

# Key Factors of Curriculum Innovation in Language Teacher Education

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**Abstract**—The focus of the study is to understand the factors of curriculum innovation from the perspective of Language teacher education. The overall aim of the study is to investigate Language educators' perceptions of factors of curriculum innovation. In the theoretical framework the main focus is on discussion about different curriculum approaches for language teacher education and limiting and facilitating factors of innovation. In order to achieve the aim of the study, an observational research is employed. The empirical basis of the study consists of questionnaire with sixty-three language teachers from eight Romanian higher education institutions. The findings reveal variation in Language teachers' conceptions of the dominant factors of curricular innovation.

**Keywords**—curriculum innovation, factors, Language teacher education

## I. INTRODUCTION

**C**URRICULUM innovation is a complex educational approach because of the various factors embedded in the teaching process. A key factor on which the success of curriculum innovations depends is the in-servicing of teachers in the use of new approaches. Educational curricular innovation is the starting point of a long process towards educational change [1].

In many countries with a mandated national curriculum for schools, there is a tendency to include all the components which make up the school curriculum in teacher education programmes [2]. Teacher education has the role of assisting student teachers to adapt to external values and norms to meet the local reality [3].

The problem that starts from this study is that educational change focused on schools often proceeds in advance of changes in the teacher education curriculum. This has always created a gap between teacher education and schools that might take several years before harmonization. Lewin and Stuart [4] assert that teacher education has to lead rather than lag behind change, so that new entrants can be prepared to adopt new curricula. When a new curriculum is introduced, one of the problems to face is a problem of change. During innovation educators are expected to respond at both the empirical and pedagogical level in ways that build broader political support [5]. If that is the case, great attention needs to be paid to the education of teacher educators. Cochran-Smith [6] reminds us that there is little attention paid to the development of a curriculum for educating teacher educators, or policies that might support the development of what teacher educators need to know and do in order to meet the complex demands of preparing teachers for the 21st century.

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Based on the literature review, it seems research in the field of teacher education is growing and new knowledge of how to prepare teachers is being discovered from all the time. Several curricula for teacher education can be identified within and across countries. Meena [7] considers that political decisions have great influence on curricula and some have ignored existing knowledge about teacher education.

Change and innovation in the curriculum are necessitated by factors in a country's political, social, economic, cultural and technological environments [8]. The education system changes in order to address these emerging needs and demands. Educational changes and innovations in most countries, including your own, are products of these factors. The question of developing the curriculum for language teacher education, in order to meet the needs of a changing society is not peculiar to Romania alone, as many countries are also involved in the same debate. Educators are agreeing with the fact that curricular innovation represents a major phenomenon because of there is the need to report the perceptions of the key stakeholders. The knowledge and attitudes of teachers regarding curriculum innovations need to be reported, not only by educational policy makers and curriculum designers, but also by the wider language-teaching community. Change in educators is important because the main barrier to curriculum innovation is teacher educator resistance to change.

This study focuses on factors of curriculum innovation that could be taken into consideration when teaching languages. In the theoretical part of this study we will present an actual approach to factors of curriculum innovation in Language teacher education. On the one hand, we will review the key concepts and their correlation and, on the other hand, I will present the latest research in this field. Following the analysis of current theories and approaches in the field of curriculum innovation factors, we are expected to create a comprehensive hierarchy and an original model of representation of different categories of factors in accordance with the current educational context.

## II. CURRENT APPROACHES IN THE FIELD OF LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

Traditionally, teacher education has been divided into theory and practice. Language education should be seen as multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary with a complex range of theories behind different teaching approaches. Nicholas et al [9] identify "tension between language as an area of specialist understanding and language teaching being required to integrate with the general teaching of the general curriculum" as a key issue for the pre-service education of languages teachers. Kelly [10] considers that closer cooperation between

first languages departments and teacher education units is crucial in achieving the integration of academic subjects and practical experience. "Language expertise and educational expertise need to be brought together." [11].

