

A policy trajectory analysis of the  
Advanced Level Welsh Baccalaureate  
Qualification.

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There are only a handful of pivotal moments in your life, where a decision you make will change your course, and take you on a new journey, which is both scary and exciting. One such moment for me was the choice to return to higher education after securing a job teaching and begin the process of completing a PhD. This decision has seen me tackle challenges and make hurdles I never thought possible and has seen me develop from a teacher with an academic interest to a fully-fledged researcher. However, this would not have been possible without the great network of individuals around me that have supported me during this thesis, or contributed to it. I am extremely grateful, to now have the opportunity to express my gratitude to those special people, who have contributed to this thesis.

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# Abstract

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It has been well documented that the success of any public policy is closely linked to its development and implementation. Less research has considered how devolved nations tackle the complex and unstable nature of public policy making and address the challenges of implementing national policy. This thesis aims to provide an historical account of the development of one specific welsh education policy, created just after devolution. This thesis follows a single policy from its conception to worked reality. In particular, this thesis aims to uncover how one specific case created during this unique time period, post devolution, was developed and implemented, The Advanced Level Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ). The WBQ education policy is of great significance to Wales' reform agenda and has undergone radical revision, since devolution, making this research particularly timely.

This thesis shows how the WBQ can be viewed as a flexible policy that can be adapted at the micro level, to create an education package best suited to the unique needs of the individuals and wider economic realities found across Wales. The WBQ aimed to tackle some of the most challenging educational issues, such as the academic vs. vocational education, specialisation vs. generalism and dealing with disaffection. The thesis draws on interviews with key stakeholders representing the macro, meso and micro, in 2012. The findings highlight the challenges of public policy making in devolved Wales and address how policy is made and who is actually developing policy. The findings of this thesis have suggested that key individuals at the macro level were crucial in shaping and developing the WBQ.

The research offers new insights into the importance of considering implementation in the development of public policy. This thesis highlights how organisations and individuals involved in the implementation of public policy actually shape its finalised form in both subtle and more extensive ways during their translation and adaptation of policy. The degree of mutation that arises during translation impacts on the policies success in eventually becoming institutionalised. Variation itself is not unexpected given the flexibility but the findings demonstrate that this flexibility is causing a huge variation in quality and incomparable delivery and structure across institutions. The success of the policy is linked to its original aims and the issues within the Welsh education system it aims to tackle. The

WBQ has been successful in achieving some of its original aims whilst others have remained unchanged.

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# Glossary of acronyms

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ACCAC = Awdurdod Cymwysterau Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru/Qualifications/ Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales

CDELL = Centre for Developing and Evaluating Lifelong Learning.

DES = Department for Education and Skills

FEDA =Further Education Development Agency

GTCW= General Teaching Council for Wales

HE = Higher Education

HEAT = Higher Education Advisory Team

HEIs =Higher Education Institutions

IB = International Baccalaureate

IWA =Institute of Welsh Affairs

LEAs = Local Education Authorities

PISA = Program for International Student Assessment

ROQ =Review of Qualifications

WAG = Welsh Assembly Government

WBQ = Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification

WG = Welsh Government

WISERD= Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods

WJEC = Welsh Joint Education Committee

WO = Welsh Office



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# Chapter 1: Introduction

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The Advanced Level Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ) has been in existence since 2001. However, debate about the development of a baccalaureate for Wales has long preceded this. This thesis will primarily aim to understand the development and implementation of the Advanced Level WBQ through the voices of all the stakeholders involved from the macro (national), meso (intermediate) and micro level (local). Additionally this thesis will generate findings which will contribute to knowledge in the field of Social Policy, by providing a better understanding of policy making and implementation.

From a macro perspective the Advanced Level WBQ allows me to focus on the process of implementing national education policy and to explore the extent to which devolution has allowed for the development of distinctive approaches to address what are pervasive issues within the post compulsory education sector (academic vs. vocational, specialisation vs. generalism, dealing with disaffection). Therefore, researching this qualification can also aid our understanding of implementing new curriculum/qualifications into schools and colleges as well as address whether the Advanced Level WBQ has succeeded in its original objectives outlined in the Learning Country (WAG, 2001).

Policy making is widely researched. However, Wales's relatively new system of governance provided a unique environment to generate some interesting data regarding policy making and implementation. Devolution provided the Welsh Government with the opportunity to develop public policy that better suited the wider economic realities found in Wales (Rees, 2002). This was a significant progression from the Welsh Office years, where Westminster created policy was loyally implemented or minor adjustments made to include the Welsh language. This thesis aims to provide an historical account of the development of the WBQ and follow this policy from initial idea to worked reality. Research focussing on policy development and implementation in this short time period post-devolution is important for policy learning and developing good practice.

The intention of this thesis is to understand how the WBQ became a working reality at the micro level through implementation and institutionalisation. Implementation research within devolved nations is relatively limited with the majority originating from a small group of American scholars dedicated to its study. The conclusions are therefore difficult to generalise to a small devolved country like Wales (Barrett, 2004). Therefore, generating data that specifically looks at policy making and implementation within Wales will consider the capacity and capability of a recently devolved nation and government to successfully develop and implement new national policy.

The WBQ has the potential to generate interesting data about implementation across the three levels due to its flexible nature and design. Implementation is still a highly overlooked stage of public policy development. Even up to the 1960s the drive was for policy-makers to translate the most innovative ideas into policy, without fully considering how to implement and the majority of research focussed on policy design and evaluation rather than on implementation (Barrett, 2004). Policy makers adopted the notion that a good idea/policy could implement itself. Barratt and Fudge (1981) pointed out that *“policy does not implement itself”*, further highlighting that implementation is a highly under-researched and misunderstood area of the political system and that this needs rectification (Barratt and Fudge, 1981, p.9). This study intends to investigate if this common misunderstanding that policy implements itself is still in existence.

This thesis aims to understand the creation and implementation of the Advanced Level WBQ, principally through semi structured interviews, conducted in 2012. The research does not cover the changes to the structure and assessment of the WBQ which has occurred since the data collection in 2012. Subsequent changes to the WBQ are discussed in more detail in the conclusion (Chapter 8).

First, this chapter begins by providing an introduction to the contextual background of education policy-making in Wales before going on to introduce the WBQ. Further contextual information including literature on the history of policy making in Wales and the Devolution settlement alongside a presentation of the existing literature on implementing public policy is then discussed in Chapter 2 and a more detailed

description of the content, structure and assessment of the WBQ is presented in Chapter 3. This introductory chapter concludes by outlining the structure for the rest of the thesis.

## 1.1 Context

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The Ruskin speech (1976) ensured that the content of student's education remained high on government agenda, particularly for those in the upper secondary and the post compulsory sector. The creation of the National Curriculum (1988) was the first real policy movement which aimed at monitoring and debating the content of education in the UK. The Department for Education and Skills (DES) became accountable to the public regarding the content and quality of a student's education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The UK Government in Westminster created numerous policies, in the attempt of reforming, regulating and standardizing the curriculum to ensure each student got a balanced, comparable and quality education.

*“Once the curriculum ceased to be the secret garden, we ceased to be a secret army, from the Ruskin speech onwards. Governments of both colours moved into the centre of the debate about the quality of what went on inside schools” (Ball, 1990, p.140).*

Prior to devolution the Welsh education system was predominantly governed by Westminster who created policies that were adjusted slightly by the Welsh Office to be more suitable for Wales, including adjustments for the Welsh language (Raffe et al, 1999). Policy making was “*technocratic*” with little challenge on the political assumptions upon which established policy trajectories were based (Rees, 2007). At this point policies and initiatives were not created exclusively for Wales and policies that suited the wider economic realities found in Wales were non-existent (Raffe et al, 1999). It was a time of huge debate in Wales about how the country should be run and how Welsh students should be served. Devolution in Wales has not run smoothly; the results of the initial referendum in 1979 being in favour of the continuation of the old system. However, over the next few years the growing dissatisfaction in this period of Conservative reign and the rise of the so-called “*quango state*”, meant that opinion

about devolution began to change. Therefore, Labour was encouraged to re-establish their commitment to devolution and towards reforming and improving through “*constitutional and political modernization*” (McAllister, 1998, p. 150). The referendum in 1997 saw a narrowly won ‘yes’ vote. The establishment of the National Assembly in 1999 provided Wales with its first opportunity to create policy solely designed with Welsh citizens in mind.

There have been numerous policies and initiatives aimed at reforming the 14-19 curriculum in Wales. One example of the Assembly demonstrating their new autonomy and possible divergence was the creation of the paving document, *The Learning Country* (2001), which set out targets for education until 2015. *The Learning Country* (2001), focused on improving education by creating learning packages better tailored to the distinctive needs of Wales’ citizens. One of the main components of the *Learning Country* (2001) was the introduction of the WBQ. The plan was to roll out the pilot of the Advanced level WBQ in 2003. The WBQ fitted with the later Welsh Government mantra of “*clear red water*” and the distancing of policy movements from Westminster for the education system in England via the development of policy uniquely created to fit the needs of Wales. It demonstrates a degree of divergence through the creation of a new qualification specifically for Welsh students whilst still maintaining the continuation of the longstanding and traditional qualifications in Wales. This ensured the movement of students across the border for higher education (HE) was not complicated by the adoption of the WBQ. The WBQ is an example of a flexible policy. Practitioners are given the autonomy to develop teaching and learning that is best suited to their own individual cohort of students, existing structures and aligns with the institutions’ academic beliefs. The inclusion of vocational elements to the qualification represented a political movement that had been building over the last two decades to reduce the academic/vocational divide and abolish the embedded belief that only academic study and the development of academic skills were of value for entering HE or employment.

Debate about the development of the WBQ has been longstanding and in existence long before devolution. The next section will document the debate and identify the challenges within the education system that the development of the WBQ would help reduce/eradicate.

## 1.2 Challenges to 14-19 education: Movement towards a baccalaureate style qualification

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The post-compulsory sector has been plagued by issues that have dominated discussions. This section will introduce these issues within post-compulsory education and then identify the policy responses that have attempted to reduce or eradicate these issues. Identifying the issues and policy responses to them will help to further understand the structure of the WBQ in its finalised form.

The traditional and well recognised qualifications are still heralded as the gold standard and have resisted any major reform, regardless of their constant criticism. Since A Levels were introduced in 1949, attempts to reform the upper secondary level in England and Wales have been incremental and implemented in a disorganised and fragmented way (Thompson, Hayden and Cambridge, 2003). Historically these reforms aim to promote greater subject breadth at advanced level, and to raise the quality and status of vocational education and training. Simple structural changes such as the divide between the AS and A2 years have done little to stop the growing criticism regarding the state of post-compulsory education provision; instead they have intensified the debate (Young and Leney 1997). Critics have argued for a new unified system of qualifications based on a baccalaureate model which would address systematic weaknesses in the current framework. It would meet the learning needs of young people in a way that responds to the social policy requirements of an advanced economy in 21st century England and Wales (Thompson, Hayden and Cambridge, 2003). Adopting a baccalaureate style qualification would address these issues as these frameworks offer greater breadth, coherence and inclusivity (Thompson, Hayden and Cambridge, 2003).

The next section is divided into sub-headings, with each subheading representing another critique of the old system. After each critique a presentation of the debate and the policy response will follow. The intended role of the WBQ in engaging with and reducing this issue with the Welsh education sector is included at the end.

### 1.2.1 Breadth v's specialisation



Using an historical lens there have been four major approaches to the development of a broader curriculum and qualifications framework in the UK. The first approach that began in the 1950s involved broadening general and academic education. The second approach in the mid-1980s involved restructuring and developing broad and robust pre-vocational and vocational qualifications. Then in the late 1980s the third approach focused on the introduction of linked components or frameworks. The final approach that dominated the 1990s and is the focus of this thesis is the movement towards a unified framework (Hodgson and Spours, 2009). The different government representatives have had varying opinions on the hierarchy of the education agenda, recognising these shifts in priority increases understanding of the policy movement towards a baccalaureate.

As early as the 1950s critics of A Levels believed the system was too specialized.

*“Nearly everyone will agree that our school system education is too specialized. But nearly everyone feels that it is outside the wit of man to alter it” (Snow, 1959).*

The UK’s A Level system is still the most specialized system in the industrial world (Finegold et al 1990). Finegold et al (1990) believes that this level of specialisation cannot prepare students for the variety of challenges they will face in life. It is through over-specialisation that students fail to acquire the personal, moral and spiritual development which is often incorporated into broader baccalaureate style qualifications (Pring et al, 2009). Historically, baccalaureate proposals have been opposed as they dilute A Level study and the tradition of specialism. Baccalaureates such as the IB are often deemed too demanding for both students and teachers, especially the requirement to study at least two foreign languages. Supporters of A Levels believe that specialisation is essential to achieve the depth of understanding in preparation for a single subject honours degree (Bunnell, 2008). Critics also believe that baccalaureates are discriminatory because of the breadth and volume required to matriculate, discouraging and discriminating certain groups of learners (Butler, 2003). Unless research can ultimately prove that breadth enhances specialist study it will always be seen as being at the price of depth (Young, 1998).

During the Conservative administration of the UK Government in the 1980s and early 1990s, A Levels received great support. The Conservatives demonstrated increasing resistance to reform despite reports suggesting that the academic track only benefitted the highest academic achievers. Lawton (1994) described the Conservatives agenda as;

*“Long-standing desire to hang onto the A Level failure system when educationists and industrialists have for 20 years been pleading for a broader curriculum and more integrated approach to education from 16-19” (Lawton, 1994, p. 136).*

Resistance to reform was highlighted in the rejection of the Higginson Report (1988), and the negative reaction to practitioner-initiated reforms such as Modular Syllabi (Young 1998). The Higginson Committee (1988) advocated for reform by suggesting students sit 5 leaner A Levels, in an attempt to broaden the academic track (cited in Higham, Sharp and Yeomans, 1994). The Higginson Committee (1988) suggested focusing less on content and more on conceptual understanding. These suggestions were rejected by the then Secretary of State Kenneth Baker and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. In 1990, Finegold et al published *“A British Baccalaureate”*, a detailed suggestion for a unified baccalaureate framework, for post-compulsory education that would broaden the curriculum and equalize the value ascribed to vocational and academic qualifications, this was also rejected.

Due to public pressure and concerns about the post compulsory education sector the Conservatives finally initiated the Dearing (1996) review of 14-19 education provision. Dearing (1996) was concerned with broadening A Levels, deeming the current system too specialized and ill-equipped to meet the UK's future economic needs. The Dearing review (1996), considered the adoption of a unified framework at advanced level, which included employability skills, experiences of work and community participation. The conclusions did little to dispel concerns, with the majority still viewing the academic and vocational tracks as separate from each other whilst relying on the continuation of A Levels as the key component underpinning 16-19 qualifications.

The consultation paper “*Qualifying for Success*” (DfEE, 1997) built on findings and recommendations of the Dearing report (1996). It was welcomed in education circles for attempting to increase participation, creating clearer routes to HE and for broadening the A Level curriculum via the incorporating of key skills, expansion of subjects offered and through facilitating mix-and-match choices.

*“We want to encourage learners to take broader, but coherent programmes of study, including the key skills. Too many have narrowed down their studies at too early an age. In particular we want to see more young people of all abilities taking the opportunity to broaden their studies by combining general (academic) studies with more vocational options” (DfEE, 1997, p.6).*

*Curriculum 2000* (QCA, 1999), aimed, to reform the state of the A Level system. It was the first real attempt at significant reform since their inception in 1951. It was the role of Curriculum 2000 to acknowledge issues that had plagued the system and suggest modifications to eradicate them, whilst finally settling the debate over whether to retain the A Levels in a modified form, or to replace them with a baccalaureate style qualification framework. Since the publication of Curriculum (2000), it has been the source of considerable controversy. The report has been plagued by heavily publicised implementation issues, being considered structurally flawed and for a general failing to overhaul the A Level system (Hodgson and Spours, 2001).

The main intention of Curriculum 2000 was to broaden qualifications, due to a tendency among some students to reduce their breadth of study and high dropout rates. One attempt to broaden the curriculum, involved splitting the A Levels into AS and A2. This suggestion was accepted with the first AS tests being sat in 2001. The A Levels were restructured and consisted of six modules completed over two years. The assessment consisted of externally marked examinations and internally marked coursework. The number of A Levels taken can vary but typically students sit four at AS Level and three at A Level. Critics have suggested that Curriculum 2000 has actually reduced breadth. The increased workload is causing students to drop courses and decrease the amount of enrichment and community work they participate in, actually reducing breadth. Some students are selecting “*bizarre combinations*” or are selecting similar or even more specialised combinations (Young, 1998, p.118). This misunderstanding has caused a

reduction in subject depth and lowering standards. Practitioners perceive the new syllabi as a threat to their deeply entrenched modes of practice, which have evolved over many years of A Level teaching (Hargreaves, 2001a). Yet the increased workload was perceived to be a positive consequence (Hargreaves, 2001a). Criticisms reached a peak in 2002, due to a media hype that surrounded allegations that A Level results were fixed, to prevent the further increase of the top grades. This was addressed by the Tomlinson inquiry resulting in papers being re-marked. However, only 1220 A Level papers and 733 AS Level papers had improved results after re-marking.

The WBQ aims to increase breadth through the core components whilst continuing the traditional academic and vocational tracks through their Optional choices. Critics of this structure saw it as a compromise and a demonstration of the Government's inability and lack of experience and confidence to demonstrate any real degree of divergence.

#### 1.2.2. Academic/vocational divide

The current system in the UK is heavily criticised for a lack of inclusivity. This is highlighted in the twin track approach to academic and vocational qualifications, with very little opportunity for transfer between the two. In the UK;

*“We have lost sight of the real purpose of work based learning by demonising the role of employers, downgrading the concept of vocationalism, falsely elevating the worth of education institutions as sites of learning and under estimating the capacity of young people to develop as learners if they leave education after the compulsory stage (Unwin, 1997, p.76).*

A baccalaureate style qualification aims to re-address these attitudes and equalise the value of academic and vocational qualifications. Currently the hierarchy reinforced by societal influences, promotes the academic pathway associating it with the habitus of the upper class and therefore wealth and success (Lumby and Foskett, 2005).

Furthermore, the massification of HE has resulted in the continuation of the academic track being perceived as the ‘gold standard’. A Levels, have been unaltered in 50 years despite criticism, and have gained the reputation of “academic excellence”. With no equal vocational counterpart, A Level results have been the only reliable indicator of an

individual's candidature for university or employment. Baccalaureate qualifications, including the WBQ, aim to raise the status and reduce the divide between the academic and vocational pathways. This would be achieved through the creation of a unified system and a common framework of assessment (Thompson, Hayden and Cambridge, 2003).

To tackle the academic/vocational divide the Conservatives suggested developing a *National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ)*. The aim was to combine all previous vocational qualifications and establish a national framework of qualifications with five levels. This would mirror the traditional academic ladder, providing more parity of esteem between the two pathways. Further changes to qualifications occurred in 1986 with the development of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs).

The Conservative opted for three distinct curriculum tracks. They aimed to promote two vocational tracks and maintain the current academic track. The 1991 white paper *"Education and Training for the 21<sup>st</sup> century"* highlighted the need for a better vocational track, widely recognised as a benefit to the economy. The paper called for greater recognition and value to be attached to vocational qualifications, to extend the services offered and providing better information and guidance for students (DES, 1991, p.3). This was established via the introduction of GNVQs in response to further pleas for an equal system and also resulted in the introduction of the Advanced Diploma. In 1993, level 3 GNVQ's changed to *"Advanced GNVQ's"* or *"Vocational A levels"*. These new terms were not widely accepted (Higham, Sharp and Yeomans, 1996). Many supported the three-track system as it maintained the academic track. Since the publication of *"Education and Training for the 21<sup>st</sup> century"* (DES, 1991), there have been further suggestions for more unified versions. These have included further bridges and ladders between academic and vocational tracks, based on a modular structure of credit accumulation and transfer to encourage a less polarised approach (Higham, Sharp and Yeoman, 1996). In 1994, the government created *"Modern Apprenticeships"* which comprised of three elements, a knowledge based element, and a competence based element and key skills training. These changes aimed to monitor, increase participation and ensure the quality of secondary education whilst also decreasing the academic/vocational divide.

A working group chaired by Mike Tomlinson, collaborated with young people, practitioners, researchers and policymakers to develop proposals for reforming the 14-19 curriculum. The Tomlinson report (2004) aimed to reform the curriculum and change the structure of qualifications and assessments for 14-19 year olds. This would be achieved via the introduction of a multi-level diploma framework that combined vocational and academic qualifications, with a common core of key skills (Working group on 14-19 reform, 2004). These recommendations were supported for attempting to eradicate the vocational/academic divide, but it only had an impact at the micro level. Persuasion for reform was not strong enough to break the equilibrium of the political era (Hodgson and Spours, 2006). The WBQ aims to reduce the academic vocational divide by grouping both academic and vocational qualifications within the same umbrella qualification. Students enrolled on both academic and vocational qualifications will be enrolled on the same WBQ. Students have the opportunity to include academic and vocational qualifications within their options.

### 1.2.3 Key skills

The importance of key skills has crept into policy discussions and reform over the last few years. Initially, a discussion concerning poor key skills in post compulsory learners was associated with vocational qualifications (Higham, Sharp and Yeomans, 1994). Discussions about increasing the breadth of the current British system often came hand in hand with the continuation and development of key skills. Recent research and media hype has highlighted the importance of key skills (Green, 1997). In the 1980s, there was a growing concern about the quality of post-compulsory education in Wales, in part due to the collapse of the coal and steel industries. This prompted the prioritisation of skills development as an essential precursor of Wales's entry into what is now termed the "*knowledge economy*" (Rees, 2002). The importance of key skills have been highly publicised and researched over the last decade. Some qualifications incorporate key skills intrinsically and they are developed across the curricula, while others perceive key skills as extrinsic or add-ons, and conduct key skills lessons separately. Particularly in Wales the focus on key skills can be linked with the introduction and subsequent low PISA scores, which laid bare some stark issues for Wales with regards to their key skills provision and ability. Continuous low scores have plagued the Welsh education sector and have resulted in considerable time and resources being ploughed into raising standards across Wales (PISA, 2016). The WBQ Core includes the continuation of key

skills. This component of the qualification was a key driver, and a highly publicised reason for its inception and continuation.

#### 1.2.4 Massification of higher education and widening access

Recent political concern with socially unequal rates of access to Higher Education (HE) has prompted the Welsh Government, in recent years, to issue policies aimed at widening access to higher education, and providing opportunities for social groups under-represented in it. The volume of applicants to UK higher education institutions (HEIs) has increased substantially over the last half century, with some social groups (for example, women) dramatically increasing their participation in higher education (HE) (Vignoles and Crawford, 2010). Despite this, inequalities have persisted in terms of access to and participation in HE, with the participation gap stubbornly remaining in favour of those from the most socially advantaged backgrounds, particularly in terms of participation in the most prestigious HEIs (Ball et al, 2002; Forsyth and Furlong, 2003; Iannelli, 2007; Boliver, 2013). Exclusion from HE and from high status universities and courses in particular operates, to a large part, through class-based inequalities in prior attainment and early educational experiences (Taylor et al, 2013; Gorard, 2008; Chowdry et al, 2013). In addition, social, cultural and material factors frame the way in which young people make university choices, in turn influencing their entry too hierarchically differentiated HEIs (Ball et al, 2002; Reay et al, 2001; Vignoles and Crawford, 2010; Archer and Hutchings, 2000).

Recognition of the inequitable rates of access to HE amongst different social groups has prompted successive UK governments, over recent decades, to place considerable emphasis upon expanding higher education opportunities to social groups traditionally under-represented in it (typically, those living in particularly disadvantaged areas in the UK and particular ethnic minority groups and mature students) (DfEE, 2000; Welsh Assembly Government, 2009). In Wales, the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ) has been strategic in this ‘widening access to HE’ agenda (Taylor et al., 2013), representing a distinct approach to widening participation in Wales to widening participation strategies delivered elsewhere in the UK.

Given the WBQ’s strategic position within the Welsh Government’s widening access to

HE agenda, there are pressing questions about the extent to which the WBQ has successfully opened up higher education opportunities to young people who have traditionally been under represented in higher education. However, despite the generally positive response of HEIs in the UK to the WBQ (Hayden and Thompson, 2007), recognition by HEIs of the WBQ has been piecemeal and extremely diverse since its inception (Hayden and Thompson, 2007). The extent to which schools and departments recognise the WBQ in their admissions criteria will vary with the status of the programmes they deliver, and in turn their admissions criteria (namely, whether they use UCAS tariff points or A-level grades to admit applicants). This in turn influences the way that the WBQ is regarded in the admissions process.

The inconsistency with which admissions tutors for degree programmes within different HEIs in the UK recognise the WBQ in their entry requirements translates into variation in the utility of the WBQ as ‘capital’, for accessing HE. Given this inconsistency in the way the WBQ is recognised, there is a need to explore how young people view it as a means of supporting their entry to HE. Whilst research has shown that achievement of the Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced Diploma plays a beneficial role in supporting some students to enter HE, and to high status universities in particular (Taylor et al, 2013)

#### 1.2.5 Raising education standards

Raising standards within schools and colleges, and improving the educational experiences of young people via the development of the most effective qualifications, has been high on the Welsh Government agenda.

The 1988 Education Reform Act involved the radical recasting of the education service and arrived from the accumulation of a decade’s campaigning to strengthen parental rights (Ranson, 1990). The 1988 Act, aimed at creating a “*market*” in education with schools actively competing against one another for “*customers*” to increase enrolment levels. This institutional competitiveness was created in the belief that it would increase efficiency and drive up quality (Hodgson and Spours, 2006). Creating a “quasi market” included, increasing the autonomy for individual education providers, the introduction of new private providers, encouragement from parents to see themselves as consumers and the use of powerful national steering mechanisms used as a form of accountability



and to retain political leverage (Hodgson and Spours, 2006). The Act was focussed on parental choice (league tables, introduction of specialist schools and the relaxation of admissions policies) and its positive impact on quality. The introduction of formula funding meant that increasing enrolment was essential to maintain or improve the schools performance and resource levels.

In 1997, the new Labour Government announced one of its first priorities would be a major review of post compulsory education and training structures. This led to the white paper in 1999 *“Learning to Succeed”* in which the Government highlighted its dissatisfaction with the current arrangements for the funding and planning of post 16 education (Huddleston and Unwin, 2002). It aimed to create a system that provided students with access to as many learning opportunities as possible.

*“There is too much duplication, confusion and bureaucracy in the current system. Too little money actually reaches learners and employers; too much is tied up in bureaucracy. There is an absence of effective co-ordination a strategic planning. The system has insufficient focus on skill and employer needs at national, regional and local levels. The system lacks innovation and flexibility and there needs to be more collaboration and co-operation to ensure higher standards and the right range of choices..... The current system falls short”*  
(DfEE, 1999, p.21, cited in Huddleston and Unwin, 2002)

This White Paper again suggested massive restructuring of the landscape using similar language to the Conservative White Paper of 1991. The propositions outlined in this White Paper did not however come into operation until 2001 (Huddleston and Unwin, 2002). The Labour Government’s attempt to significantly increase participation rates never succeeded, partly as they were unable to ride the wave of social change that the Conservatives had been able to in the 1980s. They were unable to tackle curricular and institutional divisions despite a constant stream of internal and piecemeal initiatives (New Deal, Curriculum 2000, the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA), and changes to apprenticeships (Hayward et al, 2005).

Recently education policy making has seen a shift with policy now designed that is far more flexible for the implementing organisation. This flexibility allows for tailoring the

policy to the organisation's structure and needs. Therefore, policy can now be personalised to the individual student's interests and desired academic and employment trajectory. The WBQ is an excellent example of this form of policy. However, personalisation is time consuming and difficult to achieve.

The Labour Government focussed on tailoring education to the individual, expanding a policy started by the Conservatives, by creating Specialist schools that taught extra subjects on top of the National Curriculum subjects and were allowed to select 10% of their student body. This time period also saw the introduction of Academies which were independent schools within the state system yet funded by independent organisations in the aim of improving the quality of schooling. This flexible type of policy has also been witnessed in the creation of the 14-19 pathways which encourage education packages be tailored to the individual which is an objective of the WBQ. The WBQ was centred on individualisation and the option for students to demonstrate personalisation in their choices of options, and subject focuses for core components. Where individualisation and personalisation is successfully achieved, student's motivation and attainment levels have increased, as well as their chances in accessing HE (Taylor, 2012).

### 1.3 Movement towards the development of a Welsh Baccalaureate

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The complex and diverse nature of the post-compulsory sector is complicated further by the devolution process. Elements of the post-16 sector often have radically divergent relationships with the devolved institutions, in terms of both the formal devolution settlement as well as the day to day reality of policy development and implementation (Rees, 2002). In response to the issues outlined above, discussion has moved towards the adoption of a baccalaureate qualification for Wales.

#### 1.3.1. The IWA proposal for a Welsh Baccalaureate

The initial proposal for a Welsh Baccalaureate was made in 1993 by the Institute of Welsh Affairs (IWA). It was met with mixed reactions (IWA, 1993). The IWA owing no allegiance to any political or economic interest group, conduct research and promote new thinking on welsh issues, through their publications, creation of reports as well as

holding seminars and conferences to encourage discussion and debate. In 1993, in a report entitled “*Wales 2010*”, the IWA proposed the introduction of a Welsh Baccalaureate. In a later report, it was recommended the Welsh Baccalaureate be based on the International Baccalaureate (Jenkins and David, 1996). The IWA proposal was created to tackle the endemic problems in Welsh education, including over specialization.

Support for the IWA model was not expressed by all groups and organizations, especially those at the national (macro) and intermediate level (miso). Critics argued it was unachievable due to the complexities surrounding acceptance and the current education structure. A proposal’s success is often directly related to whether it is technically feasible, compatible with the minister’s values, financially viable and appealing to the public (Kingdon, 1984). The quote below from Kingdon (1984) reinforces this notion and further explains why items all of government agendas.

*“Financial cost, the lack of acceptance by the public, the opposition of powerful interest groups or simply because they are less pressing than other items in the competition for attention” (Kingdon, 1984, p.19).*

After a three month study on Welsh institutions, conducted by the IWA and Edexcel, 32 colleges and schools volunteered to join the pilot of the IWA proposal (David and Jenkins, 1997). During this time period the IWA also generated support for the proposal from HEIs and business (David and Jenkins, 1997). The IWA asked the Welsh Office for 1.2 million to finance a three year pilot, in ten education establishments. This request was rejected by Peter Hain, the Welsh Office Minister for Education and Training, who stated he was waiting for the publication of the UK wide consultation on 16-19 qualifications before making any final decision. In 1997, ACCAC in response to the publication of “*Qualifying for Success*” dismissed the IWA proposal for a baccalaureate for Wales. Despite this, the IWA continued to lobby for the introduction of a Welsh Baccalaureate.

In 2000, Black and David (2000) wrote a paper addressing concerns about the acceptability of a Welsh Baccalaureate in HEIs outside of Wales. This was in response to growing concerns within the WO that Welsh students would be unable to access HE

across the border. This paper did not dispel concerns that the adoption of a radically divergent qualification in Wales would inhibit students' chances of crossing the border for HE. Then in 2000 a coalition commitment was agreed between Labour and the Liberal Democrats to develop a Welsh Baccalaureate based on the IB. The Welsh Government put out a tender for proposals with only the WJEC submitting a proposal. In 2002, the IWA proposal was formally rejected.

#### 1.4 My interest and research ideas

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My interest in the field began during my teacher training placement at a large inner city further education college involved in piloting the Advanced Level WBQ. The FE College was in their first year of roll out and was understandably struggling to get used to and embed the WBQ into their existing structures. This was my first experience of the implementation, teaching and assessment of the Advanced Level WBQ. During my time on placement I conducted my work-based project on students' understandings and experiences of the WBQ via a focus group. After completing my PGCE, I began a full-time position in a secondary school that was piloting the WBQ. I went into this job thinking I knew what to expect regarding its structure and teaching, but was surprised to find that the WBQ was entirely different. The motivations of the teachers and students were different, the structure, teaching and assessment were entirely different and it could easily have been a different qualification from the one I had witnessed in the college. This made me think about how different it might look elsewhere. Due to the flexible nature of the policy variation was likely commonplace. It was then that I put in my application for the MSc in Social Science Research Methods and PhD, focussing on the implementation of the WBQ. My MSc dissertation focussed on students' understandings of the WBQ and highlighted that students were misunderstanding the structure of the WBQ. Students deeming it separate from their optional studies and failed to understand that the WBQ is an umbrella qualification. Completing both the optional studies alongside the Core is essential to achieving the WBQ (Knight 2010). It highlighted the variations in staff understanding, motivations and opinions of the WBQ and how these variations impact on teaching practice and students perceptions.

## 1.5. Aims

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This thesis provides a historical account of the development and implementation of the WBQ, from the macro, meso and micro level. The WBQ will be examined by identifying the problems that it aims to reduce and evaluating its success in achieving them. This thesis attempted to understand the WBQ position in the Welsh education system and evaluate whether the WBQ had achieved its original aims.

The data generated on the implementation of the WBQ intends to identify how ‘official’ guidelines have been adapted and modified as they transcend through the different levels.

*“Policy percolates down through the various levels in the system and how these levels interact or fail to interact, in the interests of learners” (Coffield et al, 2007, p.20).*

The flexible nature of the WBQ has meant that variation is commonplace, but this thesis will aim to identify if this level of flexibility is also causing variation in quality, an unintended outcome.

The broader aim of this thesis is to better understand policy development and implementation, in post-devolution Wales. The WBQ allows the researcher to focus on the process of implementing national education policy. This thesis will explore the extent to which democratic devolution since 1997, has allowed the development of distinctive approaches to addressing what are pervasive issues within post compulsory education sector (academic vs. vocational, specialisation vs. generalism, dealing with disaffection).

Through the identification of factors which impact on implementation this thesis will provide practical guidance on the recipe for large-scale policy implementation. This thesis has the potential to contribute to knowledge in the field of Political Science, alongside the Sociology of Education.

The aim of this PhD thesis is to focus on how policy is understood and implemented in schools and colleges. This is a highly overlooked area of the policy process and often results in misunderstanding and incorrect implementation. This thesis will focus on how the WBQ implementation guidelines are adapted and modified as they transcend from the macro level to the micro level. This adaptation results in a unique structure and delivery protocol from one education establishment to another.

## 1.6. Thesis narrative

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This introductory chapter has located the focus of the research and outlined the aims. The second chapter focuses on the creation and development of public policy in devolved Wales. Chapter 2 provides the historical account, mapping the major landmarks in history that led up to the development of the WBQ. Chapter 2 can be divided into two sections. It starts by discussing pre-devolution policy making in Wales, detailing the devolution settlement and then discussed policy making in post devolution Wales. The second section focusses on implementation by presenting the existing literature and identifying gaps in knowledge. The Chapter concludes by discussing implementation in devolved Wales.

Chapter 3 starts by exploring the development and nature of baccalaureates worldwide and introducing two longstanding baccalaureates (the International Baccalaureate and the French Baccalaureate). Chapter 3 concludes with a more in-depth description of the Learning Country (2001) and WBQ structure and assessment. I then critically evaluate the WBQ and highlight the findings of relevant literature that have evaluated the WBQ. After providing a detailed description of the Advanced Level WBQ the Chapter follows by outlining the procedures selected to implement the course. A detailed description of the sample, design and methodology selected is provided in Chapter 4.

Each of the empirical chapters aims to address one of the research questions, outlined in Chapter 3. The first empirical of these, Chapter 5, focuses on the development of the WBQ through interviews with various stakeholders and policy-makers at the macro- and micro-level, supplemented with documentary evidence. These interviewees reflect on this time period and the decisions made regarding the development of the WBQ.

These interviews generate an informal timeline of the WBQ. The second empirical chapter, Chapter 6, focuses on the implementation guidelines at the macro- and meso-level using data from the interviews. The Policy community interviews established what level of involvement each interviewee had in the implementation. The final empirical chapter, Chapter 7, deals with the micro-level and the implementation of the WBQ in schools and colleges throughout Wales. This is achieved using interviews with the WBQ Coordinators in schools and colleges. During this Chapter, the aim is to understand how the WBQ Coordinators translate the WBQ into institutional and classroom practice. This assists in understanding how the WBQ becomes a worked reality in the classroom, and the challenges and barriers that practitioners face. This thesis concludes in Chapter 8 with a discussion of the implications of this research and a review of more recent changes to the WBQ.

# Chapter 2. The process of creating public policy in devolved Wales: From formulation to implementation

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This chapter is divided into two distinct sections. The first section outlines the policy making process and the second section focussing on policy implementation. This chapter starts by outlining the Welsh devolution settlement, providing the literature to develop a contextual understanding of the environment and time period in which the WBQ was developed. The chapter highlighted the challenges and process of policy development during this post-devolution time period and the scope for policy divergence. Through examining the nature of the devolution settlement the researcher was able to illuminate and critically explore particular dimensions of policy making. The second section introduced the reader to implementation theory and focussed on how national policy gets implemented within a devolved government. This section identified factors that have previously contributed to a successful implementation, as well as those that can detriment success.

## 2.1 Public policy making

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This thesis has drawn on a traditional model from Political Science, which proved to be a useful tool in understanding the development of the WBQ. This model has also provided a useful organisational tool for summarising the data. Kingdoms Multiple stream Model is outlined below and its application to understanding the WBQ can be located in Chapter 5.

### 2.1.1 Kingdoms Multiple Streams Model (1984)

Political scientists have regularly attempted to create models that explain the policy making process via linear and succinct stages. These linear models have been highly criticised for failing to capture the complex process of policy making. To understand the



development of the WBQ this thesis will draw on Kingdon's Multiple Streams Model (1984). Although not exactly a linear model, it has been a useful operational tool for understanding the development of this policy. Kingdon's (1984) model attempts to explain how some issues move onto and up the Government's agenda while others do not. Kingdon (1995) constructed his Multiple Streams Model through examining case studies of federal policy making and via interviews with policy makers. This model contained elements of rationalism and incrementalism, whilst also rejecting previous traditional problem solving and incremental models of policy formation for failing to fully explain the messy process of policy formation (Cohen-Vogel & McLendon, 2009 and Kingdon 1984).

Kingdon (1984) believed that there are three independent streams, which inhabit the government arena ("*problem stream*", "*policy stream*" and "*political stream*"). The problem stream consists of all the endemic social problems that policy makers deem important. Kingdon (1984) identifies what he terms "*policy entrepreneurs*", who highlight and dramatize their chosen problem, accentuating this problem above all others. They often identify very specific solutions to tackle the problem (Policy Stream). Policy entrepreneurs can include politicians, civil servants, lobbyists and researchers. The policy entrepreneur then highlights and pushes their solution, convincing officials and policy makers to see the problem the way they want it to be seen and use their own solutions (Kingdon, 1984). Policy entrepreneurs invest a great deal of time and energy to place their proposal on the decision agenda and whilst decision makers can shift focus, policy entrepreneurs have to stay focused (Kingdon, 1995). The policy stream is made up of a selection of solutions/policies developed by specialists within the policy community and then taken up by policy entrepreneurs (Cohen-Vogel and McLendon, 2009).

The political stream consists of developments involving macro level conditions including, public mood, the role of stakeholders, intermediate level organizations and changes and turnover in the administrative and legislative branches (Kingdon, 1984). Kingdon (1984), discussed how if the macro political conditions are optimum the political stream can lead to policy formation. If these three policy streams merge then a "*policy window*" opened, providing the opportunity for a policy formation. The proposal will then rise up the agenda and reach fruition.

*“Once we understand these streams taken separately, the key to understanding agenda and policy change is their coupling. The separate streams come together at critical times. A problem is recognized, a solution is available, the political climate makes the time right for change, and the constraints do not prohibit action. Advocates develop their proposals and then wait for problems to come along to which they can attach their solutions, or for a development in the political stream like a change of administration that makes their proposals more likely to be adapted” (Kingdon, 1984, p.94).*

Policy windows are not open long and need to be utilized quickly to ensure success. Therefore, the practicalities and financial cost of the policy have to be carefully planned out, ahead of time to ensure acceptance.

This model is far too simplistic in its explanation of policy development but it does begin to address the role that key individuals both visible and hidden, have on the development of policy. This model fails to develop on from the first stages of policy making and it completely fails to acknowledge the implementation stage. This thesis will use Kingdon's Multiple Streams Model (1984), as both an analytical tool and an operational model to understand the policy development. It will form a significant component of the first empirical chapter which focuses on the creation of the WBQ (Chapter 5).

### 2.1.2 Policy community

The term “*Policy Community*” became a popular phrase used in the 1970s. Its adoption demonstrated a shift in focus in Political Science, away from formal, legal and legislative based study to tracking a policy biography. Reviewing the literature on policy communities was vital, as this thesis aimed to understand the process of policy making and implementation, through the voices of the policy community. The literature regarding the identification and influence of the policy community will be particularly useful in informing the researcher how to successfully map the policy community. The existing literature will be useful for further understanding the complex structures and hierarchy that exists within policy communities. For this thesis the policy community

only includes individuals from the macro and miso level, and not the local level. Not all academics would agree with this interpretation. Ball (1990) included teachers and recipients of policy in his definition of “policy communities”. However, to ensure clarity and a clear distinction between the levels, this thesis has excluded the micro level from its definition. The constraints of this thesis has resulted in Balls definition of policy communities being rejected, Adopting this definition would have required students and parents to be included in the data collection, which was unnecessary for answering the research questions, outlined in Chapter 3.

The policy community is comprised of key individuals closely involved in the development of policy.

*“Policy communities are networks characterized by stability of relationships; continuity of a highly restrictive membership, vertical interdependence based on shared service delivery responsibility and insulation from other networks and invariably from the general public” (Rhodes and Marsh, 1992, p.78).*

Rhodes and Marsh (1992), define a policy community as having a limited number of participants, with some social groups intentionally excluded. All members of the policy community share an economic and professional interest and have frequent interactions. A policy community is categorized by balance and power, not that all members equally share power, but all members feel involved in the processes and the experience is positive. The policy community is extremely hierarchical and in understanding the views of those involved and the various social groups, who have greater or lesser power to influence the policy will help determine the policies development trajectory. The policy community represents a range of organizations and individuals with differing viewpoints, in the hope of presenting varied opinions. This thesis has used the term policy community to represent all the individuals from the macro and miso level with the micro/local level excluded. This includes individuals from within Government, academics, student unions and local authorities etc.

Individuals often have a huge impact on the successful development and implantation of policy. Understanding the influence these individuals had on the development of the WBQ, will help to understand its finalised form. These influential individuals form the

macro and meso level are employed to make swift decisions about the procedures and practicalities of roll out. These decisions often caused mutations from the original policy. Ball (1990), in his discussion of education policy making, discusses the mutation of policy during implementation.

*“Each level is a source and a resource for education policy making that is; each level has effects in its own terms on the nature and possibility of policy.*

*Contradictions within and between the levels will initiate change (Ball, 1990, p.11).*

Mapping and identifying the policy community is not a simple task, as the group is fluid. Some members of the policy community are involved in the entire process from formulation to implementation; others are drafted in to aid in the development of a particular element, while others have a greater impact on the development from afar. The level of influence they have is highly varied often governed by their position but also by the strength of their convictions. This influence can be exerted both in the official arenas, as well as informally by rallying for support outside of these formal settings. This can make researching the dynamics, hierarchy and influence that the policy community exert, quite complex. The Welsh policy community is small, and lacks the established and well-resourced think tanks, that have had such an impact on policy development in Westminster. Policy communities play important roles in policy convergence and the transfer of policy across devolved nations, who share similar problems and ideas for solutions (Haas, 1992). Since devolution, Wales has sought to develop a close knit policy community, with strong professional values and reduce receptivity to external ideas (Keating, Cairney and Hepburn, 2012).

