

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Ymchwiliad i Gynlluniau Strategol Cymraeg mewn Addysg | Inquiry into Welsh in Education Strategic Plans

WESP 31

Ymateb gan : Norman Hudson

Response from : Norman Hudson

The Welsh Government is rightly committed to achieving best value for money in all Public Services: sadly, the Department for Education and Skills spends £2billion each year only to provide the lowest standard of education in the UK. The Minister has said that “Education today is the Economy tomorrow”; if he is right, the outlook for Wales is truly bleak.

When set against International PISA standards, the quality of Education in our Schools has been in catastrophic decline since Devolution. The Government says, in its defence, that delivering Public Services in Wales is hampered by poverty and by a dispersed population: but, GDP is lower in Northern Ireland and there are fewer people per square mile both in Northern Ireland and in Scotland.

The Environment seems to be in safer hands. A derelict site cannot be developed without a prior *Environmental* Impact Assessment; no stone may be turned if there’s the faintest chance of a newt hiding under it or a migratory bird fossicking over it. Our Children, it seems, don’t warrant such care – there being no corresponding *Educational* Impact Assessment before each new initiative further disrupts the classroom.

Given that, for every *aptitude and ability*, 50% of the population is – by definition – below average; it was irresponsible of the Government to implement the Welsh-Medium Education Policy without first having established that children with below average *language skills* have the capacity to be bilingual. In the absence of any contrary evidence, it seems entirely possible that it is this extra burden of the bilingual programme that is crippling our young people both for the PISA tests and for life.

I submit that the Welsh Medium Education experiment should be abandoned – unless it can be clearly shown that its continuance is doing no harm.

The Government, it seems, is unable to distinguish between MUST and WANT: it must manage the Economy successfully, it must deliver a first rate Education and it must achieve best value for money in all public spending; in addition, as a perfectly

legitimate national aspiration, it may want to foster a thriving Welsh language... but such whims cannot be allowed to interfere with absolute necessity.

The execution of Policy is said to be subject to intense scrutiny both from the Assembly and from other, supposedly independent, Public Bodies: it is, then, astonishing - that neither Assembly Committees nor Estyn nor the Auditor General's Office can produce any evidence to show:

- that Employers value and want workers who are bilingual in English and Welsh;
- that a person with below average language skills has the capacity to be bilingual;
- that it is NOT the extra burden of the bilingual programme that is crippling our young people in the PISA tests;
- that, with particular reference to our deteriorating PISA standings, the Government IS achieving best value for money with regard to its spending on Education;
- that the business of creating wealth is carried out in Welsh; or,
- that, in spite of all indications to the contrary, the DfES is fit for purpose.

As a further illustration of DfES folly, £12m is frittered away, each year, on the Welsh for Adults programme: not in the classroom, on "teaching", but on administration. Worse, no-one can say how many (if any) learners have emerged fluent in Welsh.

PISA Results for Wales
(E) England : (S) Scotland : (NI) Northern Ireland

| | 2006 | | 2009 | | 2012 | |
|----------------|---|---|--|---|---|--|
| | Score | Rank | Score | Rank | Score | Rank |
| | Maths | 484 495(E) : 506(S) : 494(NI) | 33 rd | 472 493(E) : 499(S) : 492(NI) | 40 th | 468 <i>Shanghai 613</i> 495(E) : 498(S) : 487(NI) |
| Science | 505 516(E) : 515(S) : 508(NI) | 22 nd | 496 515(E) : 514(S) : 511(NI) | 30 th | 491 <i>Shanghai 580</i> 516 (E) : 513(S) : 507(NI) | 36 th <i>1st</i> |
| Reading | 481 496(E) : 499(S) : 495(NI) | 29 th | 476 495(E) : 500 (S) : 499(NI) | 38 th | 480 <i>Shanghai 570</i> 500(E) : 506(S) : 498(NI) | 41 st <i>1st</i> |

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|--------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 5 GCSE A*-C | 62.3% 62.1%(E) : : 71.7%(NI) | | 65.5% 66.9%(E) : : 75.1%(NI) | | 65.8% 69.5%(E) : : 75.6%(NI) | |
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