

Minutes of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

Date: 30 January 2002

Time: 1.00pm

Venue: The Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth

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
Gareth Jones	Plaid Cymru	Conwy
Jonathan Morgan	Conservative	South Wales Central
Alun Pugh	Labour	Clwyd West

Committee Secretariat

Chris Reading	Clerk
Holly Pembridge	Deputy Clerk

Officials

Alan Lansdown	Head of Pupil Support Division, NATED
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Apologies

Janice Gregory

Huw Lewis

Substitutions

None

In Attendance:

Representing The Centre for Alternative Technology:

Ann MacGarry Education Officer

Phil Horton Technical Information Officer

Representing Oxfam Cymru:

Catherine Hester Curriculum Adviser

Representing RSPB Cymru:

Claire Fowler Education Policy Adviser

Representing CEWC Cymru:

Stephen Thomas Secretary

<i>Pupils representing Ysgol Bro Dydfi</i>	
Rachel Aston	Martin Evans
<i>Pupils representing Penweddig Comprehensive School</i>	
Anthony Hammond	Cari Fflur Davies
<i>Pupil representing Newtown High School:</i>	
Kimberley Thomas	

Declarations of Interest

Cynog Dafis	Registered Teacher; wife is a Registered Teacher
Jane Davidson	Registered Teacher; husband is a college lecturer and member of the NATFHE Executive
Gareth Jones	Registered Teacher; Member of Conwy County Borough Council
Huw Lewis	Registered Teacher
Mick Bates	Qualified Teacher, member of the General Teaching Council Wales; wife is a Head Teacher, School Inspector, member of ACCAC and Estyn committees
Pauline Jarman	Member of Court of Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council
Lorraine Barrett	School Governor
Alun Pugh	Wife is a college lecturer

Chair's Opening Remarks

1. The Chair thanked the Centre for Alternative Technology for hosting the Committee meeting.
2. The Chair announced that the Mid Wales Regional Committee was due to meet in Machynlleth at 10.30am, on Friday 1 February at Y Tabernacl – the Museum of Modern Art.
3. Members were asked to declare any new interests. There were none.

Item One: Sustainable Development/Global Citizenship in Education

Papers: ELL 02-02(p.1)& (p.2)

1.1 Ann MacGarry covered all the points referred to in her paper, and attached particular importance to:

- The need for sustainable development to permeate the curriculum;
- The need for teachers to have sufficient time for training;
- The Personal and Social Education (PSE) framework should be made a statutory requirement;
- Funding should be made available to enable schools to implement innovative ideas, which may save resources in the long term;
- The need for awards recognising innovative designs by pupils, incorporating the theme of sustainable development.

1.2 Catherine Hester and Claire Fowler delivered a joint 'PowerPoint' presentation and a copy of the slides, summarising the main points, is attached at Annex A.

1.3 Stephen Thomas stated that he supported the points made by Oxfam Cymru and RSPB Wales. He then briefly described the work of CEWC, including:

- Working with schools and colleges in Wales, to promote active citizenship and an understanding of the modern world;
- Organising conferences and meetings for young people; and
- Producing curriculum materials, with Assembly support, e.g. a Key Stages 3/4 citizenship pack.

1.4 Stephen Thomas made the following points:

- Global citizenship should be a crosscutting issue in the curriculum and not something restricted to the PSE framework;
- Global citizenship should be included in teacher training;
- Young people were increasingly interested in the environment and its ideas of sustainable development should be linked to the UN Convention of the Rights of Children (Article 24) and their right to live in a clean environment;
- The way in which the subject of global citizenship was presented in an international context was crucially important; and
- A broad range of materials on this subject should be made available in the Welsh language.

1.5 The Chair thanked the speakers for their presentations and invited the Minister to comment on some of the issues raised. The Minister made the following points:

- The National Assembly had been working closely with Oxfam Cymru, RSPB Cymru and CEWC Cymru to develop ideas on sustainable development;
- Development education and education for sustainable development had come together as subjects. The Minister had signed an undertaking with the Department for International Development (DFID) for further co-operation in this area;
- The National Assembly had made a corporate commitment to sustainable development;
- The Minister had established an Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) advisory panel, which was working alongside the working group for global citizenship. The panel was seeking to define the concept of sustainable development and would also be considering how ESD could be incorporated into the curriculum and whether the PSE should become statutory.
- The next review of the curriculum would provide an opportunity to assess how ESD and global citizenship could be incorporated into the curriculum;
- The ESD advisory panel was arranging a conference in April in preparation for the international conference to be held in Johannesburg in the summer;
- Eight schools in Wales had entered the 'Our Wales' competition – sponsored by the National Assembly - to design sustainable development projects at local level. The winning school would receive £15,000 and pupils would accompany the First Minister to the international conference.

