

A response to an article that provides evidence of sound knowledge and understanding of themes related to the teaching of Welsh in the English medium sector.

Lewis (2015: pg 1) published the article 'Welsh Second language within our curriculum', where he highlights that the Welsh Government are driving forward the importance of 'securing the future of the Welsh language'. The purpose of the article is to further update members on the curriculum reform following Donaldson's (2015) report, Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales report - Successful Futures. It also includes how they plan to implement Sioned Davies' recommendations following her report on Welsh Second Language, One language for all.

In the article Donaldson (2015), cited in Lewis (2015 pg 2) states 'The cultural, cognitive and practical benefits of learning Welsh as a living language provide a strong case for its inclusion as a compulsory element in the school curriculum'. This suggests that the inclusion of Welsh within the curriculum gives children the foundations to be capable and confident learners. I believe that this is important to give children a sense of belonging, identity, confidence and pride for their country. This is identified in the (Beaufort Research. 2013. p.4) 'At the heart of what drove positive behaviours and perceptions was a sense of identity with the Welsh language at a number of different levels: personal, family, community, national identity and heritage. This link between language and identity not only spread out from the personal through to national but also spanned the past, present and future'. I also believe that it gives them the foundations to learn other languages. However, while it is important to secure the future of the Welsh language, I feel that by increasing the amount children speaking Welsh, there is a risk that Welsh will become the majority's first language, therefore cause the English language to die out within Wales. There is research that shows that when children improve in one language they may stop using the other language. Best Start Research Centre, (2014). This is supported by Saer, D.J (1922) cited in Jones, W.R (1966 pg 117) where they argue that you can only speak one language to the best of your ability. In Saers' investigation he finds that monoglot children have wider range of vocabulary in English compared to bilingual children, where he finds that their English suffers.

Lewis, (2015, pg 2) suggests that the importance of teaching Welsh as a second language is to increase job opportunity 'In taking forward these recommendations we intend to enhance the value attached to the Welsh language by strengthening the focus on its commercial value for the jobs market'. This relates to the Welsh Government, (2015, p.8), where it highlights 'Welsh second language contributes to careers and the world of work by enabling learners to benefit from the increasing use of Welsh as a second language. This is supported by Davies, S, (2013) in her report on Welsh Second Language, One language for all, where it states:

'opportunities to work in areas where bilingual skills are required, and to take advantage of the expanding use of Welsh in the workplace. It also enables learners to interact in workplaces with those who are bilingual'

As already stated, although learning a second language shows benefits in your ability to learn further languages, I also feel that if learning Welsh is primarily to enhance the future generations ability to secure a job then I feel that teaching them a more popular language should be considered. According to Statista, (2018), the top three widely spoken languages are Mandarin, English and Spanish with only a small percentage of the world population who speak Welsh, due to this I believe that in order to increase a child's opportunity to secure a job one of the top 3 languages should be promoted.

In the article Lewis, H, (2015, pg.2.) highlights that there are challenges and obstacles in teaching Welsh and how they plan to tackle this. Following Davies, S (2013) article of One language for all she addressed that one issue is the lack of the teaching professions knowledge on the Welsh language and confidence in speaking a teaching language. This is also raised by Donaldson, G (2015) in his report successful futures 'they acknowledge significant shortcomings in the Welsh language skills of the workforce and limited knowledge of second language teaching methodology' (Estyn, 2013, pg.10) acknowledges that 'Where practitioners in schools receive regular training and support, they are more confident in teaching Welsh' There is an increased amount of effort going into improving the knowledge and confidence in teachers ability to speak Welsh. With recommendations that the government ensure that teachers are getting the training and funding to further their knowledge on learning and teaching a second language. (Estyn 2013, pg 11)

This is something I can relate to. From my experience as an English primary Education Student wanting to study and teach in Wales I feel that it is important to invest in training in order for teachers to transfer their knowledge and skills onto the pupils. However, I also feel that a lot of additional pressure is being placed on teachers to learn Welsh as a second language, which can detract from the core subjects.

Huw Lewis acknowledges the 10 recommendations by Donaldson. One of which is 'There should be a renewed focus in schools on learning Welsh primarily as a means of communication, particularly oral communication and understanding'. In Donaldson's (2015) report he mentions that the Welsh language commissioner, indicates that the chance of getting a job is increased if you have general Welsh conversation skills and qualifications in the language are not needed. I feel that Welsh should not be structured, it should be naturally embedded into the School. I feel that by including Welsh in such a strategic way creates an artificial learning environment based around it, whereas I believe if the aim is for pupils to speak Welsh naturally in the community, less emphasis should be on structured Welsh lessons and it should be included naturally throughout the school.

It is my opinion that the Welsh language should be appreciated as part of the Welsh culture and identity of Wales. We have concluded the importance of learning Welsh to ensure children have a sense of identity and belonging and to keep the culture and identity of Wales alive. We also have learnt that by learning a second language at a young age will enhance their ability to learn additional languages for the future. Although we have addressed the fact that the ability to speak Welsh will help employability within Wales I believe that if teaching Welsh is to improve employability within future generations it is important to teach them a more widely spoken language. I also feel the importance of English should still be promoted to ensure maximum employment options for the future. I feel that less pressure should be put on children to learn Welsh fluently and it should be included in a subtle, natural way throughout their life.

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