

Minutes of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

Date: 14 November 2001

Time: 2.00pm

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
Mick Bates	Liberal Democrat	Montgomeryshire
Pauline Jarman	Plaid Cymru	South Wales Central
Ann Jones	Labour	Vale of Clwyd
Gareth Jones	Plaid	Conwy
Val Lloyd	Labour	Swansea East
Jonathan Morgan	Conservative	South Wales Central
Alun Pugh	Labour	Clwyd West

Committee Secretariat

Chris Reading	Clerk
Holly Pembridge	Deputy Clerk

Officials

Richard Davies	Director, National Assembly Training and Education Department
Neil Thomas	Head, Lifelong Learning Division
Alan Lansdown	Head, Pupil Support Division
Kerry Darke	Standards and Performance Division
John Atkins	Lifelong Learning Division
Jo Salway	Higher Education Division (Private Session)
Andrew Felton	Office of the Counsel General

Apologies

Janice Gregory

Huw Lewis

Pauline Jarman (Private Session)

Substitutions

Ann Jones

Val Lloyd

Declarations of Interest

Cynog Dafis Registered Teacher; wife is Registered Teacher

Jane Davidson Registered Teacher; husband is FE college lecturer and member of NATFHE Executive

Huw Lewis Registered Teacher

Mick Bates Qualified Teacher, Member of GTC, wife is Head Teacher, School Inspector, member of ACCAC and Estyn committees.

Lorraine Barrett School Governor

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

Alun Pugh Alun Pugh's wife is FE college lecturer

Public Session

Chair's Opening Remarks

- The Chair welcomed Ann Jones and Val Lloyd to the Committee meeting as they were substituting for Janice Gregory and Huw Lewis respectively. The Chair asked all members to declare any interests. Val Lloyd declared that she was a governor of a FE college.
- The Chair told the Committee that the item on substance abuse education had been postponed with the Minister's agreement, to allow further consideration of the draft report of the Higher Education Policy Review at this meeting. The Chair stated that substance abuse education was likely to be included on the agenda for the next meeting (28 November).
- The Committee resolved, in accordance with Standing Order 8.21(vi) that they were content for their consideration of the draft report of the Higher Education Policy Review to be held in closed session. Mick Bates registered his objection in principle, but said he would accept the majority view of the Committee.
- The Committee was informed that Catrin Redknap had been appointed as the expert adviser for the Welsh Language Policy Review.

Item One: Minister's Report

Paper: ELL 17-01(p.1)

1. The Minister introduced her report to the Committee. The Chair suggested that the Committee would concentrate its questioning on the first three items in the report.
2. The view was expressed that GCSE students who achieved 'D' or 'E' grades should be recognised and encouraged just as much as students that achieved 'A*' grades. The Minister agreed that this was indeed important; the media was obsessed with the top end of targets. Also unsung, were those who had entered for vocational qualifications. The Minister felt it was worth noting that there had been a five per cent improvement attainment of grades 'A'-'G' at GCSE level.

Voluntary Partnership Council

1.3 The Minister was asked whether the themes of sustainable development and equal opportunities had been incorporated into the curriculum and when they would be incorporated into Initial Teacher Training (ITT). The Minister explained that it was important that the themes of sustainable development, equal opportunities and racism awareness underpinned the curriculum. A number of organisations from the voluntary sector were keen to be involved in this process. A member asked if these themes would be taught as part of the Personal and Social Education (PSE) framework in schools. The Minister said that it would have to be delivered as part of the statutory framework. The Assembly was currently working with ACCAC (Curriculum and Qualifications Authority for Wales) and the Minister would report to the Committee on completion of this work.

1.4 Members were interested to know how the theme of sustainable development would be embedded in

educational practice in education and lifelong learning. The Chair commented that there would be opportunities for discussion on this issue at a future meeting.

1.5 One member raised the question of how the Assembly/Committee could tap into the expertise offered by the voluntary sector – for example in respect of the membership of the ELWa Councils, Community Consortia for Education and Training (CCETs) etc. The Minister commented that there was already strong representation from the voluntary sector on CCETs. The National Council also benefited from some strong voluntary sector experience. The sector had particular expertise to offer in respect of .the added value of unaccredited learning, the proposed credit transfer framework and the development of 'soft skills'. The sector therefore had the potential to play an enhanced role in the future.

