

RHIAN SIÂN HODGES

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## Integrative or instrumental Incentives? Non-Welsh-Speaking Parents and Welsh-Medium Education in the Rhymni Valley, South Wales

The linguistic resurgence of the Welsh language in Wales can largely be attributed to the success of Welsh-medium education. The demand for Welsh-medium education, especially in predominantly non-Welsh-speaking areas of South Wales, is greater than ever. Welsh-medium education is at the very epicentre of the National Assembly for Wales' vision to create "a truly bilingual Wales" (WAG 2003, 1). This paper examines parental educational incentives, asking why non-Welsh-speaking parents choose Welsh-medium education for their children in the Rhymni Valley, South Wales, a post-industrial locality where the social use of Welsh is comparatively low. Qualitative research methods were drawn upon; in-depth interviews were conducted to gather information from parents from the *meithrin* (Welsh-medium nursery),<sup>1</sup> primary and secondary school sectors. The main parental incentives were cultural, educational, economic and personal. The findings of this study indicate that parents in the Rhymni Valley emphasised integrative incentives such as culture and nationhood whereas the conclusions of past studies have tended to emphasise instrumental incentives such as increased social mobility and economic prestige.

Keywords: language planning, parental educational incentives, sociology of education, sociology of language, Welsh-medium education.

### *Integrativni ali Instrumentalni motivi? Nevaližansko govoreči starši in šolanje v valižanščini v dolini Rhymni, Južni Wales*

Jezikovni prepoved valižanščine v Walesu lahko v veliki meri pripišemo uspešnosti šolanja v tem jeziku. Povpraševanje po šolanju v valižanščini, še zlasti v pretežno nevaližansko govorečih predelih Južnega Walesa, je večje kot kdajkoli. Šolanje v valižanščini ima osrednji pomen v prizadevanjih Narodne skupščine Walesa, da bi ustvarila "resnično dvojezični Wales" (WAG 2003, 1). Pričujoči članek, ki obravnava starševske vzgojno-izobraževalne motive, postavlja vprašanje, zakaj bi nevaližansko govoreči starši za svoje otroke izbrali šolanje v valižanščini, in to v dolini Rhymni – postindustrijskem območju, kjer je socialna raba valižanščine relativno nizka. Uporabljene so bile kvalitativne raziskovalne metode, izvedeni so bili globinskih intervjuji s starši, katerih otroci obiskujejo vrtec ter osnovno in srednjo šolo. Osnovni motivi staršev za to odločitev so bili izobraževalne, ekonomske, kulturne in osebne narave. Sodeč po zaključkih raziskave dajejo starši otrok iz doline Rhymni prednost integrativnim motivom, kot sta kultura in narodna pripadnost, medtem ko so pretekle študije bolj poudarjale instrumentalne razloge, na primer povečano socialno mobilnost in ekonomski položaj.

Ključne besede: jezikovno planiranje, sociologija izobraževanja, sociologija jezika, šolanje v valižanskem jeziku

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**Correspondence address:** Dr. Rhian Siân Hodges, School of Social Sciences, Bangor University, Ffordd y Coleg, Bangor, Gwynedd. LL57 2DG. Wales, U.K., e-mail: r.s.hodges@bangor.ac.uk

## 1. Introduction

Undoubtedly minority language transmission through the medium of education is at the forefront of contemporary language planning infrastructures. European minority language education is arguably instrumental in what Fishman (1991, 57) calls reversing language shift. Baker (2004, 1), too, emphatically accentuates the crucial link between minority language education and language revitalisation and reversal. Furthermore, minority language immersion education is also closely related to identity and maintenance of ethnic group identity (Vavti 2009). Welsh-medium education is seen as an effective language planning tool for transmitting the Welsh language, especially within localities with a low social usage of the language (Hodges 2006, 2009, 2010). Furthermore, Lewis (2006) and Williams and Morris (2000) underline the value of the Welsh-medium education system for those from a non-Welsh-speaking background, especially as 98 per cent of its pupils across post-industrial South-East Wales (including the Rhymni Valley itself) are from this particular linguistic background.<sup>2</sup> C. H. Williams (2000, 25) describes Welsh-medium education as the main language transmission sphere, especially in the years since the secularisation of an increasingly urban and post industrial society. Therefore the success of Welsh-medium education, especially within South-East Wales, is a timely and much debated topic for academics and policy makers alike.

