

Welcome to the first issue of the PGCE Programme's research bulletin.

These bulletins will include examples of published research, with key findings and implications for practice summarised. A wide range of journals will be drawn upon. There will be a brief overview of research being conducted by individuals or teams linked to the PGCE Programme and other Open University studies of interest. Issues may also include social media/ website links for educational /research organisation/s, which may be of interest to you.

### In this issue .....



**Baseline assessments:** Practitioners report that children attending morning nursery sessions are more receptive and show greater improvement than afternoon attendees.



**Student well-being:** The proportion of secondary age students' experiencing mental health and well-being difficulties increase with age. Implementing an emotional needs audit could signpost practical areas of support and intervention.



**Professional learning:** School leaders have a more positive perception of induction and mentoring in their schools than other staff.



**Education reform:** School leaders in Wales report their concerns for the changing professional identity of teachers. The positioning of skills and knowledge within the curriculum raised ambiguity.



**Evaluating the curriculum and assessment reforms in Wales:** Members of the PGCE team are working with Arad Research to investigate 'system readiness' for the new curriculum.



**Other Open University research: The impact of Coronavirus on children** - The views of children from across Europe.



**Baseline assessments** *'The responses from staff showed that in nine of the ten settings staff felt that morning session children performed better.'*

Nursery practitioners often highlight the difference between the children who attend morning sessions and those who attend afternoon sessions, with the feeling that the morning session children are more receptive and show greater improvement in their development than those who attend in the afternoon, but no specific data or evidence has been presented to support this assertion.

Statistical analysis of baseline assessment results for 593 children based in the South Wales valleys indicated that children who attended morning sessions were statistically likely to achieve two points higher on average in their baseline assessment scores. This would suggest that children who attend afternoon sessions are starting their educational journey with lower basic skills than those who attend in the morning and this could affect their school readiness.

Dorrian, J. (2021) 'An exploration of factors affecting the baseline assessment scores of children attending morning or afternoon sessions in nursery settings in Wales', *Early Years*, doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2021.1910799.



## Student Well-being

*'Female students (around 24%) are at higher risk of meeting clinical thresholds than their male counterparts (16%).'*

A survey of 884 students aged 11-16 years from five schools across North West England explored students' mental health and emotional needs. The self-reporting - *Short Mood and Feelings Questionnaire* and the *Emotional Needs Audit* were used. The study provides evidence on what teachers already 'know'.

A whole-school screening could be used to identify areas of practice that could be enhanced to support mental health and well-being – this could involve the students themselves during further consultations. Without consideration of wider policy issues, the role of school-based practitioners in supporting student mental health and wellbeing will continue to be extremely challenging.

Waite, M., Atkinson, C. and Oldfield, J. (2021) 'The mental health and emotional needs of secondary age students in the United Kingdom', *Pastoral Care in Education*, doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2021.1938644.



## Professional learning

*'It takes a school to grow a teacher.'*

The perceptions of induction and mentoring held by 99 school leaders, mentors, classroom teachers and Newly Qualified Teachers in Welsh schools is presented based on the Langdon Induction and Mentoring Survey adapted for Wales. It is suggested that school leaders have more positive perceptions of induction and mentoring in their schools than all other staff.

The research conceptualises schools as complex, relational sites for the professional formation of new teachers. Within this context, induction and mentoring are multi-faceted and comprised of multiple interactions between stakeholders and their respective engagements with the policy environment at all levels. Significant investment is needed in the design and provision of mentor development in order to meet more expansive expectations of their educative roles.

Milton, E., Daly, C., Langdon, F., Palmer, M., Jones, K. and Davies, J. (2020) 'Can schools really provide the learning environment that new teachers need? Complexities and implications for professional learning in Wales', *Personal Development in Education*, doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2020.1767177.



