Government Policy and EAL Learners: Lessons from the Past and Challenges for the Future
Lessons from The Past

Children with EAL make good progress if they are included in mainstream lessons as soon as possible as long as they are provided with the right level of support, expertise and resource.

Targeted funding and a locus of expertise enabled LAs to address EAL attainment systematically.

‘Proficiency in the English language is the major factor influencing the degree of support an individual student will require, and schools will need to be able to assess this need accurately.’ Strand, Malmberg and Hall (2015)
Future Challenges

Devolved school improvement landscape

Lack of political focus on EAL, perception that the attainment issue is solved.

The lack of robust evidence for effective pedagogies.

Negative perception of migrants, refugees and non UK nationals and the impact of this on the social cohesion.

Building on the EAL proficiency scales – a positive opportunity.
Wider Contexts

Academisation.

Curriculum and assessment changes (new GCSE curriculum, EBacc, Progress/Attainment 8, A Level reform).

‘Life without levels’.

School funding reform - £388 m proposed for EAL

Pupil Numbers - In 2020, there will be an estimated 630,000 more children in schools than today. Source: DfE.
Wider Contexts

White Working class boys and underperformance in certain regions – political priority.

Teacher shortages

International performance (UK performs averagely but with larger attainment gaps).

School purpose (solely teaching and learning? Or wider role – ‘British values’, employability, mental health?).
National Contexts

UK press is the most aggressive in reporting on Europe’s ‘migrant’ crisis

Press Coverage of the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in the EU: A Content Analysis of Five European Countries

Report prepared for The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (December 2015)
EAL will be a key characteristic of student bodies in many schools for the foreseeable future.
The attainment of students with EAL

Variability widely and depends on factors associated with risk of low achievement

Some picked up by Pupil Premium

Risk factors:
1. Having a SEND
2. Being entitled to a Free School Meal (FSM)
3. Living in an economically deprived neighbourhood
4. Attending school outside London
5. Being summer born

Many of these factors are the same for EAL pupils as their FLE peers

Strand, Malmberg and Hall (2015)
Added risk factors for students with EAL

Entry to England from abroad during a Key Stage

Changing school during a Key Stage at school

These high-risk factors should also be funded

Ethnic groups
- White
- Other
- Black
- African
- Pakistani

First languages within at risk ethnic groups
- Somali
- Lingala
- Lithuanian

Strand, Malmberg and Hall (2015)
EAL policy shift from 1980s onwards

- Withdrawal to inclusion in mainstream
- Role of the EAL teacher
- Ownership of policy and guidance
- Locus of expertise – changed
- Funding – not ring fenced
- Proficiency Scales for EAL pupils
Local authority teams

Expertise

School-led improvement system
School improvement landscape

- Local Authorities
- Regional Schools Commissioners
- Teaching Schools and Alliances
- Diocese Faith Schools
- Collaboratives, Partnerships & Trusts
- Chains & Sponsored Academies
- Specialist Leaders of Education
- Local Leaders of Education
- Grammar Schools
- Future leaders & Teaching Leaders
- Designated Outstanding Teachers
- Ofsted Framework
EAL policy shift from 1980s onwards

Ring-fenced for EAL – Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG)

Decided by the local Schools Forum. ‘EAL Factor’ limited to bilingual pupils enrolled for a maximum of 3 years.
‘3 years’ additional support from the point of entry should be sufficient for pupils with EAL.’

‘It may take 7 or more years for EAL pupils to achieve academic parity with their monolingual peers.’

(NALDIC, 2002)
Inclusive pedagogies, unless properly resourced with appropriate teacher expertise and knowledge may fail the very students they set out to support. (Leung and Creese, 2010)

Be alert to behaviours that exclude EAL learners in the ‘inclusive’ mainstream classroom.
Policy and reality – attitudes and mindsets

‘Welcome and value the cultural, linguistic and educational experiences that pupils with EAL bring to the school.’

‘Implement school-wide strategies to ensure that EAL pupils are supported in accessing the curriculum.’

(Equality Act 2010)

‘Exclusion mindset’

NEW ARRIVALS NEW TO ENGLISH SHOULD BE TAUGHT SEPARATELY. WHY ARE THEY IN MAINSTREAM CLASSES? IT’S NOT MY RESPONSIBILITY TO TEACH THEM ENGLISH!
Proficiency of EAL pupils

EAL or not
(No requirement to assess language proficiency in English)

Statutory reporting of proficiency in English for all EAL pupils aged 4-16
‘Proficiency in the English language is the major factor influencing the degree of support an individual student will require, and schools will need to be able to assess this need accurately.’

Strand, Malmberg and Hall (2015)

How well prepared is your school to accurately assess EAL learners?
5. A teacher must:

have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with [...] English as an additional language; [...] and be able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them.
ITE Teacher Educators and EAL

‘Many teacher educators have no training or experience teaching EAL pupils.’

Foley and Conteh, forthcoming (2017)

Respondent 1

I HAD VIRTUALLY NO EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING EAL PUPILS. PARTLY BECAUSE [...] IT’S 13 YEARS SINCE I WAS TEACHING IN SCHOOLS, BUT ALSO THE NATURE OF THE SCHOOLS I WAS WORKING WITH AT THAT TIME, THEY JUST DIDN’T HAVE A SIGNIFICANT POPULATION OF PUPILS IN THAT CATEGORY AT THAT POINT.

Respondent 2

SIMILAR EXPERIENCE FOR ME AS WELL.

Respondent 3

YEAH, AND FOR ME, SAME.
The school CPD landscape

Experienced, long-serving, seen it all

Newly qualified, experience of EAL pupils during placement

Experienced, new to the school, prior experience of EAL pupils

Outstanding EAL practitioner resigning

Experienced, new to the school, no prior experience of EAL pupils

Newly qualified, no experience of EAL pupils during placement
CPD and EAL in your school

Questions to think about

- How well does the CPD programme in your school address the diverse learning needs of the teaching staff regarding EAL?
- How does it support teachers in becoming (more) confident and (better) able to choose the best approach required for the needs of their classroom?
- How does it ensure that in-house expertise is not lost when key staff leave?
Importance of evidence

Where can you find research evidence for EAL?

The Bell Foundation website (free access)
https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/Work/EAL/Resources/

EAL Nexus website (free access, useful summaries)
https://eal.britishcouncil.org/eal-sector/key-eal-research

NALDIC website (paid membership)
https://naldic.org.uk/professional-learning-cpd/research-publications-and-statistics/

EEF Toolkit
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/resources/teaching-learning-toolkit
Thank you!

https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/

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