2 National Curriculum Reforms and Their Impact on Indigenous and Minority Languages: The Sami in Norway and Welsh in Wales in Comparative Perspective

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A comparative perspective on the manner in which national curriculum reform has impacted on both the Sami language and the Welsh language reveals some fundamental similarities regarding the role of parental pressure, national ideology, political empowerment, infrastructure development and legislation. Notwithstanding the significant differences in scale, context, demography and institutionalisation, both case studies point to the centrality of formal education and curriculum reform in stimulating language revitalisation efforts. However, questions are raised as to the implication such reforms have on the preponderance of L1 and/or L2 students with indigenous/minority background within the systems and on the degree to which minority languages are used within various socio-economic domains.

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to compare two contrasting approaches to curriculum reform in favour of promoting indigenous languages in Norway and Wales. In the case of Sami, we will discuss the impact of five national curriculum reforms in Norway on the role played by the Sami in education since the 1930s, together with significant pieces of legislation that have changed the status of Sami speakers. In the case of Welsh, we
will track the successive means by which both curriculum developments and wider sociolegal reforms have given a more prominent role to the acquisition of Welsh language skills, but we also query to what extent such skills are being used within national life.

If we confine our attention to indigenous minority languages in northwest Europe, the Sami and Welsh represent opposite ends of a continuum in terms of revitalisation efforts. While the Norwegian state was relatively slow in recognising the needs of the Sami people in the late 1980s (Keskitalo, 1997), the UK allowed the establishment of Welsh-medium primary schools in the 1950s, together with a handful of secondary schools in the 1960s. While the Sami people had a rich and vibrant oral culture, the Welsh have had a written tradition of poetry and religious writing since the 7th century AD. In addition, the Sami were few in number but occupied a vast area covering northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, while the Welsh were relatively numerous occupying a distinct historically defined territory in the west of Britain. While the Sami’s existence and economy comprised reindeer and sheep herding, coastal fishing and fur trapping (Karlstad, 1997), with little inward migration, the Welsh were among the first in the world to experience industrialisation, with consequent huge developments in iron and steel making, coal production, slate quarrying, ship building, tinplate working and port development. Allied to this was a substantial increase in the migration of workers and their families from the rest of the UK and Europe, particularly during the period 1851–1911. This had a real impact on the linguistic, religious and sociocultural character of the increasingly anglicised Welsh population. Social and physical communication networks tied the Welsh inexorably into the burgeoning British state and beyond, while the Sami remained relatively marginal to political developments in Nordic countries.

It is evident then that the scale, context and the conditions of possibility for language revitalisation were very different in Norway and Wales. The intriguing question is: are there any similarities in the impact of curriculum reform and educational development on the vitality of both languages? This would entail interpreting the relative impact of first language (L1) and second language (L2) speakers on the total mass of speakers and evaluating the net contribution of bilingual education to the process of language acquisition in both contexts.

Underlying both case studies is a conscious parental and political edge to developments in education, including the establishment of units, schools, curriculum development, the production of teaching resources in the target language and teacher training more generally. Undoubtedly the most significant pressure for reform has stemmed from parental demands and the lobbying of local and national political representatives by social actors and professional bodies, as analysed by Jones (2013) and Thomas and Williams (2013).
In Norway, all the Sami political parties and Sami associations have consistently advocated for stronger language rights and comprehensive educational reforms. The most notable actor is the Norwegian Sami Association, also known as NSR, founded in 1968. Since its establishment in 1989, the Sami Parliament has also played a leading role and currently has the majority of seats. In Wales, both ideological and pragmatic arguments for the promotion of education as a means of sustaining threatened languages have been propounded by protest groups and nationalist political movements and parties, namely the Welsh Language Society (Philips, 1988) and Plaid Cymru (McAllister, 2001). While we do not detail these parental and political actions, we do acknowledge their salience in prompting the state or local states to make some provision for the education of the respective student populations. Indeed, next to the family and local community, statutory education is the major instrument by which language transmission is achieved and, in the medium-term future, may become the single most important element in language revitalisation.

Consequently, it is hugely significant not only to track developments in this domain but also to ask searching questions as to how effective formal education is in achieving the aims and goals of policy planners and social actors alike.

National Curriculum Reforms and Their Impact on the Availability of Indigenous Sami Teaching for 6–16-Year-Old Students

In relation to compulsory education and the expansion of Sami people’s educational rights, Norway has experienced five periods of curriculum reform in the past 80 years. They are summarised in Table 2.1 and we will comment in turn on the impact that each of these reforms has had as revealed by an examination of national curriculum documents.

**Table 2.1 The development of Norwegian national curriculum reform**

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Gjerpe (2017); Özerk (2006a)
The national curriculum of 1939 (NC-39)

In 1922, Norway introduced a 7-year programme of comprehensive elementary schooling free of charge for all 7–14-year-old children. In the absence of a national curriculum, the educational principles and priorities were determined by central educational authorities who communicated their policies through a variety of statutory obligations, laws, directives and regulations.

A new national curriculum (NC-39) was introduced in 1939. NC-39 presented two principles. The first was about establishing national minimum standards in main school subjects. This specified the minimum standards laid down for the skills and subject knowledge that all children in different grades should achieve. In addition to this conventional educational approach, NC-39 also presented a progressive approach to teaching and learning under the name of ‘arbeidsskoleprinsippet’ – the ‘principle of learning through working/doing’ – was inspired both by the German educationist Kerchesteiner and the American educationist John Dewey (Özerk, 2006b: 41).

Underlying the introduction of these educational principles and the interest in building a contemporary educational system, there was a commitment to nation building, seen as a core agenda of the central political authorities. The nation building ideology gave little thought, let alone prominence, to the Sami people and their languages in NC-39. In fact, NC-39 was a major plank of the nationalistic, monocultural and monolingual Norwegian-oriented assimilatory policy toward its indigenous people. With regard to the language of the Sami children, NC-39 functioned as an instrument for inducing subtractive bilingualism (Lambert, 1995; Özerk, 2016).

This policy of subtractive bilingualism formulated NC-39 in such a way that there was no place for mother tongue instruction in Sami as L1. The practice of exposing children to L2 schooling only, without any corresponding allowance for instruction in and through the mother tongue, normally results in sealing the hegemony of the indigenous peoples’ L2 as the dominant language of the host society replaces the L1 (Özerk, 2016).

