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List of abbreviations

AHS	short for <i>Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule</i> [Academic Secondary School]
BIFIE	short for <i>Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation und Entwicklung des Bildungswesens</i> [Federal Institute for Educational Research, Innovation and the Development of the Educational System]
BMB	short for <i>Bundesministerium für Bildung</i> [Austrian Ministry of Education], 2016-2018.
BMBWF	short for <i>Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung</i> [Austrian Ministry of Education, Science and Research], 2018-today, 26 July 2019.
BMBWK	short for <i>Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur</i> [Austrian Ministry of Education, Science and Culture], 2000-2007.
BMUK	short for <i>Bundesministerium für Unterricht und kulturelle Angelegenheiten</i> [Austrian Ministry of Teaching and Cultural Affairs], 1994-2000.
BMUKK	short for <i>Bundesministerium für Unterricht Kunst und Kultur</i> [Austrian Ministry of Teaching, Art and Culture], 2007-2014.
CEFR	short for Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CLT	short for Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	short for English as a Foreign Language
ELT	short for English Language Teaching
ESOL	short for English for Speakers of Other Languages
FCE	short for First Certificate of English, a standardised exam that tests B2 English skills
HAK	short for <i>Handelsakademie</i> [Secondary School for Business Administration], a 5-year vocational school with a strong business focus that ends with the Austrian baccalaureate.
ILB	short for <i>Individueller Lernbegleiter</i> [personal learning coach]
ISLA	short for Instructed Second Language Acquisition
LBVO	short for <i>Leistungsbeurteilungsverordnung</i> [Regulation for Student Assessment], a legal document that regulates assessment in schools.
LPP	Language policy and language planning
NMS	short for <i>Neue Mittelschule</i> [New Middle School]
NOST	short for <i>Neue Oberstufe</i> [New Upper Secondary], for a detailed account see chapter 2.2.
SLA	short for Second Language Acquisition

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1 Introduction

Following the Covid-19 lockdown, the Austrian government released a guideline for the reopening of schools in autumn 2020. In it, the reader finds the following statement:

Pädagoginnen und Pädagogen dürfen und sollen sich Zeit nehmen, um gute Lernvoraussetzungen in der Klasse zu schaffen. Nicht der Wortlaut des Lehrplans und nicht die Seitenanzahl des Schulbuchs sollen das Lerntempo bestimmen, sondern die fachliche Expertise der Lehrkraft ist für die Unterrichtsplanung ausschlaggebend. Die Lehrerinnen und Lehrer wissen am zuverlässigsten, welches Stoffgebiet und welcher Stoffumfang im „Corona-Herbst“ in einer Klasse machbar ist. (BMBWF 2020: 12)

Although one might think that teachers have always planned lessons geared towards students and their learning pace, this is in stark contrast to recent educational reforms. Since the 2000s, Austria has seen a wave of standardisation measures, including the semi-standardised Matura¹, some curricular changes as well as educational standards. Teachers must meet criteria for all these individual policies because they are the foundation for the oral and written English Matura, for which students must be prepared accordingly to be admitted to tertiary education. Hence, teachers are faced with a dilemma: Should they fulfil standards and meet the requirements of educational policies or should they rather focus on their students, an adequate progression of content and a suitable pace in class? And if both are possible, to what extent do they value one over the other?

These are questions English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers must ask themselves on a regular basis when they plan a lesson. The dilemma is not always easily resolved, since there are a multitude of aspects that deserve consideration, including the students' needs at a given time, the context in which the lesson is taught as well as a teacher's beliefs and their ideas about language teaching and language acquisition (cf. Nation & Macalister 2010: 3). However, models of planning and curriculum design, such as the one by Nation & Macalister and many others (cf. Dubin & Olshtain 1986; Richards 2001; Yalden 1987), neglect the fact that languages are taught in an institutional setting that is governed by policies and regulations. Although Dubin & Olshtain include some reflections on language choice and the societal value of the taught language in their curriculum model, they do not consider acquisition policies and policies that affect the learning of languages, but rather focus on the status of languages.

¹ Matura refers to the Austrian school leaving examination after high school, similar to the baccalauréat in France or the A-levels in Britain.

Thinking critically about language policy is particularly important since different agents, discourse groups and institutions, i.e., teachers, schools and the Ministry of Education, have varying convictions and opinions. These conflicting ideologies can create tensions between the different agents involved (cf. Ricento & Hornberger 1996: 409). Widdowson (2012: 4) points this out and remarks that teachers feel reluctant towards change and “fashions [that] come and go”, but are expected to comply with them, nonetheless. Policies that were put in place, such as curricula, often need to be adapted to the school context. This is because they are generally created by a group of professionals and policy makers who, naturally, cannot be aware of all teaching contexts for which their policies are made. William (2011: 13) stresses that and claims that “a bad curriculum well taught is invariably a better experience for students than a good curriculum badly taught: **pedagogy trumps curriculum**”. Thus, teachers must ask themselves if it is better to strictly follow the language policies in place and by consequence focus on preparing students for tests or should they rather prioritise students’ needs and consider what works best in their own experience. More broadly speaking, what effect do language acquisition policies have on lesson planning?

These questions are vital because teachers are, after all, the agents that implement each and every educational reform, be it a change of the curriculum, a change in the organisation of the courses or new methods that are in vogue. They are the ones who organise, guide and evaluate the learning of students in the classroom. This makes them key figures in education and therefore also the centre of this paper.

Especially with regards to EFL in Austrian Secondary Schools for Business Administration², there is a disparity between the students’ needs and the teaching requirements, i.e., the requirements of the Business English Curriculum. Since students transfer to HAK from all sorts of different schools, their initial level of proficiency varies greatly. Therefore, individual support and revision of basic language functions are a crucial element of the instruction, especially in the first years. Moreover, learners are taught Business English, which does not necessarily relate to the experiences and interests of adolescents as most of them have not had any kind of work experience in companies when it is introduced. Also, the curriculum defines that a B2 level must be achieved at the end of year 5 (BMUKK 2014: 29), a language level that refers to a pass, not a pass with

² Germ. *Handelsakademie*, henceforth HAK

distinction, the latter being closer to a B2+ or C1 level. Until 2014, the HAK curriculum even stated that C1 had to be attained for some skills (BMBWK 2004: 14), which was also the curriculum on which the new semi-standardised Matura was based. As a result, the gap that must be bridged in English between year one and the Matura is considerable. The main focus of this paper will be on the influence of such acquisition policy on EFL in HAK.

This is particularly important since there is a lack of research on acquisition policy in Upper Secondary Vocational Schools in Austria. While research has been carried out on Austrian language policy with regards to status and corpus planning, as well as multilingualism, early instructed language learning, English as a Lingua Franca, CLIL, interculturality, didactics and language testing (cf. Dalton-Puffer, Faistauer & Vetter 2009: 183), there is little to no research on how language policies influence Upper Secondary³ teachers. Also, there is general research on how teachers plan lessons and what a good lesson ought to be, however **to the author's knowledge**, there is none on how language policies affect teachers and their planning.

The purpose of this thesis is therefore to answer the following research question: To what extent and how do language policies affect lesson planning of EFL teachers in Austrian Upper Secondary Schools of Business Administration? In order to answer this question, the theory part will review current language policy research and define lesson planning and its role in teaching. Furthermore, the theory section will be supplemented by case studies of language policies in Austria to draw a picture of the teaching context of this study. **This will form the basis of a qualitative investigation of teachers' lesson planning habits and how they are influenced by implemented language policies.**

2 Language policy and ELT in Austria

We are living in a world that is increasingly interconnected where communication is instant and where we are confronted with a multitude of languages in our everyday life. In this globalised world, English has established itself as a Lingua Franca that is used by both, native speakers and non-native speakers of English to facilitate communication around the world. Thus, learning English has increased in popularity and turned into one

³ The term Upper Secondary refers to year nine to 13 in school education in Austria; the term Lower Secondary to year five to eight.

of the main pillars of the education of children and young adults in Austria. According to Statistik Austria, English was taught to 97.8 percent of Austrian students in secondary education, which consists of Lower and Upper Secondary, and to 99.9 percent of all HAK students in the school year 2017/2018 (Gumpoldsberger & Sommer-Binder 2020: 229).

Since English has become an integral part of the Austrian educational system at all levels, the government has also introduced a variety of policies that try to regulate its learning. In most recent years, the curricula and regulations that have been put in place restricted and standardised the teaching and testing of English in Austria, a trend that is popular in many countries these days. In order to properly investigate these policies and their effect on the planning of English lessons, the following section will provide a theoretical overview of language policy research with a special focus on educational policies.

Language policy research has a long history and developed into many directions. It originated in the analysis of the use of language in certain contexts and efforts to influence that particular language use, as first described by sociolinguists (cf. Spolsky 2003: 4). This often involved the analysis of government legislation. Baring these origins in mind, Spolsky (2003: 5) argues that language policies consider three different areas, namely the language practices of a speech community, its beliefs or ideologies and the specific rules and regulations that are established to manage these beliefs and practices. His definition focuses on language use and how it is being regulated by the community, e.g., by selecting an official dialect or making a certain dialect the language of administration and official exchanges. Spolsky acknowledges that such policies can also be informal involving a social component.

In contrast, other researchers perceive language policies to be a set of rules established by an authority (e.g., Kaplan & Baldauf 1997: xi). Those rule-driven policies are often referred to as status planning, which is the regulation of the use of a language in specific situations, e.g., regulating the language of instruction and exams. In contrast to that, corpus planning refers to the regulation of a language standard, involving lexis, grammar and spelling (cf. Kloss 1969: 81). Although these forms of language planning have been driving research in the last decades, they will not be the focus of this paper. Clearly, they are important in language teaching, since corpus planning provides language teachers with the norms they must convey in their lessons and status planning created the language model that students must emulate. Nevertheless, they do not directly influence

how the language is taught and tested. They rather play a role in the design of a national curriculum which teachers have to accept and follow. Therefore, both status and corpus planning are not within the scope of this research paper.

Hornberger (1994: 78) developed a six-dimensional model **on the basis of Kloss's** initial ideas, adding acquisition planning, the regulation of how languages are consumed and learnt. Acquisition planning is particularly useful in the context of this paper since language education is an integral part of it. However, in **Hornberger's** terms, it also includes aspects like media, work and literature, which represent contexts in which a language is 'acquired' or rather consumed. In her model she further distinguishes language policies that focus on form in contrast to those which focus on function. Corpus planning, for example, involves the standardisation of spelling, which is a form aspect, whereas the distinction of certain styles and lexical choices is considered a functional focus. She further refers to form elements as policy planning and to the functional ones as cultivation planning. This paper will only deal with the form aspect of acquisition planning, i.e., the way languages are learnt in Upper Secondary and what norms, regulations and policies have been put in place in order to organise this learning process. Even though language cultivation is a direct result of instruction in school, e.g., school teaches in which contexts what style and variety of a language is appropriate, it will not be dealt with in this thesis.

With regards to schools and language teaching, Kaplan & Berlauf (1997: 8-9) developed a model that revolves around education, arguing that education is always one of the agents driving reform and language policies. They depict six different components of educational language policy: (1) the curriculum, determining what languages and to what extent they are taught, (2) the staff and their education, (3) the population and who is going to be taught what exactly, (4) the methodology that is used for the teaching, (5) the assessment that is carried out and finally (6) the political support behind policies, be it financial or by lobbying. While (1), (2), (3) and (6) are the prerequisites, usually found in a policy document, (4) and (5) concern teaching practice and the teacher carrying out and implementing what has been decided on further up in the hierarchy. García & Menken (2010: 255-256) depict a similar relationship between "**agents (educators and students) and elements (curriculum and resources) [which] are interrelated (through many different sociological and psychological processes)**". This suggests that teachers play a crucial role in the implementation of educational policies since they are the agents who put policies

Genesis	top-down macro-level policy developed by some governing or authoritative body or person	bottom-up micro-level or grassroots generated policy for and by the community that it impacts
Means and goals	overt Overtly expressed in written or spoken policy texts	covert Intentionally concealed at the macro-level (collusive) or at the micro-level (subversive)
Documentation	explicit Officially documented in written or spoken policy texts	implicit Occurring without or in spite of official policy texts.
In law and in practice	de jure policy “in law”; officially documented in writing	de facto policy “in practice”; refers to both the locally produced policies that arise without or in spite of de jure policies and local language practices that differ from de jure policies; de facto practices can reflect (or not) de facto policies.

Table 1 – Johnson 2013: 10, Types of language policy

into practice and who are usually made responsible for their success or failure. Their role is to build the bridge between the actual policy and the students for whom it was created in the first place. Thereby, they work towards the greater goal of changing society, e.g., by ensuring a national or even European standard of language skills or by promoting change through dealing with societal issues during class. It is those educational policies which influence ELT directly and which this thesis shall deal with in depth.

The triangular relationship between students, teachers and content mentioned above is similar to one of the most basic concepts in pedagogy, the didactic triangle by Friedrich Herbart (quoted in Kansanen & Meri 1999: 6-7) whose model dates back to the turn of the 18th century. It shows that the relationship between students and content is not the same as the one between teachers and content. As a result, teacher intervention is needed to make sense of the content. In terms of educational policies, the subject area is what society and policy makers have chosen it to be, thus content itself is a policy. For instance, in 2020, when the Austrian government presented their programme (Austrian **People’s Party**; **The Green Party**: 2020), aspects such as language education, climate change, sustainability, citizenship education, financial literacy and media literacy were made key aspects in the revision of the next curricula. Of course, the political agendas of The Greens (sustainability and climate change) as well as of the **People’s Party** (financial literacy, language education with an emphasis on German skills) will be reinforced in

those new curricula. What is taught at school and how it is done is therefore influenced by politicians and their stance on issues. **Herbart's triangle**, in return, becomes a model of language policy implementation, where the subject area becomes the language policy.

In order to narrow down the scope of this paper further, Johnson's (2013: 9-12) distinction of types of language policy is useful. His framework is particularly helpful to understand what language planning for Austrian Upper Secondary Schools looks like. In the following, this terminology as presented in table 1 shall be outlined using examples related to the Austrian school system to get an overview of the current language policies in effect.

Firstly, Johnson introduces two ways to create and implement policies, either through a bottom-up or a top-down process. Most language policies in Upper Secondary are top-down ones. The Austrian educational system is highly hierarchically organised and has five major levels (see figure 1). Whenever a policy is implemented, it has to pass through all five levels until it arrives at the base. In this context, Schober et al. (2018: 460) distinguish between the macro-level, which refers to national politics and the educational system, the meso-level which encompasses all the institutions involved, such as the school board of each province or an individual school itself, and the micro level, which consists of the individuals who carry out a policy. Regarding the effectiveness of such policies, Schober et al. (2018: 461) point out that they can be quite ineffective because the involved agents at the micro-level may not fully understand certain fundamental ideas behind a policy or do not deem new policies effective or suitable for their work at school. Blumenfeld et al. (2000: 162) conclude in their case study on implementing new technology into the classroom that research-based policies which are a result of a collaboration between the practice communities and the policy makers work best. In

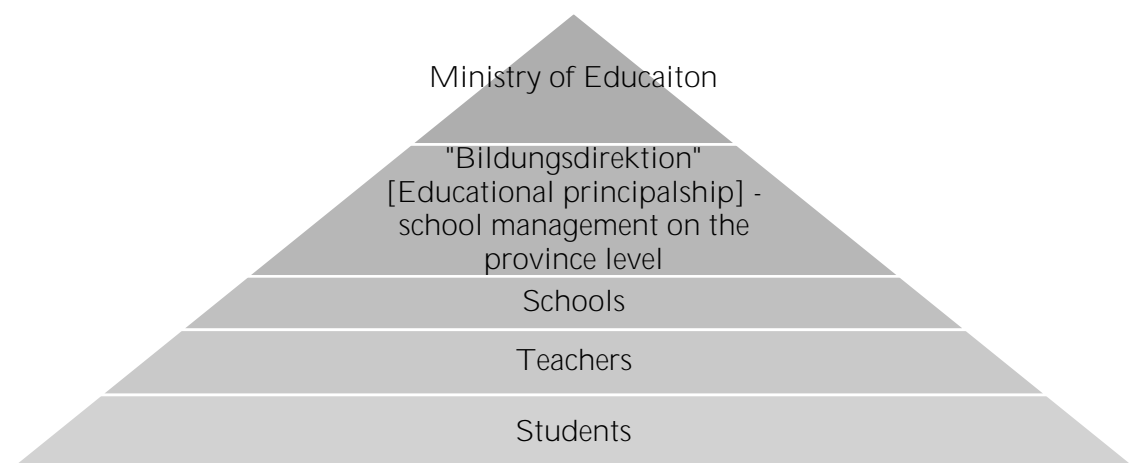


Figure 1 – Hierarchical structure of the Austrian School System

Schober et al.'s terms, all levels, micro, meso and macro, must be involved in the planning process in order for each level to comprehend a policy in its entirety in the end.

However, this does not necessarily mean that research and bottom-up policy making alone help avoid any tensions. In Austria, many school related policies are developed by task forces that involve teachers from all over the country, yet they are not necessarily more successful. The Austrian Matura, for example, was developed by a group of professionals of and around the University of Innsbruck. Nevertheless, it had to overcome political/sociocultural, technical and practical issues during the planning and implementation phase (cf. Spöttl et al. 2016: 10). Also factors outside the school system, for example, media coverage, can influence policies and policy making (cf. Spöttl et al. 2016: 15-16). Although there are many studies and evaluations of policies, there is no set recipe that could be used for their creation and successful implementation. One key factor seems to be the involvement of practitioners but since teaching contexts vary throughout Austria, what is suitable for one school, might not be ideal for another. More research is needed in this area to ensure the success of changes to come.

Johnsons further distinguishes between overt and covert policies, overt being such policies that clearly state their aims and how they should be implemented, whereas covert policies are not clearly communicated or have a hidden agenda. In Austria, most major language policies concerning ELT are overt, often implementing European decisions. For example, the Matura was a logical consequence of the Bologna Process and important to standardise the admission to universities throughout the European Union. In the same way, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (henceforth CEFR) was implemented as a means to make language learning within Europe measurable and comparable.

In contrast, some covert policies can be found on the individual school level. For instance, Austrian Upper Secondary Schools offer a small variety of second foreign languages in response to trends in the school market. In 2017/2018, the most prominent languages in HAKs were Italian (34.9 % of students), French (31.2 %) and Spanish (27.3 %) (Gumpoldsberger & Sommer-Binder 2020: 299). However, this offer is not solely based on the importance of those languages for the economy. According to the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, in 2019, Austria's main trade partners that do not have either German or English as their official language are Italy, China, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, the Netherlands and France, presented in a descending order with regards to

trade volume (cf. Wirtschaftskammer Österreich 2020: 9). Learning the languages of those countries might improve the job opportunities of young adults and thus benefit the Austrian economy, however, only two languages of the seven countries mentioned above are taught in schools on a large scale. This suggests that policies about the offer of second foreign languages are not primarily based on the economic importance of those languages for Austria. Especially schools in urban areas where there are several schools of the same type near each other will provide a selection of those to create a selling point. Thus, the main goal of those school policies is therefore to attract new students with languages that are becoming increasingly popular, such as Spanish⁴ (cf. Statistik Austria as quoted in Der Standard 2019).

However, the agenda behind the offer of foreign languages has changed in recent history. After the Second World War the choice of foreign language in an Austrian school was largely dependent on the region and by which one of The Allies it was occupied (cf. Engelbrecht 1988: 407-408). The occupiers wanted to spread their respective languages, while the occupied people wanted to show their goodwill by learning them. For instance, the *Gymnasium der Stiftung der Theresianischen Akademie*, a prestigious Viennese private school, was occupied by Soviet troops in 1945 and received its own section in the AHS curriculum that allows it to teach three mandatory foreign languages as well as Latin. In 1962 it was included in the Federal law of Private Schools which stated that the languages of the occupying forces, English, French and Russian, were compulsory subjects (cf. Gymnasium der Stiftung der Theresianischen Akademie 2020). Overall, the choice of second foreign languages on offer has largely been dependent on language policy, be it on the macro or meso level. As could be seen, the intentions are often covert in nature, such as the offer of second foreign languages for marketing or political purposes.

Apart from the genesis and the goals of policies, Johnson also reflects on the type of documentation they can have. The documentation can be either explicit, like curricula, or implicit, such as verbal agreements. Johnson (2013: 10) also refers to them as official/unofficial policies. In Austria, language policy documents tend to use vague language, thus each individual school or rather each English department needs to interpret

⁴ In the school year 2012/2013, the distribution of the romance languages in Austrian HAKs looked as follows: Italian was learnt by 35.5 % of the students, French by 36.8 % and Spanish by 22.0 % (Gumpoldsberger & Nitsch 2015: 269). In only five years, the number of students studying French decreased by about 5 %, whereas the number of Spanish students increased by about the same. The number of students studying Italian remained stable.

and adapt them for their own setting. This leads to additional implicit policies that help to execute explicit ones within the boundaries of the law, e.g., agreements of teachers about how to develop and administer tests, what coursebooks to use to be able to meet the criteria outlined in the curriculum, or what grading scheme to apply. Furthermore, educational policies in Austria differ by province, most of which have their own inspector for languages who tries to maintain quality standards. In Vienna, they usually meet with the head of each English department at least once a year to discuss, develop and plan the implementation of province-wide regulations. Only a few of the results of those meetings are put into writing and circulated as guidelines, but most are spread through department meetings in each individual school and are finally implemented by the teachers.

