

Workshop Briefing Report

Evaluation, Impact and Outcomes in working with children and young people in regional and minority language revitalisation efforts

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Executive Summary

Despite the commonalities in their work and in the opportunities and challenges that they face, prior to this workshop, there has been little interaction between organisations working with children and young people in language promotion across the four cases: Wales, Scotland, the North of Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. As a result, the aims of the workshop were to provide a space in which to discuss experiences, to contribute to capacity building, to share and create good practice and to identify potential next steps regarding evaluation, impact and outcomes in language promotion work. Its key points were as follows:

- The types of organisations who work with children and young people in regional and minority language promotion vary, and so do their aims and activity. Overall, through their work with young people, they seek to have influence over a combination of the following: levels of linguistic skills; a positive influence on young peoples' levels of language use; young people's attitudes towards the language, for instance their sense of its prestige (Section 2);
- There is an important external context to their work, which reflects broader trends, including an increased emphasis on evidence-based policy and a greater emphasis in language promotion efforts on increasing minority language use. As a result, in a number of cases there is a growing emphasis on assessing and evaluating the impact of work with children and young people in regional and minority language revitalisation efforts. It is unclear, however, whether methods of evaluating impact are being implemented consistently (Section 3);
- There is also an important internal context for the work of such organisations. The ways in which organisations working to promote regional and minority languages outline their aims and objectives varied. Some focused purely on language-related issues while others also connected with broader agendas, with the latter potentially being influenced by the need to align themselves with other governmental policy aims. There is some uncertainty whether broadening aims in such a way complements language promotion efforts or distracts from them (Section 4);
- Whereas some organisations worked in a funding context where they mainly accessed funding specifically dedicated to language promotion work, other organisations worked in contexts where there was little or no dedicated governmental funding to support work to promote RML use amongst children and young people. Consequently, some organisations downplayed, or indeed, potentially concealed the actual rationale and distinguishing factor of their work: namely working through the medium of the RML. Moreover, funder evaluation requirements often did not value or could not capture the linguistic implications of language-based interventions (Section 5);

- Other issues highlighted by the organisations included: the way in which different legislative contexts for each regional and minority language impacted upon funder attitudes towards work in a regional or minority language; the potential for ‘mission creep’; capacity challenges; and the limitations of current evaluation practices, particularly their excessive emphasis on quantitative indicators (Section 5);
- Organisations wanted to use evaluation to improve their practices and the quality of their activities but evaluating the outcomes and impact of their work was, however, a challenge. Key issues raised were internal capacity and resource issues, the challenge of impact and evaluation in volunteer-driven activities and data overload (Section 6);
- As a result, organisations called for a different and more nuanced approach to evaluation and measuring outcomes. They were in favour of greater discussion across organisations and with funders regarding what is realistic to measure, what type of data is required, and how to ensure that the data is of a high quality. They saw value in developing a better balance between quantitative and qualitative approaches and to developing methods that could improve the measurement of outcomes regarding (i) language ability (ii) language use (iii) confidence, and in particular, measuring change in these (Section 7);
- Presentations sought to share best practice and to enrich the methodologies being used to assess the impact of work with children and young people in regional and minority language revitalisation, in particular in relation to: The Theory of Change, The Most Significant Change method; the evaluation framework of Urdd Gobaith Cymru; data and evaluation of language revitalisation efforts; Language Use Observation Survey Methods; Research into Factors that Affect Young People’s Language Use, and; the potential to incorporate children as researchers (Section 8).

Key recommendations

For organisations working with children and young people

- 1** Organisations should develop a more nuanced approach to evaluation of linguistic outcomes, particularly by differentiating more clearly between language ability, language use and attitudes. On this basis, where appropriate, organisations should develop ways in order to enhance the assessment of their impact on language use and young people's attitudes towards the language, and give greater priority to measuring change in these.
- 2** Organisations should work internally to develop a clearer sense of the relationship between their activities, the type of linguistic outcomes that they seek to achieve, the most appropriate indicators and methods to evaluate the extent to which they are realising those outcomes. On this basis, organisations should adopt tools to evaluate those issues in ways that are tailored to and most appropriate to the composition of their organisation and develop the confidence to share these discussions externally, including with funders.
- 3** In this process, organisations should seek training and support to experiment with new methods of evaluation and to increase their capability and confidence in interpreting and utilising their data, including by learning from other organisations.
- 4** On the basis of the value of sharing experiences and good practice evidenced in the workshop, organisations should consider how they can build on this basis to maximise the potential of maintaining and strengthening dialogue across organisations and work to develop greater collaboration, including with active researchers in these areas.

For funders and governmental institutions:

- 5** In cases of Regional and Minority Languages, the strategic policy and legislative context should recognise the value of work by organisations to promote these languages amongst children and young people.
- 6** Funding should be provided to support work with children and people in regional or minority language promotion, either funding explicitly dedicated for this purpose, or by ensuring that mainstream youth work funding streams are supportive of applications from organisations that provide activities in a regional or minority language. The benefits of such an approach should be recognised by funders within their funding criteria.

- 7 Building on growing good practice, funders can more robustly measure and evidence the linguistic implications of activities according to meaningful aims and outcomes, in particular developing a more appropriate balance between quantitative indicators and more qualitative indicators. There is a need to further develop ways of measuring the impact of organisations or interventions on levels of language use and positive attitudes towards the language over time.
- 8 Funders should develop greater dialogue with organisations regarding the types of data that they are able to provide and the most meaningful data in order to assess their contribution to language promotion. Overall, the aim should be to adopt an approach to evaluation that places a greater emphasis on enabling organisations to enhance their learning capacity, improve their practices and the quality of their activities through a more genuine evaluation of strengths and weaknesses.
- 9 Funders should be aware of the capacity and workload implications for organisations of evaluating outcomes, particularly when organisations are in receipt of funding from a range of funders. There are challenges associated with having to report different outcomes and measurement indicators to different funders.



