



Eva Wilden, Raphaela Porsch (Eds.)

The professional development of primary EFL teachers

National and international research

WAXMANN

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Researching the professional development of primary EFL teachers

An introduction

1 Prior studies on the professional development of primary EFL teachers

This book brings together various contributions presenting current research on the professional development¹ of primary English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers. The starting point of this collection was the general shift in educational research towards the role of teachers and towards facets of the teaching profession and their relative contributions to successful and ‘good’ education. A lot of this research activity occurred in the spirit of Hattie’s (2012) highly influential meta-study in which he concludes among other aspects that “teachers are among the most powerful influences in learning” (p. 22). He thus suggested that teacher quality should be the focus on all levels of education and likewise – in focusing on foreign language (FL) education – the most recent Eurydice report (EACEA/Eurydice, 2012, p. 9) states: “To be effective, foreign language teaching needs well qualified foreign language teachers.”

While there are various established principles of ‘good’ FL teaching – i. e. communicative FL teaching, playful and active FL teaching, functional language use, variety of teaching methods, individual support and differentiation, using mistakes as a resource – there is a lack of comprehensive empirical evidence regarding their effectiveness. The question whether following these principles will lead to the intended effects of FL teaching has not yet been substantially researched. Also, there is a lack of empirical evidence of what constitutes ‘quality’ in teacher education as highlighted in the Eurydice report. This research gap can be identified in general FL education, but it is especially noteworthy in the area of *early* FL education as this is a relatively young domain (see Kubanek in this volume for a comprehensive overview). Therefore, the editors of this volume set out to invite researchers currently investigating the professional development of primary EFL teachers in order to connect their initiatives in a joint publication, facilitate exchange and networking and thus eventually contribute to closing this research gap. In doing so the editors consciously decided to focus on FL education in primary schooling (i. e. approximately from the ages of 6–12 years), rather than the pre-primary sector as well. This

1 The English term professional development refers to both initial or pre-service teacher training as well as the subsequent continuous in-service training of teachers. Throughout this introduction it is being used in reference to both dimensions of teacher education.

is because the implementation of FL teaching in primary schools across Europe has been the most significant political initiative in FL education in the past 25 years.

All contributions to this volume deal with hitherto insufficiently researched aspects of the professional development of primary EFL teachers. Thus, to pave the way this introduction will review *prior* studies relating to primary EFL teachers professional development based on the following notion of professional development: “Professional development is defined as activities that develop an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher” (OECD, 2009, p. 49). In this sense the concept of professional development relates to the process of developing professionalism. Therefore, studies for this review were selected that address either the practical skills, knowledge base, beliefs or attitudes of primary EFL teachers (for an overview of studies on the professionalism of FL teachers in the German context see: Roters & Trautmann, 2014).

In this context it is worthwhile to consider Terhart’s (2011) differentiation of three main approaches to the notion of ‘professional development’ and the ‘professional teacher’. Firstly, according to the biographical perspective developing professionalism is closely related to individual teachers’ biographies (Helsper & Tippelt, 2011, p. 275). Secondly, in the competence-oriented perspective there is a greater focus on teachers’ knowledge and competencies but also on teachers’ beliefs and further characteristics such as motivational aspects necessary for effective teaching. Proponents of this perspective often identify, classify as well as measure these competencies and usually regard an increase in competencies as an indicator of professional development (see Baumert & Kunter, 2013). Thirdly, the structural theory approach assumes that teachers are faced with antinomic or paradoxical structures in their professional contexts and thus need to develop abilities to cope with these antinomies and uncertainties (Terhart, 2011). For example, teachers ought to develop close relationships with their pupils, but at the same time it is essential to maintain a professional distance, too. From a theoretical standpoint, all three perspectives are valid, however, in empirical research the second one currently appears to be dominant.

