

# Education Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee

## ELLS(2) 07-06(p5)

### **Response To Professor John Furlong's 'Review Of Initial Teacher Training Provision In Wales', for the Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee, by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)**

As the education union, ATL is very concerned about the future provision and training of teachers for Wales. We have read Professor Furlong's Report with interest. The Report is commendably thorough, deeply researched and well written.

Because the timescale for the presentation of responses to the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee is tight we will confine ourselves to three observations.

#### **Modelling future demand**

The Review clearly manifests a deep awareness of the complexities of modelling any future demand for teachers and concomitant provision of ITT. The Review deals with some of the issues surrounding the exit of members from the profession due to illness, retirement, and redeployment. It is incumbent upon those who may decide, on the basis of this review, to reduce present ITT provision that their decision is not to the future detriment of either the profession or the children of Wales. The Report is refreshingly frank about its own limitations. Accordingly, we would draw the Committee's attention to Professor Furlong's recommendation at 3.42, and in the words of 3.43 'we would [...] recommend that if the Welsh Assembly Government wishes to develop a more robust methodology, it should, as a priority, increase its capacity to undertake statistical work in this area' [our emphasis]. We would consider it unwise that any future remodelling of ITT be initiated without this more robust methodology having been set in place.

#### **Regional Schools of Education**

We are prepared to give a cautious welcome to the proposal for a rationalisation of the number of institutions engaged in ITT in Wales and the development of three 'new' regional schools. This greater concentration could entail distinct benefits for those who learn and teach and, as the Report notes, provide a welcome alternative to the disproportionate effect of pro rata reductions in provision (see 4.4). We think that any new configuration should be cost neutral and result in no redundancies as the expertise of those currently engaged in ITT in Wales must be preserved for the nation. This new configuration, if properly planned, could result in future development of this expertise through the raising of the research profile of their staffs. As outlined in the recent lecture of Dr. Mary Bousted, ATL's General Secretary, we believe that Wales' successes in education need to be better known but

also that Welsh initiatives need greater internal and external evaluation and scrutiny. As a union dedicated to developing the education agenda we endorse the depiction of these new schools of education as places that offer the potential for '[t]he development of a strong research culture ... so that they can make a proper contribution to the intellectual leadership of the education sector' (4.20)

## **The new degree**

We were excited by Professor Furlong's proposal for the replacement of the current BA (Education) with a new 'Pre-Professional Degree' (4.6ff). ATL prides itself on being the education union and counts numerous 'support staff' amongst its members. The school of the twenty first century is becoming a complex organisation. We realise that 'support staff' far from detracting from the importance of teachers enhances their particular, unique and irreplaceable role. ATL has also consistently maintained that learning does not take place in a vacuum and that the pastoral and social welfare of pupils is a proper concern of schools and colleges. For these reasons we believe that the proposed 'Pre-Professional Degree' demands careful examination. It could promote seamless working between all education professionals, develop all their skills and talents, and promote the widening participation agenda across the board. We agree that this new degree needs to be 'both academically rigorous and vocationally relevant' (4.8). Wales has been prepared to take bold steps in forming its distinctive educational agenda, we think that this new degree could well help develop that agenda.

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Director,  
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