Welsh-medium education has grown rapidly since its establishment over half a century ago in 1947, in Llanelli, West Wales. During its infancy parents fought for Welsh-medium education in the South Wales valleys, the Rhymni Valley being no exception (Williams 2003). Their crusade was one of passionate protest and pioneers campaigned furiously to establish Welsh-medium schools, especially in mainly non-Welsh-speaking localities. A mark of its success is that the majority of Welsh-medium primary schools are oversubscribed whereas numbers are dwindling in certain English-medium primary schools. This is particularly evident in Cardiff, Wales' capital city.<sup>3</sup>

This paper hopes to provide an insight into the main incentives of parents (most of whom are non-Welsh-speaking), who chose Welsh-medium education for their children in one valley locality in South Wales, the Rhymni Valley, Caerffili. A plethora of research questions emerged. Were instrumental or integrative incentives (Gardner & Lambert 1972) specifically prioritised by this particular research sample? As illustrated by these authors, instrumental incentives include an emphasis on economic and social mobility gains from minority language education, whilst integrative incentives include an emphasis

on culture, nationhood and belonging. Further research questions included the following: What were the parental educational incentives? Had these incentives evolved since the establishment of Welsh-medium schools? Had devolution affected parental incentives? Far-reaching language planning questions were also of importance, such as the following question by Gruffudd (2000, 180): “Is language transmission through education likely to produce future parents who will transmit the language at home?” Is Welsh-medium education, as a language planning tool, strong enough to sustain the Welsh language within the South Wales valleys by providing sustainable new speakers (O’Rourke 2011) and also is the system able to compete with the considerable influence of national European languages (Nečák Lük 2001)?

Furthermore, this study is an attempt to fill the existing literature gap regarding the contribution of the Rhymni Valley to the research of Welsh-medium education. Most of the notable research has been conducted in nearby locations, the Rhondda Valley (Williams et al. 1978), Gwent (Bush 1979; Bush et al. 1981), Cardiff (Aitchison & Carter 1988; Packer & Campbell 1997, 2000) and South East Wales generally (Thomas 2007). Despite specific research on the benefits of bilingual education (Shore 1993) and historical educational research (Williams 1998, 2004; Williams 2003) within the Rhymni Valley, there remains an existing lacuna in the field of parental educational incentives and Welsh-medium education in South Wales, a lacuna this paper attempts to fill.

## 2. Background to the Study

The current resurgence of the Welsh language needs to be contextualised with respect to recent political changes in Wales. A significant milestone was the adoption of the Education Reform Act (HMSO 1989), which preceded the establishment of the National Curriculum for Wales in 1988, ensuring that Welsh would be a compulsory subject for school pupils. The Welsh Language Act (HMSO 1993) was of utmost significance, for it provided the legal basis for the equality of the Welsh and English languages within the public sector. Arguably the most influential development yet was the establishment of a devolved government, the National Assembly for Wales, in 1999. The current political climate in Wales highlights a clear commitment to a “truly bilingual Wales”; this is seen specifically in *Iaith Pawb: A National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales* (WAG 2003, 1). For the first time in its history, Wales has seen a Welsh-medium Education Strategy (WAG 2010), which highlights a clear vision for cradle-to-grave Welsh-medium provision for all *meithrin* (nursery), primary, secondary

and higher education students. The most recent development is the publication of the Welsh Language Measure (WAG 2011), which calls for the appointment of a Welsh Language Commissioner to be responsible for language planning. Moreover, these significant political developments have resulted in the Welsh-medium education receiving substantial investment (Welsh Language Board 2004).

