

UK “could learn a lot” from bilingual schooling around the world, says Cambridge

24 May

Education policy-makers in Britain could learn a lot from “inspirational” bi-lingual schooling developed by Education Ministries around the world, says a department of Cambridge University.

In the same week that Britain's approach to foreign language learning in schools was publicly criticized by Baroness Coussins, education policy-makers from many countries across the globe – including Argentina, United Arab Emirates and Spain – showcased successful bi-lingual primary schooling programmes at an event held last week at Cambridge University.

Speaking at the annual English for Schools 2010, Dr Mike Milanovic, from University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, who specialise in language learning and assessment, described the projects as inspirational. He said:

“All over the world education authorities are successfully incorporating English and other languages into full time primary education. By helping to up skill the population, bilingual school projects have a huge impact and the UK could learn a lot from this”.

Xavier Gisbert from Madrid's regional government presented their hugely successful Bilingual Programme Madrid – a government funded project in Spain which in the last year has seen nearly 250 state “Bilingual Schools” teaching 30% the region's normal curriculum in English. Other showcases included a look at various initiatives in Argentina – a country steeped in successful foreign language learning history. Silvia Rettaroli from the Ministry of Education in Buenos Aires outlined how they have a long tradition of foreign language learning the compulsory education sector dating back to 1818. She outlined how in today's system Argentinean children as young as 6 learn English and French at school.

Cambridge ESOL, who hosted the event, carry out extensive research into language learning each year and recent statistics show the UK has become a hub for overseas students learning English – with candidates from 165 nationalities taking exams set by Cambridge ESOL in the UK in the last 12 months. Dr Mike Milanovic said the benefits of such projects in both the UK and abroad extend further than the four walls of the classroom:

“Learning a second language at primary age not only benefits the individual but the society as a whole. Having a highly skilled population in terms of language ability can tangibly help to boost economies and increase employability.”

**Ends
Notes**

Full list of presentations

Thursday 20 May:

UK

Mike Milanovic: CEO Cambridge ESOL
Introduction and Welcome

Shelagh Rixon: University of Warwick, UK
Assessing and teaching children

Hanan Khalifa, Assistant Director Research and Validation, Cambridge ESOL
Student-centred assessment

Spain

Xavier Gisbert: Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid
Bilingual programme Madrid

France

Chantal Junot: National Ministry of Education, France
International foreign language certification in the French state school system

Argentina

Silvia Rettaroli: Ministry of Education, City of Buenos Aires, Argentina
Argentina: A long tradition of EFL in the compulsory sector

Europe

Karen Ashton, Research and Validation, Cambridge ESOL
SurveyLang

Friday 21 May

United Arab Emirates

Alison Currie: Partnership Advisor, EAL Programmes, CfBT, Abu Dhabi, UAE – *Bilingual Learning in Abu Dhabi, UAE*

Egypt

Nadia Touba: Director of English Studies Division - The American University in Cairo
Selected flavours of education reform in Egypt

Europe

Angeliki Salamoura: Research and Validation, Cambridge ESOL
CEFR in Practice

