



# Evaluation of Welsh-Medium Provision in Initial Teacher Education

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## Executive Summary

### 1. Research aims

- 1.1 OB3 Research, in conjunction with Arad Research and Dateb, was commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake an evaluation of Welsh-medium provision in Initial Teacher Education (ITE). The aim of the evaluation was to understand the support provided to develop Welsh-medium and Welsh language teaching within ITE. The overall objectives of the evaluation were to:
- review existing evaluations to assess the overall contribution of Welsh-medium provision within ITE
  - identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing provision
  - assess the coherence of current provision in meeting policy objectives
  - assess how existing arrangements fit with educational reforms and Welsh Government policy
  - assess the extent to which current arrangements meet the needs of individuals (ITE students and beginning teachers) and organisations (schools and consortia).
- 1.2 For the purposes of the evaluation, Welsh-medium ITE provision was defined to include any of the following:
- provision delivered by ITE Centres through the medium of Welsh (e.g. lectures and subject based seminars, tutorials and teaching resources etc)
  - provision delivered by ITE Centres to improve trainees' Welsh language skills, including provision available via WMIS

- provision delivered by ITE Centres (and via the Welsh-Medium Improvement Scheme [WMIS]) to equip trainees to teach in Welsh-medium school settings (e.g. pedagogical aspects)
- experiences gained by trainees of teaching through the medium of Welsh during school placements.

## **2. Method**

2.1 The evaluation was undertaken between December 2017 and April 2018 and involved:

- an inception stage, including attendance at an inception meeting with the study Steering Group, scoping interviews with ITE providers and preparing an evaluation inception document
- desk based research, including a detailed literature review of Welsh Government policy and strategy documents and data on participation in Welsh-medium ITE
- preparing research instruments, including semi-structured discussion guides for use with a range of contributors including current trainee teachers, current teachers and other school representatives
- conducting face to face interviews with 21 policy and strategic stakeholders
- conducting telephone interviews with Higher Education Institution (HEI) representatives
- conducting a mix of focus groups and individual interviews with 14 representatives from four of five ITE providers
- conducting seven focus groups with 52 trainee teachers, 25 trainees were undertaking a primary and 27 were undertaking a secondary teaching course
- conducting focus groups and individual interviews with 73 representatives from 18 schools (8 primary and 10 secondary settings)
- analysing the findings of the fieldwork and preparing an evaluation report.

## **3. An overview of Welsh-Medium provision in ITE**

3.1 The evaluation was undertaken during a period of significant initial teacher training reform in Wales which was anticipated to have major implications for how Welsh-medium provision ITE should be delivered in the future. At the time of undertaking the evaluation, ITE provision was being delivered by five ITE providers across three centres, namely:

- North and Mid Wales Centre for Teacher Education and Training (NMWCTET), provided by Bangor University and Aberystwyth University
- South West Wales Centre for Teacher Education (SWWCTE), provided by University of Wales, Trinity Saint David at Swansea and Carmarthen

- South East Wales Centre for Teacher Education and Training (SEWCTET) provided by the University of South Wales and Cardiff Metropolitan University.

