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Review of Initial Teacher Training in Wales

**National Assembly for Wales - Education and Lifelong Learning Committee
26th January 2006**

Agenda ELL (2) -02-06 Item 4 Evidence from UCET Cymru

Introduction

UCET's members are 90+ universities and university-sector colleges involved in teacher education across the UK. UCET Cymru is a Standing Committee of UCET which deals with matters specific to teacher education in Wales and includes all the ITT providers in Wales, including the Open University in Wales and Cardiff University. The University of Glamorgan was a member until this year.

UCET Cymru welcomes the Review of ITT and cooperated fully in the review process. Its members were particularly keen to ensure that broader aspects of ITT provision including: the relationship between the Standards for ITT, Induction and Early Professional Development (EPD) of teachers; the promotion of teaching as a career; partnership with schools and LEAs; and the role of providers in the development of the wider school workforce were included.

UCET Cymru members feel that there are many positive features in the report, we have some misgivings about others and are very concerned at some aspects. These will be elucidated in following sections. One general and fundamental concern is that the report relies heavily on government reports, commissioned studies and other official reports to the exclusion of primary research and a truly international body of knowledge.

Three Schools of Education

The sector is broadly in agreement with the establishment of three strong Schools of Education in Wales, with multi-campus provision meeting the needs of local employers, teachers and others involved in educational work with young people. If we take Wales as

a region (comparable in size to the regions in England used in their modelling), we have some concerns that student mobility in Wales is lower than that required to make the proposed sub-regional supply and demand model work. We agree on the need to have a good balanced portfolio offered in the north and south but, as will be explored later, we suggest that parallel, identical provision at each sub-region may not be possible. Most providers have already had constructive dialogue with their sub-regional counterpart(s) but there is no doubt that further reconfiguration and collaboration will take time and resources to achieve. The risk of getting these arrangements wrong is a serious one and the sector must be fully involved in any pan-Wales plan as well as engaging at a local level.

We welcome the opportunity to address the under funding of ITT, particularly in relation to partnership costs. A proposal to explore further harmonisation of partnership activities at an all-Wales level will now be re-presented to the Funding Council for scrutiny as part of the package of collaborative activities implied in the report.

Currently Schools of Education in HEIs are integrated into the work and operation of their institution. In some cases staff cross Schools within the institution and it would be unrealistic to decouple a School of Education from its institution. This must be borne in mind when establishing new, combined Schools. An impact analysis must be undertaken very early on to ensure that the proposals in the report are achievable and at what cost.

Workforce Planning

UCET Cymru members posit a view of the future in which they have responsibility for the training of a wider school workforce including those paraprofessionals operating at a level requiring higher education level skills, intellectual capabilities and competences. Partnership working with local authorities and schools is fundamental to this, as is a close engagement with the Assembly Government, Estyn and the Welsh Funding Council. The Schools of Education should be integral in the development and implementation of education policy and practices and act as a critical friend in refining and reviewing practice, to give Wales the world class education system it requires for our children and young people.

We are, however, concerned that the report could lead us to a position where we are inward-looking at a time when other nations are looking outwards. There will be much to share with other countries in the UK and further afield as our education systems diverge. The need for ‘policy learning’ will be essential if we are to benefit from best practice and to share our good work. Whilst borders are permeable, and we must welcome those people from outside Wales with the talents and skills to help our development, we could inadvertently stifle engagement and send a message of isolationism. We note that LEAs in England are still actively recruiting teachers from overseas despite the apparent need for

(lower scale) cuts in ITT provision. The Furlong report suggests we must not inhibit the recruitment of very good candidates from outside Wales and thus must allow for the fact that they will possibly return to their home country to work. We feel that workforce planning at this moment is an art not a science, and must take seriously the extreme caution expressed by the TDA and DfES in attempts to plan at a regional level, particularly for secondary teachers. We are being encouraged in the report to plan at an even finer level we call the 'sub-regional'. We do not think this is possible given current data and planning capability in Wales. Before making deep cuts, particularly in secondary numbers we must be convinced that we are able to model demand at this level.

