

WALES JOURNAL OF EDUCATION
CYLCHGRAWN ADDYSG CYMRU

19.2

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<https://doi.org/10.16922/wje.19.2>



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Erratum in 19.1

Please note that the references for Dr K. Smith and Dr K. Horton's 'Teaching and Educational Research in Wales: How Does Teachers' Engagement with Educational Research Differ in Wales from those in England?' article in the 19.1 volume were inadvertently omitted, but can be viewed in the online version of the paper.

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Editorial:
*The Wales Journal of Education and the Future
of Educational Research in Wales*

PROFESSOR DAVID EGAN
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The publication of the fourth edition of the re-launched *Wales Journal of Education* provides a timely moment to take stock on what has been achieved over the last two years and to consider the future development of the *Journal*. Through the collective endeavours of ourselves, the Editorial Board and the University of Wales Press and with the financial support provided by the University of Wales, we have been able to stabilise and expand the *Journal*. It has now returned to being published twice a year, with a special number in the spring being followed by a generic edition in the autumn.

Readers will also have noticed a significant increase in the size of the *Journal* with the four numbers produced over the last two years being well in excess of editions published previously. Quantity should not of course be the dominant metric for an academic publication, for we are committed to producing high-quality contributions to educational scholarship that meet the demands of the Research Excellence Framework. We will have to let that exercise make in due course the ultimate judgement on the quality of what we are producing, but it has been encouraging how supportive our peer reviewers have been of the draft articles we have submitted to them for scrutiny.

In this number of the *Journal* we publish two Welsh-language articles. Using a case study approach, Nicholas considers the impact of standardised reading tests for 7–14 year olds and reveals, among other findings, that the

<https://doi.org/10.16922/wje.19.2.1>



emphasis on accountability had led the school to focus on test preparation at the expense of using the results diagnostically. In their article on the Welsh Government's Welsh-Medium Education Strategy, Duggan and Thomas point to the implementation challenges. When we also take into account the English-language contributions (Jones, Dallimore and Cunnington-Wynn) in this volume on Welsh-language themes, the *Journal* is providing an important conduit for researchers and policymakers in this growing but relatively under-developed area of research. The *Journal* has always encouraged Welsh-medium contributions, since Jayne Mathias wrote a piece on bilingualism and Welsh schools ('Dwyieithrwydd a'r ysgolion Cymraeg') in 1991. However, since the relaunch we have featured Welsh-medium contributions in each edition, on the growth of Welsh-medium education (Lewis, 2016), the Cwricwlwm Cymreig (Davies and Hughes, 2016) and the positioning of Welsh as a subject within the *Successful Futures* proposals (Hopwood, 2017). The latest contributions add to the corpus knowledge in the field and we welcome further submissions.

When we review the various iterations of the *Journal* since it first appeared in 1989 there are some discernible changes and continuities. Special editions have been a periodical feature and covered topics such as special needs (1990), initial teacher training (1999), and education, technologies and society (2003), themes that continue to attract interest. The early editions had a strong focus on the history of education in Wales, beginning with a centenary celebration of the 1889 Welsh Intermediate Education Act. This reflected the strength of the discipline in the university faculties of education. Through the 2000s, changing priorities resulted in the decline of those teaching and studying the history of education in initial teacher training in Wales. However, it is uplifting to read of recent proposed changes which will mean that the history of education and education policy will feature within 'core studies' for all those training to be teachers (Welsh Government, 2017).

In bringing together contributions to this edition we have deliberately attempted to broaden the areas from which we have sought contributions. In the first three volumes of the re-launched *Journal*, these have come predominantly from academics working within higher education. In this number, we are delighted to publish contributions from the National Foundation for Educational Research, from the social enterprise organisation, the People and Work Unit and the private-sector research and evaluation company, Arad Research. In recent years, these organisations have undertaken significant amounts of research and evaluation activity in

Wales – on behalf of the Welsh Government, local authorities and other bodies. It is pleasing therefore to include the fruits of their labours in a more accessible form. As with the contributions we commissioned from practitioners in the previous volume of the *Journal*, it is our intent to follow a ‘broad church’ publication policy and to reflect the diversity and richness of educational research within Wales.

Hence, we also include in this number a focus on issues to do with equity and rights in Welsh education with contributions from Lewis et al on the enactment of children’s rights, Golding on family influences on educational aspirations and Holtom on strategies to reduce the impact of poverty on educational achievement, supplementing the research evidence provided in earlier numbers of the *Journal*.

Whilst these are all positive features, we believe, of the growth of the *Journal* over the last three years, it should not be understated how ‘hard won’ this progress has been. Without blowing our editorial trumpets too loudly, only a minority of the contributions published since the relaunch have been unsolicited. It has taken a considerable amount of editorial networking and sometimes indeed cajoling, to elicit the contributions which have led to the current healthy state of the *Journal*. We will of course continue this work but it is likely to be increasingly more challenging as we return time and time again to the same well.

It continues, therefore, to be the view of the Editorial Board that whilst we can make an important contribution to the renaissance in educational research in Wales, that we cannot do this in isolation from the wider development of increased capacity, quality and activity in this area. The parlous state currently of educational research in Wales has been well documented previously in this *Journal* and in the work, led by John Furlong, on reforming initial teacher education in Wales (Furlong, 2015 and 2016). We have been heartened, therefore, by the growing recognition by the Cabinet Secretary for Education in the Welsh Government (Welsh Government, 2016), by the Welsh Government Education Department and the Regional Education Consortia that this situation needs to be addressed if the reformed Welsh education system is to have a robust body of educational research to draw upon in informing policy developments and their impact on practice. It is particularly encouraging that the desire to strengthen educational research within the new teacher education provision in Wales is seen as important to the successful development of new professional learning opportunities for teachers in Wales and the new curriculum (Welsh Government, 2017).

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The *Wales Journal of Education* is keen to play its full part in these developments. Over the last year, we have taken the initiative in bringing a range of organisations in Wales and the British Education Research Association together to discuss the potential for creating a Wales Education Research Forum. As we go to press, progress is being made in achieving this aim. We are also seeking to achieve a significant increase to the number of subscriptions to the *Journal*, to explore the possibility of it being published more than twice a year, extending its reach to practitioners and policymakers, whilst maintaining its academic focus, and to hold regular events and conferences. To achieve these ambitious aims we would need to secure significant additional financial and business support for the *Journal*. To that end, we have asked the vice-chancellor of the University of Wales to make representations to Universities Wales to request broader financial support for the *Journal*. We will also continue to make representations to the Welsh Government, the Regional Education Consortia and other organisations.

We trust, therefore, that you will enjoy reading this edition of the *Journal* and will continue to promote it and join with us in this next stage of its journey.

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