

Policy

An understanding of the context of provision for pupils learning EAL is essential for ITE providers and student teachers. For example, under Q19, tutors are asked to consider whether trainees are aware of the whole-school ethos and the policies, procedures and approaches relating to the range of factors that can affect learning and well-being (TDA, 2007). These are, in turn, dependent on national policy, procedures and approaches. Provision for pupils learning English as an additional language raises issues not only of language and pedagogy, but also of rights and entitlements, social integration and equality of access to public provision.

In 1966, Section 11 of the Local Government Act made available funds "to help meet the special needs of a significant number of people of commonwealth origin with language or customs which differ from the rest of the community." In general, support for early stage EAL learners took place in specialist and separate Language Centres or through withdrawal from mainstream classes in schools. The findings of a 1986 Commission for Racial Equality report of a formal investigation in Calderdale Local Education Authority led to the closure of separate Language Centres. Specialist language support was subsequently provided in schools and usually in the context of mainstream classrooms.

In 1999, the DfEE Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) replaced Home Office Section 11 funding. This grant is distributed to local authorities on a formula basis relating to the number of EAL learners and the number of pupils from 'underachieving' minority ethnic groups in local authorities, combined with a free school meals indicator. Each LEA is required to devolve the bulk of this funding to schools.

The EMA grant is intended to narrow achievement gaps for those minority ethnic groups who are underachieving and to meet particular needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language. The purpose of the grant is two-fold;

- To enable strategic managers in schools and LEAs to lead whole school change to narrow achievement gaps and ensure equality of outcomes.
- To meet the costs of some of the additional support to meet the specific needs of bilingual learners and under-achieving pupils.

An increasingly wide range of activities to support the varied needs of minority ethnic pupils is now included within the remit. Additionally, the policy focus has moved away from additional teaching support for learners of EAL to a focus on strengthening mainstream provision for such learners at institutional and classroom level. This is reflected in the DfES consultation document, ['Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Minority Ethnic Pupils' \(2003\)](#) and subsequent initiatives.

Within the DfES, a [policy unit](#) has been created which focuses on the education of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. Its aims and objectives are to 'raise standards for all young people whatever their ethnic or cultural background and ensuring that all education policies truly address the needs of every pupil in every school'.

The transfer of funding responsibility from the Home Office to the DfES has been accompanied by a significant increase in the visibility of EAL issues in terms of educational policy initiatives and publications. After many years of neglect, there has been an increased recognition of the language and curriculum learning needs of ethnic and linguistic minority pupils and an effort to increase the level of teacher awareness and teacher professionalism in this field. In addition, the number of pupils learning EAL has risen considerably. In recent years a number of publications have included guidance specifically focused on the learning of pupils for whom English is an additional language (see below).

These publications reflect the current policy position which is that provision for EAL pupils is closely concerned with equal access and equal opportunities for all. This is seen as best achieved through a combination of whole school development and the student oriented adaptation of mainstream pedagogic practice within the classroom. This de facto policy position has been consistent since the mid 1980s and is that:

- Pupils learning EAL, as with all pupils, should have equal access and equal opportunity, with English as the preferred school language for bilingual pupils.
- Minority languages are valued and celebrated as worthwhile however academic attainment is only achieved through the medium of English
- The priority to develop English is the underlying assumption about language in the classroom and so minority language development is not addressed systematically
- Mainstream curriculum provision is the universal English-medium curriculum, with no dedicated EAL extension for bilingual pupils.

- Statutory assessment for pupils learning EAL is the same as assessment for native or mother-tongue English speakers

The emphasis given to meeting the needs of pupils learning EAL in the QTS Standards can be seen to reflect this policy position, and particularly so in the omission of any specific reference to knowledge and understanding. EAL is thus conceptualised as an 'aspect' of general teaching rather than a specialist subject area.

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Further Reading and References

Websites

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OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education)
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/>

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)
<http://www.qca.org.uk/>

Standards Site - Department for Children, Schools and Families
Ethnic Minority Achievement
<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/>

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