The Cwricwlwm Cymreig, history and the story of Wales

‘Distinctiveness in an education structure is no virtue of itself; it is worth fighting for only if it enriches the educational experience of pupils.’

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Introduction

The development of the national curriculum and Cwricwlwm Cymreig

The national curriculum of Wales today is the outcome of the Education Reform Act of 1988. Before this, although there were defined study areas for each examination subject, there were no compulsory curriculum Orders for learners under 14 years old. There were only two compulsory subjects, namely religious education and physical education. Welsh was also compulsory in some parts of Wales, but did not have to be taught at all in others. Otherwise each individual school had the freedom to choose the subjects to be taught as well as the aspects of these and the methods of presenting them to their learners.

Although this freedom allowed good teachers to devise learning experiences which were relevant to their learners and reflected the latest developments in the subject, it also meant that there were wide variations in the standard of education across the country. Although there were many reasons for the decision to introduce a national curriculum in 1988, concern about this variation was one reason for doing so.

The Cwricwlwm Cymreig

The original intention was to establish a common national curriculum for Wales and England. Wales and England had been one country for centuries, both constitutionally and in practice, and they shared a common education system. After considerable campaigning, it was agreed that some subjects, such as history and geography, would have different programmes of study. The Association of History Teachers in Wales took a leading part in this campaign to ensure a distinctive curriculum in Wales. Other subjects, such as mathematics and science, would have a core curriculum in common. During the process of developing the national curricula, there was close cooperation between the Curriculum Councils in Wales and England, and between the subject committees in all subjects, in order to ensure consistency between the two curricula.

The aim of the campaigning for a separate curriculum was to secure a national curriculum for Wales which would reflect the culture, environment, economy and history of Wales, and the influences which have shaped the country of today. A need for further guidance on this was perceived by ACAC which in 1993 published guidance on Developing the Curriculum Cymreig, following that with further

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2 Awduriod Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru (ACAC: the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales), successor body to the Curriculum Council for Wales (CCW), which developed the original curriculum. This later became ACCAC: Awduriod Cymwysterau, Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru (the Qualifications, Curriculum, and Assessment Authority) before being absorbed into the Education and Skills Department of the Welsh Government in 2006. For a comprehensive and informed account of the process of developing the National Curriculum in Wales and the Cwricwlwm Cymreig, see A History of Education in Wales (2003), pages 198–214. Emeritus Professor Gareth Elwyn Jones was a member of both the Welsh and English committees which developed the original programmes of study for history.

3 The adjective Cymreig means ‘pertaining to Wales or the Welsh; pertaining to the Welsh language’, that is in terms of geography, the economy or culture, and should be differentiated from the adjective Cymraeg, which refers more specifically to the Welsh language (definitions drawn from Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru: A Dictionary of the Welsh Language, Cardiff 1950–2002).
guidance and advice as the curriculum was reviewed. It remains the case however that while other countries simply have one national curriculum, Wales has a statutory national curriculum and an additional document which is also statutory.

One outcome of devolution in 1999 was the development of an increasingly independent education system in Wales. The original intention was to review the national curriculum every five years. Whilst this did not happen, there were reviews in 1995–6, 2000 and 2008. The Minister for Education and Skills announced a further review in October 2012, one key purpose of which is to consider the impact of the new National Literacy and Numeracy Framework and tests on existing curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales. As part of this wider review, the Minister has set up this task and finish group to look specifically at the teaching of Welsh history, the story(ies) of Wales and the Cwricwlwm Cymreig.

The Cwricwlwm Cymreig task and finish group will report to the Minister in July, and the first phase of the wider review will be completed by September 2013. This will include evidence gathering, consultation with key stakeholders and experts, and analysis, all of which will culminate in a report. The work of this task and finish group forms part of this phase, and will help to inform the final report to the Minister in September.

The second phase of the review will be completed by September 2014. This will include identification of any revisions to the current assessment and curriculum arrangements in Wales, informed by public consultation. Implementation is expected to take place from September 2014.

In addition, the Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales was published in November 2012. The Welsh Government announced its broad acceptance of all the recommendations of the review at the end of January 2013. This means, amongst other things, that GCSEs and A levels will be retained in Wales within the framework of a revised, more rigorous Welsh Baccalaureate. This will sometimes mean diverging from England and the rest of the UK, but many qualifications will continue to be shared. There will also be clear pathways for progression through the medium of Welsh.

History

The freedom teachers had before the establishment of the national curriculum allowed them to teach a subject like history from a Welsh perspective, and/or to include a strong element of local history in their schemes of work, if they chose to do so. It also allowed them to ignore Welsh and/or local history entirely, and to teach the history of any other country, if they so chose. Although there was never any obligation to do so, many teachers chose to teach a form of British history that was almost entirely dominated by England.

The influence of this belief that the history of England is the only ‘proper’ history is still to be seen in the custom of referring to the history of Wales as a subject.

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distinct from history itself. The history of the state, and thus of England, is the official history, namely the history taught in the country’s schools since the public education system developed in the Victorian era. This did not have to mean a complete absence of Welsh history in schools. Given that Wales had been a part of England, practically and constitutionally, for so many centuries, it thus follows that Welsh history had to be studied in the wider context of English history. However, when added to a historic lack of confidence in Welsh national identity, too often Anglocentric British history became the only kind of history taught. Rather than interpret Wales within a British context, Wales was often simply just left out of the history taught in schools.

