



Education Workforce Council submission to the National Assembly for Wales' Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee inquiry into the Welsh Government's new Welsh Language Strategy

Introduction

1. The Education Workforce Council (EWC) is the independent regulator in Wales for teachers in maintained schools, Further Education teachers and learning support staff in both school and Further Education Settings. Its remit will extend to the regulation of youth workers and people involved in Work Based Learning from April 2017. It seeks to raise the status of teaching by maintaining and promoting the highest standards of professional practice and conduct in the interests of teachers, pupils and the general public.
2. The EWC would firstly like to acknowledge the significant contribution made by education and educationalists across sectors in increasing the number of Welsh speakers.
3. We fully support the aims of the new strategy. However, it should be recognised that the aspirations outlined in the strategy (doubling the 562,016 (19%) Welsh speakers¹ by 2050) are very ambitious and will be extremely challenging for all stakeholders to achieve. Moreover, it is also clear that the education sector and the education workforce itself will be pivotal to the successful delivery of the strategy.

The Education Workforce

4. The Council holds a wealth of data in relation to the education workforce in Wales and this includes details of Welsh language ability of all registrant groups. This information is available over a number of years and can be utilised to review trends over a given period of time. This can be further broken down to ascertain if there are any trends in relation to age, ethnicity, gender, phase, for example and can be used to inform workforce planning.
5. Annex A represents a breakdown of current statistics extrapolated from the Register of Education Practitioners on 31 March 2016. The data can be provided at Local Authority level, sector, by Local Authority and years since QTS if this would be of assistance. We can also provide analyses by age group and gender.

¹ 2011 census accessed from <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Welsh-Language/WelshSpeakers-by-LocalAuthority-Gender-DetailedAgeGroups-2011Census>

Welsh Language in the Education Workforce - Key Statistics as at 31 March 2016:

There has been little change between 2012 and 2016 in the number of registered school teachers who consider themselves to be Welsh speakers.

There were 37,083 registered school teachers, of which, 12,348 (33.3%) indicated that they were Welsh speakers.

A total of 10,175 (27.4%) registered school teachers indicated that they were able to teach through the medium of Welsh.

6. In recent years, various strategies (for example, the Welsh language sabbatical scheme) have been employed to improve Welsh language ability of people in the workforce in Wales; however data from the register of practitioners suggests that this is having limited impact upon the number of Welsh speakers in the education workforce, with negligible change noted since 2007.
7. The EWC holds data in relation to subject trained for ITET students in Wales. Current data for 2015/2016 academic year shows that numbers undertaking ITET by subject trained Welsh – (secondary trained only) are low with an overall cohort of 27².
8. Whilst the EWC is able to provide comprehensive statistics for current registrant groups, it should be noted that at present, there is no regulation in place for non-maintained early years provision, therefore complicating work to map workforce Welsh language ability through phases.
9. Learning support staff in schools and further education only joined the EWC in April 2016. As at 31 August 2016, there were **28,839** registered school learning support staff. This is almost reaching parity with school teachers (**35,450** at 31 August 2016). Learning support staff obviously make a significant contribution throughout our maintained education sector, however, as a relatively new registrant group, we don't currently have as much data on their skills and qualifications as we'd like. While we are taking steps to gather data on new groups of practitioners, we would remind government that workforce planning and / or development needs to take recognise and reflect that almost half of the workforce delivering education in schools are learning support staff.
10. From April 2017, the Council will also be in a position to collate information from new registrant groups i.e. Work based learning provision and youth groups. Statistical analysis will further support the Welsh Government and key stakeholders in workforce planning. Bringing these diverse groups of education professionals under one regulatory body clearly recognises the continuum of education and should facilitate future strategic planning and policy development.

² This includes those who subsequently failed, withdrew, or deferred.

Further Comments

Developing the current workforce

11. The data held by the EWC suggests that there are opportunities to develop Welsh language skills within the existing education workforce. It is recognised that it is often difficult for practitioners to access professional development opportunities, since if these are within ordinary work hours, this requires back fill to cover absence from schools or colleges which may act as an inhibitor. If registrant groups are to be encouraged to undertake additional formal Welsh language courses, there needs to be consideration of how this can be best achieved so as not to impact negatively on classroom delivery. It would also be pertinent to look at how individuals could learn in a flexible way, including open access to quality online learning resources. Family commitments, work hours, disability, level of disposable income may have an impact on preferred learning method, in addition to personal learning styles.