01. Introduction

- 1.1** This document reports on the main discussions of a workshop organised by the Wales Institute for Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD), ESRC-funded Civil Society Research Centre project on Education, Language and Identity in Scotland and Wales.¹ The workshop was held at the Urdd Centre, Cardiff Bay and we are grateful to the Urdd for providing the location.
- 1.2** The aim of the workshop was to draw together practitioners involved in regional and minority language (RML) revitalisation activities with children and young people, particularly in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland. In terms of context, youth work and work with children and young people face challenges regarding how to evaluate and demonstrate the impact and outcomes of their work. The work of organisations and bodies that seek to promote regional and minority language use amongst children and young people face additional issues and potential challenges in evaluating and assessing the linguistic impact of their activities. In addition to demonstrating outcomes in relation to youth work in general, they must also seek to show the impact of their work on the language skills and use of young people; something that is difficult to demonstrate.
- 1.3** Consequently, the workshop sought to provide a space in which to discuss experiences, to contribute to capacity building, to share and create good practice and identify potential next steps regarding evaluation, impact and outcomes in language promotion work.
- 1.4** The project organised a previous workshop regarding evaluation, impact and outcomes in the context of youth work in Wales. The briefing report provides a context for this second workshop (see link below).²
- 1.5** This document summarises the main points arising from the presentations and group discussions during the workshop. The presentations are available on the project website (see link below).³

¹ Project details: WISERD ESRC Civil Society Research Centre, work package 2.3 Education, Language and Identity, <https://wiserd.ac.uk/research/research-projects/education-language-identity>.

² Royles, E., Jones, Rh (2018) 'Workshop Briefing Report: Evaluation, Impact and Outcomes: What does it mean for us?' <http://cwps.aber.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Evaluation-Impact-and-Outcomes-What-does-it-mean-for-us-Final-Report-1.pdf>

³ Project website: <https://wiserd.ac.uk/research/research-projects/education-language-identity>.

02. The nature and context to organisations working with children and young people in regional and minority language (RML) revitalisation efforts

- 2.1** Organisations who work with children and young people in regional and minority language revitalisation encompass different type of organisations that align with one of the following categories:
- Firstly, it includes those organisations set up with the primary aim of promoting a regional and minority language. Their work may be specifically focused on children and young people, or this cohort may be one of the groups with which the organisation works.
 - Secondly, it also includes organisations focused on working with children and young people. Activities held through the medium of the regional and minority language, or bilingually, may be less central to their work but may form one aspect of their work given the particular legal, socio-cultural and political context within which they operate.
 - Thirdly, it includes organisations that work with children and young people in relation to another policy issue, for instance work with regards to social deprivation, or issues related to health. Whilst these organisations are therefore not specifically concerned with regional and minority language revitalisation, their location (e.g. in particular geographical areas where there is a relatively high density of language speakers) means that they deliver their activities through the medium of the regional and minority language, or bilingually.
- 2.2** In practice, the aims of work with children and young people in regional and minority language revitalisation are numerous and depend on the specific context. Generally, whilst the statutory education system is posited as playing a central role in language revitalisation efforts, evidence across a range of cases underlines that the education system is not sufficient in nurturing confident speakers of the language. Rather, it is important that children and young people are provided with opportunities to use the language outside of school, in different social settings/domains.
- 2.3** Consequently, depending on the composition of groups with which they are working, organisations who work with children and young people would be expected to be seeking to have a level of influence over a combination of the following: levels of linguistic skills; a positive influence on young peoples' levels of language use; young people's attitudes towards the language, for instance their sense of its prestige.

02.

- 2.4** The workshop drew together a range of organisations and key stakeholders mainly working in Wales, Scotland, North of Ireland and Ireland associated with promoting Welsh, Gaelic and Irish. The main commonalities across these cases includes their membership of the family of Celtic languages, which are the main regional minority languages spoken in the UK and Ireland today. Across the cases, language shift has occurred as the influence of English has increased. Many of the organisations work in both rural and urban contexts (with Glór na Móna the only organisation represented solely working in a more specifically urban context). As a result, the majority of organisations have to be responsive to the often contrasting circumstances of the language in both contexts: the highest density of RML language speakers in these cases are located in socio-economically fragile areas, and the growing proportion of RML speakers are in urban areas where there are lower densities of RML speakers.
- 2.5** Beyond these commonalities, there were also quite significant differences across the cases with respect to demographic factors and the context of language revitalisation efforts, with direct effects on organisations working with children and young people in language promotion.
- 2.6** First, there were quite substantial differences in the relative length and position of language revitalisation efforts in each case, often reflected in when organisations had been established, and the extent to which they received governmental and institutional support. Organisations working in the Republic of Ireland worked in a context where there was a substantial historical basis for support for Irish with respect to language legislation and language rights.
- 2.7** For Wales and Scotland, since the 1960s, activist-led campaigns and public policy interventions have tended to be more prominent and far-reaching in the Welsh case, thus leading to the earlier introduction of language legislation. However, in both Scotland and Wales, the establishment of devolution in 1999 served as a catalyst for more proactive policy interventions and efforts to promote Welsh and Gaelic by their respective sub-state governments, including the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 that established a statutory language planning agency for Scots Gaelic.

02.

