

**ELL 19-01(p.3)**

## **Education and Lifelong Learning Committee**

### **Policy Review of the Welsh Language in Education: Draft Proposal**

#### **Introductory Observations**

It is proposed that the Policy Review of the Welsh Language in Education be undertaken in the context of the following guiding principle:

- that every child and student in Wales be given the opportunity to become bilingual in Welsh and English

This principle would appear to involve two main dimensions:

- > seeking to improve speakers' competence in both Welsh and English
- > fostering an awareness of the potential contribution of bilingualism to raising standards of achievement at a broader level

A further two issues emerge in this context:

Speakers' access to the economic and employment benefits of bilingualism

Bilingual skills as a means of furthering multilingualism

These considerations are seen to lie at the core of the National Assembly's vision of

- fostering Wales' unique and diverse identity and the benefits of bilingualism

and also the vision of a Wales which is:

- prosperous, well-educated, skilled, ... and culturally rich

## Key considerations

It is proposed that the Review be informed by a constant awareness of the following:

- A clear understanding of what is meant by the vision of a 'bilingual Wales', and an evaluation of the implications of this interpretation in relation to individual and collective linguistic rights
- Alternatives to the dichotomy 'Welsh as a medium/ Welsh as a subject' (or 'Welsh as a medium/ English as a medium'), and the possibilities afforded by the use of the two languages as dual media
- The significance of **continuity of provision** in relation to the likelihood of speakers becoming functionally bilingual (take-up of Welsh-medium provision in transition from primary to secondary education, and from secondary to post-16)
- Linked to this is the notion of a **continuum** which enables students to progressively build on the competence acquired by them at previous stages of their education
- **Access** to bilingual education, with particular reference to Special Educational Needs and Lifelong Learning
- The relationship between language and education, on the one hand, and **language in the family and community** on the other. Institutional promotion of bilingualism cannot be viewed in isolation. It is, rather, to be situated in the context of the factors affecting linguistic behaviour in domestic, social and informal settings (including intergenerational transmission).

## **Specific issues**

In addition to the above considerations, the following issues would appear to merit close scrutiny. Areas of particular interest are noted.

### **Pre-school Education/ Educare**

- Funding and marketing of the provision offered by *Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin* (Welsh- medium nursery provision)
- Measures to monitor the language development of children attending the *Cylchoedd Meithrin*
- Role of parents in enhancing the provision
- Bilingual provision: other providers of pre-school education/ educare (all-day nurseries, playgroups)
- Implications of nursery provision (in Welsh and English) in state-funded nursery units, particularly for 3-year olds

### **Discontinuity between primary and secondary schooling, and between secondary and post-16 education**

- Role of parents in enhancing the provision/ in decision-making

### **Vocational training**

- Availability of Welsh-medium courses and acquisition of skills through the medium of Welsh
- Accreditation and examining of vocational courses

- Partnerships with business

## **Careers**

- Identify means of disseminating information on careers requiring bilingual skills
- Desirability of nationally-acknowledged and regulated levels of bilingual proficiency

## **Post-16, including Welsh for Adults and Lifelong Learning**

- Vocational (see above)
- Welsh-medium provision in HE
- Welsh for Adults:

Welsh in the workplace

Drop-out rates

- Co-ordination of planning at a national level

## **Special Needs**

- Address shortage of specialists working through the medium of Welsh (e.g. speech therapists)

## **Pedagogical Resources/ Materials**

- Strategy for identifying and responding to needs at a national level
- Integration of the variety of commissioning bodies in Wales?

## **Training and Professional Development**

- Recruitment into the profession (see also below): measures to address shortage of teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh (primary, secondary, FE and HE)
- Emphasis on bilingual methodology and the challenges/ implications of bilingual education
- Awareness of new developments in language teaching methodologies (including Adult Education)

## **Research, Data and Evaluation**

- Agreement on the precise meanings of the terms used to refer to the different kinds of provision available (e.g. Category A, Immersion etc.)
- Reliable and high quality data on provision, take-up, continuity etc.
- Application of the above in terms of strategic overview, planning, and recruitment and training of staff to answer needs
- Promote culture of scholarship in the evaluation of data and education-related research

## **ICT/ New Technologies**

- Role in enhancing the profile of Welsh in terms of prestige/ linguistic normalisation
- Applications in the following areas:

teaching and learning materials

teachers' access to information re. opportunities in their field

distance learning (including video-conferencing), particularly in post-16 and adult education

## **Opportunities for International Partnerships and Co-operation**

Relevant to all stages of education

Identify cases which provide appropriate points of comparison. To include:

- language teaching and bilingual teaching methodologies
- teacher training
- marketing of bilingualism

### **Corpus aspects**

- Monitoring of language development
- Awareness of linguistic accuracy; measures to enhance pupils'/ students' competence and enrich their language
- Identify needs re. standardised terminologies

### **Observations**

It should be noted that these proposals, outlined here in draft form, have been drawn up partly on the basis of evidence already received by the ELL Committee, and partly on the basis of an analysis of the main features characterising the various aspects of the field.

Consideration of these issues by the Committee will, it is hoped, lead to further refinement of the parameters of the Review. It is also intended that the issues identified at this early stage are presented to relevant bodies and experts before responses are sought from consultees. These measures are designed to ensure that the Review is conducted within a rigorous framework, and that the selection of consultees takes place in as focussed a manner as possible.