

EDUCATION WORKFORCE COUNCIL (EWC) RESPONSE TO THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE'S REVIEW OF CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS IN WALES: IMPLEMENTATION

About the Education Workforce Council (EWC)

1. The EWC came into being on 1 April 2015, following a renaming of the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW). The EWC is the professional regulatory body for the education workforce. It registers school teachers, Further Education (FE) teachers and learning support workers in school and FE settings. It is also the policy intention of the Welsh Government to further extend the new Council's remit to Youth workers and Work based learning professionals from April 2017.
2. The Council's statutory aims (as set out in the Education (Wales) Act 2014) are to:
 - contribute to improving the standards of teaching and the quality of learning in Wales;
 - maintain and improve standards of professional conduct amongst teachers and others who support teaching and learning in Wales;
 - safeguard the interests of learners, parents and the public and maintain public trust and confidence in the education workforce.

Progress to date

3. The EWC welcomed the recommendations from 'Successful Futures', and its aspirations for education in Wales. It was heartening at the time, to see the appetite for change and the consensus around the intentions for renewed curriculum and assessment arrangements from both government and the sector as a whole.
4. The long lead time set by Welsh Government to the introduction of new curriculum was realistic, however this comes with challenges. In this regard, it is important that the Welsh Government:
 - has a clear project plan that is reviewed regularly and avoids piecemeal approaches;
 - ensures there is a regular flow of information to practitioners, employers, parents, the public and other stakeholders about the new curriculum and assessment proposals and related progress;
 - continuously reviews progress and is able to consider alternative ideas about how to develop and implement the reforms if required;
 - addresses the specific knowledge and skills gap identified by Professor Donaldson in teachers' and schools' curriculum design competency. We note

that practitioners have been deliverers of pre-prescribed curricula since the advent of the first National Curriculum in 1988. In order for schools to be confident and competent to successfully embrace the requirements of the new curriculum in terms of design and implementation, practitioners in all settings should be guaranteed opportunities to be supported to develop these skills and knowledge at the earliest possible stage.

The work of the Pioneer schools network in designing and developing the new curriculum;

5. The Council notes the Welsh Government's decision to use the Pioneer school network to design and develop the new curriculum and assessment arrangements. While this has merit, the EWC has some concerns in this regard following feedback from its registrants, for example:
 - an apparent lack of awareness amongst many non-Pioneer schools about the changes and a growing sense of a two-tier system which could be potentially divisive and unnecessary in a small country. Furthermore, there is a danger that the reform may become too closely identified with Pioneer schools and therefore not seen as 'belonging' to all practitioners in all settings;
 - very little engagement to date with other sectors of the workforce who also have a significant part to play in curriculum and assessment reform, specifically the further education sector, non-maintained settings which deliver early years provision, and youth work;
 - a need for the Welsh Government to learn lessons from the implementation and roll out of other major reforms, such as the Foundation Phase. The Welsh Government must ensure that resources (both financial and time) are not just focused on a small group of pilot settings with insufficient resource available for the vast majority of schools and settings outside of the pilot schemes;
 - the need for effective coordination across regions. It is important that developments are being shared and benchmarked across consortia regions and beyond the school sector.

The interface with effective professional learning for the education workforce and initial teacher education and training;

6. The Welsh Government issued a consultation in September on revised criteria for initial teacher education programmes in Wales. These criteria place a far greater emphasis on partnerships between universities and schools in delivering training than in the past. The proposed revised criteria also seek to prepare a new generation of teachers who will be knowledgeable about child development and skilful in curriculum design in order to be effective leaders of experiential learning in the

digital era. This of course is appropriate and to be applauded. However, the Council does wish to highlight some specific matters to the Committee and these are set out in paragraphs 7 to 11 below.

Professional development for the education workforce

7. The curriculum is no longer developed or delivered by school teachers alone. As the professional regulator for the education workforce as a whole, we know that school teachers now make up only just over 50% of the staffing in our schools (at 31 October 2016, there were 35,715 school teachers, 29,694 school learning support workers, 5,395 FE teachers and 2,354 FE learning support workers on the EWC register). The workforce as a whole requires not only appropriate and supported professional development, but also an underpinning suite of professional standards which manifest the characteristics of effective education professionals.

Enabling professional standards for the whole workforce

8. The ethos and culture that are aspired for in 'Successful Futures' need to be reflected in new professional standards which are being developed for school teachers and headteachers. It is obviously as important that other groups in the workforce (FE staff and support workers) also have progressive, coherent professional standards that act as enablers to deliver reforms necessary to implement 'Successful Futures' by producing professionals with the appropriate skills and aptitudes.

Alignment with other WG priorities and strategies

9. Curriculum and assessment arrangements impact upon many other reform agendas within education and Welsh Government as a whole. For example, the Welsh language strategy and the Early Years ten year plan. This calls for a level of 'joined up-ness' rarely seen in government.
10. As mentioned above, the reform of Initial Teacher education has a significant role to play in preparing new teaching professionals ready for the challenges and opportunities involved in the ambitious reforms proposed by Professor Donaldson. Accordingly, we are of the firm opinion that there should be similar attention paid to ensuring the entry qualifications of other workforce groups, for example PGCE FE, are similarly aligned to the needs of the new curriculum.
11. The Council recommends that further work could be done to encourage schools to engage positively and confidently with the new curriculum through demonstrating linkages with new Estyn inspection frameworks that allow innovation and creativity for schools and colleges in working towards the new curriculum. Practitioners report that they perceive there to be some tensions between the current accountability measures and the culture and ethos espoused in 'Successful Futures' that need realigning in order to give schools the confidence to innovate in terms of curriculum and teaching and learning.

Governance arrangements for implementation and the role of the Independent Advisory Board, Change Board and Strategic Stakeholder Group;

12. The EWC's Chief Executive is a member of the Change Board. As such, the Council is aware of a recent review by the Board of its terms of reference and working practices. The Council is encouraged by this scrutiny and proactive approach.
13. However, the Council considers that some improvements could be made to existing arrangements, for example:
 - a stronger presence from all sectors and registrant groups on the various boards, including from FE, support staff and youth work;
 - Wales has benefited from the insights, credibility, and international experience of Professors Donaldson and Furlong. Securing their continued involvement is key to the success of the reforms. It is crucial that communication between them and from them to the Cabinet Secretary and lead officials is maintained.

Other issues of concern and/or importance regarding the development of the new Curriculum for Wales.

Communicating with the workforce

14. We would again like to emphasise our position that communication about this reform agenda needs to reach beyond schools and to all practitioners. We would urge Welsh Government to ensure that communications about the developments reach right to classroom level, and engage with all those who contribute to effective teaching and learning, regardless of sector or setting. From Early Years to Further Education or Youth Work and Work Based Learning centres, the impact of the curriculum reforms will be far ranging, and in order to ensure the best for all learners, all sectors need to be equally informed and involved in the developments.
15. The EWC is well placed to assist Welsh Government in communicating with professionals at a **national and individual level** throughout the workforce, regardless of their place of work or indeed to bring together practitioners via focus groups or surveys, should that be a useful tool in helping the Committee with its work.
16. We are currently undertaking the first ever national workforce survey on behalf of the Welsh Government. Separate surveys have been developed for school teachers, school learning support workers, FE teachers, FE learning support workers and supply staff. One section of the survey seeks to find out about awareness of 'Successful Futures' among these groups. We hope to report the findings early in the new year, and suggest that this may be of interest to the Committee when published