

Initial Teacher Training in Wales 1996-2002

Summary of Estyn findings for the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales



Estyn

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi Dros Addysg
A Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
For Education and Training in Wales

Contents	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Standards	1
3. Quality of training and assessment	2
4. Quality of staffing, resources and accommodation	4
5. Selection and quality of trainee intake	4
6. Management of quality	5
7. The Common Inspection Framework and new cycle of inspection	6
8. General inspector visits	7
9. Recommendations	9

1. Introduction

During the period 1996 to 2001, we undertook full inspections of all eight higher education institutions that, with their partner schools, provide initial teacher training (ITT) in Wales. There were several important developments during this last cycle. The period saw the introduction of WO Circular 13/98 and consequently the Framework for Assessing Quality and Standards in ITT was revised prior to inspections undertaken during 1998-1999. Throughout this cycle, all ITT courses involved partnerships between the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and schools.

We also undertook seven surveys that focused on training for physical education, good practice in primary and secondary mentoring, ICT in primary and secondary ITT courses, excellence and innovation in ITT and the early professional development of newly qualified teachers.

Every year, general inspectors visited all the higher education institutions not subject to a full inspection. The purpose of these visits was to monitor the progress being made by the provider and to keep abreast of changes, new developments and initiatives. General Inspectors also gathered evidence of important and emerging issues in the sector.

Evidence from the above contributed each year to HMCI's Annual Report and to the production of a summary of findings for the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW).

2. Standards

Over the whole cycle, trainees' teaching in primary and secondary schools was good or better in about 55% of lessons and satisfactory in a further 40%. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching did not decrease much and the amount of good teaching varied a lot between courses, even within the same college. Overall, trainees' teaching is broadly similar in quality to that of qualified teachers over the same period. Trainees achieve this with the support of mentors and tutors. The standard of trainees' Welsh-medium teaching is similar to their English-medium teaching. Trainees' strengths and shortcomings have changed little:

Strengths

- most primary trainees have a good knowledge of the core subjects of English or Welsh, mathematics and science. They have good personal ICT skills and give appropriate attention to literacy and numeracy in their planning and teaching;
- most primary and secondary trainees manage and organise classes well and use an effective range of suitable teaching strategies; and

- most trainees' assess and record pupils' achievements appropriately.

Shortcomings

- trainees' evaluations of lessons do not focus enough on what pupils have learnt;
- few trainees use their assessment of pupils' work to help them plan their lessons or to set targets for pupils;
- few are able to use their ICT skills effectively to help pupils learn;
- primary trainees have gaps in their understanding of at least one of the foundation subjects; and
- do not plan carefully enough to teach pupils the key skills or the common requirements of the national curriculum, such as Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig.

A little over 90% of trainees who complete their course achieve QTS. Those who are not suited to teaching are appropriately advised to leave courses.

3. Quality of training and assessment

Quality of education and training

The quality of college-based education and training is good overall in both primary and secondary courses. Most training sessions are well planned, provide good teaching models and draw well on trainees' classroom experiences. Secondary courses are making good progress in developing the subject application of ICT. However there is not enough focus on helping trainees use ICT to develop pupils' key skills or in managing the actual ICT resources that exist in many classrooms.

The development of trainees subject knowledge is a strength of most courses. The training is well thought out and tutors offer good support through useful study packs, and in some courses, additional support sessions. Most courses offer a range of 'taster' courses in a range of non-core subjects. These courses, by and large, are supplemented effectively by school-based tasks that link school-based work and college-based training well.

There have also been improvements in the quality of school-based training. Overall this is best when providers and their partner schools work closely together. Mentors in schools provide constructive advice and support and trainees are offered, with few exceptions, an appropriate range of classroom experiences. Despite this however, there is too much variation in the quality of trainees' experiences between schools. For example not enough secondary schools offer trainees opportunities for joint teaching with experienced and enthusiastic subject teachers who make good use of ICT.

Despite the continual improvement in the quality of college-based and school-based training over the cycle, there is not enough training that is very good.

School mentors are becoming increasingly more involved in college-based training, particularly in delivering aspects of course work. However, their role in contributing to the planning, managing, monitoring and evaluating college-based work is not strong enough in many partnerships.

The design and content of all ITT courses remains good overall and together provide a coherent training experience. All courses highlight well the importance of the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. The main shortcoming with the design of primary college-based training is that the time available for taster courses in the non-core subjects is short and in a few cases this limits trainees' knowledge and understanding in these subjects.

All providers continue to provide good support and guidance for most trainees on their courses.

Assessment

Assessment of trainees' college-based work is good overall in most courses. Most tutors provide detailed and constructive feedback that highlights trainees' strengths and weaknesses. In a few courses, tutors set trainees clear targets and track how well they meet them. Occasionally, assessment criteria do not include enough about expected progression, or show what is good or very good performance. Most providers have good systems for assessing trainees' work but in some, tutors do not always use assessment information well to improve trainees' learning. In a few courses, information from initial auditing of trainees' subject knowledge does not build on prior achievement and is not detailed enough to track their future progress.