This substantial investment seems justified as the family's role in achieving Fishman's intergenerational language transmission (Fishman 1991) is arguably dwindling in Wales, because "Welsh-speaking households are fractured" according to Aitchison and Carter (2000, 332). Furthermore, as families' linguistic backgrounds become more diverse, there is a concern amongst language planners that the Welsh language is not being readily transmitted at home. Recent research by Morris and Jones (2005, 1) notes this precarious situation: "Many Welsh-speaking parents were not transmitting the language to their children. This is particularly the case in families where only one parent speaks Welsh."

Academic research and policy documents alike suggest young people in South Wales are more likely than their parents to be able to speak Welsh, although the issue of language use is a concern amongst policy makers in Wales and this is also evident at a European level (European Commission 2011).<sup>4</sup> On a micro level, there is also evidence that former Welsh-medium pupils in South Wales do not speak the language outside the school, especially those from a non-Welsh-speaking background (Hodges 2006, 2009, 2010). The Welsh Language Board's Youth Strategy (2006, 9–10) describes the juxtaposition between language ability and language use in South Wales' communities thus: "The demand for Welsh-medium education continues, especially in the more Anglicized areas of South Wales, such as Rhondda, Cynon and Rhyfni Valleys and in Cardiff, where the community use of Welsh is relatively low."

We now turn to the Rhyfni Valley field work. This was carried out over an intensive one-year period, and its target was to investigate the aforementioned issues in more depth.

## 2.1. Study Location

The Rhyfni Valley is 16 miles long, extending from Rhyfni in the north to Caerffili in the south, 8 miles north of Cardiff. According to the 2001 Census,

12.7 per cent of all primary school pupils and 10.6 per cent of all secondary school pupils receive Welsh-medium education in Caerffili (Welsh Language Board 2004, 100). Despite being a comparatively Anglicised area, the Welsh language was historically prominent in this valley as the language of heavy industry, such as coal mines and iron works (Williams 1998, 2004). The Rhymni Valley is a prominent part of Caerffili County Borough, the fifth largest local authority of the twenty two in Wales. Caerffili is amongst the counties with the highest numbers of Welsh speakers in South Wales (Caerffili County Borough Council 2009, 9). Table 1 shows that 27,228 people have an understanding of the Welsh language, but more importantly, 13,916 people are competent in all three linguistic skills of speaking, reading and writing in Welsh.

**Table 1:** 2001 Census Welsh Speakers in Caerffili County

Percentage and number of Caerffili inhabitants who:	Per cent	Number
Understand oral Welsh only	2.8	4,617
Speak but do not read / write Welsh	1.7	2,814
Speak and read Welsh, but do not write Welsh	0.7	1,095
Speak, read and write Welsh	<b>8.5</b>	<b>13,916</b>
Are competent in other linguistic combinations	2.9	4,786
Understand Welsh (at least one linguistic skill)	16.7	<b>27,228</b>
Total population of Caerffili	<b>100</b>	<b>169,519</b>

Source: Aitchison & Carter (2004, 38–39).

The number of Welsh speakers in Caerffili has substantially increased since the 1991 Census when 9,714 people spoke Welsh (Aitchison & Carter 2004, 50). However, these percentages are relatively low compared to the wider context of Welsh speakers in Wales. What is not mentioned, however, is the number of speakers *using* the Welsh language (unlike the Ofercat system in Catalonia)<sup>5</sup>; this has key language planning implications for the future of the Welsh language.

### 3. Aims, Objectives and Hypothesis of the Rhymni Valley Study

The aim of this study is to provide an overview of Welsh-medium education in this one South-Wales valley. This paper attempts to decipher the complex and multi-dimensional field of parental education incentives and assess specifically

why parents (mostly non-Welsh speaking, but Welsh by nationality) choose Welsh-medium education for their children in the Rhymni Valley. In order to successfully achieve these aims, the target group that was chosen consists of parents from the *meithrin* (nursery), primary and secondary Welsh-medium sectors located in various communities throughout the locality.