This pattern has proved difficult to break. The programme of study for history has from its inception given appropriate attention to local and Welsh history, and good practice also indicates starting with the local and the familiar, developing into consideration of the unfamiliar and the wider world. Nevertheless, the panel’s experience suggests that many learners in Wales learn far more about the history of England than that of their own area and country. The task group also believe that not enough attention is paid to the other countries of Britain, and that there is also a tendency to concentrate on a narrow range of topics in the history of Europe and the world.

When the national curriculum was developed in 1989, the opening statement of the Preliminary Advice on History read:

"We believe that the overriding purpose of history in the school curriculum is to provide pupils, through the acquisition of historical knowledge, with a map of the past. This will help them to understand the inheritance and identity of their own society, and those of other societies."  

The task group maintains that these words continue to define the role of history in the school curriculum in Wales. It believes that the stories of Wales should be at the heart of any history course at every level in Wales. The history of Wales should not be treated as something to be attached to the history of England, when relevant to that history. It should not be added to a course devised for other countries either. Wales is the home of its learners, and a map of their past should be as familiar to them as the way home from school.

There is a continuing debate about the nature and content of many national history curricula, with particular reference to the tendency to emphasise the positive aspects of that country’s history. In practice however, the history curriculum of every country focuses on the history of that country. In a review of a number of different history curricula, from Greece and Turkey to the US and UK [sic], Mark Donnelly and Claire Norton say ‘…the history curriculum of a country focuses almost exclusively on the history of that state’. They think that this is because ‘...the history taught in schools plays an integral part in the dissemination and reinforcement of national

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5 National Curriculum History Committee for Wales, Preliminary Advice to the Secretary of State for Wales (Welsh Office, June 1989), page 5.
identities. It provides students with a sense of self, an idea of where they came from, and of the values of their nation\(^7\).

So the history taught in schools in Wales developed over the century before the national curriculum was developed. As outlined above, the history of England was the focus of that history, in schools in England and Wales alike, because Wales had no independent educational system or constitutional status during that period. It was necessary to campaign for a programme of study for history in Wales different from that of England. Although that campaign was successful, the influence of the old focus on the history of England appears still to be strong in schools in Wales. This undermines the aims of the current programme of study, with its emphasis on the centrality of the history of Wales within a wider context.

This may be compared with the current curriculum in Scotland, where the history of the country is central to the course of study, but set in a wider context, and international influences are recognised\(^8\). The task group would not want to replace the current programme of study for history with a ‘programme of study for Welsh history’, but wants to see the diet of what is learnt and taught in schools rebalanced to make the centrality of the Welsh element more visible. It would also want to include some topics which help students understand the context of Wales in the modern world which might be lacking from a more Anglocentric list of topics.

The task group would wish to emphasise that it does not oppose the teaching of the history of England as such. To understand the history of Wales, it is necessary to understand its historical context, namely the immense influence of England over many centuries on Wales and the other nations of Britain. The task group’s concern is that the development of the whole British state is explained from an English perspective only. This does not help learners ‘to understand the inheritance and identity of their own society, and those of other societies’\(^9\) except that of England.

**Learning and teaching resources**

There was a demand for resources to support the new national curriculum, and it was decided that the government should fund resources in English and Welsh for those subjects which had a separate Welsh programme of study, and Welsh versions of resources for subjects which had the same programme of study in Wales and England. The market for these resources was too small to make them commercially attractive without government subsidy.

The first history resources for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 were published in 1996\(^10\), for example, and since then appropriate resources have regularly been published for every curriculum subject. The Welsh Books Council is responsible for publicising and promoting the sales of these resources.

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\(^7\) Ibid.  
\(^8\) See [http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/studyingscotland/about.asp](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/studyingscotland/about.asp)  
\(^9\) See note 5.  
\(^10\) *Welsh History Stories/Storiâu Hanes Cymru* (Cardiff) for Key Stages 1 and 2, and *Focus on Welsh History/Flôcws ar Hanes Cymru* (Aberystwyth) for Key Stage 3.
Previously, the lack of teaching resources suitable for schools in Wales had been a matter of concern for many years. Teachers had either to use resources developed for England, adapting and/or translating them as needed, or use resources produced by publishers in Wales, which might or might not be suitable for their own scheme of work. For commercial reasons, the resources published in Wales were not always as attractive as those produced in England, and it seems likely that the poor quality of some Welsh history resources affected the learning experience of learners.
1. The Cwricwlwm Cymreig

Should the Cwricwlwm Cymreig best be delivered in future through the discipline of history and, if not, what are the best means of ensuring that the elements of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig are delivered across the curriculum?

At present the statutory expectation is that learners aged 7 to 14 should be given opportunities in all curriculum subjects to develop and apply their knowledge and understanding of the cultural, economic, environmental, historical and linguistic characteristics of Wales. Learners aged 14 to 19 should have opportunities for active engagement in understanding the political, social, economic and cultural aspects of Wales as a part of the world as a whole. For learners aged 14 to 19, this is part of their Learning Core entitlement and is a requirement at Key Stage 4.

History is seen as contributing to the Cwricwlwm 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.

Similar statements about the contributions of other subjects to the Cwricwlwm Cymreig are provided in the section ‘Learning across the curriculum’ in the introduction to their programmes of study.

