

## Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

### The Welsh for Adults Consortia's Paper for the National Assembly for Wales. Policy Review of Welsh Language in Education

Teaching Welsh to Adults has the potential to transform the language situation in Wales. One important group of people involved are those people who influence the linguistic practices of the younger generation, i.e. parents of children who are currently receiving bilingual education in Wales' schools. Adults can become fluent speakers within a period of two to six years. Action is needed to realise this potential, and it is hoped that this policy review of Welsh language in education is a way of instigating changes. Welsh for Adults must be central to any strategy aimed at reversing the linguistic shift in Wales.

Evidence presented to the National Assembly for Wales claims that around 90% of those who start learning Welsh fail to complete their studies. If this were the case, and the source of the figure is not known, it would still mean that Welsh for Adults generates over 2,000 Welsh speakers a year. Figures provided by ELWa show that 82.4% of students complete courses. Compare this with the figure 69.6%, which is the percentage of students who do not complete Spanish courses.

## Background – The Current Situation

### Welsh for Adults Consortia

Historically, a patchwork of providers of Welsh for Adults courses has developed over the years: higher education colleges, further education colleges, local education authorities and the Workers' Education Association. These co-operate within eight Welsh for Adults Consortia (based on the old county boundaries) to create an integrated programme for the area. The existence of the Consortia ensures constant dialogue between the various providers and it is a way of disseminating comprehensive information to organisers, organisations, tutors and learners. Co-operation for the benefit of the Welsh language is an important aspect of this field. As an Estyn report states in their document *Sector Study – Welsh for Adults*, "As a result of effective joint planning between providers, large steps were successfully taken towards establishing a co-ordinated network of Welsh Courses. Consequently, learners now have a better choice of courses of different intensities, without having to travel an unreasonable distance to attend a suitable class".

One recent post 16 education initiative has been the establishment of CCETs. Unfortunately there is no official mechanism in place for co-operation between the Welsh for Adults Consortia and the CCETs.

## **Funding**

The provision is financed by the National Council for Education and Training –ELWa, which pays £3.1 million to institutions who offer courses in different areas in Wales. The funding is provided through the Recurrent Funding Mechanism, which is currently under review. The Programme Area Weighting is 1.25 and .05 of that sum must be spent on Consortium activities.

## **National Co-ordination**

The Welsh Language Board is responsible for the strategic overview of Welsh for Adults. To this end, one full time officer is employed to undertake the work. This officer works closely with ELWa to develop and monitor the strategic plans of the eight Consortia and to develop aspects of work on Welsh in the Workplace, marketing and sponsorship, research, training and creating resources.

In addition to this, a Welsh for Adults Examinations Officer is employed within the Welsh Joint Education Committee. This is a new post established in September 2001, and the officer is developing examinations on five levels within the European Qualifications Framework, and within the ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) framework.

## **Quality of Teaching and Student Achievement**

Welsh for Adults has received praise in recent inspections undertaken by Estyn. A number of institutions were awarded grade 1 for their work:

Cardiff University Grade 1 in the six elements on which they were assessed

Pontypridd College Grade 1 in the two elements on which they were assessed

Gwent College Grade 1 in the two elements on which they were assessed

Swansea University 2 grade 1s

Trinity College 2 grade 1s

These results are testament to the hard work of a high standard undertaken throughout Wales. This is ensured by effective organisation and dedicated tutors.

The figures for students sitting the Welsh for Adults examinations are low. In 2001, 362 applicants sat the Use of Welsh examination (approximately GCSE standard), while 110 students sat the Use of Welsh – Higher (advanced level). However, whilst acknowledging the importance of the examination system for setting a realistic aim for our students, most of them don't want to sit formal exams. They attend the classes to become Welsh speakers. The OCN (Open Colleges Network) is available for learners who do not want evidence of their attainment, but who want some record of achievement. The latest figure from the Awarding Body shows that 20,542 credits were awarded to Welsh for Adults students in the last academic year.

## **Growth**

A constant growth was noted in the number of people attending Welsh for Adults classes during the last few years, until 2000-2001. Compare 15,894 enrolments in 1994/5 with 23,634 enrolments in 1999-2000. The number fell to 21,011 last year but foot and mouth disease and the petrol strike during enrolment week are at least partly responsible for this decrease.

One area that has contributed to this growth is Welsh in the workplace courses. There is growing demand from employers for the provision of courses in workplaces. These vary from short courtesy courses which develop specific skills to courses which concentrate on building confidence while speaking Welsh within a vocational context and courses on improving written Welsh.

