



SILENCE

VÖICES

The **secret bias** against
'Community' Languages
that is holding back
students and the UK



ABOUT US

Global Future is a think tank dedicated to using psychology to provide fearless and original insight into the challenges facing our times. We aim to guide leaders, from businesses to politics, arts and civil society, to ask bigger, deeper questions about how we can best serve our communities.

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FOREWORD

PASCALE VASSIE OBE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTIVE, NRCSE



I welcome the attention Global Future is bringing to the calamitous drop in students achieving qualifications in ‘community’ languages. The cancelation of the 2020 summer exam series exposed a disregard for multilingualism that is costing the UK dearly. As we prepare for the 2021 Census, I note that in 2011, and with a question that is widely recognised as limiting the answer,¹ over 4.2 million people reported having a language other than English at home. We should be celebrating, encouraging and strengthening the language diversity of the UK.

In calling on the government to immediately guarantee that all students who have studied for a ‘community’ language GCSE or A-Level are able to access that qualification, Rowenna Davis is raising the crucial issue of language equality. If the British government can use the awareness awakened last summer by the APPG on MFL and others² then there is a chance we can turn the tide of monolingualism that threatens the sustainability of language departments and programmes across the country. This means committing to support for supplementary schools; a programme of guided assessment and moderation of the teaching taking place in out-of-school settings; and for 2021, an extension of the no-penalty entry deadlines to allow examination centres to process entries.³

¹ http://blog.policy.manchester.ac.uk/growth_inclusion/2019/04/improving-the-census-question-on-language-could-help-repair-community-relations-and-britains-international-image-post-brexit/ Yaron Matras, 2019

² <https://www.all-languages.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/APPFM-FLtoOfqual27.04.20.pdf>

³ In the short term, it would be prudent for the DfE to write to all mainstream and supplementary schools encouraging them to work together to submit grades and offering support about how to do that. Short term grants may also be needed to stop some supplementary schools who have lost students in the pandemic from closure.

It is not just 'community' languages that need respect; it is the millions of children and young people who have more than English as a language in their home or heritage. The nation should value bilingualism. This includes Scottish and Irish Gaelic, Welsh but also Yoruba, Tamazight, Kurdish, Krio, Patois, Sylheti, Cypriot Greek and many other variants of 'standard' languages, and all the other 100s of languages spoken at home in Britain. Children enter primary school each with an individual background of language; the English education system then proceeds to rid them of that wealth of language, to reduce their competency to one language - English. Yet many studies have found that students from a minority-language background tend to have better academic performances in English reading and Mathematics if they maintain a high level of proficiency in their native language.⁴ So why do we strip away this positive attribute from our nations' children?

The massive fall in community language entries in 2020 has exposed not only the government's lack of respect for 'community' languages but the outright discrimination against community-led learning. This is shameful and, at a time when we need to pull together to ensure the country recovers after 12 months of disrupted education, massively damaging to our children's future. The cancelling of the 2021 exams offers an opportunity to change direction and demonstrate fresh commitment to all languages and to finally acknowledge the important role of community-led supplementary schools as equal partners in the education of children.

⁴ Cognitive Benefits of Language Learning: Broadening our perspectives. Final Report to the British Academy, FBA Bencie Woll and Li Wei, 2019 - thebritishacademy.ac.uk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **This report from Global Future**, supported by the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education (NRCSE), reveals that thousands of students are set to lose any chance of achieving the qualifications for which they have studied because of a government “blind spot” on ‘community’ languages.
- **The refusal by ministers to take action is not only creating injustice** for individual students, it is also disproportionately affecting BAME communities and means the Government is actively undermining the UK’s prospects of building stronger links with emerging economies after Brexit.
- **In 2020, A-Level entries** for ‘community’ languages ranging from Chinese, Bengali and Gujarati to Polish, Greek and Turkish dropped 41%. Those for GCSEs fell by 28%.
- **This meant over 12,000 fewer** students were given the chance of a qualification compared to the year before.
- **With no concrete changes proposed** in the Government’s recent consultation response to exams for England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2021⁵, thousands more are at risk of being denied their qualifications this summer.
- **‘Community’ languages have been a vital component in social mobility** and denying people the chance to obtain an extra qualification is damaging their chances to win places at university or be appointed to well-paid jobs.

