

Language Planning in Scotland: institutional plans, civil society and government engagement

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Introduction

Is language planning in Scotland working in the case of Gaelic and BSL?

What contribution do the following make to language planning in Scotland in the case of Gaelic and BSL, particularly in relation to education?



Institutional plans



Civil society



Government engagement

Relevant terminology

A useful starting point is to define relevant terminology

'Language policy'

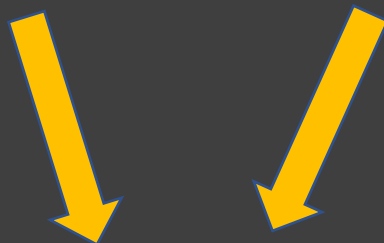
general linguistic aims identified by social institutions (including governments)

(Walsh, 2006)

'Language planning'

specific interventionist measures undertaken to achieve or implement such aims

(Walsh, 2006)



The desired outcome is the same: some sort of change to existing sociolinguistic situation

(Walsh & McLeod, 2008)

Language revitalisation

'not necessarily attempting to bring the language back to former patterns of familiar use, but rather to bring the language forward to new users and uses'

(Romaine, 2006)

Linguistic justice

'the just political management of the presence of different language groups within a political community'

(De Schutter & Robichaud, 2015)

The questions

“

How far are the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 instigating change to the existing sociolinguistic situation in Scotland?

”

“

Are the Acts succeeding in bringing Gaelic and BSL forward to new users and uses?

“

Is linguistic justice being achieved in the case of Gaelic and BSL in Scotland?

”

”



Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005

2005 asp 7



Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005

- Builds on policy infrastructure developed since 1980s
- Aims to secure the status of Gaelic as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect with the English language
- Scotland-wide in its reach, but less extensive provision expected in areas with few Gaelic speakers
- Establishes Bòrd na Gàidhlig as statutory agency to guide Gaelic development
- Bòrd must publish National Gaelic Language Plan every five years
- Bòrd may request any Scottish public authority to prepare a Gaelic language plan
- Applies to education provision on part of local authorities
- Although concerns about education were a main driver for the campaign for the Act, Act did not establish any rights in this regard



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BSL (Scotland) Act 2015



- Aims to promote use and understanding of BSL
- Requires the Scottish executive to prepare and publish a national plan in relation to BSL, which is expected to set out Scottish Government's BSL strategy
- Requires public authorities, defined as 'any body or office-holder (other than Scottish Ministers themselves) which is Scottish public authority with mixed functions or no reserved functions'
 - to prepare and publish own BSL plans
 - setting out measures to be taken in relation to the use of BSL
- Scottish Government must publish national plan every six years
- Similar to Gaelic, Act does not establish any rights in education, even though this was a key concern of deaf campaigners

(Analysis: De Meulder et al, 2019; Wilks, 2020)



Oversight



Bòrd na Gàidhlig



BSL National Advisory Group

21 individuals
11 BSL users
10 public body representatives

Formulated the National Plan

Deaf Sector Partnership



Effecting change, equality & access for BSL in Scotland

Implemented the National Plan

BSL Partners

British Deaf Association
Deaf Action
Deafblind Scotland
NDCS

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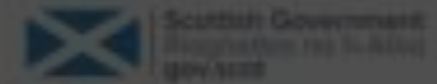


NATIONAL GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN 2018-2023

- 3 National Gaelic Language Plans since 2007
- progressively thinner and less concrete (specific actions, targets)
- 2018-2023 Plan: 'increasing the learning of Gaelic' as 1 of 3 main aims
- Priorities related to education
 - Using Gaelic
 - Initiatives which promote the use of Gaelic by young people
 - Learning Gaelic
 - Resources and support for learning
 - Gaelic in Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)
 - Gaelic medium education (GME) in primary and secondary schools
 - Gaelic learner education (GLE) in primary and secondary schools
 - Gaelic in Higher and Further Education



