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MULTINATIONAL, MULTICULTURAL, MULTILINGUAL LUXEMBOURG – A SYSTEM OF INTEGRATION OR A SYSTEM OF FAILURE?

Ursula Schinzel, United Business Institutes, Luxembourg

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to describe and explain the Luxembourgish trilingual public education system and, consequently, to determine whether the Luxembourgish trilingual public education system is a system of success or of failure. 154 questionnaires were collected and 36 interviews conducted among 1) Luxembourgers with Luxembourgish Nationality (Lux.Nat.), 2) Luxembourg residents including Lux.Nat. and foreigners who reside in Luxembourg (Lux.All.), and 3) the rest of the world (World). More specifically cross-cultural management theories by Hofstede et al. (2010), Hofstede (2001) serve as basis for this multicultural research. The results indicate that most respondents prefer integration not separation of the population, the system should maintain its instruction in the three official languages of the country: Luxembourgish, French, German. Some of the interviews are reprinted; discussion, implications, and recommendations for future research follow.

Keywords: Language and management, Hofstede, education, cross-cultural management, international business, language, trilingual public education system, Luxembourg

1. INTRODUCTION

The language situation in Luxembourg has been subject to numerous researches, publications, discussions, debates (Fehlen, 1998a; Maurer-Hetto, 2009; Horner, 2007; Weber, 2008; Weber and Horner 2010), and reforms (FGIL, 2012; Kurschat, 2014, pp.4-9), involving even the OECD (Carey and Ernst, 2006). Despite these efforts a solution to the complexity of the situation – integration versus separation (Fehlen et al., 1998b) – seems a remote, unattainable goal. Plurilingual school education (Maurer-Hetto, 2008) goes in parallel with conflicts (Elcheroth, 2010, pp.40), and reflects the complexities and paradoxes of a multicultural national identity shaped by history (Kraemer, 1995, pp.74-75).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Luxembourg

The language situation in Luxembourg's schools is deeply anchored in the specific place the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg takes in Europe and in the world. With its small size of only 2,586 km², 82 km long and 57 km wide at its longest and widest points it is one of the smallest European countries. Its borders are with Germany (138 km), France (73 km), and Belgium (148 km) (The World Factbook). The resident population as of 1 January 2014 (statec, 2014) included 90,764 Portuguese, 37,158 French, 18,773 Italians, 18,159 Belgians, and 12,659 Germans. Cross-border workers make the specific situation (statec, 2013): Luxembourg's total population consisted of 537,000 inhabitants of whom 298,200 (55.53%) were Luxembourgers and 238,800 (44.47%) were foreigners. Domestic employment was 379,000. During the daytime, 156,900 cross-border workers came to Luxembourg to work, 39% of the domestic employment: 77,800 from France, 39,500 from Belgium, and 39,600 from Germany (Schinzel, 2013a,b). You have to genuinely understand the meaning of '*Mir welle bleiwe, wat mir sin*' [*We want to remain what we are*] (Berg, 1993).

The national language is Luxembourgish (Letzebuergesch), and administrative languages are French, German, Luxembourgish (statec, 2013). Citizenship is only awarded to people who speak Luxembourgish (Spizzo, 1995). The language defines the in-group (Briley et al. 2005) and the out-group. Those who speak Luxembourgish are part of the in-group and those who do not speak the language are part of the out-group.

2.2. MANAGEMENT SCHOLARS

Management scholars, such as Hofstede (2001), Hofstede et al. (2010) and House et al. (2004) have acknowledged that language has indeed an impact on culture. Hofstede (2001) defines culture as the “collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another”. This explains the author’s choice of 3 different groups for the present research: Lux.Nat., Lux.All., World. This research does not investigate Hofstede’s 6 dimensions of culture, but rather the murky field of language and management, it tests their theory of culture across languages rather than across national borders, which is what the above mentioned management scholars do. Hofstede et al.’s (2002) criticism of his own theory goes, among others: “Nations are not the best units for studying cultures”.

Table 1 (Schinzel, 2012) shows Hofstede’s cultural dimensions of Lux.Nat., and Lux.All., Hofstede’s estimates on Luxembourg, his data for France, Germany, the UK, Belgium FR, Belgium NL, Italy, the Netherlands, China, the USA, and Japan, where the cultural differences become clear.