WHAT IS A ‘COMMUNITY LANGUAGE’ ?

So called ‘community’ languages are any language other than English that has been acquired outside of mainstream education.

⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/965005/6747-1_decisions_-_CQ_consultation_on_awarding_grades_in_2021.pdf

- **Supporting community languages also serves social mobility.** An extra qualification can help with university and job applications, as well as enabling students to connect with their heritage and culture.
- **The bias against these languages** extends to supplementary schools and community settings, which operate with no statutory funding and are mostly run by volunteers on shoe string budgets. Despite excellent pass rates, they are still being ignored or treated with suspicion.
- **But ‘community’ language speakers should be a phenomenal asset** for the UK as it tries to maintain its global status and tradition of looking outwards to the world. Indeed, following Brexit, fully-qualified speakers of subjects like Urdu, Mandarin, Arabic and Japanese will be needed more than ever for trade, growth and exports.
- **These students are also crucial for national security and social cohesion.** Valuing these languages as equals alongside others demonstrates respect for communities and creates a pool of talent to draw from for security operations both at home and abroad.⁶
- **We are calling on the government** to immediately guarantee that all students who have studied for a ‘community’ language GCSE or A-Level should be given the chance to earn a grade this summer.
- **This means committing to make a maximum of £3million⁷ available** in grants for those young people who have been denied access to entry by their mainstream school and who may not be able to afford a private alternative.
- **Longer term, we make five recommendations to end the bias** against ‘community’ languages: recognition by authorities, connection to mainstream schools, training, quality development and investment.

WHAT IS A ‘SUPPLEMENTARY SCHOOL’? ?

Community-led, out-of-school education programmes. They offer curriculum teaching, language tuition and cultural activities such as music or dance. Most run on weekends with some operating after-school.

⁶These benefits have been outlined by the All Party Parliamentary Group on modern languages <https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/schools/support-for-languages/thought-leadership/appg>

⁷This figure is built on the assumption that half of the 30,000 students that take these qualifications each year may struggle to enter exams (a slightly higher rate than last year to be safe). If we therefore assume that 15,000 students need support and that the approximate cost of an exam in a private centre is £200, then we get £3m.

RIA ISIKSIL⁸

18 YEAR-OLD
TURKISH A-LEVEL STUDENT
FROM EAST LONDON

“ONE TEACHER TOLD ME THAT A **TURKISH A-LEVEL WOULDN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE** TO MY UCAS FORM ANYWAY.”

When it came to registering to sit my Turkish A-Level exam in my mainstream school, I was told that it wasn't possible because of Covid, and there was nothing they could do about it. They couldn't give me a predicted grade because my Turkish lessons happened in the community. All that learning was pointless!

It made me feel awful. I had spent years learning and weeks revising and it was all for nothing. I emailed and begged them to allow me to sit the exam. One teacher told me that a Turkish A-Level wouldn't make any difference to my UCAS form anyway. I was predicted an A, I was capable, I was prepared: I would have done well. I wasn't told about any alternatives. I sent two or three messages to teachers with no response. My requests were ignored and unacknowledged.*

My wish now would be to be given a predicted grade as they did for other subjects. My Turkish teacher should be able to submit my grades. No one should have to go through this. I see it as a form of discrimination or racism. The UK is ignoring a language that could help students get to where they want to be, but they are not allowed to do that. It's upsetting and worrying they seem to value some languages more than others.

⁸ Names of students have been protected on request and have been replaced with pseudonyms.

BRITAIN'S BIAS AGAINST COMMUNITY LANGUAGES

A “community language” (sometimes known as a “heritage” or “home” language) is a broad-based term that essentially covers any language spoken by a minority community in a majority context. A common prejudice levelled against these subjects is that they are somehow “easy” because students may speak them at home or with relatives. The fear is that children are somehow “cheating” the system by getting a qualification in something they have exposure to outside school. It would seem strange to discount a qualification in science or carpentry to a student who was lucky enough to have a parent with these skills at home, but for some reason we feel threatened when the skill is about a non-English language. Furthermore, the vast majority of these children are second, even third or fourth generation students who have to work hard in their own time to sustain and develop their language skills to a formal standard that would qualify them for a rigorous GCSE or A-Level examination.

