

Project: European Input for Sustainable Education and Learning EISEL (2017-2-NL01-KA104-038513)
Organisation: Learn for Life, NL (info@platformlearnforlife.nl, www.lflplatform.net)
Host organisation: Learning and Work Institute Wales, Cardiff, UK

Aim of the study visit

Experience the Welch Adult Learning Festival (as we are looking for innovating concepts for the Festival in NL) and gain insight into sustainable regional and local partnerships: key conditions and pitfalls

Participants

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Programme overview

4 juni	Swansea: Learning City, Learning Festival, Communities for Work Employability project Gower College
5 juni	Cardiff: Welch Water and Groundwork National Inspire! Award Ceremony
6 juni	Cardiff Community Learning Meeting at Learning and Work office

JUNE 4, 2019

We started our study visit in Bryn House Learning Center in Swansea where we had the opportunity to meet many local key persons in the field of adult education. They gave us an interesting overview of the central issues and initiatives in the city.



Swansea Learning City <http://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities>

Judith James from Swansea University introduced the concept of the Unesco Learning Cities. Swansea was one of the first cities that joined this initiative. Aim of the Learning Cities is to motivate cities to implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the field of education. Each Learning City can choose its own priorities according to the local needs. Swansea chose themes that meet the needs of the business sector and their local society with its strong dichotomy between highly educated and vulnerable groups: Entrepreneurship, Innovation (robotization) and Inclusion. All sectors of education - formal and non-formal, from primary schools to university - are involved in the Learning City. Swansea Learning City organizes an annual Learning Festival to celebrate learning.

Swansea Learning Festival <https://www.swansea.gov.uk/swansealearningfestival>

Kay Piper explained that the Learning Festival had the same themes as the Learning City. Swansea makes use of a very nice and strong image in all the communication about the Festival: a colourful Key, the symbol for 'unlocking opportunities'. Last April 2019 the Festival had approx. 300 activities with 9000 participants. FUN is an important ingredient of the Festival activities that, like the Learning City, also targets all ages. The organizers assume that adults will only start learning if it has a clear function for them or because they like it. Festival activities may involve short training sessions, for example focused on health and wellbeing, but also on technology and digital skills, educational activities for the homeless, etc. There are also dance festivities and workshops on the street. A large driving school owner gave a workshop on employability. 39 primary schools organized an 'entrepreneur festival', focused on making and selling homemade products. The underlying goals of the Festival are to bring education and business closer together and to teach people more about the history of their own city in order to stimulate community involvement.

More than 130 partners are involved in the Swansea Learning Festival. There is a steering group of 12 persons supported by the Learning and Work Institute. The Festival has its own digital portal on which all organizations present themselves and all Festival activities are listed. In addition, all follow-up options for courses are also indicated on this portal. All Festival activities are free of charge. Looking to the future, the aim is to give the participating organizations more responsibility and to depend less on the Learning and Work Institute. The steering group also wants to organize more evening and weekend activities, they want to realise more connection between the entertainment activities and the information and guidance activities.

Further presentations were given about: essential skills, community and family learning
<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/familylearningandessentialskills>)

In Wales essential skills include language, mathematics and digital skills, just like in NL. In many cases, basic skills' training is 'embedded' in other courses. In terms of participants, there are approximately as many women as men. Furthermore, a relatively large number of people with a physical or mental disability participate in the courses. Recruitment is done in different ways, e.g. via (mental) health institutions. For the intake and the retrieval of the personal learning wish the online Welch Essential Skills Toolkit is used. Based on the results, an Individual Learning Plan is drawn up. The courses that people follow are usually classified in the Welsh Qualification Framework, which is related to the European Qualification Framework EQF. Participants often train for level 1 or 2 of this framework. Basic skills teachers receive a proper training and the courses are preferably not given in a school environment, but close to the participants. Teachers from other programs are trained, so that they recognize when participants do not have sufficient basic skills, can discuss this and refer them to relevant courses. There are 'inclusion classes' for other organizations that target vulnerable adults.

Community Learning in Swansea focuses primarily on essential skills, personal well being, building self-confidence, participation in society and health skills. Originally, Community Learning focused mainly on the participation of women. It is not primarily aimed at a qualification or certificate.

