



**Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu
National Assembly for Wales
Culture, Welsh Language and Communications
Committee:**

Cefnogi a hybu'r Gymraeg Supporting and promoting the Welsh Language

14.09.2018

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Introduction

1. ColegauCymru welcomes the opportunity to respond to the National Assembly for Wales' Culture, Welsh Language, and Communications Committee inquiry into supporting and promoting the Welsh Language.
2. ColegauCymru is a post compulsory charity and represents the 13³ further education (FE) colleges and FE institutions in Wales. In In 2014/15 more than 150,000 learners were enrolled at further education institutions in Wales. Two-thirds of all 16-18 year old learners in Wales choose to study at colleges. Most learners are adults. In 2014/15, 57% of colleges' learners were adults over the age of 19. Most studied part-time. We are happy for our response to be placed in the public domain.

Question 1

Post legislative scrutiny of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 - to assess the perceived successes and limitations of the legislation, and the impact and effectiveness of Welsh Language standards in improving and increasing access to Welsh language services.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and standards regime has certainly succeeded in raising the profile of the Welsh language.

Adhering to the legislation has required a welcome shift in bilingual workforce planning at ColegauCymru and colleges, with an increase in the number of posts advertised with Welsh as essential and/or desirable. This reflects a measure of success of the legislation. Recruiting Welsh speakers or investing in learning Welsh opportunities for staff allows for the organisations to offer an improved bilingual service. This has led to a rise in the number of Welsh speakers at ColegauCymru, with Welsh speakers recruited into Marketing and Digital Communications Assistant and Public Affairs Assistant roles. This has increased our capacity to hold meetings and events through the medium of Welsh and respond to customer demand.

³ The 13 include, FE colleges and Addysg Oedolion Cymru / Adult Learning Wales. The College Merthyr Tydfil, Coleg Sir Gâr and Coleg Ceredigion are part of university groupings.

Conversely, Standards remain numerous, complex and risk being misinterpreted in practice. The intended codes of practices aimed to avoid exactly this kind of misinterpretation and would have been a great support when compliance notices were first issued to organisations. Bodies should be required to deal with complaints about the Standards internally in the first instance. The Commission should only investigate complaints in serious cases.

There is a risk that the time spent on compliance may divert resources and staff away from the main task of improving access to, and take up of, Welsh language services. The system needs to be simplified with a better balance between compliance and promotion. The concept of Welsh Language Standards however should be retained.

Question 2

To assess whether the legislative framework supports or limits Welsh language promotion and its use.

The objective of the legislative framework is to strike the right balance between promoting the language and regulating Welsh language duties. It is the Commissioner's role to promote the Welsh language, and improve the opportunities people have to use it.

As set out earlier, the current compliance framework is complex and takes up a disproportionate amount of time and resources. Now is the time to reconsider this balance, with more emphasis on promotion and encouraging people to request and use the services available.

The recent #hawliau promotional campaign had the right ethos, however some colleges felt that it was geared towards higher education staff and students more so than further education.

There are a number of competing initiatives in terms of promoting the Welsh language. A more strategic and joined up approach needs to be taken with the Welsh Language Commissioner and the Welsh Government working more closely together.

Further education colleges are well placed to promote Welsh language initiatives to staff and learners and could be used more effectively.

Question 3

An international perspective - gathering evidence on legislation to protect and promote minority language planning in other countries.

ColegauCymru has taken a keen interest in minority language planning and promotion from other countries. Committed to international benchmarking as a Welsh Government priority for further education, ColegauCymru has facilitated two Erasmus+ funded trips for college staff to the Basque Country and Catalonia to look at language planning and promotion in vocational education.

Attitudes towards bilingualism and multilingualism in these countries is healthy. Driven by Government commitment, language is seen very much as a mode of communication and there is little friction or competition between using one or the other. Language learning is embedded in the whole education system and in business operations and is seen as adding value to the Basque economy, for instance.⁴

However, there are other factors that impact on effective language planning, including financial constraints – Wales' economy is currently very different from other countries examined. For instance, financial investment in the Basque language has been significant and it would be difficult to match this level in Wales at the present time.

ColegauCymru and the further education sector are committed to playing a central role in supporting Welsh Government to achieve its ambition of reaching a million Welsh speakers by 2050. This is a worthwhile challenge. Together as a nation, with the right balance of legislation, regulation, but crucially, promotion there is true potential to change the future of the language and create a truly bilingual Wales.

Claire Roberts

Cyfarwyddwr Materion Allanol / External Affairs Director

ColegauCymru

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http://www.euskara.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/value_economic_impact_basque/en_def/adjuntos/Euskararen%20eragin%20ekonomikoa_Laburpena_English%20AZKENA%202.pdf