

Evaluation report on capacity building approaches to support the delivery of English as an additional language in Wales

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Audience	Practitioners and leaders throughout the education system in Wales including primary and secondary, maintained and non-maintained schools; local authorities; regional consortia and government and national partners who are involved in the provision of education to learners whose first language is not English.
Overview	The purpose of this document is to share capacity building approaches and good practice in providing support to learners whose first language is not English. This is an independent review by the People and Work Unit, commissioned by the Welsh Government. Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.
Action required	None – for information only.
Further information	Enquiries about this document should be directed to: Diverse Learners and Safeguarding Team Support for Learners Division Infrastructure, Curriculum, Qualifications and Learner Support Directorate Welsh Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ Tel: 029 2082 3901 e-mail: EnglishasAnAdditionalLanguage@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Additional copies	This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at www.gov.wales/educationandskills
Related documents	<i>Minority ethnic achievement in education in Wales</i> (2014) learning.gov.wales/resources/browse-all/minority-ethnic-achievement-in-education-in-wales/?lang=en <i>Welsh as an Additional Language: Research into the level of need and current support provided to black and minority ethnic pupils with Welsh language support needs</i> (2014) Social Research Number: 46/2014 www.gov.wales/statistics-and-research/welsh-additional-language/?lang=en

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Glossary of acronyms

BTA: Bi-lingual Teaching Assistant

EAL: English as an Additional Language

EMAS: Ethnic Minority Achievement Service

ESF: European Social Fund

GCSE: General Certificate of Secondary Education

LA: Local Authority

MEAG: Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant

MELAP: Minority Ethnic Language and Achievement Project

NALDIC: National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum

NEET: Not in Employment, Education or Training

OECD: Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development

PLASC: Pupil Level Annual School Census

TA: Teaching assistant

Report summary

Study aim

The aim of this study was “To identify capacity building approaches to equip mainstream teachers in supporting minority ethnic achievement”. The objective of the study is the “identification and dissemination of successful strategies and approaches to upskilling classroom teachers in the delivery of English as an Additional Language (EAL)”.

The Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant (MEAG) is an annual grant provided by the Welsh Government to local authority education services, and it is used primarily to support EAL through Ethnic Minority Achievement Services (EMAS). EMAS operate in every Welsh county, although some are shared with neighbouring local authorities. These services vary in the support that they offer and its focus. All EMASs are working to develop the capacity of schools to meet the needs of pupils with EAL through the provision of training, mentoring and additional resources to school staff. All also provide bilingual teaching assistants, although there is a variation in the way these are deployed.

During the course of this research project, arrangements were being made to discontinue the MEAG as a dedicated grant scheme. In April 2015, the Welsh Government will introduce different grant arrangements which will see the implementation of the Education Improvement Grant. This grant scheme brings together 11 different education grant regimes previously operated by the Welsh Government, including the MEAG.

The study consulted with eight EMAS and with five schools and invited comments from other EMAS. This report pulls together the findings from consultations with EMASs and with schools, a review of education policy documents, reports submitted by EMAS in relation to their MEAG funding and short literature review.

The need

Around 7 percent of pupils in Welsh schools have a need for English as an additional language (EAL) support. Of these, 60 percent are in three counties, Cardiff, Newport and Swansea, but all counties in Wales have EAL learners. The number of pupils needing EAL support in Wales has remained fairly constant, but the proportion that have no, or very little, English grew from 24 percent in 2008/9 to 28 percent in 2012/13 (PLASC). In the same period the proportion of EAL pupils that are fluent in English dropped from 44 percent to 27 percent (ibid).

Wales uses a five stage approach to measuring language acquisition from A, which equates to ‘new to English’, to E which equates to ‘fluent’. There is a strong concentration of resources on pupils at stage A. EMASs and schools raised a concern that those who were socially fluent may not have their needs recognised, and that social fluency would be insufficient to achieve academically. In addition, the needs of second or third generation British children who only speak English in school can also be missed as they are not seen as being new to English.

Research shows that the length of time required to achieve academic competence in a language can be anything between 5 and 10 years (Collier 1989¹). The needs of EAL pupils can be complex. Issues effecting language acquisition include the age of the child or young person at stage A; competence in the home language; issues inherent in learning another language; social and economic factors, including levels of parental education, previous education experiences and the home learning environment; and cultural and migration histories. These factors suggest that standardised model of EAL support would be less effective than a person-centred approach to planning and delivering EAL support.

Conclusions

The numbers of different languages spoken by pupils, the range of previous education experience and the variety of entry points into the Welsh education system combine to make the delivery of EAL support by a central service non-viable, therefore the focus of EMAS work has increasingly become focused on capacity building for schools to meet their pupils' EAL needs.

There is plenty of guidance and research on how this is done. How to develop this approach to EAL across Wales, however, is more complex. EMAS support for a school based approach tends to focus on a department (in a secondary school), or one or more teachers, identified within the school. The specialist teacher will work alongside these, helping them develop tools and techniques, resources and confidence with a focus is on helping the school rather than individual pupils. However, both the literature and discussions with EMASs provide mixed evidence on whether this leads to a whole school approach. Schools were described as rarely prioritising EAL support, even when they have a large number of pupils with EAL needs. They may rely on outside help from EMAS, or may treat an EAL student as having a special educational need, so sidelining the problem. This creates particular challenges to developing whole school approach.

The study identified that the key requirements for building a whole school approach to supporting EAL are:

- mapping EAL support into key school improvement and equalities policies and practices including the Literacy and Numeracy Framework, professional development strategies and school improvement plans
- improving the role of school challenge and support and inspection processes to more effectively monitor and promote good practice in EAL
- a focus on achievement and flexibility and creativity in using the curriculum and accreditation models
- using school data more effectively to monitor and evaluate the development of language skills. The 'virtual headteacher' role adopted by some EMAS, a combination of the school challenge adviser's data interrogation role, the active parent's quality management role, and the specialist teacher's mentoring and development role, offered a valuable model to complement school use of data

¹ Collier, V. 1989. How Long? A synthesis of research on academic achievement in a second language. TESOL Quarterly. Vol 33. No. 3. Pp: 509-531

- commitment from the senior management team that recognises how the approach needed to support EAL learners is relevant to support for all learners, including effective differentiation based on analysis of individual learner's needs
- provide training and mentoring to develop the confidence of teachers in using differentiation effectively with EAL learners
- strategies for family engagement and for including cultural diversity in the school curriculum
- promoting and improving competence in home languages.
- In addition there may be a need to provide specific support to schools with large numbers of pupils at stage A.

1. Introduction

As set out in the specification, the aim of this study was “To identify capacity building approaches to equip mainstream teachers in supporting minority ethnic achievement”. The objective of the study is the “identification and dissemination of successful strategies and approaches to upskilling classroom teachers in the delivery of English as an Additional Language (EAL)”.

Methodology

The project ran between August and November 2014. It started with a review of the 2013/14 local authority Ethnic Minority Achievement Services (EMAS) plans and end of year outcome reports relating to the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant (MEAG) allocations from the Welsh Government. The project then undertook a desk based review of key documents, articles and journals.

An email was sent from the Diverse Learners Branch of the Welsh Government to all local authority Ethnic Minority Advisory Services (EMAS) asking for cooperation with the project and for feedback on capacity building approaches.

The study then identified and contacted eight EMAS. These were selected to cover those with large and with relatively small numbers of EAL learners, services covering rural and urban areas, high and low levels of deprivation. Each EMAS was visited and discussions held with them about their approaches to capacity building, local needs and how these are changing. In addition, all other EMAS were sent a short set of questions and invited to submit written responses or speak to a researcher.

Five schools were also contacted and consulted. These included a primary school with over 70 percent of pupils with EAL support needs; a primary school with 17 percent of pupils with EAL support needs; a secondary school with 40 percent of pupils from ethnic minority groups; a secondary school with no EAL pupils this year, and small (two or three) numbers in the past; and a secondary school with 15 percent of pupils with EAL support needs.

This report pulls together the findings from consultations with EMASs and with schools, the reviews of policy, reports submitted by EMAS in relation to their MEAG funding and the literature review.