National plans



- Current plan 2017-2023
- Goals related to deaf education
 - Early Family resources in BSL: **Councils** (Goals 11-15)
 - **GTCS** to remove barriers for BSL users to become registered teachers (Goal 16)
 - **Education Scotland** to lead on work with parents who use BSL so they can get involved in their child's learning (Goals 20-21)
 - Scottish ministers to look into level of BSL held by teachers and support staff of deaf children in schools (Goal 17)
 - **Scottish Qualifications Authority** to develop an initial suite of awards in BSL
 - Scotland's National Centre for Languages (**SCILT**) to lead work to support BSL learning for hearing pupils. (Goals 23-24)
 - Scottish Funding Council to support colleges and universities in developing BSL plans (Goal 26)
 - **Student Award Agency Scotland (SAAS)** to offer accessible advice and guidance to students who use BSL (Goal 27).

Institutional plans



- c. 65 plans agreed, including 30 local authorities
- BnG responsible for monitoring and enforcing plans
- Scottish Government has its own plan, but also Education Scotland, SQA, SFC and other national bodies
- Key challenge: very few Gaelic speakers in many parts of the country (under 1% of population, only few hundred individuals)
- Sliding scale: varying levels of provision
- But general concern about weakness of plans, irrelevance in terms of core language planning objectives
- At least initially, some reticence on the part of institutions to engage with BSL Act
- SQA, GTCS, Education Scotland, SCILT, SFC and SAAS not required to produce their own plans
- Scottish Government decided single national plan would cover all national public bodies answerable to Scottish Ministers (Third, 2017)
- Inconsistent approach on institutional websites
- Websites do not yet reflect what has changed because of the plans
- No systematic monitoring of plans

Local plans: early years and school education



- Gaelic education (especially GME) expanded considerably since 2005 in terms of numbers
- But difficult to see direct benefits from Act
- Only one new local authority started offering GME since 2005 - but via Education (Scotland) Act 2016
- In addition to 15 local authorities that offer GME, another 15 have published Gaelic language plans But no commitments to begin offering GME
- Also do not offer Gaelic for learners
- Minimal role for Gaelic in 1+2 languages policy developed in recent years
- Sharp reduction in number of primary schools offering Gaelic to learners
- Family support, early learning and childcare in council plans
 - BSL as 'natural' for deaf children from deaf families (8%)
 - Lack of understanding of language acquisition time and role model skill level needed 0 – 5.
 - 40% of waking hours would be reasonable
 - BSL not provided as an immersion option
 - Dominant approach is to become fluent in spoken English
- School education in council plans
 - Equality Unit template
 - Deaf children learning BSL – not mentioned in Equality Unit template; many plans do not consider this important element; comparisons with Wales.

Educational provision in Scotland



Gaelic: 2020/21 figures

- 3,801 pupils in primary GME (61 schools/units in 15 local authorities)
- 1,474 pupils in secondary GME (32 schools in 12 local authorities)
- 75 primary schools in 7 local authorities offer Gaelic learners education [2013: 157 schools]
- 3,599 secondary Gaelic learners (32 schools in 8 local authorities)



BSL: 2019 figures

- 780 children severely or profoundly deaf age 0 – 18
- 104 use BSL at school
- 246 use Sign Supported English, i.e. spoken English with some signs from BSL. So potentially 45% of severely / profoundly deaf group use BSL
- 3 schools for deaf children (all primary)
- 18 resource base schools in 11 authorities / 32 (CRIDE data, 2020)
- 10 LAs offer BSL as L3 under 1+2 policy

Local plans: Post-school education



- Less attention to post-school education in Gaelic policy generally
- Gaelic plans by only 4 universities (Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, UHI) and 2 colleges
- These plus Strathclyde only institutions with substantial Gaelic provision
- No expansion via the Act
- Plans have led to increased bilingual signage, increased Gaelic social/cultural activity (e.g. Gaelic officers)
- Of 19 Scottish universities, 9 have well developed plans, UoE with BSL Officer
- 4 discuss classroom learning and arrangements for BSL students' support
- 5 have enhanced templates, many with good ideas about BSL student's journey
- Shortage of BSL/English Interpreters working outside the central belt
- 6 universities have recent or ongoing research about deaf BSL users
- 4 Edinburgh universities setting up agreement to work together re BSL and Deaf studies issues
- Universities could do more to promote BSL e.g. offer BSL for credit

