

## Welsh in Education Strategic Plans

Briefing paper for the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee and the Children, Young People and Education Committee

August 2022

### About ColegauCymru

ColegauCymru is a post-compulsory education charity; we promote the public benefit of post-compulsory education and learning. We also convene the Further Education (FE) Principals' Forum, which represents FE colleges and FE institutions (FEIs) in Wales. ColegauCymru also undertakes research, policy development and provides practical support to FE colleges in Wales, including on work-based learning (WBL) which is a key part of FE college activity.

### Progress since 2015

1. Many colleges have commented that FE involvement in the planning of the WESPs had improved in recent years. However, this was not the consensus across all institutions. This needs to be more structured and consistent across the country. Similarly, some colleges commented that FE representation on relevant working groups had also improved. Again, this was not the case for all colleges. Those Local Authorities (LAs) where Welsh Education forums have been created would benefit from receiving input from their local FEI in order to see how Welsh-medium education has progressed on to post-16.
2. The circumstances of each college must also be taken into account when considering the WESPs, and how each college plans their Welsh provision. For example, a college in south east Wales with a low number of fluent Welsh speakers may require a different working relationship with their LA, particularly on the development of WESPs, than a college in north Wales with a higher number of Welsh speakers. While the former may focus on the development of lower-level Welsh language skills at a 'courtesy' level, the latter may offer a range of courses entirely through the medium of Welsh.
3. LAs are required to indicate in their WESPs how they propose to increase the percentage of learners aged 16 -19 who study subjects through the medium of Welsh in schools, however this does not directly include or affect learners in FE colleges. We would suggest that the WESPs should consider all learners aged 16-19 whether they are at school or attending an FE college.

### WESP contribution to Cymraeg 2050

4. Further Education colleges in Wales are fully supportive of Welsh Government's vision of one million Welsh speakers by 2050, and maintaining and ensuring effective WESPs are a positive way of assisting towards this ambitious target.
5. FE colleges work hard to promote and encourage their learners to continue their education through the medium of Welsh, and make an important contribution to the 14-16 curriculum through the local 14-19 Networks.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, thought should be given to the role FEIs play not only in the realisation

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<sup>1</sup> <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-02/guidance-welsh-in-education-strategic-plan.pdf>, p.14

of Cymraeg 2050, but also the continuation of achieving the outcomes of the WESP. This should be explicitly referenced in all WESPs.

6. In order to support the need for more delivery through the Welsh language, colleges in Wales have the opportunity to take part in the Cymraeg Gwaith scheme. Supported by the National Centre for Learning Welsh, Colegau Cymru co-ordinates the Cymraeg Gwaith project for the Further Education sector in collaboration with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.

7. Since the pilot year in 2017, the scheme has provided staff in further education colleges with the opportunity to improve their Welsh with the aim of increasing the number of staff who can teach through Welsh. The scheme has continued to have a positive impact on upskilling staff in FE to be able to deliver at least part of their teaching in Welsh. The Committee might like to explore how to ensure that funding for the post-16 sector to upskill staff can be put on a more secure, long-term basis that operates on academic years. Too often, funding is provided on an annual basis on a financial year cycle which does not provide the right level of security to make the maximum impact.

#### **Future challenges ahead of proposed Welsh Language Education Bill**

8. Challenges include, increasing both learners' and parents/carers knowledge of Welsh-medium availability (across academic and work-based learning activities), ensuring there are enough dual professional lecturers with the ability to teach through Welsh, and long term funding of Welsh-medium provision.

9. The vision of the proposed Welsh Education Bill will need to take post-16 provision, especially FE and vocational education, into consideration from the outset. Learners who have received statutory education through the medium of Welsh should be offered a seamless transition to further education. Likewise, learners who have acquired a level of skill in Welsh should have opportunities to maintain and develop their skills during their vocational education. For this to happen, a significant investment of time, effort and of course funding is required across a number of fronts. Delivering on the FE and Apprenticeships Welsh Medium Action Plan and securing suitable resources to succeed in this work is crucial.

10. There will need to be on-going scrutiny to ensure the strategy of both Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and The National Centre for Learning Welsh are complementary as we work towards the target of one million Welsh speakers.

11. Finally, there is a need for consistent best practice in terms of relationships between the FE sector and LAs, especially with reference to the creation and development of the WESPs. At present, relationships are variable with some colleges reporting positive engagement while others have a different experience. Some colleges report differences within the different LAs that they operate in regard to the WESP. The Committee might like to explore ways to support greater consistency and engagement on this issue.

**Amy Evans**  
Policy Officer, Colegau Cymru  
Amy.Evans@colegaucymru.ac.uk

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