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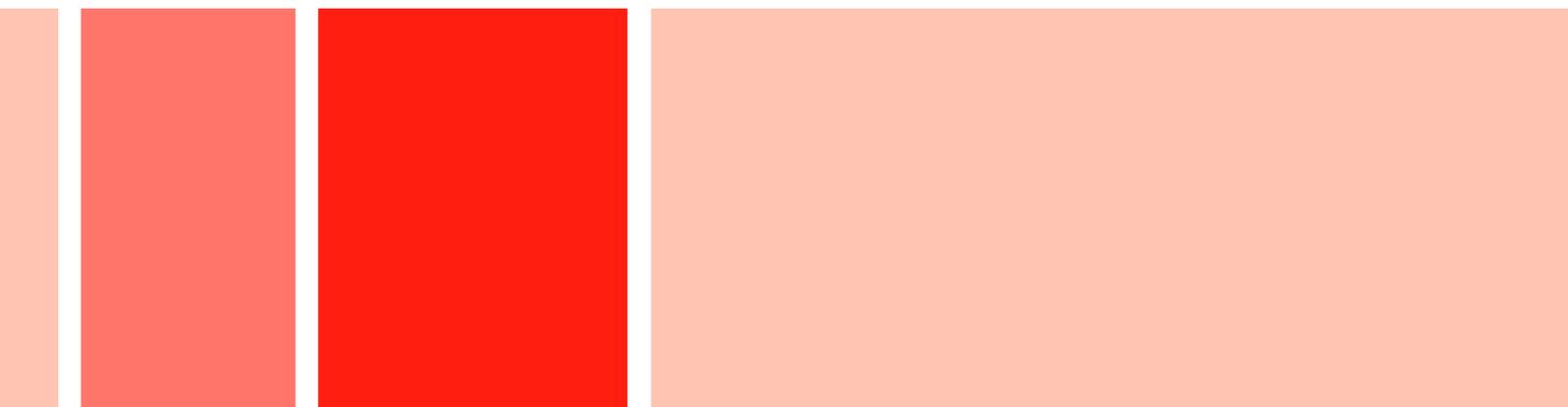
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Evaluation of the Welsh for Adults Programme



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Old Bell 3 Ltd., Dateb

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Old Bell 3, in association with Dateb, was commissioned by the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) to undertake a formative evaluation of the Welsh for Adults (WfA) Programme. This evaluation was undertaken between September 2007 and March 2010.

1.1.2 The research involved:

- A review of key policy documentation and literature to elucidate the context for the WfA Programme;
- A review of Programme data provided by WAG and WfA Centres;
- Interviews with a range of key stakeholders, including DCELLS officials, WfA Centre staff, third party providers and learners; and
- Surveys of and discussions with WfA practitioners.

1.2 FINDINGS

1.2.1 The WfA Programme is clearly rooted in WAG's Welsh language policy and is a key element of the drive to realise WAG's ambition to increase the numbers of Welsh speakers. The Programme has been shaped by previous evaluations, by on-going research (including our interim

evaluation report) and by consultation with stakeholders during its early phases.

1.2.2 In line with recommendations made by previous evaluations and with the findings of stakeholder consultation, six dedicated WfA Centres have been established. Five of these are based within Higher Education establishments and one is located within a college of Further Education.

1.2.3 WAG and WfA Centres have established a pattern of joint working which enables the open exchange of information and engenders cooperation and consistency across Wales. The system of 'committees' and 'working groups' established has and continues to evolve as Centres mature and new challenges emerge.

1.2.4 The six WfA Centres have started to get to grips with provision in their regions. Each one has sought to 'map' and to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of WfA provision in their patches, and this has helped to paint a far clearer picture of regional WfA markets than has ever before been available. Nevertheless, weaknesses in data collection and management systems are still, to some extent, hindering Centres in planning and managing provision, and there is a consensus that WAG, WfA Centres and third party learning providers need to work together to address these weaknesses.

1.2.5 Whilst weaknesses in the data have hindered our ability to draw firm or detailed conclusions about the Programme's effects on provision, they do suggest that WfA Centres have managed to stem the decline in the numbers of WfA learners witnessed over the period immediately prior to their establishment. The data also suggest that increasing numbers of learners are progressing from Entry Level to Foundation Level courses and that year on year, increasing numbers of learners are sitting WfA examinations, success in which is believed to be a spur to further learning.

1.2.6 Centres have started to effect a gradual evolution in the structure and quality of WfA provision in their areas. New kinds of courses have been introduced e.g. 'Welsh for the Family' and 'Welsh in the Workplace', and a greater emphasis has been placed upon intensive provision. At the same time, other, less effective provision has been discontinued. However, Centres have not yet succeeded in bringing about the degree of change in WfA provision sought by WAG and we believe that Centres could be more ambitious and directive in driving change.

1.2.7 Having said that however, we recognise that Centres are hindered to some extent by a National Planning and Funding System (NPFS) which militates against a shift towards more intensive provision. This is clearly outside WfA Centres' control and is an issue which WAG needs to address.

1.2.8 WAG has signalled its desire to see a growth in the level of WfA provision delivered by allocating a year on year increase in WfA Centres' 'core' funding. It has also made clear its commitment to the establishment of WfA Centres by allocating ring-fenced 'grant' funding to enable them to meet their running costs during their first five years in existence. More recently, however, WAG has indicated that Centres should be preparing for a future without, or with reducing levels of, grant funding post July 2011. Implicit in this message is WAG's expectation that WfA Centres should meet a greater proportion of their running costs by 'top-slicing' core funding. However, in order to safeguard provision, WAG guidance limits the extent to which WfA Centres can top slice core funding to a maximum of 15%.

1.2.9 Whilst there may be scope for some Centres to increase the level of funding top-sliced from their core funding, there is a danger that doing so would destabilise more marginal provision, particularly intensive and higher level courses, which tend to be more expensive to deliver

and less financially viable. Furthermore, an across the board 'top-slice' rate of 15% would not be sufficient to sustain Centres as they are currently constituted, even if efficiency savings were realised.

1.2.10 Realistically, if it is to secure continued value from the investment it has already made, WAG will need to provide WfA Centres with grant funding to contribute towards their running costs for the foreseeable future. However, in making a commitment to support WfA Centres in this way, WAG could quite justifiably require Centres to secure some efficiency savings.

1.2.11 WAG and WfA Centres have worked together to develop a WfA 'brand' and to promote participation in WfA courses. Together, they have adopted some innovative approaches to promoting WfA, including TV campaigns, an all Wales 'welshforadults.com' website and a public relations campaign. A 2008 Omnibus Survey of Welsh adults suggested that the WfA brand has become well established. Each WfA Centre has also established its own web-site which, whilst arguably inconsistent with the concept of an all Wales 'brand', provides details on courses on offer locally.

1.2.12 Since 2006, WfA Centres have produced and implemented progressively better informed and more detailed Training and Development Plans, with the new National Qualification for WfA Tutors becoming an increasingly prominent feature over the last two years. Whilst Centres might still have some work to do in refining their Continuous Professional Development programmes, practitioners are now offered a wider range of training opportunities than was the case prior to the establishment of WfA Centres. Our survey of WfA tutors¹ would suggest that respondents valued the training they had received and that it had a positive effect upon their teaching practice.

¹ Relatively low response rates means that survey findings may be subject to non-response bias and a degree of caution is needed in relying upon these findings.

1.2.13 The new National Qualification for WfA Tutors has become an increasingly prominent feature of Centres' Training and Development Plans over the last two years. The effort made to support tutors without appropriate accreditation to pursue a National Qualification course means that, by the summer of 2010, only a relatively small proportion of the existing WfA workforce will remain unqualified. This represents a significant step forward in 'professionalising' the WfA workforce. Of course, the National Qualification will remain important as a means of ensuring that new tutors acquire appropriate skills.

1.2.14 Our survey of tutors indicated that they are, by and large, positive about teaching WfA and that their impressions of doing so had improved since WfA Centres were established. However, the fact that most WfA tutors continue to be employed on sessional contracts (which means that they are only paid for the time they spend 'in the classroom' and have relatively little job security) precludes WfA teaching from being seen as an attractive or realistic 'career' option. Nevertheless, sessional contracts will remain the mainstay of WfA teaching for the foreseeable future and there may be some merit in seeking to overcome at least some of the negative perceptions associated with this kind of employment. Allied to this, there might also be merit in exploring whether the amount of tutors' time taken up by paperwork can be reduced.

1.2.15 WAG commissioned a range of teaching and learning resources to support WfA. The resources produced, which have generally been well received by WfA tutors, provide logical learning pathways as well as variety for learners, and are helpful in establishing consistency across Wales.

1.2.16 WAG also commissioned the WJEC to develop a framework of WfA examinations which test progressively higher levels of language skills. The examinations provide a logical route towards fluency and fit in with WAG's wider policy of putting in place examination based qualification

goals for adult learners. There has been a year on year increase in the numbers sitting WJEC examinations, thanks in large part to Centres' role in promoting them and administering the entry process. Both WfA tutors and the learners that we spoke to said that they benefitted from sitting and succeeding in examinations.

1.2.17 Alongside the development of examinations, the WJEC has developed Accreditation Pathways as an alternative route by which learners can assess their progress. Whilst it is too early at this stage to comment on the effectiveness of Accreditation Pathways, our discussions with tutors and learners alike suggested that attention may need to be given to the level of bureaucracy attached to them.

1.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1.3.1 We make a total of 33 recommendations relating to eight themes. These are précised below.

1.3.2 Planning and managing provision:

1. WfA Centre Directors should work together to improve market analysis and strategic planning processes. This might include sharing expertise or 'selling' services to each other;
2. Two Centres' plans which have been identified as examples of best practice by WAG should be held up as 'blue-prints' and shared with other Centres;
3. WAG should review its planning requirements with the aim of easing the burden upon those Centres that have met its criteria;
4. WAG should set out clear definitions of "completion" and "attainment" and in so doing, should apply them to all Subject Areas;
5. WAG, WfA Centres and third party providers should ensure that consistent and robust processes are put in place to record, gather, analyse and interpret WfA data;

6. WAG should oversee the harmonisation of HESA and LLWR data. It should also ensure that WfA and their third party providers have on-line access to regular and timely reports on provision;
7. The Strategic Planning Group should undertake a review of committees and working groups with a view to reducing their number and ensuring focus in their work;
8. The Head of the Welsh Language Development Unit should chair the Strategic Planning Group and engage actively with and on behalf of WfA Centres.

1.3.3 Funding WfA:

9. WAG should acknowledge that it will need to provide WfA Centres with an element of grant funding to sustain their core management functions for the foreseeable future;
10. WfA Centres should look at their funding policies with a view to using more core funding to contribute towards management costs. They should also examine their own internal costs and examine how they might work collectively to secure efficiencies;
11. WAG should enter into discussions with WfA Centres about future funding arrangements.

1.3.4 Changing WfA Provision:

12. WAG needs to action its undertaking to explore and introduce methods of rewarding WfA Centres for the delivery of intensive provision at levels which incentivise delivery;
13. WfA Centres should become more directive with third-party providers in terms of the types of courses to be offered in specific locations;
14. WfA Centres and their third party providers need to play their part in improving learner recruitment, retention, progression and attainment levels.

1.3.5 Marketing WfA:

15. The WfA Marketing Group needs to put together costed plans, which identify clear objectives and outcome measures, for its WfA social media campaign;
16. WAG and WfA Centres should monitor closely the effects of the social media campaign;
17. WAG should ask the WJEC and other publishers to feature the WfA logo on relevant learning and teaching resources it commissions or part-funds, including Y Tiwtor;
18. WAG and WfA Centres Should review their website arrangements with a view to moving towards a situation where the www.welshforadults.com website is used as a portal for those of individual Centres, or for adopting a single, all Wales website;
19. WAG should gather data to enable it to monitor specific additional marketing related performance indicators.

1.3.6 Delivering WfA:

20. WfA Centres should continue to work with their third party providers to monitor closely learner numbers and learner progression from one level to the next;
21. WAG and WfA Centres should monitor closely the demand for and take-up of intensive and targeted provision, paying particular attention to the disincentive effects of the NPFS upon the delivery of intensive courses;
22. WfA Centres should continue to support candidates to register for WJEC examinations and to require their providers to meet the costs of examinations.

1.3.7 Professionalising WfA:

23. WAG should issue specific guidance to WfA Centres as to the minimum level of CPD which tutors should undertake;
24. WAG should align its timetable for the production of Training and Development plans with that for the production of Strategic and Operational plans;

25. WfA Centres need to consider how the National Qualification courses should be delivered in future;
26. WAG and the WJEC should rethink the way in which Y Tiwtor is structured, with a view to its becoming a more current and interactive website;
27. WfA Centres should explore the balance ancillary/administrative and teaching work undertaken by sessional tutors and consider whether changes need to be made to working practices and/or the rates at which sessional staff are paid;
28. WfA Centres and their third-party providers should strive to create more permanent posts, both full and part-time;
29. WfA Centres should develop workforce succession plans for the next five to 10 years.

1.3.8 Learning and Teaching Resources:

30. WfA Centres should continue to promote new WfA teaching and learning resources to tutors;
31. WAG should consider making all electronic resources available on the planned WfA Moodle, as the main, consolidated repository for online WfA materials.

1.3.9 WfA Examinations:

32. WfA Centres and their third party providers need to make a concerted effort to ensure a higher level of subscription to and understanding of accreditation pathways amongst tutors and learners;
33. WAG, the WJEC and WfA Centres should explore the possibility of awarding qualifications to learners who successfully complete the required number of credits for particular language levels by pursuing accreditation pathways.

2 BACKGROUND TO THE EVALUATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 Since its establishment, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has made clear its commitment to revitalising the Welsh language. It has given voice to its ambition to increase the proportion of people able to speak Welsh, to arrest the decline in the number of communities where Welsh is spoken by a majority of the population and to increase the proportion of households where Welsh is the principal language. More specifically, in its seminal Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales², WAG charged the then National Council³ with developing a “*co-ordinated approach to the provision of Welsh for Adults*” and with reviewing the planning and delivery of Welsh for Adults (WfA) courses.

2.1.2 The further development and restructuring of the WfA Programme was the then National Council’s response to WAG’s policy lead. The WfA Programme comprises a number of initiatives which are variously designed to:

- Reform the arrangements for planning, organising and funding WfA provision;
- Promote WfA provision effectively;
- Professionalise the WfA teaching workforce;
- Develop teaching and learning materials for WfA courses;
- Develop a coherent, progressive continuum of WfA qualifications.

2.1.3 Old Bell 3, in association with Dateb, was commissioned by the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) of WAG to undertake an evaluation of the WfA Programme. This evaluation was undertaken between September 2007 and March 2010.

² Iaith Pawb: An Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales, February 2003

³ The National Council for Education and Training in Wales was an Assembly Sponsored Public Body better known as ELWa. The National Council – ELWa was subsumed within the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) of WAG

2.2 PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

2.2.1 The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the effects and effectiveness of the WfA Programme in order to inform its future development. More specific objectives for the study, as set out by WAG, were to:

- i “evaluate the extent to which recommendations from the previous evaluation of Welsh for Adults have been adopted;*
- ii evaluate the extent to which each individual project met its aim and objectives;*
- iii assess the overall concept of the restructuring Welsh for Adults initiative and whether it can fulfil the requirements of the Welsh Assembly Government’s vision for the Welsh language as described in the National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales ‘Iaith Pawb’;*
- iv assess the progress towards professionalising the training and career structure of Welsh for Adults tutors;*
- v assess the extent to which the six dedicated language centres have provided a national and regional framework for planning Welsh for Adults provision;*
- vi assess the progress towards improving the quality of learning and achievement of consistent national standards;*
- vii assess the extent to which the restructuring of Welsh for Adults has provided a comprehensive range of provision with courses at all levels to ensure student progression;*
- viii assess the effectiveness of the marketing of Welsh for Adults in terms of both national campaigns and the marketing activities undertaken by individual language centres;*
- ix determine the outcomes and impacts of the restructuring of Welsh for Adults and other Welsh for Adults projects on learners, learning providers and other beneficiaries and intermediaries;*
- x provide guidance in terms of the ongoing development and implementation of Welsh for Adults activities already underway; and*

xi provide recommendations for the future development of Welsh for Adults in terms of provision, assessment, planning, training of tutors, marketing, electronic learning, resources, informal learning and student support”.

2.3 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

2.3.1 This evaluation was undertaken in a number of stages over a two and a half year period. The stages involved were:

- Inception;
- Review of Programme Logic and Management Arrangements;
- Developing an Evaluation Framework and Detailed Fieldwork Plan;
- Initial Review of Developments within WfA Centres⁴;
- First Wave of Thematic Reviews, examining three separate themes:
 - The Development of Teaching and Learning Resources
 - The Development of WfA Qualifications
 - Professionalising WfA;
- Interim Review of Developments within WfA Centres;
- Interim Programme Level Evaluation;
- Second Wave of Thematic Reviews examining further the three themes of:
 - The Development of Teaching and Learning Resources
 - The Development of WfA Qualifications
 - Professionalising WfA;
- Final Review of Developments within WfA Centres;
- Final Programme Level Evaluation.

2.3.2 In this report we present the findings of our Final Programme Level Evaluation. This represents the tenth and final stage of the evaluation project and draws together issues discussed in the three Thematic Review Reports and the Report on our Final Review of Developments

⁴ WfA Centres are sometimes referred to as Language Centres, though the term in common usage is WfA Centres

in WfA Centres. Readers wanting a more detailed account of how the Programme has been implemented should refer to these reports.

2.3.3 In this report we:

- Present the context for the establishment of WfA Centres and discuss the extent to which recommendations of previous evaluations were adopted in their establishment (Chapter 3);
- Discuss the process of establishing WfA Centres, consider the way in which they function and explore the extent to which the six WfA Centres have provided a national and regional framework for planning WfA provision (Chapter 4);
- Provide an overview of how WfA provision has evolved since WfA Centres were established (Chapter 5);
- Explore the nature and effects of measures undertaken to professionalise the WfA workforce (Chapter 6);
- Explore the nature and effects of activities undertaken to develop WfA resources (Chapter 7);
- Explore the nature and effects of activities undertaken to develop WfA examinations and accreditation pathways (Chapter 8);
- Present our conclusions about the nature and development of the WfA Programme as a whole and offer recommendations in light of those conclusions (Chapter 9).

2.3.4 This Final Programme Level Evaluation is based upon:

- A review of WAG policy documents and research reports appertaining to the WfA Restructuring project;
- A review of each WfA Centre's key documentation including Strategic Plans and Operational Plans;
- A review of documentation relating to the marketing of WfA, and to WfA public relations related activities undertaken at the National Eisteddfod;
- A review of a range of documents relating to eleven projects grouped variously into the three themes of:
 - Teaching and Learning Resources,

- WfA Qualifications and
- Professionalising WfA;
- Interviews with WAG staff with an oversight of the Restructuring WfA project;
- Interviews with key representatives from each of the six WfA Centres, initially in late 2007, again in the autumn of 2008 and, for a third time, in the autumn of 2009;
- Interviews with representatives of organisations who have entered into contractual agreements with the six WfA Centres to deliver WfA provision. Representatives of 11 organisations were interviewed in 2008 and 10 organisations in 2009.
- Interviews with representatives of stakeholder organisations, including the Welsh Language Board, Cardiff University and the WJEC⁵;
- Two web based surveys of WfA tutors, one undertaken in September 2008 and the second in May/June 2009. All WfA tutors were invited by e-mail to respond to an on-line survey via a web-link provided. The 2008 survey yielded responses from 106 (15.8%) WfA tutors, whilst 144 tutors (21.5%) responded to the 2009 survey. Whilst we present survey findings in this report, we acknowledge that they may be subject to non-response bias and should, therefore, be treated with a degree of caution;
- Focus group discussions with a small sample of WfA Tutors;
- Focus group discussions with a small sample of WfA learners.

2.3.5 We wish to thank WAG and WfA Centre staff for their support and kind assistance throughout.

⁵ The WJEC is a provider of examinations, assessment, professional development, educational resources and learner support.

3. BACKGROUND TO THE WfA RESTRUCTURING PROJECT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 In this chapter we consider:

- The extent to which the current WfA Programme fits with WAG's vision for the Welsh language and whether it makes sense in the context of emerging policy on Welsh language education (section 3.2);
- The extent to which recommendations from previous evaluations of WfA have been taken into account in shaping the current WfA Programme (section 3.3);
- The transparency and effectiveness of the approach taken to restructuring WfA (section 3.4);
- The extent to which the WfA Restructuring Project met its aims and objectives (section 3.5).