- 3.2 During 2017, new accreditation criteria for initial teacher education programmes in Wales were published by the Welsh Government in response to the recommendations made within *Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers* review of the sector. The Welsh Government established the Accreditation Board of the Education Workforce Council to accredit individual ITE programmes and partnerships were required to submit their programmes for accreditation. The outcome of this accreditation process was not known at the time of undertaking the evaluation and therefore the recommendations made should be considered in this context.
- 3.3 The evaluation also took into consideration the wider policy context in terms of the Welsh language and education reform. In particular the evaluation found that Welsh-medium ITE has an important role to play in realising the Welsh Government's target of reaching a million speakers by 2050 as set out in [Cymraeg 2050](#) and contributing to the commitments set out in the Welsh Government's Welsh in Education Action Plan 20-17-2021 to assess the supply of, and demand for, Welsh-medium practitioners within the sector. The evaluation also found that future Welsh-medium ITE provision should take into account the new teaching and leadership standards introduced in response to Professor John Furlong's review of initial teacher education.
- 3.4 At the time of undertaking the evaluation, a number of schemes existed to supplement ITE provision in Wales including the Welsh-Medium Improvement Scheme (WMIS), the Teachers' Certificate of Language Competency (TCLC) and the Cynllun Colegau Cymru.
- 3.5 WMIS is financed by the Welsh Government and available to graduates who are training to teach through the medium of Welsh in secondary schools. Participants receive a financial incentive of £1,600 to participate and £2,000 is awarded to those training to teach Maths, Physics and Chemistry. The scheme is managed by Aberystwyth University. Trainees are expected to undertake a minimum of 25 hours of Welsh language skills lessons during their ITE course and attend two national courses.
- 3.6 During 2016/17, 71 trainees were initially registered on the WMIS scheme but ten of these left over the course of the year. The scheme has experienced a drop in the number of participants over the last few years.
- 3.7 During 2016/17, 34 secondary schools participated in the WMIS scheme. These receive a small financial payment in return for supporting trainees, including via a language mentor.

- 3.8 The Welsh Government has recently announced its intention to enhance the Welsh-medium financial incentive for the 2018/19 academic year onwards. The WMIS financial incentive of £2,000 will continue to be made available to participants but in addition, the establishment of the new Iaith Athrawon Yfory Incentive Scheme will make available a further financial incentive of £3,000 to students. The first payment of £500 for eligible persons will be paid on completion of an eligible postgraduate ITE secondary programme in Wales leading to QTS. The majority of the payment, £2,500, will be payable on successful completion of induction at a maintained Welsh medium or bilingual secondary school or teaching Welsh in any maintained secondary setting in Wales.
- 3.9 The TCLC was first introduced in 2015/16 as means of recognising the linguistic skills levels of ITE primary and secondary trainees on completion of their course and to demonstrate their ability to teach through the medium of Welsh. It is part-funded by the Welsh Government and delivered by the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. During 2015/16 a total of 178 primary and secondary trainees applied for the TCLC.
- 3.10 The Cynllun Colegau Cymru is a framework to teach Welsh or improve the Welsh language skills of primary ITE trainees whose first language is not Welsh. Since 2013, the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol has been responsible for the scheme's external examination and individual ITE providers are responsible for its delivery. It is available to ITE primary sector trainees whose first language is not Welsh.

## **4. Key Findings**

- 4.1 The evaluation found that:
- there has been a general decline in the number of ITE trainees participating in Welsh-medium secondary ITE provision recently, despite ITE provider efforts to identify and encourage them to apply and undertake the course
  - the majority of trainee teachers and new teachers who contributed to the evaluation had already decided to undertake Welsh-medium ITE provision prior to enrolling on the course and very few were aware of the financial incentive available via the WMIS scheme prior to enrolling on to the course
  - the extent to which ITE provision is delivered through the medium of Welsh differs across ITE providers, with some provision delivered wholly in Welsh or bilingually whilst in other areas it is restricted to Welsh language sessions and school placements
  - ITE providers find it difficult to provide Welsh-medium provision due to the low number of ITE trainees enrolled at their institution and the lack of Welsh language skills amongst staff

- Welsh language (gloywi iaith) lessons are considered to play a significant part in improving the Welsh language skills of trainees although this is not always reflected in the assessment data
- trainees have very little understanding at the outset of the course that they would be required to participate in Welsh language lessons and found them to be very intensive and not well-aligned with the content of their ITE course
- positive feedback was provided where trainees had experienced more differentiated Welsh language skills provision
- school placements play a vital part in developing and improving trainees' Welsh-medium teaching skills and the role played by language mentors was thought to make an important contribution to this
- contributors queried the rationale for restricting the benefits of the WMIS scheme only to secondary ITE trainees who intended to teach subjects other than Welsh through the medium of Welsh
- there was very little awareness of the TCLC amongst school representatives and it was not being considered during the recruitment and appointment of new staff
- it was inappropriate for a ITE trainee to achieve a QTS status yet fail the TCLC. Likewise, it was considered inappropriate that a trainee could 'fail' the TCLC examination process and receive an 'unsatisfactory' grade.

