

# The provision of textbooks and learning resources for pupils

July 2018



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# The provision of textbooks and learning resources for pupils

July 2018



# About the Committee

The Committee was established on 28 June 2016 to examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising its expenditure, administration and policy matters, encompassing (but not restricted to): the education, health and well-being of the children and young people of Wales, including their social care.

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Welsh Labour  
Torfaen

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**Michelle Brown AM**

UKIP Wales  
North Wales



**Hefin David AM**

Welsh Labour  
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The provision of textbooks and learning resources for pupils

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## Recommendations

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## 1. Introduction and background

**1.** The provision of appropriate resources for our learners, particularly during GCSE and A level education, is a fundamental need. Over the last few years, the issue of the lack of suitable textbooks, particularly Welsh medium textbooks, and other educational resources has been highlighted as a concern by those across the education sector. More importantly, this is a concern that has been raised by pupils themselves.

**2.** In October 2015, the BBC reported:

“Pupils studying maths GCSE in Welsh will be at a "huge disadvantage" because of delays translating textbooks, the body representing schools has said... The new English-language textbooks are already being used, but the Welsh translation is not available until May.”<sup>1</sup>

**3.** The following year, October 2016, the BBC again reported that there were delays in the translation of published textbooks, with the Welsh versions becoming available much later than the English versions. This, it was argued, forced teachers to translate resources themselves, unfairly increasing their workloads and placing “Welsh language students at a disadvantage”.<sup>2</sup>

**4.** The availability of resources for specific subjects has also been raised as a concern. A level Religious Education had been identified as the subject most affected by an absence of supporting textbooks, in both English and Welsh, in time for this year’s exam series. In February 2018, the BBC reported that:

“Some A-level pupils in Wales are still waiting to receive textbooks which are yet to be printed - just three months before they sit their exams.”<sup>3</sup>

### The need for an inquiry

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**5.** In December 2017, during scrutiny of their Annual Report, the Children, Young People and Education Committee (the Committee) questioned Qualifications Wales on the availability of textbooks. The evidence presented raised questions relating to the availability of materials, and to the sufficiency of resources, and what that meant in practice for pupils and teachers in Wales.

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<sup>1</sup> BBC Report, October 2015

<sup>2</sup> BBC Report, October 2016

<sup>3</sup> BBC Report, February 2018

**6.** The Committee sought further information on this matter from the Cabinet Secretary for Education, and also wrote to the WJEC and Qualifications Wales, seeking information specifically on:

- whether there was a shortage of the necessary Welsh-medium and English-medium textbooks for pupils in Wales undertaking their GCSEs and A levels;
- whether they believed any of the reported difficulties would have an impact on pupil outcomes; and
- whether and how they were trying to mitigate any negative impact.

**7.** The responses received highlighted the need for further scrutiny of the issue, and the Committee agreed to hold a one-off evidence session on the provision of textbooks and learning resources for pupils with the WJEC and Qualifications Wales.

**8.** To help inform that evidence session, the Committee undertook a targeted consultation with key stakeholders. The main concerns raised related to:

- a lack of clarity over who was responsible for ensuring the provision of adequate learning resources;
- specific subjects where educational resources are lacking;
- the timely production of suitable education resources;
- adequate provision in both English and Welsh;
- the provision of other resources from WJEC;
- the future challenges to providing adequate educational resources; and
- the effect lack of resources had on pupils and staff.

**9.** The Committee also conducted video interviews with pupils and teachers across Wales, to hear first-hand how the availability of resources impacts on teaching and learning. Further information on the methodology used in the interviews to gather opinion and the questions posed is included in the Annex to this Report – and this includes an overview of the written responses from the participants. The Committee is grateful to all those who took the time to participate and share their experiences with us.

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## 2. The availability of resources – and who is responsible

**10.** At the oral evidence session held on 20 May 2018, the WJEC and Qualifications Wales were asked to outline their role in ensuring that students and teachers had the resources that they need to pass general qualifications. Alongside this, the organisations were asked about the role of commercial publishers and the Welsh Government.

**11.** Gareth Pierce, the then Chief Executive of the WJEC outlined its role as:

- Providing the resources that are required in a regulatory sense, including two elements – the specification, and exemplar assessments.
- Investing in resources that were produced digitally in both languages simultaneously, with each new course having substantial teaching guidance, including information for teachers and pupils.
- Encouraging publishers to take an interest in providing textbooks, but it is precluded from having a commercial agreement with publishers.

**12.** Gareth Pierce explained that those interested publishers tend to be England-based, so the Welsh Government has a role to provide funding to the WJEC to support the process of providing Welsh language versions of textbooks.

**13.** Philip Blaker, Chief Executive of Qualifications Wales outlined its responsibilities as:

- The regulator of the awarding bodies, but not regulator of commercial publishers nor the provision of textbooks within that.
- In regulating they have a primary focus on the design of the qualifications and then the delivery of the assessment.
- When going through the design, its focus is very much on making sure that teachers are able to have a good understanding of what is going to be expected of them and of their pupils in the examinations.

**14.** In terms of the roles of others, Qualifications Wales confirmed that Welsh Government had a role in terms of grant funding of translation of materials into Welsh medium. Mr Blaker suggested that there was “a common model at the

moment" which relied on commercial publishers to provide textbooks, which he felt is:

"something that probably needs to be looked at in the future in terms of potential different models for how that might be achieved and also, potentially, around a paradigm shift in what's expected of those materials."<sup>4</sup>

**15.** The Cabinet Secretary for Education's letter to the Committee on 13 April 2018 stated that:

"Qualifications Wales is responsible for deciding whether there are sufficient resources available to support the delivery of a qualification but it does not require that those resources are in a specific format...it may conclude that a textbook is not essential for a new qualification."<sup>5</sup>

**16.** In terms of the publication of textbooks specifically, the Cabinet Secretary for Education also highlighted that:

"the publishing of educational textbooks is market driven with commercial publishers deciding on which titles to commission. While the Welsh Government has no power over commercial decisions made by these companies, my officials continue to liaise with publishing houses to consider options for the future."<sup>6</sup>

**17.** The WJEC, the NASUWT and the Welsh Government also noted that the structure or low take up of some qualifications had resulted in commercial publishers judging the production of textbooks to be unviable. The WJEC also explained that the development of A level Religious education textbooks was further hampered by the publisher's reliance on a "small number of authors".<sup>7</sup>

**18.** The specific question of the availability of textbooks was raised by Darren Millar AM, who outlined that both the WJEC and Qualifications Wales had mentioned that there needed to be some sort of common core of resources available for learners and teachers. Darren Millar asked specifically... "But isn't a textbook a pretty basic element of anybody's toolkit for supporting a child getting

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<sup>4</sup> Oral Evidence, Record of Proceedings [para 42]

<sup>5</sup> Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Education, 13 April 2018

<sup>6</sup> Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Education, 13 April 2018

<sup>7</sup> Letter from WJEC, 20 April 2018

through the information that they need to learn, and swot up on, in advance of exams?"<sup>8</sup>

**19.** In response, Gareth Pierce said:

"I think that the evidence is that different learners see their requirements differently. And I agree that a textbook is part of the picture that should be available...the content of a textbook is going to be important, and that that's available in some form or other.