Question 1: Should the Cwricwlwm Cymreig be delivered in future through the discipline of history?

The Cwricwlwm Cymreig should not be delivered through the discipline of history alone. The task group was unanimous in its belief that to do so would be damaging to the concept of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig itself, to the discipline of history, and also to the other curriculum subjects.

The group did not perceive there to be any advantages to delivering the Cwricwlwm Cymreig through history. Every subject provides opportunities for learners to develop their understanding of Wales, and the Cwricwlwm Cymreig should not focus on the past only: it should be a means of helping the present and future citizens of Wales to understand their world.

The task group was of the opinion that there would be the following disadvantages to delivering the Cwricwlwm Cymreig through History. It would:

- narrow the History Programme of Study too much, and tend to make it narrow and parochial
- lead to content overload of the programme of study, endangering the skills focus
- be open to being interpreted as an attempt to turn the study of history into nationalist propaganda
- mean that learners’ interest in the Cwricwlwm Cymreig would be entirely dependent on their interest in history as a subject – if history had no
appeal for them, there would be no other opportunity to kindle their interest in the Cwricwlwm Cymreig

• be impractical, given the limited time available for the teaching of history, and the optional nature of history from Key Stage 4 onwards
• be likely to deprive other subjects of their Welsh dimension, since there is far more to the Cwricwlwm Cymreig than history alone
• place the responsibility for developing the Cwricwlwm Cymreig on individual teachers, whereas it should be the school’s collective responsibility.

The task group was of the opinion that there were examples of good practice in integrating the Cwricwlwm Cymreig into subjects across the curriculum, but that there are wide variations in schools’ attitudes towards the Cwricwlwm Cymreig\(^\text{11}\). Not all schools understand the requirement that the Cwricwlwm Cymreig be relevant and meaningful to learners. While some schools are successful in giving a Welsh dimension to every subject, and do so in a way which is appropriate, integrated into the subject and the topic being investigated, many schools:

• limit it to some subjects only, for example Welsh as a subject, expressive arts (such as music and art) and history
• treat it as an addition to the ‘real’ programme of study, first devising their schemes of work, and then adding elements of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig afterwards.

Members from the primary sector thought that the present tendency towards a thematic approach, rather than a subject-based approach, provided more opportunities for effective development of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig, and they were more confident that it was being effectively delivered in their sector. Nevertheless, the tendency in some schools is to focus more on the local and the Welsh, possibly at the expense of the links between Wales and the world.

Members from the secondary sector expressed concern that the current trends in some secondary schools towards:

• reducing the time allocated to history in the school timetable
• and/or teaching it through integrated humanities courses
• and/or teaching it as part of a ‘carousel’ of humanities subjects

\(^{11}\) This comment is chiefly based on the impressions of those members of the task group who currently work with a number of different schools, as local advisors, or in museums and universities. It was supported by teacher members of the task group, on the basis of their own experience in different schools and discussions with colleagues. The most recent Estyn survey of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig was published in 2006 (Cwricwlwm Cymreig: Phase 2) and gives a comprehensive overview of the situation then, based on school reports for the academic years 2003–4 and 2005–6 and on visits during 2005–6 to a small number of secondary schools and one special school. Its conclusions (page 3) were that while teaching was good or better in three-quarters of schools, learners’ knowledge of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig had shortcomings in about a quarter of all schools in Wales, and in some of these the work was of a low standard.
• and/or compressing the Key Stage 3 history programme of study into Years 7 and 8
• and/or starting to teach GCSE subjects in Year 9

all had the practical result of reducing the time available to deliver the current programme of study in history, quite apart from the Cwricwlwm Cymreig.

Members from the higher education sector were anxious that we consider the effect of any changes on those students following GCSE and AS/A level courses at colleges for further education.

**Question 2:** If it is decided that the Cwricwlwm Cymreig should not be delivered through the discipline of history alone, what would be the best means of ensuring that the elements of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig are delivered across the curriculum?

The group felt that the Welsh dimension should be integrated into every subject, where that is relevant and meaningful. The current definitions are a good starting point in this respect, although they could be developed further.

A recent book on mathematics\(^{12}\) gives clear examples of how this may be done in subjects such as mathematics which share a core programme of study with schools in England. The author says in his introduction ‘The Welsh experience of counting must be understood in order to understand our contemporary attitude to numbers.’\(^{13}\)

The book includes a discussion on mathematical principles and puzzles, putting these in a Welsh context by, for example, outlining the work of Welsh people like Robert Recorde and analysing the reasons for the different ways of counting in Welsh.

The aim in every subject should be to integrate the essentials of the subject with the Welsh perspective in order to meet the demands of the twenty-first century, where that enhances both an understanding of the subject itself and of Wales. It need not be artificial or irrelevant. No one should be trying to put a Welsh hat on the Mona Lisa. But nor should an understanding of wider trends, concepts and events be divorced from their relevance to Wales. Peter Lord’s work on art in Wales, for example, shows how an image can be best understood by considering it in the context of the whole world of which it is a part, rather than in the context of art alone\(^{14}\). Similarly, Melin Tregwynt has adapted traditional Welsh techniques and patterns to produce textiles which have gained a worldwide market. The principles which inform the New Zealand Curriculum provide an interesting example of an approach which might be taken\(^{15}\).