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

5.1 The evaluation sets out its conclusions and offers a series of recommendations for the Welsh Government, in collaboration with its stakeholders, to consider. It considers five key issues:

- the continued decline in the number of prospective trainees and the difficulties associated with recruitment to Welsh-medium ITE
- the complexity and fragmented configuration of current provision and the need to simplify and develop greater consistency across Welsh-medium ITE
- the need to increase Welsh language capacity of ITE secondary provision and explore opportunities for closer collaboration between providers and schools
- making the most effective use of financial incentivisation to attract trainees and retain teachers to teach through the medium of Welsh
- the need to consider on-going opportunities for new teachers to develop their Welsh language skills and their pedagogical understanding and knowledge in relation to different Welsh-medium and bilingual settings.

## *Recruitment to Welsh-medium ITE*

- 5.2 A key finding of the evaluation is that, as a consequence of the continued decline in the number of trainees participating in secondary ITE courses through the medium of Welsh, secondary schools are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit. Without intervention it is likely that this trend will continue. The Cymraeg 2050 strategy sets out ambitious targets for increasing the number of secondary teachers who can teach through the medium of Welsh from its current level of 1,800 to 2,200 by 2021 and 3,200 by 2031 as well as the number of secondary teachers who can teach Welsh as a subject to 600 by 2021 and 900 by 2031. Even discounting for those who are likely to leave the profession over the next thirteen-year period, ITE provision needs to nearly double the number of trainees being trained annually in order to realise these targets. The evaluation calls for a step change in the efforts to promote and recruit to the profession and any such promotional campaign needs to be well-resourced and targeted effectively.
- 5.3 A further key finding of the evaluation is that trainees are often unclear how much provision will be delivered through the medium of Welsh prior to beginning of their courses – not least because this level of information is not always readily available in the public domain in an easy to understand manner but also because the actual Welsh-medium ITE offer and provision varies between providers. This finding points to the need to address two things – the need to agree upon a clear definition of what constitutes Welsh-medium ITE provision and the need to better communicate the ‘offer’ to prospective trainees. Aligned to this the evaluation concludes that there would be merit in adopting the term ‘bilingual provision’ where this better reflects the nature of taught provision at university.
- 5.4 The evaluation concludes that its findings should be considered alongside the recommendations offered by another study which is focusing on the recruitment and retention of teachers in Wales.
- 5.5 The evaluation recommends that in order to achieve the ambitions set out in Cymraeg 2050 that:

**Recommendation 1:** The Welsh Government, in collaboration with its accredited ITE partnerships, develop and agree upon the minimum provision which constitutes Welsh-medium ITE provision. The evaluation cautions against setting the bar at too high a level as this may risk alienating some prospective trainees with lower levels of confidence in their Welsh language skills at the outset. The definition should be informed by existing provision whilst also specifying what is expected of Welsh-medium ITE trainees:

- subject specialism support (i.e. subject tutors) is available to trainees through

the medium of Welsh

- at least half of taught provision (lectures, seminars, tutorials) can be accessed in Welsh or bilingually
- access to support from a language mentor at school placements
- at least one school placement undertaken in a Welsh-medium or bilingual school
- at least one assignment is prepared by a trainee in Welsh.

**Recommendation 2:** The Welsh Government, in collaboration with its accredited ITE partnerships, develop a stronger and identifiable Welsh-medium ITE brand. Furthermore, the evaluation recommends that ITE partnerships offer greater clarity to prospective applicants about which aspects of their ITE course are delivered through the medium of Welsh or bilingually.