It is hoped that the study can re-asses and re-evaluate parental incentives for Welsh-medium education three decades after Williams and colleagues' (1978) seminal research on bilingual education in the Rhondda Valley, which emphasised the importance of instrumental incentives and greater geographical and social mobility. A pertinent research question is to ask whether there has been an attitudinal shift during this thirty year period or whether parents still value the same educational incentives as previous generations. The role of parental incentives in Welsh-medium education remains a relatively unexplored field (Garcia & Baker 1995, 160), and therefore the aim of the research is to fill an existing literature gap and to further inform language planning and policy decisions in Wales.

The hypothesis of this study is that non-Welsh-speaking parents chose Welsh medium education for their children primarily because of instrumental incentives, mainly the social mobility implications of this choice; this reflects research by Williams and his colleagues (1978) in the Rhondda. For those, who are bilingual in Wales, there are increased occupation opportunities and the National Assembly for Wales and Welsh Assembly Government are at the forefront of these developments. It is these increased opportunities which make the prospect of Welsh-medium education such an attractive and purposeful choice for parents in this valley and countless other valleys throughout South Wales.

#### 4. Theoretical Underpinning

The main theoretical underpinning of the Rhymni Valley study is gleaned from seminal research by Williams and his colleagues (1978) on bilingual education in the Rhondda Valley. This research drew upon Watson's (1964) concept of parents as "burghers" and "spiralists" that was clearly adapted to bilingual education in the locality. The focus of the research was the status and prestige of bilingual education and how it offered its pupils higher social mobility and key resources to succeed within their specific language-based communities, networks and social practices, possibly reminiscent of Bourdieu's "class habitus"

(1987). Williams and colleagues' (1978) research, despite being published over thirty years ago, is vitally important as this essentially heralded the beginning of the so-called sociology of language discipline in Wales and is the classic reference point for all future study.

Williams and his colleagues (1978) clearly distinguished between parents as “burghers” or “spiralists” depending on their preferred language of education for their children. Burghers were parents who valued learning the Welsh language because they envisaged their children’s futures in Wales and thought they would benefit occupationally from speaking Welsh. However, spiralists were parents with largely European perspectives who valued learning “useful” European languages such as French, Spanish and German. Their children’s futures would most definitely involve a life outside Wales and its language was therefore deemed unnecessary. This research suggests parents’ economic aspirations for their children – such as entry to the “minority language economy” (Williams 2000, 120) – are the most important factors in selecting Welsh-medium education. Moreover, this study is a very useful research tool indeed when discussing contemporary parental incentives in the South Wales valleys especially. This study is used effectively to compare the development and evolution of parental educational incentives over the last quarter of a century in these valleys. Furthermore, this comparison is all the more relevant as both the Williams and colleagues’ study (1978) and the Rhymni Valley study (Hodges 2010) span an important period of wider social, political, economic and demographic change in Wales, which needs to be documented and further analysed.

“Le Capital Culturel” (Bourdieu & Passeron 1974) was also drawn upon for the discussion of parental incentives and Welsh-medium education in the Rhymni Valley. According to Bourdieu (1987) cultural capital can be defined as the skills, knowledge and information, education and essential advantages that individuals possess in order to gain a higher hierarchical and cultural status within society. Parents transmit cultural capital to their children by providing the essential cultural information needed to succeed in the educational system and within the greater society. It may be argued that parents who choose Welsh-medium education in the Rhymni Valley are in fact recreating and reproducing this cultural capital for their children. Parents transmit a unique Welsh language cultural capital to their children in order for them to succeed in the system and to gain access to a wider culturally and linguistically orientated community. They want their children to possess higher social and cultural mobility and place a value and prestige on the educational system in order to achieve this. However, is this possibly less evident today, as Welsh-medium education is seen as increasingly mainstream in the Rhymni Valley?