- 2.8** In contrast, the absence of proactive institutional support in the North of Ireland case, illustrated by historic lack of state funding for Irish medium education, has resulted in a stronger grassroots emphasis within language revitalisation efforts. Governmental support is more recent, following a Northern Ireland Department of Education Review of Irish Medium Education in 2009, which recognised that it should encourage and support informal learning opportunities through the medium of Irish. This resulted in the establishment of Fóram nan Óg in 2009 as a regional support body to facilitate the growth and development of the Irish-medium youth sector.
- 2.9** However, the Northern Ireland case also highlights a second difference across the cases in the variation in levels of politicisation surrounding language promotion. Despite advancements for youth work in Irish, it is currently working in a highly politicised context as language politics has been viewed as being at the centre of the collapse of talks to restore power sharing to the Northern Ireland Assembly, specifically in relation to tensions surrounding DUP policy decisions regarding the Irish language and calls for language legislation. At the other end of the spectrum, Comunn na Gàidhlig pointed to the more limited activism and politicisation surrounding Gaelic in Scotland. This is illustrated by the support provided to Gaelic development by Conservatives in the 1980s/ 1990s, Labour in the 1990s/2000s and the current SNP government.
- 2.10** Finally, the Republic of Ireland case highlights that governmental and institutional positions with regard to greater support for RMLs are sometimes opaque. With regards to its current two most important language policies, the 20-Year Irish language strategy for 2010-2030 and the Gaeltacht Act 2012, the former was viewed as being left unimplemented and ignored, and the government has refused to engage with proposed amendments to the latter. There have also been significant public funding cuts, particularly to the capital budget for the Gaeltacht between 2008 and 2017. Amongst the main explanations for the reduction in state support are negative political attitudes towards the Irish language and the economic and public funding conditions created by the age of austerity. Whereas the Republic of Ireland case represents the starkest illustration of the potential for reductions in institutional support for language revitalisation efforts, across the cases, organisations working with children and young people in language promotion face a more challenging funding context.

03. The external context to work with children and young people in a RML

3.1 The two main influences upon the work of the organisations are the external and internal contexts. With regards to the external context, in his presentation Prof. Rhys Jones outlined how many of the organisations work at the interface between two policy areas: youth work and language policy. Within this context, there is an increased emphasis on evidence-based policy that has resulted in a greater reliance on quantitative indicators to measure impact and on integrating evaluation into the development of policies according to a practice of test, learn and adapt. More broadly, recognition that public policy interventions may often fail for various reasons is becoming more prevalent. As a result, organisations can benefit from being more open regarding the learning process that can occur when interventions don't work. Moreover, as continuing cuts in public spending have escalated the need to justify public spending, the imperative for organisations to demonstrate the impact of their work has increased.

3.2 On this basis, documents that provide the strategic policy context in cases such as Wales, Scotland and Ireland illustrate the increased emphasis on measuring the impact of work with young people. Over time, mechanisms seem to be becoming more refined. For example, previous strategies suggested a lack of clear alignment between aims, outcomes and indicators in interventions to promote use of Welsh outside school in leisure and cultural activities:

'Aim: to increase the provision of Welsh-medium activities for children and young people and to increase their awareness of the value of the language.

Desired outcome: Children and young people using more Welsh.

Indicator: Attendance at Welsh-language events organised for children and young people, including those organised by Welsh government grant recipients' (Welsh Government, 2012: 28)

There is not a simple association between attending events and using Welsh. There are, therefore, limitations to such data in evaluating the impacts of youth work in RMLs. There are signs, however, of progress towards strengthening the evidence base, and placing an emphasis on being able to more robustly measure and evidence the contribution of organisations, including through the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data.

03.

- 3.3** The Cymraeg 2050 language strategy for Wales refers to building the evidence base and utilising the most appropriate methods in order to assess the effectiveness of interventions, utilising a combination of qualitative and quantitative data (Welsh Government, 2015: 77). Similarly, the National Gaelic Language plan refers to collating and publishing information from a range of sources in order to track progress and to develop ways of measuring increased use of Gaelic in order to assess whether strategies are working (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, 2018: 55). In the Irish case, the 20 year Strategy for the Irish Language referred to a language audit process that would provide time-series evidence of the impact of language-related policies and reforms on language use (Government of Ireland, 2010:24).
- 3.4** Overall, funders and practitioners tend to emphasise the need to demonstrate the outcomes and impact of work with children and young people in regional and minority language revitalisation efforts. Across the cases, the main emphasis seems to be upon striving to ensure the effectiveness of their interventions, rather than being associated with securing value for money. The strategies propose new methods of achieving their aims to evaluate impact with a particular focus on time, but it is not always clear whether these are implemented.



04. The internal context to work with children and young people in a RML

- 4.1** In addition to the external context, Rhys Jones' presentation drew attention to the diversity of ways in which organisations working to promote regional and minority languages outline their aims and objectives, for instance in strategy documents, reports and mission statements. A key question was the extent to which it was necessary for there to be a strong association between an organisation's aims and objectives and the ways in which their work would be evaluated, and whether all aims and objectives needed to be measurable.
- 4.2** Amongst the key trends, a number of organisations understandably had focused objectives associated with their contribution to promoting the minority language, particularly in terms of strengthening linguistic ability, providing opportunities to use the language in different settings and in nurturing positive attitudes towards the language. In line with this, some pointed to their contribution to creating language communities, or building networks of language speakers. What was somewhat less clear was how to evaluate and measure the extent to which they were achieving the latter.
- 4.3** In other cases, organisational aims and objectives were somewhat more expansive as they also encompassed their role in promoting expressions of identity and culture. The forms of expressing this varied, including an organisation projecting themselves as one that enabled young people to become 'living embodiments of our language and culture' (Urdd Gobaith Cymru Annual Report, 2017-18).
- 4.4** Furthermore, the stipulated aims and objectives of some organisations were broader, encompassing their contribution to the social and personal development of a young person. Such broader aims included enabling children and young people to make a positive contribution to the community, to developing their confidence and mental health. The suggestion was that some organisations were aligning themselves with the aims of other policy areas (and potentially other governmental policy initiatives) such as creating 'better' citizens, improving levels of academic achievement and addressing socio-economic inequalities and Young People not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs). Whereas the organisations may make valuable contributions to these agendas, there are questions, here, about the extent to which this development complements the work of youth organisations working in RMLs, or whether it serves to distract them from their main linguistic goals.

