

**Provision Of Modern Foreign Languages For Lower  
Achievers And Pupils With Special Educational Needs  
In Secondary Schools  
In England, Scotland And The Czech Republic.**

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**MA MEd**

**This Thesis Is Submitted In Fulfilment Of The  
Requirements For The Degree Of**

**M.Litt**

**To The University Of Glasgow**

**The Research Was Conducted In The Faculty Of  
Education**

**May 2008**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated the inclusion of all pupils in Modern Foreign Language (MFL) learning in secondary schools until 2004 in three countries: namely England, Scotland and the Czech Republic.

The study aimed to explore how the educational systems in these three countries catered for lower achievers, including pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in the MFL learning environment in secondary schools. It was of particular interest to seek evidence from educational practitioners that showed which models of good practice and barriers to the integration of lower achieving pupils including those with SEN, could be found in the different educational systems in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic and then to discover what could be learned from the different systems. The study considered the influences that led to all pupils having the opportunity to learn a MFL in secondary schools up the end of compulsory education in each country involved in the study.

The three chosen countries in this study had all experienced a great deal of change in terms of MFL teaching and learning and also in the field of SEN. Through an analysis of literature, the study outlined the developments that had taken place in recent years in MFL teaching and learning and in the field of special educational needs in the three countries.

In order to understand the day-to-day practice in MFL classrooms, the study drew on evidence collected in sixty-four standardised open-ended interviews. Participants included Educational Advisers, Headteachers, Heads of MFL Departments, Principal Teachers and classroom teachers. Through the analysis of the data collected, the study attempted to make sense of the different points of view that were expressed during the fieldwork interviews.

The data collected illustrated that there was a variety of provision for lower achievers, including pupils with SEN not only across each country but also within these countries and indeed across educational Authorities in certain countries. There was inequality of provision.

Contradictory comments regarding the purpose and usefulness of MFL learning for all pupils up to the age of sixteen years, in secondary schools, highlighted the complexity of educational innovations.

While there was evidence to suggest that the inclusion of all pupils in MFL learning up to the age of sixteen years old had been successful, it was clear that different influences had led to contrary suggestions that this success had been elusive. Despite the expression of extreme views for and against the situation, there was remarkable similarity in the general content of the teachers' comments, indicating some convergence in thinking.

Key factors and themes that influenced the process of the successful implementation of including all pupils up to the age of sixteen years in the MFL classroom were identified. Factors that hindered the process were also revealed.

## **Acknowledgements**

It has been a very long journey from starting this study towards completion. Along the way, I met many interesting people and learned a great deal. I thank all the people who helped and encouraged me to persevere with this study.

In particular I thank my supervisors Hazel Crichton, Brian Templeton and Dr. Alastair McPhee for expert advice and guidance. I thank Professor Stephen Baron who supervised and encouraged me in my work. I thank him especially for introducing me to Jana, my Czech interpreter and for making the arrangements for her to be paid by Glasgow University.

I thank most sincerely everyone who agreed to be interviewed to share their views on MFL teaching and learning and participate in this study including three MFL Advisers and the Director of SCILT. I would like to record my gratitude to the following schools for allowing access to interview educational practitioners in the fieldwork interviews:

St. Andrew's Secondary School, Eastbank Academy, Holyrood Secondary School, St. Maurice's High School, Dalziel High School, Arran High School and Auchinharvie Academy in Scotland, St. Augustine's RC Secondary School, Scalby School, St. Peter's Secondary School, St. Thomas Becket High School, St. Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic High School and Halewood Community Comprehensive in England, Josefska High School, Ohradni School, Brandys School and Carlov School in the Czech Republic.

This study has been a fascinating voyage of discovery on which I have travelled from North Yorkshire around England and Scotland, from Scottish Islands to Prague and Central Bohemia in the Czech Republic.

I thank my husband, my sister and all my family for encouraging me to reach the end of this project.

This study is dedicated to my mum and dad, Margaret and Donald. Their love, inspiration and encouragement have been my guiding light not only throughout this work, but for all of my life.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction To The Study

In 2004, the European Union (EU) welcomed ten new Member States and enlarged to include twenty five Member States. The new EU became home to 450 million Europeans from diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The European Commission (2003) report on *Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity* suggests that it is more important than ever that citizens have the skills necessary to understand and communicate with their neighbours; learning and speaking other languages encourages us to become more open to others, their cultures and outlooks and the citizen with good language skills is better able to take advantage of the freedom to work or study in another Member State. The ability to understand and communicate in other languages is a basic skill for all European citizens (European Commission, 2003).

Having taught languages in secondary schools in England at the time when it became compulsory for all pupils to learn a Modern Foreign Language (MFL) up to the age of sixteen, I worked closely with lower achieving pupils for many years. When I began to teach MFLs in Scotland I gained more experience of teaching MFLs to lower achievers, I began to compare my teaching experiences and became interested in discovering more about the provision of Modern Foreign Languages (MFLs) for lower achievers and pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in mainstream secondary schools in England and Scotland. I decided that it would be interesting to include the Czech Republic in the study as it was one of the first Eastern European countries to accede to the EU in 2004 and I was interested to discover how the approach to MFL learning for lower achievers and pupils with SEN compared with that in the United Kingdom.

This introductory chapter is in two parts. Part One provides an overview of the purpose and aims of the study. The rationale behind the decision to compare different education systems is considered and the choice of countries involved in the study is explained. There is a brief description of the content of each chapter

in the study. Part Two offers reasons why it is important to learn MFLs in general, explores how MFLs are promoted in Europe and considers why it is important for all pupils including those with SEN to learn MFLs. The chapter raises issues concerning provision and support for SEN pupils in schools and in MFL Departments. The focus group for this study is defined as lower achievers and pupils with SEN. There was some variance in definition and terminology used in each country but despite this variation, and it might be argued confusion, surrounding who was categorised as having SEN, all of the educational practitioners interviewed recognised that the target group for this thesis were indeed the lower achieving pupils. The needs of the children in this category in their schools included those with learning difficulties, physical disabilities, behavioural and/or emotional difficulties. Whether the pupils had a Statement of Need in England, a Record of Need in Scotland, or a specific detailed report from the Czech Republic, the key aim of this research was to include these children and those who were in the lower 20% of achievers in schools. The importance of having an appropriate curriculum, methodology, and teaching and learning strategies were highlighted and the issue of assessment was raised.

There are two specific Research Questions in this study and these are included at the end of this chapter.

## **Part One**

### **Purpose and Aims of the Study**

It was the intention of this study to discover what MFL provision was available for lower achievers, including pupils with SEN, in secondary schools in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic until 2004. The specific focus of the project was to discover how a sample of educational practitioners viewed provision of MFL teaching and learning for lower achievers, including pupils with SEN, in mainstream secondary schools in their countries from 2001-2002. The study gathered their views on the thinking regarding the inclusion of all pupils up to the age of sixteen years old in MFL learning and provision of the support for learning MFLs available in individual schools. Teaching and learning strategies in MFL classrooms and assessment issues in MFL learning with regard to lower

achievers and pupils with SEN were discussed. The research investigated ways of achieving success for lower achievers and pupils with SEN. Models of good practice and perceived problems in both teaching and learning MFLs specifically to lower achievers and pupils with SEN were discussed.

There was evidence of a gulf between theory and practice regarding MFL learning and there was a divergence of views concerning the perceived value of MFL learning for lower achievers and pupils with SEN. By exploring how the education systems in the three chosen countries catered for lower achievers and pupils with SEN in the MFL learning environment, the study aimed to discover which models of good practice and which barriers to the integration of lower achieving pupils, including pupils with SEN, were found in the different educational systems in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic and to consider what could be learned from the different systems to improve current practice in schools in the United Kingdom.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Through the experience of working as a Modern Languages teacher in England, I established that the requirement of learning a MFL up to the age of sixteen years was often problematic for lower achievers and pupils with SEN. In order to seek ways of improving provision for this group of pupils in MFL classrooms in the secondary school in which I taught, I decided to undertake a comparative study that would illustrate firstly through a study of the relevant literature, how different education systems incorporated MFL learning and programmes for lower achievers and pupils with SEN in secondary schools. Interviews with a sample of educational advisers and educational practitioners using standardised open-ended interviews aimed at discovering their views of the reality of day-to-day practice with lower achievers and pupils with SEN in MFL classrooms in secondary schools, were also included in this study.

### **Background to the Study**

Interest in pursuing this research began through a desire to improve MFL provision for the lower achievers in the school in which I taught in the 1990s. As

a MFL teacher of twenty years experience, I spent the first thirteen years of my career working in England where I found myself in the position of Head of Modern Languages in a school in North Yorkshire, in 1989. This was a time of considerable change in the subject area.

At that time, the MFL Department in which I was working, like all MFL Departments in England, was faced with many challenges, mainly focusing on the preparation for and implementation of National Curriculum requirements for MFLs and the successful implementation of Languages for All. In England, the term Languages for All was used in schools to signify that, following the requirement of the 1988 Education Reform Act, all pupils in secondary schools would study a MFL.

The requirement of the 1988 Education Reform Act that from September 1992, all Year 7 pupils would study a MFL was seen by some people as a welcome opportunity to extend provision so that all pupils, including those with SEN, would benefit from learning a MFL. The principle of an entitlement to Modern Foreign Language learning for all pupils was welcomed, not only by the Working Group on National Curriculum provision for MFL, but also by many teachers working in both special and mainstream schools (DES 1990).

It was suggested that the inclusion of a MFL as a Foundation subject in the National Curriculum underlined the belief that all pupils could benefit greatly from learning how to understand and use a second language (Moon, 2001). National Curriculum for MFL 11 – 16 (1990) states that:

**In principle, all pupils with special educational needs should have the opportunity to experience a modern foreign language.**

(NCC 1990, 13.3)

Debates in conferences for Heads of the MFL Departments in North Yorkshire, which I attended, suggested that in 1990 certain MFL colleagues did not agree with the views stated by the National Curriculum Council. These views appeared to be echoed throughout the country. Some teachers said that in their schools

colleagues did not feel that it would be possible to teach a MFL to all pupils in secondary schools and thought that learning a MFL was an academic subject suited only to academically gifted pupils. There were several reasons suggested formally and informally to support this idea including the view that it was too difficult for many pupils to understand, too academically demanding, irrelevant for lower achievers and a waste of teacher and pupil time when more time should be allocated to extra English or Maths lessons for lower achievers.

Languages for All involved other issues including the lack of suitable teaching materials for lower achievers. Traditionally text books and support materials were produced with high achieving pupils in mind, therefore, the lack of available resources was an issue that concerned many teachers. In some meetings discipline was raised as an area of concern. In general MFLs had been taught to a group of high achieving pupils who were anxious to succeed in exams. With such classes the view was expressed that there would usually be order, hard work and co-operation in a calm atmosphere. Many MFL teachers until 1990 had enjoyed teaching highly disciplined, respectful pupils and now had to contemplate teaching all pupils, many of whom were low achievers. Certain teachers were concerned that it would be very difficult to engage pupils with learning difficulties, behavioural problems and emotional difficulties in MFL learning and that mixed ability groups would have a detrimental effect on the “high flyers” because teachers would have to spend time in class dealing with behaviour issues which would reduce effective teaching time.

It was suggested by some teachers that the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations were inappropriate for the full range of ability. The question of motivation of pupils would have to be addressed. The further issue of a lack of suitably qualified teachers would mean an increase in class sizes.

Whilst certain teachers voiced such concerns and fears, there were others who welcomed the proposals for all pupils to learn a MFL. In recognising that change may not be easy, these teachers looked forward to the challenge and thought that the problems raised by colleagues could be overcome.

It was felt that MFL Departments could teach the full ability range as did their colleagues in other subject departments. Most teachers in favour of Languages for All assumed that appropriate resource materials and money to buy such materials would become available. While recognising that MFL teachers traditionally did not have a lot of experience teaching the full range of ability up to sixteen years old, it was felt that they could improve their skills by attending training courses. Many teachers also thought that including all pupils in the school in MFL learning could provide job opportunities. Whatever the problems and areas for concern in England, the schools did not have a choice of introducing Languages for All as the National Curriculum was a statutory requirement in England.

National Curriculum MFL requirements were implemented in schools and all pupils studied a MFL up to the age of sixteen years. By 1997 colleagues in the MFL Department in which I taught had decided, through experience, that the lower achievers were not motivated to learn a MFL by following the GCSE Foundation Level course. One of the main problems that the department faced was trying to encourage pupils to enjoy their MFL learning where the work they were doing was on the whole achievable for most of them; they were gaining high marks for their tasks in class but their overall Grades in the final exam would be D,E,F or G. and in most cases Grade F or G. It seemed to be that the possibility of only being able to achieve the lower grades was a demotivating factor. Many pupils felt that this was a certificate of failure. As an alternative to the GCSE Foundation level course the department worked on Units of Accreditation from North Yorkshire with lower achievers in their final two years of study which meant that after each unit of work, which lasted six or eight weeks, pupils would achieve a certificate, validated by North Yorkshire, for each unit of work. The pupils could work at their own pace and achieve the number of certificates appropriate to their ability ensuring that they could achieve recognition for their efforts. This was fairly successful and was felt appropriate for the needs of lower achievers.

As there was a suggestion that these Units of Accreditation might be phased out which would lead to more changes in MFL teaching and learning, as Head of Department I decided that it would be interesting to look further than North Yorkshire to discover what other teachers were doing to encourage and motivate

lower achievers and pupils with SEN in their MFL Departments. These factors were the catalyst for the study. It seemed that there was a lack of research concerning MFL provision for lower achievers and pupils with SEN and:

**there was a need to provide for modern foreign language teachers, particularly in mainstream schools, access to information and advice which would support their efforts to cater for a wider range of pupils than they had been used to in the past.**

(McColl et al 1997, pg.5)

At the same time as major changes were occurring in MFL teaching and learning in England, other countries were also introducing new strategies and areas for development in MFL teaching and learning. It was decided that it would be valuable to do a comparative study involving three countries. The following section explains why it was important and beneficial to conduct a comparative educational study.

### **Why Compare?**

It was useful to discover how other systems were operating in order to take decisions, informed by evidence, that could lead to:

- course improvement to decide what instructional material and methods had been successful, and where change was needed;
- decisions taken about individuals: identifying the needs of the pupil with a view to planning his/her instruction.

This study sought to compare various systems of provision of MFL learning for lower achievers and pupils with SEN in mainstream secondary schools in three countries in order to consider how lower achieving pupils, including pupils with SEN, were taught MFLs in secondary schools. From the investigation it could be possible to identify areas that could be developed in the education system in order to improve MFL teaching and learning for pupils with SEN in classrooms.

Before various other education systems were explored in the context of MFL for lower achievers and pupils with SEN, it was important to firstly consider why it is interesting to study education systems and circumstances in a comparative context. Crossley and Watson (2003) argue that in the literature on comparative education there are four main justifications for the comparative study of education systems other than mere curiosity and these have traditionally been seen as a way to:

- **gain a better understanding of one's own system**
- **lead to educational development, improvement or reform at home or abroad**
- **encourage the development of knowledge, theories and principles about education generally, and about the relationship between education and society**
- **promote improved international understanding and co-operation through increased sensitivity to differing world views and cultures.**

(Crossley and Watson 2003, pg.19)

The first two claims would appear to be particularly relevant to this study.

As early as 1900 Sadler (in Higginson 1979) stated that:

**the practical value of studying in a right spirit and with scholarly accuracy the working of foreign systems of education is that it will result in our being better fitted to understand our own.**

(Sadler 1900 cited in Higginson 1979, pg. 50)

Kandel (1993) agrees that the study of foreign systems of education means a critical approach and a challenge of one's own philosophy and therefore a

clearer analysis of the background and basis underlying the educational system of one's own nation.

Tretheway (1976) suggests that in the first place, if the study of education cross-nationally leads to sustainable generalisations or principles about education, as Kandel suggests, it follows that the application of the principles or the testing of generalisations in the home system may well lead to a "better understanding" of it. Therefore, studies in comparative education may produce both forms of analysis and accumulated knowledge that may be very helpful in understanding the working of education at home. With these ideas in mind, it would seem appropriate that students interested in education should consider other systems not only to discover how they operate but also to develop analytical skills, the ability to search for patterns, trends, generalisations and ideas that can be applied to their work and to education at home.

Since this study was exploratory, looking for examples of best practice of MFL provision for lower achievers and pupils with SEN, the second claim that comparative education could lead to educational development, improvement or reform at home or abroad seems straightforward in that, by considering how similar issues are dealt with in various educational systems, it may be possible to discover more efficient methods and more effective practices which could be introduced into the existing system, whether at home or abroad, to improve provision. In the case that examples of best practice emerge, it would be sensible to look for reasons, possibly methods of teaching or attitudes to learning that helped to achieve higher results which could then be developed to enhance educational provision in this area.

Crossley and Watson's third claim that comparative study of education systems encourage the development of knowledge, theories and principles regarding education generally and the relationship between education and society seems to highlight the importance of comparative educational studies not being limited to descriptions of similarities and differences between situations, but moving into the wider field of seeking explanations or interpretations of policies or tendencies, where such studies could explore the relationship between the

attitudes and values of societies, and aspects of education that are being considered.

In relation to their fourth claim that comparative education may encourage international understanding and co-operation, the investigation of different educational experiences in various nations may help to remove ignorance of culture and attitudes and the researcher can progress from being a mere educational tourist, as it were, towards someone who is seeking information that will lead to the development of his/her own educational system and seek to promote greater understanding of other people, other cultures and traditions, whilst at the same time discovering more about his/her own educational system and culture.

The importance of comparative education is highlighted by UNESCO in its analysis of educational trends in its World Education Report in 1993 which stated that at a time when profound changes were occurring in the whole structure of global, economic, social and cultural relations, and the role of education in these changes was coming to be recognised as fundamental, all countries could only benefit from knowing more of the cultural premises of each other's education (UNESCO 1993).

One major change which has shaped MFL teaching and learning in recent years in England and Scotland was the inclusion of all pupils in secondary schools up to the age of sixteen years in MFL learning which was phased in from 1989 until 2004 in England and from 1992 until the time of the study in Scotland. In the Czech Republic changes in MFL teaching and learning have occurred since the Velvet Revolution in 1989.

### **The Choice Of Countries**

The countries selected for this project were England, Scotland and the Czech Republic. A characteristic that was common to the education systems in the three countries was change. Significant changes had taken place in MFL teaching and learning and also in the provision for pupils with SEN in the

countries involved in this study; these changes are outlined in detail later in the thesis. In each country there was evidence of multilingualism in their societies and also specific legislation or recommendation regarding foreign language learning in schools.

### **Languages In Society**

In England, English is the recognised official language for professional, administrative and legal purposes, though this is not enforced by a written constitution. According to the Nuffield Foundation for Educational Research NFER (1996), nearly two hundred different languages are in use among minority groups resident in England. Significant numbers speak Urdu, Gujarati, Bengali, Punjabi and Cantonese; smaller numbers speak Greek, Hindi, Italian, Spanish and Turkish; other languages are used by very small numbers.

In Scotland, English is the recognised official language for professional, administrative and legal purposes. Gaelic and Scots are also recognised as national languages but with small numbers of speakers. Significant numbers of people speak the various languages of their ethnic origin. Minority ethnic cultures in Scotland derive predominately from India, Pakistan and China (Livingston 1999). Lesser numbers derive from Italy, Spain and Greece.

In the Czech Republic although constitutional laws do not declare the use of any specific language as official, Czech is used exclusively for administrative and legal purposes throughout the country. However, national and ethnic minorities are guaranteed the use of their languages for relations with governmental bodies, in legal affairs, and in education. NFER (1996) states that the proportion of national minorities is very small, in fact, Czech is the mother tongue of ninety-five per cent of the population. The principal minority languages are Slovak, Polish and German. Smaller numbers speak Hungarian and Ukranian. Most speakers of these languages are bilingual both in speech and literacy (NFER 1996).

## **Foreign Language Education**

In England, legislation introduced in 1991 required all secondary students aged eleven to sixteen to study at least one foreign language, and prescribed the structure and content of language teaching, as well as the languages that could be offered. This study considered the developments in MFL provision for lower achievers and pupils with SEN in secondary schools until 2004 when a significant change in legislation required all pupils to study a MFL up to the end of Key Stage 3, when pupils were fourteen years old. All pupils were still entitled to study a MFL up to sixteen years old but were no longer legally required to do so.

In Scotland the curriculum was not laid down by law, but advice on the secondary school curriculum was given to all schools by Learning and Teaching Scotland. Since 1992 all pupils were entitled to study at least one foreign language up to the age of sixteen years old in secondary schools.

In the Czech Republic legislation prescribed the structure and content of language teaching. According to the 1995 Amendment of the Education Act, from September 1997 the first foreign language was obligatory for all pupils from the age of nine, in primary school. This continued until the upper secondary level, from age fifteen to nineteen when the study of two foreign languages was compulsory. Foreign language teaching was provided in state schools according to curricula elaborated by a team of specialists including teacher trainers and experienced teachers and approved by the Ministry of Education. The curricular documents also contained guidance for teaching and assessment criteria.

## **Trends In Language Education**

Closer ties and increased trade with other European countries exerted a positive influence on views of the usefulness of language learning and have led to many positive initiatives, for example those promoted through the collaboration of education and industry in England (NFER 1996). However, it seemed that the attitudes of many English speakers to learning languages were still likely to be governed by the knowledge that English is an internationally used language. NFER (1996) suggests that the introduction of compulsory foreign language

learning in secondary schools enhanced its status as a school subject, but there remained uncertainty about the impact this would have on promoting pupils' foreign language competence. The demands of implementing The National Curriculum in schools in England also restricted opportunities for learning second and third foreign languages because the time allocation required for compulsory subjects reduced the curriculum time available for non compulsory subjects such as second and third foreign languages.

In Scotland at the time of the study all pupils in the last two years of primary school learned a MFL. In secondary schools many Principal Teachers felt that the policy of Languages For All, which made it compulsory for most, if not all, students to continue studying a MFL until the end of their fourth year in secondary school, has had a demotivating effect on able students (McPake et al 1999). Despite the positive influence of closer ties with European countries, there seemed to be a decline in the uptake of foreign language learning in the post sixteen age range. The Nuffield Languages Inquiry (NLI) (2000) report, *Languages: The next generation* and the Action Group for Languages (AGL) (2000) report *Citizens of a Multilingual World* recognised that if more people in England and Scotland were to take up opportunities to learn languages then social attitudes needed to change. McPake (2003) suggests that there was a need to convince people in the United Kingdom that languages could be useful to them and that they would be successful if they tried to learn another language. NFER (1996) suggests that in the Czech Republic no one doubts the importance of a good command of at least one foreign language. The language education policy followed the principles set by the Council of Europe respecting the requirements of language diversity in multicultural Europe. The command of a foreign language was seen as essential for establishing and developing trade with European and other foreign countries, as well as for scientific and cultural contacts on both official and personal levels.

Having chosen the countries to be included in this study, it was decided that the most effective way of gathering views on the provision of MFLs for lower achievers and pupils with SEN in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic was by interviewing a sample of the practitioners in each of the three countries

in order to discover their opinions which they had gathered through their personal experiences of working with young people in MFL classrooms.

### **Interviews**

It was most appropriate to use standardised open-ended interviews with educational practitioners in order to gather evidence of the day-to-day reality in MFL classrooms specifically to determine the experiences of lower achieving pupils and pupils with SEN. It was important to find out if there was agreement among Advisers, Headteachers, Head of Departments, Principal Teachers and classroom teachers regarding MFL provision and practice in secondary schools.

Kirk (1995) states that teachers often appear to be on the edge of the decision-making process in educational change, however, he stresses that the contribution that teachers make to education is crucial. He suggests that the changes that have occurred in teacher education have to be seen as integral to a wider restructuring of education and of curricular renewal which have made new and increased demands on teachers. In order to reflect the reality of institutional practice, it was felt that these interviews were essential. The evidence gathered forms an integral part of this study and provides a depth of understanding of the reality of the situation facing teacher educators.

In the fieldwork interviews, views were gathered from colleagues in three Authorities in England, three in Scotland, and two in the Czech Republic. Since significant changes in MFL teaching and learning had occurred in these three countries, it seemed to be an appropriate combination of countries to consider.

This study will offer an improved understanding of the systems in place for the teaching of MFLs to lower achievers and pupils with SEN in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic. The research will describe opinions of educational practitioners on MFL provision for lower achievers and pupils with SEN and this will provide an opportunity for consideration by those with an interest in this subject area regarding present arrangements and provide ideas which may lead to improved experience and educational development for young people with learning needs in the MFL classroom. In considering the three chosen systems,

understanding of people in other nations could be encouraged, and by sharing ideas it may be possible to provide recommendations to improve MFL teaching and learning provision.

### **The Chapter Outlines**

In this thesis **Chapter One** outlines the purpose and aims of the study and the conceptual framework is established. The reasons why the study was undertaken are explained. There is an exploration as to why comparative study of different education systems is important and the choice of countries involved in the study is discussed. There is an exploration of some of the reasons why MFL learning is important and aspects of how MFL learning is promoted in Europe are considered. The Research Questions are included at the end of this chapter.

**Chapter Two** outlines the historical background to MFL teaching in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic. The historical review is important to set the scene and explain the significant changes which occurred in MFL teaching in each country and to outline the background to MFL teaching in terms of who learned MFLs, content of courses, changes in methodology and assessment procedures leading to the present position.

There is also an historical overview of provision for pupils with SEN in each of the three countries. The chapter explores aspects and attitudes concerning inclusive education in each of the three countries involved in the study.

**Chapter Three** is concerned with methodology.

As outlined in Chapter One, the research issue was concerned with discovering models of good practice and the barriers to the integration of lower achieving pupils, including those with SEN, within the teaching and learning of MFLs in a sample of mainstream secondary schools in England, Scotland, and in the Czech Republic.

The study considered two specific Research Questions:

- 1) What are the views of a sample of School Managers and teachers on curriculum requirements for the study of MFLs for lower achievers including pupils with SEN in mainstream secondary schools?
- 2) What forms of support including teaching and learning strategies are provided for lower achievers, including pupils with SEN in MFL classrooms?

The chapter continues with an explanation of how each Research Question was explored. Examples of questions that were asked and answered in the fieldwork are included in Appendix A and Appendix B. The plan for conducting the fieldwork interviews is explained in this chapter. The questions about who should participate in the fieldwork, where the fieldwork should take place, and why certain schools were chosen are discussed. The problems that had to be overcome concerning gaining access to interview teachers in schools are also considered. The chapter explains how the fieldwork was conducted. There is a reflection of how the difficulties involved in conducting the fieldwork were overcome. There is a list of the final participants in the fieldwork.

**Chapter Four** addresses Research Question One:

**What are the views of a sample of School Managers and teachers on curriculum requirements for the study of MFLs for lower achievers including pupils with SEN in mainstream secondary schools?**

Interviewees from schools in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic answered questions and expressed views that involved ideas about MFL learning in schools in a European context. Similarities of response emerged about the development of communication skills and the consideration of MFL learning linking in with the development of the understanding of other cultures and traditions. The chapter then goes on to discuss opinions that were shared

during the fieldwork interviews with regard to the motivational aspects of MFL teaching and learning in secondary schools.

**Chapter Five** addresses Research Question Two:

**What forms of support including teaching and learning strategies are provided for lower achievers, including pupils with SEN in MFL classrooms?**

Factors emerged concerning in-class support strategies, mixed ability classes and training and advice for teachers. Aspects relating to methodology in the MFL classroom, sharing good practice with colleagues, the development of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the MFL classroom as discussed in the fieldwork interviews are explored. Views emerged that involved consideration of the National Assessment procedures in place in schools.

## **Chapter Six**

This chapter is the Conclusion to the study. Recommendations for further research and also recommendations for practice are discussed.

This introductory section has outlined the purpose and aims of the study and explored the background reasons for the research project being undertaken. The conceptual framework has been outlined. The intention of the study was to identify MFL provision for pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream secondary schools in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic until 2004. Since MFL teaching and learning in the three chosen countries was linked to the expansion of Europe, it was important to consider some reasons why MFL learning was considered to be important and to establish how MFL learning was promoted in Europe.

## **Part Two**

### **Modern Foreign Language Learning in Today's Society**

Modern Foreign Language (MFL) learning was selected as a subject worthy of investigation because it represents an area within which there had been considerable development within schools in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic until the time of this study. These developments have evoked a divergence of opinions. It is also an area considered by many both within and outside the educational system to be of considerable importance.

This part of the chapter explores some of the reasons why MFL learning was considered increasingly important not only in Europe but internationally. Since the countries involved in this study were influenced by European initiatives, it was important to consider how MFLs are promoted in a European context. The second part of this section outlines recent developments that have taken place in this area. The specific developments in MFL and SEN provision in each of the three countries are explored in Chapter Two.

### **The Importance of Modern Foreign Language Learning**

In the world today, an estimated four thousand different languages are spoken. Of this number over two hundred are used widely enough to be classed as languages of international importance, in consideration either of the number of native speakers or of the extent of the area over which the language is spoken. Johnson (2001), suggested that:

**It is not in fact difficult to understand the importance of foreign language learning in today's world. As the planet becomes smaller, and the means of moving around it easier, so it has become more multicultural and multilingual.**

(Johnson 2001, pg.5)

In the not so distant past, people used to talk of nation states which could be associated with single languages. For instance, in France they spoke French, in

Germany, German, and so on. In the new millennium, things have changed dramatically. Tinsley (2003) highlighted that:

**twelve million French do not have the French language as a mother tongue. Ten per cent of the German population is foreign born. . . Ten per cent of the U.K. population has a background from outside the U.K. ... and four million asylum seekers sought refuge in Western Europe during the 1990s.**

(Tinsley 2003, pg. 39)

People from many nations are moving closer together and bringing a wide variety of native languages and cultures into the societies in which they live. Language learning is important as a means of communicating with our European and world wide neighbours for many reasons, including:

- Pleasure, e.g. for holidays, visits and exchanges
- Trade
- Promoting greater understanding of people in the various nations of the earth and in one's own country
- Promoting the understanding of other people's cultures
- Overcoming prejudice and intolerance and leading to an intensification of European and world wide co-operation and harmony
- Promoting personal development for learners.

On a personal level, language learning can be a journey into other cultures and other worlds, promoting not only personal development, but also creating an understanding of the way of life, customs and traditions of the people of other nations. It has been said that living in the world and speaking only one language is somewhat equivalent to living in an enormous mansion and staying in only one room. Those who acquire more than one language find fascinating, new and different vistas opening before them, not only of practical opportunity, but also for the fulfilment of intellectual curiosity and the fascination of looking at the world from a background and viewpoint of another culture (Berlitz 1986). If you wander

around the “other rooms” of the mansion, you may discover the curving and sweeping scripts of the Middle East, the decorative ideographic writing of the Far East, the curling and circular scripts of South East Asia, alongside your own language and others with which you are familiar. Language learning is not only a means of communication, but also a powerful form of identities of individuals and of nations (Berlitz 1986).

Within the European Union, in 2000, there were more than forty-five autochthonous languages in everyday use; eleven of these were official languages. The ECSC Treaty of Paris in 1951 encouraged a joining of forces and working towards a “destiny henceforth shared.”

**This involves constant balancing of national and common interests, respect for the diversity of national traditions and the forging of a separate identity.**

(Fontaine 1995, pg.5)

Clearly, it is advantageous to have knowledge of each other’s language in order to communicate effectively. While learning a language it may also be possible to develop an understanding of the culture and traditions of the native speakers which is another important means of developing respect for others. The focus of this study is in the context of Europe, and as European integration develops, the diversity of languages and cultures contributing to the European Union increases. Within the European Union strong regional identities are a powerful reality, for example, the importance of autonomy to the Catalans in Spain, the Länder in the German federal structure and many Scottish people in post devolution Scotland. The importance of the diversity and richness of these and other regional identities is testified by the presence of over one hundred and forty offices in Brussels representing regions and regional consortia. Thomas (1997) states that within these regional cultures, in many cases language is a vital component, and that the creation of the Lingua Bureau in Dublin in 1982 as the base of the European Bureau for the so-called “lesser used languages” of the forty-five languages in the European Union is symptomatic of the way in which

the European supra-state has encouraged cultural diversity, in general, and linguistic diversity amongst the lesser used of the official languages, in particular. The Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC) (1988) suggests in Project No. 12: *Learning and teaching Modern Languages for Communication* that Europe is a mosaic of diverse languages and cultures which their speakers are keen to have protected and developed and that a major educational effort is required to convert this diversity from a barrier to communication into a:

**source of mutual enrichment and understanding.**

(CDCC 1988, pg. 88)

The creation of the Lingua Bureau seems to be an effort to develop the achievement of this goal. It seems that an aspiration of the European Union in promoting MFL learning is that if we are to be European citizens communicating effectively with our fellow European citizens, foreign language acquisition must be a priority if we hope to take advantage of the freedom of movement for individuals, goods, services, and capital which is on offer for citizens of the Member States. To enhance cross-cultural communication and to foster solidarity, a human investment in multi-lingualism is necessary in order to create the benefits which mutual understanding will bring.

Europe is host to perhaps the most important cluster of languages, culture and civilisation in the world. Language diversity is a priceless heritage and is an invaluable asset to European identity. Mastering such a variety of European languages, however, presents us with a lifelong challenge, not only in terms of linguistic diversity, but for individuals learning languages there is tremendous variance in needs, characteristics, motivations, resources, opportunities, experiences, working conditions and possibilities. Nevertheless, the importance of Foreign Language learning is increasing, not least in response to the revolution in communication and information technology and its impact on aspects of modern living. It is commonplace for young people to be working with CD ROM packages, playing games in four foreign languages, or more, on their computers in their bedrooms, as a matter of course. The internet has created possibilities for an enormous range of subject areas, ranging from business to pleasure.

Despite many technological advances which can assist language learning, there are still some problems that such advances cannot solve.

### **Communications Technology and the Language Problem**

Advances in communications technology are often considered to have helped to resolve the language barriers which prevent a free flow of communication amongst people who speak different languages, but others feel that this is not true and would go as far as suggesting that, *so far*, it would appear that the speed at which advances have been made in the development of communications technology could be said to have, in fact, exacerbated the problem. For example, while an American businessman can carry a notebook computer and cellular `phone in his briefcase and convert a hotel room into a virtual office, he may be totally helpless when modern telecommunications bring his Saudi client on the other end of the `phone speaking Arabic, or when his urgent fax to China fails to produce results. This primitive communication problem portrayed here is in contrast with the sophistication of today's state of the art communications technology (O' Hagan 1996).

### **Foreign Language Learning in Business with regard to the UK**

Traditionally, foreign language learning did not have a high priority in Britain. This was evident over a hundred years ago when in the first edition of its Journal in 1879, the Royal Society of Arts warned that it was beyond all doubt we suffer in competition abroad from ignorance of foreign languages by our merchants, agents, clerks and mechanics (RSA 1879).

It was demonstrated that the perception of the importance of foreign language learning had not increased greatly in one hundred years when the challenge was repeated in the centenary issue of the RSA Journal in 1979. It was suggested that the domination of English as a world language has perhaps been a contributing factor to the lack of enthusiasm for foreign language learning not just in Britain but in the USA and Australia (RSA 1979).

This highlights the problem of motivation that many MFL teachers have to overcome in a great deal of MFL classrooms in the United Kingdom. It is often difficult to encourage native English speakers in schools that MFL learning is important when there can be a lack of enthusiasm to learn other languages amid the perception that “everyone abroad should learn English”.

In 1991 a survey carried out in the framework of Action 111 of Lingua, an organisation for the promotion of the development of foreign language teaching and learning in economic life, the foreign language needs in trade and industry were identified via various surveys covering foreign language needs analysis in trade and industry from 1980 until 1990. The results clearly show the leading position of English as an international business language. Several of the large firms questioned even expected that, as a result of international developments such as the advent of the Single Market, the position of English as a “lingua franca” would be reinforced.

The majority of executive managers of large firms who participated in Project No.1 of Lingua Action 111 (1991) indicated in their response the acceptance of English as “first foreign language”, but nevertheless stressed the development towards language diversification for the sake of Europe’s cultural heritage.

It is also worth noting that some of the foreign language needs in Lingua 111 resulted not only from international business contacts but also from internal communication needs with guest workers in firms, for example, where in such cases there was often a need for social language skills.

The Lingua 1991 Project 11 - Languages in British Business, an analysis of current foreign language needs, drew attention to the fact that English-speaking firms tend to rely too strongly on English and are therefore often unaware of the loss of valuable trading opportunities, due to lack of foreign language skills.

West (1992) argues that more than half the cost of international business is used up in dialogue of the deaf between people who are ignorant of each other’s laws, customs and business dialect. Smith (1987) considers that linguistic ineptitude can lead to serious misunderstandings.

It seems true to say that despite the best intentions, few people reach the levels of proficiency necessary to conduct detailed technical or commercial discussion, or produce appropriate documents in a foreign language, but general knowledge of and capability to use a foreign language socially will be advantageous in building relationships with foreign clients and colleagues.

It has been suggested earlier in the chapter that:

**learning and speaking other languages encourages us to become more open to others, their cultures and outlooks.**

(European Commission 2003, pg. 3)

For Europeans, a key player in the promotion of greater understanding of the cultures and traditions and mutual acceptance of peoples with different histories but a common future is the Council of Europe, the oldest of the European political institutions whose headquarters is the Palais de L`Europe in Strasbourg, France. The Council of Europe was set up in 1949 with the aim of promoting reconciliation between the States and peoples of Europe, based on the principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law (Jones 1998). Under the European Cultural Convention concluded in 1954, member Governments agreed that this purpose would be served by “common action designed to safeguard and encourage the development of European culture”. Jones (1998) highlights that the Convention sought to foster among the nationals of all members, and of such other European States as may accede, the study of the languages, history and civilisation of the others.

In Europe work in the field of education and culture is conducted under the aegis of the Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC). The main purpose of its activities is to develop a type of education in Europe which meets the needs of present-day society and to draw the peoples of Europe closer together by fostering their awareness of a sense of common European identity. Doyé and Hurrell (1997) stated that in the field of modern language learning the CDCC`s

action aimed to assist Member States in taking effective measures which will enable all citizens to learn to use languages for the purposes of mutual understanding, personal mobility, and access to information in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural Europe. Its objectives are to help implement reforms in progress and to encourage innovation in language teaching and teacher training (Doyé and Hurrell 1997).

From its inception, the CDCC has been concerned with the promotion of foreign language learning in its Member States and has tried to support national initiatives for the improvement of foreign language education:

**to serve the interests of increased European understanding, co-operation and mobility by improving and broadening the learning of modern languages.**

(CDCC 1981, pg. 111)

However, in his opening address at the Conference (CDCC) of the Council of Europe to mark the final phase of Project No.12 *Learning and Teaching Modern Languages for Communication*, Roberto Carneiro, Minister of Education in Portugal, reminded us that the sum of human wisdom is not contained in any single language, and no single language is capable of expressing all forms and degrees of human understanding (CDCC 1988).

### **Native English Speakers and Language Learning**

The European Year of Languages 2001 highlighted ways of promoting language learning and linguistic diversity. Heads of State and Government in Barcelona in March 2002 recognised the need for European Union and Member State action to improve language learning; they called for further action to improve the

mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages to all from an early age (European Commission 2003).

This chapter has suggested many reasons why learning languages is beneficial. The European Commission (2003) also argued that learning other languages contributes to:

**improving cognitive skills and strengthening learners' mother tongue skills, including reading and writing.**

(European Commission 2003, pg. 3)

For mainland Europeans the importance of foreign language learning is perhaps more obvious than it may appear to the average British citizen in that languages are influenced by the proximity of borders. For example, in France, German is offered as the first foreign language in the East of the country, whilst Spanish is found much more in the South West; Italian is offered in eight out of ten collèges in the South East (Gethin and Gunnemark 1996). MFL learning is relevant and significant to people living near these borders. Many people may in fact cross such borders daily for work, or for other activities.

