

PART 2: QUESTIONS FOR CONSULTATION

The Department of Education and Skills is drafting a Foreign Languages in Education Strategy. The views of stakeholders are being sought to inform the development of this Strategy. Outlined below are a number of key questions. You are invited to provide your feedback on each question. There is also a space at the end of this template for any other more general comments you may wish to make that are relevant to the issue of foreign languages in education. It would be important to note that the submissions received will be available for general distribution.

Name of respondent: Dr. Angela Leahy

Please see suggestions for **Section 3** below.

Organisation, if any, whose views are being represented:

Email address:

1. Raising Awareness

What measures should be undertaken to promote awareness, at national, community, enterprise and individual level, of the importance of language learning and to increase interest in and motivation for foreign language learning?

2. Supporting migrant languages in educational settings

How can we encourage our migrant children to become proficient in the language of their adopted community, while at the same time maintaining oral, written and cognitive academic language proficiency in their own mother tongue?

3. Learning and Teaching

How can foreign language learning be supported for students from post-primary educational settings and thereafter? You may wish to concentrate on one educational sector.

A proposal to address the following concerns in particular

[...] fewer students than in the past are now choosing to study two foreign languages, and in some schools it is not possible to do so. There is also a worrying tendency for some students not to take any foreign language at all. There is a need to raise the awareness of parents, guidance counsellors, school principals and students themselves of the importance of languages, including foreign languages, as a life skill for all, and not just for those with a particular aptitude for languages (Framework for Consultation on a Foreign Languages in Education Strategy for Ireland, August 2014, p.8)

is outlined below:

For a variety of understandable reasons, languages (including the first language e.g. English or Irish) are often regarded as separate entities, or as separate school subjects, in educational contexts. As of consequence of this, opportunities to

- 1) explore interesting and relevant links *across languages*
 - 2) demystify the notion of language learning
 - 3) examine broader issues relating to Language
- can be missed.

The potential to develop an approach to language learning, as well as to literacy, whereby investment in the learning of one language (including the first language) can support and inform the learning of another, can also remain untapped.

It would therefore be useful to consider the introduction of *Language and Linguistics* as a *discrete subject/course* at post-primary level, potentially in First Year or Transition Year. This subject/course would not relate to any one language in particular but would introduce students to key concepts in the general area of *Language* (including Language Learning) and enable them to gain an understanding of a range of relevant concepts and themes. These could, for example include: how their own language(s) work(s), how languages have changed through the ages, how and why languages are similar to/ different from each other, how languages become endangered, what translation involves, how interpreters are trained, how subtitlers work, how dictionary entries are selected etc. There is significant scope in a subject/course of this type to engage students in inductive and deductive learning and to set projects which allow students to carry out both primary and secondary research. Projects could, for example, allow students to observe specific trends relating to languages nationally or internationally, explore features across cognate languages or document regional or generational differences in how a language is used.

The subject/course could also provide learners with the opportunity to learn more about the cognitive, social, professional and societal-level advantages associated with language proficiency and bi-/multilingualism.

Such a subject/course also has the potential to make a contribution towards addressing issues around literacy in the first language of learners. It could, for example, explore such concepts as language awareness, word formation, etymology and register.

By providing students with a structured programme for learning about languages(s), such a subject/course could help foster greater interest in language(s) amongst second level students. It has the potential to increase confidence and motivation amongst students who do not tend to perceive themselves as strong language learners. At the same time, it could serve as a form of endorsement and further encouragement for successful language students who are already positively disposed towards languages and for students from a migrant background who often bring valuable linguistic resources to the classroom.

4. Teacher Education

How can we ensure an adequate and ongoing supply of highly-skilled, professional teachers/trainers of foreign language at all educational levels to meet ongoing and emerging needs?

5. Assessment and Qualifications

How can enhanced flexibility, choice and continuity in foreign language learning programmes, their assessment and accreditation be provided, particularly at Further and Higher Education?

6. Assuring Quality

What measures should be in place to support quality assurance measures, evaluation processes and research projects and to provide a knowledge and evidence base for policy making in the area of foreign languages?

7. Supporting Multilingualism in Business and Society

How can we promote a multilingual society and support service providers, both public and private, in meeting emerging needs?

a) What role can the education system play?

b) What role can employers play in enhancing the linguistic skills of their employees, particularly their Irish employees?

8. Other Comments

Please add any other comments you may have below that you believe are relevant to the development of the Strategy.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this template. Your feedback will help to inform the development of the Foreign Languages in Education Strategy

Please email this template to foreignlanguages@education.gov.ie , or post it to: Tim O’Keeffe, Department of Education and Skills, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1