05. Organisational perspectives on evaluation and impact: the implications of the external context

- 5.1** Presentations and group discussions at the workshop drew attention to key points regarding the implications of the external and internal context for their evaluation and impact work.
- 5.2 Funder responses to ‘language organisations’**
Funders had a significant impact on the type of outcomes that an organisation was seeking to achieve. Language-promotion related to children and youth sought to draw on funding from two types of agencies and government departments; from ‘language organisations’ to promote language development and from sources of funding to support ‘youth work organisations’ to promote health, well-being and social-development of young people.
- 5.3** Some organisations worked in a funding context where they mainly accessed funding specifically dedicated to language promotion work. In these circumstances, there was clearer alignment between their core objectives and the way in which the impact and outcomes of their activities were assessed. These organisations might also seek funding from other types of sponsors with different priorities, thus influencing the way in which they would project their anticipated outcomes in funding applications, e.g. focusing more on the youth work outcomes and lessening the focus on the language in which the activities would take place.
- 5.4** At the other extreme, other organisations worked in contexts where there was little or no dedicated governmental funding to support work to promote RML use amongst children and young people. Consequently, they sought to either mould their programmes to the requirements of governmental funders to secure funding, or sought alternative sources of funding from NGOs or charities where the criteria for accessing funding was more flexible. As a consequence, some organisations felt that they had to emphasise and demonstrate their strengths and quality in another aspect of their work, e.g. youth work provision. In some cases, organisations downplayed, or indeed, potentially concealed the actual rationale and distinguishing factor of their work: working through the medium of the RML, even though providing the activity in a regional or minority language might lead to more direct impact, be more meaningful and of greater benefit to the young people. Some language organisations, therefore, felt that they were solely judged against youth work objectives and standards due to the funding context. Others felt that the lack of flexibility of the funding and unfavourable funding criteria was putting them at a disadvantage in seeking to realise their language promotion objectives.

05.

- 5.5** Given the lack of recognition of working through a regional and minority language in some contexts, funder evaluation requirements could not capture the linguistic implications of the interventions. For instance, reporting on outcomes in relation to progress and achievements arising from young people's participation in youth work would focus on outcomes such as: enhanced capabilities; development of positive relationships with others; improved health and well-being; increased participation; development of thinking skills, life and work skills; active citizenship. The lack of reporting on linguistic outcomes was deemed to lessen the potential for learning within an organisation with respect to its core objectives.
- 5.6** In the Northern Ireland case, such circumstances also led to questioning the value of evaluation and impact assessments, as they did not contribute to achieving organisational aims, or to promoting good practice with respect to language promotion activities with children and young people. In addition, youth organisations had worked on a model of Irish-medium Youth Work in 2016 in order to develop the status of the language within youth work. The model has sought to give greater attention to identifying the value that young people feel from being able to socialise through the medium of Irish, including the way in which their engagement has contributed towards the normalisation of Irish language use and increased confidence in language use.
- 5.7 Implications of the legislative context**
The challenges that some organisations faced in accessing funding to support language activities were influenced by the extent to which the legislative framework safeguarded and promoted a RML, or the extent to which public bodies complied with language legislation.
- 5.8** During discussions, organisations working in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland pointed to differences in the approach of a UK-wide funding body to project applications that referred to working in a minority language. In some cases, organisations felt that they could include this aspect in applications to support their chances of securing funding. In other cases, there were risks that the funding body would be less likely to approve an application to undertake youth work through the medium of a regional and minority language. In such circumstances, organisations would not emphasise this element, or not mention it in their application given the risks of reducing the likelihood of success of their application. Overall, the determining feature of the UK-wide funding body response across the cases was the relative strength of the statutory framework in requiring a funder to comply with language legislation. The stronger the framework, the more positive the response to applications that incorporated working in the minority language.

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5.9 In other cases, organisations referred to examples where their chances of securing funding for work through the medium of an RML was impeded by some public bodies not operating in line with the requirements of the legislative framework within which they were working. For instance, a few organisations observed that some public bodies would not read applications if submitted in the minority language, even though the legislative context provided for this opportunity.

5.10 Potential ‘mission creep’

The way in which organisations had to mould themselves and seek funding as language organisations and/or youth work organisation created potential risks in terms of ‘mission creep’. Overall, the suggestion was that any organisation in receipt of government funding had to adapt or broaden their objectives to some extent in order to maximise opportunities for funding, but there were risks in moving away from the organisation’s core objectives.

5.11 For instance, in order to access youth work funding, organisations were increasingly having to work to promote health, well-being and the social development of young people. In some cases, organisations were being encouraged to emphasise the economic benefits and employment impact of their organisation, for instance in contributing to youth employment and training in a regional minority language and creating workers that use a regional and minority language in the workplace.

5.12 There is a more positive take on ‘mission creep’. Some organisations explained that changes in their organisational objectives also derived from a more engaged input from their members, young people, who were gaining a greater voice within the organisation. For instance, members were looking for the organisation to work more on issues such as young people’s mental health. Consequently, there is a need to understand the multiple influences in expanding an organisation’s objectives.

5.13 Capacity challenges

Organisations drew attention to capacity issues when receiving funding from a range of funders. Reporting to different funders required the use of different outcomes and measurement indicators, evaluation tools and working to different reporting timeframes. Consequently, the substantial amount of work associated with evaluation and reporting created capacity challenges, particularly for smaller organisations. For instance, one small organisation referred to how they drew on funds from eight different funding sources, each requiring reporting on different outcomes and statistics in a context where they lacked an evaluation officer.

