International initial teacher education expert perspectives and recommendations

Refreshing the Criteria for accreditation of initial teacher education in Wales

International initial teacher education expert perspectives and recommendations

Audience Initial teacher education (ITE) Partnerships including higher education institutions (HEIs) and maintained schools in Wales; Education Workforce Council (EWC) Teacher Education Accreditation Board; the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW); the Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers Cymru (USCET Cymru); Estyn; student teachers on ITE programmes; all those considering ITE; local authorities; consortia; professional associations and teaching unions; central government education departments; other interested parties.

Overview This document contains a series of reports and discussion papers commissioned from two initial teacher education experts working outside of the UK for the purposes of supporting the refresh of the *Criteria for the accreditation of initial teacher education in Wales*

Action required None. For information only

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Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Contents

Introduction

As part of the work to refresh the *Criteria for accreditation of initial teacher education in Wales,* (the 'Criteria'), the Welsh Government commissioned two international initial teacher education (ITE) experts to provide a broader perspective, additional support, and challenge to Welsh Government. These experts were:

- Professor. Dr. Roland Bernhard, University College of Teacher Education, Vienna/Krems
- Dr. Susan Groundwater-Smith AM, Honorary Professor, Sydney School of Education & Social Work, University of Sydney

Both experts were asked to provide short reports on the current Criteria with recommendations for the refreshed version of the document that could be considered by Welsh Government and the stakeholder steering group. These reports were provided Summer 2022.

They were also tasked to review the refreshed Criteria put out to consultation, so that the consultation responses, and their expert view, could be considered together as the Criteria document was finalised. These final reports were received Winter 2022.

As part of the focus of their work the experts were asked to consider:

- the impact of collaborative ITE on school improvement
- the development of Wales' ITE system from an international perspective, building on international best practise for the education of student teachers
- supporting the principle of a national approach to career-long professional learning that builds capacity from ITE and is embedded in evidence-based research and effective collaboration
- supporting a self-improving system through increasing HEI and school engagement in supporting a research-engaged teaching profession
- suggesting any identified additional areas of work to support, build capacity and maintain improvements within Wales ITE sector moving forward.

This document collates all their reports.

Welsh Government would like to thank both Professor. Dr. Bernhard and Dr. Susan Groundwater-Smith AM, Honorary Professor, for their reports and support during this work. Their contribution has been invaluable in refreshing the Criteria and deepening the intellectual discourse concerning ITE in Wales.

Report One: Professor. Dr. Roland Bernhard. Developing schools into research-engaged learning organisations through initial teacher education in Wales: A review of the *Criteria for the accreditation of initial teacher education programmes in Wales*

Executive Summary

On behalf of the Minister for Education and Welsh Language Jeremy Miles, you commissioned me as 'International Teacher Education Expert' to review the current version of the *Criteria for the accreditation of initial teacher education programmes in Wales* (the 'Criteria') and provide you with recommendations on issues to consider when revising the Criteria.

It was a great pleasure for me to take a closer look at the teacher education system in Wales. My review emphasises considerations on action the Welsh Government could take to sustain and advance the contribution of initial teacher education to whole school development and improved quality in schools in Wales.

It is evident from an international perspective that the Welsh Government has established a pioneering system for genuine partnership between higher education institutions and schools in the provision of initial teacher education. Implemented accordingly, the system promises to bring about sustainable improvements in the quality of schools in Wales and thus in student learning. The system's treatment of teachers and schools as equal partners alongside higher education institutions is one particularly positive factor, representing an auspicious approach to boosting teacher agency in Wales. Another major strength of the Welsh system is its uncompromising commitment to research. It appears to me that student teachers in the current system receive ample opportunity to engage with the knowledge and skills needed for effective professional practice.

I regard it as crucial for the Welsh Government to monitor the practical implementation of collaboration between higher education institutions and schools and satisfy itself that this takes place on an equal footing; this will help ensure that schools can grow beyond the role of 'venues' for the practice of teaching and evolve into truly research-engaged professional learning communities. The Welsh Government requires partnership schools to be learning organisations. This implies the accountability of these schools for their choice of dynamic, active systems for collecting, sharing and disseminating knowledge, learning, research and ideas, both with student teachers and among all staff. More experienced teachers need to model inspiring attitudes and behaviours around lifelong learning to the student teachers they work with. A system of mutual classroom observations, for example, may be one avenue to instilling a culture of continuous professional development for all, including qualified, teachers in partnership schools.

Crucially, I propose that partnership schools begin to conceptualise themselves as 'research- engaged' institutions and that the Criteria adopt the concept, thus providing schools with a framework for their journey towards becoming true learning organisations.

Further, it appears important in this context that partnership schools engage with one another, sharing ideas, insights and good practice. I would recommend, going forward, a review of the current wording in the Criteria on the selection of partnership schools, to

establish whether it provides sufficient objective criteria to avoid the arbitrary inclusion of schools in the programme.

1. Introduction

The Welsh Government commissioned me to review the current version of the *Criteria for the accreditation of initial teacher education programmes in Wales* (Welsh Government, 2017) (the 'Criteria') and provide it with expert recommendations on issues to consider when revising the Criteria for the purpose of maintaining and improving the quality of initial teacher education provision. This paper outlines my findings.

Since 2010, concerns have grown around the education system in Wales and specifically around quality in the teaching profession, including initial teacher education; there have been calls in this context for a fundamental reform of teacher training (Tabberer, 2013). In 2014, the then Minister for Education and Skills, Huw Lewis, appointed John Furlong from the University of Oxford as Initial Teacher Training Adviser to the Welsh Government for the purpose of raising standards in the sector. Furlong gathered extensive evidence on the strengths and weaknesses of teacher education and training in Wales and submitted a report and a proposal for major change, entitled *Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers* (Furlong, 2015). The Welsh Government accepted his proposal and subsequently set up a 'Task and Finish' group, chaired by Furlong, to draw up new accreditation criteria as the key mechanism for implementing the changes the report had recommended. These *Criteria for the accreditation of initial teacher education programmes in Wales* (Welsh Government, 2017) are currently subject to review by international experts on education, of which I am one.

My review will focus on the following questions:
- How does initial teacher education in Wales stand from an international point of view?
- How does initial teacher education in Wales contribute to a self-improving education system and support lifelong professional learning and development embedded in evidence-based research?
- Which additional areas require action to maintain improvements within the Welsh initial teacher education sector?

Specifically, drawing on these questions, I will explore the role of schools in initial teacher education partnerships with higher education institutions (HEIs). My review will emphasise considerations on action the Welsh Government could take to sustain and advance the contribution of initial teacher education to whole school development and improved quality in schools.

2. The accreditation criteria of 2017 and teacher education partnerships between universities and schools

In recent years, Wales has created a system for genuine partnership between universities and schools in initial teacher education, in which successful schools do not simply take on a supporting role, but conceptualise and implement teacher education on an equal footing with higher education institutions. Under this new approach, initial teacher education programmes are 'planned, led and delivered not by universities alone, but by universities working in close collaboration with a number of partner schools' (Furlong, 2020:38). Both universities and schools have responsibility for programmes and curricula, and the participating organisations in both sectors are accountable for the quality of the provision.

Correspondingly, in this system schools and teachers have much more responsibility and agency in initial teacher education than they had previously. An OECD review undertaken in 2019 highlighted a key strength of this approach, noting that the system in Wales 'recognises schools as an important partner in the design and delivery of initial teacher education programmes and the creation and use of research' (OECD, 2019)

From an international perspective, the type of cooperation between schools and universities that takes place in Wales is ambitious and innovative. Numerous programmes run by individual universities involve collaborations of a similar nature (see Burn and Mutton, 2015); however, the Welsh system represents the first instance of a country as a whole adopting this approach and enshrining it in legislation (Furlong, 2020:38).

The Criteria state in this regard:
> 'Only if universities and a representative group of schools ('lead partnership schools') jointly engage in planning the programme as a whole will it have the coherence that is needed. Establishing collaborative programme planning procedures will require a sense of joint 'ownership' of programmes.' (Welsh Government, 2017:11)

I am enthusiastically supportive of the boost given by the system to the engagement and influence of teachers and schools, putting them next to universities in the driving seat of initial teacher education. The idea of 'joint ownership' on an equal footing is an important characteristic of effective teacher education. Protocols developed for schools elsewhere – in higher education institutions, for example – and implemented in a top-down manner have limited capacity to effect real and lasting change due to their tendency to reduce teachers to what Winch et al. have often described as 'executive technicians' (Winch et al., 2015). Effective, long-term change requires ownership by those at the forefront of that change – teachers in schools who take responsibility and contribute points of view steeped in their professional practice. Where initial teacher education provision lacks such perspectives, there is the risk that perceptions may arise of university-based teacher education as generating little impact on that practice – a complaint commonly voiced by teachers across numerous education systems.

The differing roles of schools and universities in the Welsh initial teacher education system
The criteria established by the Welsh Government regard schools as places where trainee teachers acquire the 'know-how' of their profession that cannot necessarily be put into words and that they learn through observation of experienced practitioners and through mentoring relationships ('direct practice'). In Welsh teacher education programmes, schools support student teachers to develop practical understanding, judgement and skills 'that can only be acquired through direct experience in the classroom' rather than through the 'application of theory' (Furlong, 2020:44). Beginning teachers, including students in this context, normally need to focus closely on the surface features of teaching, especially on establishing authority in the classroom. Observing other teachers as role models, teaching under observation and receiving feedback on their performance, and acquiring and refining classroom management techniques and routines are crucial activities for teachers as they take their first tentative steps into the profession. It is not until this stage has been successfully negotiated that students can begin to focus fully on their students' learning processes (Furlong, Hirst, Poklington and Miles, 1988).