Much of that digital content, of course, corresponds to the content areas of a textbook, but it's just in a different form. But, in general, there should be a textbook."<sup>9</sup>

It's held me back, because the traditional way of revising involves looking over class notes and preparing your own notes, it hasn't worked for everyone, and the way that works for me is by going through textbooks and looking at questions and past questions.

*Rhodri, Ysgol Penweddig*

**20.** Following up on this, Darren Miller highlighted that not all students would have access to digital resources in their own homes, and questioned whether the lack of textbooks would give "a significant disadvantage to those learners who might need the traditional 'swotting up from a textbook' method of revision..."<sup>10</sup>

**21.** Mike Ebbsworth highlighted that:

"We do ensure that those digital resources include things that the teachers can also print. Most of these are resources for teachers so that the teachers can adapt them for their own use, to suit the learners who are in front of them at any given time. But certainly there are materials there. If there are activities, then those activities can be printed off and handed to pupils so that they can take them home."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Oral Evidence, Record of Proceedings [para.72]

<sup>9</sup> Oral Evidence, Record of Proceedings [para.73]

<sup>10</sup> Oral Evidence, Record of Proceedings [para.74]

<sup>11</sup> Oral Evidence, Record of Proceedings [para.75]

**22.** Gareth Pierce added that:

"I think you're right that the availability of technology is an important part of this big picture. The young people talk about websites and blogs, and we're talking about digital resources, so being able to reach those resources, I think, is vital in Wales...."<sup>12</sup>

**23.** When asked whether he agreed that a textbook should be an essential core piece of the resource pack available for each qualification, Philip Blaker responded:

"I think we wouldn't want to underplay the desirability of textbooks, recognising that different learners have different learning styles and may look to different resources. I think what I'd like to raise is a wider concern about textbooks in their current model, which is very much around the fact that every time there's a change in a specification, there's a new textbook..."<sup>13</sup>

**24.** Mr Blaker also outlined two concerns relating to the current model for textbooks:

- *The focus on teaching and learning.* Concerns have been raised by Ofsted and Estyn about the focus on teaching to the test. Qualifications Wales are concerned that having a textbook that is endorsed by the awarding body and is designed specifically around that specification may encourage that tendency.
- *The sustainability of the model.* There is concern that as Wales undertakes another round of qualification reform, there may be a need for another iteration of textbooks focused on the new qualifications specification. This poses potential challenges to the publishers and costs to the schools delivering the qualifications. Qualifications Wales would rather see that textbooks are seen as a curriculum resource that are broader than the current model of publication suggests and that would not need to be changed and updated if the subject specification was altered.

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<sup>12</sup> Oral Evidence, Record of Proceedings [para 76]

<sup>13</sup> Oral Evidence, Record of Proceedings [para 78]

“

I use things like blogs and websites now instead of textbooks, because it's a lot easier, because they're already there for us.

*Megan, Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni*

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### Other concerns regarding the WJEC's provision of resources

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- 25.** Estyn and the Regional Consortia reported that there were issues with the provision of the WJEC's other support materials beyond textbooks. The Regional Consortia highlighted that:

“WJEC did not make as many Sample Assessment Materials available as schools would have liked early on in the reform process. At times the sample assessment materials were provided with incorrect mark schemes.”<sup>14</sup>

- 26.** Estyn also noted that A level exemplar examination material has been reported as late and that GCSE teachers have expressed “frustration around a lack of clarity about assessment from the WJEC”.<sup>15</sup> The NAHT shared concerns about the appropriateness and utility of mark schemes and exemplar materials available to teachers, particularly in Maths and English. It believes that:

“It would be helpful if the WJEC ensured that all necessary resources were made available before the start date of each qualification.”<sup>16</sup>

- 27.** However, Estyn recognised that:

“The WJEC provides a very useful web-based service for teachers to create their own test papers. In many cases, it offers comprehensive mark schemes.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> [Consultation Response, Regional Consortia](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Consultation Response, Estyn](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Consultation Response, Estyn](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Consultation Response, Estyn](#)

**28.** Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr told the Committee that “the electronic resources provided in Welsh on the WJEC website have also been useful” in supporting its pupils with coursework.<sup>18</sup>

**29.** Qualifications Wales explained that it will be:

“...monitoring WJEC’s key meetings for A level Religious Studies to ensure that we are content that the grade boundaries set by WJEC are appropriate and that standards have been maintained.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Consultation Response, Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr

<sup>19</sup> Letter from Qualifications Wales, 13 March 2018

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### 3. The persistence of issues and the link to curriculum reform

“The shortage of Welsh medium textbooks and learning resources has been a permanent problem at all levels of the education system. The issue has been raised by teachers, schools, organisations and unions repeatedly over the years”

*UCAC written evidence*

**30.** As has been outlined earlier in this report, and in the evidence the Committee has received, problems with lack of suitable resources have been raised over several years. Estyn, NAHT, UCAC, NASUWT, WJEC, and Qualifications Wales indicated that it was the Welsh Government’s management of the reform of general qualifications that has led to the issue of a lack of supporting textbooks.

**31.** When asked why this issue has taken so long to resolve, Gareth Pierce said that:

“I think the main reason for that is that there are three series of reforms of qualifications that have happened. There were some in 2015, other subjects in 2016, and other subjects in 2017. Those three cycles of reform have all suffered from the short timetable that was between approving a qualification and publishers being able to start the work.”<sup>20</sup>

**32.** Qualifications Wales noted that the reform timetable set by the Welsh Government had:

“proven to be extremely challenging for all involved. The provision of resources such as textbooks cannot be initiated until late in the process of developing and approving the new specification for a reformed qualification, when the specifications are in final or near final form. This has placed pressure on those providing these resources that must not be repeated in future reforms.”

