegt. Wegen der Überlastung der Eins wurde eine neue Note eingeführt, Eins mit Stern. Chemie und Physik sind in vielen Schulen Orchideenfächer. Abiturienten mogeln sich durch ihre Englischprüfungen, ohne je ein Buch von vorn bis hinten gelesen zu haben. (Luyken 2001: 42)

It is quite obvious from this excerpt that there is a real need for training providers to be allowed to set aside time to tackle such perceptions explicitly and to contextualise them by looking in-depth at comparative strengths and weaknesses of both education systems, for example the costs of heavy emphasis on academic achievement as opposed to the development of the whole child through strong pastoral support. Similarly, there is a need for comparative work for native speakers of French and Spanish.

Due to pressures of teacher accountability and league tables beginner-teachers tend to be required to teach predominantly lower years and they have comparatively little opportunity to work with classes preparing for GCSE examinations or with A/AS level classes. The lack of opportunity to work with advanced level learners of FLs is an issue for many PGCE

FLs students with good subject knowledge and it is frequently commented upon as a distinctive drawback by the German native speakers amongst them.

The lack of explicit focus on form as part of language teaching and learning is an important aspect of the grammar issue identified by Block. Whilst the revised 1999 National Curriculum (see DfEE/QCA 1999), the associated GCSE criteria as well as the National Literacy Strategy feature a renewed emphasis on grammar and language understanding, FLs teaching at 11–16 can still be described as having

> a narrow transactional-functional orientation in which pupils are prepared for the linguistic (and non-linguistic) needs of tourists … with the emphasis on 'getting by'. (The) approach is characterised by a heavy emphasis on recall of often random lexical items and phrases derived from narrowly defined, idealised interactions and exchanges at the cost of transfer of knowledge and skills across topics. (It) tends to ignore the teenage learner's communicative needs and does not allow her to engage in meaningful and realistic interaction, both supposedly central tenets of communicative methodology. (Pachler 2000: 26)

This orientation of FL study in the UK, together with the concurrent lack of interest by pupils, the little time available for study, as well as the prevailing summative assessment regime frequently make the study of FLs at 11–16 an undesirable and demotivating option for pupils. Pupils often tend to perceive the subject as irrelevant to their needs and find the emphasis on memorisation of decontextualised lexical items and phrases as well as linguistic structures challenging. This orientation is serious in the context of this paper as it can – and does – put off well-qualified UK-based linguists and foreign native speakers from choosing FL teaching as a career. Disapplication of a large number of pupils at Key Stage 4 might exacerbate the situation even further by restricting the availability of Key Stage 4 work, however much examination driven and limited it currently is.

Block notes (2001: 13) that the overall impression gained by the foreign native speakers he interviewed was that

> British students are linguistically ill-equipped for their ages and that if anyone is to remedy the situation, it will have to be the modern languages teachers like themselves, who have had a different education from their British counterparts, and in a sense, know better.

Block also reports comments from a French native speaker which suggests that the differences in education received by pupils in both countries and their knowledge about language was not merely a surface difference, "rather it was something fundamental to

being French and could prove to be a major obstacle to functioning well as a teacher" (Block 2001:13). Foreign native teachers, therefore, Block's study suggests, need to be seen as possessing a particular social, political and educational culture which tends to sit ill at ease with the market orientation prevalent in the UK. Block (2001: 18-9) characterises foreign native speakers as possessing certain values and moral principles which become manifest in their expectations that teachers deserve receiving full respect for carrying out their mission of providing free and equal education for all and that teachers deserve not to be viewed as less important than pupils. He (2001: 17-8) also found that foreign native speakers had considerable problems with finding ways of implementing the ideals of education as an equal service and right for all citizens with which they came to this country. For many of the individuals in Block's study ironically this meant seeking employment in the independent sector or grammar school, which provided them with the "comfort zone, where they might realise their ideals" (2001: 18).

If representative for the larger population of foreign native speakers, Block's study raises some extremely important questions about how their initial teacher education programmes can be fine-tuned in a way to help them accommodate prevalent views of education, schooling and methodology sufficiently to ensure they feel able to stay in the system and don't opt out again at the earliest opportunity.

