

Minutes of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

Date: 20 March 2002

Time: 1.30pm

Venue: Committee Room 3, National Assembly Building

Attendance:

Members

Gareth Jones, Chair	Plaid Cymru	Conwy
Lorraine Barrett	Labour	Cardiff South and Penarth
Mick Bates	Liberal Democrat	Montgomeryshire
Cynog Dafis	Plaid Cymru	Mid and West Wales
Jane Davidson, Assembly Minister	Labour	Pontypridd
Janice Gregory	Labour	Ogmore
Helen Mary Jones	Plaid Cymru	Llanelli
Huw Lewis	Labour	Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney
Jonathan Morgan	Conservative	South Wales Central
Alun Pugh	Labour	Clwyd West

Committee Secretariat

Chris Reading	Clerk
Stephen Thomas	Deputy Clerk

Apologies

Pauline Jarman

Substitutions

Helen Mary Jones for Pauline Jarman

Officials

In Attendance:

Richard Davies Director, Department for Training and Education (DfTE)

Derek Adams Head, Higher Education Division

Keith Davies Head, Standards and Performance Division

Tony Widdrington Office of the Counsel General

Also in attendance:

Catrin Redknapp Committee's expert advisor on the Welsh Language in Education

Presenters

In Attendance:

On behalf of ELWa-HEFCW

Steve Martin Chief Executive

Professor Phil Gummett Director of Higher Education

On behalf of ESTYN

Susan Lewis Chief Inspector of Education and Training
for Wales

Liz Kidd Head of Post-16 Education and Training

Gareth Adams Managing HMI – work of LEAs

***On behalf of the Welsh for Adults
Consortia***

Helen Prosser	Cardiff University
Cennard Davies	University of Glamorgan

Also

Dr Cen Williams	University of Wales
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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
Lorraine Barrett	School Governor
Alun Pugh	Wife is a college lecturer

Chair's Opening Remarks

1. Cynog Dafis explained to the Committee that because of the recent changes in the portfolios of the Plaid Cymru members, he wished to stand down from his position of Chair with immediate effect. He asked Members if they agreed to Gareth Jones taking the Chair on an informal basis at this meeting. Gareth Jones's permanent appointment of Chair would be confirmed in Plenary on 21st March. Members agreed to this request.
2. Gareth Jones took the Chair. He thanked members for the honour to be allowed to Chair the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee and paid tribute to the work done by Cynog Dafis in his capacity as Chair of the Post-16 Education and Training Committee and its successor, the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee.
3. The new Chair welcomed Helen Mary Jones to her first meeting of the Committee, as substitute for Pauline Jarman. As the new Shadow Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, Helen Mary Jones would be a permanent member of the Committee after the Easter

recess. The Chair thanked Pauline Jarman for her past service to the Committee.

4. There were no new declarations of interest.

Item One: Minister's report

Paper: ELL 06-02(p.1)

1. The Minister congratulated Gareth Jones for his forthcoming appointment as Chair, welcomed Helen Mary Jones to Committee and thanked Cynog Dafis for his service as Chair.
2. The Minister highlighted the following points in her written report:

- **Coalfields Communities Campaign** – the written report laid out the Assembly Government's response to the campaign which was characterised by its general approach of collaborating to use resources effectively, the widening participation agenda and up-skilling. It was likely that the report's final conclusions would not now be presented to the Partnership Council until July.
- **Visits to the Basque Country and Cuba** – the Minister was pleased by the recent visit of the Basque Minister for Education, not least because of the opportunity afforded to discuss issues surrounding Welsh Medium Education. The Basques were keen to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Assembly and the Minister would look closely at the merits of this later in the year. One of the key areas that the Assembly could learn from the Basques was in enabling teaching staff to become bilingually fluent. The Minister stated that some specific initiatives had already arisen as a result of the visit to Cuba. For instance, Swansea University had secured funding to bring visiting academics from Cuba for periods of up to one year, while the Welsh College of Music and Drama (WCMD) was considering signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Music Institute in Havana. WCMD was also exploring with the British Council, the possibility of partaking in the British-Cuba celebrations planned for October-November this year.
- **Fforwm Letter** – the Minister pointed out that the proportion of students in the Further Education Sector in Wales was higher than in England. The number of Beacon awards won by our Further Education Institutions across a huge range of subjects, pointed to the excellent performance of FEI's in Wales.
- **School Teachers' Review Body** – the Minister gave evidence to this body in February. The Body was particularly interested in the Assembly Government's focus on ensuring the delivery of ICT in schools.
- **Performance Management** – details of the timetable for the training for and the introduction of performance management arrangements were announced on 7 March. The Minister had also agreed a revised timetable for the introduction of the new arrangements themselves. However, the timetable for the completion of the first round of performance management reviews for classroom teachers remained in place; all schools were expected to produce the first round of appraisals by October 2004

