

POLICY REVIEW OF WELSH LANGUAGE

EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Note: All references to 'The Committee' in this chapter refer to the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee.

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Introduction

In the main introduction to this report, reference is made to the plenary resolution of 4 July 2000. This included an endorsement of the following resolution passed by the Post-16 Education and Training Committee on 16 February that year:

The Committee welcomes the Welsh Language Board's document 'The Welsh Language: A Vision and Mission 2000-5' as a major contribution to the task of drawing up a strategy for the continued revitalisation of the Welsh language and the creation of a bilingual Wales. The Committee agrees that the four main challenges are those noted in the "Summary of the Welsh Language Board's Position" and strongly supports the emphasis on Welsh-medium education as the basis for growth.

The Committee notes that achieving such an ambitious task as the creation of a truly bilingual Wales must involve a co-ordinated strategy, with targets, of the kind described in the Board's document.

The Committee strongly supports the aim of creating a bilingual Wales as an achievable national aim, and wishes to see the implementation of an effective strategy to ensure that this aim is achieved.

The Committee welcomes the fact that the Executive accepts the Board's document as an important contribution and guide to determining priorities for the future work of the Board within the resources voted by the Assembly.

The Committee heard evidence from the Welsh Language Board, which was set in the context of the 'Vision and Mission' document.

Definition of a Bilingual Wales

Both Committees agreed a definition of a bilingual Wales, which is given at the beginning of this report. It is repeated here to put the remainder of this chapter in context:

In a truly bilingual Wales both English and Welsh will flourish and will be treated as equal. A bilingual Wales means a country where people can choose to live their lives through the medium of either or both languages; a country where the presence of two national languages, and other diverse languages and cultures, is a source of pride and strength to us all.

Key Recommendations

That, in due course, the Assembly Minister should set up a review group, including representatives from the Welsh Language Board, Estyn, ACCAC, WJEC, GTCW, National Council-ELWa, HEFCW, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin, the Pre-School Playgroups Association and LEAs to assess progress in implementing the actions recommended in this chapter and to report.

The Committee acknowledges the crucial role of Welsh language immersion teaching during Early Years, and recommends that this provision be expanded and the key role of the *Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin* and the Pre-School Playgroups Association be recognised.

That a holistic approach to effective language acquisition during the Early Years relies on improved levels of all-day Welsh-medium and bilingual care. To this end, the Committee recommends that Welsh-medium and bilingual provision should be expanded, in partnership

with *Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin* and the Pre-School Playgroups Association. The presence of bilingual Early Years Integrated Centres is considered to be an essential component of this provision.

That the Assembly Minister should give priority to defining Welsh language provision in schools. The detailed work already undertaken by a group of experts, chaired by the Welsh Language Board, to clarify the manner in which language immersion and bilingual education is categorised will form the basis of this consideration.

That the Assembly Minister should commission the GTCW to undertake a comprehensive audit of the current numbers of Welsh language and Welsh-medium teachers and the nature of the training necessary for projected levels of demand to be met.

That the National Council – ELWa should adopt a strategic approach, on the basis of reliable data, to the recruitment, training and re-training of staff to teach bilingually and through the medium of Welsh in the FE sector;

Terms of Reference

To seek to define more closely the promotion of the Welsh Language and the benefits of bilingualism and education and lifelong learning in achieving the National Assembly's vision of fostering Wales' unique and diverse identity. The Committee will aim to suggest a strategy for actions in the area of education and training to help achieve that vision.

This policy review will complement that currently being undertaken by the Culture Committee, which covers other issues relevant to the use and status of the Welsh language.

This policy review will focus on Early Years education through to lifelong learning and will pay particular attention to the following themes:

- ❑ *Providing opportunities for people of all ages to learn Welsh;*
- ❑ *Improving opportunities for studying Welsh as a second language;*
- ❑ *Developing Welsh medium education and training across a wide range of subjects and at all levels; and*
- ❑ *Promoting equal respect for both Welsh and English.*

Vision

The Committee endorsed the following vision for the development of bilingual and Welsh-medium education:

The Committee wants to see a progressive, substantial increase in provision over the next ten years, in response to the rising demand for bilingual and Welsh-medium education. Good quality Welsh-medium and bilingual education should be readily accessible throughout Wales. Opportunities should be increased for people to develop and apply these linguistic skills in everyday life. Bilingualism is an opportunity, to be nurtured and prized.

Approach

- ❑ The Committee appointed Catrin Redknapp as expert adviser, to provide briefing and to help assess the evidence;
- ❑ The Committee commissioned a position statement (Annex 1) from the Department for Training and Education (DfTE), giving a broad overview of the Welsh language in education;
- ❑ A wide consultation was undertaken with local education authorities, schools, further and higher education institutions, professional bodies, trade unions and other organisations and individuals involved with training and education. A description of the consultation process is at Annex 2;
- ❑ In addition to the Welsh Language Board, relevant education organisations, including Estyn, ACCAC, ELWa, General Teaching Council Wales, teachers' unions, schools and others presented evidence to the Committee. All the papers presented orally to the Committee are listed and referenced at Annex 3. These can be viewed via the Committee's pages on the National Assembly's website www.wales.gov.uk This evidence complements the written evidence obtained during the consultation process;
- ❑ The Committee also heard evidence from school pupils representing the full spectrum of Welsh language provision. Twelve pupils presented their experiences directly to the Committee, and others appeared before the South West Wales Regional Committee. In addition, Catrin Redknapp visited several schools and heard pupils' views on their experience of learning Welsh. This evidence is described at Annex 4.
- ❑ Finally, the Committee evaluated the evidence in open session, before producing this chapter of the report.

Strategic Planning

The Committee is aware that there is considerable diversity in the vitality of the Welsh language within Wales. However, the Welsh language belongs to us all, and opportunities to develop bilingual skills and to apply them should be available throughout the nation. The Committee acknowledges that much excellent work has been achieved in Welsh language and bilingual education. However growth has, in many cases, taken place in a largely ad hoc manner, with little strategic planning.

The Committee is firmly of the view that Welsh-medium and bilingual education should be sustained and developed within an overall framework, which can respond to the varied linguistic nature of Wales. This framework should be able to take account of existing supply, projected demand and knowledge of what works, in terms of appropriately trained staff, teaching methods and teaching materials.

Some local education authorities (LEAs) have made a substantial contribution to Welsh-medium and bilingual education. These LEAs have, over a number of years, developed and implemented policies that have successfully promoted the Welsh language. The Committee considers that successful policies should be developed and widely disseminated. It should acknowledge that:

- ❑ The Welsh Assembly Government will provide appropriate overall guidance;

- The LEA is the most appropriate authority to formulate and implement policy at local level and has the relevant statutory authority; and
- LEAs will fully assume the vision incorporated within the national strategic aim.

The Committee considers it essential, as a first step, that the Assembly Minister should provide new guidance to improve the coherence between School Organisation Plans, Education Strategic Plans and Welsh Language Education Schemes (approved by the Welsh Language Board) to provide a firm basis for strategic planning through continuing partnership and collaboration.

