

## **Submission from Neil Logue (ADES)**

### **Q1 Is there enough funding for the Scottish Government's proposal?**

We endorse the recommendation of the Languages Working Group that the Scottish Government should fully consider the resource issues which stakeholders will need to address in implementing the 1+2 languages policy. There is, quite clearly, insufficient funding available at this time to deliver the 35 recommendations of the report of the Languages Working Group which we note, from its response of 20 November 2012, the Government accepts either in full or in part.

We are pleased to note that the Government is providing £120,000 to fund pilot projects in the current school session in order to demonstrate ways in which Scottish schools can begin to move towards the 1+2 model of Modern languages provision. More generally, we are pleased to note the Government's commitment, subject to Parliamentary budget approval, to provide an additional £4 million in the new financial year to support the development of local authority language plans. ADES is pleased to note the Government's decision to discuss with COSLA and ADES the longer term planning and resource implications of the 1+2 policy.

### **Q2 Do existing teachers have the skills and teaching resources available for language tuition? Are existing teachers and teaching assistants equipped to teach languages? Should there be more training and support for new and existing teachers for language teaching?**

At present, only a minority of primary teachers in Scotland are equipped to deliver a Modern Languages curriculum. While undoubtedly there will be some teaching assistants who are able to support the teaching of a Modern Language, the current number of such staff across Scotland is likely to be very small.

The implications of the Donaldson Report and the work of the National Partnership Group will clearly result over time in more and better training and support for new and existing teachers. However, the unambiguous and ambitious nature of recommendations 1 and 3 of the Languages Working Group report – accepted by the Scottish Government – will require a significant expansion in language learning and in relevant support in initial and continuing teacher education provision. It is difficult to see how that expansion will be possible without a major increase in language teaching/training capacity both in university Modern Languages departments **and** teacher education departments.

Steps to enhance language learning capacity across the Scottish education community will require extensive dialogue and planning, involving, as principal stakeholders, Scottish Government, local Government and the university sector. Arrangements to extend and strengthen initial and continuing teacher education in respect of Modern Languages will need to ensure that aspiring primary teachers and secondary teachers are equipped not simply with the linguistic skills but also with the range of pedagogical skills required to provide pupils with high quality and engaging language learning experiences.

**Q3 What is the capacity within the curriculum to accommodate greater language study? Can language learning be embedded in existing teaching?**

The school curriculum is, of necessity, always 'work in progress'. It can never be absolutely fixed and, self-evidently, has to evolve to take account of educational and societal changes. The curriculum in Scottish schools has always had to adapt to take account of major innovations, for example, the introduction in the 1980s of Modern Languages in primary schools and the adoption of Information and Communications Technology as a subject in its own right. Aside from Religious and Moral Education, Physical Education is the only area of the curriculum that can, as a matter of right, command a prescribed allocation of time in the school week. One of the advantages of Curriculum for Excellence is the autonomy provided to individual Head Teachers to organise and resource – including through the timetable – the curriculum in ways which best meet the needs and circumstances of individual schools. There is, therefore, undoubtedly an ability to accommodate greater language study in the curriculum of Scottish schools including the introduction of a modern foreign language from P1. Whatever the challenges, it should be noted that such an approach has successfully been put in place in other European education systems. There is, in principle, no reason why the Scottish system cannot respond positively to this proposal. In terms of embedding language learning in existing teaching, there is no shortage of examples across the country of confident teachers effectively integrating elements of a foreign language in other curriculum areas, for example, by providing instructions in Physical Education or by carrying out specific activities such as mental mathematics. There is also a very small number of mainly secondary schools which have adopted a full 'immersion' approach in which a particular aspect of the curriculum may be taught exclusively through the medium of another language. The adoption of a full immersion or CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach demands, however, a high level of linguistic skill on the part of the teacher. The systematic use of such an approach would require a major commitment to dedicated training and support in initial teacher education and in continuing professional learning provision for existing teachers.

