

Children and Young People Committee

CYP(4)–09–11 Paper 4

Inquiry into the implementation of the Learning and Skills Measure 2009

Evidence from UCU



**WALES
CYMRU**

**RESPONSE TO: NAfW Children and
Young People Committee's inquiry
into the implementation of the
Learning and Skills Measure (2009)**

CONSULTATION

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The University and College Union (UCU) represents more than 120,000 academics, lecturers, trainers, instructors, researchers, managers, administrators, computer staff, librarians and postgraduates in universities, colleges, prisons, adult education and training organisations across the UK.

UCU is the largest post-school union in the world: a force working for educators and education that employers and the government cannot ignore.

It was formed on 1 June 2006 by the amalgamation of two strong partners - the Association of University Teachers (AUT) and NATFHE-the University & College Lecturers' Union - who shared a long [history](#) of defending and advancing educators' employment and professional interests.

UCU Wales welcomes the opportunity to respond to the committee's request for evidence to their inquiry into the implementation of the Learning and Skills Measure (Wales) 2009. In our original submission to the Welsh Government's consultation on the Measure, we welcomed the recognition by the Government of the need to regulate the delivery of provision for learners within the 14-19 age cohorts in Wales, and we still continue to believe this.

Previous Welsh Assembly Governments had failed to understand the damaging impact of competition on the provision of education and training. Access to wide ranging learning provision for all 14-19 learners is a pre-requisite in enabling learners to fulfill their potential and become fully engaged in their communities and working life. We believe that a curriculum which meets the needs of all 14-19 year old learners is a must for a healthy, productive society in Wales.

UCU Wales would also like to raise concerns with regards to the timing of this inquiry. The Learning and Skills Measure (Wales) has only been in place for two years, with the current targets set for 2012. Whilst UCU Wales understands the reasoning behind conducting the inquiry now, we feel that the Measure needs to be embedded properly before a full review is conducted, and UCU Wales believes this issue will need to be revisited in three years time.

What effect has the implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 had to date on young people aged 14-19 years? Do young people have a wider choice of academic and vocational courses as a result of the measure?

The Measure was meant to give learners a wider choice of academic and vocational courses, and in most instances, we believe this to be true. UCU Wales believes there might still be some instances, whereupon learners aren't quite being given the choices that the Measure was meant to give them. We believe that one of the reasons for this is down to the fact that the Measure was meant to offer learners a minimum of thirty courses by 2012; and not 2011, therefore there is still time to achieve this.

UCU Wales does have some concerns over collaboration across local authorities, schools and further education colleges. UCU Wales is concerned that some, not all, schools are intent on providing the wide range of courses themselves. It should be noted that for some courses, FE colleges specialise in

certain courses with facilities and teaching expertise that schools are unable to match at the moment, and therefore learners should be allowed to access education for which is the best education for them, be it at school or an FE college. To ensure that the Measure is successful, we need to ensure that there is proper collaboration right across the sector.

UCU Wales is aware of some excellent examples of proper collaboration, notably in Carmarthenshire where the local authority, schools and Coleg Sir Gar are working closely to deliver on the Measure through the tri-schools reorganisation plans. UCU Wales believes proper collaboration will take time embed properly. Once this has happened, we would recommend looking again at the success of the Measure.

Do Welsh language pupils get the same depth and range of choice?

UCU Wales believes that Welsh language pupils unfortunately do not get the same depth and range of choice as their English language counterparts. Whilst UCU Wales recognises the great strides that are being made in Wales in light of the Welsh Medium Education strategy, we still believe more needs to be done. The provision for Welsh or bilingual education in the academic stream usually results in the pupil having to continue their A-levels, in the main, at the sixth form at their Welsh medium comprehensive, because the provision is still not available at their local FE college.

In addition, there are several instances whereupon pupils are unable to access vocational courses at their local FEI due to the lack of Welsh provision available. For instance, in one case, a pupil attended a local FE college to study Carpentry, where the member of staff was a fluent Welsh speaker, but wasn't confident enough with terminology in English and therefore taught through the medium of English.

