

The Experiences of Welsh-Medium Students during Their First Year in Higher Education under COVID-19 Restrictions

Dyddgu Hywel

Cardiff Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

Abstract

This research explores the personal journey of Welsh-medium students during their first year of higher education (HE). The research pathway has changed and adapted following events and changes in Higher Education following Covid-19.

The main focus of this study is to increase understanding and research on Welsh-medium students in Higher Education. The research will explore individuals' personal experiences and journey during a first year at the University. With the focus of the research having developed following recent changes and crisis with Covid-19, the researcher is isolated to explore the experiences of first year students in a pandemic. So that there is structure and progression to the research, the study will focus on key stages in the lives of first year students in Higher Education, such as transition to university, induction and academic experiences.

The aim of the study is to evaluate the personal journeys of Welsh-medium students during their first year in Higher Education. In ensuring a rare and valuable opportunity for Welsh-medium students to share voices and be heard in sharing their unique experiences. In addressing this goal, the study resulted in the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions and experiences of Welsh-medium students during their personal journeys through a first year in Higher Education (HE)?
2. What perceived barriers affect transition for Welsh-medium students during the first year of HE?
3. Impact of the covid-19 pandemic on the experiences of Welsh-medium students of the academic year 2020-2021

These research questions are designed to develop a better understanding and a more complete picture of the experiences of Welsh-medium students during the first year of HE. The research focuses on examining the factors influencing transition to university, experiences during their first year, and the impact of the pandemic on this process, both positive and negative, during a research period in question.

Although researchers have examined students' experiences in higher education, there is a absence of research in exploring the experiences of Welsh-medium students during their first year in Higher Education, particularly during the pandemic period, which is a new area of research for all. The aim of this research is to give Welsh-medium students the opportunity to share their voice in order to develop an understanding of the needs of the target group during the transition to university.

Keywords: Welsh medium; students; Transition; Covid-19; Pandemic; University; Higher Education; Blended Learning; Engagement