The Welsh initial teacher education system defines the role of universities as follows:
> 'The primary tasks of universities is to give student teachers access to professional knowledge that is not normally available in schools – that is, to research, to theory

and to knowledge about excellent pedagogical practice across Wales and internationally.' (Welsh Government, 2017:10)

Research demonstrates that 'the quality teacher is a reflective practitioner' (Hopkins and Stern, 1996); reflective practice is a concept referenced by the Welsh Government in the Criteria (Welsh Government, 2017:19; 29). Institutions delivering initial teacher education therefore need to provide student teachers with the skills they require in order to reflect on their own teaching, drawing on various types of evidence and knowledge, and to reflect likewise on the theories underlying various practices in teaching (Donaldson, 2015:71; Schön, 1983; Schön and DeSanctis, 1986; McIntyre, 1993).

It is widely recognised that the best teacher education programmes internationally are based on a kind of dual form of learning (OECD, 2012). The Welsh Government is conscious of the risk that schools in such systems may find themselves regarded 'as venues for "teaching practice"' (Welsh Government, 2017:12) and not as engaged professional learning communities in which thinking practitioners study and critique practice and the theories underlying it, develop and test ideas, and design and pilot improvement initiatives. Avoiding the potential for reductive dualism should be a concern of the teacher education system in Wales.

With respect to school-university partnerships in Wales, I recommend that the Welsh Government monitor the actual, practical implementation of collaboration between the two stakeholders, universities and schools, on an equal footing, thus enabling teachers to access training that is 'both rigorously practical and intellectually challenging at the same time' (Welsh Government, 2017:4) and immerses them in the various dimensions of the knowledge and skills they will need as successful educational practitioners.

3. Lead partnership schools as learning organisations

The Criteria require that partnership schools in initial teacher education work as learning organisations, engaging critically with and making use of the knowledge generated by research: 'All schools in which student teachers are placed should be committed to becoming a learning organisation' (Welsh Government, 2017:14). This is a crucial point; it is only when schools become 'learning organisations' (OECD, 2016), or, more specifically, 'professional learning communities' (Hord, 1997), that partnerships attain high long-term quality and vitality a self-improving system comes into being.

An OECD Education Working Paper written by Kools and Stoll (2016:1) sets out the focal concerns of a school as a learning organisation as follows:
- developing and sharing a vision centred on the learning of all students
- creating and supporting continuous learning opportunities for all staff
- promoting team learning and collaboration among all staff
- establishing a culture of inquiry, innovation and exploration
- embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning
- learning with and from the external environment and larger learning system
- modelling and growing learning leadership.

I am confident that the system holds schools in the partnership programmes accountable for their implementation of these principles in practice and their development into learning organisations. In particular, I would recommend that the Welsh Government take a close look at how schools embed effective, dynamic 'systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning' into their day-to-day running.

Interview-based research I conducted alongside colleagues from the University of Oxford on highly effective 'turnaround' schools with large proportions of disadvantaged students in London and in the English social mobility and opportunity areas (Bernhard, Burn and Sammons, 2020) found that highly effective schools regard themselves as 'professional learning communities', 'in which the teachers in a school and its administrators continuously seek and share learning, and act on their learning' (Hord, 1997:1). One of the central characteristics of highly effective schools is the crucial importance they place on continuous professional development for teachers and the establishment of robust structures to support it and its primary aim of improving 'teaching and learning' in the school. The highly effective schools we studied in this research have integrated a very strong open classroom door policy into their culture (Bernhard and Greiner, 2022). School leaders and other teachers frequently carry out 'classroom walk-throughs' which consist of short lesson observations and subsequent feedback to teachers; their intent is to provide teachers with input they then reflect upon and incorporate into their individual improvement pathway.

I do not personally have knowledge of the degree to which a culture of classroom observations or classroom walk-throughs is embedded in the Welsh education system in general and in the initial teacher education partnership schools in particular. However, I am of the view that such activities could make a significant contribution to supporting partnership schools in their development into 'learning organisations'. The intent of initial teacher education is to enable student teachers to become reflective practitioners who are 'committed to their own life-long professional learning' (Welsh Government, 2017:19). The Criteria call for them to have

> 'regular formal opportunities (through, for example, 'learning rounds' or 'lesson study') to interrogate their own and others' teaching in the light of other forms of professional knowledge derived from theory, from research and from practice elsewhere.' (Welsh Government, 2017:24)

In light of this key aspect of teacher training, I take the view that teachers and mentors in partnership schools should model the behaviour they wish to see in student teachers; it would appear worthwhile in this context for the Welsh Government to closely consider the matter of continuous professional development for teachers who work with students. It may be beneficial to establish a system of mutual classroom observation and feedback among teachers working in the programmes. Those charged with designing initial teacher education partnership schemes may consider requiring schools, in order to meet selection criteria for the programme, to have embedded robust systems for knowledge-sharing and professional improvement into their culture, involving classroom walk-throughs, learning walks and other demonstrably effective practices.

4. Developing research-engaged schools for a self-improving system in Wales

The Ministerial foreword to the Criteria (Welsh Government, 2017:2) states that student teachers should be provided 'with opportunities to engage with the best that is known from research, from theory and from practice elsewhere'. According to the Criteria, student teachers are to learn about the complex processes of teaching and to 'develop research knowledge and skills, both as consumers of research and as participants' in it (8). The 2019 OECD review of teacher education in Wales cited as a strength the Criteria's provision of 'a clear set of guidelines for incorporating research into initial teacher education programmes' (OECD, 2019).

Indeed, research is very well embedded in Wales's initial teacher education partnership system at a variety of levels. Staff at participating higher education institutions are required to be research active and to 'take lead roles in assimilating, conducting, publishing and supervising research' (Welsh Government, 2017:17). Further, the Criteria stipulate that schools 'should support student teachers who are required to engage in action research during their school experience' (15). These trainee teachers should actively engage with research in education (19) and draw on theory, research and direct experience in schools to 'develop their knowledge, understanding and practical skills in relation, inter alia, to […] the use of data, research evidence and professional enquiry in the development of effective practice' (22).

The professional standards for teaching and leadership including the Qualified Teacher Status standards in Wales, give further advice for initial teacher education partnerships in relation to the design of programmes. They call for student teachers to be provided with opportunities

- to read and engage critically with a wide range of relevant theory and research, relevant to their day to day practice in schools, including research about learning, pedagogy, assessment and child and adolescent development
- learn how to evaluate critically educational research and begin to make judgements about the quality of the research they read
- know how to access and apply relevant findings from educational research and use what they have learned to challenge and improve their practice
- understand the role of small scale collaborative research, including action research/practitioner enquiry, to the development of practice. (Welsh Government, 2017:43)

This emphasis on research and research engagement is a major strength of the initial teacher education system in Wales. Underlining this commitment to research, Jeremy Miles, Minister for Education and Welsh Language in the Welsh Government, has recently announced (Miles, 2022) a planned strategic partnership with the well-known independent charity Education Endowment Foundation and the adaptation of their Teaching and Learning Toolkit for the Welsh context. Against this backdrop, I propose that initial teacher education partnership schools in Wales, as well as being encouraged to collaborate with the Education Endowment Foundation and to make use of its resources, begin to conceptualise themselves expressly as what the literature in this field has termed 'research-engaged' institutions.

There is an increasing trend in the education context to relate the concepts of 'learning organisations' and 'professional learning communities', which I have discussed above, to the idea of research-engagement in schools (Dimmock, 2016: 48; Godfrey and Brown, 2018: 139) Evidence from systematic studies indicates that 'research-informed clinical practice' in schools contributes substantially to the improvement of school systems and individual schools (Burn and Mutton, 2015). Over the last two decades, global policy and practice in education has shown interest in how schools utilise research findings (Brown and Zhang, 2016) and various researchers have detailed the concept of the 'research-engaged school' (Handscomb and MacBeath, 2003a, 2003b; Wilkins, 2011). A research-engaged school is one in which 'knowledge is effectively mobilised to underpin professional practice and learning' (Dimmock 2016: 45). Specifically, teaching and learning in a research-engaged school are 'underpinned by evidence informed ideas and practices, drawn from both research evidence of "what works" and tacit knowledge, knowledge based on teachers' practical experience', with the ultimate purpose of changing and improving professional practice (Dimmock, 2016:47).

The literature sets out various distinguishing characteristics of a research-engaged school. One definition states that such a school:

- promotes practitioner research among its staff
- encourages its staff to read and be responsive to published research
- welcomes (as a learning opportunity as well as a responsibility to the wider educational community) being the subject of research by outside organisations
- uses research to inform its decision making at every level
- has "an outward looking orientation" (Wilkins, 2011a), including research-based links with other schools and universities. (Godfrey, 2016:34).