Furthermore, Johnson provides a distinction between policies depending on the hierarchical level at which they were created. He uses the term *de jure* for policies that have been passed by law and *de facto* for “what actually happens in reality” (Johnson 2013: 11). Whereas teachers need to or rather should abide by the law and follow *de jure* policies like the curriculum and the Regulation for Student Assessment (*Leistungsbeurteilungsverordnung*, henceforth LBVO) among others, *de facto* agreements are necessary for the implementation of official policies. For example, the 2014 HAK curriculum introduced competence descriptors for each semester that defined the goals using mainly the CEFR as a template. In order to implement those, teachers did not only have to adapt what they had been teaching, making the five skills of the CEFR fundamental pillars of their classroom practice, but also adapt their grading and the way they tested. Often there are agreements within a department on what and how to grade, although those are not necessarily compulsory. However, they serve to standardise processes within a school, so students within one institution are treated equally irrespective of the educator who teaches the class.

In addition, teachers must deal with a third type of policy, namely guidelines. Those are policies in writing, created by an institution affiliated with the government, which specify *de jure* policies, but which are not legally binding. In contrast to *de facto* policies, they are created high up the hierarchy, but can be overruled or adapted by a school’s English department. In Austria, some examples of these guidelines were created by the Centre of Vocational Languages (*Center für berufsbezogene Sprachen* or CEBS), the Austrian Centre for Languages (*Österreichisches Sprachenzentrum* or ÖSZ), or even the Ministry of Education itself. Even though the CEBS published a comprehensive guideline

for the oral Matura in foreign languages, it emphasises that their document is only a supplement to what was stated by officials (cf. Piribauer et al. 2019: 4). Similarly, the guideline for the compilation of English tests in Schools of Business Administration stresses that it is “work in progress” (Kislinger-Lanzendorfer, Mangold-Renner & Weitensfelder 2015: 4) and does not claim to be comprehensive. In practice, tests and oral Matura exams are often compiled according to the guidelines agreed on within the English department of a school, which are in turn inspired by and based on de jure and other explicit policy documents. The place of guidelines is to provide best practice examples and a certain baseline which educators can use to make informed choices. It becomes evident that all three, de jure policies, de facto policies and guidelines are needed for a school to run properly.

At this point, however, it must be stressed again that the teacher is key in educational language planning, as Kennedy (1983: xi) notes:

At the focal point in educational language planning is the teacher, since it is the successful application of curriculum and syllabus plans in the classroom, themselves instruments of higher levels of language planning, that will affect the realization of national level planning.

Whatever the policy, educators are the ones who implement it or decide not to do so. Thus, it can be conjectured that teachers are not only responsible for a policy's success but also for its downfall when their beliefs and convictions are not mirrored in language policy. Therefore, they need to be taken into consideration in order to make successful changes to the educational system.

On the whole, educational policies set a framework and thus boundaries for what teachers may or may not do while official guidelines and agreements among teachers specify them further. Thus, de jure and de facto policies supplement each other to come up with a common practice for teachers. In the following, two of the most impactful policies of recent years will be discussed, namely the new semi-standardised Matura and the Modular Upper Secondary System, which will serve as examples for the influence of policies on teaching.

2.1 The CEFR, national curricula and the Austrian Matura

The Council of Europe shaped language teaching worldwide with the publication of the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe 2001) whose language levels were implemented in national curricula within a few years after its publication.

Already in 2004, Austria adopted this six-level scale in the curriculum for Austrian HAKs which stated, most generally, that a B2 level must be reached at the Matura (BMBWK 2004: 14)⁵. In contrast, the curriculum before that defined the competences that had to be acquired in terms of communicative situations, most of which were business related (cf. BMUK 1994: 20).

Case studies were used in year four and five which either formed the basis of a teaching sequence or were used as an end-of-the-unit task to evaluate **students' progress**. Those situations based on the principles of task-based learning are elaborate Business English tasks which require the integrated use of the four skills⁶. Such case studies were also the basis for the Austrian Matura in a HAK before the introduction of its semi-standardised form in 2014. Until that date, translating and summarising texts in the foreign language were also part of language teaching, a practice that has been neglected by more recent teaching approaches and initiatives by universities and the government. The latter have been promoting the individual rather than the interconnected training and assessment of the four core skills as well as Communicative Language Teaching (henceforth CLT).

With the adoption of CLT based approaches, language curricula have also become much more rigorous over the years. The appendix shows the last three iterations for the language curriculum of year III in HAK. Simply from a length perspective, the curriculum of 1994 covers a quarter of a page whereas the current one from 2014 is about 1.5 pages long. Curriculum designers have added much more detail over the years. In 1994, a teacher did not necessarily have to read the curriculum in detail. It comprised vague goals and topics which left a lot of room for interpretation. On the one hand, this made the teachers particularly free in their choice of topics and content, enabling them to deal with current affairs whenever they wanted. On the other hand, they did not have clear guidelines concerning the inclusion of the four skills in their lessons so some may have even been disregarded. In contrast, the curriculum of 2004, even though not specifying content all

⁵ Austria has a tendency to change the name of the Ministry of Education with each new government that is appointed. All the abbreviations starting with BM... indicate the respective Ministry of Education at the time the cited text was published. For a detailed overview, consult the list of abbreviations.

⁶ The CEFR mentions five skills, namely listening, reading, writing, monological speaking and dialogical speaking, and sometimes also includes mediation. In the context of this paper, monological and dialogical speaking will be subsumed under the term speaking resulting in four core skills with regards to teaching and learning languages.

that much, is the first to indicate text types and what had to be achieved with regards to listening, speaking and writing. It also emphasised project work and case studies. Furthermore, IT had to be part of the English lessons and a connection to the practice firm, i.e., a business subject where a company is simulated throughout a year, had to be established. The current curriculum dating back to 2014 takes a much more rigorous approach by defining domains that must be covered throughout a semester, combining those with descriptors taken and adapted from the CEFR. A standardisation process can be observed which is based on the CEFR and its implementation in Austria. Furthermore, the changes from 1994 onwards resulted in a standardisation in HAK ELT, that would soon be followed by the semi-standardised Matura.

The Matura dates back to 2010 when its implementation was passed in the Austrian Parliament. At the beginning it was a project of the University of Innsbruck which developed its components and the test formats for English, a responsibility that was later transferred to the Federal Institute for Educational Research (BIFIE). Furthermore, the Matura is part of the implementation of the European Qualification Framework that was launched in 2008 by the European Parliament, an initiative that tries to make education and qualifications throughout the European Union comparable (cf. BMUKK 2011: viii). Its aim is to make the results of different school leaving exams comparable and it is supposed to increase the objectivity and transparency of the marking of student performances (cf. BMB 2016). Also, it anchored competences as the basic measurements of achievement in education (cf. BMB 2016), thereby shifting the final teaching goal from managing known situations that have been practiced in class, to being able to manage tasks that are related to domains which do not directly mirror covered content. For instance, a teacher might discuss advertising techniques and analyse advertisements, however, the Matura might require from a student to come up with a marketing plan which applies those techniques. This meant that topics would not be covered in detail over the course of a month. Teachers would rather apply a general approach where the emphasis was not so much on content but managing unknown situations. The goal of the 2010 Matura was thus to shift teaching to spontaneous production rather than memorisation and reproduction.

In addition to the Matura, the CEFR inspired several tools that should aid to evaluate language competences along the way. Firstly, *Bildungsstandards* for Lower Secondary English were introduced, which set the level for the end of the fourth year of

formally studying English to A2+. This has helped standardise language teaching and provide practitioners with a goal for their teaching and materials to assess those standards (cf. Brock et al. 2011: 7-9). These standards also exist for the exit level in year five of all vocational schools and specify a B2 level as a minimum requirement for all students (cf. Bajalan et al. 2011: 17), while also providing reference tasks for evaluation purposes. Secondly, the European Language Portfolio (ESP), also based on the CEFR, was introduced as a reflection tool for students. Its purpose was not only to motivate them and reinforce their interest in foreign languages but also to promote autonomous language learning (cf. Abuja et al. 2007: 8). It consists of reflection tasks about **students' individual language biography and language learning**, as well as descriptors for the different CEFR levels which are intended to foster understanding **about each individual's personal progress**. Both the ESP and the *Bildungsstandards* pave the way for the Matura and help to set goals for language teachers and for students.

Despite these advances, there has been a lot of criticism, especially with regard to the Matura. Firstly, it was claimed that the exam lacked objectivity since the correction of the papers is still done by the teacher who last taught the respective subject and not by an independent body (cf. Engelbrecht 2015: 228; Die Presse 2014). Hughes (2003: 50) also stresses that knowing a **student's name can influence** the test score and should therefore be avoided. Since teachers in Austria test their own students, this might impact their scoring and overall objectivity. There is even evidence that subject-teachers are not reliable scorers (cf. Die Presse 2015⁷). Hughes (2003: 47) further recommends continuous assessment of scorers themselves and stresses that “[i]ndividuals whose scoring deviates markedly and inconsistently from **the norm should not be used again**”. So far, however, Austrian language teachers are only provided with scoring seminars that can be attended voluntarily. Moreover, the considerable improvement from 12.1 per cent of students failing the written exam in vocational schools to 3.2 per cent failing in total after the *Kompensationsprüfung*⁸ (BMBWF cited in ORF News 2019) points towards a lack of

⁷ A mathematics teacher in an Austrian secondary school changed the answers of students to improve their scores and let them pass. A similar procedure is conceivable for closed question formats in the English Matura. Incidents like these could be easily avoided by establishing an **independent body to score papers thereby removing the influence of scorer's agendas in the grading process**, e.g., the wish that their students perform well or an anxiety over consequences for themselves if their students do not pass.

⁸ A *Kompensationsprüfung* is an exam consisting of a reading, a summarising and a speaking part whose purpose is to compensate a failing grade in the written Matura.

reliability of the whole examination procedure. Secondly, the exam also sparked some public controversy about the 60 per cent pass mark that is required (cf. Die Presse 2014) since traditionally, it had always been 50 per cent in school exams. Also, according to several official statements by legal experts (Kremser 2017: 132-133; Neuweg 2014: 72-75) there is no such thing as a legally binding 50 per cent pass mark. According to the LBVO (§ 14/5), the essentials have to be achieved for the most part, those being the essential competences defined in the curriculum. As long as they are clear, any type of percentage can be applied. Although each test item in the exam is benchmarked and assigned a certain CEFR level in this process, on the basis of which the total pass mark is calculated, this change was heavily criticised because the 60 per cent gave the impression that students are required to achieve better results than they were traditionally used to. Overall, the criticism that has been voiced points towards some still needed adaptations of the examination procedure. However, since the political machinery behind the Matura seems to be satisfied with the current state of affairs, intentions to revise the LBVO in the near future have been postponed.

This satisfaction is based on a particularly vague interpretation and evaluation of Matura figures each year. In press releases by the Ministry of Education, only percentages are given, however, the sample size is never indicated (see figure 2 for the results of vocational schools in summer 2019). The problem with this representation of data is threefold: (1) often the figures only show the results after the *Kompensationsprüfung* and not the actual results of the written exam, (2) students who take an oral English exam are not represented in that figure, and (3) students who take another exam than English are not included either. As a result, the figures are not representative of the entire final year of



Figure 2 – Matura results in vocational schools in 2019 (BMBWF 2019: 13)

each school type, but only show the results of the students who sat a written exam. Since, **in the author's experience**, only the most apt students take a written Matura exam in vocational schools such as HAK, it is questionable if these figures are representative of the English level of Austrian students in general. A further indicator of a worse performance of students in English is the overall pass rate for the Matura in the first sitting in summer each year. Since its introduction in vocational schools, the pass rate has dropped by approximately ten per cent from about 90 per cent to 80 percent (see figure 3). This is in stark contrast to the results of standardised exams in 2019 where Mathematics as the worst performing subject, had a pass rate of 95 per cent in vocational schools (BMBWF 2019a: 13). This might have a variety of causes since one failing grade in another Matura subject than English, be it an oral or written one, is enough to fail the entire Matura. However, the data suggests that students perform worse than the published Matura results indicate. Further investigation and a closer look at Matura results in English are needed, as the Matura figures are not an appropriate tool to prove that the B2 level as required by the *Bildungsstandards* is actually reached by every student.

Standardised testing also creates a washback effect on teaching that can either be positive or negative. Washback can be defined as the influence of testing on teaching and learning. While it can introduce an exaggerated focus on tested content, it can also be a way to ensure the implementation of policy by making neglected or new content part of a test (cf. Hughes 2003: 1-2). A study on Cambridge FCE classes in Greek language schools also showed that in the context of their exam preparation classes, students valued the

5 Reifeprüfungserfolgsquoten der Sommertermine

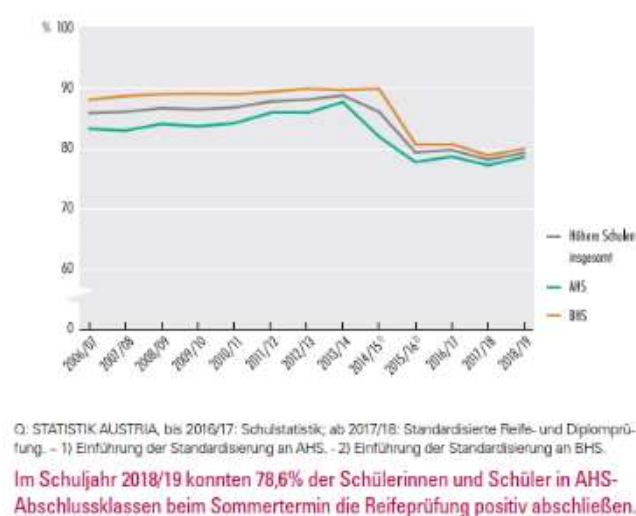


Figure 3 - Pass rate of the Austrian Matura over the years (Gumpoldsberger & Sommer-Binder 2020: 43)

prospect of getting a better job though the exam more than the actual language skills they acquired and suffered from more anxiety and stress because of the exam focus in class (Tsagari 2009: 7). Since the FCE is similar to the Matura in its composition and impact of results, this might also apply to Matura English classes. A beneficial effect of testing was found by Hamilton et al. (2008: 37) who reported that the administration of standardised tests results in an increase in competences of traditionally low-performing groups. However, in his study teachers also reported that they limit instruction to the tested content and timing according to the test schedule. Such a focus on tested content and test taking strategies in language classes, as well as an adaptation of coursebooks to meet those standards was found in several studies (cf. Shohamy 1993; Cheng 2010; Papakammenou 2018).

The Matura has had a considerable washback on the production of approved course books, which started to include the exam formats from 2010 onwards (e.g., Clarke, Cox & Zekl 2010; Tilbury et al. 2011). Those closely resemble the Cambridge ESOL test items, which have been used in their current form since the 1980s. Moreover, the Matura has reformed teaching, although there is an official recommendation communicated in teacher training seminars to avoid teaching to the test. It is not clear if test items are as useful to teach the four skills as they are to test them. Research does, however, suggest that preparing students to deal with test formats can be beneficial. This may counteract the **test method effect, that is any negative effect a test method may have on the test taker's** performance (Hughes 2003: 47-48). In contrast, standardised formats might not be suitable for teaching since they usually do not provide much freedom and fail to promote creativity. For instance, Watkins (2017: 33-34) is cautious about the use of standardised reading formats like multiple choice questions because they are less process oriented, less engaging and put emphasis on less relevant details. He also argues that they cause anxiety in students because they are linked to test situations. Furthermore, Rost (2016: 218) summarises listening research and draws five main conclusions for teaching. According to him, listening practice must (1) provide ample input from a variety of sources, (2) include personalised listening activities that motivate students to continue listening in the target language and (3) use tasks that encourage the collaborative negotiation of meaning (4) which also elicit language features (4) and practice listening strategies. Using exam task to develop listening skills is definitely a practice of strategies but does not fulfil the rest of the criteria if the practice is limited to completing the test items themselves. This would

speak against the extensive use of exam tasks for listening practice. Despite of that, there is no conclusive evidence whether exam tasks have a positive effect on the learning outcome or if they are superior to non-exam formats. What is obvious, though, is that the excessive use of exam formats moves teaching away from a more task-based or communicative approach to lessons. Whether this is beneficial to language learning or not remains up for debate.

The semi-standardised Matura is the final stage of the implementation of the CEFR. Next to several other measures, it helped move teaching in HAK away from grammar-translation and content-based lessons to teaching approaches focused on the four skills. However, the question remains whether abandoning an integrated skills approach, which is closer to task based and communicative methods, in favour of less free and highly guided task types is of any benefit for the classroom. Also, there has not been any research on how teachers have perceived the changes the semi-standardised Matura entailed. Only policy makers themselves have evaluated the Matura, who are biased. Shohamy (1993: 2) puts this as follows:

Policymakers in central agencies, aware of the authoritative power of tests, use them to manipulate educational systems, to control curricula, and to impose new textbooks and new teaching methods. At the school level, principals use tests to drive teachers to teach, and teachers use tests to force students to study.

As a result, teachers have to be careful and must find the right balance between a well-rounded language education and the requirements of the Matura. The one without the other can have dire consequences. On the one hand, not passing the final examination leaves students empty-handed with no school leaving certificate and fewer chances in the job market. On the other hand, neglecting communicative exercises in favour of highly structured exam tasks fails to make students competent in everyday life situations for which English is actually needed. Further research is needed in Austria to truly understand the washback of the Matura on **students'** competences and language teaching.

2.2 The New Upper Secondary System (NOST)

Not only examinations have an impact on teaching, but also the administration and organisation thereof. During the school year⁹ 2015/2016, and even earlier in a trial for some schools, the Austrian Ministry of Education introduced the MOST (*Modulare Oberstufe* or Modular Upper Secondary) which has recently been renamed NOST (*Neue Oberstufe*, engl. New Upper Secondary) and commences from year 10 onwards. It is a new administrative system that tries to restructure school subjects into distinctive modules of one semester each. In order to finish Upper Secondary Education and to receive a school leaving diploma, students need to pass every single module of each subject before they are eligible to take their finals. Any failed module entails a re-examination by the teacher of the respective subject that only covers the content areas and skills which the students failed to acquire (SchUG §22/5). Similar to university exams, students can re-sit them up to three times. In some cases, even a final fourth attempt is granted right before the Matura in year 13.

This is a reaction of Austrian politics to two main issues. Firstly, research has confirmed that there is no significant improvement in students' performances if they are held back an entire year; in some cases, their overall performance even worsens (cf. Hattie 2009: 97-99, Demanet & van Houtte 2016: 746). Moreover, class retention causes extra costs for parents, putting particular strain on families. Also, the government spends an estimated 8,666 € per child on the family allowance, the schoolbooks, free transportation and the costs that arise with another year of teaching according to an estimate by the Austrian Chamber of Labour (cf. Die Presse 2009). Therefore, the Austrian People's Party and the Social Democrats saw the need for change and passed a bill that would form the basis of the NOST put in place in 2012. After postponing the date for the implementation of the system several times, it has not been enforced nationwide as of September 2020. However, the government is preparing an amended version of the NOST bill and plans to introduce it in September 2021 (cf. Der Standard 2020).

There are seven goals that are supposed to be achieved with the NOST according to the Ministry of Education (cf. Dorninger et al. 2016: 4-5). **Firstly, an increase in students'**

⁹ For the sake of clarity, the nouns *mark* and *grade* will refer to the mark a student receives in a particular subject in an exam, at the end of a module or a school year, whereas the noun *year* will refer to the consecutive count of school years or the level students find themselves in, e.g., *a year one student*.

learning is expected since each failed module in a semester necessitates remedial actions. Therefore, students cannot skip studying at certain points during the school year. For example, getting a good grade in the first semester and doing only little work in the next is not possible, because there is no average grade at the end of the year that might compensate for any lack of revision. Secondly, the new system tries to foster responsibility in students as they need to take care of their learning more actively. This process of becoming self-sufficient is also supported by the introduction of *Individuelle Lernbegleiter* (ILB), who are teachers with a special training in mentoring. They try to help organise a students' learning processes in order to maximise the learning output and support students in managing their time and resources. Thirdly, the subdivision of the school year into semesters that are graded individually mirrors the organisation of tertiary education. This is supposed to make the transition from Upper Secondary to universities or to other tertiary programmes much easier. Fourthly, the early warning system (*Frühwarnung*) will entail an invitation to a meeting between the student, the legal guardians and the teacher in which they discuss pedagogical measures to prevent an impending failing mark (cf. SchUG §19/3a). Afterwards, students will be referred to the ILB coach, which promises optimal student support. Fifthly, any failed or ungraded module can be compensated for by taking exams. The student is entitled to two attempts; a third one can be granted, for which the examiner may be chosen from all the respective subject teachers at the school. Sixthly, the repetition of an entire year shall be avoided because it is seen as a loss of lifetime and valuable learning opportunities. This is realised by ensuring that students can advance to the next year if they only fail or are not graded in two modules per year¹⁰. Once in their school career they may advance with three failed or ungraded modules. However, all failed modules must be passed in later exams in order for them to advance further the following year. By the same token, it is a goal that prodigies can be promoted by making it possible for them to skip classes or to take Matura exams earlier in their school career by taking supplementary exams. Overall, the above goals are rather ambitious and certainly show the good intention of the Ministry of Education but come with challenges that need to be tackled as will be shown later.

¹⁰ It is important to note that in order to determine whether a student can advance to the next year, the grades of the modules and not a grade of the entire year are taken into consideration. This means, that if a student has a weakness in a particular subject and fails the winter and the summer term in this subject, this counts as two distinct failing grades. The failing grades can be in different subjects, though.

