

Education and Lifelong Learning
Committee



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
The National Assembly for Wales

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

To: All Consultees

January 18, 2002

Dear Colleague

POLICY REVIEW OF THE WELSH LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

The Culture Committee is currently undertaking a policy review of the Welsh language in the round. The Education and Lifelong Learning Committee has agreed to carry out a complementary policy review focusing on the Welsh language in education.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning (Jane Davidson AM) published her strategic statement on education and lifelong learning in Wales, in August 2001. This document is entitled *'The Learning Country'* and it paves the way for primary and secondary legislation in this field. It links with the *'Plan for Wales 2001'* which updates the strategic plan set out in www.betterwales.com. This includes a commitment to *"sustain an environment that celebrates diversity and makes genuine progress towards realising the benefits of bilingualism."*

Following a debate in plenary session on 4 July 2000, the National Assembly adopted a motion that endorsed a previous resolution of the Post-16 Education and Training Committee. This motion included the following aims:

"The Committee notes that achieving such an ambitious task as the creation of a truly bilingual Wales must involve a co-ordinated strategy, with targets of the kind described in the Welsh Language Board's document 'The Welsh Language: a Vision and Mission 2000 – 2005'; and

The Committee strongly supports the aim of creating a bilingual Wales as an achievable national aim, and wishes to see the implementation of an effective strategy to ensure that this aim is achieved."

The four main challenges facing the Welsh language, set out in the Board's Vision and Mission document, are:

- Increasing the number of people who are able to speak Welsh;
- Providing opportunities to use the language;
- Changing habits of language use, and encouraging people to take advantage of the opportunities provided; and
- Strengthening Welsh as a community language.

This policy review, together with that being undertaken by the Culture Committee, will identify a strategy for meeting these challenges.

Attached to this letter are a number of documents that will inform responses to the review:

- Annex A contains the terms of reference.
- Annex B sets out a number of key themes. Whilst we would appreciate comments on these themes, contributors are free to make any points they wish.
- Annex C provides some information about the ELL Committee.

If you consider there are other organisations or individuals who would wish to contribute to the review, I would be grateful if you would inform me of their contact details. Alternatively, a copy of this letter and attachments is available from the Committee's website on www.wales.gov.uk

As part of the National Assembly's commitment to openness, written responses will be placed in the National Assembly's libraries, on the Committee's website and will also be made available to the public on request. Please indicate if you wish your response or any part of it, not to be made publicly available. You are invited to contribute by sending your views to me **by the end of February**.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Reading
Committee Clerk

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Annex A - Terms of Reference

To seek to define more closely the promotion of the Welsh Language and the benefits of bilingualism and education and lifelong learning in achieving the National Assembly's vision of fostering Wales' unique and diverse identity. The Committee will aim to suggest a strategy for actions in the area of education and training to help achieve that vision.

This policy review will complement that currently being undertaken by the Culture Committee, which covers other issues relevant to the use and status of the Welsh language.

This policy review will focus on early years education through to lifelong learning and will pay particular attention to the following themes:

- ❑ Providing opportunities for people of all ages to learn Welsh;
- ❑ Improving opportunities for studying Welsh as a second language;
- ❑ Developing Welsh medium education and training across a wide range of subjects and at all levels; and
- ❑ Promoting equal respect for both Welsh and English.

The Committee will consult widely with relevant organisations and individuals. Anybody with an interest in this review is welcome to submit his or her views to the Committee. As well as a written consultation, the Committee will be inviting organisations and individuals to submit their views in person; to enable more detailed questioning and discussion of the issues raised.

Annex B – Key Themes

The following key themes will inform the structure for the policy review and the Committee's final report. It would be helpful if you could address the themes in your submission but you are free to raise any other issues, which you consider to be relevant.

You might find it useful to read a position paper on the Welsh language in education, which the Minister presented to the Committee on 12 December 2001. A copy of this paper **ELL 19-01(p.2)** can be found on the Committee's website.

