

A comparison of studies conducted in Wales and Ireland on issues affecting uptake of micro-generation training.

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Abstract

In 2007 Irvine and Stafford [1] surveyed the attitude to the need for enhanced renewable education within groups of Electricians, Architects and Chemists in Wales. Similar groups were surveyed in Ireland in 2008. In comparing the attitudes of students in these two countries the principal differences are governmental support for microgeneration, the quantity of installed microgeneration and the year of the survey. The two countries are broadly similar in terms of geography, climate, population size, ethnicity, broadcast media, educational achievements, economy and income spread. In Ireland there is greater support for governmental intervention and for increased levels of installation. This could be a reaction to the very low level of activity that prevails in Ireland. The rapid changes during 2008 in economic outlook and in Climate Change consensus may have impacted on the responses. In many areas addressed in the survey the disciplines adopted a consensus position that superseded the national differences.

Government Support

Wales

Wales aims to be at the forefront of sustainable development. The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has the aspiration for all new buildings in Wales to be zero-carbon from 2011. Zero-carbon new-build will not be achieved without significantly increased uptake of renewable and microgeneration technologies. This in turn presents its own issues in the form of ensuring that an infrastructure of manufacture, supply, installation and design is in place. Training then becomes a vital element in supporting rapid microgeneration industry growth.

Ireland

Ireland sends a mixed message on the issue of sustainable development. The Irish Government has indicated an aspiration of near zero-carbon by 2011 for all new buildings in Ireland. However, to date the Irish government has not produced an equivalent to the "Microgeneration Action Plan for Wales". Policy and other supports for small-scale renewable technologies are at the consultant writing reports which may go to public consultation stage. The activity is at state agency level rather than ministerial.

There is no plan, at least in the public domain, that deals with "Expanding Technical and Professional Skills". There are no official governmental targets for increasing the number of people gaining energy-related qualifications. School curricula on climate change and low-carbon energy has not started to be considered.

The Study

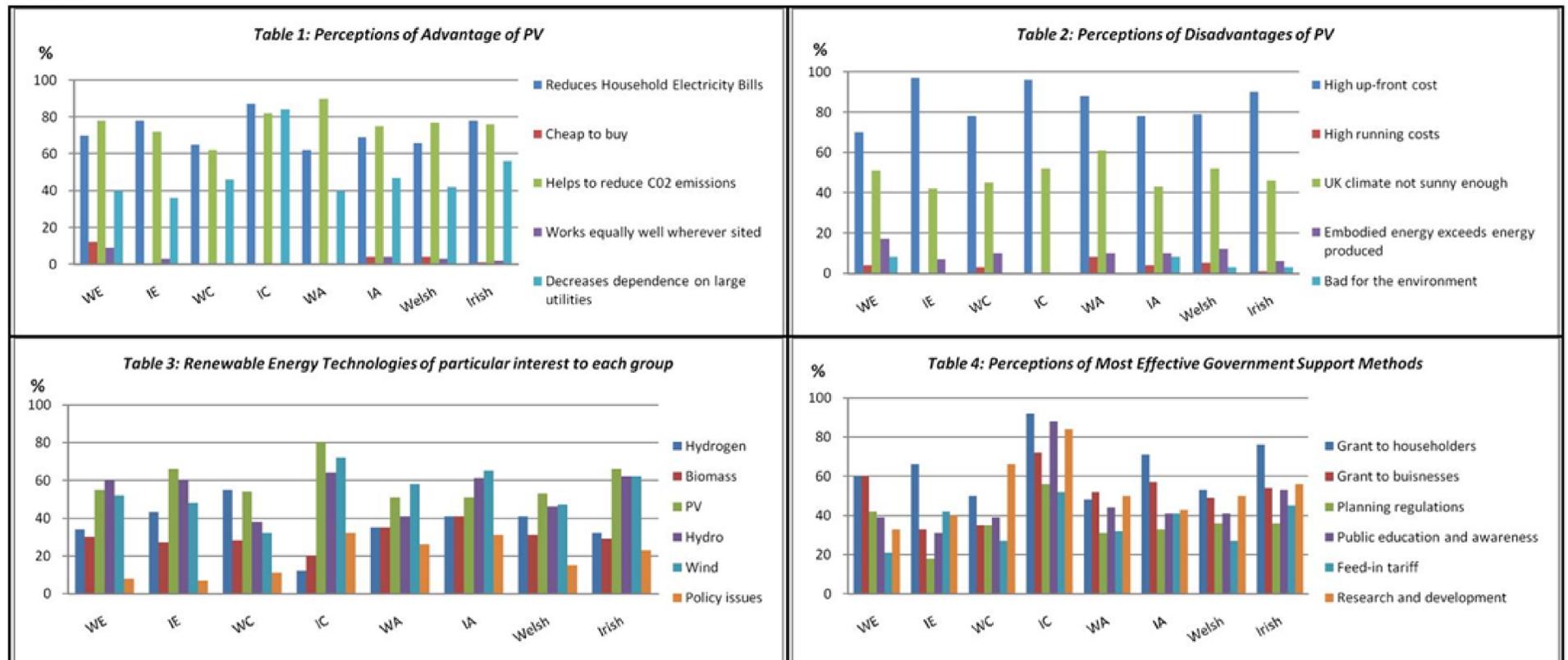
A short study was undertaken, in both countries, to gather preliminary indicative data about attitudes to PV and other renewables, among various types of students who could be classed as potential future training beneficiaries. Three groups of students were surveyed via anonymous questionnaire:

No prior knowledge of renewable technology was assumed, and none of the groups received previous courses or training in this area. The survey asked specific questions in order to ascertain the awareness of microgeneration by students with a particular emphasis on PV. Questions were directed in such a way as to derive student perception of microgeneration advantages and disadvantages as well as perceptions on the lack of mass role out of these products in Ireland and Wales.

In the data presented below the groups will be designated WE, IE, WC, IC, WA and IA.

	Ireland Students	Welsh Students
Electrical Installation	67 (IE)	23 (WE)
Architecture	51 (IA)	54 (WA)
Chemistry	25 (IC)	36 (WC)

Results



Conclusion

The small scale of these preliminary studies means that their results provide only a rough indication of prevailing attitudes among potential training beneficiaries. However some tentative conclusions may be drawn. Firstly, it appears that general awareness, interest in, and basic knowledge of renewable technologies was good in all three groups of students.

Around 25% of people find PV attractive or interesting in appearance, irrespective of discipline. The only significant group that found them unsightly were Irish architects 29%. Most are aware of the advantages to be gained. It is notable, however, that there is a strong belief that this is a technology which is not suitable for the UK climate, and this belief needs to be challenged.

Almost everyone is agreed in wishing to see more government support for these technologies, although there is no clear agreement on the best methods of achieving this.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank staff students from Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland, Llandrillo College, North Wales, Bangor University and the Welsh School of Architecture (Cardiff University) for their co-operation in distributing and completing the questionnaires on student attitudes to PV.