Supplementary schools, those that predominantly teach ‘community languages’, are largely unknown or misunderstood. Although there is no formal database of these schools and they vary greatly in operations, scale and sophistication, the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education (NRCSE) estimates that there are approximately 3000 across the country,

30,000 STUDENTS SIT EXAMS IN COMMUNITY LANGUAGES IN BRITAIN EVERY YEAR

many of which are run on the weekends and evenings entirely by volunteers who juggle jobs elsewhere. Although most supplementary schools charge £50-£100 a year to contribute towards rent and basic costs, and some have paid teachers and charge up to £200 per term, these schools are community assets that are very different to private schools. Again and again, as teachers in this report point out, they feel they are at best ignored, and at worst treated with hostility. There is perhaps a fear that these schools are somehow fostering isolated cultures that are taking students away from Britain, that they could have links with terrorist organisations, have safeguarding problems and/or fuel division. The reality is that the vast majority of these schools are designed to help students flourish in British society and are desperate to build closer partnerships with mainstream schools and get extra training and support from the state. Although there are some

powerful examples of these partnerships as the case study on Paiwand depicts, they are all too rare. Time and again, the teachers of this report document reaching out to mainstream schools and authorities with no recognition or reply.

The systematic marginalisation of these languages and their associated supplementary schools is what led to the exam crisis in language entries last year. Whilst all British students in all subjects suffered unnecessary anxiety about results when the government's algorithm was ultimately discredited and abandoned, they did eventually receive teacher-based assessments. This option was not made available to the majority of students studying a home or heritage language outside their mainstream school. Unless their mainstream schools recognised the community teachers, the students' study was ignored and supplementary schools were unable to present their assessment of students' work. Students' exam entries were withdrawn or refused and as a result, 2020 saw a 28% drop in 'community' language GCSEs and a 41% drop in A-levels. Thousands of students received no qualification that their hard work and revision should have earned them. Unlike the mainstream exam crisis, this particular scandal received virtually

no press coverage. And unlike the mainstream crisis, this was never resolved. Autumn examination opportunities were ill-publicised and often inaccessible for students who were moving on to further exams and education.

"It is not just 'community' languages that need respect; it is the millions of children and young people who have more than English as a language in their home or heritage. The nation should value bilingualism. This includes Scottish and Irish Gaelic, Welsh but also Yoruba, Krio, Patois, Kurdish, Sylheti, Tamazight, Cypriot Turkish and Cypriot Greek and all the other 100s of languages spoken at home in Britain. Children enter primary school each with an individual background of language; the English education system then proceeds to rid them of that wealth of language, to reduce their competency to one language - English. Yet many studies have found that students from a minority-language background tend to have better academic performances in English reading and Mathematics if they maintain a high level of proficiency in their native language."⁹

Pascale Vassie OBE,
Executive Director of the National
Resource Centre for Supplementary
Education

THERE ARE AN **ESTIMATED**
3000 SUPPLEMENTARY
SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND⁹

⁹ Maylor, U., Glass, K. and Issa, T., 2010. Impact of supplementary schools on pupils' attainment: an investigation into what factors contribute to educational improvements Rf210.mentaryschools-yourschool.pdf

¹⁰ Cognitive Benefits of Language Learning: Broadening our perspectives Final Report to the British Academy, FBA Bencie Woll and Li Wei, 2019 - thebritishacademy.ac.uk

NURIYE MERTCAN

VICE PRINCIPAL IN DUKE'S ALDRIDGE ACADEMY, TOTTENHAM &
CHAIR OF THE TURKISH LANGUAGE CULTURE AND EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

I arrived in the UK aged 9 with no English. Now I am the chair of an organisation supporting 36 supplementary schools on a voluntary basis. The annual fee for students is £200 at most, so we do a lot of fundraising. The aim is for our students to be integrated not assimilated.

When the exams were cancelled in 2020, a lot of mainstream school heads removed entries for private candidates. As a result, hundreds of students were told they simply couldn't get their grades. 'Community' languages were taken off UCAS forms and some were told that it "wouldn't really count" anyway. Many felt disappointed and undervalued.

It felt like a kick in the teeth. We are working hard. If you happened to come from a family that spoke German or French you would still get your grade in most cases but our children couldn't.

We were not spoken to by government. The only reason I was informed was because I also work in a mainstream school. There was no effort to reach out. I think we are looked at with mistrust. Other languages seem to be valued more; it's a form of institutionalised bias.