While I can identify numerous elements of the 'Standards for Qualified Teacher Status' and of the Criteria that are indicative of a particular feature of research-engaged schools as set out above, I cannot find the term 'research engagement' in the Criteria. I recommend that the Welsh Government consider incorporating the concept into its initial teacher education scheme with reference to the corresponding literature; doing so would point higher education institutions and schools towards a sub-field of current research in education that is highly relevant to them. Study of the literature in this area may provide schools with a theoretical basis for their journey towards becoming learning organisations.

At this point, I would like to share my thoughts on one more aspect of research- engaged schools which the literature describes as a 'key feature of the self-improving system': the 'importance of partnerships between schools' (Godfrey and Brown 2018). According to Greany (2014) the principal characteristics of a 'self-improving' education system include:

- teachers and schools are responsible for their own improvement
- teachers and schools learn from each other and from research so that effective practice spreads
- the best schools and leaders extend their reach across other schools so that all schools improve
- government support and intervention is minimised (Greany, 2014, as cited in Godfrey and Brown (2018)

I am not aware of how schools participating in the partnership programme connect in order to 'learn from each other' and share experiences and best practices. Partnerships between schools for the purpose of disseminating effective practice have proved to be effective levers of bottom-up improvements in schools. Much has been written about the London Effect, which has seen outcomes for students, especially those in disadvantaged contexts, improve considerably since around 2000 (Greaves, Macmillan and Sibieta, 2014). Numerous research publications have discussed the effect of school partnerships and school-to-school support on improvements (an example among many is Baars et al., 2014). It would appear desirable to consider establishing structures for detecting highly effective practices in partnership schools and providing opportunities for their dissemination, should these structures not yet exist. Other potential building blocks in the creation of a self-improving system might be the provision of a structured forum for discussion and the sharing of ideas, collaboration among teachers and leadership staff of initial teacher education partnership schools on research and development activities, and reciprocal staff visits and robust communication channels among partnership schools.

5. Selection criteria for Lead Partner Schools

The Welsh Government has defined the following Criteria for the inclusion of schools in the Partnership Procedures:

'In identifying lead partnership schools, the HEI should consider only effective schools that are recognised within their regions for high-quality provision. While it is up to individual Partnerships to define and justify what they consider to be 'effective' schools, such schools will normally have been identified as such by Estyn and/or the national categorisation process.' (Welsh Government, 2017:14)

Notwithstanding the many apparent advantages of giving 'individual Partnerships' the autonomy to define criteria governing schools' eligibility for the scheme, it may be the case that without prescribed, objective criteria, arbitrary choices become more likely. I am not aware of any such objective criteria existing in written form. In this light, I would recommend a review of the wording currently used in the criteria to check its capacity to ensure that the partnership schools recruited into the programme are those that provide the most appropriate learning experience for student teachers.

6. Conclusion

It is evident from an international perspective that the Welsh Government has established a pioneering system for genuine partnership between higher education institutions and schools in the provision of initial teacher education. Implemented accordingly, the system promises to bring about sustainable improvements in the quality of schools in Wales and thus in student learning. The system's treatment of teachers and schools as equal partners alongside higher education institutions is one particularly positive factor, representing an auspicious approach to boosting teacher agency in Wales. Another major strength of the Welsh system is its uncompromising commitment to research. It appears to me that student teachers in the current system receive ample opportunity to engage with the knowledge and skills needed for effective professional practice.

I regard it as crucial for the Welsh Government to monitor the practical implementation of collaboration between higher education institutions and schools and satisfy itself that this takes place on an equal footing; this will help ensure that schools can grow beyond the role of 'venues' for the practice of teaching and evolve into truly research- engaged professional learning communities. The Welsh Government requires partnership schools to be learning organisations. This implies the accountability of these schools for their choice of dynamic, active systems for collecting, sharing and disseminating knowledge, learning, research and ideas, both with student teachers and among all staff. More experienced teachers need to model inspiring attitudes and behaviours around lifelong learning to the student teachers they work with. A system of mutual classroom observations, for example, may be one avenue to instilling a culture of continuous professional development for all, including qualified, teachers in partnership schools.

Crucially, I propose that partnership schools begin to conceptualise themselves as 'research-engaged' institutions and that the Criteria adopt the concept, thus providing schools with a framework for their journey towards becoming true learning organisations. Further, it appears important in this context that partnership schools engage with one another, sharing ideas, insights and good practice. I would recommend, going forward, a review of the current wording in the Accreditation criteria on the selection of partnership schools, to establish whether it provides sufficient objective criteria to avoid the arbitrary inclusion of schools in the programme.

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Report Two: Professor. Dr. Roland Bernhard. Initial teacher education in Wales: Exemplary partnerships between universities and schools. Short review of the refreshed *Criteria for the accreditation of initial teacher education programmes in Wales*

1. The refreshed *Criteria for the accreditation of initial teacher education programmes in Wales*

In my first review of the *Criteria for the accreditation of initial teacher education programmes in Wales* (the 'Criteria')(submitted August 2022), I made the following recommendations. The Welsh Government should:

- monitor the practical implementation of collaboration between higher education institutions and schools and satisfy itself that this takes place on an equal footing to ensure that schools can grow beyond the role of 'venues' for the practice of teaching and evolve into truly research-engaged professional learning communities
- ensure the accountability of lead partnership schools for their choice of dynamic, active systems for collecting, sharing and disseminating knowledge, learning, research and ideas, both with student teachers and among all staff
- ensure that experienced teachers model inspiring attitudes and behaviours around lifelong learning to the student teachers they work with. A system of mutual classroom observations in lead partnership schools were presented as an avenue to instilling a culture of continuous professional development for all, including qualified, teachers in partnership schools
- review the current wording in the Accreditation criteria on the selection of partnership schools, to establish whether it provides sufficient objective criteria to avoid the arbitrary inclusion of schools in the programme.

I also proposed that:

- partnership schools begin to conceptualise themselves as 'research- engaged' institutions and that the Criteria adopt the concept, thus providing schools with a framework for their journey towards becoming true learning organisations
- partnership schools engage with one another, sharing ideas, insights and good practice.

As I wrote in first review, Wales has truly created a very promising and innovative system for genuine partnerships between universities and schools in initial teacher education, in which successful schools do not simply take on a supporting role, but conceptualise and implement teacher education on an equal footing with higher education institutions. The idea of 'joint ownership' on an equal footing is an important characteristic of teacher education in Wales. For creating and refreshing the Criteria, the Welsh Government has worked with recognised experts in the field, such as John Furlong from Oxford University. This is clearly reflected in the quality of the Criteria and the depth with which the issue of school-university partnerships in teacher education in Wales is addressed.

I notice that my suggestions have influenced the actual version of the text, in particular, the topic of research engagement was developed very much in the direction I suggested. I quote from the draft Criteria:

- Engaging with research plays a key role in challenging, improving, extending, and reforming our understanding of teaching practice (Dimmock, 2016). Partnerships should have a clear and supported research strategy. Student teachers should be prepared to be research-engaged, well-informed, and able to learn from excellence

at local, regional, national, and international levels to ensure they continue as collaborative professional learners throughout their careers.

- Dynamic, active systems for collecting, sharing, and disseminating knowledge, learning and research should therefore be enabled. Partnerships could consider using the National Strategy for Educational Research and Enquiry Schools as Learning Organisations principles and the Talk Pedagogy, Think Learning network as supporting architecture for this purpose.

I believe that by introducing the concept of 'research engagement' in schools, the Welsh Government has taken an important step towards reaching its goal of developing research and enquiry engaged culture in schools in Wales.

2. Further Suggestions

In this short review, I will further elaborate on two points:
- Classroom observations for teachers in Lead Partner Schools
- Collaboration between Lead Partner Schools.

Classroom observations between teachers in Lead Partner schools
With respect to the need of teachers of Lead Partner Schools to model inspiring attitudes and behaviours around lifelong learning to the student teachers they work with and to establish a system of mutual classroom observations in those schools, in which the mentors observe each other for their own professional development, it says in the refreshed draft Criteria:
- A Lead Partner School will need to have or be committed to establishing a culture where ITE is accepted as one of its core responsibilities. That culture will include an openness to examining and debating their own pedagogical and assessment practices in the light of evidence from research and from practice elsewhere.

The emphasis on constantly reflecting, examining and discussing a Lead School's own pedagogical practice is helpful. However, since the effectiveness of professional development based on (mutual) classroom observation is known very well, it seems to me of importance that student teachers see experienced teachers (i.e. their mentors) model this behaviour. Those charged with designing initial teacher education partnership schemes should thus consider requiring schools, in order to meet selection criteria for the programme, to have embedded systems of mutual observation, classroom walk-throughs, learning walks and/or other demonstrably effective practices not just directed to student teachers, but also for mentors and other teachers of Lead Partner Schools.

Collaboration between Lead Partner Schools
With respect to my suggestion about collaboration between Lead Partner Schools, the draft criteria suggest:
- Partnerships may consider the way in which Lead Partner Schools may collaborate to provide the most effective learning experiences for student teachers. For example, schools may be grouped in a 'lead alliance' to maximise the expertise of staff or facilities. Where this is the case, Partnerships must ensure that students are not disadvantaged by these arrangements.
- Lead Partner Schools should [...] routinely lead and support other Lead Partner Schools and Partner Schools within the ITE Partnership in their work with student teachers

It is indeed important that there are good connections between the individual partner schools. Not only during the 'London Effect' in the 2000s, effective collaborations between schools in the area of teacher training and professional development led, among other things, to a strong increase in learning outcomes for students, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, the wording "may consider" in the criteria is very non-committal and is therefore likely to be ignored in the whirlwind of everyday school life. The Welsh Government might consider requiring at least some cooperation among Lead Partner Schools, particularly systems of sharing effective practice of training mentees, discussing practice of research engagement and continual professional development of their staff.

