

National Assembly for Wales

Children, Young People and Education Committee

ST 45

Inquiry into Supply Teaching

Evidence from : Supply Teacher

Question 1 – What are your views on whether there is a prevalence in the use of supply teachers on a planned and unplanned basis?	
<p>No I do not. I believe that there is in fact a lack of work for supply teachers as there is a prevalence of unqualified cover supervisors that babysit classes sometimes two to three classes at a time in dinner halls across Wales is much more of a concern than the amount of supply teachers. It is something that makes life as one of these teachers much more difficult.</p> <p>They are supervised so much by these individuals with substandard work left by permanent teachers that they do not expect to have to work when a qualified supply teacher takes the class. I always make a class work and learn despite conditions and lack of resources left. Many of the issues that inhibit learning in these schools are well developed before the supply teacher has even entered the building. As teachers that attends a variety schools we all know the standard of education offered in particular schools as well as the attitude towards cover in general for both planned and unplanned occasions.</p>	
If you believe that this results in problems (for example, for schools, pupils or teachers), how do you think they could be resolved?	
<p>A situation has been created where the first choice of cover for a lesson in Key stage 3,4,5, is an unqualified person due to the fact that the schools employ people on a permanent basis. These unqualified people are usually paid approximately twice as much as my annual wage as a supply teacher.</p> <p>There needs to be a consistency of having well qualified people in charge of the classes as well as the school taking responsibility and accountability for good appropriate work of an acceptable standard being left. Work that is realistic and measurable rather than the DVD or the impossible concept of making a poster with a significant lack of information left.</p>	
How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)	
<i>1 – This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	√
<i>2 – This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	
<i>3 – This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 – Not a problem.</i>	
Question 2 – What are your views on the circumstances in which supply teachers are used for example, the types of classes they cover; the types of learning activities which take place under the supervision of supply teachers; whether they are	

qualified to teach relevant subjects?

Supply teachers are given limited guidance, no essential background history on children.

I have been used to fill in for inadequate permanent teachers that are away from school due to stress. Stressed due to not completing their work properly and poor standards in teaching. You will be in charge of a class with some of the notorious disruptive people in the school with no support, no information as what to do in an emergency and usually no phone in the room. There is also an issue of the fact that if any significant worry is raised with regards to 'Child Protection', you never know who the appropriate person would be to pass on any sensitive information.

Most teachers are sent to the schools by agencies for general cover. I often do not have any idea as to where I am going to be or what I am going to be doing until 8.30am that very day. I will often turn up to cover one subject but end up teaching something completely different. It is very much a lucky dip. It does not look like any consideration is taken when putting the right people in the right places. There are also many people on maternity contracts and long term supply through agencies rather than through the county, saving money for all apart from the person doing the work.

If there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

Bring the supply teachers back under the wing of the Government as they do in Northern Ireland. Where they would be able to distribute a good selection of teachers to the appropriate places. This would help with quality control as well as being able to put people with an appropriate amount of Language skills such as Welsh to the right places as opposed to what is happening at the moment. All supply teachers being paid the same would mean that it would be the best that would get the jobs rather than as it is at the moment through the agencies, the cheapest.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

1 – *This is a key, urgent problem.*

2 – *This is a problem that needs to be addressed.*

3 – *This is a minor problem*

4 – *Not a problem.*

Question 3 – What are your views on the impact of the use of supply teachers on the outcomes for pupils (including any impact on pupil behaviour)?

As said above, I believe that there is so many people in our schools that are just babysitting with a limited amount of skill and expectation that a great deal of damage is being done. The children are intelligent enough to know that in these circumstances that they can happily do a limited amount of work and cannot distinguish between cover supervisors and supply teachers. They then do not have the work ethic when work and learning is the main aim of the

teacher.