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\(^{13}\) Page 15.

\(^{14}\) *The Visual Culture of Wales* (Aberystwyth, 1998)

The task group was of the opinion that teachers’ understanding of the implications of Cwricwlwm Cymreig needed to be improved across all age and ability sectors, and across all subjects.

Restricting the Cwricwlwm Cymreig to some subjects alone would:

- restrict learners’ experiences
- limit the opportunities for teachers to teach their subjects from a Welsh standpoint
- reduce the potential of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig to contribute to innovative teaching methods relevant to twenty-first century learners
- reinforce the impression that the Cwricwlwm Cymreig is something peripheral or additional
- downgrade the Welsh dimension of the national curriculum in the long term.

Every curriculum or scheme of work has the potential to become restrictively conservative if it does not develop with the passage of time and with changes in society. There have been great social changes since the national curriculum was first drawn up a quarter of a century ago. Devolution has been one of the most obvious, but not the only change in the course of these years. We should take this opportunity to look afresh at every curriculum subject, with the intention of reviewing them to meet the needs of twenty-first century society and post-devolution Wales.

The term ‘Cwricwlwm Cymreig’ is a stumbling block in itself, in the opinion of the task group. It is not a curriculum in itself, but an aspect of the national curriculum. The word ‘Cymreig’ also causes difficulty, since the difference in meaning between ‘Cymreig’ and ‘Cymraeg’ is not clear to everyone, especially to those who do not speak Welsh.

The task group considered the possibility of recommending that the name be changed, in order to:

- avoid the ambiguity of the current title
- make the wider context more explicit.

A name such as ‘Wales and the World’ would:

- strengthen the continuity from Key Stages 2 and 3 to Key Stages 4 and 5
- emphasise that basing the learners’ experiences on their own area is not parochial or narrow, as there is an expectation that an integrated Cwricwlwm Cymreig will also extend their horizons.

However the task group finally decided that a change of name would not resolve the issue, or help to achieve the original aim of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig: a fully Welsh curriculum which integrates the Welsh perspective into the learning and teaching of every subject.
It is of the opinion that any further revision of the national curriculum in Wales should start from a Welsh perspective, taking as its foundation and starting point the culture, history, economy and contemporary institutions of Wales. It should aim to create a genuine and holistic national curriculum for Wales. This would avoid the problem of an additional and detachable layer of ‘Welshness’, and circumvent the danger of adding another new initiative from the Government to a timetable which is already full.

It must be recognised that such integration could endanger the Welsh dimension if that is not already firmly established in the school’s ethos. Teachers will need a clear vision and leadership, as well as continuing training in order to ensure that the principles, the practice and the resources are all familiar to them.

To that end, it will be necessary to ensure that there are people available to help teachers to develop the Welsh perspective, and to integrate it into the work of the school. These people will need to be entirely familiar with the Welsh dimension of their subjects, and the latest methods of presenting these. One of the weaknesses of the current education system is the lack of continuity and progression from one key stage to the next, and this is particularly evident at transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and in the foundation subjects. To encourage the process of integrating the Welsh perspective into the whole work of the school, the task group recommend the appointment of ‘Champions Cymru’ to help schools across Wales.

These could be individuals with a specialism in the Welsh perspective in their subjects, or whole schools or departments in which the Cwricwlwm Cymreig has already been integrated into the learning and teaching. They will all need to be thoroughly familiar with:

- the Welsh dimension of their subjects
- the latest methods of presenting them
- effective methods of integrating Cwricwlwm Cymreig into learning and teaching
- developing successful cross-curricular work.

These champions should include subject specialists, to ensure their credibility, and there should be clear links between them and higher education. Both secondary and primary sectors should be represented, bearing in mind primary teachers’ expertise in the key task of designing integrated schemes of work. They should work closely together, to help teachers by developing a range of resources that:

- show clearly how the Welsh perspective can be integrated into the work of all schools in Wales
- recognise and promote good practice
- promote continuity and coherence across key stages
- demonstrate the relevance of the Welsh dimension to the learners’ experience
• reflect the latest subject research
• demonstrate the use of innovative teaching methods.

The champions should also be aware of the pressures of work on teachers and on school resources, and provide clear and practical advice on how existing schemes of work and resources may be used as a basis for these developments. Their focus should be on the potential of integrating the Welsh dimension to reduce teachers’ work load by offering opportunities to avoid repetition and unnecessary work.

N.B. In the recommendations that follow, Recommendation 1 outlines how the current Cwricwlwm Cymreig should be integrated into every aspect of the national curriculum in Wales in future, while Recommendation 2 onwards deal with the present situation, treating the Cwricwlwm Cymreig as one aspect of the national curriculum.

Recommendations

1. The concept of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig should be more clearly defined, and this new definition be at the core of any future curriculum in Wales

1a The task group propose the following definition:

‘The national curriculum in Wales will:

• provide opportunities for every learner to understand the past, present and future of the country where they live, and the way in which that country interrelates with and positions itself in the wider world
• promote an understanding of how the people of Wales and the country itself – resources, industries, cultures, etc. – are relevant (and have been in the past) to themes such as culture, politics, social and technological developments in other places
• provide opportunities to perceive the variety within Wales in order to help them to feel how their personal story is part of a wider picture of the present and the past
• emphasise Wales’ links with the world, in order to promote an understanding of a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Wales as part of a wider international community.’