The literature supporting this study includes current approaches that seek to conceptualise a knowledge base for language teacher education. Certain programs have been recently recognized by language teacher education as having enormous influence on the future development of language teachers. The field now realizes that to discover how language teachers learn to teach, we try inquiring into their cognitive worlds and personal teaching practices [12]. Merino [13] notes that there is little federal policy addressing reforms in language teacher education programs, and focuses primarily on the policy reforms which lead to requirements for certification of teachers. The field of second language teacher education "seems to be slowly evolving from a perspective that was animated more by tradition and opinion than by theoretical definitions" [14] to a new dimension that seeks to restructure the domain and establish a research-based approach to language teacher education [15]. The idea is that "very little attention has been paid to how second language teachers learn to teach, how they develop teaching skills, how they link theory and practice, and how their previous experiences inform their belief systems". Freeman and Johnson [14] consider that the field of theory and research on language teacher education is still in its early infancy. Schulz [16] highlights three major problems that continue to affect language teacher preparation programs: "failure of the programs to provide prospective language teachers with the language proficiency required for effective teaching; lack of communication and cooperation between the language departments and educational departments responsible for language teacher education; and lack of consensus about teacher certification among states". There is also a lack of significantly data concerning state-of-the-art language teacher education programs [15]. Freeman and Johnson [14] state that recognizing that learning to teach is a continuous process and the sum of different cognitive, affective, individual and contextual factors does not necessarily mean that today's language teacher education programs operate under this set of assumptions. They argue that many programs still use a unidirectional model whereby teachers are provided with an ensemble of codified knowledge to be applied in the classroom.

The teachers' work involves integrating theoretical knowledge from a range of dynamic and ever-evolving disciplines (both in education and linguistics), their own practice, knowledge and pedagogic designs [17]. Their decisions and judgments are based on their own educational experiences; their personalities; their philosophy of language and how languages and cultures are learned; their particular context, including social and power structures of school communities as places that create and sustain meanings; their understanding of students, with collective and individual needs – as persons, as learners, as developing language learners and users; and the social, cultural and political contexts which constitute their professional landscape.

Hellekjaer and Simensen [18] observed that current language teacher education in Europe varies from country to country according to certain criteria: "organizational differences; the number and types of components required in the subject-content element of teacher education; the pedagogical part of teacher education, such as the minimum level of understanding required by the subject and the minimum time initial teacher trainees are expected to spend in schools doing teaching practice; the type of institutions that are responsible for teacher education, especially with regard to the pedagogical or methodological element".

Kelly et al [10] consider that foreign language teacher education in the twenty-first century should include the following elements of initial and in-service education: "a curriculum that integrates academic study and the practical experience of teaching; the flexible and modular delivery of initial and in-service education; an explicit framework for teaching practice (stage/ practicum); working with a mentor and understanding the value of mentoring; experience of an intercultural and multicultural environment; participation in links with partners abroad, including visits, exchanges or information and communication technology links; a period of work or study in a country or countries where the trainee's foreign language is spoken as native language; the opportunity to observe or participate in teaching in more than one country; a European-level evaluation framework for initial and in-service teacher education programmes, enabling accreditation and mobility; continuous improvement of teaching skills as part of in-service education; ongoing education for teacher educators; training for school-based mentors in how to mentor; close links between trainees who are being educated to teach different languages".

Kleinhenz et al [11] identified the main issues in teacher education for language teachers. These relate to the following aspects: a need to place much higher value on languages in the wider community; variation in supply and skill requirements of graduate teachers; more disincentives than incentives for people to train as language teachers; lack of incentives and opportunities for re-training; insufficient funding for languages; lack of communication between educational institutions and language departments in other educational institutions that educate pre-service language teachers; lack of communication between universities, schools and employers; separation of language study from the study of pedagogy: the "language gap" in courses; the generic, rather than language specific, nature of language teaching method units; is the knowledge of academic teacher trainers up-to-date?; are courses up-to-date?; lack of research in language teacher education; interacting with state curriculum and syllabus documents; teacher education and students' knowledge of language and culture at entry and exit points of their courses; practicum related issues; learning how to use informational and communicational technologies effectively; offering language education through distance learning; potential applications of the professional standards; accreditation of pre-services languages programs; the extent to which existing courses prepare students for their profession; structural impediments that affect the quality of teacher education and