It would be easier for me to get work in a school and be paid more as an unqualified member of staff than a temporary teacher.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

There is so much dreadful work left for children by their permanent teachers in key stage 3,4,5, and no work at all for Primary, that they know that is just a stop gap piece of work that does not have any relevance to what they have been studying and does not build on any work learned previously. Primary is very difficult in the fact that they expect a stranger to turn up with work that magically fits in with whatever scheme of work that they are working from. If they have indeed created a scheme of work for children to complete then surely they could have cover work available that is appropriate and build on the work that they are doing.

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3 – This is a minor problem	
4 – Not a problem.	

Question 4 – What are your views on the Continuous Professional Development of supply teachers and the potential impact of the National Professional Learning Model?

There is no Continuous Professional Development for Supply teachers. Although I have been in a shocking amount of schools including five Maternities and countless number of short and long-term contracts I have not had any CPD in 13 years.

There have been major changes to the educational structure in Wales that I have had to teach myself. Piecing together any available information from random websites. I have had to master The 2009 curriculum (to an outstanding ESTYN level, before being replaced by a teaching assistant post inspection), Welsh Bacculaureate, Essential skills Wales, National literacy and numeracy framework, with no help. All taught with no training. The changes to the curriculum this year will be equally disastrous as I have no idea how I am going to be able to gain access to this years changes especially as we Supply teachers are all locked out of HWB+.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

If the Welsh Government continues to accept that the schools employ through agencies then the Government will have to accept that no one will take responsibility for ensuring these people have the appropriate training. As stated above I have completed five maternity periods of work but was still considered as a temporary worker not important enough to invest in with training. If it is so easy use and discard staff then there is no incentive for schools to invest in people.

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4 – <i>Not a problem.</i>	
Question 5 – What are your views on performance management arrangements for supply teachers?	
<p>There are none. Even when I have been covering a maternity/sickness cover over a number of terms I have never had any kind of performance management. In fact when the permanent members of staff of a school were having theirs, I was told there wasn't a point as I was only temporary. I was the only one in a primary school looking forward to a full ESTYN inspection just to be able to know how I could improve the standard of my original policies, schemes of work having never had any training in Primary. I gained outstanding. I have also had value added in every school I have been in, on account of having pride in my work and love to see children flourish. I also relish proving to permanent members of staff in a way that is measurable that I am not a supply teacher because I am an inadequate teacher.</p>	
If you think there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?	
<p>There is too much of a turnover with regards to the pick and mix attitude within schools of getting a body in the class as shown by the use of teaching assistants and cover supervisors. I see it every day. Employing PPA teachers on a permanent basis in some of the schools mean that all take accountability and quality control of work and teaching standards. They can get to know the children, the children get to know you and realise that there is an expectation of learning and behaviour.</p> <p>The supply teacher will usually get the blame if anything goes wrong with the class or the work irrespective of the quality of the tools, circumstances or resources left. The school generally does not expect any issues with the class and usually does not take kindly to supply teachers giving any negative feedback on the classes. You are usually seen but not heard.</p>	
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4 – <i>Not a problem.</i>	
Question 6 – Do you consider that local authorities and regional consortia have sufficient oversight of the use of supply teachers?	
<p>I do not believe that the local authority has any oversight with regards the use of teachers and is equally as clueless as to how qualified the people in charge of classes in their schools. I have seen many a teaching assistants in charge of lessons. Having said this, most of</p>	

the counties appear to have a preferred agency. All involved seem to be saving money on the backs of the person doing the hard graft.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

This service need to be brought back into the county. There is much that needs doing to balance of this unethical immoral behaviour with the profit going back to education. This money could fund programmes to help with literacy and numeracy in Wales especially in areas of high unemployment. A brief scan of Companies House shows how much profit is going out of education, that is if the accounts of the agencies are even based in this country.

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4 – <i>Not a problem.</i>	

Question 7 – Are you aware of any local and regional variation in the use of supply teachers and if so, are there any reasons for this?

There is misuse of supply teachers all over Wales. I have seen people having to drive in excess of an hour and a half away from certain areas as they have started charging by the hour, not including lunch. They are then trying to boost their wages by claiming petrol back as their wages are so poor.

