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a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

Review of the revised National Professional Qualification for Headship

July 2007



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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- ▲ adult community-based learning;
- ▲ youth support services;
- ▲ youth and community work training;
- ▲ LEAs;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
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Introduction

- 1 The Welsh Assembly Government, as part of the 2006-2007 remit, asked Estyn for interim advice on the effectiveness of the revised National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) Programme.
- 2 The first cohort of the revised NPQH began their training in January 2006. The programme ran for 20 months, ending in July 2007. The focus of this advice is the quality of the training programme and how well it prepares participants for headship. This advice will form the basis of a further investigation into the impact of the revised NPQH in 2007-2008.
- 3 This report makes judgements on:
 - the coherence and effectiveness of the training programme;
 - the quality of the training;
 - the suitability of the participants; and
 - the participants' engagement with the training.

Background

- 4 The Welsh Assembly Government introduced the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) in 1997. The NPQH is a programme for headship for those aspiring to be headteachers. In 2002, a revised NPQH was introduced, creating a more streamlined qualification with a tighter, more school-based focus. In 2006, the programme was revised once again, underpinned by the revised National Standards for Headteachers in Wales which were published in April 2005.¹
- 5 The National Standards help define the knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes required for the key tasks of headship. The Standards were developed in consultation with teachers, headteachers, professional associations, LEAs, Higher Education Institutions, Estyn and others. Participants starting the NPQH from January 2006 onwards will be assessed against the new Standards.
- 6 The NPQH is a mandatory requirement for all first time substantive headteachers appointed after September 2005.
- 7 The NPQH is organised by the Consortium for Educational Leadership Training (CELT). Members of the consortium are; The University of Wales, Bangor; Cardiff University; The University of Glamorgan; Cwmni Cynnal²; and the Education and School Improvement Service (ESIS).
- 8 Participants complete the programme within 12 to 20 months. The training and development consists of:
 - a pre-induction day;
 - a core experience of five training days;
 - a follow up day with a personal tutor in school to agree a contract of visits and milestones for the completion of work;
 - two half days of tutorial support;
 - a two day residential including elements not previously covered, refreshment of candidate understanding and assessment; and
 - a final stage when participants are assessed through a school-based assessment and a final assessment.
- 9 In November 2005, approximately 850 aspiring headteachers had successfully achieved the NPQH. A further 160 teachers joined the new NPQH cohort in January 2006. The consortium predicts that by 2010, 1,500 teachers will have been awarded the NPQH.

¹ Welsh Assembly Government Circular No: NAFWC 14/2005

² Providers of educational support services

Main findings

- 10 Overall, the structure and coherence of the programme is good. The training offers a good balance of theory to practice and gives participants a framework for their further development. The current programme has been redesigned to link more closely to the revised standards for headteachers in Wales and participants now focus more on the skills and competences they need to succeed as headteachers. There are, however, the following shortcomings:
- the programme does not pay enough attention to the Welsh context and to key Welsh strategic initiatives;
 - in 2006 the programme guides were not produced for participants to use at an appropriate point in the programme when they needed them;
 - participants have to wait too long to find out if they have achieved the NPQH. This delay disadvantages participants who are acting headteachers when applying for posts in their own schools; and
 - there is no provision for participants to update their knowledge at a later stage, if they do not attain a headship post within three years of completing the NPQH programme.
- 11 Trainers are well prepared. They have expert knowledge and experience of leadership and management practice. However trainers rarely use participants' research to generate group discussion or to strengthen learning. The programme generally does not encourage participants to develop their independent research skills enough.
- 12 Most tutors who visit participants in their schools, give them good advice and guidance. However, a minority of visiting tutors are too prescriptive in the advice they give about collecting evidence.
- 13 Most participants cope well with the demands of the programme, because the extra work is based on what they do in school. They gain a broad view of their role as prospective headteachers. However, the training does not provide enough opportunities for participants to discuss, in depth, and in a range of different contexts, how others address the same issues. Participants interact well with their peers and share knowledge and understanding across the primary and secondary phases. Most participants use examples from their experience within their own school well to illustrate leadership and management issues.
- 14 Generally, participants are knowledgeable about the operational management of their school. However, many participants do not demonstrate a good understanding of national strategic priorities and this limits their ability to consider the wider issues needed in the role of headteacher.

