

Seeking teachers' views regarding literacy resources in Gaelic Medium Education

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Project summary

Although there is a recognised and documented need for specific forms of language assessment (such as reading tests), less well understood is what teachers seek for regular use within Gaelic medium education. This project used a focus group to seek teachers' views of literacy resources within Gaelic medium education.

Rationale

There is a recognised need for support materials in Gaelic medium education (GME) (Lyon & MacQuarrie, 2014; MacLulich, 2014), in particular those aimed at supporting pupils' literacy skills. There is an abundance of educational resources available in English, some of which can be successfully translated or adapted for use in GME. However, literacy materials are particularly vulnerable and likely to suffer from translation (unlike say materials aimed at numeracy). Thus, the aim of the study was to consider literacy resources within GME, seeking teachers' views, which could inform future educational resources and contribute to future research. A workshop and seminar held at a conference in 2013 indicated the interest in holding such discussions with GME teachers (Lyon & MacQuarrie, 2013) and other research conducted on a national scale demonstrated teachers' eagerness to share their experiences in order to support the development of materials being readied for use in their classrooms (Lyon & MacQuarrie, 2014).

Research process and participants

A focus group was held at the annual conference for GME teachers, An t-Alltan, in October 2014. At this annual event, teachers come together from a variety of authorities offering the researchers insight into different practice across Scotland. Seven participants volunteered to take part and this allowed a range of professionals to be involved, whose breadth of experience contributed to a group discussion.

Findings and interpretation

The study identified a number of themes. Teachers commented on the availability of literacy resources; the lack of such material was a barrier recognised to influence children's learning in the classroom and at home. Electronic resources were flagged as a potential avenue to address such limitations. Teachers commented that developing resources for use in the classroom was a particular feature of their experience, requiring specific skills and considerable time over the school year. However, teachers also noted their hesitancy and reluctance to share materials they had developed with their colleagues. One avenue to counter this was warmly received and teachers agreed they would be responsive if a simple medium to share resources was made available but that it should also include a form of quality assurance to support teachers.