2. English as an Additional Language in Wales: context and needs

Nearly ten percent of school pupils in Wales are from an ethnic minority group with over 100 languages and 140 dialects spoken by pupils². Although not all will have a language support need, in 2010 an OECD report on migrant education³ identified that children and young people from immigrant families often have more restrictive access to education in OECD countries, leave school earlier and have lower academic achievement than their native peers. It also reported that education outcomes are significantly affected when the language spoken in the home is not that spoken in the classroom, even for second generation migrants born in the country where they go to school.

In the last five years the percentage of EAL pupils in Welsh schools has remained at between 6 percent and 7 percent, but the profile of pupils and the level of EAL support need has changed (see table 1). Excluding EAL pupils that are fluent in English, the number needing support has risen by nearly a third in five years. In addition, data from local authority minority ethnic achievement services (EMAS) on the use of the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant in 2013-2014 shows a total figure of 28,902 EAL pupils, of which 2507 (9 percent) require no support, so that 26,395 EAL pupils were provided with support through the MEAG. The allocation of MEAG funding for 2014-2015 is based on an overall Minority Ethnic population of 40,184 to include EAL and other minority ethnic groups.

Table 1: PLASC data⁴: pupils in schools in Wales

Year	Pupils with EAL (No.)	EAL pupils fluent in English	EAL pupils fluent in English as a % of all EAL pupils	Pupils needing EAL support	EAL pupils needing support as % of all EAL pupils
2008-2009	30,701	13,402	44%	17,299	56%
2009-2010	25,843	8,139	31%	17,704	69%
2010-2011	28,038	8,409	30%	19,629	70%
2011-2012	30,756	9,083	30%	21,673	70%
2012-2013	31,132	8,250	27%	22,882	73%

² Minority ethnic achievement in Wales. Information document 132/2014. Welsh Government

³ OECD Reviews of Migrant Education - Closing the Gap for Immigrant Students: Policies, Practice and Performance. 2010. OECD

⁴ <https://stats.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Schools-Census/Pupil-Level-Annual-School-Census/Ethnicity-National-Identity-and-Language/PupilsAcquiringEnglishAsAdditionalLanguage-by-LocalAuthorityRegion-StageDevelopment>

Support need

The eight EMAS consulted for this study said that they had seen recent changes in EAL learners coming into the county. EMAS identified how key issues around supporting EAL are important to understand in relation to building capacity including:

- the increasingly broad range of home languages spoken
- the socio-economic profile of new learners and their previous experiences of education
- the age of EAL pupils (that is, that the older the learner entering the education system, the harder it will be to achieve a language level that allows for recognised academic achievement), especially given that the curriculum is tied to chronological age rather than ability or educational level
- staggered entry into the education system throughout the year
- frequent school moves amongst some groups such as refugees, the families of students and migrant seasonal workers, as one headteacher explained – ‘last year we ended the year with the same number in the class as we had started with, but over a third were different children’
- lack of expertise in special education needs (SEN) support services in assessing needs in a non-language based way
- an over-reliance on interested individuals within schools, rather than whole school policies in relation to EAL, and, related to this, a low prioritisation of EAL at a school and a county level.

Acquisition of English

The length of time required to achieve academic competence in a language has been assessed as being anything between 5 and 10 years (Collier 1989⁵). Factors that influence the speed of language acquisition include pre-existing competence in the home language, including reading levels and previous education; socio-economic factors; and age when first starting to acquire a new language. A study in Lambeth of EAL pupils⁶ used longitudinal statistical data collected over a twenty year period to track back and identify how long it had taken them to acquire fluency in English. The study found that it had taken between 6-8 years for pupils to acquire academic proficiency in English. The study used a four point scale, where stage 1 was a beginner and stage 4 was fluent, and identified that progress was not evenly spread over stages. Pupils tended to be at the beginner stage for a year and a half, and remain at the second stage, building familiarity with the language, for three years; and then take another three years to become confident in using the language.

⁵ Collier, V. 1989. How Long? A synthesis of research on academic achievement in a second language. TESOL Quarterly. Vol 33. No. 3. Pp: 509-531

⁶ Demie, F. (2010) English as an Additional Language: An empirical study of stages of English proficiency. Lambeth Council. Accessed <http://www.naldic.org.uk/research-andinformation/research+summaries/ealpficiencylambeth>

The Lambeth study found that language barriers remain the key factor affecting the performance of EAL pupils and identified a strong correlation between fluency in English and academic achievement. EMAS consulted for this project identified a problem occurring when pupils acquire good social English (Stage B) as teachers can make assumptions that this means that do not have an EAL need. However, they point out, when English is not spoken at home, the acquisition of academic language can only happen in the classroom and pupils can become significantly disadvantaged. This can be the issue with second and third generation pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, who may only speak English in class, and also on transition from one learning setting to another, if good records are not transferred and the new setting does not undertake rigorous language assessments.

Measuring acquisition of English

The Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) records pupils by the stage of their language acquisition using a five point scale:

- A. New to English
- B. Early acquisition
- C. Developing competence
- D. Competent
- E. Fluent

The scale is a 'stand alone' assessment structure, which is not linked to statutory assessments or the literacy and numeracy framework (LNF).

Excluding pupils who are fluent in English, and therefore have no specific language acquisition needs (although, as noted above, if English is not spoken in the home there may be an ongoing need to ensure that even second and third generation British pupils have adequate English language skills for academic work), the numbers of pupils in Wales that have a language acquisition need has risen each year since 2008/09, when PLASC records first identified language levels (table 2).

As table 2 shows there has been a shift to a higher level of support need, with a year on year increase in both the numbers and overall percentage of EAL pupils that have no English language skills. The numbers at level D have remained relatively stable but the percentage at that level has gone down due to overall increased numbers.

Table 2: Pupils in nursery, primary, middle and secondary schools acquiring English as an additional language by stage of development A-D (excluding E) and as a percentage of all EAL learners (PLASC)

	Stage A		Stage B		Stage C		Stage D	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
2008/09	4324	25%	4203	24%	4635	27%	4140	24%
2009/10	4495	25%	4522	26%	5075	29%	3612	20%
2010/11	5355	27%	4901	25%	5658	29%	3715	19%
2011/12	5894	27%	5232	24%	6561	30%	3986	18%
2012/13	6327	28%	5747	25%	6714	29%	4094	18%

Attainment and EAL

Table 3, drawn from EMAS reports, shows considerable variations between counties in relation to the attainment of pupils from minority ethnic groups during the 2013-2014 school year. Across Wales, pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve slightly above the Welsh average at key stages 2 and 3, and slightly under at key stage 4. Small numbers in some counties can account for the significant variations, but between counties where numbers are higher – Cardiff, Newport and Swansea – there is still a range of achievement levels at different key stage levels.

Table 3: EMAS 2013-2014 reported results for pupils from minority ethnic groups supported by the MEAG compared to average Core Subject Indicator (CSI) scores for all pupils in Wales

Local Authority	CSI Scores compared to Wales average		
	KS2	KS3	KS4
Anglesey	+2	+10	+4
Blaenau Gwent	-6	-14	-15
Bridgend	+2	-4	+8
Caerphilly	0	+11	+1
Cardiff	-6	+3	-6
Carmarthen	-5	-16	+4
Ceredigion	-3	+14	+27
Conwy	+1	+5	<i>Not available</i>
Denbigh	+10	+5	+3
Flint	-7	-1	+1
Gwynedd	+3	+7	+11
Merthyr Tydfil	-23	-15	
Monmouthshire	0	+8	-6
Neath Port Talbot	+10	-10	+18
Newport	-6	-4	-3
Pembroke	+2	+6	-6
Powys	+8	-1	-13
Rhondda Cynon Taf	+11	-7	+12
Swansea	-1	+6	+15
Torfaen	-1	-4	+9
Vale of Glamorgan	+5	+1	+1
Wrexham	-3	-6	-3
Wales	+1	+1	-3

Support for EAL in Wales

The Welsh Government provides an annual grant to local authorities to provide additional support to promote minority ethnic achievement in Wales. Local authority Ethnic Minority Achievement Services (EMAS) apply for a Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant (MEAG) to support pupils from ethnic minority groups up to the age of 19 years. The grant is allocated on the basis of data sent by the local authority around both the number of pupils and level of support need. Every local authority receives funding. However, 75 percent of the funding goes to three local authorities (with Cardiff receiving 44 percent), who between them have 60 percent of the pupils with EAL needs in Wales (allocation for 2014/15). The Welsh Government ministerial statement on allocations of the MEAG in 2014-2015 (January 2014) identified that 'Children of minority ethnic background represent 8% of the school population in Wales. Certain of these pupils stand in need of support and fall into two categories: firstly, children for whom English, or Welsh, is an additional language; secondly, children from particular minority ethnic groups which consistently under achieve'.

