

## Foreword (page 2)

The second sentence starts with the words 'Our aim...' but then goes on to list more than one aim. Could the aims be set out more clearly here, and later on linked more carefully to the principles and action associated with those aims?

The task might be easier if languages were grouped into, for example,:

- indigenous languages (English, Gaelic, Scots, British Sign Language);
- other languages used as mother tongue by people living in Scotland (community languages); and
- foreign languages;

acknowledging that there will be an overlap between the last two.

(Aims, principles and rationale seem to be somewhat confused in the current draft)

## Guiding principles - in the Executive Summary (page 3)

Regarding the second set of bullet points on this page:

I should like to see the guiding principles more clearly aligned to the aims of the document (see the Foreword and the end of page 3). For example, if there are four indigenous languages, why are only three of them mentioned here, and why are they not grouped together? I suggest that it would help to clarify the scope of the proposed language strategy if the principles were grouped under headings. This would also help to pinpoint the gaps that need to be filled and wording that needs to be clarified. For example:

### General principles

Linguistic diversity will be celebrated and multiculturalism will be valued  
There will be fair and equal linguistic access to information and services

### Indigenous languages

Respect for the indigenous languages of Scotland will be promoted:

- As many people in Scotland as possible will be equipped with fluent English language skills
- The Gaelic language will be protected and promoted
- The Scots language will be treated with respect and pride
- BSL...??

### Community languages

... ??

### Foreign languages

Language learning and acquisition will be promoted

## Introduction (page 4)

Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 deal with indigenous languages, but there seems to be an equality in respect of how they are to be treated. Mention of English, Scots and Gaelic is accompanied by mention of 'responsibility or duty', 'opportunities', and 'protection'; the paragraph on BSL indicates that the language is to be valued but makes no mention of any responsibility for how this will be done.

## Regarding community languages (paragraph 5)

Although it is true that we have not the same level of responsibility for ensuring the development of these languages, it is accepted by educationalists that competence in the mother tongue facilitates the acquisition of new languages. Yet many incomers have only oral skills or undeveloped literacy in their mother tongue. It is therefore important for English language acquisition to go hand-in-hand with increasing competence in the mother tongue. While we may have limited responsibility nationally for making educational provision for further education in these languages, we could usefully support and help to monitor community schools and classes where the community is willing and may be able, with our support, to provide opportunities for advancing literacy in the relevant mother tongues.

To facilitate the advancement of these skills would also, incidentally, help to raise the levels of proficiency in those languages, to Scotland's advantage.

This issue is mentioned on page 11 (Other Minority/Community languages, first and second paragraphs) in connection with fresh talent, and again at the end of page 13, but I feel it needs to be clearly flagged up earlier.

Supporting development in community language schools would not be a heavy cost or administrative burden if existing staff were employed to ensure that opportunities for self evaluation and professional development, curricular provision and opportunities for accreditation were available and capable of meeting the standards applied to language learning nationally. Such provision could then be opened up to other Scots wishing to learn and become proficient in community languages. Over time, as this parallel provision developed, it could be absorbed into and enrich national education provision.

## RATIONALE (page 5)

The aims (plural) mentioned at the beginning of the Rationale are expressed differently from the aim (singular) mentioned on pages 2 and 3. Perhaps the list as it appears and is expanded here could be used as a 'constant' expression of what the Strategy document is about, and the Guiding Principles linked to this.

Promoting respects and confidence:

*'...this respect should result in increasing opportunities for people to use their languages and be confident in using them.'*

There is no mention of how this might be achieved, but my suggestion about supporting community schools might be part of that?

## **POLICIES - ESOL (page 7)**

The importance accorded by the Scottish Executive to this aspect of the strategy will be signalled by the cost to participants. Access to opportunities to develop English skills must not be limited by personal economic circumstances. It is the very people who are most in need of ESOL classes would have difficulty in paying fees. There is no mention in the Strategy of what the Executive's attitude to this would be.

## **BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE (page 10)**

In addition to what is already written, I should like to see an acknowledgement that, in order to communicate easily with the rest of the community, Scottish BSL users need to be able to communicate **directly** with service providers and with the hearing Scots with whom they live and work. This will only become a reality when increasing numbers of the general, hearing, population also have access to opportunities for acquiring skills in the use of BSL. If BSL is a language, as stated, then deaf BSL users need people to communicate with, and not just interpreters.

I should like to see the Scottish Executive committed to making BSL a language open to all, especially in schools, public service and other locations where deaf sign language users are present. Such provision as is available at the moment is scarce and expensive, and largely dependent on providers from south of the border. I should like to see courses, assessment and qualifications provided under the aegis of the Scottish Qualifications Authority and available on the same terms as other language learning opportunities.

## **LANGUAGE LEARNING (page 13)**

It comes as a surprise to find classical languages mentioned at the foot of page 13, briefly, for the first and only time, and with no explanation as to how these fit into the national strategy.

## **LANGUAGE PROVISION (page 14)**

This section deals only with language provision as it concerns provision of services. Should it not also deal with provision of educational provision, from support for families, through school, to FE, HE and life long learning.

Amongst other things, local education authorities need guidance on their duties with respect to the European directive mentioned on page 18 which encourages provision to be made for all EU citizens to speak and understand at least two languages in addition to their first language.

## **INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE LEARNING (page 19)**

Mention is made of the British Council's role in bringing students from abroad to assist language teachers in the classroom. There is no mention here of opportunities for language teachers working in Scottish schools to improve their skills by seeking assistantships abroad.

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION (page 20)**

All stakeholders appear to have been catered for except sign language users.

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## **OMISSIONS?**

No mention of implications for teacher training or professional development.

No mention of any linkage between minority language learning and the ability of organisations and service providers to meet their linguistic access obligations (i.e. manpower issues).