

The Children, Young People and Education Committee
The provision of textbooks and learning resources for pupils taking
reformed general qualifications

19 April 2018

1. The NASUWT welcomes the opportunity to submit views to the Children, Young People and Education Committee (CYPEC) in advance of the Committee's scrutiny session with the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) and Qualifications Wales (QW) to consider the provision of textbooks and learning resources for pupils taking reformed general qualifications.
2. The NASUWT is the largest teachers' union in Wales, representing exclusively teachers and school leaders, and has drawn on comments and observations made by members to inform this submission.

GENERAL COMMENTS

3. The NASUWT has identified five main areas of concern in relation to the provision of text books and learning resources for pupils taking reformed general qualifications. These are:
 - the unrealistic timetable for the reform of qualifications in Wales set by the Welsh Government;
 - the commercial viability of the publication of textbooks, if the curriculum in Wales becomes even more distinguished from the curriculum in England;
 - the general underfunding of the education service in Wales, particularly in relation to delegated school funding;

- the increased workload placed on teachers and the lack of assistance available regarding clerical and administrative tasks, especially photocopying, in the absence of textbooks; and
 - the inequity between the availability of resources for Welsh and English language provision.
4. The NASUWT notes the comment of QW in their letter of 13 March 2018 to the CYPEC that:

*'The reform timetable in Wales was set by Welsh Government to necessarily mirror the timetable established by reforms in England. This has proven to be extremely challenging for all involved.'*¹
 5. This comment was echoed by the WJEC in their letter to CYPEC, also on 13 March 2018, in which it was stated:

*'This has proved to be a problem for several subjects that were recently reformed to a schedule set out by Welsh Government during the latter part of the period when it fulfilled the role of qualifications regulator in Wales.'*²
 6. The Union also notes that in her response to the CYPEC on 13 April 2018, the Cabinet Secretary for Education (CSfE) makes no reference to these remarks.³ The NASUWT maintains that it is in no-one's interest, in particular that of the learners in Wales, that such a timetable is followed in future.
 7. Against this background, the Union welcomes the comment by QW that:

*'we will guard against the delay in the availability of resources in future reforms.'*⁴
 8. Further, given that QW, rather than the Welsh Government, now fulfils the role of qualifications regulator in Wales, the NASUWT would not expect the problem to be repeated. The NASUWT urges the CYPEC to

¹ <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/ielssueDetails.aspx?IId=21415&Opt=3>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

seek assurances from the WJEC and QW that they recognise that all parties will need to work together to ensure that that is the case.

9. In noting that much has been said about the divergence between the education systems in Wales and England, the NASUWT suggests that, in general, whereas the structure of the education service in England has been radically changed, in Wales, it has remained relatively stable.
10. The Union maintains that such stability benefits teachers and pupils alike and cautions against further qualification reform, other than that which may prove necessary to ensure the currency and comparability of the qualifications on offer in Wales in order to provide learners with access to further or higher education and/or employment opportunities. The NASUWT urges the CYPEC to solicit the views of the WJEC and QW on future reforms, during the scrutiny session.
11. The NASUWT shares many of the concerns set out by other stakeholders over the commercial viability of the publication of textbooks, if the curriculum in Wales was to become even more divergent in comparison to England.
12. The NASUWT believes that the lack of commercial viability around the provision of textbooks in Wales is due, in part, to the woeful underfunding of schools. The Union has campaigned for many years on the issue of school funding and has been calculating the on-average, per-pupil funding gap between maintains schools in Wales and England for the past few years, following the Welsh Government's decision to stop publishing the statistics in or around 2011. The latest calculations reveal that the funding gap stood at £678 for 2015-16, the last year for which figures are currently available, which amounts to a shortfall of some £306 million in school budgets in Wales.
13. This chronic underfunding of schools, in turn, places huge pressures on teachers and impacts significantly on their workload. The CYPEC will be aware that the National Education Workforce Survey, undertaken by the Education Workforce Council on behalf of the Welsh Government,

showed that 88.3% of school teachers disagreed or disagreed strongly that they were able to effectively manage their existing workload.⁵

14. One of the main factors cited by school teachers in the survey, which has impacted most on their ability to effectively manage their workload, was 'administration'. Such administration includes the necessity to photocopy resources – exacerbated by the lack of textbooks, the inability of schools to purchase textbooks due to underfunding and the reductions in the availability of clerical assistance.
15. The NASUWT suggest that that CYPEC may wish to consider reminding the WJEC and QW that such task fall outside the teachers' duties:

*'A teacher should not be required routinely to participate in any administrative, clerical and organisational tasks which do not call for the exercise of a teacher's professional skills and judgment, including those associated with the arrangements for preparing pupils for external examinations such as invigilation.'*⁶