## 2.2 History of public policy development in Wales: Devolution settlement

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Public policy making in Wales has changed significantly in the last three decades, since parliamentary devolution. This chapter will outline the key “*moments*” in the history of devolution, whilst also acknowledging that devolution is not a static or “*settled phenomenon*” but fluid and in continuous development (Marinetto, 2001, p.316). The

devolution process is likely to develop further due to the deep transformations in central government. It's widely quoted that;

*“Devolution is a process. It is not an event and neither is it a journey with a fixed end point” (Davies, 1999, p.15).*

This thesis will discuss policy making in Wales, firstly during administrative devolution and then after parliamentary devolution and the establishment of the National Assembly in 1998.

### 2.2.1 Administrative devolution

In 1746, law was passed that stated that any policy created for England also referred to Wales. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Wales was granted the opportunity to be able to adapt some UK government policy. This opportunity was not consistency across all disciplines and the degree of adaptation tolerated, was minimal. Devolution in Wales did not begin with the creation of the National Assembly in 1998, as there were established patterns of administrative devolution long before the advent of parliamentary devolution (Rees, 2004).

A key moment in the early stages of administrative devolution came in 1959, when a Secretary for Education was appointed in Wales. Then in 1964 the establishment of the Welsh Office and a Minister of State was appointed. Their role included incorporating and developing the curriculum to accommodate for the compulsory welsh language component (Reynolds, 2008). The Welsh Office assumed powers for schools and college education in 1970 (Raffe, et al 1999). Wales began exercising devolved powers in education after the establishment of the Education Department of the Welsh Office. However, their powers were restricted and characteristically involved merely adjusting policy originating from Westminster and loyally implementing them in Wales. This was done with little or no attempt to challenge the political assumptions, upon which established policy trajectories were, based (Rees, 2004). Some of these unchallenged policy assumptions have even persisted into the era of parliamentary devolution (Rees, 2004).

In 1974 the white paper “*Democracy and Devolution: proposals for Scotland and Wales*” was published. This paper proposed the creation of the Assembly and outlined the proposals for devolution. The question of devolution rose in the mid 1970’s and resulted in the 1979 referendum. Labour believed that devolution was the next step for Welsh independence. Devolution would be beneficial as the assembly would be democratically accountable. The government decided to hold a referendum, a scarcely used constitutional device which can determine support for policy. The use of referendums is often based on expediency rather than the grandiose notion of consultation (McAllister, 1998). Referendums are rarely about choice and are generally used to legitimise a government proposal (McAllister, 1998). The 1979 referendum revealed deep divisions’ within Welsh society regarding the topic of Devolution and was a pinnacle moment in the debate for devolution in Wales (Jones and Lewis, 1999). The referendum demonstrated that the population was still not ready to fully commit to devolution. Wales was not yet confident that a Welsh Assembly could effectively develop and deliver policy for Wales. The next section outlines the opposing views on devolution.

### 2.2.2 The devolution debate

This section will introduce the reader to both sides of the devolution debate. The social realities found in Wales are often different to those found in neighbouring England. Wales has a relatively low economic activity rate, and a high unemployment rate of 8.9% for males and 7.8% for females which is the highest compared to all the UK nations, with 24% of 16-19 year olds being unemployed (ONS, 2013). This has contributed to the 20,900 people claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) (ONS, 2013). Of those employed the gross disposable household income is only £14,623 much lower than elsewhere in the UK (ONS, 2012). Wales’ low economic activity rates are partly a result of the low levels of key skills and qualification levels achieved in Wales. Wales also has high truancy rates and absenteeism for students in secondary education and one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the UK. These problems indicate a close relationship between deprivation, poverty and family disharmony (Reid, 1999). Wales would need its own policy initiatives to tackle these problems. Supporters of devolution believed this was a necessary step for Wales.

The movement towards devolution was supported by a national desire “*to preserve distinctive cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious identities*” (Knight, 1982, p 919). Holding on to a country's distinct cultural identity and individual characteristics have been a key driver for devolution, across all the nations of the UK (Knight, 1982). It acted as a means of empowering localities to address territorial needs. From a political perspective the pro-devolutionist case rested on the claims that sub-national governments are closest to their electorates and, therefore most directly accountable to their citizens. These individuals are also better placed to represent and respond to the individual needs of their communities (Andrews and Martin, 2007; Bennett, 1990). According to this interpretation devolution increases the transparency of the decision making process. This will lead to greater trust in the government which will increase citizen participation (Putnam, 2003). A closer proximity to their citizens, a greater degree of accountability and a good understanding of specific local needs could result in more innovative solutions being developed, specifically targeted at Welsh issues and distinct Welsh needs. A devolution settlement would increase the powers and resources of the country and policy would be better targeted, which is essential in an increasingly globalised economy (Keating, 1998).

Compelling counter-arguments have raised concerns that a devolved government could lead to the disadvantage of economically weaker regions. This is due to reduced funding and the limited capacity of a new government to create national policy (Morgan, 2006). Critics were concerned that devolution might contribute to rising levels of regional inequality, highlighted in the quote below.

*“In part the concern with welfare state/social policy convergence has been fuelled by claims that globalization and the spread of neo liberalism would lead, not only to an erosion of differences in welfare systems and wider changes in territorial politics of welfare states, but also to a race to the bottom (Mooney et al, 2006, p45).*

Devolution intended to open up more collaboration and network opportunities for policy making. This would involve a significant increase in practitioner and citizen engagement. So far there is no evidence that parliamentary devolution has opened up

any new avenues to those previously excluded, instead it seems to have intensified the interactions between those individuals already central to policy creation (Rees, 2007).

Devolution also went against a longstanding belief that there is a “*British way of doing things*” (Carmichael, 2002). The decline of British values and culture is still a concern for the older population, and this factored into their opinion about devolution. Critics resistant to devolution were concerned it would result in an end to the regular exchange of civil servants between Wales and Westminster, and a reduction in the number of working contacts and acquaintances that arose from travel to London.

### 2.2.3 Parliamentary devolution

A few years after the failure of the 1979 referendum opinion regarding devolution began to change. These changes were in part due to a growing dissatisfaction in this period of Thatcher administration and the rise of the so-called “*quango state*”. Many began realising the potential of a regional government within a European context. This served to convince large sections of the political class in Wales that devolution although not perfect, was the next step forward for Wales. This was supported by evidence collected via polling in the 1990’s, which demonstrated that the population supported some measure of devolution, but still failed to recognise it as an important issue (Jones and Lewis, 1999).

The Labour government renewed its commitment to devolution under the leadership of Tony Blair, after a push towards a more individualised Welsh route. The pre-legislative referendum was held on the 18<sup>th</sup> September 1997, this ended up being one of the;

*“Great moments of political theatre in recent British Political history (Jones and Lewis, 1999, p.37).*

It resulted in a narrow yes vote with the pro-devolution camp gaining a tiny majority of only 6,721 votes out of a potential electorate of 2,218,850, with the majority abstaining. Despite the closeness of the result and the poor turnout (50.1%), the results demonstrated a shift in opinion which was to have a profound impact on the history and development of Wales.



The government white paper "*A Voice for Wales*" was published on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1997, and set out the government's proposals for the Welsh Assembly. The paper outlined that the elected Assembly consisting of 60 members, would assume the responsibility of policy making and public services previously exercised by the Secretary of State for Wales. It also outlined the financial responsibilities of the Assembly. They were now responsible for the £7 billion budget previously held by the Welsh Office. They could start to make decisions about how it should be allocated (McAlister, 1998). Subsequent sections of the white paper focussed on the Assembly's commitment to creating a new economic policy agenda.

The tone of the paper was one of modernisation and highlighted the Assembly's proactive role. The document was criticised for the limited extent of powers, devolved to the Assembly (McAllister 1998). Critics were particularly disheartened by the absence of primary legislative function (McAllister 1998). The paper was compared with the Scottish equivalent, which was a more comprehensive document that clearly outlined significant powers that would be devolved to its parliament. These criticisms were addressed by highlighting that devolution is a process and not an event and that this was just one step in this continuously evolving process. This stance pre-empted the likelihood of a future Welsh Assembly assuming more powers and responsibilities. There was also growing concern that if this was the case, would the Assembly ever have the power, size or ability to create primary legislation and increase their responsibilities (McAllister, 1998).

The referendum was then followed by the Government of Wales Act (1998) that outlined the devolution settlement and how these structural changes would be implemented. It led to the establishment of the Assembly in 1999. The Act outlined three major steps. Firstly, the Assembly would only continue creating legislation on powers they had already obtained. Secondly, that the exercise of these powers would be subject to debate and scrutiny by those elected to the National Assembly and the public. Finally, the exercise of these powers would be subject to compliance with certain general legal principles to be stated in the devolutionary settlement.

The National Assembly's role is to hold the Welsh Ministers to account, debate assembly policies, create committee reports and propose Welsh laws. The Welsh Government's role is to maintain the day to day running of Wales, developing, implementing and evaluating policies and proposing new Assembly Measures. Governance in Wales is established along the same lines as in Westminster, with the National Assembly for Wales being the democratically elected parliamentary body and the Welsh Government being made up of governing Ministers, just like the UK cabinet. The UK government still retains control over Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security, Policing, Prisons, Taxation and Benefits. The policy areas devolved to Wales include Education, Health, Local government, Transport, Planning, Economic development, Social Care, Culture, Environment and Agriculture/Rural affairs. It is important to note that although Wales has gained further powers of policy make since this time period, but policy decisions are still be governed by Westminster. This has undermined the idea that devolution would give Wales the autonomy to make policy decisions without the control exerted by Westminster. This issue has been a matter of considerable debates and controversy.

The National Assembly for Wales was provided with the power to determine how the budget for Wales is spent, bringing the government closer to the nation. The Barnett formula transfers resources in a block with no restrictions on its use. This has given Wales the opportunity to target the resources to areas on its own agenda. However, this total amount is fixed so if the UK Government chose to introduce fees for public funding the devolved nations would be forced to introduce fees or raise taxes. This imposes strict policy constraints on divergences in spending.

#### 2.2.4 The Richards commission

The commission was appointed in July 2002, by the Welsh Assembly Government. The Richards commission was conducted to review the scope of the Assembly's powers. It aimed to evaluate whether these powers were adequate for meeting the needs of Wales and assess the number of elected Assembly members and their method of election. The report was finally published on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004. The Commission focussed on how the arrangements are working at present, highlighted problems that have been encountered and made recommendations, based on the evidence collected. The

commission drew on a wide range of views. The data collected comprised of, 115 open evidence sessions, 3 seminars and 9 public meetings across Wales. The commission also involved the publication of 2 consultation papers which received over 300 written submissions in response.

The Richard Commission (2004) was a detailed study of the 1998, devolution settlement. It evaluated how the devolution settlement had impacted on the way Wales is governed. It focussed on which areas of policy had been devolved. It also questioned and evaluated the policy making powers of the devolved government. The report is divided into 14 chapters each dedicated to a separate element of devolution.

*“The Assembly is the democratically elected representative body for the whole of Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government should be able to formulate policies within clearly defined fields and should have the power to implement all the stages for effective delivery, in partnership with the UK government and other stakeholders. The Assembly Government should be able to set its own priorities and timetables for action. It should be accountable to the people of Wales through the elected Assembly for its policies and their implementation”*  
(Richard Commission, 2004).

Chapter 14 is the concluding chapter and presented the Commission’s recommendations, based on the evaluation of the evidence. Some of these recommendations included:

- 1) *There should be a legislative Assembly for Wales on the model outlined in chapter 1*
- 2) *The framework delegated powers approach should be expanded as far as possible with the agreement of the UK government.*
- 3) *The Assembly needs an increase in membership to 80 members.*
- 4) *The present voting system cannot sustain an increase to 80, and the best alternative is the STV system.*
- 5) *These changes should be in place by 2011.*

*(Richard Commission, 2004)*

The report was criticised for skating over the many legal and technical difficulties involved in a further, more fundamental bout of devolutionary restructuring. The review also failed to address the issue of holding another referendum to support a move to full legislative powers. Content with accepting survey evidence that the support for devolution had increased, and that the population was in full support of increasing the powers for the Assembly. The Richards Commission contributed to another referendum which saw the population support Wales having primary legislative powers.

#### 2.2.5 Better governance for Wales, white paper.

The White paper “*Better Governance for Wales*” provided the opportunity of addressing flaws in the current devolution settlement. The paper is far more comprehensive than the 1997 white paper that preceded the referendum. Critics still questioned whether it had fully addressed all the issues that have occurred since parliamentary devolution and subsequently outlined in the Richards Commission (Trench, 2005).

*“There are key respects that don’t go far enough, some provisions seem unduly restrictive or petty, some conflict well established constitutional principles, and other provisions raise problems of practical implementation” (Trench 2005 p.3).*

Some have criticised the failure of the white paper to address some of the recommendations outlined in the Richards Commission (Trench, 2005).

It identified features that should be present in the devolution settlement including ensuring the division of powers is clear and can be understood by the people. Calling for public accountability and ensuring there is public support for all major institutional change was deemed important for modernising the Welsh Government (Trench, 2005). The white paper proposes splitting the body corporate by separating the Welsh Assembly Government from the National Assembly. There rationale for this suggestion was that the original structure was confusing in terms of accountability and responsibility. This was also a key recommendation of the Richard Commission (2004), and one which was widely supported (Trench, 2005).

It set out three stages for increasing powers to the National Assembly. The first stage outlined framework legislation for Westminster to increase the powers conferred on the Assembly. This approach however raises problems about the reluctance, difficulty and lengthy time scale involved in the transfer of powers from Westminster to the National Assembly (Trench 2005). The white paper noted that the Assembly's powers are fragmented and the practice regarding legislation for Wales should be more consistent. This issue was resulting in the current structure depriving the Assembly of making important decisions for Wales.

The second stage outlined the transfer of legislative powers in a variety of sectors to the Assembly. The legislation made at this stage is termed "Assembly measures" and require approval by the Queen in Council. Section 2, of the white paper was criticised for lacking details about what stage 2 involved and does not account for how changes in political control or to the Secretary for State may impact on the process (Trench, 2005). The final stage involves conferring legislative powers on the Assembly. Legislation created at this stage is termed "Assembly Acts" and receive royal assent like Acts of the Scottish Parliament or Northern Ireland Assembly (Trench, 2007). This final stage resembles the Richard commission's recommendation that Wales have full legislative powers. It initially appeared that the three stages would overlap this has not been the case with stage 1 becoming a feature of legislation in 2005-2006 but by 2006-2007 bills demonstrated show a different approach more heavily focussed on the new legislative functions of the National Assembly.

The paper presented a good understanding of some of the key issues that had arisen from devolution and provided possible solutions to these problems. Some critics have suggested that its recommendations rely too heavily on emulating the devolution arrangements currently in place in Scotland and Northern Ireland, with no recognition that Wales is its own country. Most accept Wales has its own language and culture and therefore, needed its own unique devolution settlement (Trench, 2005). The paper identified problems which will need considerable time dedicated to them, to develop and implement solutions. Some Tasks were further complicated by the restructuring and the process of disentangling some of the Assembly's present functions to the Welsh Assembly Government according to whether they are legislative or executive in nature.

### 2.2.6 Government of Wales act, 2006

The Government of Wales Act (2006), marked significant changes in Wales, since the devolution settlement outlined in the Government of Wales Act 1998. This demonstrates the huge developments Wales has made in its perception of itself and its increased confidence, since the narrowly won referendum in 1997. The referendum was held to ask the people if they believed that the Assembly should be able to make laws concerning the areas devolved to Wales, without consultation or permission from the UK parliament. The First Minister, Carwyn Jones' reaction to the result was *"Today an old nation came of age"*. While the Deputy First Minister and Plaid Cymru leader Iwan Jones said it marked;

*"The beginning of a new era of Welsh devolution - the decade to deliver for Wales.... To demand respect, you must first display self-respect. Today we have done just that, and the rest of the world can now sit up and take notice of the fact that our small nation, here on the western edge of the continent of Europe, has demonstrated pride in who we are, and what we all stand for" (Jones, 2011).*

The Government of Wales Act 2006 responded to many of the recommendations of the UK government's 2005 white paper *"Better Governance for Wales"* (Welsh Office 2005). However, it was still a long way off from the recommendations of the Richard Commission (Trench, 2007). Some were surprised that such dramatic restructuring was needed so soon after devolution. Critics have highlighted that the instability of the arrangements were present at the early stages, and that quick rectification was essential and expected (Trench, 2007). One of the main issues that the Act attempted to address was the ongoing role of the UK government in Wales. Westminster still retained control of significant functions, including matters of foreign policy, the macro-level economy, social security, policing and criminal justice.

One of the most profound changes to come out of the Act (2006) was the restructuring of the Assembly.

*"The single body corporate has been abolished and replaced by an elected Assembly with deliberate, legislative and scrutiny functions, and a Welsh*

*Assembly Government responsible for executive functions, notably developing and implementing policy” (Trench, 2007, p.33).*

This restructure reflected a process that had been underway for a number of years and had attracted considerable support from all parts of the political spectrum (Trench, 2007). Most of the National Assembly’s functions including some of its legislative role were given to the Welsh Assembly Government.

The Government of Wales Act (2006) has meant that the Assembly will acquire legislative powers more quickly and in more varied areas. This meant that the scope of devolved powers is dependent on the Westminster policy agenda as well as Welsh requests for powers. The transfer of powers was beneficial to Westminster who no longer had the responsibility of dealing with the political and administrative complexities of legislating for Wales and England. The requests for increased legislative powers will still come under significant scrutiny from Westminster and an extension of powers can be blocked if either the Secretary of State, Commons or Lords disapprove of it (Trench, 2007).

*“Parliament to reject proposals which are frivolous or against the principles of social justice and democracy. This suggests Westminster will actively police the powers conferred on the Assembly, only confer powers where the Assembly makes a case convincing in policy as well as constitutional terms, and reject orders or bids for orders where these are contrary to the dominant views of Westminster (Trench, 2007, p.20)*

One of the more criticised elements of the Government of Wales Act (2006) is the extensive powers that have been given to the Secretary for State. The Secretary for States role included fixing dates for general elections; making the Standing Orders of the new Assembly, participating in the Assembly, receiving all plenary papers and attending Assembly meeting committees. The Secretary for State decides whether to act on an Assemblies request for legislative powers via legislative Competence Orders. Concerns about the power transferred to the Secretary for State has resulted in criticism and suggestions for relocating some of these powers elsewhere.

However the 2006 Act;

*“Marked a major step forward in Wales constitutional development, and is a demonstration of a remarkable degree of constitutional ingenuity and imagination” (Rawlings, 2005 p.824).*

The Government of Wales Act (2006) did not change the ongoing importance and dominance exerted by Westminster. Size will remain an important issue and constraint to the Assembly’s abilities. Plaid Cymru have criticised the document for not delivering a fully-fledged parliament. Some have criticised that;

*“While the framework will change, the substance of relations and the overall structure in which they sit will both remain the same. At most it will be the case of old wine in new bottles. In many respects, however even the bottles will be very similar to the ones with which we are already familiar” (Trench, 2007, p.48).*

Understanding the key moments in the political history of Wales is key, to this thesis. The next section will discuss Education policy making in Wales, during both administrative and Parliamentary Devolution. Highlighting the discussions regarding Welsh education during this time period and will provide some explanation for the development of the Advanced level WBQ.

### 2.3. Education policy making in devolved Wales: Divergence and convergence

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The responsibilities for nearly all aspects of education and training have now been devolved. Education policy has seen most of the dramatic changes and divergences from England since devolution compared to the dominance experienced during the majority of the twentieth century (Jones and Roderick, 2003). Wales has exercised its devolved powers in education since the establishment of the Education Department of the Welsh Office in the 1960’s. The Education Department developed a separate Welsh curriculum and assessment strategy that accounted for the Welsh language. Since 1999, Wales has witnessed a new approach to Welsh education policy, not controlled by



Westminster prescriptions or treated as a policy piloting laboratory (Rees, 2007). This new approach aims to grant Wales's entry into the "*knowledge economy*" (Rees, 2002, p.106)

The post-devolution policies that demonstrate some divergences from England include; the abolition of externally based assessments at key stages 1, 2 and 3, the introduction of the Assembly Learning Grant (ALG) for students in Further or Higher education (Rees, 2002), the development and piloting of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification and further developments in the 14-19 pathways (Reynolds, 2008).

Wales believed that;

*"Education and training are of the first importance for Wales, they liberate talent, extend opportunity empower communities and help create wealth (WAG, 2001).*

New initiatives and developments in the post compulsory sector aim to arm Wales with the skills needed to face the new technological era and address the huge shifts in competitive pressures from within Europe and beyond. These initiatives must acknowledge that many communities in Wales are still disadvantaged and the skills base is relatively low. Some of the first major legislation on post-16 education was a large scale review, resulting in a revised National Curriculum. The National Assembly has also established the new council called the ELWa.

One of the most striking features that represented Wales' divergences from the rest of the UK was the publication of the "*Learning Country (2001)*", a paving document which consults a number of key policy directions and legislative proposals. The Learning Country was highly distinctive in its range and scope, and the proposals were implemented at a considerable pace. The Learning Country (2001), involved strategies for improving education up until 2010. This was then followed by additional documents expanding on and modifying the original (WAG, 2006a). It stated that:

*"Education and training are of the first importance for Wales, they liberate talent, extend opportunity, empower communities and help create wealth" (WAG, 2001)*

The *Learning Country* (2001), focussed on improving education, by creating learning packages better tailored to the distinctive needs of Welsh' citizens (Rees, 2007). The Learning Country aimed to create a distinctive strategy towards school improvement, which was evidence based, locally managed and professionally valid. The document was divided into chapters, with each chapter dedicated to reforming a separate stage of education. Each chapter concluded with a list of question for consultation and further rectification. Some of the key suggestions emulating from the Learning Country (2001), is ensuring that all children have a compulsory nursery education from the age of 3. They also suggested that all infant classes be reduced to less than 30 and encouraged the introduction of free school breakfasts, and nutritionally balanced snacks and lunches as well as free milk for students at key stage 1. Policy was also revised to face the challenges faced by small rural schools. The funding and maintenance of Welsh Universities was also addressed.

It aimed to break the mould, and provide vision and strategies for creating a diverse and inclusive learning package. This increased the number of students in post-compulsory education and would be better suited to the wider economic realities in Wales. This would allow for increased social mobility via academic achievement (Egan, 2005). This provided Welsh students with the skills to be both adaptable and employable in face of National and International technological change. It aimed to make the most of the dynamic cultural and linguistic inheritance in Wales. The policy derived from the realisation that it is;

*“No longer self-evident that all pupils should move through secondary school at the same pace, or that 16 is the principal break point in their development. Some who are put off by school may need a new and innovative stimulus to build their skills and confidence –in school or beyond. Others may need to broaden or deepen their studies...or to spend more time on vocational options, or to move on to advanced study having taken GCSE early” (WAG, 2001.p 1).*

Wales is now seen as leading the way in 14-19 developments and is being watched with interest from elsewhere (Egan, 2005). The principles of the Learning Country (2001), demonstrated an emphasis on the 14-19 sectors with policies being created that aim to

break down the academic/vocational divide, epitomised by the piloting of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ). The WBQ demonstrated the initial stages of the demise of the national curriculum framework by creating a new learning package that provided students with the option of an academic, vocational or a combined route that provided a parity of esteem to all options and could be tailored to the individual (Rees, 2007). The policy derived from a need to develop a varied curriculum that can be tailored to the individual compared to the dominant academic pathway usually associated with academic success. The WBQ provided a more flexible pathway similar to the post 16 provision in place in Scotland (Raffe, Spours, Young and Howelson, 2000).

### 2.3.1 Divergence

There is a constant pressure on governments to create new policy and reform the public policy sector, particularly in devolved nations, where citizens are expectant of the development of diverse policy (Keating, Cairney and Hepburn, 2012). Any degree of divergence is encouraged and there is a widespread public expectation that devolution should bring divergent and innovative policy, which better suited Welsh citizens (Rees, 2007). This interesting research location will provide data which can better understand the rationale for producing divergent education policy in a devolved nation and the practicalities of design and implementation.

*“Historical commitment in Wales to the use of the education system to transform society, rather than maintain the existing relations of production, and to achieve social justice for different societal groups, both of which were reflected in the phrase ‘clear red water’ and the belief in co-operation and universalism. Naturally Wales has also had much less involvement of private sector provision” (Reynolds, 2008, p.758).*

Policy change is often limited to minor adjustments of existing policy rather than the creation of entirely new policy. As policies gain longevity they ultimately gain in legitimacy. These factors make the creation of new policy difficult in today’s climate, and the removal of old, popular, institutionalised policy even harder (Lipsky, 1980). Practitioners are often resistant to change making the implementation of new policy

difficult (Lipsky, 1980). In comparison, the restructuring of existing policy is tolerable as well as cheaper and easier to implement.

It was probably never the intention of the devolution supporters to create a system whereby the different nations of the UK were attempting radically different solutions to some of the major problems faced in society (Reynolds, 2008). Instead of the continuous creation of divergent policy, the intention of devolution included the continuation of Westminster produced policy where appropriate. The rationale behind devolution was to improve the delivery of services in accordance with locally defined needs and reducing inequality (Reynolds, 2008).

Since 1999 the Welsh Government has demonstrated a desire to create a “*Welsh route*”. Early manifestations of what the leader of the new Welsh Assembly Government described as ‘*clear red water*’ between the Cardiff and Westminster governments (Morgan, 2002), included a series of welfare initiatives (introduction of free prescriptions, free breakfasts for school children, and free swimming for children). England and Wales have demonstrated differing motives and opinions, often highlighted in the drivers behind their education policies.

Devolution has provided Wales with the opportunity for divergence, which some have claimed to be quite radical (Rees, 2007). Reynolds (2008) has claimed that education policies developed in Wales demonstrate clear divergence from England;

*“The development of a distinctive set of education policies in Wales, after the devolution of power in 1999. In contrast to policies in England that emphasized consumer choice concerning accountability, and central state "support" of the profession, Wales chose a more producerist paradigm that emphasized collaboration between educational partners. Differences between the two societies are also in evidence concerning levels of expenditure, and the role of local authorities as delivery mechanisms” (Reynolds, 2008, .p753).*

These divergences are unexpected given the dominance of an England, Wales’s regime, throughout the twentieth century (Jones and Roderick, 2003). Jane Davidson explained this need for divergence by stating;

*“We shall share strategic goals with our colleagues in England but often we need to take a different route to achieve them. We shall take our policy direction where necessary, to get the best for Wales” (WAG, 2001).*

Policy making in Wales is different from England as Wales is operating on three levels, that of the individual, the local community and the nation. However, in England the decline of communities has resulted in the most influential levels are the individual and the nation (Reynolds, 2008). The effective implementation of new policies is aided by Wales’ size, as there is good communication between education professionals, knowledge brokers and policy makers. The implementation of policies is swift and problems can be identified and eradicated immediately (Nutley et al, 2007).

Divergent policy-making in education has been more pronounced than the other sectors. The Welsh approach rejects the English initiatives that prioritises choice over equality of outcome and criticises England for creating a market approach to a public services. Welsh policy makers reject this English model, arguing that population density is too low to offer any substantial choice and have therefore adopted a ‘citizen centred’ approach (WAG, 2006). The Welsh paradigm is based upon social justice, universalism, trust of providers and equality (Rees, 2007). There are elements within Welsh policies that don’t fit any simple “*new producerist*” label, as there is often consumer choice between schools and colleges and between colleges and work based learning providers. This is seen as counteracting their statement for equality of opportunity over choice. There have been some similar policies brought out in Wales and England but these vary in their tone, content and organisation (Reynolds, 2008).

Wales supports the notion of equality and the opportunities that arise from state provided services. Wales’ defence and commitment to maintaining state provided education is often a popular choice among the population. There is an emphasis upon improving service delivery through participation, collaboration and change in culture, capacity and processes. Wales’ education policies have demonstrated a desire to soften the competitive edge, through the abandonment of published league tables. Instead promoting the higher standards of pupil attainment through collaboration, support and additional professional development for teachers. The argument for collaborative working to improve efficiency

was outlined in the documents “*Making the Connections*” (WAG, 2004). This new approach aims to grant Wales’s entry into the “*knowledge economy*” (Rees, 2007, p.106). Devolution also provided Wales with the opportunity to avoid initiatives being undertaken in England that would be inappropriate for the social realities found in Wales.

In 2001, the WAG published its paving document the *Learning Country*, in which it set out an agenda for education, until 2015. What was interesting about this paving document was the language and objectives hinted at some real examples of policy divergence which was met with a mixed response. This agenda included the development, piloting and implementation of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification. This new qualification possibly demonstrated the demise of the National Curriculum framework created by the Education Act of 1988. The opportunity for further radical change was provided by the 2002 Education Act (Egan and James, 2003). This seeming divergence and the possible creation of a distinct curriculum for Wales was further supported by the Review of Qualifications (2012), which suggested making the WBQ a national qualification in Wales. This suggestion was accepted by Ministers (Welsh Government, 2012). This action demonstrated the increased confidence in Wales, in creating unique national policy initiatives.

In attempt to quantify and highlight if divergence exists, Andrews and Martin (2008) conducted research on the regional difference in public services outcomes and concluded that the different devolved nations received different outcomes in key services. Some of these differences can be explained by variables such as socio-economic and demographic characteristics and differing levels of expenditure but there is a significant amount of variation that cannot be accounted for by these variables, and is likely to be associated with differences in policy (Andrews and Martin, 2008, p.929). So far devolution and Wales’ ability to develop its own policies may not have resulted in a huge numbers of policies that demonstrate any vast divergence. However, Wales has utilised the power to target spending, with statistically significant differences between the spending priorities of English and Welsh local governments (Sharpe and Newton, 1984). There is still limited research which demonstrates a devolution dividend but the desire to create distinctive policy is still considered necessary, and is often a source of national pride.

### 2.3.2 Convergence, transfer and policy borrowing: Emulating over innovating

There have been some voices that have presented conflicting views regarding the level of divergence and innovative policy making within devolved Wales. These individuals believe that attempts at divergence have been minimal. Education policymaking and governance in post-devolution Wales is still influenced by its pre-devolutionary inheritance and there are still many similarities between the Welsh and English education systems. Both countries have focussed their attentions on reducing class sizes, improving the quality of school buildings and resources, developing an improved inspection criterion and have both expressed concerns about the gender gap. Both societies have addressed these issues by promoting personalising the secondary school experience to account for the increasingly diverse needs of the student body. Similar opinions often result in identical solutions. As well as facing similar conditions policy similarities could result from coercion, policy transfer or policy learning. Some policies are transferred merely from inertia or convenience (Keating, Cairney and Hepburn, 2012). The existence of a common market, common security area and welfare state poses limits in variation (Keating, Cairney and Hepburn, 2012). Some research has suggested that similar or transferred policy is perceived more favourably by the general public (Jeffrey, 2009) and by practitioners (Lipsky, 1980). Others suggest that devolved governments borrow policy merely because of the weak capacity of their devolved governments (Keating, Cairney and Hepburn, 2012). These policies within Wales are referred to as “dragonised”. In comparison, the wealthier devolved nations have more resources and the capacity to innovate leaving the smaller and inexperienced devolved nations with the only option but to emulate. Wales over the last few years has had to face the problems of administrative re-organisation, nation building and the continued commitment to the development of the Welsh language and culture. This may have resulted in a difficulty in prioritising education in Wales at this point. In stark comparison with England’s commitment to “*Education, education, education*”, under New Labour. This might explain why some academics argue that we have not yet witnessed any significant amount of divergence within education. However, it may also be that the policy communities’ ideas are embedded within political structures, which has constrained the options available to them, and the opportunity for divergence minimal.

Wales' ability to follow any radically different path has been called into question. Wales is constrained by the restrictions of the devolution settlement and its longstanding pre-devolution relationship with Westminster. However; since devolution Wales has demonstrated important differences in the way in which commonly recognised problems are tackled. These differences have become more important over time and although they don't demonstrate any extreme divergence they do demonstrate Wales' growing confidence in creating policy best suited to Wales.

## 2.4 Implementation

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Implementation is a complicated concept. The challenges in defining implementation have resulted in mixed opinion about what counts as implementation. Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), defined implementation as;

*“A process of interaction, between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieving them” (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973, p xxi).*

Implementation was a term which gained popularity in the 1970's, and was used to describe the post-legislative stages of policy decision making (John, 1998). This chapter will attempt to unpack this complicated concept. It is the intention to provide the reader with an overview of the literature and explain where this thesis is located within the literature. A large body of the research associated with this area of Political Science is either dated, or comes from the United States (Barrett, 2004). Where possible the researcher has included recent research examples and literature from the UK and Europe, but readers should be cautious not to accept these two systems would be similar.

Prior to the 1970's little research focussed solely on implementation but since then there has been a vast amount of research that aims to explain and understand implementation". The *“implementation gap”* was a term used by researchers to describe the limited amount of research focussed on the stage of policy development that comes after its creation but before it becomes fully institutionalised or fails. The implementation research in the 1970's tended to focus on one of three areas; policy



analysis focussing on the content and process of the decision making involved in implementing public policy, evaluation studies which used policy outcomes to evaluate their effectiveness and organizational studies which focussed on the operation of the political and administrative organisations (Barrett, 2004). During the 1980's the debate over top-down versus bottom-up perspectives dominated the field with key researchers aligning themselves on either side (Barrett, 2004). The 1970's and 80's saw the study of implementation move to a position of prominence, perhaps even overemphasis (O'Toole, 2000). The 90's saw a significant decrease in research within the field, demonstrating that the topic may have gone out of fashion or that academic research in this area was in the mature stages and extracting new and exciting findings was becoming more difficult, making researchers reluctant to try. Lynn (1998), noted the drastic decrease in implementation studies, in the field of education, and called for bigger and better empirical investigations. Implementation research can be divided into three generations (Goggin et al, 1990). This thesis will attempt to explain how these generations differ, the limitations of each generation and explain how each generation has developed from the last.

## 2.5 The three generations of academic research on implementation: The first generation

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The first generation researchers included the innovative, well documented and heavily cited research conducted by Pressman and Wildavsky (1973). This thesis has referenced the work of Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) and has used it to illuminate and explain the findings. Many academics would consider them to be the most influential researchers in this field, and their findings still very relevant for today.

The first generation research can be summarised as paying;

*“Considerable attention to issues of policy output and quasi-scientific measurement of policy implementation, reflecting a more positivist approach to policy analysis” (Schofield, 2001, p.249).*

Positivism and Interpretism are the two basic approaches to Social Science research methods. Positivist approaches adopt scientific quantitative methods while interpretist approaches prefer humanistic qualitative methods. This thesis has adopted many of the characteristics of a first generation approach due to its unusual ideas and research aims. However, it utilises a qualitative methodology not typical of a top down approach. Qualitative data was essential to capture the policy trajectory and answer the research questions outlined in chapter 3. Positivist researchers are typically interested in trends and correlations but this thesis is interested in individuals and understanding how each individual's different objective reality impacted on the final policy. This thesis does adopt a case study design typical of top down research design and of implementation research in general. This amalgamation of the two approaches occurred as the initial research ideas adopted a bottom up perspective but in designing the methodology and developing the project characteristics of top down research were incorporated heavily into the design and methodology. This combination of the two approaches would lead some to identify and situate this research as third generation.

The first generation have been hailed for their contributions to the field and for furthering our understanding of the implementation process. However, some of these earlier works had the fatal flaw of examining policy without being relevant to policy makers and being too preoccupied with the workings of Government (Berman, 1978). Berman (1978) summarised the literature of the era stating;

*“The literature consists of atheoretical case studies of varying quality, some extraordinary perceptive, others disappointingly dull- whose claims to generality are questionable because the cases cannot be easily compared”*  
(Berman, 1978, pp.1-2).

Implementation research within each policy sector often utilised very specific cases and contained its own technical jargon, making it inaccessible to other policy sectors and therefore data could not be generalised. The first generation case studies have also been criticised for being too pessimistic due to their overemphasis on policy failure (Goggin et al, 1990). By focussing on identifying factors that better describe the implementation process they made misassumptions that implementation is a rational, linear process and separate from the earlier stages of policy formation (Schofield, 2001). Researching the

limitations of the first generation approaches has helped develop the researchers own ideas and inform the methodology, to prevent further repetition of these limitations.

### 2.5.1 Top down perspective

Implementation research has tended to adopt either a top-down or bottom-up perspective. However, considerable effort has gone into reconciling the two differing perspectives and creating a coalition model/third generation approach (Sabatier, 1986). A top-down perspective believes that public policy begins with policy objectives and that implementation will follow in a generally linear fashion. This thesis accepts that a linear approach is useful for creating a clear and concise way of explaining policy-making. However, the researcher is wary of accepting a linear model which fails to represent the complex and often messy process of policy implementation. By adopting a Rational Linear Model, the top-down perspective struggles to deal with the “*messiness*” of public policy making including behavioural complexity, goal ambiguity and contradiction (Schofield, 2001). Its tendency to see implementation as a purely administrative process fails to address the political aspect, and its impact on the formulation and implementation process (Berman, 1978). The top-down perspective also fails to incorporate the role of street level bureaucrats’ as “*interpreters*” of central policy at the micro/local level (Lipsky, 1980).

In the early years of implementation research the majority of the research came from a top-down perspective. The main objective of top-down implementation research is to develop generalizable advice and recognise consistent patterns across policy sectors. Data generated from top down research has included creating policy goals that are clear and consistent and limiting the number of actors responsible for implementation, which can prevent adaptation (Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) and Pressman and Wildavsky (1973). This thesis is an example of policy trajectory research and the author has adopted a top down approach.

The study of public policy implementation is difficult because Social services are delivered by local organisations that are relatively autonomous from Government control. The differences between macro-implementation and micro-implementation arise from their distinct institutional settings. The institutional setting for micro-

implementation is a local delivery organisation, whereas the institutional setting for macro-implementation is an entire policy sector (Education, Health etc.). A policy sector consists of an entire collection of diverse governments, bureaucracies, courts, public and private interest groups, local delivery systems, clients and individual actors whose complex interactions are often difficult to uncover, let alone document in any clear or concise way. These policy sectors often have their own tacit operating rules, establishing roles, routinized procedures and reasonably stable conditions. Top down research including this thesis are associated with extremely large sample groups due to the large number of individuals and organisation involved in policy formation.

The first generation have identified interesting data regarding implementation and provided prescriptive advice to aid implementation. This type of research began with Pressman and Wildavsky's study (1973), which identified variables that increased a policy's likelihood of failure during implementation. This thesis will summarize some of the suggestions/advice below, and will later evaluate their use when analysing the implementation of the WBQ.

During the administrative stages where a policy decision is translated into a Government program one of the first problems that can occur is a discrepancy between policy intent and government action. This is called "*ambiguity in intention*" or multiple goals. These multiple goals are often conflicting making the process difficult and a government program that appeals to all, impossible. The more ambiguous a program the more scope there is for adjustment by the administering organisations. Levine (1972) stated that policy is;

*"Implemented by program operators who may or may not be in sympathy with the plans, may or may not have even understood them, but in any case will certainly be governed by their own motives and imperatives, both personal and pragmatic" (Levine, 1972, p.9).*

It is the intention of this thesis to identify the original aims of the WBQ and evaluate its success in achieving them. This thesis also intends to identify any additional objectives/goals that have developed during the policies history.

The first generation concluded that the more stakeholders involved in implementing policy the increased likelihood of adaptation. The formulation of public policy involves decisions between the public, quasi-public and private organisations each with their own autonomy, interest and values (John, 1998). Mutation of a policy increases the likelihood that the policy will fail. Therefore; clear guidelines that prevent excess amounts of adaptation are ideal (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). A useful term in macro-implementation is “*loose coupling*” the term suggests that each organisation has its own problems, perspectives and purposes which reflect its own structure and culture. Each of these organisations acts relatively autonomously within the overall macro-structure of the sector. Their unique perspective and individual challenges, impact on the interpretation and delivery of the implementation procedures. Even though further research operationalizing and measuring “*loose coupling*” is needed, the term is useful when focussing on factors comparable across sectors. This in part is due to the sequential nature of macro-implementation. The more organisations involved in implementing policy increases the number of “*passages*” in the process (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). Each passage provides the opportunity for changing the goal trajectory and intended outputs of the policy, which significantly increases the time scale and financial implications (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973).

In Wales, the active involvement of interest groups, experts and practitioners in policy formation and implementation design is now considered the norm. This is in marked contrast to the consultation culture still prevalent in England. This was apparent in the development of the WBQ. This new policy making culture provided the opportunity for more players to be involved in the design, and implementation of the policy. This increased involvement had a negative impact on the success of the policy, level of mutation and understanding. It is the intention to identify the extent to which multi-disciplinary policy making within Wales impacted on the finalised form of the WBQ and how much adaptation occurred during the implementation stages.

Hood (1976) went one step further by creating a recipe for perfect implementation. Such a process would include;

*“Perfect administration, listed as a unitary administrative system with a single line of authority, enforcement of uniform rules or objectives, a set of clear and*

*authoritative objectives implementable on the basis of perfect obedience or perfect administrative control, perfect coordination and perfect information within and between administrative units, absence of time pressure, unlimited material resources for tackling problem, and unambiguous overall objectives and perfect political acceptability of the policies pursued” (Hood, 1976, p.6-8).*

This model of perfect implementation is unrealistic, although may prove useful in diagnosing what went wrong during implementation. It is impossible to examine whether the variables are conducive with perfect implementation. It also fails to address the role of decision-making, bargaining and negotiating in implementation. In a perfect model these would cease to exist. This research did lead on to further research which identified conditions during implementation that can increase success (Sabatier and Mazmanian 1979). The aim was to identify variables that are transferable across policy sectors. This would generate a model that could be generalised, across all public sectors. Gunn (1978, p.17), identified 10 variables which make implementation difficult/impossible. These include;

- 1) Circumstances external to the implementation agencies imposing crippling constraints.
- 2) Lack of time/ resources
- 3) Required combination of resources not available
- 4) Policy implemented not based on a valid theory of cause and effect.
- 5) Relationship between cause and effect is indirect and there are multiple intervening links.
- 6) Dependency relationships are multiple.
- 7) A poor understanding of and disagreement on objective.
- 8) Task not in correct sequence.
- 9) Bad communication and co-ordination
- 10) Bad authority

The funding opportunities, budget and resource level have a direct impact on policies effectiveness. Funding is often difficult due to separate budgets, often tightly controlled by central government. Developing a common vision becomes more difficult in an increasingly heterogeneous organisational environment. Adequate planning with respect to resources, personnel and procedures is essential for implementation and

institutionalisation. These careful plans can ensure the policy project becomes a routinized part of the local delivery system and prevents the phasing out of successful policies. Even effective implementation and successful outcomes does not always guarantee institutionalisation. As even after the policy programme seems institutionalised, constant changes to the structure of the organisation and the introduction of new public policy which involves further decision points, to adapt the policy to the new setting. These unexpected decision points arise throughout the life of the policy and even during this stage can have a dramatic impact on its success (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973).

The study of macro-implementation has been promising but has provided few generalizable results across public sectors. Research on the micro-implementation stage is important, as this may be the most pivotal step because a public policies outcome is highly dependent on the local delivery.

