

## **Culture Committee 08-02 (p.1)**

Date: 25 April 2002

Time: 2.00pm-4.00pm

Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly for Wales

### **EDUCATION: NURSERY AND ADULT**

#### **Paper from the Expert Adviser**

These areas were part of the Culture Committee's remit because they were identified as 'non-statutory' education. The Education and Life-long Learning Committee, who will make specific recommendations for inclusion in the final report, is also considering them. In their meetings on Wednesday, April 24th and Thursday May 2nd, Estyn, UCAC and Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin that deals specifically with the early years will present evidence. However, evidence has been presented directly to this committee that needs to be considered in the context of the strategic approach.

#### **NURSERY**

The main evidence in this area was by the main provider of Welsh Nursery Education, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin. Since it was established in 1971, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin has grown to a membership of nearly 1000 groups throughout Wales with the highest growth in the southeast and northeast. Its English title describes its activities more precisely, - The Voluntary Association of Welsh medium Playgroups, Baby and Toddler groups and Nurseries. Their success has led to problems of growth that were compounded by a perceived lack of long term planning with the organisation having to react to immediate needs and rely on voluntary workers. They saw a clear need for increased investment in the training of staff that specialise in this age group. MYM expressed concern that the development of nursery education in the public sector, which will increase the number of 3 year-olds receiving Welsh medium education, leaves the Association in limbo. This factor has already had an adverse effect on the number of groups in the Association over the past two years. They also stressed the importance of catering for children with special needs from Welsh-speaking homes at this age.

The Welsh Language Board has analysed the situation in the context of its targets in the Vision and Mission Statement. Only 6.3% of children in Wales speak Welsh at the age of 3. These are almost all from Welsh-speaking homes. It concludes that the contribution of creating Welsh speakers in the early years is critical. At this age, children are more receptive to new languages. They are acquiring language naturally and easily rather than learning.

The Board told us about a joint strategy that it had created with MYM. It identified precise targets for marketing, a system for monitoring the linguistic targets and an increase in the provision and the reception percentage into Welsh language and bilingual nursery education.

The Education and Life-long Learning Committee will consider the details of setting realistic targets and resourcing developments. The Culture Committee is invited to consider three strategic issues that arise from the evidence.

1. How high a priority should the development of Welsh medium and bilingual nursery education be given
  - in terms of resources?
  - In terms of training of staff and teachers and
  - should this be prioritised over provision in later years?
1. With greater public sector Welsh medium provision in the 3+ age group, what is the role of Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin in the earlier provision? Should there be more Welsh language provision throughout the private and voluntary sector?
2. What are the strategic desirable outcomes for the broad strategy? Is the priority to increase numbers or to achieve greater fluency for fewer children?

## **Welsh for Adults**

A number of submissions have presented evidence in in this area. ELWa and the Welsh Language Board presented their strategic vision. Popeth yn Gymraeg, Nant Gwrtheyrn, CYD, Powys County Council, Gwynedd County Council, Iaith Cyf, Acen and others presented practical examples of the successes and frustrations as well as their vision for development. The Welsh for Adults Consortia presented their written evidence through the Welsh Language Board. The Basque model had influenced all the providers, and the resources provided by the Basque government (£30m as compared with ELWa's £3.1m) was often quoted. In general, there was agreement on the way forward:

- A national structure for provision of Welsh for Adults co-ordinating local delivery and providing central resources.
- The field should be professional throughout with proper training and a career structure for tutors.
- There should be robust monitoring systems to ensure effective provision that would reach the strategic targets set for increasing the number of people who could understand and speak the language.
- The development of Welsh in the Workplace should be based on the needs of the learner so that it is seen as acquiring a skill for a purpose, rather than a general course.

There should be incentives for employers to release staff for this purpose.

The role of ELWa and its priorities were identified as crucial. Providers were critical of the current level of funding and the formula that had been used over the years, which was less favourable than that used for teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages ( ESOL). ELWa is currently reviewing its funding for the whole area. It was also felt that ELWa had given the impression that the providers were not currently delivering effectively. They responded that ELWa had failed to factor the effects of the petrol crisis and the foot and mouth outbreak into the quoted figures. There was also disagreement on the dropout rate from Welsh courses. Figures provided later by the consortia showed that the retention rates for Welsh for Adults at 82.4% was higher than those for ESOL (79.4%),and French and Spanish (77.1% and 69.6% respectively). Other statistics from qualifications achieved indicated that around 10% of those who register for courses(about 2000 learners) became fluent in the Welsh language annually.