The actual system bears only a vague resemblance to the original plans put forward by its inventors. At the beginning, Elisabeth Gehrler (Austrian People's Party), a former Minister of Education, responded to a debate on the negative effects of repeating entire school years in *Der Standard* newspaper. It was argued that a modular system could solve this problem and that such a system had already been trialled at the *Graz International Bilingual School* (GIBS) since 1999 (cf. Der Standard 2003). There, it was conceptualised as an adaptation of the German or American school system where students had to choose core subjects and electives in Upper Secondary. Additionally, teacher tutors were tasked to help students choose subjects and supported them when aid was needed (cf. GIBS 2010). This system was further promoted by articles stating that repeating an entire year would be made nearly impossible (cf. Der Standard 2004) leading to a commitment of several schools to further trial a Modular Upper Secondary System. This original form was perceived as a means to create a school tailored to the needs of students in which Academic Secondary Schools (*Gymnasium*) could offer specialized subjects that would make them competitive with vocational schools in Austria. Those schools with a professional focus had previously become increasingly popular and accounted for 55.3 per cent¹¹ of the students in year nine in the school year 2000/2001, whereas only 22.4 per cent of students in their ninth year attended Academic Secondary Schools (Schwabe et al. 2010: 29). Similar to the 2019-NOST, this early version tried to eradicate class retention by offering students the possibility to retake only specific courses with the students in the year below them. Moreover, it provided coaches that would help work on timetables and studying programmes (cf. Der Standard 2007a). In Vienna, already four schools were trialling this modular system by 2006 and five more intended to participate the following year (Der Standard 2006). It must be noted that at no point schools were supported financially or otherwise in order to implement the new system, as was reported by Heidi Schrodtt, the former headmistress of BRG Rahlgasse (Der Standard 2007b); the changes were thought to be structural ones that the schools had to put into practice themselves. As of 2019, however, the current system is only an adaptation of what was planned in the

¹¹ This figure includes higher-level vocational schools, providing university entrance qualifications, as well as medium-level vocational schools, which do not provide access to universities. Higher-vocational schools were attended by 22.1 per cent of the students in year nine; 22.4 per cent of them attended medium-level vocational schools.

beginning. No new subjects have been introduced and only few schools have the means to offer courses that can be resat every semester.

Especially for language subjects, there are three main concerns that have arisen for teachers. Firstly, the dense curriculum that was introduced in HAKs in 2014 precisely states what each module has to cover (cf. BMUKK 2014: 34-42) restricting ELT to a fixed set of domains and skills descriptors that leave only little room to deal with students' needs and wishes or current topics (cf. appendix for a comparison between the curricula from 1994, 2004 and 2014). Secondly, it is possible for students to advance up to two years without ever having had a pass in English¹². Consequently, this leads to a situation where students are confronted with gaps that can only be bridged with extensive, extracurricular work. Thirdly, in case a student fails a module, teachers are required to compile exams which must only cover the competences and domains that the respective student has not yet mastered. This means teachers ought to personalise exam tasks which is rather labour intensive. As a result of those three issues, teachers must be much more vigilant in terms of when they teach what part of the curriculum and also work extra hours to compile and administer exams that are not paid extra. Advocates of the system claim that the extra workload could be minimised by reinforcing teacher collaboration with regards to lesson planning and exam preparation. Nevertheless, even a combined effort is not paid by the government, which in return means that teachers are pressured to increase their workload to be able to cope with the modular system.

A survey of vocational school teachers carried out by the teachers' union (cf. **Christian Teachers' Union** 2017: 1-2) reflects this strain. Three quarters of the respondents indicated that the new system does not increase the learning activity of students and has a rather negative effect on the learning outcome of weak performers. Teachers also criticised that transdisciplinary projects, individual support, and the discussion of current topics were nearly impossible. Two thirds of the teachers also indicated that they had to examine

¹² Such a scenario is possible because of a loophole in the law. Students are eligible for a so called *Aufstiegsklausel* after year nine. This is the permission to advance to the next year in case they only failed one particular subject. In the legal text, the *Aufstiegsklausel* is bound to the regulation that students have to repeat year ten if they receive a failing grade in the end-of-the-year report of year ten in the same subject for which they got the *Aufstiegsklausel*. Since there is no end-of-the-year report in year 10, because this is when the NOST replaces end-of-the-year reports with two semester reports, this rule does not take effect. In year ten, the students can then take advantage of a similar regulation in the NOST and advance to the next year if they only have deficits in one subject, possibly the same one as in year nine. It is only in year 11 that they will finally have to pass the failed modules in order to go on further. Such a scenario was also mentioned in Der Standard 2020.

students outside their scheduled lessons and that the time and administrative effort spent on the system was overwhelming. About 90 per cent of the teachers also agreed that weak performers would suffer from continuous stress. In a comment, one respondent even stated that for the 240 students in the NOST, there were 92 exams for one examination period. Overall, the survey showed the frustration of the educators involved and the increased amount of work that has emerged with the new modular system. According to them, students are put under a lot of pressure which may also account for a decrease in learning outcomes. This would need to be confirmed by data about the students themselves, though. Also, some of the questions asked in the survey were somewhat suggestive, therefore the results must be taken with a grain of salt. However, they clearly show a rather negative attitude of teachers towards the system.

As of January 2020, no detailed evaluation of the NOST has been made public. The University of Graz was tasked with an analysis of the system by the government, for which they carried out two online surveys with teachers but no report has been published yet. The government programme 2020-2024 by the Austrian **People's Party** and the Green Party (2020: 298) states that they will use the report to decide if the current NOST system will be introduced or whether they will abolish the system in favour of a "true modularisation", whatever that may be. In any case, they are bound to carry out an evaluation by law until 1 September 2021 (SchUG § 82e/4). There is a general lack of consensus whether the goals of the modular system have actually been achieved, so it is unclear what will become of the system.

As was shown by the survey of the teachers' union, there are several issues that have to be addressed by policy makers. For that purpose, a detailed evaluation of the system including teachers', administrators' and students' opinions is of utmost importance. While in principle the main goal of the NOST is to help students avoid class retention, scenarios are possible where they cannot cope with the workload anymore and have to leave school without ever graduating (cf. Der Standard 2020). Since exams to compensate for failing marks can be postponed until the Matura, **such a scenario is even possible in a student's** final year of school. Even though the bill that introduced the NOST for all forms of Upper Secondary has already been passed, there is still time for politicians to tackle the aforementioned issues. At this point, however, the future of the modular system is uncertain.

2.3 Matura, NOST and policy making

In the last two chapters, it has become apparent that policies have different effects on different levels of the school system. It could be seen that their implementation usually involves a top-down process. Although the semi-standardised Matura and the NOST were both originally created with the aid of educators, a true bottom-up process for national policies is nearly impossible, since policy makers can never account for every single teaching context there is in a country. In the end, de jure policies are made that are put in writing, be it as a law or as a formal regulation. They are both further specified on the meso and micro level, where an attempt is made to fill gaps left open on the macro level, e.g., a department wide agreement on pass marks and testing criteria in order to prepare students for a standardised test, general school-wide regulations on how to administer the NOST or a joint compilation of tests to minimise the workload created by the NOST. This is especially important because national school policies clearly define goals that must be achieved, however, they often lack suggestions when it comes to their effective implementation. In any case, the actual process must render the national policy manageable for students. Therefore, national policies alone are not enough; it is the school district and the teachers who put policies into practice.

There is also a washback effect when it comes to national policies. In the case of the Matura, teaching has switched to very rigid, highly guided task formats that lack creative use of language and pre-structure every type of interaction. While they make the outcome of every task highly predictable, it is up for debate if they provide the engagement that is needed to keep students motivated. **To the author's knowledge, no research** has been done on the influence of the Matura test formats on actual teaching. With regards to the NOST, the new, more detailed curriculum in HAKs forces teachers to cover a multitude of topics within one semester. This prevents any in depth discussion of topics during that semester, however, elaboration is possible in the following semesters since the curriculum employs a spiral approach.

Overall, Students and teachers play key roles in language policy implementation. Policies pose hurdles that must be overcome through individual adjustments. In this sense students must always be put first. While the Austrian school system defines competences and content domains for each year, students need to be in the centre of the learning process and lessons must be built around them. Learning opportunities must be created for them, not despite them; national policies can therefore not be the sole basis for lesson planning.

Students' current level and their study habits must be taken into account as well as the particular teaching context. This raises the question of how good lessons should actually be designed, since they are the minimal constituent of most language-related policy; they cover the curriculum, they introduce testing formats and prepare students for standardised tests. In the following, this question shall be addressed from a theoretical perspective.

3 Planning and policy

Lesson and syllabus planning make up a considerable part of teachers' working hours, however, there is no consensus to what those activities exactly involve. Is it enough to jot down some notes about what should be covered in a specific lesson? Or should elaborate lesson plans be drawn up which can be used repeatedly? To go even further, do lessons need to be tailored to students each time or can lessons be standardised in order to create a re-teachable sequence for a particular course? The answer depends on personal opinion and may vary between expert and novice teachers.

As a starting point, it is useful to investigate what constitutes a good lesson. Depending on the person asked and their field, the answers may differ drastically. While learning psychology emphasises aspects like repetition, motivation and purpose in a lesson, teacher trainers are more concerned with the mechanics and the sequencing of steps. Also, there is a great amount of dogma in language teaching with regards to the choice of method. Most of those can be situated in a continuum between two extremes: scholastic methods which focus on structure and pattern drill and natural methods that try to mimic language acquisition (cf. Thornbury 2019). Depending on the choice of method, lesson plans have a varying focus and sequence. Leaving all these general considerations aside, there is also the teacher's perspective, who might feel stressed, especially at peak times of the year that are packed with exams. At these times, the need for a fast and effective lesson plan is even greater since it is important that the lessons and the follow up does not consume much time.

There are also the students who have a say in lessons, who want to learn something, get challenged and perhaps even entertained. It is therefore not easy to pin down what makes up a good lesson from a theoretical point of view since "a good lesson" always depends on the perspective that is adopted, thus making this a highly subjective matter. In the following, the stance of the teacher will be taken since they are not only in charge of organising the learning process, but also key figures in the implementation of new

policies. In a second step, general pedagogical considerations will also be considered, as well as ELT research.

3.1 Curriculum, syllabus and lesson – defining the boundaries

Curriculum, syllabus, and lesson plan are frequently used terms that are part of teacher jargon, but there is a need for some clarification as to what they exactly encompass. This is particularly important because the terms *curriculum* and *syllabus* are often used synonymously in the US and Canada (Yalden 1987: 29). Yalden provides a definition of curriculum by Robertson, who views it as being

the goals, objectives, content, processes, resources, and means of evaluation of all the learning experiences planned for pupils both in and out of the school and community through classroom instruction and related programs (Robertson 1971: 566, quoted in Yalden 1987: 29)

Yalden (1987: 29) further defines *syllabus* as “a statement of the plan for any part of the curriculum, excluding the element of curriculum evaluation itself”. Those plans can either be premade and provided by the publisher of the coursebook or be an individual plan by the teacher. In cases where teaching is highly standardised, they may even be a joint effort by all the teachers of a particular year. Richards (2001: 2) provides a similar definition of syllabus, although he further specifies the term plan as being “the order in which [the

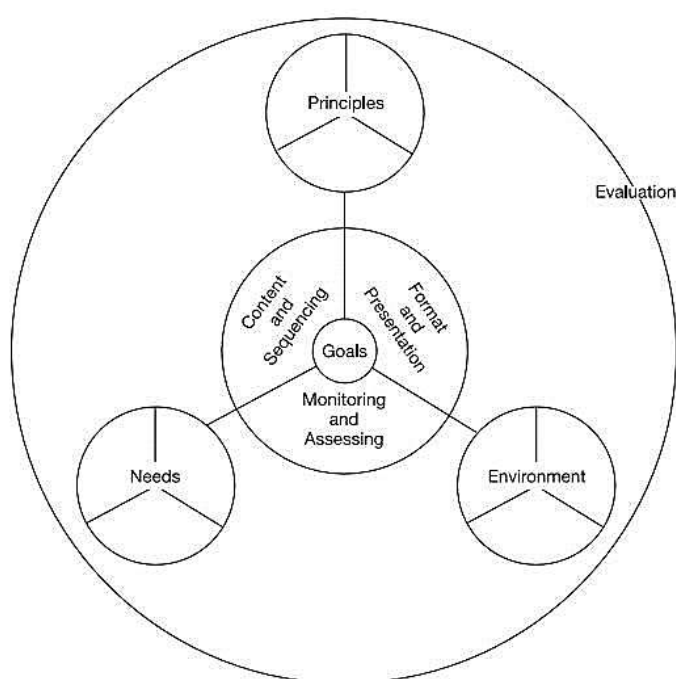


Figure 4– Macalister & Nation 2010: 3, Model of the curriculum design process

content, skills, etc.] will appear in a course”. This is also reflected in the fact that teachers often refer to the first few pages of a coursebook as the syllabus, which traditionally indicates what skills are covered in what order in a coursebook.

Nation & Macalister (2010: 1) distinguish between syllabus and curriculum (see figure 4) from the perspective of curriculum design. For them, a curriculum is based on principles derived from research as well as an environment and needs analysis to establish goals for a course. The content and its sequencing, the mode of presentation of said content, as well as the monitoring and assessment are all part of the syllabus. **Nation & Macalister’s model is also helpful since it bases a successful curriculum on research, specifically on applied linguistics, which adds a professional dimension to the design process.** In the context of the Austrian school system, the compilation of curricula is carried out by experts at the macrolevel of the school system, i.e., the Ministry of Education which involves educators in the design process.

Thus, in this paper, curriculum will be defined as an explicit policy document containing the goals, objectives, content, and teaching principles of all the school subjects of a given school type for every year of school. In contrast to that, the term syllabus refers to all the goals, objectives, content, and teaching principles for one particular subject and the outline and sequencing of course units that results thereof, planned out for the duration of the year. Hence, the curriculum refers to the de jure policy at the macro level, whereas the syllabus is the individual adaptation of the policy to the teaching context.

Curricula also come with one inherent problem. Widdowson (2003: 20) argues that their main purpose is to maintain the status quo of a society, resulting in a policy that “is retrospective, past-oriented and dedicated to the maintenance of traditional social values on the assumption that they will be of continuing relevance”. In practice, this means that curricula reflect values and include content that were important at some point but do not necessarily have the same significance at the present moment. For example, the HAK curriculum puts a lot of emphasis on texts such as business letters and memoranda, two forms of communication that were seen as vital in business some 30 years ago where a lot of emphasis was put on formality in writing. However, in recent years, these text types have been replaced by more informal and instant styles of communication, like emails and chats, that are shorter and faster. As a result, the use of business letters and memoranda is limited to big corporations where old hierarchical structures are still preserved. Despite of that, the preservation of content in the curriculum over a long period of time can also be

beneficial. Environmental education, for instance, was added to Austrian curricula in the 80s and 90s and has been taught in different subject for the last thirty years or so. This has contributed to more awareness of that matter in society and has played a role in the surge of environmental protection efforts in recent years. Whenever curricula are revised, designers should have an open mindset and include trends in society, but also dare declutter and delete what is not needed any more.

While curricula provide a **framework**, it is **the teacher's** syllabus that outlines the actual steps to be taken in order to reach the goals defined in the curriculum. Syllabuses can help to set milestones to reach a certain language level, they outline the content of a course to prepare for a language exam or they might be tailored to students' individual needs. Especially the latter requires periodic reflection and adjustments, considering what students want to learn next and planning subsequent sequences according to those needs and wishes. To what extent do teachers have the **liberty to adapt to students' needs and wishes** though? Due to the multitude of topics in the English HAK curriculum and the fact that teachers are bound to those by law, **a discrepancy between students' language levels and the set standards** can emerge. Consequently, the wrong elements are taught at the wrong time for some students, which results in failure. Syllabuses might also vary between experienced and novice teachers, since the latter, often in search of guidance, stick to the curriculum more closely whereas more experienced teachers can distinguish essential areas from less relevant content easily and adapt accordingly. The context with regards to the student demographic, **the institutional setting and the teacher's experience** considerably determine syllabus design and consequently lesson planning.

A lesson is the smallest unit of planning. It is a sequenced plan of actions with the goal of helping students learn something in a set amount of time, usually not longer than an hour. Lessons seem to be multidimensional and consist of (1) a certain time frame, (2) an educational goal that must be achieved within that time frame, and (3) a plan of action that is carried out involving (4) a facilitator and (5) a learner. All these five parts are vital pillars of a lesson without which it could not take place. At the centre there is a pedagogical intention and the goal that the teacher wants the students to achieve. The here proposed idea of a lesson is, however, in opposition to the general acquisition theory put forward by Krashen who argues that the acquisition of a language is "picking it up" i.e., developing ability in a language by using it in a natural, communicative situation." (Krashen & Terrell 1988: 18). Although lessons can involve elements that trigger acquisition, i.e.,

comprehensible input through reading and listening, the main idea of picking up a language is in contrast to the small, distinct exercises that deal with discrete parts of a language at a time. A lesson is rather learning that occurs in a classroom, a view that is also held by Ellis (2018: 120-121). After reviewing several studies, he concludes that instruction helps learners to gain explicit knowledge, which in turn increases accuracy and helps to create implicit knowledge, especially when the learner is not regularly exposed to a language feature. Hence, a language lesson is more than just the exposure to a language through input. It is conscious work on features of a language including all four skills by following a plan made up by teachers who are experts in their field. The end goal is to accelerate the learning process in comparison to natural acquisition. This goal-intervention model is at the heart of most lessons.

At this point it must be noted that the boundaries between curricula-, syllabus- and lesson planning are fluid. From a language policy perspective, they are the same policy, just on different hierarchical levels. As shown in chapter two, policies are usually handed down from the macro to the micro level and interpreted and specified there. While the curriculum in a school setting refers to the explicit language policy made by the government, the syllabus is the reinterpreted version that is usually produced for the institution in which the course is taught. It is a way for supervisors to check whether the requirements of the curriculum will be fulfilled throughout a schoolyear. On the micro level, the actual lesson takes place that finally implements the policy, i.e., the students learning about different subject matters and acquiring skills that reflect the intentions of the government. Curricula, syllabuses and lesson plans are therefore all elements of the same language policy, just at different stages of its execution.

3.2 How teachers plan lessons

The minimal unit of teacher preparation is the lesson plan that can take many different forms, ranging from detailed plans to vague sketches of a lesson plan. Studies found that some teachers only create short outlines of their lessons (Ornstein 1997: 228), or just a mental outline instead of a written one (Kansanen 1981: 35). These forms of preparation usually consist of notes in a book or on a sheet including tasks, textbook pages, and homework assignments (Sardo-Brown 1988: 76).

Lesson planning concerns several aspects of teaching. A case study by Sardo-Brown (1988: 76) involving 12 middle-school teachers showed that teachers were influenced by

seven main factors: (1) the available material, (2) the student interests, (3) the interruptions to their schedule and resulting time management issues, (4) students' interest in the previous lesson, (5) teachers' prior experience, (6) classroom management issues and students' behaviour at the beginning of a lesson as well as (7) the flow of activities. Yinger's (1980: 111) case study of one teacher that he shadowed for 40 days showed similar results, but also found that teachers thought about the organisation of the location where the lesson is taught as well.

Yinger (1980) also developed a comprehensive model of lesson planning on the basis of his case study. In its essence, he sees planning as being determined by 3 steps, (1) a problem finding stage, (2) a problem formulation/solution and (3) an implementation, evaluation and routinisation phase. In the problem finding stage, a planning dilemma is created which is the direct result of **the student's characteristics, the curriculum and available resources** as well as environmental factors, e.g., the spatial limitation of a classroom or the school building. Discrepancies between all those factors are then evaluated through the subjective view of the teacher which eventually creates the planning dilemma. This dilemma represents the discrepancy **between the students' current knowledge and the goal that must be achieved**. By drawing on the teacher's knowledge, experience, established routines and available materials a solution is designed, i.e., the lesson plan. If that is not enough, the teacher does some research in order to make up for any shortcomings. Yinger (1980: 119) points out that this is only the case if the dilemma cannot be solved with elements at the **teacher's disposition**, since research would require extra effort by the teacher. Finally, the lesson is taught. After this, a process of evaluation and routinisation starts to increase the output of a planned lesson. During the teaching phase and afterwards, adaptations are made wherever necessary and if the planned lesson proves to be effective, it becomes a routine and part of the teacher's repertoire. This is not only true for entire lessons, but also for elements of those lessons. Yinger (1980: 123) also highlights the importance of those routines and says **that they "become an important link between current teaching and future planning"**, thus a taught lesson plan adds to the experiences and routines of a teacher which influence future lesson planning.

Yinger's model is particularly useful in two regards. Firstly, it helps to identify why expert teachers do not need a detailed lesson plan, since they have methods and materials at their disposition which they can access at any time. On the one hand, this enables them to skim through the design phase, and, on the other hand, it makes them highly responsive

to the situation and needs and thus adaptable during teaching Secondly, the teaching dilemma is not only one about a gap of knowledge in the students that must be bridged, but also about the implementation of policy. Methodical choices may involve decisions about exam formats for standardised tests, general issues that arise from the curriculum, and tasks that help attain CEFR language levels. Moreover, the teacher research Yinger mentions pertains to finding information about changes in government regulations and adapting to those as well. Consequently, lesson planning and policy are inseparably intertwined.

Research also supports Yinger's model and points out the adaptability of teachers in their planning. In their meta-study, Shavelson & Stern (cf. 1981: 461-462) outline that educators do not follow a goal-intervention-evaluation pattern, but rather plan lessons based on the available materials and pay a lot of attention to the activity flow. Hattie (2012: 119), however, remarks that a "backward design", that is starting with goals and developing a lesson with those goals in mind, is more effective because being aware of goals allows to improvise during a lesson and still reach a set goal. Teachers also tailor lessons and content to learners' performance level. The lower the level, the more they structure and sequence lessons, whereas the higher the performance level, the more the focus is on understanding and content (cf. Shavelson & Stern 1981: 489). However, teachers usually adapt their methods spontaneously during a lesson, especially if they are process-oriented (cf. Shavelson & Stern 1981: 487-488).

