

## *Epilogue: A View from the Schools*

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As was noted in the Editorial to this special issue, the changes to initial teacher education (ITE) that are currently in train in Wales as a result of the new Accreditation Criteria (Welsh Government, 2017) have major implications for schools as well as universities. The aim is to develop a new and much more collaborative model of provision. Only by working closely in this way can Partnerships ensure that the programmes they offer are, in the words of the Criteria ‘both rigorously practical and intellectually challenging at the same time’ (p. 4).

As the Criteria themselves make clear, the implications of the reforms for universities are significant. Given that so much of the practical preparation of student teachers must now directly involve schools, then universities need to develop a much clearer understanding of what their *distinctive* contribution to professional learning actually is. The Criteria insist that the task of universities is to make available forms of professional knowledge that are not necessarily available in all schools; that is knowledge from research, from theory and from good practice across Wales and internationally. But in order to contribute those things universities need to ensure that they have the right staffing structures and staff development policies in place. As Furlong (2015) documented in *Teaching Tomorrow’s Teachers*, in many cases these conditions were far from being met in Welsh universities at that time.

But the Criteria also demand a very different role for schools. Schools need to become full and equal partners with universities in both designing and delivering programmes. Particularly important is their role in the joint planning of the whole programme; only if this takes place on a regular and routine basis can the collaborative approach be sustained over time. That in turn means that school staff have to be centrally embedded in the management and leadership structures of programmes. Working in this

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collaborative way involves a significant culture shift for universities who are used to being ‘in charge’. But it also involves a significant culture shift for schools. They have to accept that they are now accountable for programmes in their totality not just for providing opportunities for ‘teaching practice’.

Very radical changes are therefore demanded by both partners. But how have schools responded? In this final section of our special edition we have included three short pieces from senior practitioners who have been intimately involved in the reform process over the last two years. Two contributions are from head teachers and one from a senior mentor. The first is by Ethnie Hughes who until recently was head teacher of Ysgol Bryn Elian, secondary school in Colwyn Bay, North Wales. Hughes has been centrally involved in the development of the new programmes in North Wales offered by the Caban Partnership; a partnership involving Bangor and Chester Universities and the regional consortia, GwE. The second contribution is from Jon Murphy, Head teacher of Llanfoist Fawr Primary School, Abergavenny. Llanfoist Fawr is a ‘lead partner school’ within the Cardiff Partnership which brings together Cardiff Metropolitan University and schools across South Wales. Our final contribution is from Rhonwen Morris, Assistant Head at Ysgol y Preseli, Pembrokeshire. Morris has been a senior mentor within Yr Athrofa Partnership which includes the University of Wales Trinity St David and schools across South and West Wales. She is also the co-chair of the Strategic Leadership Group and member of the Executive Board within Yr Athrofa.

Each contributor has therefore been involved in the reform process in different ways. In these short papers, each tells their own ‘story’ and sets out their aspirations for the future – their aspiration for ITE and for the teaching profession in Wales. Taken together these three contributions provide a unique insight into how the profession itself is responding to the radical changes that have been the focus of this special issue.

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# *Building learning communities for novice teachers*

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## ABSTRACT

In our devolved education system in Wales, the educational landscape is changing requiring us all to become skilled cartographers in re-thinking and re-drawing the educational map. The reforms outlined in *Our National Mission* (Welsh Government, 2017) are wide-ranging and all encompassing, transforming the familiar territories of the National Curriculum, professional standards, accountability, qualifications and Initial Teacher Training (ITE), to name but a few. In realising these changes, it was essential that at school and HEI level, we took joint responsibility for building a coherent, professionalised and skilled workforce through building learning communities, starting with those new to the profession.

**Key words:** reforms, Welsh Government, learning communities, Initial Teacher Education

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### *The need for change*

As a Headteacher I was acutely aware of a desire by teachers for a deeper understanding of their own pedagogical practices; an understanding informed by research and evidence-based practice. What many of us have wanted is to give our children higher quality instruction through excellent practice, based on compelling evidence and theoretical knowledge. This we needed at system level, to provide a coherent framework to re-professionalise the entire workforce; it is particularly important when working with novice teachers. In Ysgol Bryn Elian, we had worked with a

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variety of partners on research studies, but in particular had a well-established relationship with Bangor University since 2004. Our joint projects were focussed on improving outcomes for identified groups of learners, while increasing the depth of knowledge of our teachers. The opportunities afforded to us, to systematise this partnership through the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) reforms (Furlong, 2015), have therefore been a natural extension and welcome consolidation of our existing relationship.