NC-39 and its policy toward the education of Sami children continued until the 1960s and 1970s. After some structural changes in the educational system, a nine-year compulsory education programme was introduced in 1969. This required a review of the national curriculum which, after 35 years of operation, saw the introduction of a new national curriculum in 1974 (Özerk, 2016).

In NC-74, the central authorities modified their monolingual and assimilatory policy and gave Sami children an opportunity to receive a few hours teaching of Sami language each week. However, the pedagogic aims did not change, as subtractive bilingualism remained the dominant ideological and methodological modus vivendi (Özerk, 2016).
Changing conditions in the world and in the country necessitated a new curriculum reform in the second half of the 1980s. Thus, 1987 saw the introduction of NC-87, after 13 years of implementing a curriculum that had outrun its course and was now facing fresh challenges and developments in the infrastructural capacity of the Sami people and organisations with their cultural values and awareness (Gaski, 1997). Chief of these was the establishment, in 1973–1975, of the Nordic Sami Institute (NSI) in Guovdegeaidnu, the largest municipality in the core area of Sápmi (Karlstad, 1997).

The NSI has become a thriving research institute with its principal focus on the Sami together with investigations into the social, economic and cultural aspects of Sami indigenous life. The NSI is financed by the Nordic Council together with the governments of Norway, Sweden and Finland. During the early 1970s, several amendments were made to school legislation and Sami parents were given the right to demand language teaching in Sami for their children – regardless of whether or not they used their own language in daily life. This milestone empowered Sami parents and initiated a sustained period of articulating educational, social and political demands in a wider sociolegal context (Özerk, 2016).

The event had a tremendous impact on the NC-87 reform and drew strength from the so-called ‘Sami movement’ and the ‘Alta affair’. In 1980, the Norwegian Government decided to construct a hydroelectric power station on the Alta-Kautokeino watercourse in the core area where the majority of the Sami people live, known as Sápmi. It was feared that construction of the planned hydroelectric power station would damage a beautiful natural setting and affect the livelihood and way of life of many reindeer holders. The Sami people organised huge anti-construction action. Physical attempts at stopping commencement of the construction works were supported by many more Sami activists. Several groups organised hunger strikes and mass demonstrations. This organised act of collective resistance by the Sami people, known as the ‘Alta affair’, had a significant impact on Norwegian popular opinion, their representatives and on the political establishment in general. While the Sami people failed in their attempt to stop construction of the power station, they did succeed in putting Sami issues firmly on the Norwegian social agenda. The action managed to generate formidable attention in and from mass media (Solbakk, 1997; Özerk, 2009).

Following the Alta affair in 1980, the state authorities started to cooperate with representatives of the Sami people. They initiated some serious committee initiatives with the aim of defining the status and rights of the Sami people. At the same time, Norwegian officials initiated attempts that sought to displace the dominant assimilation policy in different sectors in society by a more sympathetic ideology and framework that could be defended in a democratic and morally just manner (Özerk, 2016).
As a result of these societal and political reorientations, for the first time in Norwegian history, a committee composed of only Sami educational representatives was appointed by the central authorities to work out NC-87. Four chapters in NC-87 were devoted to the education of Sami children. A considerable part of NC-87 was also translated into Sami. Two of the chapters were devoted to the development of a subject curriculum for the teaching of Sami as a first language and the introduction of a subject curriculum for the teaching of Norwegian as a second language for Sami children. In addition to these chapters and new perspectives, NC-87 presented ‘functional bilingualism’ as the main aim for the language development of Sami children.

The impact of NC-87 on revitalisation of the Sami language

All these changes signalled that the Norwegian authorities were altering their assimilatory and subtractive bilingualism policy. Equality, equity, language revitalisation and additive bilingualism were now the main pillars for the education of Sami children. Additive bilingualism describes a form of language development in which second language learning does not happen at the expense of the first language (Huss, 1999; Lambert, 1995; Özerk, 2016).

Amendments in the Norwegian constitution and the establishment of the Sami Parliament

During the implementation of NC-87, several significant changes improved the status of the Sami people. A more positive approach by the Norwegian authorities in the 1980s and in the beginning of 1990s culminated in Norway’s ratification of ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in 1991, which recognised the Sami people as an indigenous people in Norway. This was actioned through Sami Law No. 56, passed by the Norwegian Parliament in 1987. The law established the Samediggi (the Sami Parliament), composed of 39 seats elected by all the Sami people throughout the country. A year later, the Norwegian Parliament amended the constitution by adding ‘the Sami paragraph’, which states ‘It is the State’s responsibility to provide the conditions necessary for the Sami people to be able to safeguard and develop their language, culture and livelihood’ (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2020: §108, translation by Özerk).

In 1989, the first Sami Parliament was elected as a consultative parliament considering Sami-related issues. The Norwegian Parliament passed the Sami Language Act in 1990, which had the practical effect of establishing both Norwegian and Sami as official languages. Further developments occurred on 1 January 1992, when several municipalities were defined as part of the ‘Sami language administration area’ (SLAA). Sami
children who live in these municipalities and have Sami as their first language/mother tongue (L1) receive compulsory L1 Sami teaching. Also in 1989, Sami University of Applied Sciences was established in one of the core areas of Sápmi, in the municipality of Guovdegeaidnu/Kautokeino. Training Sami teachers for kindergartens and schools was given priority in the first period and the university later expanded its programmes (Keskitalo, 1997).

The national curriculum reform of 1997 (NC-97 and NC-97-S)
The Norwegian Government initiated a new curriculum reform in 1997 (NC-97). With increased devolution of power and responsibility, it was now the Sami Parliament, in consultation with its electorate, who would fashion the new curriculum in close collaboration with the central authorities. Accordingly, a 10-year programme of compulsory education for 6–16-year-old students was instituted and two curriculum documents of equal value were introduced: the national curriculum of 1997 (NC-97) and the national curriculum document for Sami education (NC-97-S).

These two official curriculum documents established an additive bilingual strategy as the guiding principle of a new multicultural and indigenous-rights-oriented language policy in education. The NC-97 reform upheld the principle of ‘functional bilingualism’ as the aim of Sami children’s language development (Özerk, 2016).