- 15 Most headteachers support participants well. In very few cases, participants do not receive enough support from their headteacher particularly in matters such as the management of the school budget.

Recommendations

- 16 In order to improve the outcomes of the programme, CELT / NPQH trainers should:
- R1 make sure that programme materials are produced on time;
 - R2 give participants opportunities to think strategically and develop their own vision, within the context of Welsh policy and priorities;
 - R3 set specific research tasks so that participants can develop their leadership and management skills. Make sure that these research skills are evaluated during assessment procedures;
 - R4 ensure that the programme draws more broadly on the best leadership practice, in schools and outside of the school setting, across UK and beyond;
 - R5 make sure that all visiting tutors work to an agreed standard; and
 - R6 set up facilities for participants to network during the programme.
- 17 Headteachers should:
- R7 provide opportunities for NPQH participants to experience the full range of management responsibilities within their schools, especially financial and budgetary control.
- 18 The Welsh Assembly Government should:
- R8 make sure that participants are informed promptly when they have achieved their NPQH; and
 - R9 set up a programme of update training for those who do not achieve headship posts within the timescales set out in the NPQH programme.

Review of the revised National Professional Qualification for Headship

The coherence and effectiveness of the training programme

- 19 The January 2006 NPQH programme reduced from eight training sessions to five, with a residential experience added. The structure and coherence of the revised programme is generally good. Overall, the content of the programme gives participants meaningful and specific issues to pursue, and a framework for them to develop through further personal study.
- 20 The programme has been redesigned to link more closely to the revised Standards for Headteachers in Wales. The content of each of the training days relates directly to one of the six National Standards for Headteachers. The programme structure works well because it helps the participants to focus on the skills and competences that they need to achieve as headteachers. The programme enables them to set their own targets successfully against the standards.
- 21 There is a good mixture of theory and practice and the training days involve more active learning than the previous programme. However, because there are fewer taught sessions, participants need to supplement the programme with more personal research than was previously required. Many participants do not make the best use of knowledge available from wider sources than the programme materials and do not develop their strategic thinking or understanding of broader leadership issues effectively. The programme does not require tutors to assess participants' ability to carry out their own research or to give them the research skills they need.
- 22 In 2006, CELT produced support guides and a CD ROM for participants. The guides provide useful supplementary information for the programme. They are well-written and include a valuable commentary on each of the standards. They contextualise the programme well. They relate the content of the training days to key concepts and make good reference to further reading and useful websites. The materials mostly draw on leadership practice in England and Wales. However, texts relating to key Welsh strategic and policy documents are not always brought to the attention of the participants. In the sessions observed, there was little reference to effective international practice.
- 23 The programme guides were not produced in time for the programme. This was not helpful for participants as they could not carry out the reading they needed to do at an appropriate point in the programme.
- 24 The content of the training days is generally appropriate and follows a common format based on participants' experience as school managers. The sessions are well structured and have clear aims and objectives. They help participants to build their confidence well.
- 25 Many training sessions are structured to give participants opportunities to share their prior knowledge about a topic. These activities are particularly valuable because

they allow participants to look at issues across the primary and secondary phases and to consider various viewpoints. However, the training does not provide enough opportunities for participants to explore issues in depth, from a range of different contexts and consider how others address similar issues in different sectors and in different circumstances.