3.2 POLICY CONTEXT

3.2.1 The national WfA Programme was established in 1994 when eight consortia, centred on the eight former counties of Wales, were charged with organising learning provision in their areas, building upon existing arrangements. Funding for the WfA Programme was allocated directly to Further Education colleges, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the YMCA, Coleg Harlech/WEA (North) and WEA South, and these funding arrangements later became the responsibility of the former ELWa on its establishment in 2000.

3.2.2 The ambitious targets set in *laith Pawb*⁶ brought into sharp relief the fact that the WfA Programme, as it stood, had reached a plateau. *laith Pawb* explicitly set the agenda of “*reviving and revitalising*”⁷ the

⁶ *laith Pawb*: A National Action Plan for A Bilingual Wales (November 2003)

⁷ Foreword

language and outlined the Welsh Assembly Government's goal of creating a sustained increase in both the number and percentage of people able to speak Welsh. The document set out five key targets to be achieved by 2011 in order to create a bilingual Wales, and of particular relevance to the WfA Programme was the first major target which was to increase *"the percentage of people in Wales able to speak Welsh by 5 percentage points from the 2001 census figures"*.

3.2.3 One of the main aims set out in ELWa's **Strategy for Bilingual Learning** (which formed part of its 2005 **Welsh Language Scheme**) was to *"contribute to increasing the number of people who can speak Welsh and use it effectively in their working and personal lives"*⁸, thus echoing and reinforcing the ambitions set out in Iaith Pawb.

3.2.4 In its Strategy, ELWa went on to make a commitment to *"increase the numbers of learners enrolling on Welsh for Adults courses and to provide funding for growth"*⁹. The Strategy went on to state that ELWa had adopted its predecessor's¹⁰ practice of working with consortia of WfA providers to ensure joint planning and better progression opportunities, albeit that it also intended to *"restructure provision"*¹¹ in the wake of NFER's 2003 evaluation (see section 2.3 below). The Strategy identified eight key actions that would enable ELWa to deliver upon its restructuring objectives and the last of these called for action to establish *"dedicated language centres"*¹².

3.2.5 **The Learning Country: Vision into Action**¹³ reinforced the steps taken to implement radical changes in the way the WfA Programme was being delivered and went on to state that the Welsh Assembly Government (into which ELWa had by then been subsumed) would *"revitalise Welsh for Adults provision by continuing to strengthen*

⁸ p25

⁹ p28

¹⁰ The Further Education Funding Council for Wales

¹¹ p29

¹² ibid

¹³ Welsh Assembly Government, 2006

national coordination through the six established, dedicated language centres to help develop learning networks which can deliver high-quality opportunities for people to learn Welsh”¹⁴.

3.2.6 **One Wales**¹⁵ pointed to an intention to go a step further down the restructuring road by exploring *“the establishment of a Welsh for Adults Unit with sufficient funding, giving priority to tutor education”*. Indeed, this commitment echoes a recommendation made by the Welsh Language Board in 1999, on the eve of the National Assembly for Wales’ formation, that the National Assembly should *“invest in the long term future of the Welsh language by funding a new central coordinating unit for the WfA field”¹⁶*. It was envisaged that such a unit would lead on strategic planning at a national level and assist the eight consortia then in existence with planning within their patches, as well as putting in place a *“framework of qualifications for tutors and learners”, “identifying learners’ needs”, “developing resources”¹⁷* and ensuring the quality of provision.

3.2.7 This **One Wales** theme was later picked up in WAG’s May 2009 **Welsh-medium Education Strategy** consultation document, at a time when a Welsh Language Development Unit had been established (within DCELLS) to provide *“strategic direction for the development of Welsh-medium provision”¹⁸*. The Welsh-medium Education Strategy consultation document highlighted the value of the *“tri-level system of strategic planning and delivery”¹⁹* established in relation to WfA and committed, *“in the medium term”²⁰* to supporting *“the structures established within the centres to enable the continued planning and delivery of provision on the ground”²¹*. The document went on to set

¹⁴ p24

¹⁵ *One Wales: A progressive agenda for the government of Wales: An agreement between the Labour and Plaid Cymru Groups in the National Assembly (2007)*

¹⁶ Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg, *Strategaeth Cymraeg i Oedolion*, April 1999, item 4.1

¹⁷ *Ibid*, item 4.9

¹⁸ p5

¹⁹ p75

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ *ibid*

out the longer term intention to “*strengthen the close working relationship already established between Welsh Assembly Government and the six centres and to consider the WfA centres and their staff as part of the team of the WfA unit*”²². This approach conveyed two important messages: firstly, WAG itself lays claim to the WfA programme (rather than delegating to a third party organisation) and, secondly, WAG places the WfA programme at the heart of its wider approach to Welsh language and Welsh education.

3.2.8 The Welsh-medium Education Strategy consultation document set out a number of challenges which the WfA Centres (and their partners) face, and which reflected the progress already made. The challenges identified were:

- to “*reconfigure provision in order to plan and deliver new courses at every level of the national framework across Wales*”²³;
- to “*raise the quality of provision*”²⁴;
- to take “*Welsh to the community ... increase their [WfA Centres] presence ... and become ‘shop windows’ for learning Welsh, and places where learners can practise their Welsh outside the classroom*”²⁵;
- to increase participation in “*intensive courses*” in order to reduce drop-out rates and provide a more effective way of learning. Allied to this, WAG undertook to consider options “*for funding WfA provision in order to increase intensive provision in the medium term*”²⁶;
- to develop “*specific provision for priority sectors*” such as “*the family*” and “*the workplace*”²⁷ and, potentially for “*education practitioners*”²⁸, “*students in higher education*”²⁹ and people “*who*

²² *ibid*

²³ *p76*

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ *ibid*

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ *p77*

²⁹ *ibid*

*received Welsh-language lessons at school*³⁰ but do not use the language in adulthood;

- to explore potential innovations such as *“e-learning”* and *“alternative teaching and learning methods”*;
- to *“ensure the continuous professional development of teaching staff”*³¹;
- to *“increase the number of full-time [teaching] staff”*³² employed by WfA Centres and their third party providers.

3.2.9 The final Welsh-medium Education Strategy document, published in April 2010, reaffirmed WAG’s commitment to supporting WfA Centres as vehicles for planning and delivering *“new and improved provision”*, leading to an increase in *“the numbers of learners progressing to fluency”*, particularly through *“intensive courses”*, through *“tailored Welsh-language courses for the workplace”* and through courses for *“parents and carers and families”*. The document also points to the role to be played by WfA Centres in planning and delivering *“improved informal learning opportunities”*.

3.2.10 The Welsh-medium Education Strategy document highlights the need to *“review data collection systems”* to ensure *“accurate benchmarking”* of WfA provision in order to *“raise standards in the teaching and learning of Welsh”*. It also points to the need for Centres to *“maintain the national framework for assessment”* and to *“develop bespoke qualifications for the workplace and family”*.

3.2.11 The Strategy also refers to the development of *“an accredited framework of CPD for WfA tutors”*, embracing the *“National Qualification for Welsh for Adults practitioners”*.

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ *p76*

³² *p88*

3.3 PRIOR REVIEWS OF THE WELSH FOR ADULTS PROGRAMME

- 3.3.1 Research undertaken by NFER³³ and Estyn³⁴ in 2003-04 pointed to weaknesses in the WfA Programme as it then stood and called for a major overhaul. These two key studies examined the strengths and weaknesses of the WfA infrastructure at that time and their recommendations were clearly taken into account in shaping proposals for the reform of the system, alongside population and participation data. The findings of these two studies are discussed briefly here.
- 3.3.2 In 2003, ELWa commissioned NFER to carry out an ***Evaluation of the National Welsh for Adults Programme***. The overarching aim of the evaluation was *“to establish the impact of the Welsh for Adults programme on the delivery of Welsh language training and assess how effective it had been in developing collaborative working between providers, new approaches to teaching Welsh and responding to gaps in the learning provision”*³⁵.
- 3.3.3 The key finding of the report was that in order to improve standards, a radical change was needed in the way that Welsh for Adults was planned and delivered locally. The evaluation found that *“at their most effective”, the consortia in existence at that time, “had disseminated information and good practice, organised tutor recruitment and training, avoided duplication of courses and planned the establishment of new provision”*. It went on to say that *“the downside of the consortia was that most had been unable to prevent competition between providers and duplication of courses, had been too inflexible to permit providers to expand provision, and had often failed to prevent wastage of resources. The crucial weakness of the current structure was the inherent tension between a funding system which encouraged competition for learners between providers and the role of consortia*

³³ NFER, (2003), Evaluation of the National Welsh for Adults Programme

³⁴ Estyn, (2004), Report upon The Quality of Provision in Welsh for Adults

³⁵ p4

*which had responsibility for rationalisation without the power or resources to enforce it*³⁶.

3.3.4 The evaluation found that an accurate analysis of the real cost of Welsh for Adults provision proved difficult as providers were unable to isolate many cost items linked to the Programme from the costs of delivering their broader provision.

3.3.5 The evaluation concluded that the WfA Programme had led to a steady increase in the number of people learning Welsh and that this was partly the result of the commitment, goodwill and readiness to travel ‘the extra mile’ amongst practitioners and college administrators. The report stated that *“most providers used a range of generally effective marketing methods, but did not always reach all their target groups. New and key audiences had been identified as being parents of schoolchildren learning Welsh, people in the workplace and newcomers to Wales. Some success had been registered in taking provision to these groups, but many practical challenges remained”*³⁷. Additionally the evaluation argued that the retention of learners and their progression to more advanced courses could be improved.

3.3.6 The evaluation report made eleven recommendations for the Programme’s future, including recommendations relating to the restructuring of the Programme. They were:

- 1 The status of WfA should be acknowledged as different from that of other FE subject areas in order to reflect the recognition of Welsh by the Welsh Assembly Government as a national language and an *“essential and enduring component in the history, culture and social fabric of our nation”*.
- 2 Levels of funding for the Welsh for Adults programme were inadequate, both in terms of the basic FE learning unit and the subject weighting for Welsh. The funding for the WfA Programme

³⁶ p24
³⁷ p42

should be increased to a 2.5 times the basic Student Learning Unit value and funding should be ring-fenced.

- 3 A central agency to lead, coordinate and fund the WfA Programme should be developed.
- 4 HE Welsh courses defined as Gloywi or Graenus³⁸ should be assessed on an individual basis to decide whether ELWa or HEFCW³⁹ funding was more appropriate.
- 5 One of two organisational models should be considered to replace the consortia: Option A: One provider per geographical area for intensive and higher courses and one provider for basic once-a-week provision. Option B: One lead provider per practical geographical area; the lead provider to allocate funding and rationalise provision amongst other providers who would be sub-contracted to deliver it – in essence, the model since adopted.
- 6 A national forum for providers should be established to promote cooperation, dissemination of information and good practice across Wales.
- 7 All WfA courses should be set within a national five-level framework which reflects the Common European Framework for languages.
- 8 The numbers of learners entering for formal examinations should be increased through encouragement and inducement.
- 9 A national qualification for WfA tutors should be developed and regarded as essential for those wishing to work as tutors.
- 10 The profile of the ELWa's commissioning procedure for new teaching materials should be raised.
- 11 The funding allocated to providers should include an element for liaison with bodies such as Cyd (Cymdeithas y Dysgwyr)⁴⁰ and the Mentrau Iaith and the organising of extracurricular activities.

³⁸ Courses generally designed for improving accomplished speakers' written Welsh

³⁹ The Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCW) is the intermediary body between WAG and the higher education sector in Wales. It is responsible for distributing funding for education, research and related activities at Wales' 12 higher education institutions

⁴⁰ The [Welsh language] Learners' Society. Cyd was a charitable Wales-wide organisation that aimed to help turn Welsh learners into speakers by organising a wide range of informal learning opportunities, often involving fluent Welsh speakers as well as learners. However Cyd was disbanded in March 2008.

- 3.3.7 Several of the recommendations made in the evaluation report were later adopted and the consequences of doing so are visible in the current WfA Programme. In particular Option B outlined under recommendation 5 regarding the restructuring of the Programme led to the establishment of six regional lead providers.
- 3.3.8 Estyn's 2004 report upon *The Quality of Provision in Welsh for Adults* drew on evidence from inspection reports on individual Further and Higher Education institutions inspected between 1997 and 2004, as well as individual discussions with the chairs of each of the eight WfA consortia then in existence and a sample of providers belonging to those consortia.
- 3.3.9 Estyn's report covered the organisation and strategic management of the Welsh for Adults provision, its funding, the planning and marketing of courses, trends in the numbers of adults learning Welsh, the quality of teaching, the availability and quality of provision, learner attainment, completion and progression, support for students and teaching resources.
- 3.3.10 The Estyn report noted that there were weaknesses in the organisation and strategic planning of WfA provision. Whilst the report acknowledged that the establishment of the WfA consortia in 1994 had an initial significant impact on creating more opportunities for adults to learn Welsh, it concluded that *"the consortia [sic] structure no longer works well enough"*⁴¹. The report recognised that the original eight consortia were established in line with the eight LEAs in existence in the early 1990s, but that following local government reorganisation, the rationale for organising the consortia along these lines no longer existed and that *"they have too little jurisdiction and funding to deliver planning and management functions effectively"*⁴².

⁴¹ p2
⁴² p20

- 3.3.11 Estyn found that the levels of funding at the time significantly constrained many aspects of provision such as marketing, growth, staffing and the development of learning resources. The report stated that there was too much variation in the proportion of funding that reached WfA providers and that this was to the detriment of learners.
- 3.3.12 Estyn pointed to a shortage of intensive courses, particularly at higher levels, due in large part to funding structures which did not reflect the higher costs of delivering such provision. The report also recommended that more opportunities be created for students to use Welsh in their local community and workplace, that more e-learning opportunities be identified and that courses be marketed to specific target groups.
- 3.3.13 Estyn found that standards of achievement and the quality of teaching were good or better in three quarters of the WfA providers inspected, and there was no provision deemed to be unsatisfactory overall. It found that about 85% of full time and part-time students were completing their courses, though completion rates tended to be better on intensive and higher level courses. However, students' attainment rates were not as good: only 64% of full-time and 40% of part-time students attained the qualification for which they enrolled.
- 3.3.14 Finally the Estyn report noted that whilst there was significant growth in the numbers of adults learning Welsh after the establishment of WfA consortia in 1994, this growth tailed off in subsequent years, albeit that enrolments increased again in 2002-2003 and stood at over 25 thousand in 2004.
- 3.3.15 It is notable that recommendations made by both NFER and Estyn that core funding for the WfA Programme funding should be increased to 2.5 times the basic Student Learning Unit value were not adopted and

funding is currently set at 1.5 times the basic Student Credit Equivalent Unit⁴³.

3.4 RESTRUCTURING CONSULTATION PROCESS

3.4.1 Following the publication of the documents discussed above, the Restructuring Welsh for Adults Programme was instigated. The process was initiated with a ***Consultation Document on the Restructuring of Welsh for Adults*** published by ELWa in November 2004.

3.4.2 The consultation document called for the mainstreaming of the WfA Programme and suggested the establishment of “*dedicated language centres that would provide a shop window for learning Welsh*”. These centres would be “*known for expertise and quality and would be at the leading edge of developments*” and “*branded*” so as to “*completely revamp the image of WfA*”⁴⁴. The document went on to discuss the need to introduce a national framework of language levels which would require providers to re-name the WfA courses they delivered to accord with the framework⁴⁵ as well as to ‘professionalise’ WfA teaching and to introduce a recognised qualification for WfA tutors along the lines of the TEFL⁴⁶ award⁴⁷. The consultation document also outlined the need to develop learning resources, including those produced by practitioners⁴⁸, and to promote WfA provision consistently and forcefully. It finally proposed to examine the possibility that the weighting attached to the WfA programme be reviewed as part of the National Planning and Funding System modelling exercise to be undertaken by ELWa⁴⁹.

⁴³ Compared to 1.9 times for Basic Skills (literacy) provision

⁴⁴ p5

⁴⁵ Reflecting the seventh of NFER’s recommendations

⁴⁶ Teaching English as a Foreign Language

⁴⁷ Reflecting NFER’s ninth recommendation

⁴⁸ Allied to NFER’s tenth recommendation

⁴⁹ Partially reflecting NFER’s second recommendation

- 3.4.3 ELWa undertook a public consultation exercise to assess the level of support for three potential approaches to reconfiguration, although the organisation was clear that its preference was for a model which would involve the establishment of six “*dedicated language centres*”⁵⁰, one each in north, mid and south west Wales and three in south east Wales, serving the Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, Mid Glamorgan and Gwent ‘sub-regions’. It was envisaged that these language centres would be responsible for undertaking the planning function across all types of WfA provision in their regions/sub-regions and for channelling funding to sub-contracted third party providers.
- 3.4.4 It was felt that the proposed infrastructure would improve the way that WfA was planned and delivered locally and would reflect ELWa’s regional planning system. It was argued that a new infrastructure would provide a more coherent offer to learners, with an emphasis on the range of courses available and student progression. The dedicated language centres, it was envisaged, would be able to invest in activities such as tutor training on a regional basis, the development of new provision to address learning needs, the creation of resources, research that would inform planning decisions and the promotion of Welsh language learning in the region.
- 3.4.5 The consultation exercise revealed greater support for the adoption of ELWa’s preferred model rather than the other two models proposed (in all, 51 responses were received to the consultation, 32 of which were supportive of ELWa’s preferred option and 19 of which were not). However, the exercise also showed that some stakeholders had misgivings about ELWa’s proposal. To some extent these arose from institutional fears of losing business or losing autonomy, but some stakeholders voiced more deep-seated concerns about ELWa’s role as a coordinating and funding body.

⁵⁰ p5

3.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE WfA RESTRUCTURING PROJECT

3.5.1 The *Restructuring of Welsh for Adults Project Proposal Document* prepared by ELWa in June 2005 set out clear aims and objectives which cascaded logically from the Assembly Government's policy ambitions and from the evidence provided by the two earlier evaluation studies (as discussed in Section 3.3 above). The overall aim of this two and a half year project was *"to increase the level of learners by establishing a new infrastructure that will mainstream, plan, professionalise and develop provision in this programme area. This will involve the establishment of six dedicated language centres in Wales that will lead the change agenda and become flagships for the teaching of the Welsh language to adults"*⁵¹.

3.5.2 Ten key objectives of the WfA Restructuring project were outlined in the project proposal document⁵². They were to:

- *"Eliminate unnecessary duplication and conflicting interests;*
- *Provide a national and regional framework of planning courses;*
- *Avoid the split between non-intensive and intensive provision in the FE and HE sectors;*
- *Improve the progression from lower level courses to fluency courses;*
- *Provide funding for capacity building to meet demand;*
- *Develop bespoke courses for Welsh in the workplace and for parents;*
- *Professionalise the training and career structure for Welsh for Adults tutors;*
- *Improve the quality of learning and achieve consistent national standards;*

⁵¹ Welsh Assembly Government PP1 Form: Project Proposal Document (June 2005) p3

⁵² Welsh Assembly Government PP1 Form: Project Proposal Document (June 2005) p3-4

- *Improve the marketing for Welsh for Adults by means of each centre producing effective literature and local campaigns, combined with participation in national marketing campaigns; and*
- *Ensure that more of the core funding reaching providers of Welsh for Adults because of the reduced level of top-slicing by centres”.*

3.5.3 The objectives identified in the Restructuring of Welsh for Adults Project Proposal gave rise to clear, time-bound and generally measurable targets⁵³. Several of these concerned the establishment of new WfA Centres and their management systems and these targets have, by and large been met by now, albeit that a delay in approving the Restructuring of Welsh for Adults Project proposal put the project almost five months behind schedule from the outset.

3.5.4 Others of the WfA Restructuring Project’s targets were concerned with the numbers of courses to be run and with learner recruitment, progression, completion and attainment. Whilst these provision-related targets were time-bound and measurable, they were originally based on 2003/04, 2005/06 and 2006/07 data, which, it has since become clear, were not reliable. On this basis, WAG and WfA Centres subsequently agreed that the ‘baseline’ against which the difference made by WfA Centres would be measured in future should be the data gathered in respect of 2007/08. The progress made in relation to these provision-related measures is discussed further at Chapter 5.

⁵³ Welsh Assembly Government PP1 Form: Project Proposal Document (June 2005) p4-5

4. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND FUNCTIONING OF WfA CENTRES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 In this chapter we consider:

- The process employed to select institutions to run WfA Centres (section 4.2);
- The appointment of WfA Centres and arrangements for meeting their central management costs (section 4.3);
- The way in which WfA Centres work together (section 4.4);
- The processes employed by centres to plan provision (section 4.5);
- The extent to which the six WfA Centres have provided a national and regional framework for planning WfA provision (section 4.6).