According to the competence-oriented perspective teacher professionalism and effective teaching are closely related, thus professional development aims at constantly increasing teachers’ competencies or modifying other characteristics in a favourable way such as enthusiasm for teaching. In order to achieve this learning opportunities for (future) teachers need to be created and Hascher and Kittinger (2014, p. 223) suggest an affordance-utilization model² for student teachers’ practical education which can help to understand this process. It illustrates the various factors that influence teacher students’ learning outcomes after a practical school experience, such as contextual and individual preconditions, characteristics of student teachers’ learning opportunities, competencies of school and university mentors,

2 Hascher and Kittinger’s model is based on the affordances-utilization paradigm as introduced by Helmke (2012) for explaining the effects of teachers’ characteristics along with context factors on the teaching itself and thus on students’ learning outcomes.

etc. In a wider perspective teacher education needs to provide a number of learning opportunities (see also König et al. in this volume) that can be further classified as formal or informal (see Desimone, 2009). Formal learning relates to structured environments such as pre-service university courses or post-qualification courses for in-service teachers. In contrast, informal learning opportunities “include individual activities such as reading books and classroom observations as well as collaborative activities such as conversations with colleagues and parents, mentoring activities, teacher networks and study groups” (Richter, Kunter, Klusmann, Lüdtke & Baumert, 2011, p. 117). With regard to student teachers, informal learning may occur in the context of a school internship but also outside university or school.

In Germany and throughout Europe initial or pre-service teacher education is university-based. In Germany it is followed by a pre-service school-based training phase, which in the German context is also called the ‘second phase’ (see, e.g. Cortina & Thames, 2013). After obtaining their teaching certificate, in-service teachers are supposed to regularly attend further in-service trainings to “deepen and extend [their] professional competence, including knowledge, beliefs, motivation and self-regulatory skills” (Richter et al., 2011, p. 116). With regards to the professional development of primary FL teachers especially two competencies are essentially of interest that need to be acquired and continually further developed throughout a teacher’s professional career (e.g. KMK, 2014, p. 4): *Language proficiency* and *knowledge about FL teaching methodology* appropriate for young learners. Accordingly, in the following prior studies in the field of primary EFL teachers’ professional development are going to be reviewed following these categories: (1) the provision of primary FL teacher education and formal qualification, (2) primary EFL teachers’ English language proficiency and (3) teachers’ knowledge especially regarding their knowledge about FL teaching methodology.

1.1 The provision of primary foreign language teacher education and formal qualification

Regarding the formal qualification the Eurydice report (EACEA/Eurydice, 2012, p. 85) distinguishes between three types of primary FL teachers, i.e. generalist, specialist and semi-specialist teachers (see also Enever, 2014, p. 233 who in the context of the ELLiE study identified another type, the ‘unqualified teacher’). According to this, generalist teachers are qualified to teach (almost all) subjects in the primary curriculum (EACEA/Eurydice, 2012, p. 139). A specialist teacher on the one hand is “qualified to teach one or two different subjects. For a specialist language teacher, this would include either FLs only, or a FL and one other subject”. A semi-specialist teacher on the other hand “is qualified to teach a group of at least three different subjects, one or more of which is foreign languages” (both: EACEA/Eurydice, 2012, p. 140). German primary schools usually follow the so-called ‘class teacher principle’ in which one teacher teaches the majority of subjects in a class. Thus, in their

practical day-to-day teaching German primary school teachers act as ‘generalists’. However, it depends on the federal state in which they undergo their pre-service training whether these teachers according to the Eurydice definitions are educated as specialists, semi-specialist teachers, or as generalists (see Porsch, 2017; Porsch & Wilden in this volume). This is because the number of school subjects which primary school teachers are required to study at university differs immensely from one state to another.

Enever (2014) reviews European mechanisms aiming to support the provision of quality language teacher education courses, analyses their shortcomings and discusses them in relation to findings from the European ELLiE study (Enever, 2011). She highlights especially the need to address the course design for generalist teachers of primary FLs, i. e. teachers who are qualified to teach (almost all) subjects in the primary curriculum (EACEA/Eurydice, 2012, p. 139). Relating to the varied quality of pre- and in-service provision for primary FL teachers in the countries surveyed in the ELLiE study she warns: “it is inevitable that classroom practices may not always meet learner needs” (Enever, 2014, p. 237). Furthermore, she identifies “an urgent need to substantially increase the provision and availability of in-service courses and workshops for teachers if quality is to be improved and sustained” (Enever, 2014, p. 241). This is in line with Terhart’s (2014) argumentation who, in discussing general teacher education in Germany, calls for a decreasing of the asymmetry between initial teacher education and in-service training. In doing so he argues in favour of a mandatory and continuous professional development (CPD).