The question of why native English speakers should take time to study MFLs is often asked in schools. Gethin and Gunnemark (1996) state that from an international point of view, there are "six great communication languages" that one should learn, firstly: English, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, French and German. In countries where English is not the dominant mother tongue and language of everyday use, Gethin and Gunnemark (1996) argue that with over seven hundred million users around the world it is often the language that people normally learn first at school, on courses and on their own.

The dominance of English as a world language is perhaps a major factor influencing attitudes towards Foreign Language learning in Britain. Though Chinese is spoken by a greater number of people, English is spoken around the globe and has wider dispersion than any other language.

Beyond its uses as a first and second language in ordinary exchanges, Heyworth (2003) considered that English:

**is becoming more and more an international lingua franca for practical reasons – for travel, for work in international companies, to have access to the Internet and scientific and technical literature.**

(Heyworth 2003, pg.9)

It is hardly surprising that our fellow Europeans place a high priority on learning English. It is not however just English that is seen as important in many European nations, but foreign language learning in general has a high priority. It is a priority of Member States of the EU to make significant investments to ensure that language learning is extended into kindergarten and primary schools and to ensure that foreign language learning is a lifelong activity for every citizen (European Commission 2003).

It is also a priority for Member States to ensure that teachers trained to teach foreign languages in schools can do so:

**where class sizes are small enough for language learning to be effective, where appropriate training materials are available and where enough curriculum time is devoted to languages.**

(European Commission 2003, pg. 7)

In mainland Europe the ease of access from one country to another and the mobility of workers is also leading to multi-lingual societies. Tinsley (2003) argued that in Europe which is unarguably multicultural and multilingual:

**the forces of globalisation and migration, expectations of mobility and the availability of cheap travel mean that cultures are mixing at a rate not seen before in history.**

(Tinsley 2003, pg.39)

It is clear that the proximity of borders has a significant influence in motivation for learning foreign languages. This underlines another problem that MFL

teachers in the United Kingdom have to overcome when motivating pupils to learn MFLs. Despite the recognition of multiculturalism and of multilingualism in society and evidence of a number of cultures co-existing alongside each other, since Great Britain is an island and the inhabitants of all its component countries all speak English, it is difficult to convince pupils in schools that learning a MFL is important and useful. As Franchetti (2003) highlights:

**working in an English speaking environment it is extremely difficult to persuade young people that there is value in learning a foreign language, so motivating them becomes essential.**

(Franchetti 2003, pg.64)

There has to be a reason to learn another language and the benefits of doing so must be clear. McColl (2000) suggested that this requirement perhaps:

**provides modern language teachers with their greatest challenge.**

(McColl 2000, pg.5)

In such a climate:

**we need to say loudly and clearly that languages are for everyone.**

(Tinsley 2003 pg.47)

This study was concerned with the exploration of provision of MFL learning for lower achievers and pupils with SEN in secondary schools in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic. There was a divergence of views among practitioners in the United Kingdom concerning the value of Languages for All. However, McColl (2000) believed that all students have the potential to learn MFLs:

**Since we can observe students of all abilities successfully learning foreign languages, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that *all* of our students have a potential for foreign language learning and that, given the right opportunity, conditions and motivation, they *can* succeed. We need only look at what they can achieve in their first language – *that* is their potential.**

(McColl 2000, pg.5)

The study explored practitioners' attitudes concerning the conditions and opportunities appropriate for lower achievers and pupils with SEN to learn MFLs successfully in schools.

So far, this chapter has suggested that MFL learning is not only an important subject to be learned as a means of personal development but also it has shown that MFL learning is something that is considered to be an essential element involved in promoting improved business links between trading nations. It is considered by many people that learning MFLs can promote an increase in understanding between nations by improving an understanding of other cultures and traditions and facilitate a free flow of individuals for work and pleasure in an increasing number of nations involved in the European Union.

The importance of MFL learning in Europe and internationally has been established. Since the study was set in a European context and concerns MFL teaching and learning, it is important and appropriate to consider how Europe promotes foreign language learning.

### **How does Europe promote languages?**

Jones (1998) states the language policy of the Council of Europe has the following objectives:

- **to protect and develop the linguistic heritage and cultural diversity of Europe as a source of mutual enrichment**
- **to facilitate personal mobility and the exchange of ideas by encouraging the development of communication skills in a variety of languages**
- **to develop a harmonious approach to language teaching based on common principles**

- **to promote large-scale plurilingualism**

(Jones 1998, pg.7)

The policy has been pursued through a series of modern language projects, conducted under the aegis of the CDCC. Jones (1998) argues that in practice language teaching has seen the shift from the traditional focus on the words and structures of a language, methods of teaching and on their acquisition by learners in the 1970s, to that of focusing on the learners themselves and of defining learning objectives, according to their needs. This shift was exemplified in the concept of the “threshold level” as described by Van Ek in 1975, developed under the Council of Europe auspices. In relation to a given language, this described the minimum that a language learner should be able to do to fulfil the normal requirements for functioning independently in a country in which that language was the mother tongue. The distinguishing feature of this approach is that it puts what a learner needs to be able to do first and the knowledge and skills needed to do it second. Threshold level descriptions now exist for over twenty national, regional or minority languages in Europe.

The Council of Europe does not impose or seek to specify a universal model. Jones (1998) assures us that debate and discussion continue and constitute a rich source of ideas about the objectives of language learning; key issues under discussion included socio-cultural competence, plurilingualism, and the linked issue of partial competences. Jones (1998) states that for socio-cultural competence there is a tendency to take the native speaker as the model for the language learner. Implicit in this is the view that cultural assimilation is an indispensable part of language proficiency, and that the aim is for the learner to become as near as is possible indistinguishable from the native user of the language. It can be argued that such cultural assimilation may not be appropriate for linguistic competence. After all native speakers live in the centre of a system of values and beliefs from which they perceive their own experience and their contact with other cultures and language learners have a different outside perception of that same culture. The idea is that when native and non-native speakers interact they each have a perspective of the interlocutor which is integral to the interaction. Nuffield (1998) suggests that a learner developing “socio-cultural competence” may in fact show some of the following:

- attitudes and values - an affective capacity to relinquish ethnocentric attitudes towards others, and a cognitive ability to build a relationship between different cultures
- ability to learn - an ability to develop an interpretative system with which to gain insight into new cultural meanings, beliefs and practices
- “knowing-how” - the capacity to integrate attitudes and values, ability to learn and acquire knowledge in specific situations of bicultural contact
- knowledge - the system which structures knowledge acquired.

It would appear that certain aspects of these acquisitions are in fact independent of linguistic competence and others, for example, the ability to learn are transferable across languages and may be acquired in learning a first MFL.

Plurilingualism, is one of the policy objectives of the Council of Europe. The notion of plurilingualism suggests that there is no “perfectly bilingual” condition to be aimed for, or an ideal balance between ability in native and other languages, but conceives instead of a competence that is individual, evolving, heterogeneous and out of balance. A learner could therefore show a range of partial competences in a number of languages, without mastery of any. To be plurilingual also means that although a person may learn several languages, they do not expect to have complete control over all of them.

Plurilingual speakers - speaking several languages - offer a portfolio of language competences. Such competences, Jones (1998) argues are seen increasingly as positive attributes rather than as incomplete or unsatisfactory which appears appropriate since all language knowledge may be considered as partial including knowledge of one’s mother tongue. Plurilingual and pluricultural competence thus provide an approach to promoting diversification of language provision. Nuffield (1998) states that language learning may be seen as a key

component in pursuing the objectives of co-operation between States, respect for the identity of others and the promotion of mutual understanding.

The importance of MFL learning continues to be an issue that concerns and has concerned the Council of Europe. Jan van Ek (1978) reminds us in *The Threshold Level for Modern Language Learning in Schools*, that even as early as 1954 when the European Cultural Convention was signed in Paris by the representatives of the Member States of the Council of Europe, it was agreed that foreign language learning had to be promoted because “a greater understanding of one another amongst the peoples of Europe” would further the Council’s aim, which was the achievement “of a greater unity between its members”.

Since that time this decision has been reaffirmed by successive conferences of European Ministers of Education, stating that knowledge of foreign languages is to be considered “indispensable both for the individual and for Europe as a whole” emphasising “that ways and means should be devised of extending the teaching of modern languages to the greatest extent possible to children and adults to whom it is not yet given”.

It has been suggested that foreign language teachers, more than teachers of many other subjects are:

**called upon to exemplify the European values of openness to others, tolerance of differences and willingness to communicate.**

(European Commission 2003, pg. 10)

Whether this is true or not, as far as teaching MFL to pupils with SEN is concerned, it is crucial that the teachers have the necessary skills and expertise acquired through training and experience to meet the needs of children who require special educational help.

In the EU it is considered that foreign language learning is for everyone. Provision for pupils with SEN is increasingly being made available in mainstream schools although some of these pupils are still excluded from MFL learning (European Commission 2003). There is a need for the development of:

**good practice in teaching languages to learners with SEN... and new methods and approaches need to be developed for the teaching of foreign languages to such learners.**

(European Commission 2003, pg. 9)

Within secondary education, EURYDICE (1998), assures us that in the European Community most pupils in all Members States have the opportunity to learn at least one modern foreign language from the first year of secondary education which is from the ages of 11 or 12 years old in most Member States, and 10 year olds in most Länder in Germany. Data collected in the EU (1997) shows that most European school children have the opportunity to start studying a language other than their mother tongue between the ages of 6 and 9 years, often on an optional basis. Yet where such language teaching is compulsory, it generally begins from the third year of primary school, with English being the most commonly taught language at primary level in EU countries.

In secondary schools in mainland Europe, Nuffield (1998) assures us English is again the most widely taught language: in 1994-1995, 89% of pupils in general secondary education were learning English, 32% French, 18% German and 8% Spanish.

The European Commission promotes MFL learning for all pupils and considers this beneficial for all people regardless of their ability and in 1996 suggested that it was no longer possible to reserve proficiency in foreign languages for an elite or those who acquire it on account of their geographical mobility. In line with the resolution of the Council of Education Ministers of 31 March 1995, it was becoming necessary for everyone, irrespective of training and educational routes chosen, to be able to acquire and keep up their ability to communicate in at least two community languages other than their mother tongue (European Commission 1996).

Nuffield (1998) underlines that the keys to a positive attitude to mainland Europe by its students lie in openness and exposure to the cultures, people and institutions of other European countries. All of these aspects are mediated through language. For this reason the European Union has repeatedly stressed the importance of language learning, both in achieving socio-political objectives such as mutual understanding, respect for pluralism and the development of European citizenship and in achieving economic aims, such as the mobility of capital and labour in a multilingual, multicultural economic area (Nuffield 1998).

In today's society, it seems that integration and economic co-operation necessitate a development of cultural exchanges. A deepening of our knowledge of one another's cultures should facilitate the effectiveness of such co-operation. Foreign language learning, it seems, is a key factor in facilitating free movement of people and ideas, in preserving and developing the European heritage of diversity in language and culture, in overcoming prejudice and intolerance, leading to an intensification of European and indeed worldwide co-operation.

However, in the UK, it is possible that young people are finding their role models and preferred lifestyles in the wider English speaking world and are not aspiring to explore countries where English is not the mother tongue. It is unclear whether it is complacency or arrogance that others should learn the English language particularly as it is, of course, a major world language, or whether there are other lessons to be learned from our European neighbours regarding methodology and approaches to MFL teaching and learning leading towards achieving plurilingualism or expertise in one or two MFLs.

Aspects of plurilingualism were explored in the fieldwork which enabled a comparison to be made of MFL provision with a particular focus on lower achievers and pupils with SEN in a sample of mainstream secondary schools in three countries.

## **The Three Chosen Countries**

As has been stated earlier in the chapter, in order to conduct effective comparisons in foreign education systems it is necessary firstly to have a sound understanding of one's own system. In order to examine the various approaches to MFL teaching and learning in the United Kingdom, two separate systems of education will be considered. As has been stated earlier in the thesis, the English and Scottish systems of education are not the same. There are similarities between these two systems but also differences that are worth consideration. The education systems in England and in Scotland have both experienced a great deal of change in MFL teaching and learning in schools and also in the provision for pupils with SEN. The developments that have taken place in MFL teaching and learning in England and in Scotland since the 1960s until the present day and the developments in provision for young people with SEN in schools over a similar time are both explored in Chapter Two.

Having worked in secondary schools in both England and Scotland and thus having experience of both systems, it was decided that they would form the basis for the study; these systems will provide a comparison to the Czech Republic. This country was chosen because it too has undergone major changes as a nation and the educational system has changed and is evolving from previous communist rule towards a more European system as part of the EU.

Eurydice (1998) states that the Czech Republic is continuing the transformation of its former centralised and planned socialist society into a society operating according to the principles of a market economy and the plurality of political parties (i.e. the process which was launched by the political revolution of November 1989).

The fieldwork in the Czech Republic was undertaken while the country was working towards the modernisation developments necessary to accede to the European Union (EU). The Czech Republic was welcomed into the EU on the first of May 2004, as one of ten new Member States. On that day:

**the leaders of “old” and “new” Europe embraced in Dublin,... to celebrate the formal unification of a long divided continent.**

(Woods 2004, pg. 8)

**The new EU stretches from Lisbon on the Atlantic to Latvia on the border of Russia, from the midnight sun of northern Finland to the Mediterranean breeze of Malta.**

(Woods 2004, pg. 9)

It was interesting to consider an eastern European country in this study especially at the time of tremendous change in its educational system. The developments that have taken place in MFL teaching and learning in schools and in the provision for young people with SEN in the Czech Republic are explored in Chapter Two.

Therefore, the three countries with which this study is concerned are:  
England, Scotland and the Czech Republic.

In considering the three chosen systems within which MFLs are taught, as a result of this study it may be possible to consider implementing systems that are working successfully elsewhere to improve MFL teaching and learning provision.

### **The Research Issue and the Research Questions**

The research issue was concerned with discovering:

**the models of good practice and the barriers to the integration of lower achieving pupils, including those with SEN, within the teaching and learning of MFLs in a sample of mainstream secondary schools in England, Scotland, and in the Czech Republic.**

The study considered two specific Research Questions:

- 1) What are the views of a sample of School Managers and teachers on curriculum requirements for the study of MFLs for lower achievers including pupils with SEN in mainstream secondary schools?**
  
- 2) What forms of support including teaching and learning strategies are provided for lower achievers, including pupils with SEN in MFL classrooms?**

More specifically, the study aimed to:

- explore developments in MFL teaching and learning for lower achievers and pupils with SEN in the three countries involved in the study until 2004
  
- analyse the provision of support for lower achievers including pupils with SEN in MFL classrooms
  
- identify appropriate teaching, learning and assessment strategies for lower achievers and pupils with SEN in mainstream MFL classrooms.

These are linked to the two specific Research Questions.

The next chapter explores the development of MFL teaching and learning and the development of SEN provision in mainstream secondary schools in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Modern Foreign Languages and Special Educational Needs In England, Scotland and the Czech Republic.**

#### **Introduction**

Via a review of historical and up to date research literature, this chapter offers an historical overview of MFL provision in secondary schools, an overview of the developments in provision for pupils with SEN and explores inclusion and the teaching of MFLs to lower achievers and pupils with SEN in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic. An understanding of the historical context is important as it provides a baseline for understanding the current policy of provision for MFL learning in the three countries, which is explored in detail in the third part of the chapter. The historical overview also provides information relating to aspects of the social and cultural background that is significant in relation to attitudes that have existed in each of the three countries towards MFL learning. The historical context together with an understanding of present day issues, such as globalisation and the increasing dominance of English as a world language, as discussed in Chapter One, are important factors to take into consideration in relation to motivation to learn and attitudes towards MFL learning in the three countries.

England and Scotland share many similarities in terms of MFL learning in secondary schools since the 1960s. The Czech Republic provides a contrast to these experiences, although the communicative approach to language learning is now promoted in all three countries.

This chapter is in three parts. Firstly, there is an examination of the developments in MFL teaching and learning in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic since the 1960s. The second part of the chapter explores the developments in provision for pupils with SEN in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic over a similar time scale. The third part of the chapter considers some of the arguments and issues concerning inclusion and the teaching of MFLs to lower achievers and pupils with SEN in the three countries.

The first section highlights several key issues that have signalled the way forward in terms of teaching methods and the inclusion of all pupils in MFL learning and reveals how MFL teaching and learning have moved forward from focusing on grammatical accuracy towards emphasising communicative competence. A short section explains the changes that have occurred in assessment procedures which now lead to National Qualifications for all pupils in England and Scotland and a school leaving certificate in the Czech Republic. It is important to understand the forms of assessment available in the three countries as concerns were expressed by respondents in fieldwork with regard to various issues concerning assessment and testing of lower achievers and pupils with SEN in MFL in England and Scotland. As outlined in Chapter One, the question of whether suitable forms of national assessment for pupils with SEN were in place was one of the concerns which stimulated the study.

**Part One**  
**The Development of MFL Learning in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic**

In England the majority of secondary schools serve children between the ages of eleven and sixteen, or eleven and eighteen. In the post-compulsory sector of education there are sixth-form colleges which cater principally for students between the ages of sixteen and eighteen and, as well as other colleges of further education. Within the comprehensive system there are various types of secondary schools including selective grammar schools, city technology colleges and specialist colleges for technology, modern languages, sport and arts. Chitty (2002) argues that the creation of these specialised colleges by the Conservative Government in the 1990s was a means of promoting parental choice and competition among schools. The National Curriculum is delivered in all of these schools.

Ninety five per cent of Scottish pupils receive their secondary education in all-through 12-18 comprehensive schools. Bryce and Humes (2003) argue that this uniformity of provision can be interpreted in several ways: for example, it can be seen as an expression of social unity that enables the vast majority of pupils to share a broadly similar education prior to entering the adult world of work and a statement of belief in equality of opportunity for all. It can also be regarded as a

manifestation of democratic will in Scotland which survived the attacks of the Thatcher years that were experienced in England.

MFLs were taught to all pupils up to the age of sixteen in all of these schools in England and Scotland at the time of the study. Parallel developments have taken place in England and in Scotland in MFL learning and these developments are outlined together. The developments in MFL learning in the Czech Republic provide a contrast and these are considered separately.

The following historical overview provides details of developments in MFL teaching in England and Scotland.

In England in the early 1960s, only an elite group of able pupils, which included 25% of 11+ age groups at the most, studied foreign languages (Newsom 1963). At that time:

**typically MFLs were taught throughout grammar schools and just under a third of secondary modern schools provided foreign language teaching, mainly in French and largely confined to the ablest pupils.**

(Newsom 1963, pg.160)

In Scotland, as in England, MFL learning was traditionally perceived as being solely for an elite group of pupils in secondary schools. This is underlined by HMI (1990) in the *Effective Learning and Teaching in Scottish Secondary Schools* report on *Modern Languages* who state that:

**languages (were considered to be) difficult and therefore only for the clever pupils: that teaching concentrated on the details of grammar: ... classes were conducted in virtual silence, and ... the exercises produced written sentences which had little relevance to real life.**

(HMI 1990, pg.1)

With the arrival of the comprehensive system of education in 1965, MFL teachers suddenly found themselves teaching languages to all pupils rather than the small elite of the past, "but only, at first, in the first two to three years of secondary schooling" (McColl 2000). Teachers were looking for new ways of

motivating pupils and for new ways of allowing more pupils to succeed. From the 1960s until 2004 there was not only an increase in the numbers of pupils in schools studying foreign languages, but also the content of courses changed, teaching methods changed and assessment techniques changed.

From 1989 until 2004, in England, it was obligatory that foreign languages were learned by all pupils up to the age of sixteen years in schools. In Scotland, from 1992, all pupils up to the age of sixteen years are entitled to study at least one MFL in schools and it continues to be recommended that they do so.

In the last forty years there has been a transformation in language teaching and learning in England and Scotland and the significant changes that have occurred are outlined below.

### **Classical Accuracy to Communicative Competence**

It is clear from a European Community Study of 1997 “Learning Modern Languages at School in the European Union”, that a variety of methods have been used in modern language teaching. The grammar translation method which was popular into the early 1960s stressed written language, translation and grammar, as in the teaching of Latin and Greek.

During the period 1904 – 1964, Whitehead (1996) argues:

**the value of modern languages in developing social skills was neglected at the expense of the development of mental cultivation and discipline and the almost exclusive study of their written form.**

(Whitehead 1996, pg. 179)

This grammar translation method was followed by the audio-lingual and audio-visual methods used in the late 1960s and 1970s. These methods prepared the ground for the communicative approach widely favoured by specialists in the 1980s and 1990s and that continues into the new millennium.

In the 1970s the Council of Europe was concerned with promoting the learning of modern languages and was responsible for the initiation of a new form of

approach to language learning which identified as its language syllabus the “Threshold Level” which was required for competence in the language. Instead of promoting the study of a foreign language as an intellectual discipline developed and tested by the translation of increasingly complex passages between the mother tongue and the foreign language, the Council of Europe approach was to promote the teaching of languages for communication to the whole school population.

In *The Threshold Level* (1975) Van Ek provided a model of a functional and notional syllabus design which was and continues to be influential throughout Europe. This was achieved by identifying both the most essential contexts in which a learner needs to operate and the elements of the language required by the learner in these contexts. The new concept of modern language teaching was called the communicative approach. The functional / notional design made it possible to:

**develop the scope for applying the basic principles in several new directions: new methodologies, new materials, multi-media systems, assessment and self-assessment, learner autonomy, implications for language teacher training.**

(CDCC 1988, pg. 9)

The general aim of the communicative approach to language learning was to make available:

**to all sectors of the population of member countries the means of learning to communicate more effectively with other Europeans through each other’s languages.**

(CDCC 1988, pg.9)

## **Communicative Competence**

Since the mid 1970s the main aims of teaching and learning a MFL have been expressed as the development of communicative competence. Canale (1983) identifies the four main components that combine to contribute to communicative competence as:

- **Grammatical competence (including phonology, orthography, vocabulary, word formation, sentence formation)**
- **Socio-linguistic competence (expression and understanding of social meanings appropriate to different socio-linguistic contexts, and of grammatical forms appropriate to their expression)**
- **Discourse competence (knowledge of different linguistic genres, together with their related devices for cohesion and coherence)**
- **Strategic competence (ways of coping with grammatical, socio-linguistic, discourse and performance difficulties)**

(Canale 1983, pg.6).

Much of the educational theory that underpins communicative methodology emanates from research into how children acquire their own mother tongue and advocates that the communicative approach to the teaching of a second language should attempt to replicate in the classroom situation the processes and conditions under which acquisition of the mother tongue takes place (Krashen 1982).

Theorists (Hymes, 1971; Savignon, 1997) argue that when we acquire our first language we acquire both linguistic and sociolinguistic competence – that is, the ability to use a language in ways appropriate to any given situation – and that learners of foreign languages must do the same. Byram (2003) suggests that language was conceived as social behaviour that could be analysed on a number of dimensions which could then be used to guide syllabus planning and course design.

In England the inclusion in 1989 of a MFL as a compulsory subject in the National Curriculum meant that all pupils up to the age of sixteen years old had to study a MFL. In August 2004, the requirement for learning a MFL up to the age of sixteen in the National Curriculum changed. It became compulsory for all pupils to learn a MFL only up to the age of fourteen years old. All pupils were still entitled to study a MFL up to the age of sixteen, if they chose to do so (QCA 2003). Details concerning this change in policy are considered later in this chapter.

In Scotland, similar changes took place ensuring that all pupils up to the age of sixteen years would learn a MFL. In 1989 Circular 11/78 initiated “Languages for All” in Scotland which was phased in from 1992–1995. This circular stated that the Secretary of State was firmly of the view that the learning of foreign languages is a valid and useful educational experience which can benefit all pupils across the whole range of ability. The Secretary of State was also of the opinion that the study of at least one modern European foreign language should normally be continued by all pupils throughout the four years of compulsory schooling (SED Circular 11/78).

There is, however a divergence of views concerning the value of all pupils being involved in the MFL learning process. In fact, McColl (2000) argues that:

**there are those who question whether “all” should really mean *all* young people. Foreign language learning is considered either irrelevant or too difficult for some. Even statutory arrangements appear to admit as much, providing opt-out clauses which are variously exploited around the country. Yet there are increasing numbers of people who truly believe that all but a very small minority of the young people in our schools *can* benefit from the experience of learning a foreign language, and that they are entitled to the opportunity to do so.**

(McColl 2000, pg.1)

In Scotland, there are no statutory curriculum requirements, but the official guidance (SED 1989) recommends that the study of at least one European foreign language should normally be continued throughout the four years of compulsory secondary school.

In Scotland, the allocation of time to MFL learning is decided by schools. Time allocation can vary from school to school. On average pupils from 12-16 have approximately 150 minutes of teaching time per week for the first MFL. A second MFL starting in S3 would also have approximately 150 minutes per week (Eurydice 2004). In England in total, it is expected that at least 70 - 80% of the timetable will be taken up by the core and the other foundation subjects (Moon 2001). The 1988 Education Reform act required that each of the core and foundation subjects be taught for a reasonable time. There is no statutory definition of what a reasonable time is. In the schools visited the time allocated to MFL learning was similar to the Scottish allocation described above.

In the Czech Republic, NFER (1996) states that the schools decide the time allocation for foreign languages within the regulations set by the Minister of Education. In compulsory education, the minimum instruction prescribed by the new curricula is 135 minutes per week, 180 minutes being the recommendation for initial foreign language teaching in grades four and five (ages nine to ten). In most schools for pupils between eleven and fifteen, the average instruction time for the first foreign language is 135 minutes, 90 minutes being the minimum. However, if the parents of talented pupils require, it is possible to extend the number of hours for pupils aged nine to fifteen by 1 - 3 hours a week, depending on the decisions taken by individual schools (Eurydice 2001).

### **Developments In Examination Requirements In England and In Scotland**

In order to highlight the changes which had to be made to the exam system as a result of the whole cohort of pupils studying a MFL, there was a movement in both England and in Scotland away from end of school national examinations catering for academic pupils towards a system of end of school national examinations considered to be suitable for pupils of all abilities.

'O' and 'A' Level examinations in Modern Languages were introduced in England and Wales in 1950. Whitehead (1996) argues that:

**these ‘new’ examinations actually perpetuated a mode of assessment which had existed since 1918 and continued down to the mid 1960s and beyond; this situation still survives in attenuated form in certain ‘A’ Level examination syllabi today.**

(Whitehead 1996, pg.198)

These examinations were not intended for lower achievers. Such a system of examination excluded lower achievers and pupils with SEN from achieving a national qualification.

In Scotland, a similar situation prevailed. The teaching system post 16 was influenced by the existing ‘O’ Grade and Higher examinations. Traditionally ‘O’ Grade passes were accessed by approximately the top 30% of pupils. ‘O’ Grade exams were available until the end of the 1980s.

There was a movement in England mirrored in Scotland, which was aimed at allowing all pupils to achieve a national qualification which was externally moderated. One development which attempted to do this was the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) which was first introduced in England in 1965. This exam was intended for the pupils who were unable to attempt ‘O’ Level standard, including pupils of “average ability” (SREB 1965). However:

**the two examinations remained intrinsically deficient whatever the nature of their syllabus. From the mid 1960s in two key respects they failed to support the needs of the entire spectrum of ability of pupils then being taught in comprehensive schools and the very existence of two exams at sixteen proved divisive.**

(Whitehead 1996, pg. 202)

By the mid 1970s approximately 90% of eleven year olds were learning a MFL in England (Page 1996). The only official objectives available were GCE/‘O’ Level and CSE in England and ‘O’ Grade in Scotland. These examinations took a very academic view of language learning as the majority of the marks were awarded for written work in the MFL and grammatical accuracy was rewarded above all else. Therefore few pupils continued to study a MFL beyond fourteen years old.

An initiative which benefited the lower achievers in England and Scotland was the introduction of Graded Objectives in Modern Languages (GOML). These had short term goals and certificates were achieved at the end of various units of work. Such schemes were already used for achievement in swimming and gymnastics and were well known in musical instrument learning.

Both teachers and pupils reacted enthusiastically to GOML and research supported this view (Buckby et al 1981). In areas where a GOML scheme flourished it was typical to reverse the 14 + option drop-out; two-thirds chose to continue to study a MFL rather than give it up. Although GOML never involved a majority of teachers and learners in schools, Page (1996) argues that the scheme:

**radically changed the approach to language teaching and learning showing first of all that language is not just a font of knowledge to be acquired, but a system to be used for a purpose, and secondly, that in order to motivate learners we must consider their needs and reward them for their achievements.**

(Page 1996, pg.103)

In England, the first General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) examination was instituted in 1988. GCSE was intended for the whole ability range catering for pupils at both Basic and Higher level. The course was followed for two years from age fourteen and there was an examination for all pupils at the end of compulsory education when pupils were usually sixteen years old. It gave equal balance to all four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In the late 1980s there was a parallel development in Scotland with the introduction of Standard Grade courses at Foundation, General and Credit levels. Initially, for MFLs, writing was optional and grades were awarded for speaking, reading and listening tasks. Changes in Standard Grade MFLs required that, from 2002, all pupils must complete the requirements of preparing a folio of writing tasks. Tasks were set for candidates at Foundation, General and Credit level.

Both GCSE courses in England and Standard Grade courses in Scotland were intended for all pupils who could achieve a national qualification at a level that was appropriate to their ability. There still existed problems for pupils with SEN. Earlier in England in 1997 the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) report *Excellence for all Children, Meeting Special Educational Needs*, it was stated that there were pupils for whom GCSE qualifications at sixteen years were inappropriate. In an attempt to give appropriate recognition of the achievements of pupils with SEN it was proposed that by 2002 Certificates of Achievement, available in every subject, would become part of the national framework of qualifications (DfEE 1997). In Scotland the 1997 Report *Europe, Languages and Special Educational Needs Project* (McColl et al 1997) asked SOEID (now SEED) to consider the need for clearer guidance to schools which were experiencing a conflict between the modern languages policy governing the provision of a foreign language course leading to assessment at Standard Grade and SEN policy statements which emphasised the need to offer appropriate courses and assessment to pupils with SEN (McColl et al 1997).

McColl et al (2002) suggest that in some schools it was clear that Standard Grade Foundation level was failing to provide adequate scope for learning experiences which were appropriate for the ever-widening range of pupils undertaking programmes of modern language study for whom the only option, at this stage, was Standard Grade.

The findings of the Howie Committee for post sixteen pupils 1990 eventually led to the new structure of Education and Assessment: Higher Still. The changes to the upper secondary were announced in March 1994 and following a development programme, the start date for the new courses was 1999-2000 (Andsell 2000).

This comprehensive framework of national qualifications ensured progression for all levels of learners. The Higher Still programme provides opportunity for all pupils and includes academic and vocational units. The Higher Still programme was originally intended for post sixteen qualifications. There has now been a

removal of age and stage restrictions, Access 3 courses and Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 courses are replacing Standard Grade in some schools.

The introduction of Access level modern languages into the Higher Still development programme provided the potential for resolving the dilemma facing schools, although it was not until the lifting of 'age and stage' restrictions that this potential could be realised in S3 and S4 (McColl et al 2002).

As Higher Still provision for modern languages was developed at Access 3 and above, special schools asked to be included and provision was made for modern languages at Access 2. Later, also in response to demand from schools, Access 1 programmes were added to the modern languages framework (McColl et al 2002). With the advent of Access programmes and especially Access 3 (which is the equivalent of Standard Grade Foundation level, but without an end of course exam, using instead a series of internal assessments) Modern Language departments have been able to set up appropriate programmes for new groupings of pupils who were previously struggling with Standard Grade Foundation, or who would previously not have been included (McColl et al 2002).

The reforms were intended to provide opportunity for all pupils. Opportunities for middle and lower attaining students in Scotland had improved and students with SEN had been given better access to national certification. In 2004, however, research carried out at Edinburgh University by Moray House School of Education revealed that this opportunity:

**has not always led to attainment for all.**

(Raffe 2004, pg.1)

Researchers found that there was only forty per cent success rates for Foundation level students. This finding suggests that despite the introduction of a more flexible exam system and increased opportunities for lower achievers to progress in their chosen subject, the actual process of sitting exams is problematic for lower achievers and pupils with SEN. It was suggested that further reforms might be required with a move away from the exam system. For example, the convenor of the Scottish Parent Teacher Council (SPTC), Judith

Gillespie, suggested further reforms might be needed with a move away from the exam system when she said:

**passing exams is a skill and it is a skill some people have and some people don't have....What we perhaps need to do is to look at offering these particular youngsters routes that are exam free.**

(Gillespie 2004, pg.1)

Similar views concerning moving towards exam free courses in both Scotland and England emerged in the fieldwork interviews. However, the Scottish Executive has highlighted that the intention remains that all pupils should study a MFL up to the age of 16 years in secondary schools in Scotland.

### **The Development of MFL Learning In the Czech Republic – An Historical Overview**

The purpose of this section is to provide information on the development of Modern Foreign Language provision in secondary schools in the Czech Republic. In order to set the present situation regarding MFL learning in an historical context, the first part of this section provides a brief historical overview of the changes that have occurred in the education system in the Czech Republic. The second part considers the developments that have taken place in MFL provision in schools.

After World War Two the Czech Republic experienced sudden change as a nation, as did the educational system, and following the events which occurred after the Velvet Revolution of 1989 it continues to evolve. A brief outline of the development of the educational system will help to increase understanding of the present situation.

In 1918 Czech independence was achieved with the creation of the first Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1939). During this time the educational system was internationally recognised (Mays et al 1996), the product of decades of scholarly writings (e.g. Comenius, Jan Hus), reform-orientated perspectives and

solutions to educational problems all grounded in a distinguished educational tradition and an exposure to the influences of both European and North American thought.

After the Second World War the country entered a long period of Communist rule from 1948 until 1989. This had an impact on the educational system which became overlaid with Marxist-Leninist beliefs and promoted uniformity at the expense of individual development (Grant 1969). The 1948 School Law was passed “to make culture, training and education democratic” (Grant 1969). All schools were brought under State control. The system was organised in three tiers:

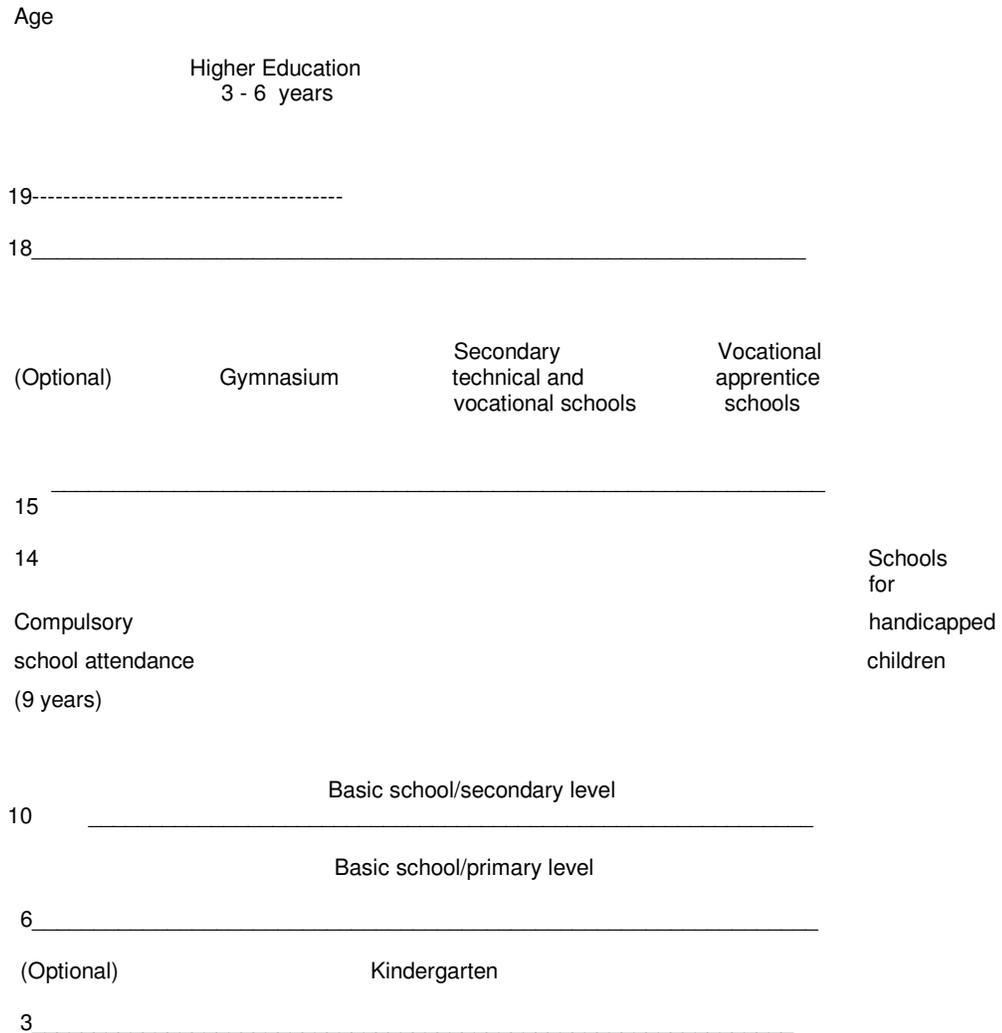
- the basic school - (the national or people’s school) for pupils of six to eleven years old
- the middle school, for pupils of eleven to fifteen years old
- the four year gymnasia and vocational secondary schools.

This system was later to develop into a basic eight-year, and subsequently, nine year, comprehensive school, followed by the four year gymnasia and technical and vocational secondary schools. The imposed uniformity of the National Curriculum for MFL learning in all the schools would appear to demonstrate the rigidity of the system.

From 1976 school attendance was made compulsory for ten years. This system was in place until 1989 (Bîrzea 1994). Following the Velvet Revolution of 1989, the school system changed again and compulsory school attendance was reduced to nine years.

**Table 1** demonstrates the Czechoslovak education system that was in place in 1992.

**Table 1: The Czechoslovak Education System In 1992**



(Parizek 1992, pg.77)

This system has continued into the new millennium.

## **Developments In MFL Learning**

Byram (2003) reminds us that three fundamental functions of all national education systems, and of compulsory education in particular, are to create the human capital required in a country's economy, to develop a sense of national identity, and to promote equality or at least a sense of social inclusion.

In the Czech Republic the political situation after World War Two led to the learning of Russian as a compulsory subject for all pupils. After the communists took over in 1948 the dominant position of Russian as the main foreign language was confirmed and this continued until 1989 (Eurydice 2001). MFL learning has been compulsory for all pupils in the Czech Republic since communist rule began in 1948. Unlike the Soviet schools, however, most of the East European systems did not limit themselves to one foreign language but offered two or even three so that the study of English, French and German was still available (Grant 1969). All pupils studied the Russian language from age nine and then had the opportunity to study a second foreign language at age eleven, either English, French or German as an optional subject.

In the general secondary school the study of two foreign languages was compulsory and the optional third foreign language could also be taken from the choice of English, French or German. In the vocational schools Russian was also compulsory and a second foreign language was offered as an optional subject. The same situation existed in the apprentice schools.

This compulsory nature of foreign language learning indicates that it was regarded as an important priority in the curriculum design and all pupils were learning at least one MFL in all schools. This situation continued until 1989 when the learning of the Russian language became optional rather than compulsory. Now pupils can choose from English, German and French as the first foreign language, and over 80% of pupils are now choosing English (Prucha and Walterová 1992).

Foreign language teaching has received attention both in relation to the languages taught and to methodology and resources (Taislov 2007). As in the United Kingdom since 1989 new curricula and teaching methods are being explored which are moving from traditions of language learning based on

linguistic analysis as was the case under the communists towards the development of communicative competence (Byram 2003). According to Taislov (2007) languages are now taught in the Czech Republic with the use of more audio-visual resources which have been made available, many of them imported from the relevant foreign countries. Languages are regarded as a key element in the internationalisation of education whereby foreign contacts and experience can assist in the solution of the Czech Republic's internal educational problems (Eurydice 2001).