<sup>20</sup> Oral Evidence, Record of Proceedings [para 88]

**33.** The Committee asked whether WJEC and Qualifications Wales (or their predecessor organisation) had provided advice to the Welsh Government at the time about the timescales for the reforms. Gareth Pierce said:

“Yes, and similarly in England, the examination boards working in England would have provided the same advice to the Government there.

So, England and Wales have run on a very short timetable common to both countries, and I would say that every exam board and every publisher has seen this very challenging in Wales and England. But our advice is that there is a real need for between 18 months and two years from completing a specification that has been approved, then being able to work with teachers on what their needs and requirements will be...”<sup>21</sup>

**34.** In relation to the potential difficulties that recent waves of reforms had caused, Llyr Gruffydd AM asked about the “tsunami” of education reforms ongoing in Wales and how confident we can be that the situation won’t deteriorate as the new curriculum is introduced. In response, Gareth Pierce said:

“That is a very key question, isn’t it? We have started to discuss this, specifically in particular in a forum that includes publishers in Wales, with the Welsh Government around the table and Qualifications Wales around the table.”<sup>22</sup>

**35.** Philip Blaker added:

“I think one of the big differences is it’s a tsunami we can see coming.

I think, for us, once we’ve seen the curriculum, and we’ve got better sight of it, we’ll be able to plan things out. We’ve already started engagement with awarding bodies over the possible supply chain for these new qualifications, and, ultimately, there’ll be a go/no-go decision that would need to be made, probably in 2023...”<sup>23</sup>

**36.** As a result of its experiences with the recent round of qualification reform, Qualifications Wales called for there to be least 12 months between the approval

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<sup>21</sup> Oral Evidence, Record of Proceedings [para 93]

<sup>22</sup> Oral Evidence, Record of Proceedings [para 97]

<sup>23</sup> Oral Evidence, Record of Proceedings [para 99 & 100]

of a qualification specification and first teaching.<sup>24</sup> The WJEC stated that 18-24 months is needed to produce high quality resources.<sup>25</sup>

**37.** Estyn highlighted the need for:

“any major change in examination policy [to be] introduced in a more staggered way in the future, avoiding both GCSEs and A Levels changing in the same year for individual subjects.”<sup>26</sup>

**38.** Qualifications Wales also said that it will use its comparable outcomes approach to mitigate any impact resulting from the implementation of new qualifications (with or without supporting textbooks). It also stated that it will delay “the date of first teaching [of new qualification specifications] to allow time for resources to be made available” if necessary in future.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Letter from Qualifications Wales, 13 March 2018

<sup>25</sup> Letter from WJEC, 20 April 2018

<sup>26</sup> Consultation Response, Estyn

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Qualification Wales, 13 March 2018

## 4. The challenges in producing Welsh Language resources

**39.** The Committee heard evidence from a range of stakeholders relating to the challenges of producing Welsh Language learning resources. One of the main reasons outlined was the need to rely on commercial publishers to produce the materials.

**40.** The Cabinet Secretary confirmed that the Welsh Government had provided funding to the WJEC which was, in part, “to enable them to improve the procedures and timescales between Welsh and English versions of textbooks”.<sup>28</sup> She noted that as a result of these actions there were examples of timescales being reduced, including GCSE Geography textbooks being published within 4 months of the English version being available. She also told the Committee that a Stakeholder Group had been established:

“with the aim of advising on how a new infrastructure can be developed to produce resources to support the new curriculum and qualifications in Wales.”<sup>29</sup>

**41.** The WJEC reported that it had developed a programme for discussion seminars with printing houses to address the issues around the production of resources for the Welsh education market and it has invited tenders for research regarding “the current use of resources in order to be able to plan purposefully to the future”.<sup>30</sup>

**42.** In its oral evidence, the WJEC also suggested that it might be interested in stepping up and taking a role in the production of materials if regulations were changed. When asked specifically if that was something they would be eager to see happening WJEC said:

“Yes, and we’ve been part of starting that discussion amongst publishers in Wales. Certainly, there is interest...”

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<sup>28</sup> Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Education, 13 April 2018

<sup>29</sup> Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Education, 13 April 2018

<sup>30</sup> Letter from WJEC, 20 April 2018

Of course, Welsh Government, Qualifications Wales and other stakeholders are part of this discussion, not only WJEC, but we've been part of initiating that discussion.”<sup>31</sup>

**43.** Gareth Pierce went on to say that this was developing at an appropriate pace and that there was some enthusiasm and vision from a number of publishers who were working as a group.

**44.** When asked what they thought was acceptable in terms of timescales for translation, Mike Ebbsworth of the WJEC said that they had done a “great deal of work” to ensure that the delay between having an English version and a Welsh version is reduced, confirming that the “best-case scenario” is that the Welsh and the English are available simultaneously.<sup>32</sup>

**45.** The Cabinet Secretary for Education wrote to the Committee setting out the role of its Bilingual Educational Resources Stakeholder Group.<sup>33</sup> In her letter, the Cabinet Secretary set out the work that was being taken forward, which included a proposal to withhold publication of English textbooks for eight weeks to allow the Welsh language versions to be produced.<sup>34</sup>

**46.** When asked further on the appropriateness of delaying the release of the English versions of textbooks, Gareth Pierce said that:

“But, just to be clear, this idea of delaying an English version is something that the Welsh Government is eager for us to experiment with, but not with textbooks that are already late. They are within the new programme of textbooks that are contained within the grant that you mentioned of £500,000. So, in a way, this is an experiment and the Welsh Government wants to look at this as one way of responding to the complaint that there are different timetables available.”<sup>35</sup>

**47.** When asked whether he thought delaying publication of the English version could mean that both sets of pupils (i.e. those studying through the medium of Welsh and English) would end up being equally disadvantaged, Gareth Pierce disagreed, saying that:

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<sup>31</sup> Oral Evidence, Record of Proceedings [para 104]

<sup>32</sup> Oral Evidence, Record of Proceedings [para 114 & 115]

<sup>33</sup> The Group was established following a summit held in 2017 to discuss solutions to the delays in producing experienced during the last round of qualifications reform.

<sup>34</sup> Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Education, 27 April 2018

<sup>35</sup> Oral Evidence, Record of Proceedings [para 125]

"... in a way, it uses the same principle as we have regarding our use of digital resources. With the digital materials, the intention is that things are available in time and that they're available in both languages at the same time. So, trying to imitate that with printed text is what we're trying to do, but not with texts that are already late. So, if these books keep to the timetable, then they will be available in time in both languages, but that the English version has stayed before going out on the shelves."<sup>36</sup>

- 48.** In relation to evidence received, including the video evidence, that teachers spend a lot of their time translating resources themselves, WJEC said:

"I think the question of translation is an interesting one... I think perhaps we need to understand what causes the need for that because, as I mentioned earlier, there are so many resources available digitally in both languages at the same time. Perhaps an interesting question is: is that source useful for teachers..."