In the period when NC-97-S was applied (from school years 1997/1998 to 2005/2006), the number of children who enrolled in Sami L1, Sami L2 and Sami Language and Culture classes increased from 1955 to 3055 (Sami allaskuvla, 2011; Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2008; Todal, 2011). These numbers show that the NC-97 reform, together with its associated NC-97 and NC-97-S documents, had a significant impact on the interest for and recruitment to Sami teaching. NC-97 curriculum documents were used until the school year 2006/2007.

The curriculum documents of 2006 (NC-06 and NC-06-S)
In 2004, the Norwegian Government initiated a broad process to introduce a new curriculum reform under the name ‘Knowledge Promotion’. Again, the Sami people were empowered to draft their own curriculum document ‘Sami Knowledge Promotion (NC-06-S)’. Several experienced Sami teachers and educationalists were appointed and participated in the curriculum making process, which took 2 years. For the first time in Norwegian history, a national curriculum now covered both basic education and secondary schools, ranging over a 13-year period of schooling (covering pupils aged 6–19 years). NC-06 and NC-06-S were introduced in the school year 2006/2007. This was a multicultural, multilingual, equity and indigenous-rights-oriented reform (Gjerpe, 2017;
Özerk, 2016). At the same time, the new curriculum reform continued to stress the importance of developing functional bilingualism among children from a Sami background. NC-06-S kept:

(1) Sami as first language and
(2) Sami as second language.

However, the 2006 curriculum document abolished the subject Sami Language and Culture. As a result of the disappearance of this subject in NC-06-S, the number of children who enrolled in Sami classes decreased from 3055 in the school year 2005/2006 to 2116 in the school year 2014/2015. In other words, during this period, 939 fewer children received Sami teaching (Sami allaskuvla, 2016; Todal, 2011, 2013).

Individual rights to receive Sami teaching and distance education

Starting from the school year 2006/2007, neither of the two curriculum documents (NC-06 and NC-06-S) contained the school subject Sami Language and Culture. The decline in the number of children receiving any teaching of Sami was mainly the result of abolishing this subject. However, there were also two other causes that partially explain the decline.

Firstly, several Sami families moved out of the SLAA and into other municipalities where there was a shortage of Sami teachers. The right to receive L1 or L2 Sami teaching thus could not be met. Secondly, in 1992, Sami children gained the right to receive Sami teaching as L1 or L2 outside the SLAA. However, due to a lack of Sami teachers, distance education was implemented as a solution. However, the distance education interventions used different technologies (TV, different portals etc.) and its full implementation was not given enough priority. It was an underperforming educational alternative for many years (Özerk, 2016).

The significant decrease in the number of children receiving Sami L1 or L2 teaching made it necessary for the national educational authorities, in collaboration with Sami educational authorities, to highlight the distance education of Sami children as a priority in 2015/2016. The result was the improvement of this provision and a campaign to heighten awareness by informing local educational authorities and Sami families about the alternative possibilities they had for receiving teaching of Sami as L1 or L2 if they lived outside the SLAA.

This initiative and improvement in distance education resulted in an increased number of Sami children able to receive the teaching of Sami as L1 or L2 via Teams, Zoom etc., overseen by qualified Sami teachers employed by schools within the SLAA. In 2021, the SLAA comprised 13 municipalities out of the country’s total of 356 municipalities. In other words, this distance education has a huge geographical area to serve. Figure 2.1 shows the number of students enrolled in Sami classes during the period 1990–2020 and the effects of the different curricular reforms in
1987, 1997 and 2006 and the improvements in distance learning in 2016. It is evident from Figure 2.1 that the improvement in distance education had a positive impact on Sami teaching: the number of Sami students rose by 284, from 2116 in 2016 to 2400 in 2020.

Curriculum reforms and why curriculum documents matter

The increasing and decreasing trends in the number of children who enrolled in Sami language classes in Norway, either as L1 teaching or L2 teaching, during the 30-year period from 1990 to 2020 (Figure 2.1) reveal that the curriculum reforms and the related curriculum documents certainly had an impact. Figure 2.2 shows the overall increase and decrease in the number of Sami children who received Sami language teaching during the 30-year period from 1990 to 2020.

It is evident from Figure 2.2 that NC-87 and NC-97-S had the greatest positive impact on the number of Sami children who received Sami teaching as L1, L2 or Sami Language and Culture. This increasing trend lasted from 1990 to 2006. As already noted, starting from the school year 2006/2007, the new curriculum did not contain the subject Sami Language and Culture. This marked the beginning of a declining trend in the numbers of children receiving Sami teaching. Although the improvement in distance education in 2016 had some positive impact on the number of children who received Sami teaching as L1 or L2, the national curriculum documents of 2006 (NC-06 and NC-06-S) failed to have the same positive
impact on the number of overall enrolments of Sami children in Sami teaching. During the NC-06 and NC-06-S period, the number of Sami students who received Sami L1 or L2 teaching decreased by 22% compared with the NC-97-S period. However, overall, despite a downward trend since 2006, the number of Sami children with access to any kind of Sami teaching increased by 98% during the period 1990–2020. This can be attributed to the offering of Sami as a separate school subject with its own curriculum and a specified number of teaching hours per week as part of Sami students’ comprehensive/compulsory/basic education.

As shown in Figure 2.1, 2400 students were enrolled in Sami teaching in the school year 2019/2020, of which 954 (40%) participated in Sami as L1 classes and 1446 (60%) in Sami as L2 classes (Sami allaskuvla, 2020).

Some of those with Sami as their second language (L2 students) are from Sami–Norwegian bilingual families; the majority are from families in which one or both parents have a Sami background with some skills in Sami. Enrolling in Sami as first language classes (L1 classes) or Sami as second language classes (L2 classes) in compulsory school (ages 6–16) gives children the right to continue to receive L1 or L2 Sami teaching in secondary school. In secondary school, pupils are assessed in Sami as L1 or Sami as L2 and the mark they gain counts when they apply to universities. Both groups are particularly at an advantage if they apply to the Sami University of Applied Sciences, where the medium of instruction is Sami. Another advantage they have is in the job market, particularly in the SLAA where there is
huge employment demand for Norwegian–Sami speaking bilinguals. We turn now to some comparative observations from a Welsh perspective.