**"I THINK WE ARE
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HOW DID SO MANY COMMUNITY LANGUAGE STUDENTS COME TO LOSE GRADES?

Although there is some variety, most supplementary schools follow the same pattern for accreditation. In a normal year outside of the pandemic, supplementary schools teach students for years outside of mainstream class hours and then, when it comes to exam time, these students register to sit their 'community' language exam inside their mainstream school, sometimes for a small fee. This is because supplementary schools are rarely registered as exam centres, whilst mainstream schools are. It also means that mainstream schools have benefitted from the high pass rates that these 'community' language exams often provide in their EBacc scores, whilst doing none of the teaching.

When it became clear that holding regular exams might not be possible because of the pandemic and the government asked teachers to submit students' predicted grades in rank order, supplementary schools started raising concerns. Most mainstream teachers understandably did not feel close enough to assess their students understanding of a subject they had never taught. However, rather than reaching out to these students or their supplementary schools, the many mainstream schools simply withdrew 'community' language students from their examinations. As the students interviewed here report, this was often done with no consultation whatsoever, they simply received an email telling them they had been withdrawn. Supplementary schools and the NRCSE raised concerns about this repeatedly from May 2020 and indeed the All Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages also raised this with time on the clock for provisions to be put in place. No real solution was proposed.

FATIMA KHALED

HEAD OF THE PEACE SCHOOL AND ARABIC TEACHER

Last year I had 14 GCSE students and none were given any grades. They were very disappointed. Imagine it: you've been working hard, and suddenly the door closes on you and no one knows how to help you get the grade you've worked for. And they were angry, because no one reached out and acknowledged their work. We are all in the dark. It's very sad. Even me as a teacher, we do a lot and it's not recognised. There was no effort to be contacted directly. It's just the way that it's done.

*We would have been happy to provide portfolios of work and predicted grades, but there is a barrier between supplementary schools and mainstream ones. This barrier makes us suffer. We do the job and we don't mind if mainstream schools take the credit for the A*s and As we give them that are simply sat on their premises. No one knows what we do behind the scenes to make that happen. I've been calling for many years that we need to bridge the divide between our different types of schools. But when we do try and reach out to mainstream schools they simply never reply.*

WHAT WAS THE IMPACT?

The failure to provide an accessible means of assessment for 'community' language students led to a phenomenal drop in both GCSEs and A-Levels across these subjects.

As Table 1 demonstrates, entries for A-Levels in 'community' languages suffered a catastrophic decline of 41% overall last year. The majority of these languages, including Polish, Arabic, Turkish, Portuguese, Japanese, Persian,

Greek, Bengali and Gujarati, declined by over 50%. It's important to be clear that this was specifically a problem for those languages that are rarely taught in mainstream – those taught in mainstream classrooms remained relatively stable, with Spanish even seeing a 1% increase in take up over the same period. Those taught in private or free schools show a less marked drop – for example Urdu, Chinese, Hebrew, Russian. Although a change in teaching specification for these

Table 1: Community Language A-level decline in 2019-2020

LANGUAGE	Applicants in 2019	Applicants in 2020	% CHANGE
Chinese	2272	1617	-29%
Russian	754	621	-18%
Polish	1169	537	-54%
Italian	822	669	-19%
Arabic	835	394	-53%
Turkish	591	269	-54%
Portugese	530	195	-63%
Urdu	410	240	-41%
Japanese	216	94	-56%
Persian	172	77	-55%
Panjabi	202	105	-48%
Modern Greek	172	54	-69%
Modern Hebrew	56	36	-36%
Bengali	28	12	-57%
Gujurati	25	1	-96%
Total	8254	4921	-41%

Source: Alcantara Communications ¹¹¹²

¹¹ <http://www.alcantaracomms.com/the-hidden-tragedy-of-this-years-a-level-figures/>

¹² These figures and the table below exclude Scotland who don't have GCSEs and A-Levels.

languages in 2018 may explain part of this fall, and the Brexit-effect no doubt counts for some of the 54% drop in Polish entries, it is reasonable to presume that most of this decline happened last year as a direct

result of the failure to provide adequate assessment measures for these students during the pandemic.

