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Erratum in 19.1
Please note that the references for Dr K. Smith and Dr K. Horton’s ‘Teaching and Educational Research in Wales: How Does Teachers’ Engagement with Educational Research Differ in Wales from those in England?’ article in the 19.1 volume were inadvertently omitted, but can be viewed in the online version of the paper.
Contributors

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Brett Duggan is a founding director of Arad Research, based in Cardiff. He has completed research and evaluation studies across a wide range of policy areas over the past fourteen years with particular interest in education policy and reform, the Welsh language and community regeneration.

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Siôn Llewelyn Jones is a university teacher in the School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University. Siôn is currently finishing his PhD, funded by the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, which focuses on exploring the aspirations of young people attending a Welsh-medium and an English-medium school in the south Wales valleys.
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Jane Nicholas is a senior researcher in the Centre for Assessment at NFER Cymru, based in Swansea. She has also worked as a secondary school Welsh teacher, advisory teacher and a teacher educator. Her research interests include the Welsh language, reading assessment, international testing and outdoor learning.

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Dr Jane Williams is Associate Professor in the College of Law and Criminology, Swansea University. She is a co-ordinator of the Wales Observatory on Human Rights of Children and Young People, and has published in the fields of children’s rights, devolution and public law. Her 2013 edited collection on The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in Wales (Cardiff: University of Wales Press) presents a critical analysis of the provenance, interpretation and potential of Wales’s unique ‘due regard’ duty on children’s rights.
Editorial:

PROFESSOR DAVID EGAN
Cardiff Metropolitan University

DR RUSSELL GRIGG

The publication of the fourth edition of the re-launched Wales Journal of Education provides a timely moment to take stock on what has been achieved over the last two years and to consider the future development of the Journal. Through the collective endeavours of ourselves, the Editorial Board and the University of Wales Press and with the financial support provided by the University of Wales, we have been able to stabilise and expand the Journal. It has now returned to being published twice a year, with a special number in the spring being followed by a generic edition in the autumn.

Readers will also have noticed a significant increase in the size of the Journal with the four numbers produced over the last two years being well in excess of editions published previously. Quantity should not of course be the dominant metric for an academic publication, for we are committed to producing high-quality contributions to educational scholarship that meet the demands of the Research Excellence Framework. We will have to let that exercise make in due course the ultimate judgement on the quality of what we are producing, but it has been encouraging how supportive our peer reviewers have been of the draft articles we have submitted to them for scrutiny.

In this number of the Journal we publish two Welsh-language articles. Using a case study approach, Nicholas considers the impact of standardised reading tests for 7–14 year olds and reveals, among other findings, that the

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emphasis on accountability had led the school to focus on test preparation at the expense of using the results diagnostically. In their article on the Welsh Government’s Welsh-Medium Education Strategy, Duggan and Thomas point to the implementation challenges. When we also take into account the English-language contributions (Jones, Dallimore and Cunnington-Wynn) in this volume on Welsh-language themes, the Journal is providing an important conduit for researchers and policymakers in this growing but relatively under-developed area of research. The Journal has always encouraged Welsh-medium contributions, since Jayne Mathias wrote a piece on bilingualism and Welsh schools (‘Dwyieithrwydd a’r ysgolion Cymraeg’) in 1991. However, since the relaunch we have featured Welsh-medium contributions in each edition, on the growth of Welsh-medium education (Lewis, 2016), the Cwricwlwm Cymreig (Davies and Hughes, 2016) and the positioning of Welsh as a subject within the Successful Futures proposals (Hopwood, 2017). The latest contributions add to the corpus knowledge in the field and we welcome further submissions.

When we review the various iterations of the Journal since it first appeared in 1989 there are some discernible changes and continuities. Special editions have been a periodical feature and covered topics such as special needs (1990), initial teacher training (1999), and education, technologies and society (2003), themes that continue to attract interest. The early editions had a strong focus on the history of education in Wales, beginning with a centenary celebration of the 1889 Welsh Intermediate Education Act. This reflected the strength of the discipline in the university faculties of education. Through the 2000s, changing priorities resulted in the decline of those teaching and studying the history of education in initial teacher training in Wales. However, it is uplifting to read of recent proposed changes which will mean that the history of education and education policy will feature within ‘core studies’ for all those training to be teachers (Welsh Government, 2017).

In bringing together contributions to this edition we have deliberately attempted to broaden the areas from which we have sought contributions. In the first three volumes of the re-launched Journal, these have come predominantly from academics working within higher education. In this number, we are delighted to publish contributions from the National Foundation for Educational Research, from the social enterprise organisation, the People and Work Unit and the private-sector research and evaluation company, Arad Research. In recent years, these organisations have undertaken significant amounts of research and evaluation activity in
Wales – on behalf of the Welsh Government, local authorities and other bodies. It is pleasing therefore to include the fruits of their labours in a more accessible form. As with the contributions we commissioned from practitioners in the previous volume of the Journal, it is our intent to follow a ‘broad church’ publication policy and to reflect the diversity and richness of educational research within Wales.

Hence, we also include in this number a focus on issues to do with equity and rights in Welsh education with contributions from Lewis et al on the enactment of children’s rights, Golding on family influences on educational aspirations and Holtom on strategies to reduce the impact of poverty on educational achievement, supplementing the research evidence provided in earlier numbers of the Journal.

Whilst these are all positive features, we believe, of the growth of the Journal over the last three years, it should not be understated how ‘hard won’ this progress has been. Without blowing our editorial trumpets too loudly, only a minority of the contributions published since the relaunch have been unsolicited. It has taken a considerable amount of editorial networking and sometimes indeed cajoling, to elicit the contributions which have led to the current healthy state of the Journal. We will of course continue this work but it is likely to be increasingly more challenging as we return time and time again to the same well.

It continues, therefore, to be the view of the Editorial Board that whilst we can make an important contribution to the renaissance in educational research in Wales, that we cannot do this in isolation from the wider development of increased capacity, quality and activity in this area. The parlous state currently of educational research in Wales has been well documented previously in this Journal and in the work, led by John Furlong, on reforming initial teacher education in Wales (Furlong, 2015 and 2016). We have been heartened, therefore, by the growing recognition by the Cabinet Secretary for Education in the Welsh Government (Welsh Government, 2016), by the Welsh Government Education Department and the Regional Education Consortia that this situation needs to be addressed if the reformed Welsh education system is to have a robust body of educational research to draw upon in informing policy developments and their impact on practice. It is particularly encouraging that the desire to strengthen educational research within the new teacher education provision in Wales is seen as important to the successful development of new professional learning opportunities for teachers in Wales and the new curriculum (Welsh Government, 2017).

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The Wales Journal of Education is keen to play its full part in these developments. Over the last year, we have taken the initiative in bringing a range of organisations in Wales and the British Education Research Association together to discuss the potential for creating a Wales Education Research Forum. As we go to press, progress is being made in achieving this aim. We are also seeking to achieve a significant increase to the number of subscriptions to the Journal, to explore the possibility of it being published more than twice a year, extending its reach to practitioners and policymakers, whilst maintaining its academic focus, and to hold regular events and conferences. To achieve these ambitious aims we would need to secure significant additional financial and business support for the Journal. To that end, we have asked the vice-chancellor of the University of Wales to make representations to Universities Wales to request broader financial support for the Journal. We will also continue to make representations to the Welsh Government, the Regional Education Consortia and other organisations.

We trust, therefore, that you will enjoy reading this edition of the Journal and will continue to promote it and join with us in this next stage of its journey.

References