1. The following points were raised in discussion:

- **Coalfields Communities Campaign** – Members were concerned about the lack of a "joined-up" response to the campaign and whether the July response deadline would be met. The Minister

responded by saying that joined-up thinking was in place and that this campaign represented an initial attempt at tackling a very important area. A great deal of work had been done to improve schools' performance in deprived areas and reminded the Committee that adjustments to the GEST formula had been undertaken with this in mind.

- **Student Support** – Members expressed concern about a recent statement by the NUS that student support was not high on the UK government's list of priorities. The Minister reminded the Committee of the action she had taken following the publication of the Rees Report and of the UK Government Review.
- **Tuition fees** – the Minister was asked to confirm the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG's) position in respect of up-front tuition fees. She reiterated the WAG's commitment to encourage as many people as possible into learning, but said that she would study the outcome of the UK Government's review of tuition fees. The Minister reminded Members that the salary threshold for paying end-loaded tuition fees was £30,000 a year.
- **Community Consortia for Education and Training (CCETs)** – Members asked for an in-depth analysis of the work carried out to date by CCETs. The Minister said that CCETs were working well and that she would report to Committee on this matter in due course.
- **Visit of Education Minister from the Basque Country** - Members were pleased to see international links being developed and asked the Minister what issues the proposed Memorandum of Understanding would cover. The Minister replied that she hoped to focus the memorandum on areas where Wales could learn from the Basque experience.
- **Fforwm Letter** - Members were concerned about pay and conditions in the FE sector, particularly that they should be competitive in order to avoid excessive movement from the FE sector into schools. The parity of perception between the pay and conditions of FE lecturers and that of schoolteachers also needed to be addressed. The Minister replied that the FE sector was a priority area in terms of future funding and the CSR. Wales should capitalise on its small and successful FE sector. Regarding the parity between FE lecturers and schoolteachers, the Minister said that she would review all aspects of this issue, including addressing issues such as equal opportunities, management and delivery.
- **School Teachers' Review Body** – The Minister promised to bring to the Committee, as soon as possible after the Easter break, the results of a conference held last year on pupil disaffection. In reply to a question about whether all schools in Wales were linked up to the Internet and had digital whiteboards, the Minister said that targets in respect of ICT had been met and that funding for whiteboards had been allocated to schools.
- **Testing for 11 year olds** – The Minister was asked whether it was still Government policy to support testing for 11-year olds. She replied that the testing arrangements were necessary to provide the evidence base for policy development of critical importance to trainers from KS2 to KS3 and higher standards across KS3 as a whole.
- **Teachers' pay and conditions** – Several members echoed the concerns of Headteachers about the impact of funding threshold payments on school budgets. Members asked the Minister if she had any plans to make additional payments this year and whether she should write to Directors of Education reassuring them of the situation. The Minister agreed that there was much confusion surrounding this issue. The Minister reminded the Committee of the 7% increase in local government

budgets, in real terms, over the last two years. The Minister explained that funding for the additional costs of the threshold payments was contained in the budget for 2002-03.

