

Building Resilience in Gaelic-speaking Communities

GOVERNANCE : AGENCY : PARTICIPATION

Iain Caimbeul – Research Fellow – University of the Highlands and Islands

Structure of talk

- Background statistics to provide context
- The '*Gaelic Crisis*' research and the '*Urras*' model characteristics
- Factors in setting up a Community-based Trust
- Some definitions
- Final thoughts

Gaelic Spoken in Households

<u>Local Authority</u>	<u>Total Population 3+</u>	<u>Gaelic Speakers</u>	<u>Gaelic Spoken at Home</u>	<u>% Gaelic of Total Pop.</u>	<u>Gaelic at Home as % of Speakers</u>	<u>% Gap: Reported Ability & Use</u>
Eilean Siar	26,929	14,066	10,882	52.2%	77%	23%
Highland	224,606	12,039	5,447	5.4%	45%	55%
Argyll & Bute	85,684	3,451	1,278	4.0%	37%	63%
Glasgow City	572,633	5,891	2,305	1.0%	39%	61%
Aberdeen City	215,597	1,628	405	0.8%	25%	75%
Edinburgh City	460,103	3,157	867	0.7%	27%	73%
Rest of Scotland	3,532,671	17,143	3,790	0.5%	22%	78%
Scotland Overall	5,118,223	55,935	24,974	1.1%	45%	55%

Source: NRS (Census 2011) Table DC2119SC

Eilean Siar: Trends in Gaelic Speakers in the 3-17 years population

<u>AREA</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>% Change 1981-2011</u>
Lewis	3,052	1,766	1,320	1,161	-62%
Harris	457	273	186	134	-71%
North Uist	350	195	195	114	-67%
Benbecula	258	177	131	120	-53%
South Uist	663	416	276	228	-66%
Barra and Vatersay	359	212	149	137	-62%
Total: Age 3-17 Population Speaks Gaelic	5,139	3,039	2,257	1,894	-63%
Total: Age 3-17 Population	7,453	5,995	4,870	4,592	-38%
% Total Population Speaks Gaelic	69%	51%	46%	41%	-28%

Source NRS: ADAPTED FROM TABLE CT_0079a_1981, 1991, 2001, and 2011. Age 3-17 Population Speaks Gaelic By Area

Key Policy Reform Points from *Gaelic Crisis* Research

- a) The vernacular Gaelic group is in crisis and is in advanced-stage language shift to English
- b) Current Gaelic policy is weakly relevant to this sociolinguistic crisis
- c) Policy reform should build the social capital and leadership capacity of the Gaelic community to address their sociolinguistic circumstances
- d) A re-adjustment of policy priorities should focus on the distribution of resources to protect the societal continuity of the vernacular group.