**Recommendation 3:** The Welsh Government, in collaboration with its accredited ITE partnerships, deliver a well-resourced marketing campaign targeted at school pupils in Welsh-medium and bilingual schools as well as undergraduates at HEIs in Wales with a view to raising awareness and increasing interest in Welsh-medium ITE courses.

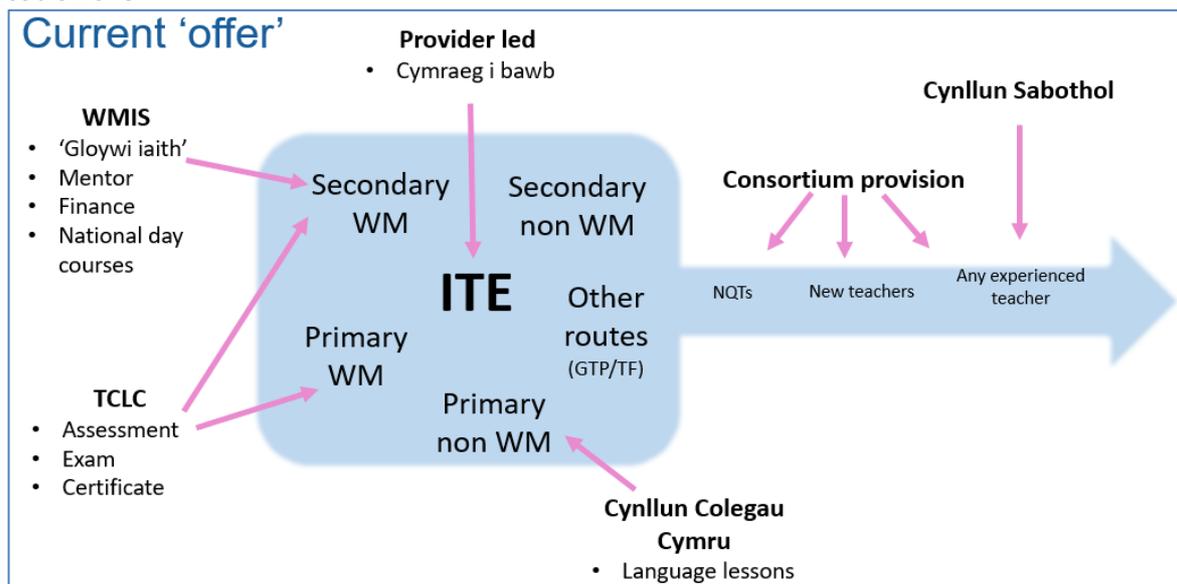
### *Simplification*

- 5.6 The evaluation concludes that the current 'offer' to train and equip ITE trainees to teach through the medium of Welsh is highly complex and somewhat disjointed as illustrated in Figure 5.1. It is also important to point out that ITE providers have to cater to the needs of trainees with varying levels of Welsh language skills when they first enter their ITE courses. At present a range of different 'initiatives' are in place targeting different cohorts of ITE trainees – some of these are national schemes whereas others are local and provider-led. Furthermore, some of these provisions are well established schemes, such as the support available via the WMIS scheme which has been in place for some 30 years, whilst others, such as the TCLC, are relatively new and not particularly well recognised across the sector.
- 5.7 Based on the evidence presented by providers, students and schools, there is a strong argument for rationalising and simplifying the provision which is geared to either supporting ITE trainees to learn or improve their own Welsh language skills or to better equip them to teach in Welsh. The evaluation stresses however that it would be vital to retain the

elements of good practice that each of these initiatives currently demonstrate, as identified within the evaluation.

- 5.8 The evaluation found that the provision currently available via the WMIS scheme does make a positive contribution to the development of Welsh language skills of trainees and concludes that this is a valuable and important aspect of intervention that should be retained as a principle within any future ITE offer.