In 2003 Estyn undertook a survey of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG): effective use of resources. The report identified a series of recommendations:

In order to promote further improvement in quality and standards, LEAs and schools should ensure that:

- systems are in place so that data collected for EMAG funding is accurate and consistent
- allocation of EMAG staff to schools is based on accurate figures and a transparent formula linked to the Assembly's stages of EAL acquisition.
- strategies are in place to extend the training of mainstream teachers in raising ethnic minority achievement
- EMAG staff and mainstream teachers plan jointly to address the needs of ethnic minority pupils
- clear, appropriate individual targets are set for the achievement of ethnic minority pupils
- EMAG staff are effectively monitored
- schools have working policies for EAL, race equality and multicultural education
- appropriate provision is made to meet the needs of African Caribbean pupils

Estyn also identified weaknesses in post-16 provision in a survey entitled 'How effective is provision for learners aged 16 to 19 years with English language acquisition needs?'⁷ The key findings related to the variation in quality of provision across providers and sectors; weakness in the assessment of needs, the skills of teaching staff to meet language support needs and the data kept on EAL learners; poor planning for post-16 transition; and the lack of a clear national strategic lead for learners with English acquisition needs.

A review of the MEAG (published in 2010) identified the grant is used to fund specialist provision of English as an additional (EAL) language teaching and support, as well as to provide training for mainstream teachers (Welsh Government 2010⁸). The review of the MEAG (ibid) found that a number of local authorities were moving their services away from a direct delivery model to one of capacity building within schools, due to the increasing number of pupils from minority groups.

A Welsh Government statement on Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant Administration (MEAG) in 2013-14 and Options for Directing Future Resources (January 2014) identified that 'The objective of MEAG is to improve educational opportunity for all minority ethnic learners, particularly those for whom English is an additional language; to offer asylum seeker pupils the special support they need and, broadly, to improve minority ethnic pupils' standards of achievement across the board'. The statement acknowledges that 'the vast majority of the funding is used to cover the cost of specialist teachers of English as an additional language (EAL) and their teaching assistants, as well as for teaching resources and training'.

⁷ Summaries of Estyn remit surveys 2008-9

⁸ Review of Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant. Welsh Government 2010.

In September 2013 Estyn issued supplementary guidance for education inspectors on equality, human rights and English as an additional language. The guidance requires inspectors to ask providers about first languages spoken by pupils and students, and the numbers of EAL learners. Where the numbers of EAL learners are a 'significant feature', inspectors are expected to comment on standards, wellbeing and learning experiences in their report (although there is no such requirement where there may be isolated or small numbers of EAL learners). The guidance sets out a series of questions to be explored with schools and which are intended to underpin good practice in relation to EAL (Estyn 2013:4-5):

- Is there a whole provider policy for supporting pupils who learn English as an additional language and, if so, is it implemented consistently?
- Is the environment welcoming for pupils for whom English is an additional language?
- Do teachers use information about the languages spoken by the pupils?
- Do pupils with English as an additional language have full access to the curriculum? Have any mainstream teachers undertaken training to help them understand the learning needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language?
- How close is the liaison between English as an additional language teachers and mainstream teachers?
- How are lessons in mainstream classes and, where relevant, during any withdrawal sessions, structured to meet the specific needs of pupils learning English as an additional language?
- Does the provider track the success of its English as an additional language provision by evaluating pupils' attainments and is it using the information to identify targets for improvement?
- Does the provider use the first language to support learning?
- How does the provider meet the needs of pupils with English as an additional language when no support teaching is available?

A combination of current and projected cuts to the MEAG (from £10.5mil in 2013/14, to just under £10mil in 2014/15), along with the increases in demand for language acquisition support, has led EMASs and schools to review the way that EAL support is provided, and ways of building capacity within schools to meet the needs of pupils with EAL needs. This work aims to:

- help ensure that support for pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds does not diminish (given real term funding cuts)
- reduce pressure on EMAs
- build a whole school approach to minority ethnic achievement
- inform continuing professional development of mainstream teaching staff

In England the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant was ended in 2011 and the money went into a Dedicated Schools Grant, which meant it was not ring-fenced to provide support to pupils with EAL needs. A year later a report from the NASUWT

identified significant decreases in levels of support from specialist minority ethnic achievement services and English as an additional language support services at the local authority level and within schools. However, EAL learner achievement levels at Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 have continued to improve despite these changes.

The MEAG will end in Wales in March 2015 and be replaced from April 2015 by the Education Improvement Grant which brings together 11 separate grant schemes consolidated under one programme with funding totalling £141m. The Welsh Government's hope is that the new grant will provide local authorities and education consortia with greater flexibility to direct resources towards areas of greatest need and address local, regional and national priorities. While specific sums under the new grant are not ring-fenced, the Welsh Government has directed consortia to ensure that the needs of ethnic minority learners continue to be addressed through agreed outcome measures in 2015-16 and through the introduction of an Outcomes Framework from April 2016.

3. Approaches to capacity building to meet EAL needs

Since the 1980s it has been policy in the UK that pupils with EAL needs should be part of mainstream schooling (Leung 2003⁹), and this is seen as a rights and equality issue as well as one of language and teaching. However, academic attainment is only achieved and measured through the medium of English (or Welsh), statutory assessments of learning are the same for EAL pupils as for their native peers and there is no English as an additional language extension to the national curriculum (ibid). That means that, although there may be respect for bi- or tri-lingual skills, they form no part of recorded educational achievement (with the exception of home language GCSEs where relevant). Therefore, pupils need to develop their English language skills to access and benefit from the curriculum.

EMAS and schools consulted for this report described a variety of approaches to addressing EAL needs which varied from pupils never being withdrawn from class at all; targeted and time limited sessions of withdrawal to focus on reading and writing; to EAL pupils being initially based in an inclusion or language specialist unit, attending a limited mainstream curriculum for a period until language skills are developed.

Research shows that the level of language acquisition support needs a child or young person may have will be influenced not only by their knowledge of English, but by their educational, socio-economic, cultural and situational background. For example, pupils who have high level reading and writing skills in their home language are at an advantage (Cross, R. 2011¹⁰), as are those whose parents have skills and/or qualifications. This argues for a pupil centred approach, which assesses and works with individual needs (Flynn 2007¹¹; Naidoo, L. 2012¹²).

Engaging with the pupil's native culture to ease learning and transition is seen as very important in EAL (Cross 2011). Most EMAS consulted in this study were involved with promoting cultural awareness in schools and were clear that including pupils' experiences and home cultures into classroom learning is valuable both for EAL learners and their native peers. A secondary school talked about how the English department have started to use folk tales from pupils' home countries in lessons and other departments have built work around food and cooking and religious practices. Using group work and digital stories to promote language acquisition, even where the EAL learners experiences are very different, can allow them to explore common elements, including language barriers and social stigmatisation, as a way of honing language skills (ibid; Cooke 2001¹³).

⁹ Leung 2003. Integrating school-aged ESL learners into the mainstream curriculum. Kings College London

¹⁰ Cross, R. (2011) *Monolingual curriculum frameworks, multilingual literacy development: ESL teacher's beliefs*. Australian Journal of Language and Literacy 34(2), pp. 166-180.

¹¹ Flynn, N. (2007) *Good practice for pupils learning English as an additional language: lessons from effective literacy teachers in inner-city primary schools*. Journal of Early Childhood Literacy 7(2), pp. 177-198.

¹² Naidoo, L. (2012) *Refugee action support: crossing borders in preparing pre-service teachers for literacy teaching in secondary schools in Greater Western Australia*. International Pedagogies and Learning 7(3), pp. 266-274.

¹³ Cooke, S. (2001) *Collaborative learning and learning to learn*. Improving Schools 4(2), pp. 36-42.