re-training for language teachers. Harbon [19] further explored this essential link by explaining some of the key issues that underpin and have an impact upon the work with pre-service language teachers in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria: the increasing policy and regulations impact upon the program design; the crowded language teacher education curriculum; preparing native speakers for the Australian classroom; the importance of in-country experience; developing a language-specific and generic stance; demands on the pre-service teachers regarding proficiency levels and pedagogical understandings; the special considerations in preparing teachers for community language schools and in pre-service programs; steady decline in the number of teachers qualified to teach languages in schools, partly a reflection of the community's concern with language learning. Kleinhenz et al (2007) propose strategies to improve access to, and the quality of, preparation for language teachers: promoting language teaching as a profession through advertising campaigns targeting specific groups; improving financial and other incentives for senior school students to study languages to senior levels; providing more opportunities for non-registered teachers to attend language teaching courses; encouraging collaborative partnerships between schools and universities; improving communication between teacher educators and language educators; using professional standards as a basis to improve assessment of pre-service and graduate teachers; providing professional learning opportunities for school principals and school leadership teams to learn about the Program Standards; encouraging in-country experience and the use of information and communication technology to extend students' knowledge of the target language and culture. The implications resulted from reference literature analysis are presented below in the form of a proposal for a reflective approach that suggests the exploration the key factors of curriculum innovation in language teacher education.

### III. KEY FACTORS OF CURRICULUM INNOVATION

Curriculum innovation is considered as an essential strategy for bringing about improvement in teacher education. According to Fullan [20], innovation is not always synonymous with change and reform, as it refers to specific curricular change. The author defines curriculum change as "any alteration in the aspects of a curriculum such as philosophy, values, objectives, organizational structures, materials, teaching strategies, student experiences, assessment and learning outcomes". Halpin et al [21] consider that curriculum innovation refers to initiatives that are perceived to be new by those who introduce and experience them.

Various approaches to key factors in innovative curriculum have regarded the contextual nature of these factors. The success of an innovation and its implementation requires the application of a number of key features. Fullan [20] highlights that the innovation does and will always originate from a variety of different sources and combination of sources. Several factors have influenced curriculum innovation in teacher education. In the context of curriculum innovation, a number of factors that influence the teacher education

programmes will be considered. These include the political, social and cultural, psychological, pedagogical, economic, technological, legal. According to some authors [1], educational curricular innovation may result from external factors such as international educational policies or from internal needs such as educational values and goals of a group of people. In this section, there are analysed in chronological perspective the most relevant contributions of authors in the field of curriculum innovations factors. Lawton [22] highlights the importance of political factors, because the author observes that curriculum development is about selecting "the most important aspects of culture for transmission to the next generation. One of the crucial questions to ask is the political question: who makes the selection?"

The cultural factors are discussed by Feiman-Nemser and Floden [23] in their extensive review of North American literature on the cultures of teaching. They described the differences in age, experience, gender, teaching philosophy, subject matter, and grade level among teachers. The author seemed to overemphasize cultural and sub-cultural factors.

Kennedy [24] has built a hierarchy of interrelating subsystems in which innovations have to operate: *classroom innovation, institutional, educational, administrative, political, and cultural*. As any visual representation of a complex phenomenon, Kennedy's shows only the tip of the iceberg of the many subsystems that may initiate, design, carry out and evaluate projects involving curriculum innovation. The hierarchy was contested later for the lack of the economic factors which are seen as liaisons between all of the above strata and as the driving force of change.

Fullan [20] has revealed six features of effective professional development. These features should be incorporated into the design of an effective professional development program. The six features are: perceived need, clarity, complexity, workability, implementation support, and advocacy.