The importance of CPD and provision of in-service training is supported by two further studies regarding EFL teachers’ professional development. In her study Hochstetter (2011) developed an observations sheet to diagnose the oral skills of primary EFL learners. She piloted the diagnostic tool by video-taping five primary EFL teachers while they were using it in their teaching. Subsequently, each teacher participated in both individual semi-structured interviews and group discussions during workshops. In summarizing her findings Hochstetter (2011, p. 198) concludes that diagnosing their pupils through observation is generally a very challenging task for teachers. In doing so they benefit on the one hand from the pre-structured diagnostic tool as it focuses their attention on subject-specific aspects rather than pupils’ general behaviour in class while at the same time allowing teachers to review their observations again after the lesson. On the other hand participating in diagnostic training and subsequently employing a diagnostic tool affords teachers the opportunity to review their subjective theories and beliefs about teaching and learning FLs.

Likewise the German DESI study (Klieme, 2006), even though focusing on secondary EFL education, supports the call for CPD in primary EFL education. The study explored the linguistic skills of 9th graders as well as the teaching quality in both EFL and German, the language of schooling, in the school year 2003/04. In the representative study approximately 11,000 pupils were tested and both teachers and pupils as well as parents and school management were surveyed. Even though the

study is situated in secondary education, its results on EFL education can inform the discourse on primary EFL education as well as study designs in this field. Regarding teacher characteristics the DESI study found that those EFL teachers who participated in in-service teacher training and maintained contacts in the target language countries succeed in triggering more motivation in their pupils (Klieme, 2006, p. 7).

In focusing on the stratified system of teacher education in Germany Blömeke (2010) analyses differences in the learning opportunities for maths teachers. Even though the study does not focus on *EFL* teacher education, its results can inform the discourse on primary EFL teacher education and future studies in this area. In this system future teachers undergo different types of formal education depending on whether they aim at becoming primary, lower secondary or upper secondary school teachers. In summary, the results of this study indicate that at the end of their formal education primary school teachers in comparison to the other teacher types demonstrated a substantially lower knowledge base of mathematics as well as knowledge for teaching mathematics. However, at the same time primary school teachers demonstrated a substantially higher general pedagogical knowledge (e.g. lesson planning, differentiation, or assessment). It is a tentative hypothesis that a similar study in the field of EFL teacher education in Germany might lead to comparable results.

The aspect of formal qualification was surveyed in the German EVENING study (Groot-Wilken, 2009) which was conducted in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia in the school year 2004/2005. It found that even though probably none of the EFL teachers participating in the study had obtained a university degree in English – the study was done shortly after the compulsory introduction of early FL education and the establishment of corresponding teacher education courses – approximately two thirds stated ‘interest and joy’ as well as ‘English as international language’ as their main motivation to volunteer for teaching EFL at their particular primary school. In a further study focusing on the continuity from primary to secondary EFL education in the German federal states of Baden-Wuerttemberg Kolb (2011, pp. 148–149) found that in the school year 2007/08 only 22% of the participating primary EFL teachers had a university degree in EFL education and 19% stated to have attended no formal EFL training at all. The slightly earlier KESS study (May, 2006) had found that in Hamburg 30% of all primary EFL teachers had obtained a university degree in EFL education. The later BIG-study (Börner et al., 2016) conducted in the school year 2012/2013 surveyed 98 German in-service primary EFL teachers and detected a slight increase in that approximately half of the teachers stated to have studied English as either major or minor subject in their university education.

The findings of the few studies available on the provision of FL teacher education and formal qualifications of primary FL teachers can be summarized as follows: In order to ensure good quality of primary FL teaching, course design, especially for generalist FL teachers, needs to be investigated (Enever, 2014). Likewise provision of

in-service training for primary FL teachers needs to be increased in order to ensure CPD (Enever, 2014; Hochstetter, 2011; Klieme, 2006; Terhart, 2014). For the stratified system of teacher education in Germany it was found that teachers leave their pre-service training with different types of knowledge depending on which school type they trained for, primary, lower or upper secondary (Blömeke, 2010), which can be interpreted as a call for investigating course design and re-evaluating the system of teacher education. Further findings from studies in the German context indicate that a significant proportion of primary school teachers teaching EFL did not undergo a subject-specific university education (Börner et al., 2016; Groot-Wilken, 2009; Kolb, 2011; May, 2006). It is very likely that this has an effect on the quality of the actual EFL teaching of those teachers.