I wish the Welsh Government every success in implementing its ambitious plans and hope that my two reviews have helped to ensure that future teachers in Wales are even better equipped to deliver good teaching and to become and remain lifelong learners in the service of their students.

Discussion Paper One: Susan Groundwater-Smith AM, Honorary Professor. Reforming Initial Teacher Education in Wales – Part One

Executive Summary

This discussion paper is constructed to provide a brief background to the reforms now being enacted in Initial Teacher Education across Wales. It will do so in the context of the global changes being experienced in school education and consider a number of demands being placed upon teachers. It will make specific reference to the core principals of mentoring and partnerships that act as the twin pillars of the reforms. Alongside these the paper will address matters of action research/practitioner research that are anticipated as outcomes of the reform. It will relate these beyond the participating schools to be inclusive of the other entities that have a stake in the changes, but will signal that a second discussion paper in relation to this area will elaborate. Throughout the discussion paper there are reference points to the reforms that have now been in place for several years. It is anticipated that the second discussion paper, addressing specifically ways forward in participatory action research and reflection as the project continues to progress, will address recommendations for further refining of the reforms.

1. Introduction

A close examination of Welsh school education identified a variable quality in the preparation for the profession of teaching through teacher education, both initial and ongoing provisions (OECD, 2014, p.66). This led to an extensive review of Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Particular attention was paid to the relationship between the school system, both schools and governance, and the role of Welsh Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) namely universities. It was deemed necessary to examine the efficacy of the partnership and the roles played by both entities in shaping the teachers of tomorrow. The subsequent report, *Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers: Options for the future of initial teacher education in Wales* (Furlong, 2015) recommended the development of a very different approach for accrediting programmes of ITE in Wales. The recommendation was directed to a more collaborative ITE system with universities and schools working in genuine partnership. As Brulin (2007) argued, that for such collaboration to work well, partners need to do it authentically and with rigour.

He made the case in practice based professional learning that there needed to be a loosening the grip over knowledge creation held traditionally by universities (Brulin's work in Sweden is particularly relevant here as it prefigures the re-examination of knowledge claims that are made by those in universities and which are to be challenged by the Welsh reforms. Gibbons et al (1994) in their consideration of the new production of knowledge developed in their thesis a new paradigm of knowledge production that identifies two different modes arising in different sites of practice. Previously, Mode 1 knowledge was perceived as embedded in universities while Mode 2 knowledge was seen as socially distributed in the relevant field but still exclusive of practice).

A set of criteria was evolved, including:
- An increased role for schools;
- A clearer role for universities;
- Joint ownership of the ITE programme;
- Structured opportunities to link school and university learning; and
- The centrality of research.

These are set out in the document *Criteria for the Accreditation of Teacher Education Programmes in Wales: Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers* (Welsh Government circular no: 001/2018 Date of issue: February 2018). Following extensive consultation, it was determined that from thereon, all new and existing programmes of ITE would need to be accredited by the Education Workforce Council (EWC), through its Accreditation of Initial School Teacher Training Committee ("the Board").

Seven university-school partnerships across Wales were accredited 2018-2020. Each of them ran a number of different programmes – primary, secondary, undergraduate, post graduate and so on. Two were refused accreditation altogether the first-time round (they were subsequently successful on re-submission the following year), all of those accredited had significant numbers of conditions that the Accreditation Board looked at a year later. Five new Partnerships opened in 2019-2020, the other two in 2020-2021. Unfortunately, all of that coincided with Covid which has proved a significant challenge.

These are the Criteria that are now to be 'refreshed'. The Welsh Government is committed to the idea that while the broad principles must remain the same, they do need updating not least because of policy and employment opportunities that have changed over the last five years.

This brief discussion paper is designed to consider the changing landscape for teaching and initial teacher education in broad terms and those policy and opportunity changes in specific terms in relationships to partnerships, professional mentoring, and practitioner research in Wales. It will act as a precursor to a later paper that will explore the possibilities for development and improvement particularly through the lens of research.

2. The Changing Landscape

The recruitment and retention of teachers is becoming a challenging task for education systems in many parts of the world (Darling Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Gallop, Kavanagh & Lee, 2020). Studies of supply, demand and retention of teachers indicate that there is a very real crisis that illustrates the point that while financial incentives are important, they are not sufficient for the recruitment and retention of quality teachers '… it is not clear that such external motivation is desirable, or attracts the best teachers and it is quite clear that the attraction is not lasting' (See et al, 2020). Much hangs on the matters associated with the diminishing prestige of teaching (Allen, Rowan & Singh 2019) and the nature of the satisfaction, or not, that may be derived from the professional work, that provides the kinds of opportunities that teachers may welcome (Toropova, Myreberg & Johansson, 2021) such as watching learners grow and thrive.

The working conditions of teaching have been seen to impact upon the learning conditions for students (Groundwater-Smith, 2022). Moreover, there is an additional consideration which is related to teaching in high needs areas where there may be significant poverty impacts or where there may not be a cultural congruence between the teachers and the taught. It is clear from both the *Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers* report (2015) and the OECD report, *Improving Schools in Wales* (2014) that there is an avowal to pay attention to equity and inclusion in the Welsh education system where particular challenges exist in relation to: Welsh language learners; greater numbers of international migrants; and young people with special learning needs.

Zeichner (2022) points out the need to provide teacher education programs, within contextual conditions that are important in the preparation of teachers. This being in order that they may teach in culturally responsive ways and sustaining ways. By inserting the practicum program (Following OECD reports on education in Wales (OECD, 2014), the earlier cited report, *Teaching tomorrow's children: Options for initial teacher education in Wales* noted that what is generally known as the practicum programme has been re-cast at 'clinical practice' signalling that schools will play a more significant role in guiding practice) into the very heart of the preparation for teachers in Wales it is possible that those in initial teacher education will have sustained contact with local communities. (Furthermore, the design of the programmes can be such that they better reflect the conditions of those communities. Importantly the reform has interrupted the former dominant roles played by universities where schools played a largely secondary role in which they might react to things that have already been conceptualised by others.

Under the Welsh reform, much of the power in making decisions regarding teacher preparation may now be one that is more equitably shared. It rests upon genuine collegiality, mutual respect, and well formulated partnership agreements. Even so there is still something of a silence regarding the role that the community, from which schools draw their students, might also be more participative, or at least consulted regarding the preparation of teachers (Ishimaru, 2020). This is a matter to which this discussion paper will later turn.

All of these conditions, briefly spelled out here: teacher shortages; teacher attrition; lack of professional satisfaction and recognition; relatively low salaries and so on, have been building over several decades in many English-speaking countries leading to significant demoralisation (Santoro, 2018). It could be argued that the Welsh reforms have effectively dodged the bullet related to such undermining of teachers in that they have provided a bulwark that points to a more progressive education system.

All the same, the impact of the COVID pandemic is more recent and not yet fully understood, both generally and specifically in relation to the Welsh reforms. A number of reports prepared by the Chartered College of Teaching (e.g. Greany, Thomson, Cousin & Martindale, 2021) have pointed to the intensification of teachers' work as they seek to assist learners in accessing on-line learning. Inquiries have indicated negative effects on work-life balance as both teachers and their students are often left to their own devices to develop appropriate strategies for coping, with some sinking, some surviving, some thriving.

Even less well understood is that when most countries (including Wales) pivoted to on-line learning, employing EdTech websites and apps in an attempt to maintain continuity and development in learning, they have unintentionally violated the rights of learners. In effect, by their wholesale uptake and engagement in a wide array of applications they have provided information for those with an interest in marketing to children and their parents. This has been recorded by Human Rights Watch (2022) and it is clear that while such access, for advertisers and the like, would not normally apply in classrooms it has become available through the technology itself. While not directly attributable to the Welsh reforms it is clear that this area is deserving of close attention. Clearly, the impact of changes to structural arrangements, with many young people engaged in learning at home, are yet to be fully documented and understood.

3. Partnerships and mentoring

An essential feature of the reforms, as they exist, is the case that is made for strong partnerships between schools and HIEs through the accreditation process. The potential benefits are reciprocal with schools developing greater access to a wider range of theoretical knowledge regarding education as a field and universities more able to comprehend and appreciate the professional knowledge that accumulates in practice. Such partnerships do not develop without mutual regard and respect. In effect what has been established in Wales is the development of a particular form of a community of practice, developed for the purpose of improving professional learning arrangements in ITE.

Groundwater-Smith & Mockler (2012:507) drew upon the work of Wenger, McDermott & Snyder (2002) who proposed that the value of communities of practice lies in their ability to connect personal development and the professional identity of practitioners to the purposes and strategies of the organization in which the practitioners work. In this case the value is greatly enhanced by the incorporation of two organisations who have come together in fresh and innovative ways. It is believed that such communities do not happen by chance but should be cultivated and nurtured. Wenger, McDermott & Snyder cite six principles for designing communities of practice, these being:
* Design for evolution – allow the community to develop and grow
* Create conditions for dialogue both internally and externally
* Allow for varying levels of participation without coercion
* Have both public and private spaces in which the community may interact
* Combine familiarity with excitement
* Respond to the rhythms of the organisational life.