Treagust and Rennie [25] separate *facilitating factors* (thorough planning, sufficient funds, effective communication, and good technological coordination) from *limiting factors* (limited human resources and technology, lack of sustainability).

Posner [26] identified seven areas, called "frame factors" that can affect curriculum implementation. These factors are typically thought of as inhibitors to implementation; however, principals with strong curricular leadership are able to minimize the negative impact of frame factors, often even turning them into assets. The main factors of curriculum innovation underlying frame factors affecting curriculum implementation: *temporal* (time: quantity, frequency, duration, scheduling); *physical* (natural and built environment, materials and equipment); *political-legal* (state and federal mandates, limits, requirements); *organizational* (administrative factors, including size, groupings, policies); *personal* (backgrounds, abilities, interests of students, staff, parents); *economic* (costs and benefits, broadly conceived) and *cultural* (values and beliefs of school and community).

Black and Atkin [27] also develop a consistent list of factors that drive reform among which national economy, professional development, inclusiveness and equity, student training, teacher empowerment, involvement of parent and community, involvement of administration and government, business, industry and publishers, involvement of professional and voluntary organizations, new educational technologies.

Cheng [28] relates the initiation of innovation with three approaches: a simplistic curriculum innovation approach, teacher component development approach and dynamic curriculum innovation approach. In the first approach, change is planned by administrators or external experts, in the second it is imposed by administrators or external experts, while in the third teachers participate in planning change. The dynamic approach is regarded as more powerful in conceptualising curriculum innovation because it focuses on the teachers' active role, their involvement and commitment to curriculum planning and their own professional development. A successful curriculum inevitably involves transformation of teacher educators' behaviour, skills, motivation, conceptions and beliefs about the management of teaching and learning.

The issue of ownership of innovation is worthy of consideration because it is a significant factor in educators' responses to curriculum innovation [29]. In this context, Markee [30] highlights that "teachers play the key role in the success or failure of a planned innovation, because they are the executive decision makers in the actual setting in which the intended innovation is to be integrated – the classroom".

Jones [31] lists five conditions that promote and sustain changes in the curriculum: mutual trust amongst stake-holders; committed and consistent leadership; proceeding with a non-threatening, incremental pace of change; professional development for academic staff; and the use of purposeful incentives.

Wangeleja [32] identified sources of innovation such as research findings, and recommendations from various annual meetings of heads of schools and principals of teachers' colleges.

Anderson et al [33] establish facilitating factors for innovation on three levels: the *individual* (personality, motivation, cognitive ability, job characteristics, mood states); the *work group* (team structure, team climate, team member characteristics, team processes, leadership styles) and the *organization* (structure, strategy, size, resources, culture).

Lamie [34] highlights key aspects in the innovation process in Language Teaching: relevance and feasibility, compatibility, knowledge, awareness of the impact of external factors, discussion and collaboration, adequate support and training, attitude to change.

Gruba et al [35] list these ten factors, and explain the ways in which we perceive them to have been drivers or inhibitors of curriculum change: influential or outspoken individuals; financial pressures, including resource availability; staff availability or workload; employer or industry viewpoints; current or prospective student viewpoints; student abilities or limitations, or intake considerations; pedagogical argument, or

academic merit; university or Government requirement or regulation; professional accreditation needs, or syllabi set by professional bodies; academic "fashion", including the desire to remain in step with other institutions.

