

EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT AND SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY DURING 2000 - 2003

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the Partnership Agreement between the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties on the 6 October 2000, education and training matters came under the remit of two separate subject committees; The Pre-16 Education, Schools and Early Learning Committee (Pre-16 Committee) and the Post-16 Education and Training Committee (Post-16 Committee).

PRE-16 EDUCATION, SCHOOLS AND EARLY LEARNING COMMITTEE

The Committee's remit mirrored the portfolio of the then Minister for Education and Children, Rosemary Butler AM. Responsibilities ranged from nursery and early years education, school standards, the national curriculum in Wales to education provision of post 16 students in schools. The Committee also considered a number of crosscutting issues with the Health and Social Services Committee and both Committees worked closely in considering the Waterhouse and Children's Commissioner reports.

The Committee started three policy reviews, which were subsequently completed by the ELL Committee:

- Early Years Provision for Three Year Olds - the Pre-16 Committee published an interim report and ELL Committee published the final report;
- Information and Communications Technology in Education; and
- Supply of School Places.

The Committee considered proposals by ACCAC (the Curriculum and Qualifications Authority in Wales) to review the national curriculum and also scrutinised the Minister's proposals for performance management arrangements for teachers.

The Committee worked very closely with the Post -16 Committee during its review of the Education and Training Action Plan (ETAP) recommendations.

The Committee was responsible for scrutinising ACCAC on the implementation of its corporate plan. The Committee also scrutinised Estyn (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Training in Wales).

POST-16 EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

The Committee's remit mirrored the portfolio of the then Minister for Education and Training, Tom Middlehurst AM. This included higher education, culture, sport and recreation and the Welsh language.

During its life the Committee completed a review of the recommendations in ETAP, in conjunction with the Pre-16 Committee and the Economic Development Committee. The Committee's report was endorsed by Plenary in February 2000. This resulted in the establishment of the National Council for Education and Training (known as National Council-ELWa and responsible for

funding all post-16 education and training in Wales) and also a national careers service - Careers Wales.

The Committee completed an extensive review of arts and culture in Wales and published a comprehensive report - 'A Culture in Common' that contained over a hundred recommendations.

The Committee was also responsible for monitoring and scrutinising the further and higher education funding councils (FEFCW and HEFCW).

EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE

The Committee held its first meeting on 15 November 2000. This report summarises our activities from November 2000 to the present. Copies of reports, agendas, papers minutes and transcripts of meetings can be found on the committee pages of the National Assembly website – www.wales.gov.uk

Membership

Current members are Gareth Jones (Chair), Jane Davidson (Minister), Alun Pugh (Deputy Minister), Lorraine Barrett, Mick Bates, Cynog Dafis, Janice Gregory, Jonathan Morgan, Helen Mary Jones and Huw Lewis.

There have been four changes in membership since inception:

- Eleanor Burnham replaced Christine Humphreys on 3 April 2001
- Mick Bates replaced Eleanor Burnham on 16 October 2001;
- Helen Mary Jones replaced Pauline Jarman on 21 March 2002; and
- Gareth Jones replaced Cynog Dafis as Chair on 21 March 2002.

Remit and Responsibilities

The remit mirrors the portfolio of the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning. It includes, amongst other things, the national curriculum and qualifications, all aspects of schools administration and organisation, further and higher education, supply side of employment policy - including the New Deal - and the work of the employment service, career services and work related education and training. Responsibilities of subject committees are set out in standing order 9.

Work and Achievements to Date

The Committee has met 49 times. Most of these meetings were in Cardiff but we also visited Merthyr Tydfil, Aberaeron and Machynlleth. In addition, members have visited a number of educational establishments, as well as undertaking fact finding visits to Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Policy Development - *standing order 9.7 (i)*

➤ Early Years Provision for three year olds

Our report was published and debated in plenary on 6 March 2001.

The Welsh Assembly Government has implemented most of the committee's recommendations including:

- Commissioning an audit of current levels of provision and estimates of future demand which would form the basis for planning and development needs and cost implications; and
- Establishing an advisory panel to make recommendations on the development of the strategy and its implementation plan.

The Minister recently launched a formal consultation on proposals for a Foundation Phase for 3-7 year olds in Wales and announced that Integrated Centres would be established across Wales which will bring together the four key elements of early years – wrap around care, open access play and training and development.