I have also seen schools take on newly qualified teachers on a temporary basis, telling the teacher it is with the prospect of being taken on at the end of the year. They are then given notice in June/July and replaced in September with more newly qualified teachers. Feeding the amount of inexperienced supply teachers and ensuring that the children are always being taught by an inexperienced teacher on a rotational basis.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

Data needs to be collected from schools on an annual basis with regards to the amount of teachers taken on by these schools, what point in the scale they are on, whether they are temporary or permanent and turnover of teachers. A simple points system for the school could help illustrate the balance of cost v's experience.

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Question 8 – Do you have any views on supply agencies and their quality assurance arrangements?

They are very much a tool for profit. The amount of agencies that have been set up speaks for itself. They are not in the business for altruistic purposes. All teachers are paid at completely being paid different rates, some of the cheaper teachers appear to be getting more work than the experienced teachers as the company makes more profit. Teachers are being exploited, afraid to turn any job down just in case they do not ask you again. The supply agency has been a way in with to privatise the education system. It is inevitable that with privatisation comes profit.

I would like to know why it is so, that the Welsh Government felt the need to ban the use of umbrella companies by construction firms that are in receipt of Government contracts to yet perfectly ethical for supply teachers to have to lose at least a day's wage in order to receive their pay. Why is this?

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

Take the workforce back under government control where there are more checks and balances, and accountability. Half of the problems would immediately disappear. Greed and exploitation has no business in education.

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<i>4 – Not a problem.</i>	

Question 9 – Are you aware of any specific issues relating to Welsh medium education? If so, what are they?

I have been informed that some agencies charge more for Welsh speakers but do not pass it on to the teacher, just a way of making more money from Supply teachers and Welsh speakers. Unless you are registered with specific agencies you cannot get work in Welsh speaking schools and it is difficult to know which agency is the flavour of the month when it comes to many of the Welsh speaking schools.

Many schools book teachers and they are told its going to be general cover in a school. They are then put in charge of Welsh classes whether they are Welsh speaking or not. I have experience of being told by children and teachers that I am the first welsh speaking Welsh teacher they have had in weeks when their permanent teacher has been away. I am qualified and happy to teach through the medium of Welsh for all key stages but do not get access to as much Welsh language education.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

As has already been said, instead of having multiple independent databases of teachers willing and able to work. One database would improve access to schools for Welsh medium teachers better all round for supply teachers and children. More permanent PPA teachers in Welsh speaking schools would also help.

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4 – <i>Not a problem.</i>	

Question 10 – If you had to make one recommendation to the Welsh Government from all the points you have made, what would that recommendation be?

To tackle the massive issue of unqualified people in charge of the classroom. It would appear the whole debate into supply teachers is a moot point. How are the pupils going to get a higher standard of teaching if they are still being taken by individuals that are not meant to do any more than watch them. How will that cover supervisor cope for example with a day such as I had last Friday when I had been left with no work by any teacher, did not have access to their exercise or text books and was put in non-specialist room and hall?

The damage will be done whether conditions are tightened/improved for the common supply teacher as they are only a percentage of the teaching time of these children. Would it not be wise to consider about clamping down on the amount of teaching time taken by unqualified people. I was personally replaced (having gained an outstanding) by a teaching assistant on a permanent basis as soon as Estyn had finished its job in a school. There is very little said in the reports made by The Wales Audit Office, Estyn, The Public Accounts Committee about Cover supervisors. A headmaster is not going to openly admit that this happens in their school as they have a 'brand' to protect. It is only when management do not consider a person to be important enough to warrant hiding these practices that you are able to see the true state of Education in Wales. What I see is what you get.

I do not feel that the mistake of forgetting about supply teachers when setting up the HWB can be ignored, as explained below.

Question 11 – Do you have any other comments or issues you wish to raise that have not been covered by the specific questions?

A complaint was made to the HWB department of the national assembly in December of 2014 with regards to the inadequate service given to supply teachers and later after a response with my Assembly member. It has subsequently been forwarded to the Education Minister. Had I realised that there was an enquiry being held into

supply teachers I would have most certainly have responded at the same time as contacting the assembly with regards to the HWB. Since accidentally finding put about this enquiry I have asked all supply teachers that I know if they were aware of it. No one that I have met whilst being on the school circuit has been even remotely aware of any review into supply teachers. How is this possible?

