

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 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

- 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