## 2.6. The three generations of academic research on implementation: The second generation

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The second generation of academic researchers on implementation were more analytical, attempting to produce analytical typologies for predicting policy outcomes. The research focussed on identifying positive and negative factors/variables that impact on the implementation process through qualitative enquiry. Goggin et al (1990) categorised the variables that impact on implementation into the three groups, “*policy*”, “*organisation*” and “*people*”. The second generation included the research by Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983), which developed a model of implementation within a complex public sector arena. This model consisted of 16 variables which can be used to analyse case study data. This research has been important for;

*“Framing policy analysts ideas particularly because their predictive criteria carry with them a very common sense and intuitively practical approach to implementation” (Schofield, 2001, p.249).*

The research focussed on the action of local implementers as opposed to central government. It was less interested in the policy goals instead is focussed on the nature of the problem the policy attempted to address. It attempted to describe the networks of implementation, in doing so making important methodological contributions (Schofield, 2001).

Goggin et al (1990) criticised the second generation researchers for continuing to utilise too many case studies and highlighted that the research lacked validation and replication. A review of implementation research by O'Toole in 1986, found;

*“The field is too complex without much accumulation or convergence, few well developed recommendations have been put forward by researchers, and a number of proposals are contradictory. Almost no evidence or analyses of utilization in this field has been produced. Two reasons for the lack of development are analysed: normative disagreement and the state or the field’s empirical theory. Yet there remain numerous possibilities for increasing the quality of the latter. Efforts in this direction are a necessary condition of further practical advance (O’Toole, 1986, p.181).*

#### 2.6.1 Bottom up perspective

Berman (1978) argues that implementation occurs when the macro (central policy) interacts with the micro (institution, the public etc.). Therefore, the context is as important as the policy itself. Despite this, research tends to deal with either macro or micro implementation, rather than the entire process. This thesis intends to understand policy implementation at the macro level, as well as the micro level. However a bottom up perspective would have included all stakeholders, including both students and parents. This would have resulted in an unmanageable sample size which was also unnecessary for answering the research questions outlined in chapter 3.

Berman (1978) believed that most implementation problems stem from the interaction of a policy with the local, institutional level. Focussing on this stage is essential to understand why the implementation of public policy sometimes fails to reach its objectives. This also explains the significant degree of variation between institutions, as



contextual factors within the implementing environment can completely dominate over the policy guidelines, created at the national level. This results in policy makers unable to control the process. The solution suggested by “bottom uppers”, is that all policy should be created that allows for a degree of adaptation so that institutions can tailor the policy to the environment without affecting the policy makers desired objectives (Berman, 1978). The WBQ is a good example of the type of modern policy that allows for greater flexibility in its implementation and will therefore prove a useful case for examining this phenomenon.

The bottom-up perspective has been more widely researched in Europe, especially during the 1970’s and 80’s (Barrett, 2004). The use of research adopting a bottom-up approach has been exacerbated by the incidences of;

*“Misuses of governed funds, services provided to wrong clients and in some cases outright local resistance to these new government initiatives” (Odden, 1991, p.1).*

Unlike top-down research which is motivated by the desire to produce prescriptive advice. Bottom-up research aims to highlight obstacles that have created difficulty for the policy to achieve its stated goals.

The macro level often assumes the implemented practice is in line with their vision. This assumption that the adoption of a policy is the same as the implemented practice is called “*adoption fallacy*”. It is assumed that each organisation adopts the same model but in fact a large degree of “*mutation*” occurs. This mutation is to tailor the policy program to the local needs of the organisation. The level of mutation, means that policy outcomes are dependent on the micro-implementation and changes to them need to come from the macro structures.

*“A collection of individual agents with freedom to act in ways that are not always totally predictable, and whose actions are interconnected so that one agents actions changes the contexts for other agents” (Plesk and Greenlaugh, 2001, p.625).*

Policy makers should acknowledge and be cautious when creating policy that they;

*“Are not writing on a blank slate, but on a page already taken up with ‘ecologies of practice, past and present initiatives and specific local factors’” (Coffield et al, 2007, p.8).*

The “*path of micro-implementation*” often begins with organisational change which can be summarised via a three stage model. These stages can be referred to as mobilization, deliverer implementation and institutionalization. In the mobilization phase the local organizations officials make decisions about project adoption and plan for its execution. These small changes can be both costly and time consuming. These plans are put into action by the deliverers, not managers, during implementation. This implemented practice will fail if steps to institutionalise the policy and make it part of the organisation standard operating procedures fail.

#### 2.6.2 Implementing policy within schools and colleges

There is a vast and extensive literature that focuses on education policy making at the macro level but very little is known about the practicalities of making education policy a reality, particularly in the post-compulsory sector. The implementation of national policy is resource hungry; it creates new demands for training, requires new materials, additional time and space and therefore, requires an extensive budget. The changes to the post-16 sector, diversity of the student body and the variety of establishments that offer post-16 education make policy implementation complex. The increasing administrative workload placed on teachers reduces their dedication, motivation and time to assist in the implementation of national policy (Lipsky, 1980). Practitioners often don't have the time to dedicate to implementing one specific policy. Schools and Colleges are often involved in implementing a huge array of innovations and policies at any given time (Lipsky, 1980). The result of this is that schools have had to become experts at implementing new qualifications, which are often highly ambiguous and actively promote adaptation by the implementing school/college (Lipsky, 1980).

When creating the guidelines for implementation one of the most difficult stages is creating clear policy guidelines which are meaningful at the local level. These

guidelines need to use terminology that is accessible to the individual creating a policy from the centre that fails to give thought to how it might be received at the micro level, is one of the major reasons for policy failure. Organisational change is often uncertain with members adapting to demands for change in unanticipated ways (Lipsky 1980). The involvement of local level service providers at this early stage can prove vital, with their knowledge and expertise essential for designing the implementation procedures and their involvement increases the support for a policy. This thesis will examine the extent of adaptation and highlight the challenges of implementing the WBQ at the micro level, via the interviews with the WBQ Coordinators.

During the implementation process institutions and practitioners translate the policy. This translation is used to adapt the policy to the institution. This often results in misinterpretation. Coffield et al (2007) highlighted the;

*“Concerns of policy makers, who watch from on high as their measures are either misinterpreted or under/over-interpreted by institutional leaders and practitioners in the ‘front line’ (Coffield et al, 2007, p.21).*

The implementation of public policy in a local organisation is characterised by “*mutual adaption*”. Both the project and the organisation are required to change to ensure the success of the policy (Berman and McLaughlin, 1974). This mutual adaption could involve multiple changes over time, by numerous individuals. This sequence of changes is called the “*path of micro-implementation*”. This adaptation is inevitable when policy levers come into contact with;

*“Existing systems, structure and cultures, the professional capacity and values of staff, pressures from the local environment, and successive translations of policy at different levels” (Spours et al, 2007, p.19).*

Many policy programmes run into further difficulties because the initial implementation plan did not allow for unforeseen circumstances such as strikes, uncooperative parents, and changes to Head Teachers etc. The project staff could not adapt the plan to accommodate for these changes (Berman and McLaughlin, 1976b). Mutual Adaptation is not always difficult and it is often highly desirable and effective. Plans are able to be

revised and modified according to the conditions within the school. The role of practitioners in implementation was captured by Shain and Gleeson (1999) work, which referred to practitioners as '*strategic compliers*'. This is mentioned by Spours et al (2007), in their discussion on "*policy translation*", whereby initial meanings may be lost and replaced by unexpected translations, which override the original and can result in unexpected outcomes. These policy translations can be beneficial to the institution and the students as the policy is adapted to the local setting. These mutations are not always negative and can actually increase the likelihood of a policies success.

One of the challenges for practitioners is struggling to meet the institutional priorities often expressed in marketized terms, while still addressing the pedagogic needs of their learners (Coffield et al, 2007). Practitioners struggle to achieve the continuous demand for practice to be inclusive, alongside the institutions demand for maximum cohort achievement. Another challenge for practitioners is they are not provided with the space and ability to exercise pedagogic judgement, and agency. This concern has been cited by many researchers and by practitioners who often feel they are the last to be informed (Coffield et al, 2007). This prevents practitioners from utilising their experience and creativity to adapt the policy to the local setting, with many feeling that their agency is constrained and discouraged (Lipsky, 1980). This can have a negative impact on implementation success as practitioners need to share ownership and responsibility for implementation, for it to succeed. Practitioners are often resistant to change which can threaten their existing routines and increase their workload (Lipsky, 2000). A reduction in their autonomy and a lack of shared ownership amongst practitioners increases the chances of resistance. An increased workload and requirements for further training can be difficult for practitioners and can result in teachers feeling disheartened and lacking support for the policy. Therefore, policy which is closely tied in with existing practices is perceived more positively, by teachers.

Research on the role of practitioners in implementation, is limited. Academic research has highlighted that the majority are willing to work hard to implement policy and practitioners are not all resistant to change, especially if they believe the policy will be beneficial to their learners (Ball, 2003). Successful implementation has been linked with monitoring and keeping everyone informed of changes. Identifying and dealing with problems quickly and effectively, is essential. The involvement of cross role groups is

essential for the successful implementation of public policy (Teachers, Heads Teachers and administrative staff).

## 2.7. The three generations of academic research on Implementation: Third Generation

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### 2.7.1 Coalition Models

Finally the third generation of researchers attempted to develop a model that addressed the limitations and criticisms of the previous two generations, and moved past the rather sterile top-down versus bottom-up debate, which had dominated the previous generation (O'Toole, 2000). This was to be achieved by conducting research across multiple locations and including longitudinal research, to generate a clearer, more detailed description of the entire process. Conducting longitudinal research across a wider geographical area is costly and time consuming. This thesis has incorporated the design and methodologies from both the top down and bottom up perspective and is an example of a third generation approach.

The third generation is still in its infancy, with little good quality research being generated that bares this label. This third generation uses a wider array of methodological techniques including network analysis, content analysis, social experimentation, qualitative regression techniques, elite interviews and questionnaires (Goggin et al, 1990). The third generation has attempted to incorporate the role of decision making in the implementation process which previous research has failed to include. Elmore's (1985), concept of forward and backward mapping was one of the earliest attempts to combine the two perspectives, but was criticised for being a useful discussion but as a theory, lacking explanatory power.

The conclusions of this thesis are that it is by incorporating both top down ideas and bottom up ideas that we can fully understand policy development and implementation has policy is translated and transformed across all 3 levels. The translations and transformations become the policy in its finalised form. Research and theory on the third generation is limited and has produced few generalizable results. Sabatier (1986), a

previous supporter and one of the developers of the top-down model, argued that to develop the field required the creation of a coalition model, that contained aspects of both the top-down and bottom-up models (Sabatier, 1986). Sabatier (1986) suggested that policy should be analysed in circles of more than 10 years, as this longer time allows for the opportunity to consider policy learning. Policy learning involves the process of learning and adapting policy by understanding the difficulties and successes that have been made during a previous policy or during a policies history. This model represents a legitimate model for studying public policy but was criticised as many felt it was unclear if it was actually studying implementation. Critics of the third generation believe this type of model will be perceptive and challenging but it remains unclear how useful it will be (Sabatier, 1986).

### 2.7.2 Conclusion.

Implementation is still; *“much discussed but rarely studied”* (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973, p.7). Researchers continue to highlight gaps in our knowledge and suggest where new research should be focussed, to revive implementation research. These suggestions provide an agenda for the future (Schofield, 2001). O’Toole’ (1986), conducted a review of over 100 implementation studies. His intention was to summarise what had been already learnt, note areas of further interest, highlight common faults with implementation studies and identify obstacles that stood in the way of further knowledge. One of the major hurdles in gaining a better understanding of the process of implementation is that although there is growing number of implementation analysts the research has failed to move beyond the stage of isolated case studies and applied wisdom. There is a limited amount of research that can be described as longitudinal or is focussed on the entire process, rather than a specific section. This thesis is an isolated case study, but does focus on the entire process of public policy making, from its development to implementation. The sample is spread over Wales, and aims to include as many variations and different demographics as possible. Conducting research over a short time span is often perceived useless as even after a policy seems to have been implemented successfully they can fail, due to an inability to become institutionalised into the daily running of the organisation (Barrett, 2004). This thesis is focussed over a ten year history of the development and implementation of the WBQ with many interviewees reflecting back further than this to explain its development. The majority

of research only covers the “*implementation dip*”. The implementation dip occurs during the first stages of implementation. This stage is characterised by a great deal of change and learning. These changes are required to accommodate for the new policy and does not truly represent its success/failure, in the long term. To attempt to reduce this concern, this thesis included schools and colleges who were at different stages of implementation (see chapter 4: methodology).

So far research has failed to produce findings that can be generalised across policy sectors, and between academic disciplines (Schofield, 2001). Implementation research can come under different rubrics. Often important findings come from studies not solely focussed on implementation (O’Toole, 2000). By generating a framework for comparison and identifying the key stages and barriers to implementation, would provide a better understanding of the implementation process and its impact on delivery and effectiveness. This area of research is dominated by political theorists and collaboration research could be a vital step forward for the future. Research has also failed to identify any links between public policy implementation and for profit organisation (Schofield, 2001). Some of these issues warrant further investigation in the future.

Identifying the variables that positively and negatively impact on implementation, is important. However, it is unclear how an increased knowledge via academic research will be able to reduce the uncertainties and difficulties that arise during implementation. Each policy is different and involves an interaction between the policy and organisational setting. It is therefore, impossible to develop a framework that can anticipate all possible barriers. This thesis will attempt to be generalizable. To ensure generalisability is possible dissemination needs careful thought, to get a wider audience. The objective was for it to be disseminated amongst policy makers and practitioners. Dissemination is challenging as accessing practitioners and disseminating findings across disciplines is complicated. There is a wealth of literature on implementation but individuals don’t know how to extract what we already have (O’Toole, 2000). This thesis has provided useful guidance about implementing education policy, across the three levels, in a recently devolved nation and identifying the challenges of implementing in this context.

This thesis has highlighted gaps in existing knowledge and put implementing policy back on the agenda. However, there are still large gaps in our understanding. Most models accept the important role of actors/groups in the implementation process. However, few researchers have attempted to address how these social groups/individuals own goals or priorities shape the policy. Research documenting the distribution of power in the implementation process is also surprisingly limited. Critics have discussed the role key individuals have in the location and accessibility of the findings. This thesis is focussed on how social groups and individuals have an impact on policy and shape its development.

The researchers' interest and position at the start of this thesis came from a bottom up perspective. This drive has impacted on the focus and have been incorporated into designing the research aims. However, this thesis has adopted many characteristics of a top down perspective as it is tracing a policy from inception to implementation. Adopting a first generation approach to my data collection and analysis was best suited to this thesis and aided me in the extraction of the data. This thesis has concluded that during implementation policy is translated and transformed by those individuals and organisation responsible for implementing it. These translations and transformations result in the policy being a combination of top down (first generation) and bottom up (second generation). This combination has resulted in the conclusion that this thesis is using a third generation approach or coalition model.



# Chapter 3. Broadening the Curriculum:

## The development and support for baccalaureate models worldwide

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This chapter attempted to map and understand the movement towards the adoption of baccalaureate models worldwide. This thesis will introduce the reader to two long-standing baccalaureates, the French Baccalaureate and the International Baccalaureate (IB). Baccalaureate qualifications can vary greatly in their structure and assessment. The range of issues that it is perceived that baccalaureates can tackle has resulted in different reasons for baccalaureates being incorporated into the curriculum (Access to HE, enhancing vocational training etc.). The different baccalaureate models are adopted to meet differing objectives and are often linked to the geographical location, ability, pedagogy, and are culturally and historically related to the country of its origin. The debates surrounding the adoption of baccalaureate qualifications had been intensifying in England and Wales, which has cumulated in the development and adoption of the WBQ, in Wales (Thompson, Hayden and Cambridge, 2003). The development of the WBQ is an example of how since devolution, Wales has responded to international debate regarding qualifications for entrance to HE (Taylor and Rees, 2012). This chapter will provide a detailed account of the WBQ structure and assessment and compare the WBQ to some longstanding baccalaureates. The final section of this chapter will introduce the thesis and highlight the aims and research questions attached to it.

### 3.1. The origin, growth and development of baccalaureate style qualifications worldwide

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The last fifty years has seen a dramatic increase in the development and implementation of “baccalaureate” style qualifications worldwide. The popularity of baccalaureates has grown exponentially as they provide the opportunity for variation over specialisation. Baccalaureates are offering students an often compulsory, broader range of subjects in

which to enrol. This is in stark comparison with the highly specialised A Level system, within the UK (Thompson, Hayden and Cambridge, 2003). Early specialisation is a common critique of the existing British A Level system (Snow, 1959). A vast amount of academic research and debate has been focussed on the effects of premature specialisation and the desirability to study a broad range of subjects to the highest level possible (Phillips and Pound, 2003). Breadth ensures a balanced curriculum and exposes students to a wide range of disciplines and learning styles. This can support them in identifying their own strengths. Specialisation is seen as detrimental for students who have not yet made any final decisions about their future, and cannot risk early specialisation (Phillips and Pound, 2003). Many countries now offer baccalaureate qualifications as part of their curriculum, resulting in a variety of different qualifications sharing this title. This variation has made the development of a working definition almost impossible.

Typically a Baccalaureate qualification is constructed of different subjects and often allows for an element of freedom. Baccalaureates provide the opportunity for tailoring the program to the student's individual needs, strengths and desired academic trajectory. Generally, this results in students enrolling on a broader range of subjects. A framework allowing for prescription, as well as choice, is more responsive to individual needs, rather than forcing students to a set curriculum. To ensure breadth, similar subjects are often grouped together and students are required to select one subject from each group.

Alternatively, some baccalaureates allow free choice but specify the inclusion and completion of a compulsory core. This limits the degree of breadth that the baccalaureate can offer as many students pick highly specialised options. Their option choices is highly governed by the subjects HEIs require students to qualify for a place on their desired undergraduate program. The breadth is provided via the teaching of the Core components. The Core offers students, volunteer and work experience and a variation of learning styles alongside more traditional academic study (Thompson, Hayden and Cambridge, 2003). Many baccalaureates include and promote the continuation and development of key skills, during their study. As well as creating wider read students with advanced key skills, baccalaureates aim to enhance student's personal, moral and spiritual development. This better prepares students for

employment and Higher Education and contributes to the national economy (Thompson, Hayden and Cambridge, 2003).

### 3.1.1 Types of baccalaureate models

Thompson, Hayden and Cambridge (2003), identified four types of baccalaureate models;

Type A: Selection of optional electives from subject groups includes a compulsory core (e.g. French Baccalaureate and International Baccalaureate (IB)).

Type B: Free selection, includes a compulsory core (e.g. WBQ).

Type C: Selection of optional electives from subject groups, no compulsory core (e.g. Leaving certificate Ireland).

Type D: Free selection, no compulsory core (e.g. New Zealand).

Types A and B are the most common baccalaureate structures. Some argue whether C and D can even be considered baccalaureate (Thompson, Hayden and Cambridge, 2003). There are certain characteristics that the majority of baccalaureates include that ensure that they are easily identifiable. The inclusion of a compulsory element/core is often one of the key characteristics and the components of the Core are often similar across all baccalaureates. Activities including work experience, volunteer work, research, key skills development and employability skills are typical across the majority of baccalaureates. Types C and D both do not contain a compulsory core and although bear the label of “baccalaureate qualifications”, do not contain many of the key characteristics that define baccalaureates.

This chapter will outline two well-established; Type A, baccalaureate qualifications, the French Baccalaureate and the International Baccalaureate (IB). There are many other types of baccalaureates worldwide but these two are both long standing and have high annual intakes. These will be useful in developing a comparison between the structure

and assessment of these two baccalaureate qualifications in comparison with the Advanced Level WJEC WBQ.

### 3.1.2 The French Baccalaureate

#### 3.1.2 a The history of the French Baccalaureate

France is associated with a centralised, highly bureaucratic, model of educational control. All high profile education decisions are made and implemented by the Minister of Education. The original baccalaureate qualification was created in France by Napoleon I in 1808 and is considered a national symbol. The ex-Minister Jack Lang (1992), described it as a “*historic monument*”. Another former Minister Francois Bayrou (1993), highlighted how the French Baccalaureate is now perceived to be a national symbol.

*“Its national character is more than symbolic: it is a bench-mark in the relationship between school and nation and it makes the objectives for democratization easier to determine. If the baccalaureate needs to involve, changes must be carried out carefully” (Bayrou, 1993, cited in Martin- van de Haegan and Deane, 2003).*

Its high profile status and public support have meant that attempts to change the system by the government, whatever their political colours, have been met by strong opposition (Martin-van der Haegan and Deane, 2003). The public believe that the French Baccalaureate represents equal opportunity for all (Martin-van der Haegan and Deane, 2003). The “Baccalaureate”, or “le bac” is an academic qualification which students take during their “premiere” and “terminale” years of “lycee” (high school). This corresponds with the sixth form in the UK. French educators believe in the “*encyclopaedic tradition*”, whereby students study as broad a range of subjects possible, for as long as possible, and to the highest standard possible, before specialisation. For practitioners and students, fulfilment of these aims means a heavy work load. French students have heavy timetables with over 390 hours of classroom based lessons per week which does not include homework, private study and other enrichment activities (Martin-van der Haegan and Deane, 2003). Attempts to reduce the

work load have been implemented including reducing the time spent receiving instruction. The heavy work load for students has also resulted in a heavy work load for teachers.

### 3.1.2 b Structure

The French Baccalaureate can be divided into three separate baccalaureate programmes, The *Baccalaureate General* (academic), The *Baccalaureate Professionnel* (vocational) and The *Baccalaureate Technologique* (vocational). The opportunity to study the three types of baccalaureate is evenly distributed throughout the various regions, and is in keeping with the French desire for equality and opportunity (Martin-van der Haegan and Deane, 2003). On first examination it appears that the French education system contains a multiplicity of baccalaureates, but the three programs contain similar components but differ in that the student's motivations and planned trajectory post assessment are often different.

Due to the structure and the number of students enrolled on the baccalaureate program the lycees are overcrowded and the teaching of the baccalaureate is often via lectures. The use of external assessments alongside the amount of hours required to study the baccalaureate program means that lectures are often the only option for teachers. Teaching methods reflect the large class sizes (35+ in core subjects). Class size is one of the most widely studied policies and has developed an extremely rigorous body of literature. Research has highlighted the importance of maintaining a balanced class size which can raise achievement levels and can actually improve class teaching practices (Chan et al, 2016). Large class sizes minimise the opportunity for oral participation and regular class monitoring tests are used to ensure standardisation and monitor individual progress. This goes against the vast amount of psychological, sociological and pedagogical research that has concluded that a portfolio of teaching styles is necessary to appeal to a variety of learners and increase cohort attainment levels (Laye, Platt and Treylia, 2017).

### **Baccalaureate Technologique**

The Baccalaureate Technologique is made up of separate series. Topics include the Evolution of Technology (STI), Laboratory Activities and Socio-Medical Studies

(Martin-van der Haegan and Deane, 2003). After completing the Baccalaureate Technologique students can choose between two pathways (either HE or employment). To enter HE a further two years at lycee is required to prepare for a Higher Technician Diploma.

### **Baccalaureate Professionnel**

The Professionnel Baccalaureate was created in 1985 by the Ministry of Education, in response to the economic needs, for more trained professionals. The courses offered are highly dependent on the region, and local area specialities. Lessons are conducted in specific “Lycee Professionnels” (Martin-van der Haegan and Deane, 2003). The Baccalaureate Professionnel includes studies in, the development of agricultural and rural equipment and the commercialisation of agricultural food products. Students can also study in areas such as Dance, Travel and Tourism and Business Management (Martin-van der Haegan and Deane, 2003). There are over 70 specialisms across diverse sectors. The baccalaureate also includes specialised sectors (e.g. watch making). The Baccalaureate Professionnel, has been very popular and the number of students enrolled on this course has soared rapidly from 800 students in 1987 to 87,600 in 2007 (Martin-van der Haegan and Deane, 2003). The number of students is continuing to rise with critics now concerned there is an overemphasis on vocational qualifications. Balancing the students moving into each stream has been a priority in France to maintain the economy and ensure the work force is balanced in terms of its distribution of skills. The Baccalaureate Professionnel has a lower status than the General stream. This has created a two tier system and contributed to the continuing existence of an academic/vocational divide.

### **Baccalaureate General**

The Baccalaureate General is the academic series. It is deemed to be the passport to HE, and like A Levels, does not lead directly to a profession (Martin-van der Haegan and Deane, 2003). In the penultimate lycee year, students choose which stream they should follow, with each stream resulting in a specialisation. The three streams include;

*S = Sciences*

*ES =Economic and Social Sciences*

*L = Literature*

Each streams specialism is associated with a certain employment area. The *Serie Scientifique* (S), prepares students for employment in scientific fields such as Medicine, Engineering and Natural Sciences and involves 36-38 hours weekly. The *Serie Economique et Sociale* (ES), prepares students for careers in the Social Sciences, Management, Business and Economics and involves 32-36 periods weekly. The *Serie Litteraire* (L), prepares students for careers in the Humanities, Education, Linguistics and Public Service and involves 28-31 periods weekly. The French Baccalaureate, General Stream, permits students to study in 40 world languages including French regional dialects. The *Serie Scientifique* is often recognised as the more elite pathway, causing a social divide.

The diversity of subject's offer wide ranging knowledge, which is ideal for students who have not made a final decision about their future and cannot risk specialisation. The successful completion of the Baccalaureate is required to pursue HE and the skills acquired during the course attempt to prepare students for the academic rigours of university. The French Baccalaureate has been criticised for being too general and that without the depth essential to measure ability.

### 3.1.2 c Assessments

The assessment for all 3 programs is via examinations. It is intended that all students take the exam. However, legally it is an academic qualifying degree and therefore if a student is not intending to attend university it is not compulsory. All examination syllabuses and papers are centralised, objective and anonymised. Most qualifications worldwide have moved towards adopting both external and internal assessments, comprised of both examinations and coursework. This is to account for the fact that some social groups perform better at coursework than examinations and this model provides a more balanced and inclusive assessment procedure. The respect for equality has a huge bearing on the French assessment model and explains why the introduction of coursework and continuous assessment is causing real difficulties (Martin-van der Haegan and Deane, 2003). Some continuous assessment has been successfully

implemented into the Baccalaureate Professionnel and Baccalaureate Technologie, possibly due to the specificity of the vocational baccalaureates. This could also be due to the fact these programs are perceived to have a lower status than the General Stream.

In their first year students must complete a piece of original research (TPE). This allows students to choose an interdisciplinary subject typically linked to dominant subjects in their series. Conducting independent research enhances student's skills in reasoning, analysis and synthesis which are required to demonstrate a critical mind, show initiative and demonstrate creative skills. In their final year students select a "specialite", the teaching hours and final weighting for this subject is increased. As a complement to the rest of their qualification students are also encouraged to take 1 or 2 options which can include a 4th or 5th language, Art, or P.E. course. The addition of optional choices increases student's chances of successfully passing the qualification.

Each baccalaureate stream has its own set of subjects, each carrying a different weighting, depending on their relevance and importance, in the field. Those subjects with a larger weighting are dedicated more time and have a bigger impact on the overall grade. It is in calculating this mean grade that passing and eventual honours are determined. The pass mark is 10/20, and the overall success rate is 80%. This score is deceptive, as only 62% of this age group successfully achieve the baccalaureate and of those only 32.4% sat the Baccalaureate General. A further 17.8% sat the Baccalaureate Technologique and 11.5% sat the Baccalaureate Professionnel (Martin-van der Haegan and Deane, 2003). A score between 12, and 13.99, will earn a "*mention assez bien*" (honours), a score between 14, and 15.99, will earn a "*mention bien*" (high honours) and finally a score of 16 or above will earn a "*mention tres bien*" (highest honours). Exceptional marks of 18+ can be awarded the unofficial "*felicitations du jury*", however, there is no fixed criteria for acclaiming this accolade and it is entirely at the marking panels discretion (Martin-van der Haegan and Deane, 2003). These honours are prestigious with some of the top universities requesting them, but they are not crucial.

### 3.1.3 The International Baccalaureate (IB)

#### 3.1.3 a The history of the International Baccalaureate and regional spread



The International Baccalaureate (IB), for 16-18 year olds, is the most well-known and widely implemented baccalaureate. The main aim of the IB was to provide an internationally accepted university admissions qualification for the growing mobile and international population of young people.

The qualification can be divided into regional versions (IB North America (IBNA), the IB Africa, Europe and Middle East (IBAEM) and the IB Asia Pacific (IBAP)). The IB is now offered in 128 countries, and is recognised by over 2000 universities worldwide. The IBDP's global growth has been extensive, from the 147 students enrolled across 2 schools during the piloting stages, to 1779 schools in over 128 countries. The annual growth is at a steady 15% (Bunnell, 2008). The global spread is varied with 35% of schools being in the US whilst Africa only has 2% of the schools. In 38 of the countries only one institution is offering the programme (Bunnell, 2008). The number of institutions offering the IB worldwide is not evenly distributed. Identifying the reason for the regional disparity is essential. Critics have suggested that the content is euro-centric which is causing this difference in uptake internationally (Bunnell, 2008). The publication of research devoted to understanding the development, implementation and evaluation of the IB is not representative of all the countries/regions offering the IB with the majority of publications coming from the US and UK. The research could be detrimental as it fails to understand the causes of the regional disparity. By not including a sample with a wider geographical spread, this research fails to identify regional issues that could be impacting on uptake.

In 2006, the course was offered in 60 accredited institutions across England and Wales. This is testament to its growing reputation for variation and academic rigour (Pound, 2006). Demand for the course is increasing leading the government to ensure that at least one institution in every area offers the programme (Coles, 2006). In the UK there are currently 876,000 students enrolled on the IB program and 222 institutions offering the qualification.

Research evaluating the IB has been limited with few major works dedicated to this topic (Bunnell, 2008). Those that do exist are often dated (Bunnell, 2008). Petersons (1972a), account of the development of the IBDP is relatively accurate and detailed and is hailed as one of the more extensive pieces of research available. However, the

research is now extremely dated. This is important as the IB has evolved and gone under recent transformations which are not reflected in these historic accounts of the baccalaureate. The limited research on the rationale behind the growth and development of the programme is noted by many authors. The majority of published research is focussed on the historical development or “early stirrings” phase (Bunnell, 2008).

The IB has been heavily criticised for significantly lengthening teacher’s workloads and for stretching already heavily burdened school budgets (Pound, 2006). Many have criticised the IB because the cost of implementation and teacher training is so high. The political barriers to growth and the potential for cloning and nationalising are causing the disparity (Bunnell, 2008). Issues regarding increased workloads have highlighted additional issues regarding staff recruitment and retention in participating institutions (Sillisane et al, 2010).

In the UK, the course has been welcomed for being more academically challenging and broader than the 3 or 4 A Levels that the majority of British students take. Critics of the current A Level system have hailed the IB for failing to be affected by grade inflation. Equally, the IB has been hailed for not suffering with the same inability to distinguish between the most able students, that is plaguing the current A Level system (Pound, 2006). The uptake of the IB in the UK has also been criticised for creating a two tier education programme, due to the growth of the IB in private schools and colleges (Sillisane et al, 2010). Research has found that the introduction of the IB increases teacher collaborations, increases student’s motivations and has the potential to develop critical thinking and global and cultural awareness, amongst students (Sillisane et al, 2010). The IB is often perceived to be an elite qualification for the academically and socially more advantaged (Sillisane et al, 2010).

### 3.1.3 b Structure

The IB is designed to offer choice, but a directed choice. It ensures students pick a range of subjects, which fall across 6 study areas. All students also complete a 3 sectioned compulsory core. The courses implementation has been well received, and has been commended for encouraging interdisciplinary thinking.

There are 6 subject areas; students must select 6 subjects 1 subject from areas 1-5 and a 6th from area 6 or another from groups 1-5. Each subject block allows for significant choice with as many as 80 subjects to choose from. Of the 6 subjects, 3 or 4 are taken at higher level with the rest at standard level. This equates to 240 hours for higher level subjects and 150 hours for the standard level subjects.

The 6 subject areas are;

- Studies in Language and Literature
- Language Acquisition
- Individuals and Societies
- Sciences
- Mathematics
- The Arts

Figure 1: The structure of the International Baccalaureate



The core requirements of the IB include an extended essay. This involves an independent research essay, of up to 4000 words, selected off an approved list of titles. Another core requirement includes lessons on the “Theory of Knowledge”, which includes basic epistemology, 100 hours of instruction and the completion of a 1200-1600 word essay from a choice of 10 titles and a presentation. The final core requirement of the course is the Creativity Action Service (CAS), which is a student’s opportunity for personal growth and self-reflection. It includes intellectual, physical and creative challenges. The CAS helps students develop an awareness of themselves and their responsibility to their community through the participation in social/community work, athletics and creative activities, and it involves 3 to 4 hours a week (Pound, 2006).

### 3.2. Movement towards the development of a Welsh Baccalaureate

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#### 3.2.1 The IWA proposal for a Welsh Baccalaureate

The initial proposal for a Welsh Baccalaureate was made in 1993, prior to democratic devolution by the Institute of Welsh Affairs (IWA). It was met with mixed reactions (IWA, 1993). The IWA owing no allegiance to any political or economic interest group, conduct research and promote new thinking on welsh issues, through their publications, as well as holding seminars and conferences to encourage discussion and debate. In 1993, in a report entitled “*Wales 2010*”, the IWA proposed the introduction of a Welsh Baccalaureate. In a later report, it was recommended the Welsh Baccalaureate be based on the International Baccalaureate (Jenkins and David, 1996). The IWA model was a proposal created to tackle the endemic problems in Welsh education, including over specialization.

Support for the IWA model was not expressed by all groups and organisations, especially those at the macro and miso level. The IWA proposal was deemed not achievable by many members of the policy community. A proposals success is often directly related with whether it is perceived as technically feasible, compatible with the Ministers individual values, financially viable and appealing to the public (Kingdon, 1984). Most proposals fail to rise on the agenda because of the;

*“Financial cost, the lack of acceptance by the public, the opposition of powerful interest groups or simply because they are less pressing than other items in the competition for attention” (Kingdon, 1984, p.19).*

After a 3 month study, on Welsh institutions by the IWA and Edexcel, they identified 32 colleges and schools ready to join a pilot of the IWA proposal. During this time period the IWA generated support from HEI's and business (David and Jenkins, 1997). The IWA asked the Welsh Office for £1.2 million to finance a 3 year pilot in 10 education establishments. This was rejected by Peter Hain the then Welsh Office Minister for Education and Training, who stated he was waiting for the publication of the UK wide consultation on 16-19 qualifications before making any final decision. In 1997, ACCAC, in response to the publication of *“Qualifying for Success”*, dismissed the IWA proposal. The IWA still pushed and continued to promote their proposal as the ideal solution for reforming the education system.

Critics of adopting this form of baccalaureate qualification in Wales were concerned about its transferability across the border and its recognition by HEIs worldwide. In 2000, Black and David (2000) wrote a paper addressing concerns about the acceptability of a Welsh Baccalaureate in HEIs outside of Wales. This was in response to growing concerns within the WO that Welsh students would be unable to access HE across the border. This paper did not dispel concerns that the adoption of a radically divergent qualification in Wales would inhibit student's chances of crossing the border for HE. Portability was a major barrier to the adoption of this model. Then in 2000, a coalition commitment was agreed between Labour and the Liberal Democrats to develop a Welsh Baccalaureate, based on the IB. The government put out a tender for proposals with only the WJEC submitting a proposal. In 2002, the IWA proposal was formally rejected.

The major events that occurred within Wales that led up to the development of the WBQ are summarised in the table below. This provided the reader with a good insight into the policy changes and events that had a real impact on the development and acceptance of the WJEC, WBQ and the rejection of the IWA proposal.

Table 1: Summary of the key events leading up to the WBQ

1988 Higginson Committee	Reform academic track to 5 leaner A levels.
1990 “A British Baccalaureate”	Publication of “A British Baccalaureate” (Finegold, 1990).
1991 “Education and training for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century”	Suggestions for improvement of vocational track via a unifies baccalaureate
1993 IWA “Wales 2010:Creating our future”	Publication by the IWA for introduction of a Welsh Baccalaureate.
1994	Initial approach to WJEC
1996 Dearing report	Suggested adoption of a baccalaureate model
1996 IWA conference	Conference open to all stakeholders to discuss proposal
1997 The welsh Bac: Educating Wales in the next century	Publications by IWA “The welsh Bac: Educating Wales in the next century” (Jenkins et al, 1997)
1997	Results of a questionnaire sent to schools and colleges in Wales published in “The Welsh Baccalaureate: Matching international standards” (David and Jenkins, 1997) results showed 61% interested in the development and 86% prepared to take part in pilot in 38 institutions.
1997 “Qualifying for Success”	Suggestion students sit 5 AS levels alongside broader key skills.
1997	ACCAC in response to Welsh Office Document Qualifying for Success devotes a large part of its letter of advice to dismissal of the Welsh Bac.
1998 The Welsh Bac: From Wales to the World”	Publication by IWA, “ The Welsh Bac: From Wales to the World”
1999	Welsh Assembly created
2000 “Beyond the border: The acceptability of the Welsh Bac to higher education institutions outside Wales	Consultation paper: “Beyond the border: The acceptability of the Welsh Bac to higher education institutions outside Wales” (Black and David, 2000)
2000	Labour-Liberal coalition commitment to pilot a Welsh Baccalaureate based on the IB

2000 “Curriculum 2000”	Introduction of AS level to encourage more breadth.
2001	Welsh Assembly invites tender for Welsh Baccalaureate pilot scheme only one tender received by WJEC.
2001 “Learning County”	Commitment to the development and pilot of a Welsh Baccalaureate for Wales.
2002	WBQ proposal sent to ACCAC and gain approval, final confirmation of the rejection of IWA proposal

(Adapted from Phillips and Pound, 2003, p.102-103)

### 3.3. The Welsh Baccalaureate: WJEC model

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#### 3.2.1a The Welsh Baccalaureate: WJEC model

After administrative devolution Wales revisited concerns regarding over-specialisation and exerted their new found autonomy through the publication of the Learning Country (2001). There had been significant focus on reforming the 14-19 curriculum in Wales since parliamentary devolution, beginning with the *Learning Country* (2001) paving document. This document was led by the “*Learning Country: Learning Pathways*” (2002) document, and then by the further guidance in “*Learning pathways 14-19*” (2004), and “*Learning pathways 14-19*” guidance II (2006). The “*Learning Country*” published in 2001 attached considerable importance to the development of a policy programme specifically geared to meet the distinctive needs of Wales (Rees, 2002). One of the major changes that came out of the Learning Country (2001), with regards to 14-19 provision was the development and implementation of the Welsh Baccalaureate (WBQ).

#### **Learning Country (2001)**

The Learning Country (2001), aimed to create a distinctive strategy towards school improvement which is evidence based, locally managed and professionally valid. The document is divided into chapters with each chapter dedicated to reforming a separate stage of education. Each chapter concludes with a list of question for consultation and further rectification. It aimed to break the mould and provide vision and strategies for creating a diverse and inclusive learning package which increased the number of students

in post-compulsory education. It aimed to be better suited to the wider economic realities in Wales, allowing for increased social mobility via academic achievement (Egan, 2005). Its goal was to ensure;

*“95% of young people by the age of 25 will be ready for high skilled employment or higher education by 2015” (WAG, 2001).*

Whilst providing Welsh students with the skills to be both adaptable and employable in face of National and International technological change. It aimed to make the most of the dynamic cultural and linguistic inheritance in Wales. The policy derived from the realisation that it is;

*“No longer self-evident that all pupils should move through secondary school at the same pace; or that 16 is the principal break point in their development. Some who are put off by school may need a new and innovative stimulus to build their skills and confidence –in school or beyond. Others may need to broaden or deepen their studies...or to spend more time on vocational options, or to move on to advanced study having taken GCSE early” (WAG, 2001.p 1).*

The reform of the;

*“14-19 curriculum is aimed at breaking down the barriers between academic and vocational pathways, strengthening students experience of employment and work, as well as other aspects of citizenship” (Rees, 2002,p.32).*

Wales was seen as leading the way in 14-19 developments and was being watched with interest from elsewhere (Egan, 2005). The principles of the Learning Country (2001) demonstrated an emphasis on the 14-19 sectors with policies being created that aim to break down the academic/vocational divide, epitomised by the piloting of the WBQ. The WBQ demonstrates the initial stages of the demise of the national curriculum framework by creating a new learning package that provides students with the option of an academic, vocational or combined route that provides a parity of esteem to all options and can be tailored to the individual (Rees, 2007). The policy derived from a need to develop a varied curriculum that can be tailored to the individual compared to



the dominant academic pathway usually associated with academic success. The policy recognises that a great deal of learning goes on outside of the formal curriculum and academic setting. It recognised the importance of careers advice, access to personal support and the important role of the learning coach (Egan, 2005). This type of policy can be tailored to the individuals' strengths and desired career trajectory without the stigma that some routes are lower status than others. In the aim of destroying a divide that has plagued the education system through history. The "*Learning Country*" (2001), accepts that students move through secondary schools at different paces, have different desired academic trajectories, have different skills or preferred academic styles and provides new and innovative stimulus that builds on their confidence and skills whilst offering a parity of esteem to both vocational and academic qualifications (WAG, 2001). Questions and concerns were raised about the practicability of this level of personalisation and the likelihood of being able to equalise the value ascribed to both academic and vocational qualifications (Egan, 2005).

Progress with implementation since 2004, had been gradual, but it is moving from merely a "*bold vision to a worked reality*" (Egan, 2005 p.11). Egan (2005), argued that Wales remained committed to improving 14-19 provision in Wales, however, its size and limited financial capabilities and funding options means that implementation will be gradual but the drive and ambition demonstrated so far will see its completion. With Wales now embracing and improving its vocational qualifications, its education system will resemble European education systems rather than the traditional British education systems (Egan, 2005).

The consultation paper on the 14-19 provision "*Learning Country: Learning Pathways 14-19*" (Welsh DET, 2002), places the Welsh Baccalaureate in the centre of change, further demonstrating the support for the WBQ by policy makers. The aim of the WBQ was to extend the learning outside of the school environment and provide opportunities and experiences for development outside an academic setting. The WBQ included the development of key skills within the core. The 6 key skills included the three main skills, communication, application of number and IT, and three wider key, skills including; working with others, improving own learning and performance and problem solving. The options would not be constrained to the offerings of the WJEC, but students could select their choices from a range of existing qualifications appropriate to

their attainments, needs and aspirations. The role of mentoring and support was also recognised by the project team as key to success.

### 3.2.2 b Structure

Figure 2, highlights the structure of the WBQ and the relationship between the options and Core. The WBQ is an umbrella qualification that includes both the traditional, well established qualifications including A Levels and BTECS alongside a common Core. The Advanced level Core contains 5 elements which are summarised in the table below.

Figure 2: Structure of the WBQ



The Core includes the continuation of key skills, community based participation, team enterprise activities and work based training.

The table below presents the content of the WBQ Core for Advance Level

Table 2. Summary of the content of the core program of the WBQ at advanced level

Component	Summary
Personal and Social Education PSE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positive relationships</li> <li>2. Good health including sexual health</li> <li>3. Rights and responsibilities of active citizens</li> <li>4. Education for sustainable development</li> <li>5. Community participation.</li> </ol>
Wales, Europe and the World	<p>Eight key issues drawn from four elements</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Political issues</li> <li>2. Social Challenges and responses</li> <li>3. Impact of economic and technological change</li> <li>4. Heritage and cultural perspectives</li> </ol> <p>A language Module</p>
Work-related Education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Working with an employer</li> <li>2. Enterprise Activity</li> </ol>
Key Skills	<p>All 6 key skills to be certificated at Level 2 or above with 3 at Level 3, of which one must be communication, Application of Number or IT.</p>
Individual investigation	<p>Interdisciplinary piece of research to develop critical thinking.</p>

For students to pass the entire diploma they must complete both the Options and Core. The qualification can be delivered in the medium of Welsh/English. Completing both elements (Core and Options) is essential to achieving the qualification. The delivery is decided by the implementing organisation with the large FE colleges predominantly opting for regular scheduled lesson time for study. Schools have opted for the majority of work to be completed during the registration period and via self-directed learning with some scheduled lessons included, where necessary.