The teaching context has an impact on lesson planning, too. Hedge (2000: 338) distinguishes between less free and more free teaching contexts, where less free ones, like most school systems, provide guidelines for teaching. What Hedge calls *guidelines* are in fact institutional or national policies. In contrast to that, more free contexts, like one-to-one tuition or general English courses in a language schools allow teachers to formulate goals together with the students first. In a second step, they set goals and find or develop course materials to meet those objectives during a lesson. Therefore, lesson planning can be much more flexible in those free contexts, focussing specifically on the interests and needs of students. Unfortunately, schools can only do that to a certain extent, because curriculum requirements must be met.

Another factor that impacts lesson planning is the considerable difference between expert and novice teachers. Li & Zou (2017: 232) show that experienced teachers plan more independently and flexibly than novice teachers; they possess superior content

knowledge, have acquired routines and teaching schemata, have knowledge of materials and can draw upon an array of experiences. Moreover, Li & Zou (2017: 240) found that **expert teachers' planning is more meaning-focused** than form focused, that is, they focus **more on students' understanding and self-expression** than on carrying out form-focused activities like grammar and vocabulary exercises. Although novice teachers also seem to be able to find suitable tasks for their lessons, their planning falls short with regards to **“organisational aspects [...] such as defining rules, the arrangement of the classroom, group composition, and timing”** (Ruys, Van Keer & Aelterman 2012: 365).

As highlighted above, the two main components of lesson planning are on the one hand the teacher and on the other hand the situation to which the teacher reacts. Through an analysis of this context, that is the students, the institutional and national policies as well as the spatial limitations, teachers create lessons drawing on their experience and materials. If this is not enough, they create or find new materials to fulfil the requirements. Consequently, a lesson plan is drawn up and carried out. By setting appropriate tasks, teachers create an environment where learning can occur. It is this back and forth between the context and the teacher, between planning and carrying out lessons, that subsequently creates routines and knowledge that inform and facilitate the planning of future lessons.

The importance of the teacher is also stressed by Johnson (2013: 53) who notes that one of the main findings of language policy research is the acknowledgement of the **“agency that educators have in the interpretation and appropriation of top-down language policies”**. They can be seen as the main actors in policy implementation through constantly solving teaching dilemmas. Planning is thus the activity of translating the curriculum into meaningful activities that try to implement policies suitable for the learners.

3.3 Effective lesson planning

The above overview of lesson planning raises the question of what constitutes effective lesson planning. In order to deal with that specific question, Hattie (2012) applied the results of his well-known meta-study and derived several guidelines for teachers. Whereas ELT focuses on methods and how to carry out language teaching to increase its effectiveness, Hattie takes a rather student-centred approach and considers managerial aspects of lesson planning. In his book he dedicates a chapter to the analysis of lesson planning and what makes it effective, thereby providing a checklist for teachers. He narrows down the process to six main factors: (1) taking into account students' prior

achievement (2) taking into account students' attitudes, (3) making learning visible and targeted, (4) following certain success criteria, (5) the right content choice and (6) collaborating with other teachers. All those shall be dealt with in the following.

Hattie (2012: 42) argues that prior achievement can predict the result of a lesson. Learning is best driven by teachers being aware of what students already know and the setting of suitable goals that are just challenging enough. Also knowing about students' personal learning styles and taking those into account while planning a lesson increases the learning outcomes. **This is particularly important since, from a student's perspective,** the lesson must create some sort of cognitive conflict that is resolved later in the lesson, the stage at which learning occurs.

Secondly, Hattie (2012: 44) stresses the importance of knowing about **students'** disposition and attitudes. He claims it is crucial that teachers pay attention to self-processes

[...] that they must modify where necessary, [including] self-efficacy, self-handicapping, self-motivation, self-goals, self-dependence, self-discounting and distortion, self-perfectionism, and social comparison. (Hattie 2012: 44)

One of Hattie's main findings here is that planning should not only focus on the succession of activities in a lesson and the setting of achievable goals, but also try to resolve issues that hinder learning, like **students'** self-handicapping, **students'** own goals that might differ from the ones of the teacher or even a feeling of hopelessness because of **students'** prior failure. Instead, teachers need to plan tasks that create success in learning which are adapted to the level of students, and thereby create intrinsic motivation.

Thirdly, making learning targeted and visible by stating clear goals is crucial for Hattie. Goals are most effective if they are shared with the students and if they are given enough time to achieve those goals, while simultaneously taking into account **students'** individual learning speed. Due to the flexibility that is required for this goal-setting process, Hattie (2012: 53) is against curricula because they present learning objective in a strict succession.

Fourthly, Hattie (2012: 58-60) compiled a list of criteria that determine successful lesson planning. There should be a challenge involved that is only slightly above the **students'** current level, so they feel that they can easily solve the set task. Also, both, a teacher who is determined to help students master those challenges, and students who want to engage in and to tackle the challenge are required. He also stresses that teachers with high expectations who set tougher challenges perform much better than those who

set easier ones. Furthermore, lessons need to focus not only on the memorisation of facts, but also on higher thinking skill like regrouping of elements and abstract thinking, both of which are necessary to develop conceptual understanding. Showing an effect size of 1.44, and therefore being the most effective measure teachers can take, are self-reported grades and space for reflection in lessons since they hugely benefit the outcome (Hattie 2012: 59). **Summing up Hattie's success criteria**, it seems that effective lessons show a large amount of student involvement and space for students to actively engage in tasks, putting the teacher into the position of a facilitator rather than a presenter.

Fifthly, another element that determines the outcome and the success of a lesson is the choice of content. According to Hattie (2012: 63)

[i]t is the notion of 'challenge' that is most importantly closely tied to the choices of activities, lessons, and outcomes of a lesson. Thus, the argument here is that **while 'curriculum is the most critical component' for choice of subject matter**, it is just as critical that we take account of challenge, commitment, confidence, and conceptual understanding.

While curricula provide basic guidelines about content, it is the skills, the teaching principles, the evaluation and the setting of appropriate challenges that are crucial for student gains. He further outlines a trend towards standardised testing which seems to limit teaching to what is actually tested, leaving less room for discussions and current topics. Craig (2006) and Volante (2004) share that point of view but argue that those limitations actually enable teachers and students to focus on essential parts of the subject area. In any case, a major focus on standardised tests may affect motivation. Standardised test topics, although diverse and plenty, become quickly outdated and cannot mirror recent developments in society like innovations and inventions, current political unrest or controversy. They rather focus on inoffensive general aspects of life and hence do not necessarily spark interest and motivation. A balanced topic choice is therefore vital to ensure that students stay motivated.

Finally, Hattie (2012: 67) points out that communication and exchange between teachers is also crucial for lesson planning. They should improve their work through mutual feedback and agree on interpretations of the curriculum in their exchanges. This avoids highly individual decision making and ensures a shared understanding of standards among them. Hattie also showed in an experiment involving 438 teachers that the variability in their judgement of reading items decreased by 45 per cent after they had been talking to each other (cf. Hattie 2012: 71). Generally speaking, teacher collaboration is a

particularly valuable tool when it comes to the implementation of standards and policies, attempting to ensure that those standards are the same throughout different classrooms.

Although Hattie drew upon data across many different subjects, his conclusions about lesson planning are also useful for the analysis of ELT. What Hattie shows is that effective lesson planning involves considerations about the students, the content and the methods that are employed to help students achieve visible learning goals. Educators are therefore tasked to adopt a holistic approach to teaching that balances all aspects of lesson planning. More recent teaching approaches like task-supported and task-based learning also try to consider students prior knowledge. After setting and performing a task, students study the language and skills that are needed to improve task performance so they can finally accomplish the same or a similar task more effectively again (cf. Ellis 2018: 15-17). **In Hattie's terms, this type of teaching** is particularly effective, since the goals are clear (the goal is to perform better than at the beginning), and there is a cognitive challenge (performing a task for the first time, perhaps with deficits, motivates learners to get better and pay attention during a focus on form activity). Although Hattie strongly argues in favour of goal-driven lessons, there is evidence that teachers typically do not follow this type of lesson planning but plan their lessons around topics and activities tailored to the students (Thornbury 1999: 7). Teachers also dynamically change their plans during a lesson, with the students they teach in mind (Freeman 1996: 9). Davis (2006: 7-9) provides **data from the students' perspective** and concludes from a series of end-of-the-course questionnaires that he regularly administered that most students wished for comprehensible input (listening, vocabulary work), the possibility to express themselves, interactive formats and tailor-made materials from the teacher. These wishes strongly suggest dynamic lessons where there is less focus on form but on understanding and interaction which put the students in the centre.

In addition, second language acquisition research confirms Hattie's findings. Dörnyei (2009: 302) draws six main conclusions from language acquisition research for language teaching which are relevant in this context. Like Hattie, he points out that there should be plenty meaning-focused activities but also practice and repetition to automatize studied language features. Secondly, to facilitate this automatization process, there should be explicit teaching of language. Thirdly, the teaching of structural language aspects increases the accuracy of students. Fourthly, it is recommended to teach formulaic expressions explicitly. Fifthly, there should be extensive use of comprehensible input from

many different sources in order to foster language acquisition. Finally, Dörnyei highlights the need for interaction and practice to study and internalise points one to five. Overall, he argues in favour of a balanced approach to language teaching, involving explicit and implicit teaching methods. Similar to Hattie, Dörnyei also argues that content choice, challenge (though appropriate tasks), interaction, memorisation as well as creative elements need to be part of an effective lesson and thus effective learning.

Therefore, it becomes clear that educators need to adopt a holistic approach to lesson planning. Not only must they take into consideration formal criteria such as policies and institutional settings, but also appropriate communicative challenges as well as the teaching and automatization of language items in order to plan and deliver effective lessons.

3.4 Standards and lesson planning

Although different authors have claimed that standards and standard setting processes are advantageous to language learning and teaching (see Council of Europe: 5-6, Crabbe 2003: 14), including reasons like easy assessment, outcome orientation for learners or comparability of language learning, a critical teacher must inquire whether such standards can lead to an outcome that is useful to students. Bax (2003: 280), for example, harshly criticises CLT and its derivatives since nowadays, it is seen as an all-purpose solution to language teaching related problems, which only focusses on specific methods but largely ignoring the context in which languages are taught. He further argues in favour of a Context Approach to language teaching which takes the classroom, the institutional setting as well as the cultural setting into account (cf. Bax 2003: 287). This argument is also supported by Harmer and Thornbury (2013) who report that CLT was originally developed to make foreign students in Britain capable of doing tasks at university, e.g., searching for a book in a library or writing an essay. Consequently, the communicative situations that arise from university life were taught in class, thus deriving needs from the context and making classes relevant to students. This, however, is not always the case when it comes to lessons based on standards, since those often do not cover language that is immediately useful to students, as was shown in chapter 2. Even though standards must be met, it is crucial to consider the setting and the student population when planning a lesson.

Although standards might ignore particular classroom contexts, dealing with them must create motivation. Research by Griffith and Burns (2012: 11) suggests six criteria for successful and motivating lessons:

- 1 Tasks are appropriately challenging.
- 2 Teacher input is minimal.
- 3 Groups have the necessary learning skills.
- 4 Goals are clear and worthwhile.
- 5 Feedback is immediate.
- 6 Tasks are intrinsically motivating.

What becomes clear from their results is that teaching involves much more than goals and standards. Although they suggest formulating clear outcomes, these are only one part of successful teaching. Most of the other criteria concern the learners themselves and their involvement in the learning process as well as motivational factors. Their concepts also intend to make students more active. This is also reflected by the basic definition of action as defined by psychologists Hackenhausen and Hackenhausen (2010: 6) who outline what motivates individuals to take action:

The individual aspires to the goal with the highest possible incentive value, taking into account the probability of its attainment. Whether or not a situation acts as an incentive for a specific individual depends on whether or **not it corresponds with that person's implicit and explicit motives.**

Thus, in order to achieve an educational goal, an incentive value needs to be created through suitably difficult tasks that are intrinsically motivating, where the outcome has been precisely defined so learners know exactly how to achieve it and therefore believe that attaining the outcome is highly probable. **From a student's perspective, a goal is attainable if they have the relevant learning skills at their disposal.** Finally, the context of the learning situation needs to be clear, so students need an adequate amount of time without interruption where teacher-talk is limited and feedback is given whenever necessary. These factors are also listed amongst **Hattie's influences related to students' achievement** (cf. Hattie 2009: 392).

Austrian school policies create two main challenges with regards to these motivational factors. Firstly, since there is a multitude of topics in the HAK curriculum that must be covered within a semester, there is often no time to deal with each individual one in detail. Thus, students do not have enough time to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to express themselves on all these topics. Secondly, the Matura itself is a challenge. As it is a proficiency test where topics and the required vocabulary are only loosely related to what is actually taught in class, preparing for it and using Matura tasks

in class is not motivating. Matura tasks are often not predictable in the sense that sometimes, it is only by chance that students can solve a test item. For example, the Matura in 2017 included a listening task on e-books for children, which required the students to find out that the speaker wrote *maze books* (cf. BMB 2017: 9), a term that is outside the scope of HAK English lessons. Similarly, topics are chosen that are not part of the world knowledge of HAK students, including Aristotle's characterisation of friendship (cf. BMBWF 2019b: 9), how scientific models help deal with crises, using a zombie apocalypse as an example (cf. BMBWF 2019c: 5) or cities and their literary significance (cf. BMBWF 2019c: 10). The reasoning behind these tasks might be that student should be able to deal with content that they are not familiar with. Although it is true that not all tasks reflect the above pattern, weak performers in particular struggle with such items. To the author's knowledge, there is no empirical evaluation of how teachers prepare for these types of tasks and what their effect on weaker students might be. However, it can be suspected that using Matura tasks like the above mentioned in teaching and especially in evaluation processes is highly demotivating since students cannot prepare for them effectively.

Furthermore, specific language work like grammar and vocabulary activities also pose two problems in lesson planning. First of all, it seems to be rare that grammar and vocabulary activities trigger intrinsic motivation, which might also be the reason why so many modern language teaching approaches have reduced their use. There are scholars who argue that direct instruction is not needed, like Krashen (2004: 3-5) who came to the conclusion in his reading research that free voluntary reading builds up language competencies, and improves grammar, vocabulary, comprehension skills, writing as well as spelling skills, without any explicit instruction. Gold (2006: 44) further argues that, while engaging tasks are being taught, structural questions will arise themselves and will be dealt with consequently. Taking all this into account, grammar and lexis can be taught in an engaging way, namely as a side effect of an engaging task. In terms of standards, this means that teachers must have the freedom to set engaging tasks that learners will want to do, which would oppose the use of standardised curricula and tests and rather favour free curricula that allow the teachers to adapt to what students want to do.

Standardising content, especially in coursebooks, is also a challenge to teaching. It is how these competences are achieved that is more important to learning than the competences themselves. Because coursebooks are produced for a general market, they often only focus on everyday commonplace topics that might concern the learners only in

a superficial way. Topics like media, free time activities and shopping are usually part of beginners to intermediate levels, but those coursebooks do not deal with particular interests and current topics that would fit the learners' context better. Interests vary from class to class and age group to age group thus making the production of a coursebook that is suitable for a whole country impossible. Banegas (2011: 80) refers to most manuals as “(un)controversial course books” which avoid provocative, but therefore also stimulating and challenging topics like “politics, alcohol, religion, sex, narcotics, -isms [...] and pornography” (Banegas 2011: 80). In Austria, this avoidance is also reinforced by the guidelines for the Matura that do not allow topics which could provoke a strong emotional reaction by the student, such as violence or death. This is not made explicit, but can be inferred from the test foundations: valid topics for receptive and productive tasks are only those, which are within the scope of experience of the student and do not provoke emotional reactions that could prevent them from solving a task. More precisely, this content is taken from the CEFR and concerns the occupational, public and personal domains of students (see BIFIE 2013: 25). Coursebook publishers use these domains as the basis for their manuals, therefore avoiding more controversial topics as they are not part of what is going to be tested in the school-leaving exam.

What shall be emphasised at this point is that standards themselves can be valuable points of orientation for output, however, it is the teacher who must be able to create a way to achieve these outputs. Educators need to be aware of what influences the classroom situation and of how they can develop a lesson that matches the outcomes as well as the context and the setting. In order to create motivation, test preparation and coursebooks alone cannot be the only sources of valid materials. Students' interests must be the foundation for every lesson in order to build competencies and new knowledge from there. It is thus essential to bridge the gap between policies and the teaching context in order to guarantee the best possible output.

4 ELT in Schools of Business Administration – a context analysis

As could be seen in the previous chapters, Austrian English teachers have been confronted with a multitude of new regulation and policies that do not only influence how lessons are given, but also the content of the lessons themselves. Especially the Matura and the New Modular Upper Secondary System caused a lot of uproar among educators and

consequently their unions. Educational policies are not always embraced because they make previously established methodology and routines obsolete. Furthermore, the context in which educators give their lessons varies from province to province and even from school to school. Depending on factors like the student population and their previous education, the infrastructure provided by the schools as well as administrative aspects, teachers must optimise their teaching to get from the current language level of the students to the desired outcome.

Despite of all modern developments, teachers play an important role, if not a central one, in the policy enactment process. Johnson (2013: 53) points out that policies are implemented from the top down and heavily rely on the support of the teachers who finally adopt and enact them. For a better understanding of educators and their planning processes, it is vital to understand the context in which they teach in order to establish what is expected from them. In the following, a historical overview of ELT in HAKs will be given in order to understand the current situation of ELT teachers. In a second step, the student population will be described to complete the picture of the teaching context.

It must be noted that this chapter faces several limitations. The historical overview will mention essential features that explain the current situation teachers find themselves in, but it has by no means the intention to provide a comprehensive history of the school type or the school system. For a more comprehensive history of the school system, see Engelbrecht (1988 & 2015). Moreover, the description of the student population is based on statistical data taken from all business schools in Austria and therefore can only show tendencies. When it comes to the English skills of the student population, there is also a difference depending on the programme students enrolled in. Their level of competence might be considerably higher if they attend a *HAK+* programme, a special course for gifted students or a Content and Language Integrate Learning programme where the use of English is reinforced. Therefore, the here presented analysis has to be taken with a grain of salt but will definitely be useful to examine what most HAK English teachers are confronted with in their day-to-day professional life.

4.1 The history of teaching English at HAK

The development of CLT and the CEFR have played a crucial role in Austrian ELT, more specifically in ELT in HAKs. After Hymes (1979) had introduced his notion of communicative competence, Widdowson (1984) developed it further to spark CLT in the

early 1990s. Austria belonged to the early adopters of a competence-based language teaching approach. This meant that from 2001 onwards, after the publication of the CEFR, competence descriptors and CEFR levels have formed the basis of language curricula. The first competence-based curriculum for HAKs was published in 2004. It defined a B2 level, in some areas C1, as the final goal after year 5 and further included competences formulated as can-do statements (cf. BMBWK 2004: 14). The previous curriculum had been more general in its approach and particularly vague, but already stated that “[the] latest findings of relevant sciences [...] shall be reflected in foreign language teaching” (BMUK 1994: 9), thus paving the way for CLT.

Those changes were largely politically motivated. Engelbrecht (2015: 190-194) sums up the changes in the school system after the Second World War as being motivated by the interests of political parties and other groups. Not only were those years marked by a drastic social change, but also by an increasing disagreement over what a good education would encompass. Especially the Social Democrats and the People’s Party in Austria have been debating over numerous educational reforms for decades. Those debates were further brought to a halt by the teachers’ unions, which always questioned the feasibility of reforms. On a macro-level, after Austria had joined the European Union, educational policies were significantly influenced by the strive for comparability of students caused by the Bologna Process in higher education. This also sparked the political interest in standardisation and standardised testing.

In the last 30 years, HAK teachers have had to deal with two major changes. Before the 90s, grammar translation and focus on formal aspects of language learning were common. While not being the only element of ELT in HAKs, translation was widely used in teaching and testing. The 1990s and early 2000s brought a shift to CLT which led to a four skills-based approach that tried to mirror tasks from the business world and brought about multi-skill tasks. Those are rather elaborate, task-based activities that involve multiple skills at once in order to solve a problem, for instance, choosing an applicant for a position after having read different CVs and corresponding applications. They were popularised by the extensive use of Longman-Pearson’s *Market Leader*¹³, a coursebook which can still be found on the list of Ministry approved coursebooks as of 2019. Another

¹³ Most often, *Market Leader Intermediate* (B1-B2; Cotton, Falvey & Kent 2010) and *Upper-Intermediate* (B2-C1; cf. Cotton, Falvey & Kent 2011) were used in the last two years of HAK.

key element of this time was genuine language use and the use of authentic, less scripted materials as the basis of teaching, which is still prominent in recent course books and teaching approaches. A remainder of this time is the oral HAK Matura, in which students have to deal with a real-life situation, usually solving a problem on the basis of enclosures such as texts, graphs and other materials that introduce current issues. The introduction of the semi-standardised Matura shifted away from those authentic situations in favour of a segregated skills approach, which is a necessity in language testing to obtain valid and reliable results.

Authenticity and work experiences are key elements of ELT in HAKs though. In the 2000s, the practice firm became an integral part of HAK education. Here, students would simulate a company and do all the tasks that are necessary for the maintenance of a business. At that time, language teachers were also involved in the process and taught business situations in those lessons. They simulated international customer visits and practiced business correspondence with practice firms from other countries, thus giving their teaching practical relevance. This practice is only left in a few schools, though. Furthermore, **students'** internship and work experience are often the basis for tasks in the language classroom. **Such activities draw upon the students' world knowledge**, since every student has to do an internship, which makes them particularly effective.

