

Minutes of the Education and Life-Long Learning Committee

Date: 21 March 2001

Time: 2.30pm

Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly Building

Attendance:

Members

Cynog Dafis, Chair	Plaid Cymru	Mid and West Wales
Jane Davidson, Assembly Minister	Labour	Pontypridd
Lorraine Barrett	Labour	Cardiff South and Penarth
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

Committee Secretariat

Chris Reading	Committee Clerk
Holly Pembridge	Deputy Committee Clerk

Apologies

Christine Humphreys

Officials

Richard Davies

Derek Adams

Keith Davies

Alan Lansdown

Tony Widdrington (OCG)

Declarations of Interest

Cynog Dafis Registered Teacher

Jane Davidson Registered Teacher

Huw Lewis Registered Teacher

Lorraine Barrett School Governor

Pauline Jarman Member of Court of Governors, University of Cardiff; and Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council

2.00pm – 2.30pm: The Committee met in closed session to question Professor Les Hobson (Expert Adviser) on his summary and analysis of information received to date.

Public Session

Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair announced that Christine Humphreys had resigned from the Assembly, with effect from 31st March, on health grounds. On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Christine Humphreys for her contribution to the work of this Committee and also the Post-16 Education Committee (now defunct) and wished her well for the future.

Item 1: Report by the Assembly Minister

Paper: ELL 06-01(p.1)

1.1 The Minister gave her monthly report to the Committee regarding current issues and items that Members had raised.

1.2 The Minister informed the Committee that, on 2nd March, awarding bodies had been invited to tender for the development and pilot project of the Welsh Bacallaureate. The Minister had received these tenders and intended setting up a steering group.

1.3 The Minister stressed to the Committee the importance of narrowing the gap in performance between schools. To help achieve this, the National Assembly and the Welsh Local Government Association had established a joint task group under the aegis of the Local Government Partnership Council. The task group would identify the key factors that contributed to consistently good performance in schools. The group was due to hold its first meeting in April and it was expected that it would present its report to the Partnership Council after approximately 12 months.

1.4 The Minister reported that she had written to John Andrews, Chair of the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW), as he had approached her subsequent to the GTCW's presentation to the Committee at the last meeting (7 March). He felt that the assumption that the Council should be financed substantially from the registration income in 2001-02 should be revisited. This would enable the Council to have a longer 'running in' period and would demonstrate to teachers that they were given value for the registration fee. The Minister was hopeful, after reviewing next year's budgets, that she could identify sufficient monies to meet the Council's immediate additional needs.

1.5 The Minister reminded the Committee that, amongst the papers circulated for this meeting, there was a copy of the proposed amendment regulations and order for the additional functions of the General Teaching Council for Wales. If Members wished to make comments, then they should be sent via the Clerk by 11th May.

1.6 The Minister informed the Committee that alongside the Ministers in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, she had issued a consultation paper on developing the role of the National Training Organisation Network (NTO). The main function of the NTOs was to assess skills needs and meet the subsequent priorities.

1.7 The Minister then referred to the issue of 'Schools (Building On Success) Green Paper for England' which can be viewed at Annex A on *ELL 06-01(p.1)*

1.8 The Minister informed the Committee that following the outcome of Marjorie Evans' case (Head Teacher of St Mary's Junior School, Caldicot), she would look at the procedures followed by the local education authority (LEA). If the Minister felt that the LEA/governing body had acted unreasonably,

then under Section 496 of 1996 Education Act, she would be entitled to direct them to review their procedures. The Minister told the Committee that she had turned down various requests to give media interviews about this case.

1.9 The Minister reported that due to the Foot and Mouth Disease Crisis, some schools in Wales had been closed - eighteen schools had been closed in Powys and two in Ynys Mon. Whether schools remained open or closed was a matter for LEAs and governing bodies. However, the National Assembly had issued guidance: the presumption was that where possible, schools remained open but pupils/teachers should restrict their movement if they had been in close proximity to livestock. If a school was located in the middle of an outbreak, then it was presumed the school would close. It was agreed that the Clerk would circulate to Committee Members copies of advice from Assembly officials to LEAs, regarding measures to be taken during the current outbreak. The Minister also reported that because of the snowfalls that had hit Wales in the past 24 hours, some 166 schools were closed but it was anticipated that provided there were no further falls overnight, they should all re-open tomorrow.