1b The distinctive nature of the national curriculum in Wales should be the foundation of any future review of the curriculum, which should emphasise that the Welsh perspective is an essential part of the education of every learner in Wales, across the entire 3 to 19 age range and across the whole curriculum16.

16 A result of recent developments in education in Wales has been a reduction in emphasis on subject skills and knowledge, as teachers work to develop literacy, numeracy, PSE, etc. in every lesson.
1c The Welsh perspective should be integrated into the in-service training of every teacher in every subject, into the induction arrangements for new teachers and into classroom resources. Online materials should be made available to assist those teachers trained outside Wales to incorporate this easily into their practice.

2. A more effective method needs to be developed of gathering and sharing examples of good practice in the development of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig across Wales

2a Good practice in making the Cwricwlwm Cymreig meaningful and relevant to learners and showing how it enriches learning should be identified and exemplified. Estyn should include such examples on the ‘Good Practice’ section of their website.

2b A system of sharing this good practice should be established, by appointing ‘Pencampwyr/Champions Cymru’ in each consortium to promote a better understanding of the potential of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig. Such champions should have credibility in their own subjects, include secondary and primary specialists, and good contacts with the higher education sector. They should all be enthusiasts for the Cwricwlwm Cymreig. They would be the focus of the work outlined below.

2c Use Hwb and the Hwb+ Learning Platform to establish a national forum to share:

- training materials
- a range of appropriate digital resources in English and Welsh to support teaching the Cwricwlwm Cymreig, regularly reviewing and updating these
- more informal examples of good practice than those provided by Estyn, such as the work of the winners of the Welsh Heritage Schools’ Initiative’s annual competition
- subject discussions across sectors.

This should be supported by a regular electronic newsletter to schools and other interested bodies. The quality of all Hwb resources should also be assured, and updated regularly.

3. It should become compulsory for all qualifications offered in Wales to include a Welsh dimension where appropriate

The specifications for all qualification offered in Wales should be reviewed to establish how the Welsh perspective is ensured. Changes to qualifications in Wales following the review of 14–19 Qualifications, discussed in the introduction to this report, may provide an opportunity to do this.

In the past, for example, it was made compulsory for all History GCSE and AS/A level specification to include a percentage of British history. While something similar could be done in order to ensure a Welsh perspective, artificial and irrelevant changes should be avoided. Consequently, specialists from the higher and further education sectors and from professional bodies should be consulted, in order to support the maintenance of rigour, and to ensure that the Welsh dimension is
integral to the knowledge, skills and understanding being developed. Such changes should not be confined to academic subjects only. The increasing emphasis currently being placed on sustainability, the use of local resources and local produce suggests a practical approach to ensuring the Welsh dimension.

In all instances, the revised specifications should make explicit links with the ‘Wales, Europe and the World’ theme in the Welsh Baccalaureate.

4. **A set of criteria should be developed to help teachers and others ensure that the Welsh dimension is incorporated in a meaningful way**

These criteria should be drafted to enable teachers to decide whether the Welsh dimension:

- is a natural, meaningful and organic aspect of the topic they are investigating
- emphasises the investigative approach to learning
- provides opportunities for learners to form their own opinions
- offers a range of images of Welshness and opportunities to compare these
- helps learners to understand and challenge stereotypes
- extends the learners’ horizons as well as giving them roots in their own culture
- takes into account the learners’ own cultural and linguistic background and the communities to which they belong
- provides opportunities to debate or challenge the content.

Consideration should also be given to how learners are supported in developing their investigative skills, so that they can develop and extend their mental map of the past, the cultures and the economy of Wales.

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17 This should reflect the diversity of experience and culture in Wales both today and in the past.
2. The emphasis on Welsh history and the story(ies) of Wales in the teaching of history and the current programme of study

Introduction

Much of the debate on the history taught in school tends to emphasise the factual content of the curriculum. There is, however, far more to the discipline of history than chronology and factual knowledge alone. While chronology and factual knowledge provide a framework for understanding the past and the relationship of different periods, developments and individual actions, history also provides opportunities to develop an understanding of:

- cause and effect
- the importance of evidence
- the role of standpoints and of bias in the process of creating interpretations of history
- the significance of historic events, changes and individuals.

It also provides opportunities to develop the skills of:

- historical enquiry
- using a range of sources
- evaluating evidence
- analytical thinking
- making historical comparisons and connections
- preparing and presenting an argument or account
- evaluating an argument or account.

One of the most important aspects of the discipline of history is the opportunity it provides of understanding that every narrative or historical argument is open to criticism, and that every historical judgement is provisional. **There is no one history: every individual has their own experience, and their own unique perspective on our past.** We should perhaps always refer to teaching different versions of history, or ‘histories’, rather than history in the singular. Realising this is a means of accepting and respecting different versions of history, while evaluating them against more objective criteria than our personal knowledge of the past, or a familiar version of it.