Research suggests that it is important for teachers to recognise the experiences refugees may have been through but also that teachers need to avoid allowing sympathy for a pupil's history lower achievement expectations (Emert 2014¹⁴; Maher 2014¹⁵). There was a concern from both some EMAS and schools consulted for this study that assessment structures should include some recognition of the impact of trauma and poverty on rates of learning. For example, a headteacher consulted felt proud of the progress made in language acquisition by a child who is sharing a bedroom with eight others, with consequent issues of tiredness and other poverty impacts, and frustrated that the school was criticised because the progress fell just short of the expected standard level.

Building competence in the home language is described as having a beneficial impact both on the pupil's general education and on English language skills and most EMAS report that they are supporting home language GCSEs. Ofsted¹⁶ provides guidance drawn from good practice in England that looks at how home languages can be incorporated into the curriculum and classroom practice. Their suggestions include:

- home language qualifications available in the standard curriculum as part of the modern language offer
- complete assessment in the languages offered at the school when they enrol
- trips and visits to allow pupils to practice their home language
- personal induction programme, carried out bilingually
- provision of a buddy, who ideally speaks the same language
- dual language books and visual aids
- involve parents in the community, and provide classes in English language
- raise aspirations of staff for such pupils
- continually review progress through tracking
- employ EAL specialist teachers
- train classroom teachers to meet EAL pupils' needs and introduce good practice
- offer an alternative curriculum (for example International General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) course for higher achievers, or BTEC qualifications for those who struggle)
- maintain a flexible approach

¹⁴ Emert, T. (2014) *Interactive digital storytelling with refugee children*. Language Arts 91(6), pp. 401-415.

¹⁵ Maher, M. (2014) *Asylum seeker and refugee children belonging, being and becoming: the early childhood educator's role*. Australasian Journal of Early Childhood 39(1), pp. 22-29.

¹⁶ <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/good-practice-resource-raising-achievement-of-students-for-whom-english-additional-language-belle-vu>, <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/good-practice-resource-provision-for-new-arrivals-learning-english-additional-language>, and <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/good-practice-resource-raising-achievement-of-students-learning-english-additional-language>

Teachers

In its survey on the effective use of EMAG resources (2003), Estyn noted that:

- few mainstream teachers have the training or skills to meet the needs of EAL pupils effectively
- there is not enough co-operation between mainstream teachers of EAL pupils and EMAG support teachers in planning pupils' experiences.

Although this report is over ten years old, similar concerns were raised during the fieldwork for this study, suggesting that the issues raised are still relevant.

The Guidance handbook on becoming a teacher in Wales (Circular number 017/2009) states that EAL comes under the Monitoring and Assessment strand of Teacher Standards in Wales (S3.2.5 English or Welsh as an additional language). All teachers, it states in the Guidance, can expect to teach classes through the medium of English or Welsh where some learners do not have these as their first language. In order to ensure that these learners achieve the standard of which they are capable, teachers 'need to be able to identify their levels of attainment and to provide support that will improve learners' language skills and help them to learn'. The Guidance also states that teachers should be able to 'analyse the language demands and learning activities in order to provide cognitive challenge as well as language support'.

The need for continuing professional development that supports teachers to help understand the needs of refugee and migrant children is important (MacNevin, J. 2012¹⁷). Secondary school teachers, in particular, may need support in understanding basic reading approaches, and the research is clear that teachers need to develop their knowledge and understanding of the cultures their pupils come from. Reflective practice (Garcia 2009¹⁸) is seen as a key tool to develop the responsiveness of teachers to pupils linguistic and cultural support needs. In addition, the need to develop an understanding of how to assess standards and needs and to recognise the differences between linguistic difficulties and special educational needs is seen as important in teacher development (Hasson 2012¹⁹).

All EMAS in Wales provide training for teachers and teaching or learning support. Different services provide different models, from termly open access sessions to whole school based in-depth training. The provision of awareness raising introductory training is seen as important in helping staff to recognise that pupils with EAL needs may struggle, and also that there are ways that they can be helped. However, all services felt that preparatory training had to be backed up by responsive support, and/or more in-depth training, when needed. It was common across all services to be responding to schools and teachers who, when a child or

¹⁷ MacNevin, J. (2012) *Learning the way: teaching and learning with and for youth from refugee backgrounds of Prince Edward Island*. Canadian Journal of Education 35(3), pp. 48-63.

¹⁸ Garcia, E. (2009) *Developing responsive teachers: a challenge for a democratic reality*. Journal of Teacher Education 61(1-2), pp. 132-142.

¹⁹ Hasson, N. (2012) *Discriminating disorder from difference using dynamic assessment with bilingual children*. Child Language Teaching and Therapy 29(1), pp. 57-75.

young person with an EAL need arrived in their class, needed guidance on what to do. In some cases this could be just a reassurance issue, but in others a 'personalised' training approach might be adopted.

The EMASs with the highest numbers of EAL learners have developed a staged 'whole school' training approach, where they are seeking to focus work on one school over a period, with EAL specialist teachers spending time with school staff to develop their understanding of needs, approaches to differentiation and support, and use of targeted resources. This approach may be focused on schools with a high proportion of EAL learners and may be mixed with a less intensive support approach to those with few EAL learners. For example, in Cardiff a three year programme set out to ensure that every school had received training in order to raise achievement amongst pupils with an EAL need. Time spent in school varied according to size of EAL population from a year to a term. Each school also had £1000 for resources. The learning from this work reinforces the importance of senior management team commitment to the work, and the need for it to be seen as a whole school priority. The danger can be that a lot of resource is invested in building the skills of a teacher and/or department but that when that teacher moves on the progress is lost.

In addition, the Minority Ethnic Language and Achievement Project (MELAP) worked in nine local authority areas and its primary focus was on EAL. The project provided training to 710 teachers and 46 EMAS staff. MELAP was funded through ESF for three years (September 2010-July 2013) to work with black and minority ethnic pupils aged 11-19 years old in Wales to address achievement gaps, tackle barriers to learning (including EAL) and prevent young people becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).

The MELAP training approach varied from 'sessions in inset days to small group training over a day and a 10 to 12 week course of training, in Swansea, for subject teachers (history, mathematics, and science) which included formal training, observation and mentoring. Several LAs intended to do more in depth training but faced difficulties engaging schools in such programmes'. Those who had received shorter periods of training often reported that it was not very useful as it did not provide enough practical examples to be applied afterwards or it took place on a busy inset day (ICF: 2014:16-17²⁰).

EMAS have worked with schools to identify their training needs using the Estyn inspection structure. In Swansea, teachers are asked to self-assess their skills and confidence at the beginning of the training period and this is re-visited at the end to identify improvements and where further work is needed.

The key challenges identified with training as an approach to capacity building were identified by EMAS as being:

Prioritisation; voluntary attendance at out of school training means that only schools and/or staff that have a basic awareness of EAL support needs will seek training.

²⁰ ICF GHK with Arad Consulting.2014. Minority Ethnic Language and Achievement Project. Welsh Government

The need for EAL to be written into a school's development plan was described as essential if INSET sessions are to be used, and, even where there are large numbers of pupils with an EAL need in a school, their support may not be a priority. The situation remains that EMASs are often having to encourage schools to take up training, rather than meeting a need that schools prioritise:

Training as a process, not an event: intensive programmes focusing on training up teachers in school are damaged when key staff members move on.

Although, in theory, such teachers should take their skills with them to their new school, so building capacity occurs across the whole education workforce, in practice EMAS staff have often found that as they move into a new role, trained staff do not champion EAL learning from their old role, and the loss of a trained staff member can represent a serious set back for EAL development in the school.

Even amongst a relatively stable workforce, new teachers will be starting each year. One EMAS, for example, runs a virtual PLC for all newly qualified teachers in the Autumn term.

Working alongside a teacher in class and providing encouragement, ideas and tailored resources was seen as much more effective than providing learning packs or other resources, without the guidance on using them. Although an intensive, and therefore potentially expensive, approach, this was seen as providing the strongest rewards. However, a study from 2010 examined the practice of subject teachers working in partnership with EAL specialist teachers while EAL learners simultaneously study the national curriculum and learn English (Creese, 2010). The study concluded that the partnership between subject teachers and EAL specialist teachers does lead to an improvement in access to the subject curriculum, but it does not create better opportunities for their lessons to provide more general English language learning.