16. The NASUWT notes the comments of the WJEC Chief Executive, Gareth Pierce, in his letter of 13 March 2018 to the CYPEC:

*'In support of most of our qualifications, WJEC makes a substantial investment in teaching and learning resources that are made available in digital form free of charge to users.'*⁷

17. Whereas the Union recognises that the provision of electronic resources on Hwb for the newly-specified qualifications will be of assistance to teachers in the absence of sufficient, quality textbooks, the use of these resources still requires teachers to tailor them to the particularly needs of the learners and to provide learners with copies of materials. The NASUWT does not view this practice as a suitable substitute for providing learners with good-quality text books, and maintains that it can add significantly to teachers' workload. Consequently, the Union urges the CYPEC to discuss these concerns with the WJEC and QW.

⁵ <https://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/>

⁶ School teachers' pay and conditions document 2017, Department of Education, September 2017

⁷ Op. cit.

18. In addition, the NASUWT is concerned that the provision of textbooks and other resources available in Welsh is even worse than that available to English language learners. Whilst the issue of commercial viability will play a part here, as the demand from the cohort requiring Welsh-medium resources is smaller than the demand across Wales as a whole, the situation is nonetheless unacceptable.

19. The Union notes the comment of the CSfE in her letter of 13 April 2018:

However, additional funding has been provided to WJEC to enable them to improve the procedures and timescales between Welsh and English versions of textbooks. As a result we have seen instances of the timescales being reduced. For example a GCSE Geography textbook was published within 4 months of the English version being available.'

20. The NASUWT maintains that in order to ensure parity between learners and equality of provision, the requisite resources in each language must be made available at the same time, with sufficient lead-in to allow 'teachers to prepare themselves ahead of the first teaching'⁸ and trust that such assurance will be sought from the WJEC and QW by the CYPEC during the scrutiny session.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

21. The NASUWT offers the following comments and observations from NASUWT members which provide a snapshot of situations being experienced in schools in relation to the provision of textbooks and learning resources for pupils taking reformed general qualifications:

'The provision of RE text books through the medium of Welsh has been a shambles. The course is about to end this May and the text books have yet to arrive! They should be in school by the 9th but the WJEC says that teachers should wait no later than May 11th before contacting them with enquiries. This is 3 days before the actual RE GCSE examination!'

⁸ Qualifications Wales, 13 March 2018, Ibid.

'Pupils and teachers in Welsh medium schools have been severely disadvantaged compared to English medium schools'

'The workload of Welsh-medium RE teachers has increased because they've been translating the English books as they go along'.

'Teachers in Welsh-medium schools have expressed concern about the lack of translated materials and usually have to begin courses while awaiting translation of text books and other essential materials.'

'There are concerns about RE resources particularly given that some schools are entering pupils at GCSE level at the end of Year 8. Similar concerns have been raised about curriculum change in Geography and History.'

'Issues have also been raised about the nature of the Welsh Curriculum, the KS2-3 transition and the difficulties associated with linking the Donaldson-type curriculum with what is being offered at GCSE/KS4'.

'At KS4 we bought the two WJEC English text books with guidance and lessons for the new specifications. We bought a copy of each book for every English teacher, so 12 books in total, but not for the pupils. I think they are excellent and have lots of Welsh related content. The reason given for not buying full sets of the books was cost. However, if we want to use texts and tasks from the books we now have to type them out, which is not the best use of time, or photocopy them, which is expensive.'

'I am currently teaching a new specification for Welsh Second Language GCSE. There are no textbooks. Resources are appearing on Hwb but it is difficult to prepare pupils properly for an exam that has not been sat before and for which limited resources are available.'

'I am teaching a year eleven class an Applied Welsh course. No textbook but plenty of resources shared by the Head of Department.'

‘There is no reprographics officer. Instead, photocopiers are dotted around the school for staff use. This is not a good use of teacher time and I feel if the school will not provide clerical support in order to photocopy resources, then it should supply text books.’

22. The NASUWT trusts that the CYPEC will recognise that these comments provide an insight into the significant problems faced by teachers and pupils in relation to the delivery of the reformed general qualifications and will question the WJEC and QW during the scrutiny session on whether either body has given due consideration to:

- the impact that underfunding has on the ability of schools to purchase sufficient and appropriate textbooks and other learning resources generally;
- the relationship between underfunding and the commercial viability of producing textbook;
- the adverse impact that the lack of textbooks has on teacher workload;
- the inequalities created by the failure to produce resources in both Welsh and English at the same time ahead of the first teaching of a reformed qualification.

23. The NASUWT trust this information will assist the CYPEC in the scrutiny session with the WJEC and QW.



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