1.10 The following issues were raised in discussion:

- There was concern that the proposed vocational GCSEs would not encompass the National Assembly's agenda – sustainable development, equal opportunities and assisting the socially disadvantaged. It was noted that the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC) and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) were working closely together on this issue. The Minister was prepared to consider written suggestions from Members.
- Some Members expressed the view that the vocational GCSE should simply be called GCSE, also was the National Curriculum designed to develop and incorporate the new vocational qualification? It was noted that to maintain parity of esteem between both the vocational and academic GCSE, the same terminology needed to be used across the board. The last Curriculum Review introduced changes leaving a distinctly Welsh curriculum. There was no need to increase the burden by imposing another Curriculum review at present, as one was due to commence in 18 months - 2 years' time.
- The Chair asked should there be one overall Welsh National Curriculum. It was noted that it was important how 'Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig' was articulated through initial teacher training and supporting teaching materials. The current National Curriculum was designed for Wales. The Minister informed the Committee that the National Assembly would review the Curriculum as aforementioned.
- Welsh Baccalaureate: One Member requested that the steering group for the development of the Welsh Baccalaureate should appear before the Committee. The Chair undertook to consider this request. Another Member suggested that the steering group should have the freedom to change the content of the Welsh Baccalaureate to reflect the Assembly's aims. The Minister undertook to keep the Committee informed by means of her monthly report.
- Narrowing the gap in performance between schools: There was concern how the joint task group, under the aegis of the Local Government Partnership Council, would achieve measures without huge investment. It was noted that reports of the task group could be copied to the Committee for information. The Minister stated that she would chair alternate meetings of the task group. Estyn would also be involved with regards to factors affecting performance.
- General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW): One Member was concerned that the GTCW

would not register teachers as being Welsh. The Minister stated that she was aware of this issue and would take it up with the GTCW.

1.11 The Committee raised the following issues on the Green Paper within the Minister's report:

- Some Members raised the topic of Space for Schools and Arts – would 'out of hours learning' use school premises? One Member commented that Estyn had reported that resources were not a significant problem for sport in schools, but there was inadequate time allowed during the school day for such activities. The Minister stated that some £155,000 had been allocated to fund Education Extra to run pilot project on 'out of hours' activities. In addition, funds were being allocated to developing creative activities for 'out of hours' learning. The Culture Committee was currently developing this agenda with its 'Culture in Common Review' and this would be discussed at their meeting on 28 March. The Minister stated that should had received the report of the PE/School Sport Task Force, which made recommendations regarding time constraints and the provision of PE activities during the school day.
- There was concern that in contrast to England, Wales did not appear to embrace specialist schools. It was noted that the National Assembly was working alongside local government to tackle under-investment from the previous government. The National Assembly's aim was to make sure that every pupil in Wales had access to a quality, high standard of education.
- There was some discussion around the Partnership agreement and the National Assembly's objective to reduce all infant class sizes to twenty-five pupils within the Assembly's next term – would legislation be required to influence this initiative/target? Also, it was asked when schools in Wales would receive the funding for school buildings, as announced in the Chancellor's budget. It was noted that the target to reduce class sizes did not require legislation. With regard to the monies for school buildings, it could not be allocated on the basis of England's spend. The Minister would be putting the case for funding for schools to her Cabinet colleagues.

Item 2: Policy Monitoring of Estyn – Chief Inspector's Annual Report

2.1 Miss Susan Lewis, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education and Training in Wales, presented the main findings of her annual report for the academic year 1999-2000. A copy of the slides shown at the presentation is attached at Annex A.

2.2 The following points were raised in discussion:

- Some Members expressed concern that the school inspection system (including the twelve-month notice period given) caused undue stress in teaching staff. It was noted that Estyn was constantly monitoring the system, with a view to making improvements and was currently consulting a wide range of groups in the education field. The twelve-month notice period enabled inspection teams to be matched carefully to the geographical and linguistic requirements of each individual school; this was part of quality assurance.
- The Chief Inspector was asked if she had any plans to modify the inspection process. The Chief Inspector replied that Estyn was aiming to introduce a common inspection framework by 2004.