**Figure 5.1: Welsh language skills and Welsh-medium provision for trainees and teachers**



- 5.9 In an ideal world any future provision focused on the development of Welsh language skills of trainees and equipping them to teach in Welsh ought to be embedded into the core offer by ITE providers. The current accreditation process offers an opportunity for the Welsh Government to achieve this by incorporating such requirements into ITE providers' core provision and assessing this on an ongoing basis. However, there is a danger that by doing away with any 'additional' intervention good practice will be lost particularly given that, at the time of writing the evaluation report, the accreditation process was ongoing and the outcome not known. As such the evaluation offers two possible recommendations for the Welsh Government to consider, once the accreditation process has been completed:

**Recommendation 4a:** The Welsh Government develops a single intervention programme which aims to support the development of Welsh-language skills amongst all primary and secondary ITE trainees and develop their abilities to teach through the medium of Welsh or in bilingual settings. This programme of intervention should draw and build upon elements of good practice which exists across current interventions. If this option be pursued then the evaluation recommends that the current financial resources allocated to administer the two schemes of WMIS and the Cynllun Colegau Cymru be

merged to fund the programme. It would be feasible to integrate elements of the TCLC into this initiative, such as the assessment of resources and teaching practice.

**Or Recommendation 4b:** The Welsh Government works with appointed ITE partnerships to embed Welsh language skills provision into a mandatory offer within ITE, removing the need for any 'add-on' initiatives such as WMIS and the Cynllun Colegau Cymru. In this case it is recommended that the financial resources currently available to administer the schemes of WMIS and the Cynllun Colegau Cymru be awarded directly to ITE partnerships. Should this approach be taken, the Welsh Government needs to be satisfied that all ITE partnerships meet agreed and clearly defined requirements and that there is a commitment by ITE partnerships to increase their capacity to deliver Welsh-medium ITE across the full range of subject specialisms.

**Recommendation 5:** Irrespective of which of the above options is pursued, appropriate and tailored Welsh language skills development provision should be made available to all ITE trainees, regardless of whether they pursue a teaching career in the primary or secondary sector, or Welsh-medium or English-medium sector so that each and every trainee teacher has the opportunity to progress along the Welsh language continuum. It is imperative that these trainees are able to access Welsh language support that is suited to their level of proficiency in Welsh thereby moving away from the two-tiered approach (complete beginner or proficient speaker) which is a characteristic of some provision at present.

**Recommendation 6:** The following good practice elements of current approaches should be retained (and extended where appropriate):

- the use of school-based language mentors (who are financially reimbursed) to support both secondary and primary trainees pursuing a Welsh-medium ITE course
- a clear outline of what is expected of school-based language mentors in supporting trainees, including language support and observation.

5.10 A key finding of the evaluation is that differentiated Welsh language skills provision is considered to be the most effective provision and that this good practice, where it exists, should be extended across the network. The evaluation concludes that mixed-ability Welsh language skills provision is undesirable and ITE providers should stream all trainees according to their linguistic ability so that trainees have the opportunity of joining the group most suitable to their needs. The evaluation further concludes that any future provision

should be based upon personal development plans for each trainee which have been informed by a consistent language assessment tool used by all ITE providers. It is anticipated that future provision should, if required, involve the provision of short, intensive classes over the summer for those trainees who require a refresher or immersion provision. In addition, there would be merit for ITE providers to explore how they could better utilise the skills of ITE trainees with excellent Welsh language skills to support those with weaker skills.

- 5.11 The evaluation concludes that a greater focus of any future Welsh language skills development should be placed upon raising the confidence of trainees to use the language in the classroom as well as developing their skills in Welsh-medium/bilingual pedagogy. There is potential benefit in placing a greater emphasis upon developing trainees' abilities to immerse their pupils in Welsh (and becoming better equipped to be able to teach pupils from different linguistic backgrounds to themselves) as well as become better equipped to teach in dual-language classrooms.