Item Two: The HE Council – ELWa (HEFCW) response to the committee’s report on the policy review of higher education

Paper: ELL 06-02(p.2)

2.1 Steve Martin congratulated the Chair on his appointment and apologised for not being able to produce a Welsh version of the written evidence in time for the meeting. He confirmed that a Welsh version would be submitted to the Clerk within a week.

2.2 In terms of HEFCW’s overall response, Steve Martin said that they warmly welcomed the Committee’s report and the Minister’s statement of the Assembly Government’s strategy for higher education. The Council particularly welcomed the recognition in the documents of the strengths of the HE sector in Wales and its importance to the future success of Wales. The clarity of vision contained in the two documents was also welcomed, as was the inclusion of clear targets. The Council would now set to work on a detailed plan to implement the strategy.

2.3 Professor Phil Gummatt flagged up the following critical issues as requiring further discussion:

- The implications for the early years of the strategy of the weak overall financial position of the HE sector in Wales. Six out of thirteen HE institutions in Wales reported an operating deficit in the financial year 2000-1;
- The need for flexibility over the full delivery of outcomes in relation to budget planning for the financial year 2003-4 and beyond;
- The need for further analysis to establish how soon and to what extent administrative savings can be gained;
- The need for flexibility over the use of restructuring funds to support developments within single institutions where the business case is compelling;
- The need for detailed discussion of target outcomes to develop realistic profiles for their achievement;
- The scope for flexibility over the availability of funds to support truly major structural developments, which may vary from year to year;
- Consideration of the implications of the strategy for the staffing and powers of HEFCW.

2.4 Steve Martin concluded by saying that he was delighted that the Assembly Government was bringing the Council up to full strength, following the recent appointment of Professor Roger Williams as Chairman.

2.5 The following points were raised in discussion:

- **Collaboration between HE institutions** – HEFCW stated that the Committee’s review and subsequent report had stimulated increased collaboration and discussion between the HE institutions in Wales.
- **Role of University Of Wales** – the report recommended collaboration between HEFCW and Higher Education Wales (HEW), in order to critically review the structure of the University of Wales. Steve

Martin said that it would not be appropriate for the Council to take a view on the role of the University of Wales, as such. But that it did have a role in encouraging the removal of any obstacles (whether they were practical or psychological) to the achievement of higher levels of sustained collaboration and performance of the higher education system, as a whole, in Wales. To that end, it welcomed the review, which the University itself had asked for Sir David Williams to undertake. Steve Martin believed that there was a will in the sector, both inside and outside the University of Wales, for change that would facilitate significantly greater collaboration, performance and efficiency.

- **A more proactive strategic role for HEFCW** – In terms of the Council adopting a more strategic role, Steve Martin said that the most important thing was for HEFCW to work with institutions in order to achieve the targets set for the sector. Steve Martin agreed that the Council needed to adopt a more proactive role, working closely with institutions, but said that, in order to carry out this role effectively, the Council's staffing would need to increase.
- **European Structural Funds (ESF)** – In response to a question about whether there was a role for ESF to assist the process of change, Steve Martin replied that HE institutions were already seeking ways to fully exploit ESF; HEFCW and the National Council had established a joint task force to enable ESF resources to be maximised.
- **Widening access** – Members were interested in the role of the joint HE and National Council's advisory group, which was established to take forward the widening access and seamless progression agendas. The immediate task was for both Councils to endorse a detailed programme for the advisory group. The group's progress would be reported regularly, for instance in the Councils' newsletters.
- **Cost of Mergers** – In response to a question about the cost of merging HEIs, Professor Gummatt explained that such costs could typically include redundancy packages and the relocation of equipment.
- **Equal pay in the HE sector** – Members expressed concern about the marked discrepancy between pay for men and women doing similar jobs in the HE sector. HEFCW's representatives accepted that the current situation was undesirable and stated that they were pursuing this matter with the HE sector. The Minister added that equal opportunities and pay were high on her agenda and that she expected all HEIs to tackle these issues.

2.6 The Minister thanked HEFCW for their response to the Committee report and the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy. She asked its representatives to take account of the functional, geographical and administrative opportunities for collaboration, and particularly for opportunities to develop strong collaborative proposals between the HE and FE sectors in Wales.