These conditions appear to have been well met by the accreditation process. It is also the case that partnerships between schools themselves are to be encouraged. A model worthy of attention for the evolution of an extensive partnership involving not only schools, but also cultural institutions with responsibility for student learning, was the establishment of the Coalition of Knowledge Building Schools in New South Wales (CKBS), Australia (Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2011). The Coalition grew out of the work of the Centre for Practitioner Research (CPR) at the University of Sydney.

The two aims of the CPR were set down as:
* To validate and value the research-based knowledge created by practitioners in the field
* To develop cross disciplinary networks to facilitate the production and circulation of new knowledge.

Its purposes were seen to be to:
* foster, support and enhance practitioner research as a mode of inquiry to understand and improve practice in universities and schools locally, nationally, and internationally
* contribute to the creation of situated knowledge regarding educational practices
* investigate and critique the outcomes of practitioner research
* encourage the development, validation, and documentation of new methodologies in practitioner research
* act as a forum for the discussion of practitioner research via conferences, electronic and print media (Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2011, p. 295).

The congruence between the principles governing the CPR and in turn the CKBS and the Welsh reforms are clear, in relation to the ways in which school and cultural institutions'

partnerships have been structured, based as they have been upon mutual regard and respect. A lasting legacy of the Coalition has been the publication of *Learning to Listen: Listening to Learn* (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2003) a handbook that underlies processes of practitioner inquiry and the place of student voice. It may be seen from the reference that the handbook was published with support from a participating school and Sydney University with case studies from the range of Coalition schools. It is clear from Academia Edu that the handbook is still in use across the English-speaking world. In it a number of sources of evidence and the processes by which the evidence might be collected and interrogated are discussed. Each strategy is selected on the basis of its integration into every-day practice in the classroom and school. It is a form of naturalistic inquiry that draws evidence from classroom occasions, interviews and discussions, photographs, and drawings. Each is designed to draw upon the experiences and perceptions of the key stakeholders in education, including importantly the students themselves.

Where good partnerships exist mentoring can flourish. It could be said that mentoring, based upon the collection of carefully and systematically collected evidence, has great power in developing skills, insights and understanding among those embarking on a teaching career. It provides the conditions for legitimate critical discourse between the mentor, as an accomplished and experienced practitioner, and the mentee, as one engaged in initial teacher education. In the intention of the Welsh reforms, they, together, seek to make sense of the evidence that is presented to them. Cordingley, Crisp & Bell (2004) recommend that effective mentoring involves, inter alia:
- A learning conversation
- A thoughtful relationship
- A learning agreement (understanding boundaries)
- Combining support from colleagues
- Growing self-direction (on the part of the mentee)
- Setting challenging and personal goals
- Understanding why different approaches work
- Experimenting and observing
- Using resources effectively.

These conditions are not to be taken lightly. They take time, training and resources and are costly. A question for the Welsh reforms will be 'are they sufficiently underwritten, financially and professionally, to fully enable their enactment'. In other words, given the centrality of mentoring to the project, are all participants: ITE students; co-operating teachers; and, university academics, able to fully engage in the processes at the heart of the reform.

If mentoring is central to the preparation of ITE students, then engaging in forms of inquiry is critical.

4. Action Research/Practitioner Research

While preceded by the many works of Dewey, who advocated for active involvement by practitioners in research in education, it was Kurt Lewin (1946, 1948) who drew attention to a broader scope beyond that sphere in terms of engaging practitioners in practice inquiry more widely. He was concerned that those working in social practices in areas such as health should have a voice in the conduct, interpretation, and application of research. He coined the phrase 'action research' as a means of embodying not only practitioner agency in the conduct of inquiry, but also in rendering that inquiry actionable.

'Action research' as a transformational social enterprise has been further developed in education, through Carr & Kemmis (1986) whose ground-breaking work, *Becoming Critical* provided a scholarly rationale for the practice with its emphasis on the requirement that educational inquiry should be subject to a rigorous and sustained critique. The term 'Action Research' assumes an activist stance in that the inquiry is committed to occupying a space between knowledge and action in a given social practice, in this case schooling and learning to become a teacher.

Action Research is not a methodology but embraces a suite of methods (Groundwater-Smith & Irwin, 2011). This distinction is an important one when considering the contribution of teacher led inquiry to teacher professional learning involving both teacher mentors and ITE students. A methodology may be seen as referring to a coherent selection of methods pertaining to a specific investigation, by way of contrast, in action research it may be that a range of methods might be employed including both qualitative and quantitative strategies so that what holds them together is their appropriateness to the question being explored.

Generally, in the literature 'action research' and 'practitioner research' are used interchangeably. In terms of a number of policy documents the preferred nomenclature is 'practitioner research'. However, by continuing to use 'action research' it could be argued that it is a means of honouring the work of Kurt Lewin that was undoubtedly related to practice.

In his article published in the Festschrift for Immanuel Wallerstein, Orlando Fals Borda (2000: 633) well-known and respected for his work in action research in South America, advocated for the need "To practice in such a way that it gives a moral and humanistic orientation to the work of the activist researcher; and, to gain a sense of personal commitment that combines the logic of action and the logic of research". He saw that the duty of the participatory action researcher was not just to identify and analyse the social reality of the conditions under which people live but to be active in remedying those very conditions in the interests of equity and social justice. He pleaded for those in the academic community to respect grassroots communities and include them as full partners and co-researchers.

Too often practitioners, in this case teachers-as-mentors and teachers-in-the-making are positioned as 'users' of research; they are seen to apply and implement research 'rather than as intellectual workers whose expertise counts in understanding classrooms, and who know how to evaluate research findings and work out their applicability to particular contexts and settings' (Lupton & Hayes, 2021: 130 – 131). Certainly, and unquestionably, the Welsh reforms do not preclude an examination of existing research in reference to the questions being asked but also encourage active and critical investigations that may contribute to the body of knowledge with respect to the phenomenon being investigated.

A more detailed examination of action research/practitioner research will be offered in the next discussion paper; as will matters related to reflection as a complex cognitive means of considering the evidence that a study may reveal. Attention will also be drawn to widening the scope of inquiry to be inclusive of the schools' own students as consequential stakeholders.

5. Practice Learning; Network Learning, Institutional Learning

The point of action research/practitioner research in education, and specifically in terms of the Welsh reforms, is twofold. The first of these is transformational, an attempt to improve

what is taking place in matters of schooling (curriculum arrangements, behaviour management, assessing learning and so on); the second is in relation to broader matters of learning. While the emphasis in the accreditation process is a desire to improve the professional learning of ITE students, alongside that of their mentors. It is also important that attention is given to the ways in which learnings may arise from the networks, both those between schools and those with higher education institutions. Furthermore, the institutions themselves, universities and the employing authority are also able to learn from this significant reform.

Learning, in this context, is taken to mean an emphasis upon changes in practice. Are the different participating entities able to rethink their relationships? Do the participants willingly engage in negotiation regarding the arrangements that have been made? Do the participants have adequate communication channels to facilitate their practices? Are the resources appropriate?

Kemmis (2021: 3) speaks of learning as 'how to go on in practice' and 'coming to practice differently'. The unique power of the practice perspective adopted by Kemmis is that it addresses **what happened**; how life unfolds – and how practices unfold. It accedes to the notion that all who are engaged are already shaped by the historical givenness of the arrangements that are to be found in the various sites. Being locked in by tradition can act to restrain and promote resistance. It is to be hoped and anticipated that action research projects involving those beyond the schools themselves will take place and act to challenge the taken-for-granted aspects of practice. Again, this matter will be further elaborated in the next discussion paper which will be prepared following on-line discussions with Professors John Furlong and Roland Bernhard.

6. Conclusion

This discussion paper has been written to assist in the discussion regarding the Welsh reforms underwritten by a set of accreditation criteria. It is designed, alongside the anticipated paper on practitioner inquiry/action research and reflection, to assist in evaluating the current policies and identifying areas for further development.

Thus, the second paper will examine more comprehensively the capacity of action research to engage in and with practical knowledge development and ways to build overlapping dynamic networks. It will argue for a departure from a linear, hierarchical model of knowledge formation where-in Universities were distanced from practitioners; an argument that is well understood and deeply informs the current reforms in ITE as enacted in Wales.

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Discussion Paper Two: Susan Groundwater-Smith AM, Honorary Professor. Reforming Initial Teacher Education in Wales – Part Two

Executive Summary

This is the second discussion paper prepared in relation to the Welsh Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Reforms. It addresses specific matters regarding the desirability of action research in the ongoing conduct of the reforms. As well as general advice it considers specific procedures for the investigation of lesson study and matters related to mentoring and reflective practice.

The paper is informed by the perspectives and needs of a range of those participating in the reform including the ITE candidates, their mentors (both school and university based) and those who manage various projects within the reform and its associated networks. It embodies both a theoretical and practical orientation to these matters.

1. Developing an action research project

The first discussion paper regarding the Welsh reforms to ITE briefly mentioned the need for participants to engage in action research. It stated: 'Certainly, and unquestionably, the Welsh reforms do not preclude an examination of existing research in reference to the questions being asked but also encourage active and critical investigations that may contribute to the body of knowledge with respect to the phenomenon being investigated' that is action research. Here the phenomenon being investigated will depend upon who is engaged in the investigation and why they should examine an aspect of practice. It will be argued that, in effect, we may be concerned with a range of participants, these being: the ITE students themselves (inclusive of the school students they may encounter); their mentors, both school and university based; and, those who may be responsible for developing overarching policies.

