



## Curriculum change in modern foreign languages education in England: barriers and possibilities

Dr Abigail Parrish's recent paper considers the languages on offer in secondary schools in England and the possibility of enacting curriculum change with a view to reducing the dominance of French, Spanish and, to a lesser extent, German as a possible way to increase take-up of modern foreign languages post-14. Questionnaires were completed by 666 students aged 14–15, 70 head teachers and 119 heads of modern languages in secondary schools throughout England, investigating students' views as to the languages they would like to learn and their views of particular languages as well as the views of senior and middle leaders on the factors which impact on the teaching of modern languages. The paper concludes that students are interested in a wider range of languages than is currently available, for reasons primarily relating to usefulness. It also finds that schools are constrained by operational concerns preventing them fully considering the possibility of teaching a wider range of languages. Implications for national-level language policy and the culture of school accountability are discussed.

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To view Abigail's paper, please see: Parrish, A. (2019). Curriculum change in modern foreign languages education in England: barriers and possibilities. *The Language Learning Journal*, 1-21 or on-line at <https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/a6WugZDC7EMWMNERz4gG/ful>

## Learning About Religions through Dialogue (LAR-D) programme.

Contact theory (Allport, 1954) advocates that the best way to challenge attitudes of prejudice and bigotry is for people to enjoy extended and ongoing contact with people whom they consider to be different or alien.

Working from that hypothesis, this project links people from different religions and cultures to specific schools, and allows them to engage in a dialogue with each other over a six to eight month period. The main purpose of the programme is for staff and pupils to be able to learn about the persons religion and culture, but in the process we hope that they will also become friends, working through misconceptions and misunderstandings, and learning to appreciate their various differences in outlook. Such learning will help our pupils to become better equipped for living in a modern, multicultural world. Participants are provided with funding to help cover some of the costs involved in participation, and this provides both incentive and obligation for full engagement with the process.



*The LAR-D team at BGU*

Six schools were selected from thirteen applications to the programme (three primary and three secondary), and these were prepared for the task at a training /planning day in September. Meantime, the faith practitioners were selected, police-checked and prepared by St Philip's (Inter-faith) Centre, Leicester so that they were ready to begin engagement with the schools immediately after the September planning day.

Each school will approach the dialogue in its own way, with some making it a whole-school activity while others will link the faith representative with a specific class or year group within the school. These six pilot studies will be monitored over the extended period of engagement, and the results and impact of the programme will be scrutinised in June 2020. Participating schools are: Lincoln Christ's Hospital School (Secondary); Magnus CE Academy (Secondary); Pinchbeck East CE Primary school; Priory Academy LSST (Secondary); South View Community Primary school; Utterby Primary Academy.

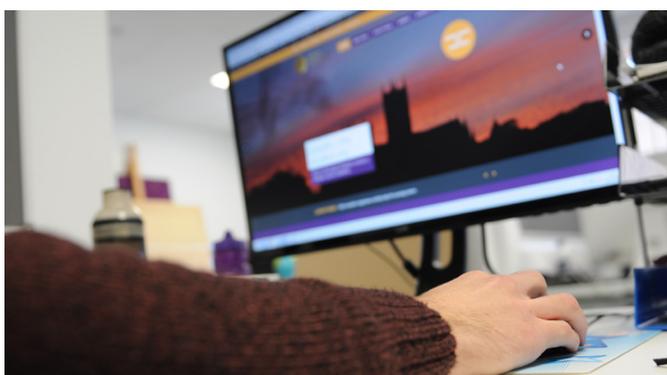
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# Addressing teacher workload in Initial Teacher Education: an assessment

This research was undertaken to understand how the DfE document above relates to our PGCE trainees 'on the ground'. In order to assess this, a sympathised document was created from the DfE workload in ITT so that it was user-friendly (shorter) and was focused on the critical areas of concern: Planning, Assessment and Wellbeing.

## Data collection

Data regarding perceptions of workload was taken at four points: a) June 2019 PGCE SD - ITT Secondary (exit programme), b) July 2019 Mentors Secondary and Primary, PGCE staff (Mentor Conference), c) October 2019 Secondary Mentors (Coaching & Mentoring days) and d) October 2019/2020 current Secondary ITT trainee teachers (Lecture on Workload). Qualitative data was provided from each collection point and shared with the next collection point in order to give a contextualised understanding of the different sampled groups, to share reflective thoughts and to support continuing discourse on the challenges of workload.



## Key findings

### Planning

Some schools are reluctant to reduce demand for extensive lesson planning (LP). Many schools expect their own LP formats to be used. Although most schools are willing to share resources, some expect trainees to produce their own. There is inconsistency regarding the timescale for sharing the LP with the class teacher, some expecting this on the day and others a week in advance.

### Assessment

This area has the least amount of detailed information on how the school/department/class teacher wants the information to be presented. Some trainees feel that this was confusing and would like more support. Some schools are reluctant to get trainees to assess pupils at KS4. However, when assessment experiences are shared well – systems and process – the results are excellent.

### Wellbeing

All sample groups feel that wellbeing is best understood and acted upon when the relationship between the trainee teacher and school mentors is positive. Some Mentors feel that it is the trainees' responsibility to raise concerns, but in the main, mentors show a positive approach to trainee wellbeing.

### Conclusion

A reduction in excessive planning for trainees should be a focus for both University-based mentors (UBMs) and School-based mentors (SBMs). Trainees should be supported to develop planning strategies that work for them and that are accessible to their mentors. Unnecessary duplication of work should be avoided.

Assessment is a relatively underdeveloped area of the Teachers' Standards and trainees' involvement in it should be clearly defined from the beginning of the training period. Access to school systems and techniques should be shared early in the trainee's practice.

Wellbeing is a collective responsibility, but trainees should be honest about their needs with the professionals they are working with even if this is difficult. SBMs should ensure that they offer protected time and space each week in which to work with trainees on all areas of practice (pedagogy, professionalism and pastoral care).

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The Secondary PGCE newsletter is designed to enable our partnership school professional colleagues to remain up to date with the team's current research interests. Would you like to hear more about a project? Would you like to get involved in our research? Do you have any research you would like to share? Please do let us know.