2.7 The Chair thanked Steve Martin and Professor Gummatt for their positive contribution and looked forward to future collaboration.

Item Three: Consideration of Estyn's Annual Report

1. The Chair congratulated Susan Lewis on her appointment to a second term as Chief Inspector and invited her to outline the key issues in Estyn's annual report.
2. Susan Lewis presented the report. In terms of progress made, the main areas were as follows:
 - Standards and quality in education and training in Wales improved again during 2000-01;
 - For under-5s there was a good and improving picture;
 - There were better standards in both primary and secondary schools;
 - In further education, there was a big increase in the work with outstanding features;

- Standards in adult and community courses were generally good;
- Many of the trainees on work-based training schemes were making an effective contribution in the workplace;
- The quality of students on teacher training courses remained high;
- In all sectors of education and training, there was a greater emphasis on learners' key skills;
- Careers companies offered good programmes of guidance activities;
- About 60% of the teaching and training in all sectors was good or very good, with another 35% being satisfactory;
- More secondary schools offered a broader curriculum for fifteen and sixteen year olds;
- The number of further education courses had expanded;
- Teachers and trainers were generally well qualified and experienced;
- A lot of accommodation in which education and training took place was of good quality; and
- Many sectors of education had good ICT resources.

1. However, there were still areas where improvement needed to be made. These included:

- 5% of teaching was classed as unsatisfactory;
- Absenteeism – on a typical day, about 3000 pupils chose not to go to school;
- Opportunities for learners to improve their key skills needed to be built into courses more effectively than they are;
- In primary schools, pupils generally didn't know enough about the diversity of society and many secondary schools did not do enough to promote pupils' spiritual development;
- In some primary schools there was an over concentration on the core subjects at the expense of work in art, music, humanities and design and technology;
- Further education institutions needed to keep up with the growing number of pupils who studied through the medium of Welsh in secondary school;
- Leadership and management in schools was generally satisfactory rather than good or very good;
- Local Education Authorities generally managed themselves effectively, but now faced the challenge of targeting more resources on schools where pupils were not making enough progress;
- There were still some teacher shortages in Wales and several primary schools found it difficult to recruit a supply teacher to cover a teacher absent for a month or more;
- There were still some primary schools and several secondary schools where the quality of accommodation was unsatisfactory.

1. In summary, Susan Lewis said that Wales would continue to need leaders with vision, managers to plan and champion changes, dedicated and skilled teachers, and learners committed to better themselves and to build a better future for Wales and its people.

2. The following points were raised in discussion:

- Members asked whether there was any evidence that **religious beliefs** rather than scientific knowledge were forming the basis of science lessons. The Chief Inspector replied that there was no evidence that this was happening in Wales.
- In respect of the provision of **ICT in schools**, the Chief Inspector said that it was not developing as well as other areas. A number of factors could affect the use of ICT in teaching and learning – these include lack of equipment, the standard and functionality of equipment, lack of technical support and lack of confidence and competence amongst the teachers using it.
- In reply to a question about whether **typing skills** should be taught in school, the Chief Inspector said that there was some merit in this and that she would try to encourage take-up in schools.