## Education reform

*'My biggest, biggest concern is that the new curriculum will be very good for very good teachers - my biggest worry is that the new curriculum won't be structured enough or scaffolded enough for weaker teachers.'*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in 2019 with eight school leaders from South Wales. Findings indicated positivity towards the pupil-centred stance of the reform and its ambitions in raising the professionalism of teachers, through increased agency and the building of professional capacity.

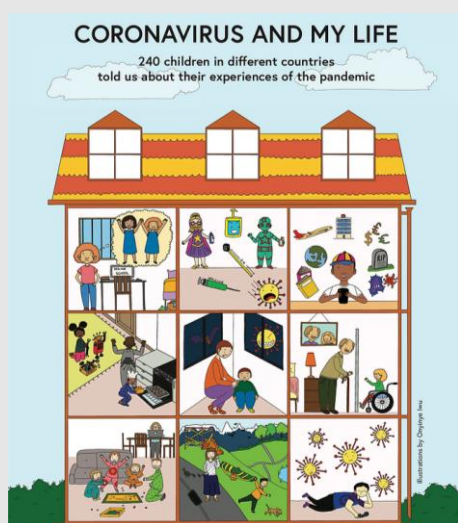
Yet, major concerns were highlighted for the changing professional identity of teachers, with uncertainty around the extent of agency being afforded and diverging perceptions being reported towards capacity building initiatives. Furthermore, the positioning of skills and knowledge within the curriculum raised worrying ambiguity. These findings illustrate the complexity of education reform and highlight significant implications that demand consideration by the Welsh Government.

Roberts, F. and King, P. (2021) 'School leaders' perspectives of Welsh education reform', *Education 3-13*, 49(5), pp. 635-648.



## Evaluating the curriculum and assessment reforms in Wales

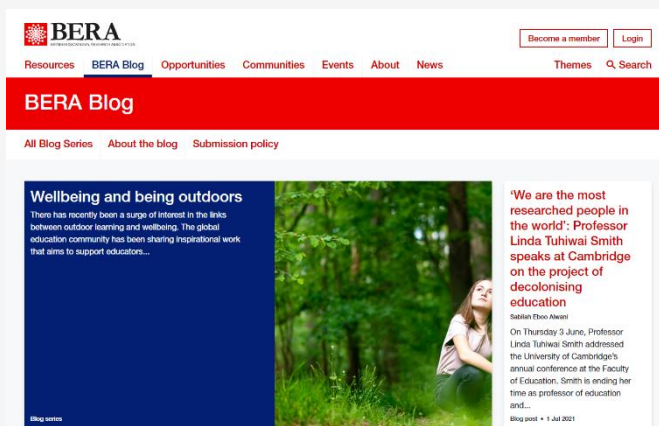
The Welsh Government commissioned Arad Research and the Open University in Wales to investigate 'system readiness' for the implementation of the curriculum and assessment reforms. Members of the PGCE team contributed to the design and analysis of the survey completed in June/July 2021 by headteachers, senior leaders and practitioners in schools and non-maintained settings in Wales delivering education. In Autumn 2021 headteachers, senior leaders and practitioners were also interviewed. Responses will be used by Welsh Government to identify the type of support required to ensure schools are ready for the planned roll-out of the Curriculum for Wales from 2022. The initial survey findings are available [here](#).



## Other Open University research [Coronavirus and my life: What children say](#)

240 children (3-12 years) from across Europe shared their thoughts, feelings and experiences of Coronavirus. Children had high levels of awareness about the widespread nature and potential impact of the virus. They shared feelings of vulnerability but maintained a sense of safety. Children's unique lenses on the world - often characterised by immediacy, honesty, compassion and 'questioning the obvious' are needed now more than ever.

Click on the poster to learn more about the study's findings and access the full report [here](#)



If you have any comments or suggestions for future Research Bulletin content, please get in touch with Alison Glover ([alison.glover@open.ac.uk](mailto:alison.glover@open.ac.uk)). If there is any research you and/or your setting are involved in, please let us know as we would welcome the opportunity to share this across the Partnership.