Therefore, I think another interesting question is: can we discover what those additional resources are that are worth translating? And, certainly, it would be very unfortunate if there were a dozen Welsh-medium schools, for example, translating material from the same website independently of each other. If there are a few websites, or a few case studies, in this big external digital world that are worth translating, shouldn't we able to source those early? Because I don't think it's a good use of teachers' time."<sup>37</sup>

- 49.** When asked whether providing such a central resource could be seen as a core part of their work, especially as this sits outside their requirements as an awarding body, Gareth Pierce said:

"Yes, we invest substantially from the WJEC budget into digital resources. So, through the types of conversations that Mike mentioned, in terms of identifying needs, deciding on priorities with teachers in individual subject areas, that can provide very useful information for us in terms of prioritisation. Of course, the digital packages that we create are already based on conversations with teachers."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Oral Evidence Record of Proceedings [para.131]

<sup>37</sup> Oral Evidence Record of Proceedings [para.50]

<sup>38</sup> Oral Evidence Record of Proceedings [para.57]

“What it’s doing is increasing the pressure on staff in the Welsh medium stream, because they have to produce things themselves, so that they don’t feel that Welsh medium students are at a disadvantage.

Meurig Jones, Head Teacher at Ysgol Llangynwyd

50. In discussing whether additional resources might be required for this, Mike Ebbsworth said:

“There is a need to be careful as well in identifying resources and needs, and that those are suited towards the requirements. Quite often a teacher—and I’ve been a teacher myself—has this idea that there is a need to have everything. But, certainly, that’s not always the case. Quite often, the focus is on different things. There has been a move towards different means of assessment over recent years, and we’ve moved our resources towards that to meet the needs of teachers on how to undertake that sort of assessment.”<sup>39</sup>

51. Philip Blaker added:

“Teachers will want to be creative in the use of resources, and, in doing that, they’ll potentially want to adapt resources from either language. I think one of the things that we would be quite keen to try and establish moving forward is what is the common core that should by default be available bilingually, and then what sits around that that would be for schools to use creatively and adapt.”<sup>40</sup>

### Welsh Government support for Welsh medium resources

52. In March 2017, the Cabinet Secretary provided an update on Welsh-medium textbooks to support reformed qualifications. That update reported that:

“...steps have been taken to improve the situation, such as making draft versions of the textbooks available on the WJEC’s secure website before

<sup>39</sup> Oral Evidence Record of Proceedings [para 64]

<sup>40</sup> Oral Evidence Record of Proceedings [para 67]

free copies of printed versions are distributed to schools. This ensures that the content is available at a much earlier date for teachers and learners. New digital resources are also being developed, and current resources are being revised to fill any gaps and are available on WJEC's website.<sup>41</sup>

**53.** The update was followed by a Summit on 26 April 2017 that aimed to ensure that Welsh-medium textbooks were available.<sup>42</sup>

**54.** On 15 December 2017, the Welsh Government announced that in 2018/19 it would make £500,000 available for Welsh language education resources, as part of an annual budget for the commissioning of Welsh language resources.<sup>43</sup> The announcement confirmed that the funding would support 22 new projects to deliver new Welsh-medium educational resources, and would help address the current shortage of resources identified by teachers.

**55.** The announcement also highlighted that seven suppliers from across Wales had been commissioned to develop the new resources for the National Curriculum and qualifications for Wales for:

- Art and Design;
- Music;
- Welsh;
- Geography;
- Drama;
- Design and Technology;
- History;
- Government and Politics;
- Mathematics; and
- Modern Foreign Languages.

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<sup>41</sup> Cabinet Secretary update on Welsh-medium textbooks, March 2017

<sup>42</sup> Welsh Government notice on the Summit to ensure Welsh-medium textbooks

<sup>43</sup> Welsh Government announcement, 15 December 2017

**56.** In a letter to the Committee, the Cabinet Secretary also explained:

"The Welsh Government, within the annual budget for commissioning educational resources, allocates grant funding to WJEC to produce Welsh-medium versions of textbooks which are produced by commercial publishers in England to support the WJEC specifications. Up to £1.3m has been awarded over the 2016-18 financial years. The WJEC also provides a guaranteed sales purchase scheme to the publisher as part of the grant arrangement. This ensures that Welsh-medium and bilingual schools are provided with free copies of the resources published."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Education, 31 January 2018

## 5. Subjects where educational resources are lacking

**57.** In February 2018, the BBC reported that:

“Students began working towards their religious studies A-level exams in September 2017, but have been using copied notes and sheets prepared by their teachers while they wait for their textbooks to arrive.”<sup>45</sup>

**58.** Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr wrote to the Committee on this issue, highlighting that:

“The A-Level course began in September with a focus on 3 themes – Philosophy, Ethics and Buddhism. This week [March 2018], we have been able to buy a copy of the WJEC textbook on Philosophy in English, but the Ethics textbook will not be available in Welsh or English until the end of April and the textbook on Buddhism (English only) is out of stock.”<sup>46</sup>

**59.** The Regional Consortia highlighted GCSE Geography as lacking in support materials, as well as A level Religious Education.<sup>47</sup>

“It’s a bit of a concern for me personally because, with a subject like Religious Studies, we quote from a lot of specialists, and if they are in English or the publication is too late for us, we can’t use them, they’re difficult to remember.