Teachers' views and opinions on the range of teaching resources available, in particular the views of those teachers who had previously solely used traditional text books, are gathered in the fieldwork interviews.

### **Assessment of Pupils**

Throughout their primary and secondary education pupils receive school reports with grades for each subject twice a year. During the timescale of this study there was no system of standardised tests for any subject. Apart from continuous assessment and short oral and written examinations, starting with the sixth grade, each pupil should take four formal written examinations in one year (Dickson and Cumming 1996). The curricula contain general recommendations concerning the format of these tasks as well as their assessment. There is no formal final separate external assessment in a foreign language at the end of compulsory schooling. At the end of upper secondary school students take the Maturita Examination in which a foreign language is one of the compulsory subjects. The requirements are stated by the Ministry of Education but its content is specified at the school level. At present this is an oral examination lasting 15 minutes. Since this examination does not contain objectively comparable criteria, it is difficult to compare the standards achieved at different schools (Dickson and Cumming 1996). However, despite the problems of lack of standardisation of MFL examinations at national level, Taislov (2007) states that results seem to be satisfactory. Nevertheless, the diversity of language teaching conditions and the limited contact between schools and bodies responsible for initial and further teacher training make it impossible to obtain a clear picture of the level of

achievement reached in MFL learning and difficult to evaluate academic results properly (Taislov 2007).

### **Conclusion To Part One**

This part of the chapter has explored the developments in MFL teaching and learning in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic. In Scotland and in England, MFL learning has developed from being perceived as an academic subject primarily for an elite group of high achieving pupils towards being accessible to all pupils. In the Czech Republic there has been a movement from all pupils having to learn Russian to the present situation where all pupils have to study a MFL but there is no longer a compulsory language which all pupils must learn; there is now a choice of languages.

It is recommended that all pupils learn at least one MFL up to the age of sixteen years in Scotland. Learning a MFL is compulsory for all pupils up to the age of fourteen years in England. In the Czech Republic, all pupils are required to learn at least one MFL until the end of compulsory schooling up to the age fifteen years.

In the three countries there has been a movement towards emphasising communicative competence in MFL teaching and learning. In the United Kingdom, however, despite increased awareness of the importance of MFL learning in modern day life, despite increased opportunities for all pupils to learn MFLs in schools and increased opportunities for all pupils to achieve national certification via GCSE courses in England and Standard Grade courses and the Higher Still Programme in Scotland, indifference and apathy towards MFL learning appears to be creeping into the educational system. McPake (2003) suggests that there is a “climate of negativity” towards language learning affecting society generally.

By contrast, in the Czech Republic, after the fundamental social and political change in 1989 the compulsory teaching of Russian as the first language was immediately stopped and was replaced by the democratic choice, by pupils or

their parents, of a foreign language. Measures were taken for the re-qualification of teachers of Russian, all institutions preparing foreign language teachers expanded, new forms of foreign language teaching study programmes were introduced (so-called fast track) and the number of schools with extended teaching of foreign languages increased (Eurydice 2001).

Since this study has a particular focus on MFL provision for lower achievers, including those with SEN, the second part of this chapter explores the developments in provision for young people with SEN in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic. The developments in England and Scotland are considered together followed by the developments in the Czech Republic.

## **Part Two**

### **The Development of SEN Provision in England and in Scotland**

It has been established that the past forty years have seen many changes in MFL teaching and learning. Since the late 1970s until 2004 there have also been major changes in another area of education with which this study is concerned, namely, Special Educational Needs (SEN). New legislation in Scotland (Scottish Parliament 2004) introduced changes that were considered necessary to “improve and update the assessment and recording process for children and young people with SEN” (Hamill and Clark 2005). This included a change in terminology from SEN to Additional Support Needs (ASN). The concept of ASN is wider than the previous concept of SEN and the new legislation is designed to represent diversity of children’s needs and guarantee them support within the education system (Hamill and Clark 2005). Since this study is concerned with the provision of MFLs for lower achievers and pupils with SEN in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic until 2004, the term SEN is used in this study.

The 1994 Code of Practice (COP) states that a child has special educational needs if he or she has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.

A child has a learning difficulty if he or she:

- **has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age**
- **has a disability which either prevents or hinders the child from making use of educational facilities of a kind provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the Local Education Authority**
- **is under five years of age and falls within either of the definitions above, or would do if special educational provision was not made for the child.**
- **a child must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or form of language of the home is different from the language in which he or she is taught.**

(COP 1994, Section 156)

In order to understand the significance of the developments in SEN the next part of this chapter outlines the key changes in provision for pupils with SEN in schools in England and in Scotland since the 1970s. Young people with SEN are now integrated as far as possible into mainstream schools and have an entitlement to the mainstream school curriculum.

In England the 1944 Education Act defined nine categories of handicap including: blind, partially sighted, deaf, partial hearing, educationally subnormal, epileptic, maladjusted, physically handicapped and speech defective. The identification of various handicaps facilitated the easy removal of children into schools or Training Centres provided for the atypical child. Significant changes occurred following the publication of the Warnock Report in 1978.

The present concept of SEN in England and Scotland is based on the deliberations of the Warnock Committee whose recommendations on special educational provision were published in its report. The Warnock Report of 1978 proposed that people with learning difficulties would be termed as having Special

Educational Needs (SEN), that pupils with SEN should be integrated, as far as possible into mainstream schools, and that there should be an emphasis on the achievements of SEN pupils rather than focusing only on their problems.

Copeland (2002) argues that Warnock's starting point was a rejection of the thinking that had underpinned the nine categories of handicapped pupils which had been a consequence of the 1944 Education Act. The categories were regarded as unsatisfactory because they concentrated on the pupils' handicaps rather than their educational needs. The main strands of Warnock's deliberations may be summarised as an attempt to change the definition of pupil disability, an enlargement of the pupil target group, a safeguarding of the position of an identified minority of pupils, an endorsement of the policy of integration of pupils with disability into ordinary schools and the recognition of parents as partners in educational decisions concerning their children (Copeland 2002).

Many of the Warnock Committee's recommendations were accepted in the 1981 Education Act. In England, the Act affirmed, in principle, that children with special educational needs should be educated in mainstream schools as far as possible, if it did not interfere in any way with the education of the other children and made efficient use of resources.

However there was great variability in the responses of Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to the implementation of the 1981 Act due to lack of clarity on what constitutes special educational needs and the responsibilities of the Local Authorities towards these pupils (O' Hanlon 1993). In England a Code of Practice giving practical guidance to LEAs was drawn up as part of the 1993 Education Act, in an attempt to establish some consistency of provision. The Code of Practice seeks to help schools and LEAs obtain best value from the considerable financial resources and expertise they devote to the education of children with SEN, from those who need a little extra help in the learning process to those with more serious learning difficulties.

In Scotland, the Warnock Report was one of two documents which had a major influence on provision. It directly influenced the Education (Scotland) Act 1981, which enshrined in law the Warnock philosophy by stating that children have SEN if they "have greater difficulty in learning than most other children of their

own age”. However, equally influential was the report of HM Inspectorate, *The Education of Pupils with Learning Difficulties in Primary and Secondary schools in Scotland* (1978). This report focused on those pupils experiencing learning difficulties who were already in mainstream schools. By locating the source of difficulty in the school, rather than the pupil, it advocated a move away from a model of pupils’ deficits to a consideration of school and teacher deficits. It suggested that “appropriate, rather than remedial, education is required”. It stressed whole school responsibility and the role of parents (Allan and Brown 1991).

In Scotland guidance and advice for teachers in identifying and providing for pupils with special educational needs is available in the HMI Report (1994) *Effective Provision For Special Educational Needs* (EPSEN) and in the *Manual for Good Practice in Special Educational Needs* (SOEID 1998).

In its agenda for action in *Ambitious, Excellent Schools* (2005), the Scottish Executive recognises that many young people face challenges in their lives, whether temporary or long term, and is committed to address the needs of young people in order to maximise their opportunities in the learning environment, intending to give pupils the best opportunities to develop their potential through “better support for learning”.

A significant impact of the 1978 Warnock Report on SEN was:

**the abolition of a negative approach to children who for one reason or another were labelled ‘handicapped’.**

(Wilkinson 1986, pg.1)

The concern was no longer with ascertaining what these children were unable to accomplish but, instead, the focus changed to finding how childrens’ strengths could overcome learning difficulties. The Warnock Report estimated that approximately one child in five would require some form of special educational provision at some time during their school career. Only a small minority of these children are placed in special schools, the rest attend mainstream schools. This means that a teacher of a mixed ability class of thirty children should be aware

that possibly as many as six of them may require some form of special educational provision at some time during their school life (Warnock Report 1978). This emphasises the need for differentiation of materials and tasks if the needs of all pupils in the class are to be met.

In MFL classrooms where there could be thirty pupils, frequent changes of activities and an emphasis on encouraging pupils to speak in the target language, meeting the needs of all pupils effectively could be described as a challenging task for MFL teachers in England and Scotland. This study aims to highlight strategies that have been considered successful by practitioners in the field of MFL teaching and learning which could possibly be used by other MFL teachers and learners in their work.

### **Integration and Inclusive Education**

'Inclusive education' is being used now to refer to forms of education that are organised to include special needs provision. Booth (1983) describes integration as the process of increasing the participation of children and young people in their communities. A majority of Local Education Authorities are now placing more children with disabilities or difficulties in learning in mainstream schools rather than special schools (O'Hanlon 1993). This has come about by the changing of attitudes, the re-allocation of resources and expertise from special schools, the development of in-service training for those in special and mainstream schools, reduction of the proportion of children selected for separate special school education and the commitment to putting the integration principle into action (Swann 1991). This movement presents a challenge for MFL teachers who have to adapt teaching styles and resources to meet the increasing needs of pupils, particularly in mixed ability classes of thirty pupils.

Integration practices appear to flourish in school communities when Headteachers, well supported by LEA services at the personal as well as the managerial level, together with parents and governors, adopt a truly whole-school philosophy. Both pupils and adults are alert to the clear statements of intent in such schools, in school policy documents, in pronouncements and in the

behaviour of staff, parents and governors (Jones 1998). The whole school ethos is also important in promoting Languages For All in schools. The importance of a positive whole school ethos in terms of MFL learning is emphasised in the fieldwork interviews.

### **Local Management of Schools (LMS) and SEN**

Control over the allocation of resources and decisions about their use is gradually moving from the LEA to schools themselves and this is known as LMS. It is suggested by Lee and Henkhuzens (1996) that in England the issues arising as a result of LMS and changing patterns of resources are of “great importance for pupils with SEN”. The funding of special needs provision and of support services in particular is perhaps the most important single challenge facing the field at the present time (Mittler 1995). For example, some of the facilitating conditions that underpinned the effective integration of pupils with SEN into mainstream schools involved the supportive strategies and provision of LEAs, particularly in relation to staffing and resources (Fletcher, Campbell et al. 1992). With budgets now being delegated to schools and decisions about support needs for pupils are being made at school level, Lee and Henkhuzens (1996) suggest that area policies are increasingly threatened and integration may be dependent on institutional policies rather than LEA policies.

### **Attitudes Concerning Integration**

Headteachers involved in the 1996 study, *Integration In Progress: Pupils with Special Needs in Mainstream Schools* (Lee and Henkhuzens 1996), had positive views of taking a wide range of pupils and were in favour of integration but felt that not all their staff shared their views. Subject teachers were generally supportive of the policy of taking the full range of pupils, although certain members of staff expressed concern about several factors: lack of resources, taking on pupils who were highly disruptive or violent, or those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Some subject teachers were concerned that they did not have the necessary skills and expertise to deal with such pupils (Lee and Henkhuzens 1996).

The Research questions revealed that behavioural issues were a source of concern for MFL teachers, particularly in city schools in England and Scotland. Many teachers feel that they do not have the skills necessary for including pupils with a wide range of special needs in their classes. There is also concern that there will be insufficient material and financial resources and in particular, support staff to implement a policy of full inclusion effectively (Hornby 2001). The question of lack of sufficient training for teachers in mainstream schools who have to teach the full range of ability, including those pupils with SEN, is highlighted by Garner (2001) who states that there is minimal input on teaching pupils with SEN in initial training courses and limited In-service training available. The fieldwork interviews revealed that many MFL teachers in the three countries would welcome further training in this area.

Provision of support services for pupils with SEN vary from LEA to LEA and provision for SEN pupils vary from school to school (NfER 1996). This view was highlighted in England and Scotland in the fieldwork interviews. In Scotland, there have been several initiatives to facilitate inclusion. In 1998 a new Community Schools programme was launched as a key element in the strategy to promote social inclusion and raise educational standards. In 2002, HMI highlighted the many initiatives that were ongoing in Scotland which were working towards achieving inclusion in Scottish schools. For example, from 1998 to 2001, the Excellence Fund provided a core programme of national funding intended to support targeted action at local level, including the teaching of MFLs. This funding was used to support a range of developments in specific areas, including:

- the development of alternatives to exclusion and multi-agency support for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties
- support to include pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools
- the introduction of study support schemes, including homework clubs,

breakfast, lunch and evening clubs, summer schemes, sports and arts activities

- the introduction of classroom assistants and the reduction of class sizes.

During the course of this study, there was no indication at Government level that class sizes should be reduced for MFL learning and this was highlighted as an area of concern in the fieldwork interviews in both England and Scotland.

At a time, therefore, when inclusion is seen as being universally assumed to be a desirable goal, constant vigilance is necessary to ensure that mainstream schools provide an appropriate learning and social environment for all pupils (Mittler 1993).

### **The Development of Special Educational Needs in the Czech Republic**

In the Czech Republic the transition from the State controlled system of education to the evolving one of today is being developed in order to be as effective and appropriate as possible for all pupils (Parizek 1992). Kalous (1997) argues, however, that there is an “inertia of acquired attitudes and behaviour patterns “ which is a legacy of the Communist regime and believes that this is the most significant, yet elusive, barrier to educational reform in the Czech Republic. These “attitudes and behaviour patterns “ he describes as work habits that are deeply rooted in the past, such as acting only according to detailed instructions “from above”, for example, following centrally prescribed curricula. There is a contradiction between the new principles of democracy, humanism and liberalism, and the old rigid, highly bureaucratic educational structure. However, Bîrzea (1994) explains that such a paradoxical co-existence of old and new structures is typical of States in transition and the Czech Republic is no exception.

Forty years of Marxist Leninist educational ideas left the former Czechoslovakia with a residue of concepts that focused on individual defects in special education (Černá 1996). There are, in fact, some specific terms, as defined by Sovák

(1984), that were used in special education in the former Czechoslovakia which continue to be important: for example, defect refers to impairment or lack of something necessary for a healthy life or a shortage of substances necessary for full health. Defectology as defined by Sovák (1984) is a term used for the science that studies defective persons and is the theory behind special education. Defectology in the Czech Republic investigates the causes, aspects, and substance of the respective impairments, the impact of the defect on the personality of the handicapped person and the social consequences of the defect. Special education refers to the science concerned with the development and education of handicapped persons. Defectology is the basis for special education; its object is the defective person (Sovák 1984).

A categorical approach such as this traditionally labels students with exceptionalities. It recognises the following categories: speech impairment, hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical handicap, health impairment, mental handicap, learning disability, and multiple handicaps. Categorisation serves administrative purposes as well as health, social and educational care services (SECR 2007)

Before the Velvet Revolution of 1989, the education of pupils with disabilities was guided by defectology and professionals emphasised a deficit model. However, since 1989 the opening of Western ideas and the presence of visiting scholars and teachers from Western Europe and the United States exposed special education to the fruit of decades of research and innovative thinking. With the advent of the Velvet Revolution, a major challenge facing the Czech Republic was to shift to an orientation which allowed the integration of students with disabilities into their mainstream schools.

In 1996 Černá suggested that from the early 1990s the trend was to emphasise the value of every individual with impairment or handicap and to discover and develop the abilities of each person's capacities. The goals of special education were socialisation, normalisation, integration into society, and emancipation in order to incorporate the handicapped into the world of work and social activity

(Černá1996). These are similar to the goals being achieved in both England and Scotland in the field of SEN.

This integration required a change of attitude among those involved in the process of change in the system. During the communist period children with special educational needs were removed from populated centres away from public view (Černá 1996). In post revolutionary Czechoslovakia, their existence is now more freely accepted and serious attempts are being made to respond to some of their needs.

However, the previous system was established in 1929 and it is difficult to change attitudes which have prevailed over such a long time; secondly, there had been little or no opportunity to consider other systems and evaluate their strengths and weakness whilst the country was veiled behind the Iron Curtain; and thirdly, exceptionality is highly stigmatised in the Czech Republic Mainstreaming is not a common practice and many teachers and even some parents are not committed to integration (Černá 1996).

However, while the attitude of teacher unions towards educational reform has not been entirely negative, these unions were opposed to “massive liberalisation of schools” (OECD 1996). Polyzoi and Černá (2003) argue that:

**the majority of teachers in the Czech school system remain cautious participants in the change process.**

(Polyzoi and Černá 2003 pg. 48)

The re-education of an entire generation of teachers, professors and citizens in the promotion of more positive attitudes towards students and citizens with disabilities has been described as a courageous undertaking (Kotásek 1997). Estimates indicate that in the Czech Republic over 15% of the school-age population have some kind of learning difficulty and many of these students are emotionally handicapped and, for the most part, attend special classes within ordinary schools (Kotásek 1997). This study is focusing on MFL learning among

pupils such as those within this 15% of the school-age population who have learning difficulties and are placed in mainstream basic schools.

### **Conclusion To Part Two**

The second part of this chapter has explored the developments that have occurred in the field of special educational needs in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic. The key issues raised have shown that there have been many similarities in the development of provision for pupils with SEN in schools in England and Scotland. In the Czech Republic change is occurring slowly as it is not only the education system that is developing but the change in traditional attitudes towards young people with learning difficulties is taking time to achieve.

In England and in Scotland the theories surrounding special educational needs provision have moved from a medical–deficit model of “disability” towards a social inclusion model. The social inclusion model for SEN provision suggests that difficulties could be overcome by the school adapting to meet the needs of the pupils with SEN and to find ways in which all pupils could be empowered to learn together in mainstream schools whether they have a learning difficulty, a physical disability or a behavioural or emotional difficulty. Problems concerning the integration of pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties into mixed ability classes were raised in both England and Scotland during the fieldwork interviews.

The inclusion agenda has been seen as a controversial policy, particularly on the issue of staff in schools having to deal with increasing levels of indiscipline and persistent low-level disruption. Surveys in the mid 1990s found that very serious misbehaviour was rare, but that the cumulative effect of a great deal of minor disruption was very wearing on teachers (Munn and Johnstone 1992). The policy of “inclusion” has also made it very difficult to exclude pupils for anything other than very serious offences (Munn et al. 2000). Pre-1970s persistently disobedient pupils were sent to establishments outwith mainstream schools.

In the Czech Republic a medical-deficit model of “disability” was the dominant theory regarding pupils with special educational needs. The medical–deficit model suggested that a disability that a child may have was related to a problem with the child that could perhaps be treated. Children who were considered to require special care were traditionally educated outwith mainstream schools. Since 1989 there has been a movement towards integrating young people with disabilities into mainstream schools (SECR 2007).

The process of inclusion is ongoing and the Scottish Executive, the Government in the United Kingdom and the Government in the Czech Republic are all committed to supporting staff and pupils to achieve their potential in Scottish, English and Czech schools. It is a very interesting time to discover how these young people are being provided for in the MFL classroom.

The first and second parts of the chapter have offered a brief historical overview of the developments in MFL teaching and learning and the developments in the provision for pupils with SEN in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic. The historical overview provides the background to current policy of provision of MFLs for all pupils in each of the three countries which is explored in detail in the third part of the chapter. An understanding of the current policy of provision of MFLs for all pupils in each of the three countries provides a baseline for the understanding of the Research Questions which are discussed in Chapters Four and Five where views on current practice are explored and analysed.

### **Part Three** **Integration and MFL Teaching and Learning in Scotland and England**

Through a review of research literature, this third part of the chapter considers some of the main arguments and issues surrounding inclusion and the teaching of MFLs to lower achievers and pupils with SEN in England and in Scotland together, followed by a review of the research literature from the Czech Republic.

At national level the UK Government has clearly articulated its social inclusion policy (Hamill and Clark 2005). In England there is no doubt that due to the

growing emphasis on the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools, the number of children with SEN being educated in mainstream schools is increasing (McKeown 2004). There is also an increase in the severity and variety of their SEN. Pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties and variety of medical conditions, sensory difficulties and physical disabilities, are now attending mainstream classes. The implication of this is that teachers in mainstream schools have to expand their knowledge and skills in order to meet the needs of pupils with SEN (Stakes and Hornby 2000).

In Scotland in 2003 the Scottish Executive placed an increased emphasis on inclusion by establishing the promotion of inclusion and equality as one of its national priorities. This vision of inclusion refers to all pupils regardless of disability, gender, sexual orientation, religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background (SEED 2003). Considerable progress has been made in promoting “inclusion for all”. The practice of segregation is no longer accepted unquestioningly but it remains difficult to move smoothly from schools that have been characterised by deficit thinking to inclusive models which do not locate the problems within individuals as opposed to systems. Confusion and uncertainty still surround this concept (Hamill and Clark 2005). This view is reinforced by Lennon (2003) who argues that the child deficit model criticised by Warnock in 1978 still dominates the thinking of many teachers in secondary schools and is a powerful determinant of their professional attitudes. He goes on to suggest that learners with SEN continue to be seen as an obstacle to the effective learning of their peers.

In their studies on inclusive education, Hamill and Boyd (2001, 2002) found that increasing numbers of schools were moving away from mixed-ability teaching and were using a system of setting where young people were assigned to classes in certain subjects according to their attainment in that subject. They found that several teachers in the schools involved in their studies referred to the bottom, middle and top sets when discussing attainment and the vast majority of pupils with SEN were in the so-called bottom sets. The researchers found that the composition of sets varied very little across subjects. The researchers felt that it is worth noting that as schools strive to support lower achievers and young

people with SEN within inclusive schools, there are barriers caused by traditional thinking that have to be broken down. Hamill and Clark (2005) state that while some people may agree that teaching pupils in mixed-ability classes is the most appropriate way to support pupils with SEN, other people are of the opinion that setting gives support to pupils with SEN by facilitating teaching and learning, targeting of resources and the pace of work in classrooms. However, most schools continue to try to find ways of supporting young people with SEN (Hamill and Clark 2005). The issue of learning a MFL in mixed-ability classes was discussed in the fieldwork interviews.

In recent years, secondary schools in Scotland have focused on meeting the needs of lower achievers and pupils with SEN using a holistic approach. For example it is suggested in *A Manual of Good Practice in Special Education Needs* (SOEID 1998) that:

**the school policy makes it clear that all staff have a responsibility to support young people with SEN**

(SOEID 1998, pg. 63)

and that:

**specialist staff provide support to class teachers through co-operative teaching, professional development, working individually with young people and sharing their expertise through consultancy.**

(SOEID 1998 pg. 63)

Similarly, in England, the SEN code of practice states that all teachers are teachers of pupils with SEN (DfES 2001).

**Inclusion... requires ownership by the Headteacher and Senior Management Team, Governors and all staff.**

(DfES 2004, 4:9)

The Government's strategy for SEN states:

**....headteachers should ensure that staff develop the skills and confidence to respond effectively to children's SEN.**

(DfES 2004,2:8)

There is an awareness that staff need training to be able to meet the needs of the increasing numbers of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools. Inclusion does present a challenge as the population of learners in inclusive contexts increases. Staff in schools are likely to feel threatened by the changes to teaching styles and contexts that will be required to ensure that all pupils reach their potential unless they themselves are supported in their endeavours (Hamill and Clark 2005). The provision of support for lower achievers and pupils with SEN is a key factor in facilitating success for these SEN pupils not only in MFL classrooms but in all subjects. This key issue is addressed by Research Question Two in the fieldwork interviews.

While examining the issue of inclusion, SEED (2003) identified that a group of pupils who presented particularly difficult challenges to schools were pupils who experience social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Various studies (Cooper 1993; O'Brien 1998; Porter 2000) have all concluded that when the concept of inclusion focused upon pupils whose behaviour can be disruptive to the rest of the class, the majority of teachers involved in the studies felt that this group of young people made a conscious choice to be disruptive and consequently forfeited the right to be educated in mainstream schools.

In common with the conclusions of these three studies, Hamill and Boyd (2000, 2001 and 2002) found that these pupils posed the biggest barrier to inclusion within secondary schools. Most teachers were willing to make an effort to include pupils with sensory, physical or less complex learning difficulties, but when a pupil's behaviour was disruptive there was evidence that this could lead to teachers rejecting the entire inclusive process.

Views on behavioural issues in MFL classrooms were addressed by the research questions and views were gathered in the fieldwork interviews.

## **Why Teach MFLs to Lower Achievers and Pupils with SEN?**

There are many suggested justifications for excluding young people with SEN from MFL learning for example:

**Mathew has learning difficulties. It takes him all his time to get to class and listen. He certainly won't follow a foreign language.**

**Liz has the attention span of a goldfish. She won't pass an exam. She won't stop talking long enough to let you get a word in edgeways in either language.**

**Paul is dyslexic. Learning French will just make his spelling worse.**

(McKeown 2004, pg.10)

However, it has been stated in favour of MFL learning, that some pupils with SEN excel at MFL learning and these pupils have many strengths (Caldwell 2002). Similarly, Wilson (2003) states that SEN pupils in his school enjoy MFL learning and they see it as a fun and practical activity. He has found that many pupils with SEN achieve a higher GCSE grade in German than in English. He concludes that starting from scratch in learning another language might well lead to an improvement in their mother tongue performance (Wilson 2003). However, although many pupils with SEN enjoy learning a MFL, young people with SEN can find learning a new language very challenging and require a lot of support (McKeown 2004).

There are many positive reasons why lower achievers and pupils with SEN should learn MFLs. Bovair (2002) argues that the MFL curriculum is a very useful vehicle:

- **to develop pupils' self-esteem;**
- **to develop pupils' ability to communicate in another language;**

- **to develop pupils' capabilities in their own language;**
- **to learn about the countries where the target languages are spoken, and to encourage positive attitudes towards different cultures**

(Bovair 2002, pg.7)

Other research literature would agree that for lower achievers and pupils with SEN learning a MFL is a challenge but it is also an important factor in helping young people appreciate different communities and cultures in the modern world (McKeown 2004). These issues are discussed in the fieldwork interviews.

In order to achieve these goals, an appropriate curriculum is central to the process of meeting needs and responding to diversity. In England, one of the intentions of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES 2002) publication *Languages for All: Languages for Life, A Strategy for England* was that all secondary pupils should have high quality teaching and learning at Key Stage 3 and a flexible curriculum and range of routes to support success during the fourteen to nineteen phase.

In Scotland, *A Manual of Good Practice in Special Educational Needs* (SOEID 1998) outlines the principles in relation to the curriculum which apply to all young people. The curriculum must satisfy the principles of breadth, balance, progression, continuity and coherence, and all young people have an equal entitlement to a curriculum in line with national guidelines, including 5-14, Standard Grade and Higher Still.

When teaching MFLs to lower achievers and pupils with SEN, making the curriculum accessible to all pupils requires a range of strategies to be used. In England, the starting point for planning a school curriculum is the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. It outlines three essential principles that are essential to developing a more inclusive curriculum:

- **setting suitable learning challenges**
- **responding to pupils' diverse learning needs**

- **overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals.**

(NC 1999. pg. 20)

Curriculum planning and assessment for pupils with SEN must take account of the type and extent of the difficulty experienced by the child. A small number of pupils may need access to specialist equipment and approaches or to alternative or adapted activities, consistent with school based intervention augmented by advice and support from external specialists as described in *SEN Code of Practice* (NC 1999).

However, planning and delivering a curriculum that can be accessed by all pupils is a complex and skilful process (Solity 1993). It is clear that learners have a variety of needs which have to be addressed in different ways and differentiation is one curricular strategy which caters for this variation. Catering for diversity through differentiation can be challenging but it is at the core of inclusive practice and it is one strategy that teachers can use to help them meet the challenge of inclusion (Solity 1993). This means that the MFL teacher has to implement core, reinforcement and extension activities in order to meet the needs of all the pupils in the classroom. Holmes (2002) argues that as the organiser of the learning the teacher's responsibility is twofold:

- **to find ways to modify the activities and make them accessible for low-attaining pupils:**
- **to provide other activities which stretch higher attaining pupils.**

(Holmes 2002, pg.217)

Differentiation can be achieved by the tasks set for pupils of different abilities or by outcome where all pupils are set the same task and the differentiation is achieved according to the standard of work that pupils are able to produce. It is also important for the teacher to consider not only that pupils have different needs and abilities but also have different learning styles. For example, some pupils respond to visual stimulus, some have strong auditory memory, some

prefer practical learning related to given topics and some pupils react more favourably to written tasks and other pupils do not (Holmes 2002). Therefore, in order to cater for:

**differences in learning styles and to combat stereotyping, the differentiated classroom should provide variety and balance in the different types of experiences offered.**

(Holmes 2002, pg.213)

Another vital component in achieving effective inclusion is the ethos and culture within schools and classrooms. Literature on school effectiveness has highlighted these issues. The *How Good is Our School* report considered how schools could develop a culture of quality by:

**establishing an ethos that only the best will do and that by working together we can make significant improvements.**

(SOEID 1997, pg.3)

It was suggested in the fieldwork interviews that when teaching and learning MFLs among lower achievers and pupils with SEN was successful, the ethos not only in MFL classrooms but also in the whole school had an important influence. McLean (2003) talks of achievement as a generic issue as much as a specific one and of motivation being achieved at whole school level. He suggests that classrooms where optimal learning opportunities are provided are more likely to be found within a school where the leadership operates the motivating principles of engagement, stimulation, structure and feedback and applies these principles to motivate the teaching staff. He argues that the motivational model proposes that the drivers of engagement and feedback deliver affirmation in the classroom, while stimulation and structure provide empowerment.

McLean (2003) suggests that school leaders play a critical role in the development of motivating schools. Management teams need school leaders who have the vision to move from a control culture to an emphasis on self-motivation and to encourage the optimistic view that learning is an intrinsic part of human nature that needs to be nurtured.

It is essential that strong effective leadership promotes a vision of inclusion that permeates all levels in the school community, from senior managers to all staff including policies on teaching and learning and curriculum delivery (Hamill and Clark 2005). It was highlighted in the fieldwork interviews that a whole school ethos that promotes MFL learning is crucial in the development of Languages for All in schools. Sebba and Ainscow (1996) argue that essential components should include the encouragement of mixed-ability groupings where possible, co-operative and active learning, inter-professional collaboration and a differentiated curriculum. Young people experience the reality of inclusion in classrooms and the teachers must create an atmosphere where everyone is valued.

McKeown (2004) argues that there are many practical things a teacher can do in the MFL classroom to make the learning experience easier for pupils. For example: establish routines for the beginning and ending of lessons and use the same greetings each lesson; tell pupils what is expected of them and keep expectations high; explain practices and reinforce routines and plan carefully for social interaction in pair work and group work. The creation of such supportive structures for working within can make a big difference for pupils with SEN (McKeown 2004).

Holmes (1994) suggests that when presenting new language, arranging words into songs, rhymes or poems is a technique that is of value in facilitating learning for lower achievers and pupils with SEN and suggests the employment of multi-sensory approaches to learning using visuals, smell, touch and action. Pupils hear and respond, see and respond, thus addressing the learners' senses. When using visuals, using the same visuals and materials for a series of lessons is less confusing for pupils with learning difficulties. Using the concept keyboard with a tape recorder can help to enhance listening skills by giving the pupils the opportunity to see the words they are listening to on tape and using an overhead projector or a large monitor allows target language to be used more effectively when pupils can see clearly the words they are speaking (McElwee 1994).

There has been a lot of debate concerning the role of grammar in guidelines on MFL teaching and learning. McColl (2003) states that this is a complex issue that requires careful thought and planning. It has been suggested that most pupils will

be able to recognise and use some familiar structures correctly if enough opportunities for practice are given and many pupils will be able to recognise and use new examples of those patterns using known vocabulary (McColl 2003).

Research literature suggests that the role of grammar in MFL learning provides an important link with the learning of the mother tongue. Johnstone (1994) argues that while communicative teaching requires maximum use of the foreign language for an ever widening range of purposes, there is also good reason for discussing their first language with pupils. This could involve the use of common terminology, for example, nouns, verbs, adjectives and so on to describe certain categories of word in both languages. There could be discussion of common features that the two languages have or do not have; discussion of what pupils think they can do in each language; and discussion of the strategies that pupils may find useful in developing and using each language (Johnstone 1994). In this way learning a MFL can help pupils build on their first language which would be useful for lower achievers and pupils with SEN. Teachers have to decide what tasks can be set according to the level of individual pupils in their class (McColl 2003). The role of grammar in MFL teaching and learning and links with learning the mother tongue are considered in the fieldwork interviews.

However, MFL teachers have to be aware that the barriers to learning that certain pupils have may not be linguistic ones but may be much more basic. If a MFL teacher finds that a pupil lacks confidence in speaking, the pupil may have had insufficient opportunity to become familiar with the language that he or she has to produce. If a pupil cannot understand what the teacher is saying in the target language it may be that the pupil has to visualise words and has not seen the written form. If pupils cannot remember vocabulary they may not have been taught effective strategies for learning vocabulary (McColl 2003). The teacher must also be aware of barriers to learning that may be less obvious: for example, although someone may not be deaf, it may be very difficult for them to process information presented orally (McColl 2003). Teachers have to identify and deal with barriers to learning for effective teaching and learning to take place. This is an issue that could be improved with further training for teachers. As highlighted in Chapter One, certain teachers felt that they lacked the necessary skills to

teach MFLs to the ever increasing number of pupils with SEN in MFL classrooms.

Many MFL teachers who have turned to educational technology as a tool to cater for the needs of lower achievers have found that pupils of all abilities were keen to use the same activities. Pupils could work at their own pace and differentiation by outcome is achieved (McElwee 1994). Using technology in MFL classrooms is encouraged in both National Curriculum Guidelines in England and in the 5-14 guidelines in Scotland. Computers can be used in a number of different ways from word processing to using desk top publishing. The video camera can be used to record a range of activities and the use of commercially produced video materials and satellite television is useful in opening up access to the culture and languages of other countries. In the revised 5-14 Guidelines (2000) it is generally recognised that Information and Communications Technology (ICT), which is developing at a rapidly increasing pace, has a natural affinity with MFLs. The use of new technologies to communicate instantaneously with counterparts in the countries whose languages are being studied is an application of ICT that could be used to motivate and inspire MFL learners. It is suggested that ICT can be useful for creating and presenting work, searching and researching and communicating and collaborating individually or in groups using e-mail (5-14 2000). Views concerning the incorporation of ICT in MFL classrooms are discussed in the fieldwork interviews.

Motivating reluctant learners is an on-going challenge for MFL teachers. The problem of lack of motivation is highlighted by Bruner (1996) who argues that school experiences differ from other forms of learning because they are de-contextualised. He suggests that before children come to school, and also in societies where formal education does not exist, learning appears to happen with little effort or external pressure. Bruner argues that this is the case because such learning is contextualised, meaning that children acquire knowledge where it is meaningful and useful for them and they develop skills which enable them to interact with and to control their environment. Long (2000) suggests that the de-contextualising of learning is partly the product of a prescriptive curriculum and class sizes which limit the ability of teachers to respond to individual interests

and needs. In the case of MFL learning, the evidence from the fieldwork suggests that in both Scotland and England many lower achievers do not consider learning a MFL in the context of being meaningful and useful to them. There is a lack of opportunities for pupils to become immersed in contact with MFLs outside the MFL classrooms, whereas people learning English have many opportunities to develop English skills, for example, watching T.V. programmes in English, listening to popular music in English from the U.K. the USA, Australia, Canada and so on outside MFL classrooms. They also have a perception of learning English as an important skill that will be useful to them.

Shaw (1994) argues that another challenge MFL teachers face on a daily basis both in mainstream and special schools is providing a worthwhile MFL experience for pupils who won't sit still and listen. MFL teachers constantly have to think of ways of motivating and capturing the interest of such pupils. Shaw suggests a selection of approaches to try to include such children in the MFL learning process including: establishing routines, establishing strict values, recognise success, however small, encourage pupils to learn songs and display images of target language and pupils' work.

Of course, given the wide variety of difficulties faced by pupils with SEN there is not going to be one easy answer for all situations (McLagan 1994). MFL teachers will continue to select and adapt ideas and resources to continue to motivate and inspire all pupils in their MFL classrooms in England and Scotland.

### **Integration and MFL Teaching and Learning in the Czech Republic**

There will now follow an exploration of the policy of integration and the teaching of MFLs to lower achievers and pupils with SEN in the Czech Republic. Education policy in the Czech Republic is evolving. In 2003, the educational policy of the Czech Republic was still awaiting a comprehensive reform law (Mitter 2003). Integration policy in the Czech Republic only began after 1989. From this time integration had developed towards a broader social acceptance of the integration of disabled people, mainstreaming and better educational and technological support for people with a disability in integrated settings. The main principle of the education of pupils with SEN is to create equal opportunities for

this group, to minimise the negative impact their disability causes and to give pupils with SEN access to an appropriate level and quality of education (SECR 2007).

However, there were several problems that had to be overcome. At the time of the study integration policy was still not part of the Education Act. The New School Law had yet to be approved by Parliament; there were limited resources for assigning an additional support teacher into mainstream classes with integrated SEN pupils; the individual needs of an integrated pupil and the educational management of the whole mainstream class is extremely demanding if the necessary personal assistance to the pupil with SEN was not provided; mainstream teachers were often reluctant to apply different approaches that are required to meet the needs of integrated pupils and many teachers and parents felt that separate education in special schools was better at meeting the needs of pupils with disabilities (SECR 2007). Traditional thinking patterns of teachers and parents were causing resistance to change. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport is responsible for educational legislation, general education policy and the inclusion process. The national strategy for developing the process of integration is focusing on the class teacher as the most important element in this process. The class teacher is the key person who manages the whole class and ensures that the needs of all pupils in the class are met (SECR 2007). One of the support measures that was being developed is the introduction of in-service training programmes for teachers concerning the education of pupils with SEN, (SECR 2007).

An important area in MFL learning in schools in the Czech Republic which could be interpreted as a form of support for MFL learners is class size. Official recommendation for class size for learning MFLs is given by the Ministry of Education; the maximum compulsory number is twenty-four pupils. If the number in the class exceeds twenty-four, the class is split into two groups with twelve to thirteen pupils in a group. The average number of pupils in a class is fifteen to twenty. If a class has less than eighteen pupils, it does not split into two groups; if however there are more than eighteen pupils, the Headteacher of the school can decide if the class is split into two groups for MFL learning, depending on

available funding (Eurydice 2001). This is a contrast to the MFL class sizes in England and Scotland where class sizes for MFLs tend to be large by European standards. Classes of thirty pupils are common in each country. In Scotland the maximum number of pupils in MFL classes is thirty-three in S1 and S2 and thirty in S3 and S4. It seems possible to suggest that smaller class sizes would benefit all pupils and particularly lower achievers and pupils with SEN. The teacher would have more time to deal with the individual needs of pupils in the classroom and pupils would have more opportunities to interact with the teacher and to participate in speaking tasks in class. Increased opportunities for action and interaction in the MFL learning process could lead to an improvement in motivation and learning MFLs for all pupils in Scotland and England.