Incidentally, a recent letter to the editor of the *TES* (Tidmarsch 2001) suggests that such a view is not only prevalent amongst foreign native speakers:

> Education in schools now seems to have become a business proposition in this country. Teachers are given targets to achieve, e.g. how many of their pupils gain A-C grades at GCSE – rather like salesmen's (sic) end of month figures. ....
>
> Teachers now have to deliver a curriculum, rather than encourage pupils to learn, and be excited by new learning. Success or failure seems to be measured in profit and loss terms.
>
> Education in schools needs to be functional – to develop pupils' aptitudes so that they can become useful and productive members of society. For many, many years a 'liberal' education has been the mainstay and ideal of our education system. Function and liberality are both needed.
>
> Teachers need to feel that they are making a valued individual contribution to the education of their pupils, instead of some notional 'value-added' computation being applied.
>
> There can be interest and joy in teaching and learning.
>
> Have we lost it?

Combating restricted views of professionalism

It is also argued in this paper that it is essential for government and its agencies to do all they can to combat the currently prevailing restricted view of teaching characterised by a narrow perception of professionalism and do away with a view of teaching as a low level technical skill comprising predominantly the delivery of the National Curriculum as well as other centrally prescribed government edicts. Critics have viewed the introduction of a competence- and standards-based curriculum for initial teacher education as an attempt to de-skill the teaching profession. This can be seen to be rebounding and counterproductive as

> it does not do justice to the complex web of 'knowledges', skills and understanding characterising excellence in teaching and teachers. What is needed … is intelligent and creative schools … with intelligent and creative teachers, able to prepare pupils adequately for the demands of the learning society and knowledge economy. … Society needs teachers, who have the ability and willingness to co-operate with colleagues and pupils in constructing (situated) knowledge, who can engage critically and intellectually in a range of situations at a local, regional and (inter)national level, teachers who (can) take a full part in a variety of professional discourses. And teachers are needed, who have the disposition to engage in continuous knowledge building processes throughout their careers in order to be able to adapt to ever changing demands and circumstances to acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding and to refine what they already possess. (Pachler and Field 2001: 15)

Beyond the question of how best to prepare beginner-teachers for the challenges of teaching, the view be advanced here that teaching needs to be seen to offer scope for professional decision making and professional freedom in order to be attractive to well-qualified candidates. This is particularly important as high quality training can be seen to have a considerable impact on lifting morale of existing applicants and to encourage the perception of teaching as a desirable career choice for potential applicants (see e.g. Tabberer 2000b).

In this context recent work by Moore et al. (2000) is instructive, which examines to what extent teachers in the UK are becoming more consciously and deliberately eclectic and pragmatic and less obviously ideological or political in constructing their professional identities. Moore et al. note that while they found only very few teachers who "openly declared themselves as either wholesale supporters or wholesale rejecters of government reforms in education, almost all of (them) talked of the ways in which they had modified

previous practice to 'bring it in line with' current policy, or had found ways of incorporating current policy into a largely unaltered continuing practice" (p. 2).

A study by Coldron and Smith (1999: 711) suggests that policies which impose a great degree of uniformity and conformity, such as aspects of the National Curriculum, the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies, the non-statutory Key Stage 3 Schemes of Work and, of course, also the standards governing initial teacher education as well as the OFSTED framework, "threaten to impoverish the notion of active location, restricting the number of potential positions the teacher might assume" and, by implication, make teaching a less desirable career choice for capable applicants seeking a degree of professional autonomy and keen on deriving satisfaction, for example by feeling able to make free choices in their working lives. Moore et al. (2000: 5), referring to Coldron and Smith, note that "not only might some teachers be severely restricted in their choice of identifications or positionings by such matters as increased government control or increased student disobedience; they might also find themselves pushed into some kind of professional identity *crisis*". Indeed, Moore et al. (2000: 9) found that

> (many) teachers felt that they were being *forced* to make compromises, rather than actively pursuing choices: that is to say, of making necessary but not always welcome adjustments to their practice in order to respond best to external pressures from central government, from other teachers, or indeed from students and their parents.

In order to ensure a sufficient number of well-qualified candidates continue to choose teaching as a career, government needs to take the message from research studies like the ones reported here very seriously and consider a fundamental rethink of its approach to the teaching profession and not just 'tinker at the edges' by introducing ever new schemes.