1.2 Primary EFL teachers' English language proficiency

Since modern FL education differs from many content-based subjects – the target language is both the learning objective and the medium of communication – the teachers' target language proficiency has traditionally been a central issue within the discourse on FL teachers' professional development. The underlying assumption is that in order to be 'good' FL teachers, teachers need to have a high level of proficiency in the target language. This is related to notions of teachers as role models catering for a) high quality language input and b) opportunities for inter-/transcultural learning. The aspect of teacher's language proficiency is particularly significant in the context of *primary* FL education as the previous section highlighted the variety of qualifications to be found among teachers in the primary FL classroom.

In reviewing data from the ELLiE study surveying early FL education in seven European countries, Enever (2014, p. 240) concludes that "in three out of four cases, there was evidence of teacher anxiety in relation to language competency, a concern that may well also relate to fear of losing control of the class." In shifting the focus to teachers' self-perception of their EFL proficiency – and so far as there has been no study testing teachers' language competencies – the German BIG study (Börner et al., 2016, p. 18) found that approximately one third of teachers surveyed considered their EFL proficiency as 'very good'. The authors furthermore report³ that the better primary the teachers rated their own EFL proficiency the more important they consider reading comprehension, writing activities, games or storytelling as primary EFL teaching methods (Börner et al., 2016, p. 21).

The Eurydice report (EACEA/Eurydice, 2012, pp. 96–98) did not specifically address the language proficiency of FL teachers across Europe. However, it contains data regarding time spend in target language countries by (future) FL teachers as one indicator of language proficiency. Only in seven European countries future FL teachers are formally required to spend a period of time in a target language country,

3 Unfortunately, however, the authors fail to report their measures of data analysis.

ranging from at least two weeks up to a whole year. In surveying the cross-border mobility of FL teachers the report concludes that in the majority of participating countries FL teachers spend at least one month in a target language country, either in their holidays or during courses of study.

In conclusion, it has to be emphasized that the evidence on primary FL teachers' target language competency is sketchy at best. In spite of a proportion of teachers self-assessing their target language proficiency as 'very good' (Börner et al., 2016) in one setting, in other contexts indicators of target language related teacher anxiety were observed (Enever, 2014). On the bright side, however, across Europe the majority of FL teachers spend a minimum of one month in a target language country as part of their training (EACEA/Eurydice, 2012). No studies could be identified which explicitly assess in-service primary FL teachers' language proficiency as one indicator of their professional competence. This is probably due to the ethical domain of social research and the issue of field access, i.e. finding teachers volunteering to participate in such a study. For these – very justified – reasons most studies tend to revert to teachers' self-assessment as well as teacher observations. However, in order to comprehensively close this research gap other measures of investigating FL teachers' target language proficiency ought to be found, with educational researchers making an even greater effort to reach out to school teachers in order to reduce their frequently observed anguish towards being the 'object' of research.

1.3 Primary EFL teachers' methodological knowledge

Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), especially knowledge about subject-specific methodologies, is regarded as an important factor in achieving teaching quality. Accordingly, several studies set out to investigate this element of primary EFL teachers' professional development.

In her data review of the ELLiE study Enever (2014, p. 240) concludes by highlighting a number of weaknesses in the FL education system in the seven countries participating in the study. This included indicators of teachers' difficulty to move away from teacher-centered teaching, overusing the first language without a clear strategy for its purpose and a lack of expertise in organizing interactive communicative tasks. "Additionally, where specialist [FL; EW & RP] teachers were employed, it was sometimes evident that they lacked the skills and expertise relevant to this age group, whereas generalist primary teachers were more likely to have these transferable skills as a result of their teaching experiences across the broad primary curriculum" (Enever, 2014, p. 235).

