



ALL Briefing No. 25

Date: July 2020

Theme: Proposals for a national languages strategy 2020

Background:

The British Academy published *Towards a National Languages Strategy: Education and Skills* in July 2020, with proposals from The British Academy, AHRC, ASCL, The British Council, Universities UK.

This strategy would be UK-wide and would take a joined-up, holistic approach.

The previous National Language Strategy dates from the period of the Labour Government at the beginning of the century.

Key messages:

This document makes proposals only; it is not a statutory document and has not been adopted; the proposals are detailed and these extracts are chosen to give a flavour.

General proposals:

- Establishment of a *Languages UK* brand and online portal for sharing messages, information and resources
- Major communications campaign to promote all languages, including home/heritage languages, with support from UK governments
- Continuation of Erasmus+, Generation UK, student ambassador and mentor schemes
- Creation of a cross-sector framework for language competency with recognised equivalence between qualifications across the four UK jurisdictions, and to include *home*, *community* and *heritage* languages which need greater recognition and utilisation
- Joined-up strategy for recruitment and retention of language teachers
- Intensive schemes for languages accessible to all learners (building on Mandarin Excellence Programme model).

Proposals for primary and secondary languages:

- A new task force or separate wing of NCELP devoted to primary education, led by primary practitioners and experts, for England
- Work with UK governments to establish and implement the best approach for the primary curriculum, and for the transition to secondary school
- Clear guidance in England on the amount of time that should be allocated to language learning in KS2, on time allocation for primary languages in the new Curriculum for Wales 2022; implementation of a fully funded primary languages curriculum in Northern Ireland
- Adjusting GCSE and A-level grade boundaries to bring languages in line with other subjects
- Investigation of how curriculum content is interpreted in examination specifications.

Proposals for Post 16 languages:

- Introduction of an *Advanced Languages Premium* for the study of languages at RQF level 3 to restore a healthy pipeline from GCSE to Higher Education
- A new entity similar to NCELP devoted to post-16 education in England
- Recommendation that language elements are incorporated into existing qualifications
- Recommendation of new types of post-16 qualifications for languages, e.g. Core Languages or Languages Plus, which would focus on the practical uses of languages.
- Integration of language learning into vocational and technical qualifications where appropriate.

Proposals for Higher Education:

- Ensuring funding models for undergraduate education to cover the full costs of provision for language degrees and other learning opportunities, such as learning a language alongside another subject
- *Language Challenge Funds*, pots of money for which HE institutions can bid if they wish to expand or create new provision
- Creation of a Strategic Committee for Languages in Higher Education, chaired and supported by the British Academy and working closely with UCML
- Creation of a Strategic Committee for Languages in Further Education

Proposals for Initial Teacher Education:

- Requirement for teacher education providers to extend the amount of time allocated to the primary languages subject specialism

- Facilitation of language learning for primary education trainees, so that they have the opportunity to achieve at least CEFR A1/A2 in a language
- DE(NI) should explore teacher education qualifications for primary languages
- Fostering of cross curricular teaching in secondary education via SKE courses, and by not requiring language teachers to have expertise in two different languages.

Abbreviations:

AHRC - Arts and Humanities Research Council,
 ASCL - Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)
 RQF level 3 = A level and equivalent
 UCML - University Council of Modern Languages
 CEFR – Common European Framework of Reference
 SKE - subject knowledge enhancement
 NCELP – National Centre for Excellence in Language Pedagogy
 DE (NI) – Department of Education (Northern Ireland)

References :

Towards a National Languages Strategy: Education and Skills

<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/2597/Towards-a-national-languages-strategy-July-2020.pdf>

Points for reflection / action:

The document calls for joined-up action from all sectors of Education and wider areas of society. Are there ways in which you as an individual, your Department, School or Institution can contribute

- by using the messages of this document to raise your profile or enhance effectiveness?
- to supporting any of the initiatives or aspirations?
- to raising pragmatic or strategic questions?
- to proposing strategies locally?

As noted in the ALL Press Release *‘Moving forward it is essential that the voice of language practitioners and learners is carefully considered. Language teachers, lecturers and initial teacher educators (in schools and universities) will be essential in shaping this proposed strategy further and in its implementation’*

Are there issues in these recommendations which you consider require clarification, in the light of your context and experience? If so, could you write a brief thinkpiece for ALL to share with others?

Likewise, are there important omissions from the proposals you wish to point out to others?

Send to info@ALL-languages.org.uk

This Briefing has been prepared by volunteers from the ALL Council and is for the benefit of ALL members.

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