## **Creating an effective system – the need for professionalization**

### **Tutors**

Welsh for Adults relies heavily on part-time tutors. According to the Welsh Language Board's latest figures, less than 60 full time tutors are employed compared with 700 part-time tutors. Under the current system, although part-time tutors get satisfaction from their work of teaching adults, it is impossible for them to carve a career for themselves within the field, therefore we are losing many tutors to other fields. These tutors are committed and hard working but the same professional standards cannot be expected from part-time tutors as a full time workforce. A field which is so important with regard to restoring a language cannot continue to be over reliant on part-time staff. **Jobs and career paths must be created for full time tutors to raise the status of the field and to professionalize it.**

### **Learners**

If learners choose to follow the Welsh for Adults progression route from stage 1 to stage 6, they receive between 300 and 600 hours of training. Compare this with learners in the Basque Country who receive between 1,500 and 1,800 hours of training, around 10 hours a week. Our students are expected to attain high standards in a relatively short time and deserve congratulating in doing so. If we could offer more hours their standard would be so much higher. What is important for our students is that they are able to learn in fair conditions. It is not possible to control this when students attend courses voluntarily in the community. However, **when students learn as part of their work, it should be a condition that they are released from their work during their normal hours and are given a lighter workload where this is possible in practical terms. Specific funding is needed to release staff for these courses and it will be possible to measure their attainment through the new five level examination system.** Bodies such as the National Assembly for Wales could take the lead in this respect.

There is also a need to plan for the group of young people who leave our schools having studied Welsh until the age of 16. This will happen by 2003 and this is the first time that such a situation has arisen in the history of the language. It will be an opportunity and a challenge in the years to come to build on this foundation and the work will fall on the Welsh for Adults field. **Full time professional staff will be needed to develop and concentrate on the work of educating 16-year-old young people and they will require a supply of suitable resources.** Unless this is done, all the resources invested in our children's education will have been in vain.

## **Welsh for Specific Needs**

As mentioned above, there has been a large growth in Welsh in the Workplace. As a result, the Welsh Language Board has published *Guidelines for Employers* and a project is in the pipeline to attract Objective 1/3 funding to develop Welsh in the Workplace in the private sector throughout Wales. One thing that has been highlighted over the last few years is the need for careful and detailed tailoring so as to meet the exact needs of employers. This calls for research in the first instance, followed by the creation of appropriate materials. This is the type of work providers find very difficult to undertake at the moment due to the lack of full time staff. Staff working full time in the field often have very heavy administrative and/or teaching workloads which hinder the important work of creating specialist materials.

## **Funding**

Inequalities exist in the way Welsh for Adults and English for Adults are funded. The Welsh for Adults Programme Area Weighting is 1.25. English for Adults receives a Programme Area Weighting of 1.5. Welsh for Adults should at least be equal. **The Assembly is asked to ensure fair funding for the field as a result of the current survey of the Recurrent Funding Methodology and, in the meantime, to raise the weighting to 1.5 from the**

**beginning of the next financial year.** As a short term measure, this would go some way in securing more full time tutors and in relieving staff of heavy workloads to professionalize Welsh in the Workplace by creating appropriate materials. However, this is only a short-term solution. What is really needed is a costing of a comprehensive programme of employing full time staff.

## **Assimilating Learners**

People are now aware that it is possible to learn Welsh. This wasn't always the case. The challenge now is to teach more people but also to ensure opportunities for people to use their Welsh – whether in their homes, in their workplaces, while dealing with public bodies or socially. Very few resources are invested in this important work. **Welsh for Adults and CYD need to co-operate with a wide range of organizations and bodies to ensure access for learners to use their new language. Awareness campaigns need to be held amongst Welsh speakers as well as learners.** If this step is not taken, what is the point of having learning of the highest standard in classes? People do not master a language in a class alone.

We are confident that we can meet the challenge of teaching Welsh effectively for adults if we are given the opportunity to undertake the work with the backing of adequate resources.

## **National Co-ordination**

Since September 2001, bold steps have been taken in the examination field. Specifications and specimen papers have been created on five levels within the European Qualifications Framework and are currently being accredited by ACCAC. This is happening due to the appointment of an officer who can devote all his time to this work. This is the first time that this has happened in the history of Welsh for Adults. Usually the National Officer is responsible for the whole range of the field and is consequently unable to specialize in specific fields.

The Examination Officer at the WJEC and the National Officer at the Welsh Language Board are merely projects currently funded by ELWa. This shows once again the lack of investment in the field – this time at a national scale. Compare this once again to the situation in the Basque Country, where the government allocates £21-£24 million Euros annually for national projects.

Experts are needed on a national scale in the following fields:

- marketing and publicity
- developing teaching and learning resources, including e-learning resources
- research
- training

- developing the Welsh in the Workplace provision
- maintaining and managing special projects

**Effective national co-ordination and development can be achieved by establishing a Virtual Centre, which would develop the Welsh for Adults and post 16 Welsh medium and bilingual sectors. In this context, a Virtual Centre means that it would be possible to have different departments located in different parts of Wales.** As well as the specific areas listed above, the centre would be responsible for strategic planning in the different sectors. Core funds should be released to employ full time staff on permanent contracts as well as project money to fund the production of teaching and learning resources, marketing and publicity, and organising staff training.

One of the aims of the National Assembly for Wales is to create opportunities for people to become bilingual. Welsh for Adults is one of the means of realising this aspiration. As this paper shows, investment is needed. There is a need to create stability for staff and fair learning conditions for learners. Professionalization is needed. Professionalization is crucial if Welsh for Adults is to play its part in ensuring that the Welsh language and bilingualism are on the increase, rather than in decline, in Wales.