Effective strategic planning can only be undertaken on the basis of accurate, reliable data. There should be a commitment to the commissioning of research in order to assess the demand for Welsh-medium education, particularly with reference to Early Years provision and the first seven years of statutory education. Assessment of current demand and projected growth would have direct bearing on two main areas:

- (i) Geographical location of Welsh-medium and bilingual provision; and
- (ii) Recruitment, training and re-training of teaching staff.

In addition, the Committee considers that future development is dependent on a clear understanding by all parties of the content and objectives of the education provision offered to pupils and their parents. There is a need to adopt an agreed and easily identifiable set of definitions and categories for the different models of linguistic provision available in Wales.

The Committee recommends that, in due course, the Assembly Minister should set up a review group, including representatives from the Welsh Language Board, Estyn, ACCAC, WJEC, GTCW, National Council-ELWa, HEFCW, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin, the Pre-School Playgroups Association and LEAs to assess progress in implementing the actions recommended in this chapter and to report.

Common Threads

Continuity and Progression

Measuring an individual's competence in any language is clearly a complex exercise. All speakers display varying levels of ability in the four main skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), and rates of progression in these skills are generally influenced by a range of factors. In the case of speakers who deal with two (or more) languages, the picture becomes considerably more diverse. Speakers usually display varying levels of proficiency in their languages; for example, a speaker's oral skills may be considerably more refined in one language than in another, whilst reading skills in the two languages may not show the same degree of variation. Even within the broad category of oral skills, a speaker may show considerable mastery of idiomatic and colloquial usage in one language, whilst competence in more formal registers is greater in the other language. The scope for individual permutations and profiles is, therefore, endless. It should also be noted that the order in which skills are acquired is not always the same for the two languages.

All speakers having some degree of contact with two languages could be considered to occupy some point along a linguistic continuum, with varying levels of correspondence between their abilities in the two languages. The notion of continuity is highly relevant to the issue of how language skills are

taught and assessed. In the evidence received, the limitations of approaching competence in the light of the established distinction between 'Welsh as a first language' and 'Welsh as a second language' were considered, and the possibility of assessing speakers' competence along one continuum was introduced.

Similarly, alternatives were presented to the contrast normally drawn between Welsh learnt as a language and Welsh used as a medium for learning other subjects. The most significant area of discussion in this regard was the potential offered by the use of Welsh in addition to English as a medium of instruction with pupils whose contact with Welsh has traditionally been limited to second language classes.

Promoting speakers' progress along a linguistic continuum also has to involve a consideration of how the transition from one stage of education to the next safeguards continuity of provision. The Committee learnt of the role of *Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin* in providing opportunities for young children, together with their parents, to make the initial steps along this continuum. The importance of building upon these foundations as children move to statutory education was highlighted. The Committee also heard that current trends display marked erosion as pupils and students progress through the sectors. Research carried out by the Welsh Language Board (*Continuity in Welsh Language Education 1998*) found that, whilst 20.9% of primary school pupils attend schools where Welsh is used as a medium for at least some subjects, the proportion drops to 12.9% in secondary schools. In FE institutions, 2.31% of students were formally assessed in Welsh in 1996/97. The proportion of students following some or all of their courses through the medium of Welsh in HE at this time was 1.6%.

Access and Equal Opportunities

A recurrent theme in the evidence received was the concern that Welsh-medium and bilingual education and training should be available to all pupils and students in Wales. There was concern that provision that was technically available was not always accessible because of practical considerations of distance and transport options. The availability of Welsh-medium provision in the local community, within reasonable travelling distance, was highlighted as a key priority for the early years sector. However, the same considerations emerged in the context of provision for 5 to 16 year-olds.

Central to the principle of access was the ability of pupils (and their parents) and students to make choices on the basis of detailed information and real options. It was recognised that this, in turn, was wholly dependent on adequate levels of staffing and funding.

Equality of opportunity was highlighted as a central theme of Welsh-medium and bilingual Special Educational Needs. Concern was raised at the considerable variation in the provision available in different parts of Wales. The Committee learnt that the same shortcomings affected all parts of the country to some extent, however. Many of these stemmed from the shortage of specialists and practitioners able to work through the medium of Welsh. Processes of diagnosing and assessing special needs were significantly affected.

Data, Evaluation and Research

The relative paucity of information on current provision was a recurrent theme during our evidence gathering, and spanned the full gamut of education and training, from nursery to university. The need to improve levels of data collection and analysis was relevant to two main areas:

a) *Understanding of current and projected levels of demand for Welsh-medium provision*

As noted earlier, accurate and reliable data are a prerequisite to effective strategic planning. Assessment of projected growth should lie at the core of all decisions regarding the location of Welsh-medium and bilingual provision, and crucially, the recruitment and training of staff.

b) Evaluation of the effectiveness of different models and methodologies of Welsh-medium and bilingual teaching

The Committee learnt that there has been no systematic review of the development of bilingual and Welsh-medium education in Wales. Whilst Welsh language immersion teaching programmes and various bilingual teaching methodologies have been successfully delivered, detailed and comprehensive evaluation of current practice have not been undertaken. There was a call for high quality educational research into models of good practice to be commissioned, in order for Welsh-medium and bilingual provision in Wales to continue to evolve. It was also felt that this played a key role in nurturing a culture of scholarship within the sphere of educational research in Wales.

Resources: Staff, Teaching and Learning Materials

Meeting current and projected levels of demand for bilingual and Welsh-medium provision clearly involves securing appropriate numbers of adequately trained staff. The fundamental need for a comprehensive evaluation of staffing needs is mentioned above. The difficulty of recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of teachers to teach Welsh (particularly Welsh as a second language) and to teach other subjects through the medium of Welsh was also a salient feature of the evidence gathered.

The Committee learnt of the importance of the availability of Welsh and bilingual teaching and learning materials, which were of the same standard and quality as those available in English. The need for further co-ordination of the production of Welsh-medium and bilingual materials was expressed, and a strategy for identifying and responding to needs at all stages of education at a national level was called for.

Beyond the Classroom

The Committee strongly believes that education and training play a major role in creating a bilingual Wales. At the same time, however, the Committee acknowledges that language acquisition cannot be fully achieved within the sphere of formal education alone. Furthermore, linguistic competence is only truly meaningful when it is applied in everyday situations. Consequently, measures to increase the number of Welsh speakers should be set within the broader context of developing bilingual speakers within communities. Institutional promotion of bilingualism cannot be viewed in isolation. It is, rather, to be situated in the context of the factors affecting linguistic behaviour in domestic, social and informal settings, including intergenerational transmission.

Facts and Figures

At the start of this policy review, the Assembly's Department for Training and Education (DfTE) produced a paper setting out, in broad terms the state-of-play regarding the Welsh language in education. *[This will be updated and placed at Annex 1].*

Early Years / Pre-School Provision

Welsh-medium education in Wales has developed significantly over the last fifty years. There has been a consistent increase in the number of schools teaching through the medium of Welsh, and in the numbers of non-Welsh-speaking parents opting for this provision for their children. As a result, Welsh-medium provision has come to cater for two broad categories of pupils with very different linguistic needs: first-language Welsh speakers, and those speakers coming into contact with Welsh for the first time at school, immersion teaching. Immersion teaching programmes are based on the belief that children acquire language in the first instance without any real awareness of the processes involved. By focussing on the content rather than on the language itself, immersion teaching seeks to reproduce this natural process of acquisition.