Indeed, cultural capital with respect to the Rhymini Valley study is also heavily associated with cultural and social prestige (Baker & Brown 2009). Bourdieu himself (1986, 248) claims that education is defined as a “certificate of cultural competence”. Essentially, pupils require educational success in order to gain a prominent status within the cultural hierarchy of society. This may possibly explain parents’ motives for choosing Welsh-medium education in the Rhymini Valley. Their children were granted access to specific cultural practices and social networks of language communities not available unless they possessed knowledge of the Welsh language gained through education. It may be argued that Welsh-medium education in this district afforded like-minded parents membership of a common interest group or community where shared norms and values in relation to Welsh-medium education were upheld. This particular Welsh-medium education community may be likened to any minority language community, because of its high regard for similar cultural practices and unique behavioural patterns. According to Fishman (1991, 26)

[t]o really know a language well, one must know its associated culture (indeed even the history of that culture) /.../ as well as the cultural specifics and behavioural goals /.../ every bit as much as it is necessary to know the associated language if one wants to know a culture well.

## 5. Methodology

The Rhymini Valley study drew upon the interpretative perspective epitomised by Max Weber. The purpose and function of sociological research, according to this perspective, is to understand individuals within society in order to understand society at large, rather than researching the society in order to understand the individuals within it. According to Weber (1964) we should understand social acts by studying the deep and complex meanings and incentives behind social behaviour. This philosophical standpoint is used effectively to gain insight into parental educational incentives of Rhymini Valley parents choosing Welsh-medium education.

This qualitative study drew upon deep, rich social data gathered from 50 in-depth interviews with parents of the Welsh-medium *meithrin* (see above), primary and secondary school sectors in the Rhymini Valley. A sample of parents from all sectors was successfully selected (using non-probability sampling to create a representative sample of research participants) from communities throughout the Valley, based on differing linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds. Consequently, linguistic background distinctions were made, namely: non-



Welsh-speaking (families where neither parent spoke Welsh), mixed language families (families where one parent spoke Welsh and the other spoke English or another language) and Welsh-language families (families where both parents spoke Welsh). Due to the linguistic composition of this particular location, the vast majority of parents were non-Welsh-speaking parents and their national identity may be described as Welsh (a small percentage of parents were English). This qualitative research strategy was chosen to reflect the passion, enthusiasm and strong viewpoints of parents in relation to Welsh-medium education.

Participants were afforded opportunities to elaborate upon their views in a dynamic style, which adequately reflected the nature of the research field whilst adhering to strict ethical guidelines of the 1998 Data Protection Act, the British Sociological Association, and the Bangor University Ethics Committee. A small scale pilot study was used prior to final research strategies in order to operationalize key concepts within the interview schedule. The software package “NVivo 2” was used to code and create themes from the interview data. This tool was effectively used to analyse the main primary research patterns of this study.

## 6. Primary Data Results

Following successful data collection over an intensive one-year period, four main categories of parental incentives emerged from the Rhymini Valley study, viz., cultural, educational, economic and personal incentives (Hodges 2010). Table 2 highlights the main incentives of parents, who chose Welsh-medium education for their children in this study:

**Table 2:** Main Parental Incentives and Welsh-medium Education in the Rhymini Valley

First incentive Welsh-medium education	Per cent	Number
Cultural	50	25
Educational	34	17
Economic	8	4
Personal	8	4

