Summary of the Furlong Report

*Teaching Tomorrow’s Teachers: Options for the future of initial teacher training in Wales*

Summarised by Paul Stock, iNet Wales Programme Coordinator, March 2015

The Furlong Report was published on 09 March 2015. It considers and scopes the changes that are needed to bring about improvements to initial teacher education and training (ITET) in Wales, following a review of the quality and consistency of teacher training undertaken by Professor Ralph Tabberer in 2013. This summary provides an overview of the main arguments and recommendations.

**The Case for Change**

There is a ‘widespread consensus’ that current ITET provision overall ‘is not of sufficient high quality to serve the needs of Wales either now or in the future.’

[There is a] ‘need to attract and increase the quality of new entrants to the teaching profession and raise the standard of provision on offer to make it more attractive to prospective candidates.’

‘The “teachers of tomorrow” will have to respond to the changing nature of knowledge in society.’ (p5)

‘Wales, needs a new form of professionalism amongst its teachers. It needs teachers who:

- have high expectations of and a commitment to the achievement of all pupils;
- take responsibility for innovation;
- relish change and help to lead it;
- are able to take a sharper focus on the needs of individual learners, including helping them in ‘learning how to learn’;
- accept and respond to demands for their accountability;
- take personal and collective responsibility for professional development;
- are able to evaluate and use different sorts of evidence relevant to the improvement of practice;
- are willing to work collaboratively with other teachers and other professionals both day to day and in the development of their practice;
- are willing and able to work in ways that draw on best practice from across the UK and internationally.’ (p6)
The Donaldson Report also has big implications for the teaching profession. ‘What is needed in Wales are forms of ITE and CPD that will allow and encourage the achievement of a new kind of teacher professionalism of the sort proposed by Donaldson; one that is appropriate for the challenges of 21st century schooling.’ (p7)

International Evidence

‘The best programmes internationally:

• ensure that ITE programmes attract the best and most suitable candidates into the teaching profession;
• offer academic awards that are competitive, practice-focused and built on relevant educational research;
• develop strong links between theory and practice, in a way that helps students to understand and explore the interconnectedness of educational theories and classroom practices;
• establish strong links between initial teacher education and continuing professional development of teachers in schools;
• ensure that all of the above principles are underpinned by a clear understanding of evidence about how student teachers learn to teach and that courses themselves are the constant subject of research and development.’ (p8)

Current Provision

‘As has already been noted, there is a broad consensus across Wales that in relation to current requirements, initial teacher education is not as strong as it should be. But there is also evidence, that those current requirements in key respects fall well short of what the international evidence suggests is best practice. They also fall well short of what will be required if the recommendations of the Donaldson Review of Curriculum and Assessment are accepted by the Welsh Government. From published evidence and from meetings held with a wide range of stakeholders across Wales in the last year, it is clear that there are currently weaknesses in provision at a variety of different levels: the National level, the Institutional level and the Programme level.’ (p10)

There is a widespread view held across the higher education sector that initial teacher education is not currently well led at the national level: ‘... it is unclear who or what body is charged with providing leadership of the sector.’

And ‘...without effective leadership there will be little chance of the sector responding to the many challenges posed by the recommendations of the Donaldson Review. And without effective leadership there is little opportunity for the sector benchmark its current work nationally and internationally and to become a self-improving system. Given the current lack of leadership of the sector it is perhaps not surprising that the quality of the programmes is not as strong as it should be.’ (p11)
Current Estyn Provision does not provide ‘an effective or appropriate way of monitoring or managing quality. Moreover, some stakeholders have questioned whether the current inspection process, with its strong emphasis on public accountability, is as effective as it might be in contributing to the enhancement of quality.’

The ‘current QTS Standards in Wales, as in England, remain conceptualised as a set of behaviourally based “competences”: things that newly qualified teachers “must know and do” ... the current standards in Wales do not conceptualise teacher learning in a developmental way.’

