

Comments Form

We welcome your comments on any aspect of the Interim Report, and particularly on those issues outlined in the next steps chapter, chapter 9.

The information you send to us may be shared with colleagues within the Department for Education and Skills and selected organisations involved in the development and implementation of our proposals. It may be published as part of a summary of comments made on the Interim Report. We will assume that you are content for us to do this. If you are replying by email, your consent overrides any confidentiality disclaimer that is generated by your organisation's information technology system. If you do not wish for your comments to be published as part of a summary, then please request this in the main text of your response.

We may, in accordance with the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, make available on public request, individual responses. This does include your comments unless you tell us that you wish them to remain confidential.

Please insert 'X' if you want us to keep your response confidential

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Please insert 'X' in **one** of the following category boxes that best describes you as a respondent.

National organisation

Sectoral organisation

Regional organisation

Local organisation

Subject association

Representative body

Educational institution

Training provider

Individual

Employer

Learner

Other

Please use this space to provide a more specific description.

ALL is the major UK subject association for teachers of foreign languages in all sectors. It represents around 7,000 language teachers across the UK, most of them based in England. The majority of ALL members teach in secondary education, although members also come from primary, FE, higher and adult education.

Comments

Response to the Tomlinson Review Consultation

The ASSOCIATION FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING welcomes the review of the 14-19 curriculum and the chance it offers to create a cohesive and structured framework for the progress and achievement of young people in this important phase of education and training. We fully support the notion of continuity in this phase without the inhibitor of the somewhat artificial break at 16 that most students currently experience.

With regard to language teaching in particular, we believe that the proposals offer an exciting opportunity for foreign language education but one which will need to be very carefully planned and aligned with the Review's broader recommendations in order to fulfil the aspirations of the government's own National Languages Strategy for England, the prime aim of which is to "transform our country's capability in languages". The imminent changes in statutory requirements to allow more individual choice in the subjects studied post 14, in which MFL is to be removed from the core curriculum and a new 'entitlement' introduced in its place, places **languages at serious risk** of disappearing in some schools or having drastically reduced numbers of participants in others; the place they will have in the new 14-19 framework is therefore absolutely crucial.

Foreign language capability is essential for UK citizens, both in terms of international contacts and relations and in the global markets of the 21st century. Economically and politically we cannot afford to be lacking in capability in foreign languages, neither can we restrict the opportunities of our young people. Therefore we would like to recommend that a **working group** be set up to look more closely at the detail of how languages can be successfully integrated into the new 14-19 proposals. Such a working group could encompass also three other tasks:

- identifying links to other government agendas such as social inclusion, policies for sport and recreation or the international dimension;
- ensuring continuity with and effective progression routes into adult and higher education.

Language learning brings with it a number of positive advantages beyond the purely linguistic: an empathy with other cultures, enhanced intercultural awareness, improved communication skills in both the mother and foreign tongue; it both supports and introduces the international dimension in education. Recent studies with less able learners have shown that learning a foreign language can increase confidence and raise self-esteem. Languages education also has a strong link with the Citizenship agenda. For all these reasons we would argue that language learning has real value for everyone.

The review proposals could offer key opportunities for the future:

- A number of pathways for language learning could be introduced
- Languages could have greater coherence
- Student numbers post 16 might increase
- Languages could have a different status
- Young people might be more engaged in their learning of foreign languages, especially boys.
- There will be real opportunities for the use of ICT in language teaching and learning to become more integrated

All this can only happen if there is a strong strategy for supporting foreign language teaching within the framework.

We would therefore suggest that:

- 1 Languages be seen as a **key skill**, though not part of the core, at all levels. It therefore needs to be available at level 2 within advanced diplomas. The diagram on Page 47 of the Interim Report appears to show only maths, communication and ICT being available at Level 2 in advanced diplomas.
- 2 Language courses 14-19 follow a **range of interesting and appropriate pathways** to meet learners' needs. The model for Mathematics (currently experiencing similar problems with take-up), which was presented in the TES of 27 February 2004, with a possible structure of complementary but different pathways, is one that would also work well for languages.
- 3 In terms of **content and pedagogical approach**, a fresh and innovative 'take' on language learning post-14 is essential. Ideally language courses for this age range should help young people to make sense of the modern world. Courses should have the following characteristics:
 - There should not be a repetition of KS2 and KS3 learning or methodologies.
 - There should be continuity from 14 to 19.
 - Learning should be active and independent with real language use.
 - Languages should be well integrated with vocational learning, in many cases as compulsory complementary learning, and should include international experience.
 - There should be a range of language courses drawing content from the Arts, Media, Science, ICT, Social

Sciences and the Humanities; pupils can then choose a course that reflects their subject interest.

- All courses should be available at Entry level to Level 3, with all level 3 courses leading to specialist study in HE from whichever pathway.
- The demands of Level 3 Language courses should be equivalent to other Level 3 courses so that learners no longer feel that advanced study is unattainable.

4. Learners should have an entitlement to learning in their **heritage language**, as far as is practically possible.
5. There should be an **international dimension** in all courses. The **personal challenge** element of the diploma is an excellent opportunity for international activities, and this could be emphasised in diploma guidelines and again relates closely to Citizenship.
6. The **Advanced Diploma** should enable young people to take a language at whatever level and to get credit for it.

Assessment and Accreditation

The Association supports the principle that the pace and progression of learning should be determined by the learners' needs, although members have pointed out to us that learners' needs are not the same thing as what learners want – the study of languages is demanding and many school pupils at age 14 are too young to appreciate the long-term benefits of language learning, so a strong steer is needed to encourage young people to continue to learn languages in this phase. The notion of "stage not age" in language learning is also one we support.

The new assessment system should not penalise risk takers and the burden of examinations on pupils should be replaced by more continuous assessment. There are also concerns among our members that pupils could be rushed through the various stages and subjected to exam pressure at an earlier stage.

A robust accreditation system is a key requirement for the future. It needs to recognise achievement at every stage and we would suggest that:

1. Language learning should be an accredited part of certain courses at all levels, especially in vocational subjects.
2. The new national recognition scheme, the "Languages Ladder", is used as a means for accrediting short courses, e learning courses and modular courses that were included as part of the programme in a range of fields of study and training.
3. A suite of examinations which define content in more detail than the Ladder is essential.
4. A "single awarding body" might make it easier to explore alternatives to traditional examinations and achieve greater coherence and continuity nationally to the benefit of young people, parents, employers and academic institutions.

Implications

The implications of some of these changes for teacher training are serious and will entail significant development in this sector. In the future there will be a need for more multi-disciplinary teacher training.

There could be practical problems for small and medium-sized secondary schools in making provision for the new kinds of courses. The specialist schools will have a clear role to play in their locality and there could be a need for federations of schools to form clusters and to work collaboratively to cover the range of courses. New technology will also play a key role in delivery.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not normally acknowledge receipt of individual responses unless you put an X in the box below.

Please send completed questionnaires and responses to the address shown below by **11 May 2004**

Send by post to: **Consultation Unit, Department for Education and Skills, Level 2a, Castle View House, Runcorn, WA7 2GJ.**

Or by email to: 14-19reform@dfes.gsi.gov.uk