The Czech Republic publishes curriculum documents separately for each level of schooling (i.e., primary, lower, and upper secondary). However, the new National Curriculum for Modern Languages within compulsory education was conceived as a six-year cycle (Dickson and Cumming 1996). The curriculum documents for modern languages deal with common aspects of the teaching of modern languages and prescribing standards of attainment for listening, speaking, reading and writing. This includes lists of topics and communicative functions and notions, and outlines the principles of communicative teaching methodology, including the development of students' language awareness and cross-cultural competence. Language-specific parts of the curriculum list the structural elements to be mastered and contain detailed specification of those features of the particular foreign language that are difficult for the Czech learner which may require reinforcement. Teaching is carried out in State schools according to these curricular documents, but the Ministry of Education states that up to 30% of the curricular content may be modified by the teacher to adjust it to the learners' needs and local conditions. There is considerable attention paid to the development of clear pronunciation (Dickson and Cumming 1996).

A significant number of lower achievers and pupils with SEN attend basic, vocational and technical schools where they encounter problems because the National Curriculum in the Czech Republic does not give sufficient consideration to the special needs of pupils in vocational and technical schools with regard to

modern language learning (Taislov 2007). Only pupils in special schools for the mentally disabled follow a special reduced curriculum (SECR 2007).

As outlined earlier in the chapter, the use of ICT in MFL learning is encouraged and considered to be an effective tool in facilitating the learning process. In the Czech Republic the application of ICT in education was introduced at the end of the 1980s and at the start of the 1990s. New technologies became available to schools and enlightened school management and staff applied ICT to the educational process as they were able to (SECR 2007). MFL teachers interested in using ICT in MFL learning could incorporate it into their classes. However, limited or lack of:

**equipment, funds, training, support and professional advice lead to differences in educational achievements of schools using ICT, in motivation of teachers to accept new technology as a pedagogical tool and in searching for new resources and teaching approaches.**

(SECR 2007, pg. 18)

There have been a number of Government resolutions concerning the development of ICT. In 2000 the Conception of the State Information Policy in Education was approved. The Conception involves the whole society and has long term goals. Its main aim is to define steps to provide computer literacy to all citizens in order to compete in the new society of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Two main priorities are to provide ICT to everyone in formal education and to create an ICT framework that will enable ICT to be integrated into all curricula at all levels of education. This is an ongoing process. The research literature suggests that the incorporation of ICT into the MFL curriculum would enrich the MFL learning experience for lower achievers and pupils with SEN (SECR 2007).

### **Conclusion To Part Three**

Inclusion is an ongoing process in secondary schools in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic. The research would appear to show that teachers can facilitate this process in MFL learning by setting suitable learning challenges for

all pupils, by adapting teaching styles to respond to pupils' diverse learning needs and facilitating access to MFL learning by overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment. ICT is being incorporated in the MFL learning process in the three countries. In the Czech Republic traditional attitudes concerning people with SEN have to be overcome in order to facilitate the process of inclusion.

The research literature agrees that a whole school ethos that promotes a climate of acceptance of all pupils and an ethos that promotes MFL learning for all pupils is essential for the promotion of MFL teaching and learning for lower achievers and pupils with SEN. The availability of wider appropriate support systems in MFL classrooms such as funding for staff development and resources enhances the learning experience of lower achievers and pupils with SEN in MFL classrooms.

The next chapter explores the methodology of the thesis.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### Introduction

This chapter is concerned with explaining the specific methodology that was used to conduct this research project. The chapter re-visits the purpose of the research. It outlines the rigour of techniques involved in undertaking the study. There is consideration of how validity and reliability were incorporated into the fieldwork. There are details of where the fieldwork was conducted, who the final participants were and of the time taken to complete the fieldwork interviews.

#### Purpose

In answer to the question, “What is the purpose of educational research?” Bassey (2003) suggests that:

**educational research is critical and systematic enquiry aimed at informing educational judgments and decisions in order to improve educational action. The focus is on what happens in learning situations – that is, educational action – and on a value-orientation towards improvement of the action.**

(Bassey 2003, pg.111)

Pratt and Swann (2003) add that among educational researchers there is concern that the research be of some benefit to society: for example, some researchers:

**are attempting to improve classroom practice and some are concerned with the policy content within which practice takes place.**

(Pratt and Swann 2003, pg.179)

While it appears there is no single purpose that can be applied to all research:

**many educationalists argue that educational research should be directed in some way or other towards the improvement of educational practice.**

(Pratt and Swann 2003, pg. 179)

As outlined in detail in Chapter One, the purpose of this research was to discover how lower achievers, including pupils with SEN, were catered for in a selection of secondary schools in three countries and to discover what educational practitioners thought about the provision of MFL teaching and learning for lower achievers including pupils with SEN, in their schools. Ultimately, interested parties may be able to use the results of the study to inform planned improvement of provision of teaching and learning MFLs in secondary schools for lower achievers, including pupils with SEN, who are in their care.

### **Rigour**

This chapter addresses the issues of rigour in two main ways. Firstly on a practical level, by applying a methodical approach and ensuring that appropriate techniques were used in the research. Secondly, on a logical level where concern is expressed for the validity of argument and the soundness of evidence. After all:

**educational research is more than just telling stories or analysing discourses.**

(Turner et al 2003, pg.96)

**It is a means by which we can generate testable and tested knowledge about how students learn in classrooms, what promotes and what inhibits learning, the consequences of policy and so on.**

(Pratt and Swann 2003, pg.182)

In order to conduct this educational research project in an appropriate way, qualitative research tools and procedures were considered appropriate. Face to face semi-structured open format interviews were utilised as the investigative technique.

### **Why use Qualitative Research?**

Both qualitative and quantitative research have their critics and advocates. Borg, Gall and Gall (1993) suggest that advocates of quantitative research argue that it has led to:

**remarkable discoveries in the physical and biological sciences and in allied professions such as engineering and medicine.**

(Borg, Gall and Gall 1993, pg. 201)

Borg, Gall and Gall (1993), consider that the purpose of quantitative research is:

**to make objective descriptions of a limited set of phenomena and also to determine whether the phenomena can be controlled through certain interventions thus, initial quantitative studies of a research problem typically involve a precise description of the phenomena and a search for the pertinent variables.**

(Borg, Gall and Gall 1993, pg. 196)

In such settings, a theory would be formulated to explain the empirical findings. It seems that the purposes and methods of quantitative researchers are more appropriate for research being undertaken in scientific fields such as Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Economics or Mathematics. In such settings researchers can discover “laws” that can lead to “prediction and control of educational phenomena” (Borg, Gall and Gall 1993, pg. 195). This type of research would usually involve statistical analysis.

Advocates of qualitative research argue that it is appropriate for the study of human behaviour and that:

**its methods are particularly appropriate for the study of education because they are derived from the social sciences. Both education and the social sciences are concerned with the study of human behaviour and thinking in various settings.**

(Borg, Gall and Gall 1993 pg. 201)

This study was concerned with gathering views from individuals about an area of education in which they were both involved and interested, that of MFL teaching and learning in secondary schools. Qualitative research was used for this study because the subject being considered was complex in that situations varied from school to school and country to country. The study was exploratory as there appeared to be a lack of research concerning the MFL teaching and learning process for lower achievers and pupils with SEN.

It has been suggested that qualitative research is:

**predicated on the assumption that each individual, each culture and each setting is unique. Furthermore, qualitative researchers consider it important to study and appreciate this uniqueness.**

(Borg, Gall and Gall 1993, pg. 195)

For this study it was considered most appropriate to use a qualitative approach because the purpose of the research is to develop an understanding of individuals and events in their natural state taking into account the relevant context.

### **Investigative Techniques**

It was decided to interview the participants in order to gather their views on the research topic. The use of questionnaires to gather data was rejected although questionnaires are useful tools for collecting data from a large number of respondents if one is seeking information about facts or wishes to study particular groups or people dealing with a particular issue. Questionnaires are useful if the information you are seeking is not complex and does not require

explanations by the respondents or the interviewer. For example, Wilson and McLean (1994) suggest that the questionnaire is:

**widely used and a useful instrument for collating survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher, and often being comparatively straightforward to analyse.**

(Wilson and McLean 1994, pg.245)

Despite the attractiveness of the questionnaire in terms of facilitating data analysis, it can lead to a limited flexibility of response from the participants and also the possibility of a limited scope of the data collected. There is also the possibility that barriers such as language and understanding of terms used in the questionnaire could lead to confusion among respondents.

Hinds (2000) argues that it is useful to use interviews when:

**in depth information is required, where the subject matter is potentially sensitive. The issues under examination would benefit from development or clarification.**

(Hinds 2000, pg. 47)

For this study interviewees were asked questions that involved value judgements based on their experiences. In order to achieve rich, full answers to the questions, there had to be the opportunity for interviewees to develop their ideas, to explain their points of view and give reasons for their answers and an opportunity for the interviewer to clarify any issues that the respondents may have had and also to probe for reasons for certain points of view, if required. As has been outlined in Chapter One, there was a wide divergence of views in education concerning MFL teaching and learning. In particular, teaching and learning MFLs to lower achievers has emerged as a subject that appeared rather sensitive in that concerns have been raised regarding the effectiveness and appropriateness of doing so, among certain educational practitioners. On the

other hand, many educational practitioners believed that was beneficial for all pupils to learn MFLs.

It was decided that interviews would give participants maximum opportunity to express their ideas, expand their answers and seek clarification if any issues required further explanation, from the researcher, who would be conducting the interviews.

### **Type of Interviews**

Interviews can vary in structure. Structured interviews focus on a set of pre-defined questions that are asked in turn with no deviation from the script. Interviews which focus on a pre-defined theme or area and allow discussion to take place between the researcher and interviewee on the given themes are known as unstructured interviews. Hinds (2000) suggests that in many interview situations a mixture of the two approaches is used. Semi-structured interviews, Drever (1995) suggests, “lie between these extremes”.

When considering the type of interview that would be most useful for a project, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) argue that it is important to consider “fitness for purpose”. If one hopes to gain comparable data across people or sites, the more standardised the interview should be and the more one wishes to find unique personalised information about how people view the world, then qualitative, open-ended interviews would be more appropriate.

It was decided to use semi-structured open-ended interviews for this research project. The exact wording and preferred sequence of questions was determined by the researcher in advance of the interviews, although depending on the answers given, there was flexibility in the order of questions.

All interviewees were asked a set of core questions for each topic to be discussed and then general questions were asked according to the professional position of the interviewee. For example, Headteachers were asked general questions relating to MFL provision in their schools and classroom teachers were

asked general questions relating to the MFL experience from their perspective in the classroom.

Respondents were asked to answer the same questions in order to increase comparability of responses. The semi-structured approach was chosen to allow naturalness and flexibility in sequencing of questions and to enable the interviewees to add any points that they felt were relevant.

During the interviews the interviewer used prompts or probes to allow the interviewee to clarify or expand on the answers, if required. This was designed to minimise the possibility of respondents misunderstanding interview questions and in the interests of ensuring that they understood, as far as possible, the purpose of the question. This was particularly important because there were various terms used to categorise the lower achievers in schools, not only in the different countries, but some variation in terminology was also found to exist among education authorities.

It was therefore important, for example, that the researcher could confirm exactly which pupils were included in the focus of the study with the respondents and explain any other points that were required. In that way, the researcher felt that each interviewee would understand each interview question in the same way. Interviews by e-mail and telephone were rejected as an effective method of gathering the data since it was felt that the more personalised face-to-face interview would be more effective as not only would every interviewee have the opportunity to seek clarification from the researcher about any points that they wanted explained in more detail, but also the researcher could interpret the tone of the responses and body language, in terms of visual clues for example, nods, smiles, frowns and eye contact to facilitate interpretation of the depth of feeling of the respondents.

It was also felt to be more effective to interview the respondents in their natural settings. This made the interview sessions more convenient, more relaxing and less time consuming for the participants and it also let the researcher understand the context and conditions in which people worked.

## **Validity and Reliability**

In research studies, results have to be both reliable and valid. According to Hinds (2000), reliability:

**refers to matters such as the consistency of a measure, for example, the likelihood of the same results being obtained if the procedures were repeated. Validity relates broadly to the extent to which an instrument measures what it claims to measure or tests what it is intended to test.**

(Hinds 2000, pg. 42)

Reliability is achieved in this study by firstly having a set of pre-determined questions that all interviewees answered. The questions were in five topic areas, which facilitated the organisation and analysis of the data. The interviewees were asked for their views on: curriculum requirements; provision of support; teaching and learning methodology; assessment and future plans for lower achievers and pupils with SEN in their schools.

The researcher interviewed all the participants herself which led to greater validity as this minimised the amount of possible bias that could have occurred if more than one person had conducted the interviews. By using only one interviewer, any misunderstandings on the part of the interviewees concerning the questions being asked could be clarified.

In order to ensure validity of response, the interviewees were also assured that their identity would remain confidential and that they were free to express their genuine opinions and discuss their definition of the given situations, as they wished. It was recognised that all respondents had their own reasons for their interpretation of the truth as they saw it, according to their experience.

## **The Research Questions**

As outlined in Chapter One, the research issue was concerned with discovering -

the models of good practice and the barriers to the integration of lower achieving pupils, including those with SEN, within the teaching and learning of MFLs in a sample of mainstream secondary schools in England, Scotland, and in the Czech Republic.

The study considered two specific Research Questions:

- 1) What are the views of a sample of School Managers and teachers on curriculum requirements for the study of MFLs for lower achievers including pupils with SEN in mainstream secondary schools?**
  
- 2) What forms of support including teaching and learning strategies are provided for lower achievers, including pupils with SEN in MFL classrooms?**

In order to explore Research Questions One and Two the researcher created questions in five topic areas: A - Curriculum Requirements; B - Support Strategies; C - Teaching and Learning Strategies; D - Assessment Procedures and E - Future Developments. These formed the basis for the interview framework for the fieldwork. The core questions asked in the interviews in each of the three countries are outlined in Appendix A. The entire interview framework for each of the three countries is outlined in Appendix B.

It was recognised that there was a need to pilot the interview framework and this was completed prior to the start of the fieldwork interviews in a school in Glasgow.

### **Ethics**

When planning the interview sessions various aspects relating to the interviewees were considered. In order to encourage people to participate in the research project, the researcher informed the participants that as much care as possible would be taken by the researcher to facilitate their participation in the

study. For example, they were informed that the location of the interview would be in their school or office and that suitable times for conducting the interviews would be agreed, in advance. All participants were sent a copy of all the questions that they would be asked in the interview which gave them time to consider their answers. Each participant was also sent an abstract which outlined the aims of the research project. It was explained that all of the interviews would be recorded on a tape-recorder and that transcription and analysis would be completed by the researcher at a later stage. The interviewees were made aware of the potential audience for the research and assurances about anonymity and confidentiality were offered to each interviewee before they agreed to participate in the research project.

The settings for the interviews were chosen by the interviewees once the researcher had arrived in their school or office. All interviews were undertaken in a setting where there were minimum interruptions and chairs were placed at a comfortable distance apart. An atmosphere of trust and mutual respect was created by having an informal chat to each participant in advance of each interview.

Finding willing participants to be involved in the study was more difficult than first anticipated.

### **The Informants In The Field**

Fieldwork interviews were conducted in three countries: Scotland, England and the Czech Republic. The original design of the fieldwork was to involve participants from:

- Policymakers
  
- The Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching (SCILT) representatives and/or the Centre for Information on Language Teaching (CILT)
  
- MFL Advisers

- Headteachers
- Principal Teachers of MFL/Heads of MFL Departments
- Classroom teachers

The original plan had to be modified due to difficulties that arose in the course of conducting the fieldwork. The main issue was finding people who were willing to participate in the fieldwork interviews and so the time taken to complete the fieldwork interviews spanned a year from May 2001 until May 2002.

The reasons given by the Headteachers who did not wish to participate in the study were that increased workload for staff who were planning and preparing new courses in order to meet National Curriculum requirements in England or preparation for the implementation of Higher Still requirements, in Scotland, meant that staff were too busy to give their time to be involved in this study.

All schools approached in York City Council declined for various reasons, but there was a general view expressed by the Headteachers that not only was there a lot of pressure on their staff who were preparing to meet the new guidelines set by the Government but also their schools were already involved with many students from York University and from neighbouring Universities and felt that they could not devote any more time for staff to be involved in this study.

In the Czech Republic it was also very difficult to find schools that were willing to be involved in this study. However, the people who did participate were very open and interested in sharing ideas and were keen to speak about their experiences.

The final interviews represented a wide range of views.

### **School Interviews**

Due to the lack of permission for access into schools by Headteachers and lack of time granted to the teachers in schools to participate in the interviews, it was recognised that the number of available participants for interview was going to be less than the original target which was:

- the Headteacher
- the Principal Teacher of MFL/ Head of MFL Department
- two Classroom teachers

in three schools in three Authorities in Scotland and in England and (due to the constraints of time) two schools in two Authorities in the Czech Republic. The next target set was that the fieldwork would involve interviewing:

- the Headteacher
- the Principal Teacher of MFL/ Head of MFL Department
- one or two Classroom teachers (according to their availability)

in two schools in each of three Authorities in Scotland and in England, and in two schools in each of two Authorities in the Czech Republic. Therefore views would be gathered from people in six schools in Scotland, six schools in England and four schools in the Czech Republic.

### **Why the proposed Education Authorities were chosen**

Originally it was proposed to interview key personnel from schools from a City Council, a rural Authority and an urban Authority within a variety of Education Authorities and a variety of educational settings including those schools experiencing greater or lesser success in terms of examination league tables. However, due to difficulties in gaining access, an opportunistic sample, collecting data from those schools willing to participate, appeared to be the only option. However, comparisons could be made between city, urban and rural schools.

## **Research Access**

In England, it only became possible to find the required number of schools necessary for the study after several months of correspondence to Headteachers. Nineteen schools were contacted by the researcher and access was granted to six schools. Having contacted ten schools in Scotland, the target of gaining access to at least two schools in three Education Authorities was met. In the Czech Republic, it was also very difficult to find schools willing to participate in fieldwork. However, due to personal contacts through a third party, with links to education personnel in Prague, the fieldwork interviews became possible. A Czech teacher of English agreed to be a translator and through her a copy of the interview questions was sent to all participants in Czech and in English. Every school in Prague and every school in Central Bohemia were contacted. Two schools agreed to participate in Prague and two in Central Bohemia. Some teachers preferred to answer in Czech and the interpreter translated their answers immediately. In this way the teachers could understand what the interpreter said. The Headteachers and School Managers were not all fluent English speakers and so they answered in Czech and the interpreter translated their responses into English. All answers were recorded on tape during each interview.

## **Education Authorities Involved in the Fieldwork**

The Education Authorities who participated in this fieldwork were:

### **In Scotland**

- Glasgow City Council
- North Lanarkshire Council
- North Ayrshire Council

### **In England**

- North Yorkshire County Council
- Redcar and Cleveland Council
- Knowsley Borough Council

Agreement to contact schools in Scotland and in England was granted by the Director of Education in each Authority.

### **In the Czech Republic**

- Prague
- Central Bohemia

Agreement to contact schools for research access in the Czech Republic was granted by the Director of The Institute of Education Youth and Sports.

### **Limitations**

Difficulties arose almost immediately when the UK policymakers who were asked to participate were either unable or unwilling to do so. One senior policymaker explained that she did not feel that it was her area of expertise being researched. Other policymakers did not reply to the researcher.

Although it would have been useful to have an overview of policy for the teaching of MFLs to lower achievers and pupils with SEN, in order to provide a situational context within which to place the responses of the school based interviewees, since this study is concerned with models of good practice and barriers to the integration of these pupils in schools, due to the amount of time that was required to complete the fieldwork in schools, it was decided not to include views of policy makers.

However, the Director of SCILT and three Advisers from Scotland were interviewed. It was decided that their views would enrich the data and should be included even though there was no input from Advisers from England and the Czech Republic.

The majority of the fieldwork interviews were conducted in schools and involved:

- Headteachers or School Managers
- Principal Teachers of MFL/Heads of MFL Departments
- Classroom teachers

### **How the Fieldwork was Conducted**

All Authorities involved in this study were contacted by the researcher in writing. Permission to contact schools was gained via the Director of Education in each Authority in Scotland and in England. Schools in the Czech Republic were contacted once permission had been granted from the Director of Education, Youth and Sports. The researcher then contacted several schools in the chosen Authorities by writing to the Headteachers seeking permission to interview the Headteacher, the Head of MFLs and classroom teachers in their school.

Interview questions were sent to each participating school in advance of each meeting in order to give participants time to consider their answers in advance.

All interviews were taped on cassette tapes during each interview.

### **The Processing of the Data**

All interviews were transcribed by the researcher and collated in sections which corresponded to the topic areas that concerned each specific Research Question.

The answers are detailed in Chapters Four and Five where the results and analysis of Research Questions One and Two are discussed and analysed respectively.

In total twenty four interviews were conducted in Scotland with: three Headteachers and two Assistant Headteachers, seven Principal Teachers of MFL, one Principal Teacher of SEN and eleven classroom teachers.

In total twenty three interviews were conducted in England with: four Headteachers and two Deputy Headteachers, six Heads of MFL Departments, one Head of SEN and ten classroom teachers.

Due to time constraints, fewer interviews were conducted in the Czech Republic than in Scotland and England. However, it was considered that an appropriate range of people had been interviewed to conduct a valuable comparison between the three countries. In total thirteen interviews were conducted in the Czech Republic with: two Headteachers, three Deputy Headteachers and eight classroom teachers. In the schools visited in the Czech Republic, the position of Head of MFLs did not exist as it does in Scotland and England.

### **Reflection on the difficulties overcome in conducting the fieldwork**

As already stated, the main difficulty was gaining access to schools to conduct the fieldwork. It is possible that schools did not want to be involved in the research as they may have been concerned that their school policies may have been criticised or that there may have been negative views expressed about members of staff or about MFL provision.

The proposed time for each interview, which was set at one hour per person, may also have been a reason why schools declined because of time constraints for lessons.

Not only was it difficult to find schools willing to participate in the fieldwork, but it was not always possible to interview two classroom teachers and in some schools a Deputy Headteacher or an Assistant Headteacher answered the

questions designed for Headteachers. This was considered acceptable as the Deputy Headteachers and Assistant Headteachers, as part of the senior management team, were able to give an insight into school policies and practice which they had a part in forming and implementing, thus achieving validity in terms of answers to the questions prepared for Headteachers. It was decided that if a Deputy Headteacher or an Assistant Headteacher answered these questions then the term School Manager would be used to identify their comments.

### **Timescale for the interviews**

The length of time taken to conduct all of the interviews was extended due to the problems of gaining access to schools and then finding convenient times to conduct the interviews. The time taken for each interview varied according to the length of the answers and interest in the subjects being discussed. In some cases, the interviews were longer than an hour and developed into very deep discussions, whereas others were shorter and more succinct.

### **Conclusion**

It was decided that it would be most appropriate to conduct semi-structured interviews in the fieldwork and that all interviews would be conducted by the researcher. All interviews were conducted face-to-face and the researcher travelled to meet and interview all participants in person.

### **The Final Participants**

In all, sixty interviews were conducted in schools in the three chosen countries. The researcher conducted twenty four interviews in schools in Scotland, twenty three interviews in schools in England and thirteen interviews in schools in the Czech Republic. In Scotland, the Director of SCILT and three MFL Advisers were interviewed. This allowed the data to be enriched. Overall, information was gathered from sixty four interviews.

All schools were happy for it to be noted that they had participated in the study but the views of the participants remained anonymous. The Director of SCILT and the Advisers were all happy for the researcher to state that they had participated in the study and all gave permission for their names to be included but they all requested that their views should be anonymous and only be indicated by the general term of views of an Adviser.

The results of the data analysis are outlined in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Discussion of Research Question One

**What are the views of a sample of School Managers and teachers on curriculum requirements for the study of MFLs for lower achievers including pupils with SEN in mainstream secondary schools?**

In order to gather information about the perceptions of the interviewees regarding the reasons why a MFL was included as a core subject in the curriculum in their country, the participants were asked to express their answers to several questions. Various views emerged. The issues which arose from the fieldwork answers concerned:

- **MFL learning in schools in a European context**
- **Development of communication skills**
- **Understanding of other cultures and traditions**
- **Motivational aspects of MFL teaching and learning.**

Within each of the four key issues there were sub-themes that emerged and these are outlined following each key issue in turn. As the chapter progresses, it is important to remember, as outlined in the Methodology chapter, that it was only possible to gather views of Advisers in Scotland. It was not possible for the researcher to interview Advisers in England or in the Czech Republic. Interviewees tended to answer the research questions more vigorously and at greater length in Scotland and a wider range of views were expressed among interviewees in Scotland than in England and in the Czech Republic. This is reflected in the data.

**The first key issue that emerged concerned MFL learning in a European context.**

Within this key issue the responses produced views which could be grouped under five sub-themes including:

- MFL teaching and being part of Europe
- Economic and political reasons
- Inter-professional dynamics
- Curriculum developments
- Equal opportunities

**MFL teaching and being part of Europe**

Interviewees in all three countries stressed the importance of learning a MFL especially in the context of developing closer links with our European neighbours.

The view was expressed in Scotland and in England that pupils should not be disadvantaged and should be able to learn at least one MFL to enable freedom of movement in Europe. In the Czech Republic almost all pupils were learning English as their first MFL in school and the importance of learning English for business and cultural purposes was acknowledged by almost all interviewees since, as highlighted in Chapter One, English has become a lingua franca for communication not only in Europe but internationally.

In Scotland people interviewed at all levels indicated that they felt that MFL teaching was “lagging behind” the level of MFL learning in many other European countries for pupils of similar age. This view was expressed particularly strongly in one Authority. It was felt that the Government had now decided it was time for Scotland to catch up with the rest of its European neighbours. Pupils in Scotland therefore should study at least one MFL up to the age of sixteen years so that they would not be disadvantaged and would leave school with a basic knowledge of a MFL, be able to communicate with European partners in at least one language other than their own, and not to expect everyone to speak English. It

was also felt that learning a MFL would help to develop cultural awareness of other countries and could open up job opportunities.

With closer integration of the European community and the setting up of the Single European Market in 1992 which underlined the importance of growing needs in language competence in commerce and industry, and very importantly, the explosion in the travel and tourism industry, there was:

**an obvious need as some of our young people are at a distinct disadvantage to their European counterparts particularly since they cannot string two words together.**

(Classroom Teacher, Scotland)

On the question of knowledge of job opportunities, a Headteacher pointed out that:

**we are now trying to get children to appreciate that job opportunities are not just restricted to local areas but they can occur anywhere. It is important that pupils have at least a grounding in a MFL, therefore, the European dimension is the main influence.**

(Headteacher, Scotland)

In Scotland, the feeling strongly expressed across all interviewees was that it was very important that we should ensure that MFL teaching and learning did not fall behind the opportunities offered in the rest of Europe.

In England, it was also felt that a main reason behind the decision to include a MFL as a Foundation subject in the National Curriculum was due to the increasing links with Europe.

In the Czech Republic, it was universally accepted that it was important that all pupils should learn English and it was recognised that English was an international language and it is therefore very useful for all pupils to have an understanding of English for personal and professional reasons.

## Economic and Political Reasons

On the point of the importance of learning a MFL for economic reasons, views were expressed from all countries explaining the significance of this theme. There was agreement that gaining competence in at least one MFL would allow pupils to participate and compete in the European wide business community when they left school. However, in all three countries, there was also agreement that the economic argument had less relevance as far as lower achievers were concerned.

Interviewees from the three countries stated that political reasons featured in the requirement that all pupils should study a MFL up to the age of sixteen years old. In Scotland it was felt that there were rather contradictory reasons which lay behind the decision to include a MFL as a core subject in the curriculum. Firstly, there was the economic rationale as described above, but the other argument expressed by the Minister for Education in 1992, Michael Forsyth, was that learning other European languages would assist in the understanding of other cultures and civilisations and improve understanding of the wider society. One interviewee held the view that Mr Forsyth's intention was to encourage young Scots not to become more European, but to become economically competitive. The educational establishment in Scotland at that time was opposed to all pupils studying a MFL up to the age of sixteen years. This was evident because:

**earlier in the same year that Circular 11/78 was issued, the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (SCCC) which was the official body who advised politicians, had pronounced against a policy for all pupils studying a MFL up to 16 years on the grounds that it could not be delivered successfully. So, on one hand there was the educational establishment against introducing a MFL for all pupils up to sixteen years, and a right wing politician who was taking a different view for economic reasons.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

In England, it was suggested that a main reason for including a MFL as a Foundation subject was merely:

**a reflection of the view of the Government at the time that we should go back to the old Grammar School curriculum and pupils should study English, Maths, Science and a MFL since that is what the people in Government at the time had done and that was their view of what education was all about.**

(Headteacher, England)

In the Czech Republic, the political changes in 1989 marked a significant change in schools regarding MFL learning, as outlined in Chapter Two. All pupils learned Russian as the first MFL and the teaching of English was very limited in schools. This was reinforced by a classroom teacher who stressed:

**the starting point for the change was in 1989, not only in the private lives of people, but also in the professional sphere. MFL teaching before 1989 was very limited and English was taught in secondary schools, or at least University, but at a very limited level in basic schools which can cover up to Grade 9 levels, suitable for pupils up to fourteen years old. For the majority of pupils, English was not a subject taught in schools.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

Pupils were now offered English or German in most of the schools visited; one offered English, German or French.

### **Inter-professional dynamics**

Views grouped under this heading included ideas regarding preserving jobs for MFL teachers, about solving a problem of MFL uptake with more able pupils and pressure from other teachers of other subjects in schools. For example, in Scotland, one Adviser suggested that:

**there was a problem with uptake of a MFL as an optional subject and that when Circular 11/78 came out, the issue being discussed at the time was that many able pupils at the end of S2 were opting to study subjects other than MFLs. This meant that the significant majority of pupils were not continuing with MFLs after second year in secondary schools, and given that in mixed ability classes in S1 and S2, it indicated that those pupils had very little competence in a MFL, or a competence that was so small, it was very easily lost.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

It would appear that the argument presented by the Adviser was that the only way of ensuring that the pupils judged able to continue learning a MFL did so, was to make MFL learning compulsory for all pupils. However, not everyone agreed with the value of including all pupils in MFL learning. Strong views were expressed by a Principal Teacher in Scotland and her classroom teachers who felt that two main reasons why MFLs were a core subject did not involve any educational value for pupils. Instead, they expressed the view that MFL learning became a core subject due to pressure from other subject teachers who felt that MFLs were 'elitist' and that MFL teachers should cope with the full range of ability as other teachers had to in other subject areas. The second reason was that this was a way of preserving jobs for MFL teachers and that they could see no sound educational reason whatsoever for all pupils to study a MFL in secondary schools. One Principal Teacher felt the decision was politically correct but that in her opinion, it was 'rubbish'.

The view that job preservation was more important than the educational value of MFL learning to pupils was a minority view in Scotland and there is no evidence from research to support this view.

In England, it was also suggested by three interviewees that it was a way of preserving jobs for MFL teachers but this theme did not emerge as a significant reason behind the decision to include a MFL as a Foundation subject in the National Curriculum.

In the Czech Republic, several interviewees expressed concern about finding suitable fully qualified MFL teachers able to teach all pupils in their secondary schools. Recruiting MFL teachers was a problem, mainly due, it was felt, to the low salaries paid to teachers.

### **Curriculum developments**

In the three countries, mixed views emerged regarding the appropriateness of the MFL curriculum.

In Scotland it would appear that there was a great divergence of opinion. On the one hand there were those who argued very strongly in favour of Languages for All. That group comprised:

**Local Authority Advisers and language teachers. Their argument was not the political, economic one favoured by Michael Forsyth. They believed that there had been many interesting developments in the field of modern languages during the 1980s, e.g. the introduction of Standard Grade.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

The previous 'O' Grades had tested skills that were academic and focused on reading and writing and largely ignored oral communication. Standard Grade offered a curriculum for all levels of ability with Foundation, General and Credit Level awards available, and:

**a campaign developed in order to include a MFL in the core curriculum in opposition to the official view by the Scottish Consultative Committee on the Curriculum (SCCC).**

(Adviser, Scotland)

There were then:

**two arguments in favour of Languages for All. One was the political argument and then the groundswell of teacher opinion referring to the fact that we now had a curriculum relating to all pupils.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

On the other hand, not all teachers agreed that Standard Grade offered a suitable curriculum. One Principal Teacher wanted to:

**ditch Standard Grade tomorrow.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

It was suggested that:

**Standard Grade was never properly resourced. Schools are still struggling to find resources, especially for lower ability. Some recently published resources are an improvement, however, it often appears they are aimed at a younger audience.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

In England, several views were expressed concerning the appropriateness of MFL National Curriculum requirements for lower achievers. In one Authority in particular there was agreement from a Headteacher, Heads of Department and classroom teachers that including a MFL as a Foundation subject in National Curriculum was not appropriate and many of the lower achievers could not cope with learning a MFL as they found it too difficult. The Headteacher actually thought that for the pupils in his catchment area:

**National Curriculum actually imposed a programme which was inappropriate to their needs and did not have the relevance that it needed to engage the pupils and to motivate them.**

(Headteacher, England)

A MFL was included as a core subject in Scotland and a Foundation subject in England, in the curriculum. This was to give everyone a “rounded” education,

and one Scottish Headteacher thought that it ensured breadth and balance in the curriculum, reflecting the curricular design for Scottish education. However, strong opposition was expressed by two interviewees in one Scottish school. The Principal Teacher and classroom teacher agreed that they could see:

**no reason at all for poor children with limited academic ability to study a MFL at all. The motivational and socialisation aims, etc., can be achieved in other ways.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

A contrast in views was illustrated in England. At the time the fieldwork interviews took place, it was not a common occurrence that pupils studied a MFL in primary schools. In all of the schools who participated in the fieldwork, the pupils began their MFL study in the first year of secondary school at the age of 11 years (Year 7). Many Heads of Department and classroom teachers stressed that when a MFL was a new subject to the pupils, there were benefits:

**if they feel they are starting something new, even the weakest pupils can become quite enthusiastic and can be quite successful and achieve a feeling of initial success.**

(Head of Department, England)

Interestingly, this feeling of enthusiasm and success was a point that many of the interviewees in Scotland felt had been lost in the Scottish mainstream secondary schools due to MFL learning moving into primary schools.

In the Czech Republic, it was pointed out that a MFL was included as a mandatory subject in the National Curriculum so schools had to teach all pupils at least one MFL. Pupils with SEN who had a special educational plan which was individual and expresses their needs, all studied a MFL.

**All pupils have to follow the same National Curriculum which is often difficult for lower achievers and pupils with SEN.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

However, it was felt to be important that all pupils had the opportunity to have access to higher education if they wished to continue studying, and so MFL learning was important for all pupils because:

**entry requirements to University or a higher academic establishment include competence in MFLs.**

(Headteacher, Czech Republic)

In Chapter Two it was stressed that in order to implement Languages for All successfully, the curriculum had to be appropriate for all levels of ability. Several views were expressed that would suggest the inappropriateness of curriculum requirements in Scotland England and the Czech Republic caused problems for lower achievers learning MFLs.

### **Equal opportunities**

Mixed views emerged from all countries in this category. In Scotland many interviewees at all levels thought that all pupils should have the same opportunities available to them. It was explained that:

**every child deserves the opportunity of being able to study a MFL as this would result in more in-depth study other than simply being able to communicate in a foreign language.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

**In an inclusive society pupils should not be denied the opportunity to study a MFL regardless of their ability.**

(School Manager, Scotland)

Inclusion issues in Scotland are discussed in Chapter Two.

Similarly, in England, there was a strong view shared by all Heads of Department and classroom teachers interviewed in two Authorities that all pupils should have

access to a MFL and should not be disadvantaged in that regard. In one school they did not exclude any child at all from studying a MFL and went as far as having a Statement in their departmental policy which reads that:

**no children are excluded from language classes as a result of a Statement of Special Educational Needs.**

(A school in England)

In the Czech Republic it was stated that:

**all children follow the same National Curriculum and have to study a MFL.**

(Headteacher, Czech Republic)

Of those interviewed only one Headteacher was unsure at this stage as to whether it was beneficial for lower achievers and pupils with SEN to study a MFL from the age of ten years as she felt that:

**many of these pupils have difficulties with their own language and when they have to learn a MFL, it is often very difficult for them.**

(Headteacher, Czech Republic)

While it was expressed by many that equal opportunities for all pupils to learn MFLs was beneficial, in Scotland and England some opposing views were expressed. In one Scottish school it was felt that:

**teaching a MFL to all pupils up to sixteen years old is a waste of time. Teachers do their best but get very little progress.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

In fact, rather than offering lower achievers equal opportunities, it was stated that teaching lower achievers a MFL up to sixteen years old was actually causing them more problems since:

**we are teaching them a sound system that confuses them further.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

It was considered important to remember that:

**SEN pupils have very little understanding of how their own language works and how grammar and communication work.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

It was felt that:

**we would be better employed spending our time teaching them some English.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

Further problems were highlighted by a Head of SEN in England who said that:

**any inclusive agenda where pupils perceive themselves to be treated the same as everyone else, is good, i.e. beneficial. Where it is counter-productive is where children may be very anxious about school and have literacy problems and that their anxiety is not lessened by the study of a foreign language. They perceive themselves as not successful in that regard.**

(Head of SEN, England)

In fact:

**the SEN children do not always regard learning a MFL as an equal opportunity; they see it as something they are having to do, find it difficult, and they do not want to do it.**

(Head of SEN, England)

As far as the theme of equal opportunities is concerned, as illustrated above, different views emerged across the country in Scotland and in England. In the Czech Republic there was general agreement on the importance of this theme.

**In the second key issue concern regarding the development of communication skills emerged.**

Learning a MFL can develop communication skills and it has been suggested in Chapter One that the study of a MFL could assist the progress and understanding of the first language of the pupils. When interviewees were asked to express their opinions on the supposed benefits of studying a MFL, various responses followed which could include the following three sub-themes:

- **development of understanding of the pupils` first language**
- **confidence building and improvement of basic communication**
- **personal and social development**

For the first sub-theme and the point that learning a MFL assists in development of the understanding of the pupils` first language, mixed views were expressed by interviewees in the three countries; very strong opinions were put forward in favour of this idea and very strong views were expressed in disagreement. For example, in Scotland in Glasgow City Council overall there was a positive feeling that learning a MFL helped pupils improve their understanding of their first language. In one particular school there was a very strong feeling expressed by the Principal Teacher and classroom teachers that learning a MFL did in fact improve the understanding of the first language. They emphasised the importance of learning grammar saying that that it raised awareness of the structure of language whether it is one's own or a MFL. At a basic level lower achievers and pupils with SEN became aware of structural elements such as adjectives, nouns, verbs and so on, but all agreed that complications arose when work on tenses began. Another Principal Teacher agreed that knowledge of the structure of sentences and grammar gave pupils an insight into their own language and this could only result in improvement. However, four classroom

teachers said that if they were being honest, in their opinion, learning a MFL really did not assist pupils in their own language. In fact one claimed:

**it has no impact on their first language. In reality if you do not have a basic understanding of your own language, then life is very difficult in the MFL classroom trying to learn something new.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

Although most of the interviewees in Glasgow City Council were positive, in the other Authorities in Scotland there was general agreement that learning a MFL did not improve pupils' understanding of their first language. Similar opinions were emphasised by interviewees at all levels, sometimes very strongly, for example:

**No way does it make one iota of difference to their own language. Their understanding of their own language will only be improved when English teachers explain how this language works, i.e. by explaining grammar and by learning spelling.**

(Headteacher, Scotland)

Principal Teachers and classroom teachers expressed similar views and it was felt that it was:

**ironic that many lower achievers spell more accurately in French than in English.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

These contrasting views illustrate a clear dichotomy of views among practitioners in different Authorities.

The Advisers came to similar conclusions via different explanations. All agreed that knowledge of the structure of a language was beneficial to MFL learning but many pupils were not familiar enough with the structure of their own language for any great influence to occur. For example, there was general agreement that

knowledge of the two languages did interact but one of the great problems was that many pupils who were often lower achievers and pupils with SEN did not know much about their first language in terms of grammar, syntax, and so on, and therefore to go so far as to say that the second language actually helped the development of the first was a bit of a grey area and difficult to explain why it helped.