The Welsh Language in Education: Curriculum Reform and National Strategies

National curriculum reform is a once in a generation phenomenon. That it happens at all within the Welsh-medium education system is a sign of its maturity. The initial start of the system was characterised by slow growth and even slower acceptance and institutionalisation. In the 1950s, there was a limited number of Welsh-medium primary schools, with most located in Anglicised (predominantly English-speaking) areas. There was a limited number of Welsh-medium high schools in the 1960s, all in Anglicised areas. These schools were established as a result of parental pressure and a sympathetic reaction by some in power within local authorities (Thomas & Williams, 2013). Both primary and secondary levels were characterised by strong forms of bilingual education/immersion, but it would become increasingly difficult to define precisely a profile of a Welsh-medium school that was both generic and universally accepted (Williams, 2014).

Having been pioneered by a select number of local authorities, Welsh-medium education was transformed by a major reform that followed the UK’s Education Act of 1988. This introduced a national curriculum and changed the relationship between the Department of Education and Science and the local education authorities in England and Wales. In a period of increased centralisation, which saw a diminution in local authorities’ discretion to set policy, the establishment of a national curriculum in England and a similar (if separate) one in Wales was a radical departure from previous practice. The one exception in Wales was making a certain amount of Welsh instruction mandatory for all pupils by making it a core subject in the Welsh national curriculum.

Prior to the 1988 reforms, Welsh-medium schools were predominantly an opt-in choice for parents as the default education system was predominantly unilingual English. Within this system, many students were taught a limited amount of Welsh, but 45% of pupils did not receive regular lessons in Welsh (they were pupils in Church schools, both Anglican and Catholic, and those who resided within the Welsh–English border local authority schools) until Welsh was made one of five core subjects in the national curriculum introduced under the Education Reform Act of 1988. This had significant implications for the governance of schools, the preparation of in-service teacher training, the production of appropriate learning resources across a range of school subjects and – most critical of all – a new narrative that sought to convince parents and guardians of both the relevance and the quality of Welsh-medium instruction their children would experience. Thereafter, there was a significant growth in L2 acquisition of Welsh.
The Education Act of 1988

The Education Act of 1988, as applied to Wales, had three significant sociopolitical impacts. Firstly, for the first time in its modern history, the education system introduced a specified amount of Welsh language instruction to all students within the statutory age range. This had the effect of giving – at the very least – an awareness and patina of understanding, if not necessarily fluency to all students, so that the language could be claimed as a public good rather than a minority concern. Secondly, for some students in English-medium education, they could opt to supplement their capacity and interest in Welsh by taking more advanced, demanding qualifications. Thirdly, when such students matriculated and in time became parents, there was a significant increase in the number of children registered in Welsh-medium education coming from mixed-language or predominantly English-speaking households. This accelerated an already long-established pattern of parental choice, which is represented by the lobby group Rhieni Dros Addysg Gymraeg (RhAG, Parents for Welsh-medium Education). RhAG informs, pressurises and evaluates the educational plans of target local authorities so that the needs of Welsh-medium pupils are factored into local and national decision making and policy formulation.

The next 30 years saw a growth in the number of opportunities available to use Welsh within the statutory education system. This was accompanied by a small but incremental growth in the role of Welsh for higher and further education, culminating in the successful Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (Welsh National College), which works with universities and colleges across Wales to develop Welsh language opportunities. Through this arrangement, the Welsh Government initiative funds Welsh-medium lecturers and offers undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships for students to study higher education courses through the medium of Welsh. In turn, this has accelerated the development of professional cohorts in fields as diverse as science and engineering, health care, pharmacy, optometry, the legal profession and commerce.

Within statutory education, once the new curriculum had been bedded in, a number of concerns were raised about the relative role of Welsh both as a subject and as a medium of instruction. Williams (2010) argued that, despite having a distinct Welsh model of bilingual education, the system was not producing the levels of fluency trumpeted by the national reforms and, in particular, there was a danger of developing a linguistic underclass. The necessary supportive link between the language of home, school, community, media and society was not as robust as anticipated. Policy reforms in both education and official language strategies were in danger of overburdening the education system to deliver and solve linguistic issues (Williams, 2004). More worryingly for policy reformers there was a discrepancy between the institutional perspective and the ‘street’ perspective on the rights, behaviour and achievements of populations targeted by Welsh language initiatives.
In strict linguistic terms, the increasing diversity of the school cohort background was reflected in issues surrounding linguistic competence and an inconsistent set of skills, especially in writing and the production of material. A more general characteristic was linguistic interference from English in terms of the Welsh ‘verb, subject, object’ pattern and grammatical rules. Code-switching and the generic capacity to function as equal bilinguals in employment was also an issue because, although spoken Welsh was generally of a good standard, that of written Welsh was less acceptable.

Williams (1995) argued that while current policies were aimed at increasing exposure to various amounts of bilingual education, the anticipated growth in numbers had not automatically translated into the anticipated increased usage of the language. In 1988, Williams raised a conundrum in the title of an inaugural lecture to open the Canolfan Iaith/Welsh Centre at Bangor University, titled ‘Bilingual education in Wales or education for a bilingual Wales?’ (Williams, 1988). He argued that it was desirable that the whole education system should be involved in some degree of Welsh-medium instruction if the political goal of forging a bilingual nation was to be advanced. More recently this has become a reality as, in seeking to broaden access to some degree of Welsh language instruction, more and more non-designated bilingual schools have adopted an admixture of teaching both the Welsh language and some subjects through the medium of Welsh, to varying degrees of success (Williams, 2014).

Williams (1988, 2010) also asked that if alternative forms of bilingual education were to be introduced along a continuum, as an admixture of forms of instruction, immersion and exposure to Welsh, could that threaten the integrity of both Welsh-medium schools and Welsh as a first language of instruction? The underlying concerns were twofold. Firstly, in some predominantly rural areas, for reasons of financial pressure, designated Welsh-medium schools might be encouraged to ‘merge’ or share a site with well-established English-medium schools and, in partial compensation for this rationalisation, the practice of bilingual teaching might be spread more widely in the resultant combined school structure. A second scenario was that, in some areas that did not contain a designated bilingual school, the introduction of a greater amount of Welsh-medium instruction in hitherto English-medium schools, either as streamed classes or through an increased use of translanguaging, might satisfy the requirements of both parents and local authority educational plans. In both scenarios, the spread effect of Welsh would be increased but there was no guarantee that the primacy of Welsh as a first language of instruction would be maintained.