- Concern was expressed that the inspection process was unduly diagnostic and analytical and did little to help schools. Members were assured that Estyn did advise/support LEAs and schools as part of the post-inspection procedures but this had to be based on inspection evidence.
- Members noted that the report highlighted that there were weaknesses in Welsh medium provision across the Post-16 sector and there were too few opportunities for bilingual education in the FE sector. It was hoped by the Committee that the Minister would take this message to Education and Learning Wales (ELWa) to be included as part of its next remit.
- There was some discussion about school attendance rates in socially disadvantaged areas and the re-integration of socially disaffected children into schools and whether this was having a negative impact on teachers and other pupils. It was noted that school attendance rates in socially disadvantaged areas were usually worse than those in more favoured areas. With regards to re-integration, a balance was needed in re-engaging disaffected pupils whilst not disadvantaging the remainder.
- The Committee felt that the Chief Inspector's report did influence policy development and also informed the distribution of Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST) funding for the next year. It was noted that it was vital that Estyn's reports on a variety of topics were read and subsequently acted upon. Perhaps more systematic feedback was required from LEAs and schools.
- It was noted from the report (p.61) that with regard to Initial Teacher Training (ITT), there were weaknesses in trainees' ability to use assessment information and Information Communications Technology (ICT). Estyn had brought its report on this issue to the Committee in September 2000. College-based training was helpful but further investment in modern equipment and training of existing teachers was necessary to increase the use of ICT in schools.
- Members expressed concern that there was a potential danger of over-emphasising formal learning to the detriment of fostering creativity in pre-school children. It was noted that a firm balance between encouraging and fostering creativity and developing basic skills was essential.
- The Committee felt that it was important that Estyn measured issues such as social inclusion, equal opportunities and sustainable development in their assessments of institutions. It was noted that Estyn inspected all aspects of equal opportunities. There was still much to be done with regards to social inclusion in partnership with the Teacher Training Partnership; the framework of ITT and social inclusion was currently under review.

Item 3: Policy Review – Higher Education – Key Theme Presentation – Funding – Sir William Taylor and Professor Steve Smith, on behalf of HEW.

Paper: ELL 06-01(p.2) and (p.3)

3.1 Professor Sir William Taylor, Chair of the Universities-UK Funding Options Review Group, presented a discussion on the theme of Funding. Universities-UK, (formerly the Committee of Vice Chancellor and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom), had just completed a year long UK-wide review of higher education funding options. The focus of the review had been the funding of

institutions. Professor Taylor gave the ELL Committee an overview of the report. Professor Steve Smith, Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, presented on behalf of HEW and spoke from his paper.

3.2 It was arguable that there had been little change over the past decade in the range of possible funding options. The most fundamental choice was between funding through general taxation and direct funding by beneficiaries.

3.3 In practice, there were hardly any universities that relied exclusively on either general taxation or on payments by past or present students. A mix of such modes was practically universal. Therefore, the issues that needed discussion were mainly about the respective contributions from public and private sources and the manner in which such contributions flow to institutions.

3.4 Fundamentally, over the last twenty years, as a consequence of underfunded expansion, there had been a more than fifty per cent reduction in resources per student. This had brought average staff-student ratios down from 1:9 to 1:17 and if the money for research that in the average unit of funding was excluded, to 1:23.

3.5 The funding requirement incorporated several elements:

- maintaining in 2003-2004 the purchasing power of current levels of grant;
- Increasing the sum of £170m allocated for recruitment and retention of staff by 2003-2004;
- meeting the statutory requirements on institutions to offer equal pay for equal work;
- correcting under-investment in infrastructure and to fully meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and
- enhancing to 20 per cent the so-called 'post-code premium' designed to raise recruitment and retention of disadvantaged students.

Taken together, these items could increase the total funding requirement to £900m per annum.

3.6 A total of eight distinguishable funding options were considered and in conclusion, four options were justified for further consideration. They were: increased public funding, markets fees, graduate income-contingent contributions and institutional endowment, all discussed in detail in the report. The other four options were rejected on the grounds of practical and political feasibility, they were: increased tuition fees for which income contingent loans would be available; Funding Council teaching grants abolished, fees deregulated and a publicly endowed bursary fund to support needy students; individual learning accounts and the Cubie/Scottish Parliament Scheme.

3.7 Professor Taylor informed the Committee that the Vice Chancellors considered the Funding Options Report at their meeting in Newcastle at the beginning of March 2001. They had accepted the report as the basis on which dialogue with the parties should continue, both before and after the coming General Election.

3.8 The following points were raised in discussion:

- There was some discussion about what model of funding for HE in Wales should be adopted. It was noted that as discussions were still continuing around the U-UK report, one model alone could not be identified, and a combination of models might be deemed a more practical/ appropriate solution.
- The Chair asked whether if a funding gap were to persist between Wales and other parts of the UK, Wales could develop and maintain a world class research university. Professor Taylor stated that Wales already had a strong university research presence and that if research was to be concentrated in a small number of institutions, it would be important for arrangements to exist whereby research-active scholars and teachers from elsewhere in Wales could contribute from their disciplinary and professional expertise. Professor Smith added that the HE sector in Wales was diverse, different institutions would respond to different models of funding. Whichever model was adopted, closing the gap was imperative.

