

Buffy Williams MS
Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee
Senedd Cymru

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4 December 2024

Annwyl Gadeirydd,

Re: The Welsh Language and Education Bill – additional evidence from the
Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

As you are aware, the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (the Coleg) supports the aims and objectives of the Welsh Language and Education Bill and has made this clear in our evidence during Stage 1 of the scrutiny process.

We very much welcome the Bill's aim of ensuring that, over time, everyone leaves the compulsory education sector in Wales an independent Welsh speaker (B2 level). The aim poses a particular challenge for the tertiary sector to ensure that suitable progression pathways are in place for learners to continue to maintain, use and develop their Welsh language skills throughout their time in the tertiary sector before entering the world of work.

We very much welcome comments by Mark Drakeford MS, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Welsh Language, in his evidence to the Children, Young People and Education Committee on 24 October on tertiary education, and his willingness to look again at the elements of the Bill relating to this sector, which is the Coleg's main area of interest. His

comments were constructive, and his willingness to offer the clarity needed on the face of the Bill and in the Explanatory Memorandum, were very welcome.

As the committee produces its report on Stage 1 of the Bill, we write to you to offer additional evidence regarding two specific issues raised as part of our written and oral evidence, namely, Welsh as a subject and the education workforce.

Welsh as a subject

Due to time constraints during our evidence session to the committee on 17 October, we were unable to provide much detail on this aspect of the Bill. This letter therefore outlines why the Coleg believes that the protection of Welsh as a subject (e.g. GCSEs, A-levels, degree in Welsh) is such an important issue and one that merits attention on the face of the Bill.

Specific provision is required in the National Framework for Welsh as a subject, particularly for learners beyond compulsory school age. Welsh as a subject is not distinguishable from the categories listed in section 35(a), so we believe there is a risk of missing important opportunities to protect and develop this fragile and vital subject.

Although Welsh is a mandatory part of the curriculum for all school years in the statutory period including Years 10 and 11, the pattern of post-16 provision is extremely fragile. We know that it can be challenging to convince learners to study the subject, for a variety of reasons; but even when a group of learners want to study AS or A level, the provision is not necessarily available. While e-sgol is an alternative option in some cases, the reality is that we are losing learners (First and Second Language) every year in a subject that cannot afford to lose them (see Appendix 1 below).

Education in Welsh as a subject is the main means of creating proficient users (C1 and C2). In practice, only by protecting and promoting Welsh A levels (First and Second Language) will we create significant workforces with advanced skills in Welsh, particularly teachers who can teach Welsh or teach through the medium of Welsh and Welsh tutors. Increasing these workforces is key to achieving the objectives of the Bill.

The challenges facing Welsh as a subject are complex and involve a number of factors. We are not suggesting that the Bill itself can address all of these, but rather, we consider that there are significant benefits to referring on the face of the Bill to Welsh as a subject as one of the areas that Welsh Ministers will be required to address in the National Framework.

We suggest that there are three options in relation to potential amendments that would realise the policy aim of conserving and promoting Welsh as a subject, namely:

Option 1: Subsection 23(1) could be modified by adding a new clause (d):

"(d) in relation to Welsh as a subject, including for the purposes of GCSEs and A-levels"

Option 2: A new subsection could be added to section 23 stating:

"23

(...)

(X) Welsh language education in section 23(1) includes the teaching of Welsh as a subject including for the purposes of GCSEs and A-levels.

Option 3: The definition of "Welsh language education" could be further amended in section 35(a) of the Bill as follows:

"35. Interpretation

In this Part –

a. "Welsh language education" means –

- i. teaching Welsh,
- ii. education and training through the medium of Welsh,
- iii. **teaching Welsh as a subject, including for GCSE and A-level qualification purposes.**

in a school, for pupils of compulsory school age **or within tertiary education** ;

The education workforce

The Coleg, along with a significant number of other stakeholders who gave evidence to the committee during Stage 1, has expressed concern about the Bill's reliance on an education workforce with adequate Welsh language skills to implement the proposals.

We recognise that the Bill provides for action in relation to the education workforce by local authorities (identifying steps to ensure that sufficient education practitioners work in the area), and by the Institute (in relation to improving Welsh language teaching methods, and providing opportunities to learn Welsh and improve levels of ability in Welsh).

However, the Coleg believes that this does not address an essential piece of the jigsaw, namely the provision of Initial Teacher Education and the need to ensure that provision is designed and delivered in the most strategic manner possible from a national perspective.

For that reason, we remain supportive of the Welsh Language Commissioner's proposal to "placing a duty in the Bill on Welsh Ministers to produce and publish a Welsh in Education Workforce Plan as part of the National Framework for Welsh Language Education and Learning Welsh."¹

While the current Welsh in Education Workforce Plan has pulled together a number of strands and stakeholders in terms of Welsh education workforce planning, it does not, in our view, go far enough and lacks sufficient status among stakeholders to deliver the strategic progress needed.

We strongly support the Bill and therefore the aim of this letter is to ensure that it takes every possible opportunity to realise the Government's objectives. Legislating offers a golden opportunity to ensure that the anticipated progress in education through the medium of Welsh and in Welsh as a subject happens seamlessly across the whole education system. The Coleg is very keen to play a key role in making this vision a reality.

We trust that as a committee you will consider our suggestions in this letter as you produce your report on Stage 1 of the Bill. If you would like further information do not hesitate to contact Gwenllian Griffiths, the Coleg's

¹<https://business.senedd.wales/documents/s154162/WLE%207%20Welsh%20Language%20Commissioner.pdf>

Director of Policy, Communications and Engagement by emailing g.griffiths@colegcymraeg.ac.uk.

Yn gywir,



Dr Ioan Matthews

Chief Executive

Appendix 1

Year	First language Welsh	Second language Welsh
2008/09	304	489
2009/10	318	410
2010/11	302	410
2011/12	257	400
2012/13	287	356
2013/14	252	312
2014/15	280	272
2015/16	246	245
2016/17	214	242
2017/18	231	216
2018/19	256	164
2019/20	244	158
2020/21	231	195
2021/22	206	160
2022/23	176	112

Table 1: Number of entries for Welsh A levels and Welsh Second Language A levels (aged 17 pupils only) - [A level entries and results \(aged 17 pupils only\) by subject group \(gov.cymru\)](#)