- 26 The training covers many practical issues of headship well, but sessions are dependent for their success on participants bringing in material from their schools. If they are unable to do this, they are disadvantaged. For example, in a session dealing with financial management, most participants had some understanding of their school budget. However, in a few cases, headteachers had not given participants access to the budget. These participants were not able to take part in the session fully or learn by considering their own experience.
- 27 Overall, the structure of the residential part of the programme is good. The activities build on work that the participants have done before and there is good reference to the guides and other sources of information where new ideas about leadership and management are put forward. More reference is made to the Welsh agenda and documentation on the second residential day, but this is not a clearly defined feature in the residential, or the programme as a whole.
- 28 During the residential, there are good opportunities to discuss influential research and new educational philosophies. However, participants are not required to research widely as preparation for the residential activities, to enable them to engage more successfully with contextual issues. This makes it difficult for trainers to assess participants' broader understanding.
- 29 At the end of the residential there is a very useful session that addresses what work needs to be done next and the organisation and timing of assessments.
- 30 Professional Development logs provide trainers and tutors with a good insight into participants' ability to make connections and reflect upon their personal development. These logs are an important tool in the assessment of participants and provide good evidence of their ability to think about the role of the headteacher in a more strategic, creative and personal way.
- 31 In the English medium groups, with participants coming from English medium schools, the programme makes limited reference to Welsh medium and bilingual issues. This does not give participants enough experience of the broad Welsh agenda or emphasise the Welsh Assembly Government's priorities to expand bilingualism as outlined in *Iaith Pawb*³.
- 32 Following the programme, participants are expected to attain a headship post within three years. However, there is no provision to give participants who do not secure a headship post within three years, an opportunity to update their knowledge.

³ The National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales

The quality of the training

- 33 The overall quality of training on the NPQH is good. All NPQH trainers have expert knowledge and experience of leadership and management practice. Nearly all trainers have good experience of headship in different types of schools. This means that trainers are able to use examples of good practice in their training and give good practical and relevant advice to participants.
- 34 Most trainers worked on the previous programme for at least a year. They use this experience well to contribute useful ideas to the planning and delivery of the revised programme.
- 35 CELT provides detailed information for the trainers about the overall structure of the programme, session plans and assessment criteria. The trainers find the shared materials and formats helpful. The trainers generally work well together using the given materials. In addition, they are able to provide insights for participants from their own experience to illustrate concepts and management approaches. They understand the demands of the programme well and employ a very wide range of teaching strategies to engage the participants to good effect.
- 36 Trainers receive basic information about the participants before the programme and they undertake an informal needs analysis on each candidate at the beginning of the programme as part of their teaching strategy. This helps trainers to respond well to the various needs and abilities of the participants.
- 37 On training days, trainers work in pairs. This team teaching gives participants a good balance of approaches and expertise. In many cases the team is made up of one serving headteacher and one retired headteacher. The serving headteachers bring valuable up-to-date knowledge to the programme. They share with participants, the ways in which they and other heads deal with topical issues.
- 38 Trainers explain session objectives clearly and check that the participants have met them at the end of the day. They employ a good mixture of learning activities during the training sessions to present and explore information in various ways. Trainers refer frequently to assessment criteria and describe carefully what participants need to do to succeed. They set the scene for the next part of the programme well.
- 39 Trainers encourage participants to read around subjects and make useful reference to relevant and up-to-date texts. However, trainers do not always use participants' reading as a basis for group discussion or to consolidate learning. Trainers do not specifically assess the quality of participants' reading and research.
- 40 Trainers use systematic questioning well. They use participants' responses diagnostically to develop participants' own thinking. They have good judgement about where it is appropriate to bring in examples from their own experiences.
- 41 Trainers build a good rapport with the participants. They are approachable and participants are comfortable about asking questions. Trainers use discussion effectively to encourage participants to explore their personal values and vision for

their school. They give participants enough time to ask questions and clarify any issues well during the training sessions.