4.2 WfA CENTRE APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

4.2.1 In November 2005 ELWa invited all Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) providers it then contracted to deliver WfA provision to submit proposals to host dedicated WfA Centres, making it clear that a total of six would be established, one each in the north, mid and west Wales regions and three in the south east region. In doing so, however, ELWa recognised that relatively few providers would, in reality, be eligible, equipped or inclined to submit proposals to host the WfA Centres, primarily because only a handful of providers had the capacity to deliver a full range of provision, including intensive courses leading to language fluency. It therefore approached, on an informal basis, those institutions which it was thought were best placed to host Centres to discuss the possibility of their bidding and to alleviate concerns that they might have had in taking the WfA role on board.

4.2.2 Indeed, our fieldwork revealed that the degree of enthusiasm about hosting WfA Centres varied across institutions. Some regarded taking on the mantle as a fairly natural step, primarily because the institutions concerned were the largest providers of WfA courses in their areas and

because they were perceived to have strong reputations in the WfA field. Some institutions seemed to perceive that they had a “*duty to respond and take on board this responsibility*” as the Programme’s objectives were very closely aligned to those of the institutions in terms of promoting the Welsh language, whilst one felt that it had “*no choice*” but to do so because there were no other realistic candidate organisations to take on the role in its area. It is important to stress at this point that, whilst some institutions clearly had misgivings, they approached the process of submitting proposals with “*cautious enthusiasm*” and it was not thought that their qualms had compromised in any way their commitment to establishing effective WfA Centres.

4.2.3 The main concerns which institutions had in taking on the responsibility for hosting WfA Centres revolved around:

- The likely sustainability of ring-fenced funding to meet the costs of running WfA Centres, with an explicit apprehension that Centres, once established, would be left to meet running costs from inadequate learning programme funding. As will be seen later in this chapter, this concern remains;
- The risk associated with appointing staff (particularly without the necessary long-term financial security) and in resolving issues arising from TUPE⁵⁴ Regulations applying;
- Issues in taking on responsibility for managing provision in new geographical areas;
- Difficulties in providing appropriate accommodation for a dedicated team;
- Difficulties in finding accommodation for WfA classes, particularly in those areas where host institutions had no experience of delivering courses;
- Taking on responsibility for provision that was not considered to be ‘core business’ for the institution;

⁵⁴ The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE)

- The potential loss of experience and contacts if traditional providers were to withdraw WfA provision;
- Some consortia were perceived to be working well and the benefits of restructuring were questioned in some of the regions.

4.2.4 There was also a degree of concern that WfA, as a Further Education initiative, might not be given the same priority or status as Higher Education initiatives within Universities, which as envisaged from the outset, would later become a central component of the WfA infrastructure. Despite this concern, however, stakeholders generally accepted that there were several advantages to locating the WfA Centres within Higher Education establishments, including:

- The ability of Universities to contribute towards professionalising the field as University-led teacher-training courses are perceived to have a higher kudos attached to them;
- The experience Universities would bring to the field of curriculum planning;
- The well-established relationships between Universities which would allow a degree of cooperation between WfA Centres;
- WfA provision would benefit from the quality assurance systems and structures already in place in such establishments such as the Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) process, albeit of course, that Further Education institutions also employ similar systems.

4.2.5 In the event, six proposals were received, five from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and one from a Further Education Institution (FEI), each stating a preference for taking on board different regions. No proposals were received from rival organisations although stakeholders commented that the University of Wales, Newport could have been a potential candidate organisation to take the lead upon the WfA Centre in Gwent (particularly given that their inclusion would have created a unified University-led delivery structure across Wales). It should be

noted, however, that the University of Wales, Newport had little experience of delivering Welsh for Adults courses.

4.2.6 The proposals submitted by the six institutions were very detailed and covered the following areas:

- Institutions' pedigree and track record in the delivery of WfA: range of courses delivered, achievement rates, collaborative activities undertaken, involvement in the development of resources etc;
- Institutional management arrangements: quality assurance systems, human resource management arrangements etc;
- Proposals for the development of WfA Centres, including key steps in the centres' development, staffing, descriptions of key management arrangements; and
- The anticipated costs of developing and running the proposed WfA Centre.

4.3 APPOINTING WfA CENTRES

4.3.1 In May 2006, the then Minister for Lifelong Learning announced the establishment of the six new WfA Centres based on the proposals received. The Centres established were:

- **North Wales Welsh for Adults Centre**, based at Bangor University, and serving the six Local Authority areas of Ynys Môn, (North) Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham;
- **Mid Wales Welsh for Adults Centre**, based at Aberystwyth University, and serving the three Local Authority areas of Ceredigion, Powys and (South) Gwynedd;
- **South West Wales Welsh for Adults Centre**, based at Swansea University, and serving the four Local Authority areas of Neath Port Talbot, Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire;
- **Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Welsh for Adults Centre**, based at Cardiff University, and serving the two Local Authority areas of Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan;

- **Glamorgan Welsh for Adults Centre**, based at the University of Glamorgan, and serving the three Local Authority areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend;
- **Gwent Welsh for Adults Centre**, based at Coleg Gwent, and serving the five Local Authority areas of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen.

4.3.2 WAG recognised that the host institutions would need discrete grant funding to enable them to establish WfA Centres. The Project Proposal stated that the actual cost of establishing the WfA Centres would be determined by the proposals received, but that an estimated budget of up to £4.7 million over a 31 month period would be allocated for the purpose.

4.3.3 Following the initial 31 month set-up period, WAG allocated a further £6.8 million grant funding to meet Centre's management costs for the three year period to July 2011, which reduced the need for Centres to 'top-slice' core funding associated with the delivery of courses to meet their central costs. This was a particularly important decision at a fairly formative stage in the new arrangements' development in that it helped to:

- Avoid potential disagreements between Centres and their regional provider networks about the level of funding which should be 'top-sliced' to meet central costs;
- Prevent a diminution in delivery related funding at a time when providers were being asked to change and deliver more courses to greater numbers of learners;
- Reduce the chances of WfA funding becoming lost in institutional accounting systems;
- Provide WfA Centres with a degree of certainty that allowed them to plan with confidence.

4.3.4 This arrangement clearly provided Centres with additional 'breathing space' whilst they established themselves. However, in 2009 WAG

indicated in its responses to Centres' Strategic and Operational Plans that they should gradually prepare for a future without grant funding or with reducing levels of grant funding post July 2011. This was a firm signal to Centres that they needed to think carefully about the sustainability of their funding policies and their own internal costs over the coming year or so.

4.3.5 Of course, Centres are able to 'top-slice' their core funding to help meet their running costs, though WAG guidance specifies that the level of 'top-slice' should not exceed 15% of the core funding. Centres' 2009/10 running costs range from 21% to 36% of their 2009/10 core funding allocations which, in the absence of grant funding, would clearly breach WAG's 15% 'top-slice' ceiling. Whilst all but one of the Centres could, in theory at least, retain a greater proportion of their core funding to meet running costs, the level of funding which could be generated would still fall short of the amount needed to maintain the Centres as they are currently constituted (discounting any other potential sources of revenue). Moreover, WfA Centre Directors were generally reluctant to increase the level top-sliced from core funding on the basis that it would run counter to WAG's express policy on the Welsh language and undermine the challenges set in *Iaith Pawb* and, more recently in its Welsh-Medium Education Strategy⁵⁵.

4.3.6 Directors' reluctance to increase the proportion of core funding 'top-sliced' was compounded by fears that WAG's plans to alter the basis upon which WfA provision is funded from 2010/11 onwards could impact adversely upon at least some WfA Centres. WAG proposes to move towards a common post-16 allocations methodology from September 2010, which could mean a reduction in the level of funding which individual Centres will be able to access, albeit that "*transitional arrangements*" will be put in place to guard against destabilising the WfA infrastructure in the short term.

⁵⁵ Welsh Assembly Government (April 2010) Welsh-medium Education Strategy, Document No: 083/2010

4.3.7 Whilst the grant funding arrangement put in place may not be sustainable in the longer term from WAG's perspective, careful consideration does need to be given to the costs of running WfA Centres relative to the core funding available to the Programme when decisions are made regarding the future funding of the Centres, with a strong suggestion that larger WfA Centres offer marked economies of scale.

4.4 INTER CENTRE WORKING

4.4.1 From the outset, WfA Centres and WAG have worked together to move the agenda forward through a system of committees. Some of these are standing committees while others are task and finish 'groups'.

4.4.2 There are currently six Welsh Assembly Government led committees or task and finish groups, as follows:

- WfA Strategic Planning Committee;
- WfA Marketing Committee;
- WfA E-Learning Committee;
- WfA Curriculum Task & Finish Group;
- WfA Resource Panel;
- WfA Data Task & Finish Group.

4.4.3 Six national working groups have also been established, each of which is led by one of the six WfA Centres. The intention in establishing these groups was that they would 'do the legwork' necessary to inform Centre Directors' deliberations and enable decisions to be made about key strategic issues. The working groups currently in existence are:

- Welsh in the Workplace Working Group, which is led by the Gwent WfA Centre;

- Welsh for the Family Working Group, which is led by the Glamorgan WfA Centre;
- Research Working Group, which is led by the South West Wales WfA Centre;
- Training Working Group, which is led by Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan WfA Centre;
- Informal Learning Working Group, which is led by the Mid Wales WfA Centre;
- Quality Working Group, which is led by the North Wales WfA Centre.

4.4.4 The consensus among stakeholders who we interviewed was that the WfA Strategic Planning Committee had developed positively since its inception and was considerably more effective in its current form than the two committees it succeeded in 2009. Most contributors also perceived that the other committees and working groups were reasonably useful fora for exchanging ideas and disseminating good practice. However, there was a feeling that the purpose of some was not clearly enough defined, or not entirely realistic, and that they had consequently failed to come up with concrete recommendations. It was suggested that the Strategic Planning Group should review the need for and purpose of all WfA committees/groups with a view to rationalising and reducing their overall number.

4.4.5 Beyond their involvement in these national committees and working groups, particular Centres have worked together on specific activities.

4.5 THE PLANNING PROCESS

4.5.1 In each of the three years since their inception, WfA Centres have produced planning documents, in line with the following guidance issued by the WAG:

- Annual planning guidance which is largely based on DCELLS' general planning guidance notes to FEIs;
- Annual training guidance which requires WfA Centres to develop three-year training plans;
- Data collection guidance which originated with DCELLS' Data Management Branch;
- Quality assurance guidance issued by DCELLS' Quality Management Branch and tied into the Self Assessment Review (SAR) process, which forms part of DCELLS' annual Provider Performance Review (PPR).

4.5.2 The planning documents which have been produced each year are:

- Three year Strategic Plans, which paint a picture of regional WfA 'markets', provide a review of developments to date⁵⁶ and set out each Centre's mission, aims and objectives;
- One year Operational Plans, which discuss Centres' infrastructure arrangements or physical "*presence*", their staffing arrangements and their third party contracting arrangements. They describe the activities to be undertaken in relation to each of the objectives set out in the Strategic Plan, noting the date by which activities should be completed, and who within each WfA Centre has responsibility for implementing each action. They also set out income and expenditure projections for the coming 12 months;
- One year Provision Development Plans, which set out in a fine level of detail, the courses which Centres intend to run during the forthcoming academic year in terms of course level (i.e. Entry, Foundation etc), the location of delivery (i.e. postcodes), type of courses (i.e. intensive courses, specific courses for families, Welsh

⁵⁶ Which, in some Centres' cases is repeated, albeit in different words, in the Operational Plan and, in our view, interrupts the flow of Strategic Plans from the expression of mission to the articulation of strategic aims and objectives

in the Workplace courses etc) intended learner numbers and WCEU⁵⁷ targets;

- Three year Marketing and Communications Strategies, which provide a review of previous marketing activities, set out aims and objectives for the forthcoming three years and details of costed activities to be carried out over the next twelve months. These are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

4.5.3 Whilst the headline structures of planning documents have remained broadly unchanged, they have become increasingly detailed over the last three years as Centres have got to grips with DCELLS' requirements and with the nature of WfA provision within their regions. The use of various kinds of intelligence to feed into SWOT/BEEM⁵⁸ analyses, we believe, has helped to clarify the logic behind adopting specific aims and objectives featured in Centres' plans. The majority of WfA Centres have attempted to map provision (either across all of their regions or parts of their regions) with, it has to be said, varying degrees of success in terms of identifying gaps and duplication. One Centre used a Geographic Information System (GIS) to visualise provision and this was thought to have helped considerably in the planning process. Other Centres still have some way to go in terms of mapping provision and using the data generated to reduce or remove duplication and competition between providers.

4.5.4 Although the plans of each Centre displayed particular strengths, the plans of two Centres in particular stood out to us for the quality of their analyses and the logical flow of strategies from those analyses. These same plans were held up as 'exemplars' by WAG staff.

4.5.5 In reality, the plans produced during Centres' first three years in existence had little influence over the contracts issued to third party

⁵⁷ Weighted Credit Equivalent Units (WCEUs) are used within the National Planning and Funding System (NPFs) as the base funding unit. One CEU is designed to represent 10 hours of learning time

⁵⁸ Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats / Build, Exploit, Eliminate and Minimise

providers. Third party provider contracts for 2006/07 were issued directly by WAG and those issued by Centres for 2007/08 and 2008/09 represented little more than a “rolling over” of contracts previously issued by WAG. As they continue to map provision and gather information to determine the particular needs of their regions and sub-regions, it will be important for the WfA Centres to strengthen their contracts with third party providers to ensure that they add value to the provision, and are consistent with DCELLS’ national aims to improve quality and remove duplication.

4.6 WfA CORE FUNDING

4.6.1 As discussed above, although the WfA Centres were established in 2006, they did not take on responsibility for funding the delivery of provision within their regions until August 2007. Table 3.1 below shows the total number of Weighted Credit Equivalent Units⁵⁹ (WCEUs) and the associated funding allocated to each WfA Centre for each of the last three academic years. These allocations were based upon historical data about the volume of provision delivered by individual providers attached to each WfA Centre, together with a provision for a 10% annual growth in the cash value of provision.

⁵⁹ Weighted Credit Equivalent Units (CEUs) are used within the National Planning and Funding System (NPFS) as the base funding unit. One CEU is designed to represent 10 hours of learning time.

Table 4.1: Weighted Credit Equivalent Unit and Funding Allocation by Centre

	2007/08		2008/09		2009/10	
	Target WCEUs (thousands)	Total Funding £ (millions)	Target WCEUs (thousands)	Total Funding £ (millions)	Target WCEUs (thousands)	Total Funding £ (millions)
North Wales	66.2	2.4	72.0	2.6	77.4	3.1
Mid Wales	28.0	1.0	30.1	1.1	32.4	1.3
South West Wales	45.9	1.6	49.3	1.8	53.0	2.1
Glamorgan	20.7	0.8	22.3	0.9	23.9	1.0
Cardiff & The Vale	35.7	1.2	38.4	1.4	41.2	1.6
Gwent	25.4	1.0	27.2	1.1	29.3	1.2
Total⁶⁰	221.9	8.0	239.3	8.9	257.2	10.3

4.7 WfA CENTRES AND THEIR PROVIDER NETWORKS

4.7.1 Each WfA Centre has established at least one provider network within their region. In most cases, these networks have evolved from the consortia that existed prior to the regional WfA Centre structure being introduced, which means that WfA Centres have had to reassess and redefine their relationships with organisations previously thought of as 'partners', but which have now effectively become 'suppliers'.

4.7.2 On the whole, this adjustment has been approached sensitively and cautiously, with Centres generally avoiding radical changes in their first

⁶⁰ May be subject to rounding errors

two years in existence. Our autumn 2009 fieldwork suggested that, on the whole, the new network arrangements have “*bedded-in*” and that networks provide a conduit for on-going dialogue. However, stakeholders also pointed to some weaknesses, generally to do with the quality, breadth and timeliness of information provided to networks and the depth of discussions at network meetings.

4.7.3 However, Centres have not always succeeded in driving through the marked change in WfA provision required by WAG as swiftly as they had hoped. On the whole, they have continued to contract with those organisations previously contracted by DCELLS to deliver WfA courses, although a handful of providers have withdrawn from the market. Nevertheless, Centres have engaged providers in a far more detailed discussion about the nature of provision to be delivered, as well as tightening up the terms of contracts issued to providers by, for example, introducing claw back clauses and requiring them to set out quality assurance arrangements and “*register*” tutors with the Centre. Indeed, there was a suggestion that Centres themselves, as they have become better established and better equipped to put on or manage provision, have become increasingly robust in their approach to underperforming providers.

4.7.4 Hitherto, most WfA Centres have not set rigid targets for sub-contracted providers as to the nature or level of courses to be delivered by them. Whilst this clearly allows providers a greater level of freedom and autonomy to allocate CEUs efficiently, it does not “*force their hand*” in any particular direction e.g. the delivery of more intensive or higher level provision. Some Centres have, for some time, been considering setting ‘indicative’, rather than binding targets, in order to shift providers’ emphasis without hamstringing them or “*punishing them unfairly*” if they fail to achieve certain objectives, and two are currently taking legal advice on “*re-vamping*” their provider contracts in time for the 2010/11 academic year. The objective of this exercise will be to simplify the provider contracts and also explore to what extent it will be

possible to include specific targets (such as minimum targets for learners and number of courses at particular levels/intensity).

4.7.5 Whilst Centres have not set targets for particular types of courses in providers' contracts, it was clear that headline strategic messages about WAG and Centres' priorities are getting through to providers. Nevertheless, it will be important that Centres continue explore how they can improve arrangements for communicating their priorities and for sharing the detail of their Strategic and Operational Plans with their third party providers.

4.7.6 Allied to this, it was argued that WfA Centres need to consider how, in line with WAG's original expectations of them and as reiterated in the Welsh Medium Education Strategy Consultation Document, they might increase their own profiles and become *"shop windows for learning Welsh, and places where learners can practise their Welsh outside the classroom"*.

4.8 INFORMAL LEARNING⁶¹

4.8.1 The Welsh Language Board (WLB) has awarded grants to WfA Centres, as part of its Main Grants Scheme, to support informal learning activity to complement mainstream WfA provision. Table 3.2 below shows the value of grants awarded from 2007/08 to 2009/10:

Table 4.2: WfA Centre Funding

WfA Centre	2007/08 £ (thousand)	2008/09 £ (thousand)	2009/10 £ (thousand)
North Wales	10.6	15.5	15.5
Mid Wales	15.9	15.0	15.0
South West Wales	15.4	12.0	10.0

⁶¹ Informal learning is the term used to describe the process whereby individuals acquire attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his/environment e.g. from family, friends and colleagues from work, play and social experiences and from the mass media.

Glamorgan	18.0	20.0	20.0
Cardiff & the Vale	13.5	13.0	13.2
Gwent	13.0	13.0	16.0
Total	86.4	88.5	89.7

4.8.2 The funding awarded has been used in a number of ways with Centres adopting different approaches in response to their regions' linguistic and structural characteristics. Generally speaking, informal learning activities have moved away from initial mapping exercises to activities such as:

- Organising events specifically for lower level learners whose language skills are too under-developed to be able to participate in existing Welsh language networks;
- Organising 'bridging' type events to bring learners and Welsh speakers together in order to provide an opportunity for learners to practise their Welsh with fluent speakers;
- Organising 'fairs' for learners to meet and join Welsh language groups and associations and a focus on other means of disseminating information such as via web-sites.

4.8.3 Whilst informal learning may initially have been seen as an "add on" for WfA Centres, several Directors noted that it has now effectively become embedded as part of their Centre's core work, with some linking exponential increases in informal learning activities to improvements in retention and progression rates.

4.8.4 However, it was acknowledged that the level of resource available to support informal learning is limited and WAG acknowledged in its Welsh-medium Education Strategy consultation document that *"increased grant funding would be required to develop this aspect of the centres' work and to pave the way for adult learners of Welsh to integrate fully into Welsh-speaking communities"*.

4.9 USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES

4.9.1 Although Information and Learning Technologies (ILTs) are generally thought to hold some promise for the WfA field, the general consensus is that blended learning represents a more realistic way forward i.e. the use of technology to enhance more traditional approaches to teaching. In this case it might mean using whiteboards, making resources accessible via Virtual Learning Environments such as Moodle, encouraging learners to use on-line resources e.g. the BBC's Dysgu Cymraeg resources or the use of Video-Conferencing to enable people to speak with Welsh speakers in other parts of the country.

4.9.2 Generally speaking, the use of ILTs has still been confined to classroom settings, and more specifically to courses delivered at University, College or LEA based venues with the required facilities. Some Centres stated that they were not in a position to take forward the e-learning agenda, partly because of what was perceived as the lack of a clear national policy from WAG, albeit that WAG has now commissioned research to inform the development of a new course which will include an element of e-learning. Centres are reluctant to invest developing this type of provision in the meantime, particularly given the resource constraints they face.