Civil society



- Network of Gaelic organisations established especially since 1980s – active in arts and culture, community development etc.
- Funded via Bòrd na Gàidhlig (c. £3.5m/year for all external activities, including GLA Implementation Fund)
- Not directly related to Gaelic Act, although Bòrd aligns organisations' priorities with NGLP
- Taic Freumhan Coimhearsnachd – Bòrd grants for community activity
- Broadcasting is largest area of activity in terms of spend (c. £25m/year) but this unrelated to Act/Bòrd
- Funds given to Councils for producing draft and final plans in BSL.
- No government funds available for BSL education nor to develop BSL schools
- Dual category status (disability v language); disability model continues to prevail
- Ambiguous influence of charities for deaf people slowed progress made towards legal recognition of sign languages (Lawson et al, 2019); proven to be the case
 - Deaf Sector Partnership
 - Allocated £900,000 between 2015-2017 to:
 - support development of BSL National Advisory Group
 - support BSL users' involvement in developing BSL National Plan
 - support inclusion of Deafblind people
 - help public bodies to be more inclusive of BSL and meet duties under Act
 - Known projects
 - 10-weeks family sign language (NDCS)
 - Colleges and Universities Steering Group and support for deaf students (Deaf Action)
 - Deaf Roots and Deaf Pride project and apprenticeships (BDA)
 - Not clear how much was allocated to these organisations, and what funding was allocated post-2017

Government engagement



- Since 1986, Specific Grants for Gaelic Education have assisted local authorities with costs of Gaelic education, especially GME - £4.5m per year
- Gaelic Capital Fund to assist projects to build or redevelop Gaelic schools - £4.5m per year
- SFC makes £200,000 per year available for Gaelic education opportunities in further and higher education (SFC, 2021): Gaelic Language Act Implementation Fund
- Critique: Act has brought increased bureaucratisation that does not actually strengthen language
- Serious problems with management of Bòrd na Gàidhlig (strong criticism from Auditor General)
- Small, poorly funded, politically marginal body that has little bargaining power with public bodies
- Dedicated Gaelic & Scots Unit in Scottish Government, but very small, struggles to cover myriad policy areas
- Gaelic recognised as a ministerial responsibility, but very low priority
- Having the Scottish Government as responsible for monitoring could be more effective than a separate Bòrd na BSL.
- No money allocated other than for consultations, planning and translations to councils and Deaf Sector Partnership
- BSL skills gaps of ToDs requires funding to close
- October 21 review of First National BSL plan suggests civil servants now more engaged
- Early years 0 – 3 immersion in BSL remains an area not discussed by SG.

Conclusions



Institutional plans

- Councils often adopt similar language in both BSL and Gaelic language plans
- Councils rely on outside bodies for both BSL and Gaelic development
- Lack of Government funding mentioned in Gaelic and BSL plans
- Similar minimal initiatives, waiting for funding, expecting outside input rather than taking responsibility for language plans



Civil society

- Councils turn to charitable organisations to plug gap in services
- Gaelic community organisations widespread (but all publicly funded). For BSL, BDA is only deaf-led body of BSL users.



Government engagement

- Few new Gaelic policy initiatives in recent years
- Amendments to Education Acts about GME useful – BSL users could consider similar tactic.

Food for thought ...

- How far are the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 instigating change to the existing sociolinguistic situation in Scotland?
- Are the Acts succeeding in bringing Gaelic and BSL forward to new users and uses?
- Is linguistic justice being achieved in the case of Gaelic and BSL in Scotland?
- Is time ripe for legislative reform?
 - SNP manifesto undertakes to introduce Scottish Languages Bill ‘which takes further steps to support Gaelic, acts on the Scots language, and recognises that Scotland is a multilingual society’ – could this include BSL?

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