

Comparative Analysis of Early Foreign Language Curricula in Some Countries of Europe And The U.S.

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ABSTRACT

The Council of Europe in its Recommendation indicates the importance of knowing modern languages, as well as the need to develop a methodology for learning and teaching with the aim of meeting communication needs and preserving the richness and diversity of world languages and cultures. Croatia follows the trend of the development of multilingualism and has taken meaningful steps within the framework of preparation for entering the European Union. One of the most important steps is adopting the National Curriculum for Preschool Education, General Compulsory and Secondary School Education, which is a fundamental document that sets values, goals and principles of education, including the principles of multilingualism and multiculturalism.

In this paper, curricula for teaching foreign languages in lower grades of elementary schools in Croatia, Germany, the UK and the USA are compared and analysed. Since Croatian educational theory and practice has traditionally been largely influenced by those from the German-speaking area, the paper gives a comparison of the foreign language curriculum in elementary schools in Croatia with the experimental foreign language curriculum of the North Rhine – Westphalia federal state. In order to obtain a more comprehensive picture these results are then compared with foreign language curricula in the UK and in California. The objectives, content and strategies of individual curriculum, with particular emphasis on intercultural competence in lower grades, are analysed. The results confirm the importance of early foreign language learning, as well as raising awareness of students' own culture and the acceptance of diversity; it can be concluded that curricula which focuses on student achievement and competences is necessary for life in a modern society of rapid changes and global development.