It does appear that the setting up of the HWB and the inability of supply teacher to be able to gain training, access for resources or for class use is a major oversight. Even in the National Digital Learning Council report it advises that all teachers be given access to the technology. It would have cost a considerable amount less in consultation fees had the managers in charge of the project simply asked people such as myself with a practical working view from the bottom. I would have suggested for them to attach the HWB login to the individuals' unique teaching number for traceability instead of the impractical linking to the registers of schools, especially as there is no system-administrator in based in many of these schools. I would dearly like to know how the Government intends for the 'new deal' to work if these many teachers are literally locked out of the system? Any multi million pound initiative would not work without some margin of common sense behind it especially as it has also been extended with more millions of pounds being spent on it.

Why is it that we can only take some of the work available in schools yet take all the blame for when things are deemed unsatisfactory in education. There are many times that I have been put in a position where I have had to pick up, sort out, fix, get results and disappear as if I have never been, just in order to hide the inadequacy of the permanent member of staff.

How does it help that the education committee sanctioned a collection of data over survey monkey aimed at the service provided by supply teachers when it is clear that they are not the only providers of this service. Who is to say that the majority of these children were taught by the cover supervisors. I personally do not know who teaches my child although I do realise that it is not always the class teacher. In my opinion, this question could only have been conceived by an individual with limited knowledge of the system. If these people are not exclusively the carers of these children during lesson times then how could they get all the blame? It has also not been helpful that these statistics have already been used in the media by journalists that have used this data in order to stigmatise the supply teachers further. Would this data hold up to official or legal scrutiny? We teach children to consider all variables when producing a questionnaire with the aim of a true unbiased survey.

As agonising an existence as it has been, it only occurred to me a few summers ago when listening to the Children's Commissioner for Wales talk on the radio about his concerns for children in poverty in Wales and what the definition of poverty was, that I realised that I was a person technically classed as a being in poverty. I find it interesting

that the recommended pay rise for Assembly members' by the Independent Remuneration Board is more than my annual wage. I am deeply concerned about gender equality and deprivation in education, but how does a person in poverty that works under the conditions that I do help people that are also under that same poverty line. I am shut out from professional development, cannot utilise any of the experience that have in my head or my hands due to my status, and cannot access further education even though newly qualified teachers are able to read a masters for free with approximately 12% of the experience in practical terms that I have had. I cannot work for anyone that is able to make a difference as many educational foundations, trusts, bodies expect experience in research, not practical experience in the field. We are in limbo.

I would dearly hope that someone has the strength of character to be able to make the right decisions. As were it not for the charity of others I would the mother of a child in utter poverty and degradation, simply because I care about children's education and love teaching. There are far too many people all the way up the ladder taking their share out of the supply teacher both figuratively and financially, leaving very little left, and I anticipate for quality of life purposes that I will not be in this profession for much longer. Neither could I condemn any other prospective individual to the profession of teaching. Working as a supply teacher cannot be described as anything other than an introduction to personal financial annihilation. I do not need training in the Bradford factor to be able to work out the patterns of absence that I am called in to cover as I have had to anticipate these patterns for a number of years just in order to balance my budget. I usually get paid a limited amount if at all between the months of June, July and August. September, a few days if I am very lucky as you *have get a few days' pay into the system before the payroll closes mid-month. Last year it was one day. October, a few days more although November has a week that is lost due to the Half term holidays. The payroll of December is only worth approx. two weeks due to it being closed early for Christmas. In effect, you only have two weeks' worth of money to the pay the bills. In reality it is only approximately five months wage of the year that you can depend on and holiday pay is also limited. A small percentage of the days wage for every day worked. It is then taxed.*

I believe that teaching as well as education and learning should be inclusive not exclusive which is certainly incredibly far from the truth. Transparency is not found in abundance in education.