

Blended Learning to Support Gaelic Language Learning

Thursday 5 August 2021 - Parallel Session 4 - 11.30am to 12.30pm (GMT+1)

CAMPBELL - Renewing Indigenous Languages / Building Enduring Partnerships

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Across Scotland approximately 3,700 primary school pupils (0.9% of the total primary school population) are enrolled in Gaelic Medium Education (GME). GME is an immersion model that aims to ensure that children have equal fluency and literacy in English and Gaelic and can use both languages in a range of different situations, both within and outwith the education system, and so contribute to the wider sustainability of Gaelic in Scotland. Most children enrolled in GME will live in households where Gaelic is not spoken as the main language of the home, the family, and the community, with the classroom being the only domain in which they can use the language. This study aimed to explore the role of online learning in supporting the increased use and proficiency of Gaelic by “bringing the Gaelic home”, with data collected through questionnaires and interviews with parents and teachers, classroom observations and evaluations of children’s language skills. The findings show that children who actively engaged in online learning activities, especially content created by their class-teacher, both synchronously and asynchronously, showed a greater confidence and proficiency in Gaelic than their peers who did not. Parental support was instrumental in ensuring that children engaged with the online learning materials, and this helped foster positive attitudes towards the language, which are a predictor for the likely later language use, and thus the long-term future of the Gaelic language in Scotland.