Beyond the nuances of school planning there lies the issue of skill development and the categorisation of whole schools and pupils according to linguistic criteria. The performance of, and division between, L1 and L2 learners has been an abiding concern of practitioners and commentators for some time, so much so that the government announced significant
reviews of both the education system writ large and of the role of Welsh within it. An important contribution was ‘One language for all: Review of Welsh second language at Key Stages 3 and 4’ (Welsh Government, 2013a). The report highlighted a number of issues in Welsh second language provision as follows.

1. Pupils do not continue to develop their Welsh skills well enough on transition to Key Stages 2 and 3.
2. The time allocated to teaching the subject is not sufficient; in some schools the allocation is as little as one hour a fortnight.
3. Many teachers in primary schools lack confidence and ability to teach Welsh as a second language.
4. Too many pupils who follow the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) Welsh second language short course are entered for the foundation tier even though they are capable of gaining A*-B grades, which cannot be achieved in the foundation tier.

The report’s judgement was that in most schools there are not enough opportunities for pupils to hear and practise using the language beyond formal Welsh lessons and in too many secondary schools the subject is taught by non-specialist teachers who lack a thorough understanding of second language teaching methodology (Welsh Government, 2013a).

The report made a number of recommendations, including the following.

1. Ensure that Welsh second language continues to be a statutory subject within the national curriculum and continues to be a compulsory subject for all pupils in Wales until the end of Key Stage 4.
2. The need to embed processes for planning Welsh-medium provision: strengthening strategic planning processes for all phases of education and training should continue to be a priority.
3. The need for improved workforce planning and support for practitioners: ensuring a sufficient workforce for Welsh-medium education and training is vital.
4. The need to ensure that young people have the confidence to use their Welsh language skills in all walks of life: education and training alone cannot guarantee that speakers become fluent in Welsh or choose to use the language in their everyday lives.

Welsh was considered within the broader educational framework and was influenced by the Welsh Government’s decision to recast its curriculum design following the recommendations of the Donaldson report (Welsh Government, 2015d), which argued that all children and young people will be:

1. ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives;
2. enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world;
(4) healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

It was evident that if the numbers receiving some or all of their education through the medium of Welsh increased, these additional numbers would come from predominantly non-Welsh speaking households and would presumably become new speakers of Welsh. In some European contexts the term ‘new speakers’ has been adopted as a descriptor for those who are not mother tongue speakers, but who learn and use a language either as a result of formal schooling or as adults. For many, the concept of new speakers is more neutral and less discriminatory than L2, but this is not universally accepted and only a few jurisdictions (e.g. the Basque Autonomous Community, Navarre and Scotland) have made reference to the category within their official documentation (Williams, 2023).

**Dilemmas in language education**

The structure and nuances of the teaching of Welsh within a variety of educational sectors was revealed by a number of government reports that gave a good overview of the challenges faced by promoting Welsh-medium education. A plethora of reports was published, focusing on Welsh for adults (Welsh Government, 2013b), teacher education (Welsh Government 2014a), Welsh-medium further education (Welsh Government 2014b) and on the teaching of Welsh as a second language (Welsh Government, 2014c). The latter report drew attention to the weaknesses in the manner in which Welsh was taught and advocated abolition of the curriculum and qualification divide between first and second language learners. Drawing on these reports, the Welsh Government announced far-reaching changes to the manner in which Welsh and other languages were to be taught within the statutory education sector as part of a new curriculum for Wales. Education and Skills Minister Kirsty Williams declared:

We want all our learners to be citizens of both Wales and the world and that means ensuring that all young people from all backgrounds have an opportunity to develop their language skills – whether that’s in Welsh, English or international languages. (WalesOnline, 2019)

Consequently, the government devised a new national curriculum launched in two stages: September 2022 for Year 6 and some of Year 7 and September 2023 for Years 7 and 8, which will be rolled out year on year until it includes Year 11 by 2026. In the new curriculum, Welsh will be compulsory for all learners aged 3 to 16 – alongside English – but will be no longer separated into first and second language programmes of study.
All learners will follow the same curriculum and there will be more of an emphasis on improving their skills and use of the language.

While it would be up to schools to decide how they approach this, they would need to think about opportunities for learners to listen, read, speak and write in Welsh – this might be through use in different parts of the curriculum or outside the classroom. (Welsh Government, 2019)

Four regional school improvement consortia across Wales are currently planning ways to ensure teachers can deliver the agreed changes through professional learning, including the augmentation of a sabbatical scheme of intensive Welsh language training to teachers and teaching assistants. So, a continuum, a sliding scale of performance and assessment and a recasting of the primacy of teaching Welsh as a first language are the elements of the new approach to promoting Welsh within the statutory education system. This reform has sparked some controversy by both supporters and detractors of Welsh, as now discussed.

The reform raises the question as to what descriptor will be used for those significant many who do not become ‘full new speakers’ of Welsh despite increased exposure to formal instruction in and through the language. Are they to be referred to as Welsh speakers, L2 students or advanced learners? These are important questions, not only for teachers and school managers, but also for curriculum designers, assessors, students and their families. It is probable that this category of student will grow as a proportion of all students and speakers because the conventional L1 category appears not to be growing within a fairly stable system. Recent data suggest that the numbers of Welsh-medium schools and pupils has not grown substantially and indeed, within several local authorities, there are certain schools that have considerable empty additional places despite the careful planning outlined in the statutory Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) framework. The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 placed a duty on all local authorities in Wales to consult on, produce and review plans that provide the strategic direction for the planning and delivery of Welsh-medium and Welsh language education in their locality. While this obligation has made the responsibilities, provision and direction of local education policy more transparent and consistent, it has also called into question the episodic and epiphenomenal pattern of Welsh-medium demand. A particular difficulty is succession: as Table 2.2 reveals, there remains a structural difficulty with succession as twice as many pupils are registered in primary schools than in secondary schools (Stats Wales, 2021). Were this succession rate to be improved significantly then the investment in skills and confidence imparted by the primary school experience would strengthen the progressive development of more students and could, in adulthood, lead to a greater use of Welsh in socioeconomic domains.
Different categories of bilingual schools

As a category, bilingual schools may be divided into four sub-divisions according to the percentage of subjects taught through the medium of Welsh and whether there is parallel provision in English.

