CYPE consultation response: *Scrutiny of COVID-19 and its impact on children and young people (including students in further and higher education)*

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Introduction

Following the rapid closure of education institutions in March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, an online anonymous survey investigating the impact of "emergency remote teaching" on education practitioners was distributed internationally via a range of professional networks.

The survey received 2,745 responses after four weeks, consisting of a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data on perceptions of online learning, teaching and assessment, which included 488 from the education sector in Wales.

Of the respondents based in Wales, 110 were from higher education (HE), 99 from further education (FE) and 261 from schools; the remaining 18 were from across the wider education profession, including adult education.

The following summary presents the key significant results from our survey for these three sectors in Wales, which aligns to a number of areas with the remit of the CYPE Committee.

Higher Education

- In general, across the UK's HE sector there were concerns about the impact of the move to online learning, teaching and assessment for both staff and their students.
- Concerns centred around the impact of the changes on the sector as a whole, including student recruitment and market sustainability (and thus financial resilience of institutions), the fragility of the (HE) labour market, and impact on local/regional economies.
- Furthermore, concerns were raised about the disturbance to personal life (especially for practitioners with caring responsibilities), health and wellbeing, and workloads. Respondents anticipated a large increase to workload in both the shorter and longer terms.
- However, more positive messages were also recorded about the opportunity for positive change stimulated by the crisis.
- Within the Welsh HE sector (*n=110*):
  - 64% agreed that they felt prepared for the move to online learning, teaching and assessment.
  - 47% agreed that their students are prepared to engage in online learning, teaching and assessment.
  - 68% agreed that they felt confident in their ability to facilitate online learning, teaching and assessment.

- o 90% agreed that their institution has been supportive in facilitating the move to online learning, teaching and assessment.
- o 71% agreed that they have a good working knowledge of the technologies available to support learning, teaching as assessment online.
- o 91% agreed that could access appropriate technologies to support online learning, teaching and assessment.
- o 68% agreed that they are aware of a range of appropriate pedagogical approaches to supporting learning and teaching online.
- o 44% agreed that they were confident that all of their students would be able to access the teaching and assessment that they would make available online.
- o 59% said that have an appropriate home working environment to support learning, teaching and assessment online.

Schools

- School practitioners held significantly more positive attitudes towards the move to online learning, teaching and assessment when compared to those in HE.
- However, school staff raised greater concerns about issues of access and equity for students. While most (94.4%) of school staff in Wales reported that they had access to the tools and technology needed to support online teaching and learning, only 27.3% of teachers in Wales agreed that they were '*confident that all of [their] students will be able to access the teaching and assessment that [they] make available online*'.
- School staff also raised concerns about the quality of online teaching, however, they also showed awareness of the positive impact this may have on their teaching and pedagogical practices in the future.
- Those teaching Welsh and based in Welsh medium schools also raised concerns about the lack of immersion and face-to-face interaction, particularly for students whose parents did not speak Welsh.
- Unlike HE, school staff perceived that the greatest increase to workload would be in the longer term when students eventually return to schools.
- Within the Welsh school sector (*n=261*):
    - o 80% agreed that they felt prepared for the move to online learning, teaching and assessment.
    - o 52% agreed that their students are prepared to engage in online learning, teaching and assessment.
    - o 83% agreed that they felt confident in their ability to facilitate online learning, teaching and assessment.
    - o 93% agreed that their institution has been supportive in facilitating the move to online learning, teaching and assessment.
    - o 88% agreed that they have a good working knowledge of the technologies available to support learning, teaching as assessment online.
    - o 94% agreed that could access appropriate technologies to support online learning, teaching and assessment.
    - o 72% agreed that they are aware of a range of appropriate pedagogical approaches to supporting learning and teaching online.
    - o 27% agreed that they were confident that all of their students would be able to access the teaching and assessment that they would make available online.

o 77% said that have an appropriate home working environment to support learning, teaching and assessment online.

Further Education

- Practitioners in FE also expressed concerns about the access that their students would have to the teaching they made available online.
- Concerns were specifically raised about how practical and vocational subjects could be taught online.
- Staff in the FE sector consistently raised concerns that the temporary measures may become normalised, with a view to reducing costs in the future.
- FE staff also anticipated an increase to workload in the longer term.
- Within the Welsh FE sector (*n=99*):
  o 75% agreed that they felt prepared for the move to online learning, teaching and assessment.
  o 56.8% agreed that their students are prepared to engage in online learning, teaching and assessment.
  o 77% agreed that they felt confident in their ability to facilitate online learning, teaching and assessment.
  o 92% agreed that their institution has been supportive in facilitating the move to online learning, teaching and assessment.
  o 83% agreed that they have a good working knowledge of the technologies available to support learning, teaching as assessment online.
  o 91% agreed that could access appropriate technologies to support online learning, teaching and assessment.
  o 75% agreed that they are aware of a range of appropriate pedagogical approaches to supporting learning and teaching online.
  o 40% agreed that they were confident that all of their students would be able to access the teaching and assessment that they would make available online.
  o 72% said that have an appropriate home working environment to support learning, teaching and assessment online.

Comparisons with other UK nations

As the data was collected via opportunity sampling, it is difficult draw conclusive country comparisons. However, respondents from Wales were significantly more positive about the move to online learning, teaching and assessment than respondents in both Scotland and England (the low level of responses from Northern Ireland meant that they were excluded from country comparison analysis).

Conclusions

While the overall picture could be viewed as more positive in Wales than in other parts of the UK, it is worth reiterating that practitioners across both the compulsory and post-compulsory sectors have raised a number of significant issues – both in the short term and in the longer-term -- arising from the pandemic:

- Practitioners across all sectors have raised concerns about equity of access and the ability of some learners to meaningfully engage and progress with online learning in both the short and longer-term. While a large majority of practitioners reported that they themselves had the necessary access, they were significantly less confident that their students would be able to access the learning teaching and assessment made available online.
- Practitioners in all sectors are concerned about workload issues, both in this immediate period, as well as moving in the next academic year and beyond.
- Practitioners in FE and HE in particular are concerned about possible changes to roles and responsibilities, contracts, an increase in precarity across the education profession, and potential job losses (especially with the potential impact of reduced student numbers for the 2020/2021 academic year).

Due to the sampling method used, it is difficult to make clear comparisons between countries. Therefore, further Welsh-specific research should be conducted that deepens this analysis and seeks to explain the patterns and variations demonstrated from this data.

Being mindful of the rapid response for this consultation, as well as the needs of the CYPE Committee, we have only presented a high-level summary of some of the key quantitative results from the survey; related publications and outputs are presented below. We would be happy to support this CYPE Committee consultation going forward, especially as we continue to analyse and disseminate outcomes from our survey.

Further reading

Watermeyer, R., Crick, T., Knight, C., and Goodall, J. (2020) COVID-19 and digital disruption in UK universities: afflictions and affordances of emergency online migration. *Higher Education.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00561-y

Watermeyer, R., Crick, T., Knight, C., and Goodall, J. (2020) Academic lives are in transition. *Wonkhe* (4 May). https://wonkhe.com/blogs/academic-lives-are-in-transition/

Watermeyer, R., Crick, T., Knight, C., and Goodall, J. (2020) Forced shift to online teaching in coronavirus pandemic unleashes educators' deepest job fears. *Nature Index* (9 April). https://www.natureindex.com/news-blog/forced-shift-to-online-teaching-in-coronavirus-pandemic-unleashes-educators-deepest-job-fears-