Altrichter [36] develop a model of factors affecting implementation of curricular innovations based on following dimensions: *characteristics of the innovation itself* (need, clarity, complexity, quality, contextual suitability and practicality); *local characteristics* (regional administration, community characteristics, contextual stability); *organization* (actors – management, teachers, students' and other participants' competencies and attitudes, organizational characteristics); *government and external agencies* (quality of relationships between central and local actors, resource support and training). Wang [37] categorized the factors into two groups: external factors and internal factors. "External factors are factors that stem from outside the classroom, such as cultural, organizational, or administrative characteristics those teachers and students have little or no control over. Internal factors are factors related to teachers and students in the classroom." In a synthetic vision, the external factors are testing, textbooks, teacher training, resource support and the internal factors are teachers' beliefs and decision-making in innovation, teachers' attitudes towards innovation, teachers' understanding and ownership of innovation. Otunga and Nyandusi [38] analyze the context of curriculum development by considering six major factors that influence the curriculum development process in Kenya: *political forces, the socio-economic context, the cultural context, the ICT context and the networking context*.

Meena [7] also introduces normative acts (which need to consider the principles of education, education philosophy, professional ethics and child psychology), research (improvement of teaching methods), and frequency of curriculum change as key factors in implementing innovation at the level of the curriculum. Boyossa [39] focuses on three large categories of factors affecting curriculum change implementation in the process of teaching languages: teacher-related factors (attitudes, training, and ownership), learner-related factors, and context-related factors (resources, ease of implementation, examination).

The *cultural factors* should include consideration of such aspects as religion, gender, ethnicities, but also professional associations and other cultural groups. A curriculum depends upon two sets of cultural factors: those of the school, and those of the community. Since the curriculum represents aspects of a group's culture that receive official recognition by the school, the principal must be aware of the accepted beliefs and norms governing people's conduct in both the school and community and must guide the implementation process accordingly. It is especially important that the curriculum be developed to fit the needs of the community, rather than perceptions of those outside of the community.

The *political factors* are seen as important indicators in the implementation of innovative education as they can dictate the

acceptance or rejection of educational government policies. They determine and define the goals, content, learning experiences and evaluation strategies in education, but also curricular materials, sometimes the hiring of personnel, funding and examination systems.

The *economic and technological factors* both concern the adaptation of education to the exigencies of the contemporary society regarding the adaptation and training for successful integration on the labour market, respectively the progress in industry. "Economic considerations related to curriculum implementation are often out of the direct control of the principal. This does not mean that he/she has no role to play in this area, however. On the contrary, the most effective principals are often those who have a clear picture of economic constraints—and potential resources—at the federal, state, and local levels, and are able to minimize the constraints and capitalize on the resources. In these times of diminishing fiscal resources, principals are expected to lead their schools not only in curriculum development and implementation, but in helping to pay for the innovations." [26]

Many *organizational factors* related to the natural and built environment of the school are subject to state regulations and guidelines and may or may not be in the principal's immediate control. When space and other resource allocation decisions are being made, they should promote the kind of learning articulated in the school's vision and philosophical orientation.

The *psychological and pedagogical factors* are the most crucial ones for the principal to consider in curriculum implementation because "they deal with human considerations, and all change ultimately depends on the willingness of the people involved to adapt" [26]. This means that there must be a high level of trust between the principal, teachers, and the larger school community. Principals must make the time and effort to know their teachers well. They must know the students well, and to a certain extent, the parents. Principals must understand not only the importance and relevance of the curricular innovation, but also have insight as to how the people involved will respond to the change. Effective principals provide support and encouragement for teachers, capitalizing on their strengths and reassuring them at times when they feel uncertain about implementing change.

The *legal factors* integrate the normative aspects involved in implementation of curriculum innovation, as the professional ethics code, the specific rules of educational institutions.

A holistic overview upon factors affecting implementation of curricular innovations is an attempt to unite all these perspectives on two dimensions (Table I): on the one hand, the categories of factors (cultural, economic, political, organizational, psychological, pedagogical, legal, technological) and on the other hand, the two levels (internal and external). It results a new perspective regarding the representation of the key factors taking into consideration the context of manifestation and agents involved in the curricular change. In order for curriculum innovation in language teacher education to proceed efficiently and effectively, these contextual factors have to be taken into account.