This committee is asked to consider the following statements in relation to the future direction of Welsh for Adults:

1. The goal is to continually increase the number of adults who achieve a level of fluency in the Welsh language.
  2. That ELWa should;
    - develop its strategy for Welsh for Adults, taking into account its importance in the overall goal of a Bilingual Wales.
    - allocate funds commensurate with this goal to provide access and opportunity for adults to learn Welsh in every part of Wales.
    - Establish a robust monitoring system to measure the effectiveness of the provision in meeting the targets.
    - Provide the framework for a professional corps of tutors, properly trained and qualified, throughout Wales.
    - Establish a resource centre (perhaps on a virtual basis) to ensure that the system is able to meet the growing demand from learners.
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1. Learner-driven Welsh in the Workplace schemes should be available and widely promoted. Incentives should be available for employers, both public and private sector, to encourage the release of employees to learn Welsh.
  2. The Education and Life-long Learning Committee will consider the details and will continue to monitor the strategy and its effectiveness in the future.

## **ANNEX**

### **EVIDENCE FROM ESTYN (ELL-7-02(p.4))**

#### **Early years**

##### **Evidence**

Nearly all young children aged three to five receive some form of early years education in either the maintained or non-maintained sector and for either all or part of each day.

Our evidence from inspection of the maintained sector shows that young children make good progress in the development of their language, literacy and communication skills. In

designated Welsh-medium and bilingual schools pupils aged three to five often receive a good foundation for the development of their fluency in Welsh. This is the case even when they come from homes where English is the sole language. In English-medium schools, many young children also receive some early experience of Welsh that introduces them to the use of Welsh in everyday settings.

Young children also receive some support in learning Welsh in voluntary, private and independent settings in the non-maintained sector. About 20% of young children attend Welsh-medium playgroups within the non-maintained sector. However, there are no precise figures available on the total number of young children receiving some early experience in learning Welsh in the English-medium non-maintained sector.

In the Welsh-medium non-maintained sector, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (MYM) is effective in helping young children to establish good foundations in the Welsh language. It provides immersion teaching and support in the Welsh language for children from Welsh-speaking homes and some English-speaking homes. MYM also works effectively with young children who speak English as an additional language who are mainly from ethnic minority families in urban centres such as Cardiff, Swansea and Newport.

### **What works well?**

Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin has proved its ability to provide a firm grounding in Welsh for young children who do not speak Welsh at home. This has thereafter given parents the choice of sending their children to either English-medium or Welsh-medium schools.

When children of pre-school age learn Welsh it often provides a valuable opportunity for them to begin to be aware of the distinctiveness of Wales, its languages and its culture. It also provides a valuable preparation for a child's learning of Welsh at key stage 1. Young children often benefit greatly from the use of Welsh in play, role-play and structured activities across the sector.

ACCAC's 'Desirable Outcomes' and the production of guidelines by some LEAs on the six areas of learning have helped teachers to foster pupils' language skills and this can include their bilingual skills. Some Early Years Partnerships in LEAs have improved planning for Welsh-medium education for young children.

### **Main areas of concern**

- There is not enough reliable information on the extent of learning of Welsh by young children in the non-maintained sector.
- Not enough detailed guidance is generally available for playgroup and nursery leaders

about constructing a curriculum in a bilingual setting or in developing children's competence in a second or third language.

## **Welsh for adults**

### **Evidence**

The National Council is responsible for funding the Welsh for adults provision. The provision involves a wide range of providers who work together in eight consortia. The consortia comprise every provider of Welsh for adults within a specific catchment area. The consortia were established in 1994 to co-ordinate and develop the provision strategically.

The demand for Welsh for adults provision has increased significantly, from 13,300 students registered for courses in 1994 to 21,011 in 2001. Most students are working towards levels 1 and 2.

Our evidence (2000-2001) indicates that all providers of Welsh for adults deliver courses of at least satisfactory quality. Standards of work are mostly good at all levels.

### **What works well?**

Intensive courses, such as 'wlpan' and short-term residential courses, have been particularly effective in helping adults to learn Welsh.

### **Main areas of concern**

- Not enough learners progress to higher level courses. Many are content to consolidate their learning at the same level for too long. Many are people who undertake Welsh learning in their leisure time and do not feel the need to progress to higher levels.
- Too many learners drop out of beginners' classes, often because they do not appreciate how demanding it is to learn until they start.
- In some areas there are too many providers competing for the same clients.
- In many areas it is difficult for providers to recruit suitable tutors to meet local needs. Tutors often need more training and guidance and would benefit from a structured national route for teaching/tutoring at every level.

- The provision for Welsh in the workplace is uneven across consortia. Some providers offer little or nothing, while others respond better to needs.