*Ffion, Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni*

**60.** Estyn reported issues in the provision of A level support material in “mathematics, religious education, history, French, English, computer science and physical education” and Welsh medium GCSE resources in “physical education,

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<sup>45</sup> BBC report February 2018

<sup>46</sup> Consultation Response, Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr

<sup>47</sup> Consultation Response, Regional Consortia

music, problem solving in mathematics-numeracy, drama, French and Spanish". It also reported that:

"some pupils opted to undertake their work for the Welsh Baccalaureate in English rather than in Welsh, citing the lack of relevant Welsh-medium resources available via the internet as a reason for this choice... Some Welsh-medium or bilingual schools teach science through the medium of English. This is because text translated from English to Welsh is often more difficult for pupils to access."<sup>48</sup>

**61.** In its written evidence, the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) reported that:

"Mathematics AS Unit 3 and 4, ICT for both GCSE and AS, Media Studies GCSE and Geography A Level, have no endorsed textbooks available yet."<sup>49</sup>

**62.** In a letter to the Committee, the Cabinet Secretary highlighted:

"In the case of subjects where textbooks are not produced in either Welsh or English, WJEC have produced a range of bilingual digital materials which are free of charge to schools and are available on the resources section of the WJEC's website. It also grant funded the regional consortia over £3.4m in 2016-17 and £2m in 2017-18 to provide support to schools to prepare to deliver the new qualifications which included the development of resources in both Welsh and English."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> [Consultation Response, Estyn](#)

<sup>49</sup> [Consultation Response, NAHT](#)

<sup>50</sup> [Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Education, 31 January 2018](#)

## 6. The effect of a lack of resource

The lateness of textbooks, sample materials and clear guidance around marking is likely to have impeded teachers' planning...They felt they were often left guessing as to how to mark pupils' work accurately and were therefore worried that they were not guiding the pupils appropriately.

These issues are very likely to have had an impact on pupils

*Estyn written evidence*

- 63.** The Committee conducted video interviews with pupils and teachers, and heard significant evidence relating to the impact of a lack of resources, and the effects this has. One of the key concerns raised was that pupils were experiencing a lot of stress and anxiety, and that this was having a negative effect on their well-being. This was made worse during exam times where pupils were already experiencing increased stress levels.

View the video interviews with pupils and teachers:



**64.** The lack of resources themselves were mentioned as a direct source of stress for pupils, along with the perception that this lack of resources might result in a disadvantage. Pupils commented on the potential disadvantage on two fronts:

- where pupils were studying through the medium of Welsh, but then having to use English language resources to study;
- where resources were not available in either language and this put pupils at a disadvantage in competing against pupils outside of Wales for university places.

**65.** Whether or not the disadvantage is real, what was clear is that the perception of such disadvantage added to stress and anxiety. When asked whether they accepted that some pupils had been negatively affected by the lack of resources for general qualifications, Gareth Pierce said:

“I’d have to agree. There is evidence of their concern, isn’t there? But as Philip said, what we don’t have is evidence that that anxiety then has an impact on their attainment, because there are so many factors, there are so many different kinds of resources that they’ve referred to—even those who want to see textbooks, they’re also talking about so many other materials that are available to them.”<sup>51</sup>

**66.** Qualifications Wales argued that the availability and quality of teaching and learning resources is only one of many factors that can impact on the performance of a learner in an exam, and as a result it is not possible to gauge the impact any lack of resources would have from exam results.

“It’s very stressful, because the university I’m going to, I have a lot of competition from other people in other subjects that have their textbooks...and it’s going to be a lot more difficult to compete with them.

*Georgina, St. Albans RC High School*

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<sup>51</sup> Oral Evidence, Record of Proceedings [para 151]

**67.** In its response to the consultation, the NAHT stated:

“Staff are reporting that they are less confident that they are covering the full content with the required depth, knowledge and understanding needed to fully support their students, due to issues related to support materials and resources.”<sup>52</sup>

**68.** NAHT went on to argue that this will have “a direct negative impact on pupil outcomes”<sup>53</sup>

**69.** The Regional Consortia said that they would be concerned if pupil outcomes were impacted by a lack of textbooks, and acknowledged that pupil outcomes could be affected where teachers are required to create resources from scratch given the time this takes up, which could be spent more productively with pupils.

**70.** The NASUWT shared the Regional Consortia’s concerns, highlighting:

“the increased workload placed on teachers and the lack of assistance available regarding clerical and administrative tasks, especially photocopying, in the absence of textbooks.”<sup>54</sup>

**71.** UCAC also warned that additional pressure and increased workload on staff could have an effect on the recruitment and retention of Welsh medium teachers.<sup>55</sup>

**72.** Estyn acknowledged that teachers producing their own resources could help to mitigate the effect of a lack of appropriate resources, but warned that the resultant resources were not “rigorously edited and their quality is extremely variable”.<sup>56</sup> Estyn also stated, particularly in regards to A levels, that:

“lateness of textbooks, sample materials and clear guidance around marking is likely to have impeded teachers’ planning...These issues are very likely to have had an impact on pupils’ achievement ...findings from visits to schools and FE colleges indicate that leaders in all schools and colleges visited expressed disappointment and frustration about the

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<sup>52</sup> [Consultation response, NAHT](#)

<sup>53</sup> [Consultation response, NAHT](#)

<sup>54</sup> [Consultation response, NASUWT](#)

<sup>55</sup> [Consultation response, UCAC](#)

<sup>56</sup> [Consultation response, Estyn](#)

quality and timely availability of English-medium and Welsh-medium textbooks and other resources such as specimen papers.”<sup>57</sup>

**73.** Commenting on the reduction in attainment suggested by Estyn, Philip Blaker highlighted the link through to curriculum reform, commenting that:

“Reforms always throw up issues like this. It’s almost an inevitability of any change that there will be impact. I think what we need to do is we need to think about the future reforms, particularly knowing that we’ve got some on the radar already, and to think about what this paradigm is and how we can isolate some of these factors in the future. So, if we look at resources and if we look particularly at textbooks as being a curriculum resource, rather than a qualification resource, I think we can change the timeline to which some of those materials are produced.

...I would really like to a shift in the paradigm for resources particularly, away from the focus on the qualification and into more of a focus on the curriculum—then that provides an opportunity for, I would suggest, a much healthier model in the future.”<sup>58</sup>

**74.** In relation to competition with pupils studying in England, the Committee asked whether the delay in publication of textbooks would place English-language student using the English-language version at a potential disadvantage, compared to students in England. Gareth Pierce responded explaining that:

“...applicants for qualifications in Wales are assessed as a national cohort, if truth be told, so, each piece of information we have on the standards is evaluated for that national cohort. The standards stem from the three-nation system. So, in discussion with Qualifications Wales, we ensure that there is no disadvantage to any cohort in Wales in any subject, be that because of a textbook being unavailable or for any other reason.”<sup>59</sup>

**75.** Philip Blaker went on to add:

“Certainly, from a comparable outcomes perspective, the fewer differences that there are that are differential—So, the idea of textbooks being available in English and Welsh at different times could potentially create another dimension in terms of disparity. So, if we’re

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<sup>57</sup> [Consultation response, Estyn](#)

<sup>58</sup> [Oral Evidence, Record of Proceedings \[para.162-164\]](#)

<sup>59</sup> [Oral Evidence, Record of Proceedings \[para.136\]](#)

looking at it strictly speaking from a comparable outcomes perspective, it makes the awarding easier if everybody's on a common playing field."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Oral Evidence, Record of Proceedings [para 137]

## 7. Committee view and recommendations

**76.** It is clear from the evidence received that there are concerns from pupils, teachers and a wide range of stakeholders about the availability of textbooks and other learning resources. Concerns have been raised about resources in both the Welsh and English languages, and in relation to hard copy and digital material. The potential impact that a lack of resources might have on pupil achievement is also an area of real concern for the Committee.