Such an approach contrasts markedly with submersion, however, where speakers of a non-dominant language are plunged into a mainstream language classroom, and in a relatively unstructured manner gradually acquire the dominant language. Under such circumstances, pupils tend to undergo a process of assimilation, and their skills in their first language are not developed.

A significant proportion of young children from Welsh-speaking or bilingual homes, and children embarking on an early immersion programme, attend nursery schools run by the *Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin*.

It was noted in the evidence that an early exposure to Welsh provided the optimum conditions for acquiring the language. The advantages of introducing Welsh to speakers at an early stage of their linguistic and cognitive development were presented on the following grounds:

- ❑ Capacity of young children to acquire language;
- ❑ Most appropriate age for the nurturing of positive attitudes towards bilingualism;
- ❑ Parents presented with a realistic choice and enabled to make informed decisions regarding subsequent medium of education for their children; and
- ❑ Means of reducing need for second-language teaching at primary and secondary levels.

The valuable role played by *Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin* in providing a favourable climate for early development of language skills in Welsh was acknowledged. Figures provided by *Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin* indicated that, in June 2001, 403 Parent and Child groups - *Cylchoedd Ti a Fi* - and 578 Nursery Groups - *Cylchoedd Meithrin* - were members of the organisation. It was estimated that the centres catered for some 13,367 children daily. The important role of the *Cylchoedd Ti a Fi* in providing young children and their parents with opportunities to hear Welsh being used as a medium for play and other activities, thus promoting early progress along the continuum, was highlighted. Facilitating the transition to the *Cylch Meithrin*, and subsequently to Welsh-medium primary education, was identified as the objective most conducive to the successful acquisition of Welsh at this stage. The practice of clustering nursery groups with the local Welsh-medium primary school was noted as an essential element of ensuring consistency of teaching methods, facilitating planned provision, and fostering early links with the parents of younger children.

The Committee learnt that *Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin's* success was due to a number of factors:

- ❑ The proven efficacy of immersion language teaching;
- ❑ The embedding of the activities of the *Cylchoedd* in the local community; and
- ❑ The support provided for groups and parents, including opportunities to learn Welsh alongside the children.

The Committee was told that plans by the Assembly Minister to expand the provision of nursery places for three-year-olds offered the potential to foster bilingual skills amongst the young, providing provision is made available through the medium of Welsh in all communities. A key area of concern for the *Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin* was the likely impact of extending part-time nursery education to all three-year-olds in the maintained sector. The choice sometimes facing parents is that between paying fees for their children to attend the local *Cylch Meithrin*, or LEA-funded nursery provision at a Welsh-medium school. These schools are frequently a considerable distance away, a factor which prompts many parents to opt for local LEA-funded English-medium provision. Measures to expand part-time provision for three-year-olds in the maintained sector should not, it was asserted, be at the expense of provision for two-and-a-half year-old children, nor at the expense of those children and parents requiring *local* Welsh-medium nursery provision.

The importance of adopting a consistent and holistic approach to Early Years education also highlighted the current scarcity of Welsh-medium full-day care provision.

Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin stressed the importance of establishing rigorous mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the efficacy of the methods employed to teach Welsh in the Early Years. Research recently undertaken by Professor Colin Baker at the University of Wales, Bangor, into the linguistic development of young children was deemed to be a valuable contribution to this area. An all-important associated consideration was the availability of appropriately qualified and trained staff.

The Committee welcomes the recent announcement by the Assembly Minister of plans to expand Early Years provision, in partnership with both the maintained and non-maintained sectors. The Committee acknowledges that the Assembly Minister, taking account of advice from the Early Years Advisory Panel, will determine future policy in this area. Any changes would be subject to consultation with all relevant parties, including *Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin*, Pre-School Playgroups Association (PPA), Welsh Language Board and the LEAs.

The Committee acknowledges the crucial role of Welsh language immersion teaching during Early Years, and recommends that this provision be expanded and the key role of the *Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin* and the PPA is recognised.

The Committee notes that the Assembly Minister has commissioned an audit of Welsh-medium Early Years provision, and recommends that the findings of this audit inform future policy development.

The Committee recommends that expansion of Early Years provision should also involve increasing bilingual provision, with some degree of immersion teaching, in accordance with parents' wishes.

The Committee considers that a holistic approach to effective language acquisition during the Early Years relies on improved levels of all-day Welsh-medium and bilingual care. To this end, the Committee recommends that Welsh-medium and bilingual Provision should be expanded, in partnership with *Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin* and the PPA. The presence of bilingual Early Years Integrated Centres is considered to be an essential component of this provision.

Statutory Education (5 to 16)

The Committee heard evidence concerning this sector from a wide variety of sources, including teachers, pupils, LEAs, Estyn, ACCAC and others.

As noted above, Welsh-medium education in Wales has developed significantly over the last fifty years. The first official Welsh-medium school was opened in 1947 in Llanelli. Since then, there has been a consistent increase in the number of schools teaching through the medium of Welsh, and in the numbers of non-Welsh-speaking parents opting for this provision for their children. Welsh-medium provision, as noted earlier, is characterised by the fact that it caters for two categories of pupils with very different linguistic needs: first-language Welsh speakers, and those speakers coming into contact with Welsh for the first time at school.

The main feature of early immersion language teaching is that it aims to ensure levels of linguistic proficiency amongst pupils of non-Welsh-speaking backgrounds that are equivalent to those displayed by pupils from Welsh-speaking homes by the age of 11. Levels of proficiency in English are maintained, both through formal education and also through the presence of the language outside the school environment. Furthermore, most of the skills acquired through the medium of Welsh are transferable and can be equally applied in English.

Definitions and Models

Reference has already been made to the crucial role of a national, co-ordinated strategy in the effective delivery of Welsh-language provision. For this provision to offer the appropriate climate for language growth there needs to be an agreed and easily identifiable set of definitions for the different models of linguistic provision available in Wales. Such a measure is deemed to lie at the core of:

- ❑ Establishing clear objectives for educators and pupils regarding linguistic outcomes;
- ❑ Providing unambiguous information to parents and their children regarding the options available;
- ❑ Assisting LEAs in developing and co-ordinating their strategy for Welsh language and bilingual provision, including resource planning and staff recruitment;
- ❑ Allowing systematic evaluation and monitoring of the relative strengths and weaknesses of different models of language teaching.

The Committee learnt that considerable lack of clarity surrounds the present categorisation of schools in Wales in relation to the Welsh language provision available. The 1988 Education Reform Act defined Welsh Schools as:

Those where more than half of the following subjects are taught partly or wholly through the medium of Welsh -

- a) Religious Education, and*
- b) Subjects other than English or Welsh, which are Foundation Subjects in relation to pupils at the school.*

The same definition was also incorporated into the 1966 Education Act.