Whole school approaches: Many EMAS felt that the most effective way of developing capacity was to work in a very practical way with individual teachers and/or departments in secondary schools through mentoring and demonstration.

All EMAS were clear that support from, in particular, the senior management team was vital in developing sustained capacity for EAL support in schools and even the intensive school based programmes were not always successful in developing this. Estyn's survey of the effective use of EAL resources (2003²¹) found that 'where school leaders and managers are directly involved in the management and delivery of EMAG services, there is clear vision and good strategic management'. The survey also reported that many head teachers had a high level of commitment to meeting the needs of ethnic minority pupils and valued the centrally based administration and management of EMAG services. However, those consulted for this report were sceptical. There was a concern that some schools liked the services offered by EMAS because it enabled them not to have to address needs themselves, and that in the past they have relied too heavily on external support to address EAL.

²¹ Survey report: Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG): effective use of resources. 2003. Estyn

Differentiation

The key process for inclusion of EAL learners in mainstream provision is differentiation. Differentiation within the classroom is described by Hall (2002²²) as:

'A process to approach teaching and learning for students of differing abilities in the same class. The intent is to maximize each student's growth and individual success by meeting each student where he or she is . . . rather than expecting students to modify themselves for the curriculum.'

Differentiation is recognised as the key tool for meeting EAL needs in the classroom but it can be difficult to develop, especially in secondary school. As Tomlinson (1999²³) noted:

"For all its promise . . . effective differentiation is complex to use and thus difficult to promote in schools. Moving toward differentiation is a long-term change process" (p. 6).

The project was told that secondary school teachers are often not experienced in teaching and building literacy, and the Welsh Government review of workforce skills in relation to SEN (forthcoming) showed that secondary school teachers' confidence in working with pupils with literacy levels below level 1 was low. EMAS and school staff consulted for this study were clear that skills and confidence in supporting EAL developed through practice, and so was lowest where there are very few pupils that need EAL support, although these are often the settings where it is felt that differentiation should most adequately meet needs.

Both EMAS and school respondents in this study said that teachers often do not know how to differentiate, and that a lot of the work of EMAS staff was around developing the techniques and resources with staff to show them how. However, most respondents did feel that differentiation is not enough at the earliest stage of language acquisition, as one stated 'when children have to learn basics like sounding the alphabet we need very focused extra support to get them reading and writing, and it is a very fine balance to get it right'.

Professional development

Mentoring, and individual support, were seen as key tools in building teacher confidence to use differentiation approaches, and also in demonstrating what those approaches could be. There were a number of examples given of how support from EMAS on differentiation is working, although there were few examples of

²² Hall, T. (2002). *Differentiated instruction* [Online]. Wakefield, MA: CAST. Available: www.cast.org/publications/ncac/ncac_diffinstruc.html

²³ Tomlinson, C. A. (1999). Leadership for differentiated classrooms. *The School Administrator*, 56(9), 6–11.

professional learning communities (PLCs) or peer-to-peer mentoring structures identified.

EMASs tended to talk about the need to take a conciliatory and essentially supportive approach to training in schools and some find it difficult to take a challenge role. All consulted have sought to move from being seen as providers of external and additional support through teaching or learning assistants, to a more overt approach to offering expertise in EAL strategies and research to promote capacity building, and most felt that the status of the work had benefited as a result. However, it was clear that the prioritisation of EAL within a school was still more to do with the interest and commitment of staff than school, county or education policy expectations.

In-class support and additional resources

All EMAS services provide bi-lingual teaching or learning assistants (BTA) but they are used in a variety of ways, from staff that are based in a school on an on-going basis to work with individuals and groups, to other areas where BTAs are only used for home language study for GCSEs and A levels. There are different views about their value, but common agreement that it is increasingly less feasible to provide all pupils who are new to English with a BTA because of the rising numbers of learners with EAL needs, the range of languages spoken and the spread of schools that would need to be covered.

Most EMASs were clear that BTAs were essential, albeit their views varied on the extent of the role they should take, and schools were very appreciative of their input. However, there was a concern from some schools about the way BTAs and specialist teachers are deployed to schools. Because they are managed by the EMAS it can create a tension as the school has no control over:

- *who they get and for how long*, for example one school complained that their specialist EAL teacher was the fifth they had had in two years, and this was a particular issue as it took the children they were working with a long time to build trust in a teacher. There was a related concern that being a BTA brought no job security, so people would move on
- *the training they receive*: EMASs appeared to vary considerably in the training and qualifications they require amongst BTAs. Some have invested a great deal of training in BTAs, whilst others confessed to some concern that they were not always sure about the quality of home language competence or English language skills of some BTAs. Secondary schools were concerned that to be effective a BTA would need a full understanding of the curriculum and subject matter and, in some home language GCSE study, BTAs were providing the bulk of the teaching support
- *accountability*: in one area it was felt that the lack of a 'scheme of work' amongst BTAs and specialist teachers made it hard for schools to discuss or monitor progress
- *job descriptions*: schools said these could be inflexible, for example a BTA may not help with students or pupils that do not speak their language.

The concern about providing BTAs is that, unless their role is clearly identified and defined, it can shift responsibility for making educational provision appropriate for EAL students away from the school to the EMAS. School complaints about the ways that BTAs are deployed suggest that this could further enhance the lack of ownership of support for EAL learners, as it appears to put structural barriers in the way of schools assuming control and learning from the work. There was a common view across schools and EMASs that the MEAG protected support for EAL and that this is important but, as one head said 'I would like to employ our own staff, have the funding devolved, but ring-fenced, like the PDG'.

An additional concern about using BTAs is around avoiding pupils becoming dependent on their support. One head explained 'some Polish children get by without needing to speak English as the BTA and other children help so much'. The need to use BTAs sparingly, and in a targeted manner, was emphasised.

Family support

Work with the families of EAL learners is described a key tool in promoting educational achievement. Fuller (2012²⁴) describes how if headteachers and the school leadership simply deal with pupil diversity by engaging and evaluating data sets on school performance and attainment, the school will not achieve much, as they also have to understand a pupil's relationship with education. The article suggests that schools that pursue more 'people-orientated' values and engage more with staff, families and the community will benefit from better empowerment from these groups. However, developing interventions such as family learning can be difficult since families are likely to be very different, perhaps coming from different cultures, or even different communities within a country. Therefore, such interventions need to be very clear about what support families want and where there is common ground between them (Hope 2011²⁵).

In particular, it can be complicated for native parents to navigate their way through the education system, but for those with poor English language skills and very different cultural expectations it can be extremely difficult (Cobb 2012²⁶).

The EMAS and schools consulted all identified the importance of parental/family support and the problems they face in working with families that speak little or no English. All EMASs consulted were involved in supporting families, sometimes significantly beyond educational engagement. Schools all saw pupils from other cultures as enriching school life, but said that the initial introduction to Welsh school life can be confusing and overwhelming for a child or young person. Even if they

²⁴ Fuller, K. (2012) *Leading with emancipatory intent: headteachers' approaches to pupil diversity*. Educational Management Administration & Leadership 40(6), pp. 672-689.

²⁵ Hope, J. (2011) *New insights into family learning for refugees: bonding, bridging and building transcultural capital*. Literacy 45(2), pp. 91-97.

²⁶ Cobb, C. (2012) *Speed bumps, roadblocks and tollbooths: how culturally and linguistically diverse parents navigate the highways and byways of giftedness in Ontario*. British Journal of Special Education 39(1), pp. 12-20.

have attended school before (and examples were given of pupils arriving aged up to 13 years that had not), customs, behaviour and expectations will be very different. It is not only language support that may be required and those consulted talked about needing sometimes to support pupils through trauma related to past experiences, understanding playground behaviour and school rules, and adapting to new cultural norms.

Schools, in particular, valued contact with community organisations that could link them to parents, and EMAS staff, particularly volunteer and paid bilingual teaching assistants (BTAs), are often involved in a range of activities, from attending school open and parent evenings, helping in lunchtime and after-school clubs, developing social activities in the community for families and providing advocacy support for visits to job centres. Work with Families First, Communities First and other partner bodies was described, including providing training, support with translation and brokering introductions for families.