TABLE I  
FACTORS OF CURRICULAR INNOVATIONS

CATEGORIES AND LEVELS		Factors
<i>Cultural</i>	internal	- age, experience, gender, ethnicity; - teaching philosophy
	external	- cultural appropriateness
<i>Economic</i>	internal	- capacity of obtaining resources
	external	- resource support
<i>Political</i>	internal	- decision-making; - participation and involvement
	external	- government and other agencies; - education law
<i>Organizational</i>	internal	- professional development needs - teacher training
	external	- class size and workload - beliefs and attitudes towards innovation;
<i>Psychological</i>	internal	- understanding/ knowledge of innovation (need, clarity, complexity, and practicality); - ownership of innovation; - personal concerns
	external	- communication; - leadership and administration
<i>Pedagogical</i>	internal	- teaching experience; - teaching method
	external	- educational objectives; - educational contents; - teaching strategies; - evaluation strategies
<i>Legal</i>	internal	- respect of professional ethics code
	external	- professional ethics
<i>Technological</i>	internal	- ability to handle ICT
	external	- access to audio-visual resources

#### IV. CURRENT RESEARCH ON CURRICULUM INNOVATION IN LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

The investigation of curricular innovation has been recognized by many researchers both in mainstream education and in language education. Many studies have been undertaken on language curriculum implementation to improve teaching and learning and on how to manage curricular innovation in the language education context. Research on innovation in education has shown that teachers' perceptions of the innovation to a large extent determine the success of that innovation. While there are some general studies on teacher attitudes to, and beliefs about, the value of intended curricular innovation [40], there has been little specific research in the domain of language teachers' conceptions of curriculum innovation.

In language education, teachers may view the revised curriculum either negatively or simply differently than as was the intent of the policymakers [41], or view the innovations favourably but not incorporate the curriculum changes into their day-today classroom teaching for various reasons [42].

Karavas-Doukas [43] took a similar perspective to examine the gap between teachers' expressed attitudes towards the communicative approach and their classroom practices. She investigated English language teachers in Greek public secondary schools. Her attitude scale consisted of statements covering the main aspects of the communicative learner-centred approach: group work, error correction, the place and importance of grammar, the needs of students, the role of the

teacher and the learner. The scores revealed that teachers on the whole held favourable attitudes towards the communicative approach. Gahin and Myhill [42] conducted their empirical study using a sample of English language teachers in Egypt to investigate their attitudes towards the communicative approach versus the traditional grammatical approach in teaching. The quantitative data revealed no statistically significant differences between participants according to age and gender, but there were some clear differences according to teachers' teaching experiences and in-service training attendance. The experienced English language teachers and their less experienced counterparts were found to be different in their attitudes towards communicative language teaching. Less experienced teachers favoured instructional strategies consonant with communicative approaches.

The way educators respond to innovation can be explained in terms of compliance, innovative mediation and collaborative mediation [44]. Compliance focuses on the acceptance of imposed changes by educators and adjustment of practice accordingly, in the sense that great central control was considered as acceptance and desirable.

Carless [45] pointed out that teachers should have a thorough understanding of the principles and practices of the proposed change if a curriculum innovation is to be implemented successfully. He emphasized that "teachers not only need to understand the theoretical underpinnings of the innovation, but more importantly, how the innovation is best applied in the classroom".

Andersson [46] proposes that research results within teacher education constitute the base for restructuring new teacher education programmes. Educators' responses to a new curriculum are also closely associated with working conditions and support. According to Lamie [34], practical constraint such textbooks, class size and the examination system may affect educators' responses to innovation. Lewin and Stuart [4] found teacher educators tend to take a passive rather active role when there is an innovation.

Castro et al [47] initiated an investigation among Spanish secondary school language teachers, focusing on the extent to which teachers support the new culture-and-language teaching objectives. The findings suggest that teachers are willing to support the new objectives, but that they experience conflicts when having to prioritize language teaching and culture teaching objectives.