The standards give ‘little emphasis to the contribution of initial teacher education to teachers’ long-term professional development. The Welsh Standards also place much less emphasis on ‘knowing and understanding’ than those of other countries. Because of the dominant focus on what newly qualified teachers must be able ‘to do’ at their end of their programmes, there is virtually no explicit recognition of the role of research or critical reflection in teachers’ professional learning. As a consequence, newly qualified teachers are not conceptualised nor is there a requirement that they are prepared to be active professionals, with their own judgements to make and with their own responsibilities as leaders of children’s learning.’ (p12)

‘The Donaldson Review necessitates a fundamental re-conceptualisation of all of the teaching Standards in Wales- from the Standards for Qualified Teacher Status right through to the Standards for Head Teachers.’ (p13)

‘There is extensive evidence, both from Estyn and from senior stakeholders across the system that effective collaboration [between ITT Centres] has been much more challenging that was originally anticipated. Different universities, necessarily have different processes and procedures for staffing, for course management, for quality assurance, for financial accounting and many other things as well.’ (p14)

There ‘seems little appetite to move away from university led provision. Employment based routes (GTP and Teach First), though important in their own ways, remain very small compared with the numbers enrolled in university led courses.’

In 2014, ‘no single academic from any of the teacher education Centres was returned for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) ... On this bench mark Wales has the lowest profile of any of the four home nations of the UK and by a very long way.’

Very few university staff have a research contract. Few staff have doctorates. (p15)

ITT centres in Wales have difficulty recruiting able students when there are incentives to study in England, such as financial incentives and lower entry grades. (p16)

There are ‘questions as to whether the current three year undergraduate route is the most appropriate vehicle for attracting and producing the highest quality primary school teachers….In Scotland and Northern Ireland, both of which attract much higher quality entrants, the degree is already four years in duration.’

‘Given that research is not explicitly referenced in any form in the current ‘Standards’ and given the lack of a robust research culture within teacher education in Wales at present, it is hard to see how these features of high quality teacher education can currently be in place.’
'At present it seems that most schools have only a small role in professional education, often with very small numbers of students. Teacher education is undertaken primarily on a voluntary basis – an ‘add on’ to schools’ normal work. Internationally however, there is strong evidence that in the most effective systems, universities work with much smaller numbers of schools which take larger numbers of students. Moreover, schools themselves are encouraged to take leading responsibility in key aspects of the training programme.' (p17)

The ‘proposed new masters’ degree framework and the New Deal more generally, have the potential to ensure that teachers’ professional learning can be supported in a systematic way throughout their careers. However, while these are very positive developments there are currently no systematic links between those with responsibility for CPD, the new Consortia, and Wales’ teacher education Centres in universities.’ (p18)

‘Changes are needed at all three levels of the initial teacher education system – the national level, the institutional level and the programme level. Much of the responsibility for the changes that are needed will lie beyond the direct purview of the Welsh Government. It is the universities both at their central and programme levels and practices in schools that need. What Government can do, however, is to set up the appropriate structures that will encourage and support the changes that are needed.’ (p19)

Options for Change

In the current accreditation arrangements, the QTS Standards play a central, if not defining role. ...Given that the Standards for Newly Qualified Teachers in Wales are so narrowly competency based and given that they are not clearly linked to teachers’ future professional learning, it raises questions as to whether, in their current form, they are actually appropriate as the primary driver for institutional accreditation. Certainly when considered in relation to the vision of teacher professionalism foreshadowed by the Donaldson Review (2015) or compared with practice in other jurisdictions, they seem overly restricted.’ (p22)

The ‘Standards for Initial Registration Scotland set out a developmental curriculum for the university, as well as the school contribution to initial teacher education. It is these Standards that are then used as a basis for institutional accreditation.

‘In the Republic of Ireland…all university staff must be research active; they should hold qualifications at least one level higher than those they are teaching; student staff ratios on teacher education programmes should be no more than 15:1.’ (p23)

‘This then leads to a range of possible options:

Option 9.1 Status quo. Re-accreditation using Estyn inspection information against the current Standards

‘If the Government agrees that re-accreditation is necessary, then the quickest way to undertake that process would be by using existing procedures. However, this would be unlikely to ensure good practice as defined by the international literature; Wales’s accreditation procedures have not done so in the past and therefore seem unlikely to do so in the future.'
Option 9.2 Re-accreditation with a revised set of developmental standards including a broadly specified curriculum as in Scotland

‘Certainly including some reference to a broadly specified curriculum to be covered in both universities and schools would be a valuable development; indeed it would be essential if the aspirations of the Donaldson Review (2015) are to be achieved. Such an approach would recognise and value the distinctive but complementary contribution of both contexts for professional education. It would also be an advantage if the standards underpinning the accreditation process were conceptualised as developmental, with clear links to probation and early professional development. Initial teacher education would then link more appropriately with Wales’ proposed new Masters programme than is possible at present. A developmental set of standards would also encourage greater collaboration than at present between different providers – universities, Consortia and Masters’ providers such as the Masters in Educational Practice (MEP).’ (p23)

Option 9.3 Re-accreditation as in 9.2 but with revised criteria, including minimum standards for providers, as in the Republic of Ireland.