EAL and school improvement

Effective capacity building in schools was seen as clearly linked to EAL becoming a stronger priority in school improvement policy and practice. With pupils with EAL support needs making up nearly 7 percent of the school population in Wales, and nearly 30 percent in Cardiff, and numbers expected to rise in future (all EMAS and schools consulted expected that numbers of EAL learners would rise in coming years) the need to embed EAL into school improvement planning in a more structured way was seen as important.

There have been significant changes in the Welsh education system to encourage school improvement and attainment over the last few years. These changes, along with current and future funding changes, will inevitably impact on EAL support. As identified above, EAL pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, or who are living in poverty, may benefit from more generic programmes to support achievement amongst pupils that are socio-economically disadvantaged. In 2012/13 the Welsh Government launched the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG). The PDG is a distinct funding stream made available to schools based on the number of pupils eligible for free school meals, or looked after by the Local Authority. This funding has risen year on year and will be £1,050 per pupil in 2015/16. The funding is allocated to schools in order for them to allow learners from these disadvantaged backgrounds to overcome any additional barriers that they may face to achieving good learning outcomes. However, a significant concern raised during this study was that many EAL learners are not registered for free school meals, despite living in poverty. Learner's families may be refugees unable to claim free school meals, low paid workers who either do not know of their eligibility or chose not to take it up (for example, one school talked about Polish families who work but are in very low paid employment and unwilling to register for free school meals) or temporary workers who find it hard to establish their eligibility. As a consequence, schools may find their PDG allocation is lower than it could be.

In 2008 the Welsh Government introduced the Schools Effectiveness Framework, the policy framework through which the Welsh Government has sought to address

the improvement of outcomes in Welsh schools. It outlines the roles of national government, local government and individual learner settings in the task of improving outcomes, and recognised the 2006 PISA²⁷ results as the benchmark for improvement. The multi-tiered model of school improvement recognised in the School Effectiveness Framework was adapted further in the 2014 National Model for Regional Working. This document formalises the role of regional consortia in the management of education, sharing best practice, monitoring outcomes and driving improvement. However, EMAS reported poor or non-existent links with school challenge advisers.

From 2011-2014 the publication of School Banding sought to group schools according to performance whilst mitigating against the incidence of deprivation amongst their pupils. The purpose of School Banding was to “establish priorities for differentiated support and to identify those from whom the sector can learn” (Welsh Government, 2013). The embedding of EAL support practices into the priorities for differentiated support would be an important tool in developing capacity in schools.

Since 2013 the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) has been a statutory obligation for local authorities, and sets out targets and expected basic skills outcomes for learners from age 5 to 15. These targets are designed to influence school management, as well as classroom teaching, and to aide governors in monitoring progress. EMASs all saw the LNF as providing a good focus for EAL, as it has widened a focus on writing across the curriculum and has developed the idea of all teachers being teachers of reading. However, the testing structure for LNF was seen as inflexible (literacy tests can only be taken in English) and as disadvantaging EAL learners. The framework does not allow for measuring sub-level progress, a DFE report (2010)²⁸ on recording progress in reading, writing and maths in years 3-9 identified that EAL pupils make more sub-levels of progress than their peers in class, especially in reading.

In addition to these policy instruments, there have been changes to qualifications frameworks, such as the abolition of externally based assessment of pupils in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, recommended by the Daugherty Committee, and also the implementation of the Foundation Phase curriculum to replace Key Stages 1 and 2. These approaches, particularly that of the Foundation Phase, seek to introduce holistic approaches to primary education that address basic skills of literacy and numeracy alongside play and social development. EMASs were all confident that provision in the Foundation phase was inclusive and effective with EAL learners, since there was a strong focus on language development.

The role of local authorities in Wales is in the process of long term change. Recent moves towards the use of regional consortia have seen a shifting of many of the responsibilities of local education authorities. In particular, the Hill Review (2013) and the National Model for Regional Working have both suggested that regional consortia, working above the local authority level, have a role to play in facilitating the sharing of best practice between good schools and underperforming schools. All

²⁷ Programme for International Student Assessment. OECD

²⁸ DFE 2011. How Pupils Progress in KS2 and 3.

EMAS involved in this study were working collaboratively with neighbouring counties through a variety of structures. The Gwent Education Multi-Ethnic Service (GEMS) approach has one county, Newport, as a lead authority and provides EAL support services across the four other counties of Gwent – Monmouthshire, Torfaen, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent. Denbigh and Conwy also share services. Others may collaborate just on training activities, or may share written resources. However, there are significant variations in the approaches that EMAS take, particularly in the usage and role of bi-lingual teaching or learning support assistants, and a move to consortia working was not always seen as straight forward.

Concurrent with the strengthening of the regional model of four consortia, there have been changes to the monitoring of schools' progress both externally and internally. Estyn has undergone recent changes to its inspection regime, with the introduction of shorter notice periods and more regular follow-up inspections. As noted above, it has also published supplementary guidance on inspecting EAL support in schools. This, it is hoped, will provide a clearer view on the performance of schools to policy makers and to the public. Also, the National Model for Regional Working has encouraged schools and regional consortia to make better use of their own self-evaluation mechanisms. It is intended that data collected through these annual assessments should be made use of in the management of resources in the school and the monitoring of progress. Ensuring the EAL is a key area for data collection and analysis would be an important tool in building capacity in schools for meeting need.

Public finances in Wales have come under pressure since 2010, and this has implications for both the structure and content of a range of policies. It has already been noted that the allocation for MEAG funding has been reduced. However, despite a cut of £1.5 billion in the year 2014/15, the Welsh Government has maintained much of its commitments to ongoing educational interventions and policies, such as Schools Challenge Cymru, and has increased the funding available to schools through the Pupil Deprivation Grant (Welsh Government 2014). Ensuring the profile of EAL within these priority policy areas is, therefore, important.

Targeting work

The equalities and inclusion agendas central to education in Wales put EAL support into whole school improvement approaches. However, there are specific issues relating to progress through education that schools and EMASs focused on as particularly important.

Pupils who are new to English and to Welsh school life need help to introduce them to what happens in school, and to access the curriculum. As noted above, the provision of bi-lingual language teaching assistants (BTA) for pupils with no or little English is seen by most (but not all) EMASs as helpful, but increasingly unfeasible. The number of different languages being spoken, and numbers and spread of pupils, means that it is not possible to every pupil new to English to have access to a BTA. Involving other pupils in providing help through a 'buddying' process, involving volunteers from the community and/or providing translations are all processes being used in schools.

However, targeting resources at pupils with no English is not enough. There was a concern from schools, in particular, that a lot of resources are focused on pupils who are new to English (particularly in the provision of BTA support) but that moving pupils who are at Stages C and D on to fluency at an academic level is crucial. Schools reported that there is little support for pupils at top C level, and nothing for those at Stage D, but that pupils at Stage C cannot get a GCSE in English, especially since the marking regime has put greater emphasis on spelling and grammar. The point was made that sometimes pupils that are second and third generation British, but who only use English in school, may actually not progress beyond Stage C because their language needs are not assessed. Many EMASs are involved in after school, homework and breakfast clubs to promote more extensive development of language.

Transitions points, whether through key stages or between education providers, are important for EAL learners. Schools identified the value of EMAS staff coming to cluster transition meetings, and of them working across key stages, so they can work with a pupil as they progress from primary to secondary school in both settings. In its 2009 report on EAL learning for 16-19 year olds Estyn reported that research by the Ethnic Minority Language and Achievement Service found all learners experience a dip in their English language skills level when transferring between levels of study²⁹. Language acquisition is not a linear process, especially when the acquired language is not being used outside school, and the need to continually reassess and plan for supporting language skills, even when a learner has good social English, was emphasised by EMAS.

A number of those consulted stated that if interventions are to be measured purely in terms of achievement against standards set for native peers, there is a disincentive to working with pupils who arrive in years 9 or above. Indeed, some felt that, given the time needed to achieve academic competence in a language, any new learners entering the system at secondary school would not be able to achieve at the required level. This creates a disincentive to schools to admit non-English speakers into the mainstream curriculum, and a perverse incentive to identify EAL learners as having special educational needs. There is a concern that EAL pupils are too frequently identified as having an SEN, when their problems are linguistic rather than cognitive. They may also be placed in lower sets than they should be because schools are unable to clearly assess their ability. For example, one school described how pupils coming into the school from other countries can have better maths skills than native peers, but because maths papers have become increasingly language dense, they are unable to work alongside higher set peers.

