

EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE

REPORT TO PLENARY UNDER STANDING ORDER 9.9

MAY 2001 TO APRIL 2002

1 Introduction

1.1 This report summarises our activities from May 2001 to April 2002. Copies of our reports, agendas, papers, minutes and transcripts of meetings can be found on the National Assembly website (1).

2 Membership

2.1 Our current membership is: Gareth Jones (Chair), Jane Davidson (Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning), Lorraine Barrett, Mick Bates, Cynog Dafis, Janice Gregory, Jonathan Morgan, Helen Mary Jones, Huw Lewis and Alun Pugh.

2.2 There were several changes to our membership during the reporting period:

- Mick Bates replaced Eleanor Burnham on 16 October 2001;
- Helen Mary Jones replaced Pauline Jarman on 21 March 2002; and
- Gareth Jones replaced Cynog Dafis as Chair on 21 March 2002.

3 Remit and Responsibilities

3.3 Our remit is based on the portfolio of the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning. This portfolio embraces education and lifelong learning and includes, amongst other things, the national curriculum and qualifications, all aspects of schools administration and organisation, further and higher education, supply side of employment policy - including the New Deal - and the work of the employment service, career services and work related training.

3.4 Responsibilities of subject committees are set out in standing order 9.

4 Priorities

4.1 We have sought to develop a strategic approach to our work. We have focused on three key priorities during the reporting period. We completed policy reviews of The Supply of School Places and Higher Education in July 2001 and January 2002 respectively and are currently undertaking a review of The Welsh Language in Education.

4.2 We are committed to making our proceedings more accessible to the people of Wales. To this end, in January 2002, we met at the Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth and also launched our higher education report at the Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff.

5 Work and Achievements to Date

5.1 During the reporting period we met 18 times. Our principal achievements were as follows:

6 Policy Development - *standing order 9.7 (i)*

Policy Review of the Supply of School Places

6.1 We inherited this review from the now defunct Pre-16 Education, Schools and Early Learning Committee. Our report was published and presented to Plenary on 10 July 2001 (2).

6.2 The Welsh Assembly Government has accepted the committee's recommendations and has established a joint working group with District Audit and the Association of Directors of education Wales (ADEW), to devise a new methodology for measuring school capacity.

Policy Review of Higher Education

6.3 We completed our policy review of higher education. This policy review began during the last reporting period (November 2000) and was completed in January 2002. The report was launched at the Welsh College of Music and Drama on 15 January (3). In the report, we set out our vision for higher education in Wales and made recommendations to the Assembly Minister. The study took account of national, European, and wider international issues, together with the teaching, research and economic missions within the sector.

6.4 We undertook fact finding visits to the Scottish Parliament and also the Northern Ireland Assembly, where we held a formal committee meeting with members of the Northern Ireland Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment Committee.

6.5 In response to this review, the Welsh Assembly Government recently published a strategy for the higher education sector in *Wales - Higher Education and the Learning Country*. The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning has set out a number of important proposals based on the report and has undertaken to keep the committee informed of progress.

Policy Review of the Welsh Language in Education

6.6 We are in the process of undertaking a review of the Welsh language in education. The Culture Committee is currently undertaking a policy review of the Welsh language in the round and our committee will provide the education contribution. We have appointed Mrs Catrin Redknap as Expert Adviser to assist the committee.

6.7 We will seek to define the benefits of bilingualism in education in achieving the National Assembly's vision of fostering Wales' unique and diverse identity. The Committee will suggest a strategy to help achieve that vision.

6.8 We also contributed to key policy developments being taken forward by the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning (4)

7 Review of Expenditure and Administration – *standing order 9.7 (ii)*

7.1 The Minister presented a report to the committee each month on policy initiatives, consultations, budget issues and other matters. The topics to be covered in each report were discussed and agreed in advance by the Chair and the Minister. The committee scrutinised the Minister on her report and, when necessary, further clarification was sought on particular issues.