Pay for FE College Lecturers

1.6 The Minister noted the pivotal role played by the FE sector in taking forward the drive for learning. £3.17m had been added to the National Council - ELWa's 2001-02 provision in-year in recognition of the pressures facing the FE sector. However, the Minister stressed that she had no locus in discussions on pay within the FE institutions. She had met the unions and Fforwm over the past week to urge continuing discussion and to register the Assembly's expectation that there should be fairness coupled with affordability.

1.7 The view was expressed that there was insufficient funding available to enable a settlement and that industrial action might result. . The Minister said that she rejected the notion that there was insufficient funding available. The catalyst for the Assembly putting in additional money in-year had been David Blunkett's (then Secretary of State for Education in the UK government)teaching pay initiative, which was made available to FE colleges in England subject to conditions. .The additional money in Wales represented a similar injection of funding ,but without 'strings'. It had been provided to assist in meeting pay pressures in the sector, ,not as an addition to the National Joint Council's recommendation of a 3.7% pay increase.

1.8 The Minister told the Committee that constructive dialogue was needed between colleges and unions at the local level if agreement was to be reached on a settlement that was both fair and affordable. She hoped that, in the light of her recent meetings with the unions and Fforwm, there would be renewed efforts by negotiators to bridge differences and avoid industrial action.

1.8 The view was strongly expressed that FE lecturers teaching 'A'-Levels in colleges should have broadly comparable pay and conditions to teachers teaching 'A'-Levels in schools. The Minister said that the Committee had registered its concern on this matter and had incorporated it as one of its priorities for the Budget Planning Round. There would be a transfer of funding of sixth form funding to ELWa in April 2002 with the money recycled to LEAs next year in line with existing spend. . The Minister referred to her written report and reiterated that pay should be fair, equitable and affordable. She also noted that the year-on-year increase of 10.5 per cent in provision going to the FE sector had been the best uplift for the sector for a long time in Wales.

Tests for 7 Year Olds

1.9 The Minister was asked how much money would be saved and returned to schools in light of her decision to abandon the national tests at the end of Key Stage 1. The Minister was asked whether she planned to scrap the tests for Key Stages 2 and 3. The Minister stated that she did not want any money to

be lost to schools during this financial year; GEST funding would remain in place for this year. There had been overwhelming support for scrapping the Key Stage 1 tests. Consequently, bureaucratic burdens had been released from teachers and unnecessary pressure had been taken off young children. There had been a close relationship between the teacher assessments and the results of statutory written tests: they were almost identical. The Minister stated that she was determined to drive up standards and to achieve key targets. Results at Key Stage 2 had been good but there had been a fall-off at Key Stage 3. The Minister stated that it would not be appropriate to abandon written tests at KS2 and KS3 against that background.

1.10 The Minister was asked how the statutory assessment in schools would be evaluated. The Minister replied that Estyn would monitor and evaluate this statutory function.

Initial Teacher Training Grants

1.11 Members asked if the initial teacher training grant was paid in separate stages, as in England there were three instalments, the third being paid after one year's employment as a teacher. Some Members were concerned that some students undertaking ITT had received the grants but had not subsequently taken up a teaching position. The Minister stated that the ITT grant was paid in ten monthly instalments. Richard Davies stated that NATED officials would provide a note to the Committee, outlining the payment profiles in England and Wales.

1.12 The Minister was asked if she would provide information on the number of graduate teachers in schools in Wales. The Minister responded that this information would be included in the note to Committee previously mentioned by Richard Davies. The Minister stated that the graduate teacher training programme needed to be re-energised: teachers needed encouragement to move around. Richard Davies added that there were funds available for between 15 and 20 people per year. The Chair commented that it would be useful to have a future agenda item concerning the supply of teachers.

1.13 In discussion, members expressed interest in how successful the monitoring of ITT grant schemes had been. They asked if information would be provided at the end of the academic year. The Minister told the Committee that there was a range of schemes in place. The information in the past had been supplied on a combined Wales and England basis but it would be supplied separately this year and would be brought to the Committee as soon as possible.

