

Modifications made by the Working Party of the University Board for Welsh Medium Teaching to the Plan below to be submitted to the Assembly's Education and Lifelong Learning Committee on 24 April 2002

NATIONAL CENTRE

for

The Support of Welsh Medium Teaching in Higher Education

April 2002

FOREWORD

Following an invitation by the National Assembly for Wales Education and Lifelong Learning Committee (acting on behalf of the Culture Committee) to contribute to a review of Welsh language policy in education, the University Board for Welsh Medium Teaching will present evidence on 24 April 2002. Since the first paper was submitted to the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee in July 2001, wider consultation has taken place on its contents and this paper contains the results of that consultation which has improved our understanding of the basic needs for progress in the field. It is agreed that the primary need is a more robust framework, which will give priority to promoting all aspects of Welsh medium teaching, learning and scholarship, on a national and institutional level. This includes increasing the demand for Welsh medium courses, creating a demand in new fields and increasing the number of Welsh

medium staff. The role of the Centre is more clearly defined within this inclusive framework.

In addition, two important documents have appeared – the *Higher Education Policy Review* and the Strategy *‘Reaching Higher’* which was published by the Minister for Education in March, 2002 – and consideration was given to the contents of these documents when preparing the modifications.

1. Consideration was therefore given to the following in the review of the Plan:

- i. The wider consultation that took place between the introduction of the original plans in July 2001 and February 2002, particularly at The University of Wales, Aberystwyth, University of Wales, Bangor, and Trinity College, Carmarthen.
- ii. The recommendations of the *Higher Education Policy Review* in particular.

- o Chapter 3: Recommendation 5:

‘That ELWa - HEFCW should prepare a strategy for developing Welsh medium provision, including an assessment of demand and taking into account the proposals made by the Board for Welsh Medium Teaching’.

- o Chapter 3: Recommendation 6:

‘That the National Assembly should fund a centre for the production of learning materials in Welsh, based on existing expertise in Aberystwyth, Bangor and Trinity College Carmarthen but with links to all parts of the HE and FE sectors in Wales’.

- o Chapter 9: Recommendation 5 (bullet point 3):

‘That ELWa - HEFCW should facilitate collaboration between Aberystwyth, Bangor and Trinity College, Carmarthen to develop Welsh medium provision, based on the proposals of the Board for Welsh Medium Teaching’.

- i. The publication of the strategy for the Higher Education sector in Wales in the document *‘Reaching Higher’* which notes:

"We want an HE sector which is responsive to individuals, including those who wish to pursue elements of their degrees through the medium of Welsh. Over time it should be viewed as part of the mainstream provision covering a selection of

courses and modules."

and includes the recommendations:

"We shall invite HEFCW to commission a report into current levels of demand and supply in Welsh medium higher education, the projected trends in demand and the steps that should be taken to increase demand."

"We shall ensure that HEFCW enters into a dialogue with the Board for Welsh Medium Teaching to see how demand might best be met."

- ii. Public debates in the Welsh medium press and media regarding the original Plan.
- iii. The unanimous decision of the University Board for Welsh Medium Teaching at its meeting on 16 November, 2001:

'That a working party should be established to develop a structure to look at ways of ensuring the adequacy of Welsh medium provision within the Higher Education system in Wales'.

1.2 Linking with 1.1 above (v) above, the University Board for Welsh Medium Teaching has already established a Working Party to look in more detail at the way the work of the Support Centre would integrate into a more complete structure and strategy for extending Welsh as a medium within the sector. This involves:

- i. the planning and establishment of more robust and complete structures (across and within institutions) which will be a means of normalising and extending Welsh medium rather than a hindrance
- ii. the planning and establishment of national and institutional strategies which will be a means of achieving point (i)
- iii. giving the Centre a clearer aim, that of **planning, advising on and co-ordinating** Welsh-medium provision within the sector
- iv. the modification of the original document following the recent deliberations and announcements by the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee and the Education Minister.

1.3 The Working Party consists of 10 members, 6 of whom teach full time in the sector and who also hold other key posts in their colleges, under the chairmanship of

Professor M. Wynn Thomas (University of Wales Swansea).

The members are:

Dr Cen Williams (Welsh Medium Teaching Development Officer)

Ruth Ab Ieuan (Secretary)

Mr Heini Gruffudd (University of Wales Swansea)

Mr Ifor Gruffydd (University of Wales, Cardiff)

Dr Richard Wyn Jones (The University of Wales, Aberystwyth)

Dr Ioan Matthews (Trinity College, Carmarthen)

Dr Delyth Morris (University of Wales, Bangor)

Professor Gareth Roberts (University of Wales, Bangor)

Professor Ioan Williams (The University of Wales, Aberystwyth)

The first meeting of the Working Party was held on Thursday, 28 February 2002 at Gregynog and the main purpose of the meeting was the modification of the original Plan in the light of discussions.

