

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE: 6 MARCH 2002

POLICY REVIEW – WELSH LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

Purpose

1. Awdurdod Cymwysterau Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru/Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC) is the Welsh Assembly Government's principal advisory body on the school curriculum and assessment and on all qualifications (other than those in higher education).
2. ACCAC is responsible in Wales for -
 - ensuring quality and standards in external general and vocational qualifications;
 - keeping under review all aspects of the school curriculum and statutory arrangements for maintained schools; and
 - commissioning Welsh bilingual classroom materials to support the teaching of Welsh, other subjects through the medium of Welsh and Wales-specific aspects of the curriculum.

ACCAC is required to exercise its functions for the purposes of advancing education and training in Wales with a view to promoting equality and coherence in education and training.

3. The purpose of this paper is to provide a summary of ACCAC's perspective on the Committee's policy review regarding the Welsh Language in Education. It addresses, in turn, the school, pre-school and post-school phases.
4. The paper supports the attendance at the Committee of ACCAC's Chairman (Mr Brian Connolly, OBE) and Chief Executive (John V Williams).

A. THE SCHOOL PHASE

Curriculum

5. The Education Reform Act 1988 established, for the first time, that Welsh was to be a subject within the curriculum of every school in Wales – as a core subject in Welsh speaking schools (as defined in the Act) and a foundation subject in the others. The then Secretary of State established a Working Group (chaired by Professor Gwyn Thomas of the University College of Wales, Bangor), which set out detailed proposals for the implementation of this policy decision. As evidence already given to the Committee has demonstrated, the teaching of Welsh is now firmly embedded in the National Curriculum, with over 98% of pupils between the ages of 5 and 16, studying Welsh as a subject.

6. Concerns have been expressed on two matters;

- continuity between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.

Concern about the drop off between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 has been described in various ways e.g. that, although 20.9% of primary school pupils attend schools where Welsh is the sole, main or part medium of teaching, the proportion drops to 12.9% in secondary schools; or that 40% of children who receive their primary education following the 'mother tongue track', start their secondary education as second-language speakers following an English –medium Curriculum.

Yet, Statistical Bulletin SB 48/2001 'Welsh in Schools' (December 2001) states that, in 2001, head teachers thought 16.5% of 11 year olds (at the end of Key Stage 2) spoke Welsh fluently and that, in 2000/01, just over 1% of fluent Welsh speakers did not continue to learn Welsh as a first language when they transferred from primary to secondary school.

Detailed work is required to ascertain precisely the nature of the issues related to Key Stage 2/Key Stage 3 continuity. It also needs to be established whether these issues are all-Wales issues or are more localised and, if the latter, the likely causes.

- continuum between the Welsh and Welsh Second Language Programmes of Study.

When the National Curriculum was first established, it was decided that it was not possible to devise one Programme of Study that could sensibly encompass all pupils in Wales whilst, at the same time, providing for sufficient differentiation in performance. There have been two reviews of the National Curriculum since that time (1993/1995 and 1997/2000). In the last review, it was again concluded that one Programme of Study was not feasible but work was done to ensure a better read-across between the requirements the Programmes of Study for Welsh and Welsh Second Language and to create a better interrelationship between the levels of attainment for Welsh and Welsh Second Language.

The possibility of a continuum will remain part of the Authority's future reviews of the National Curriculum. However, given that the last review was only completed in January 2000, there is no justification for embarking on an immediate review.

Commissioning

7. ACCAC commissions high quality Welsh classroom materials to support the teaching of Welsh as a subject and other subjects through the medium of Welsh, and bilingual (Welsh/English) materials to support Wales-specific aspects of the curriculum (the Cwricwlwm Cymreig)
8. These responsibilities transferred to ACCAC from the then Welsh Office in 1995. As ACCAC has no grant making powers, a system of commissioning through open tender was established. This process has led to significant developments.

- Strategic and corporate planning

For the first time, at a strategic level, priorities are identified over periods of three years and published in a series of strategic documents. A revision of the current strategic document is planned for the coming financial year.

The work of commissioning resources has been developed alongside the work on the curriculum and assessment with the same subject officers dealing with all fields. This has led to the development of materials that go side by side with qualifications or with new curriculum developments.

- Managing quality, timing and finance

The Authority monitors the nature of the content and the appropriateness of language over all the materials, with the Authority's subject officers and classroom teachers being central to this activity. A *Termiadur Ysgol* was developed and published in order to standardise terms in Welsh across the curriculum. It is planned to update this publication shortly.

By establishing a relationship with publishers on the basis of a contract, it has been possible to ensure that resources are produced within a given timescale. The publishers themselves invest in the projects as well as the Authority. On average, publishers have contributed about 20% of budget costs, recouping it via sales.

- Working with others

The Authority has worked jointly or has jointly commissioned projects with a number of other public bodies in Wales e.g. publishing books to run side by side with the BBC's television series; the CD Rom based on St Fagan with the Museums and Galleries of Wales; vocational materials with the Further Education Funding Councils and reading books with the WJEC.