8 Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies - *standing order 9.7(iii)*

8.1 We scrutinised ELWa - National Council on their draft corporate strategy and funding review, following their creation earlier in the year.

8.2 ACCAC (the qualifications, curriculum and assessment authority for Wales) also appeared before the committee to discuss their corporate plan for the period 2002/03-2004/05.

8.3 We also received a presentation from Estyn concerning their annual report for the academic year 2000 - 2001. Following her presentation, the Chief Inspector for Education and Training was scrutinised by the committee concerning the findings of the report and the consequent policy implications. Estyn is not an ASPB but works closely with the Assembly in providing evidence and advice, upon which to develop and monitor education policies. We therefore take a keen interest in Estyn's work.

8.4 In April, the General Teaching Council for Wales presented its corporate plan for 2002 - 2005 and Operational Plan 1 April 2002 - 31 March 2003 to the committee and provided a progress report on achievements over the past year.

9 Legislation – *standing order 9.8 (i)*

9.1 We considered and reported to plenary on the Inspection of Education and Training (Wales) Regulations 2001, the Financing of Maintained Schools (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2002 and the Education (Budget Statements) (Wales) Regulations 2002. We are also currently considering a schedule of relevant, forthcoming secondary legislation. This schedule covers the period from the present up until the end of Summer Term 2002 (5).

9.2 We have also had the opportunity to discuss the Education Bill, which is about to go to report stage in the House of Lords, on two occasions during this reporting period. At one of these sessions, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Don Touhig MP) joined the Assembly Minister in informing the committee of the provisions of, and progress with, the Bill. This was very constructive and the committee would hope to have further such opportunities for dialogue with parliamentary colleagues.

10 Budget – *standing order 9.8 (ii)*

10.1 Our budget preferences were set out in the summer, and we commented on the draft budget in the autumn term (6).

11 Complaints – *standing order 9.8 (iii)*

11.1 No complaints were received during the reporting period.

12 Public Appointments – *standing order 9.8 (iv)*

12.1 Our public appointments nominees were consulted on numerous appointments to public bodies during the reporting period.

13 Forward Programme

13.1 Looking to the future, we have produced a strategic work programme for 2002-03 (Annex 1).

¹ See www.wales.gov.uk pages for Education and Lifelong Learning Committee at the following address www.wales.gov.uk/keypubassembledlearning/index.htm

² See www.wales.gov.uk/keypubassembledlearning/content/ellpolicy.html for copies of our report.

³ See www.wales.gov.uk/keypubassembledlearning/content/ellpolicy.html for copies of our report (ISBN 0 7504 2790 6).

⁴ Reducing bureaucratic burdens in schools, National Economic Development Strategy/Skills, GEST programme 2002-03, Extending Entitlement (Direction and Guidance), Substance Abuse Education and Rural and Small Schools policy.

⁵ ELL 05-02(p.7) March 6 2002 see www.wales.gov.uk

⁶ See www.wales.gov.uk budget and strategic planning pages for copies of our responses.

⁷ Current nominees are Gareth Jones, Jane Davidson and Lorraine Barrett. During the reporting period Cynog Dafis was present rather than Gareth Jones.

⁸ Higher Education Funding Council (Chair and Member), ACCAC (Member), Council for Education and Training (Member) and Wales New Deal Advisory Taskforce (Members).

ANNEX 1

**EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE
STRATEGIC FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
MAY 2002- MAY 2003**

Introduction

1. The Education and Lifelong Committee is one of the National Assembly's seven subject committees. The responsibilities of the subject committees are set out in Standing Orders, as reproduced at **Annex A**.
2. Standing order 9.9 requires subject committees to maintain a rolling programme of work covering periods of at least 12 months. The Panel of Chairs has agreed that committees' work programmes should be strategic and cover an 18 month to 2 year time frame, supported by more detailed work programmes covering a three month period. However, this work programme sets out the Committee's strategic priorities between May 2002 and the next Assembly elections in May 2003. A detailed work programme for the period May 2002 to July 2002 will be made available later this term.