1.4 In doing so, the Working Party set itself two aims, namely:

(i) to **safeguard** the current Welsh medium provision at Aberystwyth, Bangor and Trinity College, Carmarthen, the three institutions who will, according to the *Higher Education Policy Review*, form the basis of the work, and

- i. the further **expansion** and **development** of Welsh medium provision in these three institutions and across the sector to those colleges where there is limited use of Welsh medium teaching

There was a strong perception within the Working Party that it would be very difficult to achieve (ii) without first safeguarding (i).

1.5 To follow, some modifications which would lead to a consolidated version of the original Plan are discussed. They derive from the discussions of the Working Party and a consensus between the members that they should focus on the following themes:

- The reduction of staffing levels at the Centre
- The extension of the Doctorate and Fellowship schemes
- Structural changes
- Funding

1. Considerations which will strengthen the Welsh medium position

This section gives details of the 4 themes identified above. 2.1 and 2.2 focus mainly on the Support Centre and on the contents of 1.2 (iii) and (iv) while 2.2 and 2.3 are mainly concerned with the medium term and with the contents of 1.2 (i) and (ii).

The focus in the Recommendations of the *Higher Education Policy Review* on the creation of a Welsh medium structure on the foundation that already exists at three institutions [see 1.1(ii)] leads to the need to maintain that provision as a prerequisite. The Support Centre's original Plan gave priority to extending Welsh as a medium by establishing joint working structures to plan and deliver specific modules. It could be argued that it gives priority to those institutions that do not have a strong tradition of Welsh medium teaching.

The most obvious and basic means of maintaining the existing provision is by ensuring a plentiful supply of lecturers to maintain and strengthen the provision and then extend it to other institutions. This is directly responsible for this change of direction and the contents of 2.1, 2.2. It also links indirectly with sections 2.3 and 2.4.

The results of the questionnaire sent recently by Dr Cen Williams to the staff at the institutions shows that nearly 40% of the staff at those institutions who teach through the medium of Welsh (or who could do so) are over 50. This could lead to a crisis in the sector which highlights the urgent need to prepare lecturers who are competent and confident to teach in Welsh and/or bilingually. As this is the primary need, it is recommended that the number of Doctorates and Fellowships be increased. These prospective lecturers on the Fellowship Scheme will contribute towards preparing modules which would be part of the workload of the

Centre in the original scheme with both sides contributing to their own departments in the individual colleges.

1. A reduction in staffing levels at the Centre

The Working Party believes, therefore, that too much of the funding (about 60%) in the original plan is directed towards staffing the Centre. Bearing in mind also that there has been a shift in emphasis regarding the aim and role of the Centre, [see 1.2(ii)] the Working Party believes that more of this funding should be used to strengthen the position of Welsh medium staff at the institutions.

The recommendation is for a reduction in staff levels at the Centre by the removal of the following posts: (See original document 1.2 (1) and 1.2 (2) and section 2.2)

Research / Staff Development Officer

Academic Translators (x2)

Terminology Experts (x2)

1 Secretary

Merging the post of the Computer/ Web Officer with that of the education package designer

This means retaining the following posts:

Director

Vice-Director

Assistant Officer

Administration / Finance Officer

Schools and Further Education Colleges Liaison Officer (changing the title and nature of this post from Marketing Officer)

Academic translators (x2)

Secretary

Computer Officer / Education Package Designer (merging two posts)

The responsibility for research into Welsh and bilingual methods of presentation and staff development courses would become part of the duties of a member of the core team i.e. one of the first three posts listed above. Through co-operation with bodies such as the University of Wales Board of Celtic Studies and the University of Wales, Bangor, Terminology Unit, terminology expertise and leadership could be safeguarded. Because of the increase in scholarships and the fact that Aberystwyth, Bangor and Trinity College have their own translation teams, the number of translators at the Centre could be reduced and co-operation between translators within the institutions could be increased. The two posts involved in packaging teaching materials and using technology for presentation could be merged by taking advantage of the distance Welsh medium framework and systems which is already being developed in other institutions such as the University of Glamorgan. (See recommendation 2, Chapter 3 of the *Higher Education Policy Review*). Finance must therefore be ring-fenced for this collaboration.