Effective history teaching can help to develop the active citizens of the future. It can enable learners to understand their own history, and the way in which the past has formed the present, but, more importantly, it can help them to investigate that history, and evaluate different versions of it. It can equip every citizen to deal effectively with all kinds of propaganda.
Learning and teaching

Once again, the opinion of the task group as a whole was that **there are wide variations in the approach taken to teaching Welsh history in the schools of Wales at present.**

- There are variations between the primary and secondary sectors and also between individual schools in the same sector\(^{18}\).
- Many schools still appear to be influenced by the Anglocentric history commonly taught before the introduction of the national curriculum.
- In other cases, the prevalence of examples from the English curriculum seems to have had a strong influence on both the choice of topics, and the focus within those topics.
- The tendency in primary schools is to emphasise the local dimension to history when presenting Welsh history. Local history is not so evident in the schemes of work in secondary schools, however, and the attention given to Welsh history also varies.
- Local history is rarely linked to the wider context in either sector.
- Few schools provide opportunities for learners to investigate different perspectives on Welsh history\(^{19}\).

Consequently, many learners are deprived of knowledge, skills and understanding relevant to them when they try to connect with the history of their locality and that of Wales itself.

It must be remembered too that history is optional at Key Stages 4 and 5, at the precise time when learners' intellectual development enables them to understand complex concepts and to think in more abstract terms. This is also the time when they are developing as young citizens. History is a compulsory subject for this age range in many other countries in the European Community. The original intention in developing the national curriculum was that history be a compulsory subject at Key Stage 4. The task group is of the opinion that consideration should be given to revisiting this idea, perhaps initially by making an historical element compulsory within the Welsh Baccalaureate. Giving up history at the age of 14 does not help the young people of Wales to understand history better. Including history as an element within the Welsh Baccalaureate would give learners an opportunity to develop their historical understanding and skills at an age-appropriate stage in their education, and to apply them to a wider context than that of an examination subject alone.

The task group was also of the opinion that some periods and events are over-emphasised in schools' schemes of work, and that this limits learners' experience of history. The original aim of studying some of the same periods (the

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\(^{18}\) See note 2 above for the basis of these observations.

\(^{19}\) While an understanding of interpretations of history is one of the subject skills identified both in the Programme of Study for Key Stages 2 and 3, and an assessment objective at GCSE and AS/A level, it is a skill with which many teachers find difficulty, and they tend is either to avoid it, or to interpret it as developing an understanding of bias.
early modern period, the nineteenth century and aspects of the twentieth century) at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 was to provide opportunities to deepen learners’ knowledge and understanding as they matured intellectually. Key Stage 2 learners are expected to investigate ways of life in these periods, developing their understanding of the different characteristics of each period. They would then enquire more deeply into their political, economic, spiritual and social history at Key Stage 3. In practice, it appears that some popular topics, irrelevant to the original plan, such as the marriages of Henry VIII, are introduced at Key Stage 2, and then taught again at Key Stage 3, and this without always developing the appropriate depth.

There are examples of good and/or innovative practice, and of cooperation between schools and other agencies (such as museums, archives, libraries and the higher education sector). However there are far fewer examples of such practice being shared with other schools, of schools in the same area working together, and of the continuation and influence of innovative schemes. For example, the winners of the Welsh Heritage Schools’ Initiative’s annual competition provide evidence of good practice in the teaching of local and Welsh history, but there is little evidence of this being shared with other schools. Sharing resources and good practice with colleagues is a very effective way of raising standards and ensuring consistency of provision, as is clearly seen in countries such as Finland.

Opportunities to share good practice have declined in recent years. For many years CYDAG provided a forum for teachers in the Welsh-medium sector to meet regularly and share resources and practice, but recent developments in education have led to a reduction in the work and influence of CYDAG. Nothing similar exists for teachers in the English-medium sector since the Association of History Teachers in Wales ceased to function. The Humanities Advisory Panel was for many years a means of sharing information in this field. The members of this panel included the local authority advisors for geography and history, and representatives of the education services of heritage institutions such as the National Museum and Cadw. Following local authority changes, it ceased to function this year. The professional learning communities provide a new opportunity for teachers to work together, but it is too early to assess their contribution.

Several other reasons were put forward to explain these deficiencies. Some are practical, such as resources, while others are less easy to define, since they reflect common attitudes and beliefs. No new resources or programme of study can meet the need to change the attitude of some teachers and learners towards local and Welsh history, since this requires a broader change of attitudes. However the popularity of television series such as The Story of Wales (BBC, 2012) and the articles in the New History of Wales in the Western Mail (2010–12; subsequently published in book form) suggests that innovative and attractive materials can capture the public imagination, and in so doing might have a positive influence on education too. It should be noted that both these examples are available in English only.

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20 Cymdeithas Ysgolion dros Addysg Gymraeg: an organisation which promotes Welsh-medium education and supports the sharing of good practice and the development of teaching and learning materials through the medium of Welsh.

21 But selections from them are now available in Welsh: see https://itunes.apple.com/gb/itunes-u/stori-cymru/id580130164.
Visits to historical sites can enrich and extend learners’ experiences, and although good use is made of such visits at Key Stage 2, this is not as true at Key Stage 3. There are practical reasons for this, the cost of transport being one, but schools in Scotland integrate visits and the local environment into their school work, providing an example which should be considered in Wales. In order to make such visits effective, the heritage sector will need to work more closely with schools (see also the comments below under Resources).

**Current difficulties in giving an appropriate emphasis to the history and histories of Wales**

**Resources**

- The lack of appropriate resources, especially in Welsh, and lack of information about those which actually are available.
- The difficulty of finding resources for the history of Wales which are innovative in their teaching approach and up-to-date in content.
- The wealth of good, innovative and contemporary resources available for English history.
- The omni-presence of English history across all media, from quiz games to serious historical documentaries on British and international channels.