Gaelic Crisis Research & Community Conversations

- ❖ *“Within the remaining Gaelic vernacular communities of Scotland, the social use and transmission of Gaelic is at the point of collapse”.*
 - ❖ *“Without a re-orientation of public policy and interventions focused at the community level, the present Gaelic vernacular groups do not have the demographic or societal resources to sustain a communal presence in the islands beyond the next 10 years”.*
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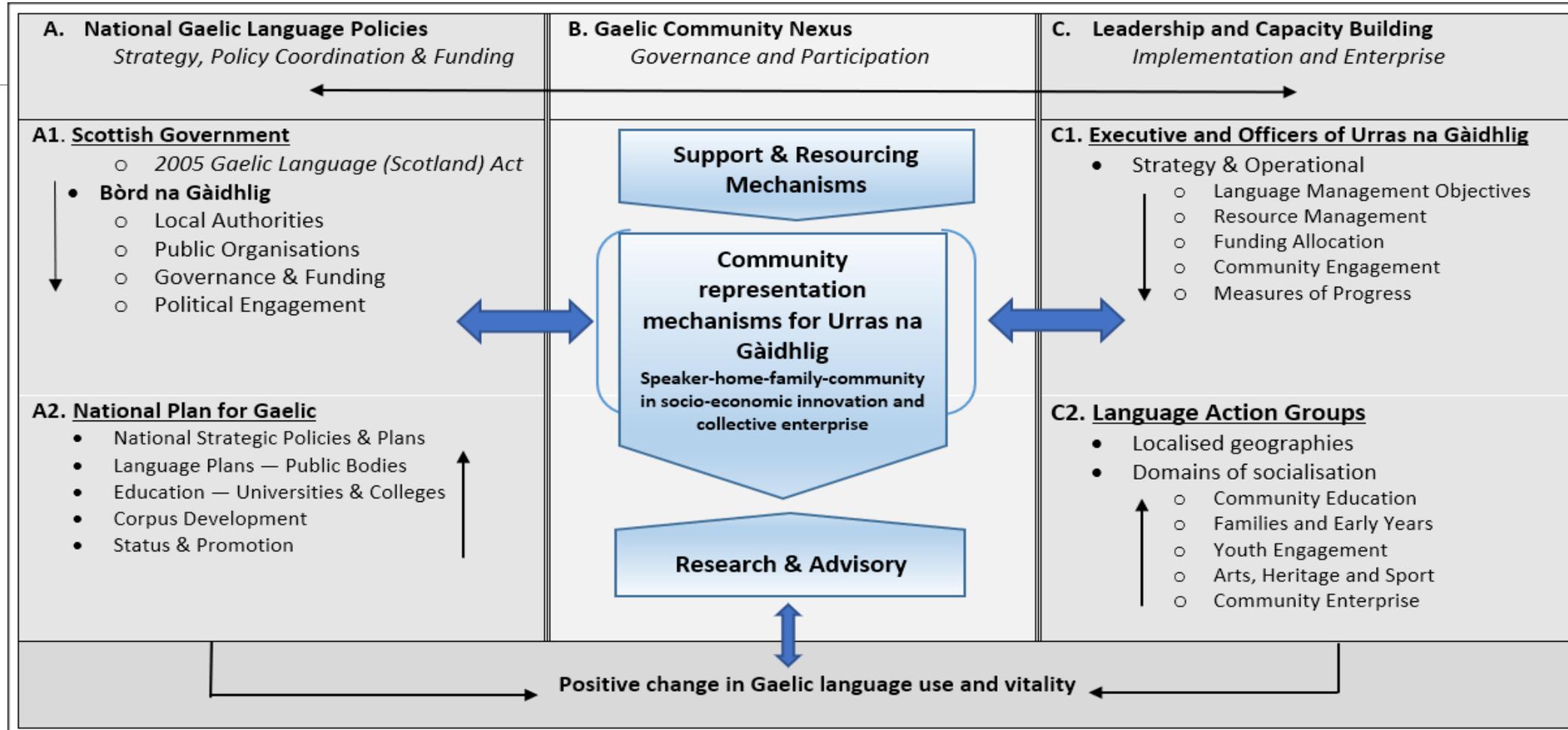
- ✓ *“The decline in ‘natural’ usage....represents the larger challenge for community usage.preserving Gaelic as a native language, acquired in the home and community, should be recognised as the primary aim of revitalisation efforts in the vernacular communities”.*
- ✓ *“The perceived threat to Gaelic’s position as a language of the home and community had two main drivers – the overall reduction in opportunities to speak Gaelic and low levels of confidence. Both factors represent a vicious circle where Gaelic-language ability suffers through infrequent and irregular use, which in turn erodes confidence and the will to engage in the language”.*

Recommendations from the Research & from Community

Gaelic Crisis Research: Proposed a New Model for community-led Gaelic revitalisation in the islands. *Urras na Gàidhlig* would be a community development Trust for the Gaelic-speaking Group.

Community Conversations: Urras na Gàidhlig – Most participants believed this idea should be explored further in terms of structure, membership and resource. Aspects of a decentralised structure, with power and resource equitably distributed and situated throughout affiliate communities, should be considered. Any trust should be inclusive and incorporate a holistic approach to the language in the community, for example addressing the language's place in land management, housing and economy. In this sense, it would be important to reflect how current organisations, such as community land trusts and heritage societies, could be involved from an early stage. Recognising high levels of volunteer fatigue, any exploration into the feasibility of a language trust should not be left to the communities to undertake.