We are also concerned that the report fails to acknowledge that responsibility for employment of teachers rests at the level of individual schools and LEAs. Schools may, on occasions, prefer to employ newly-qualified teachers from outside Wales. Given the level of cuts and the relatively small numbers of trainees produced in each sub-region this could have a significant effect on supply and demand predictions. We recognise the fact that as education systems diverge there will be a natural tendency to recruit internally but we are not yet at this stage; the core teaching competences embodied in QTS status mean that a good teacher can work in a range of settings or countries. Welsh language capability is likely to be the key defining feature that will distinguish between teachers trained in Wales compared to outside Wales. We do not see the sector making sufficient progress in this area in the timescale suggested. We have yet to see and implement the standards that would distinguish teaching in schools in Wales from teaching in the UK or elsewhere. Production of a CPD module on 'Teaching in Wales' seems of more benefit for those trained outside Wales which begs the question about a 'made in Wales' supply model.

It is a given that Schools of Education in Wales will develop courses that focus foremost on training for a Wales workforce. What we cannot predict is whether this would prevent those trained in Wales teaching elsewhere. The cross-border portability of a QTS award is enshrined in European law. We have benefited from recruitment of students from outside Wales and have shared much experience. Whilst we recognise the financial exigencies of a 'made in Wales for Wales' philosophy, we are saddened that good practices of Welsh ITT providers will no longer have the same impact outside Wales.

Reduction in ITT numbers

The reduction in numbers is intimately linked to the change in degree provision and these must be taken as one issue.

We recognise the need to reduce the number of ITT graduates seeking teaching work but not in posts. We suggest that this figure is actually relatively small as some graduates will always choose to go on to do other things after graduating.

We are concerned that only one model of supplying the needs of Wales is considered in the report. We are therefore not convinced that sufficient rigour has been demonstrated in arriving at the conclusion that the way to reach the ideal supply number is by cutting out one complete route, the undergraduate BA or BEd. It seems a convenient way of reaching the desired supply number and allows for the use of a one year PGCE course as a ‘thermostat’ with a rapid response capability. Little evidence is presented of the relative merits, quality of graduate, employability potential, retention and value of either type of cohort. We believe there is evidence on either side, some schools prefer BA/BEd graduates, others PGCE graduates. They are different types of NQT with different skills and capabilities but together meet the needs of schools. The report argues that Wales has limited flexible provision in ITT, cutting out one proven pathway therefore seems illogical.

We have serious concerns that widening participation and increasing the diversity of the teacher workforce will be fundamentally set back by the proposals. All providers have worked hard to increase the diversity of intake and have had most success with undergraduate level courses. A number of providers are fearful that many of their existing target group will not be persuaded by the less certain route of following some pre-professional degree and a PGCE rather than gaining a place on a truly professional BA/BEd route at the outset.

Existing undergraduate ITT degrees, particularly primary, make up a significant proportion of the Welsh language provision that takes place across all HEI work in Wales. Whilst the report suggests that a new pre-professional degree could include Welsh language modules this is untested and not supported by market research.

The existing undergraduate primary ITT provision is successful, attracts large numbers of applicants, and is welcomed and understood by schools and LEAs; replacement with a three year pre-professional course plus a PGCE presents increased uncertainty and risk. We are not convinced that the risk has been fully assessed in relation to undermining progress against widening participation, Welsh language and other Assembly priorities.

The proposed secondary cut of 25% is too much – evidence from England suggests that lesser cuts have begun to destabilise ITT provision. We reiterate the assertion that it is impossible to successfully plan secondary numbers at sub-regional level.

We do not believe that all three new Schools can host a full range of ITT courses including all secondary subjects. Evidence suggests that some subjects could only be viable if places were aggregated at one or at best two Schools (e.g. business studies). This therefore raises the issue of student mobility and the present situation where students may wish to go to their local provider which may be an English HEI in some cases. Although student funding regimes may reduce this potential we cannot control such eventualities. We would need, however, to define a core of provision at each School.

The report shows a weak understanding of 2 year undergraduate secondary shortage area courses and their importance. Conversion of these to a BA plus PGCE is not a good replacement. These courses have successfully attracted career changers, and the ability to reach QTS in two years (rather than, at best 3) is critical to this cohort. We may not be able to meet the needs, particularly in shortage subjects such as mathematics, in Wales if this provision is removed. We welcome the recommendation to provide bursaries to UG BA/BSc secondary shortage subjects although this seems contradictory to the need to abolish such provision and replace with a PGCE (see above).

