



Wales Institute of Social & Economic
Research, Data & Methods

Sefydliad Ymchwil Gymdeithasol ac
Economaid, Data a Dulliau Cymru

Language, Citizenship and Identity - Policy Briefing

Introduction

The promotion of the Welsh language via bilingualism and bilingual development represents a prominent theme in policy and planning for the Welsh Assembly Government and other public bodies in Wales.

1. Governance structures

1.1 *European level* - At the European level, the Welsh Language forms part of the UK entry of the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.

1.2 *UK-wide level* – At present, the UK parliament has responsibility for Welsh Language legislation. However, in early 2009, a Legislative Competency Order (LCO) was made asking for the right of WAG to legislate on Welsh Language affairs.

1.3 *All Wales level* – The Welsh Language Board is a statutory organisation sponsored by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and represents the national language planning body for Wales. The Board was established in 1995 under the terms of the Welsh Language Act (1993) with its main function being to promote and facilitate the use of Welsh. It became answerable to the National Assembly under the Government of Wales Act 1998, having previously been funded by and accountable to the Welsh Office. More recently, the Welsh Language Unit has been established within the Welsh Assembly Government. The Unit is responsible for implementing the Welsh Language action plan and for monitoring its impact as set out in the WAG document *laith Pawb* (see below). Whilst overseen by the Welsh Language Unit, many of the policies and initiatives are to be implemented by the various Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs) which also have responsibility for the impact of broader policies on the Welsh Language.

2. Key Policy Documents

2.1 *laith Pawb: A National Action Plan for Bilingual Wales* (2003) represents the key document produced by the Welsh Assembly Government, published in February 2003. The action plan sets out the National Policy Framework for the Welsh Language and emphasises the mainstreaming of Welsh Language policy development.

2.2 *Welsh Assembly Government Welsh Language Scheme* (2006), published by the Welsh Assembly Government in December 2006, the scheme provides an overview of bilingual services provided by the Assembly Government and sets out how it will treat the English and Welsh languages equally in policies and services.

2.3 *Our Language: Its Future* (2002) the final report from the review of the Welsh Language carried out jointly by the National Assembly's Culture Committee and Education and Lifelong Learning Committee in 2001/02. The review collected evidence from a wide range of academics, stakeholder groups and local authorities.

2.4 *The Future of Welsh: A Strategic Plan* (2005) published in August 2005 by the Welsh Language Board, the plan sets out the Board's strategic priorities. It identifies eleven key priority areas, including Welsh language and bilingual education and training; Welsh language schemes and developing and providing services in the Welsh language; and promoting and facilitating the use of Welsh in the community.

2.5 *First Stage Evaluation of Iaith Pawb* (2007) published in July 2007 by consultants commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government, the report provided an evaluation of progress of Iaith Pawb and recommendations on how to conduct the full evaluation during Phase 2.

2.6 *Iaith Pawb and Welsh Language Scheme Annual Reports (2003-2009)* these reports provide a regular update on the Welsh Assembly Government's performance against the commitments contained in Iaith Pawb and the Welsh Language Scheme.

3. Key Data Sets

3.1 *UK Census data* (2001) last carried out in 2001, the census provides data on Welsh speakers for Wales down to Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) level. The data provides the opportunity for a longitudinal analysis of the Welsh language using previous iterations i.e. 1991, 1981, 1971 etc... (though issues of re-wording have been raised) More detailed figures and tables of the census data have been published and are available in two key Office for National Statistics (ONS) documents, the *Census 2001: Main Statistics about Welsh* and *Report on the Welsh Language from the 2001 Census*.

3.2 *Living in Wales Surveys* (WAG, 2004-2008) – an annual dataset/report providing data on a wide range of topics, including values and opinions. The 2004 to 2006 surveys included supplements focused on the use of, and ability with, the Welsh language – referred to as the *Welsh Language Use Surveys 2004-06*. In addition these surveys were restricted to an All Wales or regional level of analysis, however a few questions have been asked in all the surveys (2004-08) allowing for a finer spatial scale of analysis.

3.3 *Annual Population Survey (APS)* – is a combined survey of households in Great Britain. It brings together results from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the English, Welsh and Scottish LFS boosts and provides enhanced data on key social and socio-economic variables. The APS provides data on people who say they can speak Welsh. Data is available at Unitary Authority level from 2005 and most recently to 2008.

3.4 *Welsh Omnibus & Welsh Speakers Omnibus* – conducted by the Cardiff-based market research company, Beaufort Research Ltd. In terms of frequency, the *Welsh Omnibus* is carried out four times year and *Welsh Speakers Omnibus* is carried out twice year. Both

maintain a minimum sample size of 1000 of the 16+ population who are resident in Wales, with the latter survey focused on Welsh speakers only.

3.5 *British Social Attitudes Survey* - began in 1983, and has been conducted every year since, except in 1988 and 1992. The survey is made up of up to 3,500 randomly selected adults throughout Great Britain. It includes a wide range of topics including national identity and party alignment.

3.6 *1997 Welsh Referendum Survey, 1999 Welsh National Assembly Election Survey and 2001, 2003 and 2007 Wales Life and Times Surveys* – surveys carried out by a team led by Institute of Welsh Politics at Aberystwyth University covering a wide range of questions related to the Welsh language, citizenship and identity.

In addition to these sources, a number of one-off surveys have been conducted by a range of organisations in recent years including the Welsh Language Board, BBC Wales, and S4C. The Stats Wales and Nomis websites also provide access to a range of data sets on nationality/identity and language.

4. Emerging Themes and Questions

Over a number of decades the future of the Welsh Language has represented an issue of key political importance and of social protest. Several areas identified as of strategic importance within above policy documents can be listed as emerging research themes. These include:

- Changes in relation to the spatial distribution in numbers and percentages of Welsh speakers across Wales;
- Population shifts in majority Welsh speaking areas, particularly around concerns over the out-migration young people;
- The use of Welsh in the private sector;
- The extension of provisions of Welsh medium and bilingual education;
- Assisting parents raise children bilingually or through the medium of Welsh;
- Barriers to using and facilitating use of Welsh amongst adult language learners;
- Language use amongst young Welsh speakers in their social networks;

Contention and debate have reflected broader concerns that statistics showing a stabilisation in the numbers of speakers, and increases amongst 3-15 year olds as a result of bilingual education, may in fact mask real declines in language use in community and familial settings. There are also concerns over variations in fluency and confidence in using Welsh amongst Welsh speakers. There remain gaps in knowledge on the relationship between Welsh language ability and social mobility; on the changing socio-economic position of Welsh speakers; and on their spatial dimensions.