Table 2: Community Language GCSE decline in 2019-2020

LANGUAGE	Applicants in 2019	Applicants in 2020	% CHANGE
Arabic	4203	3034	-28%
Bengali	570	462	-19%
Chinese	3201	2891	-10%
Gujarati	508	243	-52%
Italian	5331	3459	-35%
Japanese	698	610	-13%
Modern Greek	589	459	-22%
Modern Hebrew	378	510	-35%
Panjabi	865	708	-18%
Persian	388	215	-45%
Polish	5704	2941	-48%
Portugese	2280	1538	-33%
Russian	2133	1499	-30%
Turkish	1656	1295	-22%
Urdu	3679	3212	-13%
Total	32183	23076	-28%

Source: Alcantara Communications

Table 2 shows GCSEs in ‘community’ languages following a similar pattern. Overall there was a 28% drop in these GCSEs, with similar languages such as Gujarati, Polish and Persian suffering the biggest falls. More research needs to be done about why some languages suffered more than others, but anecdotal evidence suggests that students of some ‘community’ languages are more

likely to take exams in private centres that come with higher fees. In addition, certain supplementary education centres are registered as exam centres and were therefore able to submit teacher assessed grades directly to the government. Some teaching of Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and, especially Italian, takes place in the mainstream sector.

In some cases, a good partnership between a supplementary and mainstream school was able to solve the problem. Where this bridge existed, students were able to obtain their qualifications. When a mainstream school has a relationship with the supplementary school their mutual student is working in, they are more likely to understand the work they are completing and to trust the evidence that is presented to them about their grades. In these rare cases, these mainstream schools felt confident about submitting predicted grades from the supplementary schools, even if they had not taught them this subject directly. This bridge, built before the pandemic hit, made the system more resilient and kept qualifications going despite Covid-19. In all too many cases however, as our case studies indicate, supplementary schools found it impossible to work with mainstream schools and their mutual students fell through the net.

“The massive fall in community language entries in 2020 has exposed not only the government’s lack of respect for ‘community’ languages but the outright discrimination against community-led learning. This is shameful and, at a time when we need to pull together to ensure the country recovers after 12 months of disrupted education, massively damaging to our children’s future. The cancelling of the 2021 exams offers an opportunity to change direction and demonstrate fresh commitment to all languages and to finally acknowledge the important role of community-led supplementary schools as equal partners in the education of children.”

Pascale Vassie OBE,
Executive Director of the National
Resource Centre for Supplementary
Education

PAIWAND, NORTH LONDON

Paiwand, meaning 'unity' in Dari, was founded to support Afghan children to maintain their cultural identity and improve their lives in the UK.

Although it runs a range of services, Paiwand has been operating a supplementary education programme in Harrow and Barnet for over 10 years. From 2010 to 2018, Paiwand operated three supplementary schools each taking place at a mainstream primary or secondary school on Saturdays.

In return for providing the venue and caretaking costs free of charge, these host schools referred up to 30 of their own students onto the programme. The majority of students were referred by other local primary schools or directly by parents – for a fee.

Classes included Maths, Science, Music and Drama and the option to take Dari and Pashto, the two official languages of Afghanistan, to over 500 children and young people aged 6–16 years. Approximately 40% of the students were Afghani; the rest were predominantly of Indian, African-Caribbean, Somali and Eastern European heritage.

Supplementary school teachers followed a programme of professional development each term and those teachers of mainstream curriculum subjects who were UK trained accessed professional development through their own mainstream schools. In addition, Paiwand supported mainstream schools to liaise with families that they found difficult to engage and/or did not speak English.

Due to the strong links with mainstream schools, they were able to share data on students' progress which enabled Paiwand to evaluate and show the value of the programme.

Currently one of the three supplementary schools continues to operate. The partnership is strong and continues despite budget pressures in mainstream schools which sadly led to the project contracting.

WHY ARE COMMUNITY LANGUAGE STUDENTS STILL AT RISK IN 2021?

Despite being told about the failures of last year, the Department of Education risks letting down thousands more children this summer. Following consultation, Ofqual published its decision in the spring to embrace teacher assessed grades in full in 2021.¹³ With no significant changes or support in place to assess ‘community’ language students mainstream schools are again withdrawing or refusing to enter students for subjects they do not learn in school. Given this it’s hard to see how a second cohort of students will fare any differently to those that went before them. This must change. Failing to provide students with fairly earned grades once is devastating; failing to do so twice is unforgivable.

