

Background

The teaching of Welsh history and culture has been the focus of intense debate both before and since the establishment of the national curriculum in 1988. The murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement have brought renewed focus on antiracism education and the teaching of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic history and culture in schools since summer 2020.

When the National Curriculum was established in Wales and England in 1988, it was agreed that some subjects, including history, would have different programmes of study in Wales. The aim was that the national curriculum for Wales reflect the culture, environment, economy and history of Wales, and the influences that shape modern Wales. In 1993 and 2003, the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority For Wales (ACCAC) (2003) identified the need for further guidance on developing Y Curriculum Cymreig and published supporting materials and resources for schools. In 2001, ACCAC (2001) published a report 'Equal opportunities and diversity in the school curriculum in Wales'. In 2001 and 2005 we published thematic surveys on Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig (Estyn, 2005). In 2005 we reported the quality of planning by schools for Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig had improved since the Estyn survey of 2001 and in many of the classes visited, pupils were developing a good knowledge, skill and understanding of the way in which historical events, people and landscapes have influenced artists, poets and authors in various parts of Wales. In the same year we reported that a minority of schools had used the guidance on equal opportunities and diversity in the school curriculum in Wales effectively.

In 2008 the National Curriculum for Wales was revised. Curriculum guidance documents referred to Curriculum Cymreig (Ages 7-14) and Wales, Europe and the World (Ages 14-19). The guidance emphasised the contribution of history to the Curriculum Cymreig helping learners understand the factors that have shaped Wales through the study of local and Welsh history. In addition the guidance specifies that schools should develop approaches that develop pupils' knowledge, understanding, skills, values and attitudes to enable them to participate in the multi-ethnic society of Wales.

'Learners aged 7-14 should be given opportunities to develop and apply their knowledge and understanding of the cultural, economic, environmental, historical and linguistic characteristics of Wales. Learners aged 14-19 should have opportunities for active engagement in understanding the political, social, economic and cultural aspects of Wales as part of the world as a whole. History contributes to the Curriculum Cymreig by making local and Welsh history a focus of the study and helping learners to understand the factors that have shaped Wales and other countries today.' (Welsh Assembly

Government, 2008, p.8).

‘Schools should develop in every learner a sense of personal and cultural identity that is receptive and respectful towards others. Schools should plan across the curriculum to develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, values and attitudes that will enable learners to participate in our multi-ethnic society in Wales. Schools should develop approaches that support the ethnic and cultural identities of all learners and reflect the range of perspectives, to engage learners and prepare them for life as global citizens.’ (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008, p.4)

In 2010, the Welsh Assembly Government published guidance on ‘Unity and diversity’ to support schools to develop the principles of equality and diversity (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010).

In 2012, the Minister for Education and Skills established a task and finish group chaired by Dr Elin Jones to produce a report for the Welsh Government (2013) on *The Curriculum Cymreig, history and the story of Wales*. The task and finish group noted that schools' attitudes towards the Curriculum Cymreig varied widely, for example by treating the Welsh dimension as an addendum to programmes of study or emphasising local and Welsh context at the expense of the links between Wales and the world. The task and finish group went on to suggest that ‘many learners in Wales learn far more about the history of England than that of their own area and country’ (Welsh Government, 2013, p.12). The main recommendations about Welsh history from the report included:

- In the revision of the national curriculum, the programme of study should be structured so as to provide clear guidance on the relationship between local, Welsh, British, European and world history. The aim should be to provide a sound foundation for learners’ historical understanding while expanding their horizons.
- A proportion of Welsh history should be an integrated and compulsory part of every history GCSE specification offered in Wales.
- Certain questions, themes and topics should be selected for development on Hwb+ so that the higher education and heritage sectors work with teachers to develop innovative resources based on the latest research.

All such resources should emphasise the provisional nature of history and the diversity of experience in all periods. Where appropriate, it should help learners to contrast and compare the experiences of different groups of people in all periods. (Welsh Government, 2013, p.22)

In 2014, the Minister for Education and Skills asked Professor Donaldson to conduct a review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales from the foundation phase to key stage 4. The resulting report, *Successful Futures* (Donaldson, 2015), outlined proposals for a new curriculum and recommended that the principle of subsidiarity be

applied to the process of curriculum reform. The Curriculum for Wales is purpose driven rather than content driven, allowing schools to design and develop their own curriculum. A few stakeholders within education in Wales perceive the Curriculum for Wales to provide both opportunity and threat to the inclusion of Welsh history and culture in schools.