Likewise in her study focusing on the transition from primary to secondary EFL education in the German federal state of Baden-Wuerttemberg Kolb (2011) investigated among others the relationship between teacher qualification and the EFL teaching methods they used. According to her findings the lack of formal qualification among a significant proportion of primary EFL teachers comes into effect in

that these teachers tend to disregard certain important EFL teaching methods, such as written input, vocabulary work as well as free and interactive communication (Kolb, 2011, p. 168) – all elements in which primary EFL education seems to have deficits (also see: Groot-Wilken, 2009; May, 2006). Therefore, these shortcomings clearly flag up the correlation between primary EFL teachers' formal qualification and their pupils' learning outcomes.

Focusing on one of the overarching objectives of modern FL education in Europe, intercultural communicative competence (ICC), Brunsmeier (2015) interviewed 19 primary EFL teachers. She analysed how the teachers in her study understood ICC and how they implemented this curricular objective in their teaching. Brunsmeier (2015, p. 203) concludes that all teachers in her survey are aware of the notion of ICC, however, their actual understandings of this construct are very diverse and tend to be vague at times. In implementing ICC in their teaching the primary teachers appear to focus on the knowledge domain and seem to have a great need for guidance on how to actually implement all aspects of ICC in their teaching.

In this context it is worthwhile to consider the study by Göbel (2011) on teaching quality in intercultural EFL education on secondary level. She identified intercultural experiences of the EFL teachers as a factor impacting on their pupils' intercultural learning processes. According to her findings, secondary EFL teachers with more extensive intercultural experience achieve a "more pronounced realization of cultural and intercultural topics in their teaching than those with fewer international contacts" (Göbel, 2011, p. 109; transl. by authors). This result is worth mentioning, too, in the context of primary EFL teacher education since, as the Eurydice report showed (see above), across Europe it is *not* mandatory for FL teachers to spend time abroad in target language countries.

In conclusion these empirical studies indicate that – even though on a conceptual level there are a number of established principles of 'good' FL teaching (see above) – these are not being put into practice by all primary FL teachers. There is evidence that this is related to teachers' formal qualification (e. g. Enever, 2014; Kolb, 2011) and, regarding ICC, to their personal experiences (Brunsmeier, 2015; Göbel, 2011). These findings on the teaching methods as used by primary EFL teachers link back to the question of provision of teacher education and CPD which appears to be the key for solving various issues in the professional development of primary EFL teachers.

2 Studying the education, professional competencies and beliefs of primary EFL teachers – Structure of this book

This volume brings together studies by a number of dedicated researchers from various disciplines such as EFL education, applied linguistics and educational sciences. Even though working in very diverse contexts all authors in this volume share the

desire to extend our knowledge about the professional development of primary EFL teachers in order to exploit the full potential of early FL education.

As the various contributions cover a wide range of topics in the field of primary EFL teacher education the book has been structured as follows: The first section 'Teaching primary EFL' is the corner stone of the whole book and contains three chapters on the fundamental issues of primary FL education. In her contribution *Angelika Kubanek* reviews the past 25 years of 'new' early FL education in Europe. She gives an overview of the development from local projects to consolidation, explores the most relevant supranational documents, considers empirical findings and concludes by discussing the challenges for educating primary FL teachers. In doing so she is contesting a number of traditional principles of early FL education such as a purely playful teaching approach or the A1 descriptor of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). She advocates considering early FL education as political education, suggests higher expectations regarding the learning objectives and calls for an increased integration of research into the education of primary FL teachers.

Thorsten Piske shares some critical thoughts on current early EFL education and thereby challenges the widespread notion of 'the earlier the better'. He explores how the so-called 'Critical Period Hypothesis' first led to rather high expectations of early FL education which then turned into disappointment and criticism to be found in the public discourse. He continues by reviewing selected findings from the field of second and FL learning research focusing on immigrant populations, pre-school and school children. Based on these findings he identifies five factors which appear to be important for successful FL learning and discusses them against the background of 'reality' in many German primary FL classrooms: (1) continuous intensive exposure to the target language, (2) learners' opportunities to frequently use the FL in speaking and writing, (3) a large amount of authentic, enriched and (near) native-like input, (4) specific training of the different linguistic skills considering the differences between a learner's first language and the FL and (5) motivating learning environments. He concludes by discussing the implications of his findings for primary FL teacher education and especially urges to deconstruct over-simplified notions of 'successful' and 'good' FL learning.