TABLE 1. CULTURAL COMPARISONS: THE AUTHOR’S LUXEMBOURG, LUX. NAT. IN COMPARISON WITH HOFSTEDÉ’S UK – BELGIUM FR – BELGIUM NL – ITALY – THE NETHERLANDS NL – CHINA –USA – JAPAN (ON A SCALE FROM 1-100, 1 BEING THE LOWEST AND 100 THE HIGHEST SCORE)

	The author’s Lux. Nat.	The author’s Lux. All.	Hofstede’s estimates on Luxbg	Hofstede’s France	Hofstede’s Germany	UK	Belgium FR	Belgium NL	Italy	NL	China	USA	Japan
PDI	29	36	40	68	35	35	68	61	50	38	80	40	54
UAI	95	97	70	86	65	35	93	97	75	53	30	46	92
IDV	34	51.5	60	71	67	89	71	78	76	80	20	91	46
MAS	54	47	50	43	66	66	60	43	70	14	66	62	95
LTO	65	69	64	63	83	51	82	82	61	67	87	26	88
IVR	55	53.5	56	48	40	69	57	57	30	68	24	68	42
MON	24	10	-	16.5	9.9	35.4	-	-	35.2	11.9	0	57.2	4.0

2.3. The Luxembourgish Public School System

The 1984 legislation on language made Luxembourgish the official language together with French and German. Despite the growing number of foreign children, Luxembourgish is the language of instruction in pre-school (age 3-6), with the aim to prepare pupils for the alphabetization in German in primary school (age 6-12). In secondary school (age 12-19), German as language of instruction will be replaced by French, until French is near mother tongue level (Kurschat, 2014b; Christmann and Sunnen, 2007). “Moreover, there are few alternatives for parents whose children cannot cope with the state school system. The small number of private, religious (i.e. Catholic) schools follows the state school curricula and students take exactly the same examinations, including the Secondary School Leaving Examination” (Weber and Horner, 2008, p.89). The only alternatives are the Lycee Vauban, the Waldorf School, the European School and the International School, but they tend to charge high fees and to cater for an international elite. “As a result, the only other option taken up by 3.6% of the school population is to attend schools just across the border mostly in Belgium or France (Berg and Weis, 2005, p.58).” Several reform systems are proposed, among them the idea that in Cycle 2 the alphabetisation should be in a language known by the pupils: Luxembourgish, French or Portuguese. However he also suggests 2 parallel systems: the French speaking and the German speaking (Weber, 2014a, pp. 10-11). Luxembourg needs to create an integrative education system and a language policy that prevents the loss in multilingualism (Fehlen, 2009; Houtsch, 2010). Fehlen, shows, despite its smallness, the complexity of the country and its society. However, he explains, Luxembourgish is mostly used as a spoken language. Its use as written language is limited, with the result that German is mostly used as a written language. Fehlen states that the instruction in French in secondary school is responsible for the high failure rate of pupils.

2. 4. Hypotheses

There are more issues to the research subject besides the five main themes 1) integration not separation of the population, 2) learn the three official languages of the country: Luxembourgish, French, German, 3) be prepared for the multilingual and multicultural reality in Luxembourg, 4) high failure rate given the fact that children do not understand the language of instruction especially in mathematics, biology, chemistry, history, and 5) pupils do not learn English well enough.

The author formulates the following three hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Lux. Nat. will highly favor trilingualism. Lux. All. will be less in favor of trilingualism. The rest of the world will be afraid of trilingualism in education.

Hypothesis 2: Lux.Nat. will be against bilingualism. Lux.All. will be less against bilingualism. The rest of the world will favor bilingualism.

Hypothesis 3: The other school options will be equally less preferred by all three categories: Lux.Nat., Lux.All., World.

Investigating the above formulated three hypotheses is the content of this research. The deployed methods, instruments, processes are described in the following chapters, providing the respective results from questionnaires, questionnaire's open questions and interviews. The objective is to validate the above formulated hypotheses and to come up with implications and discussions.

3. METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

The first instrument was a questionnaire developed by the author in English, translated by mother tongue speakers into German and French and back translated for validity check. A five-point Likert-type scale was employed to indicate responses that ranged from 1=strongly disagree 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree. The first part of the questionnaire investigated the advantages of the trilingual public education system, the actual system. In a second part, the advantages and disadvantages of one of the proposed reform systems was investigated. In a third part, the respondents' personal opinion was questioned, respectively if they prefer the trilingual current public system, a bilingual system or rather any other education system. The second instrument were the interviews. Semi-structured interviews were carried out.

4. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSES – QUESTIONNAIRE'S CLOSED QUESTIONS

The questionnaire provided the following results:

TABLE 2. WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF THIS TRILINGUAL PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM (THE CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM)?

		Total	Lux.Nat.	Lux.All.	World
		N=152	N=62	N=110	N=42
1.1.	Integration of all children into the multicultural, multilingual, multinational environment in Luxembourg.	4.01	4.02	4.06	3.90
1.2.	Children learn 3 languages and have the opportunity to study in L, G, F.	4.13	4.31	4.13	4.17
1.3.	Children are educated following the multicultural education in Luxembourg.	3.82	3.88	3.85	3.69
1.4.	Children are prepared for the multilingual reality of Luxembourg, for the future, for work, for life.	4.05	3.97	4.04	4.05
1.5.	L+G+F is to be seen as ONE language, not three, we add English, Spanish as foreign language.	2.75	2.53	2.69	3.02
1.6.	Often, none of the three languages (L+G+F) is the mother tongue of the children at home, but it is Portuguese, Italian, ..., what allows pupils an alphabetisation in L+G+F.	3.54	3.54	3.62	3.38

TABLE 3. WHAT ARE THE DISADVANTAGES OF THIS TRILINGUAL PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM (THE CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM)?

		Total	Lux.Nat.	Lux. All.	World
		N=152	N=62	N=110	N=42
2.1.	Pupils do not understand the language of education and therefore cannot follow the content in e.g. biology, mathematics, chemistry...	3.30	3.42	3.35	3.19
2.2.	Pupils are not performing well in the field of study (e.g. biology, mathematics, chemistry...), because they don't understand the language.	3.29	3.53	3.34	3.14
2.3.	This causes a high failure rate.	3.17	3.46	3.33	2.76
2.5.	Loss of identity in terms of culture. Language is not only a method of communication but also determines my cultural identity, my: who am I?!	2.93	2.81	2.99	2.79
2.6.	Pupils do not learn English well enough. English is neglected. L+G+F favoured.	3.05	3.00	3.01	3.29

TABLE 4. WHAT WOULD BE THE ADVANTAGES OF THIS BILINGUAL PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM (THE DISCUSSED PROPOSED BUT CONTESTED REFORM-SYSTEM: IN KINDERGARTEN THE LANGUAGE OF EDUCATION WOULD REMAIN LUXEMBOURGISH. BUT THEN THE CHILD WOULD HAVE THE CHOICE BETWEEN A FULL EDUCATION (PRIMARY AND SECONDARY) IN GERMAN LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION, OR IN FRENCH)?

		Total	Lux.Nat.	Lux.All.	World
		N=152	N=62	N=110	N=42
3.1.	All children still would learn Luxembourgish in Kindergarten.	3.91	3.85	3.87	3.95
3.2.	The choice of one language of instruction for primary and secondary education allows that children understand the content of instruction (e.g. biology, mathematics, chemistry...).	3.69	3.68	3.65	3.74
3.3.	The failure rate would decline.	3.30	3.27	3.36	3.19
3.4.	Children could better concentrate on the content of instruction than on the language of instruction.	3.66	3.69	3.70	3.55
3.5.	Better motivation of children who will be more motivated to learn the different subjects thanks to the taught language.	3.43	3.44	3.44	3.43
3.6.	Pupils could concentrate better on learning English .	3.24	3.21	3.20	3.48

TABLE 5. WHAT WOULD BE THE DISADVANTAGES OF THIS BILINGUAL PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM (THE DISCUSSED PROPOSED BUT CONTESTED REFORM-SYSTEM)?

		Total	Lux.Nat.	Lux. All.	World
		N=152	N=62	N=110	N=42
4.1	This reform system would be a separator of the population – those who speak German – divided from those who speak French.	3.60	3.86	3.67	3.40
4.2	This separation in 2 different languages would divide the society into different levels.	3.36	3.60	3.46	3.12
4.3	Children/Pupils would not be prepared for the multilingual reality in Luxembourg, where at least L, G, F are needed in	3.62	3.95	3.75	3.31

	everyday situations.				
4.4	There might not be enough teachers in Luxembourg capable of teaching and/or in German and/or in French in primary and secondary school.	2.88	2.88	2.78	3.19
4.5	There would be an administrative problem, because this division would duplicate all classes, new school rooms would be needed, new schools would need to be constructed.	3.44	3.57	3.46	3.48
4.6	This language division (in German or French) would re-enforce the cultural division into German or French culture .	3.58	3.76	3.63	3.50
4.7	Other countries (Germany, France,) also experience the same problem with immigrant children not understanding the language of instruction in class.	3.29	3.31	3.22	3.52

TABLE 6. WHAT IS YOUR PERSONAL OPINION. WHICH SYSTEM WOULD YOU PREFER?