2. Extending the Doctorate and Fellowship schemes

The Working Party believes that the numbers in receipt of Fellowships and Doctorates could be increased from the first year through the financial savings gained by a reduction in staff at the Centre (2.2 in the original document). This provision will be strengthened by substantially increasing the total number of those who will benefit to 128 over a period of ten years, whilst simultaneously accelerating the development. The result would be a supply of Welsh medium staff in a wide variety of subjects who would be available to strengthen the provision that exists at Aberystwyth, Bangor and Trinity College Carmarthen and the extension of Welsh medium teaching to other institutions and new occupational and technical fields.

By achieving an increase in the number of academic staff at the institutions the provision of courses can be increased, and these staff can also carry out a substantial amount of the developmental work which formed part of the original scheme, such as aspects of marketing, developing materials and terminology.

Alongside the process of ensuring qualified lecturers it is vital that an inclusive strategy is established with ELWa – with HEFCW playing a key role in it. (See recommendation 5, Chapter 3, of the *Higher Education Policy Review* and section 2.4.)

3. Structural Changes

The aim will be to work towards a structure leading to

- i. ensuring a central place for Welsh medium teaching within the planning processes of individual institutions**
- ii. a considerable increase in the number of Welsh medium lecturers within the system**
- iii. planning and co-ordinating the growth of Welsh medium at national level**
- iv. ensuring that sufficient funds are available to ensure growth and plan the interrelationship between all the elements identified in points (i) – (iii) above.**

1. Finance

Because of the need to (a) ensure a supply of Welsh medium lecturers trained to use the language as a medium in a wide variety of fields and (b) speed up the process considerably, the recommendation is to divert more of the requested funding in the original scheme towards the Doctorate and Fellowship schemes and to utilize more of the total funding in the early years.

This would represent a substantial step forward towards solving the current

problems of ensuring Welsh medium staff in the institutions and enabling Welsh to be extended to new fields, including occupational and technical fields.

This would also enable the Centre to begin with a full quota of staff within a few months of its establishment. The money saved by reducing staff in the Centre would be used for the field panels' developmental work as well as for the establishment of teaching fellowships and scholarships.

At the same time, it is hoped that ELWa – HEFCW will begin the process of developing a full and inclusive Welsh medium strategy to continue the work at the end of the ten years. This would include sufficient funds for the individual colleges and the sector on a national level to employ staff trained to operate through the medium of Welsh.

1. The Way Forward

Following the publication of the strategy for the Higher Education sector in Wales in the document '*Aiming Higher*' and the recommendation:

"We shall ensure that HEFCW enters into a dialogue with the Board for Welsh Medium Teaching to see how demand might best be met."

and the reference in another recommendation to increasing the demand:

"We shall invite HEFCW to commission a report into current levels of demand and supply in Welsh medium higher education, the projected trends in demand and the steps that should be taken to increase demand."

The Board for Welsh Medium Teaching is expected to co-operate with the National Assembly of Wales, ELWa – HEFCW, ELWa, the Welsh Language Board and other relevant bodies to plan a strategy for developing the Welsh language in the sector during the next ten years and beyond.

2. Summary

Several hypotheses which are vital to the development became clearer in the review of the original paper, namely:

- i. that a more robust framework is needed which will give priority to the promotion of all aspects of Welsh teaching, Welsh medium and scholarship, on a national and

institutional level

- ii. that the recommendations contained here are part of the process, and that the University Board for Welsh Medium Teaching (WMTB) will play a leading role in bringing this discussion to the attention of the sector as a whole and the planning bodies of individual institutions
- iii. that WMTB, through the Support Centre, will plan, advise, liaise and co-operate across the sector
- iv. that a considerable increase in the numbers of Welsh medium teaching staff is required
- v. that the sector needs to attract more students from schools and tertiary colleges by increasing and creating the demand for new courses, and that raising the profile of Welsh medium teaching nationally will lead to more interest and an increase in those schools and tertiary colleges
- vi. that the Centre will be fully staffed from the beginning in order to facilitate the developments
- vii. that there will be greater co-operation with bodies (e.g. Board of Celtic Studies and Bangor University's Terminology Centre) and that established systems (e.g. University of Glamorgan's teaching technology systems) can be used, to compensate for some of the specialist aspects which have now been omitted by reducing the Centre's staff
- viii. that Welsh medium growth is based on the three colleges who are strongest with regard to Welsh, according to the recommendations of the *Higher Education Policy Review* (assuming that the three institutions understand their supportive role in promoting a growth in provision across the sector by traditional means and new technology)

If we accept the points emphasised in these hypotheses, the main changes with regard to redirecting funding are:

- more of the funding will be used to train lecturers to teach through the medium of Welsh by substantially increasing the total number receiving Doctorates and Fellowships
- a reduction in the central staff of the Centre in order to ensure more funds for that

purpose

- ring-fencing funding for the collaboration identified above.