1.14 There was some concern that some students in Wales had not received their £4,000 grant. The Minister was asked to confirm that the budget for this still ran to 2003-2004. She responded that there needed to be a joint evaluation with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Funds for secondary school teacher trainees were available until 2003-2004, those for primary until 2002-2003. The situation should be looked at year on year. Richard Davies stated that the capacity for ITT had to be correctly balanced for the longer term.

Math.Cymru

1.15 One Member was concerned that there had been a lack of momentum in carrying forward the Maths 2000 initiative as the 'end of year' report had been published in March 2001. The Minister responded that, although the report had been published in March 2001, time had been required to assess the recommendations and find the necessary funding. The Minister stated that the Maths Cymru initiative would be led by national co-ordinator to be managed by Techniquet. The Minister confirmed that the post

had been advertised and an appointment was expected by the end of the month.

New Opportunities Fund (NOF) ICT Training

1.16 There was some discussion around interactive whiteboards for schools. Members asked how they operated. The Minister explained that it was a large, wall-mounted computer screen, used as a teaching tool. A video insert could be used or music played. Teachers could save the lesson on the board. The Minister said that she had announced funding of £9.5 million (?) to provide at least one whiteboard in every primary schools and at least three in every secondary school in Wales. One whiteboard in each secondary school would be located in the science department.

Action Points:

- ***NATED officials to provide a note to Committee outlining ITT payment profiles in England and Wales; also provide information on number of graduates in ITT in Wales.***
- ***Future agenda item on supply of teachers (Chair).***

Item Two: Substance Abuse Education

Paper: ELL 17-01(p.2)

**** This agenda item was deferred to the meeting on 28 November****

Item Three: ICT for Learning Strategy

Paper: ELL 17-01(p.3)

3.1 The Committee was provided with a paper giving it an update on progress on ICT initiatives. The Committee was then shown an IT presentation by Caerphilly LEA who were leading eight other LEAs on ICT Support Strategies and Projects in Schools. A copy of these slides can be viewed at Annex A. The presenters were: David Hopkins (Director Caerphilly LEA and Chair of ADEW ICT sub-group), David Trace (ESIS), Bob Howells (Caerphilly LEA) and Ian Morgan (Caerphilly LEA). The Chair invited the Committee to question the presenters.

3.2 The Committee was interested to know what links the project had had with ACCAC and the BBC with regard to curriculum development. David Hopkins told the Committee that ACCAC were due to come to ADEW's quality assurance group. ACCAC had indicated that they wished to work with LEAs in this area. Bob Howells added that with the introduction of whiteboards, Caerphilly LEA had set up a project, offering guidance for teachers using the whiteboard as a teaching tool.

3.3 The issue arose of whether teachers would be able to know what level of work had been achieved by the pupil through the computer using existing teaching methodology. David Trace responded that there was already a capacity to do this. The Minister commented that LEAs should test this capacity. Bob

Howells added that even though this was the case, it was important that the confidence of teachers wasn't undermined. The aim of the project was to build on good practice and fund a mechanism to disseminate this information widely to teachers across Wales and support teachers in a similar way to Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and beyond.

3.4 The Minister said that the presentation had been an excellent example of LEAs working together on a teacher led basis as the material had been developed in teachers' own schools. There was a case for networking: investment was needed to generate a good practice intranet across the educational service in Wales. ICT could therefore be used as a tool for good practice. The Minister suggested there was a need to perhaps look at procurement exercises.

3.5 The Chair commented that the presentation had provided interesting background in the context of the Committee's future policy review: 'Schools of the Future'.

Item Four: National Council – ELWa –Draft Corporate Strategy and Funding Review

Papers: ELL 17-01(p.4) - Draft Corporate Strategy

ELL 17-01(p.5) - Funding Review

4.1 The Committee had the opportunity to discuss ELWa's funding review process in the context of the National Council's Draft Corporate Strategy. Enid Rowlands (Chair of the National Council), Steve Martin (Chief Executive, ELWa) and Elaine Allinson (Head of Funding) were present.

4.2 Steve Martin talked the Committee through slides outlining the National Council's Draft Corporate Strategy. A copy of these slides can be viewed at Annex B.

4.3 The Minister commented that if members looked at the timeframe outlined in Annex A, the outcome of the first major funding review would be visible by 2004. She suggested that the Committee feed in any comments on this issue to the presenters as this was a singular opportunity to discuss developing an agenda with the National Council.

