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GwE Gogledd Cymru

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Annwyl Weinidog

A chithau'n Weinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg newydd, teimlwyd y byddai'n berthnasol rhannu crynodeb â chi o'r ohebiaeth a fu rhwng Cydbwyllgor GwE, sydd yn cynnwys y chwe deilydd portffolio addysg ar draws Gogledd Cymru, a Kirsty Williams, y Gweinidog Addysg ar y pryd, yn mynegi ein pryderon am degwch y trefniadau a wnaed gan Cymwysterau Cymru o 2018 hyd 2021. Drwy rannu'r crynodeb hwn, gallai fod yn ddefnyddiol fel sylfaen ychwanegol wrth benderfynu ar y gyfres arholiadau eleni.

Daeth ein rhwystredigaeth gwreiddiol gyda Cymwysterau Cymru i'r amlwg gyntaf yn 2018 pan oedd dysgwyr a safodd yr arholiad TGAU Saesneg laith yn yr Haf dan anfantais o'u cymharu â dysgwyr a safodd yr arholiad yn gynnar ym mis Tachwedd 2017, gyda throthwy llwyddo gradd C yn cael ei godi'n sylweddol erbyn dyfarniad yr Haf. Daeth ysgolion yng Ngogledd Cymru i'r casgliad ar y pryd mai unig resymeg yr ymddygiad hwn oedd yr angen i ddiogelu'r brand TGAU, gan fod dyraniad graddau C wedi cyrraedd yr uchafswm am y flwyddyn academaidd neilltuol honno er sicrhau deilliannau cymaradwy â blynyddoedd blaenorol. O ganlyniad, methodd lawer o ddysgwyr yng Ngogledd Cymru, yn enwedig y rhai llai abl a bregus, â dilyn eu dewis o yrfa neu lwybr dysgu. Cyfaddefodd Cymwysterau Cymru ar y pryd 'nad yw'r gwahaniaethau a'r newidiadau sylweddol yn strategaethau mynediad canolfannau dros y blynyddoedd diwethaf yn rhoi chwarae teg i fyfyrwyr.'

Fe'n syfrdanwyd ymhellach yn Haf 2020 wrth i'r algorithmau gan Cymwysterau Cymru achosi

Dear Minister

As the new Minister for Education and the Welsh Language we felt it might be pertinent to share with you a summary of communication between the GwE Joint Committee which includes the six education portfolio holders across North Wales and Kirsty Williams the then Minister of Education expressing our concerns regarding the fairness of arrangements made by Qualifications Wales from 2018 to 2021. By sharing this summary, it might prove useful to you in further informing the decision-making process around this year's qualification series.

Our initial frustrations with Qualifications Wales first became apparent in 2018 when learners sitting the English Language GCSE examination in the summer, lost out compared to learners who had sat the examination early during November 2017, with the C grade pass threshold being raised significantly for the summer award. Schools in North Wales concluded at the time that the only logical rationale behind this outcome was the need to protect the GCSE brand as the allocation of C grades had reached its quota for that particular academic year group to ensure broadly comparable outcomes with previous years. As a result, many learners in North Wales especially the less able and vulnerable could not follow their chosen career or educational pathway. Qualifications Wales admitted at the time 'that the significant differences and changes in centre entry strategies over recent years do not promote a level playing field for students.'

We were further alarmed in the Summer of 2020 that the algorithms proposed by



cymaint o anghyfartaledd ac annhegwch i gynifer o ddisgyblion a myfyrwyr yng Ngogledd Cymru. Pe na byddai'r Gweinidog Addysg wedi penderfynu i fynd yn ôl i Raddau Aseu Canolfannau, byddai llawer o ddysgwyr wedi colli cyfle i droedio llwybr gyrfa oherwydd bod y graddau anghywir wedi'u dyrannu iddynt drwy'r algorithm wedi'i fetio gan Cymwysterau Cymru. Cyn y 'diwrnodau canlyniadau' y flwyddyn honno, nid oedd yr ohebiaeth gan Cymwysterau Cymru i'r gymuned addysg yn ddigon tryloyw nac eglur. O'r herwydd, bu ysgolion ac athrawon yn neilltuo cryn dipyn o amser ac ymdrech yn 'rancio' eu disgyblion, a hynny'n ofer wrth iddo ddod yn amlwg bod yr wybodaeth y gofynnwyd amdani wedi'i diystyru mae'n debyg o blaid yr algorithm a ddewiswyd. Roeddem yn gwbl bendant y gellid yn hawdd fod wedi osgoi'r sefyllfa anffodus hon.

Ysgrifenasom lythyr hefyd at y Gweinidog Addysg ar y pryd yn mynegi ein pryderon dwysaf a'n rhwystredigaeth eithaf na wnaed y penderfyniad yn gynharach i symud at Raddau a Bennir gan Ganolfannau ar gyfer Cyfres Arholiadau Haf 2021. Byddai hyn wedi osgoi'r gorbryder mawr a ddaeth yn amlwg ymysg arweinwyr, athrawon a dysgwyr.