As a school which had trained teachers for a considerable period of time, we felt the disjoin between what we knew we needed to do to train and mentor new teachers and what the system would allow. We wanted a deeper, more meaningful relationship with student teachers than simply playing the role of a distant host to transient guests. The predication of the old system where novices were required to separate ‘theory’ from day-to-day practice in schools appeared to us to be an uncomfortable and unhelpful disconnect. Indeed, the vision, content and methodologies of the programmes set down by Universities were largely unknown to us and yet we were placing these novice teachers into our classrooms to help in their education. As a result of this ‘disconnect’ the role of mentoring within this system inevitably became more pastoral than intellectual; it was difficult to provide anything other than a superficial, yet caring support for new teachers, who were expected to connect separate learning and experiences into a useful corpus of evidence-informed practice: too much for any new practitioners.

We were therefore keen to engage more fully in ITE but sensed our own limited influence as a result of system incoherence. If lecturers in the higher education institutions (HEIs) dealt with theory and the classroom was solely experiential, how could we as a school know what the expectations upon these student teachers really were? In the void, we dutifully applied our own understanding of excellence in the teaching profession matched against the mandatory standards for qualified teacher status. Our partnership with the HEI providers were generally one-dimensional and transactional, rather than utilising a model of equal expertise, each learning from the other in order that we could nurture emerging practitioners of high quality. We felt very confident, however, that our school setting was an excellent learning environment for any novice teacher and that our staff had a great deal of skill and knowledge to share. The system, however, needed to change.

*Developing the new programme*

In implementing the new approach to ITE, we have worked very closely with the Bangor and Chester University partnership (CaBan) right from inception. CaBan was created as a joint venture including both Universities, the Collaborative Institute for Education Research, Evidence and Impact (Bangor University), the School Effectiveness and Improvement Service for North Wales (GwE) and partner schools. At the start of the partnership I had been asked to project manage the building and development of the programmes and the partnership itself. This gave me a unique insight into the strengths, challenges and potential for the partnership needed to deliver Furlong's rich and exciting vision for ITE. Our involvement, therefore, was significant at both the strategic and operational levels. We were fully engaged with a range of activities such as: contributing to the ITE programme content and module development: marketing, drawing up business plans, writing and checking the programme submissions, presenting evidence to the accreditation panel and training other potential partner schools.

As already noted, we had a very strong relationship with Bangor University, who had not just worked with us in educating novice teachers but in a variety of research projects throughout the years, pre-dating these reforms. Teachers in Ysgol Bryn Elian have a strong track-record of iterative professional development and building research strategies to ensure that pedagogical practice is rooted in evidence and built from the classroom out. Our partnership too with the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE), which gathers evidence on effective learning processes to inform and enhance teaching and learning<sup>1</sup>, gave us a significant advantage in our preparations to help develop these ITE programmes.

Many teachers in Ysgol Bryn Elian were therefore already actively engaged in deepening their own subject and pedagogic knowledge through learning partnerships within and outside the school. But the ITE reforms encouraged us to systematise research practices, making sure that we viewed our pupils' and our own learning through fresh eyes in order that we were in a position to mentor and guide novice teachers in becoming more expert. Our approach to research was one of demystification with a focus on integrated classroom practices and routines: not bolted on and separate to the day-to-day work of the teacher. I believe that this is a particular strength of the school and indeed the ITE reforms as a whole, in

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that the infrastructure and culture of professional learning focussed on all learners (pupils and teachers alike), provides a rich seam for us all collectively to mine. As a school, therefore, we were delighted to be a key part of developing and honing our own practices further, while working in close partnership with CaBan and other learning providers.

I would describe our engagement with the CaBan partnership as rich and intense. We were quickly debating what we collaboratively determined to be 'great teaching' and how this could be translated into designing programmes, starting with our vision for the novice teacher. What, in other words, does an excellent practitioner look like if we get this right? Then, we asked, 'how could we get there?' These questions exercised us all and positively challenged perceptions of the previous system of training new teachers. We quickly shifted into adopting what we considered to be a very new and more exciting mindset, reflecting deeply on our own values and aspirations as a partnership. This we then reflected in the programme writing and submissions. The debate was refreshing, intellectually robust and resulted in a growing, positive understanding of what each member of the partnership could contribute and develop further.