### 3.2.2 c Assessment

The qualification is assessed via a portfolio completed during the duration of the qualification, alongside the results of the individual investigation and key skills assessments. The mark was either pass/fail, with a pass being worth 120 UCAS points or the equivalent of an A at A Level.

### 3.2.3 The Pilot

In 2001, the WAG agreed to run a 6 year Pilot of the WBQ, in 31 schools and colleges, starting with 18 institutions in the first year. The pilot was supported by the Steering Committee which was comprised of elite members from the policy community and the WBQ Project Group. During this time period the external and internal evaluations were conducted, the findings of these were intended to feed into any amendments and changes to the finalised structure.

## 3.4. Research and evaluation

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Since its inception, the WBQ has been evaluated and researched on a relatively minimal scale for such a large scale national program. However, during the early years and the pilot, the WBQ was heavily scrutinised via an internal and external evaluation. The next section will outline these two evaluations and summarise the findings, before commenting on subsequent research.

### 3.4.1 Internal evaluation

From the outset, the internal evaluation conducted by the University of Bath was intended to be formative and predominantly qualitative. It was based on an essentially illumination model structured around three stages of observation, enquiring further, and seeking to explain, with a view of contributing to decision making. Data was gathered via regular contact with stakeholders (students, teachers, Head Teachers/Principals, parents, employers, higher education personnel etc.) in the form of conferences, interview, questionnaires and centre visits. The internal evaluators also took on the role of organizing and chairing the WBQ Higher Education Advisory Team (HEAT), comprised of Admission Tutors from English and Welsh Universities. They offered guidance into the dissemination of information within the HE sector.

The internal evaluation highlighted several issues with the WBQ including the acceptability of the qualification, marketing and promotion, management and organization, curricular challenges and issues with the implementation, delivery and assessment of key skills. They also identified issues with student attainment and progression, student support, staff training, support and funding (Hayden and Thompson, 2009). With regards to the acceptability of the qualification the internal evaluators highlighted that some stakeholders still require further convincing of the value of the qualification (Hayden and Thompson, 2009). Acceptance by HEIs had significantly improved after the decision by UCAS to attribute 120 UCAS points to the Core. However, the internal evaluators did note some concern about the variations in the valuation of the WBQ by HEIs, when undergraduate offers were being made by the different departments. Closely linked to acceptability has been issues regarding the marketing and promotion of the WBQ, with some confusion still existing between the WBQ, IWA proposal and International Baccalaureate (Hayden and Thompson, 2009). However, understanding and the perceived value was increasing amongst all stakeholders but further promotion was necessary (Hayden and Thompson, 2009).

The internal evaluation identified some curricular challenges including challenges to implementing a flexible curriculum which avoids over prescription (Hayden and Thompson, 2009). The internal evaluators noted difficulties with the implementation,

delivery and assessment of the key skills. Schools found the delivery of the key skills difficult due to minimal experience. Key skills were better delivered at the start so as not to coincide with option assessments. Anecdotal evidence from centres identified that the continuation of key skills through the WBQ has been beneficial for students and they are achieving higher results than predicted. The internal evaluators also highlighted other anecdotal evidence of the WBQ providing students with numerous positive attributes, but suggested that longitudinal research would be necessary to confirm this. Preparing students for the WBQ, during the early years was difficult, and the role of the personal tutors was challenging and highly varied. Staff training was a key issue highlighted, with centres not sending appropriate staff to training events and concerns about the lack of knowledge distribution amongst staff and the need for a cascade model. A need for collaborative partnerships was identified. Funding for implementation was noted as vital for the effectiveness of the delivery and its continuation.

The internal evaluation included a wide range of stakeholders in their study and the feedback they provided has resulted in actual change (Hayden and Thompson, 2009). Working so closely with the centres and various stakeholders has ensured their participation and continued commitment to the evaluation resulting in an in-depth evaluation of the implementation process. The internal evaluators recognised issues regarding objectivity due to their close relationship with the centres but felt that the findings of the one year external evaluation would complement their own findings and would not be so subject to issues of objectivity.

### 3.4.2 External evaluation

The external evaluation was conducted over a year by the Centre for Developing and Evaluating Lifelong Learning (CDELL), at the University of Nottingham (Greatbach, Wilmott and Belin, 2006). The aim of evaluation was to evaluate the design, delivery, implementation and impact of the WBQ pilot. The evaluation was based on the collection and analysis of a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, including questionnaire surveys from staff, parents and students, case study visits to the centres and interviews with a range of stakeholders. The findings of the internal evaluation was reviewed and included in the external evaluation. The external evaluators published

several recommendations and concluded that the WBQ was ready to be rolled out in stages across all schools, colleges and work based providers, in Wales, on completion of these recommendations. The issues/recommendations that were highlighted in the report included,

- Welsh Government to develop a robust financial model to support the introduction of the WBQ which would fully cover the additional costs during implementation.
- The roll-out should be staged to allow for more individualised support and funding.
- Continue to develop and research the WBQ implementing both formative and summative approaches and commission longitudinal research to be conducted to ascertain the impact of the WBQ as they their desired academic and employment trajectories. Data collected during pilot, evaluations and subsequent research to be published and disseminated widely.
- Ensure that ownership of the WBQ is distributed amongst staff as for some centres acceptability has not been gained amongst all staff.
- Address the concerns from a large proportion of varied that the WBQ needs to be graded.
- Provide support for centres to develop institution-wide skills tracking system.
- For the WJEC to continue the support via INSET training events hosted nationally and provision of formal and informal feedback and advice. They recommend an increase in the number and distribution of resources that describe good practice and provide additional support for practitioners on assessment. A requirement for more support in the delivery and assessment of key skills was included, which has been particularly challenging for school and a lack of confidence and limited experience has a negative impact on the delivery. The WJEC to contribute to the development and maintenance of local and national networks.
- For the WJEC to assess and review the administrative workloads that the WBQ assessment system puts on staff and provide guidance on marketing the WBQ.

- To ensure that senior staff are appointed to manage the implementation, delivery and assessment of the WBQ. For those key individuals to attend the training events and distribute the information amongst all staff involved.
- To ensure elements of the core are integrated both with each other and within options. Integration has proved difficult for many centres.
- To continue to develop mechanisms that promotes the WBQ to all stakeholders, particularly with HEIs, employers and LEAs.

(Greatbach, Wilmutt and Belin, 2006).

The external evaluators commended the WBQ pilot for successfully implementing the program in 31 schools and colleges and for the financial support available for centres for implementation (Greatbach, Wilmutt and Belin, 2006). The broadening aspects of the WBQ was commended, alongside the additional skills it has provided (Greatbach, Wilmutt and Belin, 2006).

### 3.4.3 Review of qualifications (2012)

Due to growing dissatisfaction with qualifications in Wales a review of Qualifications was commissioned in 2012. The Review of Qualifications in Wales (ROQ, 2012), evaluated the entire scope of qualifications offered in Wales. The review spent a great deal of time on the WBQ. The 4 principles underlying the reform of qualifications in Wales included, ensuring all qualifications were meeting the needs of Wales including its bilingualism, performance issues and socio/economic challenges. Any reforms had to be evidenced-based and include research, feedback and stakeholder engagement. There were design considerations including focussing on branded qualifications, focussing on literacy and numeracy as well as ensuring inclusion, clear progression and coherence. Finally, the ROQ (2012), called for world class standards and was concerned with issues regarding stakeholder recognition, clarity, robust assessments and portability. The recommendations of the ROQ (2012), included a focus on coherence and breadth of educational experience and building on the strength of known and trusted qualification brands whilst allowing divergence in the interests of learners. The ROQ (2012), recommended addressing the status differences between the different pathways. Furthermore, the review recommends developing belief and confidence in the Welsh



system, including the establishment of '*Qualifications Wales*' and developing new models of social partnership and engagement.

The ROQ (2012) dedicated significant time to the development and reform of the WBQ. They highlighted a number of strengths and weaknesses. The aim of generating this list was to develop or change areas of concern/weakness and continue or expand on the perceived strengths of the WBQ.

The findings of this review are what fed into the structural changes that have occurred and the introduction of grading since 2015. In the final chapter this thesis will highlight the recommendations that emanated from the ROQ (2012), and explain whether the findings from this thesis are consistent.

#### 3.4.4. WISERD research (2012)

WISERD commissioned a report funded by the Welsh Government, the report entitled, *Relationships between the Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced Diploma (WBQ) and Higher Education (HE)* (Taylor and Rees, 2012). It focused on the effectiveness of the WBQ in preparing young people for Higher Education. It demonstrated that the WBQ and access to and progress at University, are inextricably linked. The evaluation used a mixed methods design by incorporating a quantitative element based on an existing dataset and a qualitative component generated through interviews with current and past students, admissions tutors and WBQ Coordinators (Taylor and Rees, 2012).

*'There is strong evidence to suggest that the WBQ is enormously valuable in helping students to enter Higher Education, and particularly in leading universities. We found that of those who progress in to Higher Education, those with the WBQ are 31% more likely to attend a Russell Group university. However, the evaluation also finds evidence to suggest that students with the WBQ Core find they are 15% less likely to achieve a 'good' degree result than equivalent students without the WBQ Core, once they are at University.'* (Taylor, 2012 Policy Café).

The WBQ seems to improve the probability of getting in to University but with all other things being equal, this advantage seems to come at the expense of the progress they

make once in University (Taylor, 2012). The suggestions that emulated from this report are summarized in the quote below.

*'It would seem there are three areas of improvement needed for the WBQ. These are the way the WBQ is promoted and delivered, making it more challenging and greater tailoring of the content to particular needs of students. But equally, further monitoring and analysis is required, as more students in Wales undertake the WBQ, in order to understand fully the relationships between the WBQ and University participation and progress. (Taylor, 2012, Policy Café).*

This quote clearly suggests that the design, implementation and delivery of the WBQ need continued development and adjustment and that personalization of the qualification to the individual is desirable.

The report made suggestions for improvements that impact on the WBQ use for entrance to HE. These suggestions included better promotion to HEIs, more challenging content which included higher level skills development and a greater degree of specialisation and finally more options for personalisation (Taylor and Rees, 2012). Further continuous monitoring and analysis was highlighted as necessary to measure the relationship between The WBQ and HEIs in the future (Taylor and Rees, 2012).

### 3.5 Aims and Research Questions

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The WBQ allows the researcher the opportunity to focus on the process of developing and implementing national education policy, in devolved Wales. The thesis explores the extent to which democratic devolution, since 1997, has allowed for the development of distinctive approaches to addressing what are pervasive issues within post compulsory education sector (academic vs. vocational, specialisation vs. generalism, dealing with disaffection). This thesis is attempting to gain an accurate and detailed understanding of the previous literature and to gain a broader picture of previous empirical work/theoretical ideas and changes to policy and practice, to situate the research. This has enabled the author to identify a gap in the existing literature, which this thesis is attempting to address and prevent my research being repetitive, irrelevant or of little

value to the field. This process has also been vital for developing the research questions, which are grounded and supported by existing academic literature.

#### **Research Question 1:**

**Post-compulsory education in Wales has been the focus of reform over the last few years. What impact has the history of post-compulsory education and the development of the Welsh Assembly Government had on the development and creation of implementation guidelines for the advanced level, Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ)?**

#### **Research Question 2:**

**The assumption that the adoption of a policy is the same as the implemented practice is called “*adoption fallacy*”. How does the policy percolate down the various levels and how is the policy “*translated*” and possibly “*adapted*” in the creation of implementation guidelines at the National (WAG), Intermediate (WJEC), Local (LEA’s) and institutional level (schools and colleges)?**

#### **Research Question 3:**

**Berman (1978) believed that most implementation problems stem from the interaction of a policy with the local institutional level and that focussing on this stage is essential to understand why the implementation of public policy sometimes fails to reach its objectives. How is the national implementation guidelines “*translated*” by practitioners in each school or college to create a working protocol that suits the individual environment?**

### **3.6 Summary**

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Many baccalaureates worldwide contain similar features, content and assessment procedures. The table below summarises and compares the 3 Baccalaureate programs discussed during this chapter (French Baccalaureate, International Baccalaureate and

Welsh Baccalaureate). This is interesting as this table presents the similarities and differences of the WJEC model in comparison with two longstanding, Type A baccalaureates. These differences can help highlight the concerns and challenges of implementing a Type A, baccalaureate in Wales, and why a type C was selected.

Table 3. A comparison of the key characteristics of the French Baccalaureate, International Baccalaureate and WJEC Welsh Baccalaureate.

<b>Baccalaureate</b>	<b>Baccalaureate type</b>	<b>Assessment type</b>	<b>Provides the option for vocational study.</b>	<b>Classroom structure</b>	<b>Recognised by Universities in the UK</b>
<b>French Baccalaureate</b>	Type A	Examinations	Yes	Large classes	Yes
<b>International Baccalaureate</b>	Type A	Examinations and Coursework	Very limited	Smaller classes	Yes
<b>Welsh Baccalaureate</b>	Type C	Portfolio Assessment and the Individual investigation	Yes	Smaller classes and via self-directed learning	Recognised but not always assigned the same value.

### 3.7. Conclusion

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This chapter has mapped the policy movement which led to the development of the WBQ. Since the 1990s, and the publication of “A British Baccalaureate” (Finegold et al, 1990), there have been more than 30 proposals for a baccalaureate style curriculum. These proposals have come from various stakeholders including teaching profession associations, think tanks, academic researchers, and political parties (FEDA, 1999). All proposals were attempting to broaden general education and unify the vocational and academic tracks.

Mapping the policy movement has been vital for understanding the finalised version of the WBQ. The WBQ was designed and developed by a mid level private awarding body the WJEC. The final structure married up with the Ministers ideals about the content and assessment. The devolution settlement provided the opportunity for the creation of a new baccalaureate qualification in Wales. The structure and assessment of the WBQ reflected debates and concerns regarding the introduction of a baccalaureate qualification in the UK, over the last 30 years. Understanding the challenges and successes of other baccalaureates worldwide ensured that the WBQ would include all the successful ingredients from previous baccalaureate structures and would include policy learning. The WJEC was obviously extremely influenced by the policy movement and discussions that had come before were reflected in the finalised design. Concerns about any diversion from the British system, the continuation of the academic/vocational divide, concerns about key skills. Support for the continuation of advanced modern language study and the importance of critical thinking, key skills and debate all factored into the final design. The final structure was deemed less risky and easier to implement than a model similar to the IWA proposal/ International baccalaureate. The WBQ success is partly associated with the timing of its proposal and development, and this chapter has further examined this idea.

The next chapter provides a detailed account of the Methodology including the justifications for the choice of design, sample and analysis.

# Chapter 4: Methodology

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Through examining the literature, it is evident that this research area appears to warrant further investigation. This reflective methodology chapter aims to provide the reader with a detailed account of the research design, data collection procedures and analysis. This chapter will highlight the process of selecting and designing the method, identifying and accessing the sample group and finally, transcribing and analysing the data. Providing a clear and detailed Methodology Chapter is essential for creating transparency in the research process so other social researchers can replicate, reinvent and reference (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

## 4.1 Case study

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A case study methodology was selected as they generate rich data and can be successfully used to extract individual's understandings and interpretations.

*“A case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a real life context. It is research based, inclusive of different methods and is evidence-led. The primary purpose is to generate in-depth understanding of a specific topic (as in a thesis), programme, policy, institution or system to generate knowledge and /or inform policy development, professional practice and civil or community action” (Simons, 2009, p.21).*

The single case in this thesis is the WBQ. This thesis intended to understand how the WBQ was created at the macro level and interpreted by the various levels (Macro, Miso and Micro level) during implementation. This thesis intends to use this case to understand the complex and multifaceted process of policy making and implementation, in a devolved nation. It is the intention that the findings of this thesis be published via effective avenues that will access and inform policy makers and other stakeholders about implementing public policy. The choice of methodology aimed to highlight the

understandings and interpretation of policy rather than be an evaluation and quantification of the policies success, which is reflected in its target audience.

There are different types of case studies. Some case studies are:

*“Examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalisation. The case is of secondary interest it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates the understanding of something else” (Stake, 2005, p.44).*

This thesis focuses on the development and implementation of one policy (The WBQ). Therefore the only conclusions that the author can be sure about relate to this policy alone, but it also has the ability to cast some light on policy implementation more generally. The WBQ could be viewed as an instrument and the findings can illuminate the problems that arise during implementation, which public policy analysts refer to as the *“Implementation gap”*. That is not to say that the individual study of the WBQ will not provide interesting findings in itself. Addressing its ability to tackle some of the more pervasive issues in post-compulsory education, which were some of the original aims of the policy, will be particularly interesting.

The adoption of a case study design was not selected until a detailed consideration of the limitations of this method could be explored. Issues surrounding the external validity or generalizability of a case study were paramount. One of the major concerns about case studies is singleness and an obsession about the inability to generalize case study data (Thomas, 2011). Critics argue that case studies provide anecdotal evidence that cannot be corroborated by evidence from alternative examples. To limit this criticism the researcher chose to explore the case from varied viewpoints and across various locations. Data collection needs to be sufficiently comprehensive and varied, to represent the phenomenon. This will develop what Foucault (1981), called a polyhedron of intelligibility, providing a three dimensional view of the case. This thesis is not constrained to merely understanding the case in one type of setting or within one geographical location, but investigates the understanding and interpretation of the WBQ, in a variety of settings including schools and colleges, throughout Wales. This thesis examines the WBQ through interviews at the macro, meso and micro level. The WBQ is unique in that the population is extremely large. Therefore, it is not afflicted by the concerns about singleness and generalizability. The inclusion of a wide range of

viewpoints ensures the sample is large enough to hear most/all of the perceptions/interpretations that might be relevant and ensure the research findings are representative of the phenomenon. However, the views of some individuals were unreachable as some individuals had retired and were living elsewhere with no current contact details available and some individuals declined contact and involvement in the research.

The sample included all the interviews conducted both in the schools and colleges alongside the individuals at the macro and micro level, which I have termed the Policy Community. The sample was not unique in any way as;

*“The objective was to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or commonplace situation” (Yin, 2003, p.41).*

Therefore, a range of schools and colleges were selected that reflected the range in post-compulsory education establishments throughout Wales and epitomized the various sites that offer the WBQ. The schools and colleges were not selected for any defining features and the only inclusion criteria were that they were offering the WBQ at Advanced level. A specialist school was also included that only offered the WBQ at intermediate level, but this institution provided another lens to understand the implementation of the WBQ, in a relatively unique setting. Further details on the sample can be located within this chapter.

The limitations of the thesis included the short time scale for data collection and large sample identified may have impacted on the level of detail extracted from each interviewee/site, typical with a case study design. The length of the interview and amount of detail extracted was often dictated by the interviewee and the type of interview location (phone, location etc.) and not by the researcher. During the interview process the researcher attempted to generate as much detail as possible to ensure the data is representative. The process of data collection and the limitations of the research are explored in greater detail later in the chapter.



There were two types of data analysed to address the research questions, the documents that provide the historical and policy account of the literature and the primary interviews.

### 4.2.1. Document analysis

Documents are an integral and inescapable part of our daily lives. There is a great deal of textual material of potential interest that can aid the researcher in understanding and analysing public policy. This thesis uses documents to support the primary data and provide an insight into the original aims of the policy. Understanding the original aims outlined in the documents, is interesting as they can be compared with later documents to address whether the objectives had changed during the implementation of the policy or during the early years. Often the researcher could refer back to the original documentation when analysing the interview transcripts to assess the interviewee's understandings of the WBQ and to check for misunderstandings. The policy documents provide a historical understanding and became an integral part of the literature chapters. Document Analysis is an invaluable part of most schemes of triangulation. The use of document analysis in the Social Sciences is marginalized, under-utilized and used as a supplement to the conventional social surveys (Prior, 2012). However, document analysis is a successful and cost effective method of researching a social phenomenon. The researcher chose to use document analysis as it would be neglectful to merely generate new data, without analysing the policy.

A document relates to an aspect of the social world and is vital to meaning and interpretation (Prior 2012). Official documents are intended to be objective statements of fact, but they themselves are socially produced and often created with an implied leadership in mind (Atkinson and Coffey, 2004). It is therefore, essential to identify the origins, context, purpose and original audience of the document of interest. Atkinson and Coffey (2004), believe that official documents should be viewed as a distinct level of reality in their own right. All documents have their own distinctive ontological status, as they are separate from reality and should therefore, not be taken to be a transparent

representation of a social reality. This thesis is interested in how policy (WBQ) is translated and understood by practitioners and how it in turn impacts on behaviour (Prior, 2012). This thesis intends to move passed merely understanding content to how it impacts on behaviour and how the policy itself interacts with the “*real world*”.

Access to the relevant documents was often a simple procedure. Now, in the electronic communication era, documents can be easily accessed online. However, assessing a documents authenticity is difficult to establish. Some of the Steering Committee agendas were more difficult to access and the researcher had to use macro level contacts and gatekeepers to access/retrieve the documents required. This was often very time consuming and resulted in some documents being missing or incomplete.

The documents used in this thesis were not analysed and scrutinised under the same analytical framework as the interview transcripts. The documents were landmarks and pointed out the key moments that led up to the development and implementation of the WBQ. They acted as a backdrop for the findings and were a vital component of the literature review. They provided a timeline and historical account of the development of the WBQ. They could illustrate how it was promoted and understood at each level. These documents were vital for evidencing and supporting the findings extracted during the analytical stages.

The documents used in conjunction with this thesis included policy documents and other national level produced material including the Steering Committee meeting agendas, the internal and external review of the WBQ and the WBQ pilot findings. Additional documents examined included the guidance and support materials developed for schools and colleges which were published and distributed by the WJEC on their website and during training events. The timetables and learning materials produced within each school and college were also examined and this helped to understand the unique processes and structure within each establishment. Finally, media articles, research and other promotional materials were scrutinised to evidence some of the primary findings.

#### 4.2.1. Interviews

The primary data generated in this thesis was collected via semi-structured interviews, conducted with key individuals at the macro, miso and micro level. All the interviews were conducted in 2012, and are therefore, time restrained and do not attempt to cover the recent changes to the curriculum, discussed in the Conclusion.

##### 4.2.1. a. Materials: Designing the interview schedule

A semi-structured interview design was selected. This method was the most suitable method for extracting the data necessary to respond to the research questions. The first priority for data collection involved creating a clear interview schedule. This process began with the researcher jotting down all the potential avenues of interest from the literature search, alongside their experiences as a practitioner. This resulted in a long list of possible areas of interest. The list helped to develop the research questions and was useful for creating the interview questions.

The interview questions were intentionally not so focused that they prevented alternative avenues of enquiry arising, during data collection. Broader questions also limited the possibility that any preconceptions the researcher had, impacting on the empirical data.

After the interview schedule was complete an informal pilot was utilized to ensure the accuracy of the tool. The interview questions for the micro level were the most likely to be inaccessible and so were piloted. Eight colleagues from the post compulsory sector were invited to an informal event and asked if they would mind providing feedback on the questions. This was essential to ascertain if the terminology used was accessible to teachers. This was completed over a 20 minute coffee break with no significant issues being detected. Piloting even on a small informal scale can ensure the adequacy of the instruments and prevent any unforeseen circumstances (Mason, 2002).

At the start of each interview some demographic questions were asked including, name, title, position, number of years involved with the WBQ and previous employment history etc. These answers were important for contextualizing the individual's answers

by positioning the individual within a broader socio cultural context (Zaharlick, 1992). Using demographic questions at the start can be a useful tool for gaining rapport, relaxing the interviewee and providing a better understanding of the individual's experiences and history of the WBQ (Mason, 2002). Their answers were extremely interesting as many had a varied, long history with the WBQ and they would draw on all of their previous roles, when answering the question.

Basic considerations regarding order and flow were important, for creating a positive balanced interview schedule. Dividing questions into topic areas was useful to maintain the flow of the conversation and ensure the interviewee remained focused. The order was flexible and was often dependent on the interviewee. The choice of language and terminology was carefully considered to ensure it was appropriate for its intended audience. Appropriate terminology was important as many of the interviewees had a varied educational and political background. Selecting comprehensible and relevant language was important and it was essential to limit the political terms used when interviewing teachers and limit the use of "teacher talk", during interviews with the macro and micro level. Using this language correctly provided a vital tool in gaining the trust and acceptance of your interviewee. At the end of the interview the participant was thanked for their time and asked if they minded being called back if any additional information was required. Example interview schedules for the macro and micro level can be located in the appendices.

#### 4.2.1 b Conducting the interviews

All the interviews were conducted during the academic year 2011-2012 with the majority being administered during the first few months of 2012. The data collection period was governed by the academic school year with examination periods being of particular concern. Even the policy community, who were not constrained by the academic cycle, were still demonstrating an adherence to the school year calendar in their choice of scheduling interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were an ideal research design due to the limitations regarding access as well as the time and budgetary restraints for data collection. This form of interview was adopted as the researchers own experiences as a teacher in the

post compulsory sector gave the researcher an insight into the type of discussions that might occur. Therefore, questions could be tailored to understanding these more specific issues. Semi-structured interviews offered flexibility and the researcher could target the questions to the interviewees own unique experiences and guide the discussion whilst also ensuring the interviewee remained focussed. Interview schedules were often short and could not allow for interviewees going off track. The researcher reflected on and was aware that their own experiences and opinions were the motivation for conducting the research and although provided a greater understanding of the implementation, the researcher was wary to not impose their expectations onto the interviewees. The insider role of the researcher will be discussed later in this chapter, including a discussion of the advantages as well as possibly impact this may have had on the thesis.

The ability to tailor the questions to the individual was vital. It meant that the interview could develop a detailed account of the individual's experiences with the WBQ. It also provided the opportunity for some specific questions to be designed, prior to the interview. The use of vignettes from previous interviews was a particularly useful tool for extracting interesting new avenues of enquiry or presenting alternative viewpoints. The interview guide contained approximately 10 open-ended. Combining open-ended questions alongside the introductory demographic question and using a range of question types was essential for creating an effective interview schedule (Kvale, 1996). Many of the questions within the interview guide were repeated to all interviewees as the researcher was interested in accessing information on a specific area, from a range of viewpoints. Where possible care was taken to ensure the wording of these questions remained the same, to ensure standardization (Mason 2002). Some questions were designed specifically for an individual prior to the interview. This was often based on the researcher's access to details of their academic and employment history. A further number of interview questions were added and designed during the interview, in reaction to their responses to previous questions or developed after a previous interview response generated an avenue of further interest.

The flexibility and nature of the open-ended question meant that the researcher had difficulty maintaining momentum and focus. This meant asking appropriate follow up questions were difficult, but a necessity, for unpacking the often long responses that covered numerous areas of interest. It also meant that at times the researcher was

making significant decisions about what was regarded off topic, based on what areas of the research they deemed important.

During data collection, the researcher had to expect and prepare for the unexpected and be able to respond accordingly. This included unexpected interview behaviour such as a refusal to be recorded, answer specific questions or last-minute cancellations.

Permission for recording an interview's response was entirely up to the individual interviewee.

Deciding on the use of a recording device was difficult and the relevant literature was examined, before a decision was made. The researcher was concerned that a recording device may disconcert respondents. This can have a negative impact on the responses provided as well as significantly increasing the time for transcription (Bryman, 2008). Recording devices can often malfunction and interviews were often conducted in noisy environments, where the voices were indistinguishable, making transcriptions impossible. This resulted in the researcher relying on the reflections and notes made during the interview. The interview environment played an important role in deciding whether a recording device would be appropriate. Environmental issues, such as high levels of noise and regular interruptions during the interview, were common place, especially in the more public settings. Regardless of the conditions or refusals to record the discussion, the interview continued as the opportunity for a rescheduled interview may not occur, and a difficult interview environment may not impact negatively on the quality of the response. Some interviews were allocated a significant time period of over 2 hours for all questions to be completed thoroughly; others were allocated a 20-minute break between classes. These shorter interview sessions often meant that the researcher had to make important decisions about the priority of the questions to ensure essential questions were asked. Again, the researcher was making decisions about what they deemed to be important.

The location of the interview was also extremely varied a number were conducted over the phone while the others were conducted face to face. Some interviews were conducted over the phone due to the time constraints and cost of travel. Over the phone interviews were challenging, as continuous notes were made, as recording phone interviews requires more costly equipment and voices are often inaudible. Phone

interviews were often a continuous stream of discussion with few pauses, to make notes. Therefore, making accurate and detailed notes was difficult. Making clear and concise notes was further complicated by poor reception in long distance and mobile calls. The interviewer could not read the non-verbal cues of the interviewee via a phone call and be able to react to them appropriately. The researcher felt that phone interviews often provided a scapegoat for interviewees who were uncomfortable in answering difficult or critical questions. Of the face to face interviews the locations were often suited to the interviewees schedule and were therefore, varied. Some venues included public spaces, classrooms and shared offices where noise levels were high and interruptions continuous. The use of a Dictaphone in these instances was impossible. Other interviews were conducted in quiet public places and offices, where recording the interview was much more manageable. This meant not all interviews were recorded and the researcher had to rely on good note taking skills and allocated time for transcription or typing field notes as soon as possible after the interview was completed.

On two occasions, joint interviews were conducted in one location, as two individuals identified themselves as the key individuals regarding the WBQ. Often during single interviews, co-workers seated nearby offered their opinion, and the researcher had to make decisions about the inclusion of this material during transcription. In these instances, the researcher decided if the comment warranted inclusion. If the comment was relevant the individual was asked if they would like to be included in the thesis and presented with the introduction sheet and an ethics form to complete. After each interview, the interviewee was thanked for their cooperation and provided the opportunity to ask questions. They were asked whether they could think of anyone else that they think should be contacted for an interview and they usually provided contact details for those suggested. After each interview came a time of reflection, to focus and note down any interesting, experiences, opinions or understandings the interviewee had on the WBQ. Reflecting on how these findings may weave into the final thesis and whether they supported or contradicted previous interviewee's responses. It was occasionally the case that an interviewee opened up a new avenue of interest. These interesting new areas of focus often provided new questions for following interviews. Key features of the interview such as length of time, location and how a general reflection on how the interview went, was noted down.

### 4.3 Sample

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The sample could be divided into two groups, the members of the Policy Community from the macro and meso level and the local level which included the WBQ Coordinators. Determining the sample size involved careful considerations. Through examining similar research and via lengthy discussions with my supervisors, a decision was made to keep the sample to approximately 30. A decision to limit the number of interviews to 30 was due to the size and scope of the PhD thesis and the length of time required for transcription and analysis. This was reviewed during various stages of the process and at the end of the data collection period to ensure data saturation had occurred and that no new material was being developed (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009).

#### 4.3.1. Sample: Policy community

##### 4.3.1.a. Identification

The identification of the sample began during the very first few weeks of this PhD, as it would be a lengthy and complicated process. It was essential to identify all individuals that would be ideal candidates to be interviewed, to ensure a variety of perspectives, across different levels was achieved. The identification of the policy community was aided by Wales' size which has a relatively small, geographically close, policy community.

The objective of this research was not to generate "the truth" but explore the understandings of those linked to the development and implementation of the WBQ. The interviewees were selected due to their proximity, involvement, and interest in the creation of the WBQ. Prior to data collection, this purposive sample was selected by initially mapping the entire policy community and identifying key individuals as well as other stakeholders, who watched the development with keen interest at a distance. The identification of the policy community began with the analysis of the macro level produced documents. These documents often referenced key people involved in its production or in the case of steering committee notes, a list of attendees. Through scrutinising these texts the researcher was able to compile a list of individuals, to



approach. The researcher then attempted to approach all those individuals for interviews. A few contacts were also made via a snowball sampling technique, where interviewees on the original list suggested other individuals who would have a different perspective or had additional experiences of the WBQ. This technique developed further avenues for gathering varied viewpoints, from across the policy community.

#### 4.3.1.b. Representativeness

When identifying and accessing the sample the researcher had to select individuals that were the most representative of their social group or organisation. Characteristics such as a long history representing that social group, being a key or senior individual in that group, experience in other positions/organisations and an individual history with the WBQ were paramount. Identifying an individual for interview required a significant amount of research on each organisations and regular discussions with contacts about which individuals would be the most interesting and representative of their social group. One of the difficulties of the thesis was identifying appropriate interviewees that represented the entire policy community. Often an individual or small group of individuals were selected to represent an entire social group/organization. Justifying using such a small sample to represent such a large social group was something the researcher had to explore during the design stage. One of the biggest concerns regarding the sample was whether one individual can represent an entire organizations viewpoint and experiences, or merely their own. To assist in extracting more general viewpoints questions were designed that attempted to extract the more general views of the entire social group that they represent, as well as making assumptions about what they thought other social groups thought. These more general viewpoint questions were coupled with questions that targeted the individual's experiences and history of the WBQ.

#### 4.3.1.c. Multiple Identities

Identifying the level of each organization was occasional difficult as some national level organisations played a very minor role in development, implementation and delivery of the WBQ while some intermediate level organisations had national level responsibilities. This was due to the unique implementation procedures selected by the WG, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. The researcher chose to

just divide them based on their position and not how their level of responsibility might reflect their position.

One of the key challenges was identifying the social group that each individual inhabits. This was particularly difficult with the policy community as many individuals had multiple roles and were connected to numerous social groups. These multiple identities often meant question asking was difficult, as it was often unclear which position their viewpoint was being derived from. How the individuals identified themselves changed depending on who they were talking to or even the topic of discussion.

Many members of the policy community had experiences of the WBQ which began as practitioners or during managerial positions in a school or college. They have since had a number of other roles within the policy community before residing in their current positions. Their experience of the WBQ was varied and they drew on their entire employment history. They did not feel constrained to their current group. This added an interesting facet to the interviews but meant that categorising any individual as representing one social group, became blurred. This often meant that the issues about representativeness was further exasperated by the issues about dual/multiple roles as it was impossible to distinguish which of the experiences and memories came from which social group.

During interviews respondents changed which social groups they identified with depending on the audience, and whose support they were attempting to obtain. This was particularly apparent with individuals often highlighting how they could empathise with of the role of practitioners due to a previous role as a teacher or because the policy was designed with teachers in mind. It was clear that interviewees would swap identities to aid in answering the question. This role swapping tactic could be deemed a technique to possible protect their current positions. They could divert questions back to the early years of implementation where challenges were more accepted and practitioners were not responsible for the development and implementation of the WBQ.

Many of these policy community members had previously been teachers and still identified themselves as such which is not atypical in education. The teacher identity continued into their new roles affecting how issues were understood. One of the key

reasons for adopting these multiple identities is that by identifying as a teacher, with practical experiences in the classroom ensured that other current teachers trusted their judgement and respected that they had an understanding of the varying roles and responsibilities of teachers. Members of the policy community often made a point of highlighting their teaching history to gain the trust of the teachers implementing the policy. Teachers often expressed how they didn't trust members of the policy community who created education policy. However, those individuals who had once been practitioners and understood the practicalities of delivery were perceived more sympathetically and more capable of developing policy with practitioners in mind.

#### 4.3.1.d. Access to the elite

Access is often one of the most difficult tasks in conducting education research. It should be conducted as early as possible to allow for the possibility of delay or a complete breakdown. Van Maanen and Kolb (1985 p.11), believe that access is,

*“Not a matter to be taken lightly but one that involves some combination of strategic planning, hard work and dumb luck”.*

Access was further complicated by the design which required access to be negotiated for each individual and for each separate organization.

After identifying an individual appropriate for interviewing the researcher had to begin the process of making contact. Contact was initiated via a phone call in which the researcher requested an interview. Alternatively, contact was achieved by appointment or by email, if no telephone contact could be located. However, initial contact was administered in a variety of ways including via email, letter, and during a chance meeting at a public event or conference. After this initial meeting/discussion, perseverance was often essential to maintain contact, with rejection being a possibility. Once contact was established with a senior member of the organization it was important to recruit this individual to act as a champion. This assisted in gaining access to the top management and for locating the target individual, for interview. Confirming the location and exact time of the interview once access was agreed, was paramount.

Once that individual has been contacted further negotiation is necessary. This often began with a required meeting or phone call to make introductions and discuss the research in more depth. This would ensure the individual had a good understanding of their role in the research. It is important to be honest about their role and realistic about the time and effort they will have to contribute to the research. During this meeting the researcher always provided an information sheet that they could keep and file for future reference and a copy of the consent form (located in the Appendices). Prior to attending the interview the researcher attempted to create reassurance, and make it clear that they were happy to travel or organize the interview for any time that would best suit the respondent. To appear warm and approachable the researchers dressed in way that was suitable to a wide spectrum of individuals. The researcher attempted to create a good rapport with all recipients through her demeanour and dress. After the meeting the next stage involved waiting for the final arrangements and interview to be timetabled. After the first few interviews were completed the researcher realised the difficulties in negotiating access and began to rely more on a snowball sampling method. With previous interviewees acting as gatekeepers providing contacts for other key individuals from the list, as well as suggesting other individuals who might have a different viewpoint to offer. Maintaining a relationship with these individuals was important as they could often open avenues to other organizations and individuals for you and therefore maintaining a level of ongoing access was important this stage.

#### 4.3.1.e. Policy Community

The Policy community was made up of all the individuals within my sample who came from the macro and miso level. The total number of participants in this section was 17.

Table 4: Features of the Macro and Miso Level Interviewees

<u>Position and organization</u>	<u>Interview type</u>	<u>Use of Dictaphone</u>
Ex-Minister for Education	Phone	X
WJEC welsh Baccalaureate development Office	Face to face	X
WJEC Head of Pilot	Face to face	X
WJEC regional support officer	Phone	X
Director of Teaching Union	Face to face	√
Director of Teaching Union	Face to face	√
Director of Teaching Union	Face to face	√
Director of Teaching Union	Face to face	X
Head of General Teaching Council	Face to face	√
Chair of 14-19 review of qualification	Face to face	√
National Director of a Teaching Union official	Phone	X
Welsh Government Policy Advisor	Face to face	X
CollegesWales	Face to face	√
Local authority 1	Face to face	√
Local authority 2 (joint interview)	Face to face	√
Local authority 3	Face to face	√
Civil servant	Face to face	√

Table 4 represents the policy community and identifies the position or organisation that each interview represents. It also includes details about the interview, including whether it was a phone or face to face interview and whether a Dictaphone was used.

#### 4.3.1. f Macro level

##### Welsh government interviews

###### 1. The Ex-minister for education and skills

It was important to include an interview with the Minister for Education and Skills, at the time of the development of the WBQ. The Minister was a key driving force in the development of the policy. The interview focused around her motivations for pushing and developing the qualification. Her account provided an invaluable insight into this time period and demonstrated the impact one individual has on the creation of a new qualification in Wales. The ex-Ministers involvement in the policy arena and with the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification is now limited. Therefore, her perspective and experience of the WBQ is quite dated. She was a teacher prior to this position and is now again in a teaching position.

###### 2. Civil servant

To gain a more up to date view of the Welsh Government perspective on the development and implementation of the WBQ, the Civil Servant involved in the promotion, development and implementation of the WBQ, was interviewed. This individual had been in this position since the early years, prior to the creation of the WBQ. This individual had a long history with the WBQ because of their position and had access to numerous individuals and social groups involved in the WBQ development and implementation. He provided a detailed historical account of the creation and implementation of the WBQ alongside, a current view of the WBQ. This individual could also illuminate possible developments, for the future. He was a teacher prior to this position and this made him well respected.

### 3. Head of the review of qualifications

The Head of the Review of Qualifications (2012), was selected for interviewing as the review was going to be heavily focused on the WBQ. The drive was to modernize and develop the qualification over the next few years to help it to develop and progress. This meant he had access to numerous interest groups and key individuals from various viewpoints, as part of the review system. He also had a long and varying history with the WBQ, being a Principal in an FE College who had piloted the Advanced Level WBQ. This experience has provided an excellent understanding of the structure, content and assessment of the qualification which he selectively draws on when discussing his current role at the macro level.

### 4. Policy Advisor

This individual is an academic and policy advisor for the Welsh Government and was selected for interviewing due to their unique history and viewpoint of the WBQ. He had a differing opinion to the majority of the other interviewees. This individual had supported the initial IWA proposal rather than the current version of the WBQ. He has also published a number of academic journal articles that have discussed education policy making in post devolution Wales. A regular critic of the current WBQ, he has provided another viewpoint to the thesis. He also provides an academic viewpoint to the thesis.

### 5. Directors of the teaching unions

This thesis included 4 individuals from the largest teaching unions located in Wales. In each case the Director of the teaching unions was the individual selected for interviewing. The teaching unions offered a unique perspective of the WBQ implementation and development. This thesis also included an interview with the Director of one of the teaching unions, at the British level. This individual was included in the sample due to his unique experience with the WBQ, as a Head Teacher in one of the first-year pilot schools. He is a huge advocate of the WBQ and promotes its adoption across the border. These interviews provided a unique perspective of the creation, implementation and development of the WBQ. They inevitable drew on the

opinions and experiences of the individual schools, colleges and teachers that they represent. This also provided useful contacts for accessing schools and colleges, as well as providing a more general overview of the feedback and opinions of the WBQ, outlined by numerous schools and colleges.

#### 6. Head of teaching council

The final interview at the macro level was with the Head of the General Teaching Council. The General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW), is the statutory self-regulating professional body for the teaching profession in Wales. Its aims are to contribute to improving standards of teaching and the quality of learning and to maintain and improve standards of professional conduct amongst teachers. They work to raise the status of the profession through greater public understanding of what is involved in teaching. The Head of the GTCW had been in this position for a number of years and had a long history in the education sector even if not having a direct relationship with the WBQ. This meant he could draw on experiences from the period just prior to devolution regarding the conversations and development of the WBQ.

#### 4.3.1. g. Miso level

##### WJEC and pilot members

#### 1. WJEC Welsh Baccalaureate development officer

One of the first interviews the researcher conducted was with the WJEC Welsh Baccalaureate Development Officer, who has been in this current position for a number of years. The WJEC is responsible for a large proportion of the implementation, training and promotion of the WBQ. They also have a considerable presence within Welsh Government and are involved in the policy process and development of the WBQ in the future. This individual had a long history with the WBQ having been a WBQ Coordinator in a first-year pilot school prior to this position. This provided some practical and grounded knowledge of, the implementation of the WBQ which he selectively draws on in response to the interview questions.



## 2. WJEC head of pilot

The Head of the WJEC, WBQ pilot was interviewed. This individual was responsible for the pilot of the Advanced level WBQ. The pilot was conducted over three cohorts and the Head of the pilot was responsible for planning and implementing the pilot, the production of reports as well as refining and developing the WBQ during these early years. This individual had a long history and involvement in education. This individual is still residing in a government position but they have less involvement in education and had no current involvement with the WBQ. Therefore, the Head of the WJEC pilot had excellent experiences of the development and early years of the WBQ, but his view is quite dated. Therefore, the interview was tailored to this specific time period.