➤ **Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Education**

Our report was published and debated in plenary on 13 March 2001.

The Welsh Assembly Government has implemented the three principal recommendations of the report:

- Establishing an ICT Advisory panel;
- Establishing an ICT Task Force; and
- Establishing a National Grid for Learning in Wales - NGfL Cymru.

The NGfL will develop a new bilingual education website portal for Wales, which will become the main online learning centre, providing new curriculum materials and education resources for pupils and teachers.

➤ **Supply of School Places**

Our report was published and debated in plenary on 10 July 2001.

In accordance with the Committee's principal recommendation, the Welsh Assembly Government has established a joint working group with District Audit and the Association of Directors of Education Wales (ADEW), to devise a new methodology for measuring school capacity.

➤ **Higher Education**

This policy review began November 2000. The report was launched at the Welsh College of Music and Drama on 15 January 2002 and also debated in plenary.

In the report, we set out our vision for higher education in Wales and made recommendations to the Assembly Minister. The study took account of national, European, and wider international issues, together with the teaching, research and economic missions within the sector.

We undertook fact finding visits to the Scottish Parliament and also the Northern Ireland Assembly, where we held a formal committee meeting with members of the Northern Ireland Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment Committee – the first formal meeting between committees from these two devolved institutions.

In response to this review, the Welsh Assembly Government published a strategy for the higher education sector in Wales - '*Reaching Higher: Higher Education and the Learning Country*'. This adopts many of the key recommendations in the Committee's reports – principally the need for more strategic collaboration between the higher education institutions in Wales.

➤ **Welsh Language in Education**

At the invitation of the Culture Committee we carried out a review of the Welsh language in education. This formed part of Culture Committee's policy review of the Welsh language in the round. We launched a joint report '*Our Language: Its Future*' and held a plenary debate on 9 July 2002. This is the first time that two subject committees have produced a joint report,

Assembly Members and the public broadly welcomed the report in the plenary debate. In August representatives of both Committees attended the National Eisteddfod in St David's, Pembrokeshire, to promote the report and to answer questions from members of the public.

The Welsh Assembly Government has recently issued an action plan '*Iaith Pawb: the National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales*'. This incorporates many of the Committee's key recommendations. These include the need for significant additional funding in areas such as bilingual nursery education, teacher training through the medium of Welsh, language learning sabbaticals for teachers at all stages of education, support for SEN practitioners, classroom materials and other curriculum support for the language.

➤ **Policy Review: School of the Future**

The Committee commenced its current policy review in October 2002. The Committee has identified a vision for the school of the future – 10 to 15 years from now. The Committee established a reference group to assist with its work. The group represented a wide range of views from the field of education and training.

The Committee will publish an interim report on 25 March 2003 and there will be a plenary debate on this subject. The report will set out broad conclusions and suggest topics for further exploration by the new education committee.

Other Policy Matters

We have also contributed to key policy developments being taken forward by the Minister. These included:

- A report on reducing bureaucratic burdens in schools;
- A report on the work of the Wales Skill Task Force;
- Assessment of proposals by the General Teaching Council for Wales concerning continuing professional development for teachers;
- Special Education Needs pilot projects;
- The National Economic Development Strategy;
- Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST) programme;
- Extending Entitlement (Direction and Guidance);
- Substance Abuse Education;
- Rural and Small Schools policy; and

- Proposals for a broader curriculum for 14-19 year-olds – *Learning Pathways*.

Crosscutting Themes

The National Assembly has a statutory duty to consider the four crosscutting themes of:

- Equal opportunities;
- Social inclusion;
- Sustainable development; and
- Welsh language.

The Committee has considered each of these issues during the reporting period. Chwarae Teg presented a stimulating paper on equal opportunities. We held a very interesting and informative meeting at the Centre for Alternative Technology in Machynlleth, on the theme of education for sustainable development and global citizenship.

Social inclusion and widening participation were included as themes in our policy reviews of higher education and school of the future.

We considered the role of the Welsh language in education in our joint policy review with the Culture Committee. In addition, much of the Committee's business was conducted through the medium of Welsh.

Review of Expenditure and Administration – *standing order 9.7 (ii)*

The Minister presented a report to the Committee for scrutiny each month on policy initiatives, consultations, budget issues and other matters. The topics to be covered in each report were discussed and agreed in advance by the Chair and the Minister, taking account of topics suggested by Committee Members.

Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies - *standing order 9.7(iii)*

The Committee has responsibility for the monitoring and scrutinising four Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs) and Estyn (A Non-Ministerial Government Department):

- Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCW);
- National Council-ELWa (Post-16 Education and Training);
- ACCAC (the qualifications, curriculum and assessment authority for Wales);
- General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW); and
- Estyn (Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales).

These organisations have all appeared before the Committee to present their corporate and annual plans. They have also helped the Committee in providing evidence and guidance during our policy reviews. We are grateful for the support and advice provided by these organisations.

The Committee held a very useful and constructive joint meeting with the Economic Development Committee to scrutinise National Council-ELWa on its proposals for training to help workers made redundant by CORUS in Newport.

Legislation – standing order 9.8 (i)

The Committee has considered and reported to plenary on the Inspection of Education and Training (Wales) Regulations 2001, the Financing of Maintained Schools (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2002 and the Education (Budget Statements) (Wales) Regulations 2002.

The Committee held two sessions to be informed about the recent Education Bill as it progressed through Parliament. Mr Don Touhig MP (Under Secretary of State for Wales) attended one of these meetings to inform the Committee of progress and to answer questions. The Bill received the Royal Assent and became the Education Act 2002. This is an important piece of primary legislation that contains several sections applying only in Wales.

Budget – standing orders 9.8 (ii) and 19.1 to 19.4

Each summer in accordance with Standing Order 19.1, the Committee gave its views on priorities for the Assembly's expenditure in the following financial years. Each October, the Assembly Finance Minister tabled a draft budget setting out the proposed allocation of the Assembly's resources for the following financial year and the provisional allocations for the subsequent two years. The Committee subsequently commented on the draft budget, with reference to matters within its remit.

We discussed the recent budget on 24 October 2002. The Committee expressed concern about the significant differential between the pay and conditions of teachers and those of further education lecturers. The Minister took account of these concerns and provided extra funding of some £9m to improve pay for further education lecturers and support staff.

Complaints – standing orders 9.8 (iii), 21.6 and the Code of Practice on Complaints

We had no complaints referred to us during the past year.

SUCCESSOR COMMITTEE

The number and portfolio of subject committees after the May 2003 Assembly elections will depend on the First Minister's allocation of subject responsibilities to members of the Assembly Cabinet. The work programmes and priorities of incoming committees will be a matter for them to determine.

To assist our successor committee in its deliberations we have drawn up the provisional work programme at Annex 1 and invite the incoming committee to consider focussing on the following priority area:

- School of the Future – Further review(s) building on the interim report.

A list of suggested topics on which to prepare briefing notes for the new committee is at Annex 2.

Annex 1

EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE

PROVISIONAL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
SUMMER TERM 2003

ITEM	Time	COMMENT
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Meeting 1

Minister's Report		
National Council-ELWa - Corporate Plan		
Break		
Learning Pathways: 14 – 19: Outcome of Consultation		
Forward Work Programmes		

Meeting 2

National Council – ELWa: Funding Review - Outcome of Consultation		
ICT Taskforce; Progress Report		
Break		
Welsh Language Action Plan		
ACCAC – Draft Corporate Plan		

Meeting 3

Minister's Report		
Cardiff 2008 –European City of Culture: Education Implications		
Break		
Budget Planning Round – Consideration of Key Priorities		
Truancy Action Plan		

Note: There might be time for one further meeting before the summer recess. In which case, the committee will agree an appropriate agenda.

Annex 2**EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE****LEGACY PAPER: TOPICS FOR BRIEFING**

1. Education Act 2002
2. Learning Pathways 14-19
3. Foundation Phase 3-7
4. 'Our Language: Its Future' and 'Welsh Language Action Plan: Iaith Pawb'
5. Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
 - National Grid for Learning (NGfL Cymru)
 - ICT taskforce
6. Higher Education:
 - Response to 'Reaching Higher'
 - Assembly Learning Grants
 - UK White Paper on funding
7. School of the Future
 - Community Schools
 - Curriculum and Assessment
 - Enriching the Learning Experience
8. Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies:
 - ACCAC
 - General Teaching Council for Wales
 - Higher Education Funding Council
 - National Council – ELWa
 - Estyn (a Non-Ministerial Government Department)