4.9.3 However, some WfA Centres reported that they were involved in ICT related projects during our fieldwork in the autumn of 2009: For example:

- North Wales WfA Centre invested some funding during 2008/09 to develop on-line resources that would complement their Wlpan course. It is expected that these resources will be made available soon;
- The Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan WfA Centre is enjoying continued success with its specific blended learning course which started as a pilot in January 2008 aimed at "*Money Rich, Time Poor*" people.

4.9.4 WAG has signalled its desire “to develop a national e-learning action plan which will inform the development of blended learning and e-learning courses to enable adults to learn Welsh at a time and location that suits their schedules. As with Welsh-medium provision, the action plan will set out steps to be taken to take advantage of all the latest technological advances in education, and to ensure that technical support for practitioners is provided through the WfA centres”. Discussions and recommendations arising from the E-Learning Committee (see section 4.4.2) meetings during 2010 will form the basis of this plan.

4.10 MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS

4.10.1 A December 2009 review of WfA Programme data requirements confirmed particular problems raised by WfA Centres and WAG relating to:

- Inconsistencies in the way different providers interpret the term “*completer*”, with some recording as completers learners who leave courses having achieved a number of credits towards a qualification, but without necessarily completing particular courses or levels within the WfA framework;
- The practice among some learning providers of changing/lowering learners’ “*qualification aims*” when they leave courses early without achieving full qualifications;
- Differences in the way key performance indicators, specifically “*completion rates*” and “*attainment rates*” are calculated.

4.10.2 In short, the review highlighted ineffectiveness and inefficiency within WfA data management systems, although encouragingly, it also noted that WfA Centres and their sub-contracted providers were committed to resolving the weaknesses identified.

4.10.3 The review led to a number of recommendations being made which included:

- Setting out clear definitions of “*completion*” and “*attainment*”, whilst “*recognising the award of credit for units of learning and the partial attainment of qualifications*”. This is, of course, in line with expectations of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales;
- Developing “*consistent processes*” for interpreting and using WfA data, once effective systems have been established;
- Ensuring that WfA Centres and their sub-contractors have on-line access to regular and timely reports on provision, to enable them to monitor, benchmark and manage performance effectively.

4.10.4 We endorse these recommendations. The establishment of reliable and robust WfA management information systems, involving WAG, WfA Centres and third party providers is crucial to the effective management of the Programme and to demonstrating, in a credible fashion, its achievements. The absence of consistent and reliable information undermines stakeholders’ ability to make informed judgements about the Programmes’ effectiveness and crucially, its contribution towards the aspirations set out in *laith Pawb*.

4.11 MARKETING WfA

4.11.1 The WfA Strategic Marketing Group brings staff from various disciplines within DCELLS together with representatives from the six WfA Centres to oversee the development and implementation of a “*Marketing and Communication Strategy*” for the WfA Programme. The first such “*plan*”, which formalised earlier activity, was developed in March 2007, updated in March 2008 and overhauled more fundamentally in 2009.

4.11.2 Successive versions of the Marketing and Communications Strategy have set out marketing aims and objectives, identified specific target

audiences for marketing activities and defined the relative roles of WAG and the WfA Centres in relation to marketing. Table 3.3 below, shows the level of expenditure upon national and regional marketing activities in each year since the WfA Programme's inception:

Table 3.3: National Marketing Related Expenditure

	2006/07 Actual £ (thousand)	2007/08 Actual £ (thousand)	2008/09 Actual £ (thousand)	2009/10 Funding £ (thousand)
WAG Expenditure	162.1	0	98.9	105.5

4.11.3 Marketing activities undertaken have included:

At a national level:

- Developing the WfA brand;
- Producing literature and promotional resources aimed at the target audiences identified in the Marketing and Communications Strategy;
- Undertaking a range of public relations and promotional activities, including:
 - Developing “PR stories” about various learners, as well as the celebrities participating in the Big Welsh Challenge⁶²;
 - Issuing “big spreads” on WfA in the regional press;
 - Providing ‘branded’ materials which Centres could take out with them to exhibitions and events;
 - Having a presence at key national events such as the National Eisteddfod and the Urdd Eisteddfod;
 - Running specific public relations and promotional events such as “Checkout Cymraeg”;
- Running TV advertising campaigns;

⁶² The Big Welsh Challenge is an on-line interactive Welsh language course featuring a team of celebrity learners on the one hand and celebrity mentors on the other. The BWG is a five year programme, running from March 2006 and it is envisaged that resources will be produced to coincide with every level of the WJEC WfA framework.

- Running internet and social media advertising campaigns;
- Developing and managing the welshforadults.org web-site;

At a regional level

- Adopting the WfA brand in Centres' marketing materials and literature;
- Adopting the WAG WfA course levels⁶³ in Centres' marketing literature;
- Developing regional WfA branded websites, each linked to the national welshforadults.org web-site. By 2009, these regional web-sites included a course search facility;
- Preparing and distributing regional prospectuses for each academic year, outlining all WfA provision and courses for their region;
- Establishing telephone help-lines and central e-mail response services for learners;
- Developing and distributing leaflets aimed at specific 'markets' e.g. the parents of children at local Welsh medium schools, local employers and geographically focused documents. These resources are generally based on literature and promotional materials initially developed by WAG and, therefore, carry through the WfA brand imagery;
- Preparing and distributing regional press releases;
- Distributing a range of branded "*marketing products*" such as mugs, car stickers, pencils etc;
- Attending a range of local events to promote courses e.g. "*Parti Ponty*", school open/parents evenings, summer/Christmas fairs etc, 'checkout' campaigns at local supermarkets;
- Developing contacts with stakeholders within the region e.g. Mentrau Iaith, local schools, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin groups, Twf etc;
- Running prize draw competitions in order to secure potential learners' contact details;

⁶³ Entry, Foundation, Intermediate, Higher, Proficiency

- Displaying roadside banners in the run up to new courses commencing;
- Using learners as “ambassadors” to encourage others to follow their example;
- Using tutors to encourage learners to continue onto higher level courses;
- Producing learner newsletters to, inter alia, inform learners of forthcoming informal learning opportunities;
- Providing information on courses to Learndirect.

4.11.4 WAG and WfA Centres have sought to monitor the effects and/or effectiveness of marketing and public relations activities, by gathering data in respect of the following indicators for those periods when particular advertising campaigns (which typically coincided with the run up to the academic year) were running:

- Key statistics relating to different sites’ referrals to the www.welshforadults.org web-site;
- Visits to the www.welshforadults.org web-site;
- Visits to each WfA Centre’s web-site⁶⁴;
- Visits to each WfA Centre’s web-site routed from the www.welshforadults.org web-site⁶⁵;
- Enquiries about WfA courses received by Centres via:
 - Telephone;
 - E-mail.
- The level of press coverage achieved for the WfA Programme.

4.11.5 This clearly represents a good start, though it is crucial that further work is done to extend the coverage of monitoring data.

4.11.6 At a more strategic level, an Omnibus Survey⁶⁶ undertaken in November 2008 revealed that:

⁶⁴ With the exception of South West Wales WfA Centre

⁶⁵ With the exception of South West Wales WfA Centre

- 38% of Welsh adults (aged over 16) had seen the WfA logo, which seems a fairly high level of awareness to have achieved within eighteen months of its launch;
- 72% of Welsh adults thought that learning Welsh would have a beneficial effect upon their careers,
- 67% thought that learning Welsh would help inculcate a stronger sense of national identity;
- 52% thought that learning Welsh would improve people's social lives.

⁶⁶ The Wales Omnibus Survey was undertaken by Beaufort Research Ltd

5. DELIVERY TO DATE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.1.1 In this chapter, we draw upon data provided by WfA Centres and the WJEC to provide an overview of how WfA provision has evolved since WfA Centres were established.

5.1.2 However, as already touched upon in Chapter 3, it is important to note that there have been concerns about the reliability of some data and this has restricted our ability to draw firm conclusions upon some aspects of performance.

5.2 LEARNER NUMBERS

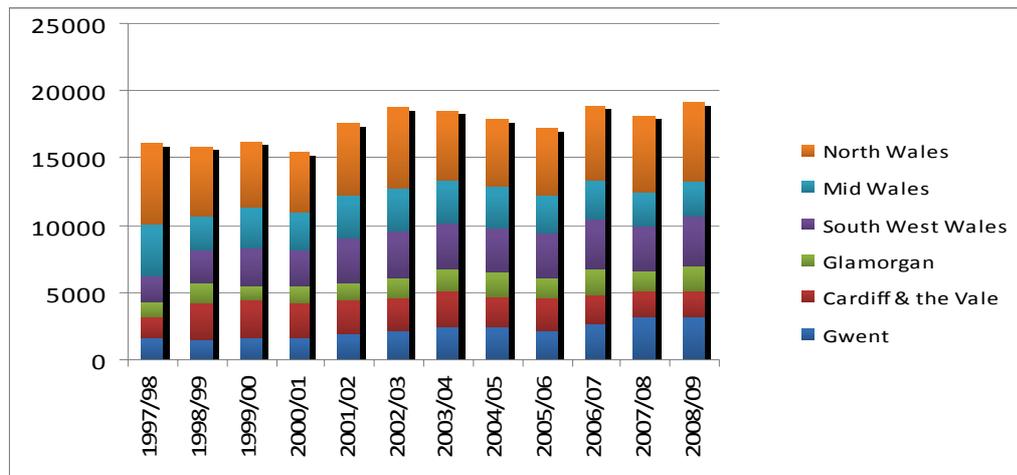
5.2.1 Although WfA Centres were established in late 2006, they did not contract providers to deliver courses until the 2007/08 academic year and were not, in reality, able to gather reliable data about learner numbers until later during that year. On that basis, WfA Centres regard 2007/08 as their “*baseline*” year.

5.2.2 Figure 5.1 below shows the numbers of individuals enrolling onto WfA Courses between 1997/98 and 2008/09. It suggests a small overall increase in learner numbers since 1997, and crucially, a reversal of the steady decline in enrolments witnessed in the four years prior to the establishment of the WfA Centres in 2006. It is also notable that all six WfA Centres have met or exceeded their WCEU targets each year since their establishment.

5.2.3 An element of this growth is accounted for by Centres’ experimentation with different approaches to recruitment, such as the introduction of short courses focused on “*the family*”, for example, or “*taster courses*” designed to lead potential learners into mainstream provision, and more especially so, onto intensive courses. Centres’ introduction of

more “summer schools” and “revision courses” has also helped to boost the numbers of learners recruited. However, there is growing concern among WfA Centre Directors that the level of growth in the volume of provision seen up to now may not be sustainable in the longer term. Some were worried that their Centres may have started to “reach saturation point” and that learner numbers had or would shortly “plateau out”.

Figure 5.1: Learner Enrolments onto WfA Courses^{67 68}



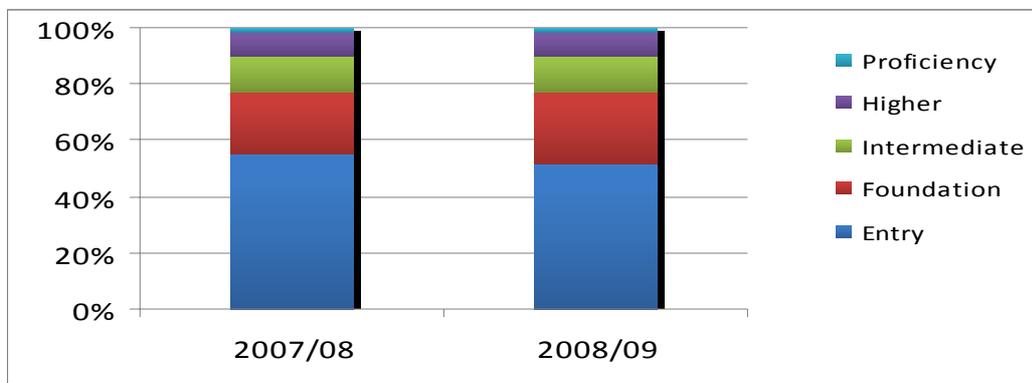
5.2.4 Figure 5.2 shows the proportions of learners participating in WfA courses (excluding taster type courses) at each level in 2007/08 and 2008/09. It shows that the majority of learners (at 51% overall in 2008/09) enrolled onto Entry Level courses, with progressively fewer enrolling onto courses at higher levels (25% on Foundation level courses, 13% on Intermediate courses, 8% on Higher level courses and only 1% enrolling onto Proficiency level courses). However, it also shows that a slightly higher proportion of learners participated in Foundation Level courses in 2008/09 than was the case in 2007/08, with a corresponding decline in the proportions participating in lower Entry level courses. Although it would be wrong to read too much into one year’s change, it does suggest that a higher proportion of learners

⁶⁷ These data have been compiled slightly differently over the years and can only be relied upon to provide an impression of changes in the level of provision in each region

⁶⁸ Data for 2008/09 have yet to be verified by WAG

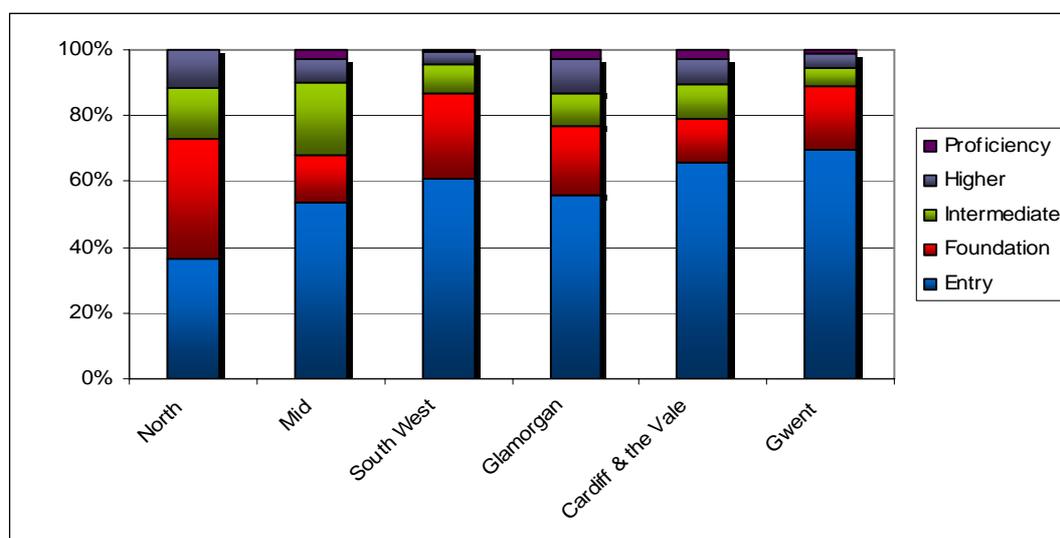
recruited onto Entry level courses in 2006/07 and 2007/08 progressed into Foundation Level courses in 2008/09 than had been the case in previous years. It must be remembered, of course, that the progression effect from the Entry and Foundation levels through to the Intermediate and Higher levels will take some time to come thorough, though the next few years will be very important in terms of maintaining the momentum and achieving an improvement in the historically static picture for the Intermediate and Higher levels.

Figure 5.2: Learner Enrolments in 2007/08 and 2008/09



5.2.5 It is notable that there were significant differences between Centres in terms of the distribution of learners across levels, with for example, Entry level learners making up only 37% of the North Wales WfA Centre's enrolments, whilst they represented almost twice that proportion of Gwent WfA Centre's enrolments, at 70%. As figure 5.3 shows, overall, North Wales and Mid Wales WfA Centres have 'more advanced' learner profiles, with 36% and 12% respectively of their 2008/09 enrolments at the Foundation Level and 15% and 18% respectively at the Intermediate level. It is also interesting to note that 12% of learners enrolled with the Glamorgan WfA Centre were pursuing Higher or Proficiency level courses.

Figure 5.3: Learner Enrolments at each Level by WfA Centre in 2008/09⁶⁹



5.2.6 There is a clear fall in the numbers of learners participating in courses at each ascending level, though the limited data available would suggest a tapering level of drop-out as learners progress to higher levels i.e. roughly 51% (61% in 2007/08) fewer people participate in Foundation level courses than do onto Entry level ones, roughly 47% (42% in 2007/08) fewer people participate Intermediate level courses than do Foundation level ones and roughly 37% (27% in 2007/08) fewer people participate in Upper level courses than do Intermediate level ones. The numbers participating in Proficiency level courses are very small, though WAG is anxious to see this provision extended further.

5.2.7 It was clear from our fieldwork that WfA Centres, like WAG staff, are acutely aware of the need to increase the numbers and proportion of learners progressing from one level to the next and most Centres have put in place measures to promote learner progression. However, inconsistencies in the way providers have interpreted learner “completion” means that the data cannot be relied upon to provide a clear and consistent picture of the extent to which learners progress

⁶⁹ The charts for the South West Wales and Cardiff WfA Centres are based on estimated figures, derived from the number of enrolments at each level divided by the average number of enrolments per learner across all levels

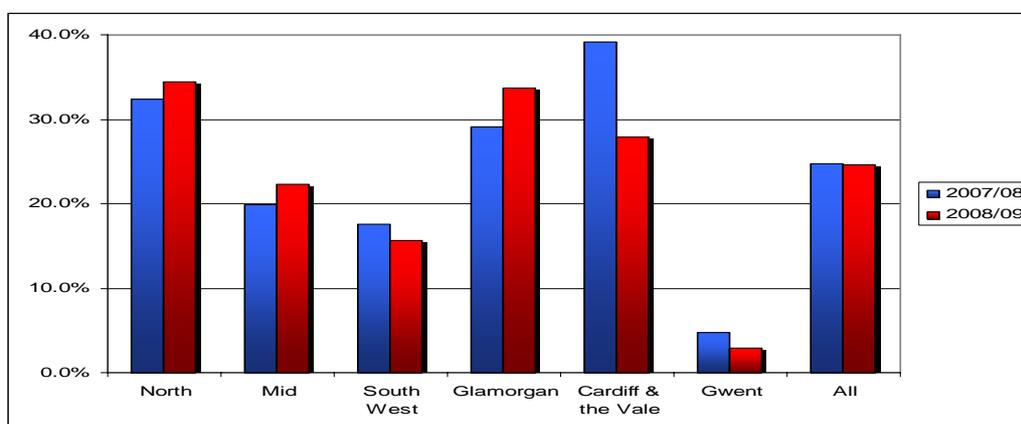
from one course or level to another. This, in turn, obstructs WfA Centres' identification of good practice and hinders the implementation of evidence based policies to improve learner retention and progression. Of course, improving learner progression rates, whilst also improving recruitment levels, would help Centres to secure the ongoing growth in learner numbers sought by WAG.

5.2.8 There is a consensus among WfA Centre Directors and WAG officials that learners enrolling onto intensive courses rather than more traditional 'once a week' courses tend to be more successful in developing their language skills. On that basis, Centres have sought increasingly to promote intensive provision. Figure 5.4 shows the proportion of learners enrolling onto intensive provision at each WfA Centre in 2007/08 and 2008/09. However, contributors pointed to the dichotomy which exists between WAG's desire to promote intensive provision on the one hand, and its funding policies, which fail to reward providers commensurately for the higher level of input involved in the delivery of intensive courses, on the other. Some contributors suggested that WAG should explore how the National Planning and Funding System could be flexed in order to "*induce*" more providers to deliver intensive courses.

5.2.9 At a Wales wide level, the proportions of learners enrolling onto intensive courses remained fairly static between 2007/08 and 2008/09. However, there were some marked differences from one Centre to another. The North Wales, Mid Wales and Glamorgan WfA Centres witnessed a shift towards more intensive provision and a corresponding increase in the number of enrolments per learner, suggesting that individuals enrolled onto successive courses as they progressed from one level to the next. By contrast, there was a decline in the proportion of learners participating in intensive provision at the South West Wales, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan and Gwent WfA Centres with, in the case of the South West Wales and Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan WfA Centres, a corresponding decline in the

number of courses (excluding taster courses) onto which each learner enrolled.

Figure 5.4: Learner Enrolments onto Intensive Courses by WfA Centre in 2007/08 and 2008/09



5.2.10 Whilst some Centres had succeeded in stepping up the volume of intensive courses delivered in 2008/09, there was a general fear that the economic downturn would impact adversely upon recruitment of learners onto such courses in the immediate future. It was thought that individuals in employment would become less inclined to spend money, that people out of work would be more focused on finding jobs than on learning Welsh (albeit that rather perversely, doing so could help them secure employment⁷⁰) and that employers would be less inclined to support Welsh language learning among their staff as business conditions tighten.