**The influence of GCSE**

- Although the old history ‘O’ Level requirement to answer one question on Welsh history cannot be said to have ensured effective or coherent learning and teaching of Welsh history, the decision to remove that requirement for GCSE lowered the status of Welsh history in the eyes of teachers. The later decision to require the study of a percentage of British history reflects a wider concern about the effects of such changes in respect of British history. The requirements and expectations of the 16+ examinations have a considerable influence on Key Stage 3 teaching, and many teachers regard Key Stage 3 as a preparation for GCSE. If Welsh history does not have an appropriate emphasis at GCSE, it is not surprising that it is not given prominence at Key Stage 3.

**Attitudes and practices in schools**

- Schools’ individualist ethos: every school is a little world of its own, with its own individual priorities, traditions, programmes and schemes of work. It is difficult to arrange meetings which are outside the work of the school itself or change a school’s arrangements to meet those of another school or institution. In addition, schools in the same locality may be in competition, and this does not support cooperation.

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22 There are also many readily available resources to support the teaching of Nazi Germany, a very popular option at both GCSE and AS/A level.
• A general belief amongst history teachers that they need to pass on a certain body of information so that their learners have a secure foundation of historical knowledge. This may be defined in terms of their own experience and interests.

• There is an increasing emphasis in the primary sector on developing the historical skills which will enable learners to decide the focus of their enquiry, obtain the relevant information, and assess it. Consequently, there is less emphasis in the primary sector on formal schemes of work and pre-planned lessons.

• Lack of knowledge of Welsh history amongst teachers in general, due essentially to weaknesses in their own schooling, and the lack of opportunities to follow courses which integrate the history of Wales with that of Britain as a whole, Europe and the wider world.

• Lack of confidence in and enthusiasm for teaching Welsh history, arising in part form lack of information and experience, and the perception that local and Welsh history is narrow, and different from ‘real’ history, i.e. that of England, Europe and the wider world. This is reflected in the negative attitude of many university students of history towards the Welsh history options offered.

• Lack of teaching time for history in school, and of time for teachers to research/read/prepare. This is true of many subjects, of course, but there is a current tendency to conflate history and geography in order to follow a course in humanities.

General attitudes and beliefs

• The lack of a wide or popular circulation in Wales for those publications which deal with Welsh affairs, while the contrary is true for publications from England. There is also a general lack of publications: there is, for example, no national newspaper in Wales. The tendency in such English publications to refer to England as ‘Britain’ is misleading, and this is very clearly seen in recent discussions on proposed changes to the national curriculum in England. There are very few references to the other national curricula in Britain, while the English curriculum is all too often described as ‘the national curriculum’.

• The way in which Welsh history is presented from an English perspective even by some heritage institutions in Wales. In this context, reference was made to the tendency to over-emphasise those aspects of the heritage of Wales, such as the castles, which reflect the perspective of the conquerors, rather than the experiences of the native Welsh. Efforts should be made to ensure that all heritage institutions in Wales provide appropriate interpretations, in both local and national contexts, and in both English and Welsh. Where necessary, training should be provided to ensure staff are confident in interpreting the history, histories and cultures of Wales.
The programme of study

The task group agreed that the current programme of study gives explicit priority to the history of Wales in every period studied at Key Stages 2 and 3 (with the exception of the enquiry into recent history at the end of Key Stage 3). However the evidence available to the panel suggests that, for a variety of reasons, not all schools meet the requirements (see above for more detail on this).

In addition, some periods which are key to an understanding of Welsh history are not included in the programme of study, for example:

- the period between AD 400 and 1000, when the Christian tradition of the saints developed, together with the early independent kingdoms of Wales
- the first half of the eighteenth century, when the Methodist Revival began, which did so much to form the nonconformist tradition of Wales.

Since it would not be practical or desirable to consider including every aspect of every period in any programme of study, the task group are of the opinion that the present programme of study should be restructured. A revised programme of study should build on the current programme, and develop from it. It should offer a choice of a variety of in-depth and line of development studies, which would support learning and teaching aspects of local and Welsh history which give appropriate emphasis to the wider British, European and world contexts. It would then be possible to include some themes suitable to specific areas of Wales, such as the development of the copper industry or maritime history.

However, the task group would wish to emphasise the importance of using current good practice. A revised programme of study should build on the best of what is already there, while addressing any perceived weaknesses. Curriculum change should be evolutionary, not revolutionary. The task group would not want to see teachers’ good work being undervalued, nor the promising developments of the years following the establishment of the national curriculum being thrown aside. Sudden and revolutionary change would place a strain on the human and financial resources of schools at a time of economic stringency. The task group believes that ‘Champions Cymru’ could work with teachers and learners to develop ways of teaching history which would reflect the best of what is currently available, and develop innovative methods of teaching that reflect the histories of a diverse and devolved twenty-first century Wales.

Recommendations

1. Cooperation between schools and the sharing of good practice should be priorities of the whole education system in Wales. The appointment of ‘Champions Cymru’ would be one means of achieving this, as would the development of online resources.

2. To facilitate this sharing, and to provide a level of coordination in the development of new resources, a subject-specific appointment should be made to the Hwb team. They would also be charged with producing a regular newsletter to
keep teachers up-to-date with new resources and summaries of the latest relevant research.