## 3. WJEC regional support officer

During some of the early interviews with the schools and colleges WBQ coordinators discussed the significant role and support that the WJEC Regional Support Officer had on the development of the WBQ in their establishment and how this was becoming extremely pronounced. With 4 WJEC regional support officers, whose role often includes working outside within the local community throughout Wales meant they were difficult to access. The researcher managed to obtain access to the WJEC regional officer for North Wales, from a school within her area. The interview was conducted over the phone due to the amount of travelling she was committed to. She had not been in the position for long but was able to discuss her role which included developing and organizing local training events that were targeted to the specific needs of the schools and colleges within her locale. She was also responsible for supporting all the schools and colleges within her locale and sending them information about developments/changes to the current system, as well as dealing with any queries and concerns.

## 4. Representative of CollegesWales

CollegesWales is the national organization representing all 15 FE colleges in Wales. It was created in 1993, as an educational charity and a company limited by guarantee. It was known as “fforwm”, until its renaming in 2009. The interviewee was suggested by

the Chief Executive of the company because of his long history with the WBQ. The interviewee is a consultant for CollegesWales and is responsible for advising them and colleges on issues surrounding curriculum standards, governance, management and quality. His previous history saw him involved in the pilot of the WBQ, as part of the WJEC, and then moving into this post. The interview was tailored to focus on both time periods and extract information on his experiences.

## 5. Local authority interviews

The researcher conducted three interviews with local authority officials, from 3 of the different local authorities that my sample of schools and colleges derived from. All 3 interviews were from southern areas of Wales. One of these interviews was a joint interview, with two gentlemen that were involved in education. These interviews were particularly interesting as the local authorities had a very close relationship with the schools and colleges in the area. They had a good understanding of the schools individual circumstances. However, their involvement in the development and implementation of the WBQ has been limited and their understanding of the qualification is basic. The lack of involvement by local authorities has contributed to the fractious and poor relationship that the local authorities have with the Welsh Government and the WJEC. This often resulted in a negative opinion of the WBQ and a feeling that their lack of involvement has had a direct, negative effect on the implementation and ultimately success of the WBQ.

### 4.3.2. Sample: Micro level

#### 4.3.2. a Identification

The objective for obtaining a sample at the local level was to include a range of establishments that represented the range of post-compulsory education establishments within Wales.

As the WBQ can be delivered in the medium of Welsh and English, a combination of Welsh, English and bilingual schools and colleges were selected. As the WBQ is a relatively new qualification with uptake at this time not being compulsory, schools and

colleges were selected at various stages of their implementation. However, in terms of a policies history all these establishments would still be considered as within the developmental stages/years. One of the criteria for inclusion was that all schools and colleges offered the WBQ at Advanced level, but many also offered the WBQ at Intermediate and Foundation level. The schools and colleges were spread throughout Wales but the majority clustered around South Wales, due to the researcher's individual contacts and ease of access. The number of learners enrolled on the WBQ, across the establishments was extremely varied, from 5 students to 100's in the larger FE colleges. Schools and colleges were selected in part because of their variations and to reflect the range of establishments located throughout Wales. The quality of the teaching and learning in the schools was varied, based on the results of their most recent Estyn inspections, with one school having special measures associated with its WBQ provision. The school and college intake was also extremely varied with some cohorts coming from areas of predominantly higher socio-economic status while others located in predominantly lower socio-economic communities. The number of students allocated Free School Meals (FSM), was used as a measure for establishing Socio-economic status. Critics argue that using FSM numbers to establish socio-economic status is flawed as the option to utilise their right to FSM is on the individual student/family, and as the scheme is associated with poverty many don't use this opportunity.

#### 4.3.2.b. Access to education establishments

Access is one of the most difficult aspects of conducting education research (France, 2004). There are numerous gatekeepers involved in education research due to the hierarchical nature of education settings. These gatekeepers included Head Teachers, teachers, non-academic staff and parents. Each social group have their own roles and opinions and these can impact on the research process. It is often ideal to gain the support of an individual within the organization, who will act as your champion and may vouch for you and the value of your research. They can be valuable in directing you to events to increase networking opportunities or to individuals for inclusion. This was a tactic the researcher often employed for gaining access.

It was essential to approach the individual with the highest authority initially. Therefore; all letters and phone calls were addressed to the head teacher/Principal as they are often

the individuals who granted permission and informed other staff, at lower levels of your presence (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2007). Head Teachers are also more,

*“Open-minded than those lower down, who, because of their insecurity, may be less cooperative” (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2007, p.57).*

This is not always the case, as after gaining a relationship with one WBQ Coordinator who was keen to be involved in the research and some preliminary interview dates were scheduled, access was prevented by the Head Teacher. The WBQ Coordinator commented that he felt the reason was probably that the Head was concerned about a researcher presence. The school was aware of failings in their delivery but were attempting to rectify this without it damaging the schools highly regarded reputation.

From this point forward most of the initial approaches were made to the WBQ Coordinator directly, who had a better understanding of the value and contribution the research might have. The Coordinator often approached the Head Teacher on the researcher's behalf. My insider role provided the researcher with the knowledge that the WBQ Coordinators were the best individuals to approach, as they often had managerial status as well as good relationship with other teachers as they still had a teaching commitment as part of their contract.

Each gatekeeper had different ethical positions, power and beliefs (France, 2004). Satisfying the criteria of all gatekeepers could be complicated and involve difficult decisions for the researcher (France, 2004). Teachers are suspicious of researchers, assuming that the top management have sent them to evaluate and scrutinise their practice. WBQ Coordinators had to be reassured that the findings would not be sent to their senior management team, which could cause them to be dishonest in their answers or to even sabotage the research. Ensuring each individual of my credentials and professionalism often proved to be reassuring. Ensuring they understood that the conversation would remain private and all published data from the schools and colleges would be anonymised, was essential. Creating a level of trust with teachers can be achieved by highlighting your credentials, being non-judgmental and playing a role in the classroom (i.e. helping out). Adopting this active role can be problematic but you often have no choice (Van Maanen, 1988). The researcher was a teacher in the sector;

therefore, it was their intention to actively discuss my teaching status so that teachers would relate to me and be more likely to trust the researcher. This comradely allowed the researcher to access a full and detailed account from teachers.

Conducting research in an education establishment is often disruptive and therefore creating a realistic timetable that achieves planned research activities without disrupting everyday practice is essential. Teachers often accommodated for the research during the breaks. The time allocated for interviews was entirely governed by the interviewee, with them deciding the length and location of the interview.

#### 4.3.3.c. Researcher role

Clarifying the research role is an important stage of the Methodology, to ensure the research is credible. Making explicit the researchers biographical and philosophical position to locate themselves within the text and create a form of “audible authorship”, is vital (Charmez and Mitchell, 1997, p.197). The objective of developing a form of audible authorship will increase validity and provide a form of “validity-as-reflexive-account” (Atheleide and Johnson, 2013, p.340). As previously discussed, the researcher is a qualified teacher and had been working in the post-compulsory. The researcher identified herself as a teacher. This status identified the researcher as an insider in the schools and colleges in which the research was conducted. This insider role was not solely associated to their teacher status but as an active applied research student the researcher had been involved in collaborating with and attended events for/held by the policy community and had built relationships with these individuals.

As a teacher in the post-compulsory sector the researcher has accumulated numerous colleagues/contacts/friends that also work in the sector. These proved vital for attempting access but raised concerns about the researcher role. The literature focussing on the research role perceives the insider role to be part of a spectrum, on one end having “complete membership” whilst on the other end being a “complete stranger” (Adler and Adler, 1994). The researcher didn’t currently work in any of the education establishments that were included in the sample, but their identification as a teacher in the sector saw them located as a member on this spectrum. The researcher was still part of the same social group that the local level sample belonged to, just not the specific

institution (Breen, 2007). This forced the researcher to explore the myths and research surrounding insider/outsider status and place the researcher role as central to the production of knowledge.

The insider status is linked with both advantages and disadvantages. Those who adopt an insider status in their methodology believe that attributes of objectivity and distance render outsiders incapable of appreciating or fully understanding the reality in which they study. On the opposite end of this debate, others argue that researchers need objectivity and distance to conduct valid research on any social group. Bonner and Tolhurst (2002), identified the advantages to adopting an insider role. Advantages are linked to access, as the researchers identification as a fellow teacher often ensured that they were granted access and the trust endowed on them because of my status often made me privy to conversations which an outsider would have been exempt. This itself raised ethical considerations when interviewees responses might be something they regret sharing (Kirsh, 1999), or might impact or cause a loss of reputation/professionalism after publication (Seidman, 2006).

We conversed using insider language (“teacher talk”), which increased rapport. The researcher’s status gave the participants a greater respect for the research, confidence in the research and to be more willing to be involved. Being an insider supported the researcher’s ability to conduct the research as they were already aware of the environment. They had a greater understanding of the culture being studied and the political nature of the institution including the formal hierarchy and the reality of how it “really works”.

However, labelling the researcher as an insider, purely based on occupation failed to address other crucial differences between teachers in terms of gender, ethnicity and class (Skeggs, 2004).

*“Dichotomised rubrics such as ‘black/white’ or ‘insider/outsider’ are inadequate to capture the complex and multi-faceted experiences of some researchers such as ourselves, who find themselves neither total ‘insiders’ nor ‘outsiders’ in relation to the individuals they interview?” (Song and Parker, 1995, p. 243).*

The insider research role has numerous disadvantages including a loss of objectivity and an increased likelihood of researcher bias. The researchers own perspective will have impacted on the entire design, data collection, analysis and write up of the thesis. Their researcher perspective could affect the data collection and analysis process and it may impair their ability to receive, or be aware of important information (Vrasidas, 2001).

The research included a large sample and varying perspectives, alongside the researcher perspective creating a more objective account (Unuluer, 2012). During the interviews participants often made comments, which assumed you already know what they know. To counteract this, the researcher had to use further probing questions, asking them to unpack these terms or shared assumptions. Ethically, the insider role further complicated research in a number of ways and the researcher had to reflect on the impact their insider status had on coercion, compliance and access during the entire thesis. Being clear about their role to prevent concerns about role-duality was key (DeLyser, 2001). The researcher was concerned that participants may provide sensitive information and grant access to data they would not normally share with a researcher. This was evident that on many occasions they invited me back to the education establishment once the research was complete. The insider status caused an imbalance in the traditional intimacy between interviewer and interviewee (Rogan and de Kock, 2005). The researcher had to manage the reality that although an insider they were there to complete the research and move on to the next education establishment.

#### 4.3.3.d Participants

Table 5 presents key features of the micro level interviews. Details regarding the Number of years each school/FE college had offered the WBQ, whether it was a welsh/English/bilingual establishment and interview type are all located within the table. A more detailed profile of each school and college that made up my sample can be located in the appendices.

Table 5: Features of the micro level interviews

<b>School/College</b>	<b>English/Welsh medium</b>	<b>Number of years offering the WBQ</b>	<b>Interview type</b>
Suburbs school	English	3	Face to face
Town Pilot School	English	8	Face to face
City College	English	8	Face to face
Valley College	English	5	Face to face
Welsh City school	Welsh	7	Face to face
Rural school	Bilingual	8	Face to face
Coastal school	Welsh	4	Phone
North College	Bilingual	4	Phone
North School	Bilingual	7	Phone
Catholic school	English	1	Phone
Specialist School	English	2	Face to face

#### 4.4 Ethical considerations

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An application for ethical approval was conducted during the first year of the PhD (2011). A certificate of ethical approval was granted, after the ethics committee was satisfied that all ethical guidelines and codes of conduct were being followed, and all preparations had been made to ensure that these ethical guidelines would continue. The research will be conducted including the BERA ethical guidelines and the Cardiff Universities guidelines for ethical practice. As part of the ethics submission the Committee required the researcher to submit details regarding the sample, method and aims of the research. The researcher had to submit a copy of the consent form and information sheet to ensure these met with ethical guidelines. A copy of the ethical grant is included in the appendices.



All interviewees were given a consent form and information sheet which provided them with the researchers contact details, information about the research and some general information about the WBQ. It was explained that pseudonyms would be used for all the schools and colleges to protect their right to confidentiality and anonymity and the individuals from the policy community would be identified using their titles. The protection of the Policy Community was made difficult as positions and organizations were a vital part of the data, but they were also identifiable. After lengthy discussions with the supervisors, titles were used even though most interviewees were happy with full names to be used.

The consent form and transcripts which may have identifiable features are stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). They will be stored for three years after the submission of my thesis. All other identifiable data has been blacked out, removed or replaced with a pseudonym. The only individuals with access to the materials with identifiable features are the researcher and the supervisors.

## 4.5 Analysis

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### 4.5.1. Transcription

After each interview, the notes made during the interviews, were further expanded or audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. A dictaphone was used where possible to keep an accurate and complete account of the interview (Bryman, 2008). Where a dictaphone could not be used, notes were made during and immediately after the interview. Allowing that time was essential, as the researchers memory of the interview was at its best. These notes were then translated into formal typed notes later on. Transcription was an on-going process which occurred after each interview was conducted. This was important with this research as some interviews were only days apart, others were weeks/months apart. Examples of the transcribed interviews for the macro and micro level are located in the Appendices.

After transcribing all of the interviews, the researcher could move into the stage of using Thematic Analysis. Thematic Analysis was used to organize and structure the

findings as well as begin the process of analysing the data. The amount of data was overwhelming and this process of reduction and ordering was both essential and therapeutic for the researcher. It prevented the researcher from being overwhelmed by the quantity and overly captivated by the richness of the data which would have prevented them from finding an analytical pathway through the data.

#### 4.5.2. Thematic analysis

The researcher chose to use Thematic Analysis as a way of organizing the data and beginning the in-depth analysis of the material.

*“Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, it also often goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic” (Boyatzis, 1998).*

This thesis uses Braun and Clarke (2006), guide on the stages of Thematic Analysis as a template for which to conduct the research. This guide provided a useful tool as there are few well established or widely accepted rules for qualitative analysis with Thematic Analysis receiving its fair share of the criticism.

The Braun and Clarke (2006) guide to Thematic Analysis begins with familiarizing yourself with the data during the data collection, transcription and subsequent readings of the transcript (Reissman, 1993). During this stage the researcher annotated the transcript jotting down any thoughts and feelings they had during the reading (see Appendix). The decision was made to annotate and code the data manually.

The physical act of reading, annotating and colour coding the transcripts was the best method for the researcher for ensuring they were close to the data (Stewart, 2012). The researcher utilized a method of using different colours to represent different themes that they were developing. Examples of transcripts colour coded by themes are located in the Appendices. The decision not to use any qualitative software packages, such as Nvivo or Atlas-ti, was made as the researcher liked the closeness of working physically with the data (Stewart, 2012). The researcher had training on the use of CAQDAS packages

but felt that physically analysing the data by hand would assist in the structuring of the work. Further reservations were expressed, by the researcher about using a quantitative approach to qualitative data and that CAQDAS packages often force you to assume a hierarchy to your themes early on (Stewart, 2012). The software does not do the analytical thinking for you and the researcher wanted the freedom provided by analysing physically. The researcher could not perceive any significant benefit to using a CAQDAS package and did not want to use it for the sake of it, resulting in a “prolonged, inefficient, unfocussed analysis” (King, 2010 cited in Stewart, 2012 p.504). Stewart (2012), also raises concerns that these packages “encourage too much granularity over generalization (p.505).

All transcripts were annotated on the left-hand side and these notes were refined and reduced on the right-hand side of the transcript. The annotations and list on the right-hand side of each transcript were further refined and became the list of codes (see Appendix).

*“Codes identify a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that appears interesting to the analyst, and refer to “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon” (Boyatzis, 1998: 63).*

Coding was conducted by further highlighting the annotated transcript to highlight potential patterns. Coding was very thorough, with every element of the transcript coded. Contradictions were of particular interest as at this stage as the researcher was still unsure what was going to be important. Braun and Clarke (2006), suggest creating as many codes as possible during this stage to prevent early focusing. After producing a long list of codes from all the transcripts the researcher began to make connections between the codes and identifying patterns. This was achieved by physically cutting out all of the codes and then clustering them into groups. Once a pattern or cluster of codes was determined, this group of codes were assigned a theme name, which represented all the codes that made up the cluster.

*“A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p10).*

Thematic Analysis is not a linear process and even in these latter stages the researcher must move back and forth between the entire data set, the coded extracts and the analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Once a significant list of themes had been established the researcher began to make connections between themes searching for patterns between them, once a cluster of themes had been identified the researcher developed a main theme name which represents the entire cluster. These became the 8 main themes (see appendix). The main themes included *“Implementation”*, *“Inclusivity”*, *“Rigor”*, *“Skills development”*, *“Training”*, *“Value”*, *“Future development”* and *“Creativity”* (see appendix).

This process involved making important decisions about what counts as a theme in terms of size and prevalence. Measuring size or prevalence as a means of determining the validity of a theme was impossible for this thesis as the policy community interviews were conducted on one individual who represented an entire social group and a recurrent theme in their transcript may not appear again in the rest of the data set. The themes generated captured something important in relation to the research questions rather than being based on any quantifiable size or prevalence. The themes identified and analysed will be an accurate reflection of the content of the entire data set.

Thematic Analysis is not completed after the six stages have been conducted, with the writing stage being the final stage of analysis. The researcher adopted a semantic approach to theme identification, initially focussing on surface meanings and not looking beyond what is said. Then in the findings chapters the researcher used these themes as a tool for organising and structuring the chapters. The researcher was developing the themes by attempting to theorise the significance of the patterns and their broader meaning and implications (Patton, 1990). This additional level of analysis was often established by linking the themes with relevant literature.

Thematic Analysis is not without a great deal of criticism with critiques concerned that Thematic Analysis is often poorly demarcated yet a widely used qualitative method

(Boyatzis, 1998). In using the Braun and Clarke (2006) guide, the researcher hoped to create further standardisation and create a clear and coherent account of the method which could be easily replicated. Despite the application of a rigorous research design and continuous revisions, researchers are inevitably providing an interpretation of the data generated as the research is influenced by the knowledge frames and values of the researcher (Adkins, 2002).

The justification for using Thematic Analysis was the flexibility that it offered the research. The researcher did not want to be tied to a theoretical framework.

*“Through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data” (Braun and Clarke 2006, p.5).*

Thematic Analysis provided a tool for which the researcher could order the data in a meaningful way and begin to divide the findings into subject (theme) areas, for presentation.

#### 4.5.3 Conclusion

It was the intention that this chapter would provide the reader with a detailed description of the methodology. Relevant literature was used as justification for the choices in research design, participant selection and analysis. This chapter maps out the entire process of conducting the research in the hope of providing transparency in the research. There is a tendency in academic writing in the Social Sciences to obfuscate with abstractions rather than clarify with specificity and this research intends to provide the reader with all the essential ingredients that the reader can imagine the reality of conducting the research.

The following chapters will now aim to unpack the findings, linking them with relevant research and literature, where appropriate. The researcher will be drawing on the individual themes identified during the Thematic Analysis and using them as a means of telling the story of the WBQ, from creation to implementation.

# Chapter 5: Creation, Development and the Early Years.

In the previous Methodology chapter, it was highlighted that this thesis is a form of qualitative policy trajectory research. This thesis aims to understand the development and implementation of the WBQ across the macro, meso and micro level. This chapter focuses on plotting the chronology of the policy through the voices of the primary interviewees. As the findings are governed by the primary interviews some areas and moments are given more time, while others have been entirely missed. The gaps in the history will be supplemented with the researcher's knowledge of the time period alongside, the analysis of the documents. Through the interviews the researcher has identified key events /moments, that impacted on the creation of the WBQ. However, interviewees may have failed to address some of the smaller contextual changes that may have equally impacted on the creation. Plotting the chronology of a policy can be difficult as,

*“When one starts to trace the history of a proposal or concern back through time, there is no logical place to stop the process” (Kingdon, 1984, p.77).*

This chapter contains the voices of the policy community interviewees, from the macro and meso level. The interviewees were reflecting on this time period. These diverse voices will map the trajectory of the policy, from initial idea to working reality. The literature and a working definition of “policy communities” can be located in chapter 2. The Methodology chapter (chapter 4), provides a detailed account of how the researcher identified the policy community and the data collection process.

This chapter will be drawing on Kingdon's (1984), theory of policy formation, called the “*Multiple Streams Model*”, as a way of explaining the creation of the WBQ. A detailed account of this model is located in chapter 2. Kingdon's (1984), theory of policy development will provide a useful framework for understanding the development of the WBQ. The researcher will identify the 3 policy streams throughout this chapter and

explain how these three streams converged, resulting in a policy window opening and the creation of the WBQ.

### 5.1. Kingdon's Multiple Streams Model: Problem stream

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All policies are created/motivated by the discourse and social problems that exist. Problems can arise through the occurrence of a crisis or dramatic event, through the gradual accumulation of knowledge amongst the policy community, fads, and via political changes including changes in leadership, elections and public mood (Kingdon, 1984). Identifying the policy communities key motivations for the adoption of the WJEC, WBQ, will help the researcher identify the problems the WBQ attempted to address. These problems form the problem stream. Wales has its own set of individual problems within the post-compulsory education sector, outlined within the Introduction.

There was a large variation in the reasons outlined by stakeholders that motivated them to supporting/resisting the adoption of a baccalaureate for Wales. The original objectives of the WBQ outlined in the Learning Country (2001), included breaking the academic, vocational divide, inclusivity, adding breadth to the current traditional system deemed overly specialized, providing employability skills and cultural awareness (WAG, 2001). This section intends to highlight the interviewee's justifications for supporting/rejecting the WJEC created WBQ. Understanding the motivations behind its inception is vital to understanding why it was created, who it was aimed at, and what was the intended place it would have in Welsh post-compulsory education. It will also help identify if the initial motivations/objectives have changed during implementation and interpretation.

#### 5.1.1 .Inclusivity

The WBQ represented a dilemma we have witnessed in the creation of education reform and public policy for the last 30 years. The notion that to improve quality in education, policy makers must manage this paradoxical reality, by treating all students alike regardless of their ability or desired trajectory, while still being attentive to the

individual (Lipsky, 1980). An effective curriculum should be inclusive but have the opportunity for personalization. Inclusivity was one of the key motivators for the WBQ.

Recommendations and objectives outlined in the Learning Country (2001), hinted that the WBQ would be ideal for eradicating the vocational/academic divide. Interviewees wanted a baccalaureate qualification whereby vocational and academic qualifications had parity of esteem. They felt students should be able to mix and match vocational and academic qualifications to create a combination that suited their individual talent and academic needs. The structure of the WBQ allows for students to create an educational package most closely aligned with their own talent, academic interest and desired trajectories. The majority do not combine vocational and academic qualifications. The WBQ has failed to achieve this objective, with the persuasion for reform not strong enough to break the equilibrium of the political era (Hodgson and Spours, 2006). The opportunity for combining vocational and academic qualifications, as well as a core that utilizes both academic styles of learning alongside more kinaesthetic styles of learning does provide a more inclusive qualification, suited to wider range of individuals. Many Interviewees thought it was essential that the WBQ be suitable for all students regardless of their desired academic trajectory. Supporters wanted the WBQ to add breadth to a curriculum that has being regular criticized for being too narrow and overly specialized (Finegold et al, 1990).

*“We needed to create a curriculum that suited all students and had the breadth that was missing from the current A Levels” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

The policy community also wanted the qualification to have the opportunity for individual personalization within the core, so students could tailor elements to their individual interests, and desired academic and employment trajectories. The scope for personalisation was perceived to be a key success of the WBQ by the study conducted by WISERD (Taylor et al, 2012). The report recommended that all institutions strive for high levels of personalisation which would ensure the WBQ be deemed valuable in accessing HE. These new forms of policy that allow for flexibility in implementation and the opportunity for personalization have been popular for the last twenty years.



*“A flexible curriculum that enabled much more local adaptability than there is in the present Bill, because the teachers and the Headmaster are the only ones who really know what their pupils are best suited for” (Ball, 1990, p.141).*

A flexible policy that allows Head Teachers and Principals the opportunity to adapt policy to their local setting will create the most effective learning packages that suit their diverse student body. However, ensuring inclusivity and personalization can be extremely difficult and little research went into addressing the difficulties schools faced with when trying to provide opportunities for individualization, within the WBQ Core.

### 5.1.2 Increasing breadth

The timing was a vital component in the success of the WBQ. There was a growing concern about the over specialization of A Levels. This concern was often highlighted in the media, and regularly enters academic and political debate.

*“This was before even AS levels were introduced. We were only offering deep learning, not wider learning” (ex-Minister for Education and skills).*

*“We needed to create a curriculum that suited all students and had the breadth that was missing from the current A levels” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

*“Concern that the current system was too narrow, especially for post-14 education” (Head of WJEC pilot).*

Recommendations from the Dearing Review (1996), focussed on adding breadth to the post-16 education system. These recommendations had a huge impact in pushing the WBQ forward, and highlighted the importance of adding breadth to our current system (Dearing, 1996). Even though the conclusions published by Dearing (1996), did little to dispel concerns. The majority still viewed the academic and vocational tracks as separate from each other and relied on the continuation of A Levels as the key component underpinning 16-19 qualifications. The WBQ seemed to be the remedy for keeping the current system, whilst still adding breadth. Therefore, by creating the WBQ

and adding the core elements to the students existing curriculum choices could both add breath as well as develop key skills.

Increasing breadth also included the continuation of key skills development up until to the age of 18. Key skills development was perceived by universities and employers as deemed.

*“Increasing the breadth of learning and learning is underpinned by key skills”  
(Civil Servant).*

The population of Wales have a wide ranging socio economic status. Wales also has variations in regions, from agriculture, industry and mining centres to large sprawling cosmopolitan cities. This has resulted in variations in attainment and key skills. The collapse of the steel and coal mining industries has resulted in the prioritization of key skills development to ensure welsh student’s entry into the “*knowledge economy*” (Rees, 2002). On average Wales’ students were not doing as well as the students of neighbouring countries, preventing welsh students competing in a global market. Concerns about literacy and numeracy levels in Wales led the Minster to enter Wales into PISA.

*“It was also at a time when numeracy and literacy were on the agenda and why I got involved in PISA. We needed to be consolidating skills, rather than just straight learning” (ex-Minister for Education and Skills).*

The continued concerns about low PISA scores in Wales have ensured a continuing commitment to supporting and maintaining the WBQ, past its inception. The WBQ is seen to be a vital tool in raising key skills in Wales and ensuring welsh students can compete in a global market.

### 5.1.3 Accessing higher education/employment

The traditional A Level system has repeatedly faced opposition by various social groups including HEI’s, teachers unions as well as Ministers (Mathieson, 1992). However, A Levels are still the criteria used to assess a student’s ability for undergraduate study by

HEI's. Therefore, when deciding on which model of baccalaureate would be appropriate, a unified approach was deemed less contentious, whilst also catering to the needs of a growing population of sixth formers. A large proportion of this growing population would have not stayed on a decade before (Mathieson, 1992). Critics of the unified model termed it a, "*half way house, between A levels and an International Baccalaureate*". The IWA proposal was rejected on the grounds that such extreme divergence would not be ideally suited to welsh students seeking employment or HE elsewhere. The over specialization of A Levels was seen as a significant problem but adopting a significantly different baccalaureate structure would cause problems for welsh students accessing HE.

One of the other key motivations, discussed by interviewees was providing welsh students with better experiences and opportunities for accessing HE or employment. The inclusion of work experience components, team enterprise activities, CV writing, communication and community participation, as part of the WBQ Core aimed to provide students with employability skills.

*"The WBQ is essential for better preparing students for employment or higher education and would provide a better structure for post 16 students" (Director of a Teaching Union).*

Ensuring students could use the qualification to gain entry into the university of their choice was of huge importance for policy makers.

*"There is a lot at stake for the Welsh Bac because it because if there is this diversion then the Welsh Bac in terms of its currency" (local Authority).*

Therefore, securing the 120 UCAS points for the WBQ Core was key for promoting and advertising the WBQ, to universities. A high proportion of welsh students travel across the border for HE and maintaining this was extremely important to the success of the WBQ.

*"We also had to ensure that Welsh students could use this to access any university of their choice" (ex-Minister for Education and Skills).*

The WBQ Core contains opportunities for students to conduct references, interviews, in- depth research, enhanced writing skills and guidance on the UCAS application procedures. These skills are essential for students in accessing HE.

Interestingly access to HE was not an original aim of the WBQ, but merely an accident as a result of UCAS granting the WBQ core 120 UCAS points. Now, the WBQ is often solely valued as a vehicle for accessing HE, rather than an opportunity for skills development or for tackling any of the original intentions set out by the Learning Country (2001). University acceptance has taken time, but was extremely aided by UCAS recognising the WBQ core as 120 UCAS points. Many universities still have mixed feelings about the WBQ, reflected in the varied offers they give out. Many HEIs are still rating it lower than the 120 UCAS points, others not recognizing it at all.

*“Still an issue around the credibility nationally and across the border in terms of its currency and how it will be used to secure entry into higher education”  
(Local Authority).*

The type of university will also impact on its likelihood of acceptance, with those offering places based on points being more likely to accept the WBQ at the 120 UCAS points. Universities making offers based on subjects tend to have more varied acceptance. Elite universities are often less likely to accept the WBQ, than the new red brick universities.

*“Probably why some universities especially the elite universities don't like it because they want only the best and the Welsh Bac doesn't let them see who those students are” (Suburbs school).*

The undergraduate course that students apply for can also impact on whether the WBQ is offered, with subjects such as Medicine being notorious for not accepting the WBQ as a part of their offer, or if it is accepted having no impact or reduction in the other requirements of the course.

*“A lot of work has gone into increasing the recognition of the WBQ in universities and in general it has been well received even with a few universities still resisting. The problem there is such a huge number of admission tutors each with their own opinions etc. There is still a lot more to do with regards of raising the profile and acceptance of the WBQ in universities” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

This mixed acceptance was attributed to the lack of grading, making it impossible for universities to determine the best students. This has now changed since the Review of Qualifications (2012), recommending it is graded. Grading was implemented in September 2015 (WG, 2012). It will be interesting to determine over the coming years if grading will impact positively on recognition by HEIs, but this is beyond the scope of this thesis.

#### 5.1.4 Raising standards, increasing experiences and doing something different

The WBQ was also seen to be providing the opportunity to do something new and innovative in Wales. It was hoped it would raise standards and give welsh students an edge in a competitive global market. Initially the lack of an examination procedure was seen as a key objective of the WBQ, with the value being in the wealth of experiences and improvement in key skills, rather than on the generation of a grade value to determine knowledge gained. The WBQ aimed to be:

*“Offering something very different for students. Offering a valuable course which is not related to performance measures” (WJEC WBQ Development Officer).*

Unfortunately, many stakeholders including universities and employers, although stated that experience is a vital factor in the selection process also like individuals to gain a value to determine their ability. The history of post compulsory education in Wales means we are strongly tied to the traditional academic practices such as examinations and providing a grade value (Ball, 1990).

It was also important for Jane Davidson the Minister for Education at the time, that the qualification provided students with the opportunity to learn about Wales, its language, culture and heritage and for this to be a prominent theme in the finalized structure of the WBQ. This was included in the “*Wales, Europe and the world*” component of the Core. The opportunity for integrating these key components was also available throughout the various other elements of the Core. This was not the first time a curriculum reform had attempted to include elements of national identity. The National curriculum also had similar objectives as the WBQ. The WBQ also tried to instil a community element by making community participation and volunteerism a compulsory element of the WBQ. It attempted to create well-rounded individuals, aware of the community in which they inhabit. Another key motivator for the Minister was ensuring welsh students had the opportunity to continue foreign language study until the age of 18. This was perceived to be important giving the dramatic decrease in students enrolling on foreign language study in Wales.

The problems identified above could be rectified using the solution the Minister advocated for, the introduction of the WBQ.

## 5.2. Kingdon’s Multi Streams model: Political stream

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Kingdon (1984) discussed how if the macro political conditions are optimum the political stream can lead to policy formation. Devolution, the coalition, changes to leadership as well as public mood all contributed to creating the right climate for the development of the WBQ. This chapter will discuss some of these changes below and highlight how they formed what Kingdon (1984), would term the political stream.

### 5.2.1 Devolution

Chapter 2, provided a detailed account of the devolution settlement and highlighted how the creation of the National Assembly (1998), impacted on the development of diverse policy, including the WBQ.

During the Welsh Office years the Civil Servants' role was to merely implement Westminster created policies, with some limited opportunities for adaption.

*“Historically Civil Servants in Wales had just introduced English policies with a bit of welshness tagged on” (ex-Minister for Education and Skills).*

Devolution in Wales was a theme that repeatedly came up by many interviewees who focused on the opportunity that it provided for the creation of a distinctive qualification for Wales. The *“Learning Country”* (2001), document outlined in chapter 3, introduced the WBQ and many discussed their reactions to its publication, or their involvement in its development.

The Labour, Liberal Democrat coalition enhanced the ability of the government to pursue a coherent policy program, resulting in the creation of the WBQ (Rees, 2002. p.108). The power and independence devolution offered Wales coupled with new leadership, ultimately impacted on the success of the WBQ development.

*“I got the permission from coalition manifestos but the delivery was mine” (ex-Minister for Education and Skills).*

The changes to the leadership in Wales and the alliances formed after the referendum meant it was the;

*“Right time for Wales to have a change which was helped by a coalition with the Liberal Democrats who had committed to the introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate” (ex-Minister for Education and Skills).*

The timing and popularity of the new Minister ensured support at the macro level, as well as by the population of Wales.

*“Mood of the membership then was let's do something wholly different it was around the time Tomlinson was going on. So it was a case of let's do something*

*wholly different and let's do a diploma or something" (Director of a Teaching Union).*

The WBQ has now become *"Wales's flagship qualification post devolution" (WJEC WBQ development officer)*. The creation of the WBQ curriculum hints at a demise of the National Curriculum framework, made possible by the Education Reform Act (1988), in Wales.

### 5.2.2 Ministerial influence

This IWA proposal was drastically changed to form the qualification we have today, but support for this original model still exists. The Minister for Education at the time felt, *"the International Baccalaureate was inappropriate" (ex-Minister for Education)* for tackling some of the more pervasive issue in the Welsh education system.

The WBQ came at a time in the history of devolved Wales often referred to as the, *"Jane Davidson Era" (Policy Advisor)*. This sense of ownership and the legacy she has created ensured the success, support and uptake of the WBQ. Interviewees further explained how the WBQ was created from the Ministers individual ideas about the structure and content of the WBQ, and how it should fit into the current system and include the well-established traditional qualifications. Initially the policy community had,

*"Wanted a Bac that looked like other Bacs worldwide in counties that have such animals. Then of course it all fell apart rather dramatically and then Jane Davidson decided that she could create something that looked like baccalaureate without drastic changes to the current system, it is still not actually a bac but it's closer to bac than the English baccalaureate" (Director of a Teaching Union)*

This is not the first time the overruling of a previously supported proposal in favour of a Ministers desired outcome has occurred. Ball (1990) published a book focussing on the creation and implementation of the National Curriculum. Ball details how the inclusion



of practical math was a hugely supported initiative but was overruled to keep in line with Secretary for States vision (Ball, 1990 p.202).

*“The interpretations, ambitions, personal concerns, personality and commitment of the Secretary of State, are to become increasingly significant in the determination of curriculum policy” (Ball, 1990, p.139).*

The case of the WBQ provided another example of the hierarchy in policy-making and how some voices/social groups carry more weight and have more influence than others. When the Minister is seriously considering a proposal and chooses to make it a priority, other participants in government follow suit (Kingdon, 1984). Jane Davidson was a popular Minister in both political circles as well as with the citizens of Wales. Her supporters enabled the WBQ to remain high on the agenda and ensured its continued support and development. The next section will further explore the role of the Minister in the development of the WBQ, using Kingdon's model (1984)

### 5.2.3 Policy entrepreneurs

The various social problems in education became part of what Kingdon (1984), termed the Problem Stream, and these social problems can reach the agenda guided by Ministers and other policy elites. Kingdon (1984), identifies what he terms Policy Entrepreneurs who highlight and dramatize the problem, accentuating the problem above all others and then identify very specific solutions to tackle these problems. Additional literature on the role and defining characteristics of policy entrepreneurs is located in Chapter 2. Policy Entrepreneurs are responsible for highlighting and pushing their solution, convincing officials and policy makers to see the problem the way they want it to be seen, and to use their own solutions (Kingdon, 1984). This next section will explain how the interviewees demonstrate that the Minister was one such policy entrepreneur. Jane Davidson covers the main criteria for being a policy entrepreneur in that she demonstrates sheer persistence in pushing through this policy, has the ability to speak for others due to her position, and has the political connections and position for negotiating policy formation.

During the period when the IWA proposal was in consideration, the Minister was very clear about her opinion of adopting this model. The Minister felt the IB and IWA baccalaureate proposal would be a successful academic qualification, but would only suit a small proportion of the student body in Wales. It would be costly, time consuming and potentially detrimental for students crossing the border for higher education. It was therefore deemed “*not fit for purpose*” (ex-Minister for Education and Skills) and the current structure was created. The Minister’s influence was so apparent that, “*once Jane Davidson decided the International Baccalaureate was not appropriate*” (WJEC Head of Pilot), then it was rejected and a new structure created.

*“Jane Davidson the Minister for Lifelong Learning at the time was a key driver in the inspiration and development of the Welsh Baccalaureate”*  
(CollegesWales).

Any policy proposal will be rejected if it is not compatible with the Ministers values, and ideals (Kingdon, 1984). The Minister already had a very clear idea about the content and structure of the WBQ. She already had the solution; she just needed the right problem(s) to attach it to. According to Kingdon (1984), Policy Entrepreneurs;

*“Lie in wait in an around government with their solutions already in hand, waiting for problems to float by to which the can attach their solutions, waiting for a development in the political stream they can use to their solutions, waiting for a development in the problem stream they can use to their advantage”*  
(Kingdon, 1984, p.165).

Policy Entrepreneur are often vital for what Kingdon (1984, p. 134), refers to as the “softening up” process which is essential for ensuring the policy is a success.

*“These entrepreneurs attempt to “soften up” both policy communities, which tend to be inertia-bound and resistant to major changes, and larger publics, getting them used to new ideas and building acceptance for their proposals”*  
(Kingdon, 1984, p.134).

To prevent any resistance new proposals are often just re-packaged initiatives with familiar elements, so the idea is not completely new.

*“The second real version of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification was a practical and achievable qualification for welsh students” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

Policy Entrepreneurs “*soften them up*”, by educating their fellow specialists about the prominence of a particular problem or the importance of a proposal (Kingdon, 1984). Softening up the public is also vital to ensure the relevant public is ready for a proposal when the time is right. Policy entrepreneurs initially prevent resistance by floating trial balloons to gauge receptivity. This process is vital as many proposals fail as they are introduced too early.

Jane Davidson had a huge influence on the shaping and development of the final WBQ structure. Some interviews even suggested that the creation of such distinctive and divergent policies that include the introduction of the WBQ and the Foundation Phase were created by Jane Davidson purely as an act of creating a legacy during her time as the Minister for Education. Some were concerned that the Ministers preoccupation with creating this legacy overrides any concern for raising attainment in Wales.

*“Then there is a change of leadership and they need to create a new initiative to have as their legacy” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

Many interviewees outlined Jane Davidson’s influence on the WBQ and how in turn its success has contributed to her legacy. The explanation for why many Policy Entrepreneurs promote policy is advancement and legacy building (Kingdon, 1984). Interviews discussed the considerable time it takes to develop and implement large scale change in education and how time consuming it is to change the mind-set of the entire education community.

*“Cultural change in education like most things it takes much longer than governments are prepared to give because they operate in four year timescales*

*and they want to make impact within those times” (Head of General Teaching Council).*

Ministers have a limited time to create and implement something new and innovative that will become a part of their legacy. Therefore, large scale change can feel rushed and unplanned. Planning and effective delivery can save a great deal of time but any additional time can be costly. The quote below highlights how other individuals suspect that policy development is often associated with legacy building

*“One thing that struck me about this was how important the role of the individual was and how politically useful curriculum, qualification and assessment initiative can be in career building but sometimes take a long time to find their feet” (Head of General Teaching Council).*

Policies can also change over time to fit, because of changes in Ministers and the agendas they choose to focus on. Jane Davidson felt the WBQ could add breadth for Welsh students, promote inclusivity and provide the opportunity for vocational and academic qualification combinations. Ministers since Jane Davidson have promoted the WBQ differently using their own agendas as motivation for its continuation. These changes to Ministerial leadership may help to explain the change of focus and changes to the original objectives.

In the Methodology one section focussed on how the policy community often presented multiple identities within their interviews, particularly focussing on their identity as a previous practitioner. The Minister deployed this tactic regularly during her interview. This section will explain her motivations for using this tactic. The Ministers own education philosophy as well as her experiences as a teacher, meant she felt she could create a successful post-compulsory qualification that could work successfully at ground level. Her experience as a teacher meant she felt she had a good idea of the problems faced within a classroom, and for the students that inhabit them.

*“The Welsh Baccalaureate was created by a teacher for a teacher (ex-Minister for Education and Skills).*

The quote above from the Minister for Education at the time demonstrates a tactic she employed to get other teachers to relate to her and support her policy proposals. Being relatable to different social groups will ensure your message is more widely received and supported. Additionally, personal experiences can ensure problems/proposals rise on the government agenda (Kingdon, 1984). Policy entrepreneurs often use their personal experience to gain support, so surrounding herself with other ex-teachers would be essential to ensure the proposal was accepted.

The Ministers view for how the WBQ should be structured; the content, value and assessment procedures had a huge impact on the final version.

*“Jane Davidson decided that she could create something that looked like baccalaureate without drastic changes to the current system”* (Director of a Teaching Union).

The new WBQ structure included the well-established traditional qualifications (A levels and BTEC’s etc.). This was a clever option, as many stakeholders are resistant to reform which includes divergence from these popular traditional qualifications. The Minister was adamant she wanted to keep the existing traditional qualifications which were still highly valued in Wales but to add breadth and diversity to the current system and allow the opportunity for personalization. *“The modal is more like curricula rather than a curriculum”* (Ex-minister for education and skills). It was also important to the Minister that the WBQ included;

*“A Welsh element teaching students about the country in which they live in, including its language, history and culture”* (WJEC Head of WBQ pilot).

Many of the ideas and requirements the Minister had for the WBQ became part of the WJEC model. This structure was going to be less costly to implement. Therefore, this structure was a *“practical and achievable qualification for welsh students”* (Director of a Teaching Union) (Kingdon, 1984).

Many of the interviews recognized that all policies including the WBQ have “*a fairly clear political steer*” (Civil servant). The leader’s agendas at the time had a huge influence over the policies created.

*“A lot of it is down to political direction them saying we are going to have a pilot and we are going to have a roll out” (Civil servant).*

Jane Davidson is well known for the contributions she made to the Welsh education system during her time as Minister including the introduction of the Foundation Stage as well as the WBQ and they have formed part of her legacy. She has remained an avid supporter of the WBQ, and is very proud of her achievements during her time in office. She claims her education philosophy has not changed and that the WBQ still has real role to play in the Welsh Education system, 10 years on. “*The “Learning Country” and “Vision into action” are my go to reads. My education philosophy still hasn’t changed*” (Ex-minister for Education and skills). Having such a senior person and her team defending and promoting the WBQ is extremely important to ensuring policy effectiveness and success (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). A senior team all dedicated to its inception, prevents extremely diverse perspectives, conflict and multiple clearances than can impact on implementation (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). Her position allowed her to develop additional targets for the policy, some of which were deemed unachievable by the policy community.