During school-based training, the frequency and quality of feedback given to trainees on their teaching varies too much between schools. Feedback to trainees does not always focus sufficiently on the standards that pupils achieve and mentors do not always link the targets they set trainees to the standards for qualified teacher status.

A small number of providers have introduced trainee' profiling and self-evaluation. This has encouraged trainees to set personal targets for improvement. The full potential of these initiatives has not yet been realised fully by other providers.

Welsh-medium teaching

Providers offer language enrichment courses for trainees who teach in Welsh. These courses are of good quality and support trainees' language development well. However, there is not always enough subject specific support for these students. All courses that offer Welsh-medium provision provide placements for trainees in Welsh-medium schools and provide a Welsh-speaking tutor for school experience. A small number of Welsh-speaking trainees are not encouraged or supported enough to enable them to train to teach in Welsh.

All providers make training available for non-Welsh speaking trainees to learn Welsh as part of their primary training. On some undergraduate courses, attendance is compulsory in the first year. These courses lead to qualifications at different levels and are very well attended by most trainees. Many trainees make good progress in their ability to use Welsh in their teaching. This training often effectively combines the teaching of Welsh with a valuable insight into the methods of teaching a second language.

4. Quality of staffing, resources and accommodation

The quality of staffing, learning resources and accommodation is good overall in most providers. Tutors are by and large well qualified. Those who have recent teaching experience or who undertake research generally use it well to enrich the training they offer. Almost all tutors use information and communications technology effectively in their teaching.

Tutors and trainees in most providers have access to a good range of general teaching resources and of up-to-date ICT equipment. A few providers are short of phase-specific or subject-specific equipment available in schools and also of some subject-specific software. In some cases this limits trainees' understanding of how best to plan for the effective use of these resources in their teaching.

The quality of providers' accommodation is mostly good. Primary departments in particular have good quality displays that show good examples of tutors and trainees' work. These displays often reflect the bilingual context of Wales and help raise trainees' awareness of Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig.

The quality of resources available in schools for trainees is good overall. However, there is too much variation in the quality and availability of ICT equipment between schools.

5. Selection and quality of trainee intake

Recruitment to primary courses has consistently met HEFCW targets over the cycle. Most providers have developed a range of appropriate strategies to attract trainees particularly onto secondary courses. The availability of training grants has also supported recruitment. Despite this, enrolment to some secondary subjects has remained below target figures. Some groups of trainees, including those who are Welsh speaking, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and males on primary courses are underrepresented.

The quality of trainee intake over the cycle has been at least satisfactory and most providers have effective interview and selection procedures. However, some providers do not involve heads and mentors from partner schools enough in the selection process.

6. Management of quality

The quality of leadership and management

Overall, the management of initial teacher training has good features but some shortcomings remain. Internal and external monitoring of college-based work is generally good and the role of external examiners is a positive feature. Procedures for course evaluation take account of trainees' views but few providers include direct observation of teaching sessions as a tool for self-evaluation. Course tutors prepare action plans that address weaknesses in provision and set targets for improvement. Often however, these action plans do not incorporate enough quantitative measures to aid the monitoring and evaluation of the action plan and identify the extent to which targets are met. Progress to develop target setting has been slow overall. Few colleges make enough good use of assessment information to set targets for courses as a whole or use recruitment, completion and destination data to inform course development.

Partnership between initial teacher training providers and schools

Initial teacher training providers and their partner schools show a strong commitment to partnership and enjoy a good working relationship. During the last cycle, the quality of the management of these partnerships was at least satisfactory in all courses but varied within and between providers. In the best practice, there are well-established arrangements for joint working and a clear understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of those involved. There are also examples of good arrangements to ensure moderation of standards within and between schools. In the less effective practice, teachers do not have enough understanding of college-based provision and are unsure about partnership requirements. There is considerable variation in the extent to which colleges provide support for their partner schools. At present, there is not enough joint observation of trainees' teaching by class teachers, mentors and college tutors. A few providers do not monitor the quality of placements enough or ensure that trainees are placed in schools that best meet their needs.

Few providers involve their partner schools enough in the overall planning, monitoring and evaluation of college-based courses.

7. The Common Inspection Framework and new cycle of inspection

As part of our work for 2001-2002, we have been working with the Welsh Assembly Government to produce a common inspection framework applicable to all providers of education and training in Wales. This entailed extensive consultation. It was particularly timely for ITT, as it came at the end of a cycle of inspection.

In 2001-2002, we consulted with providers on the Common Inspection Framework. We also consulted with them on the Handbook of Guidance on applying The Common Inspection Framework to inspections of initial teacher training settings. During this period, we did not conduct any full inspections of ITT providers. We have systematically evaluated and shared the best inspection practice across all ITT providers. Many of these best practices were already part of the last cycle of the inspection of ITT.