Varghese and Stritikus [48] realized a research to establish the factors that influence how teachers respond to language policy in their respective contexts and make recommendations for teacher preparation programs in terms of inclusion of issues around language policy. As the two above quote teachers in the respective studies, these factors include, among others, an interaction between their personal beliefs and the policy environments in which the teachers find themselves. In agreement with the research results, we also need to understand how language teachers form their identities in communities, among others, in their teacher education programs, and beyond that, in their schools and classrooms.

Hornberger [49] proposes that a USA-Australia comparative policy analysis be undertaken.

This analysis would address policy content and what counts as language planning at the local, state and national levels. It is envisaged that such a policy analysis would include policy texts (legislation and public reports), institutional practices and public attitudes as forms of language planning and would examine how community-heritage languages are positioned in these policy processes. Téllez and Waxman [50] explore the role teacher education plays in English language development of teachers and the recently developed standards.

Wang [37] investigated a group of Chinese EFL teachers to respond to a questionnaire soliciting their perceptions about the external and internal factors that facilitated or impeded their curriculum implementation activities. The analysis of the survey data resulted in six significant factors which contributed to the prediction of teachers' curriculum implementation endeavour. These six factors were: resource support; communicative language teaching; grammar-translation method; teaching experience; language proficiency; and professional development needs. Kirkgöz [51] using a multidimensional research a procedure, including a questionnaire, observations and teacher interviews, a picture has been developed of teachers' instructional practices and factors are influencing their classroom practices. The findings revealed a gap between curriculum objectives and teachers' implementation of the innovation. Factors that were identified as having a significant impact on teachers' classroom application of the communicative teaching include teachers' understanding of the curriculum innovation, their previous training, insufficient instructional support, limited instructional time, large class size and lack of resources. It is suggested that a greater level of support in the form of in - service training and resource provision be given to teachers to ensure more effective implementation of the curriculum initiative.

Canh and Barnard [52] explored the implementation process of a new curriculum in one specific context through an interpretation of qualitative data derived from classroom observation and post-observation in-depth interviews with English-language teachers. The aim of Cately's [53] study was to produce evidence for stakeholders in education regarding the new roles foreign language teachers could play to fully meet these expectations. They should be supported by appropriate curricular changes to develop Content and Language Integrated Learning focused competences. Language teacher educators' conceptions of curriculum innovation can be investigated through various methodological points of departure. This study is an attempt to contribute towards the development of research in the curriculum for Language teacher education in Romania in agreement with the recent research and approaches.

## V. OBSERVATIONAL RESEARCH ON FACTORS OF CURRICULAR INNOVATIONS IN LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

### A. *The objectives and hypotheses*

The main objective of this study is to determine the Language teachers' perceptions towards the categories of curricular innovations factors.

### The hypothesis

Teachers appreciate more certain categories of the factors of curricular innovations in connection with the specificity of the Languages discipline.

### B. The define of concepts and variables

The concept regarding the factors of curricular innovations represents the independent variable which was developed in eight main categories: cultural (C), economic (E), political (PO), organizational (O), psychological (PS), pedagogical (PE), legal (L), technological (T).

In identifying the subjects' perceptions, the dependent variable used was the assessment of the importance of the categories concerning the factors of curricular innovations. In order to establish this variable, the subjects were asked to evaluate each category, according to its importance.

### C. Subjects

63 Language teachers were involved in this study (Romanian, English and French Language). The teachers are from Language teachers from eight Romanian higher education institutions.

### D. Methodology

The questionnaire was the main instrument that was used for identification the Language educators' perceptions towards the categories of curricular innovations factors. The items have been chosen with reference to the national context and modifications have been based on other research studies on factors of curriculum innovation [37]. The instrument contains 16 items, two for each of the eight categories of factors. Each evaluative item in the instrument is based on a five-point Likert scale to obtain the respondents' degree of agreement or disagreement. The response scale was as follows: 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. This scale is one of the most commonly accepted and used rating scales in educational research and in language education research. In the field of language education, Karavas-Doukas [43], and Gorsuch [54], have also used questionnaires to explore Language teachers' attitudes and perceptions of communicative approaches and innovation attributes.