A very close relationship has been developed with the Welsh Books Council, particularly in the area of marketing, with the Authority promoting and working on the publication of an annual catalogue setting out all the books and resources available in Welsh for children and school pupils.

- Output

Between April 1995 and 2001, 215 projects have been commissioned. 165 of these have been completed with 1,167 titles being published.

During this period, projects have been commissioned in 17 different areas:

Subject	% of projects
Welsh	12%
Welsh Second Language	15%
Mathematics	9%
Science	5%
History	8%
Geography	11%
Art	3%
Music	7%
Modern Foreign Languages	2%
Design and Technology	4%
Information Technology*	6%
Physical Education	3%
Religious Education	6%
Special Educational Needs*	6%
Vocational	1%
Business Studies	1%
Cross Curricular	1%

* the materials for these areas have also been produced for specific subjects.

Projects have been commissioned for pupils of all ages (5 to 16+) and all abilities, including special educational needs. For example, there is now a library that contains over 150 books in Welsh Braille for children of all ages.

Over the years, different types of materials have been prepared - books, packs and files, video programmes, discs and sound tapes, CD Roms and Internet material. The aim is to commission the material in the most appropriate medium, bearing in mind that the educational content of the resource is more important than the nature of its presentation. However, the arrival of new technology and its use in schools is an increasingly important factor in the Authority's choice of publishing medium.

64% of the projects have involved the production of original materials with 36% being adaptations from English medium materials. Welsh is the only language of some 70% of the materials with the remainder being published in both English and Welsh. The latter materials support the Curriculum Cymreig across the curriculum. Before 1995, no such provision was made at all.

- Looking forward

The last six years have seen a significant improvement in the range and quality of Welsh language materials available in schools. There has also been the development of English language materials with a focus on Wales. Looking forwards, one can foresee new challenges:

- the expectation of parents and teachers in this area has grown considerably over the last ten years. There is considerable call for better materials in a number of areas e.g. Welsh software and for courses post 16, particularly in vocational areas; and
- as the Authority's commissioning programme has extended to cover more areas of the curriculum and a wider range of pupils in terms of age and ability, the pool of expertise and experience that is available is becoming stretched. Within the next few years there will be a need to ensure that the commissioning process for Welsh medium materials is one which is sustainable over a period of time.

Qualifications

9. As the number of pupils studying Welsh at Key Stages 1, 2, and 3 has increased, so has the percentage of 15 year olds being entered for Welsh qualifications at Key Stage 4. This grew from 23 % of the cohort in 1992 to 64% of the cohort in 2001. Entries for Welsh Language have grown from 9% to 12%; entries for Welsh Second Language qualifications from 17% to 52%. Over the same period, the demand for Welsh medium qualifications has grown from 4.3% of entry in 1992 to 7.1% in 2001. There are variations between subjects, with science and mathematics showing the greatest growth in absolute numbers. There are similar trends in respect of Entry Level qualifications and A Levels.

10. Funding support for Welsh medium general qualifications was first provided in 1994, by means of a payment made by the then Welsh Office to the WJEC towards the production of Welsh medium GCE and GCSE examinations. The remit for this work was then passed to ACCAC. Payments have continued to be made towards the costs of Welsh medium GCE and GCSE examinations; together with the Certificate of Educational Achievement (CoEA) in later years. More recently, funding support has also been provided for the translation of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) specifications and the production of Welsh medium GNVQ assessment tests - initially through the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ), and, latterly, by ACCAC, following reconstitution in October 1997. The Authority is also involved in the production of Welsh medium Key Skills tests; and has recently submitted proposals for providing funding support for Welsh medium GCSEs in vocational subjects and for Advanced Extension Awards.
11. As to the future, the challenges are –
 - That, as the diversification of qualifications increases, sufficient time is given to allow for the parallel development of Welsh medium qualifications;
 - the production of a strategic funding policy in respect of Welsh medium qualifications, which balances the principles of equality of opportunity with the value for money considerations of investing public money in areas of low or unknown demand. The Authority has been commissioned to prepare advice in the coming financial year; and
 - consideration of the increasing demands being made on what is a small pool of appropriately qualified experienced professionals who set, mark and verify examinations.

B. THE PRE-SCHOOL PHASE

12. Compulsory education starts at five, although, in Wales, very many children, before that age, attend nursery classes or reception classes in primary schools, nursery units, nursery schools, private nursery schools, private day nurseries or voluntary playgroups.
13. The Authority's publication '*Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning before Compulsory School Age*' provides guidance for under-fives provision, taking account of the best practice developed in Wales in the provision of pre-compulsory age education. The document makes plain that one characteristic of good quality provision in Wales is that it provides experiences and opportunities for young children to be become aware of the distinctiveness of Wales, its languages and culture.