**77.** Of particular concern was the direct evidence we had received from pupils and teachers. It is clear that the lack of resources is having a real effect on pupils, and is adding to their stress and anxiety. This is particularly worrying given the increased stress already on pupils going through exams.

### The availability of resources – and who is responsible

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**78.** It was also very clear from evidence received that pupils learn in different ways, and the Committee strongly believes that resources must be available in a range of formats to enable pupils to learn using the method that best suits them – whether that is through using a textbook or through digital resources, in English or in Welsh. The Committee understands that the funding available to meet the cost of resources is limited, and believes that there must therefore be a fundamental rethink about what resources should be made available to ensure effective learning by all our pupils.

**79.** The Committee is concerned that there is a lack of clarity about who is responsible for ensuring that resources are available for all pupils, whatever method of learning they prefer to use. This lack of clarity may result in a failure to provide adequate resources and have a detrimental effect on pupils' learning. There must also be a clear understanding about what core resources should be expected to be available for each subject before a course is started. This should include textbooks and teacher resources, as well as online resources.

**80.** To help ensure that the issues identified in the provision of resources can be fully considered and rectified, it is essential that all those with an interest are involved in the process.

**81.** To help inform any discussions moving forward, the Committee also believes it would be helpful to establish if there are similar problems with the provision of resources in other parts of the UK, and if so, to what level.

**Recommendation 1.** The Cabinet Secretary must publish details to clarify who is responsible for ensuring that resources are available for all pupils, whatever method of learning they prefer to use.

**Recommendation 2.** Qualifications Wales should publish a list of core resources required for each subject, and which must be available prior to courses being commenced. These resources must include printed textbooks and teacher resources as a minimum, in addition to online and other resources.

**Recommendation 3.** The Cabinet Secretary should initiate a comparison with other parts of the UK to establish if there are similar problems with the provision of educational resources, and whether solutions have been found which could be used in Wales.

## Bilingual provision

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**82.** The Committee was extremely concerned to hear that teachers were translating resources themselves in order to make those resources available to pupils. We believe that this uses up teachers' time undertaking tasks that should not be necessary, and could potentially impede the ability of teachers to plan their work and teach adequately. It was also suggested by Estyn that where teachers are unable to plan adequately, this could have a negative impact on attainment – although the Committee notes that there is no direct evidence to confirm this.

**83.** Another factor that was highlighted is that where teachers are translating materials themselves, they are often doing so in isolation from other teachers or schools. Although the Committee has not undertaken any work to establish the scale, this must result in duplication of effort, where the same material is being translated by a number of teachers. The Committee also believes this could result in inconsistencies in translation, affecting the quality of the resource available for pupils.

**84.** While the Committee accepts that it may not be possible or feasible for all learning resources to be available bilingually, there must be a common core of resources that should by default be available bilingually. In addition, other resources that are used most widely across English and Welsh medium schools should also be available bilingually.

**85.** The Committee therefore believes that it is essential to establish the extent to which teachers are translating resources themselves, and what those resources are. Any resources that are considered to be part of the common core of

resources, as outlined in recommendation 2, should be translated centrally and available in Welsh medium schools at the start of a course.

**86.** Where it is identified that other resources are used widely across schools and are being translated by teachers, arrangements should also be put in place for those resources to be translated centrally, and made available to teachers and pupils as appropriate. The Committee believes that this should be taken forward as a function or responsibility of the WJEC.

**Recommendation 4.** The Cabinet Secretary should establish the extent to which teachers are translating resources themselves, and what those resources are. Arrangements should then be made for those resources to be translated centrally, and made available to teachers and pupils as appropriate.

**Recommendation 5.** The functions of WJEC should be extended to include responsibility for the translation and promotion of learning resources that are part of the common core of resources that should be available, or those used widely across schools.

**87.** The Committee recognises the challenges that a commercial market poses in a Welsh context, but believes that bilingual resources should be developed naturally as resources are created. This would help ensure that resources are available in English and Welsh at the same time. The Committee believes that this should form part of any contract awarded for the production of resources where a commercial publisher is used.

**Recommendation 6.** The Cabinet Secretary and WJEC should ensure that bilingual resources are developed naturally as the resource is being created, and that this should form part of any contract awarded for the production of resources where a commercial publisher is used.

**88.** The Committee welcomes the commitment from the Cabinet Secretary to improve the availability of resources to support qualifications in both Welsh and English, and to ensure that they are produced at the same time. The Committee is concerned, however, by the Cabinet Secretary's decision that for forthcoming/new resources the English version will be withheld for eight weeks to allow for the Welsh version to be produced and for both languages to be issued at the same time. The Committee is extremely concerned about the rationale for this decision, and believes this could disadvantage those learning in English if publication is delayed. The Cabinet Secretary should therefore reconsider this decision.

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**89.** The Committee understands that this approach will be trialled for two forthcoming publications, and that this is not being rolled out for all publications at this time. The Committee believes that, should the trial go ahead, further detail on the rationale behind this decision must be provided before the trial is undertaken, including how the Cabinet Secretary will assess the success – or otherwise – as well as the potential impact on pupils if the English language version is delayed.

**Recommendation 7.** The Cabinet Secretary should reconsider the decision to delay publication of English language resources by up to eight weeks and ensure that resources, both Welsh and English, are published as soon as practicable.

**Recommendation 8.** The Cabinet Secretary, if the trial proceeds, should provide detail on how its success or otherwise will be measured, including how the potential impact on pupils will be assessed if the English language version is delayed.

**90.** The Committee welcomes the additional funding that the Welsh Government has made available for the production of Welsh Language resources. The evidence received suggests that this is having a positive impact, but more could still be done. In order to help ensure that resources are produced in English and Welsh at the same time, the Committee believes that Welsh Government funding should be linked to bilingual delivery as part of any contract.

**Recommendation 9.** The Cabinet Secretary should ensure that Welsh Government funding for Welsh Language resources should be linked to bilingual delivery as part of any contract.