A new model to support the vernacular community



General Principles which underpin the Model

- To strengthen social capital
- To build community resilience and leadership capacity
- To address community governance
- To recognise the centrality of community agency in implementing a new future

Success characteristics for model implementation

- Model agreed between policy-makers and the community should be one in which the community can integrate their own reality.
- Model should be based on knowledge and research relevant to each community and not chosen as a standard one-size-fits-all approach.
- Model should be developed through productive dialogue with the community.
- Model should be flexible to allow for adjustments during implementation.
- The model should reflect and include those elements essential for sociolinguistic transformation, thereby creating an environment which instils confidence in the process of change from the start.

What do we mean by.....

- Community Governance
- Community Agency (Empowerment)
- Community Resilience

Community Governance

Concept usually refers to community participation, engagement and decision-making in public matters.

[Community level management and decision-making that is undertaken by, with, or on behalf of a community, by a group of community stakeholders. The focus on 'community' rather than on a corporation, organisation, local government or the public sector is the distinguishing feature of community governance *vis a vis* these other forms of governance. (Totikidis, Armstrong & Francis, 2015)]

Community governance, by definition, is about community management and decision-making but also implicates the broader aims of addressing community needs and building capacity and well-being (in our case the future well-being of the Gaelic vernacular community).

Community Agency (Empowerment)

Public policy interface: recognising the value of communities and their ability to create sociolinguistic and socioeconomic change.

Theoretical assumption is that **communities of people possess agency** in the sociological sense: they have the ability to act and be agents of their own development. Place-based communities, with some support and initial encouragement from enabling public policy, can create their own development trajectories.

Agency is an *a priori* condition in individuals that enables and strengthens social capital and contributes to collective social agency (Dale and Onyx, 2005)

...‘the key variable which separates the older, positivistic/technicist approaches from the newer critical/postmodern ones is agency, that is, the role(s) of individuals and collectives in the processes of language use, attitudes and ultimately policies’. [Ricento (2000: 206)]

A number of authors (cf. Ricento 2006; Hornberger 2006; Cooper 1989) consider that agency is now seen as a significant variable alongside, *inter alia*, ideology and ecology, in approaches appropriate for contemporary language planning, with the grassroots role of individuals vital in influencing localised language interventions. [page 365, The Gaelic Crisis in the vernacular Community]

Community Resilience

Resilience has been described in many different way.....concept interdisciplinary and is evident in geography, economics, sociology, ecology, and disaster and natural hazard studies.

- Multiple interpretations and not a singular or fixed entity.

Community resilience is perceived to promote greater well-being by creating common objectives and encouraging community members to work together for the common good of their place (Aked, Marks, Cordon and Thompson, 2010).