**Recommendation 7:** The Welsh Government, in conjunction with accredited ITE partnerships, develop a single language tool for assessing the Welsh language skills of trainees at the outset of the ITE course in a consistent manner. This tool, which could be used at the outset and end of ITE provision should be aligned with, and allows for comparison, with the Professional Standards and with data collected via the planned annual workforce census data due to be collected from 2019 onwards.

**Recommendation 8:** Future Welsh language skills provision should be made available to trainees in accordance with their needs as assessed via a personal development plan at the outset of their ITE course. These development plans should identify what trainees require in advance of, as well as during their ITE course, as opposed to assuming that all trainees require a minimum number of study hours, regardless of their ability. It is further recommended that those in need of Welsh language skills support continue to receive at least 25 hours of support per academic year. Development plans should take into consideration the needs of trainees in terms of:

- Developing confidence
- Welsh language skills development
- Pedagogical knowledge and
- Abilities to immerse pupils in Welsh and teach in dual-language classrooms.

**Recommendation 9:** All ITE partnerships should explore opportunities to provide intensive Welsh language skills provision to those trainees in need of additional support prior to their course, via late summer classes as is currently being delivered by some. There may be merit in partnerships delivering such courses through collaborative models of delivery.

- 5.12 The evaluation concludes that there are a number of issues associated with the TCLC that raise questions about its suitability, particularly given that ITE trainees can achieve their QTS but fail the TCLC. The evaluation also concludes that its purpose and fit is somewhat at odds with emerging Welsh Government thinking around promoting a Welsh language skills continuum. The TCLC is still in its infancy and should it be maintained, its remit and functionality would need to be modified and broadened. For instance, there would be scope in extending such a certification tool so that it was applicable to a greater number of trainees and teachers, from complete learners to proficient speakers along the Welsh language skills continuum, be they trainees or existing teachers.
- 5.13 However, the evaluation concludes that the introduction and requirements set out as part of the new professional standards for teaching raises questions about the relevance of a separate accreditation tool for the future. Ideally, the language competencies of trainees and teachers would be better monitored via these standards and as such the evaluation offers the following recommendation:

**Recommendation 10:** The Welsh Government adopt elements of the TCLC (as set out in recommendation 4a) to assess the Welsh language competencies of trainees at the start and end of ITE provision and for the Welsh language competencies of new teachers to be assessed via the professional standards for teaching and leadership.

### *Developing capacity*

- 5.14 The evaluation found that Welsh-medium provision varies from one ITE provider to another and one key factor accounting for this variation is Welsh language capacity across the ITE provider network. The feedback from trainees suggests that those without access to a Welsh-speaking secondary subject tutor in particular felt at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts. The evaluation recognises the difficulties associated with increasing the Welsh language capacity of ITE secondary provision and considered a number of possible

models to address this, including the development of a single centre of expertise for Welsh-medium ITE, the development of a collaborative approach across ITE providers (where such expertise is shared) as well as a model where an increased use of school capacity is made. There are advantages and disadvantages to all three models, as well as delivery challenges. For instance, developing a single centre of expertise may be practical from a delivery perspective but could serve to alienate prospective applicants due to the need to travel/be based at one centre. The evaluation concludes that working in collaboration with schools would be the best approach for addressing the gaps in capacity across current Welsh-medium ITE provision.

**Recommendation 11:** The Welsh Government, in collaboration with ITE partnerships and partner schools, explore a number of options to increase the Welsh language secondary subject capacity of the ITE network. These options could include making greater use of school-based capacity (recognising that this would need to be financially resourced) and collaboration between ITE partnerships (e.g. the sharing of subject tutors) where appropriate.