In an attempt to distinguish themselves from other vocational schools, some HAKs introduced different programmes with individual curricula in 2019, including industrial business, international and European affairs, communication and IT, as well as business and law. Since other types of vocational schools had introduced practice firms as well as a focus on business in the past too, this was a necessary step to attract new students. While some subjects changed, the English curriculum in all those new programmes stayed the same. However, teachers might pick up on these special programmes in class when they interpret the curriculum and choose topics that align with them.

Teachers must adapt constantly, especially because they are not always experts in business matters. This raises the question of how teachers deal with these constant trends, as they switch from one end of the methodology spectrum to the other several times in their teaching career and have to accommodate many topics on the way. Especially the shift from a task and CLT based approach to teaching based on exam formats that are not communicative in themselves is rather drastic. The empirical part of this paper will give a preliminary answer to this question.

4.2 Diversity in the student population

Heterogenous classes in HAKs where students do not share the same L1 have become common in Austria. Between 1957 and 2017, Austria's population grew from seven million people to 8.8 Mio. (Radinger et al. 2019: 10). This steady increase was only possible due to immigration, resulting in 15.8 per cent of the population being immigrants in 2018. Most of them came in the 1960s and 70s from Ex-Yugoslavia and Turkey (Radinger et al. 2019: 10) in order to support the workforce and to sustain the constant economic growth of the country. An influx of immigrants from Syria in 2015 has also had and will continue to have its impact in the future. Immigrants are, however, not evenly distributed throughout Austria but gather in the agglomeration of cities. Whereas on average, only 21.6 per cent of the population in Austria comes from another country, 40.2 per cent of all Viennese are immigrants (Radinger et al. 2019: 12). In contrast to that, only 12.3 per cent of the population of Burgenland are immigrants (Radinger et al. 2019: 12). In terms of students, 26 per cent of Austrian pupils do not have German as their L1 (Radinger et al. 2019: 12).

Immigrants have not necessarily gone through the Austrian Lower Secondary System but come from different educational backgrounds showing a varying degree of competence. Students' English skills depend, among other aspects, on external factors like the importance of English in the curriculum of their country of origin, the applied teaching methods, the teacher training and teachers' level of competence. In rare cases, no English was studied in favour of another foreign language. Even though the first year of HAK is designed to revise the essentials, aiming at A2 language, to bridge any apparent gaps, students might need some extra support and time. In those cases, this can be an extremely challenging task because some are also studying German as an L2 at the same time, which usually receives greater attention because it is needed to follow all other classes.

This may partially explain why students seem to struggle, especially in their first years (year nine), as shows data by Statistik Austria (Gumpoldsberger & Sommer-Binder 2020: 285-287). In the whole of Austria, 17.1 per cent fail their first year in a vocational school like HAK in comparison to only 12.8 per cent in Academic Secondary Schools. These figures vary drastically among the Austrian provinces; in Vienna, those are 22.4 per cent vocational/14.4 per cent academic whereas in Carinthia the shares amount to 13.2 per cent vocational/10.0 per cent academic. In terms of students, that means that in Austrian vocational schools, more than four out of 25 students fail their first year; in Viennese

vocational schools, that figure amounts to more than five out of 25 students on average. Although students might fail various subjects because of personal reasons and illness, it points towards a trend that not all students are adequately prepared for Upper Secondary, especially the students who choose a vocational school.

Furthermore, teachers are confronted with varying levels of English from students within Austria. This is evaluated at the beginning of the first year with a diagnostic check. In a communication issued by the Ministry of Education (cf. Weger & Kieslinger-Lanzendorfer 2016: 3) about how to administer this check, it is emphasised that this A2 level exam is supposed to evaluate the current level of proficiency and should consequently be used as the basis for a support programme, i.e., students who fail the diagnostic check should receive special attention and/or tutoring throughout the first year. This level is set rather low because in Lower Secondary, irrespective of the school type, students should already have reached A2 and in some competence areas B1 (cf. BMBWK 2000b: 60) according to the curriculum. If students have not even reached A2 in Lower Secondary after four years of formally learning English, it is difficult for them to reach B2 after another five.

Moreover, 58.3 per cent of students attending the first year of vocational school come from middle schools¹⁴ and 26.3 per cent from Academic Secondary Schools according to *Statistik Austria* (Radinger et al. 2019: 51)¹⁵. The rest of the students either repeated year one or came from other educational backgrounds, e.g., from schools abroad. The difference in the level of competence in English between Middle Schoolers and those who have attended an Academic Secondary School is considerable, as can be seen from the last English *Bildungsstandard* evaluation conducted in 2013.

The E8 are a standardised examination at the end of Lower Secondary which were implemented in order to compare Austria to other countries and for the government to have an evaluation tool and data on which they can base political decisions. They were designed to determine whether the students have reached an A2 level in English according to the CEFR, testing the reading, listening and writing skills of about 159,000 students. For the speaking part, about 500 students were chosen randomly and examined. Whereas

¹⁴ This figure includes students that attended *Hauptschule*, an older form of middle school.

¹⁵ In comparison, only 17.2 per cent of the students in year five of an Academic Secondary School come from a middle school and 65.8 per cent attended year four in an Academic Secondary School previously (Radinger et al. 2019: 51).

in total an A2 level or higher was achieved by 97 per cent of the students in listening and by 86 per cent in reading (Schreiner & Breit 2014: 25-27) only 63 per cent passed the writing part of the examination. A detailed analysis that distinguishes the school types the students attended previously shows that there is a considerable difference between Academic Lower Secondary Schools and Middle Schools. In the former, about 70 per cent achieved a B1 level or higher in listening and reading whereas only about 20 per cent managed to do the same in Middle Schools (Schreiner & Breit 2014: 25-27). With regards to writing, the discrepancy is even bigger; 61 per cent of Academic Secondary School students achieved a B1 level and only 6 per cent failed to reach A2 (Schreiner & Breit 2014: 28). In contrast, more than 50 per cent of the Middle School students failed the writing part and only about 13 per cent of middle schoolers achieved a B1 level (Schreiner & Breit 2014: 28). Considering the fact that just under two thirds of the students who attend a School of Business Administration attended a Middle School previously, the range of competence levels in English can be vast.

This also becomes apparent in the level of first year coursebooks for Schools of Business Administration, which on average indicate a lower language level on their covers than coursebooks of Academic Secondary Schools (see table 2).

Academic Secondary School	CEFR Level	School of Business Administration	CEFR Level
Prime time 5 (Hellmayer, Waba & Mlakar 2009)	B1	English Unlimited HAK/HUM 1, 2 nd edition (Tilbury et al. 2019)	A2+
English in Context 5. Student's Book (Williams & Abram 2013)	A2+-B1	Just go for it 1, HAK edition (Kislinger, Baker & Mangold-Renner 2012)	A2
Macmillan Gateway B1 (Spencer 2011)	B1	Focus on Modern Business 1 (Abram et al. 2014)	A2
		Best Shots 1. HAK modular (Mühlböck et al. 2017)	A2-B1

Table 2 – Coursebook levels in year one of Upper Secondary according to the CEFR in Academic Secondary Schools and Schools of Business Administration

Thus, the first year of Schools of Business Administration is designed to revise the basics of Lower Secondary before going into detail about any business-related matters or advanced language use from year two onwards. It can be conjectured that the above mentioned initial conditions are one of the reasons that each year, about 20 per cent of HAK students fail the school year whereas only 12.2 per cent of students in Academic

Secondary Schools do (Radinger et al. 2019: 53)¹⁶. Although starting at a lower level in Upper Secondary does not necessarily predict the failure of a student, it is the heterogenous classes that can be challenging and require much more targeted interventions.

As could be seen, depending on the school type teachers work in, the initial conditions regarding the level of English students possess in year one of Upper Secondary can be vastly different. Although vocational schools offer an extra year in comparison to Academic Secondary Schools which helps students to compensate for any shortcomings students might have in year one, the number of students who drop out of HAKs is double the one for Academic Secondary Schools. However, this figure must be taken with a grain of salt since students do not only fail because of their language skills in English. Taking the E8 evaluation into account, students at a HAK will show a varying language level because of **students' previous education and experiences**. It must be emphasised at this point that varying language levels among people who have had the same type of instruction are common. Benison (2005: 10), after reviewing success factors of language learning, came to the conclusion that “psychological factors such as language aptitude, learning style, age, motivation, strategy use and learner beliefs, and social factors such as **gender, class, ethnicity, cultural background and settings for learners**” determine the outcome of language learning. This is partially confirmed by the E8 evaluation (Schreiner & Breit 2014: 101-102) which concludes that gender (females were better than males), migration (people who immigrated from outside the German-speaking continuum performed worse) and social background (the higher the education of the parents, the better the language level of the student) were determining factors for the outcome of the evaluation. In any case, heterogenous classes need to be addressed by HAK teachers in order to bridge the gap between Lower and Upper Secondary.

¹⁶ These figures include all the students who failed the year as well as those who could move on because of the so called *Aufstiegsklausel* (SchuG § 25)

5 A theoretical framework of policy and lesson planning

As could be seen in the previous chapters, language teaching in schools is influenced by policies and policy makers, thus courses cannot be designed as liberally and independently as language pedagogy and didactics suggest. School teachers are the agents of a highly hierarchically structured system, negotiating learning outcomes and bridging the gap between set standards and the current level of the students they teach. While their primary task is to create learning opportunities that suit the students, they must match the goals defined in the curriculum and by other agents at the macro and meso level at the same time. Herbart's didactic triangle (quoted in Kansanen & Meri 1999: 6-7) can be extended for that purpose to depict the influence of language policy on the basic teaching constellation.

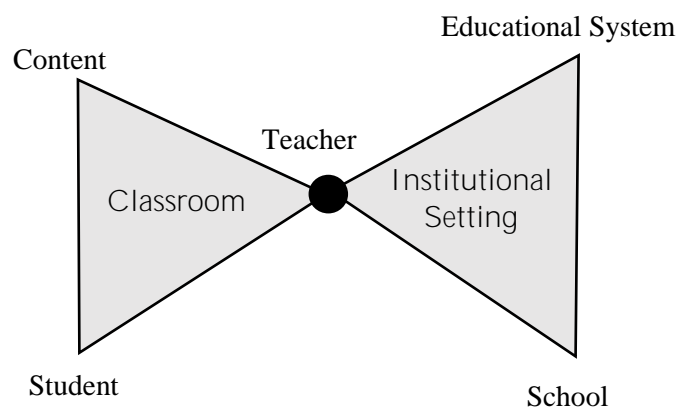


Figure 5 – Extended didactic triangle

The model in figure 5 shows that, in a school context, individual classroom realities are not only defined by the relation between the teacher, the content and the student alone, but by a hierarchical structure that is attached to one key node, the teacher. If there were no policies handed down through the system to the students, the instruction students receive would probably only change through experiences the teacher and the students have made. While content areas only change slowly and usually not fundamentally, the way they are taught and what aspects of the content area are chosen change at regular intervals. Thus, lesson planning and teaching are not only altered through experience, but also through language policies. Overall, the model serves three main purposes.

Firstly, it accredits more importance to the teacher who has been focused on less in recent, student-oriented research. In a constructivist sense, teachers only provide learning

opportunities, with which students can acquire language themselves. In a modern educational system, those opportunities are shaped by policies. The extended triangle illustrates that teachers are the link between the educational system, the school and the actual classroom. Whenever a new policy in education is designed, be it on the macro or meso level, they are in charge of its implementation. This hierarchical organisation has a considerable impact on classroom reality. Even though the content area can be vast, teachers determine the parts of this content area students work with. Thus, policies serve as guidelines to select suitable content, although they are often seen as being imperative rather than a framework. Teachers are therefore central figures in both triangles of figure 3; on the one hand they are employees of a school and actors in the educational system itself working with and in both institutions. On the other hand, having those policies in mind, they navigate and break down parts of the content area for the learners so they can easily understand, and apply concepts. They are the link and communication channel between the two triangles.

Secondly, the model helps to understand the policy making process. It is again individual teachers who influence standard setting processes not only within a school, but also on a national level. Usually, a few teachers who have analysed their particular classroom settings use their expertise to come up with standards, methods and advice that have proven to be effective in their own classroom reality. This analysis, however, is again hugely influenced by policies that are in place. Their expertise is then used to create new course books, guidelines and teacher training seminars that are intended to help others achieve a similar success¹⁷. In the best case, this process is supported by scientific research of a local university, but especially in Austria, think tanks with expert teachers are often used. This highlights one main flaw of policy making in Austria: usually, policy makers do not know the entirety of classroom contexts for which they produce a regulation. Since

¹⁷ The Elementary Business English Standards (Weger et al. 2014), a document that defines the exit level of HAS students for English, will serve as an example here. Although the authors received scientific guidance by the University of Vienna, the document seems to be led by teaching experience rather than real-life linguistic requirements. The descriptors for writing include, for instance, placing orders (cf. Weger et al. 2014: 18), a very standardised text type that demands a high level of accuracy and elaborate vocabulary. However, concerning linguistic competences, a simple range of vocabulary and linguistic structures is sufficient (cf. Weger et al. 2014: 19) to achieve the exit level, which does not fit the requirements of offers. One reason for the discrepancy between real life requirements and what is set as a standard could be that the authors viewed real life goals through the lens of their individual teaching contexts, and therefore adapted goals to fit their classrooms.

it is difficult to transfer aspects from an individual classroom setting that function well to others, some policies work better than others.

Thirdly, it becomes clear that teachers find themselves torn between classroom reality and institutional setting. As classroom reality and policy often do not overlap, they need to constantly negotiate between the two. On the one hand, they apply institutional guidelines in a top-down process, and on the other hand, they provide feedback from the classroom to the institution in order to renegotiate policies. This might also require them to circumnavigate policies because other aspects of language teaching might prove to be much more useful, necessary or simply more enjoyable.

In the following empirical part of this thesis, the relation between the institutional setting and the classroom shall be explored. This will give further insight into how teachers actually plan lessons and how they put policy into practice.

6 Method

For an analysis of the effect of language policy on HAK teachers' lesson planning, a qualitative research method was chosen. This allows not only to depict the teachers' opinions and reasonings, but also permits to go into greater detail about issues that are raised during the conversation. The following research question was in the centre of the research: To what extent and how do language policies affect lesson planning of EFL teachers in Austrian HAKs?

In order to answer it, a comparative study was designed (cf. Flick 2004a: 207) that aimed at eliciting and comparing teachers' experiences with regards to educational policies. Interviews with seven teachers have been conducted, a number that conforms with Dörnyei's suggestion of six to ten people to reach saturation, that is the point where new interviews do not add any new insights (Dörnyei 2007: 127). The teacher sample was chosen based on features derived from the research question (cf. Merrens 2004: 235): (1) all teachers had to teach English in a HAK to ensure that they would have had to deal with the NOST and the requirements of the Matura; (2) the teachers had to range in experience so a comparison between novice and expert teachers could be made; (3) they had to come from different schools to make sure that the results could be reasonably generalised; and (4) some teachers should be involved in policy design to get their expert views. Educators from three different Viennese HAKs were chosen, aged between 28 and 65 (see table 3). These included novice teachers that were in their third year of service as

well as expert ones with up to 40 years of experience. Some of those had been involved in local and national language policy development concerning ELT in HAKs and general language teaching policies, such as the design of the HAK curriculum for English, the development of the Austrian English Matura in its current form and the development of reflection tools for students based on the CEFR. Since ELT is a female-dominated profession in Austria, all participants were women.

	Age	Gender	Teaching experience in HAK	School	Interview length	Further information
Teacher 1	60	fem.	38 years	A	43 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subjects: English and French • head of the English department at her school
Teacher 2	26	fem.	2 years	A	38 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subjects; English and Spanish • novice teacher in her first year after the induction phase
Teacher 3	65	fem.	40 years	B	60 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recently retired teacher who only taught English • involved in policy development in Vienna and on a national level • gave teacher training seminars • She was the head of the English department at her school.
Teacher 4	40	fem.	5 years	A	34 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subjects: English, Civics and law • novice teacher who had been teaching Civics for 5 years and English for 2 years.
Teacher 5	29	fem.	5 years	C	31 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subjects: English and German
Teacher 6	49	fem.	16 years	A	37 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subjects: English and German • head of the German department at her school
Teacher 7	53	fem.	35 years	C	26 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subjects: English and French • involved in policy development in Vienna and on a national level • gives teacher training seminars • head of the English department at her school

Table 3 – Interviewees

A semi-structured interview guideline was developed, which used a content mapping framework. This technique tries to elicit cognitive structures and interviewees' rationales (Scheele & Groeben 2010: 342), in the case of this research, the reasons why certain elements from a list were important to their lesson planning. Teachers were further asked to explain their thought process in the course of the interview.

Pedagogical and methodological aspects of teaching	Educational policies	Practical/Personal issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meaning-focused activities • form-focused activities • Kommunikation und Interaktion • Menge an Input für die Sprachlerner*innen • Interessen und Bedürfnisse der Schüler*innen • kultureller Background von Schüler*innen • Wiederholung von behandeltem Stoff • Stärken und Schwächen von Schüler*innen • accuracy • fluency • Motivation der Schüler*innen • Mehrsprachigkeit • Methode (CLT, TBL, Grammar Translation, Audiolingual, Lexical Approach, etc.) • Hausübungen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rezeptive Fertigkeiten laut GERS • produktive Fertigkeiten laut GERS • NOST • Schularbeiten/Tests/Lernzielkontrollen • Ministerium/Stadtschulrat/Direktion • Fachinspektion für Sprachen • Englisch Fachgruppe/Fachkoordination • Schulbuch • Maturaformate • Lehrplan • LBVO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • persönlicher Stresslevel • Bedürfnis nach Veränderung • Verhalten einer Klasse • bereits vorhandenes Material • persönlicher Gesundheitszustand

Table 4 – Interview cards

Overall, the interview consisted of three parts, (1) a question to elicit the lesson planning process of the teachers, (2) the content mapping activity based on a reasoning gap¹⁸ and (3) a question about their stance on the NOST. After the initial question, small

¹⁸ The term *reasoning gap activity* has its origin in ELT and refers to a speaking task where participants have to decide on one of several options giving reasons, e.g., giving reasons for choosing one particular accommodation over another from a list.

cards with topics related to lesson planning (see table 4) had to be organised in a way which was meaningful to the participant. In a first step, they had to divide the cards into half and give reasons for why one half of the topic cards was more important to their own lesson planning than the other half. In a second step, the five main influence factors on their lesson planning process had to be chosen and again justified. Free associations with those topics were encouraged and clarifying questions were asked to elicit details and to provide further insight into singular matters. In order to avoid any suggestive questions, open question types were preferred during the interview.

The influence factors on the cards for part two of the interview were derived from research literature and prior interviews with teachers. The pedagogical and methodological topic list was mainly compiled from insights from second language acquisition and didactics. In ELT, several issues have been defined as playing an essential part in teaching and learning languages, such as motivation (cf. Ellis 2015: 46), meaning and form focused instruction (cf. Ellis 2015: 242) and similarly accuracy, fluency and interaction in speaking which are also part of Matura grading scales. Furthermore, Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis had a considerable impact on ELT. He argued that second language acquisition was solely driven by large amounts of comprehensible input, thus making this a factor that was worth exploring in teachers' lesson planning. Students' strengths and weaknesses, as well as their interests and beliefs were also seen as important, since those relate to psychological factors in second language acquisition (cf. Ellis 2015: 38-39). Finally, the first language and language transfer seem to be a matter of debate in ELT (cf. Ellis 2015: 117-119) which was why the background of students and their individual multilingualism were included. Finally, for this section dogmatic issues were chosen such as the choice of method and the importance of homework in the classroom, which completed the section on pedagogical and methodological aspects. All the interview cards related to educational policies were taken from two main areas, namely *de jure* policies (the CEFR, the regulation for student assessment and by extension exams, the curriculum, regulations concerning the Matura, and government approved course books) and *de facto* policies from some level of the school hierarchy (policies created by the Ministry, the school board and its inspector for languages, the principal of a school or in house policies that were agreed on within an English department). The terms in the column practical issues were derived from pre-interviews with teachers who emphasized that aspects like personal health and stress level as well as ease of preparation were also

determining factors in their lesson planning, which is also supported by findings by Sardo-Brown (1988: 76) and Yinger (1980: 111). The goal of mixing inductive and deductive approaches to finding terms for the content mapping activity was to connect research with teaching reality, so interviewees could relate more easily.

The content mapping activity was further tested on a teacher and topics were reformulated to make sure that the terms chosen were easy to understand and elicited output on desired topics. At that point, the first and last question were added since the reasoning gap activity did not encourage the participants to speak about their lesson planning process or the NOST in great detail. This triangulation of methods (cf. Flick 2004b: 250-251) including content mapping and interview questions ensured that valid results on those two topics were gained as well.

For analysis purposes, transcriptions of the interviews were made, focussing broadly on the content of the interview. Then, Schmidt's (2004) outline of the analysis process for semi-structured interviews was applied. After a first reading of the material, analytical categories were established which were then used to codify the interviews according to ideas. Those ideas in turn were clustered to develop overarching topics. Consequently, those topics were grouped and used to draw conclusions that were relevant to the research question.

The chosen research layout shows three main advantages. Firstly, structured interviews can seem robotic and may feel unnatural if the conversation is limited to answering set questions. In contrast, a reasoning gap activity helps the interviewer to set a certain topic framework while being engaging and inquisitive at the same time. This improves the mood and the ease of conversation. Secondly, information is not only gathered about key issues related to the interview topic, but also about why certain aspects do not actually matter that much after all. This generates a more rounded view which cannot be elicited by a question like **"What do you consider to be important in your personal lesson planning?"**. Thirdly, since the topic cards pre-codified the interview, the analysis of what was said appeared to be easier than with traditional interviews.

However, there are also limits to this type of interview. Question-type interviews offer the advantage that the responses may elicit answers that were not previously considered by the researcher. Although the reasoning gap activity involved follow-up questions and encouraged the interviewees to add their own topics, this only yielded little success. Interviewees stayed within the framework of the interview cards and elaborated

on them, but did not introduce any points that had not been considered when conceptualising the cards.

7 Results and discussion

The results section will be split into two main parts. First of all, there will be a discussion of general aspects concerning lesson planning **and teachers' planning** routines. This shall provide an insight into the interplay between the lesson planning process and language policies such as the curriculum, the NOST or the Matura. The second part will deal with general issues that the teachers raised with regards to lesson planning. This will deal with considerations as to why or why not teachers adhere to educational policies in their planning process.

7.1 The lesson planning process

Before the main part of the interview, all participants were asked to outline their lesson planning process. The results of this question are summarised in table 5. Overall, lesson planning can be characterised by five main steps, i.e., (1) reflections on previous progress, (2) defining goals in alignment with the students' current level, language policies and colleagues, (3) finding appropriate materials, (4) self-preparation and acquiring missing knowledge (5) and administrative tasks. It is important to note at this point that these five steps represent a model and may be realised differently or even be partially omitted by some educators. However, in one form or another, they encompass the main lesson planning processes that are carried out. Furthermore, since the research is limited to HAK teachers, the presented results are also limited to this context and might not be applicable to all other school types.

	Considerations	Preparation mentioned	Choice of content
Teacher 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> last lesson last homework materials/ coursebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> copying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> curriculum topics for final exams

Teacher 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> defining goals for the lesson coursebook checking level of difficulty repetition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> doing exercises before the lesson making a list of activities preparing (supplementary) exercises and worksheets preparing Quizlet ¹⁹units check attendance of students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> coursebook curriculum
Teacher 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> incorporating practice tasks for the Matura personalising the lessons to the needs of the group focus on monological and dialogical speaking interaction considering current topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> searching for input material exchange with colleagues about topics and materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> curriculum /domains syllabus designed by the English department coursebook
Teacher 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> defining a topic defining goals does the coursebook fit? finding tasks preparing necessary vocabulary planning sequences rather than individual lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sequencing activities doing exercises before the lesson 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> curriculum coursebook
Teacher 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> defining a topic checking the coursebook materials exchanges with colleagues goals that have to be reached until the exam date (exams being compiled with colleagues) available materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exchanging materials with colleagues no written lesson plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> curriculum coursebook
Teacher 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> check students' level aligning students' level with the requirements of the curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> curriculum coursebook
Teacher 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> planning sequences rather than individual lessons checking available materials under consideration of previous experiences checking the CEFR descriptors in the curriculum ensuring that all the five skills of the CEFR get equal attention what language structures need to be taught? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> checking in with colleagues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> coursebook descriptors of the curriculum

Table 5 – Teacher preparation

Preliminarily, it might be worth asking the question why teachers plan new lessons in the first place, since it is possible to plan a course in its entirety and then repeat those lessons perpetually. Teacher three provides an insight into this:

¹⁹ Quizlet is a practice app and website that students can use to revise vocabulary.

Das Lustige, wenn ich jetzt Revue passieren lasse, ich musste jedes Jahr, egal in welcher Klasse ich war, mir neue Stundenvorbereitungen machen, weil ich gemerkt habe, dass jede Klasse anders ist und einen anderen didaktisch-methodischen Zugang braucht. Die Zeiten ändern sich einfach. Aber die Gemeinsamkeiten des Lehrplans, des GERS, die Voraussetzungen für die standardisierte Reife- und Diplomprüfung, unsere Lehrstoffverteilung und die Kooperation im Team, das war immer der Raster, nach dem das ging.

Due to constant changes in the students they teach, that is **students'** interests, their attitudes, and their use of media, to name a few factors, teaching styles and methods must be adapted to ensure that learners are engaged and actually acquire the skills defined by the curriculum. This does not mean that every lesson must be planned from scratch each time, since the teaching goals defined through educational policy do not change so rapidly. However, the approach through which the policy goals are reached should be revisited and developed constantly.

At the beginning of the lesson planning process, teachers consider the previous progress of their learners. Usually, content is split up into teaching sequences that cover all important skills and language features that are needed to reach a goal, be it a specific task like ordering food, some cognitive challenge like evaluating information and making a necessary decision based on the results, or discussing an issue. Teachers reflect on what has been done before and how to continue such a sequence in a logical manner:

Wenn ich eine einzelne Stunde plane, dann schaue ich einmal, wie weit ich in der vorherigen Stunde gekommen bin, was wir da gemacht haben, was die Hausübung war. Dann überlege ich wie man das fortsetzen könnte. Und dann schaue ich, was ich für Unterlagen habe und wie viel Zeit zur Verfügung ist.
(teacher one)

Such considerations are not limited to the progress within a sequence alone, but involve students' progress as a whole as well, which teacher seven points out: “[...]ich [denke mir] immer: wo sind meine **Lernenden und was brauchen sie und was müssen wir tun**”. This suggests that teachers do not only choose appropriate material to reach a desired outcome but that it is equally important to evaluate how to build on previous lessons and knowledge in a meaningful way (cf Griffith and Burns 2012: 11) so students can add to their previous experiences and knowledge easily and effectively. Such reflections also mirror Krashen's (2004: 37-38) definition of language acquisition, which is “obtaining 'comprehensible input' in a low-anxiety situation”. Thus, aligning input with students' previous experiences and language level might be beneficial for language acquisition to occur.

Based on this initial needs and context analysis, goals are formulated. These goals are usually derived from language policies, which can either be explicit, e.g., the goals and topics listed in the curriculum or the CEFR, or they can be implicit, e.g., the familiarisation with test formats or the memorisation of specific content knowledge to solve a subsequent task. The interviewed teachers mentioned three main sources for their goals, namely the curriculum itself, the coursebook and upcoming exams. While some teachers claimed that they would actively plan with the curriculum next to them, some only said that they kept the domains of the curriculum at the back of their mind. Especially novice teachers mentioned the coursebook when referring to their goals:

Grundsätzlich überlege ich mir, was ich in der Stunde erreichen will. Dann nehme ich als Erstes das Buch zur Hilfe und schau mal ob im Buch was drinnen ist zu dem, was ich machen möchte. Wenn ich sehe das passt, dann schau ich mir meistens die Nummern genau an. Mein letztes Jahr war mein erstes Dienstjahr, das heißt, ich habe dann in *listening* ein bisschen Reinhören müssen. (teacher two)

This is because novice teachers sometimes only have a vague or incomplete idea of the topic areas they must teach. According to research, novice teachers possess less pedagogical content knowledge (Richards, Li & Tang 1995) and in comparison to expert teachers, they perform worse when it comes to meta language and giving explanations of language issues (Andrews 2007: 121-122). Consulting the coursebook can be a good way to overcome any of those shortcomings and to realise what is meant by the domains and skills mentioned in the curriculum. Also, content knowledge can be a problem at the beginning of a teacher's career. Hardly any university programme for English teachers in Austria includes an extensive amount of Business English. However, if educators find themselves teaching in a HAK, they have to deal with topics such as business correspondence, the teaching of which requires procedural knowledge about how a sales contract is concluded, relevant world knowledge and topic vocabulary on terms of delivery, payment and discounts, as well as an awareness of formal conventions. Again, consulting the coursebook and how it presents content can be a useful tool for closing any gaps. Such preparation involves the pre-solving of exercises and the listening and reading of input material in particular.

Additionally, there are also practical and economic reasons for using the coursebook as teacher six points out:

Ja weil das [Schulbuch] meine Grundlage ist, was ich unterrichte. Die Schüler haben ein Schulbuch und damit wir nicht immer ... in Zeiten von Kosten sparen kann ich nicht immer kopieren und kopieren. [...] Ich versuche

natürlich das Schulbuch, das sie gratis zur Verfügung gestellt bekommen, im Unterricht zu implementieren. (teacher six)

Austrian students are provided with government-funded coursebooks, for which they pay nothing at all or only a small sum. In times of an increased awareness of sustainability and the need of cost cutting, this is even more of a reason to use them.

Furthermore, the above quote further illustrates that, for some teachers, the textbook is the foundation upon which they build their course. Since the book itself is a possible translation of the curriculum into actual classroom activities, it can be used as a guide to sequence and teach a course. In fact, when taught in its entirety, a coursebook is supposed to cover all the necessary skills and content points that are required by the curriculum in a given school year. Moreover, coursebooks cover all test content and formats of the Matura exam. As Shohamy (1993: 15-16) points out in her study of several Israeli language exams, teaching can become test-like, especially if there is a high-stakes exam that students must take, thus publishers adapt their materials to match the used exam tasks as a selling point for their coursebooks. Consequently, educators tend to rely on coursebooks, particularly in their first few years of teaching.

Finally, exams play an essential role when defining goals. Teacher one replied the following to the question about how she decided on the content of her lessons:

Na ja, nach Lehrplan, Themengebiet. Wenn's zum Beispiel die Abschlussprüfung ist, dann schaue ich, was sie zur Abschlussprüfung können müssen, oder zur Matura. Dann schaue ich, was im Buch drinnen ist. Wenn das das nicht abdeckt, muss ich zusätzlich Materialien suchen.

Teacher six added that there are formal criteria that she must adhere to: “[...] wohin geht es, Tests, Schularbeiten, oder ich würde sogar vorher noch sagen Matura-Formate, wo muss ich hin mit [den Schüler*innen]”. This indicates that exams also play a role in the lesson planning process. While there are explicit policies for tests, like guidelines for the Matura or *Schularbeiten*²⁰, there are also implicit regulations, especially when regarding content knowledge. For example, the curriculum might state a domain like “shopping possibilities”, which can be realised with activities that deal with a topic that the teacher or a coursebook writer deems interesting, such as supermarket tricks, or recent shopping trends. Since the oral exams and *Schularbeiten* are made in-house, those specific realisations of domains might be translated into exam tasks that require ideas about

²⁰ *Schularbeiten* as defined by the LBVO are written achievement tests of at least one hour that cover a defined topic area.

supermarket tricks or shopping trends. In return, as soon as such an exam task is compiled and reused regularly, supermarket tricks and shopping trends become a common interpretation of the curriculum for which content knowledge and language structures must be prepared²¹. These are either taught using the coursebook or by supplementing extra materials. Similarly, Matura style exam tasks are used in testing English, although not required by any government policy, in order to make students acquainted with them. This is a common policy that is usually agreed on by the English department of a school.

Such de facto policies are crucial since they help establish interpretations of policies within a school (cf. Hattie 2012: 67) and standardise the same courses taught by different teachers. Teacher five outlined what this process looks like:

Ich schaue mir an welches Thema wir gerade bearbeiten müssen. Dann schau ich mir an, was es dazu im Buch gibt und was mir davon gefällt und dann schaue ich was ich noch dazu finden kann und ich tausche mich stark mit meinen Kolleginnen aus, vor allem mit den Kollegen die den gleichen Jahrgang unterrichten, weil wir ja jahrgangsübergreifende Schularbeiten haben.

It is interesting to note that the first reason for why teacher five has exchanges about materials and lessons seems to be that teachers at her school compile exams together. Doing so makes it all the more important to adapt to the speed and adopt materials of the co-teachers so all students of a year can solve a test without problems. Hence, the anticipation of a jointly created *Schularbeit* leads to collaboration among teachers and results in a common interpretation of the curriculum. Another way of reaching the same goal is presented by teacher three, who indicates that their syllabus for the entire year was created collaboratively, also resulting in a common interpretation of the curriculum. What could be seen is that a policy like the curriculum needs to be translated into actual classroom reality by means of input material and activities. This is either done by a coursebook writer for the teacher, by the teachers themselves or both. As soon as those interpretations are done and finalised in a repetitively used exam task, it can be argued that this exam task replaces the vague curriculum as a more specific interpretation and teaching goal in the future.

When deciding on goals for lessons, not only the nature of those goals but also the time that can be spent on them plays a role. The curriculum that goes along with the

²¹ This is especially true these days since publishers release suitable testing material that match the sequences taught in their coursebooks.

NOST states in great detail what domains need to be covered within a semester, which is why teachers need to limit the time spent on certain areas to be able to cover the essentials:

Das Modulsystem hat uns da halt gezwungen noch genauer hinzuschauen, auch weil wir noch enger als Team miteinander arbeiten. Also ich kann nicht mehr freiwirtschaften wie in meinen Anfängen oder auch noch vor zehn Jahren, zu sagen, das [Thema] macht mir jetzt wahnsinnig Spaß. Ich muss schauen, dass ich einigermaßen im Tempo und in den Sachen parallel zu den Kolleg*innen bleibe. [...] ich würde zwar manchmal mehr machen wollen, aber ich muss jetzt schauen, dass die Dinge weitergehen. (teacher seven)

In addition to that, there are administrative reasons why the curriculum needs to be covered. Teacher six mentions that she wants everything to be covered in case another colleague has to take over her class. This is especially important because some Matura relevant domains are only taught in certain semesters, hence the need to cover them when they come up. Overall, this results in a tight time frame during which it is difficult to elaborate and go into depth on certain topics.

After this second stage of choosing goals, appropriate materials are found. The flow chart in figure 6 illustrates this process in detail. Depending on the school culture, the material choice is either made individually or by a group of teachers giving parallel courses. Teacher five outlined the following process at her school:

Ich schaue mir mal an welches Thema wir gerade bearbeiten müssen. Dann schau ich mir an was es dazu im Buch gibt und was mir davon gefällt und dann schaue ich was ich noch dazu finden kann und ich tausche mich stark mit meinen Kolleginnen aus. Vor allem mit den Kolleginnen die den gleichen Jahrgang unterrichten, weil wir ja jahrgangsübergreifende Schularbeiten haben. [...] **Ich habe zum Beispiel erst gestern ein Gespräch mit meinen Fachkolleg*innen gehabt, mit denen ich die fünfte unterrichte. Da haben wir genau geplant wie wir in den nächsten Stunden vorgehen, bis zur Schularbeit.**

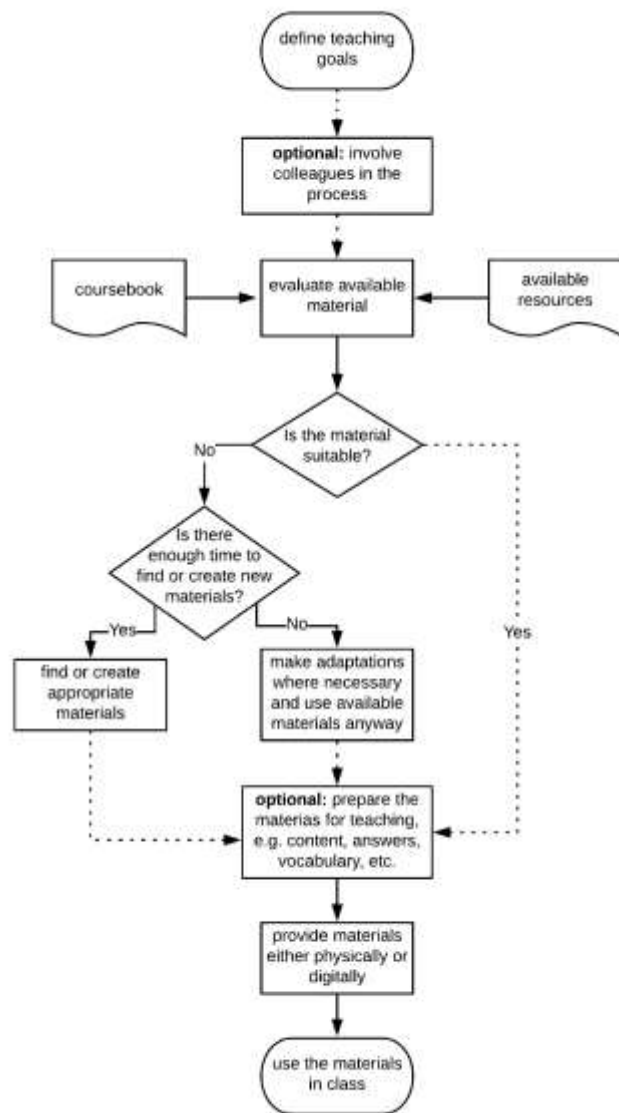


Figure 6 – The material choice process

This exchange of materials represents another way to standardise a course. The materials are either chosen from the coursebook or from a pool of extra material at the **teachers'** disposal. If goals deviate from the provided exercises in the coursebook, teachers have two options, either they find materials from other sources or they create materials themselves. A mixture of the two, where pre-existing tasks are adapted to a group's special needs or a specific goal is also possible. It is important to note that subjective opinions about materials, the available time for preparation as well as the resources at the **teacher's** disposal play a role when it comes to material choice, as was pointed out by teacher two:

[...] also, ich überlege mir was ich machen will, schau mir das Buch dazu an und wenn ich im Buch was gescheites dazu finde, nehme ich das her, ansonsten mache ich selber Arbeitsblätter. [...] Das ist auch nicht für jede Stunde möglich. Je nach Stressphase arbeitet man eben mehr mit dem Buch.

The less time is available to the teacher, the more they rely on pre-existing materials and the coursebook, especially because they might have been used before and thus do not need to be prepared in great detail. However, teachers also resort back to available materials, even if they do not deem them entirely suitable when they are under pressure, e.g., in times when they must mark lots of homework and exams

As soon as materials are chosen, teachers prepare them for classroom use. This can have two reasons, either because the material is unfamiliar or because the educators themselves must fill gaps in their own knowledge. Teacher four describes the former as follows:

Will ich dann am Listening arbeiten, zum Beispiel, dann muss ich zuerst mal schauen: welche wichtigen Vokabeln kommen in diesem Listening denn vor?
[...] **Ich muss mal überlegen, wie die Inhalte am besten methodisiert werden,** damit die Schüler*innen am meisten davon haben.

This process might further involve solving exercises, reflections on what language structures to highlight while teaching or predicting possible pitfalls for students. Such considerations, however, can also be made during a lesson to some extent, especially by experienced teachers who have used similar materials previously. For instance, a new worksheet on a grammar structure that a veteran teacher has covered several times in their career barely needs any preparation. Similarly, reused materials can be brought to class with next to no preparation at all.

In addition to preparing materials to increase the lesson outcome, there is also the need for teachers to master the taught area themselves. Teacher one provided anecdotal evidence for that after her interview. She reported that when starting out as a teacher, she did not receive much help from her colleagues. Not coming from a business school background herself, she told the interviewer that she had been looked down upon when asking for help on a topic she had not known much about and pointed out that there had not been much collaboration among teachers at all. She characterised her first years as learning by doing where she would prepare not only material, but also herself so she was able to teach the content that was required by the curriculum. Likewise, teacher four stated that she was able to teach all business-related matters because of her previous work experience in a bank, but that non-intuitive matters like Matura specific textual features

or test formats required her attention. Furthermore, all novice teachers highlighted the fact that they needed more preparation for classes they had not taught previously. Thus, especially at the beginning of their career, educators pay special attention to material preparation.

The last step of the lesson planning process is carrying out administrative tasks. This involves copying chosen worksheets or making them available digitally. Afterwards the lesson is ready to be taught in the classroom.

To sum up, the lesson planning process is determined by language policy either directly or indirectly. Whereas there are de jure policies that teachers follow, they, either individually or within an English department, create de facto policies, such as oral agreements among colleagues, on how to specify policies and put them into practice. Those de facto policies can consequently replace vague areas of the de jure policies, for instance, specifications of content in the curriculum or means to assess students.

This mirrors some of **Menken**'s findings in a study about the effects of the New York Regent examination on students with English as a second language. She concluded that "High-stakes tests have become de facto language education policy [...] 'Teaching to the test' is commonplace in classrooms serving ELLs [English Language Learners], resulting in changes to language education policy." (**Menken 2008: 138**). In contrast to the New York context, there is one major difference in comparison to the situation in Austrian HAKs. The oral examinations and *Schularbeiten* are made in-house, so the English department of a school specifies what is tested. This enables them to define what is taught and therefore make their "teaching to the test" meaningful to the individual school context, at least to a certain extent. Depending on the level of collaboration among teachers, this can even result in agreements on the used materials and the sequence of content introduced to students.

However, teachers do not seem to disregard findings from language acquisition research in the process. By analysing classroom contexts, they adapt standards and break them down so students can learn and understand the input easily. They, thereby, help to make the input comprehensible, since they know about their students' level of competence and choose materials accordingly.

One factor that also plays a role in the lesson planning process is self-preparation. Inexperienced teachers tend to focus more heavily on the preparation of tasks and materials to be able to teach them successfully. Here they use the coursebook as a

translation of policies into activities to meet most standards. Experienced teachers, in contrast, do not prepare lessons in great detail. Their preparation rather revolves around the analysis of new standards to make changes to their current ways of teaching. This helps them to meet those standards and to equip their students with all the necessary skills for exams.

Teachers think about standards less consciously than subconsciously. In that respect they are similar to tour guides: while inexperienced ones prepare one route in detail at the beginning and focus on their performance, more experienced ones will have many different routes in mind. They are more apt at reacting to the wishes of their clients and do not check their set path constantly, but try to choose a tour that is most suitable to the people they show around. Although they are aware of where they want to go and what to say, they adapt to new situations and are more concerned with the present. Policies can be seen as roadblocks or street signs in this analogy. Rather than changing the whole tour, they merely require slight adaptations to their usual practice.

