

Submission from Mr Hugh R McMahon, Lecturer in Politics and European Institutions

Submission to the External Affairs Committee.

The Macaulay report, on the provision of the teaching of modern languages in primary schools is an extremely visionary and pioneering document, which has gained considerable public support across the political parties in Scotland.

My own background of teacher, assistant head and member of the European Parliament has given me both the interest and background knowledge to offer the following submission to the committee.

Since retiring from education and public representation I have been involved with the CRCees a language based research initiative at the University of Glasgow where I have witnessed the benefits of language exposure to Scottish and other students.

I have been also part of the ongoing campaign to safeguard those Eastern European AND Slavonic languages at Scottish universities (see Petition 1395 current before the Public Petitions Committee)

General comments.

I think that the committee is correct to focus on the issues of funding and training and also to suggest which specific languages should be available for the Economic benefit of Scotland The results of the 2011 Census should be a good guide to what languages are spoken in Scotland and in what proportions

As the Recent figures for England and Wales discovered that Polish was the second language spoken in England (562, 000 cited Polish as their second language the Scottish figures are awaited with keen interest.

On the issue of Resources the Report does not specify how much should be allocated apart from suggesting that it should be twice or three times the current £4M.

It could be possible to supplement the amount spent by the Scottish government and local authorities by external grants from the cultural budgets of the country whose language is being taught I refer to the Haban,Russky Mir and the Sikorski and Goethe Institutes.

However there will be a serious requirement for a major increase in funding, particularly to finance the training of the additional teachers, necessary for this implementation of this scheme and this must be addressed with some urgency.

As far as the question of which modern languages should be available, there has been a significant change in the number of languages spoken in the world.

French which has been traditionally the first foreign language taught in schools in the United Kingdom does not make the list of the top ten most spoken languages in the world in three reference sources: 1) The Pearson Ethnological Study of 2012, the UNCR list of 2011 and the Jon say study on Google

According to these studies of the ten most spoken languages in descending order are Chinese, Spanish, English, Arabic, Hindi, Bengali, Portuguese, Russian, Japanese, German and French.

This surely should invite the Scottish government and the various educational bodies to re-examine the importance of offering French as the first foreign language.

Perhaps Spanish would be more appropriate?

On the issue of the role of languages in economic development and what languages should children be learning to benefit Scotland economically and to benefit their careers, I would suggest Chinese, Spanish, and a third language from either Hindi or Bengali, Arabic, Portuguese, Russian and Polish which is not in the top ten but we have 65,000 Polish speakers in Scotland and Scotland according to Scottish Enterprise has twice as much trade with Scotland than Australia.

Most of these languages are traditionally spoken in the BRIC group of countries, which possess the best opportunity for trade with Scotland.

As we are in a world where employment opportunities are worldwide, knowledge and expertise in some of these languages will enhance our young persons' future career opportunities.