UCU Wales believes that if the Welsh Government is serious about Welsh medium education they must recognise the constraints on the Welsh medium education strategy. UCU Wales believes these constraints will continue until they fund appropriate training for teaching and lecturing staff. Being a fluent Welsh speaker does not necessarily mean that you have the skills to teach through the medium of Welsh or bilingually. UCU Wales believes if this issue is to be addressed, the Welsh Government must invest in staff training to ensure that they are able to deliver bilingually.

UCU Wales believes that the new Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol will substantially increase Welsh medium provision in higher education as well the increase in the number of staff who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh. UCU Wales believes the next step for Welsh medium education would be the creation of a equivalent body for further education and 14-19 education to ensure similar developments are made in the sector.

UCU Wales believes strongly that current commitments by the Welsh Government to expand Welsh medium provision are important, but need to be implemented further to ensure that Welsh language pupils are offered the same depth and range of choice as their English language counterparts..

If the measure has resulted in a wider choice of academic and vocational courses, has this had any unintended consequences for other subjects, for example modern languages?

UCU Wales are not in a position to comment on this issue, and would leave it those better placed to do so.

Has the implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 had any effect on the numbers of young people choosing to stay on in education or training at the end of compulsory education at 16?

UCU Wales believes this would be hard to measure currently as there are many other factors affecting the numbers of young people choosing to stay on in education. Due to the economic climate, many young people are choosing to stay on in education. Additionally, there is a significant lack of jobs available for young people; youth unemployment currently stands at around 20%.

UCU Wales believes due to these factors, as well as the short life span of the Measure's implementation, you cannot attribute the numbers staying on in education solely on the Learning and Skills Measure (Wales) 2009. But UCU Wales believes if we get the Measure right, then it can benefit the learner.

What practical problems are being addressed in order to implement the Measure? Are there implementation problems for example:

- in rural areas
- the provision by local authorities of a minimum of thirty learning programmes, including five vocational options
- delivering of local area curricula
- delivery of learning (including the use of IT and remote learning)
- transport and travel issues
- any others?

UCU Wales believes that learning providers would be better placed to comment on this issue.

Is the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 being implemented consistently across all local authorities?

UCU Wales believe that anecdotal evidence currently suggests that this is not the case.

Are vulnerable learners, particularly those with additional learning needs, able to benefit from the provisions in the Measure?

UCU Wales are not in a position to comment on whether vulnerable and ALN learners are benefiting from the provision in the Measure.

Is learning support being delivered effectively?

UCU Wales is not in a position to comment on whether learning support is being delivered effectively.

What effect is the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 having on further education colleges?

UCU Wales believes that the Measure is driving the transformation agenda forward as it removes the market in the sector, where collaboration is working effectively.

Despite this, UCU Wales believes the Measure has lead to an increased pressure on lecturers with regards to professional practice. As part of the Measure, learners in the 14-16 age cohorts attend lectures at FE colleges, which increase pressure on lecturers as they have not received the training needed to work with this age cohort. For example, learners at 14 years of age require more supervision in a workshop environment than that an older learner would, and this impairs the quality of lecture being delivered as a higher percentage of the teaching session is spent on supervising rather than educating.

UCU Wales understands that the previous, as well as the current, FE PGCE course doesn't cover working with learners under the age of 16. UCU Wales would encourage that if lecturers are expected to work with learners under the age of 16 that these needs are catered for in any future PGCE courses for FE.

UCU Wales was contacted previously with regards to contributing to Welsh Government guidance on this issue. This guidance cannot be found on the Welsh Government website, and UCU Wales would urge that this guidance, if it exists, is updated and published as a matter of urgency.

Lecturers in these environments need the relevant training and support in order to be able to teach these learners effectively. UCU Wales believes this is essential if learners are to receive a high standard of education, and if the Measure is going to benefit these learners.

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