The difficulty of identifying and assessing SEN amongst EAL learners was raised in most areas. As noted above, SEN specialist services rarely have the knowledge or tools to assess accurately where the pupils do not speak English. Literacy levels

²⁹ Providing the Needs of Pupils from Ethnic Minority Backgrounds Studying in Sixth Forms within LEA Maintained Schools, J.L. Martin MA.Ed, April 2008

may provide little insight into cognitive skills and a NALDIC report (Cline and Shamsi, 2000³⁰) identified the importance of approaching assessments holistically:

Literacy is intimately bound up not only with our language knowledge but also with our feelings about our languages and about the social group with which they are associated.
(Ibid: 2)

For example, one school described how they identify where a pupil has a problem and just explain their observations to an educational psychologist and agree strategies, without the pupil being directly assessed. The EMAS in Cardiff have dedicated educational psychology hours linked to their service, which enables the development of specific expertise. In one area there had recently been a high number of referrals to visual and hearing impairment services from EAL learners. Most EMASs did not work with special schools and there was little knowledge about how pupils with SEN and EAL needs were supported.

More able and talented: all EMAS and some schools identified examples of exceptionally bright pupils whose only problems are to do with language. The fact that the ALNCo or SENCo is often also the EAL coordinator in a school can provide an SEN association in the school, masking the need to assess cognitive as well as language and communication ability.

Data and the ‘virtual headteacher’

A number of the EMASs described having a form of ‘virtual headteacher’ role, whereby they collate (or even collect) data on the progress of pupils with an EAL need in the county, monitoring achievement. The data are used to inform contact with schools, or teachers, to promote progress, providing the opportunity to suggest new strategies or introduce new resources. The extent to which this role functions as support or challenge varies, for example the EMAS in the Vale of Glamorgan describes its primary role as working to develop the school’s ambition for the child, challenging achievement rather than offering to help with the provision made for the child, whereas in other areas data are used to help fine tune interventions.

The use of data and benchmarking structures can help in the identification of SEN. In Swansea, for example, a simple graph mapping progress is used to help to identify where a pupil is not developing language skills at an expected rate and flag up the need to undertake a more thorough assessment of progress and contributory factors.

The data collation and analysis approach used by EMASs provides a structure within which, in some counties, an individual pupil centred approach has been developed. Some of the EMASs know every child with an EAL need in the county, at least by name, and staff are likely to know aspects of their backgrounds and support needs. In some cases by bridging home and school life EMAS staff have been able to

³⁰ Cline, T and Shamsi, T 2000. Language needs or special needs? The assessment of learning difficulties in literacy among children learning English as an additional language: a literature review. 2000 DFEE

identify safeguarding or support issues that may be missed in school. This level of knowledge of pupils is not possible where there are larger populations of pupils with EAL needs, but the collection and analysis of data on progress provides a valuable tool in placing EAL within the school improvement context, as EMAS are able to provide detailed updates on progress and benchmark school EAL outcomes against others in the county.

4. Analysis

All of the EMAS consulted agreed that there is a need to develop capacity for schools to support pupils with EAL needs. In part this was seen as a recognition of increasing numbers of pupils with EAL needs, and also of the increasing complexity of meeting their needs. The numbers of different languages spoken by pupils, the range of previous education experience and the variety of entry points into the Welsh education system combine to make the delivery of EAL support by a central service non-viable. As one EMAS staff member explained:

'We cannot be about service delivery with the numbers now coming in. Schools became too dependent on us, and now all schools have to address how to provide EAL support'

There is plenty of guidance and research on how this is done. It involves whole school commitment, a focus on achievement and school improvement, flexibility and creativity in using the curriculum and accreditation models, confidence in using differentiation approaches and effective resources. How to develop this approach to EAL across Wales, however, is more complex. A school based approach may focus on a department (in a secondary school), or one or more teachers, identified within the school. The specialist teacher will work alongside these, helping them develop tools and techniques, resources and confidence with a focus on helping the school rather than individual pupils. However, both the literature and discussions with EMASs provide mixed evidence on whether this leads to a whole school approach, and even where they take this capacity building approach EMASs also continue to provide some support for individual pupils, usually through a BTA or TA.

There was no standardised approach to capacity building, other than through the provision of training, but most EMAS feel that there will continue to be a need for specialist support, through teaching assistants and specialist teachers, for those pupils with greatest need at key stages 1 and above. Schools, and especially secondary schools, said that there is a need for translation support for a period to stop pupils falling behind their peers, or being placed in lower sets, purely because of their linguistic disadvantage, especially as the Welsh education system is based on chronological age, rather than ability. However, the increasing numbers and range of needs make it unrealistic to expect to be able to offer everyone a bi-lingual teaching assistant, so schools have to develop the capacity to meet the needs themselves. As one respondent said *'having help in class does not change the teacher's approach – training for differentiation is the key. There is an assumption that everyone knows how to do it, but they don't.'*

The extent to which schools may need external or additional support with EAL was seen as being a matter of scale. Schools all over Wales have EAL pupils but numbers can vary from 70%+ of the school roll, to single, isolated learners. Faith schools often have higher numbers. As one headteacher explained:

'with one or two children, you may need advice and some guidance; with a few more you need a term of support and

help to get them ready; at 70% you need extra help and time to get them reading, help them acclimatise to their new environment and to understand what is happening’.

As this quotation illustrates, the issue of numbers is one of time to provide individual support and support to help pupils make the transition into the school environment. A teacher may know what to do, but simply not have the time needed to develop language skills whilst not disadvantaging others in the class. The scope for ‘buddying’, with pupils helping each other, also diminishes as the proportion of new to English pupils grows.

Nevertheless, EMASs were clear that improving provision for pupils with EAL needs helps pupils across the board to develop their language skills. A study in England using their National Pupil Database found that, after controlling for demographic characteristics of schools, there was no evidence that having a large number of EAL students in class disadvantages native peers (Geay et al 2012³¹), and it appears to provide a slight advantage in maths achievement. Visual resources, for example, can be useful for all learners developing their English skills.

The staged approach to language acquisition

The staged system for recording language acquisition is generally felt to be effective, although schools talked about using up to 16 sub-groupings within a stage. However, its disassociation from other standard testing procedures schools must use was seen as preventing it becoming embedded into school planning procedures. Also, the expectation of a uniform progression rate through the stages was seen as a blunt instrument that did not allow for circumstances. Finally, there is a concern that insufficient attention is paid to language acquisition needs from stage C (or even B).

The policy context

The need to balance inclusion and achievement was seen as important. All interviewees stressed the importance of focusing on achievement, and of measuring progress against benchmarks. However, the need to enable older EAL learners to achieve academic successes, despite the time it may take to gain the language skills necessary, underpins the growing numbers of pupils sitting own language GCSEs, and has led to calls for a greater use of a range of qualifications including international GCSE and BTEC.

The LNF is seen as a strength in capacity building as it focuses on language, but a weakness as language acquisition can impact on pupil’s scores. An OECD report (2010) found that factors that impact on improved education outcomes include participation in early childhood education and childcare, early home reading activities, more hours dedicated to learning language in school, education resources

³¹ Geay C, McNally, S and Telhaj, S (2012) Non-Native Speakers Of English In The Classroom: What are the Effects on Pupil performance. Nuffield Foundation

at home, a more advantaged school average socio-economic profile and school accountability measures. All of these factors impact on literacy.

In 2013-2014 half of the Welsh local authorities contributed funding towards EAL support alongside the MEAG funding. Contributions ranged from £360,000 to just over £1,000, and totalled slightly over one million pounds. However, EMASs saw this funding as vulnerable. In some areas it is under threat and in others the decision has been taken to withdraw it. Providing support to EAL learners was described as not a politically attractive issue locally. In addition, the successes of some services in closing, or even reversing the achievement gap between EAL and native pupils was creating its own dangers, with people asking if EAL pupils are doing well, why should support be provided? Although it is counter-intuitive to remove support that is working, in times of austerity the prioritisation of funding around perceived greatest need means that EAL support is vulnerable.