In Welsh schools, Welsh is a core subject, along with English, Mathematics and Science, and all pupils between the ages of 5 and 16 receive lessons in Welsh. In schools that are not Welsh-medium, Welsh is taught as a foundation subject up to the age of 16.

The Committee heard, however, that in reality the picture is far less systematic and consistent. Individual LEAs employ a number of different categories to refer to their Welsh-medium and bilingual schools (e.g. 'bilingual schools', 'traditional Welsh schools', 'Welsh-medium schools', Category A, Category AB etc.), and the same type of school is sometimes given a different definition or title in two different LEAs. Further confusion is introduced by the differences in the percentages of the curriculum taught through the medium of Welsh. Current provision of Welsh-medium and bilingual education falls into three broad groups:

- ❑ Schools where all, or nearly all, subjects are taught through the medium of Welsh;
- ❑ Schools where some subjects are taught through the medium of Welsh; and
- ❑ Schools where Welsh is taught solely as a subject.

There was a call in the evidence for a clear set of definitions, to be used by all the LEAs, and recognised by all parties as the basis for planning, implementing and evaluating teaching strategies.

This emphasis on defining schools, however, should not obscure the crucial need to focus on defining different models of language provision. If pupils are to progress along a continuum towards greater fluency in Welsh, and if the provision available is to reflect the more creative approach to bilingual teaching advocated in previous paragraphs, it is important that choices about the most appropriate language provision are based on an understanding of the different kinds of provision within schools.

Evaluating the success of current kinds of provision is not easy, for pupils are, of course, products of their communities as well as of their schools. However, the crucial role of designated Welsh-medium schools (and other schools offering the same provision) in delivering bilingualism in the four linguistic skills to all pupils is acknowledged. A strategy to facilitate expansion of this model should be based on a comprehensive audit of demand.

At the same time, opportunities for promoting Welsh language growth in other schools should be encouraged through the following routes:

- ❑ Availability of the 'designated Welsh-medium model' in schools where English is also used as a medium for some subjects; and
- ❑ Use of Welsh as a medium and the use of bilingual teaching methods for some parts of the curriculum in English-medium schools, in accordance with parents' wishes.

That the Assembly Minister should give priority to defining Welsh language provision in schools. The detailed work already undertaken by a group of experts, chaired by the Welsh Language Board, to clarify the manner in which language immersion and bilingual education is categorised will form the basis of this consideration.

Continuity

Some respondents were concerned at the extent of the decline in pupils' contact with Welsh as they transferred from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Levels of discontinuity were seen to involve two main categories of pupils:

- Pupils studying Welsh as a first language at Key Stage 2 transferring to studying Welsh as a second language in Key Stage 3, and studying no subjects through the medium of Welsh; and
- Pupils studying Welsh as a first language at Key Stage 2 continuing to study Welsh as a first language in Key Stage 3, but studying no subjects through the medium of Welsh.

Differences of interpretation emerged in relation to the extent of this discontinuity:

- In 2000-01, just over 1% of 'fluent' speakers did not continue to learn Welsh as first language when they transferred from primary to secondary school. It should be noted that there are no agreed criteria for defining 'fluency' in this context. This figure is derived from a comparison of the percentage of pupils learning Welsh as a first language, in their first year in secondary school, with data provided by primary headteachers on the percentages of 11-year-old pupils considered to be fluent speakers in the previous year: (Welsh in Schools SB 48/2001).
- More substantial levels of discontinuity were also presented to the Committee. These figures were based on a comparison of the percentages of pupils entered for KS2 and KS3 assessments in Welsh as a first language. In 2001, 14.1% of pupils were assessed in Welsh as a first language at the end of Key Stage 3 (compared with 12.5% in 1997). If the progress of the same cohorts of pupils between Key Stage 2 (1998) and Key Stage 3 (2002) is traced, the percentages assessed in Welsh as a first language are as follows:
Key Stage 2 – 17.5%
Key Stage 3 – 14.1%

Further statistics were presented by the Welsh Language Board: 40% of children who have received their primary education bilingually or through the medium of Welsh begin their secondary schooling by following the curriculum through the medium of English.

The Committee also learnt that there is considerable variation between LEAs in traditionally Welsh-speaking areas in relation to the proportion of pupils who are taught and assessed in Welsh first language in KS3 and KS4. In Gwynedd 78.5% of the Year 9 cohort was assessed in Welsh first language as a subject (2001), whilst in Carmarthenshire only 29% of the pupils fell into this category. In Year 11, 82% of pupils in Gwynedd were taught in Welsh as a first language; in Carmarthenshire the corresponding percentage was 28.5.

Estyn's evidence to the Committee noted that:

Too many pupils in bilingual secondary schools follow Welsh second language courses and sit GCSE Welsh second language even though they may have undertaken National Curriculum assessment in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 in Welsh first language. This strategy serves to boost schools' overall results, with more pupils gaining A-C in Welsh second language. However, in terms of pupils'*

progression in the Welsh language, this is an artificial boost and they receive less of a challenge as a result.

Concerns were raised by other respondents about the lack of continuity experienced by large numbers of pupils as they progressed through the system. This practice was felt to be undesirable for the following reasons:

- It encouraged underachievement, and represented the only aspect of the curriculum where a decline in skills/standards was readily allowed to happen;
- It did not provide the most suitable learning environment for those pupils who were in a genuine sense 'second-language' learners; and
- It defied the whole notion of language regeneration.

Examples were provided of good practice in relation to promoting a progressive accumulation of language skills in Welsh. These included bridging projects funded by the Welsh Language Board by means of its grants to assist *Athrawon Bro* in safeguarding Welsh as a teaching medium in the transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.

The Committee is aware that there is currently some disagreement concerning the most appropriate method of measuring levels of continuity between the different stages of education.

The Committee recommends that the Assembly Minister should commission ACCAC, Estyn and the Welsh Language Board to establish an agreed set of criteria for assessing current levels of continuity. A thorough analysis of the reasons for the apparent lack of continuity should be undertaken, and appropriate measures should be adopted.

Welsh as a Second Language

Evidence submitted by a number of respondents, including some of the school pupils who contributed to the Review, pointed to a number of key issues associated with the teaching of Welsh as a second language. There was recognition of the valuable work carried out by the *Athrawon Bro* and the Centres for Latecomers, and the progress made by some pupils learning Welsh as a second language was acknowledged.

Commenting on standards in Welsh second language in primary schools, Estyn noted the following:

Inspection evidence indicates that Welsh second language is one of the subjects where standards are highest in key stage 1 and lowest in key stage 2. In key stage 1, standards are good or very good in 57% of classes and unsatisfactory in about 2% of classes. In key stage 2, standards are good or very good in 44% of classes and unsatisfactory in 11% of classes.

The Committee learnt that a number of schools were successful in setting clear objectives and developing fluency in Welsh in everyday situations by the end of key stage 2. Other pupils, however, were not making enough progress, and too many were unable to converse in Welsh in key stage 2.