‘Given that one of the key weaknesses of current provision outlined in Section A has been the lack of investment by universities in their departments and faculties of education, then specifying a set of minimum standards for providers could have an important part to play in raising quality. Only if teacher education attracts high quality staff with the appropriate professional and academic qualifications and only if, once they are in post, they are given the right support by their universities in terms of their employment contracts and the opportunities to develop as active researchers themselves, can we expect the system to improve.’

Option 9.4 Re-accreditation as in 9.3 but with a revised set of standards, including minimum standards for partnerships with schools

‘One of the major weaknesses with the majority of teacher education both in the UK and the Republic of Ireland is that the contribution of schools has, except in a small number of instances, remained underdeveloped. As the BERA-RSA (2014) inquiry made clear, the development of research informed clinical practice’ is the hallmark of the very best teacher education programmes internationally. However, it demands a very different form of ‘partnership’ from that currently in place in most of Wales. Schools themselves have to have a leading role in key parts of programmes, in that they have to take a whole school approach to professional education and they have to work in close collaboration with their university partners. In addition, programmes have to develop systematic ways of integrating what student teachers learn in school, with other forms of professional knowledge that they acquire through their universities. Although most accreditation criteria, including those in Wales, specify in broad terms that teacher education programmes must be based on the principles of partnerships with schools, too often that aspiration is not realised in practice. A revised set of accreditation criteria which focus in detail on the nature of university/school partnerships and which give schools leading responsibilities in key aspects of ITE programmes, could give Wales the opportunity to devise more consistent and effective practice than currently happens elsewhere in the UK.’ (p24)
The need to Reform the Accreditation Body

Option 10.1 HEFCW continues to act as the accreditation body

‘While there would obviously be advantages in continuity if HEFCW itself were to take on a new and expanded role in the accreditation process, it would not be able to do so within its current resources. Those resources could be expanded, but it remains questionable as to whether a generic organisation such as HEFCW, with many different national responsibilities, should also become the lead body in a very specific professional field such as initial teacher education.’

Option 10.2 The Welsh Government itself acts as the accreditation body

‘There would be some advantages if the accreditation process were taken over by the Welsh Government itself. In resource terms, it could be more efficient; coordination at a policy level would in principle be easier to achieve. However, such a model would perhaps make teacher education too close to government. It may, as in England, come to be seen as a politicised process and Government itself might be seen as directly responsible for any future weaknesses in provision.’

Option 10.3 Establish a new and independent “Teacher Education Accreditation Board”

‘Again, this would have some key advantages. The Board could include representation from a wide range of stake holders (the teaching profession, higher education, parents’ organisations, Estyn and HEFCW); as such it would be at an appropriate ‘arm’s length’ from Government. With appropriate membership, such a Board would also be well placed to take on a leadership role of teacher education as a whole. The disadvantage of this option is that it would inevitably be more expensive than other options presented. It would also be yet one more body for Government and Higher Education to engage with; in some respects it might therefore make coordination of the sector more not less difficult.’

Option 10.4 Establish a ‘Teacher Education Accreditation Board’ within the Education Workforce Council for Wales

‘This is the option that has been adopted in Scotland and the Republic of Ireland, where it appears to work well. As a sub-committee of the Council, the Board could include a range of stakeholders, including representation from the teaching profession itself. It would also be well placed to provide leadership and coordination for teacher education on a national level, while at the same time being at arm’s length from Government. In taking responsibility for the accreditation of providers of teacher education, the Council

RECOMMENDATION 1: That the Welsh Government, as a matter of priority, revises the Standards for Newly Qualified Teachers in line with the principles specified in Option 9.4.

RECOMMENDATION 2: That the Welsh Government establishes a revised accreditation process for providers of initial teacher education as described in Option 9.4.
would also be bringing itself in line with the role of many other professional bodies; it would also send a strong message about the teaching profession itself taking a lead role in its own professional education.’ (p26)

RECOMMENDATION 3: That the Welsh Government establishes a ‘Teacher Education Accreditation Board’ within the Education Workforce Council for Wales – option 10.4.

