

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Ymchwiliad i Addysg a Dysgu Proffesiynol Athrawon | Inquiry into Teachers' Professional Learning and Education

TT FI 03

Ymateb gan: Undeb Cenedlaethol yr Athrawon, Cymru

Response from: National Union of Teachers Cymru (NUT Cymru)

### **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 Children, Young People and Education Committee's Inquiry into Teachers' Professional Learning and Education.

### **Areas for consideration:**

#### **General views on the standards:**

There is little opposition to the vision of having an education sector which places the child at the centre of its work. There is also no opposition to the notion of practitioners constantly striving to develop and grow. This has always been the case. The failure in the past has been an inability to match that vision to action. We certainly continue to support the notion of aligning professional standards, and all other education policies, towards delivering on this vision.

We agree that the principles and purposes of the standards that were set forward in the original consultation, taken individually, are appropriate to the new education agenda in Wales. The one concern is that many of these principles and purposes are quite vague in their descriptions which make it somewhat difficult to reflect in specific tasks. Alternatively, it is a case that they are catch all terms and so they can be fulfilled quite simply and therefore do not necessarily have a tangible outcome for teachers or pupils.

The values, dispositions, dimensions and their elements are all appropriate. A complete different set could also be designed and again be found to be appropriate. It is hard to argue that areas such as collaboration, pedagogy and professional learning are not central to professional standards. However what has been produced is an over complex and cumbersome set of standards. Schools and teachers will not be able to utilise these standards as a way of informing their work beyond a tick box exercise for career progression and performance management, and indeed the fear is it will be misused in those regards.

We estimate that the slides that formed the consultation and standards comprise 75 standards for teachers (comprising 6 Values and Dispositions and 5 Dimensions which are sub-divided into 32 elements, each with 2 Descriptors) and 79 standards for leadership (comprising 6 Values and Dispositions and 5 Dimensions which are sub-divided into 34 Elements, each with 2 Descriptors). On several occasions NUT Cymru has requested clarity from the Welsh Government in the form of a clear, concise and coherent set of standards. That, unfortunately, has not been forthcoming.

We did welcome the clarity that standards should not be the sole requirement for performance management and this will, in part, help mitigate some of the concern about capturing each and every element at all times. That they are not supposed to act as a checklist will be a positive thing.

However, we are aware that since the consultation on standards the Welsh Government has reflected on the way in which the standards were presented. We would hope that there is still scope, post September but prior to these standards becoming statutory, for discussion between the Welsh Government and teaching unions to take place that can find a better balance. Ideally we would like to reach a point where the number of standards are dramatically reduced, thus making them more useful as a tool within schools, but accepting the underlying descriptors and dimensions remain as a way of showing progression within those standards. This model was supposed to be simpler and clearer than the previous one which we know from the EWC workforce survey showed that 57.9% of teachers didn't use. Unless there are changes we do not believe the percentage will improve.

### **The proposed implementation timescale:**

In terms of asking teachers to switch to the new standards over the course of 2017, when they are introduced but not statutory, this seems highly unlikely. Without a clear list of standards that will apply we cannot agree that the timescales for implementation are realistic. Further, even if that were the case, we calculate that post consultation there will only be 35 working days available for schools to receive, digest and plan said implementation. That is much too short a time period.

All of the descriptors and dimensions would need underpinning with explanatory guidance/exemplification for there to be any hope of them being successfully implemented. The Welsh Government needs to clearly demonstrate what this actually means and looks like in practice. With the current number of descriptors, this is a significant task which will take a

significant amount of time to compile and so calls the timescales for a successful introduction of the Standards further into question.

Should there be negotiation and development of the standards, both in their content and presentation, then there is a possibility that by September 2018 we could reach a point where implementation is possible. In theory this should result in standards which are less onerous on teachers and school leaders and which individuals will want to engage with for their professional development. However, if the standards remain in their current format and with the current list of expectations then not only will the timescales prove unrealistic but the value of the standards themselves will be questionable.

### **Support and training:**

It may not be a case that teachers, as a general point, need support and training to transition to the new standards. However if we are to ensure that teaching standards are as high as we would like to ensure then it is important to look at the quality, funding and availability for teachers to access continued professional development to meet both current and existing standards. CPD remains a huge failing in Wales which is consistently undermining the ability of teachers to gain new skills and improve on the high quality expertise they already have. We have heard positive soundbites from a number of successive Education Ministers about the importance of professional development and recognition of the Welsh Government's failure to address this in the past but we do not appear much further along in terms of practical and tangible action.

There may very well need to be some training around the specific transition of the new standards, but again this will be determined more by the exact nature of the standards that are ultimately implemented in 2018 and how schools feel they can, or as is the case at present, cannot utilise them. There is no use in having a set of aspirational standards that calls for career long professional growth unless there is funding to provide quality assured professional learning opportunities to support and enable teachers to attain these aspirational levels. Teachers cannot be held responsible without a guarantee of such an entitlement.