Estyn provided the following evidence in connection with Welsh second language in secondary schools:

Inspection evidence shows that the proportion of key stage 3 classes with good or very good standards in Welsh second language (37%) is amongst the lowest in the National Curriculum. Standards are unsatisfactory or poor in 12% of classes, a much higher proportion than in any other National Curriculum subject, apart from information technology. The proportion of classes with good or very good teaching (45%) is also lower than in any other National Curriculum subject and teaching is unsatisfactory in 12% of classes.

The Committee are concerned that not enough pupils are achieving fluency in Welsh by the end of Key Stage 3, and that too many pupils are failing to enter an examination in Welsh second language at the end of Year 11. Some respondents mentioned the unrealistic targets of attainment within the times allocated for the subject in the case of the Short Course, although Estyn noted that the short course A*-C result in Welsh was better than that in either French or German. Dissatisfaction amongst Key Stage 4 pupils was identified as a particularly challenging area by a number of respondents.

There was support for the belief that language acquisition is at its most effective when it is used as a medium for the teaching of other subjects. The Committee was told that better levels of achievement in Welsh could be attained, if greater attention were focussed on an interactive use of the language, mainly oral work. It was suggested that PE, art, drama and music might be appropriate subjects.

A number of examples were provided of good practice in innovative curricular patterns for the effective delivery of Welsh through a small amount of bilingual teaching in subjects other than Welsh.

The Committee also heard about the potential benefits of dual assessment of pupils' linguistic skills in Welsh. Such an approach, it was suggested, could be adopted to measure pupils' attainment in Welsh on a second language scale and their corresponding attainment on the first language scale. This dual assessment would have the effect of:

- Rewarding the efforts and success of second language learners and their teachers;
- Raising expectations for pupils to progress further and gain recognition on the first language scale;
- Providing a clear structure for the secondary sector to build on the progress made at primary level; and
- Encouraging parents to support Welsh in the curriculum up to the age of 16.

However, Estyn told the Committee that insufficient research has been undertaken into the possibility of offering dual accreditation, particularly at GCSE level.

The Committee recommends that:

The forthcoming Review of School Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements by ACCAC should include a thorough review of Welsh in education, both in relation to programmes of study and levels of achievement in Welsh as a first and second language.

LEAs should consider ways of improving standards in Welsh second-language.

Schools should be encouraged to enter pupils for the most appropriate GCSE Welsh language examination.

There should be a commitment to reducing the number of pupils who enter no examination in Welsh as a second language at the end of Key Stage 4.

There should be more use of Welsh as a medium of instruction in appropriate subjects, in English-medium primary and secondary schools.

Dual literacy and other features of bilingual teaching methodologies should be developed and used more extensively at both primary and secondary levels. This should include relevant guidance and in-service training for teaching staff. Estyn's discussion paper on this area is regarded as a useful tool.

HEFCW should commission research into the feasibility of measuring pupils' competence in Welsh along a linguistic continuum.

Later Immersion

The evidence drew attention to the lack of flexibility of the current framework and the obstacles placed in the path of those wishing to 'opt into' Welsh-medium education after initial choices have been taken at a very early stage in a child's education. The need to ensure more points of entry into the Welsh-medium sector was highlighted, and programmes aimed at providing later immersion in the language were discussed. The Committee was told of one school in the north that has implemented such a programme very successfully over a number of years, and learnt that other schemes designed to offer intensive Welsh provision are currently being developed. The Committee heard additional evidence from Professors Joan Netten and Claude Germain on pilot projects of the Intensive Core French programme in parts of Canada.

The Committee recommends that:

Pilot projects aimed at delivering Welsh for intensive periods and increasing the number of entry points to Welsh-medium education should be established and funded. The detailed research into the feasibility of courses based on the Intensive Core French model, undertaken by a group of experts under the chairmanship of the Welsh Language Board, should provide useful guidance.

Recruitment, Training and Professional Development

The chief concern underlying several of the comments made in relation to this area was the difficulty of recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of teachers to teach Welsh, particularly Welsh as second language, and to teach other subjects through the medium of Welsh. The attraction of career opportunities outside the teaching profession was felt to have an important influence in this respect. The Committee was told that difficulties are particularly acute at secondary level, although the availability of teachers able to deliver the Welsh second language component at Key Stage 2 was also an area of concern.

There was a call for an evaluation of the success of incentive grants to attract teachers of Welsh and through the medium of the language, and also for the development of further initiatives to ensure a sufficient supply of teachers. Proposals for retaining existing teachers included job-sharing and part-time work; it was also pointed out that the ability and numbers of active supply teachers had to be considered. The Committee also heard of the potential offered by re-training and extended language training programmes for teachers wishing to teach through the medium of Welsh.

The importance of accurate data was stressed in relation to planning targeted and co-ordinated recruitment and retention strategies. The role of the General Teaching Council for Wales in undertaking surveys to this end was highlighted.

The success of *Cynllun Colegau Cymru/Welsh Colleges Scheme* was acknowledged (providing opportunities for primary ITET students to develop their proficiency in Welsh), and there was a call for additional funding to be made available to extend partnerships to include secondary ITET and serving teachers through CPD. It was pointed out that the provision of Welsh-medium courses in ITET was variable in extent and conditioned by such considerations as the viability of teaching groups and the availability of qualified staff.

The value of training in bilingual teaching methodologies was also stressed.

The importance of including opportunities for developing Welsh-medium and bilingual CPD within the current development of a CPD framework was highlighted. Some examples of successful partnerships (e.g. with *Menter a Busnes*) in the provision of INSET were given, although it was also suggested that more extensive use could be made of consortia/partnership arrangements to create more viable training groups in some areas.

The Committee recommends that:

The Assembly Minister should commission the GTCW to undertake a comprehensive audit of the current numbers of Welsh language and Welsh-medium teachers and the nature of the training necessary for projected levels of demand to be met.

It is acknowledged that the extent of current shortfalls and the limited pool of potential recruits into the teaching profession will place some constraints in this regard. Particular attention should therefore be given to the role of re-training and CPD initiatives.

The Assembly Minister should consider, with the National Council – ELWa and HEFCW, the scope for introducing intensive courses and sabbaticals to expand the pool of practitioners able to teach Welsh and through the medium of the language.

The General Teaching Council for Wales should incorporate Welsh-medium and bilingual CPD within its current development of a national CPD framework.

Teaching and Learning Materials

There was repeated reference to the importance of the availability of Welsh and bilingual materials, which were of the same standard and quality as those available in English. Whilst there was recognition of the valuable work carried out by ACCAC in the identification of needs, there was some concern about commissioning and preparing publications within required time-scales.

The committee heard of the need for further co-ordination of the production of Welsh-medium and bilingual materials. A strategy for identifying and responding to needs at all stages of education at a national level was required. It was pointed out that production and marketing in a mass society (characterised by competition between centres and suppliers) was quite different from minority language situations where there is a shortage of materials. There should be an emphasis on rationalising production and enhancing distribution of information.

There was awareness of the potential for the development of ICT in two main areas:

(i) Enhancing the profile of Welsh in terms of prestige and linguistic normalisation

Welsh, it was pointed out, had to be seen as a modern working language. Examples of good practice at local level were provided (e.g. creation of web pages), and the desirability of developing these on an all-Wales basis was discussed.

