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Written Submission

- to the Culture, Welsh Language and Communication Committee

*** Will the new Curriculum for Wales enhance opportunities for Welsh history and culture to be taught from a Welsh perspective?**

The opportunities for teaching from a Welsh perspective could well be enhanced by the new curriculum - but only if ESTYN are tasked with looking for evidence that it is consistently being taught, and that WJEC exam questions eventually test for it. There may well be the opportunity for some schools to pay 'lip service' to this instead of embedding it as a basis for their schemes of work, however.

*** What opportunities will the new curriculum offer for the teaching of Welsh local and national history?**

The aim is for local topics to be studied, which could then lead to discussions about regional, national, British, European or even World matters. This will allow pupils to explore their local history, as well as the national history of Wales, but it will very much depend on the ability of their teachers to develop suitable schemes of work. Unfortunately, we have not yet had access to any exemplar materials for this, but we assume that the Humanities Pioneer Schools have already provided guidance for their partner schools. If resources are not readily available then teachers may well revert to using their 'tried and tested' materials, and opportunities for studying topics on local medieval history, for example, may be lost.

*** In what way, if any, will teachers be constrained in the teaching of Welsh history and culture?**

As mentioned above, teachers may well be constrained by a lack of suitable resources - but also, due to the lack of prescription in the new curriculum, schools will most probably study different topics to those in other parts of the country simply due to their location. That is, pupils living in the valleys of South Wales may well end up with an in-depth knowledge of the coal industry, but will probably have very little knowledge of the slate industry in Gwynedd; the Epynt clearances in Powys; the Rebecca Riots in West Wales; etc.

*** How might the teaching of Welsh history and culture be affected by the greater discretion for schools in the content of what is taught?**

The new curriculum aims to be non-prescriptive and to focus on “fundamentals”. For the past three years, however, the Society’s main concern has been that teachers and schools would be able to by-pass historical topics or periods if they so wished. For this reason, we are keen to have some ‘general prescription of study’ so that topics from each of the main periods are covered. For example, topics could be studied from: Celtic and Roman Wales; The Age of the Saints; The Age of the Princes; The Tudors and Stuarts; The Industrial Revolution; and the 20th century. We also recommend the use of timelines so that pupils can place events in a chronological order more easily. The draft curriculum does refer to ‘chronological maps’ but we strongly suggest that the topics are also taught in a chronological order wherever possible. We feel that the new curriculum should have a list of ‘must haves’, i.e. topics that all the pupils in the country need to be taught so that they have a rounded knowledge of the events which have formed modern-day Cymru. Teachers must then be supported in developing appropriate schemes of work through the availability of suitable bilingual and multimedia resources.

Gareth Jones (Secretary)

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