However, one Adviser gave a very interesting example which highlighted a pertinent point. He had found that from the very early days of Standard Grade when teachers were facing up to the challenge of teaching the lower achieving pupils at Foundation level, many teachers found that pupils in that group had immense difficulties in sustaining even the most basic conversation in English. Teaching the structure of a conversation therefore was socially very helpful since it taught these pupils how to construct a conversation in their own language. The Adviser felt that it was a reasonably accepted point that learning a MFL supported the development of the mother tongue and vice versa, but one of the problems with the less able and lower achieving cohort was that they did not naturally structure their learning themselves, it had to be done for them. By helping the pupils to structure their learning of a MFL, it could often be very useful in assisting them to structure the learning of their own language. He stressed that no one was expecting the lower achievers to become experts in MFL, but knowledge about language helped them to generate sentences in a MFL and added knowledge of some structural coherence in their first language which he thought was an advantage.

Three Advisers agreed in a general sense that learning a MFL improved communication skills and they also shared the view that there was some benefit towards the understanding of the first language although in a somewhat limited way. The benefits towards the development of the first language were seen in terms of reinforcement of how a language was learned in terms of learning vocabulary and the reinforcement of the construction of language.

However, one Adviser suggested that caution should be expressed about the claim that learning a MFL helped to develop the understanding of the pupils' first language. It was possible that the learning of the second language could have

beneficial effects on the learning of the first language but these benefits did not happen automatically simply through learning a second language. He argued that there was a stronger correlation to consider, which was if a pupil was doing well in the second language, it indicated that the pupil had some underlying linguistic competence. It was also worth considering that if some pupils had difficulties with literacy which were already affecting their first language then learning a second language would not necessarily help their first. If this problem was not addressed then similar problems in second languages may develop in such pupils. A key point to bear in mind was that within schools, the evidence suggested, literacy was central to success. If children learned to read and write in a second language and they were making progress, then the Adviser felt that this tended to be beneficial for pupils.

In England mixed views emerged, in schools in North Yorkshire. One Headteacher felt the discipline of learning a new language was equally appropriate for lower achievers and pupils with learning difficulties, as those without, and that the process of learning how to construct sentences in the foreign language would help pupils to improve their mother tongue. All of the classroom teachers felt that pupils benefited from looking at patterns of language and words. Exploring syntax and sentence structure in a foreign language helped pupils to improve their understanding of grammar and sentence structure in their first language.

One Head of Department emphasised the importance of all pupils having the same opportunity to learn to communicate in a MFL as all pupils including those with SEN had this ability. He suggested that given enough time all pupils could begin to converse in a MFL to some degree and this feeling of initial success was very encouraging.

Another Head of Department did not think it helped the lower achievers to improve their first language at all and felt that most lower achievers could not get beyond a basic level of competence. These children:

**only feel successful if they are following a course offered in their school which is one where pupils pass the units of work and work at**

**their own pace. A sense of achievement ensues when they are presented with their certificates.**

(Head of Department, England)

In Redcar and Cleveland a Head of Department and classroom teacher however thought that it would help pupils because in the MFL classroom pupils were made more aware of adjectives and nouns, etc:

**and this is all coming into the new literacy business in English, so, yes, I have often found that children go elsewhere, knowing something that they have picked up with us, especially this terminology.**

(Head of Department and classroom teacher, England)

However, In Knowsley Borough Council, the overwhelming view was that learning a MFL did not provide a great deal of benefit to lower achieving pupils and pupils with SEN. Only one classroom teacher thought that it made such pupils aware of the structure of their own language if they could recognise patterns within French or Spanish. In Knowsley, the view was expressed that teachers had to overcome a history of indifference to MFL learning and also a Head of Department thought that the benefits of studying a MFL for lower achievers and pupils with SEN were very limited because of their low academic ability. She thought that learning languages was a very academic pursuit and many pupils reached a certain point and achieved a basic knowledge which was not very high.

It was important to remember that:

**If pupils have an understanding of English as their first language then grammar lessons in the target language can make sense but when pupils really struggle with their first language then learning a MFL does not help their first language at all.**

(Head of Department, England)

There seemed to be an overwhelmingly negative view in Knowsley concerning the benefits for lower achievers and pupils with SEN studying a MFL. It is important to consider at this point that there were significant numbers of children in the schools visited who were lower achievers but the majority of practitioners interviewed were not real supporters of the policy of Languages for All.

Mixed views were expressed by the interviewees in the Czech Republic. Overall, in three schools, there was a feeling that learning a MFL did improve communication skills and was beneficial for all pupils, but in one school in Central Bohemia the general feeling was that it was very difficult for the lower achievers to learn a MFL. In one school in Prague teachers tried to encourage the lower achievers to choose German as their first MFL as the Headteacher thought that it would be easier for them since the structure and pronunciation is very similar to the Czech language, but they had come to the conclusion that the end result was just the same, i.e. learning English was just as difficult or as easy as German for the lower achievers.

The teacher of English in this school in Prague felt it was essential that all pupils learn a MFL, especially English. She felt that learning another language did help pupils to learn and to:

**understand and to learn how languages work, so that is good.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

It was very helpful therefore to know what pupils could expect and it helped them to learn another MFL in terms of learning about the importance of grammar and vocabulary. She also felt that:

**it is important that pupils learn that they cannot translate literally from one language to another, and it is of value to know that languages work slightly differently in terms of word order.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

There was disagreement expressed by a Headteacher who felt that learning a MFL was very difficult for the lower achievers and did not think that it helped their first language in any way. In fact:

**it is extremely hard to think of examples where it would help to develop a first language.**

(Headteacher, Czech Republic)

In Central Bohemia there were also opposing views on this issue. In one school all people interviewed felt that it was very difficult for the lower achievers to learn a MFL. However, all pupils did many speaking activities which were possible as the MFL classes were generally very small and consisted of not more than fifteen pupils. The classes for the lower achievers were far less than ten pupils. No one thought that learning a MFL would help pupils to improve understanding of their mother tongue.

However, another Headteacher in Central Bohemia thought that learning a MFL definitely assisted in learning one`s own language:

**especially in terms of expanding vocabulary, but of course there are problems with the lower achievers because very often they are not able to understand their own language in terms of grammar and tenses.**

(Headteacher, Czech Republic)

All grammatical points must be explained to these pupils in their own language in the first instance. Overall, the Headteacher thought that:

**learning one`s first language and a MFL should go hand in hand. All pupils do benefit from learning a MFL.**

(Headteacher, Czech Republic)

Interestingly the English teacher in this school thought that for many SEN pupils, English was easier than Czech and they often had less problems in English than in their own language which has many complicated grammatical points:

**for many SEN pupils English is easier than Czech and they can have less problems in English than in their own language because there are no cases for tenses. There are lots of things that are more simplified in English than in Czech, so in this context, it is probably not such a problem to learn English.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

Overall, despite the problems that many pupils had to overcome, it was felt that it was very useful for all pupils to learn a MFL in the Czech Republic. The importance of learning how language is constructed and how to learn languages was emphasised.

The second sub-theme to emerge in this section concerned learning a MFL as a means to build confidence and improve basic communication.

In Scotland, several interviewees expressed the view that learning a MFL did help to increase confidence in lower achieving pupils, especially in speaking activities. In Glasgow City Council particularly there was a very positive response to this idea and it was also emphasised that learning a MFL helped to improve basic communication skills. All interviewees felt that it certainly developed the understanding of the process of communication for all pupils. A School Manager suggested that:

**by learning another language, pupils would have an understanding of how people communicate and that it would also give them a perception of the world, that different people speak different languages, and could remove the insular vision that everyone speaks English, and that is the end of it.**

(School Manager, Scotland)

It was emphasised that:

**learning a MFL is a life skill, it builds confidence in pupils and helps to improve articulation, especially in lower ability pupils.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

All of the classroom teachers agreed that learning a MFL improved confidence and basic communication skills.

In England, some interviewees thought that learning a MFL helped to build confidence in many lower ability pupils even if it was in a somewhat limited way, for example, one Headteacher thought that:

**even if lower achievers and SEN pupils can only learn a limited amount of a MFL, what they do learn reinforces their sense of achievement, even if it is mostly speaking: it also gives them a sense of novelty and initial success at learning something new and this is important.**

(Headteacher, England)

Another positive view in this area was expressed by an Adviser who said that:

**as long as reasonable targets are set and conformed to the styles of the cohort, then there is every reason for teaching MFLs to slower learners and to pupils with a record of needs as to anyone else.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

However, he felt that:

**pupils feel a sense of achievement and satisfaction but there is a problem that it is very difficult to find a progression in a MFL with that kind of approach.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

The problem of lack of progression was also highlighted by a Head of Department in England who thought that many lower achievers seemed to enjoy many aspects of learning a MFL, but:

**they cannot really get beyond a certain level.**

(Head of Department, England)

In the Czech Republic, some interviewees also commented that learning a MFL raised confidence in many pupils but this was a minority view, overall. One classroom teacher emphasised that teachers spent a lot of time encouraging pupils to learn new vocabulary and worked hard with pupils on speaking tasks which were mostly repetitive. For lower achievers, the emphasis was on developing speaking activities in the MFL.

The third sub-theme to emerge in this section involved views on personal and social development. In Scotland, there appeared to be two opposing views concerning personal and social development. For example, an Adviser stressed that for him:

**for the lower ability pupils and lower achievers, the biggest benefit is in terms of personal and social development.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

He felt that learning a MFL was a worthwhile experience for these pupils because:

**it is inclusive, in the sense that they end up doing the same as mainstream pupils but in the areas of personal and social development it gives them access to something totally different from their normal curriculum.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

An opposing view was expressed by another Adviser who did not agree entirely with the importance of personal and social education expressed above. He felt that:

**it is unfortunate that many of the so-called gurus in education would consider themselves to be teaching firstly personal and social education and not specifically languages.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

In England, only three people commented on this specific category. A School Manager who was a specialist teacher of SEN pupils shared the view with another Head of SEN that anything that was inclusive where lower achievers perceived themselves to be treated in the same way as everyone else was good and they have found that these pupils wanted to become involved. If the work set was at an appropriate level then the pupils enjoyed learning a MFL, but both stated that it was counter productive where children may be very anxious about school and if they had literacy problems in their own language, they found that often their anxiety was not lessened by studying a MFL and often perceived themselves as unsuccessful and this was something else they could not do. The teachers must present it at an appropriate level.

A Headteacher made the point that:

**we must not forget of course that many of the lower achievers in the MFL classroom also struggle in most or all other subjects and they fail to achieve success year after year. There was, in fact, a danger that previously the lower achieving pupils were being given a very sterile curriculum that focused on English and Maths and very few other subjects, and for them to discover that they are capable of participation in other subjects, with support from teachers and Headteachers, is good for the lower achievers and SEN pupils.**

(Headteacher, England)

In the Czech Republic it was expressed that learning English was an important aspect of personal and social development as a knowledge of English would enable all pupils to:

**understand and use many English speaking sites on the internet.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

Overall, although many expressed that it was difficult for lower achievers to learn English, it was agreed that it was a good subject for them to learn.

The mixed views expressed seem to suggest that the inclusive experience for all pupils studying a MFL is only a positive experience for lower achievers if the work set is achievable for their level of ability and a lot of support is available.

**The third key issue that emerged concerned understanding of other cultures and traditions.**

Within this key issue, responses produced views which could be grouped into two sub-themes, including:

- developing awareness of lifestyles other than their own
- creating links/developing contacts with young people abroad

In the three countries the overwhelming view was that the aspect of developing awareness of lifestyles other than their own was very important for pupils to learn. One or two interviewees expressed opposing views or highlighted difficulties. For example, in Scotland in Glasgow City Council, the majority of interviewees felt that an important aspect of MFL learning was that it developed the pupils' understanding of other cultures and traditions and broadened the pupils' awareness of civilisations, other than their own.

On the other hand, there was an opposing view expressed by three classroom teachers who felt very strongly that in their experience they were not convinced that the pupils they were teaching in the East End of Glasgow were interested in learning about other cultures and traditions. They agreed that learning a MFL did not develop pupils' understanding of other cultures and traditions because by the time many of these children had reached age eleven, they had very entrenched views and often these views were very narrow with regard to embracing other cultures. Even in their own city they had a very limited view of life and were not always willing to explore new cultures at all.

They agreed that not all pupils fitted into this category but they argued that the majority with whom the focus of this study is concerned certainly did. These

classroom teachers felt that in their particular school, because of the background of the pupils concerned:

**their interest in other cultures did not extend beyond their awareness of the fact that there are many Rangers and Celtic football players who have ‘funny’ names.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

Following on from this exposition, these teachers agreed that as a result of their views on the ‘closed’ minds of certain eleven year olds, it was a promising idea to begin teaching MFLs in the primary schools where younger children would possibly be more willing to participate more fully in all aspects of MFL learning, including making more effort with pronunciation, and more often to enjoy the experience of learning a MFL. These views form an important link with the targets set in the report by the European Commission (2003), *Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004-2006*, where it was suggested that it is:

**a priority for Member States to ensure that language learning in kindergarten and primary schools is effective, for it is here that key attitudes towards other languages and cultures are formed, and the foundations for later language learning are laid.**

(European Commission 2003, pg.7)

Such findings would suggest that it is essential to include the study of a MFL in the curriculum in order to broaden the horizons of many pupils.

The majority of teachers interviewed felt that the experience of investigating and understanding other cultures and traditions was a very important aspect of learning MFLs in schools. The remaining classroom teachers, three Principal Teachers and one School Manager, in Glasgow City Council, all felt that learning a MFL was beneficial to all pupils.

A Principal Teacher made the point that at the time of the study most information acquired by young people came from television or the radio, and much of it was American influenced, so if they came into school and learned French, German, Spanish and Italian language and culture, it made them more aware of the outside world and also helped them to understand foreigners when they came to this country. It was outlined by a School Manager that it depended very much on how language was taught. This School Manager felt that there had to be a dimension of culture and tradition taught through MFL teaching as opposed purely to the structural process of the language. She felt that it was very important to emphasise to pupils that the particular MFL with which they were involved was not only spoken in one country but, for example, with regard to French, there are several countries around the world where French is spoken and all these countries have different cultures and traditions from ourselves. This view was expressed very strongly by the entire staff of a school where Spanish was their main MFL. They felt that it was a very important aspect of learning Spanish to explain that the language is spoken by much more than twenty million people around the world. It was argued that it was essential and very motivating to include information about Spain, Latin America and Mexico in their curriculum. In their view, pupils enjoyed learning about how other young people live in other countries and were interested in the school system, mealtimes, hobbies, social life, etc., in countries where people speak the target language.

In North Ayrshire, all of the interviewees thought that expanding knowledge of other cultures and traditions was an important part of MFL learning in schools. All of the staff who were interviewed from a school on a Scottish island agreed that MFL teachers had a huge role to play in developing understanding of other cultures and traditions as living in the West of Scotland, they felt they were isolated from a multi-cultural society, but especially living on an island there was a tendency to become rather insular. In this school a very important person for the pupils was the foreign language assistant whom they had to “share” with other schools on the mainland. In 1990 they requested that an assistant from the Cote d’Ivoire visit their school for a week and:

**she made a huge impression on the pupils with her style, appearance and personality and she brought first-hand information about French speaking peoples` way of life from Africa which the pupils found amazing.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

In North Ayrshire there was unanimous agreement that MFL learning had an enormous amount to contribute to developing pupils` understanding of other cultures and traditions, which all interviewees felt was important to promote understanding and tolerance among pupils and helped create a sense of respect for other people who live “differently” from ourselves. Many interviewees highlighted, however, that it was difficult to find material relating to cultures and traditions which could be used in their classes. In their experience, this part of the curriculum tended to be delivered by teachers according to their own individual experience. Many teachers suggested that they would like to do more work in this area. Another problem highlighted was the lack of curriculum time to deliver many lessons on culture and traditions.

The Advisers agreed that it was important to emphasise the culture and traditions that were present in the countries where the target MFLs were spoken. One Adviser stated that in his opinion the best way to teach a MFL was in a context where the culture and aspects of other countries were incorporated so that it inevitably became part and parcel of the classroom work and pupils could learn a great deal in this way. Another Adviser expressed the view:

**that the only way to get under the skin of other cultures and traditions is by learning the language of the country you are interested in.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

He was convinced that it was important to teach the background and culture of a country through the medium of the MFL and he felt that a main focus of education is to widen the horizons of the pupils.

In two of the Local Authorities in England, it was agreed that learning of the cultures and traditions was interesting but not the main focus in the MFL classroom. In the other Authority it was felt that it was important to incorporate background information from time to time.

In North Yorkshire and in Redcar and Cleveland, all interviewees agreed that learning of other cultures and traditions was a part of learning a MFL. One school Manager observed that in her experience it certainly was not a main focus of learning. All interviewees agreed that pupils found it interesting to learn how other people live abroad. They liked to learn how major festivals such as Christmas and Easter are celebrated. They liked to find out about customs and how people greet each other. They also like to learn about shopping, eating habits and school life abroad.

In Knowsley, in one school, the Head of Department and classroom teacher agreed on the positive aspects and value for lower achievers in their development of knowledge of the cultures and lifestyle of other countries but they found that:

**these lower achievers just cannot cope with linguistic concepts but enjoy learning of the differences between school and family lifestyle of these countries.**

(Head of Department, England)

In another school the Headteacher felt that it was most important to emphasise the cultural aspects of life in other countries.

In all of the schools visited in the Czech Republic, there was a unanimous view expressed that it was very important that pupils learned about the cultures and customs of people in the countries where the MFL they are studying are spoken. One school had a Spanish assistant who gave conversation classes to small groups but often told many classes about life in Spain which everyone found interesting, even if they were not learning Spanish. One Headteacher, who thought that learning a MFL was very difficult for lower achievers, agreed that for

all pupils it was of benefit to learn about other cultures, the history, geography, conditions, personalities, and so on from other countries to broaden their horizons.

Overall, in the three countries, there was general agreement that learning about the lifestyles of people in other countries where the target language is spoken, was both interesting and enjoyable. It was not the main focus in the MFL classroom but it was an aspect that many pupils including the lower achievers found valuable.

In Scotland, the Advisers were keen to promote contacts with people abroad and one Adviser felt that a key issue was - could pupils go beyond the course book and actually get in touch with pupils of their own age in other countries? In his experience there was evidence from schools in Inverness who took pupils with SEN and involved them in a school twinning arrangement with a special school in France. The exchange experience developed inter-cultural contacts but also developed self-esteem and self-confidence in many pupils including those with SEN. The friendships that were made reinforced the value of learning a MFL. In the view of the Adviser one key issue in MFL learning at the time of the study was developing links with people in schools abroad via pen friends, the internet, or video conferencing.

In North Lanarkshire there were many exchange visits. Many pupils had cultural experiences through such trips. In North Ayrshire many contacts were developing with schools abroad through their "Partners in Excellence" programme and many schools were involved in Comenius Projects where schools had links with others in three countries. All pupils were encouraged to participate in exchange visits.

In England it also emerged that teachers were keen to develop links with schools abroad, to develop pen-friend links and to develop personal contacts for all pupils. This was seen as a motivational factor.

In the Czech Republic, classroom teachers stated that they encouraged pupils to

become involved in exchange visits to Germany or England as this was an excellent motivator for pupils and to try to develop links with other children and it was important that they could:

**understand and speak to other children and understand and listen to music - it is fun for them as well.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

In the Czech Republic it was revealed that teachers were very keen to develop contacts with schools in England or in English speaking countries. In fact, three Headteachers and six other teachers stressed the importance of learning of the culture, history and geography of other countries which pupils can learn in the MFL classroom. Even if lower achievers could not be expected to study the literature of a country in the target language by themselves, it was useful for them to listen to certain excerpts from popular literature read to them, or for them to look on the internet in English speaking sites.

**The fourth key issue that emerged concerned motivational aspects of MFL teaching and learning.**

Within this key issue the responses that emerged could be grouped in three sub-themes including:

- Class size
- Motivating pupils to learn a MFL
- Behavioural issues and Inclusion issues

On the issue of class size, in all of the participating Authorities in Scotland, an overwhelming response clearly expressed was that one of the major difficulties was trying to teach mixed ability groups or lower ability groups with more than thirty pupils at a time. Other problems were voiced but the number of pupils in class was the point which recurred in every participating school. For example:

**in classes of thirty, the teacher has to deal with pupils with a wide range of ability. Some pupils are disaffected and show very little interest or are disruptive. They are in the same class as pupils who can and want to learn the MFL. These pupils are not really receiving a good service either in this situation.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

In another school in Scotland pupils were doing very well in MFLs and recent Standard Grade results revealed that many slower learners had achieved higher results in Standard Grade German than they had in any other subject.

A Principal Teacher argued that, in general, teachers worked very hard to present the curriculum at an appropriate level for all pupils but a major issue was that class sizes which were just too big.

**In S1 and S2 we have thirty-three pupils in mixed ability classes. The pupils are streamed in S3 and S4 and pupils are happy to work in these groups at their own pace but no matter how hard a teacher tries, in groups of thirty-three lower ability pupils do not get enough attention. Lower ability pupils should be taught in small groups. Despite being a very high achieving Department in a high achieving school, smaller class sizes would allow us to set the heather on fire.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

In two Authorities in Scotland class sizes of thirty pupils or more emerged as a major difficulty that MFL teachers felt they had to overcome. However, in North Ayrshire, in the schools visited, they had created smaller groups for the lower achievers and this was fully supported by the Headteachers. In one school they tried to keep all MFL classes less than thirty pupils and very small groups for the lower achievers. The Headteacher, who was not a modern linguist, thought that:

**it would be virtually impossible for any teacher, no matter how hard they tried, to extend the more able and support the less able in groups of thirty.**

(Headteacher, Scotland)

For this Headteacher, small groups made a big difference and she also stressed the importance of having:

**a well motivated staff who had a sense of inclusiveness and who are concerned with making sure that all pupils are encouraged to reach their maximum potential. So, it is essential to have enough staff to be able to provide small class sizes and staff with an inclusive and encouraging attitude. We are very lucky in our school.**

(Headteacher, Scotland)

In England, the issue of class sizes also emerged as a major difficulty. It was felt to be particularly difficult to encourage and support pupils with speaking and writing activities in mixed ability groups of thirty pupils. In North Yorkshire, in the schools visited, the Heads of the SEN Departments both emphasised how difficult it was for the lower achievers to cope with writing and that they would prefer to see much smaller groups.

In the Czech Republic, in the schools visited there seemed to be a calm acceptance that all pupils have to learn a MFL and it was best to be positive about that situation. Despite this, some teachers did express concern that it was a very difficult subject for the lower achievers.

In the course of conducting the research in the field, it was interesting to discover just how small the Headteachers tried to keep the MFL class sizes compared to the general experiences in Scotland and in England. A major difference between the systems in Scotland and in England compared to the Czech Republic was the class size, which was always small. If there were more than twenty-three pupils in a MFL class they had to halve the class size for MFL lessons, as outlined in Chapter Two. Therefore, officially, twenty-three pupils was the absolute maximum but, in practice, teachers informed the researcher that

classes were very rarely made up of more than eighteen pupils. Of all the classes that the researcher visited, the maximum class size was twelve pupils in a mixed ability class. However, there was concern that:

**there is a shortage of MFL teachers in general and with a shortage of qualified MFL teachers, it is difficult to form groups that would not be too big so that learning can still be effective.**

(School Manager, Czech Republic)

In one school, the usual size of MFL groups consisted of between fifteen to eighteen pupils, which caused them a great deal of concern because in their experience, these sizes of classes were very big for MFL learning.

**The groups of SEN pupils are much smaller, they are always less than ten pupils and in some cases we have had two in a class.**

(School Manager, Czech Republic)

It therefore appeared to be the case that keeping MFL classes as small as possible was a distinct priority in the Czech Republic. It seemed to be the case that an average sized class would include about twelve to fourteen pupils.

The second sub-theme concerned motivating lower ability pupils to learn a MFL. On the issue of motivating to learn a MFL, problems emerged in all three countries. Similar difficulties were encountered, particularly in the cities in Scotland and in England where schools involved in the study were located. In Scotland a School Manager emphasised the importance of having good teachers and stated that in her view:

**the main problem we have in implementing the policy of Languages for All is the motivational side, both for pupils and staff. Rather than looking for specific practices, the best resource in a MFL classroom is a teacher who is committed to teach MFLs to all children and who believes that MFLs can be accessed by all children and all children have merit. The difficulty is when you have colleagues in certain areas**

**who are perhaps not as committed to Languages for All as they could be because they feel that this policy is an imposition on them and they feel they are not fully up to speed on how to deal with some of the more difficult children.**

(School Manager, Scotland)

However, overall she did not think that at the time of the study they had the right approach to MFL teaching in Scotland.

**Probably adjustments could be made in MFL classrooms which could improve the experience, not so much in language learning, but in the way that pupils learn a MFL, the media through which the pupils learn a language, and the number of children a teacher has to work with at a time. When you have a group of thirty pupils, I do wonder how reasonably any teacher can support individuals to learn a MFL.**

(School Manager, Scotland)

Four classroom teachers felt that in practice there were not a lot of benefits for lower achievers studying a MFL at all. In their view they had to teach many pupils who did not see the relevance of learning a MFL despite many sound reasons being offered by teachers.

**Many pupils take the view - Oh well, I'm not going to work in France and I am just going to sit at the back of the class and not bother.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

Another teacher thought that many pupils saw MFL learning in the same way as they saw many other subjects.

**It is just something they go along with as with other subjects from 9 a.m. until 3.30 p.m. and it has nothing to do with the rest of your life.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

In an inner city school, severe problems were highlighted. One teacher stressed that for some pupils:

**learning a MFL is just Hell on Earth. They do not have an inkling as to what is going on and it all just goes over their heads.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

Another classroom teacher suggested that in the school where she worked many such problems were due to the backgrounds from which many of these children came from.

**When a child's background is one of encouragement, interest and support, then their whole attitude generally is very different.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

A Headteacher was not convinced that it was beneficial for all pupils to study a MFL up to sixteen years and thought that:

**lower achievers, especially those with SEN, could gain more by reinforcing core skills.**

(Headteacher, Scotland)

Lack of dedication and application by certain pupils was considered to be a difficulty that teachers have to overcome. For example,

**when pupils get to S3 and S4, they start to lack enthusiasm for learning a MFL since they have to remember so much. Teachers have to keep their lessons as entertaining as possible, but for some pupils, nothing will ever interest them. Lack of motivation to learn vocabulary and grammar and lack of interest in the subject are major problems in the MFL classroom. In S3 and S4 learning a MFL becomes too much like hard work for many pupils who are not prepared to make the effort required that will lead to success.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

Mixed views emerged from the Advisers. On the question of motivation, one Adviser thought that current assessment procedures were not helpful. For example, he thought that:

**one of the last things that adolescents want to do is to talk about themselves in public and if you are trying to spend the entire S3 and S4 curriculum making them do what they do not want to do in a 'funny' language, then you are destined for some difficulties. In my experience, some teachers overcome such problems simply by being good teachers and therefore target pupils' interests where they can identify them, or by trying to generate interest where they do not find much interest. A lot of commercially produced material is pretty and colourful but difficult to understand because the instructions are given in the target language.**

(Adviser, Scotland).

However, another Adviser was more positive and he explained that in his Authority:

**much work has been done to encourage all pupils to study a MFL up to the age of sixteen years. We have a Directorate who are very pro languages and are involved in international work which has been developed over the last five or six years. We have several Comenius projects operating involving pupil exchanges and teacher exchanges and through their Partners in Excellence work, we have created a climate in most of their schools, certainly not in all schools in the Authority, but many have developed an international climate which has had a positive influence on studies.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

In schools in England, it emerged once again very clearly that motivating lower ability pupils to learn a MFL was a major problem for many teachers in two Authorities. Views expressed included the following:

**Another problem to be overcome is that children in certain areas, and the area where this school is situated, is one which has a resistance to MFL learning. Often pupils say “I’m not going to need French or Spanish when I go to work and if I go to Spain, everyone will speak English”. Therefore they do not always see the point of learning MFLs which is a problem.**

(Head of Department, England)

In another Authority, a Headteacher stressed that in their particular area:

**it is very difficult for teachers to motivate the children in the MFL classes as there is a general feeling that MFLs are not important to them. Many of their parents do not have a high regard of learning a MFL. There is a tendency with the type of children in this school to be much more willing to adopt a more restricted list of subjects that are important to them and many cannot see the importance of learning several subjects which includes MFLs.**

(Headteacher, England)

In the Czech Republic, difficulties arose from the content of the National Curriculum. It was difficult to motivate lower achieving pupils to learn grammar in some schools, but in others, learning English was very popular with many pupils including lower achievers. For example, a School Manager stated that:

**since it is not possible to adjust the National Curriculum to the needs of pupils, problems with understanding a lot of grammar points arise. This is mainly due to the fact that they do not understand these points in their own language. However, despite these difficulties pupils do not regard these issues as an obstacle to learning a MFL. In fact, it is a favourite subject among many pupils in our school.**

(School Manager, Czech Republic)

However, the problem of motivating pupils to learn a MFL appeared to be an ongoing and difficult area to overcome in many MFL classrooms in the three countries. In Scotland and in England, it seemed to be a significant difficulty that teachers had to overcome in the urban areas.

The National Guidelines for MFL learning in the three countries stated that at least one MFL should be studied by all pupils to the end of compulsory secondary schooling in Scotland and in the Czech Republic and up to the age of sixteen in England, at the time of the fieldwork interviews. As a possible motivational factor to encourage pupils to remain interested in MFL learning, interviewees were asked for their views on the possibility of lower achievers and pupils with SEN changing languages after two or three years of study. By changing languages, pupils would achieve partial competency in at least two MFLs which would seem to be a possible way of developing plurilingualism as discussed in Chapter One.

Mixed views emerged in the three countries. The majority of responses which favoured changing MFLs after two or three years of study only came from classroom teachers in the three countries for similar reasons:

**The main disadvantage of studying one MFL for five years is that lower achievers and pupils with SEN get to their ceiling after two or three years. The advantage of starting another language is that you can start again and look at another language, another country and another culture. Overall, I think that changing language after two to three years is best for these pupils.**

(Classroom teacher, England)

**I think that lower achievers get to a peak of what they can understand after two or three years. At the beginning they are intrigued by MFL learning and find it exciting but after two years it becomes too difficult for them. In the past I have worked with pupils on a European Studies course where they learned some French, German and Italian and it was a great idea for these pupils.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

**Learning a foreign language can be difficult for these pupils and it could be interesting for them to learn a new language and learn about another country after two years or so.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

Only one Adviser thought that it would be beneficial for lower achievers and pupils with SEN to change languages:

**I think that the benefits probably far outweigh any potential negatives. Actually the National Guidelines tend to suggest that pupils study at least one MFL up to sixteen so that is what will continue but I think that there is a fairly buoyant case for offering some youngsters a wider experience than just French. In the lower ability range some youngsters take Spanish in third and fourth year, probably in defiance of the National recommendations and there is no indication that it does any harm. They do Access 3 courses and there are no external exams which is a tremendous boost.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

However, the majority of interviewees agreed that in order to avoid confusion, for the lower achievers and pupils with SEN it was more beneficial to continue studying the same MFL for the recommended compulsory time:

**I can't think of any advantages of studying two different foreign languages. I personally would like to see these pupils taking one MFL right through from Year Seven to Year Eleven and then you can differentiate throughout. I don't think that there is any advantage in confusing them with two MFLs.**

(Head of Department, England)

**The benefit of studying the same MFL right through is the depth of language that the pupils can acquire and the consolidation process that is needed takes time. I think that there can be confusion when**

**pupils are exposed to a whole new set of structures and vocabulary. The disadvantage of changing languages after two years of study would be that at the age of sixteen the lower achievers would not develop a proficiency in either language. Overall it is better to study the same language for four years in the secondary school to give the pupils a better chance of success.**

(School Manager, Scotland)

**These pupils can find learning new vocabulary difficult. I think that it is best for them to continue learning the same language in the basic school.**

(Headteacher, Czech Republic)

An Adviser thought that the time allocation in Scottish schools for MFL learning was an important factor to consider and:

**there is a strong argument for continuing to study one MFL up to the age of sixteen and that argument rests upon the fact that in school conditions in Scotland the overall time available is limited.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

The interviewees discussed arguments for and against changing MFLs after two or three years of study. Despite the agreement among some classroom teachers in the three countries that it would be beneficial for lower achievers and pupils with SEN to study a different language, the majority of responses from the three countries suggested that it was more useful for lower achievers and pupils with SEN to study the same MFL throughout secondary school.

The third sub-theme concerned behavioural and inclusion issues. Problems were identified in this category in the urban Authorities in Scotland and in England.

In Scotland in Glasgow City Council, in certain schools, behavioural problems emerged as a major issue that teachers had to overcome with many lower

achievers in the MFL classroom. One school visited did not experience difficulties in this area but others felt that:

**one of the most difficult areas to deal with, not just in a MFL classroom, but in general these days, is behavioural problems. There are many pupils who, if they do not like a subject, in this case a MFL, become disruptive and that causes problems for the teacher and the other pupils in the class who are willing to learn but who are being regularly disrupted in their learning process by the antics of constantly disruptive pupils.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

A major problem expressed by many was that of truancy among lower achievers.

**If you have pupils truanting on a regular basis, when they return the teacher has to spend time with them trying to ensure that they are able to keep up to date with the lessons and the rest of the class have to be set tasks whilst the teacher spends time with such pupils thereby causing problems all round.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

In another school, a Principal Teacher highlighted problems caused by the policy of social inclusion and found that:

**recent policies regarding social inclusion have led to many discipline problems arising with the Department and many teachers feel that they are merely holding the fort in many lessons and therefore not teaching the way they would like to, or indeed used to be able to.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

Issues surrounding inclusion are discussed in Chapter Two.

An Adviser expressed that it was difficult to strike a balance between inclusion and problems caused by disruptive pupils. In fact he suggested that he thought

that class sizes of about twenty pupils in a mixed ability scenario would be manageable and recognised that:

**it is not helpful to have too many pupils in one class together. However, it is difficult to strike a balance between inclusion and pupils who disrupt proceedings.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

Interviewees in the other Authorities in Scotland did not experience indiscipline in the classrooms to any great extent.

In England in two Authorities, behavioural problems did not emerge as an issue of concern, but in the urban Authority, the problems caused by lack of appropriate behaviour were summed up by a Head of Department who thought that:

**motivating the pupils is a constant struggle and in my experience a lot of lower achievers also have behavioural problems. The whole experience of teaching MFLs to all pupils up to the age of sixteen years is a struggle for teachers and it is a struggle for lower ability pupils who, for much of the time, are not really learning a great deal. I often feel that teachers are just going through the motions.**

(Head of Department, England)

In the Czech Republic no one mentioned indiscipline or behavioural problems in the classroom at this stage in the interview process.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the perspectives of the interviewees regarding the reasons why a MFL was a compulsory subject in the curriculum in their country.

In all three countries, many positive comments were expressed in favour of Languages for All. For example, many interviewees in the three countries felt that learning a MFL helped in some way to improve basic communication skills and to increase the confidence of many lower achievers. Many pupils gained a lot of satisfaction from being able to be involved in speaking in a foreign language at a somewhat limited level.

It emerged in the three countries that by learning a MFL, understanding of other cultures and traditions could be improved. Many people felt that learning about how other people live was both useful and beneficial for all pupils. It was suggested that especially for the lower achievers this was an interesting part of the MFL courses

In the three countries, the majority of interviewees expressed many positive reasons why all pupils should have the opportunity to study a MFL and there was general agreement that all pupils should have equal opportunities to learn MFLs in order to, for example, become mobile in Europe for work or pleasure if they so wished. There was general agreement concerning the importance of Languages for All, in theory. However, many of the interviewees highlighted several practical difficulties which suggested that many practitioners, particularly in Scotland and England, felt that MFL learning could often be problematic for lower achievers and pupils with SEN, in practice. In Scotland and in England similar perspectives and similar problems emerged. One of the practical difficulties that MFL teachers felt caused problems concerned class sizes which were usually for thirty pupils and were considered to be too large by classroom teachers, Principal Teachers, and School Managers in both Scotland and England.

Several classroom teachers in the three countries thought that by changing the MFL being learned after two or three years of study it could motivate lower achievers and pupils with SEN in MFL classrooms and lead to partial competence in at least two MFLs. However the majority of responses indicated that it was considered more beneficial for these pupils to study the same MFL throughout secondary school.

It was suggested that the inclusion of pupils with behavioural or emotional special needs into mainstream MFL classes often caused problems but this was

not only specific to MFL classes, but in general. Motivating lower achievers and pupils with SEN was also seen as difficult in practice in Scotland and in England. Advisers seemed to be more positive about the inclusion of all pupils in MFL learning in schools than the School Managers and teachers. This was possibly because the Advisers were less close to dealing with practical problems in classrooms and their views were of a more theoretical nature than those expressed by the classroom practitioners.

In the Czech Republic, views concerning Languages for All were less negative than those expressed in Scotland and England, possibly because motivation to learn a MFL, was greater in the Czech Republic than in Scotland and England. MFL learning was promoted as a very important part of the curriculum in all schools visited and lower achievers and pupils with SEN were included in this positive whole school ethos. At the time of the study, behavioural problems were not considered to be an issue by interviewees in the Czech Republic.

While there were many positive reasons expressed to suggest that learning MFLs was beneficial for all pupils, including lower achievers and pupils with SEN, several views emerged that revealed a lack of commitment among many practitioners to the policy of Languages for All. This situation was more prevalent among practitioners in Scotland and England than in the Czech Republic.

The next chapter considers the views expressed in response to Research Question Two.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Discussion of Research Question Two

**What forms of support including teaching and learning strategies are provided for lower achievers, including pupils with SEN in MFL classrooms?**

In order to gather information regarding perceptions of the various support strategies that were in place in the three countries involved in the study, the interviewees answered several questions. A variety of views were expressed. The issues which arose from the fieldwork answers are collated in terms of:

- **In-class support**
  
- **Mixed ability classes**
  
- **Training and advice**
  
- **Methodology in the classroom**
  
- **ICT in the classroom**
  
- **Formal Assessment**

In-class support can be in the form of co-operative teaching involving:

- help in the classroom in the form of another MFL teacher, a learning support teacher or a classroom assistant
  
- small group extraction - where another teacher works with a small group in another room on certain tasks

- lower achiever extraction - where the co-operative teacher works specifically with a group of lower achievers on certain tasks.

In the three countries involved in this study, various possibilities for in-class support were available. It emerged that despite other options which were in place in some schools, the main focus for providing support for lower achievers and for pupils with SEN came from their classroom teacher. Provision varied from school to school in Scotland and in England. All schools visited in the Czech republic provided extra lessons after school for lower achievers and pupils with SEN.

In Scotland provision of in-class support for lower achievers varied from school to school. Some schools made provision for team teaching to occur on a regular basis with two MFL teachers in a classroom at a time. Learning support teachers, who often were not MFL specialists, were involved in certain classes. Classroom assistants were involved in some cases and some schools visited had no in-class support for MFL lessons. In some schools, lower achievers and pupils with SEN were extracted from MFL lessons to work with a learning support teacher who assisted them with their MFL work. Two schools had made a decision to keep the MFL sections small and so enable the MFL classroom teachers to focus on teaching the lower achievers in a situation where their needs could be met and work could be completed at an appropriate pace.