(ii) Applications

The need for Welsh versions of recent education software was highlighted. The Assembly's role in supporting the co-ordination of ICT development in education was welcomed.

The Virtual Teacher Centre (VTC Cymru) site needed to be developed in order to meet the needs of teachers in Wales.

The launch of the BBC Digital Curriculum was awaited with anticipation, but reservations were expressed regarding the sustainability of broadband technology in Welsh-speaking rural areas.

The Committee recommends that ACCAC should carry out a review of the process for identifying and responding to the need for Welsh-medium and bilingual teaching and learning materials, at a national level.

The Committee recommends that the ICT Advisory Panel, established by the Assembly Minister in response to the Committee's policy review of ICT in education, plays an important role in ensuring that ICT (including video-conferencing and e-learning) is used to extend the availability of academic and vocational subjects through the medium of Welsh.

Careers

The Committee heard evidence from a variety of organisations concerned with careers: including, Dysg (the learning and skills development agency for Wales), the CBI, the Employment Service and *Menter a Busnes*. From an education and lifelong learning perspective, two main themes emerged:

- The need for linguistic continuity between school and work; and
- Bilingualism as an asset that adds value to individuals and businesses.

There are related issues, concerning sustainability of communities, but these are addressed elsewhere in this report.

The Committee welcomes the work by *Menter a Busnes*, in partnership with *CYDAG*, in providing INSET training for teachers to help raise awareness of career opportunities in which bilingual skills can be developed and applied. The Committee feels that it is important for pupils to appreciate that an ability to use the Welsh language is increasingly valued by employers. The CBI gave examples of areas where business makes use of Welsh: mainly in customer focused businesses, such as banks, large retailers and utilities. The CBI also made the point that the private sector saw providing bilingual goods and services as a means of better catering for their customers' needs, not necessarily as a way of boosting profits. The Committee is keen that more should be done to encourage small local businesses to appreciate the value of incorporating bilingualism into their business plans.

The Committee welcomes initiatives by *Menter a Busnes* and others, such as *Gorwelion* and *JobCymru.com*, which aim to raise awareness and understanding of enterprise and business in general and to broaden horizons concerning the value of bilingual skills in the workplace.

The Committee acknowledges the work of Education Business Partnerships and Community Consortia for Education and Training (CCETs) in promoting the need for people to develop their skills, including use of the Welsh language, to meet the needs of employers. CCETs are particularly important in helping to develop skills relevant to the needs of their local community.

The Committee welcomes the recently published Skills and Employment Action Plan for Wales 2002. The purpose of the plan is to provide a strategic framework for policies and programmes in this area and to give details of specific action that is being taken by the Welsh Assembly Government and its partners to improve our skills and levels of employment. The learning aspects of the plan are designed to integrate the emerging corporate strategy of the National Council – ELWa and the Higher Education Funding Council. The plan complements the policies and proposals contained in *A Winning Wales* and *The Learning Country*. Responsibility for taking the plan forward rests with the Future Skills Wales partnership, under the chairmanship of the Welsh Assembly Government. The National Council – ELWa's Skills Unit will support the partnership.

The Committee recommends that the Future Skills Wales partnership should devise a clear and co-ordinated strategy for collating and disseminating on information on careers where bilingual skills are required.

Post-16 Education and Training

Further Education and Vocational Training

The Committee was told that post-16 education in Wales fails to provide linguistic continuity for those pupils who receive Welsh-medium and bilingual secondary education.

Since April 2001, the National Council - ELWa is responsible for funding, planning, securing and promoting post-16 education and training in Wales (except for HE). In its evidence to the Committee the National Council - ELWa noted:

Having invested heavily in Welsh language and Welsh medium education as part of the national curriculum, it is vital that there is provision for students when they enter the post-16 sector.

[...] Equally important is addressing the drop in participation at different stages of bilingual education because students do not see the value of remaining in the Welsh language system. Further work needs to be undertaken on the reasons for this, including the possible impact of post-16 provision on pre-16 participation.

The Committee welcomes the fact that the National Council – ELWa has set up a Bilingualism Unit, to develop a strategy for the delivery of post-16 Welsh-medium and bilingual education and training.

Statistical data provided by the National Council - ELWa included the following observations:

The highest level of bilingual/ Welsh-medium provision is concentrated in six institutions in the north and west; and

The number of students enrolled on courses who are assessed in Welsh has increased, but as a proportion of all the students enrolled on these courses the number assessed in Welsh/ bilingually has fallen. Further statistical details can be found in Annex 1A of the National Council's paper.

The National Council - ELWa made reference to three main sources of data and information regarding 16+ provision:

The funding of bilingual and Welsh Further Education provision (Canolfan Bedwyr Research for the Further Education Funding Council for Wales)

Research commissioned by FEFCW in 1999/2000 revealed that current methodology for funding FE bilingual and Welsh provision did not stimulate growth. The reasons centred on the following main areas: Lack of learning resource materials; shortage of staff able to teach in Welsh; low priority given to Welsh-medium teaching; perceptions of the students (peer pressure, additional effort required because of lack of materials, limited number of tests and examinations in Welsh, lack of confidence in Welsh language ability).

The Committee welcomes the fact that the report's recommendations are to be taken into account in the development of the National Council - ELWa's new national funding system and in the development of the National Council's strategy.

Continuity in Welsh Language Education (Welsh Language Board 1998)

A study showed that just over 2% of students were formally assessed in Welsh in FE institutions in 1996-97 (figures were not provided for sixth-form students).

A Study for the Need for Welsh/ Bilingual Language Skills in North Wales SMEs and Indications for Human Resources Development and Training with regard to Welsh (Cwmni Iaith for Celtec, 2001)

The report concluded that support for Welsh-medium training has been less than effective, and has not been delivered according to demand. It was found that providers often failed to offer Welsh language training. There was a demand for language skills in business, but a failure to provide the kind of Welsh language training required for the needs of the economy.

Vocational training was identified as an area in particular need of development in the post-16 sector, not least because vocational qualifications prepared young people directly for the workplace. In

addition, students following vocational courses are those most likely to remain in their localities and join the local workforce.

The main features meriting closer scrutiny were:

- ❑ Means of identifying need in terms of Welsh-medium/bilingual provision; i.e. strategies employed to obtain accurate data about the skills needed by employers;
- ❑ Marketing of the provision on offer; and
- ❑ Dissemination of information about employment where bilingual skills are required.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that FE colleges experience considerable difficulty in recruiting staff with appropriate language skills to enable them to teach through the medium of Welsh/ bilingually in some vocational areas. The need for rigorous means of assessing the extent of the need for suitably qualified staff was highlighted. The Committee heard that bilingual teaching methods and an understanding of the needs of the bilingual teaching setting have not featured prominently in the training of lecturers and trainers until recently.

Sgiliaith told the Committee of its role in offering training sessions in bilingual teaching methodology. The Committee also learnt that FENTO, the body guiding standards and training in the FE sector, has commissioned work to adapt FE teaching standards to teaching in the bilingual situation.