4.4 There was some concern regarding school sixth form funding transfer. It was felt that some school sixth forms might lose out, one particular sixth form in Denbigh would lose £300,000. Enid Rowlands told the Committee that it was imperative that the National Council forged relationships on a strategic level with LEAs. She explained that she had personally visited every LEA and talked to Directors of Education, Chief Executives, political and cabinet leaders to outline the totality of what the Council was trying to achieve by way of the funding review. The Council had been acutely aware of the sensitivities surrounding the transfer of sixth form funding. There had been a significant, separate amount of consultation with schools and LEAs and the Minister had written to all schools and directors of education.

4.5 Steve Martin explained that there were two phases to this process. April 2002 would be the first phase. The Minister had outlined in her letter to LEAs etc that there was a plan to pay back to LEAs the sums spent this year, hence there would be no fluctuation. The next process would be the piloting of new approaches. In the long-term the Council wanted schools to be full partners in this expansion, yet to a certain extent there had to exist a willingness to change on the part of schools. The Council had been working closely alongside Assembly Officials, the WLGA and John Roberts, a consultant and ex-head teacher. Elaine Allinson added that the Council had also been working with LEA Finance officers to draw

on their expertise, to ensure that the proposed systems and processes were not too onerous for schools.

4.6 The Chair raised the issue of pre-16 and post-16 smaller/rural schools' vulnerability in the funding review process, as outlined in the ETAG report. Enid Rowlands said that learning should be centred at the base of every community; learning networks and sets of communities should be created. Previously, learning had been viewed as age-bound and institution-bound. The National Council's aim, set by the Assembly was to radically increase opportunities for learning for all ages in a more dynamic way. She highlighted that learners should be seen as customers with a right to quality provision, who could access it in bite-sized chunks if they so wished.

4.7 The view was expressed that there should not be too much emphasis on the attainment of qualifications alone. Enid Rowlands agreed and said that there was a need for a quality structure, which was both more responsive and flexible. The Council had been working with ACCAC to achieve this. It was important to instil confidence in those returning to learning. Using the television and other IT media would help to expand learning – Coleg Digidol had been leading in this area. The skills of those who supported learning would also change and expand dramatically, they would also mentor learners and increase their own IT skills.

4.8 There was some concern that schools would be somewhat inhibited in their provision of learning opportunities because of their obligation/restriction to follow GCSE and 'A'-Level curricula. Steve Martin said that the Council had been working jointly with ACCAC on the proposed Credit Framework and they had taken account of such issues. At the moment there did not appear to be any obstacles. There would, however, be greater flexibility within a fixed qualification in the form of the Welsh Baccaalaureate.

4.9 One member raised the issue of enterprise education and felt there was a need for co-ordinating the teaching of this important subject both at pre-16 and post-16 level. Steve Martin agreed and said that evidence-based information suggested that in the past, this area had not been sufficiently funded. There was a need for provision of clusters of business units that would foster a business ethic at all levels of education. Enid Rowlands added that business would have to be engaged in the learning community process and business had to be attracted to fostering these links. The Council recognised what key part it could play in delivery and in creating the right conditions for entrepreneurship to flourish. The Council had been working in conjunction with the WDA to develop a strategy.

4.10 There was some discussion regarding the National Council's Draft Strategy and the point was made that there was little reference to multiculturalism in the document. The National Council was asked to comment if there was to be any specific targeting within black/ethnic minority communities. Steve Martin assured the Committee that as plans were developed, all interests would be encompassed and defined. The Council was eager to achieve synergy with the Assembly's programmes and multiculturalism was an issue that needed addressing. Enid Rowlands commented that the Council was very aware that there were key groups/customers with key additional needs. The ethos was one of integration and not segregation.

4.11 The issue rose regarding the future nature and validity of LEA involvement in schools funding in light of the National Council-ELWa's handling of Key stage 4 funding. Enid Rowlands emphasised that it was vital to ensure that existing systems operated well. The main issue was that the experience for the learner was as seamless as possible. Hence, the consultation had been open in order to agree on a strategic direction. Steve Martin the publication of the Learning Country consultation document had provided an overarching view from the Assembly. The National Council, the Assembly and other bodies could work to a common agenda.