20 schools participate in the Swansea Family Learning Program. In the past, all primary schools participated, but unfortunately budget cuts were made. Parents learn essential skills through family learning. For example, they learn to listen to the child and improve the child's speaking skills. Family learning encourages parents to learn, because almost everyone wants to support his/her child in their development. Family Learning shows parents how to be involved in the school of their child, parents become aware of the education system so that they and their child can make a good choice for further education, etc. Family learning takes place once a week. Many young parents participate in the program, especially single mothers. The course leads to an 'essential skills qualification'. At the end of the process, information is given about possible further training

And finally, some Education & Work projects were presented

Swansea Working is for adults who want to prepare themselves for the job market. They can join job (application training), drawing up a CV, etc. Swansea Working can be reached offline and via email, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Guidance is also possible for persons who already have a job but still needs support and for people who struggle with health problems, such as physical and mental limitations, and addiction problems. There are programmes for 'repeated offenders' that will soon be released from prison. The program has been operating since April 2018 and is financed by the Welsh Government and ESF, supplemented by resources from the local authorities.

Communities for Work started in 2016 with an ESF grant. This project has same structure and methodology as Swansea Working but focuses on a different target group: the program is only active in disadvantaged communities (postcode driven). The project focuses on all sectors of the labour market. The training includes both professional skills and essential skills training.

Finally, there is a non-postcode-driven +Program for specific target groups, such as young people at risk, young asylum seekers and young single parents. These participants have multiple problems, broader than just unemployment. Their distance to the labour market can be less than the section via the postcode approach, but these participants have other additional problems.

In these programs the supervision is intensive, the programs do not run in a school environment but in "hubs" in neighbourhoods. There is good cooperation and little or no competition between the employability programs. Placement of participants often succeeds through good (informal) contacts with employers.

Better Jobs, Better Futures (BJBF) <https://www.betterjobsbetterfutures.wales>

In the afternoon we visited BJBF, an initiative of Gower College, a school somewhat comparable to an ROC in the Netherlands. BJBF started early 2018 and is focusing on short-term unemployed people with limited access to the labour market, on people who want better perspectives in another sector (intersectoral mobility) and on workers who do under-qualified work in their current job and want to be guided to other jobs where they can make better use of their talents and create a better future for themselves. BJBF has a dual approach: they work both with the individual who wants to be guided to

(better) work and with companies to help them identifying employees who are eligible for an up skilling program and become more employable for the company itself and for the labour market.

BJBF also supports people who want to start their own business and they have a program for refugees and migrants in which English as a second language (ESOL) and employability are combined. In this program BJBF focuses on underemployed migrants and refugees, which is rather common among highly educated refugees. BJBF offers them one-to-one career guidance with an individual learning plan. If desired, they remain in contact with the adult learner once they have found work again.

JUNE 5, 2019

Welch Water <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5SngfSNOM>

We consider the Essential Skills Programme of Welch Water as a very good practice of learning at the workplace and that is why we describe this extensively.

Welch Water supplies drinking water and cleans wastewater. Around 3000 people work at various locations in Wales. Welsh Water cooperates with the Union (TUC) to improve the essential skills of its employees. Research in all departments of this semi-profit company showed that 65% of people were insufficiently qualified. The reason for this research was the introduction of a new computer system with Ipads, which by no means everyone could work with. Some employees even resigned because they could not handle this renewal in the company.

Welch Water therefore decided, together with the Union, offering courses in reading, writing, maths and digital skills. Together they organize annual 'road shows' to inform and motivate employees. At these shows, the commitment of both business management and trade union is clearly visible. TUC also uses the so-called Union Learning Reps for this (in addition to their Health & Safety Reps). A Learning Rep is a trade union member/employee who receives special training to motivate his/her colleagues in the workplace to improve their essential skills. The Learning Rep knows how to spot colleagues who can benefit from it, knows how to motivate his/her colleagues best and how to overcome practical and psychological barriers to learning. Finally, the Learning Rep can guide the colleagues for a while after they have started a course.



Interested employees are invited to do a simple assessment and can even receive help to do this test. After this assessment, a tailor-made program is offered to grow from level 1 to level 3. The employee has a personal tutor who teaches all subjects. The training courses take place during working hours and are financed by the trade union. The participants remain motivated to learn because their lack of self-confidence and fear to failure gradually disappears. Many employees learn on a one-to-one basis, every step is tailor-made, the learning is close to the workplace and the employee's own experience

and hobbies are included in the learning process. Barriers to learn are removed as much as possible, e.g. employees can ask for childcare.