However, there remain considerable challenges for us at a school and system level. The funding crisis continues to be significant threat to the delivery of these reforms for secondary schools in particular. Seed and project funding were needed for all partners in order that sufficient capacity and resources could be built. For a school to maintain its commitment to the education of new and existing teachers and building the internal support mechanisms around delivery, requires continued additional time and funding for professional learning, including mentoring. The costs in building capacity to deliver these reforms are significant. The recruitment challenges of attracting teachers into the profession will also inevitably impact upon whether or not a school can afford to commit to developing policy and practice around supporting and educating tomorrow's teachers. Innovation, building professional capital for a world class system, requires resource beyond dipping into the well of good-will.

The two crucial areas, funding and recruitment, represent significant potential threats to delivery of this new model. It is clear that both the HEIs and schools remain under significant financial pressures. This tension was played out through many robust discussions around how money would be divided between the schools and the HEIs once the recruits arrived. Externally sourced funding beyond the school's own budget was also self-evidently required for education, building research networks across

schools, growing expertise with in-service teachers, in advance of September 2019.

An additional challenge was building robust and coherent programmes in the context of a number of significant policy reforms, each moving at different speeds. These reforms include:

- a new curriculum which had not yet been fully settled;
- new professional teaching and leadership standards<sup>2</sup> against which QTS would be met;
- changes in professional learning for in-service teachers which was at a developmental stage regarding an agreed framework;
- mentoring and coaching programmes, vital to the success of educating novice teachers, were nationally at a very early stage of development;
- induction programmes still resided in the old system, potentially causing a loss of coherence after QTS (now being addressed); and
- a new Additional Learning Needs Bill.<sup>3</sup>

We were, in short, working in a changing landscape where we were expecting a significant conceptual and cultural leap from dependency to creativity and innovation while accepting uncertainty.

The leadership challenges in absorbing these transformative, sometimes unaligned agendas, cannot be over-estimated. However, our collective optimism as a school and within the CaBan partnership, was maintained: we were sold on the new vision for reform in building professional capital from the earliest teachers in genuine partnership with expert school and university practitioners. In our view, the success of our pupils depends upon it.

*Our aspirations, our achievements*

Our significant engagement and commitment to developing this new, more collaborative approach to ITE and our own internal support structures, has already resulted in significant benefits, which I sincerely hope will continue to be the case. Our highly-skilled profession can only be strengthened by helping novice teachers to grow and learn the complexities of an excellent teacher's skill set. To do this we need a shared and explicit understanding of the science, art and craft of teaching, moving us far beyond the passive recipient model under the old system. In teaching

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tomorrow's teachers, in-service teachers will become more reflective and expert: in doing so, they will perform, serve our children better.

We recognise very clearly that developing teachers is one of the most important jobs a school can do, and that this responsibility resides with each and every one of us. The bond with our Universities now provides us with a research-rich, collective, collaborative approach to teacher education. The partnership recognises now that we each have an equal and valuable contribution to make in realising our vision for student teachers and the clear benefits for our entire schooling system.

The hope for the future in our delivery plan for the region and Wales, is that teachers trained through the CaBan partnership will be reflective, self-critical learners, who understand the value of evidence informed research practices. They will become teachers who utilise sound theoretical evidence as producers and consumers of research, to get the very best for and from our children. They will become scholars of their craft. Deep subject and pedagogical knowledge are critical in order that the quality of instruction matches the needs of children. I want these novice teachers in the system, to hold on to their optimism and know that they are valued professionals because they have the wherewithal to develop, grow, see their own impact upon our children and to constantly remember why it was that they decide to take up this wonderful profession. I want them to be intellectually challenged by the programmes we have co-constructed and feel the thrill of switching on the lightbulb of learning for the reluctant child. I want them to understand that building positive relationships with these young people is vital if they are to inspire, to nurture, to grow our next generation of teachers, doctors and professionals, in whatever capacity. I want them to be proud to work in Wales and to enjoy its language and culture. We need this new generation of teachers to experience the continuity and coherence of our education system where their rich learning as students and desire for continued knowledge growth, inspires them to make teaching their life-long career.

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*Notes*

- 1 <http://www.curee.co.uk/what-we-do> (accessed 23 September 2019).
- 2 The new professional standards for teaching and leadership were published in September 2017.
- 3 The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill was passed by the National Assembly for Wales on 12 December 2017.