### *Incentivisation*

- 5.15 The evaluation found that the WMIS current financial incentive is not an important factor in attracting individuals to apply for a Welsh-medium PGCE course not least as very few were aware of the incentive in advance of joining the course; rather it plays an important role in retaining trainees to participate in Welsh language skills sessions once enrolled on a course. In light of the recommendation that Welsh language skills provision should become embedded across all ITE provision for all trainees the evaluation concludes that it would be appropriate to financially reimburse a specific cohort for engaging with this provision, given that it would no longer entail an additional workload.
- 5.16 The Welsh Government has proposed to enhance the Welsh-medium financial incentive for the 2018/19 academic year onwards and the evaluation found that this enhancement is required and appropriate, in light of the difficulties associated with attracting applicants to the profession. However, it concludes that there would be merit in raising this further in line with the highest financial incentive available in England for those in Wales wishing to teach Welsh and through the medium of Welsh in light of the significant recruitment challenges faced and the need to meet the objectives set out in Cymraeg 2050. This would help ensure that the teaching profession is able to better compete with other professional sectors that are recruiting from the same pool of candidates. In addition, it is more important that these

financial incentives encourage a greater proportion of trainees to move into a Welsh-medium or bilingual setting and allow such schools to retain a higher proportion of their workforce. As such the evaluation makes the following recommendation:

**Recommendation 12:** That the current financial incentive associated with the WMIS scheme for secondary trainees be abandoned. Rather the Welsh Government should offer a higher financial incentive of up to £10,000 to each individual who successfully complete a Welsh-medium PGCE secondary course and enter the teaching profession. This incentive could be awarded at key points:

- an initial payment of £2,500 on successful completion of Welsh-Medium Qualified Teacher Status
- an early-career payment of £2,500 in the third year of teaching
- a further early-career payment of £5,000 in the fifth year of teaching.

5.17 A key finding of the evaluation is that at present ITE providers do not have any contracted targets to achieve in terms of the recruitment of Welsh-medium ITE trainees. Whilst setting such targets may not be particularly effective the evaluation concludes that there would be merit in communicating clearer expectations to those accredited ITE partnerships on how many Welsh-medium trainees they should be aiming to recruit on an annual basis so that the ambitions of Cymraeg 2050 can be translated into action. These expectations should also be incorporated into partnerships' accreditation review processes on an ongoing basis.

#### *Continuity of support and development*

5.18 One important message raised during the evaluation related to the need to consider on-going opportunities for new teachers to develop their Welsh language skills and their pedagogical understanding and knowledge in relation to different Welsh language and bilingual settings. The evaluation found that some provision is available to teachers – either via their educational consortia or via their own school – but a clear message from the research points to a need for this provision to be formalised, better structured (in the sense of being available to all) and better promoted to new teachers. The evaluation concludes that the intensive Welsh language provision available to trainees during their ITE course seems to disappear as they enter the workforce, with very little awareness of other personal development opportunities until they become experienced teachers (and therefore eligible and appropriate for the Cynllun Sabothol). This is particularly important in light of the need

for teachers to demonstrate their commitment to improving their Welsh language skills as part of demonstrating their professional standards.

5.19 The evaluation considers whether it would be appropriate to link any financial incentivisation with the proposed Welsh language continuum being developed by the Welsh Government so as to ensure that individuals are motivated to further their skills from one level to the next over the shortest time period possible. In light of the fact that the Welsh language continuum is still in its development stage the evaluation does not make a firm recommendation to this effect but would note that it might be worthwhile considering such an option for the future. This model could reward trainees or teachers on the achievement of each level, with those already achieving the highest level being awarded the full amount available.

5.20 The evaluation therefore recommends:

**Recommendation 13:** that the Welsh Government, in conjunction with educational consortia, explore how it could deliver on-going opportunities for new teachers to continue with the development of both their Welsh language skills as well as their pedagogical skills to immerse pupils in Welsh and teach in dual-language classrooms, so as to address the perceived gap in support that currently exists after gaining a QTS. This could be delivered as an extension to existing regional professional learning programmes offered to NQTs during their induction period and be aligned to support the new Professional Standards for teachers.

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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