05.

5.14 Current funder practices and indicators in evaluating language promotion work

Organisations also faced internal capacity and resource issues that impacted upon their evaluation and impact assessment work. In a number of cases, the vast majority of organisational resources were focused on frontline work. Administrative overhead costs were minimised and they had little time for evaluation and impact work. Activities were often led by officers on 0.5 contracts working individually in different communities. In many respects, it was much easier to collect quantitative data, but as mentioned above, organisations recognised that generating a more thorough understanding of the influence of an activity required different, more qualitative types of data.

5.15 Limitations to evaluation practices

Beyond this, a number of potential limitations were identified with current evaluation practices:

- In a number of cases, organisations felt that there were risks in evaluation based too excessively on quantitative indicators, which were not always the most appropriate to capture the actual quality of the impact of organisations' interventions. The tendency to draw on quantitative indicators such as the number of events, and how many attended those events was not able to take into account the impact on more critical issues, particularly the quality of the experience and its effects on the language use of attendees. Such indicators did not either take into account the implications of contrasts in numbers able to take part in activities, for instance between rural or urban areas.
- Other practices noted was a lack of attention to evaluation in some cases, either because language concerns were not integrated into the evaluation mechanisms, or where there seemed to be a lack of adequate attention to evaluating the linguistic impacts of funding directed towards language revitalisation. Instead, greater attention was given to other quantitative indicators, the number of 'likes' on social media.
- Overall, there is a tendency to stress short-term outcomes whereas the impact on attitudes towards the language may be more substantial in the longer term. Whilst it is somewhat unreasonable to expect an organisation to be able to demonstrate and quantify its long-term impacts, there are risks that funding will be prioritised towards short-term outcomes and to organisations able to stress the strengths of their short-term outcomes.

06. Organisational perspectives on evaluation and impact: the implications of the internal context

6.1 There was a desire amongst organisations to use evaluation to improve their practices and the quality of their activities with children and young people in promoting regional and minority languages. For instance, they wanted to be able to clarify that as an organisation they were creating meaningful language promotion activities, having an impact, and that they wanted to learn in order to improve and strengthen their work.

6.2 Tools and appropriate qualitative indicators

Evaluating the outcomes and impact of their work was, however, a challenge for organisations. One key issue was the difficulty of gaining appropriate tools to measure language use, confidence, and aspects such as the contribution of an organisation to a young person's identity. For instance, the objective of an organisation such as Comunn na Gàidhlig is to encourage and support children and young people to use Gaelic and they wish to measure young people's propensity to use the language. However, they tend to measure attendance according to indicators such as contact hours per term, numbers attending summer camps, number of schools taking part in a football competition. They felt challenged in their ability to measure willingness to use the language and undertake attitudinal research. One way in which they had investigated this in an individual project was through collecting case study evidence through direct observation, discussion and evaluation, including the use of evaluation sheets, video diaries and discussions with participants.

6.3 The relative benefits and drawbacks of external evaluation were also discussed. Some organisations had either commissioned or been involved in externally commissioned projects where an external consultant evaluated their effectiveness. Whereas many positives aspects of this approach were cited, some potential risks included a lack of an ability to reflect in depth on the context within which an organisation worked and how this might influence an evaluation.

6.4 Capacity

Organisations also faced internal capacity and resource issues that impacted upon their evaluation and impact assessment work. In a number of cases, the vast majority of organisational resources were focused on frontline work. Administrative overhead costs were minimised and they had little time for evaluation and impact work. Activities were often led by officers on 0.5 contracts working individually in different communities. In many respects, it was much easier to collect quantitative data, but as mentioned above, organisations recognised that generating a more thorough understanding of the influence of an activity required different, more qualitative types of data.

06.

6.5 Organisations were looking for easy to use toolbox, and recognised the need for training and support to increase their capability. Organisations were aware of the drawbacks of not having adequate training and support: spending too much time gathering evidence and trying to analyse the data, taking them away from the activities for which they were being funded.

6.6 Challenges of impact and evaluation in volunteer-driven activities

Generally, organisations contrasted the approaches of paid staff and volunteers towards data collection and analysis. The former are more appreciative of its importance and more involved in its collection, and organisations find it more difficult to involve volunteers in these activities. This point was illustrated in Cumann na bhFiann's provision of Irish language youth clubs to provide opportunities for young people to use Irish outside of school. A strong emphasis is placed in the model on young people themselves running clubs rather than parents etc. and it also works to keep young people involved in the organisation until they are 24-25 years of age. Consequently, the model is particularly dependent on its leadership training academy whereby members of their clubs volunteer to join the academy at around 15 years of age and work through four stages of the leadership programme until they run clubs. As a result, language promotion is almost entirely dependent on the voluntary aspect and they require 200 volunteers a year to run the clubs. Given the small number of staff and resources, the organisation is more dependent on informal methods to evaluate their work where volunteers submit weekly data on attendance and activities, subsequently analysed based on a framework of midyear and annual review. Such a situation makes the development of more sustained forms of evaluation more challenging.

6.7 Data overload

Organisations discussed the risks in collecting too much data and lacking confidence in how to analyse, interpret and utilise their existing data. Organisations therefore needed to have confidence in their internal systems, the type of data that they are collecting, how to interpret and utilise it. Some organisations did not have an adequate sense of what is reasonable and realistic in data collection terms and there was a consensus that this should be tailored for organisations relative to their size.