In November 2019, the National Assembly for Wales, Culture, Welsh language and Communications Committee (2019) published a report on the teaching of Welsh history, culture and heritage to inform the Welsh Government's consultation on the Curriculum for Wales 2022. The committee considered evidence from a range of stakeholders, including a member of the Curriculum Cymreig, history and the story of Wales task and finish group who expressed frustration with the lack of progress in the development of the teaching of Welsh history, especially considering that their report was published in 2013 (National Assembly for Wales, 2019, p.7). The Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team provided evidence from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic pupils to the committee outlining their concerns that there was nothing in the curriculum about being black and Welsh. They were also critical of teachers' superficial knowledge of diverse histories. (National Assembly for Wales, 2019, p.19)

In July 2020, the Welsh Government appointed Professor Charlotte Williams to lead a working group to advise on and improve the teaching of themes relating to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities and experiences across all parts of the curriculum. The working group's recommendations included:

- the creation of new bilingual resources to support the teaching of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic history and culture
- the strengthening of What Matters Statements to reflect that Wales is a multicultural society with a long history of diversity and to mitigate the risk that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic experiences and contributions are marginalised
- the provision of guidance to stimulate schools to reflect on diversifying the curriculum
- provision for professional learning throughout teachers' careers (Williams, 2021, p.11-15)

In January 2020, the Welsh Government published guidance for the Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2020). This aims to help schools develop their own curriculum, enabling their pupils to develop towards the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales. Schools should have a vision to develop a curriculum which supports the development of pupils' sense of identity in Wales. Schools should design their curriculum in a way that allows pupils to consider local, national and international contexts and develop understanding of human rights education and diversity. This includes human rights education and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The guidance for the cross-cutting theme of diversity refers to 'recognising and celebrating the diverse nature of social groups and communities and to ensuring that the curriculum

reflects that diversity, and is responsive to the experiences of those groups and communities' (Welsh Government, 2020, p.42). In addition, 'learners' understanding of Wales should also recognise how different perspectives, values and identities shape Wales, rather than presenting a simplistic characterisation of a uniform Welsh identity' (Welsh Government, 2020, p.45). The guidance refers to opportunities such as:

- making links with local communities and organisations
- learning about cultural diversity, values, histories and traditions within local, national and international contexts
- understanding different identities, histories, cultures, perspectives and values that shape communities and societies
- developing an authentic sense of cynefin, building knowledge of different cultures and histories, allowing them to develop a strong sense of individual identity and understanding how this is connected to and shaped by wider influences
- drawing on the stories and distinctiveness of a school's local surroundings
- recognising Wales' diverse linguistic heritage and culture, and its connections with the rest of the world
- recognising the links between local, national and international contexts, understanding how they constantly influence each other

In May 2021, the Welsh Government (2021) published a consultation document on the draft statements of the What Matters Code. Within the humanities area of learning and experience, amendments include making references to Welsh history more explicit. In addition, statements of what matters have been strengthened to refer to the development of pupils' understanding of the diverse history, cultural heritage, ethnic diversity, identities, experiences and perspectives of their local area, Wales and the wider world. The Curriculum for Wales Framework guidance will be published in Autumn 2021.

Maintained secondary schools in Wales teach the reviewed WJEC GCSE in history which commenced in September 2017 for award from 2019. The GCSE qualification aims to allow learners to:

- develop and extend their knowledge and understanding of Welsh history and the Welsh perspective in history
- acquire an understanding of different identities, including their own, within a society and an appreciation of social, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity
- build on their understanding of the past and the diversity of human experience through experiencing a broad and balanced course of study

The GCSE syllabus consists of four units: two studies in depth entitled 'Wales and the wider perspective' and 'History with a European/world focus', a 'thematic study from a broad perspective' and a non-examination assessment (NEA) titled 'Working as a historian'. Each study in depth offers four options for schools to choose from. The

specification for the thematic study guides teachers to highlight the impact of change on Wales within the broader historical context.

Schools commenced teaching the reviewed AS/A Level in September 2015. Aims and objectives of the AS and A level include:

- to encourage learners to acquire an understanding of different identities within society and an appreciation of aspects such as social, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity, as appropriate
- learners should be given opportunities, where appropriate, to consider a Welsh perspective if the opportunity arises naturally from the subject matter and if its inclusion would enrich learners' understanding of the world around them as citizens of Wales as well as the UK, Europe and the world'

Glossary

antiracism

The policy of challenging racism and promoting racial equality