5.2.11 One of the priority areas for development has been to increase the provision of bespoke Welsh in the Workplace courses. All WfA Centres have been delivering Welsh in the workplace courses within their host institutions as well as to other (mainly) public sector employers. This was seen as an increasingly important element of their provision and, in some instances, something that was helping to cement the status of Centres within host institutions. Whilst Centres generally felt that they

⁷⁰ See for example, Future Skills Wales (2005), which indicated that 23% of employers felt that Welsh language skills were lacking amongst employees

had been successful in increasing learner numbers, some feared that to some extent, their success to date might be attributed to picking 'low hanging fruit' and that future growth would be harder to come by, particularly given an economic climate which is likely to "*affect people's priorities*" and the financial pressure upon public sector finances. Directors felt that the Welsh Language Board could engage more proactively with WfA Centres by referring employers to Centres for specific WfA provision to enable them to realise their Welsh Language Development Schemes. It is understood that WAG will take the strategic lead to further develop Welsh in the Workplace provision in the future through national investment. It is hoped that this approach will remove the duplication of resources and will make the courses more cost-effective for employers.

5.2.12 All Centres have also attempted to increase the number of Welsh for the Family courses (either directly or via third party providers), though Centres were mixed in their views about the effectiveness of this approach. One Centre Director noted that a number of Welsh for the Family courses had to be "*closed due to lack of numbers*" and another two highlighted a poor conversion rate amongst parents who had participated on 'taster courses' organised via Twf and Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (MYM). By contrast, one Centre Director spoke of a steady and growing demand for taster courses. In this context, it is notable that WAG has commissioned the development of materials to support a national Entry level Welsh for the Family course, which will facilitate this type of provision in the future.

5.3 LEARNER OUTCOMES

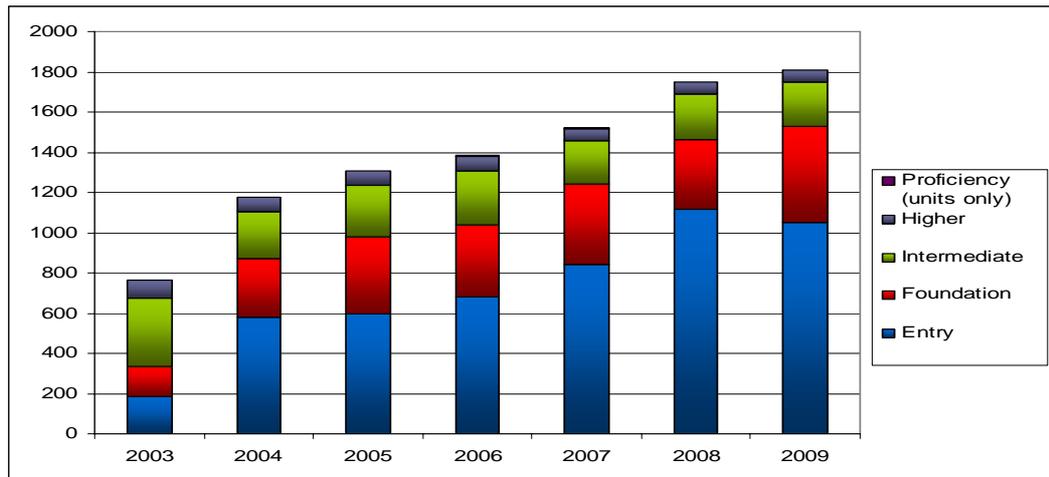
5.3.1 Figure 5.5 shows the numbers of learners sitting WJEC examinations at each level over the last six years. The numbers of candidates have increased steadily since the introduction of the new WJEC examinations, with a marked growth in the numbers of learners sitting

the Entry level examination in 2008 and the Foundation level examination in 2009. Of course, tutors have encouraged learners to sit WJEC examinations for a number of years (not least because of their long held belief that success in examinations leads to progression onto higher level courses), but WfA Centres have actively sought to step up the promotion of WJEC examinations in the last few years by:

- Registering candidates for examinations. Previously, learners who were minded to sit examinations (often in the wake of tutor persuasion), were required to enter for the examinations themselves. This inevitably meant that some learners, although willing to sit examinations in principle, failed to do so because of the trouble of having to enter;
- The introduction of the new WJEC course-books and credits pathway leads learners more naturally towards the examinations;
- Some Centres' contracts with their providers make specific reference to guiding learners towards WJEC examinations;
- Some Centres have met or have required their providers to meet the costs of entering examinations, on the basis that they will receive 'outcome' payments when learners pass examinations.

5.3.2 The emphasis on WJEC qualifications is not without its detractors, however, and some commented that *"it's a political issue because of the investment that WAG has made in them"*. Whilst the WJEC clearly welcomes an increase in the numbers sitting examinations each year, it will not necessarily welcome any decline in pass rates that might come in the wake of pushing unenthusiastic learners towards examinations.

Figure 5.5: Learners Sitting WJEC Examinations



5.3.3 Inconsistencies in providers' interpretation of what constitutes "completers" means that data on completion rates are not reliable. Similarly, the practice of altering learners' "qualification aims" for 'early leavers' means that attainment rates cannot be calculated in any meaningful way. These weaknesses need to be addressed as a matter of urgency by WAG, WfA Centres and their sub-contracted providers.

5.3.4 Although not necessarily relevant from a WfA Programme perspective, WAG may need to explore the extent to which the misinterpretation of measures or practices such as altering qualification aims impairs the reliability of data about other programme areas. The incentives for providers to 'work the system' that measures their performance in relation to learner completion rates, learner attainment rates and learner progression rates are obvious and it is highly likely that the practices uncovered by the internal review of WfA data requirements are more widespread than the WfA Programme.

6. PROFESSIONALISING THE WfA WORKFORCE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

6.1.1 In this chapter we:

- Touch upon the background to the professionalising WfA theme (section 6.2);
- Provide a brief outline of the WfA workforce (section 6.3);
- Describe the activities undertaken to professionalise the WfA workforce (section 6.4);
- Consider the effects of activities undertaken to professionalise the WfA workforce (section 6.5).

6.2 BACKGROUND TO THE ‘PROFESSIONALISING WfA’ THEME

6.2.1 Prior to the establishment of the WfA Programme, WAG argued that the WfA field was characterised by:

- A fragmented and partially amateur WfA tutor workforce;
- Variable standards of teaching (as a result of the partially ‘unprofessional’ nature of the tutor workforce);
- The absence of a single coherent and easily recognisable qualification for WfA tutors;
- The fragmented approach taken to training WfA tutors (as a result of there being no single, national qualification framework);
- The absence of a consistent means of disseminating information and good practice among practitioners;
- The lack of a clear career path for WfA tutors and the related lack of “status” attached to WfA teaching.

6.2.2 It was against this background that WAG committed to strengthening the WfA workforce as part of a wider drive to improve the quality and effectiveness of WfA provision. WfA Centres are required to produce three year training strategies which provide details of their WfA tutor

workforce, consider wider developments within the WfA field (e.g. changes to the WfA curriculum), identify training needs and set out costed training plans. Provision is made for the employment of training officers in WfA Centres' core funding allocations to enable the development and implementation of such plans. WAG also meets the costs of an annual WfA training conference at which a range of workshops of relevance to WfA tutors are held.

6.2.3 In addition to these activities, WAG has funded three distinct projects which revolve around professionalising the WfA tutor workforce. They are:

- 1 WfA Tutor Training;
- 2 National Qualification for WfA Tutors;
- 3 Online Magazine for WfA Tutors.

6.2.4 It is, of course, difficult to separate the effects of these three WAG funded 'projects' from the wider range of activities funded by WAG to develop the WfA tutor workforce. We, therefore, consider each of the projects in the context of these wider activities.

6.3 BACKGROUND TO THE WfA WORKFORCE

6.3.1 Prior to discussing the approaches taken to "*professionalising WfA*", we provide an insight into the size and nature of the WfA workforce.

6.3.2 Across Wales, a total of some 670⁷¹ people are involved in organising or delivering WfA provision. WfA staff are employed by either WfA Centres or their contracted third party providers on one of three types of contract:

- Full time;
- Fractional, which means that they are employed on a permanent basis but work part time hours. Tutors employed on this basis enjoy the same benefits, pro-rata, as their full time counterparts;

⁷¹ Figure calculated from information provided by WfA Centres in September 2009

- Sessional, which means that they are paid for the hours they work. Sessional contracts provide no guarantee of work and no benefits such as sickness and holiday pay.

6.3.3 The overwhelming majority of WfA tutors (87%) are employed on sessional contracts, and many of these teach WfA for fewer than five hours each week. Whilst this employment arrangement minimises the risk of providers being burdened with employment costs if demand for WfA courses turns out to be weak, it also makes it more difficult for providers to attract and retain WfA tutors in the long term. A few providers took steps to address this problem by starting to recruit tutors onto permanent contracts (both full time and fractional) for the first time during the autumn of 2007, which is in line with WAG's ambitions. However, it must be recognised that sessional tutors will remain the mainstay of WfA teaching, at least in the medium term, and the challenge of making WfA teaching an attractive career choice will remain.

6.3.4 The rates paid by individual providers vary significantly within some regions, but are considered to be fairly consistent, and thus less of an issue amongst tutors in other regions. Where differences exist, WfA Centres do not generally perceive that they are in a position to harmonise pay levels because tutors' pay is generally governed by institutional policies rather than those of the WfA Centre.

6.3.5 In terms of the gender profile across Wales, data received from WfA Centres indicate that women outnumber men as WfA tutors. It is also notable that a significant proportion of tutors are over 60 years of age and a majority are over 50⁷² ⁷³.

⁷² In 2007, WAG asked WfA Centres to look at the age profile of their tutors with a view to attracting younger practitioners into the field. This information was drawn from Centres' planning documents and/or subsequent discussions

⁷³ This information was drawn from Centres' planning documents and/or subsequent discussions

6.3.6 WAG requires all WfA tutors (FE practitioners) to hold an appropriate teaching qualification⁷⁴. However, information provided by WfA Centres indicate that some 22%⁷⁵ of tutors do not, albeit that they may hold high level qualifications relating to the Welsh language e.g. degrees in Welsh.

6.4 OUTLINE OF ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN TO PROFESSIONALISE THE WfA WORKFORCE

6.4.1 From the outset, WAG charged WfA Centres with professionalising the WfA workforce and made provision within Centres' annual funding to enable them to meet the costs of developing and delivering training plans. In addition to this, WAG provided WfA Centres with an additional one-off award of £280 thousand in November 2006 (via the so called WfA Tutor Training project) to *"kick start"* their staff training programmes and to *"show partners that Centres were for real about improving standards"*.

6.4.2 Since then, Centres have produced progressively more detailed annual Training and Development plans, in line with WAG requirements. These documents, which set out the programmes of courses and professional development opportunities which Centres propose to offer, have been informed by:

- Estyn Reports;
- Provider Self Assessment Reports;
- Surveys of WfA tutors;
- Observations of tutors 'in action', which now form a key element of all Centres' staff development activities;
- Tutors' Individual Development Plans (which are informed by survey responses and tutor observations);
- Feedback on courses run in previous years.

⁷⁴ Although technically, some tutors may be exempt from the Further Education Teachers' Qualifications (Wales) Regulations 2002

⁷⁵ Derived from data provided by Centres in September 2009

- 6.4.3 Since the launch of WfA Centres' first training plans in 2006/07, there has been a steady year on year growth in the numbers and proportion of WfA tutors undertaking some form of professional development activity, as well as a corresponding increase in Centres' expenditure on training.
- 6.4.4 The vast majority of respondents to our 2009 survey of WfA practitioners (more than 80% for all types of 'course') said that the training they had received has been useful or very useful. Indeed, several respondents commented that the increase in professional development opportunities on offer over the last three years was one of the "*best aspects*" of the WfA restructuring programme.
- 6.4.5 The National Qualification for WfA Tutors has become a more pronounced feature of Centres' training plans over the past two years and is seen by some stakeholders as the "*starting point*" of a continuous professional development (CPD) journey for existing and aspirant "*professional WfA tutors*".
- 6.4.6 The National Qualification for WfA Tutors was developed by Cardiff University, in close collaboration with other WfA Centres, as a means of addressing the historically variable standards of teaching associated with the involvement of untrained 'tutors' in the WfA field and of elevating the status of WfA teaching as a career choice. The introduction of a single National Qualification for WfA Tutors was also seen as a means of removing confusion stemming from the existence of a range of awards which ostensibly qualified people to teach Welsh to adults.
- 6.4.7 Cardiff University used its existing TACiO⁷⁶ course as the basis for a 60 credit equivalent suite of modules which, under a credit and transfer agreement between Cardiff University and the University of Wales,

⁷⁶ Tystysgrif Addysgu Cymraeg i Oedolion/Certificate in Teaching Welsh for Adults

Newport, can form the first part of “*an integrated WfA pathway*” into The University of Wales Newport’s 120 credit PGCE – PCET qualification⁷⁷. The course is delivered by each WfA Centre under franchise agreements with Cardiff University, which holds the overarching contract with DCELLS.

6.4.8 The budget for the initial development and piloting of the National Qualification was £64.6 thousand and DCELLS subsequently allocated a further £502.5 thousand for the delivery of the National Qualification to 85 WfA tutors between 2008 and 2010. Discussions are on-going between WAG and HEFCW regarding the funding of this provision as ‘mainstream’ offer in the longer term. Whilst WAG may well be minded to provide sufficient ‘ring-fenced’ funding (via HEFCW) to meet the costs of delivering training, it is unlikely to fund the on-going delivery of the National Qualification as generously as it has during the pilot phase. Indeed, it is possible that as the numbers of existing and aspirant WfA tutors undertaking National Qualification courses declines (as more tutors become suitably qualified), WfA Centres (via their sponsoring universities) may be forced to introduce fees to ensure the viability of provision, much in the same way as they do for other post-graduate courses.

6.4.9 As at July 2009, a total of 111 practitioners had enrolled onto National Qualification courses (including those enrolling onto 30 credit equivalent ‘pilot’ courses in 2007 and 2008)⁷⁸, with 84% of those participating in the ‘pilot’ courses completing successfully. Some 77% of the respondents to our 2009 survey of practitioners who had participated in National Qualification related courses had found the training useful or very useful and a further 18% had found it fairly useful.

6.4.10 WAG has recently contracted Cardiff University to develop a blended

⁷⁷ Delivered under franchise arrangements by FEIs across Wales

⁷⁸ Figures provided by Cardiff University

learning course for the National Qualification for WfA Tutors that will combine on-line training sessions with face to face teaching and provide tutors with an additional and flexible option for pursuing the qualification. WAG is also keen to put in place more distinct pathways for continuous professional development within the WfA field. Subject to the availability of funding, it is hoped to:

- Establish a study and research based learning pathway for WfA tutors who have completed the National Qualification. This could build upon modules which some universities have already built into Masters level programmes;
- Develop further a continuous professional development framework;
- Define a minimum number of hours' training to be undertaken by WfA tutors in any given year. In this context, there may be some merit in considering the longer term sustainability of the existing practice of paying sessional tutors to participate in training;
- Develop a 'Preparing to Teach' mini-module that will also form part of the first module of the National Qualification.

6.4.11 In addition to the training related activities described above, WAG engaged the WJEC to develop and publish an Online Magazine, "*Y Tiwtor*", as a means of enhancing the professional knowledge and skills of the 670 or so WfA tutors working across Wales in a cost effective and consistent manner, by presenting them with easily accessible, up-to-date, professionally relevant information and by providing them with access to a host of teaching and learning resources. In principle at least, an On-Line Magazine would seem an ideal vehicle for engaging the disparate WfA tutor workforce. It also has the potential to play a pivotal role in the implementation of WAG's wider Restructuring WfA Programme in that it provides a 'route to market' for teaching and learning resources developed and for disseminating information about key developments in the WfA field, including the new WfA Qualifications , the National Qualification for WfA Tutors and developments within WfA Centres.

6.4.12 The total funding allocated to the development and publication of “*Y Tiwtor*” was £180 thousand over three years, although there was a clear expectation that further funding would be made available if the magazine proved successful⁷⁹. The first edition of “*Y Tiwtor*” was published on-line in March 2008 and nine subsequent editions have been published on a quarterly basis. The publication has been adapted somewhat from the earliest editions, not least in response to our September 2009 Thematic Report on Professionalising WfA.

6.4.13 Our June 2009 survey of WfA tutors revealed that⁸⁰:

- 88% of respondents had heard about “*Y Tiwtor*” some 15 months after its launch;
- 79% of those who had heard of “*Y Tiwtor*” (or 69% of all respondents) had accessed it on-line;
- The overwhelming majority (93%) of tutors who had accessed “*Y Tiwtor*” had done so more than once;
- Of those who had accessed “*Y Tiwtor*” at least once, 82% thought that its general appearance was good or very good, 71% found it clear and easy to navigate and 64% thought that its content was organised in a logical fashion.
- Some 68% of who had accessed “*Y Tiwtor*” at least once rated the overall quality of the content as good or very good;
- Some 62% of survey respondents who had accessed “*Y Tiwtor*” had also accessed learning and teaching resources which it featured and a majority of those (73%) had used the resources they had accessed;
- Generally, respondents had found the learning and teaching resources accessed “*relevant*”, “*flexible*”, “*practical*” and “*easy to use*”.

6.4.14 We asked survey respondents what specific types of additional

⁷⁹ We understand that WAG has recently extended the contract with the WJEC for a further 18 months (until October 2011) on a pro-rata basis

⁸⁰ Relatively low response rates means that survey findings may be subject to non-response bias and should, therefore, be approached with a degree of caution

features they would like to see in “*Y Tiwtor*”. A majority of respondents (prompted) suggested that the following additions would be helpful:

- Advice on teaching methods;
- Information about good practice;
- Reviews of teaching and learning resources;
- Information about relevant research;
- Information about professional development.

6.4.15 Individual respondents also offered their own suggestions for improvement and we argued in our September 2009 Thematic Review that it was time to rethink the way in which “*Y Tiwtor*” was structured and the way in which the web-site functions. We also concurred with some commentators’ views that the resource, as it stood, was “*too lightweight*” and, therefore needed to be beefed up in terms of content. We argued that there was scope for “*Y Tiwtor*” to become more obviously a continuous professional development resource and to:

- Feature up-to-date news between ‘editions’;
- Feature periodic ‘headline/editorial articles’ which reinforce the “*professionalising*” agenda;
- Feature weighty, academic articles on aspects of teaching, possibly drawing on particular pieces of research;
- Provide access to an archive of past articles/features organised along thematic lines;
- Provide information on continuous professional development opportunities such as conferences and new developments such as the proposed blended learning National Qualification course;
- Provide access to a bank of resources according to level (as is currently done);
- Highlight specific resources at particular times of the year e.g. Christmas, Easter, the summer, Halloween etc (as is currently done);
- Provide a ‘search’ facility⁸¹;

⁸¹ This has been added since we presented our Thematic Review

- Provide a 'blogging' facility for tutors;
- Distribute periodic paper based summaries of the web-site's content as a means of enticing tutors who expressed a preference for a paper based resource to visit "*Y Tiwtor*".

6.4.16 It is, of course notable, that a number of WfA tutors do not have easy access to ICT facilities and are, therefore, less likely to make regular or extensive use of "*Y Tiwtor*".

6.5 EFFECTS OF ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO PROFESSIONALISE WfA

6.5.1 Our 2008 and 2009 surveys of WfA tutors explored how participating in training had influenced practitioners' teaching practice⁸². There was a strong suggestion that overall, the training delivered had led to an evolution (rather than a revolution) in teaching practice. The changes which respondents typically identified included:

- Placing a greater focus on the learner in planning lessons;
- Introducing variety to enliven lessons;
- Demanding more learner involvement/input, especially stepping up the volume of "*oral work*" done with learners;
- Using better approaches to teaching language and grammar;
- Making more use of learning and teaching resources;
- Making more use of learning technologies;
- Encouraging learners to access certain web-sites
- Being better placed to "*sell*" WfA examinations to learners and better able to "*prepare learners for examinations*";
- Placing a greater emphasis on on-going assessment, not least as a result of using WJEC accreditation pathways;
- Coping better with paperwork as a result of "*knowing exactly what's needed*".

