

School workforce data collection in Wales

Consultation response form

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Responses should be returned by 3 March 2017 to

Education Workforce Data Branch
Workforce Strategy Unit
Education and Public Services Group
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or completed electronically and sent to:

e-mail: educationworkforcedata@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Question 1 – Do you agree with (option 5) the proposal to carry out an individual level census on the school workforce that utilises the EWC Register of Practitioners?

If you disagree, would options 1 to 4 be more suitable?

Agree	X	Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree	
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Supporting comments

NFER welcomes the fact that the Welsh Government is proposing draft regulations that allow for the development and implementation of an individual-level school workforce census for Wales. The school workforce data collections currently made by the Welsh Government are of an inadequate level of detail and quality for effective workforce planning. Devolution of control over teachers' pay to the assembly makes the need for detailed data even more urgent.

We believe the Welsh Government is right to identify the collection of individual-level school workforce census data as a priority. Individual-level census data from the school workforce census in England has provided a greater level of detail on the school workforce and provided new insights for understanding the composition of the workforce. It has enabled researchers from inside and outside government to undertake analysis that greatly enhances policy making and public understanding about the teaching workforce and supply challenges at a time when this is one of the most pressing

issues facing the education sector in England. It has also enabled the Department for Education to develop a detailed teacher supply model to predict future demand for teachers and inform the setting of targets and limits for the number of initial teacher training places. The data collection proposed in this consultation would benefit the Welsh Government by enabling it to conduct more detailed workforce planning, including establishing a similar model for teacher supply.

We do not have a particular preference for how Welsh Government collects data about teachers. However, it is really important that Welsh Government think carefully about data quality and coverage when deciding how to collect this information. These are both critical and will impact on how the data can be analysed and the insights that can be drawn from research conducted using it. This should include consideration of how incentivised data providers are likely to be to provide up-to-date and accurate data.

Question 2 – The draft regulations currently propose that schools, local authorities and the EWC will have a period of 27 days to complete data returns with a November census date. Do you agree with this proposal?

Agree		Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree	X
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Supporting comments

NFER has no particular view on this matter.

Question 3 – Currently, which sources of data on the school workforce do you use?

EWC Annual Statistics Digest	X	Annual PLASC bulletin	X	StatsWales open data	X	None	
Other (please specify)			<input type="checkbox"/>			

Supporting comments

NFER have used data on teacher numbers, recruitment and retention from StatsWales for understanding the teacher supply challenge in Wales. However, the school workforce data collections currently made by the Welsh Government are of an inadequate level of detail and quality for effective workforce planning. Devolution of control over teachers' pay to the assembly makes the need for detailed data even more urgent. The EWC Annual Statistics Digest provides a useful summary of the composition of the teaching workforce in Wales, but does not report figures on relevant topics such as teacher retention or turnover. This is a major shortcoming for understanding how changes within the school workforce are potentially affecting delivery of education within the Welsh education system.

NFER researchers extensively use England's individual-level school workforce census for analysis. We have just begun a major [new research project on dynamics within the teacher workforce](#), exploring patterns of teacher retention and turnover using the school workforce census in England. It would not be possible to conduct similar analysis using publicly available data in Wales. However, a school workforce census in Wales would enable similar detailed analysis to be undertaken, to gain deeper insights into the teacher supply challenges faced in Wales. In order to enable such third-party research to take place, Welsh Government should explore how the school workforce census data could be made available for researchers to request for analysis (subject to appropriate safeguards, such as having research plans with a legitimate need to access individual-level data and relevant data protection and security measures in place).

Question 4 – The draft regulations currently propose the collection of data items within seven categories (staff details, contract and service agreement, absences, curriculum, qualifications, recruitment and retention, Welsh language and Welsh medium). Do you agree with the collection of these categories?

Data category	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
Staff details	X		
Contract and service agreement	X		
Absences	X		
Curriculum	X		
Qualifications	X		
Recruitment and retention	X		
Welsh language and Welsh medium	X		

Supporting comments

The introduction of the school workforce census in England in November 2010 marked a considerable improvement in the quality of information government held about the characteristics of teachers and other school staff. All these features (except for Welsh-medium, which is specific to Wales) are collected as part of England's school workforce census, and each contributes to its richness and usefulness for workforce planning and research. The Welsh Government is right to be taking England's school workforce census as a model.

Collecting relevant information about school staff in a school workforce census would be a very positive move for workforce planning and research in Wales. Linking this data, or at least enabling the data to be linked in future, to other datasets presents even greater opportunities for further enhancing the insights that civil servants and researchers will be able to gain from analysing the data for policymakers. The benefits of enabling data linkage should be considered and, where necessary, built into the data that is collected through, for example, having appropriate permissions to link data and relevant data fields to enable linkage.

We highlight three particular examples where enabling the school workforce census data to be linked with other data could hugely enhance the insights that it would be possible to gain through research.

1. **Linking individual staff records across multiple censuses.** The Department for Education has recently linked individual staff records in the school workforce census across many censuses. This has enabled research on teacher retention to distinguish between teachers who move school and teachers who leave the profession, and therefore provide a detailed picture of the dynamics within the teaching workforce.
2. **Linking school workforce census records to records in other relevant datasets.** England's school workforce census has [recently been linked](#) to data on teachers' initial teacher training records. This has enabled [new research](#) to be undertaken to measure the retention rates of teachers who trained through different training routes, and to gain a more detailed understanding of the teacher training system and the implications for workforce planning.
3. **Enabling teacher information to be linked to data about the pupils those teachers teach.** The [Welsh Government](#) and [OECD](#) have both highlighted teacher quality as a key factor in the challenge of improving the quality of education in Wales. Teacher effectiveness (narrowly defined as the average amount of pupil attainment progress across all the pupils he/she teaches) has not been directly measured in Wales. The existence of Welsh literacy and numeracy data for every pupil in year two to year nine offers a rare opportunity to measure teacher effectiveness far more accurately than elsewhere (e.g. England). While the Welsh Government may understandably be reluctant to collect information necessary for linking pupils to the teachers who teach them, there should be scope for independent researchers to undertake research of this kind (with clear safeguards to ensure that the data is only used for agreed research purposes and is specifically not used to make judgements on individuals). Such research could identify the characteristics of teachers who are most effective at raising pupil attainment in literacy and numeracy.

Question 5 – We would like to know your views on the effects that the draft regulations proposed would have on the Welsh language, specifically on:

- i) opportunities for people to use Welsh
- ii) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Supporting comments

NFER has no particular view on this matter.

Question 6 - Please also explain how you believe the proposed draft regulations could be formulated or changed so as to have:

- i) positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language
- ii) no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Supporting comments

NFER has no particular view on this matter.

Question 7 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

About NFER

The National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales (NFER) is a charity and the leading independent provider of education research and assessments in the UK. We provide evidence that improves education, learning and the lives of learners in the form of insights that are relevant and accessible and inform policy and practice. Successive UK governments have used our evidence to inform policy thinking.

Through expert research and extensive knowledge of education and assessment, we offer a unique perspective on today's and tomorrow's educational challenges. We draw on trusted relationships, working with a range of influential organisations from government departments to employers; from school leaders and teachers to parents. The breadth of our work enables us to have a systemic view of the education system, linking together evidence from different areas to give a wide perspective.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: