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Policy Briefing on Modern Languages Educational Policy in the UK

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Modern Languages Educational Policy in the UK

Primary Education

Issues

1. Statutory/non-statutory

There is currently a difference in the statutory provision for languages across the four jurisdictions of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (see Table 1). In particular Northern Ireland has no statutory provision at primary level, having lost the previous Primary Modern Languages Programme.¹

Statutory provision for languages at Key Stage 2 (KS2) is an enabler since it signals the central importance of languages in the primary curriculum. However, statutory provision alone does not guarantee successful outcomes: it must be accompanied by adequate funding and resources, a clear and realistic implementation plan, and an effective reporting mechanism. In practice, provision for languages is uneven within each of the four jurisdictions, raising issues of equality of opportunity.

2. Competing priorities

Whilst the average amount of time spent on languages in primary schools is 30-60 minutes per week, in practice the amount of time is very variable. Lack of reporting and accountability means that language lessons are often squeezed out by competing priorities, particularly in the last year of primary by preparation for tests, but also regularly for sporting and other events.

3. The place of languages in the curriculum and communicating the importance of languages

Languages are often viewed as a non-core subject. Senior leadership teams and governors are not always aware of the importance of languages across the curriculum. However, research shows the value of language learning for literacy, including in the first language (L1).² Languages are also central to the development of primary curriculum objectives such as cultural and mutual understanding, citizenship, health and wellbeing. Languages could easily be integrated into geography or history lessons.

4. Teacher education and training

There is considerable evidence of primary teachers lacking the skills and confidence to deliver adequately the languages component of the curriculum. Currently many PGCE courses lack any training in modern language pedagogy and there is insufficient Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for serving primary teachers. An example of good practice is a new project run by The Open University in Scotland and Scotland's National Centre for Languages, entitled 'Learning to teach Languages in Primary School', in which teachers learn French or Spanish as well as how to teach the language in the classroom.³

5. Progression and transition

In some areas there is a lack of clearly defined learning outcomes, whilst in others robust frameworks have been developed, either at a jurisdiction level (e.g. Scotland's 1+2 policy⁴) or at a local level (e.g.

¹ See the recent Chief Inspector's report: https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/cir-2016-2018_1.pdf, p. 37.

² <http://www.meits.org/policy-papers/category/florence-myles>.

³ <http://www.open.ac.uk/scotland/news/teachers-become-learners-new-languages-project>.

⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/language-learning-scotland-12-approach/pages/6/>.

Hackney Learning Trust initiative⁵). In addition, whilst some jurisdictions have clear recommendations about appropriate assessment, others currently do not. There is also great variability as to whether information about the primary pupils' progression is conveyed to the secondary school or not. There is evidence that many schools simply restart language learning at secondary level due to the inconsistency of provision: this is frustrating for those who have already had several years of good teaching. There are at least three different models for coherent provision and transition: offer the same language at KS2 and KS3; offer a different language at KS3; offer pluriliteracy in the early years of primary followed by an L2 in late primary, then continued into KS3. Each model has its advantages and drawbacks.

6. Inspection and accountability

Currently there is evidence that languages are not systematically included in primary schools inspections, once again suggesting this is an area of secondary or low importance. Ofsted's decision to give credit to a curriculum that is broad, rich and deep from 2019 is welcome, since it will require a 'good' school to show evidence of good quality teaching and progression beyond English and Maths at KS2. Thematic inspections and effective provision reports are also ways of highlighting languages provision.

7. Range of languages offered

The landscape is necessarily different across the UK because of the presence of indigenous languages in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, as well as the differing presence of community languages. Whilst Wales has favoured a bilingualism + 1 model, Gaelic is just one of the languages available in Scotland at L1, L2 or L3. Excluding the indigenous languages, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, French and Spanish dominate, whilst Scotland offers eight languages at KS1 including Urdu, Mandarin and Cantonese. There is evidence that children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) or Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) are often withdrawn from language learning. Research suggests that EAL children not only serve as positive role models in the language classroom, but they also outperform other children in learning additional languages.⁶ Bilingual children on the autistic spectrum have also been shown not to suffer any negative effects from retaining two languages.⁷

Recommendations

Short term

1. Clarification of the appropriate amount of time to be devoted to language learning in primary education would be welcome, backed up by an inspection framework which verifies that this is being enacted in schools.
2. There should be a clearer articulation from government of how language learning fosters and enhances literacy and other core skills and enriches other areas of a broad and balanced curriculum to nurture future global citizens.