*“Statement in there that by 2010 that we would have 25% of the learners doing the welsh baccalaureate and I remember my colleague looking at me as if well where did that come from and it had come from the ministerial stage not from us and we both looked at each other and said well that’s not ever going to happen” (Civil Servant)*

*“Top federal officials who wish large accomplishments-from small resources in a short time- and those who must implement them-career bureaucrats and local participants characterized by high needs and low cohesion” (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973).*

Good leadership skills and support for a policy can impact on the success of the policy. Many policies lose momentum very quickly after their inception, if not properly managed, financed or if the leadership is not strong.

*“We often have problems maintaining the momentum. Initially there was a major launch and it was the flavour of the month” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

However, the Minister’s unwavering commitment to the introduction of the WBQ helped to ensure its success. Some interviewees attributed the WBQ success to her length of leadership and believe that without it the WBQ may not have been as successful. The absence of that leader for any reason can lead to the authority's power dissolving.

#### 5.2.4. Multi-disciplinary policy making

Although it is clear that the Minister had a huge impact on the adoption of the WBQ; *“Public policy is not one single actor’s brainchild” (Kingdon, 1984, p.76).*

*“Ideas come from anywhere, actually, and the critical factor that explains the prominence of an item on the agenda is not its source, but instead the climate in government or the receptivity to ideas of a given type, regardless of source” (Kingdon, 1984, p.76).*

Stating that one individual single handily influenced and ensured the creation of a policy would fail to acknowledge the importance of the multiple complex factors and numerous individuals that contributed and aided its development. It is always a combination of individuals who provide the resources, popularity, experience and position to bring an idea to fruition. What is interesting is that many of the interviews explained that the creation of the WBQ was solely down to the Minister and failed to acknowledge the role of Multi-disciplinary policy-making.

Devolution provided Wales with new mechanisms and opportunities for negotiation and brokering, and a more open policy formation process. Welsh Government encouraged

the use of multi-disciplinary policy making and the inclusion of views from different political parties, professional bodies, stakeholders and civil servants (Rees, 2007). This was the one of the first occurrences of different social groups having an involvement in policy making, which had previously not occurred under administrative devolution.

Once the WJEC had won the tender to develop the WBQ (even though they were the only proposal), there was a time of development and adjustment.

*“WJEC won the tender and there was some toing and froing and some slight adjustments to the model and then the steering group” (Civil servant).*

Once the contract for developing and piloting the WBQ was in place, a steering group was created. The steering group was made up of organizations and stakeholders throughout the Welsh education community, to aide in the creation of the WBQ. They were supported by the WJEC, WBQ project team who assisted in the roll out of the pilot. The WBQ project team was made up of a handful of elite members;

*“Small team of us initially like four who did all the brain storming around baccalaureates” (CollegesWales).*

It was hoped that a steering group made up of various individuals, who each represent another stakeholder’s viewpoint, would be the most effective and fair method for designing the WBQ. The steering group was responsible for advising the Minister on piloting a new bilingual post-16 qualification (The Welsh Baccalaureate). They were also responsible for ensuring that this new qualification adhered to its original objectives including;

1. Meeting the need of the wide range of students in Wales
2. Promoting access and Inclusion
3. Encourage participation and success
4. Adding breadth to study (including provision for community action & participation so students can better meet the economic and social needs of Wales on leaving full time education)
5. Providing parity to academic and vocational qualifications



6. Teach students about the distinct culture and heritage of Wales as well as broader national comparisons.

The steering committee was also responsible for safeguarding students involved in the pilot, and ensuring a thorough evaluation prior to roll out. These regular meetings were usually centred on the discussion of one element/component of the WBQ. They were responsible for advising Assembly Officials on additional/revised objectives and to monitor and steer the development of the qualification throughout the pilot. For a proposal to survive it needs to be technically feasible. The responsibility of addressing many of the practicalities of implementation was on the steering committee (Kingdon, 1984).

*“Advocates of a proposal must delve deeply into details and into technicalities, gradually eliminating inconsistencies, attending to the feasibility of implementation, and specifying the actual mechanisms by which an idea would be brought into practical use” (Kingdon, 1984, p.138).*

The *“Use of multi-disciplinary teams is essentially vital for sharing good practice” (WJEC WBQ Development Officer)*. The steering committee members included a number of individuals within Welsh Government as well as representatives from ACCAC, ESTYN, UCAS, HE Wales, ELWa and Business Wales.

*“We had a steering group set up by us, we brought in people like well ACCAC were involved we had representatives from HE Wales, representatives from industry, representatives from UCAS and ESTYN as well plus once WJEC had won they were involved” (Civil servant).*

The individuals from each organization were chosen to represent various view points in the education community. However, these social groups still just replicate the elite members of the policy community, with no representation from practitioners. After each steering group meeting a contract monitoring group followed; in which members of the steering group met with members of the WJEC, Fforwm (WBQ development partners) and the University of Bath.

*“We had a tripartite system between the WJEC, Colleges Wales and the University of Bath.....The project team had the “contract in 2001 that wasn’t launched until 2003 so that period of eighteen months to twenty four months were the development stage” (Colleges Wales).*

As the WBQ grew and developed so did the number of stakeholders and viewpoints involved in its creation.

*“Other bodies/organizations have become more involved, we now have a careers Wales network who can promote and support the WBQ” (WJEC WBQ Development Officer).*

The internal (Bath University) and external evaluation (Nottingham University) were also conducted to evaluate and inform the developers during the early years of any challenges/complications. The external evaluators agreed with roll out.

The combination of organizations included in the development was seen as important but further replicated the concern that policy is created by the elite, with limited contribution by practitioners. The Minister still had the final say in any amendments. All the work, ideas and planning completed by the steering committee could still be overruled by the Minister, and their viewpoint ignored (Ball, 1994). This new method of multi-disciplinary policy making in Wales has succeeded in opening up new avenues for social groupings that had previously been excluded. However, not all social groups are equally or proportionately represented. This research has suggested that the success of multi-disciplinary policy making initiatives has been limited and there is still a long way to go. Further research alongside this small case study is essential. Rees (2007) states however that;

*“The advent of parliamentary devolution has served to improve and intensify the interaction between those groups which have been central to the policy-making process all along: politicians, civil servants, professional organizations and local education authorities” (Rees, 2007, p.15).*

The creation of the steering group which combined a vast collection of viewpoints, the internal and external review and the feedback from the pilot centres has meant that the final structure is an amalgamation of influences and interests, from both within and outside the DES. It contains compromises, assertions and some vagaries. Each Individual had their own interpretations and motivations for the WBQ which would become part of the reworking of the policy but could result in dislocation and conflict within that process (Ball, 1990). This resulted in a combination of ideas and debate about the structure and content from various stakeholders and organizations as well as some policy borrowing from successful cases worldwide. Ball (1990) terms this the “*Pot pourri effect*” (p.182). Policies are in some case not a complete text but a combination of compromises, viewpoints and often end up a; “*cannibalized product of multiple influences and agendas*” (Ball, 1994, p.16). These multiple viewpoints tend to be those of the elite who are compromised by financial planning and political agendas and not with improving the quality of teaching and learning.

#### 5.2.5. Practitioner versus government created policy

Solutions are created by specialists from within the policy community. This section will discuss who these specialists are, what role they play, and which social groups are excluded from policy making. One of the endemic debates that plague national policy creation is who creates it and the lack of dialogue and input the practitioners have in its development. National education policy is predominantly created by elite policy makers. Practitioners feel policy makers don’t have a real understanding of the difficulties of actually implementing education policy within the various education settings. Devolution reduced this concern with the creation of the National Assembly committee, providing the opportunity for a variation of individuals and organizations to present their opinions on policy creation (Jones and Osmond, 2001).

This debate was reflected in the interviews with some stating that the elite policy makers had created a policy unsuitable for welsh education establishments and without the required input from practitioners. A concern that effective education policy should be designed including practitioner involvement continues. Many teachers reflected on this in their interviews and used this as an excuse for many of the failures in the

implementation of the WBQ or explaining the difficulties they have faced in their own individual school.

*“They are not teachers and don't understand how it works in each school and the variations within it” (Suburbs school).*

Many believe that teachers are the experts in the education field. Teachers need to be involved in creating the most successful qualifications which allow for the wide variation of needs in the schools/colleges throughout Wales.

*“I think that civil servants minds work in a different way to the way that my mind works as a teacher in the FE sector” (City College).*

Therefore, teachers must be included in the development of policy if not solely responsible for policy creation.

*“The secret garden that was education belonged to practitioners it belonged to teachers. And then government said this is too important to be left to them to the profession umm sadly but maybe that was something that needed at the time the trouble is now we have gone over the edge to such a degree now that politicians are into everything an umm that's fuelled by the electoral system that you make promises to do A, B and C. If we could move to a position and there is no sign of it but whereby education was considered too important for politicians then you could get the cultural change that was needed to give time to major new things to embed properly and for the philosophy to be embedded in the way things are done but as it is at the moment we are getting too much policy shift” (Head of General Teaching Council).*

Others recognized that the Welsh Government had included practitioners in the development of the WBQ and that there, *“was a lot of involvement by teachers in its design” (Local Authority).*

*“Operations of Assembly committees in Wales has provided much more open access for interest groups of all kinds to influence the process of policy development” (Rees, 2002 p.111).*

Some interviews felt the WBQ was a unique policy due to the amount of contribution teachers had in its creation and development, in comparison with other education policy.

*“It was very much a bottom up proposal which is unlike most national education policies with schools and colleges having a real say in the creation and development of the qualification” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

In particular teachers, Head teachers and WBQ Coordinators from the 31 schools and colleges involved in the three phased pilot felt they had more input in its development.

*“As a pilot school with a really senior and experienced WBQ team we had the opportunity to help in the development of the WBQ with collaborations with the WJEC” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

This was in stark comparison with those not involved in the pilot and that had only implemented the WBQ over the last few years. These establishments felt they had no input in the design and implementation of the WBQ and that it was solely created by the policy elite. This opinion may have been due to these schools not being aware of the involvement of the pilot schools or that the inclusion of the self-selected pilot schools is not enough and doesn't represent the huge variation in schools and colleges in Wales. Interviewees also felt the limited contribution of teachers in the design was tokenistic and that ultimately the design and the final decisions on the structure of the WBQ were made by the elite policy makers.

Structures were in place that allowed for pilot institutions to contribute to the WBQ development, but actual impact was minimal. Feedback from the pilot schools was passed on to the project team who could in turn pass their experiences on to the steering committee, but the actual involvement of practitioners on a large scale in the

development was non-existent. The feedback collected from the pilot schools did not have to be considered or even incorporated into the design.

Many of the policy elite were teachers or had past experiences of working in the education sector. This meant that the public could relate and felt more secure in the decisions made by the Ministers and policy makers as they knew what they were doing. Trust in the WBQ increased as;

*“The Welsh Baccalaureate was created by a teacher for a teacher” (Ex-Minister for Education and Skills).*

Practitioners are hugely critical of policy makers who have no experiences of teaching. The myth still exists that attending school as a child makes you an expert.

*“Everyone has been to school and everyone thinks they know something about education because they have all been to school but that doesn’t make them an expert” (WJEC WBQ Development Officer).*

Throughout the last few years, the inclusion of the teacher’s voice in policy making has become increasingly more pronounced. However, although the Welsh Government has sought to;

*“Allow the educationalist voice back into the policy complex; one other hand the degree of control over, intervention in and monitoring of curriculum matters from government and civil service is at an unprecedented level” (Ball, 1990, p.204).*

The inclusion of the teacher voice in policy making and the recognition of the teacher as the expert in the field of education will always be overruled by the decisions, motivations and opinions of the elite policy makers. Only certain voices and influences can be heard at any time and are considered legitimate. The established groupings such as those represented on the WBQ steering committee fail to represent all the stakeholders’ views.

*“These views reflect the assumptive worlds of this established policy community as it was constituted during the era of administrative devolution and the changes since 1999 have done little to transform things” (Rees, 2007, p.15).*

There is no prediction for how the Welsh education sector will promote the wider inclusion of social groups during policy making in the future or how their view will be included in the shaping of policy. Discussions about multi-disciplinary policy making are still in existence but little practical changes have been made that allow for this change. The bonfire of the quangos was conducted to increase *“democratic accountability of decision making” (Rees, 2007, p.16)*. These actions have aimed to reduce the divide between Welsh Government and the Welsh civil society.

The lack of teachers being approached to consult on education policy has always been a cause of debate and has an extensive literature base. The exclusion of teachers represented in the consultation processes is typical (Ball, 1994). This threat to their autonomy is often followed by the expectation to respond constructively and intelligently to change (Ball, 1994). This typically contributes to the frustration and resistance to policy often witnessed by teachers during implementation, which will be discussed in further detail in the following chapters.

The interviews demonstrated that each organization felt that any problems that occurred were caused by another organization. There was a form of blame management with teachers blaming their lack of voice in policy formation as a reason for problems at the micro level. The civil servants blaming problems on the implementing organization, the local authorities blaming government for having no role and the implementing organization blaming the government created original policy. This continuous cycle of blame is in part caused by a lack of ownership, a lack of voice and the fact that no single organization follows the policy through the entire process.

### 5.3. Kingdon’s Multiple Streams Model: Policy stream

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There have been numerous reviews, publications and discussions that hinted at the need to reform post-16 education. These events impacted on the success and inception of the

WBQ, and have had a huge impact on its finalised structure. The interviewees reflected on publications and events throughout history that they believed contributed to the development of the WBQ, many pre-devolution.

The Conservative initiated Dearing review (1997), and later Labour reviews, highlighted concerns about over specialisation and recommended increasing breadth. Many macro and miso level interviewees concluded that these publications had impacted on the creation of the WBQ. One Civil Servant who was involved in the development of the WBQ reflected on this time period. He believed that the development started with the;

*“Dearing recommendations about adding breadth to post 16 education and there was talk about some sort of overarching certificate in that review, but that never really happened as there was a general election and we got a Labour government and the Labour government decided that they would do their own review which was Qualifying for Success..... Well that one again was post 16 and they came up with very similar overall conclusions about increasing the breadth of learning and that learning are underpinned by key skills. There was talk about an overarching qualification and the main outcome I suppose was from Curriculum 2000 with the introduction of AS’s. But it also added fire to calls which had been on-going anyway, for a welsh baccalaureate led by the Institute of Welsh Affairs, who wanted a welsh Bac which was basically the international baccalaureate with a bit of welshness thrown in. Ministers from both the Conservative government and the incoming Labour government were opposed to that, they didn’t want it, but the Institute of Welsh Affairs kept on and they kept saying no thank you very much and then we got the Assembly and Ministers continued to say no thank you very much and then we had a coalition government with Labour and the Liberal democrats and part of that deal with the Liberal democrats was the Welsh Baccalaureate. Part of the deal involved developing and piloting a Welsh Baccalaureate initially based on the International Baccalaureates which was the initial agreement from that coalition government” (Civil Servant).*



This quote provided a valuable and unique opportunity to understand the history and key landmarks in the welsh political history that led to the creation of the WBQ. This Civil servant had been in post since the early stirrings phase and was closely involved in its development.

### 5.3.1 The IWA proposal

The initial proposal for a Welsh Baccalaureate was published in 1993, by the Institute of Welsh Affairs (IWA) and was met with mixed reactions (IWA, 1993). In a report entitled “*Wales 2010*”, the IWA proposed the introduction of a Welsh Baccalaureate. In a later report it was recommended the WBQ be based on the International Baccalaureate with some additional welsh elements, including the welsh language and culture, bolted on (Jenkins and David, 1996). The IWA model was a proposal created to tackle the endemic problems within welsh education, including over specialization.

It adopted a grouped/prescriptive framework to ensure breadth, as well as addressing the culture of dropping difficult subjects like Maths, Sciences and Modern Languages. There were many who supported the proposal for Wales to adopt, “*a bac that looked like other bacs worldwide*” (*Director of a Teaching Union*), unlike the current WBQ, which some felt “*is still not actually a bac*” (*Director of a Teaching Union*). This opinion is due to its unusual structure and limited restrictions in options choices. After a 3 month study on welsh institutions by the IWA and Edexcel, they identified 32 colleges and schools ready to join a pilot of the IWA proposal, and had gained support from HEI’s and business.

Support for the IWA model was not expressed by all social groups and organizations, especially those at the macro and miso level.

*“I remember very distinctly in the early 1990’s when the IWA first came up with the idea of a Welsh Baccalaureate, that within ACCAC circles the Chief Executive there at the time was not greatly enamoured with the concept, whether that was coming from what would have been the Welsh Office, because prior to devolution a Welsh Office steer against it or whether it was about the prevailing feeling at the time about A Levels being gold standard or whether it was*

*political, in terms of the England-Wales comparison issue. I'm not quite sure but I know certainly that when the IWA came out with the idea it wasn't really, it wasn't very supported within ACCAC at the time. I don't really think it was given the opportunity as far as I can remember it was not really discussed within the ACCAC within the authority itself" (Head of Teaching Council).*

The IWA proposal was deemed to be an unachievable proposal by many members of the policy community. It would involve completely restructuring the education system, and this would incur a large financial cost to implement. A proposal's success is often directly related to whether it is perceived as technically feasible, compatible with the Ministers' individual values, financially viable and appealing to the public (Kingdon, 1984). The next section will outline the major concerns highlighted by the policy community during interviews. The IWA proposal was rejected for many of these reasons discussed below. Therefore, even though the IWA proposal received significant support from many social groups including schools, colleges and universities it was rejected by government.

#### 5.3.1 a Suitability

The IWA proposal was supported by many Head Teachers and Principals, who thought that the adoption of this type of baccalaureate structure would be ideal for raising academic standards in Wales. This model would also be adding breadth to the curriculum. Many felt it was more suited to the traditional, academic, school students, making up a significant proportion of the students in their sixth forms. The implementation of the IB had previously been well received by HEIs, making a similar qualification an ideal vehicle for students hoping to attend HE in the UK, as well as worldwide. Some Heads/Principals were committed to the adoption of the IWA proposal and felt it would be effective for their cohort, and so had some immediate reservations about the later current model, *"It wasn't the model we had wanted or expected and thought would be the most effective"* (Director of a Teaching Union).

#### 5.3.1 b Restructuring

Supporters of the IWA model recognized that the practicalities of implementing such a wholly different structure into schools would be both difficult, time consuming and costly. The challenges to implementation may have impacted on its likelihood of becoming a reality.

*“Budgets act as constraints, holding some items low on (or even off) the agenda because the item would cost more than decision makers are willing to contemplate” (Kingdon, 1984, p.111).*

The introduction of the IWA model would involve significant restructuring to the timetabling in schools/colleges, extensive changes to teacher training and professional development, as well as a significant increase in teaching hours. These changes would cause further stretching of resources, resulting in an increase in expenditure within each school/college.

*“We were pushing for the six subject international baccalaureate which was rejected mostly on the grounds that it would have increased teaching hours to 30 plus” (Policy Advisor).*

The cost of implementing the IWA model and completely restructuring the Welsh education system would have been extremely costly and difficult. The WJEC, WBQ structure was seen as a cheaper compromise that still included many of the key objectives that the Welsh Government and Minister wanted for the Welsh Baccalaureate.

*“Ultimately the Welsh baccalaureate was selected as it involved minimal cost but still included all the welsh distinctiveness” (Policy advisor).*

### 5.3.1 c Divergence and transferability of qualifications

Prior to adoption, plans for the development and implementation of the IWA proposal had overwhelming support from admissions tutors in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This would be essential for ensuring the qualification could be used as a vehicle for Welsh students to access HE, throughout the UK. There was still however, a

growing concern about the introduction of the IWA model, and diverging from England. Divergence could complicate entrance to university for Welsh students. Any form of significant divergence is restricted by the continuing influence of the “*British system*”, which limits any differentiation that takes places (Rees, 2002). There has always been a closer relationship between Wales and England, with students crossing the border to access HE in England. Reluctance to large scale change and divergence from the traditional A Levels may have contributed to the proposal’s rejection (Kingdon, 1984). The public and government commitment to the continuation of A Levels, which are perceived as the gold standard, making any divergence from them highly unsupported.

*“The Bac will be central to the way the welsh education system evolves but it needs to be central in such a way that it clearly adds value as an all-embracing qualification without devaluing the known and loved brands they could be A levels, or GCSE's or BTEC nationals” (Head of the Review of Qualifications).*

The inclusion of these traditional qualifications was a clever policy manoeuvre as it quietened concerns about divergence and gained the support of traditionalists, who still valued the old system.

The creation of the WBQ structure could be considered the policy stream as this new qualification structure attempted to address the pervasive problems in the education system identified in the problem stream (Kingdon, 1984).

### 5.3.2 Initial implementation procedures

After the Minister pushed for the creation of the WBQ she had a relatively hands off approach;

*“However I never intervened on the components. That was not my role (Ex Minister Education and Skills).*

The responsibility of the WBQ implementation procedures and the decisions made regarding the practicalities of roll out, were left to the WJEC. Ministers often push

ideas/policies but fail to imagine the sequence of events that will bring their ideas to fruition (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973).

*“I think she was more of a curriculum developer than an implementer which is part of the reason for the variability” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

They then leave the implementation of the policy to less senior colleagues within Welsh government, an implementing organization or local authority. Ball (1990) discussed how often the initial implementation procedures are often not the anticipated procedures of the policy initiator, resulting in possible variation. Therefore, the policy can evolve during this stage to make the implementation and roll out more coherent and simpler. Ministers often distance themselves from the implementation procedures, believing it is not their role, allowing them to use implementation as a possible scapegoat if the policy fails. When creating policy it is hoped that some thought should be given to implementation to ensure its success and the future institutionalisation of the policy at the micro level. Some interviewees discussed how they felt Ministers should be involved in thinking and developing implementation procedures for the policies that they create. This would ensure the implementation was in line with the key objectives of the policy and ensure some level of standardization and quality assurance. Some suggested that;

*“When you are introducing change of this nature I think you need to have very clear direction” (Local Authority).*

*“Parts of Wales have struggled with the implementation phase but I think it is really down to leadership and the commitment of the leaders within the system to take a proper lead” (Local authority).*

However, there is now a growing acceptance that a policies likelihood of success is associated with how flexible it is;

*“Policy is a dialectical process and outcomes are constrained by the potential power schools are able to exercise as front line organizations” (Shilling, 1988, p.11).*

The flexibility of policy is desirable within education for creating the most effective learning packages for each school/colleges individual student body. It is;

*“Now obvious point that the passage of laws and the promulgation of regulations did not fully encompass the policy making process” (Lipsky, 1980, p.213).*

The DES *“is not a thing, an entity in itself, but rather changing amalgam of particular civil servants and inspectors” (Ball, 1990, p137).*

The mixture of personalities, beliefs and the motivations of these senior officials have a huge impact on the final product. Deciding on the implementation procedures and finalized structure can be timely and the combination of personalities means that *“factions develop” (Ball, 1990, p.137.* Implementation can be affected by external factors such changes to broader political and economic concerns. Also movements and new fashionable ways of thinking about policy can impact on the final structure. The WBQ came at a time in history where policy which was flexible and dynamic was desirable (Ball, 1990). Policy is also not fixed but fluid, it will change over time and by each reader;

*“Policy as a discourse, a construct of possibilities and impossibilities tied to knowledge and to practice.....as texts, policies and can be subject to a variety of readings, they will have a d different effectively in relation to different groups of readers” (Ball, 1990, p.185).*

Each reading can be interpreted differently and often is not understood in terms of the objectives set out by the authors and key drivers (Ball, 1994). Interestingly, all these various viewpoints and expert opinions can be a waste when the Minister has such a strong opinion and motivation. Therefore, reports and feedback are often tailored to meet the opinion of the Minister who can then support the move towards national roll out (Ball, 1990).

### 5.3.2 a Branding

There were many decisions that had to be made during the early years of the WBQ regarding the creation, final structure and assessment of the WBQ. One of the first decisions that had to be made was what to name the qualification, and how to brand it. This seemingly simple decision would potentially have a huge impact on its success. The implications of how to brand it would have a huge impact on the uptake in Wales as well as the recognition and uptake internationally.

*“Our biggest failure was calling it the Welsh Baccalaureate as no one else will take it up where England may have taken up if it had a different name. But it was at a time when the famous “clear red water” speech was given” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

The WBQ came at a time in Welsh history which allowed for divergence from England and by calling it the Welsh Baccalaureate, the Welsh Government highlighted this divergence and created a national brand; *“The creation of the WBQ created a real sense of ownership” (Director of a Teaching Union)*. Labelling the WBQ, “Welsh” would have a positive impact on the uptake in schools and colleges in Wales, especially as uptake at this point was not compulsory. This has recently changed with the Review of Qualifications proposing a national rollout (WG, 2012). The negative of this was that the chances of uptake in England and worldwide was non-existent.

### 5.3.2 b Value

Other further decisions included what value the baccalaureate should have to students; *“Jane Davidson wanted it to be worth an A grade which was politically very clever” (Director of a Teaching Union)*. The decision by UCAS to offer the Advanced level Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification core at 120 UCAS points had a huge impact on the level of uptake by schools and colleges, who could see the benefit of offering it to their students as it could be promoted as a vehicle for accessing HE which was more suitable to their sixth formers as well an opportunity for skills development. It also diminished some concerns about the recognition of the WBQ in universities now that UCAS recognized it and valued it as the equivalent as an A at A level. The Welsh Assembly

also developed the advertising portfolio of the WBQ by providing funding to UCAS to promote and advertise the WBQ. By creating a curriculum that was valued as 120 UCAS points whilst could be still tailored to the individual was another example of giving politicians their league tables and market pressures and promising teachers arrangements which ensure good practice. Value for entrance to HE was a lesser objective and never the main objective of the qualification, although time has seen this evolve into one of its main goals especially for motivating students at ground level. These opposing objectives of the WBQ and the discrepancy between policy intent and government action is an “*ambiguity in intention*” or multiple goals that are intended for the policy to tackle. Levine (1972) stated that policy is;

*“Implemented by program operators who may or may not be in sympathy with the plans, may or may not have even understood them, but in any case will certainly be governed by their own motives and imperatives, both personal and pragmatic” (Levine, 1972, p.9)*

### 3.2 c Reaction

Once the WBQ had been developed and even after the pilot there was still growing concerns about its national roll out. Some of these issues will be addressed in the later chapters on implementations.

One large teaching union in Wales had serious concerns about the qualification and felt that delaying roll out would be ideal until issues surrounding teaching hours and funding could be rectified. Meanwhile, Plaid Cymru felt the pilot had raised too many concerns, and that roll out was extremely premature. The Welsh Conservatives also wanted further clarification on whether it would be optional and had concerns about recognition by major stakeholders. Even in plenary sessions within the National Assembly concerns were raised about the impact it would have on Welsh students studying abroad. That combined with some initial bad press meant that opinion was still varied. This demonstrates that even in the later stages of development many social groups still had huge reservations about the adoption of a WBQ.



#### 5.4. Policy window

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Returning to Kingdon's Multiple Streams Model (1984), policy development is only possible when all 3 streams converge.

*"Once we understand these streams taken separately, the key to understanding agenda and policy change is their coupling. The separate streams come together critical times. A problem is recognized, a solution is available, the political climate makes the time right for change, and the constraints do not prohibit action. Advocates develop their proposals and then wait for problems to come along to which they can attach their solutions, or for a development in the political stream like a change of administration that makes their proposals more likely to be adapted" (Kingdon, 1984, p.94).*

When the three streams converge a policy window opens, which allowed for the development of the WBQ. Therefore, the practicalities and financial cost of implementation had to be carefully planned out prior to the policy window, to ensure acceptance. Policy entrepreneurs play a major role in opening policy windows by attaching proposals to problems, overcoming difficulties by redrafting proposals and taking advantage of political changes and events that can aide in the acceptance and uptake of a proposal. The policy window that opened in this instant was a predictable window as devolution and the appointment of a new Minister was inevitably going to result in a policy window opening.

What the interviews and literature have failed to illuminate is whether the Problem Stream came first or the Policy Stream, in this example? The Minister's clear guidelines on the content and structure of the qualification suggest that the policy came first and the problems it attempted to eradicate were merely attached after its development, as a means of justifying their position. If the policy came first then this would go against, rational comprehensive models of policy formation. These models believe that the government would identify problems and then assign goals to tackle them, they then evaluate numerous proposals before deciding on the policy that would achieve their goals, with the least cost. Also the neat stages of a comprehensive rational

model do not represent the process of policy formation adequately. Although many interviewees stated that the creation and implementation of the WBQ was rushed, some felt it was more incremental. *“So the development and policy rollout really has been incremental” (CollegesWales)*. The rejection of the IWA proposal does seem to suggest other policies had been considered before the current model developed. Therefore, maybe a Garbage Can Model would be a more realistic model. The Garbage Can Model is where a variety of problems and solutions are dumped into the garbage can by various individuals and are then pulled out at the apt time for reuse (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972).

Kingdon (1984), draws on theory developed by Cohen et al (1972), The Garbage Can Theory of policymaking is useful as it resists the linear, comprehensive, rational models of policy making. It adopts the idea that the policymaker's aims and problems are ambiguous and policymakers often struggle to research issues and produce viable effective solutions, quickly using evidence based research to support their proposal. Therefore, policymakers wait for the right time to present their ready-made solutions. This is typically when an appropriate problem is identified. However; some have criticised Kingdon's (1984), use of the garbage can model (Mucciaroni, 1992 p.482). However, the Garbage Can Model is hailed by Kingdon (1984), for explaining the complexity and unpredictability of agenda setting and policy making. This model can also further explain the important role that chance, creativity and human agency have on the entire process (Mucciaroni, 1992 p.482).

### 5.5. Concluding comments

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In conclusion, this chapter has outlined and explored the development and early years of the WBQ. The use of key theorists in political science such as Kingdon (1984), and Pressman and Wildavsky (1979), have helped to organise and structure the chapter. The chapter is divided using Kingdon's Multiple Stream Model (1984), which includes the Problem Stream, Political Stream and the Policy Stream. The final section explains the development of the WBQ via the development of the policy window.

The section which outlined the Problem Stream, revisits many of the problems associated with the Welsh education system outlined in the Introduction. These problems became the objectives for implementing a baccalaureate qualification in Wales. The policy community believed that this type of baccalaureate model would contribute to eradicating or reducing some of these problems. The voices of the policy community were collected via the primary interviews. They highlight what problems the different individuals within the policy community thought were important and how they believed the introduction of a baccalaureate, could reduce them. Highlighting issues in Wales including inclusivity, over specialisation, poor key skills and a lack of personalisation and flexibility which would allow for students to tailor their learning, were identified as key motivators for adopting a baccalaureate model. Issues about acceptability and portability resulted in interviewees explaining why a baccalaureate based on the IB would be potentially too divergent and possibly detrimental to Welsh students, crossing the border for HE.

The section outlining the Political stream reiterates some of the key historical changes to Welsh governance that have occurred in the last 30 years and were outlined in chapter 2. This section outlines how some of these political changes contributed to the development and acceptance of the WBQ. The ministerial involvement in the development of the WBQ was a theme that arose in the majority of the policy community interviews. Utilising Kingdon's concept of Policy Entrepreneurs, provides an interesting concept for explaining and understanding why the WJEC model was accepted. The Ministers' own education ethos fed into the policy and impacted on the content, structure and assessment. Understanding the role the policy elite have on the development of policy is essential to understanding policy success/failure. This chapter outlined who was included in the development of the WBQ and whether a multi-disciplinary approach to policy making was adopted in this case. The final section presents the debate about whether practitioners should be involved in policy making and how they were incorporated into the design of the WBQ. The majority of the Policy Community believed that practitioner involvement was vital for the development of the WBQ. However, the findings have suggested that the involvement of practitioners, particularly those employed outside of the selected pilot schools, was minimal.

The last section outlines the final stream, the Policy Stream. This section starts by outlining the two different proposed models, the IWA proposal and the WJEC WBQ. Both models are discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Using the voices of the policy community interviews and linking these back to some of the problems identified at the start of this chapter has been useful for understanding why one model was chosen over the other. Once the WJEC model was accepted there were numerous decisions that had to be made regarding the value and branding of the qualification. These early decisions are documented within the chapter. This section includes the policy community's reaction to the pilot and early decisions and their opinion regarding national rollout. This chapter concludes by discussing how when all the three streams converged then a policy window opened, allowing the right time for the development of the WBQ.

In the following two chapters the focus is on implementation, the first looking at implementation from a macro and meso level perspective. The last empirical chapter will focus on the implementation from a micro perspective.

# Chapter 6. Implementation of the WBQ: Macro and Miso level perspective

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The previous chapter was interested in the development of the WBQ; this second empirical chapter focuses on implementation. This chapter aims to capture the implementation of the Advanced Level WBQ, at the macro and miso level. It is the intention that this chapter will highlight all the implementation procedures and decision points that occur outside of the school/colleges. The process and barriers to implementing the WBQ at the micro level will be the focus of the next and final empirical chapter.

Our understanding of policy implementation, across all 3 levels is limited. Implementation is a complicated, multi-layered process. Many different social groups and key individuals are involved in the implementation process, all with varied power to influence the process. These macro and miso level organizations are employed to make swift and decisive decisions about the procedures and practicalities of roll out. These decisions often cause mutations from the original policy, as it passes through each level.

*“Each level is a source and a resource for education policy making that is; each level has effects in its own terms on the nature and possibility of policy. Contradictions within and between the levels will initiate change (Ball, 1990, p.11).*

Chapter 2 explored the existing literature and attempted to identify the characteristics associated with successful implementation. The chapter presented a number of variables that impact on implementation. Some of these variables include,

1. Clear, achievable and quantifiable objectives.

2. Limited stakeholder involvement to reduce opportunities for additional revisions and translations
3. Experience, capacity and time to implement
4. Sufficient resources for implementation
5. Effective communication, training and dissemination

These variables are revisited in this chapter, in terms of the implementation of the WBQ. The chapter concluded that a perfect implementation procedure is a myth and all policy is destined to experience a variety of bumps and hurdles during implementation.

This chapter aims to understand the “*implementation gap*”, the stage between the development of a policy and it becoming institutionalisation. Implementation difficulties and policy failure often occur due to poor communication amongst the policy community, inadequate implementation procedures and insufficient resources. These types of difficulties will be discussed within the chapter and the researcher will conclude whether they impacted on the implementation of the WBQ.

The evidence used within the chapter emerged from the interviews with the policy community. The macro and Meso level interviews included,

1. Welsh Government
2. WJEC
3. Academics
4. Teaching Unions
5. Local Authorities
6. CollegesWales
7. Welsh Teachers Council

The micro level is not completely absent from this chapter. Practitioners are extremely opinionated about the impact the policy community have on implementation, before it reaches the micro level. The inclusion of a practitioner’s perspective was necessary as a large proportion of the policy community were previously practitioners. They reflected on this time period, when answering questions.

As a newly devolved nation Wales has limited experiences of developing and implementing national policy. A concern about Wales' ability to successfully develop and implement the WBQ, with limited funds, was a concern expressed by the majority of the interviewees. This concern transcended across all three levels. The majority believed that Wales would need to gain more experience of implementing policy, through small scale initiatives, before moving to large scale national policy. Implementing national policy is complicated and would therefore come later in Wales' devolution history. Comparisons were made between other countries who have successfully implemented small-scale initiatives before moving on to national policy. In comparison, Wales attempts large-scale policy implementation with little prior knowledge. The concern was that Wales was neither prepared or experienced enough to undertake national policy implementation.

*“Other countries do small things well; in Wales we do big things badly (Policy Advisor).*

Interviewees believed the WBQ was an innovative idea, but the timing of its development meant that Wales was too inexperienced to implement national policy.

*“One of the major problems in Wales is not vision but implementation. Their implementation powers are weak” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

With limited experience of implementing policy there *“is a nervousness about our ability to pull it off” (Director of a Teaching Union)*. Governments often have difficulty imagining the sequence of events that would bring their ideas to fruition (Ball, 1990). With limited experience the concern was that Wales would struggle to implement on such a large scale, which would cause implementation issues. These issues would impact on the success, cost and length of the implementation process. As often,

*“All of a sudden strange hurdles appear, or strange misconceptions or finances aren’t quite well managed, which can cause implications” (Local Authority).*

Interviewees recognised that planning would help to prevent and manage these hurdles. However, without the necessary experience of planning implementation, Wales would struggle to pre-empt any possible hurdles and plan accordingly.

Interviewees were further concerned about Wales’ experience to implement over long periods and this was linked to the limited budget. This limited budget often resulted in skipping corners and failing to allocate money to important areas/stages of the implementation process. Interviewees gave examples of where additional funding was necessary including the initial advertising and continuous training.

*“Ultimately the implementation was done on the cheap with limited training opportunities” (Policy advisor).*

*“There is problem with funding and that has a significant impact on the training of teachers” (WJEC WBQ Development Officer).*

*“The funding has never been there to back it up, but that is an endemic problem not just about the welsh Bac” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

*“Funding has also been an issue with not enough resources being allocated to implementation, but it may not have been there in the early years as we were in a resource poor time period” (Policy Advisor).*

The majority of interviewees were concerned about Wales’ ability to provide financial support to continue the development over the long term, and maintain the momentum of take up. Finance is often planned and thoroughly considered during the early years of piloting and roll out, but the consideration of maintaining momentum and financial aid for the future, often is missed.

*“Our record for implementing things thoroughly and over a period so standards can be maintained is a bit dismal” (Director of a Teaching Union).*



Funding was a key driver for schools and colleges, to ensure they could implement the WBQ in a way that best suited the ethos of the school/college. This form of personalisation was a major objective of the WBQ. Maintaining a continuous level of funding and support would be extremely difficult and there are,

*“financial implications of such large scale implementation” (ex-Minister for Education and Skills).*

The allocation and amount of funding for schools and colleges, implementing the WBQ was recommended by the steering committee. The steering committee suggested that funding would be tapered over a three year period to support the implementation of the WBQ.

Pilot schools were privileged with more funding and support than those schools and colleges who joined later.

*“The amount of support provided also differed for pilot schools compared to other schools that adopted the welsh Bac later” (Policy Advisor).*

*“We also have a tendency to throw everything at the pilot school initiative and say look how well it works, sometimes as well worse than that we trial certain parts of a new initiative in schools and then when we put it all together to implement across it doesn't work., you know that might work there but it doesn't work in conjunction with other areas” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

The Pilot schools and colleges recognised that they had received extra support and resources. These additional support mechanisms potentially allowed for a smooth implementation, resulting in fewer problems arising, which could have hindered roll out.

*“Being part of the pilot gave us the opportunity for a long and thoroughly planned out implementation procedure” (Town Pilot School).*

I will revisit the differences in support between the pilot sites and those schools and colleges that enrolled later in the next chapter, through the practitioner's perspective.

#### 6.1.1. The government's role in the implementation of national education policy

Historically, the Welsh Government has acknowledged its hands off approach to implementation. The Welsh Government believed it was responsible for the development of policy, but not for ensuring the policy becomes institutionalised.

*“It was previously thought, that governments created policy and everyone else did it” ((ex-Minister for Education and Skills).*

The Welsh Government have publicised their aims to expand their role and responsibility in implementation. Spending more time and energy on implementation was a discussion that appeared in many of the interviews across all 3 levels. Critics argue that the Welsh Government is overly focused on the development of policy and not on the practicalities of implementation. By focussing on the entire stage of policy making from the development to the implementation, would increase the chances of a policies success. In the case of the WBQ, the Welsh Government delegated the responsibility of implementing a large scale education policy to a miso level awarding body. The awarding body responsible for implementation had no experience of implementing policy on a national level. Adopting this approach to implementation passed on any of the macro level concerns about enacting the policy to the implementing organization.

*“An issue with Welsh Government is in the general running across all the departments, in that they create these great strategies and ideas and then hand them over without any thought to implementing them. They move on to point B without really dealing with any of the issues at point A” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

The macro and miso level interviewees believed the Welsh Government should lead on the implementation of the WBQ, as they have the best understanding of the objectives of the policy. Many felt that implementation procedures and perceived difficulties in implementation should be discussed and planned during the formation stage. This would prevent some of the problems with implementation later on (Ball, 1990). An

appreciation of the length, unpredictability and the number of stakeholders and decisions which can cause delay can be prevented by planning for these disruptions (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1978).

*“Welsh Government should lead on the Welsh Bac absolutely it is a policy direction and the WJEC are just a sort of an awarding body so yes they are not the leader on that as it stands however I a new guise as an all Wales Welsh examination board then they would be very much in the driving seat so I would like to see that come through” (Local Authority).*

The Governments limited involvement during policy implementation can be perceived as a tactic to reduce the concerns about implementation from practitioners as well as prevent resistance by practitioners (Ball, 1990).

Any identified issues or failures of the WBQ were often associated with the Minister distancing themselves during policy implementation. The Minister and macro level organisations/individuals often have the best understanding of the main objectives of the WBQ. Their involvement is vital to ensure their ideas are translated correctly into implementation procedures. This lack of ministerial/government involvement was perceived by interviewees to represent how the political elite perceived implementation to be of less importance, than policy formation.

*“I think she was more of a curriculum developer than an implementer, which is part of the reason for the variability” (Policy Advisor).*

*“The real problem with the welsh government is on this issue as well as on many other issues has been implementation and we have never really known how to control the leaders of parliament so when it comes to get things done and rolled out it is never really done effectively so you have always had isolated areas sometimes quite large where things have not gone well” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

*“When it comes to implementation we rush it” (Head of General Teaching Council).*  
Interviewees did note that implementation had been rushed and under planned *“but this is not unique to Wales” (Head of General Teaching Council).*

*“A lot of the consultations we do have from the welsh government education department um their all about these grandiose ideas and a lot of the time we are sending back our ideas on the consultation saying well great in principle in practice is maybe where we fall down a little. We have maybe a six month consultation about the idea and then a 3 week consultation about the details” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

This quote demonstrates the disparity between the time allocated to policy formation, in comparison with, the time allocated to planning implementation. This difference in the time dedicated to each stage highlights how formation is perceived as more important and superior to implementation and that developing these “grandiose ideas” is the most important. This demonstrates how we have yet to really move on from the notion in the 60’s, that a good policy can implement itself. This is discussed further in chapter 2 (Barrett, 2004).

## 6.2 Creating national policy that works in the classroom

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The Welsh Government’s lack of involvement in implementation may have caused some of the mutations to the original policy. As the policy passes through the three levels it is interpreted by key individuals. Each separate interpretation will allow the opportunity for mutations to occur.

One of the main sub-themes that came out of the interviewees was regarding the amount of mutation that occurs to the original objectives of the WBQ. The implementation procedures, changes to government agendas, stakeholders with incompatible values and insufficient time can cause mutations to the original objectives. These result in new objectives being developed or the overemphasis of lesser objectives. The initial aims set out in the Learning Country (2001), and those presented to the steering committee to aid them in the development of the WBQ, were outlined in Chapter 3.

Typical top down advice on ensuring successful implementation has include creating policy goals that are clear, consistent and quantifiable (Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) and Pressman and Wildavsky (1973). Implementation is further aided by limiting the number of actors responsible for implementation and limiting the extent of change during the process (Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) and Pressman and Wildavsky (1973)). The WBQ was associated with a large number of objectives that were extremely varied and intentionally broad. The varied objectives resulted in a degree of ambiguity in intention. These multiple goals were conflicting and the number, meant that it was difficult to achieve all of them. Some interviewees suggested that during implementation the original objectives were often dropped, adjusted for practicality or replaced by new achievable objectives that fitted with the changing agendas. Examples of this can be located below. Clarity and consistency form key individuals responsible for implementation and the continued focus on the original objectives was essential.