Numbers of places allocated to the GTP route, are felt by most UCET members to be too generous at around 10% of the proposed secondary ITT numbers (assuming that GTP is less likely to be needed for primary ITT). This skews the overall provision too heavily towards employment-based routes. We also note the lower quality assurance scores emerging from such provision as compared to HEI-based routes. We suggest a proportionate reduction in GTP places should occur as HE based numbers drop. We welcome the notion of a small-scale Welsh Internship Teacher Scheme with good links to ITT providers. The Open University in Wales takes a somewhat different view on the need for such a route and would see the GTP as increasing flexibility.

Other supply and demand issues

Because of the stage of development and implementation of some Assembly Government policies, insufficient account has been taken in the report of the needs of the Foundation Phase and 14-19 Learning Pathways. We are aware that there is likely to be a dramatic reduction in post 16 teachers due to retirement in the next few years. The training of a 14-19 teaching workforce is inextricably linked to the demand for secondary teachers. These need to be modelled together. We welcome the report's suggestion for better statistical information on which to base planning forecasts. The ELWa National Planning Framework and National Planning and Funding System for post-16 provision needs to articulate with any plans for ITT in Wales to guarantee sufficient qualified teachers are produced for the 14-19 sector. There is an urgent need to link together secondary school and 14-19/post-16 workforce planning. We wish to register, however, that academic staff responsible for Post-compulsory Education and Training (PcET) provision including that at Cardiff University were not fully and specifically consulted as part of this review.

Welsh medium provision

We welcome the aspirations in the report and in Assembly policy in relation to increasing the Welsh-medium and bilingual skills of teachers and young people. The report

acknowledges that Welsh medium data are very scant (we believe some, in the report, are inaccurate), so it is difficult to plan nationally let alone sub-regionally. Basic issues are not clear such as the numbers of WM students emerging from schools and at degree level, and the definition of 'designated Welsh medium provision'. Some current providers suggest that meeting the aspirations in the report for Welsh-medium PGCE courses at all centres is currently impossible and likely to remain extremely difficult. We have a good track record of innovatory approaches to WM recruitment and we do not feel this has been recognised in relation to the plans proposed. We remain very concerned that the loss of the UG BA/BEd and its replacement with other UG provision would not sustain the level of Welsh language teaching we currently have within the BA/BEd degrees and make it more difficult to meet the aspirations of 'iaith pawb'.

Whilst we see merit in ring fencing and supporting Welsh-medium provision, we would not wish to see inflexibility in WM targets that would destabilise other provision or divert funds to unachievable targets.

Pre-Professional Degree-

Whilst we welcome the support such provision would give the sector in making a transition from the undergraduate ITT courses, we find the concept questionable. We feel it is an untested product; we have no good understanding of how other professions will react to it. Indeed some of the other professions suggested as a market for the degree are not PG qualified so won't need it, or in any case already have undergraduate diploma type provision in place. The degree could end up as competition for existing courses.

Most providers already have undergraduate non-ITT education degree courses and Foundation degrees for support staff and the wider school workforce. Other providers have been actively developing such provision. It would be sensible to firstly look at whether these can be further modified to incorporate some of the principles of the suggested pre-professional degree (such as a placement component and increased Welsh-medium content). The degree must lead on to a range of professional employment routes and not be simply a filter for PGCE courses. We feel the latter stance would be unethical and duplicitous. However, to make the degree work there is urgent need to formalise some aspects of the wider school workforce career structure, standards for such employees and the links to ITT, QTS and other Standards for CPD. UCET Cymru is already in discussion with WAG officers regarding Higher Level Teaching Assistant training and that for the wider school workforce. We would wish to play a full part in the development of a career structure for education paraprofessionals.

Development of non-ITT undergraduate education courses will require cooperation within HEIs and between HEIs and a range of professional interest groups (youth work, counselling, social work etc). this will inevitably take time and resources to achieve. Links

to Foundation Degrees and further education college provision must also be clarified. We suggest the development of pre-professional portfolios in each School of Education, rather than a single degree, developed in collaboration with employers and other stakeholders to support school workforce remodelling and the needs of new education professionals.

Research

The emphasis in the report on increasing research capacity and infrastructure in HEIs in Wales is commended. Whilst highly rated 'RAE type' research is concentrated in a very small number of providers in Wales we wish to assert that not all providers have a weak research profile. Some providers have and continue to play a key role in evaluating and implementing education policy and wish to enhance this capability.

