



Education Workforce Council Submission to the National Assembly for Wales' Children, Young People and Education Committee: Inquiry into Teachers' Professional Learning and Education

Introduction

1. The Education Workforce Council (EWC) is the independent regulator in Wales for teachers in maintained schools, Further Education teachers and learning support staff in both school and Further Education settings. Our remit will extend to the regulation of youth and youth support workers and people involved in work-based learning from April 2017. It seeks to raise the status of the education workforce by maintaining and promoting the highest standards of professional practice and conduct in the interests of education practitioners, learners, and the general public.
2. The EWC notes that this inquiry focuses solely on teachers in schools whereas data from our register shows that the education workforce is much more diverse and evolving. It would be a missed opportunity not to consider the wider education workforce holistically, as there are many professionals who contribute to the standards of teaching and learning across a variety of settings who equally deserve access to quality professional learning opportunities. Awareness and an accurate appreciation of the composition of the education workforce need to be fully incorporated into current policy.
3. Learning support workers were required to register with the EWC from April 2016, and the Register of education practitioners indicates that there are now over 31,000 registered learning support staff in Wales. This is almost reaching parity with school teachers (33,000). This figure constitutes a significant increase from the initial estimates provided by Welsh Government who anticipated registration figures of around 23,000 school learning support staff. Prior to registration, very little was known about the true composition of the education workforce in Wales. The education workforce is both diverse and evolving, and this this should be a key consideration in any future planning and policy making processes.

Continuing Professional Development

4. During 2005-2008, the General Teaching Council for Wales (subsequently reconfigured to the EWC) undertook a review of professional development arrangements for teachers in Wales, resulting in formal recommendations to Welsh Government. This review highlighted significant concerns in relation to provision availability, consistency, quality and funding support, and these issues are still apparent. The comprehensive review undertaken by the GTCW made strong recommendations for there to be national programmes of quality assured continuous professional development throughout a practitioner's career. The documents are available for review on the EWC website¹.

¹ <http://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/research-statistics/gtcw-archive>

5. At present, there are large scale reforms within the education sector and associated initiatives to bring these reforms to fruition and these are being led centrally by Welsh Government, however the delivery model for these reforms, including the delivery of CPD is regional. Training for example, is currently provided by the regional consortia which can, without effective monitoring and review, potentially lead to disparity and lack of standardised approach to training across Wales. The contribution of the regional consortia as a whole requires full and ongoing evaluation to determine if it is the best approach to raising standards across Wales. It is also imperative to ensure that the system constitutes value for money for the Welsh tax payer. Without central governance, it difficult to maintain a CPD system which is robust and responsive enough to meet the challenges of a modern education system which is undergoing considerable reform. It is also necessary to ensure that there is equality of access/opportunity for all schools/practitioners across consortia areas. Recent Estyn reports have highlighted several recommendations relating to the effectiveness of the regional consortia.²
6. Pioneer and Hub schools are charged with sharing best practice with other schools / teachers, however, in essence, what this means is that the best teachers are often taken away from their classes for significant periods which can have a negative impact upon learners. There needs to be a balance between ensuring that standards are maintained within a practitioner's own establishment, against identifying innovative ways to disseminate best practice.
7. The knowledge base regarding what constitutes effective CPD for practitioners is growing but it is not necessarily reflected in policy implementation and development in Wales. It is important that there is a strong evidence base for new initiatives to ensure that they have the best chance of success. Practitioners and stakeholders, including the wider public need to have confidence that changes made are necessary, relevant and represent best value, and that they are in the best interests of raising standards in Wales.
8. There is work currently underway to create a suite of professional standards for the education workforce. The existing standards for teachers have not been refreshed for a number of years and this renders the profession vulnerable. In order to maintain confidence that the standards remain relevant and fit for purpose, these should be systematically reviewed on a regular basis. The EWC would like to see strong drivers for CPD within the new suite of standards. In England, work has already been undertaken with respect to CPD standards³

² <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/search?sector=2244>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standard-for-teachers-professional-development?>

9. The EWC is the independent regulator for education practitioners in Wales, and as yet does not have the same remit as its counterpart regulators in terms of producing and owning the standards for those it registers and performing a quality assurance role for CPD activity. Given that this is standard practice across a very wide range of regulators, we eagerly await the implementation of the intended consultation on transferring these functions to the EWC as announced by the previous Minister for Education following agreement from the Cabinet in July 2015 (CAB 14-15 (73)), and further outlined in Qualified for Life (page 15):

We will develop the role of the new Education Workforce Council so that it supports a high-status profession.

The key success factor in developing and maintaining a skilled workforce will be to ensure that opportunities for continuous professional development are accessible and appropriate for **all** education practitioners and not limited to teachers.