The essential skills training courses is a win-win for everybody involved: the employees are more motivated and more employable; they have greater self-confidence, function better and are less ill. The employees experience a more meaningful life, they engage better with their families. This has a positive effect on the company and on the community in general.

An important success factor is the one-to-one learning system. Not every learner can learn in a group. Sometimes they are ashamed about their situation. Then one-to-one learning is a good way to adjust to the level of the learner. During our visit there were learners who shared their stories with us. A learner said that he was very disappointed that he lacked skills when the IT changes were introduced. But he gained confidence through one-to-one learning. This had positive effect on his work but also in his private situation. Now he could help his daughter with her homework. He was very proud of this: "the essential skills program was the best thing that ever happened to me." In addition to one-to-one learning, there are also groups with a maximum of 6 people.

The trade union plays a major role by promoting the learning, by the work of their Learning Reps and by financing the program (with a grant from the Wales government). Education is an important spearhead in negotiations between employers and trade unions. Members and non-members can apply for the training courses. Many people who participate in the program decide to join the union during or after their training.

On average, an employee spends two hours on essentials skills during working hours. Welch Water immediate notices the results. For example: the employee who goes to a customer for a fault can now take a photo of the fault himself, upload the photo to the system and handle the complaint himself. This saves a lot of time for a manager. The two study hours per week are therefore "earned back" very quickly. The essential skills program from Welch Water is a great success. The union is now copying this to other companies in Wales.

Groundwork Wales <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/Sites/wales/pages/Category/programmes-wales>

Founded in 1980, Groundwork helps communities in Wales to create better neighbourhoods and to develop essential and entrepreneurial skills. Groundwork focuses on disadvantaged communities, with persons of all ages, with and without specific needs. They offer job perspectives and promote a sustainable 'green' living and working through:

- Building skills and improving job prospects
- Promoting a healthy lifestyle
- Motivate and develop self-confidence, skills and employability of young people
- Awareness of the environment
- Supporting local communities to redesign neglected open spaces



Our delegation visited two projects, a community garden and Wood2Work, both aimed at increasing self-confidence and improving the health and wellbeing of the participants. These projects offer young people and adults with a distance from the labour market valuable practical work experience and additional training. In the community garden flowers, vegetables and fruit are cultivated. Professionals and local volunteers guide the participants in order to improve their work skills. Groundwork Wales also supports the Men's Shed groups., where men work on mutual respect, companionship and mental health.

Inspire! Adult Learning Awards 2019

<http://www.learningandwork.wales/our-work/promoting-learning-and-skills/adult-learners-week/inspire-award-winners-2019/>

On Wednesday evening we joined the festive national Inspire! Adult Learners Award Ceremony. Eight adult learners and four projects received an Award, among others the Into Work Award, Life Change & Progression Award, Health & Wellbeing Award and the Family Learning Award. The celebration took place in a prestigious historic harbour building, now a hotel, and started with a gala dinner. This was followed by the ceremony, presented by BBC presenter Sian Lloyd. After a welcome speech from David Hagendyk, director of the Learning and Work Institute Wales, all winners were presented with a 3-minute film. The overall Adult Learner 2019 was announced. In the closing speech, the Minister of Education Kirsty Williams congratulated each winner individually and spoke passionately about the right to lifelong learning.

The Inspire! Adult Learning Awards is a well-known phenomenon in Wales and has been organized for years by Learning & Working Institute Wales, always in a different city and with support from the Welch Government. In the Netherlands we unfortunately miss such a strong commitment from the government at the Learning Festival.



JUNE 6, 2019

Adult Learning in Cardiff

<https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/resident/Schools-and-learning/Adult-Learning/Pages/default.aspx>

Thursday morning we visited the Adult Community Education Center on Severn Road. First, we were informed about the Cardiff & Vale Community Learning Partnership (CVCLP), a regional partnership involving the four largest education providers: Cardiff & Vale College, Cardiff Council, Vale of Glamorgan Council and Adult Learning Wales. The partnership has the overview of all subsidized education in the region, coordinates the data collection and reports, and monitors the quality of the education provided. CVCLP is a highly hierarchically structured partnership and annually inspected by the Welch Government: the strategy group is at the top, the operational group and the quality and data group at the top. This includes the curriculum & progression group, the learning & development group and the learner involvement group. The learners in this group receive training to properly fulfil their

duties in the working group. (NB: Swansea has a similar Learning Partnership. The Welch Government took the initiative for the regional partnerships.)