Introductory Observations

The Policy Review of the Welsh Language in Education is to 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 intended 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 assessment of the implications of this interpretation in relation to individual and collective linguistic rights
- Possible alternatives to the dichotomy 'Welsh as a medium/ Welsh as a subject' (or 'Welsh as a medium/ English as a medium'), and the potential 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, namely, the take-up of Welsh-medium provision in the transition between the various stages of pupils' education
- The notion of a **linguistic continuum**, relevant both in terms of the opportunity for individual students to build on the competence acquired by them at previous stages of their education, and also in terms of the methods applied to assess skills
- **Access** to bilingual education, with particular reference to:
 - Obstacles hindering access to provision that is technically available (e.g. geographical location, transport issues) ⇒ Issue of community schools
 - Special Educational Needs
 - 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
- Interface between nursery education providers and primary schools

5-16 year-olds

Continuity between primary and secondary schooling

- Accessibility and nature of the information provided on the options available
- Role of parents in decision-making

The National Curriculum

- Appraisal of the National Curriculum in Wales

Careers

- Methods of collating information on the need for Welsh-medium and bilingual skills in the workplace
- Means of disseminating information on careers/ occupations requiring these skills
- Desirability of nationally-acknowledged and regulated levels of bilingual proficiency

Post-16 education

Welsh-medium and bilingual provision in Further Education and Higher Education

Vocational Training

- Measures to identify needs in terms of Welsh-medium and bilingual skills/ qualifications
- Availability of Welsh-medium and bilingual courses, and acquisition of skills through the medium of Welsh
- Dissemination of information about needs and availability
- Accreditation and examining of vocational courses
- Partnerships with business

Welsh for Adults

- Rôle of the eight Welsh for Adults Consortia
- Funding issues
- Levels of attainment and drop-out rates

- Co-ordination of planning at a national level
- Awareness of new developments in language teaching methodologies

Welsh in the workplace

- Welsh for Special Purposes/ Identification of different linguistic profiles according to specific linguistic tasks
- Welsh and bilingual skills as an aspect of professional development in all spheres of work

Special Educational Needs

- Process of diagnosing and assessing pupils' needs in the context of Welsh-medium and bilingual education
- Measures to overcome shortfalls in the number of specialists working through the medium of Welsh (speech and other therapies)
- Consistency of provision at a national level

Recruitment, Training and Professional Development

- Availability of data to identify needs in terms of recruitment into the profession (see also 'Research, Data and Evaluation' below)
- Measures to address shortage of teachers competent to teach through the medium of Welsh (primary, secondary, FE and HE)
- Availability of INSET courses through the medium of Welsh
- Availability of Welsh-language and Welsh -medium supply teachers
- Management skills through the medium of Welsh, and training for aspiring headteachers through the medium of the language
- Initial training and INSET:
 - emphasis on bilingual methodology and the challenges/ implications of bilingual teaching
 - awareness of new developments in language teaching methodologies

Pedagogical Resources/ Materials

- Strategy for identifying and responding to needs at all stages of education at a national level
- Strategy for reviewing materials published over the last ten years

Research, Data and Evaluation

- Agreement on the precise meanings of the terms used to refer to the different kinds of language 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

ANNEX C

EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE

Background

The Education and Lifelong Learning Committee is one of the seven subject committees of the National Assembly for Wales. The Committee covers the portfolio of the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning (Jane Davidson AM), who is a member of the Committee.

General Responsibilities

The responsibilities of subject committees are to:

- Contribute to the development of the Assembly's policies;
- Keep under review the expenditure and administration connected with their implementation;
- Review the discharge of public functions in those fields by public, voluntary and private bodies;
- Advise on proposed legislation affecting Wales;
- Provide advice to the Assembly Cabinet on matters relating to the allocation of the Assembly's budget;
- Be involved in the process for considering complaints about the Assembly's actions or omissions;
- Be involved in the public appointments process;
- Consider matters referred to it by the Assembly.

The current members of the committee are:

Cynog Dafis(Chair)	Plaid Cymru	Mid and West Wales
Jane Davidson (Minister)	Labour	Pontypridd
Lorraine Barrett	Labour	Cardiff South and Penarth
Mick Bates	Liberal Democrat	Montgomeryshire
Janice Gregory	Labour	Ogmore
Pauline Jarman	Plaid Cymru	South Wales Central
Gareth Jones	Plaid Cymru	Conwy
Huw Lewis	Labour	Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney
Jonathan Morgan	Conservative	South Wales Central
Alun Pugh	Labour	Clwyd West

Secretariat:

Chris Reading; Clerk (Direct Line 02920 898164)
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