In the consultation, Ofqual lumps ‘community’ language students in with all “private candidates”, although it is worth noting that many of these children would not usually be considered as private candidates as the majority attend mainstream schools, study their ‘community’ language in volunteer-run supplementary schools at the weekends, and are entered into language exams for little or no fee by their mainstream school. Ofqual do, however, acknowledge that children of black and ethnic minority status are “disproportionately represented” in that private sector category and claim that they will take these students into account.

They state that:

“The Department for Education is exploring ways to make sure there are affordable options for private candidates to work with centres, and to encourage centres to work with private candidates”

Despite this clam, no mainstream or supplementary schools appear to have been issued with guidance about how this might happen, whilst time is fast running out. Meanwhile Ofqual acknowledges that they “cannot require particular centres to accept students” leaving ‘community’ language students exposed to rejection from accreditation once again. Whilst mainstream schools can not be forced to take responsibility for accrediting these students, a commitment to some solid guidance, funding or support about how to assess these students would be a basic place to start.

¹³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/965005/6747-1_decisions_-_GQ_consultation_on_awarding_grades_in_2021.pdf

One alternative sometimes put forward for 'community' language students is to pay a private exam centre to assess them directly. However, these fees can often be prohibitively high – the highest reported to the NRCSE is £1000 for a GCSE - particularly for some of the communities taking these exams who are more likely to have lower incomes, and Ofqual openly acknowledges that it “does not have the power to limit the fees charged to private candidates.” Such an approach then, could well prohibit students from BAME communities from obtaining the qualification they have worked for and damage their chances for future social mobility. This is why we are calling on the government to make up to £3m in grants available for those students who have no alternative but to obtain their grades privately.

Whilst some supplementary schools are being supported by community-led consortia such as the Turkish Language Culture and Education Consortium, which in partnership with NRCSE, has used the past months to establish an examination centre, this certainly has not been possible for all. Without further changes, more students are at risk of losing qualifications they have spent years working for. As Turkish A-Level student Ria puts it in her case study study, many students started to think that their learning was “pointless”.

UP TO 30% OF
BRITAIN'S BAME
COMMUNITY ATTEND
A SUPPLEMENTARY
AS WELL AS A
MAINSTREAM SCHOOL¹⁴

¹⁴ <https://www.ippr.org/files/publications/pdf/supplementaryschools-yourschool.pdf>

ELZBIETA KARDYNAL

EUROPEAN WELFARE ASSOCIATION CIC POLISH SCHOOL
SANDWELL



We started our supplementary school in the West Midlands in 2009 and grew to about 400 students aged 3-18. Some dropped out during lockdown, and I know other supplementary schools had to close because of a decline in numbers. Our 400 students attend 167 mainstream schools and I can count on one hand the number that actually engaged with us. I've always wanted to build partnership and collaboration with mainstream schools, and some have been wonderful, but

mostly they are not interested. Covid magnified our problems. It reflected the difficulties we'd faced for years trying to build a partnership – it's a challenging, frustrating and stressful experience. Last year we had 15 students entered for exams in mainstream schools; only 5 of those managed to get qualification. Some students were withdrawn without any consultation or notification whatsoever. I tried to explain that these were our mutual students. It was an incredibly frustrating and disappointing experience after all our hard work and particularly disheartening and disengaging for students – some were reasonably

asking, "What's the point?" Despite taking part in the government consultation and providing schools with valid arguments, two thirds of our students lost the opportunity to obtain qualification.

It reflects where we are as supplementary schools – it's a constant battle trying to prove ourselves. We are facing the same this year. It's discriminatory. We should know the benefits of multilingualism, but there is so much ignorance. Ultimately, we need proper acknowledgement, legislation, funding, representation, consultation and guidance. It's this call for acknowledgement I want to stress. It's a cry for social justice.

IT'S THIS CALL FOR
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
I WANT TO STRESS.
IT'S A **CRY FOR SOCIAL
JUSTICE.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The UK needs a strategy for ‘community’ languages. This strategy needs to solve both the urgent, short-term need to get students accredited for their work this summer, but it also needs to address the longer term, position and status of ‘community’ languages in our country.