			Total	Lux.Nat.	Lux.All.	World
			N=152	N=62	N=110	N=42
5.1.1	I prefer the trilingual public education system (the actual system: in Kindergarten Luxembourgish as language of education, in primary school German, and in secondary school French)?	yes no Total	98 54 152	53 (84%) 9 (16%) 62 (100%)	77 (65%) 33 (21%) 110 (100%)	22 (52%) 20 (48%) 42 (100%)
5.1.2	I prefer the bilingual public education system (the system under discussion, where children decide which language of education they chose for both primary and secondary school: German or French)?	yes no	45 105	9 (16%) 53 (84%)	27 (24%) 82 (66%)	19 (45%) 23 (55%)
5.1.3	I prefer other options: (please complete the three questions below only if you answered this question with yes)	yes no	56 92	23 (36%) 37 (64%)	41 (37%) 67 (63%)	15 (34%) 26 (63%)
	5.1.3.1 There is the choice to go to European School for an education in your mother tongue.	Average	2.93	2.73	2.95	2.81
	5.1.3.2 There is the choice to go to International School, or St. George , for a full education in English.	Average	2.62	2.49	2.48	3.11
	5.1.3.3 There is the choice to go to Lycee Français for a full education in French.	Average	2.67	2.51	2.55	3.13

84% of the "Lux.Nat" prefer the trilingual public education system, with only 16% against it. Regarding the bilingual reform system, only 16% were for it, whilst 84% were against it. Other schools were considered negatively by 64%, but positively by 36%.

69% of the "Lux.All." are for the current trilingual public education system, 21% are against it. The bilingual system is preferred by 24%, and rejected by 66%. Other schools are preferred by 37% with 63% against them.

52% of the "Rest of the world" are for the current trilingual public education system, 48% are against it. The bilingual system would be preferred by 45%, and rejected by 55%. Other schools are preferred by 34% with 63% against them.

5. RESULTS – QUESTIONNAIRE'S OPEN QUESTIONS AND INTERVIEWS

By keeping the three categories, 1) Lux.Nat., 2) Lux.All., 3) World, the open questions' responses provided in-depth insight into serious reflections of directly concerned parents, whose children follow the

Luxembourgish trilingual education system, or who consider doing so or who hypothesize in case of an eventual move to Luxembourg.

Among the 36 interview responses the main themes already mentioned and questioned above re-appeared. Other themes were discussed. Here is what participants wrote and said:

	Open questions	Interviews
Lux.Nat. respondent who is for the trilingual system	<i>"I followed the Luxembourgish school system and today I am very happy to have done it (as my origins are Portuguese). I must admit that it was very hard: German lessons and some matters (biology / geography) were given in German. I felt alone as nobody (my parents) could support me on a day to day basis with my homework. My child is in the Luxbg school system. I speak Luxembourgish, Portuguese and French with my own child..."</i>	<i>"We absolutely have to stick to our trilingualism. This is our identity, our culture. It represents a challenge and at the same time our wealth. In France, in Alsace, there is a similar situation: they also have trilingualism: French, German, Alsatian, and the Alsatians also speak well English"</i>
Lux.Nat. respondent who is against the system	<i>"... The Luxembourgish education system is not the best, pupils don't have enough knowledge, following the PISA results, especially in sciences, biology, physiques, chemistry, philosophy. They only learn these matters by heart without any generation of own ideas or any creativity. ... Motivation in general is low. ... School teachers lack knowledge themselves and teach frontally without any inspiration ... What misses at their language level is the mastering of one language. Pupils express themselves badly in written and orally in all languages. ... Pupils' only wish is to become school teacher or civil servant because of the fringe benefits. There is no real motivation, nor enthusiasm ..."</i>	<i>"The main issue is the division into 'Lycee Classique' and 'Lycee Technique' Integration is a complicated matter. The integration of the Portuguese children is lagging behind. The reality is that the good Luxembourgers go to 'Lycee Classique' where they speak Luxembourgish and German, but the bad Portuguese and French attend 'Lycee Technique' where they speak French"</i>
Lux.All. respondent who is for the trilingual system	<i>"... It is an enormous chance for our children to be given the possibility of learning three languages. ... Knowing to speak three languages opens up their mind for other languages, cultures and knowledge ... Yet, we should teach better our teachers. ... Today my son speaks five languages, despite the initial problems with German, he had needed extra tutorial lessons ..."</i>	<i>"... We have to keep trilingualism at all costs. When I started going to school, I spoke only Italian as my parents only spoke Italian with me. I rapidly learned Luxembourgish, French and German and later English. But mathematics is a matter I just don't understand, in whatever language ... It's fantastic, with my language knowledge, I can travel everywhere in the world ... We have to continue to have our children develop in a multilingual society ... " (Respondent : Italian living in Luxbg)</i>
Lux.All. respondent who is against the trilingual system	<i>"... The requirements are too high. Strong pupils are able to follow, weaker not. Languages should be taught differently. French and German should be taught together from primary school on, and additionally offer extra tuition classes for weaker pupils. ... Luxembourger pupils have problems with French, whereas others with German. ... European School, International School, St. George ... are no public schools and therefore</i>	<i>"... Time spent with the instruction of three languages is at the detriment of the matter of its own. At the moment children in Albania or in France study 'history' or 'mathematics', the real content of it, because the linguistic problems are not given. Here the language is dominant, not the content "</i>