Features of the new inspection cycle

- The inspection process will place even more emphasis on the experiences and achievements of learners;
- inspections will place a new emphasis on self-assessment by using the provider's most recent self-assessment as the starting point for the inspection process;
- inspections will continue to include an element of peer evaluation;
- inspections will involve providers more actively in the process, for example through the opportunity for providers to have a nominee who will liaise with the inspection team;
- we will extend our practice of seeking feedback from providers on the process and outcomes of inspection;
- we will move to a six year cycle of inspection; and
- we will review the length of notice of inspection.

The main innovation for ITT in the new Common Inspection Framework is a greater emphasis on self-assessment. There will also be a clearer emphasis on inspecting the promotion of equal opportunity and diversity and other Welsh Assembly Government priorities.

The consultation on the Common Inspection Framework and the Guidance on the Inspection of ITT has now been completed. The final versions of these documents are available on the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk).

8. General inspector visits

During 2001-2002, we increased the extent of the general inspector visits to ITT institutions to involve two inspectors for two days. This was in response to the positive evaluation of these visits by the sector and in order to be able to gather sufficient evidence on trends in the sector for HMCI's Annual Report. The visits focused on specific issues and were guided by a detailed aide-memoire. The main or emerging issues arising from the visits are noted below.

Recruitment

Recruitment is buoyant in most primary and secondary PGCE courses. This is, at least in part, attributable to the new training grants. However, a few providers are concerned that applications for places on some BA (Secondary) courses are declining. These trainees do not receive training grants.

Providers still could do more to recruit trainees from ethnic or other under-represented groups. The majority of providers do not target the recruitment of trainees from ethnic minorities, trainees who can speak Welsh or male trainees onto primary courses.

Curriculum development

College tutors are steadily improving the content of their courses. They now spend more time explaining to trainees how to use assessment information and ICT in teaching. In most subjects, trainees learn how to promote the Welsh Dimension (Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig) effectively and purposefully in their work. A few providers are still at an early stage in developing aspects of the curriculum in response to new Welsh Assembly Government priorities and initiatives. A few are beginning to teach about sustainable development. Most providers need to do more to prepare trainees to tackle underachievement and pupil disaffection.

Auditing

In the core subjects, tutors audit trainees' subject knowledge thoroughly. In a very few courses there is auditing of trainees' knowledge in non-core subjects but generally few tutors in other subjects do this.

Assessment

Grading systems vary between and within some providers. A few courses give trainees an overall grade. This helps tutors to identify how well trainees and courses are doing. Providers do not always use assessment well to improve trainees' learning. On a few courses, tutors set trainees clear targets and track how well they meet them. Mentors do not always link the targets they set trainees to the standards for qualified teacher status. Trainees who encounter difficulties receive well-planned tutor support and guidance to progress to QTS.

Career entry profiles

Most providers are aware of the need to improve the quality of the Career Entry Profiles. These often describe trainees' strengths well, but not the specific areas they need to work on. As a result schools find it hard to set newly qualified teachers clear targets for improvement in these areas.

Staffing

Providers report that fewer teachers are considering a career in teacher training. They report increasing difficulty in recruiting new tutors and in seconding teachers from schools. Some providers have too many part-time teachers. This means that there is additional burden decreasing number of full time staff. Some providers are short of staff to develop trainees' bilingual skills.

Quality assurance

Providers have been slow to include direct observation of teaching sessions as a tool for self-evaluation. In most provision, peer observation remains at a very early stage of development. Progress in making better use of assessment information to set whole course targets, remains slow in some providers. Few are doing enough to analyse recruitment, completion and destination data as a means of informing course development.

Collaboration between providers

Providers work together more often now, but they still do not collaborate enough. For example, there is too much variation between providers in the expectations they place on schools and their assessment systems. This makes it difficult for schools that work with several providers.

Flexible routes

A few providers are beginning to offer flexible routes into teaching. Overall however they have been slow to support these initiatives.

Continuing professional development

There is a range of accredited courses on offer for serving teachers, mostly at Masters level. Providers report that the recent growth in numbers on some of these courses, although still small, may be due to the introduction of performance management and threshold assessment. Most providers offer financial concessions to staff from partner schools studying for these qualifications. Some school-based mentors have started these courses as a direct result of this incentive. Few providers, at present, offer distance or on-line learning as an option for these courses. At present, collaboration between providers and LEAs to provide continuing professional development for teachers is at an early stage of development.

9. Recommendations

There has been a high degree of consistency in the main messages in the full inspection and survey reports produced during 1996-2002. These messages are also supported by the findings of general inspector visits. Taking all the above into account, the key issues for initial teacher education providers are to recognise that whilst the quality of provision is good overall more could be done that is excellent. Providers need to:

- identify what is excellent in their training and make what they do well even better;
- strengthen their collaboration with other providers in order to share good practice, reduce duplication and develop common practices and expectations;
- involve mentors and partner schools more in the planning, managing, monitoring and evaluation of courses;
- reduce the variation in the quality of school-based training by improving the support and feedback to mentors and partner schools;
- make better use of assessment information and other data to improve target setting and inform course development;
- widen access to teacher training to underrepresented groups; and
- strengthen their partnership with LEAs to improve the continuing professional development of teachers.