### E. Procedure

The Language teachers were asked to complete the questionnaire in the period September – December 2011.

### F. Data presentation and analysis

This study presents the results of the Language teachers' perceptions towards the categories of curricular innovations factors. The hypothesis is confirmed, because teachers appreciate more certain categories of the factors of curricular innovations in connection with the specificity of the discipline.

The analysis of means indicates the following hierarchy of categories of factors of curricular innovations in the perception of Language teachers (Table II):

- at the level of *external factors*: the access to resources (4,82); the access to audio-visual resources (4,51); the changes in education law (4,38);

TABLE II  
ROMANIAN TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE FACTORS OF CURRICULUM INNOVATION IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Items	Factors	Mean
<i>1. The external factors of curriculum implementation:</i>		
a. The structure and size of scholar group influences my teaching.	C	3,24
b. The access to resources influences my teaching.	E	4,82
c. The changes in education law influence my teaching.	PO	4,38
d. My workload influences my teaching.	O	3,76
e. The communication with others influences my teaching.	PS	3,82
f. The teaching methods influence my classroom instruction.	PE	3,61
g. The professional ethics influences my teaching.	L	2,59
h. The access to audio-visual resources influences my teaching.	T	4,51
<i>2. The internal factors of curriculum implementation:</i>		
a. My teaching philosophy influences my classroom instruction.	C	3,29
b. I would like to get involved in activities for obtaining resources.	E	4,36
c. I would like to participate at decision-making process of teaching.	PO	2,17
d. I would like to improve my teaching through professional development.	O	4,32
e. I accept the integration of innovation in Language teaching.	PS	3,65
f. My teaching experience helps me in my classroom instruction.	PE	4,58
g. The respect of professional ethics code influences my classroom instruction.	L	3,22
h. I would like to learn more about computer-assisted teaching.	T	3,70

- from perspective of *internal factors*: teaching experience (4,58); activities for obtaining resources (4,36); professional development (4,32).

The economic factors are most appreciated in teachers' perceptions regarding the implementation of curricular innovations at both external and internal level, as can we seen from the data analysis. Indeed, resource support has been considered essential in determining successful implementation of an innovation or change in the context of language teacher education. Previous studies demonstrated the importance of resources. Both Karavas-Doukas [41] and Gahin and Myhill [42] found that more funding was needed to obtain materials such as resource books or even photocopies, to assist teachers in preparing and presenting the items which needed to be taught.

The investigation of the perceptions teachers on factors of curricular innovations is an important stage in initiating and implementing changes at both educational policies as well as in educational practice.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The approaches concerning the factors of curricular innovation from perspective of language teacher education have proved, on the hand, the importance of the aspect through

the numerous studies that have been dedicated to this aspect and, on the other hand, the plurality of perspectives that need to be considered for the development of a realistic analysis of categories of factors. Curricular innovation in the field of language teacher education becomes a priority in the contemporary context of higher education. More than this, innovative acts have to be considered frequently and permanent improvements have to be made so as to maintain the rhythm of the social, political, technological changes. With help of modern training programs in higher education, language teachers will be capable to integrate successfully in future jobs, of adapting to multiple situations of work which require first and foremost solid training, but also creativity, originality, flexibility and adaptation.

The results of research have led to relevant conclusions regarding the Language teachers' perceptions towards the categories of curricular innovations factors. The general conclusion consists in the general hierarchy of categories of factors of curricular innovations in the perception of Language teachers: economic, pedagogical and technological factors. The specific conclusions result from the two levels of analysis to categories of curriculum innovation factors as follows: at the level of external factors, the most important in the perception of Language teachers are the economic, technological and political, while at the level of internal factors, the most appreciate are the pedagogical, economic and organizational factors.

The product of this study's effort of identifying, defining and describing the factors of curriculum innovation for Language teachers represent a challenge and a positive experience of covering the path of professional development closely related with the changes in the contemporary society and the European policies.

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