

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 20

Ymateb gan : Cymdeithas Genedlaethol Prifathrawon Cymru
Response from : National Association of Head Teachers Cymru

NAHT welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Children, Young People and Education committee.

NAHT represents more than 29,000 school leaders in early years, primary, secondary and special schools, making us the largest association for school leaders in the UK.

We represent, advise and train school leaders in Wales, England and Northern Ireland. We use our voice at the highest levels of government to influence policy for the benefit of leaders and learners everywhere. Our new section, NAHT Edge, supports, develops and represents middle leaders in schools.

The invitation to submit evidence to the National Assembly for Wales' Children, Young People and Education Committee concerning the inquiry on teachers' professional learning and education requested information, in particular, concerning the readiness of the workforce to implement the new curriculum. As requested, NAHT Cymru will focus specifically on evidence concerning:

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

Arrangements for continuing professional development for the current workforce

Professional development within schools is often dictated by a number of factors.

These can be viewed as influences being driven at a number of levels:

- National Policy delivery – e.g. the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework required a number of activities including school level audit (identification of need), whole staff training and individual bespoke CPD – e.g. developing revised planning and individual staff development dependent upon previous experience and skills;

- Regional approaches – e.g. many of the excellence in teaching programmes are supported and delivered on a regional basis (not necessarily delivered by the consortium but facilitated via their communications);
- Local Authority initiatives – e.g. focusing on a specific intervention or approach used for pupils, the training for which is facilitated by the Local Authority. This can be in reaction to an identified area for development raised via locally available data or as a local response to a National Policy requirement;
- Cluster level – e.g. secondary cluster arrangements may have identified a particular area for development. Each school in the cluster might undertake an initiative / intervention programme and this might require staff training, joint planning arrangements, ongoing monitoring and refinement. Such approaches may utilise quality assured external providers or be delivered in-house via joint arrangements;
- Whole school level – through Self Evaluation Reporting processes a school can identify areas for further development subsequently placed within their School Improvement Plans / School Development Plans with specific actions / success criteria which might include professional development needs;
- Department / Phase level – the approach could be as for the whole school above but for a specific age group or subject department;
- Individual development needs – these may arise via performance management processes, or via an agreed career path / job role and are very specific to the individual staff member. The professional learning needs are influenced by the staff member's current role (teaching or non-teaching), the priority needs of the wider setting and pupils, the ability and resource open to the setting to support such professional learning.

Another area that places a demand on CPD requirements for the workforce could be described as the 'business as usual' professional development. Fundamental, regular development areas such as Safeguarding and Child Protection training, Health and Safety training, First Aid training, Performance Management and activities such as assessment standardisation / moderation occur on an ongoing, often annual, basis and each requires resource in terms of time, staff commitment and cost - borne by school training grants and / or budgets.

Schools utilise a number of approaches in order to undertake CPD for staff including weekly twilight sessions, closure in-service training days, specific internal school-day activities (e.g. joint learning observations such as those incorporated into excellence in teaching approaches), external events within clusters and utilising external provider training. The pressures upon such arrangements include balancing the training requirements of all staff against the finite time opportunities, prioritising the needs of the wider school against National Policy and external demands, financial pressures – e.g. organising effective supply cover and training events and materials – and, most importantly, maintaining high quality teaching and learning for pupils whilst enabling staff to develop professionally. This can be particularly challenging in smaller schools.

There are also 'free' training events organised by National Government, Regional Consortia and Local Authorities, however, there still remains a cost to the school if the events take place during the school day as supply cover is required for the pupils still in class. In some circumstances, schools have had to ensure attendance at such essential CPD events, for example, training for staff required to deliver the Foundation Phase baseline. However, such essential training may have been organised a significant period of time after the start of the financial year, with no additional resource provided to the school to cover supply costs. Many schools are only able to commit very limited training budgets for the year in their school development plans and so there is no 'spare' resource for such additional activity which means that the cost for enabling staff to attend the unanticipated training must be borne by the school budget and not the training grant (which is committed or spent).