The Committee expressed concern about the potential dangers of so-called ‘jam-jar’ (special initiative) funding and whether Wales could achieve its strategic objectives for HE, with a reduction in this type of funding. Professor Smith thought that Wales could cut back on the proportion of resources that went into special initiatives and still achieve its objectives. The Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) had plans to cut down on this type of funding. To have flexibility to respond to new possibilities and discoveries, it was important that universities should have adequate discretion in the use of resources, whilst recognising the importance of the need to respond to national priorities. Governments and universities needed to interact closely with one another.

- There was some discussion of whether funding could be more mission-sensitive and less competitive. Professor Taylor responded that whatever the difficulties in devising and securing acceptance for formulae funding, once in place the criteria were at least transparent and the necessity to compare claims on an individual basis could be avoided. It was important, however, that formulae should be subject to regular review.
- Members enquired about the appropriate formula for the unit of funding resource in Wales. Professor Taylor stated that this was a matter for the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW). Professor Smith added that HEW did not want to see separation between teaching and research and wanted to see Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) grading, as used in the rest of the UK.
- There was some discussion about the level of investment, both hardware and running costs that e-learning required. Professor Taylor could see much potential for e-learning, but some caution had to be exercised. There were some subjects for whom e learning was inappropriate and where face to face contact with teachers was essential on a continuous basis. Professor Smith added that the cost of implementing and maintaining e-learning were huge; potential savings were a long way downstream. It had been calculated that the cost of developing a single distance-learning model was £1m. Wales would need a clear policy on e-learning and collaboration would be needed between institutions. A high-quality product would be needed to ensure success in global competition.
- The Committee raised the issue of the costs of bilingualism across the sector and wondered why the funding of UK/Welsh institutions was not benchmarked with America. Professor Smith stated that it was difficult to estimate the total cost of Welsh medium provision but the University of Wales, Aberystwyth had incurred costs of 4% of its total income. The Chair commented that across the HE sector as a whole, this cost would be negligible. Professor

Smith agreed. To benchmark against American institutions would be inappropriate as the sheer size of endowments and the institutions themselves, superseded those of the UK.

- The Committee raised the issue of collaboration working for the Welsh HE sector and how this could work, given the relatively small size of many Welsh higher education institutions. Professor Taylor responded that collaboration was more likely to succeed if centrally initiated proposals took full account of the views of academic and research staff.

3.9 In response to the HEW paper, the Minister stated that:

- She was not responsible for the Guardian Press Report concerning the funding gap but had responded to it.
- HEW should acknowledge that the National Assembly had made considerable attempts to reduce the gap to within 1%.
- The National Assembly had never proposed cutting student numbers in order to reduce the funding gap.

Item 4: Minutes of March 7th Meeting

Paper: ELL 05-01(mins)

The minutes of the March 7th Meeting were ratified by the Committee.

Papers to Note

The following papers were noted by the Committee.

Paper to Note: Letter from Mr R.G. Bingham, Chair of ADEW's ICT Working Party concerning the Committee's report on ICT and the Chair's letter in response.

Paper: ELL 06-01(p.4)

Paper to Note: Letter from the Chair of the Economic Development Committee to the Chair.

Paper to Note: ELL 06-01(p.5)

Paper to Note: The National Assembly's remit letter (2000-1) to Estyn.

Paper: ELL 06-01(p.6)

Paper to Note: Consultation letter and draft regulations for the General Teaching Council for Wales.

Paper: ELL 06-01(p.7)

The next Committee meeting will take place on Wednesday 4th April 2001.

Committee Secretariat March 2001

The Annexes are published in the language they are received in.

ANNEX A

**Adroddiad Blynyddol y Prif Arolygydd
Chief Inspector's Annual Report**

Mae gennym lawer i'w ddathlu!

There is a lot to celebrate!