07. Strengthening the quality of evaluation and outcomes work

7.1 Consequently, organisations called for different approaches to evaluation and measuring outcomes.

7.2 Organisations were interested in developing methods to measure outcomes in the following ways:

- Greater attention to measuring outcomes regarding (i) ability (ii) language use (iii) confidence and attitudes, and in particular, measuring change in these.
- Incorporating differentiation in the process of evaluating the outcomes if working with first language speakers or those who had learnt the language. This was already being achieved in some contexts where evaluation responded to different targets for work with language learners and first language speakers.
- A combined approach, with a better balance of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, would be more effective in measuring the outcomes and quality of their work.
- Scope to take greater account of the level of density of language speakers, e.g. the impact of work in areas where there is a high density of language speakers and areas with a low density of speakers. The latter point highlights that the work of individual organisations can differ significantly, influenced by demographic differences: operating as a youth work organisation in the RML in a high speaker density area, as opposed to providing youth activities to promote a RML in areas with a lower density of language speakers.
- A greater emphasis on the distance travelled – linguistic or otherwise – by an individual in the context of an activity/ engagement with an organisation.
- Reflecting developments whereby some funders are placing a greater emphasis on evaluation to promote the learning capacity of an organisation by encouraging a genuine evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of approaches, supporting emergent practice rather than best practice, and creating the potential for organisations to learn from failure.
- Overall, there was consensus amongst organisations of the need to challenge themselves and their funders to analyse what is realistic to measure, what type of data is required, and how to ensure that the data collected is of high quality.

08. Sharing best practice and enriching methodologies for impact and evaluation work

8.1 A range of presentations sought to share best practice and enrich the methodologies being utilised by organisations working with children and young people in regional and minority language revitalisation.

8.2 The Theory of Change (Rhys Jones)

The Theory of Change provides a framework for identifying and mapping all of the activities and processes (outputs), and how these processes etc. lead to intermediate outcomes (the results of actions and processes), and their association with the impact or ultimate goals of the intervention/organisation. This idea entails developing an assessment of the effect of a programme or an intervention in order to provide a clear, concise and robust framework to explain and justify the relationship between specific activities and their ultimate goal.

8.3 The framework can enable thinking backwards from the intended impact of the work, to design the evaluation and monitoring framework from the outset in a way that is aligned with the activities being undertaken. It is viewed as a valuable tool to effective evaluation, with suggestions that funders consider that usage of a theory of change framework can lead to more successful bids as it provides a better understanding of what an organisation proposes to do. Models of theory of change can vary. Some models argue that outcomes are within the sphere of influence of an organisation, whereas impact is in the hands of others, and 'providers' are not accountable.

8.4 The Most Significant Change method (Rhys Jones)

The Most Significant Change (MSC) method was presented as a method that could be integrated into existing qualitative data assessments, particularly case studies, and provide more rigour. It focuses on collecting significant change stories, leading to a systematic selection of these stories within the organisation in a way that can engage all levels of the organisation in assessing its impact. As a result, it can inform the evaluation and monitoring of intermediate outcomes and impact.

8.5 The practice is based on asking the young person a question regarding the most significant change for them within a specific time period and space. It therefore enables the young person to evaluate what they would prioritise as the most significant change to them and the difference made as a result of their interaction with a youth organisation. Such stories can be collected in different ways: by the youth worker, asking a young person, through group discussion, or a young person writing the story. Individuals at a higher level within the organisation subsequently examine and discuss the stories, selecting and developing a justification for what they view as the most significant change of all. Their selection is then explained and justified to other levels within the organisation. This process of feedback verifies and strengthens the accountability of the choices made. The method can also be quantified, e.g. by quantifying the types of significant changes that appear in the various stories that have been collected.

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8.6 Amongst its strengths is that it draws upon data that can be collected by many people and can build the capacity of staff and volunteers. From an initial qualitative basis, quantitative elements can be added. It presents a valuable way of measuring programmes with numerous outcomes and can identify unexpected outcomes. It can be amended to reflect the size of an organisation, can allow organisations to focus on different aspects of their activity or on different geographical settings. It is used in the youth sector in England and elsewhere in the public sector. Moreover, it is an approach that can be used in flexible ways; to address the broader impact of youth organisations or in relation to their more specific impact on issues such as language use.

8.7 The Evaluation Framework of Urdd Gobaith Cymru (Catrin James)

One example where the MSC has been used in the minority language youth work sector is by Urdd Gobaith Cymru as part of the development of their evaluation framework. Catrin James explained that in order to evaluate the impact of their activities in increasing confidence in language use, they had developed a framework composed of the following:

- The Urdd has adopted the Theory of change as an analysis framework of its activities, the type of changes that it is trying to achieve and the intermediate outcomes.
- At a regional (17 regions) level, a standard consistent format to collect data across all provision within a region against targets set by the organisation (including the funders targets). The tool developed is a 'live' document, updated regularly allowing the organisation to consistently monitor data collection across all departments. A further evolution in the framework is to collect data to ensure mapping against geographical target areas, and for equality and diversity.
- An emphasis on measuring the distance travelled by drawing on a model Demonstrating Success, used as part of a previous European funding project, 'Reach the Heights'. The emphasis is on measuring progress with respect to interaction, motivation and active participation, independence, respect for others. Usage of Welsh has been added to the measures, understood as willingness to take part in Welsh-medium activities; seeing the value in utilising Welsh; eagerness and confidence to communicate in Welsh. This data is utilised to measure distance traveled on the level of an individual but also scaled up and expressed quantitatively across the levels of the organisation to the Wales-wide organisational level.
- Case studies are also being developed in order to understand the impact of the organisation / benefits of a particular activity from the perspective of a young person. A consistent approach to collecting case studies is used across the organisation, in terms of the type of evidence collected (including quotes from the young people). On this basis, the Urdd is developing a bank of evidence (70 case studies being collected twice a year nationally) and the Most Significant Change method is being utilised in the process of discussing case studies within the Urdd.