Table 2 demonstrates that the main parental incentives were cultural ones. Half the Rhymini Valley research sample chose this kind of integrative incentive, including an emphasis on identity, nationhood and belonging. This disproved any hypothesis involving Williams and his colleagues’ (1978) instrumental

incentives. There appears to have been an attitudinal shift between 1978 where instrumental incentives came to the forefront, and 2010 where integrative incentives clearly dominate the research. This attitudinal shift could possibly highlight the development of a devolved government in Wales and its commitment to a “fully bilingual Wales” (WAG 2003, 1). This finding corroborates research by Packer and Campbell (1997, 2000) and Thomas (2007). In order to highlight the complexity and multi-layered nature of this research field, parents were asked to provide their top three reasons for choosing Welsh-medium education. Educational and economic incentives came to the forefront when providing a second and third incentive respectively. These findings suggest that instrumental incentives were an additional feature or bonus of the system, rather than the main driving force for the Rhymni Valley sample. However, it may be argued that integrative incentives for choosing a minority language education are strongly supplemented by instrumental incentives in countries where devolved governments fully support minority language education, such as is the case in Wales. The Rhymni Valley parents’ incentives will be discussed in further detail according to specific sub-categories below.

## 6.1. Cultural Incentives

The main reasons parents chose Welsh medium education for their children in the Rhymni Valley were cultural or other integrative incentives (Gardner & Lambert 1972). Moreover, half the sample (50 per cent, n=25) made this particular choice. This disproves the hypothesis based on research by Williams and his colleagues (1978), which highlighted economic reasons as the main incentive for bilingual education in the Rhondda. On the other hand, this finding confirms research by Thomas (2007) that acknowledges the prominence of reasons based on cultural identity in South Wales and could also be likened to Bourdieu’s “cultural capital” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1974) and also the concept of education as “cultural competence” (Bourdieu 1986). Incorporated within these reasons was the intrinsic value of the Welsh language and the pride associated with learning the mother tongue of Wales: “We are proud to be Welsh and have our own language” (Interview 4, 14). Parents clearly stated the importance of nationhood, identity and belonging. A crucial aspect of these integrative incentives was the significance associated with traditional elements of local Welsh language culture, such as the Eisteddfod.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, this primary data result suggests parents in the Rhymni Valley are burghers (Watson 1964; Williams et al. 1978) in nature as their focus is on local, Welsh-speaking, Welsh identity and belonging/contributing to the local community.

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One of the most prominent integrative incentives was the concept of the “lost generation” (Hodges 2010). The Welsh language had skipped two generations in the Rhymni Valley and therefore parents were eager for their children to learn their mother tongue, an opportunity not afforded to them personally. This finding heralded this generation of young people in the Rhymni Valley as “new” Welsh speakers reminiscent of recent research by O’Rourke (2011) in Ireland and Galicia. There was a deep sense of loss and regret and parents felt their Welsh identity was somewhat “incomplete and inadequate” (Interview 52, 67), because they were unable to speak the Welsh language or – as Bourdieu (1991, 67) noted – “possess the code of the message” in order to succeed. Moreover, they adamantly wanted the Welsh language to have an equal status to the English language, and this may be an argument for the influence of the Welsh Language Act 1993, which calls for an equal status for the two languages. The following quotation epitomises parents, who chose Welsh medium education for cultural reasons: “We both believe it is important for our children to learn their own language, they are born in Wales, they are Welsh, and have the opportunity to learn, speak and use Welsh” (Interview 4, 99–101).

## 6.2. Educational Incentives

Educational reasons themselves were the second most prominent motivating force for the choice of Welsh-medium education. The following themes were prominent among the educational reasons given by parents in the Rhymni Valley study. It was apparent that Welsh-medium schools achieved high academic success; their results were equal to, if not higher, than local English-medium schools, and this corroborates Reynolds and colleagues’ research (1998). The good reputation of the schools was a major factor for the choice of this educational sector, and this supports Bush and colleagues’ research (1981); further, Welsh medium success were reported by word of mouth within the communities of the Rhymni Valley. A significant number of respondents thought that Welsh-medium education simply provided a better education than English-medium education. Moreover, a small minority – who tended to be English by national identity – chose a Welsh-medium school for their children, because it was similar in ethos to a private school. “It is almost like having a public school education in the national system the way that the teachers behave with children and their expectations” (Interview 33, 135).