12. The people of Wales are becoming increasingly digitally connected. According to Ofcom's Communications Market Report (Wales) 2016, tablet device ownership in Wales stood at 67% of households which was higher than the UK average of 59%. Smartphone ownership is lower in Wales than the rest of the UK (65% v 71%) but of these, 36% of people in Wales cite their smart phone as the most important device for going online. The same report also highlights that internet users in Wales are spending 17.8 hours each week online. Although it is recognised that there are challenges in Wales³ with respect to availability / quality of broadband, there is an increasing availability of free wifi in public places meaning that more people will have the opportunity to access online material at their leisure should this be their preferred learning method.

13. The UK Government has recently partnered with Futurelearn⁴ to provide online learning resources to enable people to learn about people, processes and public participation within parliament. This Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) approach facilitates interaction between a wide range of learners from diverse geographical locations across the globe, and enables interaction and learning between student and learning providers, and between students themselves. A similar approach could be adopted by Welsh Government to raise the profile of Wales within Europe and the rest of the world, both in terms of its rich history and the Welsh language. This approach enables flexible, high quality, cost-free learning which can also lead to accreditation. As at 26 September 2016, 4,463,374⁵ learners were enrolled on Futurelearn courses. Learners in a 'MOOC' environment can learn at their own pace and can access materials at a time suitable for them which helps to increase access.

³ <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/infrastructure/2015/downloads/cn15-wales.pdf>

⁴ <https://about.futurelearn.com/press-releases/uk-parliament-partners-futurelearn-open-doors-uk-political-establishment/> 16th September 2016

⁵ <https://www.futurelearn.com/>

14. There are numerous websites and apps to support Welsh language learning, which are of variable quality; however there is an intelligence gap since we know little about the people who use them in terms of demographics, how effective they are, or about the motivation behind their desire to learn Welsh or choice of learning medium. It is not clear what these offer in terms of progression opportunities, and how cost influences choice of approach. A more joined-up approach would assist in developing a broader understanding.
15. At present there is a sabbatical scheme open to teachers who wish to improve their Welsh language ability, although this is currently limited to teachers and teaching assistants. Since April 2016 there has also been a requirement for learning support assistants to register with the EWC, and this group represents a large proportion of overall registrant numbers. It would be prudent to consider how these groups may be supported in a similar way to those who meet the current eligibility criteria for equality of opportunity. New registrant groups such as Work Based Learning are due to register with the EWC from April 2017, and additionally there is an intention to register Youth Workers. It is important to factor in these changes when considering any evaluation and / or extension of the sabbatical scheme/similar initiative.

Estyn reports

16. In terms of promoting Welsh language and culture, some very good practice has been identified within schools and colleges via Estyn inspection reports. Examples include, a weekly award for using Welsh outside the classroom, supporting and encouraging peers to use Welsh such as in the school shop, staff being role models in terms of use of Welsh language, establishing partnerships with a cluster of schools to develop literacy materials, designated Welsh mornings, availability of a wide range of Welsh literature. Evidence of what works could be disseminated more widely to ensure students can benefit from best practice.
17. Recent Estyn inspection reports (2016) also highlight, however, where there is room for improvement, such as a need to increasing incidental use of Welsh, ensuring progressive language skill development through the school system, effective planning for use of Welsh, and creating more opportunities for pupils to use Welsh outside of Welsh lessons etc. There is also a suggestion that practitioners sometimes lack Welsh language ability or do not feel confident using it. Any future strategy needs to take cognisance of these areas for development.
18. A recent Estyn report ⁶ highlights that there are gaps in provision with respect to Welsh language within the Education Other than at School provision and made the subsequent recommendation for Local authorities to provide Welsh-medium EOTAS for pupils who have received their education in Welsh.

⁶ Education other than at school. Published June 2016, Estyn. Available from: <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-reports/education-other-school>

“Pupils who have previously been attending Welsh-medium schools have extremely limited opportunities to continue their learning in Welsh when they start EOTAS. When providers recruit staff to work with these pupils, they do not always recruit qualified teachers.”