⁸² Relatively low response rates means that survey findings may be subject to non-response bias and should, therefore, be approached with a degree of caution

- 6.5.2 Respondents who had participated in National Qualification related training said that the experience had rendered them more confident and more willing to think about their approach to teaching and to experiment with different methods.
- 6.5.3 Some of the tutors who undertook the one year 60 credit course at Cardiff in 2008/09 intended to progress onto the second year of Newport University's PGCE course in September 2009.
- 6.5.4 A handful of respondents claimed that the training (of one form or another) received had made no difference to their working practice. In some cases, this was because they had only attended training fairly recently had not, therefore, had the opportunity to put into practice what they learnt. However, some practitioners who had undertaken training in the use of technologies for learning and teaching claimed that it had not been possible for them to put their newly acquired skills into action because *"the equipment isn't available where I work"*. It is clearly of concern that the facilities available to some tutors are not adequate, but also that some training is delivered without full consideration of how it will impact upon recipients' day to day work.
- 6.5.5 Roughly 20% of respondents to our 2009 survey claimed that they had been unable to take up training opportunities which had been offered to them, primarily because the training offered clashed with other commitments, not least work commitments among sessional tutors who also work elsewhere.
- 6.5.6 Our 2009 survey explored what effects, if any, *"Y Tiwtor"* had had on respondents' teaching practice. Comments fell into three main categories:
- Tutors using a wider range of learning and teaching resources as a result of accessing them from *"Y Tiwtor"*;
 - Tutors introducing new approaches and activities in the classroom as a result of picking up ideas from *"Y Tiwtor"*;

- Creating a sense of belonging to a supportive WfA community.

6.5.7 A handful of respondents who claimed that “*Y Tiwtor*” had not affected their teaching practice per se, nevertheless commented that “*it’s good to know that it’s there for up to date information on any changes*” and “*it’s good to know that there are resources there when they’re needed*”. Others said that they looked forward to having the time to look through the resources accessible via “*Y Tiwtor*” and to think “*about the possibilities they offer*”.

6.5.8 Our survey also explored practitioners’ perceptions of teaching WfA as a career and how they felt those had changed over the last three years or so. The majority of respondents were positive about careers in teaching WfA and 60% of respondents felt that there had been a change for the better in that time, whilst 22% felt that things had not changed and 18% thought that the teaching WfA had become a less attractive career option.

6.5.9 The key attractions identified in relation to teaching WfA were:

- An enjoyment of teaching adults and of the social interaction which that involves;
- The flexibility of being able to work part time and to take on the number of hours which individual tutors want to teach;
- Love of the Welsh language.

6.5.10 A small number of individuals commented that the creation of more “*permanent*” posts had helped to increase the attractiveness of the WfA field. However, a far greater number of respondents pointed to negative aspects of the terms under which the majority of WfA tutors are employed:

- The rates paid to sessional tutors do not reflect the volume of work involved in teaching WfA;
- Sessional tutors’ inability to secure sufficient hours’ teaching to earn a living wage;

- The lack of job security;
- The lack of career progression opportunities;
- Out-of-pocket expenses which sessional tutors are unable to reclaim from WfA Centres;
- The volume of paperwork attached to the job, with a number of experienced tutors arguing that there had been an “*overwhelming*” increase in paperwork in recent times.

7. WfA TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCES

7.1 INTRODUCTION

7.1.1 In this chapter we:

- Provide some brief background to the WfA resources theme (section 7.2);
- Describe the activities undertaken to develop WfA resources (section 7.3);
- Consider the effects of activities undertaken to develop WfA resources (section 7.4).

7.2 BACKGROUND TO THE 'WfA RESOURCES' THEME

7.2.1 Historically, the Welsh for Adults sector has not been particularly well served in terms of teaching and learning resources, which meant that tutors were often left to develop their own materials, leading to inconsistency across the piece. It was against this backdrop that in 2003, the then ELWa developed a Commissioning Strategy which outlined broad plans for producing new teaching and learning materials for the sector.

7.3 OUTLINE OF ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN TO DEVELOP WfA RESOURCES

7.3.1 The process of developing resources has been guided, initially, by a Resource Panel made up of a range of stakeholders including representatives of the then WfA consortia, and latterly, through consultation with WfA Centres and a handful of other expert stakeholders.

7.3.2 Over a five year period, a total of fourteen projects have been established to develop custom-made WfA teaching and learning materials. Some of the more recent projects have yet to be completed,

whilst others have, by now, led to the publication and use of resources within the WfA sector. Our evaluation has focused on seven projects which have been completed, and which are described briefly below:

WJEC Course Books

7.3.3 The aim of the WJEC Course Books project was to produce and publish a set of three standard course books together with accompanying audio resources and tutor guidance, at WfA Entry, Foundation and Intermediate levels. The books were created in accordance with the linguistic content of the WfA examination specifications and were designed to fit in with the accreditation pathways which would later be developed.

7.3.4 The budget set for the project was £150 thousand (including design, trialling, printing and publication costs) and the timescale for delivery was July 2004 – September 2007.

Resources for Proficiency ('Hyfedredd' Level)

7.3.5 WAG also commissioned the WJEC (under a separate contract) to produce course materials for five units of learning at the Proficiency level in the WfA framework. The materials produced consists of audio resources and a tutors' file capable of being updated periodically (rather than a course book), to ensure that the resource can be revised relatively easily as time goes on – and to allow for modular use linked to the Proficiency course units. The WJEC's contract also involved delivering training sessions for tutors on the course materials, producing appropriate marketing materials and undertaking all arrangements in relation to the sale of the materials, in consultation with WAG.

7.3.6 An overall budget of £28.9 thousand was set for this project⁸³, which was delivered in two phases, the first running from Autumn 2006 to Autumn 2008 and the second from Autumn 2008 to Autumn 2009.

WJEC Flashcards (Cardiau Fflach CBAC)

7.3.7 The WJEC was further commissioned to produce three successive packs of 'flashcards' to complement other course materials, including a pre-existing set of flashcards which the WJEC had developed some years earlier.

7.3.8 The overall cost of developing three sets of flashcards, in 2007, 2008 and 2009 was £50.8 thousand, with WAG's investment amounting to £33.2 thousand and the balance being derived from the sale of flashcards.

WfA Materials at National Museums and Galleries of Wales' (NMGW) Sites

7.3.9 WAG commissioned a series of materials designed for use by WfA tutors and learners at various NMGW sites. The resources are intended to provide more and better quality learning opportunities outside the classroom. This evaluation has considered resources centred on the National History Museum, St Fagans and on the National Slate Museum, Llanberis.

7.3.10 In addition to the development of resources, the two projects in question also involved the provision of training to staff at the NMGW sites to ensure that they were able to support Welsh learners in using the packs.

⁸³ The total project cost amounted to £35.5 thousand, with the balance being met from income derived from the sale of the resources

7.3.11 The overall cost of developing these two sets of resources, in 2005-2006 and 2006-07 was £17 thousand. The NMGW also contributed £5,000 towards the cost of developing the materials.

“Gwrando’n Astud”

7.3.12 The then ELWa commissioned the BBC to produce *“high quality audio resources for Welsh for Adults tutors from the Radio Cymru sound archive”*. The work involved the selection, editing and transcription of BBC recordings suitable for use in teaching Higher and Proficiency level WfA courses, as well as the creation of accompanying tutor guidelines. Utilising BBC archive materials in this way represented a relatively cost effective way of producing authentic teaching and learning resources.

7.3.13 The resources were made freely available via a dedicated tutors’ section on BBC Learn Welsh website, though in light of the general lack of ICT facilities available to WfA tutors, WAG also commissioned the production of two audio CDs and a printed file/booklet for distribution, free of charge, by BBC Wales to all tutors in Wales.

7.3.14 The project was undertaken in 2006-07 at an overall cost to WAG of £47.6 thousand.

OCN Tutor Resources

7.3.15 OCN was commissioned to produce and promote a resource pack for tutors which included a good practice guide on assessment practices, notes on appropriate vocabulary, exemplar assessment materials and guidance on how the materials could be used to support both OCN and WJEC provision. To all intents and purposes, these resources were seen by some as something of an ‘interim’ measure whilst the WJEC introduced accreditation pathways that fitted in with the newly developed WfA examinations. The on-going work of the WJEC in developing alternative accreditation pathways closely linked to course

materials and exams is likely to mean that over time, the OCN accreditation pathways will become less used. At the time of our 2009 survey of WfA tutors, however the OCN accreditation pathways remained in fairly widespread use (across three of the six WfA Centres) and, as such, the OCN teaching and learning materials also continued to be used by WfA tutors.

7.3.16 The budget for this project amounted to £5,000 and the timescale for delivery was mid 2006 to August 2007.

Acen Tutor Resources

7.3.17 The then ELWa commissioned Acen⁸⁴, to write, edit, design and produce online back-up teaching materials, to accord with the five WfA examinations offered by the WJEC. The work involved examining pre-existing online teaching materials in other languages (English in particular) to assess whether there were any activities available that could be reconfigured or adapted for WfA use (with the permission of copyright holders).

7.3.18 The overall budget for the production of these resources was £87.7 thousand. The resources have been available for tutors to download and use via a website (www.tiwtor.co.uk)⁸⁵ since early 2007.

Other

7.3.19 Since the commencement of our evaluation, WAG has commissioned a number of additional WfA Teaching and Learning Resources, which are not considered in this report. They are:

- A pack for use at Oriel 1, National History Museum - "*Pecyn Perthyn*";
- A pack for use at the National Wool Museum - "*Pecyn Gwau Geiriau*";;

⁸⁴ A company providing services to Welsh learners

⁸⁵ Note that this is a completely different website to the WJEC managed www.ytiwtor.org site.

- A DVD featuring video clips for ‘uwch’ and ‘hyfedredd’ levels - “*Gwyllo’n Graff*”;
- A DVD of the BBC’s *Big Welsh Challenge* video learning materials ;
- Learning through Literature Pack;
- A collection of TV clips themed around Wales and "Welshness" - “*Eclips*”;
- Welsh for the Family Resources (including coursebook, flashcards and CDs)
- A collection of online resources to support intensive courses;
- A ‘taster’ pack for parents learning Welsh – “*Cymraeg o’r Crud*”
- A pack for use at the National Coal Museum, Big Pit.

7.3.20 Each of the projects commissioned was developed in consultation with key stakeholders within the WfA field, which ensured that they were founded on sound evidence of need and demand. The projects commissioned fit clearly with the WfA qualifications framework and we believe that the existence of a well integrated suite of resources has helped to embed the new course structure and titles with the tutor workforce, as well as simplifying matters for other stakeholders, not least learners. Moreover, the availability of resources, clearly linked, as these are, to the courses and qualifications on offer, plays a key role in leading learners towards examinations, whilst also providing a recognisable and familiar ‘brand’ to those progressing from one level to the next and more generally in giving the WfA sector a more professional image. In short, there has been a clear strategy and, for the most part, sound logic to the way in which WAG has consulted on, prioritised and set about commissioning WfA teaching and learning resources.

7.3.21 Whilst there were inevitably some procurement related complications and delays in the completion of some projects, WAG seems to have managed the process of commissioning resources effectively. To a large extent, this coherent approach to commissioning resources was

reflected in the views expressed by respondents to our 2009 survey of WfA tutors. On the whole, respondents said that the resources produced were relevant, logical, suitable and of high quality.

7.3.22 Nevertheless, our thematic review pointed to two important and on-going strategic issues facing WAG in relation to the development of WfA resources.

7.3.23 Firstly, tutors involved in delivering intensive WfA courses have said that the WJEC course books and supporting materials for the Entry, Foundation and Intermediate levels are primarily geared towards delivery in part time course settings. As such, there has been some pressure on the WAG to commission a 'sister' set of resources tailored more closely to the requirements of intensive delivery. Given that this would be a significant undertaking involving a substantial resource commitment (to produce materials for what are essentially the same courses and exams but delivered in a different way), it is entirely understandable that the WAG commissioned some initial research in 2008⁸⁶ to explore the issues further before committing to a new programme of resource development. Whilst this research was useful in understanding the breadth of stakeholder perspectives in relation to intensive courses, it did not provide sufficient detail to take the work forward. The research concluded that further detailed research into teaching and learning Welsh was needed before any new courses and/or resources could sensibly be commissioned. On this basis, WAG set about commissioning further, in-depth, longitudinal research (over a period of some two years from March 2010) with a view to making clear recommendations in relation to the future needs of the WfA curriculum, including the delivery of WfA intensive courses across all levels.

7.3.24 In order to improve the amount and quality of resources available to support intensive provision in the short term, WAG commissioned new digital resources to complement existing intensive courses, starting

⁸⁶ Undertaken for WAG by NFER.

with Entry and Foundation levels. These resources were under development at the time of our review.

7.3.25 The second issue identified by tutors is that no new resources have been developed for the Higher level within the WfA framework, largely due to the relatively low level of learners pursuing WfA at this level and the existence of some usable (if not ideal) materials from pre-WfA Programme days. Although WAG has no immediate plans to commission a dedicated course book for this level, the WJEC has indicated that it plans to review resources and accreditation routes at the Higher level, with a view to plugging the existing gap and providing a full range of resources from Entry to Proficiency levels.

7.4 EFFECTS OF THE PROJECTS

7.4.1 Our 2009 survey⁸⁷ suggested that tutor awareness of the different resources developed varied, with:

- 75% of respondents saying that they were familiar with at least one of the three WJEC Course Books (covering Entry, Foundation and Intermediate levels);
- 92% claiming to be familiar with the WJEC Flashcards;
- 52% of respondents saying that they had come across the St Fagan's or Llanberis Slate Museum centred NMGW resources;
- 42% saying that they were familiar with the BBC's Gwrandon Astud materials;
- 31% claiming to have come across the OCN materials;
- 60% saying that they were familiar with the Acen Tutor Resources.

7.4.2 Whilst there seemed to be reasonable awareness of some resources, there was clearly considerable scope to promote others to tutors. Having said that, however, it must be remembered that Gwrandon Astud resources, for example, are designed for use in teaching Higher

⁸⁷ Relatively low response rates means that survey findings may be subject to non-response bias and should, therefore, be approached with a degree of caution

and Proficiency level courses, which relatively few tutors teach. By the same token, the NMGW materials are designed for use at specific sites and are, therefore, less likely to be of interest to tutors working in areas some distance from those particular NMGW sites.

7.4.3 Our survey also provided some insight into the use made of the resources produced by tutors:

- 57% of all respondents said that they had used the Entry level WJEC course book in their teaching, 40% said that they had used the Foundation level resources and 21% the Intermediate level materials;
- 86% of all respondents said that they had used the WJEC Flashcards;
- 32% of all respondents said that they had used the NMGW resources;
- 26% said that had used the BBC's Gwrando'n Astud materials in their teaching;
- 27% claimed to have used the OCN materials;
- 47% said that they had used the Acen Tutor Resources.

7.4.4 Not surprisingly, there was a degree of correlation between tutor awareness and usage of WfA resources. This reinforces the need to promote newly developed WfA teaching and learning resources quite vigorously to tutors, to ensure that learners benefit from the significant investment made by WAG.

7.4.5 Finally, our survey explored tutors' perceptions of the appropriateness/suitability and the quality of the WfA resources developed, with the following findings:

- 72% of respondents who were familiar with the WJEC course books thought that were appropriate and of good or very good quality;

- 86% of respondents who were aware of them thought that WJEC Flashcards were appropriate/suitable, whilst 92% rated their quality highly;
- 65% of those who were familiar with them thought NMGW resources appropriate/suitable and 68% said they were of good or very good quality;
- 90% of those who were aware of the BBC's Gwrandon Astud materials thought them appropriate and 88% rated their quality highly;
- 58% of those who were familiar with them said that OCN materials were relevant and 47% said that they were of good quality. It is notable that a number of respondents claimed to use OCN resources despite not regarding them as particularly relevant (29%) or of good quality (40%), suggesting that there may be scope to introduce some tutors to alternative resources, particularly now that WJEC Pathways are in place;
- 81% of those who were aware of Acen Tutor Resources thought them appropriate and 75% rated their quality highly.

8. WFA EXAMINATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

8.1.1 In this chapter we:

- Touch upon the background to the WfA examinations theme (section 8.2);
- Describe the activities undertaken to develop WfA examinations and accreditation pathways (section 8.3);
- Consider the effects of activities undertaken to develop WfA examinations and accreditation pathways (section 8.4).

8.2 BACKGROUND

8.2.1 Adult learners of Welsh have, for a number of years, been able to sit examinations to demonstrate their progress and achievement. However, during the late 1990's and early 2000's questions were raised by some WfA practitioners about the value of and need for WfA examinations and, as one stakeholder put it, the sector experienced a *"dwindling appetite"* for examinations at the time.

8.2.2 However, a ground-swell of opinion eventually emerged around 2001 (from tutors, learners and other key stakeholders such as language planners) that examinations were strategically important to *"the actual and perceived status of the language"*.

8.2.3 As well as the consensus within the WfA sector, the drive to develop a set of examinations tailored to fit clearly with course structures has become an increasingly important policy objective for the Welsh Assembly Government (which is equally true for Adult and Community Learning as a whole). There has also been a general perception that examinations give learners goals to work towards and a means by which their progress and achievement can be recognised.

8.2.4 As an alternative to examinations, learners were able to gain recognition for the Welsh language skills they developed via Agored Cymru's accreditation pathways⁸⁸. However, many in the sector believed that these accreditation pathways failed to challenge learners sufficiently. Furthermore, they bore no direct relationship to the examinations in existence at that time and there was a view among stakeholders that accreditation pathways should lead more clearly to exam based qualifications.

8.2.5 It was against this background that initially ELWa and later WAG:

- Commissioned the development and implementation of a suite of new WfA examinations;
- Commissioned the development and implementation of new accreditation pathways to complement WfA examinations.

8.3 OUTLINE OF ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN TO DEVELOP WfA EXAMINATIONS AND ACCREDITATION PATHWAYS

8.3.1 In brief, WAG commissioned the WJEC to:

- Put in place a WfA qualifications and accreditation framework, which fitted with the National Qualification Framework⁸⁹ and the Common European Framework of Reference;
- Develop specifications for examinations at each of five levels: Entry, Foundation, Intermediate, Higher and Proficiency;
- Organise and run WfA examinations at each of the five levels;
- Develop credit pathways for four of the examinations⁹⁰, in accordance with the Credit and Qualifications Framework;
- Produce an annual Examinations Bulletin.

⁸⁸ Agored Cymru was formerly known as the Open College Network

⁸⁹ The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) sets out the levels against which a qualification can be recognised in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

⁹⁰ Entry, Foundation, Intermediate and Higher. The Proficiency examination was already Modularised

8.3.2 The introduction of the WJEC accreditation pathways leading directly to the WJEC examinations has arguably been a controversial step, as it has effectively paved the way for a direct alternative to the Agored Cymru accreditation route. WfA Centres now have the option to follow either the WJEC or Agored Cymru credit pathways⁹¹ for Entry and Foundation levels. Of course, learners who follow Agored Cymru credit pathways still have the option of sitting WJEC examinations at the end of their course if they choose.

8.3.3 The total budget allocated for this work over a seven year period was £939.7 thousand⁹².

8.3.4 Following the development of the new WJEC examinations, WfA Centres altered the system employed for registering candidates for examinations. Previously, candidates were left to register themselves, but from 2007 onwards, WfA Centres took on that mantle, thus bringing their relationship with the WJEC in-line with that between the WJEC and schools.

8.3.5 The reaction to this change amongst the WfA Centres seems, on the whole, to have been positive, despite some early concerns that the resulting additional administrative work (for WfA Centres) would not be reflected in additional resources from WAG. Our fieldwork with tutors and learners suggests that this new system has bedded in very well over the past couple of years.

8.4 THE EFFECTS OF THE PROJECTS

8.4.1 Revisions made to the system for registering learners for examinations means that the WJEC is now able to compile data on examination

⁹¹ It is worth noting that learners cannot opt out of accreditation pathways. All learners will either follow OCN or WJEC pathways (or WJEC Examinations) as learning outcomes.

⁹² We understand that WAG has recently extended the WJEC's contract for a further period of three years. In doing so, however, WAG has charged the WJEC with coming up with an alternative assessment option to examinations, possibly in the form of portfolio building. The purpose of doing this is to provide learners with an alternative means to examinations of achieving qualifications.

entry and success rates at the level of individual Centres, sub-contracted training providers and indeed tutors. This has enabled WfA Centres to monitor more closely which providers and tutors are actively submitting candidates for WJEC examinations, as well as providing evidence about the quality and effectiveness of teaching. Further evidence surrounding the quality of provision is provided by the examiner's report provided in the annual WJEC Examinations Bulletin.

8.4.2 Our 2009 survey of WfA practitioners⁹³ suggested that a majority (81%) of tutors were aware of WfA examinations, with the exceptions generally being those who were new to the profession. Some 64% of survey respondents had prepared learners for examinations at Entry level, 48% at Foundation level, 35% at Intermediate level and 16% at Higher level. Only a handful of respondents had prepared learners for examination at Proficiency level.

8.4.3 Overall, 83% of respondents to our 2009 survey who were familiar with the examinations thought that they were good or very good in terms of:

- Organisation;
- The relevance of the curriculum;
- The relevance and quality of the examination specification; and
- The quality of examiners.

8.4.4 A similar proportion (80%) of tutors responding to our survey said that they were familiar with the WJEC accreditation pathways. Of those that were aware of the accreditation pathways, some 61% believed that they would have a positive effect upon learners, although others expressed concern that the pathways intrude upon rather than facilitate learning and that they can be burdensome to administer. Some of the learners we interviewed also suggested that they did not find the accreditation pathways particularly relevant.