**Adroddiad Blynyddol
Annual Report**

- gwelliannau yn sgîl arweinyddiaeth dda gan uwch reolwyr
- improvement through good leadership at senior management level

cafwyd y canlyniadau gorau erioed ym:

- **mhroffion y CC**

- **arholiadau TGAU**
 - **arholiadau safon Uwch**
- best ever results in:
 - **NC tests**
 - **GCSE examinations**
 - **A level examinations**

- mae'r ysgolion a cholegau ar y trywydd iawn i fodloni llawer o dargedau'r Cynulliad
- schools and colleges on target to meet many of the Assembly targets

- mae'r safonau yn parhau i godi
- standards continue to rise

- cyflawniad uchel mewn dosbarthiadau chweched dosbarth ac mewn llawer o feysydd rhaglen mewn sefydliadau addysg bellach
- high achievement in school sixth forms and many programme areas in further education institutions

- ysgolion arbennig - datblygiadau cyson ond gwendidau mewn 1 ysgol allan o 5
- special schools - steady development but weaknesses in 1 in 5 schools
- hyfforddiant athrawon - sefyllfa gadarnhaol ar y cyfan
- teacher training - generally a positive picture
- llawer mwy o bobl ifanc yn mynd ymlaen i addysg bellach
- large increase in numbers going on to further education

- gwaith oedolion, ieuenctid a chymunedol - darpariaeth anghyson o ran maint ac ansawdd
- adult, youth and community work

- uneven provision in quantity and quality

- ansawdd hyfforddiant-yn-y-gwaith a gwaith cwmnïau gyrfaoedd yn amrywio llawer mwy nag ansawdd y gwaith mewn ysgolion a cholegau
- quality of work-based training and work of careers companies much more variable than that in schools and colleges

Y prif feysydd i weithredu arnynt:- ysgolion ac AALI

Main areas for action:-
schools and LEAs

- ennyn diddordeb myfyrwyr â phresenoldeb gwael a'r rheini na chyflawnant yn dda
- engaging poor attenders and those who are not achieving well

Y prif feysydd i weithredu arnynt:- materion trawsbynciol

Main areas for action:-cross-cutting issues

- cael y gorau gan bobl a manteisio i'r eithaf ar gyfleoedd
- **cymhelliant**
- **diddordeb**
- **presenoldeb**
- **cadw myfyrwyr**
- getting the best out of people and opportunities
- **motivation**
- **engagement**
- **attendance**
- **retention**

Y prif feysydd i weithredu arnynt:-ysgolion ac AALI

Main areas for action:-schools and LEAs

- parhau i wella medrau mewn llythrennedd, rhifedd a TGCh
- continuing to improve skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT

Y prif feysydd i weithredu arnynt:-ysgolion ac AALI

Main areas for action:-schools and LEAs

- gwneud cynnydd gwell o gyfnod allweddol 2 i gyfnod allweddol 3 a thrwy flynyddoedd 8 a 9
- making better progress from key stage 2 to key stage 3 and throughout years 8 and 9

Y prif feysydd i weithredu arnynt:-ysgolion ac AALI

Main areas for action:-schools and LEAs

- gwella gwaith rheolwyr canol o ran monitro, asesu a chynllunio ar gyfer gwelliant
- improving middle managers' work in monitoring, assessing and planning for improvement

Y prif feysydd i weithredu arnynt:-ysgolion ac AALI

Main areas for action:-schools and LEAs

- gwella ansawdd a gwaith cynnal a chadw adeiladau
- improving the quality and upkeep of buildings
- twf mawr mewn addysg Gymraeg ac addysg ddwyieithog mewn ysgolion
- large growth in Welsh medium and bilingual education in schools

Y prif feysydd i weithredu arnynt:-

ôl-16

Main areas for action:-post-16

- gwella'r mynediad i addysg a hyfforddiant Cymraeg a dwyieithog
- increasing access to bilingual and Welsh-medium education and training

Y prif feysydd i weithredu

arnynt

Main areas for action

- lleihau'r bwlch o ran perfforiad
- closing the gap in performance

Y prif feysydd i weithredu arnynt:-

ôl-16

Main areas for action:-post-16

- gwella ansawdd y data
- defnyddio'r data i lywio'r gwaith cynllunio ar gyfer gwelliant
- improving the quality of data
- use data to inform planning for improvement

Y prif feysydd i weithredu arnynt:-

ôl-16

Main areas for action:-post-16

- datblygu'r gwaith o reoli ansawdd darparwyr hyfforddiant galwedigaethol
- developing quality management of vocational training providers

Y prif feysydd i weithredu

arnynt:-materion trawsbynciol

Main areas for action:-cross-cutting issues

- casglu data ar gyflawniad grwpiau ethnig lleiafrifol
- collecting data on achievement in minority ethnic groups