#### Availability of textbooks and teacher resources

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**91.** The Committee strongly agrees with stakeholders that textbooks and teacher resources are a part of the core package that should be available for learners. It is clear that pupils use a range of methods for learning, and those who use textbooks should not be disadvantaged by textbooks being unavailable. The Committee is therefore concerned that it is not a requirement that textbooks must be available to all, and believes that the Cabinet Secretary should take steps to remedy this.

**Recommendation 10.** The Cabinet Secretary should make it a requirement that textbooks and teacher resources are part of the core package of resources available for learners.

**92.** The Committee agrees with views expressed that it is vital that pupils are taught the curriculum rather than being taught to pass exams. The Committee therefore welcomes the suggestion by Qualifications Wales about producing curriculum focussed textbooks, rather than qualification focused textbooks. The Committee believes that this would help with the sustainability of textbook production, as the curriculum is less likely to change over time than are qualification specifications.

**Recommendation 11.** The Cabinet Secretary should put plans in place to ensure that in future years curriculum focused textbooks are produced and used as the method for teaching rather than the current model of qualification focussed textbooks.

### Reliance on digital materials

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**93.** As has already been outlined, it is clear that different pupils approach their learning in different ways. For some, the use of digital material can be an effective method. Similarly, the Committee has noted that digital material is used widely by schools. It is clear that WJEC is making more and more resource available on a digital platform and this is welcome.

**94.** However, the Committee is concerned that the reliance on the use of digital resources could disadvantage some learners who have limited or no access to digital material. This can be due to limited broadband availability in some areas, or that some families do not have broadband at home. We believe that research is needed on this.

**Recommendation 12.** The Cabinet Secretary should commission research to establish the level of pupils affected by a lack of broadband, and who cannot easily access digital educational resources.

### Impact of curriculum reform

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**95.** The Committee is extremely concerned about the potential impact of the forthcoming curriculum reform on the availability of resources. It is clear that a high volume of resources will need to be revised or new material produced to meet the new curriculum and this needs to be managed effectively to ensure that those resources are available to learners, in the format of their choice, at the time of first teaching.

**96.** It is also clear from the experiences with the recent round of qualification reform, that more time is required between approval of a qualification specification and first teaching. The Committee also agrees with views expressed

by a number of stakeholders that there needed to be more lead-in time in preparing resources for new qualifications. The Committee agrees with the WJEC that a lead-in time of 18-24 months is needed to ensure that high quality resources are produced for first teaching, and believes that this should be built into the process for forthcoming curriculum reform.

**Recommendation 13.** The Cabinet Secretary should work with Qualifications Wales to ensure they are able to support the delivery of the new curriculum and the development of the resources needed for it.

**Recommendation 14.** The Cabinet Secretary should ensure that a lead-in time of 18-24 months is available for the production of any new resources required as a result of the forthcoming curriculum reform.

**97.** The Committee also agrees with Estyn in its call for any major change in examination policy to be introduced in a more staggered way. In particular, changing both GCSEs and A Levels in the same year for individual subjects should be avoided. This will have a positive impact on the production of any new resources required.

**Recommendation 15.** The Cabinet Secretary should ensure that major changes in examination policy should be introduced in a more staggered way in the future. In particular, changing both GCSEs and A Levels in the same year for individual subjects should be avoided.

# **Provision of textbooks and learning resources for pupils taking reformed general qualifications (GCSEs and A Levels) in Wales.**

Video interviews with pupils and teachers

April 2018

## **Introduction**

To help inform its one-off scrutiny session with the WJEC and Qualifications Wales, the Children, Young People and Education Committee wanted to hear from pupils and teachers, to understand their views on the provision of textbooks and learning resources. The committee is particularly concerned about the availability of Welsh medium resources and the resources available in specific subjects.

This paper briefly sets out the methodology used to gather opinion; the questions posed; and written responses from the participants.



## Methodology and participants

Conversations were held with schools across Wales including, Anglesey, Denbighshire, Preseli, Aberystwyth, West Wales and South East Wales.

GCSE and A Level students, studying a range of subjects, and teachers from three English language and seven Welsh language schools participated

Participants submitted their views via written and/or video evidence

## Questions

### STUDENTS

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- 1.** Have you always been able to find a textbook to help you study when you have needed one? If not, what impact has this had?
- 2.** Do you get your learning resources in the language of your choice? Have you ever not be able to get a resource in the language of your choice? If not, what impact has this had? How did it make you feel?
- 3.** When preparing for an exam or assignment, are you satisfied/happy with the learning resources available to you? If not, did this have any impact on you?
- 4.** When preparing course work or revising for an exam, where do you look to get extra information?

### TEACHERS

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- 1.** Have you always been able to find a textbook to support your teaching when you have needed one? If not, what impact has this had
- 2.** Do you get your teaching resources in the language of your choice? Have you ever not be able to get a resource in the language of your choice? If not, what impact has this had?
- 3.** When preparing students for an exam or assignment, are you satisfied / happy with the teaching resources available to you? If not, did this have any impact on you?
- 4.** Where do you recommend students look to get extra information when they are revising or preparing for an exam?

## Written and oral contributions

Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda

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### Teacher of Religious Studies and Sociology

1. Welsh books arrive at least a year after the English ones (e.g. my GCSE books (RE) have only just arrived – only 3 weeks before the exam)!!
2. The linguistic standards are too high for pupils when they arrive - higher than university standards.
3. No posters available e.g. DreamWorks / Illuminate.
4. We need to buy English books and translate as nothing else is available.
5. There are no Welsh marking schemes in some subjects.
6. There are no Welsh revision resources.

Ysgol David Hughes

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### Religious Education

7. Over the last two years, we, in the Religious Education department, have been disappointed with the lack of Welsh language resources available for teaching the course. Welsh resources arrive months after the English ones and often arrive at the end of the course. As teachers, we have been under extreme stress trying to understand terms for a completely new course. The WJEC vocabulary for the A2 course arrived late, so that was a huge challenge. Due to the lack of Welsh-medium resources, our translator cannot take on more work, so we have had to translate lengthy and complex units. As you can imagine, this has impacted on our other duties, resulting in huge stress. We have received complaints from parents, which causes us much distress, and we feel that we appear to be incompetent and unprofessional. The main complaint is the effect on the wellbeing of learners. Learners who study the course through the medium of Welsh are being treated unfairly and they feel disadvantaged. The fact that resources are available for English-medium learners but not for Welsh-medium learners holds the children back and, as a result, they do not reach their full potential. Undoubtedly, our Welsh-medium learners are not treated fairly.