Typical responses highlighted the individual styles and situations in the schools visited. In one school the Headteacher explained:

**there is a staffing enhancement mainly in English, Maths and MFL which allows for smaller classes and better interaction with the pupils who have difficulties, for example, if there are four classes on, we put five teachers on the timetable; if there are three classes on, we timetable four teachers. Obviously it depends on staffing, but that is what we try to do.**

(Headteacher, Scotland)

Another Headteacher explained that in her school they offered support by having reduced class sizes for identified pupils. They sought to:

**support all staff by keeping the numbers of class sizes in S1 and S2 well down. No class in S1 and S2 has more than twenty-five pupils; one class has twelve pupils. Classes where learning support is targeted will never be more than twenty pupils.**

(Headteacher, Scotland)

It was not common to have such a specific policy regarding class size. In fact, among the schools visited in Scotland, this was the only school that had such specific guidelines. In this same school the Principal Teacher reinforced the view that every child and every teacher were supported and not just pupils with MFL. However, she felt that it was very important to separate pupils who had learning difficulties from pupils who had behavioural problems and did not see:

**why slower learners who behave beautifully should be subjected to a torrent of abuse from other pupils because they are in a class with a crowd of badly behaved pupils.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

In general, it was apparent that support strategies varied from school to school and the onus was on individual departments to bid for what they required; support for pupils with SEN was not supplied automatically. For example, one School Manager highlighted that:

**we have a bidding system within the school whereby teachers bid for support for children whom they perceive to have the greatest needs, not necessarily recorded pupils.**

(School Manager, Scotland)

It seemed surprising that support was offered to lower achievers in this haphazard way. This seemed to imply that there was a lack of adequate resources to support the learning and teaching of Languages for All in the

schools visited. This system of applying for support for lower achievers was, however, fairly popular in the schools visited, if not always successful. Another School Manager stated that within the MFL department:

**if we perceive a need we can request in-class support but we do not always get it; assistance can be requested both for short or long term periods depending on the requirement.**

(School Manager, Scotland)

There was a mixed reaction to the idea of extraction of pupils from the classroom in a small group or on an individual basis. One Principal Teacher was involved in this area previously and he would like to:

**see this kind of work again.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

Whereas, another Principal Teacher thought that extraction from lessons:

**does not really work.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

There was a mixed reaction to the input by classroom assistants. One School Manager stressed that the effectiveness of in-class support by classroom assistants:

**really depends on the calibre of the classroom assistants, sometimes they are too informal and the teacher has to spend time discussing requirements with them.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

A Headteacher expressed concerns about classroom assistants in specialised fields in secondary schools and she said that:

**it is vital to have fully qualified MFL teachers and unless classroom assistants are trained, they can cause more harm than good.**

(Headteacher, Scotland)

Although it appeared that the onus was on each MFL department to bid for extra help if they felt they needed it, not all schools included the MFL departments in this process. Some schools visited had no extra in-class support available.

A Principal Teacher stated that she would prefer smaller classes instead of in-class support. In her view:

**everything comes back to smaller classes.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

The Advisers agreed with the evidence that support was offered at a whole school level and:

**schools tend to operate through their learning support units and we give advice on materials or co-operative teaching which is not a very common practice in MFLs.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

An Adviser recognised that certain needs were not being met in schools. He said that he would like to set up more support systems but highlighted the problems involved in setting up such schemes. He stated that:

**the structured support for S5 and S6 which exists was put in place when Higher Still was introduced. To produce structured support is quite a long term procedure and requires quite a lot of development work so I am hoping to generate support for teachers in the middle school, firstly by adapting existing materials for Higher Still which can be used for S3 and S4 and partly by creating new materials for the lower general range so that they can do Intermediate 1.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

Another Adviser said that they had started work on developing support strategies for lower achievers but due to staffing limitations, work was advancing slowly. He stated that:

**Hilary McColl was a National Development Officer for a number of years working directly from the Scottish Executive in order to develop support strategies and materials for lower achieving pupils. We would, in principle, like to be in a position to do more in this area.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

In England, there was a similar variation in the level of in-class support provided for lower achievers and pupils with SEN in the schools visited. In-class support for lower achievers was managed in a similar way to Scotland.

Two schools visited provided no in-class support for their MFL departments. In another school, the Headteacher stated that they had no specific support strategy for MFLs but they had a whole school strategy where:

**we put aside about £70,000 for support strategies across the whole school and target that the slow learners and MFL will get a slice of that so they would have some in-class support but it would not come from specialist MFL teachers but from other support teachers so that they are part of the whole school system. It is really left to the Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). She will highlight where there is a need with a particular pupil, or if a group is coming from a primary school with certain individuals whom she thinks will struggle in English or even more in MFL lessons, the SENCO will allocate extra in-class support. A support teacher will accompany children to some of the MFL lessons. There is also the possibility of some pupils being extracted from lessons for support and they get special input on their particular area of need.**

(Headteacher, England)

A problem highlighted was lack of time available for learning support teachers to work with pupils and in one school:

**at the moment there is no extraction in the MFL department and no in-class support because the hours are very, very limited. In-class support was given but due to lack of resources, there has been no such support over the last two year period. Beforehand liaison took place between the Head of MFL Department and the Learning Support Department and the lessons worked very well.**

(Learning Support teacher, England)

In general it seemed that each department:

**does their own thing.**

(Head of Department, England)

In another English school, they generally asked for assistance from the Learning Support department who decided if they could offer help:

**at the beginning of the year we are given a list of all pupils who are on the Special Needs Register. They might not necessarily be Statemented but they are on the Register and if we feel we need support for these pupils specifically, then we go to the Head of Special Needs and we make an application, as it were.**

(Head of Department, England)

A particularly negative view was expressed by one Headteacher who said that they:

**do not have any support systems in place for lower achievers in the MFL Department. Our tendency would be to disapply rather than pour resources into a situation that we would regard as hopeless really.**

(Headteacher, England)

In the schools visited in the Czech Republic there was no in-class support in terms of co-operative teaching. Extra lessons were available in the afternoon after school had finished. Attending these extra lessons was not compulsory but if teachers recommended that it would be beneficial for a pupil then the pupil would normally be present. These extra lessons were free of charge, so:

**the special help for these pupils with SEN is some extra lessons outwith the normal range of lessons e.g. every week there are extra lessons in a group of only SEN pupils, outwith the common classroom, and these pupils are grouped in a special class where they receive help with the Czech language, reading, key subjects, including English.**

(Headteacher, Czech Republic)

All of the schools visited had such extra lessons available for all pupils. It was emphasised that these classes were very well attended. However, the feeling was that the support strategies for lower achievers and for pupils with SEN had to be provided by:

**just the teacher.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

In all schools visited at least one person stated that pupils were free to discuss problems with any teacher and:

**the pupils can choose their teachers - they can go to any teacher if they have a problem.**

(School Manager, Czech Republic)

A great deal of work involved encouraging pupils. There were difficulties in providing support for lower achievers but it was felt important to build up good relationships with the pupils in class and one teacher stated that she really

stressed the importance of teachers building working relationships with the pupils but:

**not in a superior way; I try to treat the pupils as equals.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

Apart from the extra lessons after school the main source of extra help for pupils came from the classroom teacher.

**The second key issue in this category to emerge involved views expressed about mixed ability classes.**

In all three countries visited, there were no fixed rules regarding enforcing mixed ability teaching in secondary schools. All schools visited in Scotland had mixed ability classes in the first year of secondary school, but were free to decide if they wanted to continue with mixed ability groups thereafter. English schools followed the same system. Schools in the Czech Republic also had mixed ability groups for pupils aged eleven and they could also continue with mixed ability groups if they wished, but whenever possible, within the schools visited, pupils were placed in classes according to their ability.

Overall, from a teaching and learning point of view, the impression formulated by the researcher was that the majority of those interviewed preferred MFL classes to be set. However, problems arose with pupils with behavioural difficulties. Grouping too many pupils with behavioural difficulties together was not a favoured option. The following responses offered insight into the various points of view expressed.

In Scotland in certain schools where no in-class support was available, the majority of interviewees felt that the provision of support for lower achievers and pupils with SEN by the creation of groups set according to ability could perhaps be beneficial. In many cases this took place at the beginning of S2 - for example, one Principal Teacher stated that in terms of support offered:

**our main objective is set up at the beginning of S2. Pupils are broadly set which means they are in a class which is homogeneous and this makes teaching easier; this allows for differentiation in coursework and coursebooks.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

In two of the schools visited, pupils were set according to ability after the October break in S1 in one school and after the Christmas break in S1 in another. It was felt that:

**setting is great; the advantages of setting are reflected in our exam results.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

However it was considered important not to set classes too soon in S1 as pupils who had studied French in the primary schools and were now studying it in S1 had an unfair advantage over the others who had not studied French before. In such cases it was felt to be:

**unfair to set classes too soon in S1.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

Where schools did have mixed ability groups in S1 and S2, it was stressed that it was vital to have high expectations for all pupils.

**When expectations are high for all pupils, mixed ability is a good thing. Little help groups can be set up where the more able pupils help the less able and these pupils think this is great. This works if you have classes like that, but it depends on relationships.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

Problems were identified when a teacher had to deal with a mixed ability group of thirty pupils and several had behavioural and emotional difficulties. In such situations more able pupils could be left to work through activities with very little

help as the teacher had to spend most of the lesson maintaining order in the classroom and trying to keep children focused on the work of the classroom. In such cases:

**discipline can get out of control and more able, well behaved children get a raw deal.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

There was therefore a dilemma - in classes of thirty with no extra provision for children with SEN and if discipline got out of control:

**do you put them all into one class which would be totally unmanageable, or do you filter them into all classes and then they cause disruption anyway?**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

The response from several teachers was that:

**you need smaller classes and books that are accessible to lower achievers. Smaller classes are essential.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

The Advisers also expressed opinions relating to difficulties facing teachers and suggested that:

**there are, in fact, very strong arguments for teaching all MFL classes in smaller groups which are simply not accepted by teachers' associations and therefore by the Government.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

One Adviser said that having spent twenty years of his life trying to argue the case for smaller groups in all MFL classes, he was now:

**getting cynical about it simply because nobody takes it on board at all.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

He recognised that two arguments were evident. For example:

**children of lower ability taught in groups of five or six by teachers trained in SEN can sometimes do very well. On the other hand, it can also be self-defeating because there is no stimulation from pupils who are more able, consequently the jury is out on that one.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

It would appear that on the evidence presented individual schools decided which systems worked best for them within the constraints of their situation, whether it was due to staffing problems or lack of resources.

In England there was a variation in provision. In one school there was a whole school policy to keep group sizes less than twenty-five in first year and to keep lower ability classes working in groups of fifteen or less. In this school the Head of the MFL Department stated that:

**the SEN pupils are usually in smaller groups and I would say that there are never more than ten in a lower ability group in the MFL Department.**

(Head of Department, England)

This was the only school visited in England where such a specific policy for supporting lower achievers in terms of keeping class sizes small was evident. In other schools the MFL Departments had mixed ability classes in first year and then set pupils according to ability from second year onwards. Most schools left the decisions about class sizes to the individual departments. Most departments tried to keep lower ability groups as small as they could but many felt that groups of twenty to twenty-five pupils were still too big to be as effective as they could be.

Teachers were keen to have more support for teaching lower achievers. One classroom teacher felt that in her school the support systems in place were very limited. They had:

**mixed ability and that`s it - you just have to get on with it.**

(Classroom teacher, England)

In general, the overall impression was that mixed ability classes worked fairly well in first year and then most teachers preferred classes to be set according to ability.

In the Czech Republic for language learning, the classes were split into small groups. Again there was variation in provision from school to school. For a mainstream basic school which catered for pupils up to fifteen years, pupils with SEN were included and:

**some are integrated into normal classes and some have specialised classes. Where possible, the tendency is to integrate pupils with SEN into the normal classroom. For those who are able to be integrated, they will have a specific education plan which is written down for them individually explaining their specific needs.**

(School Manager, Czech Republic)

In such cases it was the:

**classroom teacher who has to work out specific methodologies to suit individual pupils.**

(School Manager, Czech Republic)

The main support system in this category was to keep the MFL classes as small as possible. For example, a typical aim was to keep groups of SEN pupils in classes of less than ten. In one school:

**usually the MFL classes are composed of fifteen to eighteen pupils but the groups of SEN are much smaller. These groups are always**

**less than ten and in one class we have two pupils but they are very weak.**

(School Manager, Czech Republic)

The importance of having small groups in MFL learning was emphasised by a classroom teacher who highlighted that it was very difficult to teach pupils even in a group of twelve if:

**the class is problematic because of ability. It is difficult when some pupils have problems with reading, even in the Czech language, they also have problems reading in English. However, often they do not have problems speaking English.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

Other teachers were comfortable teaching mixed ability groups but acknowledged that extra help was often required. For example:

**it is not a problem to have mixed ability but you have to give the slower learners extra help and individual work or extra classes after school.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

Extra lessons were available for Czech, maths and core subjects which included MFLs, paid for by the State, but the schools had to bid for money:

**for those integrated pupils with SEN, the school has to prove every year the numbers of SEN pupils. The school gets extra money from the State for these pupils but if the State is short of money, they don't get anything, but the school has to provide one extra Czech lesson for these pupils.**

(School Manager, Czech Republic)

The main support system in this category was to provide very small MFL classes for pupils with SEN and the availability of extra lessons in the afternoon for lower achievers and pupils with SEN.

**The third key issue in this category to emerge involved views expressed about training and advice.**

Overall, in the three countries, it emerged that many teachers would welcome more training courses concerning working with lower achievers and pupils with SEN. More training and more advice from outside schools would be welcome.

In Scotland, in the schools visited, Principal Teachers offered advice to colleagues and teachers shared ideas within their departments. In general, learning support teachers tended to follow the ideas of individual classroom teachers rather than suggesting strategies for dealing with specific problem areas that could arise. Many teachers felt that there was a lack of courses focused on working with lower achievers and SEN pupils. Many teachers said they would be prepared to attend such courses but often lack of funding meant that they could not. There was awareness that information and training courses were available from the Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching (SCILT) but many of the interviewees did not attend since there was often lack of funding from schools to pay for their attendance or the courses were not specifically focused on working with lower achievers and pupils with SEN. The main focus of advice came from within each school. Training in this area was rather limited. Many people said that they would welcome more training in dealing with lower achievers and pupils with SEN in the MFL classrooms. In general, classroom teachers and several Principal Teachers felt that there was not a great deal of support given by Advisers or any Local Authority representatives. Final decisions were made by individual schools. One Principal Teacher explained that:

**there are courses available for working with pupils with SEN but at the moment in our school currently learning support is being developed and next year the idea is that one person in every department has to**

**be trained in learning support and consequently would be in charge of SEN in their department.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

It was felt that this was a difficult area to develop and in general:

**things could be better but we are doing the best we can. More investment has to be looked at. The Local Council hold the purse strings; it is all down to money.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

Some teachers felt that:

**outside school, no one gives support.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

Even in some schools, in departmental meetings:

**we never really get around to talking about SEN pupils and strategies.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

The key role played by Principal Teachers was emphasised. In most schools, the Principal Teachers were the key people who offered advice to staff in formal and informal ways. In the schools visited it was felt that the Principal Teachers were very approachable by members of staff and that it was important that:

**staff can go to the Principal Teacher with any problems and if he cannot solve it, he or she will move the problem on to someone who can.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

Within the schools visited, advice was available from Principal Teachers, often informally. Many teachers felt that they would welcome more training courses to

discover more about specific difficulties that pupils have, e.g. in one school a pupil with dyspraxia was to come to their school the following year and so:

**training courses about what to do and how to cope with specific difficulties, particularly in the MFL classrooms, would be useful.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

In most schools teachers had the opportunity to attend at least one Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course each year. Many were able to pick the courses in which they were interested but mainly they did not attend courses specifically related to lower achievers because of competing pressures. One possible reason was that departments were measured as being successful in relation to examination achievement and:

**with the pressure of time, you have to prioritise and a great deal of time is spent on raising achievement, particularly with the more able pupils.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

The Advisers agreed that it was very difficult to run courses for lower achievers in MFLs because there were so many different issues that could be covered in such a course and there were so many different demands from participants.

One Adviser:

**goes into schools, speaks to individuals or to departments, and that is it in a nutshell.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

On the question of whether he would run courses specifically on working with lower achievers, another Adviser answered:

**Yes! - we have done this in the past but it is an area that I now run a bit scared of because on such courses very often people expect all**

**the answers and the answers very often are not there. The answer very often is in the hands of the practitioner and how he or she copes with the particular difficulty in front of him or her.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

In fact, such courses were often viewed as being unsuccessful and the Adviser had:

**often found people go away disappointed from such courses, so now, I don't go down that route.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

Another way of providing training courses was to bring learning support teachers and MFL teachers together but the Adviser had found that:

**this does not really work either. Learning Support staff want to talk about theory and MFL staff want hands on practical ideas.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

Despite time and effort in a search to offer training and advice, this Adviser felt that:

**it is very much back in the school domain. People have to search out solutions for this particular difficulty. We direct them very much to the Principal Teacher and to the Learning Support Department in their schools.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

Various ways of offering advice were available in England and most schools gave staff the opportunity to attend courses but once again, funding was limited.

**There is a lot of communication about the needs of children and we try to make the support as fair as we possibly can. Again support is**

**shared equally amongst all departments and the MFL Department does not have priority.**

(Headteacher, England)

One particular school was moving to whole staff training on in-service days, or in twilight sessions where an expert was brought in to deliver a course in a three hour session. It was felt that the new system was a fairer one to all staff. Again there was variation in the possibility of staff attending courses from school to school. A young teacher thought that it would be useful to attend courses that could offer advice on strategies for dealing with SEN pupils as:

**the Post Graduate Certificate course does not cover working with pupils with SEN in any department.**

(Classroom teacher, England)

As in Scotland, it was the Head of Department who offered the main advice for teachers. Most classroom teachers did not feel they had any input from Advisers or outside agencies in terms of teaching lower achievers.

In most of the schools visited, the Headteachers were pro MFLs and encouraged the MFL Departments to keep up to date with developments in MFL teaching and learning and provided resources. They were keen to involve all pupils in the MFL learning process. All Headteachers and School Managers recognised the difficulties that teaching staff had to overcome when dealing with pupils with SEN in all subject areas.

In the Czech Republic in general, information about a child's specific difficulties were outlined in an Individual Education Plan and the classroom teacher had to find ways of helping lower achievers and pupils with SEN. There was variation from school to school. One school had a Specialist who came into school twice each week to work with dyslexic pupils and others with SEN. This was the only school visited in which this type of help was available. In another school, an Educational Specialist and a psychologist came into school once a week. In terms of attending training courses, there was variation from school to school.

In one school the Headteacher explained that:

**four times a year teachers, and especially English teachers, can attend courses to improve their general teaching skills, if they want to.**

(Headteacher, Czech Republic)

In another school, the Headteacher organised meetings and:

**once a year we can go for a meeting with specialist teachers to talk about any problems arising which could include problems with lower achievers and pupils with SEN.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

Another teacher highlighted the difficulties in attending available courses that, example:

**there are methodical and teaching seminars available but they are usually in the morning so there is a problem. The teachers cannot attend them because they are working.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

Financial constraints were also a problem:

**because seminars are usually very expensive and schools do not always have enough money to fund a teacher to attend.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

Training seminars were available in one of the schools visited and the teachers in this school trained other teachers. This was possible because:

**many years ago all of the teachers went to a general teaching seminar for teaching pupils with special needs. Since then they have developed their own methods, built on experiences as well and other**

**teachers, outside of Prague, come and see the lessons here.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

In general, it emerged that most teachers interviewed would welcome more training and more advice regarding how to cater for lower achievers and pupils with SEN more effectively.

**The fourth key issue in this category to emerge involved views expressed about methodology in the classroom.**

As outlined in Chapter One current MFL teaching methodology in the three countries involved in the study is characterised by an emphasis on the development of the ability of pupils to communicate in the target language. Teachers provided all pupils with opportunities to develop the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Many teachers expressed the view that the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in a MFL are inter-linked and some teachers would include tasks involving the four skills in lessons whilst others would focus on two skills for specific lessons.

In examination classes in the upper school when pupils were fifteen or sixteen years old specific lessons were given focusing on a single skill, for example when a group was preparing for a specific examination in speaking, writing, listening or reading. Overall, most teachers felt that it was important to offer a variety of activities in MFL lessons in order to keep pupils interested and also to keep lessons moving at an appropriate pace. Staff produced differentiated materials which met the needs of their pupils. It was also felt that having a variety of resources to work with also helped to motivate pupils. It emerged that there was a lack of appropriate commercially produced resource material for lower achievers in certain MFLs. Several views were put forward suggesting that lower achievers and pupils with SEN preferred to work as a whole class group initially and then move on to individual work. Various ideas emerged regarding approaches which were considered to be good practice and they are discussed in the next part of the chapter where the skills of listening, speaking reading and writing are considered in turn.

In Scotland all teachers emphasised the importance of using the target language, whether French, Spanish, Italian, or whatever language was being taught, as much as possible in the MFL classroom. However, most teachers felt that lower achievers and pupils with SEN would understand and follow instructions given at a basic level. Explanations of tasks tended to be given in English otherwise pupils did not understand what they had to do. In general, all pupils were taught the same course content but lower achievers completed fewer tasks and higher achievers worked on extension material and development work, as:

**we have to accept that children with SEN need more reinforcement and embedding of things in the classroom.**

(School Manager, Scotland)

Listening skills were developed in a variety of ways, for example, pupils listened to the teacher speaking in the target language, teachers drilled vocabulary using flashcards and pupils listened to the teacher and repeated words and phrases and they listened to the foreign language assistant (FLA). In most schools teachers indicated it was an advantage to have a FLA but not all schools had one. Pupils listened to a tape or watched television as a whole class, and answered questions in English to check comprehension. It was also felt that it was beneficial to correct listening tasks as a whole class group as:

**in that way pupils can hear what other people are coming up with and they can follow the framework of what they are doing better.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

It was suggested that listening was a very difficult skill for all pupils to develop and it was important for lower achievers to have listening texts that were fairly short or at least broken up with questions. One teacher thought that:

**lower achievers and SEN pupils are often hyperactive and have a very short concentration span, and if we are forcing them to sit and listen**

**to ‘chunks’ of dialogue that is not broken up, it does not particularly work.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

**If we had more tick-box answer type activities, it might be better, but often exam answers require a lot of information.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

This comment underlined a trend that emerged from Scotland and England, which suggested that the curriculum was driven by assessment requirements rather than the needs of pupils. This was problematic for lower achievers and pupils with SEN because, as discussed in Chapter Two, it was recognised in Scotland and England that there was a need to develop courses that did not involve end of course exams which tended to be difficult for these pupils to pass and to develop courses that recognised achievement as pupils progressed through units of work.

Individual listening tasks were also favoured by teachers who had tape recorders available in certain classes. Pupils could listen to an audio tape containing activities in the target language individually and answer questions from worksheets. This system worked successfully with certain groups of pupils who worked:

**carefully with the listening system and accurately corrected their work and who could be trusted to do that, but with other groups, this could be a wasted exercise.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

This highlighted the motivational aspect of learning a MFL. Encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their own learning was important for MFL teachers. However, lack of resources was highlighted as a problem and meant that classes tended to work on whole class listening as in some schools, MFL Departments just:

**do not have the resources to have individual listening going on.**

(Classroom teacher, England)

Teachers had to decide what worked best for their specific groups. Listening skills were developed by:

**constant practice and making sure pupils know the vocabulary.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

**Teachers decide, and measure it by success levels in each class, what works best for their groups. If it works - good - if it doesn't, don't do it again.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

Listening skills were developed in the same way in England as in Scotland. It was recognised that pupils needed a great deal of practice, repetition and encouragement and:

**listening skills should be developed in the same way that a baby would learn a language - you listen, speak, read and write.**

(Head of Department, England)

It was suggested that lower achievers, should be given achievable tasks. In order to increase success the teacher should:

**go overboard to choose very easy material that they can actually cope with and that gives them encouragement.**

(Head of Department, England)

In some schools it emerged that for many lower achievers:

**listening is probably one of the stronger skills, probably because they are hearing the language so much in the classroom, mostly through**

**repetition and the use of audio tapes.**

(Head of Department, England)

It was emphasised in both Scotland and England that it was important to keep some humour in the learning process and that it was popular to include games and songs, especially for lower achievers. In Scotland and England there was agreement from a number of interviewees that group work was not particularly successful with lower achievers and children with SEN. In fact:

**we have been down the road of student centred learning and group methodology and all the different titles but basically everyone has decided that it doesn't work particularly well. It is a nice thought, philosophically, that each group is doing something different and that while you are devoting yourself to a small group speaking, the rest are happily writing and listening, etc., but the reality is that they are happily scribbling or listening and not taking it in and you have no way of checking because you cannot get round them all. So, I don't think that with the best will in the world, that it would work.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

The reality of day-to-day classroom practice for some teachers was highlighted here. It was suggested that lower achievers and pupils with SEN liked to work as a whole class group and not in small groups of pupils. As a class group:

**you could do game type activities, for example, anything from dominoes to guessing games to working with the overhead projector.**

(Head of Department, England)

Many people agreed that in their experience, lower achievers:

**like working as a whole class group and if you can put an element of competition in, they like that as well.**

(Classroom teacher, England)

In general, in the Czech Republic responses suggested that listening skills were practised as a whole class by listening to audio tapes, the radio, by watching videos, or by listening to the class teacher. Some partner work between pupils developed both listening and speaking skills. The most popular form of developing listening skills was to listen to the audio tapes that accompanied the course books they were using. Lots of practice was recommended just as in Scotland and in England.

**We do a lot of listening in class. We use audio tapes and we listen to the radio.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

**I try to use some videos and we have cassette tapes.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

Most teachers used German or English in class but predominantly English as most pupils were learning English as their first MFL. Very similar problems to those encountered in Scotland and England had to be overcome in classrooms in the Czech Republic. Mainly teachers tried to use the target language as much as possible but with the lower achievers often explanations about what pupils had to do in class in the language lessons had to be given in Czech. As in the other two countries, teachers used the target language as far as was practical and then used their own language to explain tasks. For example:

**I try to speak a lot of English in class which is not easy with the elementary level classes. So, when I need to explain an activity we are doing sometimes it is necessary to speak in Czech because often they just switch off when they hear English, so I try to combine it.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

It was stressed that it was important that teachers were sensitive to the fact that many of the lower achievers had many difficulties not only with listening tasks but in general when they were learning a MFL. For example:

**the important thing is to be human towards the pupils, to be friendly and to understand their nature and problems. That is probably the core of my teaching.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

This view of pedagogy is more pupil centred rather than content and exam centred. It provides a contrast with the views expressed earlier in the chapter from teachers in Scotland and England.

This section focuses on how speaking skills were developed in the MFL classrooms in the three countries. The most popular forms of practising speaking skills were similar in the three countries. Activities involved whole class repetition leading to individual answers, pair work for speaking activities and individual work with the class teacher.

Although pupils in both Scotland and England had regular speaking tests where each pupil had an individual test conducted by his or her class teacher, there seemed to be a greater emphasis on developing speaking in the target language in the Czech Republic than in Scotland and England. This was possibly because for lower achievers there was less emphasis on passing written exams in the Czech Republic and more emphasis on developing the practical skills of speaking in a MFL.

In Scotland many teachers introduced topics by presenting the new vocabulary to the whole class, the pupils listened and then repeated the words and phrases. It was emphasised that with the lower achievers:

**you have to do a lot of drilling and repeating and practising round the class. The SEN pupils feel confident with this having heard the vocabulary so much.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

It was considered very important to:

**encourage the pupils to say something even if it is inaccurate at first and then to practise the language in the classroom.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

Paired work was also popular but this work had to be “learned in advance” and then practised in class. With lower achievers and pupils with SEN it was suggested that it was better to have:

**no surprises - that will never work.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

Pair work and whole class activities were also encouraged in England. For example, pupils:

**can prepare things in pairs and practise it and then I go around and listen to them and take it from there.**

(Head of Department, England)

Pair work tasks were:

**usually teacher led to start with and then we can ask questions to each pair and then they can ask another pair, and so we can build up speaking that way.**

(Head of Department, England)

The four language skills were inter-linked and by:

**preparing the speaking, it helps pupils with their listening and writing.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

Three Principal Teachers emphasised that it was useful to record pupils and noted that many pupils liked to listen to themselves speaking in their chosen

MFL, although such activities were restricted due to class size. Such activities were:

**time consuming and expensive. The main problem would be finding time to record every pupil, but it is feasible if every pupil has to do a speaking assessment with the teacher; you could just record the test on the audio tape.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

Two schools in England used video recording to encourage the pupils to speak in the target language which worked well. For example:

**we video them doing role-play. It actually boosts confidence once they get over the initial embarrassment. Yes, videoing the pupils is very good.**

(Head of Department, England)

In all schools visited all teachers used relatively low level technology, for example audio tape recorders and video recording regularly to develop listening and speaking skills among pupils and both teachers and pupils were comfortable with these arrangements.

It was recognised that:

**SEN pupils find speaking a bit difficult so they need a lot of support. Most SEN pupils find it difficult to learn questions and answers at home but mostly they respond well in class with the teacher.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

One Principal Teacher was not in favour of whole class speaking in groups and would:

**never go down the road of whole class speaking in groups because I have seen far too many lessons where you think that it is productive**

**chaos and you can hear the odd bit of French going on and you think 'Yes!'. The reality is that one or two are speaking French and the rest are having a ball talking about 'Neighbours' etc.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

As with listening tasks, group work was not a favoured option. It was suggested once again that:

**smaller sections would be ideal rather than having a whole classroom approach. For example, one of my classes had twenty-eight pupils but was cut down to eight for exam preparation and they all came on in leaps and bounds with the eight of them and the teacher.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

Pupils' limited access to undivided attention by the teacher emphasised limitations imposed on pupils by their learning environment in Scotland and in England.

In England various ways of practising speaking skills were discussed. Schools from different areas expressed opposing views concerning the success rate of developing speaking skills. Most teachers felt that lower achievers and pupils with SEN coped fairly well but they needed a great deal of support and a lot of practice. For example:

**you have to jolly them along all of the time. You have to create an atmosphere where it is okay to make a mistake.**

(Head of Department, England)

This view relates to the Czech view of pupil centred learning expressed earlier in the chapter where the participation and contribution of individuals is more important than accuracy.

Variation in class sizes, especially for lower achievers, caused problems in one school, where:

**in Year Eleven we have a group of eleven SEN pupils, but in Year Ten, there are thirty two pupils in the lower group, so that oral work is horrendous.**

(Head of Department, England)

It was even suggested that for MFLs:

**the classes are getting too big to go forward.**

(Head of Department, England)

Many teachers tried to encourage pupils to speak using flashcards and overhead projectors, with a lot of repetition:

**and tried to make it as visual as possible.**

(Head of Department, England)

All teachers thought that while it was important to use the language that the lower achievers had learned in advance, the lower achievers should be encouraged to move forward and take risks in their language development. Most teachers felt that it was important to give lower achievers shorter dialogues and to:

**remember to give the lower achievers bite size chunks. Do not give them work that is too difficult.**

(Head of Department, England)

In the three countries it was emphasised that it was always important to have high expectations for all pupils because:

**it is often surprising how much the lower achievers have actually retained.**

(Head of Department, England)

In general, pupils did a lot of speaking in class in the Czech Republic. They practised vocabulary and had regular vocabulary tests which were often completed orally. They worked a great deal on:

**dialogues and then try to speak about their towns etc. at greater length.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

One teacher claimed that pupils:

**like to discuss things and they like role-playing.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

However, many teachers felt that learning a new language was:

**too difficult for many lower achievers.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

It was emphasised that it was important to make sure that activities were appropriate for the age and ability of pupils. As in Scotland and in England, games and songs were popular. One Headteacher thought that the most important skill for the lower achievers was learning how to speak the foreign language despite difficulties that had to be overcome. In fact:

**the disadvantage is that these slower pupils cannot follow fully or fulfil the demands of the National Curriculum, therefore the emphasis for these children is to teach them how to speak and how to manage basic everyday conversations for basic everyday situations.**

(Headteacher, Czech Republic)

There was a sense of commonality here in terms of curriculum demands and of pedagogy in the three countries. Teachers and pupils had to overcome similar problems in the MFL learning process.

It was recognised that it was not easy for the lower achievers to learn a MFL. Many agreed with the point of view expressed by a classroom teacher who said that:

**in our school the teachers also wonder if it would not be better to give really slow learners more Czech lessons instead of English, but at the moment everyone has to study a MFL.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

This was very similar to arguments that had been advanced in Scotland and in England which suggested that it would be more beneficial for lower achievers and pupils with SEN to have more English lessons instead of learning a MFL. This raised the issue of entitlement to learning. All pupils had the entitlement to study the same curriculum in each country but it had to be considered whether the curriculum offered in each country was appropriate for the lower achievers and pupils with SEN.

Teachers in the three countries used similar strategies to develop reading skills. A variety of resources were available in different schools. In general, all teachers encouraged pupils to learn dictionary skills and tried to encourage pupils to read for pleasure.

It was suggested by Scottish teachers that reading leads on from the spoken word and schools had a variety of strategies and worksheets to develop reading for information, reading for pleasure, skimming and scanning. Magazines were available and many schools encouraged pupils to subscribe to them but found that it tended to be top sets who were interested in them. It was recommended by several classroom teachers that one should begin with smaller passages and work up to longer texts. Two schools advised that they had a reading scheme with audio tapes so that pupils could listen to the text and read it at the same time. There were short, simple exercises following the text answer and this seemed good for lower achievers.

However for lower achievers a lot of support was required from the teacher. One teacher:

**reads the passage with them always and I go through the questions. They copy new words into their notebooks, translate the passage together, and then the pupils answer questions in English.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

Often pupils reacted well to reading tasks:

**if it is something they are interested in, for example, sport or pocket money. It has to be relevant to what they are studying.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

Not all departments felt that pupils did enough reading for pleasure but found that it was interesting:

**just to get the pupils used to reading books which is something they don't do much of at home, in English. They do not read books or newspapers at home so if you give them something to read for pleasure, then they enjoy that.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

However, these texts were in addition to the course books as it was suggested that:

**the courses on the go right now are very poor on reading.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

Teachers felt extra resources were necessary in this area in order to encourage pupils to read more extensively. It was also important not to limit the lower achievers but to allow them to extend their vocabulary and so:

**high expectations are essential once again. By allowing pupils to access more than you think they can do, it is often surprising what they can do.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

Many teachers in England would also like to develop reading skills further in their lessons. For the lower achievers:

**a lot of reading is restricted to the coursebook materials.**

(Head of Department, England)

A lack of resource materials for lower achievers was also restricting the amount of reading in some schools. It was suggested that:

**there are a lot of books available but many lower achievers find them too difficult.**

(Head of Department, England)

Many teachers felt that it was important to encourage pupil success rates and thought that it was important to make sure that:

**the work is not too difficult - just keep it achievable.**

(Head of Department, England)

In the Czech Republic most of the reading texts were contained in the textbooks. One teacher pointed out that there was an individual reading passage for each topic. Some schools had magazines for older classes but:

**really nothing for the younger ones.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

One teacher observed that the lower achievers:

**don't like reading the textbook. They like reading magazines and library books in English which some try to do.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

Pupils often liked:

**reading from the overhead projector.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

Teachers felt that it was important to:

**take things slowly with the lower achievers and read the passages aloud with them very slowly.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

It emerged that Czech teachers adopted similar approaches to Scottish and English ones in developing reading skills among pupils. It was always important to set pupils targets that were specific, achievable and short enough for pupils to experience successful outcomes in their work.

In the three countries, in general, many interviewees thought that writing was the most difficult skill for lower achievers. Several teachers commented that speaking and writing skills were closely inter-linked and it was useful to prepare speaking and writing tasks that were very similar so that by memorising a written task, it would help to develop the speaking in that topic area and vice versa.

The Scottish view with lower achievers was:

**it is best to stick to the materials they know that you have given them to learn off by heart.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

For tests many schools gave the lower achievers a lot of support and writing exams were based on speaking tests:

**so they write what they are going to say in the speaking test. Their work is corrected, they learn it for the speaking test and then the writing test is very similar. In that way, it all mingles in.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

Writing tasks in class were usually short and simple tasks. Many teachers agreed that for the lower achievers:

**it has to be heavily directed and controlled. Even with writing simple sentences or gap filling activities, they need help.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

One or two Scottish teachers suggested that a possible reason for pupils finding writing in a foreign language so difficult was related to the structure of the Standard Grade exam. At the time of these interviews, writing was optional in the Standard Grade and many lower achievers did not sit that part of the exam. Speaking was worth 50% of the exam, so due to pressure of time, teachers were focusing on the other skills. In general, it was felt that:

**pupils find writing in a foreign language difficult because they have not been trained since the curriculum is very heavy. There just is not time to do everything. The emphasis has always been on speaking because in Standard Grade 50% of the marks go on speaking; it is just finding the time to do everything, that is the problem.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

Similarly, in England, most teachers gave lower achievers short, simple exercises, for example:

**copy writing, filling in gaps, postcards, etc.**

(Head of Department, England)

It seemed to be rather low level activities that pupils were being asked to do but the reality was that such short activities allowed pupils to feel successful and

through experience teachers had found that this approach worked well. In one school, however, pupils were encouraged to develop their writing skills in a somewhat less directed manner than in other schools visited. For example:

**at the end of each unit of work, we give pupils the opportunity to do some free writing and this is quite successful. By developing free writing skills in Key Stage 3, it prepares pupils for the course work in Key Stage 4.**

(Head of Department, England)

This comment provided further evidence of the exam centred curriculum in England. However, this Head of Department did emphasise that the lower ability pupils did have many difficulties writing in the target language.

**SEN pupils seem to cope better with speaking in the target language. Many of these pupils have difficulties writing and even copying in their own language.**

(Head of Department, England)

Czech teachers also thought that short simple tasks worked well with the lower achievers. It was important to write:

**vocabulary, easy sentences, have immediate checks and short fragments.**

(School Manager, Czech Republic)

Many teachers were not keen on spending much time developing writing skills with the lower achieving pupils. A view shared with some others was that the four skills should be practised in the following order:

**speaking, listening, reading and writing in last place, if at all, because there are pupils who can neither write nor express themselves in their own language so writing in a foreign language is a big problem for them. They are unable to understand that there is a mandatory word**

**order in English or in German because Czech is very tolerant in word order.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

One Headteacher thought that overall in her experience it would be:

**best to cancel written tests for these pupils because speaking and listening are more important.**

(Headteacher, Czech Republic)

On the question of the importance of grammar while learning a MFL, mixed opinions emerged regarding how much grammar lower achievers and pupils with SEN should be taught. There had been a change in the recommendations from knowledge of grammar being essential to the success in MFL learning, to the idea that no grammar at all should be learned in a structured way, to the recommendations in vogue at the time of the study where grammar was taught as part of an overall communicative approach. It appeared that most teachers explained many grammatical points to most pupils but the following views were expressed concerning how much grammatical teaching the interviewees recommended for lower achievers and pupils with SEN:

**we do not include too much grammar for pupils with SEN. If they can jot down the phrases and put them in the correct order - fine! If they know terms such as verbs, nouns, etc., just to put the wee phrases together then that is fine.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

Another typical view was that:

**we explain some concepts but tend to keep it simple and just take it down to what they need to know. We just teach grammar in very general terms, for example, if we are studying the perfect tense, we just say we are looking at the past tense and work out some examples in English and then retain the fact that communication is important.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

Similar views were expressed in England. It was suggested that accuracy was not essential and:

**we do not teach very much grammar to SEN. These pupils need to be able to put sentences together, to have a verb in there. As to whether the verb endings have to be correct, well, I think that if a sympathetic native speaker could understand what they were saying, that would be fine.**

(Classroom teacher, England)

An example of the pendulum swing in trends mentioned at the start of this section was suggested by a Head of Department in England who said that the introduction of a new course book for Year Seven pupils had led to the teachers teaching more grammar in MFL lessons and:

**we have just really started teaching grammar again with this new course. For the high flyers it is fine but for the lower ability, grammar is a little bit beyond them unless it is very simple.**

(Head of Department, England)

In the Czech Republic, it was also suggested that it was best to keep grammar teaching as simple as possible. Teachers felt that it was communication that was important rather than grammatical accuracy:

**even if they are in a situation where they have to use the present perfect and they used the present simple, the person would understand them.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

A common problem that emerged in the three countries was that many lower achievers did not understand grammar points in their own language which caused extra difficulty when trying to learn grammar points in a MFL. Overall,

however, it was felt that learning grammar in a foreign language could help pupils to understand similar grammar points in their own language. For example:

**with the SEN pupils there are problems, especially when they are not able to understand their own language. For example when they do not know tenses etc. in Czech, it is hard to explain grammar points to them in any foreign language or in English.**

(School Manager, Czech Republic)

The role of grammar in MFL learning was a difficult issue to incorporate into the MFL learning process for lower achievers and pupils with SEN in the three countries. However, it was suggested that the reinforcement of grammatical points was beneficial and that:

**learning your own language and learning a MFL go hand in hand.**

**Lower achievers and pupils with SEN benefit from learning a MFL.**

(School Manager, Czech Republic)

Similarly, the traditional grammatical approach was favoured in one school in Scotland where they preferred to give all pupils:

**lots of grammar. Everyone has a grammar jotter. I have never heard such nonsense as 'grammar is not necessary'. Children like grammar and they like working things out. They take notes in a very formal and traditional way and it works.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

In general, it seemed that teachers had to gauge the extent of how much emphasis could be put on teaching grammar to lower achievers depending on the level of the group of pupils they had in front of them.