1.6 The Chair then invited members to ask questions. The following issues were raised in discussion:

- **Teacher training** – it was felt that new and experienced teachers needed time to increase their awareness and knowledge of sustainable development in order to teach the subject. They also

needed support from external expert advisers. Examples of good practice could be found at educational institutions at Bangor and Swansea.

- **Initial Teacher Training (ITT)** – some members felt that there was a need for sustainable development to permeate initial teacher training (ITT). The Minister confirmed that Estyn was reviewing work on ITT and would publish a report soon.
- **Separate subject** – some members suggested that sustainable development should be taught as a separate subject, rather than incorporated into the PSE framework. However, the presenters felt this could lead to the subject being sidelined and subsequently overlooked.
- **Legislation** – presenters were asked if they considered that legislation would be helpful; for example, in requiring schools and colleges to purchase local produce. There was no consensus on this issue.
- **Progress** – members were interested in progress in this area, since the inception of the National Assembly. The presenters felt that there had been too much reliance on individuals to promote this issue. It was suggested schools should develop their own vision statement for sustainable development and global citizenship. The presenters felt that slow but significant progress had been made over the past two years.
- **Pupil impact** – members were interested to know how schools responded to requests from pupils to implement changes in their schools. Members asked if it was possible to assess pupils' impact in bringing about change. The presenters felt that more attention and resources should be given to this issue. The presenters considered that having their suggestions taken seriously and implemented would encourage pupils to develop ideas on, and engage with, sustainable development.
- **The Learning Country** – Members asked whether the organisations represented at the meeting had responded to the Minister's consultation document *The Learning Country* in respect of the need for increased promotion of sustainable development. They had not yet responded but intended to do so. Presenters stated that their responses would be informed by the helpful discussion at this meeting.
- **Curriculum** – the Chair pointed out that the Education Bill, currently being considered by Parliament, would give the National Assembly the right to develop a new National curriculum for Wales. Members were interested to know whether presenters had any ideas for possible development of the curriculum. All presenters agreed that changing the curriculum significantly would require substantially increased funding. It was considered that the Welsh Baccalaureate could bring about a change in its own right. The Minister responded that the National Assembly wanted to work with teachers in developing a new curriculum. The Minister said she would soon be asking ACCAC to start the next review of the national curriculum.
- **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** – members were interested to know if schools had been using ICT to share ideas and good practice with schools in other countries. Members learnt that there were a number of such projects currently operating in Wales; for example, a project linking schools in Wales with those in Denmark and Nicaragua.
- **Economic Development** - The Chair commented that the Committee had not yet covered the issue of linking education and training with economic development and how sustainable development could contribute to socio-economic development in Wales. Also, the Committee had not looked at relevant courses in further and higher education and careers advice. It was agreed that the Committee should consider these themes in the future.

Item Two: Policy Review – Welsh Language in Education – Oral Evidence – Young People from Local Schools

Papers: ELL 02-02 (p.3)&(p.4)

2.1 Young people from local schools gave short presentations to explain details about their linguistic and school background. The Chair then invited members to ask pupils questions about their experiences.

2.2 The following issues were raised in discussion:

English medium school – One pupil was pursuing a small percentage of the curriculum through the medium of Welsh and the Committee asked the pupil to comment on what this involved. The pupil explained that studying part of the curriculum in Welsh was an enjoyable experience. The reason for wishing to do this was that the pupil's parents had lost their ability to speak Welsh when they attended an English-medium school and the pupil did not want this to be repeated. There was one other pupil in the class; sometimes other pupils made reference to the fact that Welsh was being spoken.

School models – the Committee was interested to know if pupils thought it preferable to have separate Welsh medium and English medium schools or have single, bilingual schools with different streams. One pupil believed that separate Welsh medium and English medium schools would be more effective as the English language tended to dominate, as more people in Wales spoke English than Welsh. Dividing up people, according to the language they spoke, in one single school was felt to be a negative direction. Another pupil felt it preferable to have bilingual schools, where both languages could co-exist. From the pupil's own experience, separate English medium and Welsh medium schools could cause division and might breed negativity.