- Members asked about what the **teaching of cultural diversity** meant in practice. The Chief Inspector replied that it was about knowing who you are and where your roots were. At the heart of the diversity issue, children attending all white schools needed to have the cognisance that they lived in a society of diverse cultures.
- Members questioned whether the **school building stock** built during the Victorian era had lasted better than the buildings constructed in the '50s and '60s and whether some head teachers were spending too much time on building problems at the expense of other issues. The Chief Inspector replied that the shell of some Victorian buildings had stood the test of time, she also agreed that some heads spent too much time on building problems, but that this was part of a wider issue of using staff time more effectively. The Chief Inspector firmly believed that, first and foremost, teachers should teach.
- Members raised the issue of **social inclusion** and how the attendance rate in schools could be increased. The Chief Inspector said that there was much good practice to be drawn from the schools in Wales that have successfully improved attendance rates. Some schools contacted parents immediately after an absence was brought to light.
- Members were concerned about the **under-achievement of boys** in school and the lack of improvement made in this area since 1996. The Chief Inspector replied that an increase in literacy levels should lie at the heart of any strategy for improvement and there was some evidence that this was improving in primary schools. Estyn did not have a national strategy in place to remedy the under-achievement of boys but it did have an emerging understanding of the issues. Any strategy to remedy under-achievement might best be drawn up by the Equal Opportunities Commission. The Minister said that from her experience, head teachers who placed an emphasis on vocational qualifications achieved positive results in this area.
- In response to a question about the **effectiveness of equality policy** within schools and whether schools complied with special needs and disability legislation, Estyn replied that equal opportunity policies were in place, but the most important thing was to ensure that equality was a reality in schools.
- Members asked whether inspectorate staff from outside Wales were made aware of the bilingual nature of many Welsh schools. The Chief Inspector assured members that all inspectors were made aware of the Welsh context.
- Estyn's representatives were asked about what they considered to be the most important aspects in the Minister's **annual remit letter** and whether any important issues were omitted from this year's letter. The Chief Inspector replied that Estyn were consulted about the contents of the remit letter and where it felt its priorities should lie. Estyn's findings in one year did influence what was included in their remit for the following year. One of the most important pieces of work undertaken by Estyn in the coming year was that surrounding the Excellent Schools for the 21st Century agenda. The Lifelong Learning agenda was also of vital importance.
- Members asked about how Estyn viewed the development of **Education Strategic Plans** as a useful planning tool. The Chief Inspector stated that there was scope for Estyn to look at the rationalisation of the planning at local education authority level, but this was only the second year since the introduction of the statutory plans and some improvement was already evident. It was important however that these plans did not become burdensome.
- In response to a question about the quality and scope of the **teachers' advisory service** in Wales, Estyn stated that they had only just started examining this issue and were not, therefore, in a position to offer a definitive view.
- Members asked about the **experience and turnover of Estyn staff**. The Chief Inspector replied that all inspectors would have had the necessary experience in the areas they were asked to inspect. In terms of staff numbers and turnover, Estyn currently employed 54 inspectors; 7 had left in the last financial year, but in the same time period, 10-12 people had been recruited.

- Members raised concerns about whether there was any evidence that teachers were concentrating too narrowly on the **Key Stage 2 test**. The Chief Inspector replied that there was evidence that Key Stage 2 teaching was better in years 5 and 6 than in years 3 and 4.
- In respect of the **publication time of LEA inspection reports**, Estyn said that it was gradually reducing the gap between the anticipated and actual publication times. The anticipated publication time was now in the order of three months; this had increased because all reports were now published bilingually.
- Members expressed concern about the **morale of teachers** prior to a school inspection. The Chief Inspector said that Estyn had consulted on this issue and found a large measure of agreement on the processes involved. Estyn were in the process of finalising the results of the consultation exercise and hoped that this would go some way to allaying the fears of staff.

1. The Chair thanked the Chief Inspector for presenting a fair and balanced report. The Minister said that the evidence contained in the Chief Inspector's report would influence both her agenda and that of the Committee.

Item Four: Policy Review – Welsh Language in Education

Papers: ELL 06-02(p.3) & ELL 06-02(p.4)

1. Helen Prosser and Cennard Davies spoke to paper ELL-6-02(p.3) and highlighted the following issues:

- Teaching Welsh to Adults has been seen as something of a cinderella service in the past, but must be at the centre of any language strategy designed to reverse language shift.
- Adults can become fluent Welsh speakers in a far shorter period than children – two to six years.
- Less than 60 tutors in Wales teach Welsh for adults on a full-time basis. There were 700 part-time tutors, but under the current system, many find it impossible to carve out a career for themselves.
- Learners on the Welsh for Adults progression route, received between 300 and 600 hours of training; this compared with 1500 to 1800 hours in the Basque Country.
- The Assembly needed to rectify the inequalities that existed between the Welsh for Adults and English for Adults funding formulas.
- Nursery schools and post-16 progression were areas that demanded greater attention.
- A national strategy was required to help people become bilingual, but alongside this, the Assembly must invest appropriate resources and look to professionalize the whole Welsh for Adults agenda.