The Advisers gave mixed views but did feel that a certain amount of grammatical knowledge while learning a MFL was useful. One Adviser thought that:

**it is amazing how much grammar they can take on board without it being called grammar. I think you always need grammar to improve your skills. You constantly need more grammar if you want to improve, otherwise you are a parrot.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

This comment relates to the suggestion that pupils would just 'pick up' an understanding of grammar as they travelled down the MFL learning road.

However, another Adviser suggested that lower achievers could be taught grammar by:

**not involving grammatical terminology at all but by showing things on an overhead projector or on a computer or by using one sentence at a time. The lower achievers can cope well with the audio visuals.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

However, the Advisers tended to agree with many views expressed by teachers regarding the problems caused by lower achievers' lack of ability to retain information. As one put it:

**the difficulty is taking the information from one lesson to the next.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

It was important to remember that many lower achievers in MFL classrooms had difficulties in other subjects as well. Whereas some subjects worked on topics in isolation, the need to retain the language acquired in previous lessons made it difficult for lower achievers to develop their linguistic skills. Limited curriculum time devoted to MFL learning was also a limiting factor in the MFL learning process in schools in Scotland and in England.

In general lower achievers followed the same courses as other pupils in all three countries. Many new course books had become available recently specifically for lower achievers. In Scotland pupils tended to follow the same course books in S1

and S2 and then differentiated courses were used for the work for Standard Grade. Many teachers prepared differentiated worksheets for the lower achievers. Often materials were available on the market but due to limited funding in MFL departments materials were not purchased specifically for lower achievers and teachers created their own materials. In general, in Scotland and in England, most teachers felt that there was a wide range of resource materials available but would welcome more simplified reading books specifically for the lower achievers. In general, there appeared to be a lot of material available for French but there seemed to be a lack of resource material for lower achievers studying Spanish and Italian. For example, a typical view was that:

**provision of resources in Spanish especially for SEN pupils could be improved. We have made booklets ourselves but pupils like course books that are bright and appealing to them.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

In reality, colourful resources would probably appeal to all pupils. There seemed to be a particular lack of resource material for reading in Spanish. In fact:

**a lot of the reading is restricted to the course materials and we have found after many years of searching for reading material there is very little on the market for Spanish and what is available has been very, very expensive. So, we need cheap readers for SEN pupils and actually for all pupils for Spanish. We need readers.**

(Head of Department, England)

In the Czech Republic, mixed views emerged from different schools. In most schools the teachers felt that they had appropriate course books and materials. In one school teachers were very happy and used:

**'Headway', Intermediate and Upper Intermediate course books. We have magazines, grammar books, games and videos. We have a variety of resources.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

All schools had recently purchased coursebooks that had audio tapes to accompany them. These resources were very similar to those used in Scotland and in England.

Others felt that lack of money in schools limited choice. However:

**it is better than before, but we could use more resources.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

**Most of the things the school is doing for pupils with SEN we have to arrange by ourselves. There are enough resources and materials on the market and the school can choose what they find best and most appropriate. However within the school budget we do have some extra money for children with SEN for MFL lessons and English lessons, but it is not much. The school has to find ways of applying special methods with the financial constraints that we have.**

(School Manager, Czech Republic)

It emerged from all three countries that no one appeared to have all the answers to questions about the best way to teach MFLs to lower achievers and pupils with SEN. Approaches that worked with one group did not always work with another. Strategies often had to be changed by individual teachers teaching the same group from lesson to lesson. It became clear that it was important that teachers shared ideas, resources and experiences with each other to support and encourage each other.

Teachers had to be flexible, adaptable, and capable of managing the varied situations that arose, depending on the behaviour of many pupils. They had to keep control of the situation in the classroom, maintain order, facilitate the learning process and have appropriate:

**classroom management because if you do not have good management, you are not going to teach them anything.**

(Head of Department, England)

The importance of careful planning of work was emphasised:

**the planning must consider whatever tasks are achievable and enjoyable, especially for the SEN pupils, because if you lose them, if they find the work hard, and if they are not enjoying it any more, then you lose their interest and if you do, then it is very difficult to keep them on task.**

(Head of Department, England)

In most schools visited, the Principal Teachers and Heads of Departments were very supportive of staff teaching lower achievers and understood that it was not an easy task.

**The fifth key issue to emerge in this category involved views expressed about ICT in the classroom.**

It appeared that the use of ICT in MFL classrooms offered many possibilities of improving motivation, adding variety and interest for pupils. Many teachers were willing to incorporate the use of ICT into the teaching and learning process but had to overcome some difficulties before they could incorporate ICT as fully as many would have liked. It was suggested by many interviewees that ICT in the MFL classroom offered possibilities to improve learning MFLs but varying opinions emerged concerning how it was used in MFL classrooms.

Different Authorities in Scotland were at varying stages in the promotion of ICT in the MFL classrooms. One Authority visited was involved in the Partners in Excellence Project and a lot of technological input in schools in this Authority was linked to this project. Through this:

**many teachers were given the opportunity to go abroad and visit the European Parliament and to see MFLs and technology in action.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

**We have put DVDs in several schools and colleagues are using part of films to emphasise points or to use as listening tasks. We have laptops for taking away and producing pupil materials. We have word processing and I think that all of these things motivate pupils.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

In one Authority they had:

**a video conference suite in every secondary school and we are hopefully persuading them to get in touch with their European partners.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

In many situations the equipment was set up but as far as linking with European partners was concerned:

**this has not happened very much yet; possibly that will be for next year.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

All schools had computers where they could access the internet in the MFL Departments and send e-mails to other schools abroad. Most schools had scanners and digital cameras. There was a lot of equipment but the extent to which ICT was used varied from school to school. There was still caution about:

**what if it all goes wrong and I have thirty kids in front of me?**

(Adviser, Scotland)

Many teachers thought that there were very interesting items of software on the market but once again, it was very difficult to include all pupils in a class of thirty pupils when you have to access a computer suite with only twenty computers. It was suggested that:

**if we want to use ICT we really have to have enough computers for all of the class to use them at one time because you cannot really focus on an ICT lesson if you have all sort of activities going on around you.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

It was felt that in a MFL classroom, ICT should be a tool to aid the learning process and should be used as an appropriate means of achieving MFL related learning objectives and not as an end in itself.

**ICT offers possibilities but we are not convinced that it is the be all and end all of improving MFL learning. It is a gimmick, a motivator to some extent.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

Despite the advantages, it was felt that there was no substitute for old fashioned learning where there was supportive interaction between the MFL teacher and pupils in the classroom.

As in Scotland, advantages of incorporating ICT into the MFL classrooms were recognised in England but some schools were more advanced in implementing procedures than others. It was felt that:

**it is a way forward for MFL teaching but I am not sure that taking thirty pupils into a computer suite and working on a piece of software would have many long term benefits. Okay, there may be short term benefits but overall, ICT is generally motivating for the kids whatever they are doing and we would use it from that point of view.**

(Headteacher, England)

Some teachers reflected on how cost effective ICT input was in MFL departments. For example:

**ICT - is it really worth the financial input? Well, if you can find the right sites on the internet, there is no doubt that it is time well spent. That is**

**the crucial thing so, if you can become more efficient at logging onto sites, it can become quite cost effective and there are lots of things that could enhance the interest of kids, and if you have the interest of kids at heart, then that always helps.**

(Head of Department, England)

In the Czech Republic ICT was being built into some MFL lessons in the schools visited, but incorporation into MFL lessons was in the early stages of development. Mixed views were expressed. For example:

**we do not use too much ICT. It could be better. We have some grammar programmes but we need more training.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

One school visited had two computer classrooms and:

**pupils sometimes have their Czech, Maths and English lessons in the computer room.**

(School Manager, Czech Republic)

**Pupils can use the computer rooms after school if their parents agree; it is free.**

(School Manager, Czech Republic)

Not all teachers felt that it was advantageous to incorporate ICT into MFL lessons, as:

**I do not use the computer room for English lessons because I feel that in MFL learning the best thing for pupils is personal relations between teacher and pupil. Pupils have computers at home so they can practise at home.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

Most schools encouraged the development of using ICT in the MFL classrooms.

There was evidence of a wide variety of approaches concerning the incorporation of low level technology and 'state of the art' ICT into MFL classrooms in the three countries.

It became clear that schools were investing a lot of money in equipment and there was a good deal of interest amongst many teachers with regard to looking for ways of incorporating ICT into MFL lessons. One of the major problems that made many people reluctant to develop ICT in MFL teaching and learning was a general lack of teacher training in this area. Many teachers were confident to use the technological facilities available in schools but others felt that more teacher training in this field was essential.

It was generally recognised that lower achievers reacted well to using computers and that language games were very useful from a motivational point of view. It was suggested that using computers was useful for word processing, drafting work and re-drafting work, particularly with SEN pupils. Although it was emphasised in the three countries that ICT could not be a possible replacement for the MFL teacher, it could enhance MFL learning.

In all three countries, people expressed a need for more professional development in this area. For example:

**there are lots of materials available. In terms of curricular materials, there are also ICT aids to help overcome physical and mental disabilities. There are many resources that can assist MFL learning by hearing and by verbal communication and by visual displays on the screen. There are self-correcting items and there are massive resources available. The problem is that many teachers do not know about these resources and I am only discovering them myself because I am doing a course at the moment. The problem is that many teachers are not computer literate.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

**ICT will be a great diversion and it will give another strand to what we are doing. We are looking forward to it coming on line. We need more input on the teacher training side. At the moment some teachers are self-taught and pupils usually know more than the staff.**

**(Principal Teacher, Scotland)**

**There is absolutely no doubt that the development of ICT is the way forward for MFL teaching. Up until now, we have not had access to ICT rooms for MFL lessons as all the rooms have been completely booked almost all of the time. The staff who have had a computer in the MFL Department have used it almost exclusively for the creation of materials. We do not have anyone in the MFL Department who is an ICT enthusiast in terms of a curriculum enthusiast, which I know exists in other places, but there is an enthusiasm to get involved in ICT as soon as we have the hardware and software ready to go and staff can get involved and look forward because it is one way of really getting children motivated into the subject and it gives them another opportunity to diversify within a classroom.**

**(School Manager, Scotland)**

**Overall, ICT is generally motivating for the kids whatever they are doing but there is still a huge need for teacher training in this area. Teachers are only scratching the surface of ICT in the classroom and I think training is quite poor. The problem is that ICT moves forward so quickly that teachers do not get a chance to keep up.**

**(Headteacher, England)**

**We have some programmes but we need more training.**

**(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)**

**I don't use computers at the moment but I would like to with the pupils but it is not ready. There are computers for the staff and for information technology lessons. We are looking forward to using**

### **computers in English lessons.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

It emerged that there was considerable potential for continuous professional development and networking in ICT and MFL learning. Many MFL teachers, in the three countries, expressed an interest in developing their ICT skills in order to incorporate ICT into the teaching and learning process for all pupils in MFL classrooms.

### **The sixth key issue to emerge in this category involved views expressed about formal assessment.**

There was general agreement that assessment was an integral part of education and that testing was an important and valid instrument of assessment. However, many respondents were concerned about the number of tests that were given in MFL classrooms. This section considers views on the ways pupils were tested in MFL classrooms in the first and second years of secondary schools. The issue of assessment procedures focused on summative testing rather than diagnostic testing, and then views on National Certificate Examinations in the three countries were explored.

In Scotland, in S1 and S2 there was variation in assessment procedures in the various schools visited. There was evidence of formative and summative assessment. Some schools preferred to assess all four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing after every unit of work (which lasted about four or five weeks). Others felt that too much assessment was counter-productive and took up too much teaching time and preferred to assess one or two skills after three or four units of work. All schools visited favoured giving pupils a summative end of year assessment in all four skills.

In one school they had two formal assessments per year which the Principal Teacher thought worked well because:

**in my previous school, we had an end of unit test and all four skills were tested. I found this was counter-productive as we were just assessing pupils constantly for the sake of it, whereas here the twice yearly assessment works well and it is better.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

In the schools which favoured assessing the four skills after every unit of work in S1 and S2, it was suggested that:

**if you don't assess all four skills there is the possibility that a pupil could be doing wonderfully well in one skill and badly in another and it may or may not be because of their lack of ability, but it may be that the teacher has not emphasised one of the skills enough.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

However, it was felt that too many tests were de-motivating for the lower achievers in mixed ability groups. For example:

**in a class where some pupils achieve ninety per cent and the poorer pupils achieve nine per cent, how appropriate is the assessment? In the mixed ability groups they all do the same tests and this can be de-motivating.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

While too many tests may possibly de-motivate all pupils, lower achievers reacted badly to this in MFLs and possibly in other subjects as well.

Concerns were expressed about assessment in MFLs in general. In fact:

**going back to the motivation aspect, one of the reasons why youngsters do get put off languages is because we don't tailor the assessments to achievements. For example, if you look at a Foundation Paper in Standard Grade in S4, it is probably five times easier than some of the assessments we are asking some of our S1**

**and S2 pupils to do in their end of unit test, so there is something wrong there. We do have a big job to do on assessment. I have concerns about assessment within MFLs in general and also concerns about SEN pupils and assessment. We still have not got it right.**

(School Manager, Scotland)

In the schools visited in England, in Key Stage 3 when pupils were aged eleven to fourteen, the patterns of assessment varied in much the same way as described above. As in Scotland, some MFL Departments had differentiated tests for lower achievers, and some did not. Some departments preferred to have separate exams for the lower achievers and pupils with SEN, for example:

**we do tend to differentiate in exams. All pupils have the same course book but it is taught in a different way so when we do the assessments, we tend to give all pupils the same topics for assessments but at different levels so they all have a sense of achievement.**

(Head of Department, England)

This approach had advantages and disadvantages. On one hand pupils had a sense of achievement in that they reached a certain level of success but it was difficult for them to understand if they were scoring high grades all year in class and the work they were doing was achievable, yet they ended up with an E, F or G grade in their GCSE exams. Achieving this final result could be very demotivating for pupils. Concerns were expressed that too much assessment could be counter-productive for the lower achievers and:

**you have to be very careful because on one hand it is a good idea to find out pupils` attainments, but for the lower achievers, they are constantly last or bottom of the class. It doesn` t actually do much for their confidence and self-esteem.**

(Head of SEN Department, England)

It was suggested that:

**to impress OFSTED, I think we really over assess and it is just too ridiculous.**

(Head of SEN Department, England)

This response provided further evidence that according to several interviewees the curriculum in England was assessment driven.

It was highlighted that it was important to remember that:

**many SEN pupils are not achieving high results throughout all the subjects. You have to be careful that pupils feel some form of success.**

(Head of SEN Department, England)

However, on the other hand:

**the exams are very effective and very efficient and sometimes these show up pupils who are not achieving their potential and then the SEN department can check if they are underachieving elsewhere or not.**

(School Manager, England)

The general impression formed by the interviewer is that there was much less emphasis on testing pupils in MFL classrooms in the Czech Republic than in Scotland and in England. In the Czech Republic, individual teachers decided when to test pupils and tended to make up their own exams for their own class, whereas in Scotland and in England, decisions about when to test pupils tended to be taken by the members of the MFL Departments, and all classes in each year group were given the same exams following departmental policy. In the Czech Republic all MFL teachers were free to decide how they assessed their pupils. Regular tests were carried out but they tended to be much shorter than exams in Scotland and England. Informal speaking tests were given, often in the form of a class type exercise. For example:

**with these SEN pupils, I examine them orally. I do not call them out to the board and I inform them immediately so each pupil knows their mark. I examine them in the class situation.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

Written tests were often in the form of vocabulary tests, for example:

**once a week pupils are given a written test which usually takes five or ten minutes. It is very basic words and examines only words and not sentences, i.e. basic vocabulary tests.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

In fact:

**it is up to each teacher when and what they are going to test and they can adjust it to each group according to their abilities and competence and what they are able to manage.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

However, within each class:

**all pupils do the same tests.** (Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

After one year of MFL study, one school gave all pupils the same test in order to place pupils in groups according to ability. Therefore:

**at first the lower achievers and children with SEN are in mixed ability groups and after some time, when the brighter and slower pupils have become apparent, after a year, all pupils get the same test which is either multiple choice or gap fill, or completing the endings of verbs and so on. They do not have to write in full sentences and after this test, the pupils are divided into groups according to ability.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

Most teachers favoured teaching pupils MFLs set in ability groups and were:

**very satisfied with this system of making ability groups because most pupils in each group are at approximately the same level and so in each group we do not feel that some pupils are very good and that others are very bad.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

Most schools had one big test once a year and apart from that, it was up to each teacher to decide how they wanted to test their pupils. In general, much less emphasis was placed on testing pupils in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in the Czech Republic than on the constant testing of pupils as in Scotland and in England.

This section considers views concerning the appropriateness of the national certificate examinations for lower achievers in the three countries and views about the grades that were achievable at the end of such courses. Mixed views were expressed on the question of how appropriate the interviewees felt that Foundation Level Standard Grade courses were for lower achievers in Scotland and Foundation Level G.C.S.E. courses in England.

Strong opinions were given for and against the appropriateness of Foundation Level Standard Grade courses for the lower achievers and pupils with SEN. For example:

**Foundation Standard Grade courses are totally inappropriate for SEN pupils because it is all based on one exam at the end. So it means that it is too much for them to remember; it is de-motivating and it makes them feel like failures. It could be improved by having continuous assessment that was recognised, like unit schemes, and by not basing the final grade on an end of course exam for listening and reading.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

On the other hand, a classroom teacher offered a more positive opinion than the Principal Teacher and felt that:

**lower achievers can cope with Foundation Level and the course is appropriate for them.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

Two schools visited had started the Access 3 course for the lowest ability pupils in their schools and the feeling was that it was a good alternative to Standard Grade courses as:

**Standard Grade courses are not appropriate at all for SEN pupils. For really lower achievers, Access 3 is far more accessible.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

On the question of how pupils felt who achieved a Grade five or Grade six for their Foundation Level Standard Grade course, mixed views were expressed. For example:

**for some pupils, grade five or even grade six is a real achievement. Some pupils are happy and others are very blasé about it.**

(Principal Teacher, Scotland)

**When they achieve a grade five or grade six, they hate it. They say, 'are we Foundies?' – and it seems like an embarrassment.**

(Classroom teacher, Scotland)

**My gut reaction is that our pupils seem to be delighted at whatever grade they achieve. There is an ethos in schools, rightly or wrongly, that says that languages are difficult. So, for anyone to achieve anything, they feel good.**

(Headteacher, Scotland)

Teachers in the schools all encouraged the pupils to value their achievements regardless of their levels. Despite this, many interviewees felt that the assessment of lower achievers and pupils with SEN could be improved.

The Advisers' views were that there was a general impression that Foundation Level Standard Grade results were not valued by pupils or employers and the Advisers favoured the new Higher Still courses for the lower achievers as an alternative to Standard Grade. For example:

**I think that the numbers who fail to appear at the final exam is an indication that it is not highly valued by those likely to achieve grades five or six. There may be a fairly positive experience from completing the course but I would not think that having a grade five or six is something that matters much.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

In general, it was felt by the majority of interviewees in Scotland and England that there was too much assessment in schools, particularly when pupils were assessed after every unit of work.

**I think that we do too much assessment. We are living in a culture where if it moves, it has to be assessed. We do too much measuring and too much valuing.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

**I would say that over the last few years we are almost in a climate where we are constantly measuring and assessing. I would rather put more of a focus on trying to get right what we teach in a classroom and get the appropriate strategies and methodologies and get the learning and teaching right.**

(Adviser, Scotland)

In England, the focus was on gathering opinions on the GCSE Foundation courses and considering how practitioners thought grades E, F, and G at Foundation Level were perceived by the pupils.

As in Scotland, there were mixed views expressed regarding the perceptions of pupils who achieved grades E, F or G for Foundation Level in a MFL. For example:

**In our school, the pupils who achieve E, F or G for GCSE exams feel quite successful with these grades.**

(Headteacher, England)

However, it was felt that:

**the actual courses for all children, in my opinion, do not bear much resemblance to real life. I have told children this and you have to jump through a lot of hoops to pass the GCSE. I have told them that there are two types of Spanish language. One that is used for communication and one for passing exams. For example, things that children have to say or write for passing an exam, Spanish people do not get hung up about. I think the GCSE course could be more realistic. I don't know how but they could be more like real life.**

(Head of Department, England)

This appeared to indicate that pupils were being trained to pass exams rather than learn a language for a useful purpose in life.

**GCSE Foundation courses in MFLs, I feel, are too difficult for some pupils. The fact that they cannot do them as a modular course and that the pupils have to store the whole of their five years work, is difficult - modular would be better.**

(Classroom teacher, England)

It was suggested that pupils had mixed reactions to achieving E, F or G grades and:

**some of them are delighted as long as they are of the opinion that they have passed their GCSE.**

(Head of Department, England)

**It is really up to the teachers to make them feel that they have done well and that it is a pass at GCSE level. Possibly there are teachers who do make them feel that grades E, F and G are worthless so you have to be careful.**

(Classroom teacher, England)

**Pupils are not going to get anywhere with E, F and G grades. They are possibly better doing the modules in the Foreign Languages In Tourism course, just for their own self-esteem. By giving them much simpler tasks that they can do well, they feel successful, so it is better than GCSE for these pupils.**

(Head of Department, England)

**You have to keep the attitude of the kids and the attitude of the teacher, positive. My own view is that if a G grade was not worth anything, then it would not be on the certificate. Overall, however, for these pupils, units of accreditation as you go along are more motivating; they prove what pupils can do.**

(Head of Department, England)

**If they don't achieve A - C, they have blown it in terms of job prospects. It is very difficult to make them believe that A - G is a pass at GCSE level. Things could be improved for SEN pupils by following the Certificate of Achievement course if they are included in league tables in schools. What is happening is that pupils who do Certificates of Achievement are not included in the school league tables of results**

**and that should change. We should value these courses more.**

(Classroom teacher, England)

It seemed to be of some concern that, with such an assessment driven curriculum in both Scotland and in England, the end result of MFL study for lower achievers and pupils with SEN at the age of sixteen years should be a greater reflection of their achievements, with a greater emphasis on what the pupils were able to do in a MFL.

In the Czech Republic, as already stated, pupils followed the National Curriculum and teachers made up their own tests. They did not have national tests that examined performance in the National Curriculum. Instead, they had entrance exams to secondary schools and:

**we don't have national tests at the end of basic schools when pupils are aged fifteen years. Pupils who apply to go to secondary schools have to pass a written examination in Czech and in maths. Some schools also require a MFL such as English but these are specialised schools, such as hotel schools.**

(School Manager, Czech Republic)

If a school wanted to assess pupils' progress, they could order tests from a private company:

**from time to time we use a test called 'calibro' which is a whole State test. It is a standard test which we can use to find out the levels of pupils. They send the results to the school.**

(School Manager, Czech Republic)

If pupils had a Statement from a Children's Clinic stating that they had undergone an examination and that it has been found that they had specific difficulties:

**for example, dyslexics etc., those pupils can follow another learning plan from the others.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

If pupils did not have such a Statement recognising their difficulties, then they had to repeat a year or even two years if they did not achieve a certain standard. For example:

**if they are just common pupils with learning difficulties and they don't have a Statement from a Specialist, i.e. psychologist, then it is a problem. They have to repeat a year or even two years and there are pupils who finish primary school in Year 7 or Year 8. Due to this repetition, they don't get to Year 9.**

(Classroom teacher, Czech Republic)

One of the schools visited was a specialised school for pupils with SEN. It included a basic school and a secondary school and they had been working on producing materials for these students for a long time. They had a computer room where pupils could type their work if they had problems with handwriting. They had pupils with SEN in the secondary school and worked very hard with them to overcome their specific learning difficulties. There was thorough testing of these pupils in order to enter the secondary school.

**The students with SEN who are here at the secondary school are very thoroughly tested before they are accepted. They are bright students but with these difficulties they are given extra time and extra help outside the classroom time. They get extra help with Czech, MFLs and with other subjects at the beginning. They have to have the same conditions and they have to achieve the same as the other pupils and the time is reduced in the higher grades. We are trying to teach them to be independent in the secondary school.**

(Headteacher, Czech Republic)

At the end of the basic school when pupils were fifteen years old, if they did not go on to a secondary school, they had an end of year leaving exam and achieved a general leaving certificate. The school decided what the format would be. Schools could seek advice on how best to work with SEN pupils from a Pedagogical Advisory Centre.

### **Conclusion**

Chapter Five explores the views that were expressed in the fieldwork interviews in response to Research Question Two. In this chapter it has been suggested that there were various systems employed to support the teaching and learning of MFLs to lower achievers and pupils with SEN in Scotland, England and the Czech Republic. Teachers used traditional and new approaches and a wide variety of methods to motivate, encourage and inspire all pupils and were constantly seeking to keep the lower achieving pupils interested in learning MFLs in the classroom.

Overall the views expressed could be classified as concerning views relating to:

- **Equal Opportunities**
- **Training**
- **Social Inclusion**
- **Differentiation**
- **Technology**
- **Exams**

### **Equal Opportunities**

Support for lower achievers and pupils with SEN varied from school to school. In Scotland and in England decisions concerning the type and amount of support offered to pupils in MFL Departments were taken at whole school level. There was no uniformity of provision at national or local level. In the Czech Republic the national policy was to offer extra lessons after school for lower achieving pupils and all schools visited had such extra lessons for these pupils.

The issue of class sizes suggested evidence of inequality of provision for pupils learning MFLs in general and specifically for lower achievers. In Scotland and in England, class sizes varied according to school policy. In the Czech Republic, the national guidelines favoured keeping MFL classes always below twenty-three pupils.

There was consistency of views and approaches concerning mixed ability classes across the three countries. The general tendency in the three countries was to have mixed ability groups in the first year of secondary school and then classes were set according to ability after first year.

### **Training**

The importance of having fully qualified MFL teachers emerged as significant in the three countries. However, it appeared that in all three countries staff would welcome more training and advice about catering for the needs of lower achievers in MFL classrooms more effectively. It was felt that not only was there a lack of support from outside schools for practitioners but also at teacher training level more input concerning working with lower achievers and pupils with SEN would be welcome.

The evidence from the interviewees suggested that the concerns highlighted in Chapter Two regarding the implementation of a policy of inclusion with minimal in-service training available for teachers, lack of support services and insufficient material and financial resources as being problematic, was very real to the people interviewed. In Scotland and in England, it was necessary to have classroom assistants who had adequate training in the field of MFL teaching and learning who had also trained to working with lower achievers and pupils with SEN to be able to offer effective support for pupils in MFL classrooms.

### **Social Inclusion**

It appeared that practitioners in the three countries felt that there was a lack of input and advice from Advisers and experts in the field of SEN in schools. Lack of funding for people to provide in-class support for lower achievers also emerged as an issue in both Scotland and in England.

At a time when it appeared that the policy of social inclusion, as outlined in Chapter Two was being universally accepted as a good and desirable concept in the three countries, it emerged that young people with behavioural and emotional difficulties were causing severe problems for MFL teachers and for schools.

Whatever individual responses were to the policy of social inclusion, despite an attempt to combat discriminatory attitudes, to create welcoming communities, to build an inclusive society and to achieve education for all under one roof in mainstream schools, unless the disruptive behaviour of an increasing amount of pupils was dealt with more effectively, the majority of well behaved hard working pupils could be denied the opportunity of achieving their full potential, not only in MFL classrooms, but in general.

### **Differentiation**

It was considered important to have differentiation in materials, tasks, outcome and pedagogy and these means were employed. In terms of the materials available, the resources had to be appropriate for the lower achievers. Tasks had to be short and achievable. It was always important to encourage the lower achievers to feel that they could do the work they were set and to feel successful in their learning.

In many mixed ability groups, differentiation was often achieved by outcome. Outcomes varied according to the interests of pupils, their motivation, their application and their abilities. While expectations of all pupils remained high, it was important to recognise that pupils were producing work that was of the highest standard of which they were capable.

A wide variety of teaching strategies was used to encourage lower achievers to learn a MFL. Whole class teaching, pair work and individual work were encouraged. Some teachers used group work but the majority of interviewees felt that group work did not work particularly well in the MFL classroom, especially with classes of thirty or more pupils.

### **Technology**

Many teachers were using a wide variety of technological aids to enhance the

classroom experience for all pupils, including lower achievers and pupils with SEN. Teachers used CDs, audio tape recorders, TV, video, DVDs, computers, power point presentations, and so on. In many cases pupils were encouraged to use audio tape recorders to both listen to the target language and to record their own work.

In terms of developing ICT in the MFL classrooms, there was variation in use of resources and availability of expertise. It was recognised that ICT could play an important role in the development of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills as well as the transferable skills such as independent learning and the use of reference materials. There was general agreement that ICT offers motivational potential for all MFL learners.

There was an enthusiasm to develop ICT in all three countries but problems such as lack of computers and lack of staff training in this area seemed to be preventing some teachers from incorporating more ICT into the MFL experience.

### **Examinations**

There was a suggestion that over-assessment was de-motivating lower achievers in MFL learning in Scotland and England. In the Czech Republic, traditional end of school assessment was mainly internal, a school based responsibility of teachers of different subjects. The end of basic school leaving certificate was also awarded by the schools.

In Scotland and England there was concern that summative National Examinations were problematic for lower achievers. Pupils working at Foundation level in Scotland and England and achieving success in the classwork were often de-motivated to learn that despite achieving all targets set in class, many pupils did not value the National Examination Foundation level Grades that they were awarded.

There was a sense that the Higher Still programme in Scotland could offer appropriate progression for lower achievers in MFLs. It was suggested that the format of the Access 3 course with continuous assessment and certification as opposed to an end of course examination could be an appropriate alternative to Foundation Level Standard Grade for pupils in Scotland. The similar format of

Certificates of Achievement would provide an appropriate alternative to Basic Level GCSE courses for lower achievers and pupils with SEN in England.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The aim of the study has been to strive towards a better understanding of MFL provision for lower achievers, including pupils with SEN in secondary schools in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic until 2004. There appeared to be many opportunities available for lower achievers and pupils with SEN to learn MFLs and also many challenges to be faced. There follows discussion of the major themes that have emerged from the investigation.

The study asked what educational practitioners thought about provision of MFL teaching and learning for lower achievers including pupils with SEN, in their schools and situations until 2001.

In order to conceptualise the importance of MFL learning in today's society, reasons for the study of MFLs were explored in Chapter One. The development of MFL learning and the development of SEN provision in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic was the subject of Chapter Two. Chapter Three outlined the specific methodology that was used to conduct this research project. Views were gathered from participants through semi-structured interviews and the results are discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

It is the task of this section to reflect upon these different opinions and to consider the major implications that they raise.

Firstly, it was clear that two opposing views emerged concerning the value of teaching MFLs to lower achievers and pupils with SEN. The evidence from the fieldwork suggested that there was a tension between the academics and the field professionals. From the evidence gathered, it appeared that there was a view that MFLs could not be taught to lower achievers and pupils with SEN and there was the alternative view that MFLs could be taught to and learned by all pupils and in fact must be done.

In the case of the former, the doubts about the educational value of doing so lay in perceptions, based on daily practice in certain schools, that such pupils did not

have the linguistic aptitude or ability to retain the information required to achieve success. These perceptions raised issues concerning support strategies and teaching methods being used in such classrooms and one had to consider if appropriate measures were in place to facilitate the MFL learning process in such situations. In addition, the problems caused by lack of motivation and lack of interest in learning MFLs among pupils made the task of teaching MFLs very difficult.

However, the perceptions that led to the latter view that MFLs could and must be taught to all pupils, including lower achievers and pupils with SEN, were supported by evidence from the Action Group for Languages (AGL) (2000) Report: *Citizens of a Multilingual World* in Scotland and the National Languages Strategy: *Languages For All, Languages For Life* (2002), in England. The evidence available to the author from Chapter One and from the fieldwork interviews suggested that the benefits to pupils learning a MFL outweighed any negative influences. When appropriate conditions were in place and the work was at a suitable pace and level then lower achievers and pupils with SEN could achieve success in the field of MFL learning.

It was clear from the evidence in the fieldwork that when MFL learning was supported by a whole school climate of achievement and support, when the staff were well motivated and believed that all pupils, including pupils with SEN, could benefit from learning a MFL, pupils responded in a positive way. Headteachers, Heads of Departments, Principal Teachers and classroom teachers all had key roles to play in creating a positive and inclusive ethos in schools. The evidence from the review of literature and the fieldwork interviews suggested that it was not just a question of all pupils having equal opportunities that was important with regard to all pupils having the chance to learn MFLs in school, but it was felt to be essential that all pupils learned MFLs as a means of broadening their horizons and increasing their knowledge of other people out-with their own experiences.

From the evidence in the fieldwork, it appeared that this aspect of MFL learning was a very important area for many pupils to explore. This aspect of MFL learning was considered to be of particular importance by respondents in

the Czech Republic and also in Scotland, although significantly, interviewees in all three countries indicated that MFL learning was an important means of developing awareness among pupils of other cultures and traditions, and that in the context of European integration all pupils should have the opportunity to learn MFLs as a means of facilitating communication and creating opportunities for freedom of movement within Europe and beyond. These issues are discussed in Chapter Four.

However, problems relating to the curriculum requirements emerged in all three countries. There was evidence from the three that the demands of the National Curriculum for MFLs in each country were often too high for the lower achievers.

The evidence from the research literature in Chapter Two has shown that all pupils are entitled to study MFLs in the curriculum, but one has to consider how appropriate it is to offer an entitlement to an unsuitable curriculum. Perhaps the National Curriculum guidelines should be reviewed in the three countries.

The fieldwork data suggested that pupil centred learning was of more importance in the Czech Republic than in England and Scotland where exam centred learning was the driving force in an examination centred curriculum. In the case of lower achievers and pupils with SEN, it should possibly be considered whether a more pupil centred approach to MFL learning would not be more beneficial and, in fact, motivating for pupils. It is important to remember as Roberts (2005) reminds us that not all learning is academic with outcomes measured in terms of test scores and qualifications. All pupils should be capable of learning and developing as individuals. Progress and achievement should be promoted and recognised in a range of contexts not least because success is not based exclusively on academic prowess. Teachers have a duty of prime importance towards the development of their pupils, and the demands of the MFL curriculum may be demotivating and causing problems if the demands are too high.

Significant concerns were raised concerning was availability and range of support strategies provided in schools for lower achievers and pupils with SEN in the MFL classrooms. There appeared to be uniformity of provision in the Czech

Republic. Overall, the classroom teachers supported the lower achievers and pupils with SEN in the classrooms and extra lessons were available after school for pupils who were experiencing difficulties. Crucially MFL class sizes had to be small, usually between twelve and eighteen pupils.

In Scotland and in England, the classroom teacher also offered support to all pupils but there were many other support strategies available ranging from in class support from specialist MFL teachers, to non-specialist classroom assistants. The forms of support that were provided for lower achievers and pupils with SEN in MFL classrooms have been discussed more fully in Chapter Five.

However, there seemed to be a great deal of inequality of support available to pupils in MFL classrooms in the sample studied in Scotland and England. The means of obtaining support for pupils varied. The most usual means of obtaining support was via a bidding system where Principal Teachers in Scotland and Heads of Department in England requested assistance and in most cases it was the Headteacher who decided if such funds would be available to provide appropriate support. Funds available varied from LEA to LEA in England and from Authority to Authority in Scotland.

The evidence from the sample of schools in the study suggested that there was a significant inequality of provision provided in an unplanned way. Once again, the issue of entitlement arose. Pupils were entitled to study a MFL in the curriculum but all pupils were not entitled to a systematic form of provision of support to facilitate and enhance their MFL learning process. The evidence from the schools in the study suggested that the system provided support strategies for some pupils and some schools and not for all pupils and all schools.

Interestingly, it emerged from all three countries that learning MFLs was felt to be beneficial to all pupils but it was often difficult for lower achievers and pupils with SEN to understand many grammatical points. Interviewees from all three countries felt that problems often arose for pupils in the MFL classroom due to lack of knowledge and structure of their own language. This had implications for language learning in general and it was interesting to discover that similar problems had to be overcome by teachers and pupils across nations.

An interesting point emerged in Chapter Four when it was considered by certain interviewees that it was in fact easier for pupils to learn English than it was for them to learn their own Czech language. This finding was of particular interest in that it challenged the orthodoxy that it is easier for pupils to operate in their mother tongue than in a foreign language. This opinion raised some concerns for MFL teachers in Scotland and England in that the implication of this view was that lower achievers and pupils with SEN may be expected to learn a language that is more difficult for them to understand than their own language, in classes of thirty pupils with little or no support.

The majority of interviewees seemed to perceive the policy of social inclusion as a problematic issue, particularly with regard to including pupils with behavioural and emotional problems into mainstream schools and mixed ability MFL classrooms. If this policy is to be successful it appeared that care should be taken to ensure that a disruptive minority were not interrupting the learning of the majority of MFL learners in schools.

The Governments in the three countries were promoting MFL learning. It was a statutory requirement for pupils to study at least one MFL until the end of compulsory secondary education in the Czech Republic. It was recommended that all pupils study at least one MFL until the end of compulsory education in Scotland, and in England all pupils had to study at least one MFL up to the end of Key Stage three, when they were fourteen years old.

The evidence from the fieldwork suggested that in these three countries it was generally accepted that in theory all pupils including lower achievers and pupils with SEN should have the opportunity to learn a MFL in secondary schools but work had to be done to remove the practical difficulties that arose in classrooms that created barriers to this being achieved in practice. These practical difficulties are discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

If lower achievers and pupils with SEN are to learn MFLs successfully, based on the evidence of the thesis, it is recommended that schools should consider the following suggestions:

- Include all pupils in the MFL learning process. (See Chapter One)

- Create an atmosphere where MFL teaching and learning are encouraged and celebrated. (See Chapters One, Two and Four)
- Promote MFL learning as an essential skill as an aid to cognitive, personal and social growth. (See Chapters One and Four)
- Set appropriate targets for pupils. (See Chapter Two)
- Ensure that the examination system is motivating and not problematic for pupils. (See Chapters Two and Five)
- Provide appropriate support to MFL teachers. (See Chapters Two and Five)
- Encourage staff to develop the skills required to teach lower achievers and pupils with SEN more effectively. (See Chapters Four and Five)
- Provide ongoing training in ICT for staff. (See Chapter Five)
- Ensure that appropriate resources are available. (See Chapter Five)
- Develop links with schools abroad to develop a realistic context for the MFL learning. (See Chapter Four).