Social/cultural life – members were interested to see if pupils thought that social/cultural life conducted through the medium of Welsh could or had helped pupils to master their command of the Welsh language. One pupil attended a Welsh medium school, where Welsh was expected to be spoken at all times on the premises. It was strongly felt that this had helped to considerably improve the pupil's own command of the Welsh language.

Opportunity – pupils were asked to comment on what they thought about the Assembly providing more opportunity for people to learn/speak Welsh and also to learn through the medium of Welsh. One pupil repositioned the argument previously put forward, and said that it would be preferable to have Welsh-medium schools and other schools where both English and Welsh were used to some extent, to teach the curriculum. The Chair pointed out that this model reflected one of the approaches adopted in the Basque Country.

After-school activities – members were interested to learn whether there was sufficient support for after-school social activities through the medium of Welsh. Some pupils felt that there was not many after-school clubs available, especially in rural areas; it would be difficult to follow up Urdd activities after school. Another pupil said that a new club, Clwb y Cymru had been set up in their school; the name had recently been changed to help attract non-Welsh speakers. One pupil felt that speaking English in school was deemed fashionable and speaking Welsh was deemed unfashionable. The school had tried to remedy this problem by organising activities through the club, such as ten-pin bowling. Another pupil was involved with the Young Farmers club and felt that, if young people wanted to participate in after-school activities where the Welsh language could be used, then they should seek them out and support them.

Attitudes – the Committee asked whether any of the school pupils had encountered any negative attitudes towards the Welsh language. There was some evidence of this but it was not perceived to be a major problem.

Social aspects – members asked how important it was for the pupils themselves, to go home and speak Welsh and whether it was difficult for pupils to retain friendships with their peers who did not speak Welsh. Some pupils told the Committee that they spoke a mixture of Welsh and English at home, others did not speak much Welsh at home. Most of the pupils had both Welsh speaking and English speaking friends, outside of school. One pupil stated that he did have friends in school who felt more comfortable conversing in English. This was sometimes difficult as the school instructed all pupils to use Welsh at all times; the school viewed this as promoting the language. Most of the pupils felt that young people should not be instructed to use a particular language.

Continuum – the Committee asked pupils to explain why they chose to learn through the medium of Welsh and if they had experienced any difficulties continuing their studies through the medium of Welsh. One pupil believed that there was a lack of continuity; for example, mathematics could be taken through the medium of Welsh at 'A'-Level at school but could not be pursued through the medium of Welsh on a higher education course. Another pupil was dissuaded by from studying chemistry, through the medium of Welsh, at 'A'-level because of the lack of suitable Welsh textbooks in this subject.

Multilingualism – it was strongly felt that Wales should not only be bilingual but multilingual. Members were interested to learn whether those who spoke both Welsh and English learnt modern foreign languages more easily than did those who spoke only English. One pupil had learnt German and French through the medium of Welsh but was naturally interested in languages and did not consider that being bilingual had helped. The Chair commented that bilingualism could have the benefit of heightening linguistic sensitivity and enhance speakers' ability to learn other languages.

Further and higher education – members were interested to know if pupils would wish to pursue their further/higher education partly or wholly through the medium of Welsh, if they could do so. All pupils agreed that they would wish to study partly through the medium of Welsh and partly through the medium of English at further and/or higher education level. Amongst the reasons given was that students might wish to work outside of Wales. Another pupil was concerned that the quality of the teaching of particular subjects through the medium of Welsh might not be of an equivalent standard to those taught through the medium of English. One pupil wanted to study English at university level but could appreciate that there should be options for students to study some subjects through the medium of Welsh if they so wished. Another pupil expressed the wish to be proficient in both Welsh and English. Another pupil expressed strong feelings of pride for the Welsh language and culture.

Item Three: Minutes of 16 January meeting

Paper: ELL 02-02(mins)

3.1 The Committee ratified the minutes of the last meeting. There was one issue raised:

- Gareth Jones pointed out that he had declared an interest as a registered teacher and this had not been cited in the previous minutes. *The minutes were subsequently amended.*

Paper to Note

The Education and Lifelong Learning Minister's remit letter to Estyn

Paper: ELL 02-02(p.5)

The next Committee meeting will be held on Thursday 7 February, at The National Assembly Building, Cardiff Bay.

Committee Secretariat January 2002