7.2 Main influences on lesson planning

In the second part of the interview, all the respondents were asked what the main aspects of their lesson planning were, limiting themselves to about five topic cards for their answer (cf. table 3). The results are visualised in figure 4. The top picks illustrate an overall tendency towards student centeredness as well as issues regarding the availability of materials, a trend that was also pointed out by Sardo-Brown (1988). This suggests a problem-solution based approach to lesson planning where after considering students' needs, interests and motivational factors, teachers select appropriate materials that help to achieve those goals. However, as teachers usually work under time constraints, those materials must be readily available, which may be a reason why the used coursebook and the previously collected and developed materials are found at the top of the list.

Educational policies also play a role in the planning process and were mentioned by about half of the respondents as being a main part of their lesson planning process. The CEFR as well as the formats of the written Matura were considered as being particularly important because they represent the goals towards which they must work. Although student centredness was highly valued, it is the materials and policies that were of great concern for most of them. Overall, three main topics emerged in the interviews, which



Figure 7 – Aspects of lesson planning listed according to the frequency they were mentioned as the main factors that influence teachers' lesson planning process; n=7

were the Matura, topic- or goal-centeredness and the coursebook, which will be dealt with in the following.

Especially the semi-standardised Matura brought about some significant changes. When it came to listening and reading, teachers could be divided into two groups. The first one regarded test formats as necessary before tests and used them as preparation:

I: Wie übst du reading und listening?

T: Videos und die *listennings*, die im Buch sind, mache ich mit ihnen. Ich muss zugeben, dass ich die Matura-Formate hauptsächlich vor den Schularbeiten übe. Im normalen Unterricht mache ich Übungen, wo sie Notizen machen oder mitschreiben müssen oder Arbeitsblätter bekommen. (teacher five)

This group showed that receptive skills have two facets for them in teaching. On the one hand, there are real-life listening activities that require working on what was

understood in a later activity, which translate to a more task-based approach in class. On the other hand, there are tasks focused on individual skills in order to pass exams, which are practiced separately. The second group of teachers internalised the standards set by the Matura more literally, and interpreted skills-training as practicing Matura formats:

T: Aber da haben wir eh, Lehrplan. So, gut, rezeptive Fertigkeiten laut GERS. Ist das wichtig für meine Unterrichtsplanung? Ja. Ahhh.

I: Warum sind für dich die rezeptiven Fertigkeiten wichtig?

T: Weil sie es nicht können.

I: Das heißt?

T: Weil das etwas ist, was sie nicht gut können, *reading* und *listening* Aufgaben. Da haben wir immer die Probleme bis zur Matura. Deswegen ist das für mich wichtig, also, weil ich weiß, dass das zur Matura kommt.

(teacher one)

This suggests that receptive skills are interpreted as Matura tasks. However, such a narrow view of skills is questionable since language application in real life is not about ticking correct statements or finishing sentences. It is about being able to understand concepts and applying them, like watching tutorials to do a task or reading the news to share a story or opinion with someone else. Thus, planning lessons on the basis of Matura formats might be harmful to actual teaching outcomes, since they do not reflect reality, but a test situation.

Also, when it came to the actual lesson planning, teachers were similarly divided when it came to what they plan their lessons around. The first group took the skills descriptors of the curriculum and the CEFR as their basis, which left them rather free in their interpretation of the curriculum. Teacher seven presents her approach as follows:

[...] Deskriptoren [meint die,] die im Lehrplan stehen, was [die Schüler*innen] an Fertigkeiten erlernen müssen. Wenn das jetzt eine Stunde am nächsten Montag in der Mitte eines Kapitels ist, dann beeinflusst mich welche der 4-5 Fertigkeiten hatte ich in der letzten Zeit gemacht. Muss ich jetzt mehr lesen, weil letzte Woche haben wir viel gehört? Dass das irgendwie abgedeckt ist. Nicht in jeder Stunde aber über eine Unit hinweg. Dass die verschiedenen Arbeitsformen abgedeckt sind, dass sie monologisch, dialogisch präsentieren, dass die Schülerinnen und Schüler selbsttätig arbeiten. Wann haben wir die letzte Präsentation gehabt in Gruppen, Teampräsentation. Dann schaue ich, welche Sprachstrukturen sind da abzuarbeiten. Dann schreiben wir die 3–4 Dinge, die sich ausgehen, wobei die Schüler zum Teil, die arbeiten ... die Planung in meiner Alterskohorte, mit meiner *experience* oft über den Haufen wirft, muss man halt sagen. wie es ist. Also, ich predige immer an der Uni: „teach the students, not the plan.“

This means that the topics mentioned were only seen as examples and guidelines on the basis of which the competences must be achieved. Consequently, those teachers were also the ones who had a rather positive attitude towards the NOST, because they did not feel as restricted. The second group, in contrast, had a rather topic-oriented approach to teaching. This meant that the topic was in the centre of their planning and that all the exercises derived from that topic. Whether each topic led to a practice of all skills in the curriculum was not as important.

Also erstens muss ich mal überhaupt überlegen: Was ist das *topic*? An welchem *topic* generell arbeite ich mit ihnen und was sind die Ziele, die **erreicht werden sollen mit der Stunde. Und überhaupt halt...sag'n ma so...** überhaupt mal welche Ziele mit dem *topic* überhaupt erreicht werden sollen. Und dann muss ich mir halt überlegen, wie das halt in Sequenzen teilen kann; wie lange ich überhaupt für das Topic brauchen will mit den Schülern und dann muss ich mir halt für jede Stunde überlegen: was will ich in der Stunde **mit den Schülern erreichen? Und dann ... ja und dann muss man sich die *textbooks* anschauen und schauen welche Übungen passen zu den Zielen, die man vor hat zu erreichen mit den Schülern.**

Furthermore, these were the teachers who found the NOST most problematic, because they were stressed by the multitude of aspects they had to cover within a semester.

Overall, it is up for debate which approach is more successful in language teaching. Both of them cover skills and content, and since most teachers base their lessons on coursebooks, even similar exercises will have been done at the end of a teaching sequence. The difference is a rather perceptual one. While one group feels under pressure because their measure of achievement is the coverage of content, the other might be more relaxed because theirs is just a balance of all skills, which can be done over the course of a semester.

Finally, one of the greatest influence factors on lesson planning is the coursebook in use. It forms the basis of all teaching since it is a translation of the curriculum into classroom practice. This means that by covering a coursebook, all essential criteria of the curriculum are met. Whatever the convictions of a teacher were, most interviewees used it to a large extent. All the policies that are mentioned in figure 6 are covered in a coursebook, such as Matura tasks, all skills and even NOST requirements. This makes it the primary source for teaching. Whenever there are time constraints, teachers revert to the coursebook. Teacher 2 put it as follows:

Je gestresster ich bin in den Schularbeitsphasen, desto weniger detailliert ist meine Stundenplanung. Desto mehr stütze ich mich dann auch wieder auf bereits vorhandenes Material oder Schulbuch.

Teachers usually only create their own materials if the coursebook does not offer what they intend to teach, or if they believe that the exercises are not suitable:

I: Warum [beeinflusst dich] das Schulbuch?

T: Ja weil das ja die Übungen zur Verfügung stellt, teilweise zumindest.
Wenn keine guten Übungen drinnen sind, muss man andere suchen.
(teacher four)

Overall, the coursebook is the most convenient way to design a lesson, especially because it is re-teachable. This makes teachers anticipate what problems might arise with certain exercises and set preventative measures accordingly. Also, since the coursebook is based on language policy, it is a major tool for policy implementation. As all coursebooks go through a review process by a government institution, this ensures that policies are put into practice the way the government intended.

Whenever teachers plan lessons, they are directly (by the curriculum, the laws or regulations) or indirectly (by the coursebooks or the available materials) influenced by policy. Even though they take students' needs into account, it depends on the type of teacher to what extent they do so. For some it is giving students choices and bringing materials to class that students are interested in, for others it is bridging the gap between students' needs and the requirements of a policy and again for others, it is both. Putting policies into the centre of the lesson design process has two major drawbacks though. First, teachers think less about what is required of students in the real world but solely focus on goals without questioning them. Some of these goals might even be outdated. This means that students can deal with English to some extent but might fail to deal with situations in the real world. Secondly, basing English classes on exams and standards robs teachers of their liberty to bring current topics and recreational language use to class, since both are only marginally represented in the curriculum or seen as irrelevant. Nevertheless, these are areas of language use that learners will encounter most often after school, since it is not guaranteed that they will need English in their professional life. As some teachers pointed out, policies need to be interpreted with the utmost freedom in order to be adaptive in the classroom. This, however, also means that some parts must simply be neglected.

7.3 The influence of the NOST

The NOST has considerably changed teaching routines and the preparation of lessons. In the interviews, teachers had to answer a question about how the NOST influenced their planning and also mentioned the NOST throughout the interview. After coding the interview, all aspects that were mentioned were summarised and regrouped under four overarching categories. Although interviewees who had recently graduated from university did not see much of a difference between the old and the new system, more experienced ones spoke of substantial alterations they had to make to their teaching. This is consistent with Shohamy's (1993: 10) findings that older teachers feel a greater impact of policy reforms on their teaching. In the present study, the mentioned changes either

	Category	Influence of the NOST on category
Personal level	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A larger number of exams that needs to be compiled. • The system causes stress for teachers.
	Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak performers suffer from exam stress; if they do not manage to pass exams, the number of remaining exams might become overwhelming. • Student's self-management is low. Since there are also the regular exams of a semester next to the ones for failed semesters, they often prioritize the latter.
Subject level	Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because of NOST, planning is focused on one semester because the curriculum defines content that must be taught only within that particular semester. • Teachers focus on the most essential topics, e.g., Matura relevant topics • Not a lot of elaboration on topics is possible. • Exact definitions of what has to be taught within a semester shortens the time spent on current affairs. • There is an equal focus on productive and receptive skills. • Standardised content makes it easier for students to change schools.
	Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A grade covering evaluations on all competence descriptors of the curriculum must be found within a semester instead of a whole year. • New tasks for the same topic areas need to be found when students resit a module exam. • The individualization of exams, that is, compiling individualised exams depending on which of the four skills they failed, results in a lot of extra work. • More attention is paid to the alignment of curriculum and tests regarding topics and text types. • Advantage: individualisation of teaching: Students must only take exams on content areas or skills they did not master.

Table 6 – Influence of the NOST on teachers

concern the personal level, i.e., issues regarding individual people and their wellbeing, or the subject level, that is everything directly related to the teaching process. They fall into four categories, namely (1) the influence on students, (2) the influence on teachers, (3) the changes related to content and the extent to which said content can be taught, and finally (4) classroom assessment. The results shown in table 6 will be compared to a 2017 survey of vocational school teachers conducted by the Christian Teachers' Union (2017: 1-2) which complements the findings.

Teachers seem to suffer much more from stress because of an increased workload. Teacher one even said that the new system felt like a corset. Educators mentioned several different reasons for that, such as the need to compile many extra exams for students who failed a semester. While some teachers reported that exams were only testing competences a given student had not mastered, as required by the law, others spoke of very general English exams. In the former case, the conceptualisation and the administrative tasks involved can consume a lot of time, especially if the number of students who take a module exam is high. Compiling general exams is a more pragmatic approach that tries to fulfil the official regulations by the government but minimizes the amount of time involved in the preparation of exams. Depending on how literally teachers took the policy, their workloads differed greatly.

A survey of teachers by the Christian Teachers' Union (2017: 2) gives details about why the workload is high. About 90 % of the respondents claimed that they had to administer exams outside their scheduled lessons, that they had to compile many more exams than in the previous system and that administrative work had increased. A comment of a participant of the same survey summarised the extra work required:

Verdoppelung der Arbeit, da LehrerInnen und [KlassenvorständInnen] alle Vorgänge parallel erledigen müssen (Katalog anlegen, Frühwarnungen, wesentlich mehr Prüfungen, Prüfungsvorbereitung, Korrekturen, Elterngespräche, Verständigungen, Prüfungseintragungen, Formulare und wieder Formulare, ...). (Christian Teachers' Union 2017: 1)

This comment also indicates that it is not only teaching related matters, but even more so the documentation of exams and grades, as well as the constant contact with parents that is stressful.

Furthermore, the NOST requires far more careful term planning from teachers. Teacher five summarised her concerns like this:

Wenn ich jetzt ein ganzes Schuljahr Zeit habe, kann ich mir die wichtigsten Themen über das Schuljahr rauspicken und die über das ganze Jahr so

unterrichten, dass ich sage, ich habe das jetzt ordentlich gemacht, während in der NOST einfach die Zeit drängt. Weil ich ja außerhalb dieses Semesters ein Thema nicht prüfen darf. Dann habe ich den Stress, dass ich das so machen muss. Und was mache ich jetzt in der NOST, wenn sich das Thema *environment* in dem Semester, wo es vorgesehen ist, nicht ausgegangen ist. Dann habe ich ein Problem. Und wenn es über das Jahr geht, dann mache ich es halt danach.

This example illustrates the importance of testing content teachers covered previously. Teacher five has the urge to examine subject matters that she deems essential at the end of a teaching sequence. However, for NOST classes, such an exam is only possible within the semester the content was taught, which teacher five describes as being stressful. The reason might be that teachers give testing weight to the extent that it marks the end of a teaching sequence. Consequently, the NOST makes teacher five select much more carefully what she covers and how much time she allocates to each topic. This is because she needs to teach and test the most important topic areas indicated in the curriculum in her opinion. The term *important topics* refers to areas that are relevant to the Matura, evidence for which will be shown below.

Teacher five also points out that she does not always stick to the NOST semester boundaries, though. The interviewer picked up on teacher five's cue regarding the topic *environment*, which is not part of the domains listed in the curriculum for semester nine. The following exchange was the result:

I: Ist deine fünfte gerade eine NOST Klasse?

T5: Ja.

I: Wieso machst du dann *environment* im ersten Semester?

T5: Weil die maturieren (lacht).

I: Aber das ist nicht im Lehrplan.

T5: Ja.

I: Das dürft ihr nicht prüfen.

T5: Werden wir nicht machen, aber wir müssen es für die Matura unterrichtet haben.

What can be seen is that not all language policies are created equal. While the NOST strictly organises and sequences teaching, the Matura, and especially its preparation, outweighs the consequences of not adhering to the modular system. Teaching to the test, at least in some contexts, seems to trump other policies like the NOST.

Students are also affected by the NOST, according to the interviewed teachers. In their experience, especially weak performers tend to accumulate exams for failed semesters. Those exams must be taken during the ongoing term, which results in a lot of extra studying for students who already struggle. Teacher seven has the following to say:

Die Modularisierung hat sicher mehr Stress verursacht. Ich finde, dass sich Schülerinnen wahnsinnig schwertun, die Dinge zu managen und aufzuholen und Dinge einfach anstehen lassen. Und diese Übertragung [von Verantwortung]: du managst jetzt deinen Lernweg und du selber bist verantwortlich, hat viele wirklich sehr über den Kopf getroffen und sie managen das schlecht. Und daher gibt es wahnsinnig viele, die wahnsinnig viele 5-er haben aus mehreren Modulen, und dann haben sie in Englisch halt am Ende im Wintermodul einen und im Sommermodul.

Teachers especially mention two reasons for students failing in the NOST system. On the one hand they fail to organise themselves, and on the other hand, they feel overwhelmed because they have accumulated too many exams. The survey by the **Christian Teachers' Union** (2017: 2) further showed that most teachers believe that in the new system students tend to drop out more easily before the Matura because of parked exams²². Moreover, teachers believe that the modular system ends the school career of weak-performing students prematurely, and that students skip lessons in order to study for module exams. Allegedly, students also appear to be under permanent pressure. Unfortunately, there is no student survey to accompany this data in order to get their perspective as well. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the new system puts students and teachers under more pressure than the previous system, since it requires extra tests that have to be prepared by teachers and taken by the students.

When it comes to the subject level, the NOST particularly influences content choice. Curricular restrictions are one main reason, that is specific content can only be taught within the semester it is mentioned in the curriculum. Teacher three, who was part of the think tank that wrote the 2014 curriculum, pointed out that this was necessary in order to let students change between NOST schools. If the domains were not clearly defined in the curriculum, it would be hard for the next teacher to compile a module exam. All this is in stark contrast to the curriculum before the current one, which barely mentioned any content at all but had a strong focus on current affairs. The difference between the old and the new curriculum is briefly summarised by teacher one:

Also [der Lehrplan] ist in den letzten Jahren mit der NOST wichtiger geworden. Ich habe mich früher nicht so intensiv, um den Lehrplan

²² If a student resits a module exam three times and fails the third time as well, the module is “parked”. This means that the fourth attempt of the module exam is postponed to a time slot right before the Matura. Furthermore, a student can only have one parked module from one subject at a time, e.g., English. If a student has one parked English module and fails the third exam of another English module, they must drop out. Similarly, if the parked exam before the Matura is failed, the student drops out automatically, too.

gekümmert. Ganz, ganz, ganz früher, aber das ist wahrscheinlich nicht mehr relevant, hat man einfach das gemacht, was im Buch war.

Curricula before 2014 were particularly vague, which gave the coursebook more importance because it was a way of sequencing teaching units. Materials could be added where necessary, but the coursebook gave the initial structure of a year. This is reflected in the development of curricula (cf. section 2.1 and the appendix), which shows a trend towards specification and adding detail in order to standardise teaching.

Furthermore, teachers lament the fact that using current world news and raising trending issues in class have progressively become more difficult, as was pointed out by teacher seven: “

Also dieses, wirklich die Möglichkeit nicht mehr zu haben, zu sagen im Wintersemester bin ich jetzt leider nicht mehr zum Bankwesen gekommen, das wäre aber im Wintermodul drinnen. Das heißt, ich muss das dort auf Biegen und Brechen machen und dann leider die amerikanischen Wahlen oder das Kino raushauen.

Similar to teacher five before, teacher seven does not like the strict time corset that is put on her teaching. It is difficult to move topics around and to cover them at a later time if a topic had to be skipped. However, she also stresses the fact that topics that are essential, either to the Matura or the business education of students, such as *Banking*, must be covered and thus permits herself to move them to another semester.

However, there is a way around that by interpreting domains and topics as freely as possible, as teacher three did:

Aber Handelspolitik passt doch wunderbar in *social issues* hinein. Das ist eine der Domänen. [...] Was an der Grenze passiert zum Beispiel, was im Bereich Finanzen, *financial markets*, oder *stock markets*, oder was auch immer, passiert. Das passt gut hinein in den Bereich Persönlichkeit. Kann ich jetzt studieren gehen in die USA? Ich fand, es ist ohne Probleme.

It seems a bit of a stretch to argue that social issues can be combined with business topics like stock markets. Despite that, as has been shown in some other contexts before, topics are only limited by **the teacher's imagination and interpretation of them**. As her main reasoning, teacher three points out in a later part of her interview, that it had always been her goal to make students achieve a B2 level. As long as all four skills, as well as grammar and vocabulary were taught in a balanced way, a match and mix of topics was possible, according to her.

Since the curriculum of 2014 mentions a multitude of topics in each semester, some teachers feel that they cannot elaborate on topics anymore. Teacher five mentioned that

she cannot deal with topics for a very long time because otherwise she is not able to cover everything the curriculum mentions. Again, this was easier with the precursors to the current curriculum and the non-standardised Matura. Since teachers compiled the Matura themselves without many restrictions before 2010, they could focus on more or less anything that met the vaguely formulated topic descriptions at the time. They were also in control of time management and could go into depth about anything they pleased for as long as they wanted. This freedom has been taken from them by the NOST system since a vast number of topics for each semester entails the need for a rapid progression. This is partially due to a spiralisisation of the curriculum, that is, topics are covered repeatedly at different levels over the five years in HAK. For example, the topic *environment* goes through several iterations. While in third grade it is just environment, it taken up in fifth grade as *economy and ecology* again. In addition, coursebook writers incorporate environmental issues as early as first grade, where the topic *living* may be interpreted as living in a sustainable house (cf. Tilbury et al. 2019: 41). Thus, elaboration is possible, but only over the course of the five years. Covering topics for a month at a time and then never talking about them again, as was often the case before the recent curriculum was introduced, is barely possible anymore.

One reason for this tightly knit curriculum was the fact that students wanted to change schools, which was pointed out by teacher three:

Wir wussten damals schon, dass man auch für die Semestrierung Bezug nehmen muss. Durch die Semestrierung auch im Hinblick, was macht jemand, wenn der nach dem 3. Semester dann weg saust aus welchen Gründen auch immer, in eine andere Schule die auch semestriert ist. Du musst das ja irgendwie korrelieren.

It must be clear what exactly the next subject teacher must examine. Thus, it was necessary to incorporate a detailed list of topics so students would get a fair chance in an examination compiled by a different English teacher without the need to contact the former one.

Nevertheless, there are also positive aspects regarding content in the NOST. Teacher seven states the following: “Dass der Fokus jetzt sehr gleich ist auf produktiv und rezeptiv, das finde ich auch begrüßungswert. Ich habe auch oft irgendwie gehört, ‘Für das Mündliche habe ich keine Zeit‘“. As mentioned previously, teachers even compiled high-stakes exams themselves, which gave them total control over their classroom. Everything that was covered was eventually tested in school and consequently assessed at the Matura. Therefore, they often only taught what was needed for their exams, sometimes neglecting oral skills. Teacher seven welcomes the fact that productive and receptive skills are seen as

equal, not only because they are anchored in the curriculum, but also because they are required by the Matura exams. This also reflects Shohamy's **findings** (1993: 2) who claims that language policies, especially tests and curricula, are a way for the educational system to implement change in schools.

