

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Ymchwiliad i Addysg a Dysgu Proffesiynol Athrawon | Inquiry into Teachers' Professional Learning and Education

TT 03

Ymateb gan : Estyn

Response from : Estyn

The National Assembly for Wales' Children, Young People and Education Committee is undertaking an inquiry on teachers' professional learning and education, in particular, the readiness of the workforce to implement the new curriculum. It is specifically seeking evidence on:

- arrangements for continuing professional development for the current workforce;
- the role of initial teacher education;
- the sufficiency of the future workforce.

The following evidence is extracted from Estyn's inspections and thematic surveys.

Arrangements for continuing professional development for the current workforce

1. Most special schools, many primary schools, and about half of secondary schools undertake a wide range of professional learning activities that make a positive contribution to improving the quality of leadership and teaching in these schools.
2. In the very few schools where leadership and teaching are excellent, leaders develop a strong culture of professional learning, with systematic planning for and evaluation of professional learning activities. There is also a clear focus on improving classroom practice and pupil outcomes. However, too few schools help staff to make the best of professional learning opportunities, and they do not evaluate whether these activities result in improvements for pupils or staff.
3. In most schools, staff participate in working groups that focus on national priorities. The rigour and impact of the work of these groups vary considerably. The most effective groups have a clear aim and sense of purpose. They work towards achieving priorities for improvement that have been scoped and planned realistically, with appropriate resourcing and enough time to undertake the work. Members of these groups take a flexible approach, work together well as a team, build trusting relationships, and plan for the mid to long-term.
4. Increasingly, schools are developing their internal capacity by developing staff as facilitators of school-to-school working. For example, some schools have become hubs for 'Pioneer Schools' or other families of schools. This experience has

provided the facilitators with rich opportunities to develop their wider leadership skills.

5. Almost all schools that are placed in a statutory category¹ (in need of significant improvement or requiring special measures) do not have these collaborative relationships. These schools and their staff are isolated, and it is difficult for them to gain a realistic assessment of the school's outcomes and the quality of their teaching and learning.
6. In contrast, high-performing schools² always work closely with networks, clusters and family groups of other schools, and are eager to learn. This networking helps them to understand the different factors that contribute to effective practice and to gauge the quality of their teaching and learning accurately and guard against over- or under-inflated assessments. They benefit directly from working with other schools on activities such as joint scrutiny of pupils' work or joint lesson observations with advisers from the local authority or regional consortium. These joint projects help staff to reflect on their practice and build their confidence.
7. The best schools use evidence-based research methods to evaluate whether particular teaching and learning approaches have a positive impact on pupils' learning, and so help practitioners to choose the most effective ways of working.
8. In effective schools, teachers use existing research evidence regularly, to evaluate theories about teaching and learning, and apply them to their own practice. Engagement with theory and research enables teachers to make more objective and informed decisions about which teaching strategies best suit their pupils, and to reject unsuitable or faddish ideas. This engagement helps teachers to be more confident, discerning and creative, because their practice is rooted in understanding what works well.
9. Successful schools, develop the leadership skills of all their staff as part of their professional and career development. Leaders in these schools use expertise from both within their schools and from other schools to enhance professional learning for staff. They encourage their staff to take advantage of internal acting or temporary leadership posts and to take up secondments elsewhere to enhance their leadership experience.
10. However, there has not been enough support at a national and local level to develop the leadership skills of aspiring and experienced senior leaders. There are too few opportunities for aspiring and experienced school leaders to develop their skills in areas such as improving teaching, implementing new initiatives, challenging underperformance, and understanding human resources issues.
11. In a very few schools, headteachers new to post have been mentored well by an experienced, effective headteacher within the local authority. However, this is not always the case nationally. In a few local authorities, headteachers, often in

¹ Since 2010, 7% of special schools, 6% of primary schools and 17% of secondary schools have been placed in a statutory category.

² Since 2010, 17% of special schools, 3% of primary schools and 11% of secondary schools have been judged as excellent.

challenging schools are not supported well enough. There is a particular shortage of training provision for leaders through the medium of Welsh.

12. All the four regional consortia have recognised the need to develop the workforce to meet the demands of the new curriculum, and have systems in place to support teachers' professional development. There are useful opportunities across Wales to help schools to implement the literacy and numeracy framework. All four consortia have been proactive in developing structures and resources to help teachers to implement the Digital Competency Framework (DCF).
13. However, only two consortia have strong and specific arrangements for supporting curriculum reform in schools. They have good plans to help pioneer schools to develop new approaches to the curriculum, and for these schools to share their experiences with non-pioneer schools. One consortia has also recognised the need to help teachers to develop their planning skills, and has developed an online lesson planning tool that is linked to the literacy and numeracy framework, DCF and the new areas of learning.
14. Across all consortia, to develop effectively their support for professional development aimed at curriculum reform, there are two main areas for development:
 - To develop a clear plan for the roles and responsibilities of the consortia to support curriculum reform
 - To ensure that all professional learning activities are evaluated robustly to assess their effectiveness on practice and their impact on learners.

