



**COLEGAUCYMRU POLICY ASKS FOR
THE NEXT WELSH GOVERNMENT**

THEME 5: FE WORKFORCE FIT FOR THE FUTURE

March 2021

This briefing expands on Theme 5 of ColegauCymru's *Further Success: Policy Recommendations for the next Welsh Government in Post-16 Education and Lifelong Learning in Wales*. Together with our *Enabling Renewal: Further Education and Building Better Citizenship, Occupations and Business Communities in Wales* report, these documents present a vision and practical action for further education in Wales.¹

Summary

ColegauCymru calls for the next Welsh Government to create a further education workforce that is fit for the future.

The next Welsh Government should:

- Build on the approach to professional learning taken by the new Curriculum for Wales, and support further professionalisation of the further education workforce
- Legislate for professional standards and minimum requirements of qualification for further education teachers and for the oversight of the Post-16 Workforce Development Framework through amending the existing legislation for the establishment of the Education Workforce Council
- Explore how an appropriate Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and dual professional model could be applied to further education
- Extend Education Workforce Council (EWC) responsibilities for regulation of the PGCE and CertEd qualifications to cover the post-16 sector in an appropriate way
- Consider how the dual professional system can be enhanced, learning from best international practice and implement funded CPD systems to enable this, informed by the work of the proposed Centre for Vocational Education and Training

Professional learning and the new Curriculum for Wales

During and prior to the previous term of the Parliament, considerable investment was made into physical infrastructure of colleges. Additional funding was also provided to the schools sector to support its workforce to adapt to the demands of the new curriculum. A similar investment into the further education workforce must be a priority.

There were 110,415 learners enrolled at Further Education Institutions (FEIs) in 2018/19.¹ Due to the range of learners in the sector, as well as its diverse learning offer, it is imperative that the further education workforce is adequately equipped and receives sufficient investment to ensure the highest standard of teaching. An investment should be based on the need to encourage innovation, creativity, and flexibility.

Professionalisation of the further education workforce

The new Curriculum for Wales provides an innovative approach to learning for the pre-16 sector. There is an emphasis on building the professional capacity of the teaching and learning system, developing local leadership, enabling practitioners to make decisions about needs of specific learners, improving innovation and creativity, and outlining the importance of meaningful learning.² The next Welsh Government should adequately resource the sector to encourage such practice for the post-16 workforce and to support the continued professionalisation of the further education workforce. However, this approach should not necessarily be identical, as the further education sector is significantly different from schools.

The next Welsh Government should develop professional learning and professional dialogue opportunities for further education staff as set out for teachers in the new Curriculum for Wales.³ This would encourage college leaders and practitioners to collaborate on a national as well as a regional basis to share best practice ideas across sectors and allow for creativity and innovation in curriculum design to best suit individual learner needs. By further professionalising the further education workforce, practitioners and leaders will be better equipped to develop curricula to suit local and regional demand and will ensure courses continue to be taught in the most engaging, useful, and innovative of ways. COVID-19 has already transformed the post-16 learning experience and this change must be shaped and supported.

¹ Stats Wales, *Unique learner numbers by ethnicity and gender*, <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Further-Education-and-Work-Based-Learning/Lifelong-Learning-Wales-Record/uniquelearnernumbers-by-ethnicity-gender>, [Accessed 11/02/2021].

² Welsh Government, *Curriculum for Wales guidance* (2020), <https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/afca43eb-5c50-4846-9c2d-0d56fbffba09/curriculum-for-wales-guidance-120320.pdf>, p7.

³ Welsh Government, *Curriculum for Wales guidance* (2020), <https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/afca43eb-5c50-4846-9c2d-0d56fbffba09/curriculum-for-wales-guidance-120320.pdf>, p233.