At this point, it is also worth noting the challenges that remain with the administration of the Education Improvement Grant (EIG).

The grants that fall under the Education Grant are:

- 14-19 Learning Pathways
- Foundation Phase Revenue Grant
- School Effectiveness Grant
- Welsh in Education Grant
- Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant
- Grant for the Education of Gypsy Children and Traveller Children
- Induction
- Lead and Emerging Practitioner Schools (Tranche 1, 2 and Special Schools)
- Higher Level Teaching Assistants
- Reading and Numeracy Test Support
- Bands 4 and 5

The flexibility provided by Welsh Government in 2015 in the use of the EIG, enabled schools to use the grant wherever the greatest need was evidenced. This was broadly welcomed and allowed schools to focus upon pupil outcomes and was also in recognition of the financial pressures that ring-fencing elements of the individual grants might cause.

During the announcement of the Education Improvement Grant in 2015-2016, the Welsh Government stated that the total grant allocation across all regions would be reduced by 10%.

Under the terms and conditions, authorities are expected to delegate a minimum of 80% of the funding out to schools. Administration costs are limited to a maximum of 1.5% of the grant total. This is at a time when schools are being required to undertake almost unprecedented levels of reform, for which training and professional learning are essential.

In addition, and most notably, the EIG is distributed to schools on a pupil number basis. This approach does not recognise that much of the EIG, and the School Effectiveness Grant in particular (and to some extent, the Welsh in Education Grant), is utilised by schools as a staff training fund. The pupil number allocation method means that schools that require higher staff to pupil ratios (Early Years, schools with Additional Learning Needs resource bases, schools with higher numbers of pupils requiring significant support and

Special Schools, especially) are significantly disadvantaged. As a result of the pupil number methodology for allocation, staff training resource is, therefore, not evenly distributed across the workforce.

As acknowledged by Welsh Government on a number of occasions, the current level of reform underway in education in Wales is the most significant and far reaching for probably 70 years. Educational professionals in Wales, and particularly school leaders, have shown an appetite to shape and lead on many of the changes proposed – many of which have been welcomed and long overdue. However, in order to deliver the desired reform and the outcomes our children and young people need and deserve, there needs to be a greater emphasis on joining-up various strands.

For the purpose of this paper, we will look at three areas frequently noted by NAHT Cymru members as substantial and significant – curriculum / assessment reform under ‘Successful Futures’, the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill (ALNET Bill) and school budgets / funding arrangements.

The fundamental principles within ‘Successful Futures’ and the articulated recommendations are welcomed by school leaders. In our evidence to the National Assembly for Wales’ Children, Young People and Education Committee in relation to Professor Donaldson’s review, we stated,

‘NAHT Cymru and our members were heavily involved in the evidence that fed into Professor Graham Donaldson’s review and in the shaping of the recommendations in Successful Futures.

Indeed, following the announcement of the acceptance of all 68 recommendations in late June 2015, NAHT Cymru stated,

“‘Successful Futures’ provides permission for the profession to take the lead and is the blueprint that should now shape the work of all interested parties - schools, Local Authorities, Regional Consortia, Estyn and the Welsh Government.

“NAHT Cymru are also pleased that there have been more realistic timescales indicated by the Minister. Lessons have to be learnt from less successful implementation of past initiatives. It’s not about getting a new curriculum and assessment in place by a short term, specific date or time. It’s actually more about getting it right, at the right time and keeping the needs of all learners at the heart of all we do.”

The examples of developments emerging from individual pioneer schools have appeared exciting and innovative and the schools and staff within them have made use of the time and space provided in order to begin devising outstanding practice.’

However, in order to ensure that the changes required are to be realised Wales-wide, resources, both in terms of time and finance, will be significant.

Within the recommendations, the focus for assessment has been made clear. Assessment for learning is to be the main driver. Assessment for learning,

involving the child / young person actively in accurately assessing where they have reached thus far in their learning, identifying the next steps for progress and equipping them to take the next steps, requires a person-led approach not necessarily supported by the current National Curriculum and traditional teaching methods.