While the first of these should be of greatest concern it is also important that the tasks of mentors deserve examination as do those carried out by those leading emerging networks as they grow and develop; the last of these are rarely included in action research briefs. Below advice regarding the development of an action research project will pay attention to what is salient and particular to each group, but will acknowledge that such advice is not exclusive to that given group. Each will be prefaced by a brief case study that will act to illuminate a specific approach to a project.

Action research undertaken by an ITE student
Case Study One:
Jo is a mature age student who has come to teaching after a short career in banking that he did not find greatly satisfying. He has been assigned to an urban primary school serving, in the main, a working-class community (A brief reference to social class in Wales can be found at https://stateofwales.com). Parents' occupations tend to be in the health care sector, being engaged in routine tasks in assembly line manufacture, and/or contract work in service areas such as hospitality. Jo is teaching a mixed ability class of ten to eleven year olds. In discussions about children's books he has discovered that very few in his class have voluntarily read an entire book and decided that he would read a book to them as a serial. But,he is getting some push- back from several of the children who would rather use the time to have access to computers.

Of course Jo is not alone in his endeavour. His first step would be to see whether among his colleagues, other ITE students assigned to the school, his mentors and other staff members, there are some who would be interested in exploring young people's approaches to children's literature. Action research is best conducted in the company of others who will assist in reflection, clarification, and subsequent action. This being so, there would be several steps for Jo to take. He would need to:

- State his purpose
- Decide what he needs to find out?
- What is he curious about?
- What is his stance on children's literature and how it came about?
- What puzzles him about his pupils' responses?
- Whether there has there been a recent critical incident in his class that is illustrative of the problem?
- How do different children respond? And so on.

By documenting his reflections with respect to these questions an investigative plan would emerge for him to follow. At the same time he could well also turn to the research literature. As it was pointed out in the first discussion paper, doing action research does not preclude turning to publications in the field. He might, for example, refer to Hunt (1999) who wrote extensively upon understanding the place of children's literature in the growth, development and well-being of young people.

Just by accumulating his reflections the processes for their investigation would become more clear – he may decide upon: a series of close observations; conducting a focus group discussion; developing an on-line survey arising from issues that have surfaced in such a discussion. He might build into his teaching brief feedback strategies (A well established strategy is for students to briefly answer in writing a short series of questions, e.g.: What surprised you? What did you find hard to understand? What would you like your teacher to do next? When collated the responses can be discussed at the beginning of the next lesson in the series) that will assist him in his planning. Furthermore he could establish a small investigative committee of young people from his class who could assist in designing a study.

Engaging young people as investigators of practice in their classrooms and schools is a well- documented process (Groundwater-Smith, Dockett and Bottrell, 2015; Mockler and Groundwater-Smith, 2015; Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2019). It is one that repositions the student as an agent in learning, doing and understanding. It is based upon respectful listening, dialogue and collaboration and requires a commitment to pay attention to what young people have to say across a spectrum of views that have been collected, collated and interpreted in a systematic way.

In their publication *Learning to Listen: Listening to Learn* Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2003) outline a number of useful strategies whereby student voice can be employed. This resource was referenced in the first discussion paper and while now twenty years old it continues to have currency.

Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) have argued that there has been a growing tendency towards an unprecedented support for the idea of listening to young people. Importantly, they make the case for the place where this should start is in the classroom itself, where teachers take seriously the views of their students and find ways of meeting their concerns. They argue that consulting with young people has the following results: enhancing the commitment of children and young people to their learning; increase their capacity for learning through

strengthening self knowledge; developing a stronger sense of membership and new skills for learning; also, to improve teachers' teaching by generating greater awareness of students' capacity; and, renew teachers' excitement about learning, leading to a transformation of pedagogic practices. Furthermore the practice may transform student-teacher relationships from passive and oppositional to ones that are more active and collaborative.

Bragg and Fielding (2005) who have undertaken extensive work in relation to student voice in the UK ask a series of questions that allow us to evaluate the ways in which schools provide for student voice (These have been paraphrased; they are not direct quotes but do arise directly from Bragg & Fielding's work, 2005:130):

- Speaking: Who is allowed to speak, to whom are they allowed to speak, what are they allowed to speak about?
- Listening: Who is listening, why are they listening, how are they listening?
- Skills: Are the skills of dialogue encouraged and supported, understood, developed and practised?
- Attitudes and dispositions: How is mutual regard and respect developed and demonstrated?
- Systems: How do school systems accommodate and regulate opportunities for students to express themselves?
- Organisational culture: Are the school norms and values consistent with the centrality of student voice?
- Spaces and the making of meaning: Where are the spaces where encounters can occur, who controls them?
- Action: What action is taken, who is responsible, what happens as a result?
- The future: Does the school need new structures and new ways of relating to all participating within it?

In company with Fielding (2001) Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) and countless others, Brasof and Leviton's introduction to *Student Voice Research* (2022) places the practice squarely in the context of change:

> 'Findings from student voice research have given teachers, school leaders, and policymakers better insight into the root factors and phenomena of perennial educational issues: from behavioral challenges and student engagement in learning and school life, to social justice concerns and solutions within the school or broader community' (Brasof and Leviton, 2022:15)

It is not a process that can be entered into lightly. Should Jo wish to engage his students in an investigation he would need to prepare them carefully in matters associated with the nature of inquiry and the uses of evidence that can be found in a number of manuals such as Brasof and Leviton, (2022) and Bragg, (2010).

If Jo is undertaking his action research in the company of others (fellow ITE students, university tutors, school based mentors) the work would be enriched by comparing and contrasting findings and what they mean for practice.

Action research undertaken by mentors in the context of lesson study
First some thoughts regarding mentoring. Much of the literature concerned with mentoring, in relation to workplace learning, constructs the activity as individualistic and fulfilling a nurturing function drawing upon the mentor's experience and wisdom as one who can lead

by example and provide confidential and secure advice. In the context of the Welsh reforms in ITE it may be preferable to articulate a more interventionist and critical role. Indeed in their own report Estyn (2018) noted:

> 'The quality of mentoring – training in the school-based parts of ITE programmes is too variable and depends on the skills and expertise of the school mentor. As students spend up to two-thirds of their training in school, this is a significant weakness in the system. In too many cases, students do not receive mentoring that is effective enough to help them to make good progress.' (Estyn, 2018:5)

To be colloquial, mentors cannot be plucked out of the air. They require training. Careful role descriptions, responsibilities and planning are necessary elements for success. Matching the mentor to the ITE student being mentored is critical so that this is not the hierarchical dispensation of wisdom but rather shared inquiry into practice.

> 'The wise coach or mentor is competent, but continuously strives to increase the capacity to learn; about themselves; about their clients; and about the organisations and contexts in which clients live and work. Every experience is viewed as a learning opportunity and this ensures continuous incremental improvement.' (Connor and Pokora, 2007: 21)

Mentoring and modelling go hand in hand. Modelling has been consistently described as a most successful professional learning strategy. One critical factor for success is that the teacher modelling the practice should be a respected and experienced staff member released from other duties to demonstrate strategies with the ITE students.
Where there was a culture of collaborative enquiry teachers will feel confident to experiment with the modelled strategies, reflect on their practice, engage in professional dialogue thus transferring the knowledge within the school context.

School based mentors may be interested in forms of professional community building that liberate participating ITE students from the private nature of their classroom practices in order to develop a generative means for engaging in professional dialogue.

Case Study Two
Glynnis is a well-regarded teacher of science and technology at Key Stage 3 in a large comprehensive secondary school. She is very attuned to student well-being at this stage as they make the transition from primary to secondary schooling. She is keen to work with ITE students as their mentor and prefers to work with several as a team.

She likes to see a focus, in the lessons that she observes, in terms of stimulating curiosity. Glynnis is also participative in the local partnership in ITE with five other schools and colleges and believes that their work could be enhanced by adopting a lesson study approach to teaching and learning where specific lessons within a theme could be developed and jointly critiqued within a community of practice. She has proposed that the group of teachers develop a collaborative action research project incorporating lesson study. Their purpose would be to explore the conditions for learning in the context of carefully planned research lessons. The intention being that learning would become more visible to the ITE students.

The conjunction between collaborative action research, mentoring, modelling, and lesson study is seen by Perez, Soto and Servan (2010:77) as a 'specific form of cooperative or participatory action research specially designed for in-service teacher education' on the

grounds that it achieves both change and understanding. In this sense the Welsh reforms position ITE students as being 'in-service'. In order to make this clear it is important to see lesson study as learning study. Shifting the focus from teachers' actions and planning, important as that is, to student learning is challenging and difficult. Wang-Iverson (2002) sees lesson study as a means of making teacher professional collaboration concrete by focusing on specific goals that examine not just teachers at work, but students at work, through the learning that is going on.

