



**WALES
CYMRU**

**RESPONSE TO:
REVIEW OF INITIAL TEACHER
TRAINING IN WALES**

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Review of Initial Teacher Training in Wales

Response from the University and College Union (UCU) Cymru

The University and College Union (UCU) represents more than 7,000 academics, lecturers, trainers, instructors, researchers, managers, administrators, computer staff, librarians and postgraduates in universities, colleges, prisons, adult education and training organisations across Wales.

UCU Wales is a politically autonomous but integral part of UCU, the largest post-school union in the world: a force working for educators and education that employers and the government cannot ignore.

UCU Wales was formed on 1 June 2006 by the amalgamation of two strong partners - the Association of University Teachers (AUT) and NATFHE-the University & College Lecturers' Union - who shared a long history of defending and advancing educators' employment and professional interests.

Overview

The following is a response to the invitation to engage in the review of Initial Teacher Training (ITT), undertaken by Professor Ralph Tabberer. The focus of the response considers:

- i. The quality and consistency of teaching, training and assessment in ITT.
- ii. ITT course structure and the coverage of issues in ITT.

The framework for the response is based on the following questions

1. What do you find to be the current strengths and weaknesses of initial teacher training in Wales?
2. In what areas can it be improved and how?
3. Do you find the current ITT course structure provides sufficient preparation for new teachers and where would you welcome improvements, if any?
4. Do you think ITT courses cover the right issues and if not, what changes would you welcome?
5. Are there alternative approaches to ITT that you would point to, for possible consideration?

Strengths and weaknesses of ITT provision in Wales

Currently there are three Schools of Education in Wales, one serving North and Central Wales, another serving South West Wales and the third serving South East Wales.

Strengths

The common accreditation criteria for providers of ITT, ensures standardisation of the minimum requirements for ITT programmes provided in Wales.

Individual centres are able to address regional needs for the future provision of qualified teachers.

There is a minimum entry requirement for trainee teachers ensuring suitability of candidates.

The combination of HE related study and classroom based work experience provides opportunities for academic discussion and reflection of educational theories, which can then be explored in a practical setting.

Regulation of the number of places provided to trainees, in line with predicted teaching vacancies, which reduces the over production of qualified teachers in Wales.

Weaknesses

Assessment not currently standardised across the three schools.

Although assessments are not currently standardised across the three schools of education, there is work towards a common approach. This collaborative approach could be applied to the streamlining of numeracy and literacy assessments across the three centres. However, the implications of this on increasing the workload for staff involved in ITT programmes should be taken into consideration.

What areas can be improved and how?

It is agreed that it is desirable to raise the standard of numeracy and literacy in Wales by recruiting high calibre ITT candidates, who can teach and promote appropriate numeracy and literacy skills in the classroom.

However, the focus on other aspects of education should not be neglected at the expense of solely promoting numeracy and

literacy. Improvements could be made to the curriculum, in areas such as the development of classroom management and interpersonal skills.

Do you find that the current ITT course structure provides sufficient preparation for new teachers and where would you welcome improvements, if any?

The consultation document includes a proposal to amend the statutory requirement to increase the minimum time, that trainee primary teachers, on all post graduate programmes, spend being trained in schools, from at least 18 weeks to 24 weeks, with effect from ITT programmes commencing in the academic year 2013/14.

Whilst it is agreed that training in schools, to develop pedagogic skills is important, there should be balance between this and university based provision. Consideration should be given for time allowed to consolidate classroom based learning, through supported reflection and discussion with peers and HE staff. There is concern that the increase in the time spent in placement, will make it difficult to deliver underpinning educational theories, if the overall length of the course is not increased.

There is also concern that the proposed inclusion of continuous assessment of functional numeracy and literacy skills, as well as mandatory training of ITT students in the teaching of literacy and numeracy, will increase the workload for university staff, teachers and students.

Do you think that ITT courses cover the right issues and if not, what changes would you welcome?

The proposal to increase the entry requirements for ITT programmes is welcomed. It is agreed that high calibre ITT trainees are needed to be able improve educational attainment, to drive Wales towards improved PISA targets.

Issues such as classroom management and reflective practice should be given greater consideration in the ITT curriculum. Poor classroom behaviour and management, contribute to poor educational experience and poor educational outcomes. The inclusion of suitable training in classroom management is key to promoting the confidence of trainee teachers, as well as reducing behaviour that disrupts learning.

The Minister for Skill and Education has already expressed interest in 'Teach First' and the success that they have had with under achieving pupils and schools. Benefit could be gained by incorporating some of the key teaching and learning values of this organisation, into existing ITT programmes in Wales.

However, any changes to the ITT curriculum need to consider the impact that they would have on workload.

Are there alternative approaches to ITT that you would point to, for possible consideration?

It is agreed that it is important to offer alternative ways of entering the teaching profession, to encourage people from differing backgrounds. The proposal that entry requirement for Employment Based Teacher Training (EBTT) should match ITT is welcomed. Consideration of equivalent alternative qualifications should to be taken into account, to support applications from appropriate candidates who are unable to follow traditional routes in to teaching.

Caution should be exercised in EBTT, to ensure that trainee teachers are supernumerary and that there is not an over reliance on existing teachers as mentors. The impact of this on the quality of educational provision would not support the aim of improving educational outcomes. Close links with HEI's should be encouraged to allow EBTT trainees opportunity to reflect and develop professional skills in a supportive setting, away from the school environment.

Conclusion

UCU Cymru welcome proposals to improve and maintain functional numeracy and literacy skills in trainee teachers and agree that highly skilled teachers are key to improving educational outcomes.

Although it is important to improve standards of numeracy and literacy in schools, other important aspects of education must not be neglected in the ITT curriculum. Excellent teachers need to have excellent teaching skills, not just appropriate standards of functional skills.

Classroom experience is crucial in developing effective practical teaching skills, but this should not be at the expense of time spent

within HEI's. Peers and ITT tutors are a valuable source of support, allowing discussion and reflective thinking. This should be taken into consideration when curriculum planning and should not be lost in order to make way for new initiatives.

Whilst it is recognised that changes to ITT in Wales are necessary, consideration should be given to the effect of the increased workload for lecturers, teachers and students to ensure that any changes are not detrimental to the quality of teaching and learning.