⁹³ Relatively low response rates means that survey findings may be subject to non-response bias and should, therefore, be approached with a degree of caution.

- 8.4.5 As already discussed in Chapter 4, there has been a significant increase in the numbers of learners sitting WJEC examinations, with more than a two-fold increase in candidates between 2004 and 2009. Whilst the bulk of those sitting examinations do so at Entry level, there was a slight increase in the numbers sitting Foundation level examinations in 2009, possibly suggesting that success at Entry level examinations in previous years has helped to encourage progression and is beginning to feed through into entry of more advanced examinations.
- 8.4.6 While overall, this presents a reasonably positive picture, it does underline the need for continued dialogue between WfA Centre staff and tutors, for example in team meetings, to continually promote the importance of accreditation pathways and to share good practice on how to introduce these to learners so that they are aware of their value and what is involved. It is important for the strategic development of the WfA programme that accreditation pathways are embraced by WfA Centres and Tutors to ensure that for those who chose not to sit Examinations, there are clear and well understood learning outcomes in place. It is also important, however, that WfA Centre Directors, the WJEC and WAG take seriously and seek to address tutors' perceptions that implementing and administering accreditation pathways can be burdensome.
- 8.4.7 In this context we welcome the continued commitment by both the WJEC and Agored Cymru to work together to prepare joint guidance in order to improve the quality and rigour of assessment procedures.
- 8.4.8 Despite this, however, the proportion of WfA learners who sit examinations remains fairly modest and there is considerable scope to increase the numbers going through the process, particularly in light of the motivational effects of sitting examinations of which both tutors and learners who we interviewed spoke.

9. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 INTRODUCTION

9.1.1 In this chapter we present our conclusions surrounding the development and implementation of the WfA Programme and make recommendations emanating from those conclusions, thus addressing the tenth and eleventh objectives of this study. This chapter effectively summarises the conclusions and recommendations made in our three Thematic Review reports and in the report on our Final Review of Developments within WfA Centres.

9.1.2 This chapter is presented under the following headings:

- The Concept of and Intelligence Underpinning the Restructuring WfA Programme, which addresses the first and third objective of this evaluation (section 9.2);
- A Framework for Planning and Managing Provision, which addresses the fifth objective of this study (section 9.3);
- Funding WfA Provision (section 9.4);
- Changes in WfA Provision, which addresses the fifth, sixth and seventh objective of this evaluation (section 9.5);
- Marketing WfA, which addresses the eighth objective of this study (section 9.6);
- Delivery to Date, which addresses the seventh and ninth objectives this evaluation (section 9.7);
- Professionalising WfA, which addresses the second and fourth objectives of this study (section 9.8);
- WfA Resources, which addresses the second and seventh objectives of this study (section 9.9);
- WfA Examinations and Assessment, which addresses the second, sixth and seventh objectives of this study (section 9.10).

9.2 OVERALL CONCEPT AND INTELLIGENCE UNDERPINNING THE PROGRAMME

9.2.1 The WfA Programme is undoubtedly rooted in WAG's Welsh language related policy. Iaith Pawb set clear targets for increasing the number of Welsh speakers and it, along with WAG's subsequent Welsh-medium Education Strategy, point to the role of the WfA Programme in realising this ambition.

9.2.2 A central component of the WfA Programme has been to restructure arrangements for planning and delivering WfA provision and it is clear that previous evaluations, most notably those undertaken by NFER in 2003 and Estyn in 2004, have influenced the establishment of an infrastructure based on six WfA Centres. WAG was also careful to consult stakeholders about its proposals and this helped to ensure that the restructuring process was open and transparent.

9.2.3 The targets set for the process of restructuring the WfA infrastructure were generally specific, measurable and time-bound, albeit that the time-scale set for the establishment of WfA Centres turned out to be a little over-ambitious given the five months' slippage which occurred in the project's launch as a result of the time taken to secure approval.

9.2.4 The Welsh-medium Education Strategy sets a number of objectives for the ongoing development of WfA Centres and WfA provision.

9.3 A FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING AND MANAGING PROVISION

9.3.1 Six dedicated WfA Centres have been established, five of which are based within Higher Education establishments and one of which is located within a college of Further Education. Whilst WAG originally aspired to a network of Higher Education based Centres, the establishment of Gwent WfA Centre within a Further Education institution provided a workable compromise which ensured the ongoing

provision of WfA courses in an area where the Welsh language has traditionally been weak.

9.3.2 The six WfA Centres have started to get to grips with provision in their regions. Each one has sought to ‘map’ and to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of WfA provision in their patches, which has helped to paint a far clearer picture of regional WfA markets than has ever before been available. Nevertheless, there are differences in the depth and quality of the analyses undertaken and there may be scope for Centres to work together to explore how best to use tools such as GIS, SWOT/PESTL/BEEM analyses and Management Information to analyse markets and develop strategy.

Recommendation 1

WfA Centre Directors should work together to examine how strategic planning tools have been used and to explore how they might either share good practice or work together to improve the quality and ensure greater consistency of market analyses and strategy development. Indeed, there may be scope to use the expertise already built up e.g. in the use of GIS, or the resources already developed e.g. Management Information by particular Centres to service the needs of other Centres, thus reducing the overall cost and accelerating the process of analysing markets, developing plans and managing provision more thoroughly.

9.3.3 Increasingly comprehensive market intelligence has formed the basis of successive Strategic and Operational Plans which have become more detailed. The plans of each Centre have particular strengths, and two in particular have been identified as potential examples of good practice. We believe that there may be scope for other WfA Centres to learn from the two Centres that have best succeeded in meeting WAG’s planning criteria.

Recommendation 2

The two sets of plans which have met WAG's quality criteria should be held up as 'blue-prints' by WAG and shared with other Centres⁹⁴. WAG and Centres should also work together to ascertain what prevents other Centres from reaching the same standards.

9.3.4 Although the process has become easier as the Centres' experience has developed, producing an annual suite of Strategic and Operational Plans is highly resource intensive, which arguably deflects Centres from shaping WfA provision in their areas and/or increases the costs of WfA provision. We believe that there may be scope for lightening the planning burden for those Centres that have met WAG's expectations.

Recommendation 3

WAG should review its planning requirements with the aim of easing the burden upon those Centres that have met its criteria. One possible approach might be to ask those Centres to produce Strategic Plans only every three years and to refresh their Operational Plans, Provision Development Plans and Marketing and Communications and Plans on an annual basis, within the framework of their Strategic Plans.

9.3.5 Although planning processes have become considerably more sophisticated over the last three years, Centres are still hindered by weaknesses in the data collection and management systems which underpin effective planning and performance management. We endorse recommendations made in the wake of the 2009 internal review of WfA data requirements to resolve specific weaknesses identified.

⁹⁴ We understand that this has already been done

Recommendation 4

WAG should set out clear definitions of “completion” and “attainment”. In so doing, should ensure that the definitions are applied to other Subject Areas⁹⁵.

Recommendation 5

WAG should work with WfA Centres, via the Data Working Group, to ensure that “consistent processes” for recording, collecting, interpreting and using WfA data are put in place. Third party providers will also need to play their part by ensuring that they adopt new data definitions and conform to new data collection processes. In essence, third party providers need to acknowledge WfA as a distinct policy field (as opposed to one adjunct to wider Further Education provision) and to work with WfA Centres to ensure that appropriate data is made available to enable provision to be monitored, managed and developed effectively.

Recommendation 6

WAG should oversee the “harmonisation” of HESA and LLWR data and explore with WfA Centres any problems which they perceive exist in transferring data between the two systems. Allied to this, WAG should ensure that WfA Centres and their sub-contractors have on-line access to regular and timely reports on provision, to enable them to monitor, benchmark and manage performance effectively.

9.3.6 WAG and WfA Centres have established a system of national ‘committees’ or ‘groups’ which have been useful in shaping the development of the WfA Programme and in enabling WAG and Centres to share knowledge and good practice. The existence of these groups has undoubtedly helped to bring about a level of consistency across Wales that might not have emerged, had Centres

⁹⁵ We understand that this work has been started

worked independently. As the WfA Programme has moved forward, so the structure and focus of some of these groups has evolved. Crucially, the replacement of the former Steering Group and Planning and Development Group with a single Strategic Planning Committee has brought about greater focus on strategic issues and enabled better use to be made of Centre Directors' time.

9.3.7 Nevertheless, the purpose of some groups appears to have been lost or diluted over time and it is clear that some are more active and useful than others. Given the level of resource which involvement in the various groups entails for WfA Centres (and, indeed, WAG), there may be scope for reviewing and rationalising the various groups currently in existence.

Recommendation 7

The Strategic Planning Group should undertake a review of committees and working groups with a view to reducing their number. In so doing, the Strategic Planning Group should identify a workable number of issues/priorities which would benefit from being considered at a national level, and set out clear terms of reference for working groups to tackle them. The assumption should be that groups should be set-up on a 'task and finish' basis in the first instance⁹⁶, although there may well be merit in establishing (or continuing) 'standing groups' to address some issues e.g. Marketing.

9.3.8 The relationship between WfA Centres and WAG has improved markedly over the last two years, not least as Centres have got to grips with the challenges they face. However, a reduced level of senior WAG officer involvement in Strategic Planning Group meetings (in the wake of the then Head of the Welsh Language Development Unit's recent illness and subsequent retirement) is a cause of concern for WfA Centre Directors. It will be crucial that the new Head of the Welsh Language Development Unit demonstrates his/her commitment to

⁹⁶ Using existing WAG guidance relating to the establishment of Task and Finish groups

driving the WfA agenda forward, both by engaging actively with WfA Centres and by acting as an advocate for the Programme within WAG in the face of inevitable funding pressures over the next few years.

Recommendation 8

The new Head of the Welsh Language Development Unit should engage actively with WfA Centres, not least by chairing the Strategic Planning Group. He/she should also act as an advocate for the WfA Programme at a senior level within WAG.

9.4 FUNDING WFA

9.4.1 In launching the WfA Programme, WAG has:

- Signalled its desire to see a growth in the level of WfA provision delivered by allocating year on year increases to the 'core' funding, based on historical delivery levels;
- Signalled its commitment to the establishment of WfA Centres by allocating ring-fenced 'grant' funding to meet their running costs, initially for a period of three years and latterly for a further three year period, until July 2011.

9.4.2 The allocation of ring-fenced 'grant' funding has clearly provided Centres with additional 'breathing space' whilst they establish themselves. However, WAG has indicated that Centres should now be preparing for a future without, or with reducing levels of, grant funding post July 2011. This was a firm signal to Centres that the need to think carefully about their funding policies and their own internal costs over the coming year or so.

9.4.3 However, uncertainty about funding post 2011 is becoming a cause of increasing concern to WfA Centres and WAG needs to enter discussions with them sooner rather than later about their future funding.

- 9.4.4 Whilst the grant funding arrangement put in place may not be palatable in the longer term from WAG's perspective, careful consideration does need to be given to the implications of requiring Centres (as they are currently constituted) to meet running costs from their 'core' funding. If grant funding were withdrawn, it would be necessary for Centres to 'top slice' their core funding by an average of some 31% to maintain operations at their present levels, which would clearly undermine their ability to *"ensure that more of the core funding reaching [sic] providers of Welsh for Adults because of the reduced level of top-slicing by centres"* (the tenth objective of the WfA Restructuring Project) and to follow WAG guidance which specifies that they should top slice core funding by no more than 15%.
- 9.4.5 Of course, there might be scope for some Centres to increase the proportion of 'top-slice' from their core funding, but even an across the board 'top-slice' rate of 15% would not be sufficient to sustain the Centres as they currently stand. Furthermore, increasing the level of 'top-slice' significantly, particularly over a short period, would undoubtedly de-stabilise some provision. Neither Centres themselves nor their third party providers could sustain some more marginal provision, particularly intensive and higher level courses which are already recognised as less financially viable.
- 9.4.6 Realistically, if it is to secure continued value from the investment it has already made, WAG will need to provide WfA Centres with grant funding to contribute towards their core costs for the foreseeable future. However, in making a commitment to support WfA Centres in this way, WAG could quite justifiably require Centres to secure some efficiency savings through, for example, restructuring less efficient and effective provision and/or through inter-Centre collaboration (as already discussed in Recommendation 1 above). Indeed, by July 2011, WfA Centres will have been in existence for five years and it would seem an apposite point at which to review their functioning and cost structures as they move into a new period in their development.

Recommendation 9

WAG should acknowledge that it will need to provide WfA Centres with an element of grant funding to sustain their core management functions for the foreseeable future. The level of grant funding that will be needed will be in the region of £2.5 million per annum.

Recommendation 10

WfA Centres should look at their funding policies with a view to using more core funding to contribute towards management costs and securing a higher level of efficiency from their provider networks. They should also review their own internal costs and explore how they might work together to maximise the efficiency of their operations.

Recommendation 11

WAG should enter into discussions with WfA Centres as soon as possible about future funding arrangements. Centres need to be given a firm indication of the gross levels of funding which they are likely to be awarded post July 2011, so that they can make grounded budgetary decisions.

9.5 CHANGES IN WFA PROVISION

9.5.1 WfA Centres have sought to 'map' provision in their regions, which has provided a clearer picture of the courses delivered in each region and has helped to highlight gaps in provision as well as identify some instances of duplication, which Centres have been able to address through dialogue with providers. During their first three years in existence, Centres have also taken steps to tackle provider weaknesses or underperformance and to effect a gradual evolution in the structure and quality of provision. In particular, they have:

- Adopted the new structure for WfA courses (Entry, Foundation, Intermediate, Advanced and Proficiency levels), thus bringing a greater level of consistency to the WfA 'offer' across Wales;

- Put in place quality assurance systems based on teacher observations undertaken by trained peer assessors;
- Entered far more detailed discussions about the nature of provision to be delivered with sub-contractors;
- Tightened up the terms of contracts issued to third party providers to some extent;
- Aligned informal learning activity much more closely with mainstream WfA courses.

9.5.2 Centres have also sought to introduce new kinds of courses, aimed at particular learner groups. The emphasis placed by WAG upon ‘Welsh for the Family’ and ‘Welsh in the Workplace’ provision has undoubtedly percolated through to providers, and various approaches to recruiting parents and employees have been tried out. Whilst there are clearly some concerns about the effectiveness of the measures adopted thus far, it is too early to tell with any degree of certainty whether these new approaches succeed in ‘converting’ a sufficient number of parents or workers into committed learners. The findings of a 2008 Omnibus Survey of Welsh adults certainly points to a widespread perception that learning Welsh can benefit one’s career, suggesting that efforts to promote Welsh in the Workplace should continue, with the Welsh Language Board and WAG identified by Centre Directors as a potentially helpful ally in this respect.

9.5.3 Centres have also sought to promote intensive provision and to break-down the divide between predominantly HEI delivered intensive provision and FEI centred non-intensive courses. Whilst there was a small growth in the numbers of learners recruited onto intensive courses in 2008/09, it must be recognised that the National Planning and Funding System, as it stands, does not reward providers for the delivery of intensive courses (which typically attract small numbers of learners) at levels sufficient to meet the costs of delivery. WAG, in its Welsh-medium Education Strategy consultation document acknowledged the discrepancy between its policy in relation to WfA on

the one hand and its funding policies on the other, and undertook to consider options “for funding WfA provision in order to increase intensive provision in the medium term”. We endorse WAG’s readiness to address this discrepancy and to find a way to ensure that funding mechanisms facilitate rather than hinder the achievement of language policy goals.

Recommendation 12

WAG needs to put into action its undertaking to explore and introduce methods of rewarding WfA Centres for the delivery of intensive provision at levels which incentivise delivery.

9.5.4 Whilst there have been a number of positive changes, Centres have not yet fully succeeded in bringing about the degree of change in WfA provision sought by WAG, with some stakeholders arguing that hopes of a rapid and fundamental shake-up of provider networks was never realistic. However, we believe that Centres could be more directive with third party providers by tying them into delivering specific types of courses in specific locations. The flexibility which providers have hitherto had does not really compel them to move in any particular direction e.g. the delivery of more intensive or higher level courses.

Recommendation 13

WfA Centres should become much more directive with sub-contracted providers in terms of the types of courses to be offered in specific locations. In doing this, Centres will need to consider the financial implications of providers possibly having to run some courses with very small numbers of learners.

Recommendation 14

WfA Centres’ third party providers also need to play their part in improving learner recruitment, retention, progression and attainment levels. This

should include acknowledging WAG's express ambition to create more fluent Welsh speakers, which will require a shift in the pattern of provision and a significant growth in more intensive and higher level courses.

9.6 MARKETING WFA

9.6.1 WAG and WfA Centres have developed a constructive relationship under the auspices of the Marketing Group, whereby each party understands their roles and responsibilities in relation to marketing the WfA Programme. The 2009/12 Strategic Marketing Plan provides a route map to which most stakeholders subscribe, albeit that some have misgivings about investing too heavily in social media campaigns, when this approach to marketing remains fairly novel and untried in a WfA context. Clearly, the effects and effectiveness of the proposed social media campaign will need to be closely monitored.

Recommendation 15

The WfA Marketing Group needs to put meat on the bones of its social media campaign proposals. These should include costed plans which identify clear objectives and outcome measures.

Recommendation 16

WAG and WfA Centres should monitor closely the effects of the social media campaign in terms of web-site hits, 'bounce rates' from individual source sites, enquiries about WfA courses and registrations onto courses by people claiming to have heard about them via social media.

9.6.2 A distinct logo and brand has been developed for the WfA Programme. A 2008 Omnibus Survey of Welsh adults suggested that this imagery and brand has become well established through prominent use in marketing campaigns, in promotional literature and on WfA Centres' web-sites and by being featured in learning materials developed under

the auspices of the WfA Programme. However, there is scope to strengthen the use of the brand imagery in resources such as Y Tiwtor and some of the learning and teaching resources commissioned or part-funded by WAG (including those published by third party publishers, for which WAG does not hold the copyright).

Recommendation 17

WAG should ask the WJEC and other publishers to feature WfA logo on relevant learning and teaching resources it commissions or part-funds. It should also ask the WJEC to consider how Y Tiwtor can be adapted to carry the WfA brand imagery more prominently.

9.6.3 Of course, it is difficult to reconcile the development of a strong national brand with the creation of six semi-autonomous WfA Centres and it is arguable that the strength of the WfA brand has been undermined rather through the creation of six independent web-sites, although Centres' web-sites are more consistent in their use of brand imagery now than they were two years ago. Furthermore, it is clear that Centres face significant costs in maintaining their web-sites and cost savings could well be made by pooling resources.

Recommendation 18

WAG and WfA Centres should review their web-site arrangement with a view to moving towards a situation where the www.welshforadults.org web-site is used as a portal for those of individual Centres or for adopting a single, all Wales WfA web-site. In doing so, however, recognition should be given to the investment already made by Centres and the strengths of their existing web-sites should be built upon rather than undermined.

9.6.4 TV advertising campaigns were run on three occasions in 2007 and 2008. Whilst stakeholders had mixed views about the quality and effectiveness of these relatively expensive campaigns, there was clear evidence that substantially more visits were made to the [welshforadults.org](http://www.welshforadults.org) web-site in their wake.

9.6.5 Other public relations efforts which appear to have yielded dividends were WfA Centres' presence at the National Eisteddfod and the Checkout Cymraeg campaign run in 2008. Whilst WorkingWordPR produced some estimates of the column inch value of press coverage received for the Checkout Cymraeg campaign, it is difficult to judge the effectiveness of activities such as these in raising awareness of WfA, let alone in increasing participating in the Programme.

9.6.6 Considerable strides have been made in monitoring the success or otherwise of marketing efforts, and it is crucial that the progress made to date is built upon. WAG should continue to gather the data it already collects, extending its coverage to the whole year (and not just to periods when advertising campaigns are being run)⁹⁷. It should also ask Centres to provide it with additional data in order both to help assess the effectiveness of particular campaigns and to enable Centres to benchmark key indicators.

Recommendation 19

WAG should gather data to enable it to monitor the following additional indicators:

- The level of investment made in marketing activities⁹⁸;
- The bounce rates of visits to the welsforadults.com site by individual source sites (this, we believe, will be a particularly important metric in assessing the effectiveness of social media marketing);
- The medium through which learners heard about WfA courses (e.g. Centre prospectus, press feature, word of mouth etc, Facebook etc).
- Numbers of new learners registered onto courses (as opposed to learners progressing from other courses)⁹⁹.