In this way teaching can itself become professional learning when the activity is collegial and where the learning arises, principally from the school students' engagement. In essence lesson study can be characterised as ways of seeing; that is observing how learners respond to a teaching episode that has been prepared collaboratively by a group, in this case mentors and ITE students, with the intention of developing, refining, and improving the lesson in the light of such feedback. It should not be taken as a means for developing 'the perfect lesson'; but rather as better apprehending what it is that makes a specific teaching episode work well for learning. Just as action research requires participants to engage in cycles of inquiry so too does lesson study as a system for building and sharing practitioner knowledge (Lewis, Perry, Hurd and O'Connell, 2006). It is a particularly powerful process when the concepts to be taught are problematic for the learners and where there is much scope for misunderstanding. Thus the process is based upon the concept that those who teach the lessons are in effect researchers, and the lessons being taught are seen as 'research lessons'.

Rock & Wilson (2005:78) see these 'research lessons' as being:
- Focused on specific teacher-generated problems, goals, or vision of pedagogical practice
- Carefully planned, in collaboration
- Observed by other teachers
- Recorded for analysis and reflection
- Discussed by lesson study group members.

They argue that lesson study is based upon principles of learning through social interaction rather than as a result of individual experience; that knowledge is acquired as an adaptive experience; and that knowledge is the result of active mental processing by the individual in a social environment. Much of this takes place in the classroom as the lesson itself is progressing. In effect the classroom can be conceived of as a learning laboratory for the participating students (both school students and ITE students) as they come into contact with new ideas, principles and practices.

Mentors can play an important role in undertaking observations that can become the basis for dialogue with the ITE students. Of course, the processes for collecting data would be determined by the overall purpose of the observations. It may be that a mentor, as observer, would maintain a running record, using a time frame that accounts for the introduction to the session, its presentation, and its closure. This mentor and possibly other members of the group might have some pre-determined categories as the focus of the observation such as:
- Affiliation and rapport with teacher (smiling, nodding, how was attention secured etc.)
- Attitude (engagement – procedural or substantive, indifference, disengagement, and distraction)
- Approach to problem solving (seeking assistance, independence)
- Connecting to prior learning
- Curiosity and creativity (dealing with the unexpected)
- Monitoring both formal and informal aspects of the classroom; and so on.

Observation is the initial step but what counts is the ways in which the information is interpreted. One purpose would be to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson and the ways in which it could be improved for the next cycle of teaching; always remembering of course that those who are observing are attempting to look at the lesson through the lens of the learners' experiences. Questions could be clustered together. For example:

- How effective was the initial orientation? How clear were expectations?
- To what extent was attention paid to what the learners brought to the lesson?
- How were learners motivated? How was praise handled?
- How well was the lesson paced? How were digressions handled? Was there information overload?
- How were roadblocks to learning cleared?
- Who seemed to benefit most? Who seemed to benefit least?
- Was learning tailored to individual student needs?
- How helpful were the resources? How accessible were the resources?
- What features of the physical environment supported or impeded learning?
- Were there any specific contextual constraints – are they likely to arise during the next cycle?.

Lesson study is founded on the argument that if we are to understand student learning then it is important to be in dialogue with young people about their learning much of which has been discussed above in relation to Jo's case. Such a dialogue will necessarily also include discussions about the conditions for their learning both within the classroom and the school. It is claimed that gaining access to student thinking is an essential component of lesson study. It can be seen as a means of penetrating 'the pedagogic black box' (Cajkler, Norton and Pedder, 2013). Young people analysing and explaining their learning both during and after a teaching/learning episode is critical to the process of developing and refining the lessons that are being studied with learning being better understood and defined (Larssen et al, 2018). Engaging with school students in this way requires tactful attention; this can be modelled by mentors intent upon developing ITE students sensitivity to the nuances of classroom practices and student experiences within them.

Using lesson study as a fulcrum that brings together ITE students and their mentors also has the potential to create bonds with university partners, who may also become involved as collaborators: planning lessons; undertaking observations; and, contributing to analysis. Creating such partnerships could clearly be seen as the basis for a collegial action research project.

Action research undertaken regarding project management
It is rare, in the literature, to find an action research study that is the province of those delegated to manage specific projects, this is particularly so in education practices, in spite of many projects being developed within reform programs. Most accounts of action research in this area are directed to projects within the commerce and industry sectors.

Even so, Algeo's account of an action research with project managers (2012) provides insight into: considering the central activity of a project; the influences at work; the intended and unintended outcomes. He advocates that the project's history should be documented addressing expectations and the nature of the ways in which knowledge is manufactured and exchanged.

Case Study Three
Kathy was formerly a primary school teacher who had contributed to initial teacher education programs at her local university. Following higher degree studies, she has been active in building networks with a range of schools engaged in ITE. She is known for her strong commitment to collaboration in particular as it relates to school improvement. She is also concerned with attention to inclusion, enhancement, and enrichment. She has proposed, through her networks to work with other senior teachers/mentors across Wales to develop, through action research, a set of criteria for successful management, including ways to overcome impediments (As with the other case studies this is fictional and draws broadly on administrative practices. It should not be seen as one that identifies a particular school leader)*.*

The action research endeavour that Kathy proposes would aim to identify the core knowledges required for the role of 'managers' of projects in relation to ITE within their schools (It is acknowledged that recognising the leadership role discussed here is not normally accorded the title 'project manager', but nonetheless the work can be well described in this way). She wishes to collaborate with other managers to identify the nature of the workplace environment, the expectations that are held by various stakeholders and ways to minimise misunderstandings and conflicts of interest. All of these have been cited as critical to successful project management (Coghlan, Shani and Coughlan, 2022). Similarly, Lappi et al (2018) point to what have been known as 'agile practices' in project management such as continuous learning and reflection on how to become more effective in capability building and project success.

Exploring these issues and practices within an action research context requires what Coghlan and Shani (2018) describe as four factors to be investigated, namely:
- Context – Action research takes place within a local situation and context and seeks to contribute to the development of the organization in that context. The external context of the global and local economies provides the larger context in which action research takes place while the local internal context of organizational characteristics, such as resources, history, formal and informal organizations, and the degrees of congruence between them affect the readiness and capability for participating in action research.
- Quality of relationships – as action research is with people, rather than on or for them, the quality of the relationships between members and researchers is paramount. Hence the relationships need to be managed through trust, concern for others, equality of influence, common language and so on.
- Quality of the action research process itself – this is grounded in a dual focus on both the inquiry process and the implementation process as it unfolds and is managed in the present tense during the initiative.
- Outcomes – the dual outcomes of action research are some level of sustainability (human, social, economic, ecological) and the development of self-help and competencies out of the action and creation of new knowledge from the inquiry.

To document each of these requires a number of methods including: an examination of archives contributing to the ITE reforms; portrayals of critical moments where new directions are taken, or older practices sustained; examples of supportive relationships and so on. An important tool would be the maintenance of reflective diaries that would also take a reflexive orientation indicating the source of dilemmas and concerns.

This section of the discussion is conducted within the wider context of the development of what is known as 'occupational knowledge' (Billett, 2010). That is the professional

knowledge that is formed and developed as the result of immersion in practice, or as it has so eloquently been put, 'how to go on' in practice (Kemmis et al, 2014: 207). In this instance the practice of project management. Such knowledge does not emerge unassisted; it comes about through a rigorous process of reflection and analysis. It requires a constant interaction between the inner professional self and the external and complex professional world (Groundwater-Smith, 2022).

Kathy's case builds upon the distinction between the acts of reflecting and being reflexive. While the former attends to careful and sustained thinking about the how, why and what of practice, the latter provides opportunities to consider the often unexamined nature of that which may lie behind the formation of ideas and beliefs that may be deeply embodied. Returning for a moment to the case of Jo, the ITE candidate, a question that was mooted as one he might consider was 'What was his stance on children's literature and how did it come about?' Jo would need to take into account not only his emerging professional knowledge of the nature and value of children's literature but also his own experiences of it within his particular social circumstances.

The spiral of action research provides a valuable heuristic, or road map, that recognizes the need to evaluate and re-visit a program-in-action. These understandings closely ally to that which perceives that reflection and reflexivity are iterative processes (Tremblay, Richard, Brousselle and Beaudrel, 2014). Repeated interactions between the range of participants enable the work of practitioner, in this case the project manager, to be situated within a more informed and critical milieu. This may lead to renewal and refreshment by developing a broader view of both a given practice and the roles of those within it; in this way moving from a purely instrumental and technical orientation to professional learning to one that is more likely to be emancipatory (Mockler, 2020).

Documentation requires time. Time that is specifically put aside. Sharing with colleagues engaged in similar enterprises entails opportunity costs when time is allocated to the tasks of reflection. For example, various project managers may attend common meetings or conferences. These could be occasions when they might take a walk together to consider their actions. Advocates who may recommend walking and talking with colleagues as a means of clarifying reflection are also mindful that such practices can become little more than a short term instrumental practice in complete contradiction to the purpose of the enterprise (Downey, Steffy, Posten Jr and English (2010). A more rigorous strategy may be the generation of jointly authored statements where colleagues work collaboratively and iteratively to generate concise statements of practice that assist in setting out what may be undertaken in difficult and challenging circumstances.

Project managers, as understood in this discussion paper, in the context of the Welsh ITE reforms are faced with having few precedents; their contribution will be critical to assisting others who wish to travel this road.

2. Conclusion

This discussion paper is designed to inform an enhanced understanding of the ways in which practices may be investigated prior to formulating recommendations. It is analogous to the tabling of a 'green paper' distributed for consultation that will underwrite a subsequent 'white paper'. It embodies both push and pull factors in relation to gathering information of the Welsh Initial Teacher Education Reforms. It achieves this by pushing out information from the research literature and pulling in information from the practitioners in their various roles. It addresses this by focusing upon both theoretical and practical matters.