# *Reflections on mentoring and the development of school-university partnership in south-west Wales*

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## ABSTRACT

The new reforms in Initial teacher education (ITE) in Wales bring together theory, research and classroom practice through closer collaboration between schools and universities (Furlong, 2015). This has the potential to transform ITE partnerships as lecturers, teachers and mentors develop a common vision and practices to improve the quality of teacher preparation. In this paper I reflect on my own journey as a mentor and the challenges and possibilities afforded by such a new partnership.

**Key words:** mentoring, collaboration, co-construction, research, Initial teacher education

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## *Introduction*

My roles and responsibilities as a mentor for student teachers has evolved throughout my career from the early days of allowing student teachers to shadow me in the classroom to becoming a subject mentor and then a senior mentor. In the early days, I perceived the primary role of a mentor as being someone could 'show' student teachers 'how to do it'; now I think the role is mainly someone who guides students to becoming effective, reflective practitioners. While acknowledging that every teacher has an individual role to play, the success of a mentor can only be measured by

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how well the mentor and mentee work together in a professional capacity; forming a positive relationship of mutual learning.

*Early concerns*

An initial lack of guidance and support with regards to the making of a successful mentor was a concern in those early days of mentoring. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) would conduct annual meetings outlining the roles and responsibilities of a mentor, but it was difficult to ensure consistency across all schools, with student teachers being mentored in very different ways. This made it difficult to ensure consistency in mentoring from one school experience to the next. There was little sharing of good practice and there were too few opportunities to observe good mentoring across schools; this was something that needed attention. In my early career as a subject and senior mentor in a rural Welsh-medium secondary school, I was left to my own devices, using previous experience as a mentee as well as relying on many influential and supportive mentors. However, I knew little about what successful and effective mentoring looked like. This was not mentoring, nor was I mastering the art of teaching teachers.

The pastoral side of mentoring is clearly an important responsibility in offering mentees emotional support and guidance as and when necessary. However, one of the challenges is ensuring that such mentoring does not lead to mentees who seek constant assurance, who need to be 'shown the way' and who have adopted a 'show me what to do' attitude to teaching. In my view, this will not develop in student teachers the resilience, perseverance, independent thinking, and critical reflection needed to succeed in the classroom and the profession. Whilst guidance is key at the beginning, not unlike the strings on a puppet, those strings must be severed one at a time and the student teacher must increasingly take control. A successful mentor will allow student teachers to 'cut their own strings' by providing them with the ability to reflect on their own practice through professional dialogue. Being a mentor is far more than simply going through a tick list of instructions provided in a handbook. It is a skillset for which training is imperative to ensure consistency in effective and high-impact mentoring. A mentor must allow student teachers to be creative, to take measured risks and to make mistakes. But a successful mentor must also guide student teachers to acknowledge their mistakes, to learn from them and to allow

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them to develop their resilience in a challenging yet rewarding profession.

*Linking theory and practice through effective mentoring*

In my view, a lack of joined-up thinking between HEIs and schools created a complicated problem. Student teachers were immersed in theoretical knowledge before undertaking classroom practice with little acknowledgement of the inextricable link between knowledge and practice. When it came to classroom practice, what was taught at university seemed to be left behind at the university. Being literally ‘thrown in at the deep end’ in the classroom resulted in student teachers who would disregard theoretical knowledge to ‘survive’ the lesson. One factor may have been the lack of guidance provided. A disconnect between university and school-based practice was evident. Hence a new model of ITE in Wales was required. *Teaching Tomorrow’s Teachers* (Furlong, 2015) refers to the development of ‘clinical practice’ in schools as a possible solution. In this model of ITE, schools:

Provide careful mentoring with a staged development of students’ teaching experiences. In addition however, such programmes also provide student teachers with routine opportunities to link their developing practical school experience with other forms of professional knowledge – with research, with theory and with knowledge of practice in other contexts. (Furlong, 2015: 17).

I have reflected on this model and my experiences, to reach the conclusion that a mentor cannot mentor effectively without knowledge of what has been taught at university prior to the teaching practice. Historically, a disconnect and lack of collaborative teaching and mentoring often led to conflicting guidance and teaching, leaving some student teachers in a state of confusion and bewilderment in what is already a steep and complex learning curve.

This meant that teachers were not ready to step into the profession. It created a sense of panic and failure which, I believe, led to many newly qualified teachers (NQTs) leaving within a few years of joining the profession. This has had a detrimental effect on the profession with recruitment and retention becoming a grave concern for schools who are already facing many challenges.