Estyn’s Future Role

RECOMMENDATION 4: That the role of Estyn within initial teacher education be reviewed once a revised accreditation process is fully in place.

RECOMMENDATION 5: That Estyn’s ‘Guidance for Inspection’ for schools be revised to include specific recognition of the contribution of a school to initial teacher education. (p27)

Options for the future of the primary BA (Hons) QTS degree (the BEd)

Option 12.1 Status quo – the BA (Hons) QTS degree remains as it is

‘Clearly this would be the most straightforward option. However, given that there remain serious questions about the quality of the three year route when compared with programmes elsewhere in the UK, and given that there are questions about the quality of intake when compared with rising entry requirements in so many other subjects, some action does need to be taken. One of the key findings from international evidence is that the most successful programmes strive constantly to raise both the quality of intake and of provision. In these circumstances, it would seem that the current three year programme is no longer fit for purpose as a major entry route for primary school teachers in Wales.’

Option 12.2. Extend the existing BA Education to four years

‘Extending the BA Education degree to four years would have significant advantages. Four year courses elsewhere in the UK generally attract higher quality students than three year courses; they also allow for greater attention to subject study and they allow an important element of advanced study – including subject specialist expertise. In all of these ways, the addition of a fourth year in Wales would contribute significantly to raising the quality of primary school teachers.’

Option 12.3 Extend the degree to four years and base 50% of students’ time in main subject departments

‘This option follows the Scottish example. In comparison with Option 12.2, it places a greater emphasis on students’ personal rather than their professional education. However, with two full years available, students’ professional education is still stronger than in the consecutive route. Increasing the amount of time
devoted to personal education is based on the assumption that this will have significant benefits in terms of raising quality, both of the intake and of the educational experiences offered to prospective primary school teachers.’ (p29)

**RECOMMENDATION 6:** That the Primary BA (Hons) QTS in its current form be phased out and replaced by a four year degree with 50% of students’ time spent in main subject departments – option 12.3. (p29)

**Options for raising the quality of entry to the profession**

**RECOMMENDATION 7:** That the Welsh Government monitors closely the impact of financial incentives on recruitment, particularly taking into account different funding levels in comparison with those available in England. (p31)

**Options for the future of professionally oriented research capacity**

There are at least three options for the future development of such research capacity in Wales.

**Option 14.1 Status quo. Allow the strengthened institutions to develop their own research cultures**

‘If the earlier proposals for the re-accreditation of teacher education are adopted, especially those outlined in Option 9.4 which suggests establishing a minimum set of standards for providers of teacher education, then there is already a possibility that educational research capacity in Wales will improve. It might also improve if there was more concentration of teacher education provision, with a smaller number of universities involved. A reformed system would certainly set up the possibility for improvement but it would not guarantee it. Over the last 15 years, universities across Wales have allowed educational research capacity to wither. Turning around that situation may therefore demand more direct intervention.’ (p32)

**Option 14.2 Extend Wiserd* Education to include a pedagogical Dimension**

(*Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data & Methods*)

‘The Wiserd Education model does provide a useful model of how research capacity can be fostered. It could therefore be extended by the addition of a second dimension to its work covering pedagogical research in key subject areas. This would have the effect of establishing a national centre for applied educational research in Wales. Given that Cardiff University already has an international reputation as a major centre of high quality social scientific research in education, there would be a strong chance that a new pedagogical dimension in their work would be of the highest quality. With appropriately managed funding it could also be tailored specifically to the needs of Wales. Such a model would have significant advantages. However, even if it were networked on the lines of the existing Wiserd Education programme,
it would only have a limited direct impact on teacher educators across Wales. Most of that capacity would inevitably be based in Cardiff University itself, which is not at present a major provider of initial teacher education.’

