

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg ar Bil y Gymraeg ac Addysg \(Cymru\)](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee on the Welsh Language and Education \(Wales\) Bill](#)

WLE 20

Ymateb gan: ColegauCymru

Response from: CollegesWales

Re: ColegauCymru evidence on the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill

ColegauCymru is an education charity; we promote the public benefit of post-compulsory education and learning. As the representative organisation of all colleges in Wales, we are well positioned to be able to outline to the Committee the further education (FE) sector's views on the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill.

ColegauCymru is supportive of the main aim of the Bill, to ensure that all pupils reach the end of compulsory school age as independent Welsh users, although we would welcome some clarity on a range of matters set out in this letter. The response is structured based on the Terms of Reference of the inquiry.

Promotion and facilitation of use of the Welsh language

The Bill sets out ambitious targets for the promotion and facilitation of use of the Welsh Language and, whilst we admire and support the ambition of the Bill, expanding Welsh language education at *all* levels is central to its success. The Bill's success depends on teacher recruitment and development, accessible programmes and support for non-Welsh speaking families, all of which will require investment from government. Significant community engagement activities could be required to achieve high level of buy in, especially in areas with lower numbers of Welsh speakers. Building confidence in learners' Welsh language skills is critical to their progression to the next stage of their learning or work through the medium of Welsh and this should be encouraged formally (for example, through the curriculum), and informally (for example, through extra-curricular activities).

Describing Welsh language ability

ColegauCymru believes that integrating Welsh language proficiency with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) will help to ensure consistency and credibility. This standardisation would allow for clear comparisons between Welsh and other languages. Further, we agree that developing a tailored Code for Welsh language proficiency provides detailed guidance specific to Welsh, addressing its unique linguistic and cultural context. As benchmarks are developed and established, it is important that due regard is given to assessment, ensuring that assessments are fair, inclusive and accessible to students from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Welsh language education

Whilst we recognise a range of positive aspects, including clear structures for accountability for delivering Welsh education based on classification, and enhancing inclusivity and broader access to Welsh language learning, there are several potential concerns. Success of the Bill is dependent on: the workforce - in recruitment, training, and



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resourcing; as well as implementation timescales, especially in higher concentration English speaking areas.

We would welcome a greater breadth of qualifications being made available through the medium of Welsh, assuming funding is available to support the workforce to deliver them. There is a need to develop a coherent and connected system of qualifications that are flexible and valued by learners and employers alike. This would also mean having the workforce in place with sufficient Welsh language skills to deliver and assess these qualifications.

Due regard must be given to the implications of the proposed changes on the FE sector. If the B2 target is expected to be achieved at GCSE level, what is the expectation on FE colleges in supporting those learners who had not managed to meet the B2 level? Given the changes to the GCSE structures, this could be challenging to achieve. In this context it is worth noting the implications of the recent changes to the GCSE Maths and English qualifications. It is important that any implications for learners taking a Welsh GCSE resit in post-16 education are carefully and fully considered, both in terms of the legislation and also subsequent qualification development.

Planning Welsh language education and learning

We welcome the approach spanning all life stages - from nursery to adulthood, ensuring that Welsh language education is accessible at every age. Promoting and expanding Welsh medium education provision at all levels will help to increase fluency and usage among learners, vital for the language's growth. The inclusion of adult education in workplaces and communities is welcome, in supporting a more inclusive Welsh speaking society. That said, the workforce is a concern here - attracting and training enough Welsh-proficient practitioners, particularly in lower concentration Welsh speaking areas is a concern. The five-year review periods of the framework provides a welcome structure, although the framework may need greater flexibility to address challenges as they arise, without waiting for the formal review period. Structured planning is necessary to address any gaps in Welsh language provision and to ensure long-term growth. We recognise that long term planning requires an ongoing financial commitment, but it is critical that the sector is enabled to plan long term.

National Welsh Language Learning Institute

While the Institute has clear goals, including leadership in Welsh language education, developing materials, and planning workforce development, Colegau Cymru would welcome further clarity on definitions in relation to the tertiary sector to avoid any potential confusion. Currently, learning Welsh in the tertiary sector (the responsibility of the National Centre for Learning Welsh / the proposed Institute) is fairly well defined, but developing Welsh medium and bilingual provision in the tertiary sector (the responsibility of Medr and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol) is less well defined, and therefore potentially open to interpretation. Clear coordination with current multiple Welsh language and education bodies and agencies is critical to avoid duplication and ensure a unified approach. The effective implementation of the Institute will depend on adequate funding and resources, and should be adaptable to changes and feedback to remain effective as Welsh language education evolves.

Barriers to the Bill's implementation

Successful implementation of the Bill ultimately depends on resources - attracting and retaining Welsh speaking staff is critical. Workforce development is vital, and we must seek to protect the opportunities that currently exist for staff to learn



Welsh, as well as create new ones. Colegau Cymru wholeheartedly recognises the challenging squeeze on the public purse, but the total funding envelope must be increased. Only with adequate resources in place can this Bill meet its ambitions.

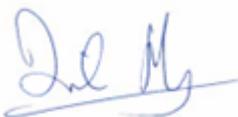
Financial implications

If Wales is to meet its target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050, significant investment in education, and specifically teacher recruitment and development is required. This includes not only recruiting new Welsh speaking staff, but also upskilling existing staff. We have seen the success of these initiatives across the FE sector. For example, Coleg Gwent, supported by Coleg Cymraeg Cendlaethol, has increased bilingual learners on key areas such as childcare and health care from 7% to 52% over the last five years. It demonstrates the importance of sustained and planned investment in professional development to improve the quality and availability of Welsh medium provision. Training programmes and professional development initiatives will need to be expanded, which could require significant government investment. It may also mean that incentives are required to attract Welsh speaking teaching staff to areas of low levels of Welsh language use.

If we are to meet the million Welsh speakers by 2050 target, it is essential that a whole education system approach is taken. The FE sector, with its well-established links to employers, is critical to the success of Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 targets and, therefore, consideration must be given to ensuring robust transition arrangements for the new cohort of learners as a result of the changes to compulsory school education enabled by the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill. Sustained investment in the FE workforce and resources for post-16 curriculum are essential to maintain the momentum in facilitating the use of Welsh language beyond post-16. The changes in the education landscape are an opportunity for us to redesign learning pathways, so that we have a coherent curriculum which enables positive progression for learners - whichever pathway they choose to follow through our system. Supporting these pathways must be underpinned by a fundamental right to high quality and independent information, advice and guidance, particularly at the key transition points. This advice and guidance would help support learners transitioning from pre-16 to post-16 provision, growing the numbers of learners who are studying bilingually or through the medium of Welsh.

We look forward to providing oral evidence to the Committee on the 17 October 2024. If you need any further information, please don't hesitate to contact us.

With best wishes,



David Hagendyk
Chief Executive