Poor publicity associated with the teaching profession has exacerbated the challenges of recruitment and retention. As a mentor, I have witnessed first-hand the detrimental effects of such bad publicity, leading to student teachers opting for teaching as a last resort or a fall back if no other career opportunities come their way. The profession requires teachers who are dedicated to the craft of teaching, who aspire to deliver the best that education has to offer and to ensure that every pupil is provided with the knowledge, skills and confidence to succeed in an ever-changing and ever-challenging world.

Education is a profession which changes continuously, and this requires a generation of resilient teachers who embrace change. ITE programmes need to encourage teachers to examine and develop their own research-based practices (Malinen *et al.*, 2012). Curriculum and assessment in Wales is facing its greatest change in a generation and with that comes a need to look at a complicated yet rewarding challenge in an intelligent way. Joined-up thinking, co-construction and co-ownership of a new model for ITE is needed so that all practitioners and mentors are ‘singing from the same hymn sheet’ as we approach a new curriculum which has the individual learner and pedagogy at its core.

#### *The beginning of co-construction*

It was imperative therefore to bring together a wealth of expertise and theoretical knowledge from across the schools and the university to co-construct ITE programmes. In my case, this process started nearly four years ago when I was approached by the consortia to attend a meeting to discuss the future of ITE. It was clear that HEIs and schools were sharing the same concerns and whilst everyone took pride in the role they had played within ITE, the cracks in provision were evident. Co-construction and collaboration were needed, and a Professional Learning Partnership (PLP) began to evolve. From those grass roots days in 2015, when we as a school were encouraged by the University of Wales Trinity St David (UWTSD) to pilot an ITE project, the co-construction and collaboration between schools and the university has grown and strengthened. Research-informed practice was at the centre of the pilot project with all practitioners involved in the early stages of development. Sharing good practice was encouraged and schools and the university alike began to develop a common vision and purpose.

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This in itself enlightened me to the real roles and responsibilities of a successful mentor to student teachers. It became an integral part of not only my own professional development, but the professional development of all teaching staff. As teachers and mentors, we are always learning and there is little that we cannot learn from one another.

*The collaborative model – developing mentoring through co-construction*

Throughout 2016, the PLP collaborative model continued to develop with the interlinking of school-based and university training becoming an integral part of ITE. The project was a celebration of the expertise that exists within the Partnership, and the need to develop ways of making the best possible use of that expertise for the benefit of our prospective teachers and learners as well as for the benefit of mentors, teacher educators and the profession as a whole. There was recognition that teacher educators needed to be stimulated to learn about and also use the available knowledge to strengthen their own scholarship (Lunenberg *et al.*, 2014).

There was a need for a more effective approach to the data held by the university on their prospective teachers. This was seen as a means of setting more meaningful and specific targets to support progress. There was close collaboration between the university's mentors and the school mentors, with the schools themselves encouraged to take lead responsibility for key aspects of the training programme with an emphasis on accountability leading to top quality mentoring.

Evidence-informed practice, research and thorough preparation to provide mentoring leading to measurable impact were imperative. The first step was to establish an effective network of schools led by Ysgol y Preseli (one of a number of Lead Partner Schools) working with the university to co-construct weekly seminars based on theoretical knowledge and classroom practice. The mentoring seminars provided an opportunity to up-skill the school's staff by sharing good practice and ensure that prospective teachers received the support they needed. While it was no longer a case of 'them and us' for the schools involved in the initial pilot project, there was a need to expand the training to more Partnership schools. This again proved to be another challenge which needed to be addressed to ensure the success of the collaborative model. Hence in May 2016, all Partnership schools were presented with the findings from the pilot, including its impact on the student teachers and the standards of teaching

and learning, as well the benefits that the university and schools had gained from working in this manner. Thereafter, the objectives and future direction were agreed and the Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP) became a reality with co-construction and research at its core.

A Draft Terms of Reference was proposed for the APLP's Strategic Leadership Group and Shadow Executive Board. The Strategic Leadership Group consisted of university staff and representatives from Lead Partner Schools whilst the Shadow Executive Board was made up of a smaller group of key representatives, including nine Lead Partner Schools and Athrofa Directors. This meant that two tiers of governance had been formed with all Lead Partner Schools represented. Their input to the Strategic Leadership Group was imperative to the decision-making Shadow Executive Board. Through this honest and transparent approach to decision-making, programmes were written with pupil progress at their core. Lead Partner Schools were invited to partake in the validation process. Working groups were established and the pilot projects undertaken by Lead Partner Schools were shared and reflected upon whilst networks of schools began to evolve. Lead Partner Schools became more accountable, taking a lead role in not only the mentoring of student teachers but also for the practice of partner schools in their networks, ensuring a more consistent and effective approach to mentoring.