At last, the NOST has a huge impact on testing culture in schools. Students may only be tested on content that they did not master in a semester, which results in highly individualised exams. This is seen as being positive by some:

Ich stand und stehe der Idee eigentlich positiv gegenüber, weil ich auch finde, dass diese Individualisierung und Stärken-Schwächen-Aufwertung eigentlich wichtig sind. Eigentlich werden die Schülerinnen über den Kamm geschoren. Alle das gleiche am Ende des Semesters abzuprüfen macht ja wirklich nicht viel Sinn. (teacher seven)

Limiting students' examinations to skills, i.e., reading, listening, writing and speaking, enables them to study much more effectively. However, this also increases the number of exams teachers have to compile and the number of tests students have to take, both of which causes stress. This poses a dilemma regarding examinations in the NOST: Are teachers idealistic and individualise as much as possible or are they pragmatic and try to standardise their tests to avoid overwork? Depending on school culture and personal convictions, the answers to this question diverge.

The compilation of exams is thus influenced greatly by the NOST. Teacher one states the following:

Das ist jetzt schon mehr als es früher der Fall war. Und ich schaue bei den Schularbeiten, dass das was ich zu den Schularbeiten gebe exakt zu dem passt, was im Lehrplan steht; jetzt textsortenmäßig und vom Inhalt her.

A more detailed curriculum has led to greater attention to detail in testing, be it achievement tests or module exams. While there was no mention of text types in the curriculum of 1994, the current curriculum lists a variety of genres to be covered (cf. the appendix). This in conjunction with a list of topics and skills form the criterion-referenced test construct for student assessment.

Furthermore, an additional challenge is material research for tests. This can be a hurdle for modular exams, as was stressed by teacher one:

Und es braucht irrsinnig viel Zeit. Dieses permanente Prüfungen erstellen; weil du kannst ja nicht ständig nur immer das Gleiche geben, und das finde ich schon sehr aufwändig und mühsam.

In training seminars, HAK teachers were advised not to create their own testing materials. Teachers neither have the theoretical background nor the institution and workforce

behind them to design reading and listening comprehension questions that meet basic validity standards, such as the ones for the Matura. On top of that, testing materials made available by coursebook publishers are often not sufficiently tested, resulting in exam tasks with varying degree of quality. Hence, collecting a variety of testing tasks for the same topic for training and testing purposes has become **part of a teacher's routine**. This takes a lot of time, since students do not always take their module exams seriously. Teacher seven talked about her discomfort regarding the exams: "Von den vier die beim letzten Termin antreten sollten, sind nur zwei angetreten, eine durchgekommen, eine nicht. Jetzt brauche ich da wieder neue Prüfungen, und das drei Mal im Semester". The sustained effort that is needed paired with the fact that students sometimes do not even show up for their exams cause a slight anger in teachers because they feel as if they had worked in vain.

Finally, the curriculum requires teachers to find a grade within a semester, which requires them to examine all skills as defined in the curriculum within that semester. This means that, for every student, there needs to be at least some sort of examination regarding reading, writing, listening, monological speaking and dialogical speaking. Teacher two summarises the situation as follows:

Ich komme da als Lehrerin selber recht in den Stress, dass ich die Noten sagen wir mal irgendwie, Rechtfertigungen sammeln muss, dass ich zwischen Oktober, wo man ja dann eigentlich erst wirklich reinkommt, und Anfang Januar, wo dann Ferien waren, irgendwie auf eine Note kommt. Und man sollte ja alles abprüfen, und dass sich die Referate ausgehen, dass man viele mündliche Noten hat, das beeinflusst mich schon ziemlich.

Languages are special in that sense. Whereas the mode of examination, either oral or written, is irrelevant to other subjects, for English, the mode is part of the curriculum requirements. The competence descriptors define that students must acquire reading, listening, speaking and writing skills, thus all four of them must be examined. In a content subject, it is just the content that is tested, for which all modes are equal. As a result, more testing is required in language classes than in content subjects. A further problem stems from the assessment regulation for schools:

Den Beurteilungen der Leistungen eines Schülers in einem Unterrichtsgegenstand für eine ganze Schulstufe hat der Lehrer alle vom Schüler im betreffenden Unterrichtsjahr erbrachten Leistungen zugrunde zu legen, wobei dem zuletzt erreichten Leistungsstand das größere Gewicht zuzumessen ist. Dabei sind die fachliche Eigenart des Unterrichtsgegenstandes und der Aufbau des Lehrstoffes zu berücksichtigen. (LBVO § 20/1)

Although all competences must be covered by exams, it is the more recent ones that count more towards the final grade. However, this contradicts the notion that all competences of the CEFR have the same value in teaching and testing. Overall, assessment in the NOST is more tedious and requires more effort and planning than in the previous system.

As evidenced by the research, the NOST influences teachers greatly. While it is a step forward in standardisation, it especially restricts teachers who want to focus on **student's needs** or alternatively, makes them ignore policies to do that. In any case, it introduced a tight schedule that requires a rapid progression to be able to cover everything that is needed for the Matura. While it was originally designed to give students more chances to cope with any shortcomings, it increased the workload of said students who often lack organisational skills. In the worst case, this means that students drop out of school because their exam-load is too high. This is because one crucial element of a true modular system is missing, which is the possibility to re-take courses. Although the system was designed to provide support, like coaches, the students are able to proceed to more difficult classes without mastering the basics, which causes frustration and more failure. While the system may be advantageous for content classes where topics can be studied separately from each other, it is especially vital for languages that students master the basics before they can deal with more advanced issues. Since often in higher-level classes, basic language is not revised in detail, those weaker students do not get the lessons they need to proceed and therefore, they fail. Thus, the NOST fails in one core aspect of its design: making weaker students able to succeed in school.

8 Conclusion

Lesson planning is heavily influenced by policies, be it directly or indirectly. Teachers are confronted with requirements and materials that reflect those policies, which they use to come up with lesson plans. While some teachers are more conscious about these standards others fulfil them by using the guidance a coursebook and old exams provide.

In general, teachers tend to prepare topics based on materials they have at their disposition. These serve as the building blocks of a lesson that represent set teaching routines. Usually, the first point of reference is the coursebook that already fulfils all standards as it is approved by the Ministry of Education. If the proposed exercises do not suit the teachers and their goals, they then do research and find or create materials

themselves. Those materials are all translations of regulations into classroom practice, which makes material design a key element of policy implementation.

These policies have been made with good intentions in mind. The Matura was a final step to enforce the CEFR in language teaching in Austria, making the skills defined in the document the basis for teaching. In the years before, these skills were only loosely part of the curriculum and could be neglected by teachers, who valued some more than others. The Matura also standardised the level of high school students, which made results not only comparable within Austria, but also within the European Union. Furthermore, the NOST made teachers look more closely at the goals they had to achieve and provided students with more opportunities to compensate for any gaps of knowledge. Thus, the major policies that were under scrutiny in this paper brought about changes that were necessary on a holistic level.

One major finding of this research is that not all teachers interpret policies the same way. This is particularly important to the educational system, since policies need to be adapted to individual classroom contexts in order to work in real life. However, this comes with readings of policies that are literal to a varying degree. Consequently, teachers feel that policies are either a burden in the worst, or a guideline for their professional practice in the best case. In some instances, a collaborative interpretation within a school is agreed on, which helps to standardise various aspects of language teaching. What has become clear though is that policies are not effective themselves, it is their interpretation that becomes a rule. This means that different schools and different teachers may interpret the same policy differently and come to varying conclusions within the framework of a policy.

This is necessary because of a highly diverse student population throughout the country. Hence, policies sometimes need to be circumnavigated or even abandoned in order for lessons to work properly. Lessons need to be based on students and not the curriculum, as one teacher pointed out, so that new content and language structures tie in with what students already know. It is thus highly recommendable to define end goals, like the competence descriptors of the Matura, but leaving the curriculum rather free so teachers can decide themselves how they achieve them. This would result in classes that are tailored to learners and reduce the strain that a tight curriculum puts on students and teachers alike. After all, it is the **teacher's** primary goal to help students make progress and to succeed as best as they can in life.

Policy makers also need to become conscious about the effect their measures have, especially on teachers and students. When the Matura was implemented, coursebooks assimilated all the formats and criteria that were set by the Ministry of Education. **However, to the authors' knowledge, there has not been any research** on whether those formats and criteria work equally well for teaching as they do for testing. As has been shown, some teachers limit the use of test formats to exam preparation. However, since coursebooks have adopted them, they have replaced activities that simulate real life such as case studies and have become omnipresent. Further research on this matter is needed to find out whether these formats are as effective in teaching as in testing.

Policy makers must make sure that their policies can be implemented without causing excessive stress in the agents at the school level. Examples like the NOST show that giving the students more opportunities to improve combined with a lack of actual support can result in failure that is, however, postponed to the detriment of students. In order for the school system to improve, weak performers need individualised support that is tailored to their needs which additional exams cannot provide on their own. Also, teachers must be considered, since the extra work, especially for full-time language teachers, can result in increased stress levels and a feeling of being overworked and in the worst case even burnout.

In the case of the NOST, a true modularisation such as the one many universities have adopted would be of great value. There, courses, lectures and exams can be resat. This would mean that students would not only receive the opportunity to compensate for failure but would actually revise everything they did not comprehend at the level they need. As a result, dropping out of school would be impossible, since it is only the graduation that is postponed. Students could manage their workload and compile more or less dense schedules over several years that suit their learning styles and preferences. However, this would also mean that major organisational changes need to take place where the concept of traditional classes where students are in the same room as their peers for the duration of their schooling is broken up and schedules are spread out throughout the day. It is questionable whether this solution would be welcomed in Austria.

Policies are needed as pointers for teachers and students, as goals, and as measures of improvement for the educational system. However, they must be taken with a grain of salt since they were made by the few that decide over the many. Although they can implement change, they must not be taken literally as policy makers are not aware of every

classroom. Therefore, teachers should have the liberty to evaluate them and to make changes where necessary, since the lesson plan is not an end in itself but a means to an end.

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10 Appendices

10.1 Comparison of year III HAK curricula

Year III – Curriculum for Business English 2014 (BMUKK 2014: 31-32)

III. Jahrgang:

5. Semester – Kompetenzmodul 5:

Bildungs- und Lehraufgabe:

Die Schülerinnen und Schüler

- beherrschen grundlegende sprachliche Strukturen gut,
- beherrschen einen ausreichend großen Wortschatz zur Bewältigung von Alltagssituationen und routinemäßiger berufsrelevanter mündlicher und schriftlicher Kommunikation,
- verstehen alltägliche und vertraute berufsrelevante Kommunikation, wenn klar und deutlich gesprochen wird,
- verstehen Texte, in denen vor allem Alltags- oder einfache Berufssprache vorkommt und können diese auf ihre Relevanz untersuchen,
- verstehen einfache berufsrelevante Sachtexte, die Bilder und Infografiken enthalten und können diesen die wesentlichen Informationen entnehmen,
- verstehen einfache berufsbezogene Korrespondenz,
- bewältigen einfache routinemäßige berufsrelevante mündliche und schriftliche Kommunikation,
- können in einer kurzen und vorbereiteten Präsentation ein Thema aus ihrem Alltag und ihrer Ausbildung vorstellen,
- können sowohl schriftlich als auch mündlich eine detaillierte Beschreibung zu verschiedenen vertrauten Themen geben, detailliert über Lebens- und Arbeitsbedingungen, Alltags- und Berufsroutine, Vorlieben oder Abneigungen usw. berichten, Ereignisse, Erlebnisse und Erfahrungen detailliert beschreiben,
- können auf einfache berufsbezogene Korrespondenz adressaten- und situationsadäquat reagieren.

Lehrstoff:

Festigung und kontinuierliche Progression in den Fertigkeiten anhand folgender Domänen:

Privater und Öffentlicher Bereich:

Diversität in der Gesellschaft, Tourismus, Medien

Beruflicher Bereich:

Arbeitsabläufe in der Übungsfirma, einfache berufsbezogene schriftliche und mündliche Kommunikation, Unternehmensformen, Firmenprofile, Infografiken

Mündliche Kommunikation:

Domänenbezogenes monologisches und dialogisches Sprechen

Schriftliche Textsorten und -formate:

Standardmäßige Geschäftskorrespondenz (Bestellung), E-Mail, Blog, Textmessage, Memo, Notiz, Leaflet, Präsentation, Rundschreiben, Hand-out, Ausfüllen eines Fragebogens, Bewerbungsschreiben, Lebenslauf

Kommunikationsrelevante Sprachstrukturen:

Festigung und Erweiterung, situations- und adressatenadäquate registerspezifische Anwendung der Sprache

Schularbeiten:

Eine einstündige Schularbeit (bei Bedarf zweistündig)

6. Semester – Kompetenzmodul 6:

Bildungs- und Lehraufgabe:

Die Schülerinnen und Schüler

- beherrschen ein Repertoire an elementaren sprachlichen Mitteln, das es ihnen ermöglicht, Alltagssituationen und berufliche Situationen mit voraussagbaren Inhalten zu bewältigen,
- beherrschen einen ausreichend großen Wortschatz, um sich mit Hilfe von einigen Umschreibungen über die meisten Themen des eigenen Alltagslebens äußern zu können,
- können die grammatischen Strukturen anwenden, wobei Fehler vorkommen können, aber klar bleibt, was ausgedrückt werden soll,
- verstehen berufsrelevante Vorträge oder Reden, wenn die Thematik vertraut und die Darstellung unkompliziert und klar strukturiert ist,
- verstehen die Hauptpunkte in einer Kommunikationssituation, wenn in deutlich artikulierter Standardsprache über vertraute Dinge gesprochen wird, denen man normalerweise im Berufsleben, in der Ausbildung oder der Freizeit begegnet,
- verstehen unkomplizierte Sachtexte und Infografiken, die mit den eigenen Interessen und berufsrelevanten Themen in Zusammenhang stehen,
- verstehen berufsbezogene Standardsituationen und berufsbezogene Korrespondenz,
- können eine vorbereitete Präsentation zu einem vertrauten berufsrelevanten oder allgemeinen Thema, in der die Hauptpunkte hinreichend präzise erläutert werden, durchführen,
- können auf einfache berufsbezogene Korrespondenz adressaten- und situationsadäquat reagieren,
- können detaillierte Texte zu vertrauten Themen verfassen.

Lehrstoff:

Festigung und kontinuierliche Progression in den Fertigkeiten anhand folgender Domänen:

Privater und Öffentlicher Bereich:

Politik und Gesellschaft, EU, Werbung, Transportwesen, Umwelt, interkulturelle Beziehungen

Beruflicher Bereich:

Firmen, Dienstleistungen, Produkte, Business Etikette, Geschäftsreisen (Reservierung, Stornierung), berufsbezogene schriftliche und mündliche Kommunikation, Übungsfirmenbezug

Mündliche Kommunikation:

Domänenbezogenes monologisches und dialogisches Sprechen

Schriftliche Textsorten und -formate:

Standardmäßige Geschäftskorrespondenz (Auftragsbestätigung), E-Mail, Memo, Notiz, Leaflet, Präsentation, Leserbrief, Hand-out, einfache Broschüre, Blog

Kommunikationsrelevante Sprachstrukturen:

Festigung und Erweiterung, situations- und adressatenadäquate registerspezifische Anwendung der Sprache

Schularbeiten:

Eine einstündige Schularbeit (bei Bedarf zweistündig)

Year III – Curriculum for Business English 2004 (BMBWK 2004: 16-17)

III. Jahrgang:

Basislehrstoff:

Kommunikationsthemen:

Wirtschaft (zB Firmenprofile, Handel und Transport), Politik und Gesellschaft, aktuelle Themen, interkulturelle Beziehungen.

Sprachfertigkeiten:

Hörverständnis - Festigung der bisher erarbeiteten Fertigkeiten; Verstehen von authentischen Hörtexten.

Sprechfähigkeit - Festigung der bisher erarbeiteten Fertigkeiten; Feinheiten der Präsentationstechnik, Präsentieren von Grafiken; Kundengespräche; Argumentation und Darstellung von komplexen Sachverhalten.

Leseverständnis - Festigung der bisher erarbeiteten Fertigkeiten; Lesen und Zusammenfassen komplexer authentischer Texte, Lesen als Informationsquelle für selbstständige Projekte.

Schreibfertigkeit - Festigung der bisher erarbeiteten Fertigkeiten; Verfassen von komplexen Texten (zB project reports, newspaper articles).

Sprachstrukturen:

Festigung und Erweiterung der grundlegenden kommunikationsrelevanten Strukturen; stilistische Feinheiten, regionale und soziale Varianten.

Geschäftskommunikation:

Korrektur mündlicher Stil für Kundengespräche und Telefonate; adäquater schriftlicher Stil für Briefe, Faxe und E-Mails; professionelle Form und Struktur von Geschäftsbriefen; Anwendung auf berufsbezogene Standardsituationen (zB Anfrage, Angebot, Bestellung); geschäftliche Fallstudien.

Spracherwerbsstrategien:

Festigung und Erweiterung der bisher erarbeiteten Spracherwerbstechniken; fächerübergreifendes vernetztes Denken.

Erweiterungslehrstoff:

Komplexe Fallstudien und Simulationen; Miniprojekte; Vorbereitung auf internationale Zertifikate.

IT-Bezug:

Schreiben und Layouten von Texten und Präsentationsunterlagen mit dem Computer; Informationsbeschaffung im Intranet/Internet; Schreiben und Formatieren von Geschäftskorrespondenz mit dem Computer; Gebrauch von Lernsoftware.

Übungsfirmen-Konnex:

Präsentationen, Geschäftsbriefe, Faxe, E-Mails, Telefonate, Kundengespräche als Vorbereitung für die Mitarbeit in der Übungsfirma.

Schularbeiten:

Zwei einstündige Schularbeiten (bei Bedarf zweistündig).

Year III – Curriculum for Business English 1994 (BMUK 1994: 21)

III. J a h r g a n g :

Allgemeine Kommunikationsthemen:

Wirtschaftliche, politische, soziale und kulturelle Themen des In- und Auslandes.

Aktuelle Themen.

Beruflich relevante Kommunikationsthemen:

Routinesituationen der kaufmännischen Praxis.

Sprachstrukturen:

Schwerpunktmäßige Wiederholung der Formen- und Satzlehre, Wiederholung und Vertiefung der für die kommunikative Kompetenz notwendigen Strukturen.

Zwei Schularbeiten.

10.2 English abstract

Lesson planning in a school context is greatly impacted by educational policy and the structures imposed by an educational system. Particularly in Austrian Schools of Business Administration (HAKs), the Modular Upper Secondary administrative system (NOST) as well as curricula and Matura regulations in place have changed the way teachers plan their lessons. The present research explores how HAK teachers' lesson planning is influenced by Austrian educational policies. This is done twofold, by providing a context analysis of educational policies relevant for HAK English classes, and by conducting a qualitative study. The latter involved interviews with seven HAK teachers and was based on a concept mapping activity. While teachers pointed out that the NOST had predominantly increased the workload of teachers, it had not increased the performance of weaker students. The curriculum was seen as a framework for an English course, but also as a restriction which was even neglected or reinterpreted by some teachers in favour of more student or exam focused content. The Matura was reported to increase the use of Matura exam formats in teaching, however, there is no research on whether these formats are equally as effective in teaching as in testing. As a result of these policies, teachers find themselves in a situation where they constantly translate educational policy into classroom reality, often neglecting the one in favour of the other.

Keywords: Curriculum, educational policy, English language teaching (ELT), lesson planning, Matura, Modular Upper Secondary, School of Business Administration

10.3 German abstract

Das Planen von Unterrichtsstunden in der Schule ist stark von der Bildungspolitik sowie den Strukturen des Schulsystems geprägt. Vor allem in österreichischen Handelsakademien (HAK) haben die Neue Oberstufe (NOST), der aktuelle Lehrplan sowie die teilzentrierte Matura den Planungsprozess von Lehrer*innen verändert. Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit erforscht wie das Stundenplanen von HAK-Lehrer*innen durch bildungspolitische Maßnahmen in Österreich beeinflusst wird. Dies passiert einerseits durch eine Analyse der Bildungspolitik im Bezug auf das Fach Englisch in der HAK, und andererseits durch eine durchgeführte qualitative Studie. In dieser wurden sieben HAK Lehrer*innen mit Hilfe einer Struktur-Lege-Technik interviewt. Die Lehrer*innen berichteten, dass die NOST hauptsächlich ihren Arbeitsaufwand erhöhe, jedoch nicht den Fortschritt schwächerer Schüler*innen positiv beeinflusse. Der Lehrplan wurde als Grundgerüst für den Unterricht wahrgenommen, jedoch auch von manchen Lehrer*innen als Einschränkung. Einige gaben auch an, den Lehrplan manchmal außen vor zu lassen, um den Unterricht auf Schülerprobleme ausrichten zu können oder gezielt auf Prüfungen vorzubereiten. Es wurde darüber hinaus betont, dass durch die Matura mehr Prüfungsformate der Englischklausur im Unterricht benutzt würden. Ob diese genauso effektiv für die Vermittlung wie für die Testung von Sprachkompetenzen verwendet werden können, ist fraglich. Die aufgelisteten bildungspolitischen Maßnahmen führen dazu, dass Lehrer*innen kontinuierlich gesetzliche Vorgaben für den Unterricht adaptieren müssen. Dabei werden diese allerdings auch manchmal vernachlässigt, um den Unterricht an die Schüler*innen anzupassen.

Keywords: Lehrplan, Bildungspolitik, Sprachdidaktik, Handelsakademie (HAK), Stundenplanung, Matura, NOST, Modulare Oberstufe