Comments like these are reminiscent of Bourdieu’s (1991) “cultural capital” and how the education system is a microcosm of upper class cultural and educational

norms and values, and therefore favours pupils from higher social economic backgrounds rather than pupils from lower ones. Parents commented on the range of extra-curricular activities available and the emphasis on pastoral care was a clear selling point; this in turn supports research by Thomas (2007). Parents described Welsh-medium schools as being family-orientated and personal institutions, where teachers knew each pupil and worked hard on their behalves. Other reasons given were the sense of discipline reminiscent of the old grammar school system and the expectation, placed on the pupils, which again was not too dissimilar to a public education system. A number of respondents chose Welsh education because of the clear advantages of being bilingual in Wales.

### 6.3. Economic Incentives

Respondents from the Rhymni Valley chose economic reasons, i.e., instrumental incentives (Gardner & Lambert 1972) as the third most popular incentive to choose Welsh-medium education. Individuals in the research sample hoped their children would have “better occupations and extended opportunities” (Interview 12, 233) after having attended a Welsh-medium school, and this supports research by Williams (2000, 120) on the “minority language economy” and that of Williams and colleagues (1978), the theoretial underpinning of the Rhymni Valley study itself. A significant number of parents said they chose Welsh-medium education for their children because of the National Assembly for Wales’ vision to create a fully bilingual Wales and that they would have better opportunities to do well for themselves in a bilingual country if they could speak Welsh. Respondents stated that bilinguals have considerable advantages over monolinguals and they placed these advantages within the current economic climate of recession.

Parents were mainly burghers (Watson 1964), who placed high value and prestige on Welsh medium education, because they saw their children’s futures in Wales. They would stay and be employed in Wales; therefore the ability to speak Welsh would be essential. This confirms Williams and colleagues’ (1978) study on the Rhondda and more recent research by Giggs and Pattie (1992). Parents in our study were aware of Welsh language prestige within the workplace, especially the public sector, and chose Welsh-medium education for their children accordingly.

## 56 6.4. Personal Incentives

A small percentage of Rhymni Valley parents chose this particular educational system for their children for personal reasons. A select few stated their friends' children attended Welsh-medium schools and they simply followed those choices. Certain respondents noted the influence of extended families and partners, like the following father:

My wife has been fully educated through the medium of Welsh – nursery, primary and [secondary] education. She was the driving force behind sending the children through Welsh medium education most definitely. I supported that as I'm a passionate Welshman (Interview 20, 100–102).

If the partner or extended families spoke Welsh they were more likely to choose Welsh-medium education for their children. Welsh-medium education afforded opportunities for grandparents to speak Welsh to their grandchildren in the Rhymni Valley; this reflects research by Baker and Prys Jones (1998) that bilingual education bridges generations of minority language speakers. As one Welsh-speaking mother notes: “My father is very proud that his grandchildren can speak to him in Welsh” (Interview 48, 23). Respondents chose the educational system if they thought the system would suit their child's particular educational and individual needs.

## 7. Conclusions

This research highlights the success of Welsh-medium education as a language planning strategy in the Rhymni Valley, South Wales. This educational sector is a highly respected educational choice for non-Welsh-speaking parents in this locality. Evidently, parents – most of whom are non-Welsh-speaking – in this valley chose Welsh-medium for their children due to a plethora of multi-layered incentives ranging from integrative to instrumental and, no doubt, a combination of these incentives. This research clearly shows the importance of Welsh-medium education as a powerful language planning tool both at the micro level of the Rhymni Valley and at a macro level of Wales. Indeed, it supports the value of minority language education on a European level. An important finding from the Rhymni Valley study is that integrative incentives were at the forefront of these specific parental incentives. This highlights an attitudinal shift from the prominence of instrumental incentives in past studies, such as the seminal research by Williams and his colleagues (1978). What is promising in terms of future language development and reversal of language shift (Fishman 1991)

is that the majority of parents chose the educational sector due to integrative incentives rather than instrumental incentives (Gardner & Lambert 1972), as stated in our original hypothesis, which suggests a sustained platform for the future of the Welsh language in Wales (Crookes et al. 1991; Ellis 1994, 1997). The emphasis on integrative rather than instrumental incentives also suggests a heightened awareness of educational implications on the future of the Welsh language.

