

# Enterprise and Learning Committee

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## Evidence from UCAC (the National Union of Teachers in Wales) to the Enterprise and Learning Committee

### September 2008: The Teacher Workload Agreement

#### 1. Introduction

UCAC welcomes this opportunity to give evidence to the Assembly's Enterprise and Learning Committee on the Teacher Workload Agreement. UCAC welcomes the improvements that have resulted from the teacher workload agreement, but the terms of the agreement are not fully or consistently implemented in Wales.

#### 2. Administrative and Clerical Tasks (Introduced 2003)

2.1 We welcome the fact that increased clerical/administrative support is available. The list of administrative tasks is now clear. Today, there are many examples of good practice and schools have appointed support staff to undertake this work, including the appointment of Examination Officers in secondary schools and where the new regime is working well, it has led to positive changes.

2.2 However, some serious issues remain, and five years after the introduction of the changes, many teachers still do not have sufficient support and some have no support whatsoever.

2.3 In general, it is easier for large schools and Secondary schools to organize support of this kind. Smaller Secondary schools also find it difficult since there is insufficient funding available to employ the number of support staff that are needed to make a difference.

2.4 It appears that not all schools /Local Education Authorities are fully aware of their responsibilities.

2.5 There is pressure on a number of teachers to continue to complete the tasks because of a lack of funding and concern over the loss of teaching staff; sometimes the funding is used to sustain a reasonable and acceptable staffing level e.g. in order to reduce class sizes, or to avoid the need for too much age variance in a classroom.

2.6 Head teachers/ Deputies very often do much of the work themselves – because the funding is not available to employ anyone and they feel that it's unfair to ask teachers. This has the effect of having teachers volunteering to share the work. (Primary) Head teachers do not have sufficient administrative support.

2.7 Where the LEA provides support for a day per week, it tends to be for specific tasks, e.g. to complete PLASG forms. This means that they have to cope without support for 80% of the time. It is difficult, therefore to make sure that the help is available at the time during the week that the work needs to be done.

2.8 In terms of the situation of teachers who are unattached to the school, e.g. peripatetic teachers or teachers with responsibility for the Welsh Centre for Primary pupils, we have some examples where there is no administrative or clerical support whatsoever. They continue to undertake all the work themselves.

#### 3. Work /life balance for teachers (Introduced 2003)

3.1 Duties under the Health and Safety Act 1974 and Working Time Regulations 1988 support and promote the work/life balance. The statements in the 'School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document' are not clear/ strong enough to make a difference:

"All teachers and head teachers should enjoy a reasonable work/life balance"

"Additional hours for classroom teachers over and above the annual 1265 must be reasonable."

Who should decide what is reasonable? Who shall monitor the hours of each individual teacher and how much work they complete at home in the evenings?

3.2 It is difficult to make sure that teachers achieve a reasonable work / life balance even when the Head teacher is aware of their responsibility. PPA time (when it is properly organised) has helped, but most of the preparation work, the planning and assessing still has to be completed outside school hours.

3.3 Increasing work pressure which arises from all the changes that are being introduced, e.g. the new National Curriculum, the new Teacher Assessment regime (CA 2 CA3), new requirements in terms of GCSEs, AS and A level standard examinations, the collaboration agenda and the introduction of a wider scope of courses at 14-19, the preparation and presenting of new policies to go hand in hand with national and statutory developments.

3.4 A feeling exists amongst teachers that there's an insufficient overview from the Welsh Assembly Government. Too many sub-

divisions within DCELLS focus on their own schemes without considering (or even being aware) that other changes are occurring. Perhaps they are placing perfectly reasonable expectations in terms of introducing the change that they're responsible for, but who can be held to account for the overview of the full picture?

3.5 Class teachers (in the Primary sector especially) feel that they have too much planning work to do on different levels (short term/mid term/longer term) which is separate to the work of presenting lessons. A question that is very often asked is – "Who reads all these schemes"? There is a feeling that even Inspectors do not do so! There's a feeling of sheer frustration that the time could be put to much better use in the preparation of class work.

3.6 The level of beaurocracy in terms of recording details of external examinations is high and is increasing. The administration of external examinations, in terms of course work and paperwork is unreasonably high these days; the Curriculum and Assessment Division should look at this in more detail. This work has to be done without a doubt, but no one discusses with teachers what effect these changes will have on their workloads. We must question also, the value of much of this administration work.

3.7 Too much emphasis on precursory setting of targets, e.g. a school/ subject has had excellent results, but there is an expectation for them to show yet more progress. This puts unfair pressure on teachers and there is no sense in it, since the children will be different year on year.

3.8 Teachers in smaller schools feel under pressure because they have to take responsibility for a number of subjects. So, they have to attend more HMS in-service training days, read more documents, write and update more work plans and monitor the subject across the school. Very often, these are the teachers who must do tasks such as school yard duties most often and who are very likely to share many of the duties that rest with the Head teacher since they realise that a Head teacher in a small school has many teaching responsibilities – and this without any financial acknowledgement.

3.9 To Head teachers and the Senior Management Team, reading current information, such as relevant Regulations, employment issues, policies and national guidelines and all the documents which are sent from sources such as WAG, all place a large amount of added pressure on them.

3.10 At the moment, we presume that not too many Governing Boards have seriously considered their responsibility under Section 21 of the Education Act 2002, i.e. to consider the Head teacher's work /life balance. And even when it is a priority, there is not much they can do, in light of the factors that are beyond their control, to ensure that a proper work/ life balance can be achieved.

#### **4. Time for Leadership (Introduced 2003)**

4.1 It can be difficult to allocate time for leadership, especially in small schools, but fairly large secondary schools also report how difficult it is for the Senior Management Team to spend sufficient time together for strategic planning. Many meetings have to be held before school hours or during the evening.

