

Introduction

I'm delighted to welcome you to this workshop on language policy, which we hope will be the first in a series of such events, offering opportunities for constructive dialogue between researchers and policymakers. It is very encouraging to see so many of you here, demonstrating that there is a very widespread interest in language policy. This is a particularly propitious time to be discussing language policy issues with, as we will hear, a number of key policy documents having been published in the last two months, including *Global Futures* in Wales, a *Scots Language Policy*, and an Ofsted report on Key Stage 3, which highlights concerns about the level of achievement in Modern Foreign Languages.

The aim of today's event is to help map out where the responsibilities for language policy sit within government and to promote greater prominence for languages nationally. We want to facilitate dialogue not only between researchers and policy professionals, but also between different government departments both in Whitehall and with the devolved parliaments and assemblies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We have deliberately adopted a broad perspective to include not just foreign language learning, but also the protection and promotion of the indigenous languages of the UK, as well as community or heritage languages. A holistic approach is necessary to appreciate and benefit from the UK's rich linguistic landscape. Whilst there is rightly widespread concern about the decline in numbers of people becoming multilingual through formal education in the UK – although recent statistics present a more nuanced picture as we shall hear later this morning – multilingualism is strongly present in the UK. For instance, DfE statistics (2014) demonstrate that nearly one in five primary school pupils have a first language other than English, and the range of languages spoken by these community (or heritage) and minoritised language speakers is much broader than those traditionally taught. Foreign language learning is, of course, vital to avoid what has been called the 'vicious circle of monolingualism'; as a series of reports has shown, language skills and a multilingual workforce not only bring economic benefits to the nation, but are vital, for instance, for peace building and UK security. Language policy then, is not just about foreign language learning, but deals with key issues for the UK today – national security, diplomacy and conflict resolution; community and social cohesion; migration and identity. As well as the 8 departments and organisations represented in the presentations this morning (the Ministry of Defence, UK Trade and Investment, the Department for Education, HEFCE, GCHQ, Education Scotland, the Welsh Government and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Northern Ireland), we also have representatives from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ofsted, the Defence Centre for Languages and Culture, [the Department for Communities and Local Government] and the British Academy, and we will be continuing the discussion with them in a closed seminar this afternoon.

The University of Cambridge has invested in a number of ways in research into, and promotion of, public policy. The Cambridge Centre for Science and Policy (CSaP) supports engagement between researchers and policy professionals; it runs policy workshops, lectures and the Policy Fellowship scheme which brings decision makers from government and industry to Cambridge as the basis for making useful and sustainable connections with researchers. Last month the University signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre to promote evidence-based policymaking. One of the University's 12 Strategic Research Initiatives is devoted to Public Policy, connecting research across the University to improve public policymaking through a cross-cutting programme of research on the policy process and support for policy development in key thematic areas. This workshop is organised in partnership with another of the Strategic Research Initiatives, that devoted to the Language Sciences, which promotes interdisciplinary research in language and linguistics, ranging from the arts and humanities to neuroscience, and which now has Multilingualism as one of its key themes. It is also supported by the University Council of Modern Languages, which is currently chaired by Jocelyn Wyburd, Director of the University of Cambridge's Language Centre, and by Speak to the Future, the Campaign for Languages, which has Baroness Coussins as its President and Bernardette Holmes, Bye-Fellow of Downing College, as its Campaign Director. I would particularly like to thank Jocelyn, Bernardette, Ben Earley from CSaP and Philip

Harding-Esch from Speak to the Future for their help in organising today's event. Finally I would like to thank Murray Edwards College for supporting the workshop.