(1) In Type A schools, at least 80% of subjects (apart from Welsh and English) are taught only through the medium of Welsh to all pupils. One or two subjects are taught to some pupils in English or in both languages.

(2) In Type B schools, at least 80% of subjects (excluding Welsh and English) are taught through the medium of Welsh and are also taught through the medium of English.

(3) In Type C schools, 50–79% of subjects (excluding Welsh and English) are taught through the medium of Welsh and also through the medium of English.

(4) In Type D schools, all subjects (except Welsh and English) are taught to all pupils using both languages.

Clearly, with such a variety in actual practice, there is a need for a more robust definition of what counts as a Welsh-medium school or a bilingual school and the government is seeking to generalise or standardise the type of education received within this broad sectoral category.

Currently there is an ongoing debate on the adequacy of curriculum development, the sufficiency of teacher training, the role of Welsh as a subject and Welsh as a medium of teaching. In broader terms there is debate on the whole issue of second language acquisition and a separate, but equally pressing, issue regarding the attitude of some who demonstrate resistance to bilingualism and express fears and suspicions of the bilingual agenda. Part of this has to do with identity politics and part with a perception that too much attention has been focused on the Welsh language of late, which threatens to increase the distinctiveness of Wales within the UK. This is a long-standing issue, as evidenced in other jurisdictions such as Ireland and the Basque Country, and has little to do with the recent Brexit divisions in the UK.

Table 2.2 Schools where Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction 2020/2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School level</th>
<th>Number of schools</th>
<th>Number of pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>60,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>22,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>89,390</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

bStats Wales (2021)
Both government spokespeople and specialists acknowledge that, despite spectacular growth, as evidenced by Thomas and Williams (2013), there are weaknesses in bilingual education provision. The most salient are:

1. the inconsistency in the nature of the educational experience provided;
2. the confusion elicited by the four identifiable ‘types’ of bilingual schools;
3. the poor succession rates at each stage in education, primary (26%) secondary (17%) tertiary (4%);
4. the general perception that there is too much fragmentation in the sector.

It may be asked that, if these are generally well-understood structural weaknesses, why have they not been addressed until now?

Part of the answer pertains to the issue of where power lies in the system. The Department for Education and Skills and the Minister have a crucial role to play, but the relationship with local authorities is often tense when it comes to sanctioning or disallowing the establishment of Welsh-medium schools. There have been struggles surrounding school reorganisation in several areas of Wales in the recent past, such as in Cardiff (Morgan, 2013) Caerphilly, Carmarthenshire and Sandfields in Neath Port Talbot. Until its abolition in 2012, the Welsh Language Board had a statutory duty to provide strategic oversight of this sector, but in truth it had little real power to direct. Direct oversight now rests with the Welsh Government, which has devised a system of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) to regulate provision and has made important contributions to improvements within the sector. In April 2010, the Welsh-medium Education Strategy (WMES) (Welsh Government, 2010) was made a duty under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. The strategy sets out six strategic aims and a number of objectives within them.

1. To improve the planning of Welsh-medium provision in the pre-statutory and statutory phases of education, based on informed parental demand.
2. To improve the planning of Welsh-medium provision in the post-14 phases of education and training, taking account of linguistic progression and continuing development of skills.
3. To ensure that all learners develop their Welsh language skills to their full potential, and encourage sound linguistic progression from one phase of education and training to the next.
4. To ensure a Welsh-medium education workforce that provides sufficient numbers of practitioners for all phases of education and training, with high-quality Welsh language skills and competence in teaching methodologies.
5. To improve the central support mechanisms for Welsh-medium education and training.
6. To contribute to the acquisition and reinforcement of Welsh language skills in families and in the community.
The current policy details of the government’s aims for this sector are set out in the Welsh in Education Action Plan, 2017–2021 (Welsh Government, 2017a), which states the following:

(1) It is the Welsh Government’s policy that all pupils should study Welsh from ages 3–16, either first or second language.
(2) Approximately 16% of pupils attend Welsh-medium schools and study Welsh as a first language. A further 10% attend bilingual, dual-medium or English with significant Welsh provision.
(3) Welsh Government statistics show that, in 2014, 22.2% of 7-year-old learners were assessed through the medium of Welsh first language and 17.1% of 14-year-olds were assessed in Welsh first language.

Several specific educational reforms, when combined with other significant legislative acts, will doubtless help shape the role and expectations of Welsh within national life. The six significant policy innovations are:


In addition, innovative strategies and acts, when combined, have offered a more robust framework for the promotion and regulation of Welsh, namely:


Of these, the Future Generations Well Being Act 2015 and Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers are hugely significant as they set the strategic framework and are sufficiently flexible to enable future policy reforms to be dovetailed into a strong, mainstreamed approach to shaping the contours of society with all the resonance that promoting Welsh within an increasingly multicultural context can sustain.

A further difficulty in implementing the goals of official language strategies such as Iaith Pawb (Everyone’s Language) (Welsh Government, 2003, 2005) and Iaith Fyw: Iaith Byw (A Living Language: A Language for Living) (Welsh Government, 2012) was that these strategies depended
heavily on the full mobilisation of the education system to deliver their aims. Difficulties in implementation were predictable. Both language and education strategies ran in parallel, but the Welsh language oversight agency could not necessarily influence the Government’s Education Department to dovetail its priorities and resources so as to achieve the goals of the language strategies. The lesson, of course, is that appeals to holistic and integrated planning are fine in the abstract, but often fall foul of the realpolitik of inter-departmental power struggles and the competitive nature of the allocation of public resources.

**The new curriculum for Wales**

In general, the education system places a great deal of emphasis on formal assessment and some, such as Sinnema *et al.* (2020), aver that this has an impact on pedagogy. A new curriculum for Wales was unveiled in 2021, to be inaugurated in September 2022. It is the first complete reform of the statutory education system in 30 years. Six areas of learning and experience have been identified, namely (1) expressive arts, (2) humanities, (3) health and wellbeing, (4) science and technology, (5) maths and numeracy, (6) languages, literacy and communication. A late addition to the details was the insistence that lifesaving skills and first aid be taught. The broad outline is as follows (The School Run, 2022).