Whole-school approaches

EMASs report that schools rarely prioritise EAL support, even where they have large numbers of EAL pupils. They may rely on outside help from EMAS, or may treat an EAL student as SEN, so sidelining the problem. The difficulty experienced by most EMAS (and highlighted in the MELAP evaluation) of encouraging schools to attend training, even where cover costs are provided, illustrates a low priority for EAL.

Capacity building strategies require EAL support to be seen as a school improvement issue, with commitment from the senior management team to make it a whole school approach. It is important to have a named member of staff (preferably in the senior management team) with responsibility for EAL and minority ethnic support work, who can raise the profile in a school. However, this person should have a strategic and monitoring role that does not take responsibility away from individual teachers to meet their pupils' needs.

EAL is incorporated into additional learning needs, and many EAL coordinators are also ALNCo or SENCos. This has led to some concerns about how EAL is viewed in schools, and the danger that language and communication difficulties can be too easily dismissed, or at least addressed, as SEN. This works against capacity building in schools. As one EMAS stated '*EAL needs recognition from senior leadership, and in the pastoral teams, that these are our pupils; we cannot just slot them in if EAL is not in the development plan*'.

Estyn's guidance on inspections for EAL was valued because it helps place EAL in mainstream school improvement, but there was concern that all inspectors do not have the knowledge to recognise good practice, and some examples of poor practice being praised were identified.

EMASs and schools identified their indicators of success in capacity building as being:

- staff confidence in supporting new arrivals
- staff confidence with differentiation

- fewer panic calls to EMAS for support
- improved results at KS3 and 4
- schools actively getting involved in procedures and monitoring – coming to EMAS with completed forms and actively engaged, as opposed to having to be encouraged to get involved.

Teaching capacity

Although it may not be feasible to expect teachers to cover all aspects of additional needs in their initial teacher training, there does seem to be an issue around differentiation, and confidence in using mixed and multiple approaches which suggests that if more work on this could be done in initial teacher training it would benefit all learners, including those with EAL needs.

Training and mentoring, especially around differentiation, are seen as the most important processes in building capacity. Resources on their own were described as being of little value, people talked about valuable tools that are left on the shelf or forgotten about until needed, and then no one can find them. There are easily accessible resources available on the internet (such as the British Council's Nexus site) but most EMAS have worked with schools to develop bespoke resources, and the key benefit is seen to be in the work done to build the teacher's understanding and use of those resources. However, there is a weakness in the transferability of such resources within and between schools, and between different counties.

Using data

There is clear evidence that monitoring and evaluation works. Where EMAS are monitoring EAL pupils they are able to use data effectively to identify where additional support may be needed, and to help identify where there may be a SEN. This can support pupil centred working practices as it focuses attention on individual achievement. Data analysis allows for targeted work, for example one EMAS identified that while the level 2 threshold achievement levels were improving, they were not for the Polish pupils in the county. Schools and EMASs can use this kind of data to inform new approaches, trying something different to reach those whose needs are, as shown in the data, not currently being met.

Collaboration and learning

Consortium working is developing but there is still limited cooperation across EMASs, and most counties are working separately or with limited cross county collaboration. EMASs are very proud of the work that they do and the expertise that has built up, with the consequence that they do not look at the prospects of merging with others always positively. The key differences between EMASs are on the use and role of BTAs and TAs; on the perceived importance of be-spoke or standardised resources; and on the level of monitoring and challenge they feel able to do.

There is little overlap or linkage between Welsh as an additional language (WAL) and EAL services, although some EMASs were starting to develop links. Outside of

areas where WAL is well developed there appears to be little support provided to Welsh medium schools. This has the disadvantage of limiting the sharing of good practice between WAL and EAL services, and can disadvantage EAL in areas where WAL has a higher profile.

Similarly, there is little EMAS support provided to special schools.

5. Conclusions

What is good for EAL pupils is good for all pupils

Supporting EAL has to be seen as a permanent role that schools undertake, not a reactive response to waves of migration. All EMASs and schools involved in this study expect that migration will continue, and with learners from ethnic minority groups making up ten percent of all pupils in Wales, and seven percent needing EAL support, their needs are mainstream.

In building capacity for EAL support in schools there is a need to place in within the broader school improvement context. This would involve clearly mapping EAL interventions, data collection and progress against core school improvement measures including the LNF; differentiation in the classroom and the use of more variety in methods of teaching and use of resources; the PDG and its outcome measures; and school development plans.

There needs to be a stronger focus in initial teacher training on differentiation and person centred planning. Although not an EAL specific issue, such a development would go a long way to developing capacity for meeting EAL needs in schools.

Many EAL pupils are also affected by poverty and may have similar problems to other socio-economically disadvantaged peers, such as parents with low levels of education, lack of access to books (in English or home language), lack of quiet space for reading and homework, and low family expectations and aspirations for education. In this context the OECD report (2010) recommends more language-centric policies, and ensuring better access to policies targeting socio-economic disadvantage. A study on poverty and ethnicity in Wales (JRF 2013) identified that all parents see education as a route out of poverty but awareness of how qualifications work, the needs of the local and wider labour market and the role that home and community play in enhancing learning may be low.

Protect and develop the achievement focus of EAL

The policy link between EAL and school improvement needs to be strengthened in order for EAL to become core to school development. There is a need to build stronger links to challenge advisers and ensure that the data held on EAL pupils is robust and can inform development work in schools. Such an approach would, hopefully, help to ensure commitment from senior management teams to EAL support work within schools.

A focus in transition support, and especially on post-16 transition, is important to prevent, and address, relapses in language acquisition.

Estyn needs to recruit trained specialists in EAL that can assist in inspections

Data interrogation and person-centred planning

The 'virtual headteacher' role played by some of the EMASs should be explored and developed, as a process for school improvement. This role was described as a combination of the school challenge adviser's data interrogation role, the active parent's quality management role, and the specialist teacher's mentoring and development role. The fact that data on EAL pupils is being monitored is likely, of itself, to have a beneficial impact. That it is analysed and stimulates challenge and/or helpful suggestions of ways to improve achievement, is very useful. Such a role means that where schools and teachers are meeting needs successfully, resources are not expended on adding unnecessary layers of work, but where there are clear gaps or unexplained lapses; these can be quickly identified and addressed.

Data interrogation can underpin effective person centred planning. There is a focus across education in developing approaches to person centred planning. In relation to SEN, Individual Development Plans are being introduced that provide a holistic assessment of needs and an agreed set of interventions, regularly update, to address needs. Adopting an IDP model for EAL learners could provide a useful framework for setting individual targets, through a structure schools will be using for other pupils. The danger would be that it further consolidates the view of EAL pupils as having a SEN, although the model was developed for the wider ALN group of learners.

A person centred approach can help to mitigate the difficulties faced by different settings, from those supporting isolated learners to large groupings of learners.

Family and community and other extra-school links

There is a strong recognition that EAL support cannot only happen within school. The need to promote and support activities outside school, or outside the curriculum within schools, which develop language skills is crucial. For example, one school of the schools visited involves the BTA in a lunchtime computer game club, and encourages EAL and non-EAL pupils that share an interest in the game to work together. Community based work, for example an evening club run by Communities First in Cardiff which brings university students, school pupils and community workers together to work on homework, can be effective in developing language skills; and work with families can help develop understanding of the school system and how to support their children.

Some EMAS have run INSET session for support bodies like Flying Start, Speech and Language Therapy services and have also had an input into initial teacher training, and with colleges and work placements. This focus on building awareness and capacity outside school is vital.

Build on what works

The closing of the attainment gap in relation to EAL learners demonstrates that support is working, although the variations in outcomes may point to particular strengths. EMASs across Wales employ some highly skilled, qualified and

experienced people, who understand EAL needs. In order for this expertise to be capitalised on, EMASs need to work more closely together, to be less defensive of their approaches and tools, and more open to challenge and development, working with each other so that what is best about each area of work is built on. This does not necessarily mean adopting common practices, especially where practices have been developed to tackle specific needs, such as particularly large numbers of EAL learners, but it should mean that clear principles on how support for EAL should be shaped at a school, county and consortium level can be set out. The danger is that without them taking this step, these principles will be decided for them.