Conclusion

This paper strongly suggests that there is an urgent need for a coherent strategy aimed at ensuring a future for German as a FL in UK schools. Indeed, this paper is not the first to reach this conclusion. In his recent survey of the state of German teaching in the UK, Nigel Reeves (2000: 15) concludes that "if no one is going to help us we have to help ourselves" and advocates the organisation of high profile conferences

> to draw attention to the importance of our subject, its rich diversity, its role in contributing to the education of the new generations in a Europe of ever-closer bonds and economic ties. … We have to re-state the supreme educational value of young people not being confined to a knowledge of one language and one culture in a multi-cultural European and globalised economy. We have to highlight and illuminate the contribution that is being made by German writers and thinkers to our self-understanding in the Information Age, an age where the nature of reality and human inter-relationships is changing. ... We must enlist the support of the DAAD and the Goethe-Institut in making the case for the German language. (Reeves 2000: 15-6)

The current paper draws predominantly on the experience and observation of a subject leader of one of the largest courses of FLs initial teacher education in the UK. What is needed to take this discussion forward are systematic and empirical studies, which build on the foundations laid here as well as the recent work of the Institute for Policy Studies in Education (IPSE) at the University of North London (see Hutchings et al. 2000 and Adams 2000), the study by Whitehead and Taylor (1998) and the work of my colleague David Block (2001). The need for in-depth investigations into the recruitment, training and retention of teachers of German as a FL in the UK can be seen to be essential if the subject is to remain a viable curriculum option for secondary schools and, by implication, for higher education institutions. Key stakeholders need to be prepared to make available the necessary funding to carry out such studies as a matter of urgency. Key government agencies such as the Teacher Training Agency and their officers clearly show an awareness of the importance of the task in hand and are putting in place a range of measures to combat the crisis in staffing. However, the solutions advocated to date, such as recruitment from abroad, more flexible routes into the profession, which take on board the needs and personal circumstances of beginner-teachers, as well as financial incentives, whilst important and certainly a step in the right direction, can be seen to fail to engage with some of the central reasons stopping well-qualified candidates from entering FL teaching. These reasons are

- the perception of teaching as offering only restricted professionalism,
- the narrow skills-based approach to teaching, and
- the narrowly transactional nature of examination specifications (formerly syllabuses), particularly at GCSE.

On their own, financial incentives, flexible courses, up-beat rhetoric and import of foreign nationals are not likely to be sufficient. What is needed in order to attract and retain well-qualified teachers in sufficient numbers, it is argued here, is a fundamental re-conceptualisation of teaching and FLs in the curriculum. In particular what is required is a reappraisal of the rationale of and aims for FL teaching and learning, not as narrowly vocational and utilitarian and characterised by a "'language chunk' approach" (Lee and Buckland 1999: 5) but as a foundation for life-long FL study and an appreciation and understanding of underlying principles of how language works. Furthermore, what is required is a view of teaching not as narrowly technicist but of intellectually and creatively challenging as well as professionally satisfying.

All this can only be achieved by way of 'joined up thinking' on the part of government agencies and policy makers. It requires partnership of government agencies with training providers and for agency to be put back into the hands of the profession; not just in a small cadre of educational leaders deemed capable of assuming control and able to improve the system from the top of educational institutions down but in a broad band of professionals and middle managers with a proven track record in effective management of their classrooms, the learners in them as well as their curriculum areas. A continued emphasis on accountability measures focussing on narrowly output-oriented success indicators is insufficient. What is needed, it seems, is a focus on qualitative educational experiences which engage learners and their teachers rather than an obsession with narrowly quantitative success indicators.

The issues raised in this paper, and the solutions advanced, do, of course, assume society continues to conceive of schools and schooling in line with established organisational patterns. However, in view of the growing potential of new technologies, traditional notions of schools and schooling are increasingly being called into question with some observers considering them to be an embodiment of an outmoded factory model, out of step with other areas of modern life (see Istance 2000: 4). In the longer term, therefore, it might well be necessary and desirable to ask fundamental questions about the nature of the profession, the role of teachers, their status in society and careers. Nevertheless, given the increasing fragmentation of community and family life as well as the trend towards individualisation

in society, schools and teachers as we know them might well continue to play a unique role in socialising new generations.

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Biographische Information

Norbert Pachler is Senior Lecturer in Education and Assistant Dean: Continuing Professional Development at the Institute of Education, University of London. Prior to moving into higher education he worked for the inspectorate and advisory service of a London local education authority on curriculum development and in-service training and taught in secondary and further education. His research interests include all aspects of modern foreign languages teaching and learning, comparative (teacher) education, as well as the application of new technologies in teaching and learning. He has published widely in these fields and is also co-editor of the *Language Learning Journal*.