It is pertinent to suggest some reasons behind this attitudinal shift of parents over the thirty year period, from the seminal research by Williams and colleagues (1978) to the current Rhymni Valley study (Hodges 2010); and, while it impossible to provide definitive answers, we can suggest some contributory factors. We need to return to the political changes in Wales noted earlier. Undoubtedly, the political landscape today in Wales is rather different from that of the late 1970s when Wales said “no” to devolution in the 1979 Referendum. Wales is now a country with devolved powers, ever since the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales in 1999, and it may be argued that there has been a heightened sense of Welsh identity since this development. Specifically, the development of *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig*<sup>7</sup> (the Welsh dimension of the National Curriculum) may also offer an insight into this heightened awareness of Welsh identity and respect for the Welsh language. The Welsh Language Act (1993) mentioned previously also called for equality between Welsh and English within the public sector in Wales, securing an effective minority language economy (Williams 2000, 120). Furthermore, the recent Welsh Language Measure (WAG 2011) has also ensured that the Welsh language will be afforded greater legislative powers in the form of a Welsh Language Commissioner, and this may possibly influence public perceptions of the Welsh language.

However, the educational sector by itself cannot sustain the Welsh language and further initiatives from the National Assembly for Wales from the Welsh Language Commissioner and Community Language Initiatives such as *Mentrau Iaith*<sup>8</sup> are much needed in order to increase the profile and prestige of Welsh in all other language transmission spheres such as the family, the community and also the workplace. Education, however, is still arguably the current “language rescuer” (Fishman 1991, 57) in the Rhymni Valley at the start of the twenty first century, and this emphasis on integrative rather than instrumental incentives should definitely be a significant finding for the planning of the future development of Welsh-medium education both in the Rhymni Valley and in Wales, the micro and the macro environments.

## 58 Notes

<sup>1</sup>Mudiad Meithrin is a voluntary organisation that was set up in 1971 with the aim of giving every young child in Wales the opportunity to benefit from early years services and experiences through the medium of Welsh (Mudiad Meithrin 2011).

<sup>2</sup>“Although 98% of the pupils come from a non-Welsh-speaking background, the success of the school is notable in securing to a large degree a strong feeling of Welshness amongst pupils of the school” (HMI Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni 2004).

<sup>3</sup>“Welsh-medium education is growing at such a pace in the west of Cardiff that the current provision cannot cope with the demand as it stands” (The Guardian 2010).

<sup>4</sup>“The study identified the social and institutional variables that provide the context for the continuing use of a language, and which create the conditions for expanding its use” (European Commission 2011).

<sup>5</sup>‘Ofercat’ is “an instrument that measures the presence of the Catalan language in a population. The results obtained by this means are the necessary complement to data on knowledge and use of the language provided by the censuses and voting lists, the questionnaire surveys and other studies” (Romagosa et al. 2003, 1).

<sup>6</sup>“The Urdd National Eisteddfod is one of Europe’s largest cultural youth festivals, attracting thousands of competitors and visitors every year” (Eisteddfod yr Urdd 2011).

<sup>7</sup>“The ‘Curriculum Cymreig’ is part of the National Curriculum and is / ... / designed to develop a sense of belonging and heritage, and an awareness of the importance of language and literature in the history and life of Wales” (BBC News 2007).

<sup>8</sup>“Mentrau Iaith” or language initiative is a local organisation, which offers support to communities to increase and develop their use of the Welsh language. A “Menter” will offer advice and assistance to individuals, organisations and businesses, and will organise activities to raise the profile of the Welsh language (Mentrau Iaith 2011).

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