

MLA Panel

Modeling Representation of Foreign Language Education at the Federal Level in the United States

Saturday, December 29, 2007: 8:30 – 9:45 a.m.
Erie Room, Sheraton Chicago

Panelists

Katherine Arens, University of Texas, Austin. k.arens@mail.utexas.edu

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Catherine Porter, SUNY College at Cortland. porterc@cortland.edu.

Moderator

Heidi Byrnes, Georgetown University. byrnes@georgetown.edu

Session Schedule

8:30 – 8:40 Introduction of series of events and panelists

8:40 – 9:10 Presentation time for each panelist (10 minutes each)

9:10 – 9:30 Moderated discussion

9:30 – 9:45 Open forum

Outline of Proposals

❖ Katherine Arens

For Want of a Strategic Education Resources Administrator: A Not-So-Modest Proposal

1. The Need for a Counter-Proposal, Re-Thinking the Norms

- to contextualize FL education within education, not as a mandate in itself
- to capitalize on extant structures and infrastructures
- to accommodate stakeholders, not theories, and long-term strategic resources development in many areas

2. Educational Mandates and Policy: What Might Be

- Federal versus centralist is wrong heuristic. "National Language Policy Summit" (2005) identified stakeholders: business, government, and academe
 - Respectively: lobbying and future assessment; policy; and expertise and best practices models
 - Add any local lobbies that can attract earmarks from any of the above
- Suggested alternative: parallel to "national science advisor" in executive branch, the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, charged with administering resources, consciousness-raising, models, and funding

3. The Immodest Proposal: Language Study Considered as Education

- PROPOSITION: Create a Strategic Education Resources Administrator charged with coordinating *all* aspects of education, balancing federal and local missions.

- LOCATION: Not in ED or executive branch, but perhaps in oversight entity like the Government Accountability Office
- FUNCTION:
 - representing *all* aspects of education, not just languages; supplement to language expert within the Department of Education
 - address language study as part of a more general area, *the arts and humanities* together, balanced off the sciences and social sciences.
- MISSION:
 - To coordinate stakeholders (business, academe, government, and local entities) and adjudicate accountability
 - Administrating language and other expertises as "strategic reserves" or "strategic resources" fostered by education not only for security purposes or current market issues, but also as long-term assets to be maintained at readiness, even if not immediately required
 - like FDIC, fostering "effective management of strategic resources" including human capital, financial and infrastructure resources, information technology, risk management
 - adjudicating policy and resources tradeoffs originating from any of its significant stakeholders as an interlocked set of demands on establishment and maintenance of strategic education resources.
- GOAL:
 - Tying federal funding and policy accountability into local funding and stakeholder accountability under comprehensive "best practices" models
 - To bring locally established standards (including criteria for performance/under-performance) into transparent national comparisons with peers, best-practice planning, financial and social planning
 - To iterate between short-term and long-term planning for fiscal accountability and response to newly emerging needs
 - To set up transparency on education costs and benefits, including:
 - Plans with benchmark levels, appealing to precise research bases for design validation, outcomes assessment, articulation among levels, plans for human resources involved (e.g., teacher [re-]training)
 - Move away from "core curriculum" as set-asides into a more flexible curricular framework, designed like *Standards* projects around functions (and probably treating *clusters* of subjects as alternative and tradeoffs)
 - Clear triggers for implementation of exit/transition strategies, sunset reviews, retraining, revision, [voluntary/involuntary] opt-out from federal scrutiny and federal funding.

4. Function of Administrator: Accountability, Adjudication, Suasion

- Routine auditing and reporting on outcomes for *public scrutiny* as ground for policy and funding calls at all levels (public "outing" actual situations and allowing for comparisons)
- Adjudication of progress/lack thereof in terms of plans and benchmarks set by local entities, national best-practices norms, fiscal accountability, expert assessments for outcomes at levels, local ability to provide basic services
- Critical exercise of central, long-term strategic planning, to sustain resources in face of "immediate needs" (asserted by government [e.g., DoD], individuals [e.g. culture-lobby, business-lobby], or academe [earmarks for "academic freedom" or "pure

- research" without outcomes accountability])
- Tying post-secondary education, scholarship, and research into public space as generating models for future best-practices, outcome assessments, definitions of and stewardship of strategic resources
- Comprehensive review of funding for expert scholarship, research, archival stewardship, media accessibility and post-secondary education (including NEA, NEH grants, Fulbright, etc.), including
 - Justification of research in terms of long-or short-term stewardship of public interests, not just within its own disciplines
 - Local and national accountability for iterating K-12 with post-secondary education, development, and a strategic reserve of innovation
- Public advocacy for sharing, imposition of public peer pressure, relating *rights* and *accountability*.

❖ **Dennis Looney**

I. Challenges

- Challenges of promoting FL study K-16 by federal decree
- Challenges caused specifically by NCLB

II. Three models of federalism

- 'layer cake'
- 'marble cake'
- 'Christmas cookies' (?)

III. Centralization at the local level: the third model of federalism at work

- Successful models of federalism adapted to the local level
 - How school-based perspectives can shape foreign language education policy (Donato and Tucker)
- Building support rather than creating resistance
- Beware of tokenism and marginalized inclusion
 - Perils of marginalization in the 'inclusive syllabus' (Ditmar)

IV. The European Union and its supranational redefinition of federalism

- Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)
- A possible fourth model of federalism

❖ **Catherine Porter**

Challenge

identifying an interlocutor to represent FL professional concerns to federal agencies

Obstacles: numbers and diversity of concerns within profession

One approach

- (1) Identify common goal
- (2) Develop structure and strategy for working toward goal

Proposed goal

Introduce FL education into K-12 core curriculum throughout US

Advantages

- (1) Would solve or alleviate most problems currently facing post-secondary FL educators
 - a) Shift in focus from lower- to upper-level work
 - b) Experienced FL learners = more capable learners
 - c) Advanced proficiency levels within reach
 - d) Increased numbers for study abroad
 - e) Broader upper-level curricular choices
- (2) Would address many aspects of current “language deficit” at the national level
 - a) Larger pool of people with FL proficiency to meet crises
 - b) Larger pool of people with FL proficiency available to teach
 - c) Larger pool of people with FL proficiency to meet the everyday needs of government and business
 - d) Citizenry experienced in seeing the world through the lens of at least one language and culture other than English

Obstacles

- (1) Need to build a consensus, change the culture
- (2) Need to resolve practical issues at local level
 - (a) starting age/grade level
 - (b) choice of language
 - (c) choice of methodology/materials
 - (d) recruitment of teachers
 - (e) adaptation to diverse student bodies
 - (f) assessment of outcomes
 - (g) financing

Proposed approach

- (1) Establish working group/task force through JNCL-NCLIS
 - (a) prepare position statement summarizing the arguments in favor of incorporating foreign language education into the K-12 core curriculum in the United States (Resources: ERIC, NFLC, other)
 - (b) develop strategies for mobilizing our memberships to undertake advocacy efforts aimed at influencing federal, state, and local policies and practices at the K-12 level. Examples:
 - (i) study and publicize approaches used in other nations
 - (ii) publicize and encourage replication of existing programs
 - (iii) introduce and publicize new model programs
 - (iv) seek out and reward FL competence in schools and in the workplace
 - (v) orchestrate support at the local, state, and federal levels for measures that would further our goal (e.g., legislation such as H.R. 2111, the “Foreign Language Partnership Program”)

Summary: agreement on common goal and multi-level plan of action to pursue it will give the profession a way to represent some of its concerns effectively at the federal level