⁹⁷ We understand that this is now being done

⁹⁸ This is being done by the Marketing Group, drawing upon Centres' Operational Plans and monitoring reports

9.7 DELIVERY TO DATE

9.7.1 Weakness with the data has hindered our ability to draw firm conclusions about the Programmes' effects upon WfA provision. In this context, we emphasise the importance of implementing, as a matter of urgency, recommendations 4-6 above.

9.7.2 The data available would suggest, however, that WfA Centres have managed to stem the steady decline in learners numbers witnessed over four years immediately prior to their establishment. This suggests that Centres' efforts to promote WfA, to target new audiences (e.g. people in work and parents) and to offer more accessible provision (including 'taster' sessions) have managed to tap into at least some latent demand.

9.7.3 Whilst recruiting new learners is essential to securing the growth in numbers sought by WAG, it is equally important for WfA Centres to retain learners from one year to the next. Allied to this, it is necessary for WfA Centres to ensure that learners progress through the different levels if the WfA Programme is to contribute to Iaith Pawb's ambition to increase the number of fluent Welsh speakers. Centres have not been able to provide us with reliable data about learner progression, but a comparison of the proportion of learners participating in courses at different levels in 2007/08 and 2008/09 provide an early suggestion that increasing numbers of learners are progressing from Entry Level to Foundation level courses which, if the pattern is sustained, should lead through to progression into higher level courses in the next two years or so.

Recommendation 20

WfA Centres should continue to work with their third party providers to monitor closely learner numbers and learner progression from one level to

⁹⁹ We recognise that data systems, as they are currently configured, may not allow this to be done in the immediate term

the next. Their ability to do this and to benchmark performance between providers and between regions will rely upon the development of robust data management systems. Data about learner progression should be used by WfA Centres to identify good practice which can be shared across Wales.

9.7.4 The fruits of Centres' efforts to shift provision towards more intensive courses appear to have been mixed. Centres have also experienced varying degrees of success in launching courses targeted specifically at the workplace and at family/parents. Some stakeholders were concerned, however, about the potential impact of the economic downturn upon these rather more novel approaches.

Recommendation 21

WAG and WfA Centres should monitor closely the demand for and take up of intensive and targeted provision. They should also pay particular attention to the disincentive effects of the NPFS upon the delivery of intensive courses (see also Recommendation 12).

9.7.5 There has been a steady growth in the numbers of learners sitting WJEC examinations over the last few years, and the rate of growth has increased slightly since the establishment of WfA Centres. A number of new practices introduced by WfA Centres have contributed to this, and we believe they should be continued.

Recommendation 22

WfA Centres should continue to:

- Encourage and support candidates to register for WJEC examinations;
- Meet, or require their providers to meet the costs of entering WJEC examinations, on the basis that they will receive 'outcome' payments when learners pass;
- Encourage third party providers to promote WJEC examinations in their contracts

9.8 PROFESSIONALISING WfA

9.8.1 As part of the programme of restructuring Welsh for Adults provision, WAG sought to put in place measures to 'professionalise' a WfA workforce that was seen as fragmented and very variable in skill level. These measures were intended to step up the quality and consistency of WfA provision across Wales and, thus, to improve the outcomes of learning undertaken by individuals.

9.8.2 WAG took a two pronged approach to professionalising the WfA workforce:

- On the one hand, it provided WfA Centres with resources to develop and implement training plans;
- On the other, it supported two longer-term, Wales wide projects: the development and piloting of a National Qualification for WfA tutors and the development and publication of an on-line 'magazine' for WfA tutors, "Y Tiwtor".

9.8.3 WAG made a strong case for each of the three separate but complementary projects it supported.

9.8.4 Since 2006, Centres have produced and implemented progressively better informed and more detailed Training and Development Plans and Centres certainly provide practitioners with a wider range of training opportunities than were available to them in the past. The award of additional funding in 2006 (under the Tutor Training project) undoubtedly put pressure upon the newly formed WfA Centres to put on more ambitious training programmes than they otherwise would have organised. This enabled Centres to make their mark with the WfA workforce early on and to create a sense that their establishment heralded a new, faster paced era for the WfA field.

9.8.5 The additional funding provided by WAG enabled WfA Centres to meet the costs of putting on training. Crucially, it also enabled them to pay

sessional staff to attend courses as well as meeting permanent and sessional staff's training related travelling and accommodation costs. Whilst this undoubtedly enabled WfA Centres to engage more WfA tutors in continuous professional development activities than would otherwise have been the case, it also set a precedent and Centres continue to pay sessional staff to attend courses.

- 9.8.6 Not all stakeholders are convinced of the efficacy of making such payments, at least as an established and widespread practice and there are questions about the longer term sustainability of doing so. We believe that WAG and WfA Centres should consider the principle which underpins this practice and the sustainability of making such payments. These issues should be explored in the context of developing guidance as to the minimum level of CPD which tutors should undertake, possibly incorporating a sliding scale to indicate the number of hours' training to be undertaken by practitioners according to the hours worked each year. In so doing, Centres could retain the flexibility to pay sessional tutors to undertake more training than the minimum required, although such payments should clearly be tied into Centres' staff development and succession plans. We believe that issuing explicit guidance about minimum levels of CPD to be undertaken will help to introduce clarity as well signalling to WfA tutors that they are regarded as 'professionals' as opposed to 'hobbyists'.

Recommendation 23

WAG should develop and issue specific guidance to WfA Centres as to the minimum level of CPD which tutors should undertake (which we understand WAG to be considering at present), possibly incorporating a sliding scale to indicate the number of hours' training to be undertaken by practitioners according to the hours worked each year

- 9.8.7 The 2006 Tutor Training project also set a precedent in relation to the timetable for the development of Centres' Training and Development plans, a timetable that is out of synch with their wider strategic and operational planning cycle. It would seem sensible to harmonise these

two cycles in order that there is a more logical cascading of training plans from strategic plans and to reduce any duplication of effort which producing and assessing plans at different times of the year may entail.

Recommendation 24

In order to align the timetable for the production of Training and Development plans with those for the production of Strategic and Operational plans, Centres should be asked to elaborate upon the programme of training activities they propose to undertake during the first half of 2010, as already outlined in their 2008/11 Training and Development plans¹⁰⁰.

9.8.8 The National Qualification for WfA Tutors has become an increasingly prominent feature of those plans and was seen by some stakeholders as the starting point of a continuous professional journey for existing unqualified and aspirant WfA tutors. Whilst this may be the case, it is not necessarily easy to see the path which qualified WfA tutors' CPD journey might take i.e. it is not clear how the range of training and development opportunities set out in Centres' Training and Development knit together to form a structured CPD programme for existing practitioners.

9.8.9 That is not to devalue the training provided by Centres, however. The majority of respondents to our survey appreciated the training they had received (including that which formed part of National Qualification courses) and thought it of use to them in teaching WfA. There was much to suggest that the training undertaken had had a positive effect upon practitioners' teaching and wider work practice.

9.8.10 The National Qualification for WfA Tutors is arguably the centrepiece of efforts to 'professionalise' the WfA workforce. It was conceived of as a vehicle for addressing the variable standard of WfA teaching associated with a partially 'amateur' workforce and of elevating the

¹⁰⁰ We understand that this has happened

status of the WfA tutor workforce. The National Qualification has been designed to comply with LLUK's occupational standards for Wales and has been accepted by Cardiff University and the University of Wales Newport.

9.8.11 Whilst there remain some misgivings about the demands which the National Qualification puts upon aspirant WfA tutors, 111 individuals have enrolled on the course, which represents some 82% of the unqualified workforce. On the basis that the majority of those currently working towards the National Qualification will have completed the 60 credit course by the summer of 2010, only a relatively small proportion of the existing WfA tutor workforce (roughly 4%) will remain unqualified by that time.

9.8.12 To all intents and purposes, this means that from 2012 onwards (and sooner in some regions), National Qualification courses will be primarily geared towards developing the skills of new WfA tutors. This, in turn, is likely to mean that the numbers pursuing courses will be much lower than they hitherto have been. On the other hand, however, the age profile of the existing tutor workforce suggests that there may well be a degree of turnover in the coming few years, which would point to an ongoing need for courses. In the short term, however, numbers are likely to be lower and it may well be that the regional approach currently employed for the delivery of courses will become unviable.

Recommendation 25

Consideration should be given to how National Qualification courses should be delivered in future, with air time given to the possibility of bringing groups from different regions together and using technology (including video-conferencing) to deliver elements of the course remotely from a central point. This will need to be considered in the context of the development of an accredited framework of CPD for WfA tutors, as discussed in the Welsh-medium Education Strategy.

9.8.13 These issues will need to be considered in light of the likely ‘mainstreaming’ of funding for the delivery of the National Qualification from the summer of 2010 onwards. This will, of course, happen at a time when Higher Education Institutions’ finances are coming under increasing pressure, which may well lead WfA Centres’ sponsoring HEIs to charge fees for National Qualification provision, much in the same way that they do for other post-graduate courses. Allied to this, WAG has already indicated that it will not provide funding to meet the employment costs of tutors/aspirant tutors whilst participating in National Qualification courses once the ‘pilot’ phase of the project comes to an end. Clearly, WfA Centres will need to consider carefully the potential effect of this changing funding landscape upon the take-up of National Qualification courses and, in time, upon the supply of new WfA tutors.

9.8.14 “*Y Tiwtor*” was intended as a vehicle for disseminating information to a disparate WfA tutor workforce in a consistent fashion relatively quickly and relatively cheaply. It was also seen as a ‘route to market’ for a range of learning and teaching materials, not least those developed under the auspices of the Restructuring WfA Programme.

9.8.15 Our 2009 survey would suggest that, two years after *Y Tiwtor*’s launch, it has delivered against these aims to a significant degree:

- A majority of respondents to our survey had accessed *Y Tiwtor*, although it is notable that a small minority was prevented from doing so by a lack of access to the internet;
- By and large, those who accessed *Y Tiwtor* found its content relevant and of interest to them;
- A majority of *Y Tiwtor* users (and a large minority of all tutors) had used it to access learning and teaching resources;
- Generally, those who had accessed learning and teaching materials had found them useful.

9.8.16 Our survey would also suggest that Y Tiwtor was fulfilling its role as a mechanism for disseminating information and, indeed, for bringing about change in tutors' working practices: several respondents commented that they had adopted ideas gleaned from Y Tiwtor. Finally, there was evidence that Y Tiwtor was helping to create a sense of belonging to a supportive community among disparate WfA tutors.

Recommendation 26

On the basis of suggestions made by respondents to our survey and our own review of the resource, we believe that, at this point, there is a strong argument for rethinking the way in which Y Tiwtor is structured and for its evolution into a web-site which:

- features up-to-date news, which can be refreshed between 'editions';
- features periodic 'headline/editorial articles' designed to reinforce WAG's "*professionalising*" agenda. These articles should be programmed a year or so ahead of publication to ensure a logical flow and to allow time for their production;
- features weighty, academic articles on aspects of teaching, possibly drawing on particular pieces of research. Again, these weighty articles should be programmed ahead;
- provides access to an archive of past articles/features, possibly including ones which appeared in the WJEC's old paper based Y Tiwtor. This archive should be organised along thematic lines e.g. 'teaching methods', 'tutor training arrangements and opportunities' (possibly linked into Centres' training plans), 'learner assessment arrangements' etc.;
- provide information on continuous professional development opportunities such as conferences and new developments such as the proposed blended learning National Qualification course. This information should be linked into Centres' training plans;
- provides access to a bank of resources according to level. In addition to the kinds of resources already accessible via Y Tiwtor,

these could include pod-casts and sound files to help learners develop aural and oral skills as well as links to other web-sites such as those of the NGfL Cymru, Acen, BBC etc;

- Highlights specific resources at particular times of the year e.g. Christmas, Easter, the summer, Halloween etc. Features relating to particular resources can be posted more frequently than periodic headline articles, thus rendering Y Tiwtor more up to date and relevant;
- provides a 'search' facility;
- provides a 'blogging' facility for tutors.

9.8.17 Consideration should also be given to distributing periodic (say termly, as is currently the case), paper based summaries of the web-site's content via WfA Centres in order to raise tutors' awareness of what the web-site has to offer and to entice tutors (particularly those with IT access only at Centre or provider premises) to visit it. In order to contain costs, this approach could be 'piloted' for a limited period.

9.8.18 Our survey would suggest that tutors are, by and large, positive about teaching WfA. It also indicated that their impression of teaching WfA had improved since WfA Centres were established.

9.8.19 However, it is clear that the terms under which the vast majority of WfA tutors are employed preclude WfA teaching from being seen as an attractive or realistic 'career' option. Most WfA tutors are employed on sessional contracts and tutors do not perceive that these provide job security or visible career progression routes. Furthermore, tutors working on a sessional basis are paid only for the hours they spend in the classroom, and whilst the hourly rates paid for sessional work are higher to provide for preparation and marking time, there was a strongly held view among tutors that the rates paid do not recompense practitioners adequately for the non-classroom based elements of the job. In essence, the hourly rates paid to sessional tutors are based on flawed assumptions about the balance between the time spent

teaching and time spent preparing, marking and dealing with learner related paperwork.

9.8.20 This issue has been compounded by what was widely perceived among survey respondents as an explosion in the volume of paperwork associated with teaching WfA over the last three years. Whilst it was accepted that there had to be some paperwork, there was a view that more and more of tutors' time was being taken up with bureaucracy, at the expense of teaching. There may be some merit in WfA Centres looking critically at how much of tutors' time is dedicated to administrative tasks and looking for means of cutting down on the administrative burden upon them.

9.8.21 Whilst Centres and some providers have made inroads into creating permanent posts (both full and part time), sessional contracts will remain the mainstay of WfA teaching for the foreseeable future. There may, however, be some scope for overcoming at least some of the negative perceptions of sessional work. For example, WfA Centres could, having assessed the time dedicated by tutors to ancillary tasks, issue guidance as to the amount of non-classroom based work sessional tutors are expected to undertake (relative to the hours' teaching undertaken). If the level of ancillary/administrative work which it is necessary for tutors to undertake proves to be higher than previously assumed, WfA Centres should consider reviewing the basis upon which sessional staff are paid.

Recommendation 27

WfA Centres should explore the balance of ancillary/administrative and teaching work undertaken by sessional tutors and consider whether changes need to be made either to working practices or to the rates which sessional staff are paid.

9.8.22 Whilst sessional tutors will remain an important and significant part of the WfA tutor workforce, Centres should strive to create more

permanent posts (both full and part time) as they get to grips with reshaping provision.

Recommendation 28

Centres and their sub-contractors should strive to create more permanent posts (both full and part time) as they get to grips with reshaping provision. Given the myriad factors influencing more generalist external providers, this may well require some Centres to take direct responsibility for the delivery of provision currently sub-contracted.

9.8.23 The WfA tutor workforce is ageing, which is itself a reflection of the relative appeal of sessional work to retired people.

Recommendation 29

Centres need to develop workforce succession plans for the next five to ten years. Some Centres have started to promote WfA teaching to undergraduates studying Welsh at their sponsoring universities and this would seem a practice worth replicating elsewhere. There might also be merit in Centres taking on “apprentice tutors” as has been the case in one Centre.

9.9 THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING RESOURCES

9.9.1 Overall, the Teaching and Learning Resources commissioned have been well grounded in evidence of need and based on detailed consultation with the WfA sector itself. This process has involved prioritising the teaching and learning materials to be developed.

9.9.2 The commissioning of these projects by DCELLS has been transparent, rigorous and all have been well managed. There is no question that these resources have helped develop the sector and are playing a fundamental role improving the quality of learning and achieving consistent national standards.

- 9.9.3 Overall, the WfA sector has been moved from being under-equipped with teaching and learning resources to being in a strong position with a range of suitable materials being available and easily accessible to both tutors and learners. The materials recently commissioned by WAG also seem to provide logical additions to the existing portfolio of materials and should add value to the overall learner experience.
- 9.9.4 The availability and use of resources for intensive courses remains an unresolved issue for WAG and the Centre Directors. Once completed, the research into teaching and learning methods recently commissioned by WAG needs to be used as the definitive platform for taking decisions on the way forward for intensive provision. Until a way forward for a consistent approach to intensive course provision is clear, WAG should proceed with caution in commissioning any 'interim' Teaching and Learning resources specifically designed for intensive use, since their shelf lives could be limited by the eventual outcome of the research work being undertaken.
- 9.9.5 The WfA teaching and learning resources already developed have generally been well received and are being well utilised within the sector. While there was some constructive criticism, overall, the feedback from tutors and learners on the quality and relevance of materials has been positive.
- 9.9.6 While awareness of most resources among WfA tutors has increased since 2008, it remains a priority for WfA Centres to promote usage of the suite of resources available, in particular ensuring that free of charge materials are widely distributed so that quality and consistency within provision, and ultimately the learner experience, are continually improved. It should be a particular priority that ensuring awareness of the range of teaching and learning materials should be a core part of the induction of all new WfA tutors.

Recommendation 30

WfA Centres should continue to promote new WfA teaching and learning resources to tutors, with a particular emphasis upon ensuring that an introduction to the range of resources on offer forms an integral part of Centres' (and third part providers') induction processes.

9.9.7 Moreover, it should be an on-going priority for WAG, WfA Centres, the WJEC and other resource producing agencies to ensure that all resources are as easily accessible as possible for learners and tutors.

Recommendation 31

WAG should consider making all electronic resources available on the planned WfA Moodle as the main, consolidated repository for on-line WfA resources, thus simplifying access to resources for tutors and learners. This should include all current WAG commissioned WfA materials (including Acen's resources and a clear link to the BBC's resources). In addition, WAG should ensure that comprehensive links are available and in place from the main WfA website¹⁰¹ and the WJEC managed Y Tiwtor and promote such links on other key websites (such as those of other resource producers). WAG should also ensure that the whole range of WfA resources (free resources and those available for purchase) is well publicised to tutors.

9.10 THE DEVELOPMENT OF WfA EXAMINATIONS

9.10.1 The WfA Examinations projects were well grounded in intelligence from the WfA sector itself and tied in with wider WAG policy to put exam based qualification goals in place for adult learners. In essence, there was a sound policy rationale and clear logic for undertaking the WfA examinations projects.

¹⁰¹ www.cymraegioedolion.org

9.10.2 Each of the two WfA examination projects met their aims and objectives and a clear national language level framework and related qualifications structure is now in place with a logical flow through courses, learner materials, accreditation pathways and exam based qualifications.

9.10.3 The examinations projects clearly fit well with the re-structuring of the WfA sector, even though the examinations projects were initiated prior to the Centres themselves being established. Having the Centres in place has meant that the qualifications and examinations agenda has been moved forward substantially – and the data collated by the WJEC reflects this.

9.10.4 There has been a steady year on year increase in the numbers of learners sitting WJEC examinations, particularly at Entry level. Whilst the small increase in the numbers sitting Foundation level examinations in 2009, it remains too soon to tell whether this represents the start of a changed pattern of progression from one level to the next.

9.10.5 Feedback on the examinations was generally very positive from a learner and tutor perspective, with a clear message being that those learners who take examinations get a lot from them, in particular increased self confidence.

9.10.6 Some encouraging progress has been made with the implementation of the WJEC accreditation pathways over the past 12 months and it is positive that three Centres are now signed up to this model. Much remains to be done on this front, however, and as we see it, there are a number of key challenges which need to be embraced by WAG and WfA Centres.

9.10.7 Firstly, concerns expressed by tutors about accreditation pathways

need to be understood and addressed. Anecdotal feedback from learners also suggests that more work needs to be done in communicating the value of accreditation pathways, particularly to those who chose not to take WJEC Examinations.

Recommendation 32

Efforts need to be redoubled to ensure a higher level of buy-in to and understanding of accreditation pathways amongst tutors and learners, so that their value in offering a recognised learning outcome is more widely appreciated.

9.10.8 Secondly, given that the overall number of WfA learners on Entry to Higher courses who go on to take examinations is still low (11% overall), it seems logical that WAG, the WJEC and WfA Centres should consider ways in which accreditation pathways should be enhanced to increase the proportion of learners gaining full qualifications. In particular, consideration should be given as to how WfA learners (who chose not to take exams) can obtain a formal qualification for having completed the required number of credits for a particular language level (linked to the Credit and Qualifications Framework). This would bring the WfA qualification structure more in-line with the CQF in Wales and with the qualification structures in place for other Adult Community Learning subjects. In taking this approach forward however, WAG should be mindful that any solution being proposed does not undermine on-going efforts to increase the number of WfA learners who take exams.

Recommendation 33

WAG, the WJEC and WfA Centres should explore the possibility of awarding qualifications to learners who successfully complete the required number of credits for particular language levels, whilst being mindful that any changes introduced do not undermine any motivation

to sit examinations.

9.10.9 Finally, there is a need to look critically at the amount of additional work which accreditation pathways generates for sessional tutors – who may only be getting paid for time spent in the classroom.