3 MILLION PEOPLE
ACROSS THE UK HAVE
SOME CONNECTION WITH A
COMMUNITY LANGUAGE

URGENT ACTION FOR THE SHORT TERM

We are calling on the government to immediately guarantee that all students who have studied for a ‘community’ language GCSE or A-Level should be given the chance to earn a grade this summer. This means committing to make a maximum of £3million¹⁶ available in grants for those young people who have been denied access to entry by their mainstream school and who may not be able to afford a private alternative.^{17 18}

¹⁶ This figure is built on the assumption that half of the 30,000 students that take ‘community’ language qualifications each year may struggle to enter exams (a slightly higher rate than last year to be safe). If we therefore assume that 15,000 students need support and that the approximate cost of an exam in a private centre is £200, then we get £3m.

¹⁷ These fees could be paid directly to local exam centres where the students have registered and who are compliant with all safeguarding measures and Covid restrictions. Because ‘community’ language students take their exams in smaller numbers than mainstream exams, it should be possible to assess them safely in this way.

¹⁸ In the short term, it would be prudent for the DfE to write to all mainstream and supplementary schools encouraging them to work together to submit grades and offering support about how to do that. Short term grants may also be needed to stop some supplementary schools who have lost students in the pandemic from closure.

IMPORTANT ACTION FOR THE LONG TERM

1. RECOGNITION

We need a database of all supplementary schools that wish to receive guidance, training and support that is shared with local authorities.¹⁹

We need a dedicated, full time team working for the DfE to build partnerships with supplementary schools.

2. CONNECTION

Build and strengthen partnerships between mainstream and supplementary schools. Training should be available on how to do this as well as examples of best practice.²⁰

3. TRAINING

Supplementary schools need access to training in a huge variety of fields from CPD, exam board training and pedagogy to best practice in partnership working and safeguarding.

4. QUALITY

Develop and extend accreditation programmes such as the NRCSE's Quality Mark for Supplementary Education to make sure there are clear pathways to develop and recognise the quality of supplementary schools.

5. INVESTMENT

Statutory support needs to be made available to extend and deepen the work of supplementary schools in the UK. This should be linked to the UK's skills, growth, trade and export plans. This should be seen as an investment in the UK's human capital and should be evaluated accordingly.

¹⁹ Previous work by the NRCSE funded by the government in 2010 identified up to 2000 supplementary schools, but the funding was discontinued and the database is no longer comprehensive or up to date.

²⁰ The benefits of this have been documented by IPPR https://www.ippr.org/files/publications/pdf/saturdays-for-success_Sep2015.pdf

CONCLUSION

‘Community’ languages are subject to bias and marginalisation in the UK. We are told we are a proudly multi-cultural country, but our actions demonstrate otherwise. Similarly, we are told there is a commitment to “Global Britain”, but we are not investing in communities that could help deliver it. Instead, supplementary schools receive no funding, little communication with government, no training or support. They are frequently ignored by mainstream schools. They suffer from stereotypes and can be dismissed as less valuable than “European languages”. The grading crisis in 2020 that left thousands of these students stranded without grades

reflected these deeper problems about the inferior status of ‘community’ languages in the UK.

This year, despite warnings, the government has not yet announced any concrete changes that would prevent a second round of students missing out this summer. When ‘community’ language students are treated this way, we risk sending a message that they are not valued and that they don’t belong.

Rather than looking at these students as a drain or a problem, it’s time to recognise the huge opportunity they represent for our country. In the aftermath of Brexit, ‘community’ languages will be needed more than ever if Britain is to maintain its tradition of looking outwards to the world. Properly utilised, they could help boost trade, growth and exports. Instead of fearing students who study these languages as somehow “isolated” from British culture, we should develop, credit and celebrate their talent as part of what makes Britain great. Developing this talent would also help these groups, often from deprived and/or BAME backgrounds, have greater access to higher education and job opportunities. With proper commitment to the five-step strategy outlined in this report, ‘community’ languages could be an engine for Britain’s economy, social mobility and social justice.

“INSTEAD OF FEARING STUDENTS WHO STUDY THESE LANGUAGES AS SOMEHOW “ISOLATED” FROM BRITISH CULTURE, **WE SHOULD DEVELOP, CREDIT AND CELEBRATE THEIR TALENT** AS PART OF WHAT MAKES BRITAIN GREAT.”