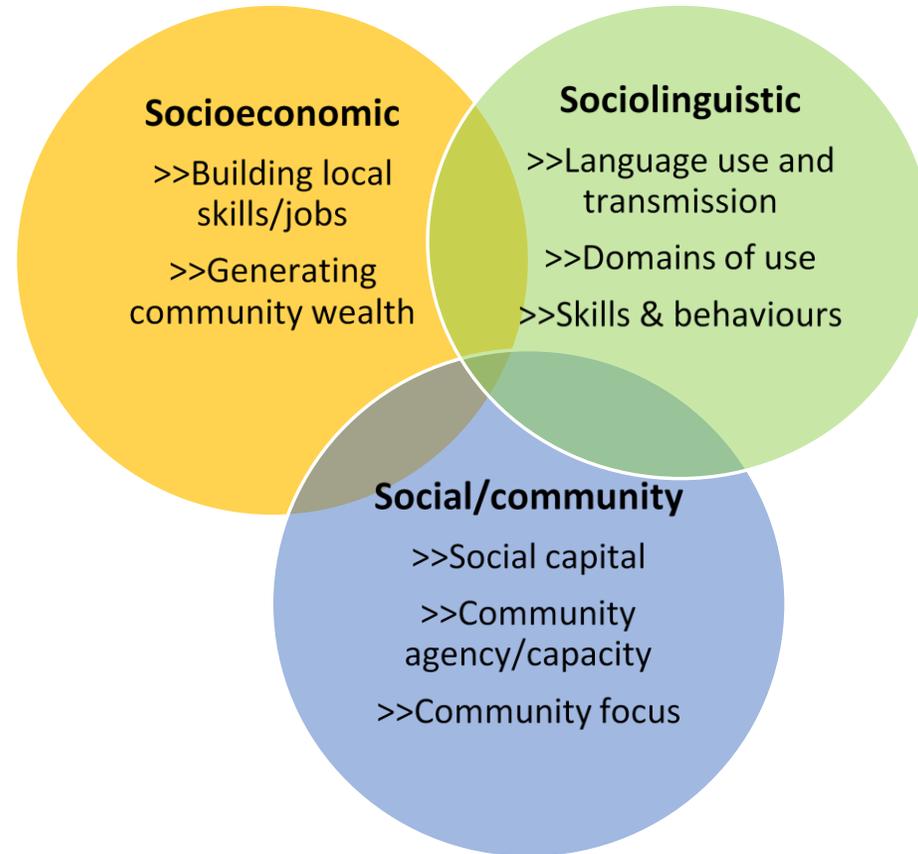
“.....definition offered by Magis (2010, p. 402) who suggests that “members of resilient communities intentionally develop personal and collective capacity that they engage to respond to and influence change, to sustain and renew the community and to develop new trajectories for the communities’ future.” Magis introduces a new understanding of community resilience by including human agency (collectively and individually), proactivity, and social capital”.

Quoted in Marianna Markantoni, Artur Adam Steiner & John Elliot Meador (2019). Can community interventions change resilience?

[Resilience indicators: Sociolinguistic resilience Index of the Gaelic vernacular community?]

Community-based language development is holistic....

...it is results based; it works from the inside out and from the bottom up; it is language-aware; and it is empowering. [Lewis and Simons (2016)]



Stèidheachadh Urras Leasachaidh

Two sets of inter-related issues in creating a Trust:

- How to create an organisation that is of real benefit to local people
- How to create an organisation which is financially sustainable

Some points to consider:

- What is the principal Purpose of the Trust?
- Is a Trust required to fulfil that Purpose – advantages and disadvantages?
 - Important to ask whether an existing organisation does the job/can do the job, or whether some other arrangement would work
- How will the wider community be involved?
- What are the critical success factors?
- What skills and funds will be required to get started?
- Sustainability: will the community be able to keep the Trust going?

Success Factors

- Establish clear objectives
- Involve the whole community
- Establish clear legal and management structure
- Gain Local Authority/other Public Bodies' support
- Engage good people in the enterprise
- Choose the early projects/interventions carefully
- Be business-like from the beginning
- Communicate effectively
- Plan to stay in business for the long-term
- Take a balanced and measured approach

Skills and funds for start-up

A start-up budget will be required for:

- ❑ Recruitment of a Development Officer/Manager
- ❑ Communication materials and events
- ❑ Specialist advice for projects
- ❑ Legal advice and incorporation
 - ❑ <https://www.oscr.org.uk/>
 - ❑ OSCR is the independent Regulator and registrar for Scotland's charities, including community groups, religious charities, schools, universities, grant-giving charities, and major care providers.

Sustainability (some issues to consider)

- Trusts are not a magic solution to solve social and/or sociolinguistic problems.
 - *How to find funds to develop projects; provide services; engage productively with communities; and keep staff employed.*
- Core funding required for the long-term.
 - *Problems arise when funders withdraw or taper off funds.....or maintain short-term project cycles.*
- Trusts have advantages in that they can package funds sources and in-kind support from various sources.
 - *Ability to be innovative.*
- Trusts are fulfilling a social purpose (Gaelic a public good) and many activities are unlikely to be profitable.
 - *Business plan which can balance objectives and costs critical.*
- Building up an asset base such as land and/or building which can yield income.