Immanuel Kant is said to have related these matters thus: 'Experience without theory is blind, but theory without experience is mere intellectual play.' Or as Groundwater-Smith and Irwin (2011) argued that without care 'theory can become the plaything of practice'; that is to say that when not well understood the theory can be distorted to fit the practice.

It is to the credit of the Welsh Initial Teacher Education Reforms, that the architects of the policy are committed to ensuring that the debate is well advised, and sufficient time is given for them to engage with the range of stakeholders and participants.

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Final Report: Susan Groundwater-Smith AM, Honorary Professor. Response to the Refreshment of the *Criteria for Accreditation of ITE in Wales,* Final Reflections

Executive Summary

My earlier feedback, as an International Initial Teacher Education Expert, has taken the form of two discussion papers. This response, while briefly focusing upon the effectiveness of the development of the *Criteria for Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education in Wales*, takes as its main purpose an identification of two areas deserving of further close attention for continuing improvement, these being the professional practice of mentoring and the further development of a formative evaluation of the reform.

1. Effectiveness of criteria for accreditation of ITE in Wales

There can be no doubt that the ITE reforms that have been enacted across Wales are comprehensive, well considered and oriented to inclusion in relation to all engaged in the partnership.

The recent documentation of the development of the reforms reiterates the centrality of the partnership, spelling out the roles for schools and universities. The emphasis is upon the concept of joint ownership. It is clear that the innovation rests upon both parties working respectfully and cooperatively with each other. Clearly both entities see the benefit of having mutual goals in the development of initial teacher education in the context of the overall features of practice. Furthermore, they contribute to the development of a form of intellectual property that can be shared beyond the immediate context of Wales through the encouragement of research including small scale projects in the form of action research as well as larger studies.

The reforms are grounded in sound communication and explicit criteria for the evolution of practice in ITE. While the partnership is sound, it is not wholly equal. It could be argued that the impetus comes from the Welsh Government and that the innovation is led by its officers who argue that that the teaching profession in Wales 'is key to raising the quality of learning and teaching in schools'. Clearly, the Welsh Government is the principal stakeholder in that it is intended that the ITE students will ultimately be teaching in Welsh schools. A major challenge in the short term is the ongoing navigation of the reform through its further iterations in ways that are satisfying to both the employing authority and universities, that themselves are subject to various forms of governance.

ITE is seen as the first step in career-long professional development with teaching being portrayed as 'highly practical and robustly intellectual'. The general characterisation of the practice of teaching is both noble and notable. The ITE programmes, structures processes and inputs are detailed and comprehensive. They rely on leadership and effective management when it comes to operationalising the complexity of the arrangements. These concerns are clearly embedded in the documentation of the reform journey. All the same there are continuing issues that require attention. Principal of these is the matter of professional mentoring.

2. Professional mentoring in the context of ITE reform in Wales

Central to the reforms is the mentoring relationship that is to be developed, principally through the schools between ITE students and teachers, but also in relation to the

association between ITE students and university staff. Embedded in the criteria is the implication that mentors are trained but it should be acknowledged that effective mentoring is a challenging task. In its document, *The Professional Learning Continuum: Mentoring in Initial Teacher Education* (Estyn, 2018) , the findings regarding the quality and outcomes of mentoring raise a number of troubling points. For example:

> 'The quality of mentoring – training in the school-based parts of ITE programmes is too variable and depends on the skills and expertise of the school mentor. As students spend up to two-thirds of their training in school, this is a significant weakness in the system. In too many cases, students do not receive mentoring that is effective enough to help them to make good progress.' (Estyn, 2018:2)

and

> 'The mentor training currently provided by the centres of ITE places too much emphasis on completion of documentation rather than developing the skills, knowledge and understanding required to mentor successfully. In addition, ITE quality assurance procedures focus too heavily on consistency and conformance at the expense of ensuring quality. As a result, ITE centres do not have robust enough processes to identify the strengths and weaknesses in mentoring, nor do they share best practice effectively enough. There is no common understanding of coaching and mentoring and too many mentors do not have good enough knowledge, understanding and skills of the most effective approaches in teacher education.' (Estyn, 2018:6)

Any discussion regarding the ongoing development of the ITE reforms will need to take account of concerns such as these and suggest how they might be addressed in ongoing training on the part of both partners.

In their introduction to *Mentoring: Perspectives on School-based Teacher Education* Hagger, McIntyre and Wilkin (2004) spelled out the many complexities and pitfalls of mentoring in ITE. The various contributors agree that the quality of school based ITE rests upon the nature and quality of the work of mentors, principally cooperating teachers. While some time has elapsed since its publication it is clear that many of the challenges associated with school-based mentoring still continue.

Certainly, problems and challenges are not confined to Wales; for example, in their study of career change teachers and their mentors, Varadharijan et al 2020 criticised the loose structure to be found in too many programs with the relationship being too reactive in nature and only existing as a point of contact. Mentees were left to navigate challenges on their own. Also, in some relationships there tended to be a pivot to non-teaching matters.

In my Discussion Paper *Reforming Initial Teacher Education in Wales – Part 2* I wrote that 'much of the literature concerned with mentoring, in relation to workplace learning, constructs the activity as individualistic and fulfilling a nurturing function drawing upon the mentor's experience and wisdom as one who can lead by example and provide confidential, secure advice. In the context of the Welsh reforms in ITE it may be preferable to articulate a more interventionist and critical role. School based mentors may be interested in forms of professional community building that liberate participating ITE students from the private nature of their classroom practices in order to develop a generative means for engaging in professional dialogue'. In the discussion paper attention was drawn to the ways in which such practices as 'lesson study' could contribute to such communitarian practices.

There is something of a silence in the documentation in relation to differentiation among ITE students themselves. For example: some may be more age-mature than others; some may

be driven by different motivations to teach (Hansen, 2021); while for others teaching may be a career change. The latter may have different experiences of work place learning and may already be well equipped in relation to problem solving, be quite independent and resilient (Crosswell and Beutel, 2017).

A question that needs to be addressed in the wider context of school education in Wales relates to: is mentoring constructivist or transmissive? Richter et al (2013). Their findings in particular indicate that mentoring that follows constructivist rather than transmissive principles of learning fosters the growth of teacher efficacy, teaching enthusiasm, and job satisfaction and reduces emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, the study points to the insight that it is the quality of mentoring rather than its frequency that explains a successful career start.

Similarly, training would need to guard against what Hobson and Malderez (2013): refer to as 'judgementoring' (referred to in the Estyn paper cited above). Writing that such a stance can be defined as:

> 'a one-to-one relationship between a relatively inexperienced teacher (*the mentee*) and a relatively experienced one (*the mentor*) in which the latter, in revealing too readily and/or too often her/his own judgements on or evaluations of the mentee's planning and teaching (*e.g. through "comments", "feedback", advice, praise, or criticism*), compromises the mentoring relationship and its potential benefits.' (Hobson and Malderez, 2013:90)

I would also like to draw attention to the fact that, as the consequential stakeholders, school students themselves, should be appropriately consulted regarding the various mentoring arrangements and the contribution that they may be able to make. There are references in the Criteria to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. For example, under 'Core Studies' attention is drawn to school students' rights, including their right to a voice in matters that relate to their lives. This strategy could be a way of operationalising the ambition to take the rights of the child into consideration.

In conclusion this brief report refers to the critical nature of professional mentoring and makes the recommendation that there is a need for continuing and appropriate training for both school and university- based mentors.

3. Ongoing formative evaluation of the reforms

The processes of this desk-based review of the refreshment of the *Accreditation Criteria for Initial Teacher Education in Wales* have engaged academic experts in ITE in familiarising themselves with the documentation of the many processes involved in the developing reform. After perusing them they have provided written responses. This procedure can be said to be a form of formative evaluation or can be constituted as what has become known as a 'Real Time Evaluation (RTE)'. Broughton proposes the following definition:

'A real-time evaluation of a WFP operation is a rapid assessment conducted during implementation, often at more than one stage (including the initial stage), of the operation's relevance and design, progress in achieving the operation's objectives (i.e. results), any gaps or unintended impact, the effectiveness and efficiency of the mode of implementation, and the appropriateness and application of operational guidelines and policies' (Broughton, 2001)

While the context for the development of RTE has primarily been in relation to emergency aid the term is a useful one in considering how to examine a reform in progress in a timely manner, by "saying the useful things to the right people" (Saunders, 2006: 197)

Traditional evaluation methods can be slow, costly, and difficult to manage. They may not meet the needs of rapidly changing practices and fail to inform an adaptive management. By engaging a desk-based review it has been possible to have a process that is iterative and flexible. Nonetheless, a reform as embracing as the changes to ITE in Wales also deserves evaluation processes that are ongoing, consultative in nature and more inclusive. It is important and desirable that following the current iteration of the ITE processes and procedures further and wider evaluation should occur.

Therefore, it is a recommendation that a working party be established to design and manage ongoing formative evaluation of the ITE reforms in practice.

Thus, this response to the refreshment of the criteria for accreditation of ITE in Wales clearly identifies the reform as one that is broad in scope, ambitious and exciting. At the same time, it is also possible to see a pathway to improvement. Hence these two recommendations.

4. References

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