14. As to Welsh and the Cwricwlwm Cymreig, the document goes on to say:

“When children reach compulsory school age, they will learn Welsh as part of the National Curriculum. They will also be given opportunities, where appropriate, to develop and apply their knowledge and understanding of the cultural, economic, environmental, historical and linguistic characteristics of Wales (the ‘Curriculum Cymrieg’).

Many playgroups and nursery classes use English as the medium of provision, although some of these will use some Welsh. Experiencing Welsh at an early age, when language acquisition skills are at their most effective, can be a valuable preparation for the child’s learning of Welsh at school.

In other provision for under-fives, both voluntary and statutory, Welsh is the medium of provision. Children in these settings may come from homes where Welsh is not spoken, but with appropriate support and planned progression, these children become successfully bilingual.

All under-fives can be given opportunities to hear about Wales, about their locality, about customs, about names, about stories and legends, about people and events. These experiences form part of a rewarding and lively learning experiences for under-fives in Wales and allow children to have their experiences of life in Wales enhanced.”

15. The Authority’s commissioning role does not extend to the pre-school phase but many of the materials commissioned for Key Stage 1 are understood to be used by under-fives.
16. As to the future, the Authority is represented on the Early Years Advisory Panel and is chairing its Curriculum Group. The outcomes of the work of the Panel is awaited.

C. THE POST-SCHOOL PHASE

17. The post-school phase is more complex and is dealt with in detail in the evidence of the National Council of ELWa.
18. Over the past two decades, there have been significant efforts to develop and enhance Welsh medium provision. A number of further education institutions and training providers have taken steps to provide programmes of study/training entirely or in part through the medium of Welsh in occupational areas such as business administration, management, health and social care, early years education, leisure and hospitality, construction, land-based occupations, media, training and development. A small number of awarding bodies have attempted to meet the need/demand for assessment through the medium of Welsh for particular qualifications (e.g. GNVQ, NVQ). It has been

possible to achieve NVQ and GNVQs through the medium of Welsh since the early 1990s. Nevertheless, the take-up of these opportunities has been low in most cases.

19. Increasingly, general information and guidance relating to vocational qualifications has become available in Welsh, as well as English. For example, the NCVQ Office for Wales (1995-97) produced a number of pamphlets, leaflets, guidance materials relating to NVQs and GNVQs in Welsh and English. From time to time, some awarding bodies have also published general information about their provision in both languages.
20. The Authority plays an important role in ensuring that opportunities are available to allow candidates achieve vocational qualifications through the medium of Welsh in centres across Wales. This is done, in part, through the process of accrediting vocational qualifications into the National Qualifications Framework. The Regulatory Authorities' Common Criteria and the Awarding Body Interim Guidance (Part B submissions) documents and Design Principles for Higher Level Qualifications provide guidance to awarding bodies on procedures relating to the assessment of qualifications through the medium of Welsh.
21. ACCAC has produced advice and guidance to awarding bodies and centres on issues relating the use of the Welsh language in the delivery and assessment of NVQs and vocationally-related vocational qualifications. Work is now in progress to produce similar guidance for GNVQs, AVCEs and GCSE in vocational subjects, together with producing draft regulations for Welsh medium and dual language assessments. National Training Organisations (NTOs) have been provided with guidance on matters relating to the translation of National Occupational Standards into Welsh. Similar guidance will be made available to the new Sector Skills Councils in due course. A glossary of terms for vocational qualifications has been published. A new version is being prepared.
22. Some small scale research work, has been undertaken. In the period 1999-2001, work was undertaken to establish employers' need for bilingual competence (English /Welsh and other languages) and the need for recognising such competence. Employers and providers have indicated their support for the development of mechanism for recognising translingual skills. The Languages NTO is currently submitting a bid to develop National Standards for translingual skills. ACCAC is supporting the development. If the bid is successful, it is anticipated that the Standards can be piloted before the end of this year.
23. The information currently available on the availability and take-up of Welsh-medium assessment in each of the families of vocational qualifications is patchy and often unreliable. Historically, awarding bodies have not recorded details about Welsh-medium assessment. Indeed, it is only very recently that they have been asked to provide such information. Several awarding bodies are currently taking steps to develop their systems to capture the data.

24. The Authority's commissioning remit does not extend to the post-school phase. However, it is known that some of the commissioned materials are used in further education colleges.
25. As to the future, the challenges, in addition to those mentioned in paragraph 11, are -
- the development of an integrated national strategy and policy framework for the post-school phase, including all key partners and building on the publication of documents such as *The Learning Country* and *The Skills and Employment Action Plan for Wales*;
 - the development of better systems for information-gathering regarding provision and demand;
 - the development of a more coordinated promotion strategy; and
 - the development of clear funding and human resources plans to underpin these developments.

Conclusion

26. This paper provides a summary of ACCAC's perspective on the Committee's policy review. It may be that the constraints of time may not enable the Committee to explore all the issues raised in this paper. ACCAC is willing to return to the Committee, at a later date, if that would be helpful.

ACCAC
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