In the final chapter of this section *Raphaela Porsch* and *Eva Wilden* analyse the process of introducing EFL education as a primary school subject in Germany. From the perspective of implementation research the introduction of this new primary school subject can be regarded as an innovation. Thus, following the 'wave model of transfer' by Jäger (2004) the authors analyze the implementation process which has taken place in Germany since 2003. In doing so they investigate three factors: the content, structure and persons which are pivotal for assessing whether an innovation has been successful or not. They specially focus on the factor 'person' by looking at the current state of research about EFL teachers' perspectives regarding this particular innovation. In addition, potential reasons that may have impeded the

success of this reform are identified on the basis of which the authors suggest ideas for further research.

The second section of this volume ‘Policy and practice of primary EFL teacher education’ encompasses three contributions exploring the structure, policy and practice of primary EFL teacher education in Germany, Europe and beyond. In pursuing an international perspective *Shelagh Rixon* explores the route of educational change from government policy decision to actual classroom practice in the field of early EFL education in various contexts. In doing so she discusses how teacher education can support EFL teachers as the agents of such reforms. She thus reviews various international studies on pre- and in-service training, the power relations between education professionals and policy-makers as well as international FL teacher qualifications. She concludes by exploring the challenges of policy-making for FL teacher education and as a consequence calls for drastically increasing the opportunities for CPD.

Janet Enever investigates notions of quality in European primary EFL teacher education and discusses whether to strive for a passion for teaching or the brightest and the best when seeking and training novice FL teachers. She first outlines various European documents impacting on the provision of primary FL teacher education and the notion of European convergence regarding teacher education. Subsequently, she examines various teacher education models currently in practice across Europe shedding light on differences and similarities, e.g. concerning type, length, methodological training or minimum FL competency. She finally discusses teachers’ motivations for taking up the teaching profession especially highlighting the apparent importance of a ‘passion for teaching’ to ensure quality teaching. She concludes by identifying three factors for achieving and maintaining quality in primary EFL teacher provision: (1) well-structured primary EFL teacher education courses, (2) initiatives to attract enthusiastic teacher candidates for primary EFL education and (3) research to further investigate factors contributing to effective primary EFL teacher education.

In her contribution *Henriette Dausend* reviews empirical research on primary EFL teacher education in Germany until 2015 in order to identify factors of success. In doing so she first outlines central documents as well as the roles of various governmental bodies in the German educational system before exploring the structure and standards of primary FL teacher education in Germany. In this context she highlights the importance of teacher educators as agents within the system educating future teachers, she explores the competencies, skills and knowledge primary EFL teachers need to acquire and she examines the development of a professional self during teacher education. She concludes by arguing in favour of pursuing certain teaching approaches in primary FL teacher education, such as (1) opportunities for practical experience and self-reflection, (2) incorporating teaching videos, (3) mandatory exchange projects or study-abroad phases, (4) product-oriented teaching and (5) portfolios as a measure of self-reflection and -evaluation.

The third section ‘In-service training of primary EFL teachers’ consists of three studies investigating training schemes for in-service primary EFL teachers with a particular focus on types of action research and adapting the phonics approach in early FL teaching: *Nora Benitt* is linking primary EFL teachers professional development with classroom-based action research. She provides a brief overview of the advantages and disadvantages of action research with regard to EFL teacher learning and presents examples from a qualitative-interpretative study. Regarding professional development she concludes that among others action research has the potential for both pre- and in-service teachers to deepen their theoretical knowledge and improve their methodological competencies. Therefore, this study establishes close links to the concept of ‘learning through research’ (*Forschendes Lernen*) which is an objective in long-term school placements (called *Praxissemester*; see, e.g. Schüssler et al., 2016) which have now been introduced in several federal states in Germany. Thus, students spend up to five months in a school placement as part of their initial pre-service teacher training at the Master’s level. This is in addition to the subsequent school-based practical training phase (‘second phase’; Cortina & Thames, 2013).

Likewise *Annamaria Pinter* and *Rama Mathew* explore a particular type of action research and work with children as co-researchers in a training programme for primary EFL teachers in India. This project aims at increasing student-oriented as well as communicative early EFL education linking up to the learners’ real-life contexts. The project’s findings show that in addition to changing teachers’ practices, professional development of the primary EFL teachers is promoted as views about teaching and learning appear to have changed along with an increasing understanding of the relation between theory and practice.

