

National Assembly for Wales

Bethan Jenkins AM - Financial Education and Inclusion (Wales) Bill

FEI 2 – National Union of Teachers (NUT)

About NUT Cymru:

NUT Cymru represents primary and secondary school members and is the largest teaching union in Wales. We welcome the opportunity to contribute evidence to the Financial Education and Inclusion (Wales) Bill.

Response:

1. The principle of teaching financial awareness and responsibility to young pupils is one NUT Cymru supports. The rise in individuals who are reliant on pay day lender loans is testament enough to the need to provide improved financial education.

NUT Cymru does, however, have some concerns about the practicalities of the introduction of this as a subject even if we do support the ambition of the Bill.

Firstly, we question where in the curriculum this will sit. It may be anticipated that financial education could simply be placed under the personal and social education (PSE) heading. However, this is increasingly becoming the dumping ground of all 'non-essential' priorities, which means it is both an over prescribed area and one that is not given the right level of focus.

If the view is that financial education is to be fitted into another area of the curriculum, again this will need to be viewed against the existing, and often competing, priorities in other subjects.

Ultimately there is no underestimating the existing burden on teachers' workloads. A recent Westminster Government survey showed that on average a secondary teacher will work around 56 hours a week, while the average primary teacher will work close to 60. These are not Wales specific figures. However, given there is a significant underfunding of Welsh schools in comparison to England, which is often addressed by spreading staff thinner, we believe the workloads of teachers in Wales are at least as high as the above figures, if not higher. With this in mind it is unrealistic and unsustainable to expect teachers to add to their workload without removing other compulsory aspects of their work.

The Welsh Government are currently undertaking a consultation on the National Curriculum that could provide an ideal opportunity to examine what is currently expected of schools that may not necessarily be adding value to a student's education. If there is scope to reduce teacher workload that in turn creates a space for financial education that works in the context of supporting existing education priorities then this could be welcomed. This would also give an opportunity to see how financial literacy could fit into the broader curriculum rather than reviewing individual subjects on a piecemeal approach.

Aside from the obvious and real concerns about the time capacity available in the school day to implement a new topic of this substance, there are questions about the skills capacity. Teachers are easily capable of relaying information but to ensure that the subject is properly embedded in the curriculum, and taught well, practitioners will need to have the relevant expertise. Therefore, in order to ensure this policy is correctly delivered assurances do need to be given as to the continued

professional development (CPD) commitment that would be provided in line with any new expectation on teachers.

Failure to identify the necessary CPD will inevitably result in a new topic in schools that for all its laudable ambitions will not have the impact it should or could have. Too often new initiatives have fallen by the wayside as a result of a lack of consideration given to the need to offer appropriate, high quality training to practitioners.

2. As previously stated, the need to ensure greater provision of financial education is evidenced by the debt issue within our local communities. The extent to which this issue should be delivered by schools is entirely dependent on the workload and CPD implications for schools. There may in fact be scope to collaborate with appropriate and ethical external organisations with particular expertise in this field, such as Credit Unions to deliver this initiative, at least while the necessary training programmes for teaching staff are developed and rolled out. However, this would still not address the issues of an overloaded curriculum as the time taken within the school day would still potentially have an impact on other subjects.

3The NUT supports a broad and balanced curriculum that allows pupils to develop the skills and aptitudes necessary to grow into confident and competent citizens that are able to cope well with the demands placed upon them by modern society, and while recognising financial education as one aspect of that, we remain concerned that in the current target-driven climate, unless the proposals for financial education are matched to the current national priorities, that this subject may be marginalised from the start.

4. In some ways flexibility to deliver financial education would be welcomed. This would allow schools to be able to decide how best to incorporate it into their curriculum, including potentially as part of numeracy lessons or 'financial literacy' across subjects. However, as stated in response to answer 1 this could very well see it simply assigned to the ever increasing PSE portfolio.

5. Again we would refer you to the response to question one. The ambition is laudable but effective delivery and impact will depend entirely on the workload and CPD implications for making this a statutory requirement.

6. See previous answers on workload and CPD. There is no point imposing any duty to deliver financial education on Welsh ministers, local authorities, regional consortia or schools if teachers are not given the support, space or time to implement it. In this context it would be useful to examine these proposals as part of the existing, and future, curriculum reviews.

7. This is wholly important. Discussions and consultation with a range of stakeholders, in particular the workforce and their representatives, is essential to developing a curriculum that works for Wales. We must not only have the insight of stakeholders to help shape the sort of information and skills we wish students to process by moving through the curriculum but also the practical obstacles to ensuring that they are delivered as intended.

8. There will no doubt be a range of different organisations that should be conducted, from subject specialist interest groups, to those who will have an overarching view of the importance of curriculum content. However at the heart of this approach must be the input of class teachers. No individual or group will have a better practical knowledge of what will or won't work at classroom

level than teachers. They are also best placed to give evidence as to the pedagogical, workload and training concerns associated with any potential changes to the curriculum.

9. If these proposals are realised, then it would make sense to review progress in the field. However we do not believe this should be a bureaucratic process that creates additional burdens on schools. Inevitably if Welsh Ministers are expected to report annually on the subject they will create expectations for progress reports to be established by schools to inform them. This in turn will drive up the bureaucratic burden on schools. If Welsh Ministers do report annually then it should be done within the confines of existing reporting tools.

10. It is possible that it could be reported as part of Estyn inspections but we are already mindful of the huge demands Estyn inspections currently place on schools. It may be unrealistic to expect schools to add another performance indicator to their existing Estyn check lists without this impacting on performance.

11. As it is very often the case that students first take sole responsibility for their own finances when going on to higher or further education it would be both appropriate and necessary for those institutions to provide advice on financial management.

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13. One of the key problems in regards to Welsh education in recent years has been the failure of local authorities to have, and see through, clear and coherent plans for the implementation of policy. That middle tier of government is vitally important for education services but all too often schools have been left to implement for themselves Welsh Government policy with little to no support from their local education services.

It makes sense to expect a local authority to have a strategy that outlines how it intends to promote financial education and for that to work in cooperation with what would be implemented at a school level.

In addition to the school based financial education local authorities could target support for and the promotion of financial education at individuals of above school age via youth and adult and community education services, although we recognise that these services are facing reduction in budgets that may impact this.

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16. As with our response to question 9 this would potentially be worthwhile so long as it does not create any additional data collection or bureaucratic burdens on school processes.

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19. Yes. Indeed the public should be encouraged to take up these services. Unfortunately, given the drastic cuts to library services that have been made by local authorities in Wales it is increasingly unlikely that this will be a practical possibility for many individuals.

20. In some cases libraries having access to good quality, high-speed internet access may in itself be an issue. Aside from that there is of course the issue of financial cuts which have put a strain on library services as much as any other public service.

21. No

22. Very appropriate.

23. Very appropriate.

24. There will be financial implications in terms of the cost of CPD that will need to be provided, and the time that will need to be invested in this. This will not only include the cost of any training but also the supply costs if any teachers are required to be released from school to participate.

With the introduction of a new subject there will inevitably also be a cost of resources that may need to be purchased or updated we would suggest that appropriate materials should be provided by Welsh Government rather than requiring schools to look to paying private publishing companies or consultants.

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