Post compulsory education

19. Whilst attainment of formal qualifications is one measure of success outside the compulsory education sector, it must also be recognised that not all learners want the pressure of formalised study, yet may be willing to undertake leisure-based / informal / work based courses which may have a significant impact on increasing the number of Welsh speakers, or may be willing to learn by increasing opportunities for them to use /develop Welsh language skills in social situations in order that it is naturally occurring rather than forced.
20. Potentially, more could be done to support employers in general who have non-Welsh speaking staff amongst their workforce. There are opportunities to encourage learning from Welsh speaking peers – this would enable staff to be immersed in the language and facilitate naturally occurring dialogue. This may also help to shift the culture from one of compliance to willing participation in general.
21. Where children and young people are learning Welsh in the classroom environment, irrespective of their level of learning, it is important that they have opportunities to develop their language skills outside the school environment, therefore parents, carers and family members need to be engaged also, and encouraged to develop their own Welsh language skills. Estyn’s recent report⁷ highlights several recommendations for Local Authorities, including working with schools to explain the advantages to pupils and parents of Welsh-medium education and of following courses through the medium of Welsh. Consideration could also be given to how best to promote continued engagement in Welsh language in the post-compulsory education sector.

The wider picture

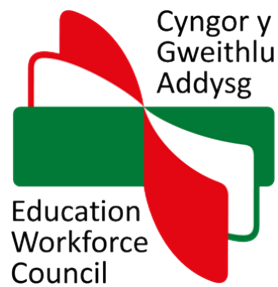
22. In order to assess the progress of the proposed strategy, there needs to be a clear definition of what is meant by a ‘Welsh speaker’ since this is open to interpretation. This would need to be a consistent approach to ensure that this can be effectively benchmarked. It is also how to account for those individuals who possess Welsh language ability, but who move out of the area in terms of collating statistics, conversely there will be individuals who cross the border from England for example for work purposes and may develop language skills but are not resident in Wales. We know for example, of large Welsh speaking communities in London and other English cities. Without any ongoing indicators of progress / formal targets, it will be difficult to assess what impact current tactics are having.

⁷ Local authority Welsh in Education Strategic Plans September 2016

https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/default/files/documents/Local%20authority%20Welsh%20in%20Education%20Strategic%20Plans%20-%20final_0.pdf

23. The education sector is already undergoing a unique period of large-scale reform which includes implementing the Donaldson proposals on a new curriculum, the introduction of new arrangements for the accreditation of initial teacher education, early years, and additional learning needs. It is imperative, therefore, that the implementation of the new Welsh language strategy is aligned with these other large scale reforms in order for it to have the greatest chance of success.
24. The new arrangements for accrediting initial teacher education which have recently been consulted upon by Welsh Government will need to reflect the aspirations in the Welsh language strategy, by having a strong focus on high quality Welsh language provision. However, these changes will only address issues of future school teacher supply and quality. We think the time is right to start looking at the entry requirements and provision for other groups in the education workforce, for example, the PGCE (FE).
25. There is a well-established evidence base pointing to the importance of the early years in successfully introducing children to second languages. There are two factors worth noting here : first, traditionally, a lot of early years provision takes place in the non-maintained sector and secondly, we know that a lot of Foundation Phase provision is delivered by learning support workers. We urge policy makers to consider the diversity within education when developing and implementing policy. It's no longer sufficient to target qualifications, or professional development initiatives at school teachers alone.
26. It will be necessary to consider that any plans to devolve teachers' pay and conditions is likely to have an impact upon the workforce.
27. It is not yet clear how 'Brexit' will impact upon the Welsh education sector, however any future planning should consider Welsh language provision in the wider skills and work arena to ensure that students in Wales have the appropriate skills and abilities to progress and flourish in a changing environment.
28. Beyond education, there are larger social, economic, and transport issues to be addressed if Welsh Government wants to reach their target. For example, enabling and encouraging Welsh speakers to stay and live and work in Wales, requires a thriving economy offering well paid employment. Welsh Government might also want to look at ways of keeping Welsh speaking regions sustainable by ensuring that these usually rural areas have sufficient quality job opportunities.

29. The EWC has access to a vast resource of data relating to the education workforce in Wales which could be further exploited to support Welsh Government to undertake research and more targeted survey / qualitative work of registrant groups to develop a broader understanding of the less tangible issues within education sector to support the Welsh Government.
30. In November 2016, we launched the first ever education workforce survey on behalf of the Welsh Government. Separate surveys have been developed for each of the EWC's registration categories, as well as a bespoke survey for supply teachers and support staff. The surveys include questions on Welsh language skills. We expect results to be published early in 2017.
31. Under the Education (Wales) Act 2014, the EWC can undertake recruitment activities on behalf of the Welsh Government. Historically, workforce planning has only considered school teachers and headteachers. Now that the EWC registers learning support staff and further education lecturers (and from April 2017, youth workers and work based learning practitioners), and as the demand for learning support staff grows, we would urge policy makers to take into account the composition of the entire workforce when thinking about recruitment and retention issues.
32. As the professional body for the workforce in Wales, we are able to communicate directly with registered school teachers, further education lecturers and learning support staff in both schools and FE colleges.



