The Government and Politics of Wales
Questions for discussion and case studies

Chapter 1 – The Evolution of Welsh Devolution
Pages 1–21, Author Russell Deacon

Teacher’s guide – in conjunction with the text book

Timing: Students should read the relevant chapter before undertaking the exercise questions and case studies, and discuss their answers. There are answer note suggestions behind all questions. The questions can be undertaken in class or at home with questions/answers and activities being undertaken in the classroom. The material is teaching material and NOT specifically material for answering examination questions.

Tutor guide: Tutors should familiarise themselves with the text, questions and answers before undertaking the activities in the classroom. For any unfamiliar terms an extensive glossary of key terms is provided on pages 206–22 of the book. The questions and case studies do not cover all of the material in the chapters. If tutors wish to cover this, they will need to set additional stimulus questions. Tutors and students may also wish to add material not provided in either the suggested answers or the text to the answers. Welsh politics is constantly changing, so answers provided now may well alter as these changes take place.

The questions for discussion and the case studies are found at the end of each chapter. The suggested answers and some ideas for teaching these are provided on the following pages. Tutors should seek to draw these answers from the students and also discuss their merits.

Suggested answers

Chapter 1 Questions for discussion

1. To what extent is it true to say that the Welsh devolution has been an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary process?

Answer points: Tutors should ensure the students are aware of the key factors outlined here. The central factor is that between the failures of the 1979 St David’s Day referendum, whereby the Welsh public voted four to one against devolution, it took twenty years before an Assembly came again. This means it was evolutionary, slow, rather than revolutionary, sudden. In the twenty-year gap between referenda, the Conservative Party governed Wales for eighteen years (1979–97) and was totally opposed to political devolution. Conservative Welsh Secretaries, notably John Redwood and William Hague, were determined to stop devolution. At the same time,
the Welsh Labour Party remained mainly opposed, as did the national Labour Party led by the anti-devolutionist Welsh MP, Neil Kinnock.

In 1992 Neil Kinnock resigned the Labour leadership and went on to become a European Commissioner in Brussels. The Labour Party was then led by the pro-devolutionist Scottish MP, John Smith, and on his death by Tony Blair. In Wales it was headed by Ron Davies, who was also pro-devolution and developed Welsh devolution plans, although these were much weaker than those for Scotland. Thus, key politicians and an active and well-planned pro-referendum campaign were some of the key factors that helped lead to a successful, albeit marginal referendum result in 1997.

At each stage in Wales the Labour leadership sought to gain the consensus of both their own party and the wider political and civic establishment on devolution. You can also note in your answer that in Scotland there was much greater political consensus soon after the 1979 referendum result, which enabled plans for a law-making and tax-raising Parliament to come forward by the mid-1980s. Similar devolution arrangements, but for different reasons, were also advanced more quickly in Northern Ireland. This more rapid movement elsewhere also gave Wales the appearance of being much slower in its move towards devolution.

2. **Illustrate the key factors that made the Labour Party in Wales reverse its opposition to devolution.**

*Answer points:* The key factors that made the Labour Party in Wales reverse its opposition to devolution were:

1. A long period of Conservative government in Wales, whilst the majority continued to vote for the Labour Party.
2. The unpopularity or inflexibility in adapting to Welsh circumstances of Conservative Welsh Secretaries that also often represented English constituencies.
3. The rise in pro-devolutionary figures within the UK and Welsh Labour Party (in Wales, Rhodri Morgan, Ron Davies and Peter Hain; in the UK, John Smith, Jack Straw, John Prescott and Tony Blair).
4. The change from the two-tier local government of district and county councils to unitary authorities, which reduced government by one layer, ensuring the Assembly could come in as a new layer of government.
5. The strong political whipping of any anti-devolutionary Labour MPs to ensure that all Welsh Labour MPs were ‘on message for devolution’.
6. A significant number of key Labour figures who saw their chances of election to Westminster being slim but the opportunities opened up by a new Welsh Assembly as being able to advance their own political ambitions for successful election and government office.
3. To what extent is it true to define Wales internationally as a principality?

**Answer points:** Tutors may wish to remind the students of some of the key constitutional principles of the UK before discussing the answer. If you examine the uncodified British constitution, there are no references to Wales being a principality.

Students will note from Chapter 1 of the book the references to Wales not being a principality, and that under international law a principality is a sovereign state whose ruling monarch is a prince or a princess with an executive role in its administration. The current or even previous Princes of Wales have had no role in administrative control over Wales. Wales is, however, a nation-state but without legal sovereignty, which remains with Westminster.

**Case study: Welsh political leaders**

*This case study covers the WJEC AS Government and Politics Specification Element 2.3.1 Political Parties and Participation in Politics – Leadership. It examines the lives of three of Wales’ most famous political leaders.*

Reviewing the three case studies on David Lloyd George, Aneurin Bevan and Neil Kinnock (Boxes 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4) and the surrounding text address the following questions:

1. **Define the leadership elements that all of the three leaders have in common.** In your answer you should consider factors such as charisma, oratory and other leadership skills.

   **Answer points:** Tutors can get the students to create a grid which highlights those factors they regard as the best attributes for political leadership. They can then rate those in the case study against these on a poor/good/excellent rating.

2. **Choose a current figure in the Welsh government and compare their biography against that of the three in the case study.** Note down any similarities and differences and indicate the possible reasons for this.

   **Answer points:** Tutors should try to steer students towards the Welsh political party leaders or senior cabinet members rather than national UK political figures. The educational and political backgrounds of each person selected should be included. Students will also need to be aware of the differences in the historical time periods impacting on leadership, such as major wars, strikes and advances in science or technology.
Summary – Reflective learning questions

These should be used either at the end or between the questions for discussion and the case studies to reflect on what has been learned. The students should be given sufficient time to discuss their answers.

1. If you were going to teach this topic to younger students, what would you identify as the key things they would need to know?
2. Based on what we have learnt, what do you think we should study next? Why?

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