	<i>not for free ...</i>	(Respondent: Albanian living in Lxbg)
'World' respondent who is for the trilingual system	<i>"I think a trilingual system best prepares a child for the realities of Luxembourg and Europe. However, as a teacher, I would certainly think there would be issues switching from one language in primary to a second language in secondary. It would be better to study in German and French all the way through. My husband and I are both bilingual English and Spanish, however, we tend to speak mostly in English out of habit ..."</i> (Respondent from Canada)	Future research is needed to get an interview in this category. So far none has occurred.
'World' respondent who is against the trilingual system	<i>"I think the current system is too complicated to be followed by a Chinese family, because we were taught English in China, so it is very difficult to learn 3 new languages, not only for the child but also for the parents. I just feel this is too complicated"</i> (Respondent from China)	<i>"Language is a highly contested subject in Quebec in general and particularly in Montreal. I always refused that my children learn English at low age, because it is important that they master their mother tongue first"</i> (Respondent from Quebec, Canada)

7. CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research has brought light to the particular elements of trilingualism in Luxembourg. A huge majority respondents from Lux.Nat., Lux.All., and the rest of the world provided astonishingly similar answers. From the questionnaires, the written open questions and the interviews no significant differences in the results emerge. Only one question regarding preference of the system showed significant differences between Lux.Nat., Lux.All., and the rest of the world. Hypotheses 1, 2, 3 were validated. Trilingualism is part of the Luxembourgish constitution, namely Luxembourgish, French and German are the three official languages of the country. It is the characteristics of the country, it is its culture, its collective programming of their mind (Hofstede et al., 2010). While Cummins (2000) researches Canada's language situation - French-English - and García (2009, 2014) in the USA - Spanish-English – tends to translanguaging, Blackledge and Creese (2010) situate linguistic practices in their respective social, historical, cultural and political contexts, Brannen, Piekkari and Tietze (2014) combine language and management and Schinzel (2013) uses language as identifier.

This research paths the way for more studies in the field of multilingualism and multiculturalism. In a world of increasing separation, conflict, crisis and war, the integrative, tolerant system of Luxembourg may serve as an example for peace, integration, tolerance, and harmonious coexistence.

Luxembourg is searching for new visions. Right in the heart of Europe, Luxembourg fights for peace, integration, tolerance, harmonious coexistence among people from different race, color, and mother tongue, qualities that are becoming increasingly rare in today's world. Future research could investigate into a comparison with Canada, Alsace, Switzerland, China, combining language and management.

In conclusion, even though the language situation in Luxembourg has been subject to many discussions, debates and reforms, numerous questions concerning future developments remain unanswered: What will the future of Luxembourg look like? Where does Luxembourg go? Where does the current developments lead to? Will it be the multilingual integrative direction (Maurer-Hetto, 2008), or will it be the monolingual, separatist direction? The ongoing continuous changes reflect the mood of modification that reigns. Luxembourg searches for its visionaries, just like Europe, in memory of Victor Hugo, Winston Churchill, Alcide de Gasperi, Robert Schumann, Jean Monnet, and Altiero Spinelli (Bumb, 2014, pp.2-3).

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