1. **Expressive arts**, incorporating art, dance, drama, film and digital media, and music. It will encourage creativity and critical thinking and include performance.
2. **Humanities**, incorporating geography, history, religious education, business studies and social studies. It will be based on human experiences and will also cover Welsh culture.
3. **Health and wellbeing**, covering the physical, psychological, emotional and social aspects of life, helping students make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing and learn how to manage social influences. It will include physical education.
4. **Science and technology**, incorporating biology, chemistry, physics, computer science, and design and technology.
5. **Mathematics and numeracy**: in the early years, this will involve learning through play. In later stages, it will include working both independently and collaboratively with others.
6. **Languages, literacy and communication**: this will include Welsh and English, literature and international languages. Welsh language teaching will still be compulsory (as an additional language for children who don’t use Welsh as their first language).

In addition, literacy, numeracy and digital skills will be embedded throughout all curriculum areas.
Given growing concerns with economic and racial disparities in the UK, made more acute by heightened awareness of the issue of slavery and exploitation during British imperialism and the reaction of various groups to the Covid-19 pandemic, it will be mandatory for the histories of Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic communities to be taught. For non-curriculum areas, thematic topics will also be addressed in relation to relationships and sexuality education together with religious education. Accordingly, the curriculum aims to produce individuals who are (a) ambitious, capable learners, (b) healthy, confident individuals, (c) enterprising, creative contributors and (d) ethical, informed citizens.

On 14 October 2021 it was announced that English language and English Literature GCSEs would be combined into one qualification, while new GCSEs in Engineering and Manufacturing and Film and Digital Media will be taught from 2025 (BBC Wales News, 2021a). However, such was the uncertainty surrounding the Welsh language qualification that a final decision was postponed. One of the controversial issues was the proposal to abolish the distinction between Welsh L1 and L2 levels and create a single standard of attainment, a continuum reflecting varying skills. Critics have argued that this would weaken the salience of Welsh as a mother tongue qualification and lead to a dumbing down of the language standards. Lest this seem like an attack on Welsh, it should be noted that, from 2025, physics, chemistry and biology will no longer be offered as individual subjects. Rather, pupils will study for one integrated science award that combines the three subjects and will be worth two GCSEs – a decision that has also led to fears of dumbing down (BBC Wales News, 2021b).

The limited evidence we have to date suggests that there is a disconnect between Welsh L2 instruction and its use in normal life outside the classroom setting.

A recent detailed investigation (Rhys & Smith, 2022) has suggested that, despite L2 students asserting that their Welsh language acquisition was a benefit in both cultural and socioeconomic terms, there is some disquiet surrounding the recurring theme of the compulsory status of Welsh within the curriculum, the lack of speaking opportunities within classroom lessons and, most poignantly of all, teaching for a test. As one respondent remarked ‘There’s no point to take Welsh lesson to just pass exams. Having a GCSE in Welsh might help me get a job, but it won’t help me speak Welsh while doing it’ (Rhys & Smith, 2022: 18). This student is merely reflecting what formal assessments by Estyn (the education and training inspectorate for Wales) have reported (Estyn, 2018) in that not enough students use the language in their lessons and this has an impact on the number of students entered for formal GCSE examination in that subject. The key to improving this situation, according to Rhys and Smith (2022), is to improve the teaching methods on L2 learning so that not only are current students taught more effectively but that future generations will
be able to benefit from an improved teacher training regime and resource development so as to contribute to the government’s strategy of making Welsh a more vibrant language, spoken by at least a million by 2050.

The implication of abolishing the formal distinction between L1 and L2 learners is likely to create a space (read vacuum) for a new descriptor of non-native speakers and it is thus likely that a set of descriptors analogous to the new speaker’s paradigm will be coined for this phenomenon. But in truth, how sustainable is the idea of a continuum and with what effect for the teaching of Welsh as a first language? Some critics argue that the reforms leave much to be desired and Brooks (2019) has pointed to the fact that:

A ‘language continuum’ will destroy the principle of Welsh-medium education, replacing it with an emphasis on ‘bilingual’ schools. English of course will remain a proper language, taught not on a continuum but as a first language. Welsh instead becomes a second language for all. It is nonsense that children who cannot hold a conversation in a language be on a continuum with those who speak Welsh as a first language all day, every day. This is a damaging idea which will harm the education of children all over Wales.

Recently, the new speaker paradigm has promised a way of easing this tension and providing a new social category of competent speakers who are not mother tongue Welsh, but rather have learned the language either through the education system or as a result of social immersion (O’Rourke & Pujolar, 2019). The difficulty is that there is no universal definition of who qualifies as a new speaker and as a consequence it is that much harder for decision makers to target their needs in a structured manner. Accordingly, there is no certainty among policy makers how this new speaker concept will be operationalised.

Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers

Clearly the statutory education system is the single most important instrument for Welsh language reproduction. It is anticipated that the new curriculum will go a long way towards fulfilling the flagship government policy of securing a million Welsh speakers by 2050, up from a total of 575,000 out of a total population of 3.168 million in 2016 when the strategy was announced (Welsh Government, 2016b).

Section 78(1) of the Government of Wales Act 2006 requires Welsh Ministers to adopt a strategy stating how they propose to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language. Section 78(4) requires Welsh Ministers to keep the strategy under review and enables them to adopt a new strategy. The Welsh Government’s policy community was preparing a new strategy to replace Iaith Fyw: Iaith Byw, which ended in March 2017. Relying on the background research and evidence-based policy
reports that had been fed into the language production and reproduction targets, commentators presumed that the total population of Welsh speakers would reach about 750,000 within two generations.

However, on 1 August 2016, at the National Eisteddfod, the First Minister, Carwyn Jones, declared that the ambition of the new policy would be the creation of a million speakers by 2050 (BBC News, 2016). This changed the whole dynamic of the situation and required policy formulators to rethink their strategy to deliver this declared aim. An executive summary for the revised strategy was prepared for public consultation during the Autumn of 2016. It declared that, in order to reach the target there was a need for:

… more children in Welsh-medium education, better planning in relation to how people learn the language, more easy-to-access opportunities for people to use the language, a stronger infrastructure and a revolution to improve digital provision in Welsh, and a sea change in the way we speak about it. (Welsh Government, 2016b)

Six key areas for action were identified, namely:

(1) planning and language policy;
(2) normalisation;
(3) education;
(4) language transmission in the family and workplace;
(5) a supportive infrastructure and improved legislation;
(6) stronger language rights.