Remit

3. The Committee's remit is based on the portfolio of the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, Jane Davidson AM. The Minister's portfolio embraces education and lifelong learning, this includes, amongst other things, the national curriculum and qualifications, all aspects of schools administration and organisation, further and higher education, supply side employment policy, including the New Deal and the work of the employment service, career services and work related training. There is an overlapping interest with the Health and Social Services Committee, which has responsibility for children and young people.

Aims

4. The Committee aims to promote and encourage long term and sustained improvement in the quality of education in Wales, with the aim of extending high-quality education and lifelong learning opportunities to all the people of Wales.

Priorities

5. With such a broad remit, the committee has developed develop a strategic approach to its work. Priorities for the coming year are as follows:
 - *Policy development (SO 9.7(i))* - the Committee will focus on those areas of policy development where it can make the greatest impact, and will and will seek to complement, rather than duplicate policies being developed by the Minister. In the coming year the Committee intends to review the following policy areas:
 - The Welsh Language in Education
 - The School of the Future

- *Scrutiny of the Minister (SO 9.7(ii))* - the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning will report to the Committee monthly on current developments within the portfolio. Once a year the Committee will scrutinise the Minister on performance against targets, but may also undertake thematic scrutiny sessions from time to time, notably in relation to the delivery of The Learning Country programme.
- *Scrutiny of sponsored bodies (SO 9.7 (iii))* - the Committee will hold an annual session in the spring/summer terms where it will scrutinise the work and comment on the future work programmes of ELWa-Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, ELWa-National Council for Education and Training, General Teaching Council for Wales, ACCAC and Estyn.
- **Other items (SO 9.8) - the Committee will also consider the following items as they arise:**
 - *proposed legislation affecting Wales (SO 9.8(i) and 22)* – each term the Minister will outline forthcoming secondary legislation to enable the Committee to identify areas where it wishes to be consulted. Following the National Assembly’s consideration of the Queen’s speech, the Committee will consider any draft primary legislation remitted to it by plenary. The Committee will also consider draft secondary legislation referred to it by the Business Committee [although it would ask not to be consulted on those areas where it has not expressed an interest];
 - *proposals for the Assembly’s budget (SO 9.8(ii))* – the Committee will indicate its budget priorities in the summer term and comment on the draft budget in the autumn term;
 - *complaints (SO 9.8(iii) and 21)* – the Committee will consider any complaints referred to it;
 - *public appointments (SO 9.8(iv) and 20)* – the Committee’s two public appointment nominees will take part in the process of appointments to public bodies as vacancies arise;
 - *other matters referred by the Assembly (SO 9.8 (v))* – the Committee will consider other matters referred to it by the National Assembly including other committees, [but would ask Members to consult the Committee Chair before tabling motions inviting plenary to remit work to the Committee].

Committee Secretariat
January 2002

ANNEX A

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUBJECT COMMITTEES

1. Standing orders 9.7 and 9.8 set out the responsibilities of subject committees.

"9.7 Each subject committee shall

- (i) contribute to the development of the Assembly's policies within the fields for which the relevant Assembly Secretary is accountable to the Assembly;
- (ii) keep under review the expenditure and administration connected with their implementation; and
- (iii) keep under review the discharge of public functions in those fields by public, voluntary and private bodies.

"9.8 Each subject committee shall also, within the relevant fields,

- (i) advise on proposed legislation affecting Wales, including performing its functions under standing order 22;
- (ii) provide advice to the Assembly Cabinet on matters relating to allocation of the Assembly's budget in accordance with standing order 19;
- (iii) perform its function under standing order 21 (complaints);
- (iv) perform any functions assigned to it under the Code of Practice on Public Appointments Procedure made by the Assembly under standing order 20; and
- (v) consider matters referred to it by the Assembly within its fields."