The university and Lead Partner Schools now see the mentor as both supporter and challenger and as an important player in the development of the personal professional identity of the student-teacher (McDonald, 2009). This is true co-construction, built over a number of years with both schools and the university taking a lead role. A shared sense of responsibility and accountability became evident and the historic feeling of 'them and us' was finally erased during the accreditation process designed to raise standards of ITE in Wales (Welsh Government, 2018).

### *Conclusion*

The bringing together of a wealth of expertise and theoretical knowledge to co-construct ITE programmes that are fit for purpose has proved invaluable. Ysgol y Preseli, along with other Lead Partner Schools, has built an in-depth understanding of what is meant by ITE that is fit for purpose. The mentoring programme developed by the Athrofa has provided mentors with a breadth of knowledge and experience to ensure that ITE

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mentoring is successful. A shared accountability and the development of networks of schools will enable the Athrofa to continue to share our vision for ITE across all partner schools, resulting in high quality mentoring across all partners involved in the APLP ITE programmes. It is hoped that this will have a very positive impact on both student teachers and mentors alike. More clarity and consistency in terms of mentoring, an interlinking of theoretical knowledge and classroom practice and the development of research dispositions should enable student teachers, teacher educators and schools to develop a rich understanding of teaching as we commit to *Successful Futures* (Donaldson, 2015) and take a long awaited step forward in terms of education. The Athrofa and its staff will continue to collaborate with schools, providing the teachers of today and the teachers of tomorrow with the skills, knowledge and experience needed to succeed in a career that is facing change head on. The reflective practice of all involved will be imperative as programmes are rolled out.

For our part, Ysgol y Preseli, in partnership with the Athrofa, aims to ensure that every pupil reaches his or her true potential – academically, socially and in terms of personal development – in a bilingual community. We share the same mission statement as the University when mentoring and training teachers as a means to ensuring all prospective teachers receive the best advice, guidance and experience to enable them to realise their potential. Together, we recognise the need to provide training of the highest standard so that every pupil receives the best education from teachers at different stages of their career (prospective teachers, newly-qualified teachers and experienced teachers) who share the same vision.

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# *Educating student teachers together: new opportunities for learning*

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## ABSTRACT

Unprecedented changes are sweeping throughout the Welsh education system, changes that will totally transform what and how we teach. Outcomes and recommendations from the Donaldson (2015) and Furlong (2015) reports have provided us with the catalyst for educational reform and in particular, have created a unique, maybe once in a lifetime opportunity to align practice between schools and universities in their work on Initial Teacher Education (ITE). As a senior leader involved in university partnerships for many years, I have witnessed the recent acceleration in the evolution of ITE provision in Wales. In this brief article, I reflect on this and comment on my involvement in planning for a strong and authentic ITE partnership between schools and university.

**Key words:** reform, student teachers, Initial Teacher Education, university partnership

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## *Introduction*

The new Curriculum for Wales has created a generic agenda on which universities and schools are meaningfully collaborating. Deepening partnership has opened collaborative opportunities for joint working and created improved economies of scale through pooling and sharing knowledge and skills between school and university professionals. At a strategic

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level, school leaders have been invited to become fully fledged members of ITE Executive and Strategic Boards, influencing course content and provision. At an operational level school staff have become ITE Co-ordinators and Research Champions gaining an increasing and valuable insight into the mechanisms of university operation. Courses have been co-constructed between university and school professionals and programmes aligned to ensure that education theory translates readily into practice. Overall therefore, improved partnership has resulted in a coherent approach to developing the future workforce for our schools.

*Recruiting and developing the best*

Succession planning is one of the greatest responsibilities faced by school leaders. The employment of teachers is a high stakes business and demands that only the very best practitioners are placed in front of our children and young people to provide them with the optimal education in order to enhance their life chances. With ever growing expectations of student teachers who will be entering a demanding profession, recruitment processes at universities have become increasingly more robust with school senior leaders and mentors now fully involved in the selection process. Our new candidates for ITE courses have proven to be suitably well qualified and passionate individuals who demonstrate the potential to excel in their chosen profession. ITE will play a critical role in preparing students for the implementation of the new Curriculum for Wales.