**Option 14.3 In addition to extending Wiserd Education, link it to a network of five centres of pedagogical excellence across Wales**

‘A final option would build on Option 14.2 but in addition establish up to five centres of pedagogical excellence across Wales. Universities could bid to establish a pedagogical centre in one of a range of subjects seen as essential for Wales – for example in Welsh language teaching, Mathematics, foundation phase teaching and teaching socially disadvantaged children. Funding might be for five years in the first instance with universities themselves providing matched funding. The five centres, each with strong links to the provision of teacher education, should be networked and linked to a pedagogical research centre at Cardiff university, where there should be funding to establish a Chair in pedagogical research. This approach would serve the national need to increase research capacity in key areas of teaching in Wales. The distributed centres, networked and supported from Cardiff would also stimulate active research cultures amongst teacher education providers across the country.’ (p33)

**RECOMMENDATION 8: That Wiserd Education be extended to include a pedagogical dimension linked to a network of five centres of pedagogical excellence across Wales, Option 14.3. (p33)**

**University providers**

‘At present there are three Centres accredited for the provision of initial teacher education in Wales: five universities contribute to those Centres. They are the South West Wales Centre for Teacher Education (University of Wales, Trinity St David); the South East Wales Centre for Teacher Education (Cardiff Metropolitan and South Wales universities); and the North and Mid Wales Centre for Teacher Education (Aberystwyth and Bangor universities).’

**Option 15.1 – 5 University Centres**

‘Given the changes that have been achieved [in collaboration, bilingual provision and range of courses], it would therefore now in principle be possible to allow each of the existing universities to continue to offer its current range of provision as individual accredited providers. …In the short term it would be unlikely to have either a positive or negative impact on quality. However, it would perhaps weaken the potential for further development…the fact that programmes are differentially distributed means that there is perhaps less potential for the development of research capacity and expertise…It also needs to be recognised that raising the quality of provision across five institutions could be significantly more challenging for the Welsh Government.’ (p34)

**Option 15.2 – A single university centre**

It ‘would be possible for Wales to develop a single national centre for teacher education. In some ways this represents an attractive option for the future development of the field. In absolute terms, the numbers
of students involved at around 1600 pa is not large compared with some other providers in the UK. A concentration of provision would allow for the development of a high quality Welsh Institute of Teacher Education on the lines of that has developed in Singapore. Such an Institute might also become a national centre for advanced CPD and research, potentially making it a major contributor to raising the quality of education across Wales. Given the geography of Wales, the Institute would need to work with a number of regional bodies across the country. A group of say 20 ‘Training Schools’ which were themselves given additional staffing to undertake their work on teacher education could act as local hubs, linked to a network of other schools in their region. Such a system would allow for the linking of schools from across Wales with the very best international practice in terms of professional education and research.’ (p35)

Option 15.3 – 3 University Centres

‘An alternative would be to competitively re-accredit teacher education from three regional universities. As at present, these should perhaps be located in the North and Mid Wales, the South West and the South East Wales. Collectively however they would need to ensure that they provided appropriate national coverage. Such an approach would allow the current distribution of provision to continue while at the same time allowing for further consolidation. In addition, the removal of the need for collaboration across universities would allow for the development of three strong centres based in three institutions, without the need for joint planning and joint accountability. Three centres, each offering broadly similar provision would also allow more straightforward marketing of courses to prospective students. When compared with the five centre model, the primary difference between the three university Centres would be their location rather than the range of courses offered.’ (p36)

RECOMMENDATION 9: That the Welsh Government agrees to resolve future provision of initial teacher education through a process of competitive tendering with the Teacher Education Accreditation Board making the final decision as to how many universities should become accredited providers. (p37)
List of recommendations

Recommendation 1:
That the Welsh Government, as a matter of priority, revises the Standards for Newly Qualified Teachers in line with the principles specified in Option 9.4.

Recommendation 2:
That the Welsh Government establishes a revised accreditation process for providers of initial teacher education as described in Option 9.4.

Recommendation 3:
That the Welsh Government establishes a ‘Teacher Education Accreditation Board’ within the Education Workforce Council for Wales.

Recommendation 4:
That the role of Estyn within initial teacher education be reviewed once a revised accreditation process is fully in place.

Recommendation 5:
That Estyn’s ‘Guidance for Inspection’ for schools be revised to include specific recognition of the contribution of a school to initial teacher education.

Recommendation 6:
That the Primary BA (Hons) QTS in its current form be phased out and replaced by a four year degree with 50% of students’ time spent in main subject departments.

Recommendation 7:
That the Welsh Government monitors closely the impact of financial incentives on recruitment, particularly taking into account different funding levels in comparison with those available in England.

Recommendation 8:
That Wiserd Education be extended to include a pedagogical dimension linked to a network of five centres of pedagogical excellence across Wales.

Recommendation 9:
That the Welsh Government agrees to resolve future provision of initial teacher education through a process of competitive tendering with the Teacher Education Accreditation Board making the final decision as to how many universities should become accredited providers.