The Charity Test

The charity test is the legal set of requirements that an organisation must pass to become a charity and be entered in the Scottish Charity Register. The charity test is in two main parts:

1. an organisation has to show that it has only charitable purposes; and
2. that it provides public benefit in achieving those purposes

Public benefit is what your organisation must provide to satisfy the Charity Test. OSCR will need to be satisfied that the organisation will make a positive difference for the public.

The charity test also states that an organisation cannot become a charity, or continue to be one, if:

- it is set up to be or advance a political party
- its governing document allows it to use its assets (cash or property) for non charitable purposes
- its governing document allows Scottish Ministers to direct or control its activities.

ARTICLES of ASSOCIATION

A Registered Trust will require to have Articles of Association, which need to be registered and approved by the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR)

THE COMPANIES ACT 2006
COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE AND NOT HAVING A SHARE CAPITAL
ARTICLES of ASSOCIATION
Of
Xxxxxxx

Objects

- 1 *The company's objects are the advancement of education, of the arts, heritage and culture and of community development through the advancement, promotion and development of activities associated with the Gaelic language, Gaelic education, arts and cultural heritage among Gaelic speakers and learners and the general public of xxxxxxx.*

Principal aims of the Urras model

- a) To develop a resource-backed strategic facility for the Gaelic community in order to enable them to improve their societal condition in a cooperative way
- b) To protect the social presence of Gaelic in the islands from sociolinguistic habitat loss
- c) To enhance the social viability of Gaelic as a core component of island life and identity.

[page 426, The Gaelic Crisis]

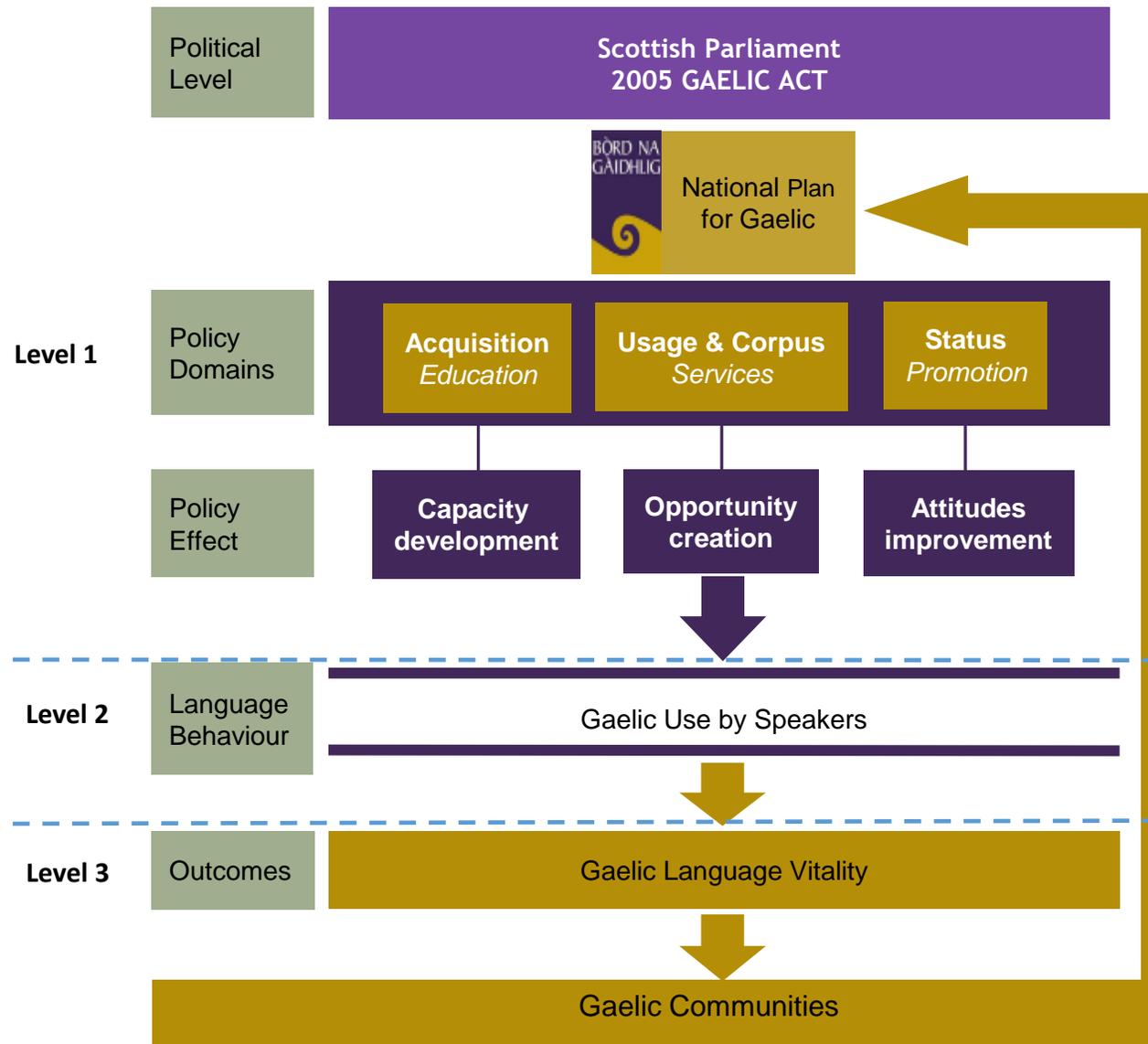
Stakeholder groups needed to initiate change