Professional standards and minimum requirements for the further education workforce

Professional standards

The further education sector would benefit from a new approach to the implementation of statutory professional standards to aid professional development, innovation, leadership, and collaboration. In 2017, a professional standards framework was drafted, however this was not mandated.⁴ Such a mandated approach is used in Scotland whereby the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) requires all registered further education practitioners to actively engage in professional reviews and development processes with their employer at least once a year. This process supports staff to critically reflect on their practice to enhance professionalism to best serve learners.⁵

By adopting a mandated model, the further education sector will be better equipped to provide the highest standard of teaching to benefit learners. Vocational courses often require practitioners to operate as dual professionals. It has already been recognised by the Welsh Government that they must act as ‘experts’ in both teaching and in vocation.⁶ As this is a distinct role, the practitioners should be adequately equipped, and adhere to professional standards required by their dual profession. Members of the further education workforce, particularly those working in regulated professions, or where specific competence needs to be demonstrated, will be familiar with the requirement of mandation. These standards would be used to inform curriculum development, design job and person specifications, act as a benchmarking tool, and to encourage innovation as well as helping to place the Welsh language at the heart of learner programmes.⁷

Post-16 Workforce Development Framework

The next Welsh Government should commission the development a post-16 framework that supports mandatory standards through the Education Workforce Council (EWC). Once developed, and with the standards residing with the EWC as an arm’s length body from both government and employers, staff will be able to have confidence in the independence of the framework. The EWC as the registrant body for a range of related disciplines is well placed to provide an overview of the diverse further education sector and its range of teaching staff. A professional learning scoping study published in 2019 found that 86% of further education practitioners hold either a teaching qualification or a Level 6 qualification. Just 55% of Work-based Learning (WBL) practitioners have a

⁴ Welsh Government, *Engagement survey – draft professional teaching standards for the further education and work-based learning sectors in Wales* (2017), <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/29621/1/170524-professional-teaching-standards-fe-wbl-en-1.pdf>.

⁵ The General Teaching Council for Scotland, *Professional Review and Development*, <https://www.gtcs.org.uk/college-lecturers/college-prd.aspx>, [Accessed 16/02/2021].

⁶ Welsh Government, *Professional standards for further education teachers and work-based learning practitioners in Wales* (2017), p4.

⁷ Ibid.

Level 6 or above qualification, and 47% possess a teaching qualification. 20% of WBL practitioners are only qualified to Level 2/3.⁸ These findings show that there are some gaps in adequately qualified practitioners in the further education sector where investing in further training and development would be beneficial. The next Welsh Government should develop a framework whereby all further education staff receive support, attain relevant qualifications, and are able to access development opportunities to ensure that the workforce is best equipped to serve learners. This in turn should be monitored by the EWC through its annual review of the further education/WBL workforce. The provision of professional development support may reside in a number of bodies but must be delivered in such a way as to inspire ‘buy-in’ from the profession and be adequately resourced.

Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)

Vocational teaching is complex as it combines subject knowledge, specialist knowledge of an occupation/industry/sector, and effective teaching practice.⁹ Possessing these skills is known as dual professionalism. As previously noted, there is a section of the further education workforce who would benefit from further professional development to upskill in some areas. Therefore, the next Welsh Government should explore options for introducing an appropriate QTS alongside the dual professional model.

FEIs are able to set their own entry requirements for practitioners to teach.¹⁰ There is currently no framework to ensure that practitioners need to possess a QTS in further education as there is for school teachers. There should be an appropriate teaching qualification required by further education practitioners as qualifying as an industry professional does not necessarily guarantee the ability to teach others effectively. High quality teaching is a skill in itself.¹¹

Fundamentally, exploring options to appropriately provide further education teaching qualifications alongside a dual professional model should not merely mirror the school model of QTS’. FEIs are alternative entities to schools. They engage with different age groups, provide vocational education, and develop learning programmes that align to local and regional demand. Due to their diversity, the next Welsh Government should explore options for developing a flexible qualified teaching status which combines classroom teaching with industrial placements, and teaches innovative industry practices. Ultimately, such a model will benefit learners as they will receive a higher standard of

⁸ Welsh Government, *Post 16 Professional Learning Scoping Study* (2019), <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-12/post-16-professional-learning-scoping-study-executive-summary.pdf>, p5.

