Language Activism and Advocacy: Lobbying for Languages

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Chair of the University Council of Modern Languages (2018-2021)

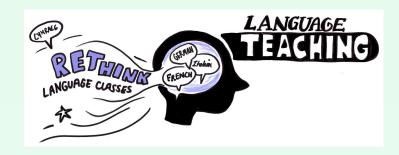
Presentation Outline

- Modern Languages in the UK: stories we tell ourselves and others
- What is the role of the Academy in supporting languages?
- Advocacy and activism in the university sector: the example of UCML
- Who is a language activist and what can they do?



Stories We Tell Ourselves and Others

- Modern Languages in the UK: a story of long-term decline: a country predisposed to 'lifelong English monolingualism'
- Yet, this is not the full picture: 'the UK has the potential to be a linguistic powerhouse', Neil Kenny and Harriet Barnes (2019) 'Language Learning: Turning a Crisis into an Opportunity. British Academy Review, Spring, p. 13)
- Agency and belief need to come from the language community





What is the Role of Academy in Supporting Languages?

- Collaborating with schools: building support networks and a robust community of practice, MFL Mentoring project in Wales and England
- Engaging with policy makers and decision-makers: working with UK Governments on language policy, e.g. working with Welsh Government on the Draft Curriculum for Wales 2022
- Mobilising other organisations who share the languages mission: British Council, British Academy, Chartered Institute of Linguists
- O Generating projects with other university departments: collaboration not competition: for example, 'Rethinking the Languages Pipeline in a Age of Brexit', 27 September 2019, Cardiff (Bath, Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter universities)
- Working nationally to promote the value of languages and contest the 'monolingualism paradigm' via associations, such as UCML

Advocacy and Activism in the University Sector: UCML

 Represents modern languages and cognate disciplines to UK and devolved Government, the funding councils and other bodies at national level;

Recent: UCML Scotland: 'Widening Participation in Languages, Cross-Sector Annual Conference, 15 June 2019, University of Dundee

 Collects and disseminates information about the state of modern languages in the UK; Annual reports on UCAS data language trends

https://ucml.ac.uk/2019/07/22/ucas-releases-data-for-2019-ug-application-cycle/

Provides a forum for debate on issues of concern through conferences, seminars and online reports;See recent workshop 'tool kit' on surviving and thriving in difficult times:

https://ucml.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/201/2019/08/UCML-Surviving-and-Thriving-Tool-Kit-2019.pdf

Presents the case for languages in the media

Coordinated media campaign to protest the closure of modern languages at the University of Hull

Who is a Language Activist and What Can They do?

Seek common purpose and work in partnership: UCML and severe grading

https://ucml.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/201/2018/11/UCML-OFQUAL_statement_Final.docx-v3.pdf

 Need to engage with government and policy makers: co-working not contestation; opening up avenues for mutual benefit

https://www.tes.com/news/we-are-struggling-hugely-languages-decline-dfe-admits

Making the case repeatedly for LANGUAGES, not individual languages.

https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/arts-blog/modern-foreign-languages-time-rename

 Understand and act on the ethical imperative to learn, understand and value the rich linguistic eco-system in the UK.

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