Annex A: Welsh language data - registered school teachers

Summary of key findings

- ❖ 33% of registered school teachers are Welsh speakers in comparison to 27% who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh, which exceeds the percentage of Welsh speakers living in Wales (23%); (Welsh Government Welsh Language Use Survey 2013/14);
- ❖ On average there is approximately 7% difference between the percentage of Welsh speakers and the proportion of teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh across the nursery, primary, middle and secondary school phases. The highest percentage difference is 7% in the primary phase. This may demonstrate an issue with confidence in Welsh language ability/fluency and the choice or need to use the language ability in a work environment. Possible more can be done to support Welsh speakers to train and feel confident to teach through the medium of Welsh or to encourage non Welsh speakers to learn the language;
- ❖ There is a lower proportion of Welsh speakers (23%) and school teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh (17%) in the nursery phase. A smaller proportion of Welsh medium teachers in early year's education may impact on the demand for Welsh medium education across the other phases, which is counter-intuitive to the direction of Welsh Government policy;
- ❖ As expected there are regional disparities in the proportion of teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh the lowest in the South East region of Wales (Blaenau Gwent 7%, Newport 8%, Monmouthshire 9%) in comparison to the highest in North and West Wales (Gwynedd 93%, Isle of Anglesey 90%, Ceredigion 80%) ;
- ❖ The percentage of Welsh speakers has decreased with years since QTS; it was at its highest amongst the 1 to 10 years group across Wales in both ability to speak Welsh and teach through the medium of Welsh in the primary and secondary phases.

Introduction

The Council records Welsh language data for those teachers registered with the Education Workforce Council.

When making an application for registration or amending a registered teacher record, teachers are advised to consider the following criteria when answering the relevant questions in relation to their Welsh language ability:-

Welsh speaker: - answer “Yes” if they consider themselves to be fluent or fairly fluent in the Welsh language.

Able to teach through the medium of Welsh: - answer “Yes” if they were trained to teach, currently teach or have ever taught pupils through the medium of Welsh or feel confident to do so.

If the information is not provided by the registered teacher do not provide this information and the relevant fields in their record on the Register of Education Practitioners are marked as “Unknown”.

Notes:

The data was extracted from the Register of Education Practitioners on the 31 March 2016.

All data provided relates to “registered school teachers” and the numbers are displayed as “actuals” rather than “full-time equivalents”.

The number of registered school teachers is “real time” and can go up or down, depending on new registrations and de-registrations.

All figures are based on registrants with a primary registration category of ‘school teacher’.

The EWC is able to provide further analyses of this data, for example, by age, gender and local authority.

Table 1: The number of school teachers registered with the EWC on the 31 March 2016 by Welsh language

| | Welsh speaker | | Able to teach though the medium of Welsh | |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------|--|----------------|
| | Number of teachers | Percentage (%) | Number of teachers | Percentage (%) |
| Yes | 12,348 | 33.3 | 10,175 | 27.4 |
| No | 22,441 | 60.5 | 24,538 | 66.2 |
| Unknown | 2,294 | 6.2 | 2,370 | 6.4 |
| Total | 37,083 | 100% | 37,083 | 100% |

Table 2: The number of newly qualified school teachers registered with the EWC on the 31 March 2016 by Welsh language

| | Welsh speaker | | Able to teach though the medium of Welsh | |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------|--|----------------|
| | Number of teachers | Percentage (%) | Number of teachers | Percentage (%) |
| Yes | 438 | 34.6 | 352 | 27.8 |
| No | 805 | 63.6 | 887 | 70.1 |
| Unknown | 23 | 1.8 | 27 | 2.1 |
| Total | 1,266 | 100% | 1,266 | 100% |

Table 3: The number of headteachers registered with the EWC on 31March 2016 by Welsh language

| | Welsh speaker | | Able to teach though the medium of Welsh | |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------|--|----------------|
| | Number of teachers | Percentage (%) | Number of teachers | Percentage (%) |
| Yes | 611 | 41.4 | 532 | 36.1 |
| No | 703 | 47.7 | 783 | 53.1 |
| Unknown | 160 | 10.9 | 159 | 10.8 |
| Total | 1,474 | 100% | 1,474 | 100% |