⁹ Association of Colleges, *The Dual Professional Toolkit* (2018), <https://www.aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/Dual%20Professional%20toolkit.pdf>, p6.

¹⁰ UCAS, *Further Education (FE) lecturers teach students over the age of 16*, <https://www.ucas.com/ucas/after-gcses/find-career-ideas/explore-jobs/job-profile/further-education-lecturer>, [Accessed 18/02/2021].

¹¹ Institute for Learning, *Professionalism: Education and training practitioners across further education and skills* (2012), https://set.et-foundation.co.uk/media/110497/2012_10-lfl-professionalism-paper.pdf, p4.

teaching.¹² All existing and inspiring further education practitioners should have the opportunity to achieve and appropriate QTS status by the end of the next term of the Senedd.

Additionally, at present, school teachers are able to freely cross over to teach at FEIs whilst further education practitioners are unable to teach at schools due to the absence of a QTS model. The next Welsh Government should provide appropriate opportunities for staff to switch between institutions, and to ensure that when this occurs, practitioners are adequately equipped to provide the highest standard of teaching in a new environment. The next Welsh Government should help shape the post-16 education workforce by developing a specialist post-16 teaching qualification for teachers in sixth form and those working in academic disciplines within further education. This will create a strong foundation for promoting post graduate research and study in both an academic discipline as well as within pedagogical practice. It would also help create a firmer bridge between school or college and university.

Extend regulation powers of the Education Workforce Council (EWC)

EWC has a statutory requirement to accredit programmes of Initial Teacher Education (ITE), to monitor compliance of accredited programmes against Welsh Government criteria and withdraw accreditation of programmes. Significantly, this accreditation of ITE only occurs for school teachers.¹³

The EWC currently works in a dual professional partnership to deliver the PGCEs/CertEds in schools, with schools acting as employers, universities acting as training bodies, and the EWC acting as the regulatory body. However, the EWC currently does not regulate ITE in the further education sector. The Education Wales Act 2016 does not specify that FEIs need to employ practitioners that hold QTS.¹⁴ This means that the EWC's remit does not extend to ensuring that FEIs should necessarily employ staff qualified to the same extent. The next Welsh Government should work towards building a streamlined system which aligns school taught PGCEs and CertEds with a similar system in further education to underpin a QTS system in an appropriate way.

To attain this system, the current good practice professional standards upheld by Welsh Government should be transferred to mandated professional standards regulated by the EWC. This would enable the EWC to accredit ITE in cooperation with training providers and FEIs in post-16 education as well as in schools.

¹² Carys Davies, 'Registration of Further Education Teachers – The Obstacles and opportunities for Professional Development', *Education Workforce Council*, <https://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/component/content/article/43-english/about/blog-archive/107-carys-davies-registration-of-further-education-teachers-the-obstacles-and-opportunities-for-professional-development>, [Accessed 17/02/2021].

¹³ Education Workforce Council, *Initial teacher education accreditation*, <https://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/accreditation/ite-accreditation/initial-teacher-education-accreditation.html>, [Accessed 24/02/2021].

¹⁴ Education Wales Act 2014, *Section 14*, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/5/section/14/enacted>.

Enhancing the dual professional system

The next Welsh Government should analyse and consider international best practice in dual professionalism to create a system which is tailored, appropriate and of the highest benefit to further education practitioners in Wales. This briefing identifies some aspects of international best practice on dual professionalism. However, this list is not exhaustive, and further research should be carried out.