This cultural shift required to deliver this approach needs significant professional learning input for many members of the educational workforce and, again, that will require resources in terms of time and finance. This differentiated, 'needs of the learner' led approach leads neatly onto the second area of focus.

The ALNET Bill is an ambitious and significant change from current arrangements for pupils with Special Educational Needs in Wales. Successful implementation will require a number of fundamental elements including genuine multi-agency working, clarity around ALN responsibilities and significant, workforce-wide professional development. In fact, NAHT Cymru believe that the timetable for roll out of the ALNET Bill depends upon much of the above being achieved *prior* to requiring educational settings to work under the new arrangements.

In focusing only upon the training requirements of staff, it is clear that the 'needs of the learner' approach suggested in the delivery of 'Successful Futures' dovetails, to a great extent, into the equipping of the workforce to deliver the ALNET Bill and wider ALN Transformation Programme.

Finally, in focusing on school budgets / funding arrangements across Wales (whilst keeping in mind the evidence submitted concerning the administration of the EIG) a number of fundamental issues arise.

NAHT Cymru have collated figures concerning the age-weighted pupil units (AWPUs) currently incorporated within Section 52 budgets - this being purely delegated or devolved budgets to schools at the beginning of the financial year and does not include any money held centrally by the local authority and spent on behalf of schools.

When looking at specific age cohorts, the variations are stark and particularly significant since AWPUs make up 70% of the funding distributed to schools.

For example, data gathered by NAHT Cymru via a freedom of information request generated comparative figures from 21 of the 22 Local Authorities for 2015-2016.

The following table illustrates the variations:

AGE GROUP COHORTS	21 out of 22 Local Authorities – Funding per pupil in £s			
	Highest	Lowest	Difference	Mid-point
3-4	3985.00	2050.70	1934.3	3017.85
4-5	4956.82	2000.54	2956.28	3478.68
5-6	3541.51	1755.49	1786.02	2648.50
6-7	3553.35	1755.49	1797.864	2654.42
7-8	3937.80	1699.00	2238.8	2818.40

8-9	3700.27	1699.00	2001.27	2699.64
9-10	3706.93	1699.00	2007.93	2702.97
10-11	3806.82	1807.17	1999.65	2807.00
11-12	5254.01	2577.88	2676.13	3915.95
12-13	5424.26	2577.88	2846.38	4001.07
13-14	5502.58	2577.88	2924.7	4040.23
14-15	5803.57	2604.00	3199.57	4203.79
15-16	5825.14	2889.00	2936.14	4357.07

Figure 1 – Age-weighted pupil units included in delegated school budget formulae for 2015-2016 (data includes 21 of 22 Local Authorities in Wales)

There are a number of factors that exacerbate the impact upon schools of the funding variation illustrated above.

- Current austerity measures and the economic impact upon public sector finances;
- the knock-on effect onto schools of the pressures on Local Authorities to make cuts to services in order to meet required efficiency savings;
- the increasing pressure on school budgets to take into account rising costs such as energy, pension and national insurance contributions;
- rising costs of service level agreements often resulting in an indirect cut to schools via the Local Authorities efficiency savings;
- a range of other challenges including maintaining sometimes aging school premises.

Therefore, it is clear from the above figures that current school budgets are hugely variable and as a result a significant proportion are frequently ill-equipped to best meet the needs of children and young people, and yet school leaders and the workforce frequently 'make it work'.

The entitlement to CPD, that should be a right of every member of the education workforce, is not able to be delivered effectively by every school leader, not as a result of any denial by the Headteacher, but by the lack of available resource at the disposal of the school.

Many of our members tell us that school budgets are at breaking point. When the current funding situation is placed against the back drop of huge professional learning demands of, often, welcomed new policy, such as 'Successful Futures' and the new additional demands of legislation such as the ALNET Bill, it is clear that resources for training are frequently inadequate. Many NAHT Cymru members have had to utilise the flexibilities within the current EIG in order to use it in its entirety simply to sustain adequate staffing levels. As a result, in such situations, resources available to any workforce member for professional learning are, at best, minimal.