Several weaknesses were identified in relation to the availability of Welsh-medium materials in this sector. The Committee learnt of two projects - the web-based Welsh-medium materials project by Dysg and the Welsh-medium NVQs Project by the Welsh Assembly – working in collaboration with Sgiliaith. These involve the preparation of resources, terminology and the translation of specifications, together with the marketing of materials and guidance on how to use them. The Committee was told that the spreading of limited funding between three bodies represents a considerable obstacle to effective development in the field, and co-ordination and forward planning is difficult.

The Committee learnt that FE institutions frequently encounter problems in relation to examination specifications and papers of all awarding bodies with the exception of WJEC. Specifications in Welsh often appear considerably later than their English equivalents, and sometimes Welsh-medium examination papers are faxed through to centres on the day of the examination.

There was repeated reference to the importance of harnessing the potential offered by ICT to promote and co-ordinate Welsh-medium and bilingual education and training in the post-16 sector. The possibilities were seen to be applicable to students' learning and also to the promulgation of good practice and the training needs of staff. In addition, the opportunities for CCETs to increase their levels of bilingual provision by maximising use of the resources in place were outlined.

The Committee recommends that the National Council - ELWa should:

Ensure that Welsh-medium and bilingual education and training is developed within a strategic framework, which takes into account the importance of:

- ❑ **Local partnerships in responding to local need;**
- ❑ **Making providers aware of the requirements of ELWa and those of employers; and**
- ❑ **Heightening awareness of the benefits of bilingual skills amongst learners.**

Ensure that the work commissioned by FENTO to adapt FE teaching standards for the bilingual sector is given a high profile and adopted by institutions;

Adopt a strategic approach, on the basis of reliable data, to the recruitment, training and re-training of staff to teach bilingually and through the medium of Welsh in the FE sector;

Develop the potential provided by ICT to establish effective means of:

- ❑ **Enabling learners to derive maximum benefit from the resources available;**
- ❑ **Disseminating models of good practice;**
- ❑ **Identifying the need for Welsh speakers in the workplace; and**
- ❑ **Marketing bilingual and Welsh-medium provision.**

Higher Education

Evidence presented to the Committee showed that continuity of Welsh-medium and bilingual provision is eroded further, as students move to the HE sector. The Welsh Language Board's research into Continuity in Welsh-medium education revealed that only 1.6 % of HE students in Wales in 1996-97 followed at least some of their courses through the medium of Welsh.

In its evidence to the Committee, the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCW) noted that the number of recorded Welsh medium enrolments has remained fairly static over the last five or six years at around the equivalent of 1,000 full-time students. HEFCW provides support for Welsh medium provision in HE in three main ways:

- ❑ Welsh medium premium;
- ❑ Welsh medium provision fund; and
- ❑ University of Wales Board for Welsh Medium Teaching.

[Expand - Annex A of HEFCW]

During the Committee's Policy Review of Higher Education, evidence was presented by the University of Wales Board for Welsh Medium Teaching (The Board). The Board presented their proposals for developing Welsh as a medium of teaching and delivery in HE. The Board proposed the setting up of a National Virtual Centre for Welsh-Medium teaching in higher education. Its main features were:

- ❑ Staff based in existing colleges, and using ICT to communicate; and
- ❑ Services offered to the whole sector, rather than to a few institutions within that sector.

The main emphasis would be on assisting staff teaching through the medium of Welsh to package their teaching materials in order for them to be used by students at other institutions. Amongst its strengths would be the avoidance of duplicating staff expertise and resources.

In its HE report, the Committee gave support to the Board's proposals and the Assembly Minister invited the Board to submit more information on likely costs. In *Reaching Higher: A Strategy for the*

higher education sector in Wales, the Assembly Minister states that the following measures will be taken:

- ❑ HEFCW to commission a report into current levels of demand and supply in Welsh-medium higher education;
- ❑ HEFCW to enter into dialogue with the Board; and
- ❑ Funding for practitioners, including pilot language learning sabbaticals.

A working party has been established by the Board, to examine in greater detail how the work of the National Centre could integrate into a wider strategy for developing teaching in Welsh. Following the first meeting of the working party in February 2002 and in the light of wider consultation, modifications were made to the original plan. These discussions highlighted the importance of safeguarding the current Welsh-medium provision at Aberystwyth, Bangor and Trinity College, Carmarthen before seeking to extend the provision across the sector.

During this policy review, the Board's evidence centred on the four following areas:

- ❑ *Reduction of staffing levels at the centre;*

It was agreed that some of the funding should be redirected from the Centre and used to strengthen the position of Welsh-medium staff at the institutions. This would be achieved by removing some posts at the Centre.

- ❑ *Extension of the Doctorate and Fellowship schemes;*

An increase in the numbers in receipt of Fellowships and Doctorates would result in a more substantial increase in the supply of Welsh-medium staff and in the provision of courses.

- ❑ *Structural changes*

Modifications would seek to ensure:

- A central place for Welsh-medium teaching within the planning processes of institutions;
- An increase in numbers of Welsh-medium lecturers;
- Co-ordination of growth at national level; and
- Availability of sufficient funds.

Savings made by reducing staffing levels at the National Centre would release funding for the Doctorate and Fellowship schemes, thereby developing a pool of Welsh-medium lecturers.

The Committee also received evidence advocating the creation of a Welsh-medium federal college, with branches in more than one geographical site. This would require a substantial increase in the number of Welsh-medium lecturers over a short period: a figure of 200 additional lecturers within 5 years was suggested. The Committee had previously heard similar evidence during its policy review

of higher education but, after due consideration, decided not to support this proposal. The Committee sees no reason to change its view on this matter.

The Committee:

Welcomes the Minister's recently published strategy for higher education - *Reaching Higher* and notes that an evaluation of levels of demand and supply will be undertaken by HEFCW.

Recommends that HEFCW give due consideration to the modified proposals of the Board, particularly with regard to increasing numbers of Fellowships and Doctorates.

Welsh for Adults

Welsh for Adults (WfA) teaching is delivered by a variety of providers: HE and FE colleges, LEAs and the WEA (Workers' Education Association). These are co-ordinated within a total of eight Welsh for Adults Consortia, based on the old county boundaries. The Consortia provide a means of disseminating information amongst organisers, organisations, tutors and learners, and seek to further co-operation between the various providers. The Welsh Language Board has responsibility for a strategic overview of the field, and employs one full-time officer to carry out this work. This officer works with the National Council-ELWa to develop the strategic plans of the Consortia and issues relating to marketing, sponsorship and research. Since September 2001 a Welsh for Adults Examinations Officer has been in post in the WJEC, with responsibility for developing examinations on five levels within the European Qualifications Framework and the ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) framework.

WfA provision is funded entirely by the National Council - ELWa. Current funding stands at £3.1million per year. £100,000 is allocated to support the activities of the Development Officer, the Examinations Officer and the ALTE project, and the examination provision in the WJEC. Funding is allocated on the basis of a weighting of 1.25 (1.0 for provision, 0.2 for development and 0.05 for the Consortia). This compares with a programme area weight (PAW) of 1.5 for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Concern was expressed at this disparity. An increase to 1.5 in the short term and fair funding as a result of the current survey of the Recurrent Funding Methodology were deemed essential if the field is to develop successfully.