The Basque Country:

TKNIKA is an innovation and applied research centre based in the Basque Country. The centre is supported by the Basque government.¹⁵ This institute provides a collaborative and dynamic space whereby vocational training colleges work in collaboration with companies, university research departments, and technological centres to harbour creativity and innovation to meet technological demand in the area. Courses led in Tknika are predominantly taught by teachers from vocational education. However, there is close cooperation with SME's who communicate local industrial needs and projects to equip learners with the best hard and soft skills for when they finish their studies. Tknika has created a 'network of hubs' as a communication platform to identify demand for projects, and to encourage project leaders to share best practice for benefit of the learner.¹⁶

Germany and Austria:

In both Germany and Austria, cooperation between the vocational sector and local business is imperative to upholding an effective dual professional system. In these countries, learner time is split between attending a vocational school and spending time in industry. In Germany, 70% of time is spent in industry and 20% in a vocational school. In Austria, 80% of time is spent in industry with the remaining 20% in vocational school.¹⁷ The respective institutions then have an obligation to meet the training contract for learners by providing specific opportunities. The vocational school focuses on basic subject-related theory and general education whilst the training company provides provision of job-specific knowledge through real life working conditions.¹⁸ Therefore, practitioners are able to teach in the areas that they are appropriately trained and provide learners with a rounded vocational experience. Continuous communication is imperative to ensure that learners are meeting their potential.

Alongside analysing best international practice, the next Welsh Government should implement funded CPD systems recorded through the EWC's Professional Learning Passport (PLP). The PLP is a

¹⁵ UNEVOC Centre, *Tknika*, (2017), <https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/Explore+the+UNEVOC+Network/centre=3065>.

¹⁶ EFVET, *Tknika – Basque Centre of Research and Applied Innovation of VET*, <https://www.efvet.org/2019/04/17/tnnika-open-days-a-window-to-the-future-of-the-vocational-education-training/>, [Accessed 23/02/2021].

¹⁷ Lifelong Learning Programme, *An introduction to the Dual VET system: The secret behind the success of Germany and Austria*, https://www.dualvet.eu/docs/productos/1_The%20Dual%20VET%20system.pdf, [Accessed 23/02/2021], p15.

¹⁸ Ibid.

bilingual tool to capture, reflect, share and plan teaching practice.¹⁹ A future Welsh Government should make CPD mandatory and support the requirement already in place within the common contract of employment. With the EWC clear policy direction should be published to outline what counts as CPD so that all further education practitioners can evidence examples of up to date vocational knowledge, and relevant industry experience regularly.²⁰

Additionally, to enhance a dual professional system, the next Welsh Government should commit to providing additional funding for salary costs via the annual further education funding allocation to reflect the high levels skills which are required by industry specialists to enter the sector. Currently industry professionals are likely to achieve a higher salary working in industry rather than entering the further education sector to teach learners. This will allow employers to work in partnership with the further education trade unions to amend and adapt the common contract and allow suitably qualified and experienced lecturers to remain in face to face teaching rather than opting to follow pathways into management in order to further their careers. This issue is further heightened when encouraging Welsh language industry professionals to enter the sector. Approximately 860,000 people speak Welsh in Wales.²¹ Inevitably, the number of industry professionals that also speak Welsh to a standard in which they are confident to teach is an additional challenge when attempting to attract them to the further education sector. Consideration should be given to the mandatory requirements of Welsh language ability in both professional standards and also in the newly developed QTS programmes for both vocational and academic lecturers.

¹⁹ Education Workforce Council, *Professional Learning Passport*, <https://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/professional-development/professional-learning-passport.html>, [Accessed 23/02/2021].

²⁰ Welsh Government, *Post 16 Professional Learning Scoping Study* (2019), <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-12/post-16-professional-learning-scoping-study-executive-summary.pdf>, p10.

²¹ Welsh Government, *Welsh language data from the Annual Population Survey: July 2019 to June 2020*, <https://gov.wales/welsh-language-data-annual-population-survey-july-2019-june-2020#:~:text=For%20the%20year%20ending%2030,equating%20to%2029%2C400%20fewer%20people>, [Accessed 01/03/2021].

This briefing is the fifth in a series of five covering each of the themes identified in *Further Success: Policy Recommendations for the next Welsh Government In Post-16 Education and Lifelong Learning for Wales*.



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