NAHT Cymru frequently state that educational spending must be viewed as an investment and not a cost. OECD and others cite the development of the workforce as a key driver of system wide progress. Investment in the professional workforce and their development has been proven, OECD suggest, to impact positively on student outcomes.

Without fundamental changes such as ensuring:

- basic school funding is sufficient and more fairly distributed across Wales;
- reforms and related policies are joined-up to maximise the scarce opportunities that schools have to address them, and:
- accountability measures are changed in order to release schools to focus upon what really matters most – continuing developing high quality teachers to deliver world-class learning opportunities for our children and young people;

the resources made available for professional learning support, including funds that should be set aside specifically for workforce professional learning, will continue to be subsumed into essential, business as usual activity.

As a result the arrangements for continuing professional development for the workforce will struggle to realise the ambition expressed within current reforms and policy.

The role of initial teacher education

As Professor John Furlong stated in his conclusion within “TEACHING TOMORROW’S TEACHERS - Options for the future of initial teacher education in Wales”,

“If Wales is to meet the challenges of educating its children effectively for the 21st century then high quality initial teacher education has a vitally important part to play. What is clear from the foregoing discussion is that on a wide range of different measures the present system is not fulfilling its role effectively. There is evidence that it is falling well short of what we know is best practice in other parts of the UK and internationally. Moreover, the changes to curriculum and assessment being advocated by the Donaldson Review will significantly raise the bar in terms of what we expect of our teachers. In the future, Wales will need a different type of teacher professional; one who has significantly more responsibility, one who understands the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ of teaching as well as the ‘what’. These aspirations have major implications for both initial teacher education and CPD. The case for change is therefore undeniable.”

Professor John Furlong – March 2015

Schools and the wider education workforce will be expected to operate in a different way in order to deliver the raft of reforms currently in development within Wales. The implications for the existing workforce – particularly those who started working in schools from 1988 onwards – are highly significant. The National Curriculum implementation from 1988 had a profound effect upon the teaching profession. NAHT Cymru members have reported that a similar change of culture has taken place in the student teacher population during this same period.

The requirements of ‘Successful Futures,’ for example, demand that the profession operate in a different way and this requires a culture change, both within and beyond the education workforce. Schools will require newly qualified teachers (NQTs) to be prepared to be reflective in their pedagogy,

play an active role in a wider self-improving system and recognise their responsibilities beyond their own classroom.

Initial teacher education, therefore, needs to be at the forefront of any changes so that they are equipped to be preparing NQTs prior to their entry into the profession. As a result ITE providers will be required to make the requisite changes to ITE programmes as soon as possible. Unless such reform to ITE occurs as soon as is practicable, there could be a situation whereby student teachers are being trained, developed and emerging into a system and school curriculum that no longer exists. It will then be left to the schools within which they are employed to pick up the 'slack' in the system and retrain NQTs for the culture changes required in new policy until ITE providers are brought up to speed with the reforms.

Schools and other settings that are set aside to support student teaching experience will play a critical role in developing the teachers of tomorrow. It will be crucial that from the very early days of school-based experience, prospective teaching candidates experience the type of activities, habit-forming processes and professional dispositions required of them once qualified. The time spent on direct experience in the classroom, therefore, needs to be maximised.

Selection onto such ITE programmes is also paramount. Many school leaders already support selection processes in support of ITE. It is important that key teaching professionals and school leaders continue to support ITE providers during the interview and selection processes onto ITE programmes so that the best candidates are selected and the profession attracts the status it requires and deserves through robust procedures.

For those settings identified suitable to support student teacher education, a difficult but critical balancing act will be required. Student teachers, like all teaching professionals, will need enough opportunities in order to be able to develop and deliver creative and innovative teaching and learning. Where this works exceptionally well, it can be seen how this has had a positive impact upon pupil / student outcomes. Monitoring and managing of student placements will be very important in order to ensure that school pupil experiences are maximised and not detrimentally affected, for example, by overly frequent student placement into the same classes.