The Committee was told that learners reach high levels of attainment, even if this is not reflected in the numbers who sit the WfA examinations. Numbers of learners have grown in recent years. A total of 21,011 students were enrolled on courses in 2001, compared to 13,330 in 1994. Growth has been particularly marked in the area of Welsh in the workplace.

The Committee heard repeated calls for the professional status of practitioners in the field to be recognised. Owing largely to inadequate funding, opportunities for developing a career in teaching Welsh to Adults were very limited. The eight WfA Consortia rely to a large degree on part-time tutors employed on an hourly basis; the need to offer stability and career prospects, and to provide appropriate training and professional development opportunities, was expressed.

There was a call for students who learn Welsh at work to be released during normal hours and, wherever practicable, to be given a correspondingly lighter workload.

The need to tailor courses to match the specific linguistic needs of employees in their particular occupations was also expressed. Such measures require adequate funding to ensure necessary research and development of materials.

The Committee was told of the need for national co-ordination. This would enable important improvements to be made in the following areas:

- Development of activity in marketing and publicity;
- Development of teaching and learning resources;
- Staff training; and
- Development of Welsh in the workplace provision.

The Committee was told that a Virtual Centre would facilitate much-needed co-ordination at a national level.

The Committee recommends that:

The review of the funding structure, currently being undertaken by the National Council - ELWa should take account of the need to develop the professional skills of practitioners.

The National Council-ELWa should seek to take a co-ordinated approach to Welsh for Adults.

A Virtual Centre be established, subject to the availability of funds, with the aim of developing Welsh for Adults within the broader post-16 sector.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The Committee received evidence from a variety of organisations and practitioners: including, the voluntary sector, LEAs and professional bodies. The Committee was told that, whilst there was a general shortage of specialists - including speech therapists, psychologists and others – this shortage was particularly acute for Welsh speakers. Therefore, there is a significant disparity in opportunities for Welsh-speaking SEN pupils and students to receive specialist care and treatment, compared with their English-speaking peers. In this area, as in others previously noted, the Committee found a paucity of data with which to quantify the problem, although anecdotal evidence suggested that the problem is more acute in the south and west and less so in the north.

This shortfall in bilingual professionals is compounded by a shortage of other resources available in the medium of the Welsh language, including materials, specialist tests and ICT.

The RNID Cymru told the Committee that the shortage of Welsh-speaking speech therapists was exacerbating the feeling of exclusion from their local communities experienced by hearing-impaired Welsh-speaking young people, especially if they rely on lip-reading.

The Committee welcomes the Welsh Dyslexia Project, funded by the National Assembly, to develop a testing procedure that will allow in-school testing of all children in their preferred language, either English or Welsh. This will highlight specific learning difficulties in reading, writing and spelling.

Some LEAs, including Gwynedd and Powys, called for a national strategy, possibly based on regional co-operation, to address the inequality of SEN provision through the medium of Welsh.

Representatives from the speech therapy profession, both from the NHS and HE sectors, presented evidence to the Committee on the practical problems caused by the shortage of Welsh speaking specialists. They called for an overall review of the profession, to be commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government.

The Committee recommends that the relevant Assembly Ministers investigate the feasibility of a review of the speech therapy profession, which should include an assessment of means to increase the number of speech therapists able to work through the medium of Welsh.

The Committee is aware that the Education Bill, currently completing its passage through Parliament, includes powers to enable LEAs to co-operate at a regional level to better plan SEN provision.

The Committee recommends that LEAS should be encouraged to establish a resource for SEN therapies, to facilitate the sharing of resources and the dissemination of good practice at a regional level. The Welsh Assembly Government should pass the necessary secondary legislation to facilitate this co-operation.

The Committee recommends that the Assembly Minister commission an audit of SEN provision currently available through the medium of Welsh.

International Perspectives

The Committee's attention was drawn to the advantages of situating Welsh-medium and bilingual provision within a broader international context. It became evident that many of the features of language provision in Wales are common to other settings characterised by the co-existence of two (or more) languages. It was also noted, however, that a number of historical, political and socio-cultural features account for important differences between communities. Placing Welsh-medium and bilingual provision within this broader context should, therefore, include identifying models of good practice and opportunities for collaboration, whilst at the same time being aware of the nature and implications of significant points of contrast.

The evidence provided some examples of partnerships between individual schools and establishments in lesser-used language communities, many of them Comenius-funded projects.

In addition, the committee heard evidence from Professors Joan Netten and Claude Germain (Canada) and Nick Gardner (Basque Autonomous Community).

The Canadian experience focussed on the Intensive French Programme, which has been successfully piloted in parts of Canada, and which is considered to be a highly effective way of improving pupils' language skills in French. Both Intensive French and Intensive English programmes were developed in Quebec in the late 1970s. Several provinces have been involved in isolated attempts to develop intensive French programmes (Quebec, British Columbia and Ontario), but a co-ordinated attempt to develop and evaluate the Intensive French programmes was only made in 1998.

Intensive French has been adopted as an alternative programme in Newfoundland and Labrador for September 2002, and pilot classes are planned for New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia. The programme French is characterised by the following features:

- Intensive period of instruction in French;
- No subject areas studied in French; and
- Re-organisation of the normal curriculum timetable (amount of time given to some subjects reduced for 5 months).

Positive outcomes of the programme are reflected not only in encouraging levels of fluency in French but also in appropriate levels of progress in English and other subjects. Pupils' perceptions of success in learning French in turn encourage them to continue their study of French and use the language.

The Committee was particularly interested in the opportunity offered by the programme for pupils to be given an additional point of entry into French-medium education. As noted earlier (Later immersion), research into the feasibility of courses based on the Intensive Core French model has been undertaken recently, and is expected to inform pilot projects aimed at intensive delivery of Welsh.

Nick Gardner's presentation focussed on language planning and education policy in the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC).

The Committee was told that there are three models of language provision in the BAC:

- Model A: Basque taught as a subject and Spanish used as medium of instruction for the vast majority of subjects;
- Model B: Curriculum taught in Basque and Spanish, with both Basque and Spanish taught as subjects; and
- Model D: Curriculum taught in Basque, with Spanish taught as a subject.

Increase in the demand for Basque-medium education since the 1980s has resulted in a significant shift away from Model A. This move towards greater Basque language input has come about partly through the setting up of new Basque-medium schools in the public sector, but a gradual conversion of existing schools has been more common. Amongst the features common to Wales and the BAC is the challenge of maintaining levels of Welsh/Basque language provision in vocational training. The Committee was also interested to hear of the measures adopted in the BAC to secure required staffing levels, through teacher recruitment and notably in-service training and sabbaticals.

The Committee recognises the value of situating Welsh-medium and bilingual education provision within the international context, and firmly believes that much can be gained from active collaboration. The Committee recommends that contacts already established by the Assembly Minister with partners in Canada and the Basque Autonomous Community be pursued and reinforced, and that further opportunities to share models of good practice with other communities be explored.