⁵ <https://www.hackneyservicesforschools.co.uk/extranet/spanish>.

⁶ Strand, S., Malmberg, L., & Hall, J., 2015. English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Educational Achievement in England: An Analysis of the National Pupil Database: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/EAL_and_educational_achievement_Prof_S_Strand.pdf, p. 36.

⁷ Uljarević, M., Katsos, N., Hudry, K. & Gibson, J., 2016. Practitioner Review: Multilingualism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders – An Overview of Recent Research and Discussion of Clinical Implications. *The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 57(11), pp. 1205-1217 (pp. 1212-1214).

3. Senior Leadership Teams should be informed of the evidence-based research showing the benefits of language learning for literacy and other skills, and Governors should be appraised of the questions they might ask to ensure that proper provision is being offered in their schools. Recognising good practice in language provision should be incorporated into Governor training programmes.
4. All primary initial training courses should have a basic compulsory languages component covering both content and primary languages pedagogy. There should also be opportunities for peer-tutoring sessions between primary and secondary trainee teachers, thereby sharing best practice and facilitating transition.
5. The exchange programmes currently funded under Erasmus+ must be protected, and opportunities created for primary school pupils to have contact with native speakers.
6. Clear learning outcomes and benchmarks for assessment need to be articulated for all the jurisdictions where languages are offered and these outcomes and/or benchmarks are not currently available.
7. In the short term, local and regional solutions need to be agreed to the question of progression and transition, so that schools work in partnership to provide adequate transfer data and a coherent programme for all pupils.
8. All primary school inspections should include assessment of the languages provision at KS2 in terms of quality of teaching and progression.
9. EAL and SEND children should not be withdrawn from language learning. EAL children should be valued in the language learning classroom and their already established metalinguistic skills and strategies for language learning should be capitalized upon.
10. There should be incentivisation for schools to embed activities that value and promote community languages.

Medium term

1. More research is required comparing outcomes across the four jurisdictions and also the link between language learning and L1 literacy.
2. There should be a number of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) centres which offer specialist pathways in languages. This would require planning to ensure geographical and linguistic coverage. Graduates from these programmes could lead and cascade best practice through their school and local and regional consortia.
3. Universities and colleges, through their Institution Wide Language Programmes (IWLPs), should facilitate language learning for primary trainees, to ensure that there is an opportunity for all primary teachers to attain at least GCSE (or equivalent) level in a language.
4. Adequate bespoke CPD should be available and financed for established primary teachers.
5. More research is required to test which of the progression and transition models works best in terms of ensuring motivation and progression throughout a pupil's education.

Longer term

1. Consideration should be given in Northern Ireland to introducing statutory provision for languages in primary education, but this will require careful planning and adequate financing.

Secondary Education

Issues

1. Decline in uptake in languages at GCSE and A level

Across the four jurisdictions, there is a worrying decline in uptake of languages at GCSE and A level, particularly since the removal of the statutory provision for languages at KS4 in 2004. There is also evidence that in some areas pupils are only receiving language teaching in the first two years of secondary education, with KS4 effectively starting in the third year of secondary school. Small class sizes, particularly at A level, are also cited as a reason for not offering certain languages. This has a negative impact on uptake at GCSE since pupils cannot see a route for progression through to A Level and beyond into further and higher education. This decline is against a background of a known national need for language skills,⁸ and raises issues about equality of opportunity across different areas and school types. Whilst in England the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) had a temporary effect on improving uptake of languages, in 2017 only 38.2% of pupils in the state sector were entered,⁹ and its effectiveness is potentially undermined by Progress 8.¹⁰

2. Competing priorities

The relative prestige accorded to different subjects in the curriculum is currently contributing to the decline of languages at KS4 and KS5. Pupils and parents are often not made sufficiently aware by the Senior Management Team, Careers and Personal and Social Education (PSE) teachers about the importance of languages, the skills they develop, and the career opportunities available to linguists.

3. Teacher education and training

Currently many teacher training programmes require two additional languages for entry, thereby excluding a large pool of potentially strong linguists with only one additional language. In some jurisdictions there is a chronic shortage of language teachers, whilst in Northern Ireland there is a surplus of Newly Qualified Teachers. The bursary system which was introduced to encourage recruitment in areas of teacher shortage has had some unintended consequences, including trainees taking up the bursary but not staying in the teaching profession.

4. Transition from primary to secondary

There is great variability as to whether information about the primary pupils' progression is conveyed to the secondary school or not. There is evidence that many schools simply restart language learning at secondary level due to the inconsistency of provision: this is frustrating for those who have already had several years of good teaching. There are at least three different models for coherent provision and transition: offer the same language at KS2 and KS3; offer a different language at KS3; offer pluriliteracy in the early years of primary followed by an L2 in late primary, then continued into KS3. Each model has its advantages and drawbacks.

⁸ https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/languages_for_the_future_2017.pdf, pp. 14-30.

⁹ Moreover, of those who entered 4 out of the 5 components, 80.4% were missing the languages component: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/676596/SFR01_2_018.pdf.

¹⁰ Gill, T., 2018. The Impact of the Introduction of Progress 8 on the Uptake of Qualifications in English Schools – An Update for 2016/2017: www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/519667-the-impact-of-the-introduction-of-progress-8-on-the-uptake-of-qualifications-in-english-schools-an-update-for-2016-17.pdf, pp. 25-26.

5. Content and progression

There is evidence of concern around the new specifications for GCSE and A Level languages. Content, level of language skill and age are not always well matched: for instance, asking a 15 year old pupil to write or speak about their family or pet is not necessarily appealing, whilst asking a 17 year old to write a literary essay in the target language is overly demanding and therefore demoralising. It is important that pupils are challenged but equally that they can achieve success and feel pride in their progress. There is evidence that the new specifications at GCSE are making them excessively challenging for lower-attaining learners, and that this is having a negative impact on uptake.¹¹

6. Range of languages offered

The British Council's *Languages for the Future*¹² and the CBI's *Educating for the Modern World*¹³ reports consistently show the same top five languages required to meet the UK's needs – Arabic, French, German, Mandarin and Spanish – yet French and German, consistently the top two in the CBI's reports, are in decline in UK schools, and Arabic and Mandarin are starting from a very low base. The Mandarin Excellence programme demonstrates that – for relatively small amounts of money – a language perceived as difficult can be taught successfully.

7. Pupil motivation and the use of digital technologies

There is evidence of positive impact from well-designed ambassador and/or mentoring programmes involving collaboration between schools and universities. Innovative and cost-effective tools for digital interactivity have been developed to allow such programmes to be rolled out across large distances, notably in rural areas.¹⁴ Early results show improved levels of pupil motivation and increases in uptake of languages.

8. Other qualifications

The loss of ASSET languages and lack of other qualifications such as NVQs in languages disadvantage certain pupils. The absence of a compulsory language component from certain qualifications is also striking: for instance, the Pearson BTEC in Travel and Tourism¹⁵ or the new CCEA A Level in Professional Business Services.¹⁶ As an example of good practice, the IB includes a compulsory language at Diploma level. The AQA Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)¹⁷ could also be an opportunity for pupils to incorporate a language element.

¹¹ https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language_trends_2018_report.pdf, p. 6.

¹² https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/languages_for_the_future_2017.pdf, p. 30.

¹³ <http://www.cbi.org.uk/cbi-prod/assets/File/CBI%20Education%20and%20Skills%20Annual%20Report%202018.pdf>, pp. 31-32.

¹⁴

http://www.meits.org/files/policy_documents/uploads/Report_for_Literacy%2C_Languages_and_Communication.pdf.

¹⁵ https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/BTEC-Nationals/Travel-and-Tourism/2017/Specification/BTEC_NAT_EC_TT_AG_SPEC_ISS1_230818.pdf. For the need for language skills in travel and tourism, see: <https://www.ukinbound.org/resources/breaking-the-language-barrier-full-report/>.

¹⁶ http://ccea.org.uk/professional_business_services/.

¹⁷ <https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/subjects/AQA-W-7993-SP-15.PDF>.

Recommendations

Short term

1. To ensure equality of opportunity, as well as fulfilling the national needs for language skills, there should be a small pupil premium to incentivise schools in the current financial climate to offer languages at A Level where a viability threshold is not reached. This could be combined with making more systematic provision for collaboration across schools to offer a full range of languages.
2. At key points when parents and pupils are making choices about subjects to be taken in public examinations, clear and accurate information should be offered about the value of having at least one language in the pupil's profile. This message needs to be consistently conveyed to pupils and parents by school and college leaders, and reinforced by government.
3. There should be a wide and diverse offer of languages in secondary schools. In particular, there should be incentivisation for mainstream schools to recognise and reward language skills obtained outside the school system and to facilitate entry for public examinations.
4. There should be a joined up strategy for retention and recruitment of language teachers across the UK. Consideration should be given as to whether bursary payments should be staggered to encourage retention.
5. There should be opportunities for peer-tutoring sessions between primary and secondary trainee teachers, thereby sharing best practice and facilitating transition.
6. In the short term, local and regional solutions need to be agreed to the question of progression and transition, so that schools work in partnership to provide adequate transfer data and a coherent programme for all pupils.
7. Given the recent changes in the GCSE and A Level specifications, there should be an urgent review of how these are working in schools, and whether they are impacting on pupil choice of subjects at KS4 and KS5. If necessary, the specifications should be adjusted to take account of any unforeseen negative consequences. The review of the specifications should run in parallel with any Ofqual or other formal review of GCSE grading in languages, which is widely perceived as being harsh.
8. Universities and schools need to be incentivised to set up ambassador/mentoring schemes. This should include the use of digital interactivity, especially for schools where the distance from universities makes travel impractical in terms of cost and time.
9. The language assistant scheme currently supported by the British Council must be protected and supported by government, and opportunities created for all pupils, including those in lower secondary school, to have contact with native speakers.

Medium term

1. Consideration should be given as to whether schemes such as the Mandarin Excellence Programme could be developed for other languages, perhaps with a particular focus on areas of multiple deprivation in the UK and those where language learning uptake is low.
2. Alternative qualifications to GCSE and A Level should be developed to give a wider range of choice for language assessment. Where new specifications are developed for public examinations, consideration should be given as to whether a language component should be incorporated.¹⁸

¹⁸ We would like to acknowledge the very valuable input to this document of all the researchers and civil servants who attended the associated policy workshop on 4 December 2018.

Table 1. Modern Languages Education Policy Summary: Primary level

| | England | Northern Ireland | Wales | Scotland |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Features common to KS1 and KS2 | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small number of Irish Medium primary schools exist in NI (DE(NI), 2014) Potential for language learning to be aligned with the primary curriculum (CCEA, 2007a) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A significant number of Welsh-medium and Bilingual schools exist at primary level (StatWales, 2018) Welsh language compulsory for all pupils from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4 (Education Reform Act, 1988) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gaelic Medium Education makes up a small proportion of primary provision in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2017) Modern languages guidance documents for First and Second curricular levels are provided in the areas of principles and practice (Education Scotland, 2015b), experiences and outcomes (Education Scotland, 2015a), and benchmarks for assessment (Education Scotland, 2017) |
| Key Stage 1 | No statutory KS1 provision Year 1-2, age 5-7 | No statutory KS1 provision Year 3-4, age 6-8 | <i>Statutory Foundation Phase provision</i> Year 1-2, age 5-7 | <i>Statutory First Level provision</i> P1-4, age 5-8 |
| Similarities | Evidence of modern (foreign) language learning provision at Key Stage 1 in England (Tinsley & Doležal, 2018), Northern Ireland (Jones, et al., 2017), Scotland (Christie, et al., 2016) and Wales (Tinsley, 2018) but reliant on school level resourcing and decisions | | | |
| Differences | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Former ‘Primary Modern Languages Programme’ (limited to KS1) ran 2007 – 2015 but funding was withdrawn bringing the programme to a close (Jones, et al., 2017) | <p>Recommended <i>Bilingual +1 Approach</i> (Welsh Government, 2015)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory delivery of Welsh | <p><i>A 1+2 Approach</i> (Scottish Government, 2012)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommended introduction of 1st additional language (L2) from P1 Full implementation planned by 2021 (Scottish Government: Learning Directorate, 2017) Gaelic (Learners) is recognised as a potential L2 subject for some pupils. The strategy incorporates positive recognition of young people with a community language mother tongue: where both the acquisition of English and the continuation of mother tongue learning are anticipated |
| Key Stage 2 | <i>Statutory Key Stage 2 provision</i> Year 3-6, age 7-11 | No statutory KS2 provision Year 5-7, age 8-11 | <i>Statutory KS2 provision</i> Year 3-6, age 7-11 | <i>Statutory Second Level provision</i> P5-P7, age 8-11 |
| Similarities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of modern (foreign) language learning provision at Key Stage 2 but with significant jurisdictional variations in policy and practice. | | | |
| Differences | <p><i>Foreign language learning</i> (DfE, 2014)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies to learning opportunities for modern or ancient languages In practice some schools lack capacity to deliver and provision is inconsistent (Tinsley & Doležal, 2018) Limited content guidance provided by comparison to other subjects which have both statutory prescribed content and non-statutory notes and guidance Non-statutory level descriptors for modern languages have been published for use from 2011 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of language learning provision at Key Stage 2 across Northern Ireland but reliant on school level resourcing and decisions (Jones, et al., 2017) | <p><i>Bilingual +1 Approach</i> (Welsh Government, 2015)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommended introduction of one or more modern foreign languages from Year 5 onwards (Welsh Government, 2015). Lack of resourcing, funding and training identified as barriers to implementation (Tinsley & Board, 2016) Statutory guidance provides non-statutory curriculum and assessment guidance for MFL study at KS2 (Welsh Government, 2013a) | <p><i>A 1+2 Approach</i> (Scottish Government, 2012):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommended introduction of 2nd additional language (L3) from P5 Full implementation planned by 2021 (Scottish Government: Learning Directorate, 2017) Curriculum support documentation situates the area of modern languages as integral to the curriculum, and provides guidance around teaching and learning, learner development and progression, assessment arrangements, and cross-curricularity (Education Scotland, 2015b) |
| Additional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the absence of strategic management of primary languages provision the issue of transition between KS2 and KS3 remains problematic (Chambers, 2014; Collen, et al., 2016) | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance to manage primary to secondary transition provided (Scottish Government, 2012) |

The tables were prepared by Leanne Henderson, Wendy Ayres-Bennett and Janice Carruthers. The associated bibliographical reference list was compiled by Leanne Henderson. For the full list, see <http://www.meits.org/publications/policy-documents> and <https://www.modernlanguagesleadershipfellow.com/policy-briefings/>.

Table 2. Modern Languages Education Policy Summary: Secondary level (Compulsory)

| | England | Northern Ireland | Wales | Scotland |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| Features common to KS3 and KS4 | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small number of Irish Medium schools exist in NI (DE(NI), 2014) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A significant number of Welsh-medium and Bilingual schools exist (StatWales, 2018) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gaelic Medium Education makes up a small proportion of primary provision in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2017) |
| Key Stage 3 | <i>Key Stage 3: Foreign language</i> (DfE, 2014) Year 7-9, age 11-14 | <i>Key Stage 3: Modern Language</i> (CCEA, 2007b) Year 8-10, age 11-14 | <i>Key Stage 3: Welsh + Modern Foreign Language</i> (Education Reform Act, 1988; Welsh Government, 2013a) Year 7-9, age 11-14 | <i>Third / Fourth Level: Modern Language</i> (Scottish Government, 2012) S1 – S3, age 11-14 |
| Similarities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language learning compulsory for all pupils aged 11-14 | | | |
| Differences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory modern (not ancient) language Limited content guidance provided by comparison with other subjects which have both statutory prescribed content and non-statutory notes and guidance Compulsory requirement reportedly circumvented by beginning teaching for GCSE in Year 9 (Tinsley & Doležal, 2018) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory modern language (this includes Irish except in Irish-medium schools) Statutory content (CCEA, 2007b) and non-statutory guidance (CCEA, 2007c) for Modern Languages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory Welsh language (Education Reform Act, 1988) Compulsory modern language (Welsh Government, 2013a) Lack of curriculum time and large classes reported as limiting factors in MfL delivery, pupil progression and subsequent uptake at KS4 (Tinsley, 2018) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory modern language Students are entitled to L2 learning throughout Third/Fourth level and L3 learning at some point within the broad general education (Education Scotland, 2015c) Modern languages guidance documents for Third/Fourth level are provided in the areas of principles and practice, experiences and outcomes, and benchmarks for assessment (Education Scotland, 2015b; 2015a; 2017) |
| Key Stage 4 | <i>Statutory 'entitlement' at KS4 / GCSE</i> (DfE, 2014) Year 10-11, Age 14-16 | <i>Statutory 'entitlement' at KS4 / GCSE</i> (The Education (Northern Ireland) Order, 2006) Year 11-12, Age 14-16 | <i>Statutory Welsh + commitment to MfL provision at KS4 / GCSE</i> (Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure, 2009) Year 10-11, Age 14-16 | <i>Statutory 'opportunities' at S4-S5 / National qualifications (National 5 / Highers; other awards for languages also available)</i> (Scottish Government, 2012) S4 – S5, Age 14/15-16/17 |
| Similarities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language learning not compulsory for pupils aged 14 and above since the previous statutory 'requirement' for all KS4 pupils to learn a language became an 'entitlement' (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004) | | | |
| Differences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modern languages are safeguarded as an 'entitlement area' at GCSE level (DfE, 2014) ML choice must be meaningfully provided with students entitled to take a course in each of the four entitlement areas (ibid.) The EBacc performance measure, introduced in 2010, included a GCSE language and reportedly, albeit temporarily, impacted school curriculum policies (Clemens, 2011) and student uptake (Tinsley & Board, 2017) Progress 8 has been integrated into school accountability mechanisms (DfE, 2018) alongside the EBacc. In requiring inclusion of only three EBacc qualifications (from sciences, history, geography, languages), languages are not necessarily part of the assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The opportunity to study a Modern language at GCSE level is safeguarded under the entitlement framework which specifies that at least one modern language course, in an official EU language, must be offered by each school (DE(NI), 2011) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language learning opportunities safeguarded in legislative provision, with the Welsh language occupying a unique status which requires it to be promoted at KS4 and post-16 (Ibid.) (Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure, 2009) Welsh language compulsory curriculum element but students are not required to be entered for examinations (Welsh Government, 2013b) MfL to be 'made available' (Welsh Government, 2010) to all students within each local curriculum (Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure, 2009) Further policy commitment to improving the language learning landscape by, for example, safeguarding equality of choice in ML and building support systems to achieve these aims (Welsh Government, 2015) The Welsh Bacc has no ML requirement, although there is potential for the 'Individual Project' to comprise cross-curricular modern languages (Qualifications Wales, 2014) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for full course certification in modern languages and Gaelic to be made available to all young people (Ibid.) Opportunities for certification in L3 to be provided (Ibid.) Focus on flexible opportunities, choice and encouraging continuation (Ibid.) |

Table 3. Modern Languages Education Policy Summary: Secondary level (post-compulsory)

| | England | Northern Ireland | Wales | Scotland |
|-------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Key Stage 5 (post-compulsory) | No statutory KS5 provision Year 12-13, age 16+ | No statutory KS5 provision Year 13-14, age 16+ | No statutory KS5 provision Year 12-13, age 16+ | No statutory provision at S5/S6 S5/S6, Age 15+ |
| Similarities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language learning not compulsory | | | |