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8.8 Data in the evaluation of language revitalisation efforts (Hywel Jones)

Hywel Jones highlighted key issues regarding the way in which organisations utilise data and understand their impact. The key points of his presentation were as follows:

- Existing guidance is helpful in encouraging organisations to be clear about the purpose of the data, its quality and use, and as to whether indicators relate to inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes (somewhat harder to assess) or impact (much harder to assess). Other important requirements for indicators are whether or not they are precise/ well-defined, reliable, valid, measurable, practicable.
- It is possible to come across examples where there are clear problems with the data reporting on specific indicators, leading to unrealistic data. Often, this arises due to pressure on an organisation to demonstrate year on year improvement in the performance of an intervention/activity. However, the data leads to questions regarding the methodology utilised to evaluate the indicator, or whether changes in methods of data collection were not reported. Comparisons of data reported across years and across activities is valuable to identify potential issues with the reliability of the data and methods utilised.
- Questions can be asked regarding how funders utilise the data submitted by organisations, and whether or not there is adequate scrutiny of this data.
- Given the type of capacity issues raised, there is scope to provide organisations with support in order to validate their data and improve the rigour of data collection methods.
- There are risks that organisations are required to try to achieve outcomes that are too substantial and unrealistic e.g. activities that promote use of a language sufficient to bring about meaningful and lasting change.
- There are risks in organisations focusing on data collection and usage of indicators to report on funded projects. Organisations would benefit from considering what data may be more useful for their own purposes and ensure that they are achieving particular aims, rather than just for reporting purposes on what may be unachievable goals.
- Existing research and models regarding the factors that impact upon young people's language use can inform the work of organisations. One model developed in the Basque Country by Luna and Suberbiola (2008) seeks to model language use and to take into account the multiple factors impacting upon levels of language. Attention was drawn to other studies that might inform organisations regarding the context to young people's networks and language use, which provides a context to the model presented (Cwmni Iaith and Europe Research Centre 2006 report for the Welsh Language Board), Welsh language use in the community (Hodges and Prys et al., 2015), research into conditions influencing Welsh Language Transmission and Use within Families (Evas, Morris and Whitmarsh, 2017).

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- Other forms of quantitative data such as some census questions and language use surveys also provide a broader context to the evaluation and impact work of organisations (e.g. language use survey data). However, there are also limitations to the value of some of this data as the actual number of respondents to specific questions are not always sufficient (e.g. questions regarding where children use the Welsh language, the extent to which they have engaged in a social or cultural event held in Welsh and not organised by their school).

8.9 Language Use Observation Survey Methods (Asier Basurto Arruti)

The Basque Street Survey to assess levels of language use was established in the 1980s in response to the need for sociolinguistic indicators and has developed as one of the main references for understanding the situation of the Basque language. The methodology has also been developed and adapted for use in the workplace, in playgrounds, in sport teams and as part of in-depth analysis projects. Its usage in more enclosed spaces of this type, as opposed to on the street, changes the methodology away from focusing on the collection of demographic information (e.g. gender and age group based on observation) to collect more specific information about the speaker. In terms of its usage in schools, teachers can conduct the survey, e.g. in the playground by taking notes. Resources are available in order to inform using the methodology (Altuna and Basurto, 2013).

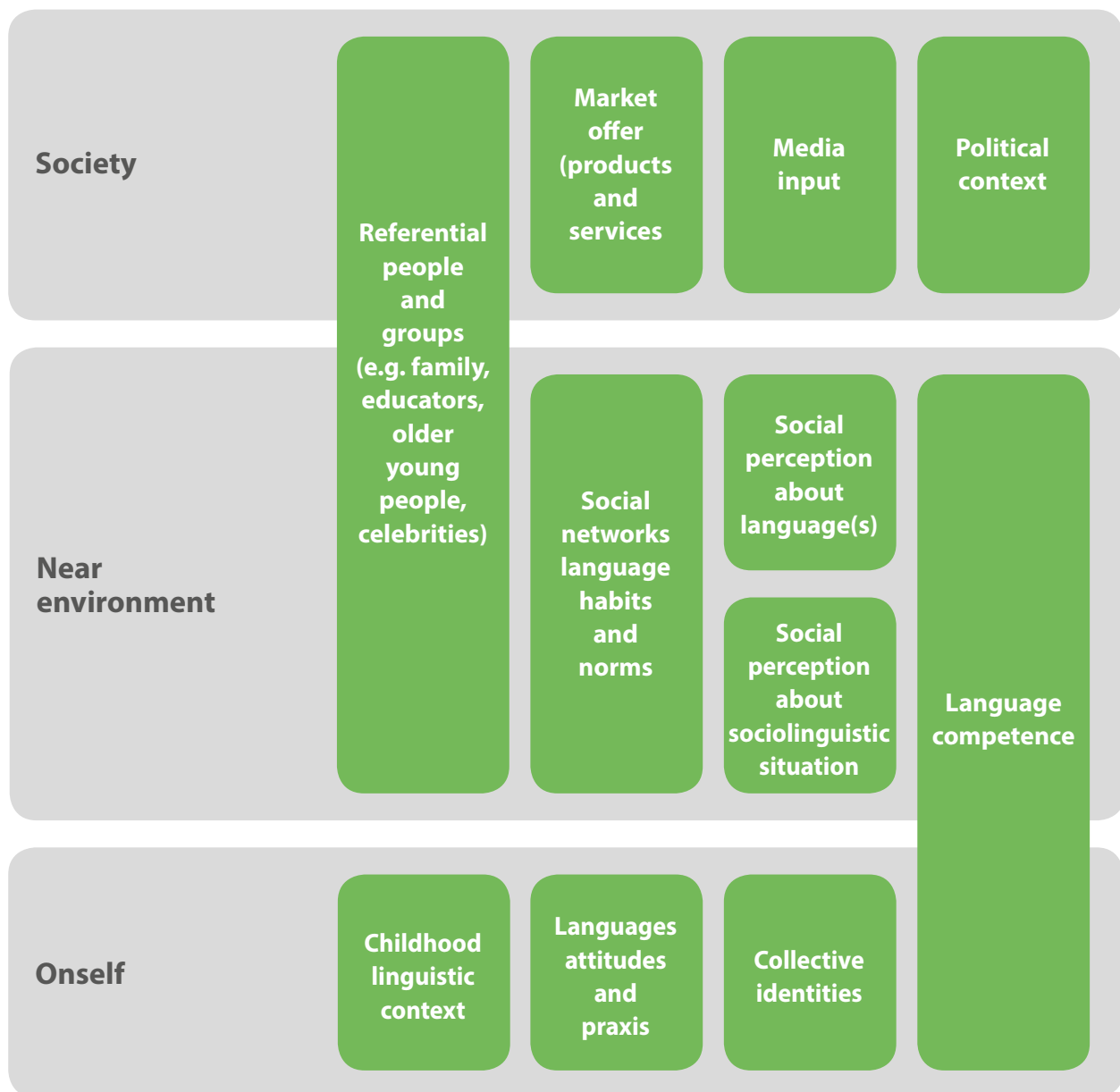
8.10 Proposal for Monitoring Factors that Affect Young People's Language Use (Asier Basurto Arruti)