In addition, in noting the aims for a self-improving system in current Welsh Government education policy, as well as the recognition that the individual in the education workforce has shared responsibility within and beyond their own setting, ITE programmes need to consider the worth of ensuring that during their training student teachers undertake experience across age groups, settings and sectors (primary, secondary, special etc).

This could achieve at least two desirable outcomes – firstly ensuring that teaching candidates, once employed, ultimately work in their favoured setting / sector, and secondly ensuring that the NQT fully understands how a self-improving, mutually supportive school system could operate by selecting and utilising expertise from every sector for the benefit of all children and young people.

In addition, any perceived inertia within the existing workforce, whether as a result of a lack of confidence or simply having worked in the existing culture within education in Wales for such a significant time, could potentially be kick-started by incoming new staff not previously tarnished by existing / previous policies.

The sufficiency of the future workforce

In terms of ensuring Wales has access to enough members of the education workforce in every type of role and across the whole range of areas of learning and expertise, there are a number of challenges to address.

The current status of education professionals, including teachers and Headteachers, in Wales is not as it should be. Press and media, social media and many other key streams of public communication perpetuate a misleading and damaging picture of the school system in particular. Over obsession with accountability in the wider world that has seeped into the school system, an ever developing blame culture and a perception that many of society's problems can be addressed by education settings has often presented an image to prospective candidates.

For example, accountability that focuses on areas under the direct influence of schools, their staff and most particularly school leaders, can assist in driving improvements. NAHT Cymru supports the move towards an inspection service that recognises its role in facilitating school improvement. There is a need for greater dialogue between Estyn, Regional Consortia and schools, as this should provide more accurate and broad picture of performance. This more professional and supportive system would be more attractive to trusted and ambitious professionals than a punitive, top-down model as it appears at present.

Headteacher recruitment has appeared to be more problematic over recent years, with evidence collected by NAHT Cymru suggesting that fewer potential candidates wish to step up to headship.

There is some suggestion that current CPD does not adequately prepare potential candidates for the lead role.

In addition, there is a sense from many NAHT Cymru members that employers expect Headteachers to ensure the wellbeing of their staff to be supported within the school but that the same support is not afforded to Headteachers from their employers.

It appears that many Local Authorities are under such pressure themselves, that if a school is identified as in need of support, it is more straightforward to issue warning notices and punitively target the Headteacher rather than provide any type of support to improve the school.

The demands now placed upon Headteachers are unprecedented, and yet the support from outside the school is often at its lowest ebb. Headteachers are frequently not able to focus upon their core duty of developing outstanding teaching and learning because they are also required to undertake non-teaching priorities, such as overseeing building maintenance, health and safety demands, production of plans and reports or innovative use of inadequate budgets in order to sustain staffing and deliver new initiatives.

Specific subject areas also present recruitment challenges, with Maths and certain Science subjects such as Physics, being particularly difficult. Some Headteachers have been required to go back into the classroom to teach as they are one of the few members of their staff team with the requisite degree qualification in such subjects. Incentivising recruitment to such subjects has been explored but that approach does not necessarily attract the best candidates. There is some evidence to suggest that the further into rural areas of Wales the school is located, the harder it is to recruit to such subjects.

Finally, it is worth reflecting on the skills of the wider workforce and recognising the inter-relationship between the three areas of focus within NAHT Cymru evidence.

It is clear that joined up thinking is required from policy makers, linking the priorities and aims of the major Welsh Government policies in education and the potential demands each places upon the current model for CPD in schools, the Initial Teacher Education settings as well as the current and future workforce.

What are the fundamental policy objectives and does the current school system in Wales have the requisite resources, support and space to deliver them effectively?

If we are committed to providing a world-class education for the children and young people of Wales, such a pragmatic reflection must be undertaken as soon as possible in order to ensure that our schools and workforce are supported to deliver the shared ambition we hold for our pupils.