

NEU Cymru additional evidence

CYPE Stage 1 scrutiny of the Curriculum and Assessment Bill

* Will teachers need training or support to ensure their teaching and delivery of RVE is pluralistic, critical and objective?

A school may have pupils with many religious or non-religious beliefs in attendance and the school therefore needs to ensure that the content of the RVE part of the curriculum is inclusive, pluralistic and developmentally appropriate. We believe it is essential that schools and education professionals have access to high-quality training to ensure that they can deliver the new RVE curriculum. If the funding for this is not made available to schools, they will not be as able to teach an inclusive and developmentally appropriate curriculum, which in turn, could lead to tensions between Local Authorities, education professionals, parents and schools.

* What particular challenges (and opportunities?) might there be in English-medium schools of working on a single learning continuum for Welsh?

We support the Welsh Government's aim to have 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050. We have always said that this will only be possible if we ensure there is support available for the current and future workforce, to ensure they are able to teach, and young people to learn and practice their Welsh.

GCSEs

Our members highlight that it is vital that there is a clear understanding of what is meant by a continuum. Whilst there are attractions in a unified programme of study, current provision is heavily influenced top down by whether learners are to be assessed at GCSE according to the Welsh or Welsh Second Language specification. We understand that many able, second language speakers, the latter specification can be insufficiently challenging and the former, with its emphasis on command of idiom and technical correctness in writing, too demanding. However, the combination of these two specifications into a combined programme of study, or continuum, will succeed or fail based on how it is assessed at GCSE. As we don't know what the assessment system will look like yet, it is therefore hard to judge. We do have opportunities to do this well, and really look at what the purpose of assessment is. This year has

shown us that exams are subject to a range of factors, and are not necessarily comparable year on year.

On whatever scale progress is measured, the most able linguists will be at a higher level and newcomers, or less able linguists, and those who are Welsh second-language learners, will likely be less advanced. This could make Welsh as a subject unpopular with those who will never perceive themselves as being "successful" to gain high results in exams/assessments.

We believe, there is anecdotal evidence of universities rejecting applications from learners on the basis of GCSE results as they were not perceived to be "all round performers," where the grade achieved in Welsh did not match the top grades secured in other subjects.

Therefore, we need to ensure that a single examination, even if tiered, avoids a cap to the grades achievable by pupils who would be the usual second language cohort. We would not want to impact on the motivation of young people to learn Welsh and the appeal of a subject which is integral to providing the future Welsh speakers, which the Welsh Government aims for.

Training

We need to produce more teachers who can teach through the medium of Welsh, or enough teachers with the Welsh language skills to teach to the highest levels. We need to ensure that all schools are using teachers trained in the subject to teach Welsh.

Therefore, training is needed to ensure that Welsh can be embedded within the new Curriculum, as we presume is the aim of the "continuum". We would expect Welsh Government to provide such training opportunities. We would not want to risk people leaving the profession because they are unable to speak Welsh. People who have been in the profession for a long time, may, for example, be experienced classroom teachers, who should be able to use their skills within the context of the new Curriculum. Therefore opportunities for everyone to learn Welsh are essential, to ensure we have the workforce to deliver the expectations of the new Curriculum.

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