**Q4 The choice of languages for teaching – which languages should children be learning and why?**

The ambition of the 1+2 approach to learning Modern Languages is, first and foremost, to provide young people in Scotland with a better and richer experience of learning languages. Specific decisions about which languages should be taught need to take account of the context and capacity of individual authorities and schools. Decisions about the languages to be taught will clearly reflect the language qualifications of teaching staff. While the rationale for providing opportunities to learn the languages of emerging or already strong economies is well understood, the absence of graduates, for example, in Portuguese or Mandarin will, for some time, make it difficult to introduce those languages into the school curriculum. If it is expected that national and local language learning strategies take account of key economic considerations, arrangements to introduce into the curriculum the languages of strong economic trading partners will have to result from careful plans rolled out over time. Universities would clearly be key players in preparing and resourcing such a fundamental change. Until a systematic approach

is put in place to establish in Scotland more diversified language training/teaching capacity, schools will continue to draw on extant foreign language expertise principally in French, Spanish, German and possibly Italian. In this context, it is worth noting that previous societal expectations in the 1960s/70s about expanding language teaching expertise in Russian resulted in a flurry of conversion training activity targeted at, in the main, then teachers of Latin and Greek. In taking forward the Scottish Government's ambitious commitment to boost language learning in Scotland and its welcome promotion of a 1+2 model, the disappearance of not just Latin and Greek but also Russian from Scottish schools should give key decision-makers and the Scottish education community pause for thought about the absolute importance of ensuring that sustainability will be a key principle in drafting the various action/implementation plans now required to support the implementation of the agreed recommendations of the Languages Working Group.

Opportunities for children and young people to learn a language will, for the moment, be dictated by the language teaching expertise already present within the system. This realistic perspective was acknowledged by the Languages Working Group whose report notes that "*continuing to engage with our nearest neighbours in Europe will remain a priority for young people in Scotland*" and that, therefore, "*learning French, German, Italian, and Spanish will continue to have an important place.*" It is, however, worth noting in this regard that French still dominates language learning and teaching in Scottish schools. It is also worth noting that across Scotland there is a significant number of teachers qualified in only one foreign language, often French.

The need for language teaching in secondary schools to be appropriately diversified is almost unarguable in the context of the Government's overall ambitions to enhance language learning and foreign language competence. The Languages Working Group has also noted the strong economic case to be made for other languages such as Portuguese (with a principal focus on Brazil), Arabic and Russian as well as other Eastern European languages including Slavonic languages. The utilitarian rationale for learning the languages of emerging or already strong economies is self-evident. However, as has been argued above, unless radical and well planned steps are taken to develop Scotland's language teaching capacity and expertise, the ambition to provide opportunities, here and now, to learn languages beyond the restricted range of languages currently available in the Scottish education system is not wholly realistic.

From a purely curricular perspective, the choice of foreign languages available to pupils is less important than the commitment to provide pupils with high quality language learning opportunities and to nurture in them the language learning skills that can equip learners to take up with confidence the learning of a foreign language during and beyond their school career, as and when personal or professional circumstances demand. The 1+2 model for learning languages envisaged by the Government will be better served, in the first instance, by schools becoming more successful in instilling in young people a respect for language 'per se' and a growing understanding of the value and benefits which derive from the confidence and the ability to 'tackle' a new language and converse thereafter with foreign nationals in their mother tongue.

**Q5 The role of languages in economic development – what languages should children be learning to benefit their future careers and to help Scotland flourish economically?**

The report of the Languages Working Group points up foreign language competence as a potentially important employability skill. Given the observations offered in the previous response, young people are likely to benefit more from opportunities to acquire the confidence, the willingness and the practical skills needed to learn languages. The actual choice of languages in a school context is not hugely important. However, the utilitarian focus on the value of language skills for marketing, commerce or exporting purposes is perfectly understandable in an ever global and an ever more competitive economic world. Against that backdrop, it will be increasingly important – for post-school providers of vocational learning and vocational education opportunities – to offer students practical modern language learning and training opportunities. Commitments along these lines will crucially depend upon the capacity not only of universities but also of further education colleges. The national implementation strategy being developed around the 1+2 approach will almost certainly require to indicate how the decline of language learning opportunities in universities can be arrested and how, in the case of further education colleges, language learning can be resurrected. Given the new ambitions for foreign language provision across the Scottish educational landscape, it is ironic that language teaching/learning in the further education sector is currently almost extinct.