*“Need to be giving that consistency of message and backing it up by their consistency of approach across their patch” (Local Authority).*

*“Communication and consistency of message was a key tool to ensuring the original objectives had been met. I think you need to know very early on why you are introducing it and what the benefits are and you need to communicate that widely” (Head of Review of Qualifications).*

The WBQ policy consisted of different types of objectives. Some objectives were practical, achievable and quantifiable. This type of objective is ideal, as success can be quantified. Other objectives would have required significant cultural shifts and changes to longstanding ways of thinking in education. These objectives take a long time to achieve and are difficult to quantify. These types of objectives are difficult to achieve as practitioners are resistant to changing long standing ways of thinking (Lipsky, 1980). Objectives like this are often adjusted or dropped during implementation or converted into a practical objective that can be easily achieved and its success quantifiable. Interviewees at the macro level explained how mutation was not unique to the WBQ policy, but endemic to all national policy in Wales, as well as potentially worldwide. The big intentions can ensure public support for macro level initiatives, but once it is

accepted and it is realised that the objective is not achievable it is dropped or replaced by a new objective that is feasible.

*“A lot of the time when they launch these things they have lot of big intentions but when they don’t fit they find some new intentions that does fit” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

In the last twenty years, since the initial discussions about introducing a WBQ occurred, numerous political changes and debates have impacted on the policy and changed the way we think about the WBQ. Interviews discussed how media articles had changed the WBQ objectives. *“Some of the big headline issues have impacted upon the policy a bit” (Director of a Teaching Union).* An example of this was the publication of the PISA scores and concerns about Wales’ poor levels of literacy and numeracy. The media stories surrounding this issue and the Ministers commitment to raising levels of literacy and numeracy in Wales has seen this become a much more prominent objective of the WBQ. This was demonstrated in the Review of Qualifications in 2012, which suggested that key skills should remain a prominent and further developed element of the WBQ (WG, 2012).

#### 6.3.1. Development, existence and use of collaboration partnerships

The previous section focused on the Welsh Governments ability to create successful policy at the macro level, which works at the micro level. To increase the likelihood of education policy becoming institutionalised, encouraging and supporting the development and use of collaborative partnerships is essential.

Government strategies for reforming education have demonstrated a desire to increase competition between schools and colleges. Competition was seen as a key mechanism in improving the effectiveness and quality of education, which would in turn have a positive impact on student’s attainment levels (Gewirz, Ball and Bowe, 1995). Policy strategies developed during the Conservative administration created the image of schools as individual, largely autonomous and competing in the local market place. Parents were viewed as education consumers, whom could choose between varieties of institution types and decide on an establishment that suited the individual needs of their

child (DfE, 1992). However, more recent reforms in Wales have moved away from policy that encourages competition to drive up quality and towards the development of collaborative partnerships, as a means of sharing best practice. Many macro level interviewees regretted not incorporating the planning and designing of collaborative partnerships during the early years. They believed collaborative partnerships would be an essential mechanism in the successful implementation of the WBQ, over the long term.

*“I don't know why we didn't set up a commission of Welsh Bac schools who could organize events, communicate with one another and share good practice which may be an incentive of the welsh bac but not one I can see happening. There is no support network” (Policy Advisor).*

*“First of all I don't recognize anything like regional collaboration at any level by anybody in terms of developing further the Welsh Bac” (Local Authority).*

Some felt that local authorities should be in charge of the development of collaborative partnerships that focussed on WBQ provision, between schools and colleges.

*“It would be good if the LEA had a central induction at one venue but unless someone takes that initiative we don't have the time to set up collaborations although I can think of instances where that would be useful” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

Collaborative partnerships come in a variety of formats, from more formal arrangements created at the macro and miso level to informal partnerships between local schools. The next few quotes include some local level responses. These confirm the macro level suspicion that unofficial, informal, school collaborations were already in existence. Interviews have suggested that there was also, *“unofficial connections with welsh Bac schools in the area” (Rural School)* and they have proved beneficial for some schools. These unofficial partnerships were set up by the individual schools. *“We do have our networks with local teachers in schools in the local area” (Welsh City School)*. These forms of informal partnerships were harder to locate, but quite common. These partnerships were often not viewed by those individuals within the partnerships as

collaborations. These unofficial connections were prevalent in most of the interviews with WBQ coordinators.

*“A great deal of informal partnerships often between neighbouring schools which often just involves an email or phone call to clarify issues they are having, get advice or share ideas. I think there is a lot more of that going on that you would expect” (Civil Servant).*

The views on collaborative partnerships were extremely mixed. Some felt that collaborative partnerships are extremely successful, while others were unaware of their existence or stated that the collaborative partnerships in existence were not useful to them. One interviewee at the macro level expressed his concerns about the lack of formally structured collaborative partnerships. He believed that Wales’ collaborative partnerships were under-developed in comparison with England.

*“There is no collaboration structures in place like we have in England which can allow for schools and colleges to learn from one another especially with the LEA’S cutting back and the consortia not up and running yet” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

As part of the later discussions on implementation, the development of collaborative partnerships played a significant role in the development agenda. The WJEC are now actively supporting the creation of collaborative partnerships between schools, to ensure the sharing of good practice. One macro level interviewee suggests that the WJEC may use collaborative partnerships to limit their involvement and degree of training they offer.

*“Whatever the WJEC do it won’t be better than bouncing ideas off other schools that are in similar situations and the WJEC think that too although it is probably in the WJEC’s interest to say that” (Civil Servant).*

In the next chapter, we will revisit the issue from a practitioner perspective. The practitioner interviews will help in identifying their existence either officially or unofficially. The researcher will also include the practitioner’s opinions on the



collaborations they have made. The micro level will also evaluate their use and effectiveness in supporting the delivery and assessment of the WBQ.

### 6.3. Miso level

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The first section of this chapter focused on the arrangements regarding the implementation of the WBQ decided at the macro level. This was generated from the themes and discussions that emulated from the macro and miso level interviewees. This section will focus on the miso level involvement in the implementation of the WBQ.

Once the WJEC won the tender, they were responsible for the piloting and implementation of the WBQ. Although they worked in collaboration with the Welsh Government and other stakeholders they had much more influence on the finer details. The WBQ represented a unique situation, with a miso level organisation having the responsibility for implementing the WBQ. It was unusual as the, *“delivery unit was solely responsible for its implementation”* (Ex-Minister for Education and Skills). Interviewees demonstrated a concern that other organisations from the macro and miso level should have been included in the initial implementation procedures, particularly local authorities. However, implementation research has suggested that the more organisations involved in implementation the more problems occur (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1974). The formation of implementation procedures involves decisions between public, quasi-public and private organizations each with their own autonomy, interest and values (John, 1998). Pressman and Wildavsky (1974) stated that the more organizations involved, although useful in providing varying perspectives, can result in delays and problems in implementation. Each organization comes with its own ideas about the objectives of the WBQ which often conflict with other organizations views. The reduced number of organisations involved in implementing the WBQ may explain its success.

#### 6.3.1 Local authority involvement

In 1996, Wales discarded the old county system in favour of 22 unitary authorities (Power et al, 2010). The last few years have seen significant restructuring to the

boundaries, size and resources distributed to Local Authorities. In Wales, Local authorities play a crucial role in interpreting, delivering and evaluating policy. Local authorities are faced by constant challenges including resources constraints and diseconomies of scale (Power et al, 2010).

Some social groups from within the policy community were excluded from the implementation procedures. The role of local authorities, as well as other organizations, that many felt should have been included in the training and development of the WBQ, were absent.

*“The local authorities part in this is a bit of a weak link well I think a lot of our members would argue that doing this officially on a consortia basis over a larger area would really do it for them” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

The wider contextual challenges into which the WBQ was being implemented has meant that the small and diverse nature of Local Authorities have prevented them being able to support the implementation of WBQ (Power et al, 2009). There is a longstanding political history linked to the role and power distributed to Local Authorities in Wales (Power et al, 2009). However, their capacity is constrained by the size and density of their localities and these issues put strain on their ability to ensure initiatives are evidence based and quality procedures are in place. Local Authorities face more pressure for evidence based policy given the decline in research activity from HEIs over the last few years. This decline is due to a reduction in funding. Local Authorities are attempting to bridge this evidence and research deficit with limited resources or experience in developing policy and research. This has resulted in ad hoc and arbitrary research of questionable quality (Power et al, 2010).

The local Authorities alongside other stakeholders had major concerns about the ability of a miso level organization to implement the WBQ and how this phenomenon has resulted in poor delivery. The unusual distribution of power has caused confusion and created tensions. These tensions resulted in the implementing organisation having a fractured and poor relationship with other miso level organizations, particularly Local Authorities. The personal agendas of key individuals were also perceived to be contributing to difficult relationships. The quote below highlighted how these

relationships had improved over time and they were demonstrating more successful collaborative partnerships.

*“They could be quite poor of the relationship there. The WJEC hasn’t had some of its finest moments and it could do better possibly and is doing better now and we have a very different relationship now in terms of the portfolio route than we have had over the last two years umm actually it was a bloody awful relationship you see because of some of the some of the almost like personal agendas within the organization which has significantly held up developments umm but they seem to have cleared now umm and some of the new staff that are in there and its actually very good to work with them and that to me is an improving situation” (Local Authority).*

The concern that one miso level organisation had sole responsibility for the implementation had led critics to argue that there should be Local Authority involvement. However, the interviews with local authorities highlighted how it seems they are now having more involvement in implementation. The Local Authorities have some involvement in the training and development of the WBQ and this does seem to be growing. Local Authorities still inhabit a culture of compliance which can constrain imitative and provide excuses for non-performance (Power et al, 2010).

The interviewees felt that distributing ownership amongst miso level organisations would ensure fewer mistakes were made and that the policy would succeed. These forms of multi-disciplinary partnerships are essential for raising standards in education. To ensure that Wales education system competes on a global scale the inclusion of organizations that can both add value to the experience as well as benefit from their involvement, is ideal. Organisations including charities and local businesses were keen to be involved in the implementation of the WBQ. Their involvement was a reciprocal relationship with students benefiting from their expertise but it also being an opportunity for them to increase recruitment/volunteer numbers and raise additional funds. The involvement of other macro and miso level groups will be discussed further in the next section.

### 6.3.2 Involvement of other macro and miso level organisations in implementation

The inclusion of a variety of multi-disciplinary organizations was assumed to be beneficial. Many had recognised how large private businesses and organizations had started to become involved in the delivery. These organisations were motivated by an interest in the qualification and what it would be offering their potential employees, in the future. This recognition meant they were more willing to assist in enterprise activities and provide opportunities for work experience. Also many charities realized their involvement could result in a reciprocal relationship, with students needing to complete compulsory community participation components of the qualification. The qualification also increased promotion and fundraising for their cause. Therefore, partnerships between schools and charities have been forged.

*“Charities and employers are really getting on board tailoring packages that work with the Welsh Bac requirements” (Local Authority).*

These additional collaborations have become more pronounced as each school and colleges’ confidence in their ability in implementing the WBQ has grown.

## 6.4. The early stages of implementation

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In the early development of the WBQ, the macro and miso level organisations focussed on a handful of key elements of the implementation. Initially the focus was on the advertising, funding, piloting and evaluation. This next section will focus in detail on these key areas and note the decisions that were made.

### 6.4.1 Advertising

During the early years, advertising became a priority for the development of the WBQ. Successfully advertising the qualification would increase recognition by HEIs, employers and other stakeholders. Creating a well-known brand would ensure the longevity and success of the WBQ. Effective advertising would result in teachers, students and parents being less resistant to the introduction of a new qualification

(Lipsky, 1980). Resistance is lessened if all parties understand why completion of the qualification is beneficial. Advertising had been a difficult and recognition was slow. Some interviewees suggested that the advertising protocol was under-developed and this had resulted in varying recognition by HEIs.

*“The problem again stems from implementation problems as there was never any training or communication with admissions tutors unless they look at the huge documents which I doubt they do” (Policy Advisor).*

The decision to value the qualification at 120 UCAS points did provide Admissions Tutors with a better understanding of the value of the qualification, and how this would relate to offers. One Teaching Union Director stated that the high level of uptake during the early years was caused by UCAS valuing the core at 120 UCAS points. This valuation ensured practitioners could see the value of the qualification for their students.

*“The take up was initially quite slow but with the 120 UCAS points the number adopting the Welsh Baccalaureate increased” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

The Civil Servant reflects on this time period and discussed the impact the allocation of 120 UCAS points had on uptake. The valuation also lessened any nervousness about piloting such a new qualification.

*“Before we started delivering, just before we started delivering UCAS allocated 120 UCAS points to the welsh baccalaureate core which was very much of a boost and I think the centres that were involved had some nervousness which was dissolved and helped settle them down a lot but it also perked up interest from other centres as well as they could see the risk was slightly less and there was a real positive side to it to and so lots more centres indicated they were interested in the pilot and the discussions with the steering group we agreed that after the first year we would take on another half a dozen centres we could have had considerably more but we decided to keep it relatively controlled and then after the second year we decided to take on another seven centres at the end of the final year. There was much more interest once it was off the ground and once some key people such as xxxxxx head of xxxxx began saying really positive*

*things about the welsh baccalaureate plus since UCAS had given it 120 UCAS points it had generated a lot of interest” (Civil servant)*

The belief that the UCAS value affected the take up was supported by the practitioners interviews who stated that this valuation was the main reason for adoption, in their school or college.

*“The famous 120 UCAS points which was important especially for your academic students” (Head of Review of Qualifications).*

The value assigned via UCAS also worked as a motivator for students and parents. One of the many difficulties with advertising is maintaining the communication with stakeholders over a long period.

*“We often have problems maintaining the momentum. Initially there was a major launch and it was the flavour of the month” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

It is essential to keep stakeholders up to date with major changes to the curriculum and ensure the WBQ is still taking a centre stage. This is more important during times of huge curriculum overall in Wales.

#### 6.4.2 Initial procedures: The pilot

A detailed description of the pilot is located in Chapter 3. This section will summarise the key features of the pilot. The inclusion of the material from the interviews with the WJEC and WG was useful to understand the decisions made regarding the structure of the pilot. The initial implementation procedures began with the creation and development of the pilot in 31, schools and colleges throughout Wales, over 3 cohorts. The pilot procedures were supported and monitored by the WJEC Project Team as well as scrutinised by the Steering Committee. The Civil Servant involved in the delivery reflected on the development of the Pilot. He initially outlined who was involved in the pilot and their responsibilities.

*“The WJEC won the tender and there was some towing and froing from some slight adjustments to the model and then the steering group continued throughout the pilot phase with the same people I mentioned earlier as well as then the WJEC who were in attendance as well as well as Fforwm as technical partners which is now CollegesWales you know and they had the university of Bath as internal evaluators as well so that steered the development of the model plus the steering group knew that we needed a reasonably sized group of schools and colleges within the pilot and I think initially we were looking for 20 or something schools and some colleges at one point we were struggling to get there and have sufficient numbers but we eventually got there and had nineteen but at the last minute one dropped out but we started the pilot anyway at eighteen” (Civil Servant).*

The Civil servant noted the nervousness between pilot schools and colleges about the newness of the qualification and the risk of piloting the qualification.

*“There was an initial concern from centres as well it was a bit of a risk, it’s a new qualification and well it takes a lot of time to developing how they’re going to be teaching it or delivering it. Plus, the learners have got this new qualification and need time to accept it” (Civil Servant).*

This nervousness was significantly reduced by the allocation of the 120 UCAS points. Many school and colleges were then interested in being involved in the pilot.

*“Really the problem in those latter phases was keeping the numbers down we wanted our own twenty started with 18 which then went up to 24 and we agreed we could go a bit further and pushed it to 31” (Civil Servant).*

Many schools and colleges thought that being involved in the pilot would be beneficial for them, as the qualification was gaining recognition. Many interviews across all 3 levels expressed concerns that the pilot schools and colleges were privileged and that the level and amount of support offered could never be replicated during roll out. This caused the schools and colleges who chose to implement the WBQ at a later stage to

have reduced support and resources. This would cause poor delivery in comparison with the resource privileged pilot institutions.

*“We also have a tendency to throw everything at the pilot school initiative and say look how well it works, sometimes as well worse than that we trial certain parts of a new initiative in schools and then when we put it all together to implement across it doesn’t work., you know that might work there but it doesn’t work in conjunction with other areas” (Local Authority).*

The WJEC Welsh Baccalaureate officer reflected on this time period and the procedures and structures that had to be developed during the early years. This included developing training programs and offering regional and national support and training.

*“So we set up regional support offices. Initially the training required consisted of a handful of events now we do hundreds all around Wales, like going on tour. Now have a “Welsh Bac family” who can meet to discuss any issues and work together to eliminate them” (WJEC WBQ Development Officer).*

Many schools and colleges recognized the role and support offered by their WJEC, Regional Support Officers. The role of the WJEC, Regional Support Officers was often perceived very positively. This will be further discussed in the training section.

#### 6.4.3 National training programmes

Training is an essential element of curriculum development and reform. Training is essential to produce quality education programs and ensure standardization. This section will highlight the training developed by the implementing organisation and the views of the macro and micro level on the quality of training on offer. There are two forms of training discussed during this chapter, the first is highly linked to promotion and includes advertising to stakeholders by developing their understanding of the WBQ. This would hopefully ensure they perceive the WBQ as a valuable tool for accessing HE and employment. The other form of training discussed is the training developed by the implementing organisation for WBQ Coordinators and Head Teachers to assist in supporting, managing and delivering the WBQ.



Many interviewees were concerned about the level of recognition by stakeholders, particularly HEIs and employers. Failing to consider the importance of promoting the qualification and ensuring all stakeholders were aware of its existence and fully understood its value, has resulted in mixed recognition.

*“The problem again stems from implementation problems as there was never any training or communication with admissions tutors” (Policy Advisor).*

Further training structure need to have been considered and developed that effectively promoted the WBQ to Admission tutors and Business’. This form of training could have reduced the issues that have occurred regarding recognition.

The national training program was a theme that appeared in many of the interviews across all 3 levels. The problem with curriculum training is ensuring that the implementing organisation is delivering consistent high quality support, over the long term. The national training program had to support schools and colleges in their progression and development, not just the initial start-up.

*“Wales needs to develop a more sophisticated level of support for their schools and colleges over the long term” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

The WBQ has been involved in regular changes to the curriculum, over the last decade. These changes resulted in schools and colleges being extremely concerned about keeping up to date with changes. The schools and colleges required regular training to account for these changes and evolve.

*“This is one of the major problems in Wales is that continued support and training is highly underdeveloped which has had a detrimental effect to schools and colleges attempting to implement the WBQ after the pilot. It was never intended to be a bolt on” (Local Authority).*

The next chapter will revisit the issues surrounding training through the voices and opinions of the local level.

#### 6.4.4 Funding and resources

The funding for implementing the WBQ has now ended. The schools and colleges who have only recently began implementing the WBQ and those yet to adopt the WBQ, have struggled due to a lack of funding. The initial pump priming was seen as extremely beneficial for recruitment and uptake but those who missed this opportunity have had significant problems implementing.

A concern about the current lack of funding was expressed across all 3 levels.

*“Schools implementing the qualification now are often struggling due to the financial challenges” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

*“Some issues around the pump priming of the welsh bac, some of the schools who didn’t get in there early enough have felt that it is a little bit difficult then to finance the changes to facilitate it effectively so that has been a bit of an issue” (Local Authority).*

The lack of financial planning for the future compared to the resource rich pilot phase was discussed by the macro and micro level interviewees. Only funding the initial pilot period was perceived to be a problem in Wales.

*“That is exactly an example of what happens, you get a great investment during the pilot phase because actually governments are good at conjuring up pots of money for that sort of thing but they are not very good at proper hard calculations of to keep on this and pursue this philosophy that you need and then they say mmm its too expensive you know and so then you roll back on what was originally intended” (Head of General Teaching Council).*

This lack of financial support has resulted in unfunded schools and colleges merely adding it on to their existing structures, rather than embedding it. This lack of funding for the future was linked with the concern that the government never plans for the sustainability of implementation procedures in the future.

*“Without that funding or the support we received as being part of the pilot many other schools and colleges are simply just adding it on to their existing structure which is not the intention of the WBQ which involves integration” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

As the adoption of the WBQ was optional the removal of funding to support the implementation of the WBQ was going to have a huge impact on uptake, *“there is no real financial attraction anymore” (CollegesWales)*. However, since the Review of Qualifications in 2012, the announcement was made that the WBQ was to become compulsory. The impact of this was the few remaining schools and colleges yet to commence roll out were left with a heavy financial burden.

#### 6.4.5 Time

Implementing any new policy or qualification takes significant time. The length of time it takes for a policy to become institutionalised, is often under estimated. Ensuring that a policy is given enough time for institutionalisation is vital for its success. Even after 10 years for some of the schools and colleges, most still felt it was still in the developmental stage. It's a;

*“Relatively new qualification and it does take a long time for an entire system to change” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

*“Time is very important it takes years and years to develop a new qualification into a finalized structure” (WJEC WBQ Regional Officer).*

Many macro and miso level interviewees expressed a concern that in Wales we fail to allow the time for implementation and institutionalization. The majority of the interviewees also recognized that this is not endemic to Wales, or even just in the education policy sector, but is a problem when implementing any new program in any sector in many countries.

The pilot schools/colleges felt that although they were still developing and adjusting their WBQ program, the last 10 years of support, financial assistance and training had been vital for them. Time was a huge determinant on the success of the program.

*“I’m glad I was there at the start now, because I have been through the whole journey as long as the Welsh Bac has been there you know so I feel I have a really solid grasp of it” (City College).*

One of the aims of the WBQ was that it should be integrated into the existing structure and qualifications. Embedding elements of the WBQ would further demonstrate its value and prevent repetition. However, *“integration takes a long time” (Director of a Teaching Union)*. Due to the limited time dedicated for implementation schools tried to rush implementation resulting in the WBQ being a bolt on.

Another major concern about the amount of time it takes to successfully implement a new program was that practitioners need time to change their way of thinking.

*“You have to bring about cultural change to the teachers who don’t just see it as something they have got to do” (Head of General Teaching Council).*

Teachers have to feel confident in their delivery and be motivated towards its successful delivery. They have to value the qualification and understand the role it plays in the Welsh education landscape.

*“It’s a new qualification and well it takes a lot of time to developing how they’re going to be teaching it or delivering it. Plus the learners have got this new qualification and need time to accept it” (Civil Servant).*

The difficulties associated with getting teachers on board and giving them a sense of ownership in the delivery will be discussed in the following chapter.

#### 6.4.6 Adoption

The adoption and take up of the Welsh Baccalaureate came as a surprise for many of the interviewees. Some even stating that the Welsh Baccalaureate, *“has become part of the landscape” (Local Authority)*. Equally one member of a local authority felt that the Welsh Baccalaureate was *“a non-controversial part of the curriculum” (Local Authority)*. His discussion centred on how the WBQ had been well respected and valued by schools and colleges within his authority, as well as nationally. This acceptance meant that it was not currently on the agenda. By not being on the agenda activities and discussions about developing it, additional training and additional promotion, failed to exist.

The Civil Servant involved in the piloting and roll out of the WBQ was surprised by the level of uptake, reflected in his quote below.

*“I was absolutely amazed to be honest at the level of uptake....I just didn’t think it was going to catch on the way it has....You have seen yourself the level of participation is huge it is levelling off now of course but there are still some still receiving delivery funding who were some of the last to come on board.....I’m still here but we way exceeded what we expected, so I just didn’t think it was going to catch on the way it has you know and I’m surprised at that and that’s thanks to key people who just get it and respect it and when you get principles talking so positively about the welsh baccalaureate then” (Civil Servant).*

He believes the successful level of uptake was due to the funding, which made it more appealing to schools. He also felt that the high level of take up was in part due to the promotion and support publicised by well-respected elite members of the policy community.

## 6.5. Summary of findings

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This chapter has summarised the decisions and subsequent challenges that arose during the implementation of the advanced level WBQ, at the macro and miso level. The chapter is divided into the macro and miso level. The final section outlined the

implementation procedures and provided some evaluations of the early years of implementing the WBQ.

Interviewees across all 3 levels were concerned about the Welsh government's ability to implement policy, on a national scale. This concern was due to the limited resources and implementing experience, in post-devolution Wales. Some interviewees suggested that this was why the WG opted for a hands off approach to the implementation of the WBQ and explained why the implementation was managed by a mid-level organisation. Concerns were raised about the lack of consideration given to implementation, during the design phase. This lack of planning would impact on its success at the micro level. Others were concerned that vital elements of the implementation were missed during the development of the WBQ including the development of collaborative partnerships between education establishments. These partnerships could allow for opportunities to share best practice and ensure the policies longevity.

The chapter then outlined who was included in the policy making and implementation process and explained the exclusion of some social groups in the implementation of the WBQ. The lack of a local authority presence in the implementation of the WBQ was perceived to be quite surprising. This lack of involvement was explained by describing the situation. The local authorities have limited resources and capacity to support implementation. The exclusion of the local authority in implementation contributed to increased tensions between organisations and the continuation of the debate about who is responsible for implementing policy and supporting education in Wales. The chapter then outlined the procedures regarding implementation, developed by the WJEC. The chapter briefly summarises the pilot procedures. Interviewees highlighted their concern that pilot establishments were privileged in terms of support and resources. Critics of the pilot were concerned that this level of support could never be imitated during roll out, resulting in poorer quality provision. This chapter also explores the issues that arose during advertising, training and funding which impacted on adoption/take up. The lack of consideration during the early years about the practicalities of implementation has impacted on the longevity and sustainability of the WBQ for the future.

This chapter will feed into the final empirical chapter which attempts to understand the implementation of the WBQ at the micro level, through interviews with the WBQ Coordinators in the schools and FE colleges.

# Chapter 7. Implementation of the WBQ: Practitioner perspective

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One of the most interesting facets of implementing public policy is how the policy is perceived at ground level and what degree of misinterpretation and mutation occurs. Many of the problems that occurred were not considered during the developmental stage and materialised during implementation (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1979). This chapter aims to illustrate the process of policy implementation and the role that teachers and other allied professionals have on implementation, and ultimately policy success. This chapter will also highlight the practicalities of implementing education policy in the extremely hierarchical, complex and multifaceted secondary and further education establishments, located within Wales.

The WBQ is an interesting policy for studying implementation at the micro level, due to its flexibility. The schools and FE colleges had the option to make the WBQ compulsory for the entire cohort, selective departments or have it as an additional optional. The flexible nature of the policy was a key driver during its development because it allowed practitioners the opportunity to tailor various components of the WBQ to its cohort.

The various post-16 establishments found in Wales are extremely varied and complex. The introduction and implementation of a public policy is often complicated by existing practices, the continued implementation of older policies that often contradict or are incompatible with the new policy, the resistance of practitioners and limited funding and resources (Ball, 1994).

*“We are not writing on a blank slate, but on a page already taken up with ‘ecologies of practice, past and present initiatives and specific local factors’”*  
(Coffield et al, 2007, p.8).



This chapter will be drawing on the work of Lipsky (1980), who focused on the role of “*street level bureaucrats*” (Public sector workers i.e. teachers, social workers, nurses etc.) and their role in the implementation of public policy. Practitioners have a significant role during implementation, as active agents in the interpretation and final enactment of policy.

*“Decisions of street level bureaucrats, the routines they establish and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainty become the public policies they carry out” (Lipsky, 1980, p.xiii).*

Teachers have considerable discretion and autonomy, regularly making decisions on who will remain in schools and who is teachable whilst still being governed by the constraints, rules and regulations of their profession (Lipsky, 1980). Lipsky (1980) argues that only understanding the implementation of policy through the views and decisions of the policy community, misses the complex decision making process that occurs when implementing a policy at the micro level. This quote below highlights how policy development at the national level often appears to make the system seem clearer and linear, but this is often not the reality at the micro level.

*“It’s like moving the deck chairs on the Titanic you can move things around in central government you think they look neater and it does look neater from these heights but actually it is not making a blind bit of difference on the ground” (Head of General Teaching Council).*

The majority of data that informs this chapter derives from interviews with the WBQ Coordinators (or the relevant alternative) in the schools and FE colleges that make up the micro level sample. WBQ Coordinators and Heads of Sixth form are in the majority of cases teachers with some management level responsibilities regarding the implementation of the WBQ. These individuals are what Lipsky (1980), refers to as “*street level bureaucrats*”, (SLBs). SLBs include practitioners, support staff and the management team. The experiences and opinions of the macro and micro level interviewees will be included where appropriate as these individuals have often resided in teaching posts, prior to their current positions.

## 7.1. Receiving and understanding the WBQ: Micro level

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Practitioners were concerned that the key characteristics and objectives of the WBQ were difficult to implement for teachers. The WBQ contained unfamiliar concepts for teachers who were comfortable with the traditional heavily prescribed curriculum. The WBQ went against the tradition and would need to change the teaching traditions and culture if it was to succeed, and become institutionalised.

This chapter will focus on some of the misunderstandings and broader challenges of implementing the WBQ. The second section of this chapter will deal with the practicalities and logistics of implementing the policy. Addressing how staff shortages, restricted timetables and poor or limited resources are commonplace within schools and colleges and impact significantly on the program. These challenges often impacted on the success in implementation and caused resistance amongst practitioners.

### 7.1.1. Flexibility

The WBQ Core is an example of a movement over the last decade towards more modern, flexible types of education policy. These allow for practitioners to tailor the policy to their individual school/college. Flexible policy in the post-compulsory sector is ideally suited to the wide range of post-compulsory establishments and courses/qualifications available to students as each have their own unique timetabling structure, optional choices, resources and financial capabilities. The opportunity for flexibility in the delivery of the WBQ Core was a major objective of the WBQ at the macro level.

The WBQ Core is the element of the WBQ that allows for the largest degree of flexibility and can be adapted to the specific needs of the establishment and individuals within the classroom. Flexibility within the options is limited demonstrating a possible unwillingness to change the traditional well established qualifications in existence (AS/A levels, BTEC's etc.). However, students have the freedom to tailor their optional choices to their own interests or desired academic or employment trajectory. Some

schools and colleges have opted to embed elements of the Core into the student's options.

The flexible nature of the Advanced Level WBQ often made it more attractive to schools and colleges considering offering the qualification. Once the decision to roll out was made then the flexibility became an issue when dealing with the practicalities of implementing.

#### 7.1.1a Flexibility: Policy community perspective

The rationale for the adoption of a flexible policy at the macro and miso level was to enhance professional autonomy and give the teachers the responsibility of creating effective teaching practices. This recognises that teachers are the experts, as they understand the students that inhabit their classroom.

*“This hand on approach gave schools and colleges a real sense of ownership”  
(Director of a Teaching Union).*

*“My own position is in favour of giving as much flexibility to individual teachers to use their own professional judgment in the vacuum of leaving them to work it out” (Head of the General Teaching Council).*

Adopting and utilizing a flexible policy that can be adapted to meet the needs of the student body, put the power back in the hands of what some believe to be the experts. The majority of the policy community agreed that practitioners have the best understanding of their student body including their aspirations, socio-economic status etc. This understanding would put them in an ideal position to create successful policy for them. However, this view is not shared by the entire policy community. Some individuals argue that policy development and implementation should be managed by the macro and miso levels, who are specialists in this area. Regardless of which side of the argument they inhabited, a flexible policy that could be tailored to each individual site was seen as beneficial, by almost every interviewee.

#### 7.1.1b Flexibility: WBQ coordinator perspective

The WBQ Coordinators often had the responsibility for tailoring the WBQ Core to the ethos of the school, as well as to the individual students. The quotes below demonstrate this.

*“You can tailor it to the students’ needs or interests or you can ask them what they want to cover” (City College).*

*“The flexibility is great we can fit it into the ethos of the school and tailor it to the community. We can develop areas we choose and work to our strengths. We can combine areas that we want to” (Town Pilot School).*

*“We think the freedom is great and you can tailor your lessons to the students” (Valley College).*

For some establishments, particularly the three FE colleges, who offered a wide range of qualifications including academic and vocational study, the flexibility was essential. This was due to the structure and timetabling across departments being extremely varied. Each department had different elements of the WBQ embedded during their scheduled optional lessons to prevent repetition and time wasting. Embedding elements of the Core was vital given the extremely limited number of teaching hours assigned to classroom study, in the case of vocational study. Colleges had chosen to treat each department independently, as each department will be able to embed different elements of the Core into the student’s optional study and what elements will require separate study. The quote below represents this. It highlights how the management staff and practitioners in one FE college initially met to discuss what areas needed particular focus across all departments (in their case the WEW element) so resources could be targeted to developing this element. Other elements could be dealt with on a department to department basis.

*“Each department timetables and delivers the Welsh Bac in their own way. Initially all the departments got together and mapped out their subject and discussed what areas they were already covering what bits could be easily integrated and what areas would be more difficult and may involve stand-alone lessons. This helped us to target resources to the right areas such as the Wales*

*Europe and the World element which we have had to provide stand-alone lessons for some subjects. We believe that we shouldn't have a rigid framework allowing for flexibility which provides a more enriching model that suits their subjects” (Valley College).*

This quote also shows how the level of flexibility has allowed each department to approach delivery in their own way and how attempting to create events and structures for delivering elements across the entire cohort, have failed. Therefore, giving each department the autonomy to develop their own unique WBQ package had proved the most successful. Another FE College has opted for a similar route highlighted in the quote below.

*“We are trying to be less prescriptive letting each department choose how to deliver it and tailor the Welsh Bac to their students and program. We did used to do some cross college events and speakers but these were criticized as they weren't tailored to the students level or optional choices, so we have now left it to the responsibility of each department to decide how best to deliver it and design it in a way that suits their unique student body” (North College).*

The flexibility was what initially attracted some establishments to the adoption of the WBQ. The flexibility allowed them to tailor it to the very specific needs, unique structures and student body. The quote below from the specialist and catholic school demonstrate how the flexibility was essential in these establishments for the WBQ to embed itself around the schools unique existing structure.

*“It is a huge advantage we can take the specification and adapt it to us. I think it has to be flexible especially with our pastoral system if it had been too rigid it would have been impossible to implement” (Catholic School).*

*“The flexibility is what initially interested us in offering the Welsh Baccalaureate as we could tailor it to our very specific needs and schedule” (Specialist School).*

On implementing the WBQ some schools even realised they had some of the resources and structures already in place. This made the implementation smoother. This was often the case for experience teaching key skills.

*“I’m so glad we had already done key skills as I don’t think we could have done it if we have had to do it from scratch” (North School).*

*“We are part of the Archdiocese so our pastoral system is slightly different from other schools but that has not been a problem for implementing the Welsh Baccalaureate in fact many of the systems were already in place due to that” (Catholic School).*

FE Colleges and a few schools with some prior experience of teaching key skills on a large scale were more comfortable teaching the Key Skills element of the Core. This was in stark comparison with schools with limited key skills teaching experience who found this element of the Core, particularly challenging.

#### 7.1.1 c Challenges when implementing flexibility policy

Many schools and FE colleges used the interviews to express concerns that the intentions of the WBQ were great, but achieving this level of inclusivity and personalization was impossible. This was often because of the individual circumstances of each school/college. One example of this can be seen below;

*“We have to make it work for the entire cohort but also every individual within it and that has been difficult. We have had students who can't afford to get to work experience and have had to have their parents come home to take them (Suburbs School).*

Teachers were far more wary of the flexibility and concerned about the level of flexibility in the classroom. This concern was noticeable during the early years of implementation. They felt that a flexible policy was ideal but caused many problems at micro level. The majority of schools and colleges felt guidance during the early years of implementation would have been valuable to provide teachers with a better

understanding of the structure and content of the WBQ. *“Sometimes remove the option of choice and people actually prefer it” (Head of Review of Qualifications)*. A more prescribed curriculum and example materials would provide practitioners with the tools to ensure quality in their teaching practices. Additional prescription would increase teacher’s confidence which would allow for a greater degree of flexibility in the future. These example resources could provide the foundation for individual teachers to develop their own style and materials that draw on their own strengths and interests. A lack of confidence in the teacher’s ability to deliver flexible policy was reflected in their teaching practices and this affected how students valued the WBQ. Examples of this can be located in the quote below.

*“I think there are pros and cons to it being as flexible as nothing is set in stone, there is no right way of doing it. This gives you such a variety of options that can be overwhelming but in time can help you create a way of doing it that suits the school. I think some guidance would be ideal so you could have some idea about what you are doing and what you should be doing.” (Suburbs School).*

*“It was a hindrance in the beginning because we felt well I felt nervous about doing stuff that wasn’t governed every step of the way so that’s why I said took me two years to get my head around it, you see I’m so used to teaching and having to reach this objective and this objective to get an outcome that’s the BTEC way” (City College).*

*“A few of them were very nervous about the freedom and there being no prescribed curriculum and tasks for completion. Plus it took a long time for them to realize that they weren’t preparing students for exams but using this time for life skills and enrichment activities” (Valley College).*

These quotes all demonstrate how, over time, practitioners grew more confident in their delivery and could see the benefits of the flexibility. They felt that guidance at the start is necessary but not as the WBQ program begins to develop within the school/college. The quote below demonstrates how over time the school/college can develop their own program drawing on the strengths of the staff delivering the program. As schools and colleges gained confidence, they also began embedding more elements of the WBQ within student’s options, or combining areas of the Core.

*“We can develop areas we choose and work to our strengths. We can combine areas that we want to combine such as PSE and application of number which we combine. We have set it up so students look at whether BMI is an accurate reflection of health which has link with socio economic status etc. and requires research into the obesity epidemic but also links well with number” (Town Pilot School).*

Many felt that the level of flexibility was great for highly motivated schools and colleges. However, for resistant and unmotivated establishments it provided the opportunity for poor quality lessons. Therefore, the flexibility had opened up avenues for some centres to offer a poor quality program. This resulted in a huge variation in the program, quality and content across schools and colleges in Wales. Some interviewees discussed the variation in teacher’s commitment, identifying innovative teachers and practice that raised the enthusiasm and perceived value of the WBQ, amongst students. Other interviews identified how the commitment of teachers caused huge variation in the quality of the delivery, within each school and college.

#### 7.1.2. Variability: The WBQ experience

One of the problems with implementing any national education policy is that some schools and colleges struggle with the implementation process often due to their individual circumstances. These difficulties in implementation can impact on the quality of the implemented practice. The flexible nature also meant that there was no prescribed way of teaching the program causing some degree of variation. Variation in the teaching and practice was an original objective of the WBQ and expected given its flexible nature but many felt that the flexibility the WBQ, offered allowed for variations in quality. It was interesting that the WBQ Coordinators in the schools and colleges often recognized extreme variations in delivery between them, even between classrooms but that this was not being discussed or noticed at the macro and miso level.

The flexibility and the amount of interpretation had resulted in variation in quality. This was often associated with poor levels of motivation and commitment by staff, which impacted on students perceptions. The quote below demonstrates how the flexibility has



caused some variation in quality and highlighted concerns about why the implementing organization seemed unaware of this.

*“I think it (flexibility) has got to be positive thing as you can tailor it to the school. I’m not sure about quality assurance. It concerns me that the WJEC is so trusting that everyone is doing it correctly but if they did it would involve a lot more paper work plus I think it needs to be flexible” (North School).*

Concerns were raised that the lack of standardisation and the degree of flexibility would make inspection criteria extremely vague and quality assurance inspections almost impossible.

Many interviewees acknowledged and provided examples of excellent practice. Examples were provided of schools and colleges providing a unique and well balanced delivery. In these instances the variability was not problematic. Interviewees also provided examples of different ways of developing the program and personalising the curriculum to the cohort, whilst ensuring the targets are met. Opportunities for innovative practice were often constrained by the individual site with some schools having the financial capability and resources to offer expensive and elaborate experiences, others offering more modest experiences which are still unique for their student body. Examples of this are located in the quote below.

*“Plus the Welsh Bac gets students to do things outside of their comfort zone and challenges them. It also gives them opportunities they didn't have we went on a trip to London with some of the students and most had never even been to London. This gives students confidence and life experience” (Valley College).*

Many identified how the commitment of teachers caused huge variation in the quality of the delivery. The quote below is from a WBQ Coordinator from an FE college discussing the community participation element of the WBQ and explaining how some teachers plan unique experiences for their students to learn about the charity/organisation they were supporting. These students are also provided with the opportunity to learn new skills during their voluntary work. In comparison, some establishments made the students do a sponsored walk around the local lake to ensure

the students have done the minimal requirements for completing this task and can go home early.

*“If the teacher has the enthusiasm then that rubs off on the students but if they are just trying to something that’s quick easy and requires no effort and takes only two hours on a Tuesday afternoon. It’s the inspiration and the delivery and the mind set of everyone involved.....So when staff are buying into it can be absolutely brilliant but then you have other staff who are negative still and a pain and they have been teaching it now for six or seven years and they just poo it and they are the ones that walk around the lake which takes half an hour and then they get to go home early” (City College).*

This variation was associated with the ethos of the school/ college and the value the WBQ had, within the establishment. When attempting to identify the perceived value of WBQ, two types of establishments were identified, those which define themselves as a WBQ school and those that treat it as a bolt on.

*“We are now proud of the fact that we are a successful welsh baccalaureate schools, a Welsh Bac flagship school” (Town Pilot School).*

This clear distinction between the different establishments was often identifiable by visiting the school/colleges website and addressing how much time and prominence the WBQ had in their promotion and activities. It was also very easy to ascertain the school/colleges perceived value of the WBQ through discussions with the WBQ Coordinator. The success of the school in terms of its delivery of the WBQ was often related to whether it described itself as a flagship school /college, or not. This success was reflected in their inspection reports.

### 7.1.3 Personalisation

Linking the last two sections, one of the main objectives of the WBQ was that its flexible nature would open up avenues for personalisation of the curriculum. This personalisation could be linked to each individual student’s interests and desired academic and employment trajectory.

*“All the great reform acts of the last 30 years, developed to improve performance and quality in public services may be understood as attempts to manage this apparently paradoxical reality of how to treat all citizens alike but at the same time be responsive to the individual” (Lipsky, 2000, p.xii).*

The notion of personalisation is ideal, but not an easily achievable objective. The challenge is enacting this in a classroom of 30 students, all with hugely varied trajectories. Teachers are often too busy and have insufficient resources to implement any significant level of personalisation. Teachers are overly focused on maintaining order and have less time for developing engaging learning activities (Lipsky, 1980).

*“They manage their difficult jobs by developing routines of practices and psychologically simplifying their clientele and environment in ways that strongly influence the outcomes of their efforts. Mass processing of clients is the norm, and has important implications for the quality of treatment and services” (Lipsky, 1980, pxii).*

Teachers invent models of mass processing to aide them in dealing with the student body as a whole. Attempting to include personalisation in their teaching practice can cause favouritism and stereotyping (Lipsky, 1980). Most attempts of including more personalisation has been a complete failure with teachers continuing with their convenient routinized practice (Lipsky, 1980). Teachers often create shortcuts and simplifications to cope with their responsibilities and achieve their objectives. One example of this is the delivery of the key skills element of the WBQ. It was intended that students would be enrolled on the level of key skills appropriate to their current attainment level. However, the majority of schools and colleges only offer each key skill at one level. This has caused frustration, as students were being entered at a level below/higher than their academic ability. This practice undermines the WBQ objective regarding personalization and tailoring aspects of the WBQ to a student’s strengths. The macro level was aware of this failure but no solution was provided.

*“Too many centres that say right everyone will do level 2 and that’s not right for the learners and so that’s another thing that we are looking at” (Civil Servant).*

Every interviewee regardless of their position agreed that personalisation and the creation of learning packages that could be tailored to the individual, was desirable.