The Role of Initial Teacher Education

10. We welcome the proposal by the Welsh Government to confer responsibility on the EWC to accredit ITE programmes for school teachers. However, the proposed changes will only address issues of future school teacher supply and quality. We think the time is right to start looking at the entry requirements and provision for other groups in the education workforce, for example, the PGCE (FE). Every professional that supports young people in an educational capacity should have equality of opportunity and have the initial support in starting out in a career that their colleagues in other educator roles have, and learners deserve to have the very best practitioners to support them on their journey through education. It is of paramount importance that such training should be of sufficient quality, and that standards across providers are both consistent and reflect current best practice. Every student passing through these programmes should be in a position to enter their profession with confidence, and be fully equipped to meet the challenges of a modern education system. If Wales is to be truly ready for the implementation of Donaldson, such implications need to be taken into consideration.
11. Current statistics relating to ITE provision indicate that there are disparities across institutions in terms of student outcomes. The number of deferrals for example suggests that there are inconsistent processes across institutions, and we note that very few students who enrol on ITE programmes fail which raises questions in terms of the robustness of processes. This trend is also apparent in the Induction process where statistics show that since the introduction of Induction in 2003; only 10 of 15,125 new teachers have failed their Induction, that is 0.07%. A robust evaluation of the value of the Induction process in its current format should be factored into any forward planning in order to promote confidence in the quality of our newly qualified teachers and address the concerns around the quality assurance processes of provision on a national, regional and individual institution level. The ITE outcome data can be made available to Welsh Government if this would be of assistance.

The Sufficiency of the Future Workforce

12. Professor Donaldson proffered a 'bottom-up' approach to developing the curriculum, in that practitioners should be charged with this responsibility. Whilst this has its obvious merits, it should also be acknowledged that practitioners are not experienced in curriculum design. In the past the curriculum has been developed centrally and practitioners have been charged with delivering it. The new approach is very different and those developing the curriculum need the appropriate support. There are still opportunities to develop the profession's skills in this area, but this would need to be addressed as a matter of urgency given the ambitious timeframes proposed for implementation of the curriculum. There are indications that consortia and pioneer schools are having to start from scratch to build capacity on the schools to develop the curriculum. It is also important that Wales learns from the experiences of curriculum reform in Scotland.
13. In addition to curriculum reforms, the Welsh Government has also announced the ambitious strategy for 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050. This has huge implications for the education workforce, who are seen to be key drivers of the strategy. If the demand for Welsh speakers is likely to be stimulated by the requirements of the new strategy, effective planning will be essential to ensure workforce supply meets demand, and this planning needs to go beyond school teacher supply.
14. Consideration needs to be given to the more formal development opportunities open to education practitioners, particularly since the last cohort able to enrol on the Master of Educational Practice (MEP) programme was in the 2014/2015 academic year. The MEP was only aimed at newly qualified school teachers with a lack of similar opportunities for the rest of the education workforce which can present a situation which is unfair and potentially divisive. The programme was closely aligned to Welsh Government priorities, which provided a sound basis for equipping those new to the profession with the skills they need to drive the new education agenda. As yet, there are no clear plans in place for a replacement programme, yet in March 2015, Huw Lewis announced that the New Deal for the Education Workforce, would

support and enable all practitioners to successfully meet the opportunities and challenges which lie ahead as a result of the recommendations from Professor Graham Donaldson and Professor John Furlong. The New Deal will support practitioners to develop their practice in the most effective ways to improve outcomes for their learners.
15. These promises do not appear to have come to fruition, and there has not been any subsequent announcement to reassure the workforce that CPD remains a key focus for Welsh Government. If Wales is to lead the way in education, the CPD offering needs to be responsive to support the new agenda. There is no indication how effective the MEP

programme has been in supporting the Welsh Government Education agenda, if it has assisted in retaining new teachers, or if it represents value for money.

16. The establishment of the new National Leadership Academy could potentially assist in promoting and providing CPD, but early indicators are that this initiative will be very much focused on school teaching staff, not looking beyond this group and therefore not supporting or developing the wider workforce.

The EWC's Knowledge and Reach

17. In November 2016, we launched the first ever education workforce survey on behalf of the Welsh Government. Separate surveys have been developed for each of the EWC's registration categories, as well as a bespoke survey for supply teachers and support staff. The surveys included questions in key areas such as preparedness for Donaldson, and relationship between Continuing Professional Development and performance management. We expect results to be published early in 2017.
18. The EWC is the producer and guardian of a vast and unique resource of data relating to the education workforce in Wales which could be further exploited to support Welsh Government policy initiatives. For example, undertaking research and more targeted survey / qualitative work of registrant groups to develop a broader understanding of the less tangible issues within the education sector, including information about the nature of qualifications held by registrants, for example, and whether or not they are working in a role that is directly related to that qualification, particularly in relation to subjects and phases taught.
19. Under the Education (Wales) Act 2014, the EWC can undertake recruitment activities on behalf of the Welsh Government. Historically, workforce planning has only considered school teachers and headteachers. Now that the EWC registers learning support staff and further education lecturers, and as the demand for learning support staff grows, we would urge policy makers to take into account the composition of the entire workforce.
20. From April 2017, the Council will also be in a position to collate information from new registrant groups i.e. work-based learning provision and youth groups. Statistical analysis will further support the Welsh Government and key stakeholders in workforce planning. Bringing these diverse groups of education professionals under one regulatory body clearly recognises the continuum of education and should facilitate future strategic planning and policy development.
21. The EWC was commissioned by Welsh Government to develop the 'Professional Learning Passport' (PLP) which was launched officially in September 2016. This goes some way to providing practitioners with the tools they need to record their professional development activity centrally in a way which can be transferred easily if they move between employers.

At present, uptake of the tool is encouraging outside the mandatory categories, but further work needs to be done to embed the process further in order that it becomes the norm across all sectors. We also plan to provide EBSCO within the PLP from March 2017. Additionally, the EWC has developed the Learning Exchange initiative on behalf of Welsh Government. This provides practitioners with access to a searchable database of regional, national and international learning opportunities for the STEM, ICT and Computing subjects. This has been an important recent development which aims to support practitioners in refreshing and enhancing their subject expertise.