Table 4. Modern Languages Assessment: Secondary level (KS4 and KS5)

| | England | Northern Ireland | Wales | Scotland |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| Assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Qualification specifications provide content guidance, in relation to the requirements of each subject specification with additional support materials and assessment exemplification. I.e. curriculum provision / content not described in national curriculum document | | | |
| Assessment availability | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Beyond the three most popular languages (French, German, Spanish) multiple other language subjects are offered at GCSE and GCE level by one or more of the examining bodies which operate these qualifications. For example, at GCE level AQA offer Polish and Edexcel offer ArabicA much wider variety of languages are potentially accessible through IGCSE qualifications and international AS / A level qualifications or through the International Baccalaureate (IB) pathways (Middle Years or Diploma). For example, at IGCSE level Cambridge International offer Afrikaans and Malay as first and second languages whilst IB is offered in up to 55 languages. The study of an additional language (modern or classical) is a compulsory requirement of the IB at Diploma level | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">National 5 specifications in Modern Languages available in 8 languages (French, Gaelic (Learners), German, Spanish, Italian, Mandarin, Cantonese, Urdu)Modern Languages for Work Purposes and Modern Languages for Life and Work units available in 10 languages, including Polish and Russian; suitable for the accreditation of L3The same 8 languages are also available at National levels 2-4Senior Phase (S4-S6, Age 15-17) / Higher available in 8 languages (Scottish Qualifications Authority, 2018). N.B. Advanced Higher (Level 4 equivalent age 17-18) available in 7 languages (Scottish Qualifications Authority, 2015a)Evidence of flexible and learner-centred approach in the Scottish Baccalaureate in Languages which, in addition to requiring linguistic competence in L2 and L3, has a vocational dimension which requires candidates to apply their skills in planning, implementing and evaluating a project (Scottish Qualifications Authority, 2015b) |
| Recent reforms: overview | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Recent qualification reforms were introduced at GCSE and GCE level (DfE, 2015; CCEA, 2014; Welsh Government, 2012)The perceived ‘more rigorous’ demands of the qualifications are reported to be further depressing uptake in England (Tinsley & Doležal, 2018)Greater alignment between languages (Ofqual, 2016) extends the regulatory approach to assessment across the qualifications for all modern languages (i.e. to languages other than French, German and Spanish). Similar alignments are in place in NI and WalesThese reforms also resulted in an end to three-country regulation which, for example, means that the benchmarking of grades for subjects across jurisdictions will no longer be formally undertaken (Ofqual Qualifications Wales CEA Regulation, 2017a)There are resulting variations between how GCSE and GCE examinations are structured (weighting and tiering) and awarded (different systems of grading) across England, Wales and NI (Ofqual Qualifications Wales CEA Regulation, 2017b) | | | |
| GCSE: variation in availability | <ul style="list-style-type: none">In England, only GCSE and GCE specifications approved by Ofqual are available to candidates (Ofqual Qualifications Wales CEA Regulation, 2017a) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">In NI, candidates can be entered for GCSEs which meet the requirements set by Ofqual or CCEA (Ofqual Qualifications Wales CEA Regulation, 2017a) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">In Wales, candidates are to be entered for GCSEs and GCEs normally approved by Qualifications Wales or Ofqual in cases where no equivalent WJEC qualification is available (Ofqual Qualifications Wales CEA Regulation, 2017a) | |
| GCE: variation in availability | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">In NI, candidates can be entered for GCEs which meet the requirements set by each of the three regional regulatory bodies (Ofqual Qualifications Wales CEA Regulation, 2017a) | | |
| GCE: Decoupling | <ul style="list-style-type: none">AS and A level qualifications are now ‘linear’, whereby student outcomes at A level will no longer comprise marks awarded in AS components. Despite resistance to the decoupling of AS and A level (Ofqual, 2014), in England its implementation was pursued (Sutch, et al., 2015) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">In CCEA, AS and A level qualifications have not been decoupled, for example, the GCE French A level award is based on both the AS (40%) and A2 (60%) units (CCEA, 2018) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">AS and A level qualifications have not been decoupled by WJEC (except for Eduqas), for example, the GCE French A level award is based on both the AS (50%) and A2 (50%) units (WJEC, 2016). N.B. These weightings differ from those used in NI | |