3. In any future 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.

4. Numerous, specific and diverse examples of schemes of work with a focus on local and Welsh history in its wider context should be developed for Key Stages 2 and 3. Once these have been quality assured, they should be stored on Hwb and updated regularly.

5. GCSE approaches and priorities influence learning and teaching at Key Stage 3. The creation of a curriculum that integrated the history of Wales into the wider historical context would entail integrating an element of the history of Wales into the GCSE specification also. Even before introducing an integrated programme of study for Key Stage 3, ensuring that such an integrated element of Welsh history was compulsory at GCSE should have a positive effect on the emphasis placed on the history of Wales at Key Stage 323.

6. In reviewing the qualifications, consideration should be given to making history a compulsory element within the Welsh Baccalaureate.

23 Compulsion is not always effective, however. The inclusion of a compulsory question on Welsh history on the old Ordinary Level papers did not lead to a positive approach to teaching and learning Welsh history in all instances.
3. Does the teaching of history across all phases sufficiently take into account the latest research and the new resources available about the historical development of Wales from the earliest times to the twenty-first century?

The resources commissioned by the Welsh Government to support learning and teaching of history are available through the Welsh Books Council. Although representatives of the Council regularly visit every school in Wales, and the Council’s catalogue is also available online, the task group’s opinion is that only a minority of history teachers in every sector are aware of the resources they offer, both digitally and in print. Publishers in England have a much larger market, and consequently the resources to advertise their publications more widely and also to obtain publicity for them. The vast majority of these resources do not support the learning and teaching of Welsh history however.

Teachers and student teachers now mainly use websites, and some of these, such as the BBC website, provide them with information on programming on Wales and/or Welsh history which might introduce them to recent research. However the use made of these by teachers depends very largely on their personal interest in the subject, and not all the BBC’s resources are available in Welsh, which limits their usefulness in Welsh-medium schools.

Many heritage institutions provide very high-quality resources which take into account the latest research, but these are not always intended for schools, nor are they always devised to meet the requirements of the Welsh curriculum. Some heritage bodies do not provide any specific educational resources, and there is a tendency to emphasise local history at the expense of the wider Welsh context, or to set this history in the context of the history of England.

At present, university teachers are being encouraged to strengthen their links with A level students, and participation in the online forum recommended above would be a means of doing this. However, although part of the Research Evaluation Framework (REF) strategy is to strengthen the impact agenda (which includes engagement with institutions like schools) there are also other requirements on university teachers.

Although teachers were making considerable and increasing use of NGfL, the standard of these resources was variable. The current development of Hwb has immense potential to promote awareness and use of the latest research and new resources, and was warmly welcomed by the group. As a result of the scarcity of resources, the tendency has been to use old resources, which reinforce traditional stereotypes (e.g. the coal miner in his bath, with no reference to the work of his wife in the home, etc.).

Many of the factors noted in discussing the teaching of the history of Wales more generally (See Section 2) are also relevant here, and in particular the weaknesses in cooperation and sharing of good practice.
Although there are examples of successful cooperation on individual projects between research institutions (such as universities and museums) and schools, the task group is of the opinion that there is a lack of co-ordinated and continuous cooperation between the different sectors. This weakens the influence of the higher education and heritage sectors on the history taught in schools in general.

The programme *The Story of Wales*, and the series on Welsh history published by the Western Mail in recent years, provide a glimpse of the exciting and relevant research currently being carried out in Wales. But, perfectly naturally, there has been no guidance on the way in which this research might be used in schools, and there is no obvious way for researchers to find out whether their work is relevant to schools.

The task group believes that appointing ‘Champions Cymru’ would create a link between the research world and the classroom, and that Hwb+ offers an opportunity to present the fruits of this cooperation to teachers and learners across Wales in a medium which is both accessible and relevant.

**Recommendations**

1. Access to the online collaboration space provided by Hwb+ should be extended to the higher education sector, and to heritage organisations such as the National Library of Wales, the National Museum of Wales, Cadw, the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales and the county archives and other organisations through CyMAL.

2. Certain questions/themes and/or 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 in formats useful to teachers. These could be connected with the GCSE and GCE options on Wales (e.g. GCSE ‘Development of Wales 1900–2000’).

3. Those materials already produced where copyright is held by the Welsh Government should be digitised and made available via Hwb.

4. Those heritage institutions which are directly funded by the Welsh Government (i.e. Cadw, the Royal Commission, the National Museum and the National Library) should be required to adopt education policies which show clearly how they intend to contribute positively to the success of the national curriculum and the Cwricwlwm Cymreig.

5. Welsh Government-funded heritage organisations should be strongly encouraged to provide easy access to the materials they develop, in both Welsh and English, so they can be used in the classroom setting.

6. Such resources should emphasise the provisional nature of history and the diversity of experience in all periods. Where appropriate, it should support the teaching of recent history, which helps learners contrast and compare the experiences of different groups of people.
'A nation is spiritually poor when it is cut off from its past.'\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{24} David Thomas, \textit{Hen Longau Sir Gaernarfon} (2\textsuperscript{nd} edition, Llanrwst, 2005); quoted by Robin Evans, \textit{Merched a'r Môr}, chapter 8, page 1. Author's translation.