A number of key stakeholder groupings will initially be central to creating a collegiate and productive public debate. These include:

- a) Local individuals who hold positions of influence and leadership within their communities
- b) Individuals with responsibility to enact change from within the formal policy structures of Scottish Government, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and local public bodies
- c) Research bodies with knowledge and expertise on the societal condition of the Gaelic-speaking group.

[page 435, The Gaelic Crisis]

Gaelic language development and the pathway-to-outcomes model



Without a radical change in policy direction Gaelic will soon cease to exist as a community language in any part of Scotland.

In light of the critical challenge, it is clear that clinging to the current *status quo* in language planning and policy is not a credible option.

Indeed, there is no sense in continuing to rely on vague under-informed aspirations on which much of the existing Gaelic policy framework is based.

[page 442, The Gaelic Crisis]

Source: adapted from Grin, 2003. Language Policy Evaluation and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Agus mu Dheireadh

1. A focus on headlines of progress is “crowding out” fundamental questions on **language capability/competence and use** within communities. ***A Language First*** narrative.
2. **Developmental objectives not “fully proofed”** on their impact on minority language development efforts.
3. Public policy emphasis heavily skewed towards **status, symbolism and commercialisation** (*appropriation of Gàidhlig cultural/heritage dimensions*) with functioning core language communities a secondary priority. The “normalisation” of **Gàidhlig use** is not **embedded** within community to effect sustainable change.
4. Need to **strengthen the vitality of Gaelic as a community language** vs formal language of school and institutions.
5. Resource and policy management of **GME provision at Secondary School level requires prioritisation** and change.
6. Need to fully recognise the **power of the arts and cultural heritage** to shift attitudes/motivations towards Gaelic.
7. Language Plan activities not fully recognising the **complexity** of managing/directing/planning community development dynamics.
8. Gaelic language plans at regional and sub-regional levels not fully addressing factors of competence, opportunity and motivation/desire within communities to use Gaelic on a daily basis. ***Living lives through Gaelic.***
9. A shift of focus from the **“collective”** to **“individualisation”** is accelerating Gaelic language shift.
10. Support needed for a network of **Gaelic Community Trusts/Hubs**: a strategic element>>>transformation>>>
(a)“Gaelic vernacular sustainability”>>>(b)sustainability of learner community.

Tapadh leibh!

Post-d: iain.caimbeul@uhi.ac.uk