4.12 The issue was raised whether Section 52 information had been used as a top-slice in the distribution of funds to ELWa-National Council. One member felt that the amount transferred would not reflect the real costs to schools. Elaine Allinson told the Committee that Section 52 information had been used to inform the amount of money transferred from the Assembly to the National Council. The Assembly, the National Council, the WLGA and John Roberts had been in consultation and had looked at a cost and spend combination. Section 52 didn't reflect the real costs, hence the point of the detailed survey with each school was to identify these real costs.

4.13 There were some comments from one member on the use of language in the Draft Corporate Strategy, e.g. 'learning providers' etc. Enid Rowlands explained that the words had been used to reflect learning in a different way: learning services were reflected in a broader way than had previously been stereotyped.

4.14 The Council representatives were asked if the Council would support school-related programmes, such as Excel Wales. Steve Martin pointed out that the Council had to look at what was legal for it to fund and this had been discussed with the Assembly. He explained that this year funds for existing pre-16 initiatives had continued to be available; there was no wish to disrupt schemes that were offering value provision. In the future, there would obviously have to be prioritisation and choices would have to be made.

4.15 The Chair referred to University for Industry (Ufi) and its work and asked how the Council ensured that this work did not compete with that of Coleg Digidol. Enid Rowlands declared that she was a member of the S4C board that funded Coleg Digidol. The Council had been consulting with the BBC and the Open Learning University; ultimately, there would be a clear role for all the different bodies. Steve Martin had met with Ufi officials and the consensus had been to ensure that there were resources across Wales. The Council was in the process of developing an e-learning strategy before the end of the financial year.

4.16 The Chair asked if the Council had a memorandum of understanding with Ufi. Enid Rowlands responded that there was a working relationship but this had not been formalised as of yet. Developing e-learning did not save money but it made learning more accessible and more effective. Co-operation had occurred also with HEFCW on the issue of e-learning.

4.17 The Chair reminded the Committee that Ufi would bring a report to the Committee in February/March 2002. It would be an opportunity to see how they would respond to the National Council's wishes regarding e-learning. The Chair added that he was pleased with the developments outlined by the National Council.

Item Five: Minutes of 8 November meeting

Paper: ELL 16-01(mins)

5.1 The Committee ratified the minutes of the last meeting. There were no comments.

Private Session

Policy Review – Higher Education – Further consideration of the draft report.

ADEW projects presentation

Support for ICT in Schools

An overview of ICT support strategies and projects

Introduction

- Assembly funded collaborative projects that support the use of ICT in schools, led by:
- Flintshire
- Vale of Glamorgan
- Newport
- Cynnal
- Caerphilly

Common features of good provision

- agreed policies
- well resourced classrooms
- good support for professional development good technical support & backup

Simple strategies to motivate teachers

- good in-school leadership at all levels
- good personal resources for teachers
- appropriate challenges for teachers to use ICT in relevant contexts
- strong encouragement to use CD ROMs to promote learning

policy to teach keyboard skills

Approach to Support

- avoid demoralising teachers
- engage in discussion with schools & elected members about ICT challenges
- keep it straightforward & simple

Intranet developments are at heart of the strategy

Benefits for schools where there is

- one access point per classroom
- access at point of teaching
- access to local Intranets and the Internet

Support Issues

- establishing & developing Education ICT Support Services
- providing good technical support
- ensuring good curriculum support through Advisory services

utilising experts in schools

Technical Support

- technical support staff for networking, hardware & software installation
- access to desktop management software for connection to individual PCs from central office

Advisory Services

- programme of support, adviser & guidance
- full coverage of all subjects & aspects of curriculum
- full coverage of all aspects of leadership & management
- growing repository of expert teachers

Ofsted recommendations

- provide more support for schools
- increase levels of support for ICT leaders
- provide focussed classroom support to improve teaching
- monitor & evaluate progress in ICT standards & teaching

Successes

- Advisory support for developing planning
- effective schemes of work
- identification & dissemination of good practice

Good practice

- supporting role of ICT subject leaders
- literacy & numeracy intervention projects
- using interactive whiteboards to promote effective teaching & learning

An example

ICT Best Practice Project which incorporated work from 9 authorities

ANNEX B is a separate document.