Resource implications

This is a package of recommendations that will not be cost neutral. There will be human resource costs associated with redeployment and possibly redundancy as well as significant costs associated with reconfiguration, management and governance. We welcome the recommendation that any savings from cuts be diverted back to ITT providers. Without adequate funding there is a serious danger of destabilising the sector.

Governance issues

We recognise and endorse the concerns in the report in relation to the restricted capacity of education governance at Assembly level. Whilst we would not necessarily advocate significant increases in bureaucracy, there is a serious concern that we will fall far behind what is happening elsewhere in the UK despite some very good policies emerging from the Assembly. We welcome the notion of a National Forum and National Advisory Body for ITT as well as Regional Working Groups. UCET Cymru as a body would wish to be represented on such groups as well as by individual providers/Schools of Education.

Additional issues

Guaranteed Induction year – we welcome discussion of this proposal but also recognise that this is unlikely to be operational until numbers are reduced.

Bursaries for all studying through the medium of Welsh are welcomed.

An Annual Survey of NQTs is welcomed although we currently have some concerns about the accuracy of existing NQT data and its collection methodology.

Professional learning and development schools – we see this as a move towards a ‘Training Schools’ model which has been well tested in England and from which we can learn more. One concern which emerges from drastic cuts in ITT numbers is the extent to which a number of schools will now be excluded from involvement in the training of teachers and good schools with innovative or high quality provision may be excluded, for example, because of their inability to take large numbers of trainees. Money will be lost from some schools as a result of being withdrawn from partnerships. The impact of this is not known.

The recommendation to continue to fund innovative projects is again welcomed and reflects ITT providers’ sound track record in such schemes.

Greater involvement in CPD and stronger links to LEAs are very welcome. However, there is little to suggest how this might be done and whether additional funding will be available. We support the view that much of teachers’ CPD must be accredited and HE led. We are actively working with the GTCW to develop appropriate frameworks and standards.

Portrayal of TDA work is poor in the report. The full work of the Wales TDA representative was not discussed e.g. in development of bilingual production of all relevant TDA materials. Given that an examination of the TDA’s work in Wales wasn’t in the remit of the report we suggest that a separate exercise be undertaken to evaluate the support provided and the value for money achieved. We feel that TDA funds have clearly helped recruitment and meeting targets especially in secondary shortage areas and increasing the diversity of intake.

Timeframe and critical path

We feel the timescale as described in the report is unrealistic, particularly in the early stages. We suggest that no comparable provision for the BA/BEd degree could be in place and fully supported by robust marketing and promotional strategies until 2008-9 entry. We recommend safety netting UG provision until 2008-9 intake.

The sector needs to work with HEFCW on a critical path for change. We feel that it would be necessary to work on setting up the Schools first then think more fully about the detail of target numbers.

Ensuring the adequacy of funding for change cannot be overemphasised. Much of the report’s recommendations come as a package and together have significant resource

reallocation and enhancement implications. We assume that reconfiguration and collaboration funding is available to support change.

Conclusion

UCET Cymru welcomes the report and the opportunity it presents for serious dialogue around the provision of education and training for education professionals in Wales.

The need for change in the ITT sector is undeniable, not least to engage with the preparation and support of the wider school workforce and the remodelling agenda. ITT providers see their roles broadening to support these developments.

Partnership working is central to many of the existing and planned initiatives in education. Systematic and sustainable working practices with networks of stakeholders must be established and fully resourced. The respective strengths of schools, LEAs and Schools of Education must be focused on meeting the needs of young people.

Larger, more robust and responsive Schools of Education must emerge to deliver the Assembly Government's education proposals for Wales. Enhanced research capability must be achieved, taking account of practices in Wales, in the UK and beyond.

A suite of qualifications and accredited programmes must be developed for all aspiring teachers, qualified teachers and the wider education workforce in Wales. HEIs must be fully involved in all these developments.

Further modelling must be done of the impacts of several of the report's recommendations in relation to the guaranteed supply of teachers within sub-regions and for the whole of Wales, including Welsh-medium provision. Simple solutions seem to carry heavy risks and the potential to destabilise and irretrievably damage existing ITT provision.

Any developments must be realistically costed and have meaningful time frames attached to them. The HEI providers must work closely with the Funding Council and Assembly Government Officers to quickly establish a framework for change taking account of a range of linked policies including 14-19 Learning Pathways (including any possible QTLS award), the Foundation Phase and the workforce remodelling agenda.