1. Dr Cen Williams of Bangor University highlighted the following issues in ELL-06-02(p.4):

- Every child in Wales must be given parity of opportunity to become bilingual.;
- Dr Williams drew attention to the late immersion project carried out at Ysgol Maes Garmon, Mold, details of which were outlined in Appendix A of his paper;
- The importance of bilingual teaching models and 'translanguaging' were also highlighted;
- The late immersion situation could be taken up in all the bilingual secondary schools in Wales. These schools had the staff in place in act swiftly in this area;
- There were also opportunities to extend Welsh medium education into English medium secondary schools. As Welsh was a core subject in all of Wales' primary schools, there was a firm basis in most areas for development;and
- There needed to be a definition of what was meant by "bilingual teaching". There were

groundbreaking schools in Gwynedd who promoted bilingualism through monolingual teaching whereby children were taught part of their courses in Welsh and part in English.

1. The following points were raised in discussion:

- In response to a question about why the Welsh for Adults funding formula was different from the English funding formula, Dr Prosser replied that they were working to a formula first set down when the Further Education Funding Council was established;
- In response to a question about why the Consortia placed so much emphasis on the need for full-time tutors, Dr Davies agreed that part-time staff were committed and had a role to play, but there was a clear need to help tutors forge a career progression in this field. Many tutors also needed fairer terms and conditions of employment, including holiday pay and job security;
- Dr Williams was asked for a further explanation as to how 'translanguaging' would work in practice. He said that the aim of 'translanguaging' was to develop the bilingualism of each pupil within the class and to allow for systematic movement from one language to another. 'Translanguaging' was not a method of translation, it was a means of reinforcing both languages;
- Members asked whether the Consortia viewed the Welsh for Adults system as a means of increasing the number of bilingual teachers in the education system. Dr Davies felt that there was a huge potential to do this, but that an increase in resources was needed to enable this to happen. Dr Williams added that the system should be sustainable and that Further Education Colleges had prime responsibility for the development of Welsh Language teaching;
- Members questioned whether a national strategy for adult learning was the best way forward given that there were vast differences in the Welsh language continuum throughout Wales. Dr Davies replied that bilingual schools were often established in a haphazard nature, often by the enthusiasm of individuals. A clear framework or set of guidelines was needed in this area;
- Members also questioned whether a network of purpose-built centres needed to be built for adult learning courses given that many school and college buildings were under-occupied in the evenings. Dr Prosser replied that it was possible to create language centres within existing buildings. Dr Davies added that a number of local authorities were looking at the idea of establishing community schools, which would bring together children and adults in a learning environment.

1. The Committee briefly discussed the definition of a "Bilingual Wales" put forward by Huw Lewis and recently adopted by the Culture Committee. The Committee unanimously agreed this definition:

"In a truly bilingual Wales both English and Welsh will flourish and will be treated as equal. A bilingual Wales means a country where people can choose to live their lives through the medium of either or both languages; a country where the presence of two national languages, and other diverse languages and cultures, is a source of pride and strength to us all."

Item Five: Minutes of the previous meeting, 6 March 2002

Paper: ELL 05-02(mins)

5.1 The Committee ratified the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 March 2002. [*Janice Gregory confirmed that she had been present at this meeting. This omission had previously been corrected in the official record.*]

Papers to Note

There were three papers to note:

- Minister's statement to Plenary on student hardship; **ELL 06-02(p.5)**
- Minister's statement to Plenary on higher education; **ELL 06-02(p.6)**
- Catrin Redknapp's report on visits to secondary schools in the north, further evidence for the Welsh language policy review; **ELL 06-02(p.7)**

Committee Secretariat March 2002