What is now clear is that a symbiotic relationship between ITEs and schools is essential in ensuring that we not only recruit but also jointly professionally develop the highest calibre teachers to ensure that the children and young people in our charge attain the highest standards in a safe and nurturing environment. With expectations of the new Curriculum for Wales so high, never has so much responsibility and accountability been placed on the shoulders of education professionals. Working closely with university staff and student teachers I am filled with optimism and great hope for the future as we nurture the next generation of professionals who will enthuse, educate and inspire tomorrow's children and young people.

Working alongside student teachers at the university and on school placement, I have seen them rise admirably to the challenges we face; the aspirations they hold for the future is commendable. Without doubt, universities are instilling in students the need to be resilient learners with the

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flexibility to adapt to changes in order to meet the demands of an ever-changing educational landscape. In this capacity, student teachers are acting as role models because these embody the exact qualities, we hope will transfer the children and young people in our charge.

*Learning together*

The student teachers we are developing today will be the pioneers who will be delivering the new curriculum upon its implementation in 2022. Because of the changing pedagogy demanded to deliver the new curriculum, for the first time in recent history the current cohort of student teachers will be entering the profession almost on a par in terms of their skills and knowledge of the new curriculum as their seasoned teacher colleagues who have many years of experience. Student teachers, school staff and university lecturers are almost at the same starting point in their learning about the new Curriculum for Wales. They are working jointly to design the new curriculum and developing new pedagogies in order to effectively deliver it. All are currently learning new skills and knowledge side-by-side and developing their craft together through participation in the biggest continual professional development programme ever seen in Wales. While they are based in school, learning has become a more reciprocal process with school staff learning as much from student teachers, as the students learn from experienced practitioners.

Development work for the new ITE courses implemented in September 2019 has been extensive and the accreditation process has involved exacting scrutiny. An exciting part of the newly accredited programmes has seen significant changes in the way student teachers receive continual professional development. The creation of Lead Partner Schools is an innovation, which in the Cardiff Partnership scheme sees student teachers receiving 15 days of professional development on school sites, in addition to university-based study and time spent on other sorts of school experience. Each of the 15 development days, designed and delivered as a collaboration between university and school professionals, are incremental in the way they build knowledge and skills. Elements of each professional development day include the study of an aspect of educational theory followed by observing those ideas being put into practice live in the classroom with children and young people.

Having been fortunate enough to be involved in the pilot of this approach I have experienced first-hand how this gives students teachers authentic learning experiences. Importantly, students clearly see the relevance of the academic study they are undertaking; they can see the purpose of what they are doing and why they are doing it. As with all good learning, relevance leads to greater engagement. School staff have commented on the high levels of enthusiasm and engagement evident amongst student teachers as the theory starts to make sense when seen in practice within the classroom environment.

### *Conclusion*

Student teachers in Wales are now been prepared to arrive at their first teaching placement equipped with not only the latest educational theory, but also with the first-hand experience of how it translates into practice. The new ITE courses are forward looking, progressive and designed to provide the professional development opportunities to facilitate student teachers' preparation for delivery of the new Curriculum for Wales. While on school placement, student teachers no longer just emulate best practice they have observed, they also often demonstrate innovation and creativity themselves based on the outcomes of their own action research. Jointly, school staff, student teachers and lecturers are learning a whole new educational vocabulary, learning together brings great security and reassurance. We are hopeful that the new ITE courses will cultivate a new generation of teachers for whom critical thinking and action research will be second nature.

As we prepare for the new Curriculum for Wales, we are not so much opening a new chapter in education, more starting to write a whole new volume. Due to the common reform agenda we are all currently addressing, there are striking similarities in school and university visions and strategy. The two institutions are almost mirroring each other as we aspire to achieve the same goals. This can only be a good thing because ultimately ITE and schools exist for the same purpose; we are striving to provide the best possible education for our children and young people. Collectively, university and school staff, find themselves as key players in reforming education in Wales, they are the architects who are designing and building a new and exciting education structure. Currently, colleagues are still laying foundations for the new Curriculum for Wales with a measured and

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carefully considered approach to ensure they will securely support the infrastructure yet to be layered on top. Collectively we are taking care of the children of tomorrow by carefully preparing the teacher students of today.

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