The study presented by *Alicia Jöckel* touches upon the – occasionally highly charged – debate about the role of reading and writing in the early EFL classroom. In her contribution she first summarizes the pros and cons of including written language in the primary EFL classroom before presenting results of her study on training German primary EFL teachers to use ‘phonics’ – a method originally devised for teaching reading and writing to first language English learners. After describing the method and its adaptation for the EFL context she concludes by discussing the potential of phonics for teaching the written skills in early EFL education as well as the competencies and knowledge teachers need in order to use this method effectively.

The final section of this book ‘Professional competencies and beliefs of primary EFL teachers’ contains four chapters investigating the knowledge, competencies and beliefs of teachers in primary EFL education. Relating to the idea that teachers possess subject-specific competencies and beliefs *Bianca Roters* provides a literature review about classifications and empirical studies regarding EFL teachers’ professional knowledge. She also explores studies investigating the career choices of EFL teachers stressing the relevance of biographical factors influencing the future professional development. She concludes with a call for more empirical research – long term but also in mixed-methods designs – based on the notion that more empirical evidence

with robust results is needed about the effects of (EFL) teacher education on teachers' development.

One rather new development in research on teacher professionalism is the attempt to measure professional competencies of teachers. Several studies in Germany were conducted in the last few years, mainly projects in which researchers from various disciplines collaborated (e. g. COACTIV, see Kunter et al., 2013). On the basis of these it is possible to explore the relationship between teacher competencies and teaching quality as well as the impact on learning outcomes. However, because of the complex nature of this type of research there still is a variety of unanswered questions, e. g. concerning the type of test instruments to be favoured (e. g. open or closed items or video vignettes) or whether researchers can agree on the same construct definitions (see e. g. Aufschnaiter & Blömeke, 2010). Despite these challenges *Johannes König* initiated the so-called PKE project ('Professional competence of EFL teachers: Foreign Language Pedagogical Content Knowledge of Pre-Service Teachers – Concept, Measurement, and Validation') in which an instrument for assessing pre-service EFL teachers' competencies was developed based on a theoretical model of EFL teacher competencies. Together with his colleagues *Sandra Lammerding*, *Günter Nold*, *Andreas Rohde*, *Sarah Strauß* and *Sarantis Tachtsoglou* he presents first findings from this project, gives examples of the test items and discusses whether this test for pre-service EFL secondary school teacher students could be adapted for the primary EFL sector as well.

Henning Rossa presents his longitudinal interview study BELT ('Beliefs about Effective Language Teaching') investigating pre-service primary EFL teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. His findings include the notion that participants' professional identities and self-concepts do indeed develop further during their school-based practical training ('second phase'; Cortina & Thames, 2013) while there are at the same time some relatively stable beliefs. He concludes by posing some open questions relating to the need of providing continuity in teacher education as well as the need for adaptable organizational structures of teacher training in order to meet individual needs. His findings are a powerful reminder that future teachers just starting their teacher education (already) have highly influential beliefs that do affect their learning.

This book concludes with a chapter by *Ann-Cathrin Deters-Philipp* who investigates primary EFL teachers target language proficiency addressing a somewhat sensitive issue often neglected in FL teacher research. She emphasizes in her study that the discourse too often neglects the actual linguistic demands of early FL education. She addresses the particular linguistic skills needed by EFL primary school teachers and critically discusses whether teacher education in Germany is able to provide the necessary competencies. One of the findings of her interview study with 21 primary EFL teachers is that the formal teacher qualification – in her study only seven teachers had a university degree in EFL education – does not fully explain differences in the self-perception of the teachers' linguistic abilities. Individual and

biographical factors also affect the teachers' classroom practices and subsequently impact on pupils' learning outcomes.

