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NEW POLICY BRIEFING COMPARES EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN MODERN LANGUAGES ACROSS THE FOUR UK JURISDICTIONS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE UPTAKE AND LEARNING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

LEADING LANGUAGES EXPERTS HIGHLIGHT POLICY ISSUES IMPACTING MODERN LANGUAGE PROVISION IN SCHOOLS ACROSS THE UK AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT.

Academics researching the role of educational policy on modern languages provision and learning in UK schools have outlined a comprehensive set of recommendations to enhance policy and improve the uptake and quality of provision of modern languages teaching.

The briefing draws attention to the uneven provision for languages across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and highlights areas of concern. At primary level, key issues include variability in teacher confidence and competence in delivering modern languages and in the amount of time devoted to language lessons, particularly since they are often squeezed out by competing priorities due to a lack of status compared with other subjects. At secondary level, the report cites the continuing decline in the uptake of languages at GCSE and A level and the factors behind this, including the perceived difficulty of languages, obstacles to recruiting teachers, and the mismatch at times between content, level of language skill and age.

The Policy Briefing, *'Modern Languages and Educational Policy in the UK'* is published jointly by Professor Janice Carruthers, AHRC Modern Languages Leadership Fellow, and Professor Wendy Ayres-Bennett, Principal Investigator, Multilingualism: Empowering Individuals, Transforming Societies (MEITS). Some of the main recommendations made include:

For primary languages

- The need for clarification of the appropriate amount of time to be devoted to language learning, backed up by an inspection framework verifying that this is enacted in schools.
- Clearer articulation of how language learning enhances literacy and other core skills and nurtures future global citizens.
- Adequate training and CPD for primary school teachers to give them the competence and confidence to teach languages.

For secondary languages

- Incentives, in the form of a pupil premium, for schools to offer languages at A level where a viability threshold is not reached.
- An urgent review of the new GCSE and A level specifications to take account of any unforeseen negative impact in terms of uptake and pupil motivation.
- A joined up strategy for retention and recruitment of language teachers across the UK.

Professor Ayres-Bennett said: “This Briefing is part of our ongoing work on policy matters affecting modern languages in the UK, and draws on a policy workshop held last December bringing together researchers and civil servants from across the UK. Comparison of the different jurisdictions provides a useful lens for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of different policies.”

Professor Carruthers added: “Our aim is to highlight areas where improvements should and could be made and to make realistic policy recommendations for the short and longer term.”

To read the Briefing, please follow this link:

<https://www.modernlanguagesleadershipfellow.com/policy-briefings/>

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Notes to Editors

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Professor Janice Carruthers and Professor Wendy Ayres-Bennett are available for interview or to provide further details on this briefing, email Ciaran Higgins for contact details.

Find out further details on the Open World Research Initiative (**OWRI**) at [this link](http://ahrc.ukri.org) ahrc.ukri.org on the AHRC Modern Languages Leadership Fellow's work at <https://www.modernlanguagesleadershipfellow.com/> and the MEITS project at <http://www.meits.org/>

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