4.2 The situation regarding Middle Managers is a cause for concern also, with the pressure of work that they're under and the insufficient amount of time they are able to give to leadership. The current schools inspection framework places a strong emphasis on the role of subject leaders for example, and their important role in terms of managing, leading and raising standards.

There is a need to look at how Middle Managers are treated. Some class teachers also, in the Primary sector, have to take responsibility for the school in the absence of the Head teacher, because some schools cannot afford to appoint Deputies.

4.3 Appointments to Assistant Head teacher posts are becoming more and more difficult these day, since these individuals undertake the responsibilities of a Deputy but without a Deputy's salary.

#### **5. Supply teaching and the 38 hour rule (Introduced 2004)**

5.1 On the surface, there seems to have been much improvement in the situation regarding supply teaching instead of co-teachers. However, this has come at a significant financial cost. Some schools contract people to undertake work regularly, others use teaching assistants for short-term supply and some employ supply teachers on demand. UCAC opposes the use of allowing teaching assistants to take charge of whole classes.

5.2 Once again, there are examples of the guidelines being misinterpreted:

combining children from more than one class but not counting this as "supply"

head teachers disregarding their own contributions towards supply

head teachers (and / or teachers) under pressure to do more than their fair share to avoid budget problems for the school

schools where it was agreed to disregard the "no detriment" rule during the first year, since implementing it would lead to too much cost for the school

5.3 Those head teachers who testify to success when it comes to reducing the supply load also testify that it will be difficult to stick to the September 2009 date. The steps forward that have been taken have cost schools thousands of pounds.

5.4 All schools should have kept records of supply arrangements so that these statistics are available for inspection by the Assembly Government.

## **6. Supervising Exams (Introduced 2005)**

Many developments in this area. Following a difficult initial period, it appears that things are working out fairly well now, but that there is a financial cost. Problems arise with internal exams – it can add much to supervision costs - the school's teachers are more likely to do this.

## **7. PPA Time (Introduced 2005)**

7.1 Many teachers feel that this is the most positive change that has occurred as a result of the workload agreement. PPA Time has been a huge step forward, especially in the primary sector, and it appears to be implemented fairly and fully in most schools. Where it works well, it has made a significant positive change. It has meant a substantial additional financial cost, but it is of great benefit to teachers and their pupils.

7.2 Some schools have practical problems, for example, teachers have nowhere to have a quiet place to work. There are other problems as well:

some head teachers break the rules and change the time of PPA according to school events, by, for example, using the teacher to do supply work

there is a growing use of Assistants during PPA time, which creates problems, since teachers often plan and prepare for them and also mark work afterwards. This happens for several reasons: head teachers expect this to happen (without having to say so and certainly without having to put it on paper); teachers feel it is unfair on Assistants on low wages to do the work of a teacher, and sympathise with them as colleagues and friends, and so try to help out; teachers realise that Assistants can't do the work but don't wish to see their class's progress hindered or see important aspects of the curriculum being ignored; teachers are keen to monitor pupils' progress and to measure their own understanding of handed-in work. UCAC is opposed to using Assistants to look after whole classes – a qualified teacher should always be available for each class and should be present during all teaching periods

head teachers setting specific tasks during these periods

head teachers expecting teachers to do without PPA time for the week if they attend a course

some head teachers require teachers to list what they do during their PPA time, thereby introducing more bureaucracy and another level of unwanted accountability

some head teachers are reluctant to give PPA time to part-time teachers or to those who work at the school during other teachers' PPA time;

part-time and unattached teachers face more frequent problems, for example, SEN teachers who are paid from the Authority's central budget are not given PPA time; PPA time need not be given to agency teachers, and more and more supply teachers have to go to agencies to seek work

PPA time is not timetabled in some schools – it occurs only on an ad hoc basis

granting teachers PPA time does not address workload problems associated with large classes or with combining various ages within classes, and so on.

## **8. Dedicated Headship Time (Introduced 2005).**

8.1 Delivering Dedicated Headship Time is difficult. Primary head teachers who teach more than 50% of the timetable also have to prepare, plan and assess as well as deliver all of the other duties of the role. Due to a lack of funding, day to day problems, the fact that many schools have no Deputies, developments in TLR payments, attempting to ensure fairness to staff regarding the workload agreement and so on, head teachers in such primary schools are under more pressure than ever.

8.2 There are also increasing and unreasonable demands on head teachers. It is impossible to keep up with all the documents that need to be read and all the new initiatives that need to be responded to. The stack of documents keeps on growing and, along with all the daily demands on head teachers, it is difficult for them to ensure that their knowledge is up to date. Some head teachers mention the substantial Health and Safety responsibilities as an example of the increase over the years. Some also mention the Healthy Schools Initiative – excellent, but someone needs to do the planning work and ensure that the principles penetrate to all aspects of school life, as well as liaising with parents and ensure their cooperation and support. And, certainly, all the documents issued by the Assembly Government are burdensome.

## **9. Conclusion**

9.1 An increased awareness of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document, as a statutory document, would go some of the way towards ensuring improvement. UCAC believes that it should be ensured that head teachers and governors are more aware of their statutory responsibilities. It is also important that teachers become fully aware of their rights and responsibilities under the terms of the book.

9.2 Additional funding to ensure that the workload agreement is properly funded is essential.

9.3 There is an opportunity to take advantage of falling numbers to reduce class sizes. This would make a real difference to teachers' workload – and stress levels.

**UCAC**

Pen Roc  
Rhodfa'r Môr  
Aberystwyth01970 639950  
SY23 2AZucac@athrawon.com