## History

- 8.** The provision of GCSE History booklets is very good in both Welsh and English. A new series is being published. Most of the books for the new courses have been provided in both languages.

The provision of AS / A Level History booklets is disgraceful in both Welsh and English. There are no definite booklets for the different courses, therefore we have to select sections from many different English resources in order to provide specific information, and there is no provision in Welsh. As a result, no pupil chooses to study History at AS or A Level History in Welsh.

## Sociology

- 9.** There is generally a serious lack of Welsh language resources for the AS / A Level Sociology course. There are various of materials and power point resources on HWB and the WJEC website in English. This creates great difficulty for those introducing the course into two languages for the first time this year, and creates additional workload. Teachers should not have to spend time translating resources when planning for the new course. Pupils studying throughout the medium of English have access to a huge amount of resources. Access to resources on the Hwb website is inconsistent and we must use the WJEC website to access them – e-books and e-notes. I am very grateful for the material on research skills produced in Welsh by @tebol. Bangor University's Department of Social Sciences has also produced a Welsh language multimedia media toolkit on research methods and this will be very useful for students. There is a need for greater consistency in the materials produced in both languages to encourage bilingual learning.

## Biology

- 10.**

WJEC resources for GCSE Biology are good in both languages. As a department, we have invested extensively to buy the new textbook for the new course (Hodder). The department received 15 Welsh copies free of charge from WJEC - and the book was available in both languages at around the same time. WJEC has recently sent 6 copies of a textbook for pupils, free of charge, which includes notes and questions and answers. KS5 resources are available in both languages - although we only offer the course in English.

## Ysgol Glan y Mor - Preseli

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### French

11. There are very few resources in Welsh / need to create Welsh resources and often translate English resources.
12. Provision of booklets again is dreadful - no textbooks for KS3 and there is little choice in the GCSE books available.

### Religious education

13. A new GCSE Religious Studies course was introduced in September 2017 but there was no textbook available, in Welsh or in English. The Unit 1 Year 10 course was created arbitrarily on the basis of the information given in the specification. The English textbook was published for Unit 1, which is the Year 10 course, in October and, at last, at the beginning of April, the Welsh textbook was published. An English textbook for Unit 2, year 11, has just been published and it is anticipated that the Welsh version may be out in late July. An English revision book is due to be published in August, but there is no mention of the Welsh version.

I feel that the lack of Welsh textbooks is totally unacceptable. It was very difficult to create a new course for teachers without the certainty that we were providing the appropriate material, and it is unfair to expect anyone to do so without the availability of the necessary resources. Introducing a new course is in itself difficult without the additional burden of a lack of textbooks. The situation is unfair and absolutely disgraceful considering that the pupils will take their Unit 1 examination on May 14th. The Welsh textbook was published only 5 weeks beforehand. Pupils needed the book during the year to make worthwhile and comprehensive use of the information contained in it. In addition, there is no sense in the fact that there is no revision book to help teachers and pupils.

We now have to prepare the Unit 2 course for Year 11, again WITHOUT the Welsh textbook. It is waste of our time, again, for us to create this course and for the information to be presented to us in the textbook, when it arrives. I feel that no teacher or pupil who is studying a new GCSE subject through the medium of Welsh has been shown any respect or fairness to enable them to study the subject with confidence.

It should be ensured that resources for any course introduced in Wales have been published in Welsh before the course starts.

## Geography

- 14.** Welsh textbooks DID NOT arrive until January 2017 although the course started in September 2017. Therefore, we had to translate and prepare our own resources in Welsh.
- 15.** The English Revision Booklet is excellent - WJEC has refused to translate it for 2 years, claiming that it is not appropriate. The Revision booklet is totally appropriate!
- 16.** Head of subject has translated 2 chapters of the English textbook while the school has paid for external translators to translate 4 other chapters!

## Electronics (Equidas course)

- 17.** English resources available from WJEC to follow this course.
- 18.** Head of subject has emailed WJEC requesting resources in Welsh - WJEC refuses to translate them!
- 19.** No examples of the exams available in Welsh (although the final exam is in Welsh)
- 20.** England's Equidas course is available in Wales (but Equidas is not required to translate it).

## Business (BTEC course)

- 21.** BTEC Level 2 Business resources available in English only. School has translated the textbooks. Official forms for pupils' tasks are not available in Welsh. No English examination papers available corresponding to the various Welsh language examination papers (online).

## Science

- 22.** English booklets published and available from September 2016 although we have prepared many resources over the summer. NO Welsh books available until January 2017. Revision booklets are published months after English booklets (just received the booklets for year 11 although they have completed three exams last year!!).
- 23.** Also, the language used in Welsh examination papers through the Welsh language is FAR MORE difficult than that used in the English language

papers. MANY pupils are underachieving because of this and are applying to study the courses in English (we must comply with the County's policy).

### General teacher comments

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- 24.** There has always been an abundance of resources for teaching WJEC Religious Studies at GCSE and GCE level. WJEC has always ensured that there is high-quality material available to support the teaching and learning of Religious Studies. It is unfortunate that, due to the demands of the new GCE course, there has been a delay in the publication of the new textbooks. This has placed extra stress on teachers who are trying to deliver the new specification.
- 25.** However, the WJEC website has a range of excellent resources including a ShareSpace for teachers to share information sheets, video clips and other digital material. There is also a wide range of online material which students can access to enhance their learning, including You Tube clips on various aspects of Philosophy and Ethics.
- 26.** I would also like to add that the textbooks that have been published thus far are excellent. They will enable us to deliver the new specification in a much more effective way next year.
- 27.** At this time of year the need for revision guidance and booklets is paramount. In the first year of delivering the new specification, we have found a deficit of sample exam questions and mark schemes. It is a shame that the WJEC did not have revision guidance in place to assist both teachers and pupils.
- 28.** The main text for the new syllabus was not available until half-way through the Autumn term, which was very frustrating. Once the text book was available, though useful and informative, it is necessarily too bulky as it covers all religions.'

### General student comments

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- 29.** The text books have good information in them and great definitions of key concept words. They are easy to understand. I think it would be beneficial if revision booklets could be provided for upcoming exams.' Year 10 student
- 30.** 'It would be really useful to have revision booklets to help before the exams.' Year 10 student

**31.** ‘The text books are very useful, however other resources are interesting too.’

Year 10 student

**32.** ‘I find the textbook too much. There is so much information in it that it gets

a bit overwhelming. I would like something more focused on the two

religions we are studying’. Year 10 student