3 Outlook: Future research on primary EFL teacher education

All contributors to this volume convened at the conference 'The professional development of in-service and pre-service primary EFL teachers. National and international research' at the University of Vechta, Germany, on January 22–23, 2016. The conference gave everyone the chance to present their projects to the research community and use the feedback for writing up their research papers for this volume. Aside from discussing the presenters' studies a lively debate amongst presenters and other conference guests on research in the field of primary EFL education ensued in the sessions continuing into the coffee and lunch breaks. Especially noteworthy in all these conversations was the general consensus that an increase in research initiatives in the field of primary EFL education is indispensable. Thus, in the closing sessions the conference participants decided to pool their ideas and identify the most salient research gaps in the field in order to inspire future research studies. The following is an attempt to summarize all the contributions made in this regard by both presenters and other conference participants. In doing so the authors tried hard to do justice to *all* contributions and hope to represent the entire variety of views shared at the conference. As the majority of the conference participants work in Germany, many of the themes raised explicitly relate to the status quo of primary EFL education in Germany. However, a number of issues raised will be applicable as well to other contexts in Europe and beyond.

- A number of contributors addressed the urgent need to *increasingly investigate actual classroom practices in early FL education*. The underlying theme of several of these propositions was the aspect of effectiveness of classroom practice. In other words questions were raised on what is actually happening in primary EFL classrooms and what are its effects. In addressing this research gap investigators might focus on several aspects, for example, the effectiveness of different teaching approaches. In this respect various contributors criticized the apparent focus on teaching semantic fields in primary EFL classrooms while at the same time neglecting structural aspects of language, written language input or pronunciation. Further contributions called for exploring methods used in other contexts, such as the Phonics method (see Jöckel in this volume), in order to investigate their potential for primary FL education. Another aspect raised in the context of investigating effectiveness of classroom practices was to include the learners' perspectives in doing so. Finally, various contributors addressed the need to investigate the actual demands on primary FL teachers in various classroom practices as they felt this has too often been neglected in prior studies.

- The latter aspect emphasizes the role of the teacher in primary EFL education and the call for increased research in this area. Several contributors urged to *explore the particular demands on the teacher in the primary FL classroom* which then ought to be considered in teacher education. In this context, for example, the teacher is very much at the centre of the FL classroom as opposed to the generally more learner-centred approach of primary education. Also, the so-called ‘beginners’ paradox’ was mentioned which emphasizes the need for (primary) FL teachers to bridge the gap between their learners’ more highly developed cognitive skills and their less developed linguistic skills in the FL. As a further demand on primary FL teachers the question was raised how teachers can be enabled to implement the teaching approaches which have been identified as ‘good’ or ‘effective’ primary FL teaching approach.
- This aspect leads to the domain of *teacher training* which was another topic enjoying lively discussions at the conference in the spirit of Terhart’s (2012) reminder that we do not know whether teacher education actually works and, if it does work, how and based on which mechanisms or resources. Thus, adding to the notion of implementing good practice the need to assess primary EFL teachers’ competencies and experiences was discussed, for example, regarding their language competencies, methodological skills or their intercultural experiences. This was seen as an important prerequisite to ensure that teachers can actually fulfil the particular role required of them in the primary FL classroom, as sketched out above. In this context it was suggested to determine a minimum requirement of competencies, skills and knowledge which future primary FL teachers ought to acquire in order to obtain their teaching certificates. The latter was raised especially in the context of debating the very diverse qualifications held by current primary EFL teachers in very different settings. It also touches upon the issue of generalist vs. specialist primary FL teacher: While the ‘generalist’ approach has the advantage of age-appropriateness and allows for the same form/class teacher to teach various subjects in a primary class, the ‘specialist’ approach has the benefit of a teacher specially qualified to meet the particular demands of primary FL teaching to this particular age group. A final aspect discussed in the context of primary FL teacher training was the call for increased continuity in all phases of teacher education, i. e. pre- and in-service training.
- This aspect links up to the element of policy making in the context of primary FL education and the need for continuous curricula, i. e. the intertwining of primary and secondary school curricula for EFL education, which is still a deficit in many places. In this regard teachers on both primary and secondary level seem to find it difficult to implement educational innovations and further research is needed to *explore how such innovations in the EFL classroom can be implemented in a way that teachers actually believe in them* and are motivated to incorporate them in their own teaching practices. In this context the significance of teacher beliefs was raised which have been identified as a major factor in teachers’ classroom

practices in any school subject. It was seen that especially in the field of primary EFL education there is a great need to investigate teachers' mindsets, its impact on their teaching practices and whether teachers' beliefs and attitudes can be at all influenced through teacher training. In this context especially teachers' (and teacher educators') self-reflection appears to be of paramount importance and ought to be further investigated.

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