Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

Policy Review of the Welsh Language in Education

Introductory Observations

The Policy Review of the Welsh Language in Education is to be undertaken in the context of the following guiding principle:

- that every child and student in Wales be given the opportunity to become bilingual in Welsh and English

This principle would appear to involve two main dimensions:

> seeking to improve speakers' competence in both Welsh and English

> fostering an awareness of the potential contribution of bilingualism to raising standards of achievement at a broader level

A further two issues emerge in this context:

☐ Speakers' access to the economic and employment benefits of bilingualism

☐ Bilingual skills as a means of furthering multilingualism

These considerations are seen to lie at the core of the National Assembly's vision of

- *fostering Wales' unique and diverse identity and the benefits of bilingualism*

and also the vision of a Wales which is:

- *prosperous, well-educated, skilled, ... and culturally rich*

Key considerations

It is intended that the Review be informed by a constant awareness of the following:

- A clear understanding of what is meant by the vision of a 'bilingual Wales', and an assessment of the implications of this interpretation in relation to individual and collective linguistic rights

- Possible alternatives to the dichotomy 'Welsh as a medium/ Welsh as a subject' (or 'Welsh as a medium/ English as a medium'), and the potential afforded by the use of the two languages as dual media

- The significance of **continuity of provision** in relation to the likelihood of speakers becoming functionally bilingual, namely, the take-up of Welsh-medium provision in the transition between the various stages of pupils' education

- The notion of a **linguistic continuum**, relevant both in terms of the opportunity for individual students to build on the competence acquired by them at previous stages of their education, and also in terms of the methods applied to assess skills

- **Access** to bilingual education, with particular reference to:

    ° Obstacles hindering access to provision that is technically available (e.g. geographical location, transport issues) ⇒ Issue of community schools

    ° Special Educational Needs

    ° Lifelong Learning

- The relationship between language and education, on the one hand, and **language in the family and community** on the other. 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).

Specific issues

In addition to the above considerations, the following issues would appear to merit close scrutiny. Areas of particular interest are noted.

Pre-school Education/ Educare

- Funding and marketing of the provision offered by *Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin* (Welsh- medium nursery provision)

- Measures to monitor the language development of children attending the *Cylchoedd Meithrin*

- Role of parents in enhancing the provision

- Bilingual provision: other providers of pre-school education/ educare (all-day nurseries, playgroups)

- Implications of nursery provision (in Welsh and English) in state-funded nursery units, particularly for 3-year olds

- Interface between nursery education providers and primary schools

5-16 year-olds

Continuity between primary and secondary schooling

- Accessibility and nature of the information provided on the options available

- Role of parents in decision-making

The National Curriculum

- Appraisal of the National Curriculum in Wales

Careers

- Methods of collating information on the need for Welsh-medium and bilingual skills in the workplace

- Means of disseminating information on careers/ occupations requiring these skills

- Desirability of nationally-acknowledged and regulated levels of bilingual proficiency

<u>Post-16 education</u>

<u>Welsh-medium and bilingual provision in Further Education and Higher Education</u>

<u>Vocational Training</u>

- Measures to identify needs in terms of Welsh-medium and bilingual skills/ qualifications

- Availability of Welsh-medium and bilingual courses, and acquisition of skills through the medium of Welsh

- Dissemination of information about needs and availability

- Accreditation and examining of vocational courses

- Partnerships with business

<u>Welsh for Adults</u>

- Rôle of the eight Welsh for Adults Consortia

- Funding issues

- Levels of attainment and drop-out rates

- Co-ordination of planning at a national level

- Awareness of new developments in language teaching methodologies

<u>Welsh in the workplace</u>

- Welsh for Special Purposes/ Identification of different linguistic profiles according to specific linguistic tasks

- Welsh and bilingual skills as an aspect of professional development in all spheres of work

<u>Special Educational Needs</u>

- Process of diagnosing and assessing pupils' needs in the context of Welsh-medium and bilingual education

- Measures to overcome shortfalls in the number of specialists working through the medium of Welsh (speech and other therapies)

- Consistency of provision at a national level

Recruitment, Training and Professional Development

- Availability of data to identify needs in terms of recruitment into the profession (see also 'Research, Data and Evaluation' below)

- Measures to address shortage of teachers competent to teach through the medium of Welsh (primary, secondary, FE and HE)

- Availability of INSET courses through the medium of Welsh

- Availability of Welsh-language and Welsh -medium supply teachers

- Management skills through the medium of Welsh, and training for aspiring headteachers through the medium of the language

- Initial training and INSET:

    - emphasis on bilingual methodology and the challenges/ implications of bilingual teaching

    - awareness of new developments in language teaching methodologies

Pedagogical Resources/ Materials

- Strategy for identifying and responding to needs at all stages of education at a national level

- Strategy for reviewing materials published over the last ten years

Research, Data and Evaluation

- Agreement on the precise meanings of the terms used to refer to the different kinds of language provision available (e.g. Category A, Immersion etc.)

- Reliable and high quality data on provision, take-up, continuity etc.

- Application of the above in terms of strategic overview, planning, and recruitment and training of staff to answer needs

- Promote culture of scholarship in the evaluation of data and education-related research

ICT/ New Technologies

- Role in enhancing the profile of Welsh in terms of prestige/ linguistic normalisation

- Applications in the following areas:

  □ teaching and learning materials

  □ teachers' access to information re. opportunities in their field

  □ distance learning (including video-conferencing), particularly in post- 16 and adult education

Opportunities for International Partnerships and Co-operation

Relevant to all stages of education

Identify cases which provide appropriate points of comparison. To include:

- language teaching and bilingual teaching methodologies

- teacher training

- marketing of bilingualism