Fel y gwyddoch, oherwydd y tarfu sylweddol dros y ddwy flynedd ddiwethaf, mae llawer o ddysgwyr yn y blynyddoedd arholi presennol eisoes wedi colli cyfran sylweddol o'u hamser dysgu ac addysgu. Drwy adael i gyfres arholiadau Ionawr 2022 fynd yn ei blaen, rydym unwaith eto mewn perygl o waethygu'r anghydraddoldeb a'r annhegwch i ddysgwyr. Rydym yn arbennig o bryderus am yr effaith a gaiff hyn ar ddysgwyr mwy bregus a difreintiedig. Yn sgil ein profiadau dros y blynyddoedd diwethaf, erys lefel uchel o bryder yn y rhanbarth am allu Cymwysterau Cymru i sicrhau tegwch i ddysgwyr yn ystod y drefn arholi arfaethedig eleni.

Qualifications Wales caused such inequity and unfairness to so many pupils and students in North Wales. Many learners would have lost out on career pathways because the wrong grades were apportioned to them through Qualifications Wales' vetted algorithm, had the decision not been taken by the Minister of Education to revert to Centre Assessed Grades. In the run up to that year's 'results days', communication with the education community by Qualifications Wales lacked transparency and clarity. As a result, a significant amount of time and effort was allocated by schools and teachers to rank their pupils and all to no avail as it became evident that the requested information was apparently disregarded in favour of the choice of algorithm. We were absolutely adamant that this unfortunate situation could have easily been avoided.

We also wrote to the then Minister of Education to express our deepest concerns and utmost frustration that a decision to move to award Centre Determined Grades for the Summer 2021 Examination Series was not made earlier. This would have avoided the high level of anxiety which became apparent amongst leaders, teachers and learners.

As you well know, due to the significant disruptions over the last two years, many learners in the current exam years have already missed out on a significant portion of their learning and teaching time. By allowing the January 2022 exam series to proceed, we are again at risk of exacerbating the issues of inequity and unfairness for learners. We are particularly concerned about the impact that this will have on the more vulnerable and disadvantaged learners. Given our experiences over the last few years, there remains a high level of concern in the region that Qualifications Wales can secure equity for learners during this year's proposed examination arrangements.

Seilir tegwch unrhyw gyfundrefn gymwysterau ar sicrhau mynediad cyfartal at amser dysgu ac addysgu i bob dysgwr. Byddem ni'n falch o gael eglurhad ynghylch pa asesiadau risg sydd ar waith o ran sicrhau tegwch a chhydraddoldeb mynediad i bob dysgwr, yn enwedig y rheiny sydd eisoes wedi colli cryn dipyn o amser dysgu ac addysgu o gymharu â'u cyfoedion ac a allai gollu mwy o amser dros yr wythnosau nesaf. Rydym yn arbennig o awyddus i ddeall y camau lliniaru sydd ar waith i roi sylw i'r materion hyn. Rydym ni'n hynod o bryderus am sut allai anghydraddoldeb effeithio ar ddysgwyr, yn enwedig y rhai mwyaf bregus a llai abl y gwyddom sydd wedi dioddef fwyaf dros y ddwy flynedd ddiwethaf. Gwyddom hefyd nad yw'n hawdd gwneud iawn am unrhyw ddysgu a gollir, os ellir gwneud hynny o gwbl.

I grynhoi, rydym yn wirioneddol bryderus am les ein dysgwyr a'r tegwch iddynt. Rydym eisiau osgoi yr hyn a ddigwyddodd mewn blynyddoedd a fu ac yn ei chael hi'n anodd gweld sut all cymwysterau drwy arholiad fod yn gyfiawn ac yn deg i'n hysgolion a'n disgyblion oherwydd yr amrywiolyn Omricron ac amrywiolion eraill allai ymddangos. Edrychwn ymlaen at dderbyn eich ymateb i'n pryderon.

Yn gywir,

Cyngh. Phil Wynn (Cyngor Bwrdeistrefol Sirol Wrexham)

Cyngh. Julie Fallon (Cyngor Bwrdeistrefol Sirol Conwy)

Cyngh. Ian Roberts (Cyngor Sir y Fflint)

Cyngh. Cemlyn Williams (Cyngor Gwynedd)

Cyngh. Meirion Jones (Cyngor Sir Ynys Môn)

Cyngh. Huw Hilditch-Roberts (Cyngor Sir Ddinbych)

Copi i / Copy to:

- Owain Lloyd Cyfarwyddwr Addysg a'r Iaith Gymraeg, Llywodraeth Cymru / Director of Education and the Welsh Language, Welsh Government

The fairness of any qualifications system is predicated on ensuring equal access to learning and teaching time for all learners. We would welcome clarification around what risk assessments have been put in place in terms of ensuring equity and equality of access to all learners especially those who have already lost significant teaching and learning time compared to their peers and may still lose more time in the coming weeks. We are particularly keen to understand the mitigation measures in place to address these issues. We are particularly concerned about potential impact of inequality for learners especially the most vulnerable and less able who we know have suffered most in the last two years. We also know that lost learning is not easily made up if at all.

To summarise, we are seriously concerned about the wellbeing and fairness for our learners. We want to avoid what has happened in previous years and find it difficult to see how qualifications by examination can be equitable and fair for our schools and pupils due to the present Omicron and possible future variants. We look forward to receiving your response to our concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr. Phil Wynn (Wrexham County Borough Council)

Cllr. Julie Fallon (Conwy County Borough Council)

Cllr. Ian Roberts (Flintshire County Council)

Cllr. Cemlyn Williams (Gwynedd Council)

Cllr. Meirion Jones (Isle of Anglesey County Council)

Cllr. Huw Hilditch-Roberts (Denbighshire County Council)

- Georgina Haarhoff Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr Cwricwlwm, Llywodraeth Cymru / *Deputy Director Curriculum, Welsh Government*