The Soziolinguistika Klusterra analysed the factors that affect young people's language use by consulting experts (within universities, Basque language associations, schools, youth groups) and by consulting young people (of different ages and geographical contexts). The study found there to be eleven factors influencing language use, which they classified into three 'levels': (i) the societal, or macro-social level, (ii) the near environment, or micro-social level and (iii) oneself, or the individual level. The eleven factors, and their mapping onto these three different levels, are presented in the following chart.

The Soziolinguistika Klusterra have used this research to produce a 'GPS of language use' book, which they intend to be a guidebook for understanding, and taking action on, young people's language use.

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Factors that affect young people's language use



Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra

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8.11 Lleisiau Bach – Little Voices and the Children as Researchers Method**(Arwyn Roberts and Jane Williams)**

The Little Voices project and their development of the children as researchers project is set in the context of the work of the Observatory on the Human Rights of Children and developed from research with children within the framework of reporting on the UN on Wales' Convention on the Rights of the Child that was formally adopted by the Welsh Government in 2004.

They work in local projects with children and young people as researchers, deliver training in research with children and provide support for researchers and others who want to engage children in their work. Their own projects with children and young people as researchers focuses on a topic that the children and young people decide upon as a matter that they wish to improve, a matter that they want to research and where they consider it feasible that they can have an impact. The research is contextualised by introducing them to children's rights and the children contribute to different stages of the process, including selecting the research methods and undertaking the research. The project also conducts follow up with the children immediately after the project and six months afterwards to measure the distance travelled, particularly with respect to rights and engagement. The project has developed a training manual in their approach to Children as Researchers.⁴



⁴ Dale, H, Roberts, A (n.d.) Training Manual Lleisiau Bach Little Voices, [https://www.swansea.ac.uk/media/Little-Voices-Project-\(English\)-v5.pdf](https://www.swansea.ac.uk/media/Little-Voices-Project-(English)-v5.pdf)

Appendix: Workshop Programme

Evaluation, Impact and Outcomes in working with children and young people in regional and minority language revitalisation efforts

Workshop organised by The Wales Institute for Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD) ESRC-funded Civil Society Research Centre and hosted by Urdd Gobaith Cymru

25 and 26 February 2019, Urdd Centre Cardiff Bay

PROGRAMME

Monday 25 February

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 12.00 - 13.00 | Lunch and Registration |
| 13.00 - 15.00 | Welcome and Session 1
Evaluation and assessing impact in the context of working with children and young people in regional and minority language revitalisation activity – current practices and developing practices?
<i>Prof Rhys Jones and Dr Elin Royles (Aberystwyth University) and Dr Fiona O'Hanlon (Edinburgh University)</i> |
| 15.00 - 15.30 | Tea/Coffee |
| 15.30 - 17.30 | Session 2
Panel on experiences of impact, evaluation and outcomes in language promotion work with children and young people

Speakers
<i>Catrin James, Urdd Gobaith Cymru, Wales</i>
<i>Feargal Mac Ionnrachtaigh, Glór na Móna, Northern Ireland</i>
<i>Caitríona Ní Cheallaigh, Cumann na bhFiann, Ireland</i>
<i>Dòmhnall MacNèill a Marina Mhoireach, Comunn na Gàidhlig, Scotland</i> |
| 17.30 - 18.00 | Session 3 - Reflections on day 1 |
| 19.30 - | Evening dinner, Côte Brasserie |

Appendix: Workshop Programme

PROGRAMME

Tuesday 26 February

9.30 - 10.30	Session 4 Speed sharing: exchanging experiences and good practice – all attendees
10.30 - 10.45	Tea/Coffee
10.45 - 12.15	Session 5 Break out parallel sessions on enriching methodologies for impact and evaluation work Speakers The Most Significant Change Method <i>Rhys Jones, Prifysgol Aberystwyth</i> Language Use Observation Survey Methods Proposal for Monitoring Factors that Affect Young People's Language Use <i>Asier Bassurto Arruti, Soziolinguistika Klusterra, the Basque Country</i> The why and wherefores of data in the evaluation of language revitalisation efforts <i>Hywel Jones, Statiaith</i> Lleisiau Bach – Little Voices and the Children as Researchers Method <i>Arwyn Roberts and Helen Dale, Bangor University and Swansea University</i>
12.15 - 12.45	Session 6 Concluding discussion and next steps
12.45 -	Lunch and finish

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