The role of initial teacher education

15. Initial teacher education (ITE) has a crucial role to play in developing skilled and creative practitioners ready to implement the new curriculum.
16. In our inspections of initial teacher training provision in Wales, we have found that too many trainees do not have secure enough skills in planning and in using research to reflect on their own practice in the classroom and to inform their teaching. All of these skills are vital to be flexible to adapt to educational changes and to be creative in leading change, to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of their learners, and to work cooperatively with others in delivering a rich and vibrant curriculum.
17. The quality of university training is too variable across and within programmes. It is a challenge for universities to provide systems for tutors to keep up-to-date with current school practice, and to ensure that staff engage in research to contribute to initial teacher training.
18. ITE also performs an important role in developing and revitalising the skills of the teaching profession through the school-based training which relies on the proficiency of mentors to develop the practice of novice teachers.
19. In the school-based training, mentors generally provide good personal support to trainees. This is a key part of their role because it contributes to trainees' wellbeing,

helps them to cope with their workload and to deal with stressful situations, such as developing strategies to manage pupils' behaviour.

20. Most mentors provide useful ideas for how trainees might approach shortcomings in their teaching. They offer creative solutions to teaching and learning problems and direct trainees towards teachers who exemplify good practice. In the best practice, mentors help trainees to deconstruct teaching and learning to identify the components of effective practice that impacts positively on pupils' outcomes.
21. In the few cases where there is very effective mentoring, mentors help trainees to reflect on their practice through in-depth questioning and challenge. They regularly review and comment thoughtfully on trainees' lesson plans, evaluations and teaching files.
22. However, training in the school-based parts of ITE programmes is too variable and depends on the skills and expertise of the school mentor. ITE programmes across Wales place trainees in schools and subject departments that are too weak themselves to support trainees. As trainees spend up to two-thirds of their training in school, this is a significant weakness in the system. In many cases, trainees do not receive mentoring that is effective enough to help them to make good progress. Too many mentors are too generous in their feedback to and assessment of trainees, and do not provide targets that are focused clearly enough on trainees areas for development. Many mentors do not focus well enough on pupils' progress in lessons as a measure of effective teaching. In a few secondary subjects, tutors and mentors do not explore with trainees specific aspects of subject pedagogy.
23. All centres for ITE provide mentor training. However, too often these events are simply about changes to courses, documentation and operational matters. ITE centres across Wales are developing new approaches to mentor training that include conferences and workshops to share good practice, and an improved use of digital materials to share data and ideas. However, in too many cases, training for ITE mentors does not focus well enough on developing mentoring skills
24. As a result, mentors do not have a clear and agreed understanding of important aspects of the work they carry out, including making accurate judgements about trainees' progress against the standards for qualified teacher status, and specific activities that help trainees to improve their practice.
25. ITE has the potential to support curriculum development though engaging new teachers and schools with research into the most effective pedagogy and curriculum design. This remains an area for development for providers of ITE in Wales.

Sufficiency of the future workforce

26. There is a significant challenge in ITE to recruit the best entrants to the teaching profession. In addition, in the last few years, there has been a drop in numbers applying for ITE. Incentives have helped a little in the recruitment to shortage subjects, however numbers are still too low. Qualification on entry to undergraduate ITE programmes are lower than the average entry qualification for degree study.

Only around two thirds of post-graduates enter their programmes with a good degree.

27. Overall, in schools across Wales, we need more teachers who can teach through the medium of Welsh. In addition, according to Education Workforce Council statistics, around one quarter of teachers registered to teach Welsh as a first or second language in secondary schools have not been trained to teach the subject³.
28. Attracting well-qualified Welsh specialists to teach Welsh second language is a challenge for many English-medium secondary schools. Overall, there is limited staffing and leadership capacity. In some schools, teachers who are not subject-specialists are expected to teach Welsh extensively. Too many of these teachers lack competence and confidence.
29. A minority of schools organise a programme to help staff to learn Welsh. This helps staff to use the Welsh language with pupils in informal situations around the school but fails to address the need for fluent teachers.
30. It is clear from the way that immersion teaching methods work with young children from non-Welsh speaking homes when they join Welsh-medium schools at the age of three or four that early immersion is the most effective way of teaching not only a second language but also a third and fourth language. However, we do not currently have the capacity in the teaching and learning-support workforce in Wales to enable schools and settings to offer immersion teaching to all children for whom Welsh is a second or third language. Neither do we have a curriculum for Welsh as a second language that requires teachers to use immersion methods.
31. A minority of schools do not plan well enough to develop future leaders. Succession planning at all levels is often a significant strength in schools with a strong professional learning culture, and this is a vital component of ensuring the sufficiency of the future workforce. In these schools, senior leaders evaluate the school's staffing situation and try to predict potential future vacancies. This is particularly important at senior and middle leadership level and allows posts to be filled internally if necessary when vacancies arise.
32. The most successful school leaders employ strategies for identifying and nurturing the leadership potential of all their staff, particularly early in their careers, and for supporting them to develop the skills they need to become the school leaders of the future. These leaders undertake detailed analyses of the knowledge, skills and attributes required for each leadership role within their school. They use this information to identify staff with leadership potential.
33. To maintain pupil progress, a schools needs to have effective cover arrangements for teachers who are absent. Nearly all schools have experienced difficulty in arranging suitable cover for absent class teachers. For a minority of schools, this happens about half of the time and for a few schools this happens about three-quarters of the time. In Welsh-medium primary schools, schools are often restricted in the choice and quality of supply teachers available.

³ Education Workforce Council Annual Statistics Digest, March 2016

34. For planned absences, most teachers leave work and planning documents for the supply teacher. Only in around half of schools is the work at the same level as pupils would normally receive. For unplanned absences, in the majority of schools supply teachers use the classroom teacher's planning documents to provide some context for their lesson planning. However, when this planning information is not available, supply teachers plan their own work for the pupils without guidance. Often this means that they focus on keeping children busy, rather than building on what pupils already know and can do.