Above all, the comparison of MFL provision in secondary schools in the three countries highlighted the importance and benefits of reducing class sizes in Scotland and in England to a level commensurate with the learning characteristics of the pupils. (See Chapters Four and Five).

Obviously some of the recommendations require support at national level in terms of provision of appropriate funding for the reduction of class sizes, staff

training and resources. Any review of policy concerning curriculum and National Examination requirements would also have to be considered at national level.

This thesis set out to present an investigation of provision for lower achievers including pupils with SEN until 2004 in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic and to consider the views of educational practitioners. There had been a considerable amount of development in both MFL and SEN provision in schools in the three countries involved in the study from the 1980s until 2004. Ultimately, as with all curriculum developments and educational programmes, views both for and against their effectiveness could be found. Overall, the evidence available to the author suggested that it was both valuable and beneficial to include all pupils in the MFL learning process in schools. In the context of an ever expanding Europe, it was possible to argue that knowledge of MFLs was not only desirable for recreational, vocational and economic reasons but it was an essential element in developing knowledge of other cultures and traditions leading to a greater understanding among people and nations. Learning MFLs could develop a sense of inclusiveness and understanding among pupils. Education therefore needs to promote and facilitate MFL learning for all pupils in schools.

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## Appendix A

### The Core Questions in the Interview Framework for the Fieldwork

In order to explore Research Questions One and Two, the researcher created questions in the following five topic areas and these formed the basis for the interview framework:

Topic A – Curriculum Requirements, Topic B – Support Strategies, Topic C – Teaching and Learning Strategies, Topic D – Assessment and Topic E – Future Developments.

Reasons why each topic was considered important in this study are given below. All participants answered a set of core questions covering the five topic areas and extra specific questions were added for interviewees according to their position in the educative process.

There were specific questions for Headteachers / School Managers, Heads of department / Principal teachers and Classroom teachers.

Slight modifications were required for each country for example changing the names of their exams and names of year groups.

The entire Interview Framework is in Appendix B.

It was felt that it would be very interesting to discover whether or not similar or differing views would emerge in the three countries.

In order to explore **Research Question One**,

**What are the views of a sample of School Managers and teachers on curriculum requirements for the study of MFLs for lower achievers including pupils with SEN in mainstream secondary schools?**

Interviewees answered questions for Topic A – Curriculum Requirements.

It was important to create questions on Topic A in order to explore perceptions of the reasons why MFL learning was important, to gather views on what the benefits of MFL study could be and to consider perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of MFL study for lower achievers and pupils with SEN.

In order to explore Research Question One and to illuminate these general areas, the following set of core questions was devised for all participants.

- 1) Why do you think that a MFL was included as a foundation subject in the National Curriculum in England / a core subject in the Curriculum Framework in Scotland / a core subject in the National Curriculum in the Czech Republic?
- 2) Which of these reasons apply to pupils with SEN?

- 3) What are the benefits of studying a MFL for young people with SEN?
- 4) It has been suggested that one of the benefits of studying a MFL is that it helps to develop the understanding of the pupils' first language. In what ways do you feel that by studying a MFL, SEN pupils will improve their understanding of their own language?
- 5) It has also been stated that a benefit of studying a MFL is that it develops The understanding of other cultures and traditions. In what ways do you think that learning a MFL will help SEN pupils to develop their understanding of other cultures and traditions?
- 6) What benefits of studying a MFL do you think are specific to pupils with SEN if any?
- 7) Some people think that SEN pupils will benefit from studying one MFL up to the age of 15/16 years. Some people think that it would be more beneficial for SEN pupils to study one MFL for two years and begin studying another MFL for two/three years up to the age of 16 years. What do you think the relative advantages/disadvantages of these two systems are?
- 8) Outline any disadvantages that you can think of that lower achievers and pupils with SEN may encounter when they have to study a MFL up to the age of sixteen years?
- 9) Are there any adjustments that can be made to the MFL curriculum which makes it more accessible to lower achievers and pupils with SEN?

### **Why were certain questions asked?**

Questions 1,2,3 and 6 were asked in order to gather views on the rationale for teaching MFLs to lower achievers including those with SEN.

Details of developments in MFL teaching and learning in England, Scotland and the Czech Republic are outlined in Chapter Two.

Questions 4 and 5 were asked to discover opinions on the claims outlined in Chapter One that learning a MFL can develop the understanding of the first language and also develop understanding of other cultures and traditions and to discover whether the participants in the fieldwork agreed with these claims.

Questions 7 and 8 were asked to discover perceptions of practitioners concerning the advantages and disadvantages of teaching MFLs to all pupils in schools.

It was considered that Topic A was important because as Chapter One highlighted there was variation in opinions of practitioners in England concerning the appropriateness of Languages for All. It was considered important to

compare and contrast the views of the practitioners in schools who were teaching pupils of all levels of ability in the three countries with the views of School Managers and Advisers with regard to curriculum design. It was felt that it would be very interesting to discover whether or not similar or differing views would emerge in the three countries.

In order to explore **Research Question Two**,

**What forms of support including teaching and learning strategies are provided for lower achievers, including pupils with SEN in MFL classrooms?**

It was considered important to discover how lower achievers and pupils with SEN were supported in the learning process in MFL classrooms. Support strategies were discussed in Chapter Two.

In order to gather views on provision of support for lower achievers, including pupils with SEN in schools and MFL departments, interviewees answered questions for Topics B, C and D.

Topic B – Support Strategies

- 1) What is the policy for providing support strategies for SEN pupils in the MFL classrooms in your school / in the schools in your area?
- 2) What forms of support for teachers in MFL departments do you provide to help lower achievers and pupils with SEN learn MFLs? What resources do you recommend?
- 3) What specific forms of support do you offer MFL teachers for teaching SEN pupils?
- 4) Do you think that there are appropriate resource materials available for lower achievers and pupils with SEN who are learning MFLs?

**Why were certain questions asked?**

Questions 1,2 and 3 were focusing on support strategies that were available in schools or authorities.

Question 4 was asked to discover views on the availability of resources.

It was considered to be important to create questions for Topic B in order to gather views on provision and support for lower achievers in MFL departments as through experience of sharing ideas with colleagues in both England and Scotland, it emerged there were many different approaches within schools with regard to providing support for lower achievers. It was considered that it would be useful to discover what support systems were in place in schools and to find

out how successful and effective colleagues felt these systems were and then to find suggestions to improve support systems in schools.

### Topic C – Teaching and Learning Strategies

- 1) What forms of classroom practice are recommended for teaching a MFL in your school?
- 2) How are:
  - listening
  - speaking
  - reading
  - writing skills developed?
- 3) What specific methodologies are recommend for teaching a MFL to SEN pupils, i.e. what extra items do teachers teaching a MFL to lower achievers and pupils with SEN have to include in their teaching?
- 4) How much grammar do you think SEN pupils need to know to develop their skills or linguistic competence in their chosen MFL?
- 5) What forms of grammatical teaching would you recommend for lower achievers and pupils with SEN? Why?
- 6) How would you suggest ICT could be used in the MFL classroom and, in particular with lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 7) In what ways could the use of ICT help SEN pupils to develop their skills in the MFL classroom?
- 8) In what ways do you think that learning a MFL helps to develop an understanding of a persons first language?
- 9) How do you measure the appropriateness of current methodologies in MFL teaching and learning?

- 10) What impact do OFSTED / HMI / Government Inspections and their reports have on curriculum development?

Topic C was chosen as an area for consideration since it was felt that this was a crucial section in achieving success for all MFL learners and particularly with the lower achievers. How pupils are taught a MFL is a key issue in keeping them motivated, in engaging their interest in the subject, and in keeping their enthusiasm alive. Following discussions with colleagues it became evident that whilst there was a basic similarity in methodology in many classrooms, there were various strategies and techniques being used in certain schools which were successful and it was considered that it could be beneficial to explore in more detail what a sample of teachers were doing in order to deliver the curriculum as effectively as possible in the three countries involved in the study.

#### Topic D - Assessment

- 1) What systems are in place to assess the progress of pupils in MFL Learning?
- 2) Why have current recommended systems been chosen?
- 3) How effective do you feel these methods are and why:
  - in general?
  - for SEN pupils?
- 4) What systems are in place to review and evaluate current assessment procedures in your school?
- 5) How appropriate do you feel current assessment procedures are in MFL Teaching and learning in:
  - Key Stage 3 / S1 – S2 / Grades 5 – 7?
  - Key Stage 4 / S3 – S4 / Grades 8 – 9?
- 6) How appropriate do you think that Basic Level GCSE courses / Foundation Level Standard Grade courses / end of basic school exams are for lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 7) How successful do you think pupils feel who achieve “E”, “F”, or “G” Grades for GCSE examinations / Grades five or six for Standard Grade examinations / an end of basic school certificate?
- 8) What input do various National bodies have on assessment procedures in your school?

## **Why were certain questions asked?**

Questions 1 - 3 were asked to find out what people thought about assessment in general.

Questions 5, 6 and 7 were adapted according to the different names of the exam systems in each country.

The specific focus on perceptions of levels of success in National Examinations for pupils aged sixteen were targeted in questions 6 and 7 because there had been various attempts to develop courses for lower achievers and pupils with SEN since the 1970s in England and Scotland and the researcher was interested to discover the perceptions of the sample of educational practitioners concerning National Examinations for lower achievers and pupils with SEN in order to discover how they overcame any problems.

In the Czech Republic it was the intention of the researcher to find out more about their assessment procedures and also to discover what the general views were on their effectiveness.

Topic D was chosen as an area to consider because as Chapter One highlighted, it appeared that many lower achievers enjoyed the experience of learning an MFL in the classroom and were enthusiastic about the set tasks and enjoyed the work that they were doing but many pupils were disappointed with the results of their final National Examinations. The researcher was aware that assessment does not only involve summative testing, however, in the context of this study, the term, assessment, was used to mean summative testing because one of the key problem areas for lower achieving pupils in MFL learning, in the researcher's experience, was sitting too many examinations. The format of how often pupils were tested and how many skills were tested at a given point, varied from school to school.

The researcher was interested to discover whether schools in England and Scotland had alternatives to GCSE and Standard Grade examinations operating in their schools. It was considered important to discover how pupils were assessed in MFL classrooms in the Czech Republic and that it would be interesting to compare the results with the outcomes found in the field in England and Scotland.

## Topic E - Future Developments

All participants were asked:

- How do you see the future of MFL learning for pupils with SEN?

General views concerning the main growth points and the main inhibitors to the integration of lower achievers including pupils with SEN were also gathered from responses to certain questions answered in Topics B, C and D.

Topic E was included as an area for exploration as there had been many developments in MFL teaching and learning in the three countries involved in the study since the 1980s and these are explored in Chapters One and Two. Many schools were introducing more computers into classrooms which provided opportunities for MFL teaching and learning, new courses were being produced, some schools MFL departments were increasing opportunities for all pupils to learn two or even three MFLs, and others were reducing the choices available. It was interesting to discover how educational practitioners would like their MFL departments to develop in the future and to find out how colleagues see the future for the lower achievers in MFL learning in schools.

The Czech Republic had experienced considerable change in education and society since 1989. It was felt that it would be an interesting time discover how teachers schools were adapting to the changes and to discover the reality of MFL teaching and learning in a selection of schools in the Czech Republic.

These five Topic Areas formed the basis for the interview framework for the fieldwork in order to answer Research Questions One and Two.

The responses to Research Question One are discussed in Chapter Four and the responses to Research Question Two are discussed in Chapter Five.

The entire Interview Framework is in Appendix B.

## **Appendix B**

### **The Interview Framework For The Fieldwork**

In order to explore Research Questions One and Two, the researcher created questions in the following five topic areas and these formed the basis for the interview framework:

Topic A – Curriculum Requirements, Topic B – Support Strategies, Topic C – Teaching and Learning Strategies, Topic D – Assessment and Topic E – Future Developments.

As explained in Appendix A, all participants answered a set of core questions covering the five topic areas and extra specific questions were added for certain people according to their position in the educative process.

There were specific questions for Headteachers / School Managers, Heads of department / Principal teachers and Classroom teachers. Slight modifications were required for each country for example changing the names of their exams and names of year groups.

It was felt that it would be very interesting to discover whether or not similar or differing views would emerge in the three countries.

The questions that were asked in the fieldwork interviews are outlined below and are grouped in the Topic areas outlined above and are grouped , in the three countries.

**In Scotland**, The Director of SCILT, Advisers, Headteachers / School Managers, Principal teachers and Classroom teachers were interviewed.

**In England**, Headteachers / School Managers, Heads of Departments and Classroom teachers were interviewed.

**In The Czech Republic**, Headteachers / School Managers and Classroom teachers were interviewed.

In order to explore **Research Question One**:

**What are the views of a sample of School Managers and teachers on curriculum requirements for the study of MFLs for lower achievers including pupils with SEN in mainstream secondary schools?**

Interviewees answered questions for Topic A – Curriculum Requirements.

## Topic A – Curriculum Requirements

### **To the Director of Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (SCILT)**

- 1) Why do you think that a MFL was included as a foundation subject in the National Curriculum in England / a core subject in the Curriculum Framework in Scotland / a core subject in the National Curriculum in the Czech Republic?
- 2) Which of these reasons apply to pupils with SEN?
- 3) What are the benefits of studying a MFL for young people with SEN?
- 4) It has been suggested that one of the benefits of studying a MFL is that it helps to develop the understanding of the pupils' first language. In what ways do you feel that by studying a MFL, SEN pupils will improve their understanding of their own language?
- 5) It has also been stated that a benefit of studying a MFL is that it develops the understanding of other cultures and traditions. In what ways do you think that learning a MFL will help SEN pupils to develop their understanding of other cultures and traditions?
- 6) What benefits of studying a MFL do you think are specific to pupils with SEN if any?
- 7) Some people think that SEN pupils will benefit from studying one MFL up to the age of 15/16 years. Some people think that it would be more beneficial for SEN pupils to study one MFL for two years and begin studying another MFL for two/three years up to the age of 16 years. What do you think the relative advantages/disadvantages of these two systems are?
- 8) Outline any disadvantages that you can think of that lower achievers and pupils with SEN may encounter when they have to study a MFL up to the age of sixteen years?
- 9) Are there any adjustments that can be made to the MFL curriculum which makes it more accessible to lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 10) What role did SCILT play in the MFL 5 - 14 Curriculum and Standard Grade development?
- 11) What was the input from SCILT regarding 5 - 14 Curriculum and Standard Grade Curriculum for pupils with SEN?
- 12) In what ways is SCILT involved with the policy makers for the MFL curriculum in Secondary schools?

## To MFL Advisers

- 1) Why do you think that a MFL was included as a foundation subject in the National Curriculum in England / a core subject in the Curriculum Framework in Scotland / a core subject in the National Curriculum in the Czech Republic?
- 2) Which of these reasons apply to pupils with SEN?
- 3) What are the benefits of studying a MFL for young people with SEN?
- 4) It has been suggested that one of the benefits of studying a MFL is that it helps to develop the understanding of the pupils' first language. In what ways do you feel that by studying a MFL, SEN pupils will improve their understanding of their own language?
- 5) It has also been stated that a benefit of studying a MFL is that it develops the understanding of other cultures and traditions. In what ways do you think that learning a MFL will help SEN pupils to develop their understanding of other cultures and traditions?
- 6) What benefits of studying a MFL do you think are specific to pupils with SEN if any?
- 7) Some people think that SEN pupils will benefit from studying one MFL up to the age of 15/16 years. Some people think that it would be more beneficial for SEN pupils to study one MFL for two years and begin studying another MFL for two/three years up to the age of 16 years. What do you think the relative advantages/disadvantages of these two systems are?
- 8) Outline any disadvantages that you can think of that lower achievers and pupils with SEN may encounter when they have to study a MFL up to the age of sixteen years?
- 9) Are there any adjustments that can be made to the MFL curriculum which makes it more accessible to lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 10) In what ways are you involved in creating policy for the development of the curriculum?
- 11) In what way do you as an Adviser offer curriculum support for pupils with SEN in the MFL classrooms, from central
- 12) Is there funding available from your Local Council for you to provide support for lower achievers and pupils with SEN?

## **To Headteachers**

- 1) Why do you think that a MFL was included as a foundation subject in the National Curriculum in England / a core subject in the Curriculum Framework in Scotland / a core subject in the National Curriculum in the Czech Republic?
- 2) Which of these reasons apply to pupils with SEN?
- 3) What are the benefits of studying a MFL for young people with SEN?
- 4) It has been suggested that one of the benefits of studying a MFL is that it helps to develop the understanding of the pupils' first language. In what ways do you feel that by studying a MFL, SEN pupils will improve their understanding of their own language?
- 5) It has also been stated that a benefit of studying a MFL is that it develops the understanding of other cultures and traditions. In what ways do you think that learning a MFL will help SEN pupils to develop their understanding of other cultures and traditions?
- 6) What benefits of studying a MFL do you think are specific to pupils with SEN if any?
- 7) Some people think that SEN pupils will benefit from studying one MFL up to the age of 15/16 years. Some people think that it would be more beneficial for SEN pupils to study one MFL for two years and begin studying another MFL for two/three years up to the age of 16 years. What do you think the relative advantages/disadvantages of these two systems are?
- 8) Outline any disadvantages that you can think of that lower achievers and pupils with SEN may encounter when they have to study a MFL up to the age of sixteen years?
- 9) Are there any adjustments that can be made to the MFL curriculum which makes it more accessible to lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 10) What difficulties did you have to overcome in order to implement the policy of Languages for All into your school, e.g. in terms of staffing, timetabling, resources?
- 11) What specific practises do you think have been successful in your school implementing the policy of Languages for All?
- 12) Outline any specific areas that you think aided the integration of SEN pupils up to the age of 16 years into MFL classrooms?

- 13) In what ways has the recent policy regarding disapplication been Implemented in your school?
- 14) What support does your school receive from the Government, SCILT / your Local Council / LEA or Advisers in order to facilitate the integration of pupils with SEN?

### **To Heads of MFL Departments**

- 1) Why do you think that a MFL was included as a foundation subject in the National Curriculum in England / a core subject in the Curriculum Framework in Scotland / a core subject in the National Curriculum in the Czech Republic?
- 2) Which of these reasons apply to pupils with SEN?
- 3) What are the benefits of studying a MFL for young people with SEN?
- 4) It has been suggested that one of the benefits of studying a MFL is that it helps to develop the understanding of the pupils` first language. In what ways do you feel that by studying a MFL, SEN pupils will improve their understanding of their own language?
- 5) It has also been stated that a benefit of studying a MFL is that it develops the understanding of other cultures and traditions. In what ways do you think that learning a MFL will help SEN pupils to develop their understanding of other cultures and traditions?
- 6) What benefits of studying a MFL do you think are specific to pupils with SEN if any?
- 7) Some people think that SEN pupils will benefit from studying one MFL up to the age of 15/16 years. Some people think that it would be More beneficial for SEN pupils to study one MFL for two years and begin studying another MFL for two/three years up to the age of 16 years. What do you think the relative advantages/disadvantages of these two systems are?
- 8) Outline any disadvantages that you can think of that lower achievers and pupils with SEN may encounter when they have to study a MFL up to the age of sixteen years?
- 9) Are there any adjustments that can be made to the MFL curriculum which makes it more accessible to lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 10) What difficulties did you have to overcome in order to implement the

policy of Languages for All into your department in terms of:

- teachers` attitudes and reactions to teaching a MFL to SEN pupils?
- timetabling issues
- resource implications
- classroom support - (availability)
- any other difficulties?

11) How successful do you think that your department has been in Integrating pupils with SEN into the MFL classroom up to the age of 15/16 years?

12) What support for teaching MFLs to pupils with SEN is available to you from:

- Central Government
- SCILT / CILT
- Your Local Council / LEA
- Your Headteacher
- Other Heads of Department
- Any other forms of support?

### **To Classroom Teachers**

1) Why do you think that a MFL was included as a foundation subject in the National Curriculum in England / a core subject in the Curriculum Framework in Scotland / a core subject in the National Curriculum in the Czech Republic?

2) Which of these reasons apply to pupils with SEN?

3) What are the benefits of studying a MFL for young people with SEN?

4) It has been suggested that one of the benefits of studying a MFL is that it helps to develop the understanding of the pupils` first language. In what ways do you feel that by studying a MFL, SEN pupils will improve their understanding of their own language?

- 5) It has also been stated that a benefit of studying a MFL is that it develops the understanding of other cultures and traditions.  
In what ways do you think that learning a MFL will help SEN pupils to develop their understanding of other cultures and traditions?
- 6) What benefits of studying a MFL do you think are specific to pupils with SEN if any?
- 7) Some people think that SEN pupils will benefit from studying one MFL up to the age of 15/16 years. Some people think that it would be more beneficial for SEN pupils to study one MFL for two years and begin studying another MFL for two/three years up to the age of 16 years.  
What do you think the relative advantages/disadvantages of these two systems are?
- 8) Outline any disadvantages that you can think of that lower achievers and pupils with SEN may encounter when they have to study a MFL up to the age of sixteen years?
- 9) Are there any adjustments that can be made to the MFL curriculum which makes it more accessible to lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 10) What difficulties did you have to overcome in your MFL department in order to implement the policy of Languages for All?
- 11) What difficulties did you and other classroom teachers have to overcome in order to implement the curriculum requirements for lower achievers and pupils with SEN up to the age of 15/16 years in terms of -
  - resources
  - teaching methods
  - departmental policy
  - any other difficulties?
- 12) How successful do you think your department has been in integrating SEN pupils into the MFL classrooms? Why?
- 13) What are your views on the latest policy regarding disapplication from MFL study? In what ways will this be implemented in your department?

## Topic B – Support Strategies

### **To the Director of Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (SCILT)**

- 1) Following the introduction of 5 - 14 Curriculum and Standard Grade, and The implications for SEN pupils studying MFLs, what support strategies did SCILT offer in terms of -
  - teacher training
  - specific resources or support material?
- 2) How do you monitor provision for SEN pupils in MFL classrooms in Schools and what do you do with the results?
- 2) What are your views on the appropriateness of current provision?

### **To Advisers**

- 1) What is the policy for providing support strategies for SEN pupils in the MFL classrooms in the schools in your area?
- 2) What forms of support for teachers in MFL departments do you provide?
- 3) What specific forms of support do you, as an Adviser, offer MFL teachers teaching lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 4) Do you think that there are appropriate resource materials available for teachers to help SEN pupils learn MFLs? What resources would you recommend and why?
- 5) To what extent do you feel that teachers working in the MFL departments benefit from having extra help with SEN pupils in terms of -
  - in class support
  - training courses
  - any other areas?
- 6) From your work with a wide range of schools, what arrangements for SEN pupils in MFL departments do you feel are most effective and why?
- 7) What are your views on the appropriateness of current provision?
- 8) How do you monitor provision for SEN pupils in MFL classrooms in

schools and what do you do with the results?

- 9) In what ways do you think that support for teaching and learning MFLs to SEN pupils in schools could be improved?

### **To Headteachers**

- 1) What is the policy for providing support strategies for SEN pupils in the MFL classrooms in your school?
- 2) What forms of support for teachers in your MFL department do you provide?
- 3) What specific forms of support do you, as a Headteacher, offer MFL teachers to work with lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 4) Do you think that there are appropriate resource materials available for teachers in your school to help SEN pupils learn MFLs? What resources would you recommend and why?
- 5) To what extent do you feel that teachers working in the MFL departments benefit from having extra help with SEN pupils in terms of -
  - in class support
  - training courses
  - any other areas?
- 6) From your contact with a wide range of schools, what arrangements for pupils with SEN pupils in the MFL department do you feel are most effective and why?
- 7) How important do you think it is to have all teachers working in the MFL department fully qualified MFL teachers?
- 8) Are there any occasions when a non-specialist language teacher would be required to teach a MFL to SEN pupils? Outline any situation you can think of.

## To Heads of MFL Departments

- 1) What is the policy for providing support strategies for lower achieving pupils in MFL classrooms in your school?
- 2) What forms of support for teachers in your MFL department do you Provide?
- 3) What specific forms of support do you, as Head of Department, offer MFL teachers for teaching pupils with SEN?
- 4) Do you think that there are appropriate resource materials available for Teachers to help pupils with SEN learn MFLs? What resources would you recommend and why?
- 5) To what extent do you feel that teachers working in your MFL department would benefit from having extra help with lower achievers and pupils with SEN in terms of -
  - in class support
  - training courses
  - any other areas?
- 6) From your contact with other schools what arrangements for SEN pupils in MFL departments do you feel are most effective and why?
- 7) Do you have what you would consider adequate staffing in terms of subject specialists in your department?
- 8) What languages do you offer in your department?
- 9) How many MFLs do SEN pupils have the opportunity to study in your department? Do they have the same opportunities as pupils to learn MFLs or not? Why? Why not?
- 10) Who outside your school offers advice or support for teaching MFLs to SEN pupils? What support do they provide?
- 11) What advice and support would you consider useful in the future, from whom and for whom? Why?

## **To Classroom Teachers**

- 1) What strategies are in place in your department to include lower achieving pupils with SEN in the MFL classrooms in your school?
- 2) What kind of support is available for you and other teachers teaching MFLs to SEN pupils in your department from -
  - your Head of Department and Head teacher
  - Advisory teacher
  - Local Council / LEA
  - SCILT / CILT
  - any other agencies?
- 3) Do you attend training courses to improve teaching and learning strategies for pupils with SEN? Why? Why not?
- 4) What are your views on the appropriateness of current provision for SEN pupils in the MFL classroom?
- 5) Which MFLs do you teach in this school?
- 6) By what means are classes organised in this school, e.g. mixed ability set, etc.  
How appropriate do you feel the groupings are and why?
- 7) What teaching resources are available in your department? How do these work for pupils with SEN?

Topic C - Teaching and Learning Strategies

**To the Director of Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (SCILT)**

- 1) What forms of classroom practice are recommended for teaching a MFL in schools?
- 2) How are -
  - listening
  - speaking
  - reading
  - writing skills developed?
- 3) What specific methodologies do you recommend for teaching a MFL to lower achievers and pupils with SEN i.e. what extra items do teachers teaching a MFL to SEN pupils have to include in their teaching?
- 4) How much grammar do you think SEN pupils need to know to develop their skills or linguistic competence in their chosen MFL?
- 5) What forms of grammatical teaching would you recommend for SEN pupils and why?
- 6) How would you suggest ICT could be used in the MFL classroom and, in particular with lower achievers and pupils with SEN ?
- 7) In what ways could the use of ICT help SEN pupils to develop their skills in the MFL classroom?
- 8) What input does SCILT / CILT have in the development of teaching and learning strategies for MFL teaching and learning in schools?
- 9) How do you measure the appropriateness of current methodologies in MFL teaching and learning?
- 9) What impact, if any, does HMI and its reports have on the activities of SCILT / CILT?
- 10) What influences curriculum change?.

## **To MFL Advisers**

- 1) What forms of classroom practise are recommended for teaching a MFL in schools?
- 2) How do you suggest -
  - listening
  - speaking
  - reading
  - writing skills should be developed?
- 3) What specific methodologies do you recommend for teaching a MFL to lower achievers and pupils with SEN i.e. what extra items do teachers teaching a MFL to these pupils have to include in their teaching?
- 4) How much grammar do you think SEN pupils need to know to develop their skills or linguistic competence in their chosen MFL?
- 5) What forms of grammatical teaching would you recommend for SEN pupils and why?
- 6) How would you suggest ICT could be used in the MFL classroom and, in particular with lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 6) In what ways could the use of ICT help SEN pupils to develop their skills in the MFL classroom?
- 7) What input do MFL advisory teachers have in the development of teaching and learning strategies for MFL teaching and learning in schools?
- 8) Outline any ideas that you have seen in schools that you would encourage teachers to develop work with lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 10) How do you measure the appropriateness of current methodologies in MFL teaching and learning?
- 11) What impact, if any, do HMI / OFSTED / Government Inspections and their reports have on your work as a MFL Adviser?
- 12) What influences curriculum change?

## To Headteachers

- 1) What forms of classroom practise are recommended for teaching a MFL in schools?
- 2) How do you suggest -
  - listening
  - speaking
  - reading
  - writing skills should be developed?
- 3) What specific methodologies do you recommend for teaching a MFL to lower achievers and pupils with SEN i.e. what extra items do teachers teaching a MFL to these pupils have to include in their teaching?
- 4) How much grammar do you think SEN pupils need to know to develop their skills or linguistic competence in their chosen MFL?
- 5) What forms of grammatical teaching would you recommend for pupils with SEN and why?
- 6) How would you suggest ICT could be used in the MFL classroom and, in particular with lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 7) In what ways could the use of ICT help SEN pupils to develop their skills in the MFL classroom?
- 8) What input do MFL Advisers have in the development of teaching and learning strategies for MFL teaching and learning in schools?
- 9) Outline any ideas that you have seen in schools that you would encourage teachers to develop work with lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 10) How do you measure the appropriateness of current methodologies in MFL teaching and learning?
- 11) What impact, if any, do HMI / OFSTED / Government Inspections and their reports have on your work as a MFL Adviser?
- 12) What influences curriculum change?

## To Heads of MFL Departments

- 1) What forms of classroom practise are recommended for teaching a MFL in your school?
- 2) How are -
  - listening
  - speaking
  - reading
  - writing skills developed?
- 3) What specific methodologies do you recommend for teaching a MFL to lower achieving pupils including those with SEN?  
i.e. what extra items do teachers teaching a MFL to lower achievers and pupils with SEN have to include in their teaching?
- 4) For 5 - 14 MFL Curriculum there are 4 attainment outcomes -

Listening - pupils will understand a variety of spoken language, live or recorded, and respond in a variety of ways.

Speaking - pupils will express themselves orally in a variety of situations convey, for example, their needs, wants, views, responses, ideas and feelings. They will develop their knowledge of language structure, pronunciation and intonation.

Reading - pupils will read a variety of texts and respond appropriately. They will develop an ability in using reference materials and an awareness of the relationship between the spoken and written form of the language.

Writing - pupils will write to record their ideas and to convey meaning to others. They will pay increasing attention to spelling and structure.

The 4 Attainment Outcomes are interlinked and cannot be explored in isolation.

In Speaking and Writing, pupils are required to express themselves in the target language.

How do you feel that pupils are coping with this -

- in general:
- pupils with SEN ?

- 5) How much grammar do you think lower achievers and pupils with SEN need to know to develop their skills or linguistic competence in their chosen MFL?
- 6) What forms of grammatical teaching would you recommend for SEN pupils and why?
- 7) How would you suggest ICT could be used in the MFL classroom?
- 8) In what ways could the use of ICT help SEN pupils to develop their skills in the MFL classroom?
- 9) How do you measure the appropriateness of current methodologies in MFL teaching and learning?
- 10) What impact do HMI / OFSTED / Government Inspections and their reports have on curriculum development in this department?
- 11) What influences curriculum change?
- 12) What input do MFL advisory teachers have in the development of teaching and learning in this school?
- 13) What resources do you find most useful for teaching a MFL to lower achieving pupils including pupils with SEN?
- 14) What courses do you offer SEN pupils in the third and fourth years of secondary school?
- 15) Where pupils have a choice of courses, what do you think the reasons are that they would choose certain courses?
- 16) How do you feel SEN pupils react to learning a MFL in first to fourth year?
- 17) What do you think they achieve in their learning process?
- 18) In what ways do you think that teaching and learning MFLs to SEN pupils could be improved -
  - in general?
  - in your school?

## To Classroom Teachers

- 1) What forms of classroom practise are recommended for teaching a MFL in schools?
- 2) How are -
  - listening
  - speaking
  - reading
  - writing skills developed?
- 3) What specific methodologies do you recommend for teaching a MFL to lower achievers and pupils with SEN, i.e. what extra items do teachers teaching a MFL to SEN pupils have to include in their teaching?
- 4) How much grammar do you think SEN pupils need to know to develop their skills or linguistic competence in their chosen MFL?
- 5) What forms of grammatical teaching would you recommend for SEN pupils and why?
- 6) How would you suggest ICT could be used in the MFL classroom and, in particular with SEN pupils?
- 7) In what ways could the use of ICT help SEN pupils to develop their skills in the MFL classroom?
- 8) To what extent do you teach your lessons to SEN pupils in the target language? How do you find SEN pupils react to your approach?
- 9) In what ways do you think that learning a MFL helps to develop an understanding of a persons first language?
- 10) How do you measure the appropriateness of current methodologies in MFL teaching and learning?
- 11) What impact does HMI and its reports have on curriculum development?
- 12) What influences curriculum change?.
- 13) In what ways has the introduction of the 5 - 14 and Standard Grade curriculae changed your approach to teaching MFLs (if you were a teacher before these innovations?

14) For 5 - 14 MFL Curriculum there are 4 attainment outcomes -

Listening - pupils will understand a variety of spoken language, live or recorded, and respond in a variety of ways.

Speaking - pupils will express themselves orally in a variety of situations convey, for example, their needs, wants, views, responses, ideas and feelings. They will develop their knowledge of language structure, pronunciation and intonation.

Reading - pupils will read a variety of texts and respond appropriately. They will develop an ability in using reference materials and an awareness of the relationship between the spoken and written form of the language.

Writing - pupils will write to record their ideas and to convey meaning to others. They will pay increasing attention to spelling and structure.

The 4 Attainment Outcomes are interlinked and cannot be explored in isolation.

In Speaking and Writing, pupils are required to express themselves in the target language.

How do you feel that pupils are coping with this -

- in general:
- pupils with SEN ?

- 15) What methods of teaching Attainment Outcome1 (listening) have you found to be successful and why?
- 16) Which activities were successful with SEN pupils?
- 17) What activities did you find less successful for SEN pupils and why?
- 18) What methods of teaching Attainment Outcome 2 (Speaking) have you found to be successful and why?
- 19) Which activities were successful with SEN pupils?
- 20) What activities did you find less successful for SEN pupils and why?
- 21) What methods of teaching Attainment Outcome 3 (Reading) have you found to be successful and why?
- 22) Which activities were successful with SEN pupils?
- 23) Which activities did you find less successful for SEN pupils and why?

- 24) What methods of teaching Attainment Outcome 4 (Writing) have you found to be successful and why?
- 25) Which activities were successful with SEN pupils?
- 26) Which activities did you find less successful with SEN pupils?
- 27) How do you feel SEN pupils react to learning MFLs in Years S1 - S4?
- 28) What do you think SEN pupils achieve in the process of learning a MFL?

Topic D - Assessment

**To the Director of Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (SCILT)**

- 1) What systems are in place to assess the progress of pupils in MFL learning?
- 2) Why have current recommended systems been chosen?
- 3) How effective do you feel these methods are and why -
  - in general?
  - for SEN pupils?
- 4) What systems are in place to review and evaluate current assessment procedures in schools?
- 5) How appropriate do you feel current assessment procedures are in MFL teaching and learning in -
  - 5 - 14 Curriculum
  - Standard Grade
- 6) How appropriate do you think that Foundation Standard Grade Basic Level GCSE / courses are for lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 7) How successful do you think pupils feel who achieve Foundation level at Standard Grade / Basic Level GCSE?
- 8) What input does SCILT / CILT have in the development of national guidelines on assessment procedures?
- 9) In what ways do you think that assessment procedures could be improved for pupils learning MFLs in general and particularly for lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 10) How could SCILT / CILT help to improve assessment procedures for lower achievers and pupils with SEN?

## To MFL Advisers

- 1) What systems are in place to assess the progress of pupils in MFL learning?
- 2) Why have current recommended systems been chosen?
- 3) How effective do you feel these methods are and why -
  - in general?
  - for SEN pupils?
- 4) What systems are in place to review and evaluate current assessment procedures in schools?
- 5) How appropriate do you feel current assessment procedures are in MFL teaching and learning in -
  - 5 - 14 Curriculum / Key Stage 3 / Grades 6 – 7?
  - Standard Grade – Key Stage 4 / Grades 8 – 9?
- 6) How appropriate do you think that Foundation Standard Grade Basic Level GCSE / courses are for lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 7) How successful do you think pupils feel who achieve Foundation level at Standard Grade / Basic Level GCSE?
- 8) In what ways do you think assessment procedures could be improved for pupils learning MFLs, in general, and particularly for lower achievers and pupils with pupils?
- 9) What input do you have as an Adviser in the development of national guidelines on assessment procedures?
- 10) How could you as an Adviser help to improve assessment procedures for lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 11) What do you do to help teachers to motivate lower achievers and pupils with SEN in the MFL classroom?

## **To Headteachers**

- 1) What systems are in place to assess the progress of pupils in MFL learning?
- 2) Why have current recommended systems been chosen?
- 3) How effective do you feel these methods are and why -
  - in general?
  - for SEN pupils?
- 4) What systems are in place to review and evaluate current assessment procedures in your school?
- 5) How appropriate do you feel current assessment procedures are in MFL teaching and learning in -
  - 5 - 14 Curriculum / Key Stage 3 / Grades 6 – 7?
  - Standard Grade – Key Stage 4 / Grades 8 – 9?
- 6) How appropriate do you think that Foundation Standard Grade Basic Level GCSE / courses are for lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 7) How successful do you think pupils feel who achieve Foundation level at Standard Grade / Basic Level GCSE?
- 8) What input do various national bodies have in the development of national guidelines on assessment procedures in your school?
- 9) How do you assist teachers to motivate lower achievers and pupils with SEN to achieve success in the MFL classroom in your school?

## To Heads of MFL Departments

- 1) What systems are in place to assess the progress of pupils in MFL learning?
- 2) Why have current recommended systems been chosen?
- 3) How effective do you feel these methods are and why -
  - in general?
  - for SEN pupils?
- 4) What systems are in place to review and evaluate current assessment procedures in your school?
- 5) How appropriate do you feel current assessment procedures are in MFL teaching and learning in -
  - 5 - 14 Curriculum / Key Stage 3 / Grades 6 – 7?
  - Standard Grade – Key Stage 4 / Grades 8 – 9?
- 6) How appropriate do you think that Foundation Standard Grade Basic Level GCSE / courses are for lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 7) How successful do you think pupils feel who achieve Foundation level at Standard Grade / Basic Level GCSE?
- 8) What input do various national bodies have in the development of national guidelines on assessment procedures in your school?
- 9) How often are pupils assessed in your department?
- 10) What is the purpose of this assessment?
- 11) How do you assess -
  - Listening
  - Speaking
  - Reading
  - Writing?
- 12) Are pupils with SEN given the same exams as other pupils or different ones?
- 13) How are lower achievers and pupils with SEN motivated to achieve success, e.g do you offer Unit Schemes, Certification, etc?

## To Classroom Teachers

- 1) What systems are in place to assess the progress of pupils in MFL learning?
- 2) Why have current recommended systems been chosen?
- 3) How effective do you feel these methods are and why -
  - in general?
  - for SEN pupils?
- 4) What systems are in place to review and evaluate current assessment procedures in your school?
- 5) How appropriate do you feel current assessment procedures are in MFL teaching and learning in -
  - 5 - 14 Curriculum / Key Stage 3 / Grades 6 – 7?
  - Standard Grade – Key Stage 4 / Grades 8 – 9?
- 6) How appropriate do you think that Foundation Standard Grade Basic Level GCSE / courses are for lower achievers and pupils with SEN?
- 7) How successful do you think pupils feel who achieve Foundation level at Standard Grade / Basic Level GCSE?
- 9) What input do various national bodies have in the development of national guidelines on assessment procedures in your school?
- 10) How often are pupils assessed in your department?
- 11) What is the purpose of this assessment?
- 12) How do you assess -
  - Listening
  - Speaking
  - Reading
  - Writing?
- 13) Are pupils with SEN given the same exams as other pupils or different ones?
- 14) How are lower achievers and pupils with SEN motivated to achieve success, e.g. do you offer Unit Schemes, Certification, etc?

## Topic E – Future Developments

All participants were asked:

How do you see the future of MFL learning for pupils with SEN?