The government proposals offer clear objectives for each of these action areas and are supplemented by detailed short-, medium- and long-term recommendations. The key requirement is how best to mainstream the language and Williams (2017) argued that, in order for Welsh to be an integral part of strategic planning at every level, a more robust discourse and consistent time-series data collection and analysis were needed. The creation of new speakers is best achieved through the education system; consequently, investment in a proficient workforce means planning to support the training of teachers and learning assistants, expanding sabbatical schemes and significantly increasing the number and proficiency of workers in the childcare and early years sectors. The fundamental new reality acknowledged in government discourse here is the recognition that the tendency of language attrition within the education system needs to be replaced by a guaranteed linguistic progression and is supplemented by a commitment to maintain a continuum of access and skills development for the workplace.

Following consultation and reflection, the revised strategy reduced the six priority areas to three strategic themes: (1) increasing the number of Welsh speakers; (2) increasing the use of Welsh; (3) creating favourable conditions (infrastructure and context). The underlying message of the
Cymraeg 2050 strategy is to normalise the use of Welsh and the strategic document is replete with well-articulated interventions and proposed actions together with a description on how the success of these reforms is to be measured (Welsh Government, 2017b, 2017c).

Williams (2017) reviewed this policy and argued that the target and its implementation programme are best seen as the latest initiatives that – if they gather momentum and attract the necessary resources – could well bolster the vitality of Welsh. Williams focused on how feasible was the target of achieving 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050 and what challenges were being laid before the door of the education system at large to produce these new speakers. Williams suggested that to realise these policy goals, the education system would need to invest in the required number of new Welsh-medium teachers, open new bilingual or Welsh-medium schools, establish a greater number of dual language schools, embed more effective Welsh-medium teaching in hitherto English schools and support the work of further education and higher education institutions in staff skills development and in curricula design so as to create the effective bilingual workforce lauded in the strategy.

It is anticipated that the new curriculum will contribute to a growth in numbers and the conditions to generate a larger proportion of new speakers who will go on to use Welsh on a regular basis.

Clearly, it is too early to tell whether or not investment will be forthcoming to support the necessary infrastructure developments. However, two early features are promising. The first is the general reaction of agencies and organisations to the broad parameters of the 2050 strategy. They have bought in to the reforms, for both ideological and self-interested reasons, as they are largely dependent on government financial and political support for their legitimacy and maintenance. The second is that, at the heart of the government’s Welsh Language Unit, there is now a dedicated team of language policy experts whose evidence-based reforms and adoption of hitherto underemphasised features (such as IT, nudge theory and behavioural language planning) auger well for the implementation of the strategy. Above all, it is the discourse surrounding future Welsh vitality that has engendered a far more positive approach to a holistic language policy and its implementation – at least within official circles.

**Conclusion**

The case of the Sami demonstrates the impact of curriculum reform on language vitalisation and revitalisation. Radical changes in the emphases and priorities of curriculum reforms and formal curriculum documents have made a significant difference to the official standing of Sami education within the country as curriculum documents now have legal status in the Norwegian system. Local educational authorities must operationalise them as it is a statutory requirement. Accordingly, national
curriculum documents have a significant influence on the availability of Sami teaching and the recruitment of indigenous children to receive teaching in and through Sami, either as L1, L2 or in Sami Language and Culture classes. However, we recognise that the abolition of Sami Language and Culture as a school subject in the 2006 reforms had a significant negative impact on the number of children receiving Sami teaching.

In the case of Wales, the two curriculum reforms of the 1980s and that of 2022/2023 reflect not only pedagogical advances, but also social concerns regarding features such as preparing for a more deeply entrenched digital economy, a consideration of the relationship between language revitalisation and socio economic development (Welsh Government 2014d), a greater awareness of multicultural heritage and the lived reality of the nation, and a concern for revitalising the Welsh language by teaching it, at varying levels, to the entire school-age population.

Three things may be gleaned from this comparative analysis.

First, it is parents who are the driving force of mother tongue or L2 demands within an evolving school system that for too long has ignored or undervalued the richness of indigenous languages.

Second, once the state or the local state has recognised the permanent needs and interests of a minority, serving those interests becomes a matter of national responsibility. It follows from this that government policies, the allocation of public monies and the development of an alternative educational experience within the same state-wide educational framework change the relationship between the citizen and the host state. This is best seen when the state gradually transfers some responsibilities for decision making to the indigenous resident population or its representatives. Empowering teachers and educational specialists to engage with curriculum design and reform is an important step, but the larger questions of teacher training, capacity building, infrastructure support, material and resource development, AI and IT developments are matters of ‘national’ political decision making and the allocation of expenditure to serve the minority’s educational sector. Consequently, the establishment of the Welsh Senedd and the Sami Parliament both represent major constitutional developments in the democratisation of minority education, its legitimisation and the allocation of resources to fund it.

Third is the ideological basis of the supportive narrative for minority language education. Justifications for maintenance and arguments on behalf of minority language issues have moved gradually from a concern with unique restitution-type discourses to those that now emphasise the inclusive, multicultural element of mainstreaming such issues as a matter of national, not sectoral, responsibility. Not only does this invoke a majoritarian involvement and co-responsibility, it also redefines resource development and expenditure as a matter of public good.

We have seen that, for both Sami and Welsh, national curriculum reforms have gradually eroded the monolingual monopoly of state
education and allowed some degree of divergence; although it does not go far enough, it is an improvement on previous dispensations. Clearly there will remain a profound political element of debate and dissent, as is to be expected in advanced democracies, but many language minorities are now characterised as permanent, not epiphenomenal, policy concerns in the national agenda and consequently share a more equitable basis for future planning, innovation and intervention than was true in times past.

Recognising that Sami and Welsh speakers are at opposite ends of a minority language spectrum, notwithstanding some similar elements identified herein, we argue that they both reflect a common struggle to defend, promote and develop a variant of the theme of a common humanity, involving mutual respect and dignity. The professionalisation of the various issues subsumed within national curriculum reforms should not detract from the basic truth that it is community pressure which animates the drive for indigenous and minority language survival. Yet this drive needs to be articulated through realisable aims that seek to engage the majority and the state in constructing the conditions of possibility for incremental reform, else the energy becomes dissipated and the ambition is dashed – an all-too-common experience for supplicant peoples rather than empowered citizens.

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