- 42 Trainers give participants good guidance about the requirements for the school based part of the programme. They encourage participants to start putting their portfolios of evidence together as they progress through the programme. This helps participants to successfully present evidence to illustrate competence in a particular standard.
- 43 The activities in the sessions promote active learning and problem solving well. Through these activities, trainers encourage participants to look at strategic issues, but also focus on the functional issues of headship. This is appropriate for the early stages of the programme. However, trainers tend to focus too much on the school environment and only make limited references to the wider issues affecting Wales as a whole, or to international issues.
- 44 Many of the visiting speakers offer alternative views to topics covered on the programme and provide further examples of good headship practice. This helps participants to understand the role of headteacher from a variety of perspectives and in different school settings.
- 45 Following the training sessions, tutors visit participants in their schools to give them support and advice. Many tutors are helpful and sensitive and help participants to achieve their personal goals. They make good suggestions about where participants could provide evidence and how they might improve their experiences and their files. However, a minority of tutors are over prescriptive in the advice they give about collecting evidence. In these cases the participants become frustrated and feel a loss of ownership of their work.

The suitability of the participants

- 46 Most participants have a suitable background for the training. They can cope well with the demands of the programme. The selection procedures are effective in recruiting participants with appropriate experience to the programme.
- 47 Many of the participants have developed a good record of Continual Professional Development. A minority have undertaken leadership training, while most of the participants have completed specific issue or curriculum development training. Few have undertaken a middle management programme. In a very small minority of cases, participants did not hold a senior position in their school. These participants were not as confident as the rest of the group because their knowledge base is more limited. They have greater difficulty in understanding strategic issues.
- 48 The programme is aimed at teachers who intend to apply for headteacher appointments within three years. Most of the participants are content with the way the programme and assessment procedures are organised. However, participants who are acting headteachers were concerned that they would not have their NPQH in time to be able to apply for the permanent headship post when it became available in their own school. Whilst the programme is flexible and allows participants to be assessed early, there is no mechanism for participants to receive early confirmation

of the NPQH. This time delay in administrative systems means that a minority of participants who are acting headteachers are disadvantaged in applying for posts in their own schools.

The participants' engagement with the training

- 49 Most participants carry out programme requirements successfully and develop the confidence to cope with many aspects of a headteacher's work well. However, in most cases, they focused on developing their understanding within their own and other participants' schools. This means that they are not fully aware of the range of challenges they need to face as headteachers and the developing policy framework for education in Wales.
- 50 Participants are generally knowledgeable about the operational management of their own school. However, there are too many areas in which many participants were less confident. Few had more than a general knowledge of appointment and employment issues and many participants were unaware of the impact of community focused schools or multi-agency working. Many participants do not demonstrate a good understanding of national strategic priorities and this inhibits their ability to consider the wider thinking needed in the role of headteacher.
- 51 All participants work well together and participate fully in all activities. They build good rapport through team-working in the seminars, the residential and through external networking. The sharing of knowledge and understanding across phases is a very positive aspect of the programme. This gives participants a broader view of their role as headteachers.
- 52 Participants are pleased with the programme overall. Most participants acknowledge the demands of the programme and the need to plan coursework into their everyday work. However, participants judge that the programme is well grounded in the work they do in schools and they are able to produce the evidence needed for their files and the school based assessment. In a minority of cases, participants report that they do not spend enough time in reflection and working on their Professional Development logs.
- 53 Most participants find their headteacher very supportive. However, in a very few cases, participants do not receive enough support from their headteacher. This was mostly in relation to managerial matters, such as insight into the school budget.
- 54 Participants generally enjoy the research they are required to carry out, but many find that they have difficulty in finding time to read around the information fully. Participants find the website references more useful and more easily accessible than hardcopy texts. However, they are unaware of how they might be able to join a university library to carry out personal research.
- 55 There are no formal mechanisms for participants to network on the programme other than on the basis of personal initiatives. In many cases, participants exchange their details with one or more members of their group and keep in contact by telephone and one-to-one email. This provides them with a valuable means of informal support.