This was followed by information about the Cardiff Council Adult Learning Service. The Service offers flexible learning opportunities to support people in the field of learning, training or work. The courses, financed by the Welch Government, are offered free of charge to persons from 16 years of age. This mainly concerns courses (offline and online) to develop skills for childcare, hospitality and the retail trade. Participating in the courses: people who currently have no education, training or work experience and who are eligible for government benefits and those over 50 who do not have a full-time job. Many participants come to the Service via Jobcentre Plus.

Cardiff Council Adult Learning Service is strong in networking with companies. This gives all students the guarantee that after the Learning for Work training they will receive an interview at the local Premier Inn Hotel. If they don't get a job there, they go back to Jobcentre Plus and the guidance from Adult Learning Service stops.

In addition, the organization also provides courses where there is no strict requirement for outflow to work. Participants pay a personal contribution for these courses.



Learning and Work Institute Wales <https://www.learningandwork.wales/about-us/>

Our study visit ended with a meeting at office of the Learning and Work Institute Wales. First we shared our impressions about the Inspire! Award Ceremony with director David Hagendyk and project officer Calvin Read. This Ceremony is the prelude to the Adult Learners Week that started 10 days later. Nisha Patel, responsible for the learning campaigns, marketing and communication, showed us the new website where local partners had already placed more than 100 festival activities.

A large part of the subsidy for this work comes from the Welch Government. This amount is now 1/5 compared to 9 years ago. In our eyes it is still a lot of money, but for them it is much less than they are used to. They deal creatively with this cutback and pay a lot of attention to PR and advertising.

Outcome

General remarks

After the study visit, Herbert described the three days with the following words we all agreed with: 'It was very inspiring to join this study visit and take a look the Welch lifelong learning kitchen. It inspired me and it gave me new ideas. It is good to allow yourself 'delayed time' with passionate colleagues to review our work from a different angle. The presentations of the host organisations and the discussion within our delegation provided us with new discussion material and insights. This made the visit very valuable and powerful. I was impressed by the enthusiasm and the efforts of our Welch colleagues: they work very hard to train the inhabitants, the community and the employees to improve their participation in society and if possible their sustainable employability in the labour market. I can incorporate this new knowledge and experience very well in my thoughts and practice in the Netherlands.

And Annemarie added: 'I especially value the way they celebrate lifelong learning in Wales. It is about learning in the broadest sense of the word. In the Netherlands we focus mainly on qualified courses and training, while the Welch Festival shows that there are also many other ways to learn: by dancing, singing, playing, practicing sports, etc.,

Welch Adult Learning Festival

Both Festival and Award Winner Ceremony are prestigious aspects of the Welch educational year. Useful points to consider for our Dutch Festival:

- The Festivals' strong focus on Fun and celebrating lifelong learning to reach new learners
- The strong link with employers who cooperate in the Festival
- Many activities (for adults and children) were related to entrepreneurship
- A clear Festival logo with a message for broad recognition (the Key to unlock opportunities)
- Investing in promotion and publicity
- A Festival website that also includes information about further study possibilities/courses
- A broad steering group with 12 persons/organisations (Swansea)



About the Inspire! Award Winner Ceremony

- A prestigious professionally organised festive party with gala dinner with a well-known presenter and well-committed minister of education
- Award winners ceremony with the winners/learners in the centre
- Some award winners were also chosen with a view to a future role as learning ambassador
- Promotion material: 3 minute video of every award winner and brochure with all winners

Sustainable regional and partnerships

Approx. 6 years ago, the Welch Government took the initiative to the creation of regional learning partnerships such as the Swansea Learning partnership and the Cardiff & Vale Community Learning Partnership. In both partnerships the main (publicly funded) providers are cooperating. Together they plan to offer a comprehensive range of courses. Their aim is to provide appropriate advice, guidance and support to adult students. The partnerships aim to increase participation in education, learning and training, they want to improve achievement and attainment and enhance employability, and they want to contribute to the economic, social, health and well-being, digital inclusion, environmental and community development of their region. As they have an overview of the educational situation they can detect what is missing and how a good total supply can be realised. The partnerships are accountable to the Welch Government. It was not clear to us whether the organizations within the partnerships are competing with each other and if so, how they deal with this situation.

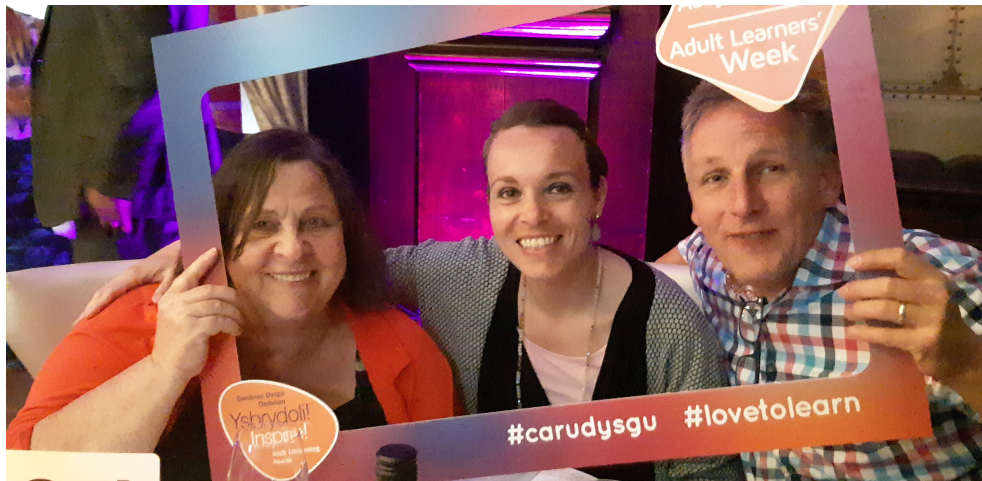
The learning partnerships have a formal structure with different committees. Their responsibility is clearly described. We liked the Learner Charter in Swansea and the Learner Involvement Group in Cardiff & Vale. Learners are trained to play a meaningful role in this group.

Further outcomes

- Learning City seems to be a very interesting concept for the Netherlands. We really would like to further develop this idea for our country. It would fit quite well in with our governance structure where the municipality has a considerable responsibility for education. Learning Cities are free to design their own way to be a Learning City and can choose their own priorities. The link with learning campaigns is an interesting one. Learning Cities give a boost to local cooperation and networks with other providers and stakeholders, including the business sector.
- Welch Water gave us an excellent example of learning on the workplace. The commitment of the company and the union is striking. We consider the use of learning reps as a great asset. Moreover, the chosen methodology is very effective: remove possible learning barriers, a permanent trainer, one-to-one working, contextual learning, etc. There is a real win-win situation for employees, employers and union. We would like to bring this concept to the attention of a number of Dutch companies and trade unions, possibly through a working visit of some Welch key persons.
- The concept of Family Learning: the power that comes from the joint effort (parents and children) to learn basic or essential skills. Family learning can make learning more accessible: parents start their training together with children. This can lead to more participation and better learning results. Family Learning can also give you better insight into the social environment of the (potential) learners. At least one person of the delegation wants to look at the possibility to apply this concept in the Netherlands
- At Groundwork we saw how projects aimed at access to the labour market can also be joint neighbourhood projects. Unemployed young people work together with local volunteers and neighbours on a beautiful community garden and they make useful wooden products. This provides pleasure, social inclusion and community spirit.
- At Better Jobs, Better Futures we were (amongst other things) pleasantly surprised by the attention to underemployed workers. This is regularly the case with highly skilled migrants and also with indigenous people, having negative consequences for the individual, the company and society in general. Because if you work and perform below your level, you make insufficient use of available talents. Do we have projects targeting underemployed persons in The Netherlands?
- As with the previous study trips to Slovenia and Ireland, we experienced in Wales the great value of a national adult education organization. In the Netherlands we really do lack an organisation like the Learning and Work Institute, an 'independent policy, research and development organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion'.

As already has been said before, the delegation was very pleased with this study visit to Wales. The meetings were particularly interesting and provided a lot of material for further discussion. We were well received by our hosts and our Welch colleagues took the time to explain the work. We were impressed by the enthusiasm of the partners in Cardiff and Swansea. They spoke with great respect about their target groups and with love for their work. They make great efforts to involve adults in adult education, whether or not aimed at entering the labour market.

This study visit took place in a period with total uncertainty about the consequences of Brexit for the Welch society and for education in particular. We wish our passionate Welch colleagues all necessary wisdom and creativity to handle this situation.



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