*“Each student will have their own independent experience of their welsh bac. Schools do things in different ways, ways that suit them. It will depend hugely on the student's options. The best teachers teach the subjects they love and are passionate about so they can tailor it to the Welsh Bac, that's when it works best” (WJEC Head of WBQ pilot).*

This level of personalisation could only be achieved by creating a flexible policy that allowed teachers to develop teaching practices that provided the opportunity for personalisation.

*The welsh bac is a very personal experience and will be very different for each student depending on their subjects and they often tailor their community work, work experience and individual investigation to their own academic and employment trajectory. It also offers our science students the option to do a piece of long writing which they will need to do as part of their undergraduate. I also think that this is a common sense qualification giving students some of the practical skills they need in life. Feedback from employers and universities have stated how important these practical skills” (Town Pilot School).*

Personalisation is often extremely difficult for practitioners to enact due to their time constraints, limited resources and work load. This often results in activities and lessons that suit the entire cohort rather than the individual. The majority of schools/colleges have had to restrict opportunities for personalisation. These restrictions included pre-ordained essay questions for the individual investigation and key skills only being offered at certain levels.

*“But this involves a lot more work too mark and I mark everything because I want it all to be marked the same as we could end up with 10 different interpretations if 10 departments were marking. The key skills are so much*

*easier now we have accreditation as we only need to send 5 not 10 from each level, but we have had some problems with ICT” (North School).*

Many schools attempted to introduce a level of personalisation by using a student’s hobbies, activities and work as examples of practice, to achieve elements of the Core. This allowed some students to complete large section of their WBQ program by continuing with activities/work they were already involved in. Tailoring the elements of the WBQ to each individual students desired HE trajectory was commonplace. The majority of schools tailored some elements of the WBQ to every student’s desired undergraduate study.

*“We try and get speakers in to talk to the students so we have had Shelter Cymru come talk to them, we have done question time with AM’s and we have had Dynamo which is part of Careers Wales come visit” (North School).*

*“Good the work experience bit we are doing at the moment is not too bad as they are older and most of them already have jobs. We have told the tutors you know about timing so if they want teaching then its two weeks but if they want medicine well give us a lifetime. And so each of the tutors or personal tutors will spend like an hour and a half on it so as long as everything is broken down and you can tell the tutors then it’s not too bad at all. We have you know one lady in charge of work experience who will then be getting all their choices and sending them off so it works quite well actually wouldn’t go as far as saying it works well but it works. And the community participation includes anything they do in the community which is quite nice so they can do it as voluntary work which we can set up we do beach litter picks raising money for charity and but anything if they are in a sports team I there in a choir if there in anything at all it counts” (City College).*

All the schools and colleges recognised that increasing the opportunities for personalisation within the WBQ was an objective for them in the future. It was additionally a key component in ensuring the recognition of the WBQ, by HEI’s.

## 7.2. Misunderstanding the structure and assessment of the WBQ

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The last chapter discussed the problems associated with the number of goals/objectives of the WBQ, and the impact this had on understanding. During the data collection period of this thesis and the time spent at the micro level it was clear that misunderstandings of the structure and assessment of the WBQ, were commonplace. The misunderstandings of the structure and objectives of the WBQ was caused by street level bureaucrats being too busy to allocate the time to study the policy in depth.

*“Street Level Bureaucrats are notorious for being too busy coping with their day to day problems to recite to themselves the policies they must apply”*  
(Pressman and Wildavsky, 1979).

Multiple individuals demonstrated a misunderstanding of the umbrella structure of the WBQ. Students and teachers valued student=s options as higher and separate from their WBQ study (Knight, 2010). This view was highlighted in that WBQ lessons/activities were perceived to be of lesser importance and could be missed if they collided with important activities or assessments for their options. A misunderstanding of the structure was then embedded into the classroom practice, further distributing the misunderstanding amongst staff (Ball, 1994). This valuation difference was apparent in the way the WBQ was structured in the schools, with one school doing the entire qualification in year 12 to prevent it affecting their final year and assessments. Other schools ensured that all WBQ activities ceased during assessment and coursework for A Levels. This type of behaviour ensures that the WBQ is perceived as less important than the options.

Time was essential for ensuring students and teachers understood the WBQ. Pilot schools and colleges had a better understanding of the WBQ structure as they had benefitted from a higher level of support and guidance during the early years of implementation. In pilot establishments misunderstandings were less common as they had received more guidance and training.

A misunderstanding of the assessment was apparent in a few schools/colleges. The criteria for passing the WBQ was often misunderstood, with the information about the number and level of option qualifications required to achieve an overall pass being

incorrect. Of particular concern was that in many schools and colleges there were still students enrolled on the WBQ who failed to cover the amount and level of qualifications required to achieve the WBQ diploma.

*“We still get students now doing just two A levels and they don't realize if they fail one they cannot pass their Welsh Bac” (Suburbs School).*

Many students and teachers questioned the compulsory elements of the WBQ Core in particular the fact that many of the compulsory components could be achieved through student's optional choices, part time work and extra-curricular activities. Some students could use these activities as evidence for numerous parts of the Core saving them time. However, some parts of the Core could not be substituted and this caused frustrations with students, especially when they were particularly efficient in this area and were forced to complete lessons at a basic level.

*“I don't understand some of the structure of the welsh bac why is it that if a student is already doing a language that can count as their language module and if they have a part time job that can count as their work experience but math, ICT and English don't. Why can't a Math A level student be exempt from application of number as they are clearly working above and beyond the level required” (Suburbs School).*

#### 7.2.1 Misunderstanding of the original objectives

Many schools and colleges failed to understand or ignored major objectives of the WBQ. . Objectives created at the macro level are often dropped or changed during implementation (Lipsky, 1980). The original objectives outlined in the Learning Country (2001), were not always identical to the perceived objectives of the practitioners. This affected how the qualification was driven and practiced within each school/college.

One of the original objectives of the WBQ was that it would provide Wales with a workable structure which could reduce the academic/vocational divide. Students could combine vocational and academic qualification to make up their options, and these were

valued equally. The majority of students however, do not combine vocational and academic qualifications. This objective could not be achieved in practice and there is still a clear divide, so the objective was dropped.

Another objective was that elements of the Core, in particular the key skills should become embedded within the students optional studies. Embedding the curriculum reduced the amount of hours required for WBQ study and prevented repetition. Most interviews stated that embedding the curriculum would be a good thing but difficult to put into practice. Those schools with a longer history of WBQ delivery were typically more confident to embed elements of the WBQ. Successfully embedding elements of the WBQ further highlighted the umbrella structure of the WBQ and prevented misunderstandings. The WBQ was highly valued in the schools and colleges that adopted more integration.

*“I think one of the big differences between schools is whether they have integrated the key skills or whether they are taught separately in allocated lesson hours” (WJEC Regional Support Officer).*

*“Students are much more confident in their key skills thanks to the welsh bac. I don't think you can teach it separately to be successful students need to realize that their key skills are important in all their subjects. Leighton Andrews literacy drive is achievable in Welsh Bac schools. By embedding much of the work you make students aware that it is not separate which makes them value it higher” (Town Pilot School).*

A handful of schools and colleges were adopting unique and innovative ways of embedding the curriculum. Most of these were well established WBQ schools and colleges. The majority of these schools and colleges were involved in the pilot and had been delivering the WBQ for almost a decade. They believed that successful integration actually increased the perceived value of the WBQ by students. Within schools, this usually involved combining elements of the Core rather than embedding elements into student's optional studies. These schools promoted their use of integration and attributed their WBQ success to their ability to integrate. Combining the various



components of the WBQ with the existing structures within the school was perceived by the macro, miso and micro level to be a key factor in the success of the WBQ.

*“I think that the best practice is whereby the key skills are integrated however this can take a great deal of time and planning to make this successful. The schools that have integrated the key skills are in general the schools that have been offering the Welsh Baccalaureate for a long time” (WJEC Regional Support Officer).*

Early in the implementation of the WBQ it became apparent that embedding the elements of the WBQ was extremely complicated due to the varied options that students were taking. This is possibly an area that the macro and miso level hadn't factored into their design. Integration was often perceived to be particularly difficult during the early years of implementation when teachers were still in the process of understanding the structure and the content. Schools and colleges who have been offering and delivering the WBQ for many years had far more successful examples of integration. Coordinators who had students enrolled on vocational programs had the most difficulty integrating the curriculum due to the limited amount of classroom study time. This resulted in extra lessons and spending more time on their WBQ study as they struggled with some of the more academic components of the Core. This might have been because they tend to be assessed and taught using more kinaesthetic styles of learning.

*“For most of the vocational areas we try to allow or have a designated welsh bac session which is usually two sometimes three hours and in that the tutor will cover elements of the welsh bac that have not been embedded or integrated into other areas of the welsh bac plus a few of the key skills. Most of the vocational courses have a designated welsh bac block, and most of the welsh bac is taught during that time, but some strands are embedded for example with political issues with BTEC sport would look at politics and sport which might be part b of unit 10 that they need to cover, so it is different per course. Travel and Tourism, Sport and Health and Social Care all lend themselves to it, it's there or there about and these courses allow for elements of the Welsh Bac to fit in naturally (City College).*

Embedding key skills has been a key driver in a number of policy movements, across the UK. Practitioners are encouraged to be embedding key skills in their classroom practice where possible and that this is relatively simple. However, in reality embedding key skills into subject specific lessons is extremely complex. This issue links with the next section which looks at the practicalities of timetabling the WBQ into the existing structure.

### 7.3. Practicalities of implementing the WBQ: Micro level

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Teachers often feel their ability to teach is hindered by a lack of time, resources and information. This prevents them being able to respond appropriately to each individual students needs and unable to ensure each protocol is carried out efficiently and too the highest quality (Lipsky, 2010).

*“Difficulties and possibilities in timetabling, structure, teaching and mode of delivery. Some colleges have to cater for students moving between and within large sites. Welsh medium schools have other difficulties. Rural schools may have difficulty in accessing work experience and community work due to their isolated location” (WJEC WBQ development Officer).*

Teachers and Head teachers have to make decisions about how to structure and embed the policy, often resulting in a trial and error approach (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1979). Many practitioners were also initially confused by the structure and content of the WBQ. Confusion, misunderstanding and a pressure to implement quickly often resulted in poor decision making regarding the initial implementation procedures.

*“We didn't know what we were doing. We decided to go straight to a full cohort starting with the AS year” (Suburbs School).*

Adjustments to the structure happened regularly and it was these decisions that caused the variation between schools and colleges. The policy evolves and settles within each establishments existing practice. Schools and colleges are involved in the

implementation of multiple policies at any given time. Therefore, any new policy must also respond to new practices being implemented.

### 7.3.1 Collaboration

Research has concluded that collaborations between establishments are vital to ensure there is learning from best practice. These forms of collaboration help schools in the early years of implementation to learn from schools and colleges who have successfully delivered the WBQ, over a number of years. This can be a vital tool if enacted correctly for distributing the wealth of knowledge and skills from more established schools and colleges, particularly those involved during the pilot years.

*“There are some fantastic, high performing institutions and we have tried to encapsulate what the characteristics are of these institutions and I think we have done that successfully” (Local Authority).*

Some felt the WJEC had created some opportunities that could allow for successful collaborations but the huge demand and workload on teachers meant that the database was not being accessed or effectively utilised.

*“WJEC created a database where teachers and coordinators can share resources, but it is having the time to check the resources” (Coastal School).*

Formal collaborative partnerships failed to exist with some calling for the School Excellence Framework to be brought back in. This could help newer schools and colleges learn from best practice as well as provide additional recognition for the successful schools, achievements.

*“On the one hand they talk the Ministers message but rather than go to the successful institutions around Wales to pick out this best practice” (Local Authority).*

Informal collaboration partnerships were in existence. One of the schools interviewed was a pilot school and a flagship school. This school prided themselves on their ability

in delivering the WBQ which was highly commended during the inspection. This school actively encouraged collaborations between establishments and had developed a range of workshops on the school site in the hope of supporting other schools.

*“We have now offered our experience to other schools inviting them to come see what we are doing and what we have found works well so we can learn from one another. We have more workshops scheduled like this and I think these forms of collaboration will be vital for the future” (Town Pilot School).*

WBQ Coordinators from surrounding schools had utilized this opportunity and had found the skills, resources and advice on implementation useful.

However, developing collaborative partnerships can be extremely time consuming and difficult to develop and maintain. Interviewees emphasized that collaborations would be useful but that the current arrangements are poor and need a complete re-development and re-commitment by schools and colleges.

*“We don't really have the opportunity to discuss with other coordinators to share ideas and resources. There should be some sort of forum where we can share tips and ideas for example it would be great for up to get advice from welsh medium schools and colleges to help us in setting up our one welsh medium class and get ideas about good resources we can use. I did initially join the north Wales Consortium but after the first meeting I realized that would not be very useful” (North College).*

Many schools and colleges found the ideal reciprocal relationships that should exist within collaborative partnerships are often one sided.

*“Especially if they are nicking all our good ideas etc. which means we have to completely make up new ways of teaching it and keep raising our bar” (Suburbs School).*

*“We have tried collaboration but I have yet to see how sharing good practice works in our favour” (Catholic School).*

Many felt that welsh medium schools were much better at forming collaborative partnerships and at sharing good practice.

*“I think that there is a lack of communication between schools although welsh medium schools might be slightly better as they have always had to and the mechanisms are already in place” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

However, the majority of welsh schools and colleges within the sample are located in predominantly English speaking areas and have limited spaces. This means competition for students is limited and the sharing of good practice more common.

### 7.3.2. Management

Head teachers/Principals decided whether to offer and develop the WBQ in their school/college. Their initial positivity and support significantly impacted on staff motivation. Having a, *“head teacher that is really on board” (Welsh City School)*, was perceived by practitioners to be a key determinant in the success of the implementation. Schools and colleges are extremely hierarchical and one of the first decisions that had to be addressed was deciding who would be managing the development and implementation of the WBQ. This usually started by appointing a WBQ Coordinator. Many schools and colleges attributed their success in implementing the WBQ to the senior, experienced team that was established prior to adoption. These individuals were employed to ensure the development and implementation stages, were unhindered.

*“We also made sure the team we had in place for delivering and implementing the WBQ was experienced and strong” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

The senior team often included the Head/Principal, Heads of Year, and Heads of Sixth Form, the WBQ Coordinator, Heads of Departments as well as other senior members of staff. There was often but not always a WBQ Coordinator. WBQ Coordinators are responsible for structuring the program, scheduling staff meetings and organizing the attendance at external training opportunities. Developing a senior management team that is accessible and communicates widely amongst the rest of the staff is essential for

creating a whole team approach. Developing such a strong support network was deemed an essential component at the macro, miso and micro level.

*“I am working with some centres that have been doing this a long time and one of the most important things which impacts on the success is the managements perceptions and dedication” (WJEC WBQ Development Officer).*

*“Management that value the welsh baccalaureate and dedicate enough time and teachers to its implementation and development are usually the most successful” (WJEC WBQ Regional Officer).*

*“Our support and motivation for the roll out came from a one hundred percent backing from senior management team and from the governors” (Town Pilot School).*

The problem with developing an experienced senior team at the start was training and development was focused on these individuals. These individuals were typically those sent to external WJEC developed training sessions. It was essential that these individuals have the structures in place whereby all that information, advice and guidance gained during training is communicated down to all staff within the school effectively. A cascade model of communication was essential to prevent the information being lost during staff turnovers. The practice of dissemination was not always effectively integrated into the establishment’s routine practices. Staff turnovers within senior positions were commonplace, resulting in that wealth of experience being lost. This had a significant impact on the success in implementing the WBQ.

*“Another problem is you get a great deal of turn over as some welsh baccalaureate Coordinators get recognized for being good coordinators and then they get promoted and move on to something else and all that great experience gets lost” (Civil Servant).*

*“Constant change and evolution in each centre WBQ coordinators get promoted new Coordinators are appointed” (WJEC WBQ Development Officer).*

The successful implementation of education policy relies on their expertise and dedication to percolate down from the highest level of management to each teacher residing in every classroom. Communicating across FE colleges is further complicated by the fact that they are often spread across various sites. This made communicating ideas and sharing resources difficult.

*“It works where you have an enthusiastic teacher well versed and well trained in what the welsh bac is exactly about and if that person hasn’t really bought in to it due to insufficient training or the school not fully buying into it then it is seen as an add on” (Head of General Teaching Council).*

Teachers do not always share the perspectives of their superiors on the role of teaching. Heads/ Principals are often focused on quantitative impact and reaching government prescribed objectives, rather than individual success and progression. These two objectives are often not in conflict but might be achieved using different approaches.

*“Managers orientated towards the budget, the market, entrepreneurial activities and the drive for efficiency, and teachers orientated towards the national curriculum, teaching and learning, student needs and the drive for effectiveness (Ball, 1990 p.58).*

### 7.3.3 Team involvement

The majority of schools and colleges chose to slowly implement the WBQ. There was only one teacher solely responsible for delivery, at the beginning. This often caused a problem in creating a whole team approach when it did become compulsory.

*“Different schools have different approaches to delivery. This to a certain extent reflects the culture of school. One of the main problems is that initially in the first years one teacher covers all the compulsory elements of the core during a slot in the timetable dedicated to the welsh baccalaureate. Schools are too used to a subject based curriculum. Most then realize that treating the Welsh Baccalaureate core as another subject is not the most effective and therefore evolved delivering the Welsh Baccalaureate across the curriculum. It is the most*

*successful when the whole school is drawn in to the Welsh Baccalaureate and the core is embedded with each department being responsible for a small piece of the delivery of the core” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

Ensuring a whole team approach was deemed vital to the successful implementation of the WBQ, with ownership for its delivery, being shared. This view was expressed by almost all the interviewees. The challenge was putting this into practice, especially when the WBQ is not given a first priority by teachers. The majority of teachers prioritised the teaching of their own subject area. The tendency was for teachers to value their own subject teaching, over that of the WBQ. This would inevitably impact on the student’s perceived value of the WBQ. The idea of shared ownership was a major objective at the macro and miso level.

*“You get more buy in from staff and more ideas being fed in and commitment from everybody rather than responsibility being left to a small number of individuals who have been left isolated and insufficiently supported by a senior team within a school” (Civil Servant).*

*“Whether the staff is prepared to adopt the approach as a team and are not resistant” (CollegesWales).*

Most WBQ coordinators recognised the importance of getting all the staff involved in the WBQ delivery. They also recognised that the practicalities of enacting this objective, was extremely difficult. The challenges were occasionally caused by staff resistance. Some practitioners prioritised their subject teaching higher than their WBQ commitments.

*“As a school all the staff involved in the Welsh Baccalaureate tries to meet regularly but it is not easy as the staff are from across departments and have many other responsibilities. It's hard to get everyone together when the Welsh Bac is like their third priority” (Coastal School).*



Some Coordinators also felt it hard to relinquish the control of many aspects of the WBQ after a period where it was their sole responsibility to deliver and manage the WBQ.

#### 7.3.4 Timetabling and Resources

Variation in the structure and delivery was one of the most noticeable differences witnessed during the data collection stages. Schools and colleges chose how the WBQ would slot into their existing timetable. This caused huge variation in how the WBQ was structured within each establishment. Some schools and colleges chose to have regular weekly lessons, with the number of hours directly related to the amount of teaching hours allotted for A Levels. This reflected their perceived value of the qualification. Others chose to adopt weekly or fortnightly lessons significantly disproportionate to the hours allocated to their optional study. Some schools chose to teach the majority of their WBQ during a short registration each morning, during the last few weeks at the end of the academic year or predominantly during self-directed learning. Some schools even had to take students out of their optional lessons for WBQ study. This caused concern amongst students about the amount of optional study time, missed. Options were predominantly deemed more valuable. One school completed their entire WBQ lessons during the AS year. They justified this decision by the fact that the A2 year was too important for distraction by WBQ study. This further reduced the perceived value of the WBQ in comparison with their optional studies.

*“All of the WBQ is delivered in year 12.....I think our model is quite difficult and is so reliant on everything going to schedule as staff sickness or absence can throw the whole thing off.....but we are in the first years of it so maybe that will settle with time” (Coastal School).*

These variations say a lot about the real saliency and importance of the WBQ within each setting and the value of the WBQ by the senior management team. The choice to have extremely reduced WBQ teaching hours hints at its perceived value within the establishment. It is also an example of the complex bureaucracies within schools and colleges with their own standard operating procedures. These existing procedures often

dictate the success of the new initiative as they are unwilling/ unable to adjust the existing practices to make room for the new.

Schools and colleges both struggled with timetabling but as colleges have more flexibility in the structure of their day, schools found it the most challenging.

*“Are one biggest difficulty is time. I think though we can be more flexible with our time than say schools keeping them an extra hour or scheduling an extra session” (City College).*

Timetabling is further complicated as it is essential you ensure the correct resources are available (ICT, Interactive Whiteboard, specific room etc.) During this time period, or that a particular teacher is available to teach at that allotted time (i.e. Modern language teachers for language or Maths for numeracy lessons). It is also important that their WBQ studies don't collide with the assessments for students other qualifications. This is particularly important, as some qualifications have varied examination timetables.

*“If when they are doing the welsh bac it butts up to hard against significant A level deadlines there not it doesn't work as well as if the timetable is done bearing those things in mind” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

*“The language module can be difficult in accessing teachers who are available to teach the language and ensuring their availability but we are very luck in this city as there is a lot of options” (Welsh City School).*

A lack of financial support, resources and available specialist teachers was often the main reasons for difficulties arising during implementation. These issues are reflected in the quotes below.

*“The one thing we have struggled with a bit as been the admin side with us being such a big centre we have had difficult uploading key skills etc. As the personal tutor I always seem to be spending time mopping up the key skills at the end but we can't have separate lessons teaching the key skills separately it would be too costly and use up too many teaching hours. I know a lot of colleges*

*embed their key skills compared to schools which have stand-alone lessons” (North College).*

*“We have also had to organize that two specialist teacher's mark and teach the ICT as we needed specialists to mark this area. It has also been one of the hardest parts to deliver as there is a huge range in students abilities in ICT and that makes it complicated with some students at level 3 but failing to evidence how they achieved the most basic things at level 2 and others struggling to achieve level 2” (Suburbs School).*

Many of the interviews with the WBQ Coordinators highlighted how a lack of resources particularly ICT equipment made implementation difficult and a continued lack of financial support meant acquiring up to date and new equipment impossible. Identifying the resource demands during the design stages is difficult as each establishment will have its own unique issues. Therefore, planning, funding and resources supplies should be in place that can be adapted and changed to accommodate the individual's college or school's needs (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1979). A lack of available ICT equipment was apparent in schools and colleges from lower socio-economic areas, with higher intakes of free school meals.

*“Problem with that is the lack of computers and the limited access to them around the teaching timetable. This is another thing we need to address in the future getting more computers and having a better timetable which has clearly scheduled times for welsh baccalaureate work.....The hardest part has been timetabling due to the tight constraints we have and especially accessing ICT facilities which the students need for their key skills work but we know this is something we have to address in the future as ultimately we need more ICT resources. We have also have had to schedule in marking time for teachers. The WBQ teachers have extra time for tutorials which is scheduled during registration time” (Suburbs School).*

Access to the support material and resources developed by the WJEC was supposed to be equal. A Bilingual establishment had particular difficulty accessing Welsh resources for the same support material available in English. There were concerns raised by

practitioners that documents were not being accurately translated, resulting in two different curriculums.

*“Resources that we have previously been using for our welsh bac students are not available in welsh.....This has caused a slight divergence between the English speaking curriculum and the welsh curriculum” (North College).*

The flexibility of the WBQ also meant that routinized WBQ lessons could be dropped, adjusted or accommodated to allow teachers to schedule enriching activities, trips and speakers. This flexibility ensured students were exposed to a range of opportunities and experiences. These activities were often perceived positively by students.

*“The flexibility is great it is great you can teach anything you want really and you can make it as fun as you like which is important. So for example in the Wales heritage component we went on a few trips we went down the big pit, the museum, we watched Max Boyce, we you can do anything with heritage of Wales which is great” (City College).*

*“However this flexibility has a lot to do with the teachers, they have the opportunity and flexibility to organize trips and speakers but they have to be motivated to do that, and that is why we don't work on timetabled blocks” (Valley College).*

*“We can also tailor and vary our classroom time to include teaching, workshops, discussions, debates, independent learning etc.” (Town Pilot School).*

These activities were ad hoc and were not practiced across all establishments consistently.

#### 7.3.5. Teacher training

There were various viewpoints on the quality of the WJEC, INSET training events. Some schools and colleges discussed how the WJEC training events and other support opportunities were poor.

*“It’s worrying that we have to get the information from them as the WJEC is not offering us any further support. I thought we get more guidance than we did the website is not useful and I thought there would be a lot more training events than there is” (Suburbs School).*

Some felt the trainers seemed to lack any practical experience of implementing the WBQ, evident in their training of it. This was particularly apparent during the early years. However, interviewees also recognized that this had improved as the years had gone by. Many teachers felt the WBQ training events were both informative and valuable and had provided the opportunity for collaboration partnerships to develop.

*“We have received a lot of help from the WJEC and their INSET is excellent” (Town Pilot School).*

*“We all tend to work in isolation bar the annual training events where we all get together” (North College).*

Interestingly, the positive opinions regarding training tended to be more prominent in interviews with the pilot establishments and those that had a close relationship with the WJEC. Some interviewees explained their satisfaction with the level of training and support was due to the personal relationship they had with the WJEC, as a Moderator.

*“Good, we get support from the WJEC but most of the support comes from within. I have a relationship with the WJEC as a moderator so I have easier access to them, but we try not to ask for things if we can work it out ourselves” (Valley College).*

However, many were concerned that the level of training was unacceptable especially in developing the WBQ.

*“If you are trying to implement the Welsh Bac or expand it in your school there isn’t the necessary training to do that” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

This was also linked this with the fact that the training only presented new information and was focussed on those just embarking on implementation. It was criticised for not supporting schools and colleges to progress and develop their delivery.

*“We don’t train teachers enough particularly in terms of on-going process um we don’t offer enough training for developing new initiatives to improve skills is an ongoing process so when initiatives come in you can take them up and run with them “ (Director of a Teaching Union).*

*“The training needs to develop now as it is always difficult when you have schools at different stages” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

Training was aimed at the new centres, in the early years of development and not for those who had been offering the WBQ for a number of years. This meant staff attending training events left, feeling unmotivated and uninspired, even though they recognized the school/college could benefit from additional training.

*“Need further support and training. We did attend the WJEC training days in October but they were not very useful as it was focused more for new centres they should have different training events some for new centre and some for older centres”(North School).*

Some interviewees felt that the level of support was unnecessary especially for well-established schools that had been running the WBQ for a number of years. These schools preferred the option of one to one advice via email or through conversations with their Regional Support Officer. This type of support would only need to be utilised when queries or concerns developed.

*“I think the one on one stuff, is more useful. If I have a query I email the WJEC and they always respond immediately and I think that these emails are more useful than the INSET stuff” (Catholic School).*

Each of the WJEC, INSET training events had a different theme to provide more focused discussion and training. This meant that the usefulness of each event was

perceived differently by each establishment depending on the challenges they faced. Most argued for an opportunity for general discussion and to discuss problems as they arose.

*“Each meeting we have a theme and the last one was actually a help here and these meetings are extremely useful” (Welsh City School).*

The changes in the focus at the training events meant that some schools and colleges who were struggling with that particular element could have in depth support and advice. As well as the opportunity for discussion focused solely on their needs rather than more general guidance.

*“The key skills were difficult at first but with the support from the WJEC and our determination saw us work it out. The support we received from the WJEC was extremely valuable in those early years” (Director of a Teaching Union).*

Access to the training events was criticised as yearly events were often difficult to attend and alternative dates unavailable.

*“Well we can always do with more support and training, we do attend the WJEC training sessions but they are limited and it is not always feasible to go to all the training events” (Coastal School).*

The continuous developments and adjustments to the structure, content and assessment of the WBQ has meant that training needed to be updated regularly, to keep schools and colleges informed.

*“I have just asked the WJEC for help with the individual investigations which we have been doing without issue for many years and this year they say they are not ok. They make changes to the criteria but fail to tell us which is frustrating. They just keep moving the goal post and not letting us know” (North School).*

The Regional Support Officers of the WJEC were able to develop training opportunities for their local area, targeted to their local needs This is reflected in the quotes below.

*“So we set up regional support offices. Initially the training required consisted of a handful of events now we do hundreds all around Wales, like going on tour” (WJEC WBQ Development Officer).*

*“They often make suggestions for training they want or topics they would like to discuss in depth” (WJEC WBQ Regional Support Officer).*

*“Setting up training that focuses on only the individual investigation. I talk to them and give them ideas about delivery and supporting student through their individual investigations. I bring along plans and previous successful individual investigations for them too look through and get a good idea about the type of thing that is expected” (WJEC WBQ Regional Support Officer).*

The role of the Regional Support Officer was often highly valued by the schools and colleges for the support and training they provided.

*“I predominantly work with welsh medium schools here conducting and supporting them in their training and presenting all the feedback and training in Welsh. There had been growing complaints that there needed to be a support officer in North Wales who spoke Welsh as most of the schools here are welsh medium schools and they want their training and support to be in welsh” (WJEC WBQ Regional Support Officer).*

*“My main roles involve conducting sessions where I can present feedback from the previous year, organizing training sessions for areas whereby centre feel they could benefit from additional training. I mostly just act as extra support” (WJEC WBQ Regional Support Officer).*

The Regional Support Officers could also better tailor the training opportunities to the requirements of the schools and colleges in their local area.

*“Support from our Regional Support Manager on areas such as assessment criteria” (North College).*



The majority of schools and colleges had a close relationship with their Regional Support Officer and found the relationship and training they provided, to be highly beneficial.

#### 7.4. Practitioner resistance

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Lipsky's (1980), research on street level bureaucrats identified how practitioners demonstrate a level of resistance when implementing new policy. Lipsky (1980), discussed how some teachers are resistant to change. Practitioners often choose the easiest option rather than create a unique opportunity for their students. This is caused by multiple work pressures, lack of time/resources and because they feel unmotivated or do not support the WBQ.

*"It comes from how it is driven you have some staff that are loving it and driving it and other staff are thinking right we have got two hours what can we do with those two hours which will hit the criteria, it's all about the attitude and the implementation of the individual implementing it" (City College).*

Some of the examples of poor practice highlighted during this chapter could be demonstrations instances of resistance amongst practitioners who are unmotivated to deliver the WBQ.

Many WBQ Coordinators recognised resistance in their fellow teachers, particularly during the early years. The quote below is an example of practitioner resistance.

*"Plus its very bitty with the six key skills most fail well if anyone fails then most fail on the I.T. and number level two which is only a GCSE level because that is enormously detailed and laborious. And pedantic and awful and that is just the teacher's views..... They are all fairly happy bar the I.T and numeracy teachers who hate it and are pulling their hair out because this year again there's been a change to the scheme as it has gone to essential skills Wales instead of the old key skills and it was a nightmare before. These projects they had to do and now it even worse I think if they get them through this year and*

*the WJEC say that it is fine the they will be more relieved but at the moment they are quite tense quite tense wondering if they have done it okay and they have succeeded” (City College).*

A lack of commitment by staff was caused by teachers being ill-prepared to deliver the WBQ, with limited training or resources available to support them. Also, many teachers were forced to teach the WBQ to fill-up their timetable. This caused resistance and anger amongst staff that use the spaces in their timetable for content planning and marking.

*“Been dragooned and dragged to the table of the welsh baccalaureate and they just want to be left alone to teach their own subjects” (Colleges Wales).*

A small proportion felt that making it compulsory that teachers, teach the WBQ had not had a negative effect on the morale and commitment of staff. In these instances this was often associated with good management.

*“The feedback and commitment of staff has been pretty good especially since we have had to use whatever staff was available during the allotted times to deliver the Welsh Baccalaureate Core. I think it is important and something I take very seriously that staff needs to be involved and that it is my job to keep them up to date on any changes etc.” (Catholic School).*

Practitioners have the opportunity to manipulate policy by adapting it to the unique environment and the individual students that inhabit their classroom. This occurs via the decisions they make regarding content and delivery. These decisions can have a significant impact on the quality of the WBQ delivery. Teachers have the power to impact on the delivery and success of the WBQ. Many practitioners have the power to remove individual students from the course, if they are struggling or unable to achieve the objectives of the qualification.

*“However, this is reviewed at the end of year 12 and action is taking for students who are struggling or failing to meet the criteria whether that be a*

*letter home or removal from the welsh baccalaureate.....have made it compulsory for all and we can't have any exceptions”(Welsh City School).*

Some practitioners were uncomfortable with the ethos of the qualification or disliked particular aspects of it. This would cause resistance and a lack of motivation.

*“Well currently the individual investigation is causing us concern as it has been seriously dumbed down and now fails to motivate students to express their individuality. The model that all students have to follow is a social science, geography model which suits a large majority of the student body but doesn't suit everybody. The compulsory component of collecting primary evidence acts like a straightjacket for many students. There are just too many constraints and rules now that they have to follow with the individual investigation” (Rural School).*

Practitioner resistance was a particular issue affecting the successful implementation of the WBQ, alongside all the other challenges they faced above. If a policy fails to become institutionalised and be a part of the existing structure, it is likely to fail.

#### 7.5. Institutionalisation

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The institutionalisation of education policy is the action of establishing a policy as a convention or a norm in the organisation (school or college), or culture. The successful implementation of the WBQ was associated with whether the WBQ had become institutionalised, or not. Institutionalised policy is where the new practice becomes a part of the existing structure, weaving and embedding itself within it. One of the most apparent findings when interviewing WBQ Coordinators was where no integration had occurred, the staff and students perceived the WBQ as a bolt on.

*“Some institutions that have more comfortably adopted the welsh bac because I would say they were prepared to let their hair down and create a more integrated posture compared to other institutions who very early on and who struggle are those who treat it as something as something almost completely*

*separate or as a bolt on.....you get some very good examples of you know of some taking on board the philosophy of the welsh baccalaureate while others have completely ignored it you know and treat it as a bolt on” (CollegesWales).*

Embedding the curriculum and ensuring a whole team approach was vital for ensuring the WBQ becomes institutionalised. Ensuring that the entire workforce was involved in the development, and that ownership was shared, prevented resistance.

*“By promoting ourselves as a welsh bac school not just a school offering the welsh bac we have met less resistance from colleagues, parents and students, as they just accept it. Getting all the staff on board is vital for transferring key skills across all subjects showing students the worth of these skills” (Town Pilot School).*

#### 7.5.1 Motivations for completion

An interview with an employee of a local authority bore out an interesting discussion regarding how the different establishments that had successfully embedded major elements of the curriculum, valued the qualification. Embedding areas of the curriculum increased the student’s perceived value of the WBQ. These establishments valued the skills it provided students above the UCAS points it provided students for entrance to HE. The way the qualification was marketed to students and teachers had a definite impact on the success of its implementation and its perceived value amongst them.

The WBQ was originally designed for supporting students in their progression to either HE or employment. However, the majority of schools and colleges tailor their WBQ experience to accessing HE. Many elements of the core are tailored to help students applying and preparing for HE, with little or no opportunity for students considering other options. This often meant that students only valued the qualification for the UCAS points it provided. One school had tackled this problem and ensured students valued the experiences and the skills that the WBQ offered by attempting not to promote it as a vehicle for accessing HE but as an opportunity for key skills development. They did still encourage students to tailor their WBQ program to their desired academic and career trajectory.

*“I try not to sell the Welsh Bac as being 120 UCAS points although it is an important element for students” (Town Pilot School).*

Schools and college who only valued the WBQ for the UCAS points, typically treated it as a bolt on and suffered from resistant teachers and unmotivated students.

*“Looking at curriculum principles it is easy to see how some schools often see it as a bolt on and think their kids should do it to get their grade A and so treat it as a bolt on where some schools do it from the principle of this is a really good qualification and can really contribute to curriculum bringing in the breadth to A levels and delivering it with some heart and passion you know and putting coordinators in place who those coordinators who are going to fly in a sense and senior management brought in who have experience and are a real advocate of it” (Local Authority).*

The marketing of the qualification was directly related to the likelihood of it becoming institutionalised. Those institutions that valued the qualification higher, were more likely to have a successful implementation. Interestingly, how they marketed the course also directly impacted on the likelihood of it becoming institutionalised. Some schools and colleges marketed it as a vehicle for accessing HE, others as a key skills qualification providing added employability skills. The marketing differences were directly related to their individual cohorts and the aspirations of their student population.

## 7.6. Conclusion

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This chapter has detailed the implementation of the WBQ at the micro level, using the interviews with the WBQ Coordinators. The limitations of the micro level sample are that by only interviewing the WBQ Coordinators this thesis can only generate findings and outline the experiences of implementing the WBQ from those already highly invested in its implementation. The inclusion of other stakeholders from the micro level (teachers, parents, support staff and students) might have highlighted additional

challenges to the implementation of the WBQ, not previously discussed due to the sample bias. However, the time and scope of this thesis had to be considered during the design and adding these additional stakeholders would have created an unmanageable amount of data. Additionally, as the thesis is interested in specific details about how the WBQ was structured within each establishment, accessing just the WBQ Coordinators was sufficient.

#### 7.6.1. Summary of findings

This chapter detailed the process of policy making at the micro level by identifying the role that practitioners have on the implementation of the WBQ. The flexible nature of the WBQ meant that the delivery was often different, from establishment to establishment. The micro level could see the benefit of this degree of flexibility. This level of flexibility, had been lobbied for by the macro and meso level, who believed it was essential for the WBQ. Practitioners were wary about the level of flexibility and required some degree of prescription, in the early years. This level of flexibility goes against their pedagogy and teaching culture. A flexible qualification goes against their teacher training which prepared them to deliver prescribed, tightly controlled curriculums. The level of flexibility has resulted in a great deal of variability, which is to be expected. However, it has meant that the comparability of the qualification across different schools and colleges was questioned, due to the huge variations in structure and delivery. Some practitioners recognised how this would have made quality assurance and standardisation impossible. The level of variability has also resulted in a huge variation in quality, across the different establishments. Practitioners are encouraged to incorporate personalisation where possible, into the WBQ delivery. The degree of personalisation achieved within each establishment is highly varied. Including personalisation is complex and requires significant planning and resources that teachers just don't have access to.

The next section of the chapter highlighted some of the common mistakes and misunderstandings witnessed by practitioners. Practitioners regularly misunderstand the structure of the WBQ, failing to acknowledge the umbrella structure and realising that both the work completed as part of the core as well as the correct number and level of optional qualifications, are essential to pass the WBQ. This misunderstanding had

resulted in practitioners promoting the optional qualifications as higher and separate from their WBQ study and allowing some students to complete the WBQ core who do not meet the necessary options, to pass. This chapter also highlighted how changes to the original objectives of the WBQ are commonplace. Objectives are often mutated and altered, to allow for easier delivery. The example provided was that one of the intentions of the WBQ was to deliver key skills at a level appropriate for each student's ability. This is often not the case, with the establishment only delivering one level and deciding the level for the entire cohort to reduce the number of classes necessary.

The next section highlighted the practicalities of implementing the WBQ into any school or college. This section addressed the challenges of structuring, timetabling and managing the WBQ, within already heavy timetables. The elements of the core also required additional resources, including specialist teachers, computers, classroom space, and work experience opportunities. These resources are limited, particularly in establishments where the majority of the students are from deprived communities and the school has a funding shortage. Each establishment created their own unique protocol for dealing with these additional demands, which are provided as examples. This section also follows on from the previous chapter by providing a practitioners perspective to collaborative partnerships and training.

The final section concludes by discussing practitioner resistance and importance of institutionalisation. It has been assumed that all street level bureaucrats conform to the expectations of their profession and any variations in the implementation of policy are minimal (Lipsky, 2000). However, this chapter suggests a different phenomenon, whereby some policy that is designed to be intentionally flexible can cause extreme variation from establishment to establishment. Resistance to policy is common, with practitioners often withholding cooperation by not working to reduce their work load, demonstrating aggression towards the organization and having negative attitudes (Lipsky, 1980). These forms of non-cooperation injure the schools or colleges ability to achieve their objectives. This problem can be resolved by head teachers marrying the personal, material or psychological needs of teachers with the organizations objectives.

The next chapter will conclude by summarising all the findings and will outline the applications. This final chapter addressed the main focus of the thesis and will return to the literature presented at the start of the thesis.



## Chapter 8: Conclusion

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It is the intention, that this conclusion will bring together all the existing chapters. This chapter will summarise the key empirical findings that have been generated during data collection and analysis. This chapter will summarise the findings in a clear and concise manner but educing down this complex thesis will not be simple. This thesis is telling a story, the story of a policy that starts from the initial idea to it becoming a national qualification. The story of the advanced level Welsh Baccalaureate.

This chapter will address, what the advanced level WBQ tells us about policy making and implementation in post-devolution Wales. Understanding the context and history of policy making in Wales will further explain the challenges in developing and implementing the WBQ. The restrictions in developing innovative and diverse policy in Wales will help to explain the rationale for adopting this type of baccalaureate. The structure and assessment of the WBQ represented a commitment to maintaining a relationship with neighbouring countries and limiting diversion. Understanding how policy percolates down from the macro level, through the miso level, before entering the micro level will help explain why mutations and adjustments to policy occur as policy is translated and understood. Identifying the variables that impact on the development and implementation of policy will provide useful guidance for the future. Chapter 2, identified variables that appear to affect policy implementation, using the existing literature and Chapters 6 and 7, confirmed their existence. These variables will help ensure the continued development and growth of the qualification as well as highlight issues that may impact on policies being implemented in the future. This chapter identified issues that arose during implementation and will further explore whether these issues are related to the qualification, or the newness of the WG.

After summarising the findings, this chapter will provide further evaluations of the entire thesis. This thesis has aimed to be transparent in highlighting its limitations as well as critiquing the methodology, as the thesis has developed. Suggestions for additional or follow up research will be included in this section. Alongside the critique, this chapter will highlight its successes and attempt to predict any policy applications

for the future. The researcher has always intended for this research to be disseminated within and outside of academia. The researcher has been mindful during the entire project of the potential for application. Considerations for potential avenues for impact and application are discussed and plan for dissemination highlighted. Disseminating findings across a wider audience was a key objective of the thesis. As part of this section, the researcher will introduce empirical findings that could not be presented within the time frame, that warrant further study. These may provide further smaller projects or journal articles for the future. In highlighting these, the researcher will justify why they didn't factor into the final thesis.

This research began 5 years ago and the majority of the data collection was completed in 2012. During this time period the advanced level WBQ was not compulsory for schools and colleges. The WBQ has undergone significant restructuring since the Review of Qualifications (ROQ) (WG, 2012). It is now compulsory for all students and has been graded at advanced level since September, 2015. These changes will be highlighted and the new structure of the WBQ explained. This section will conclude with the researcher reflecting on the research experience and her role in the research process.

### 8.1. Revisiting the original aims

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This thesis aimed to understand the development of the WBQ at the macro level and then capture the implementation of the qualification, across all 3 levels. By highlighting how policy moves from the macro, miso and micro level, we can better understand what variables support implementation and what hinder success. Data was collected via semi-structured interviews, firstly with the policy community who represent the macro and miso level and then with WBQ Coordinators that represented the micro level. The policy community comprised of individuals from the macro and miso level organisations. The policy community comprised of 16 individuals from various organisations all of whom had a long history with the WBQ. The interviews aimed to capture their experiences and understanding of the development and implementation process of the WBQ. A further, 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted at the micro level, with WBQ Coordinators. Each of these individuals represented a different

schools or college, throughout Wales. This thesis aimed to understand how they had implemented the WBQ into their establishment, including decisions regarding structure and delivery. To support the findings from the interviews the data was supported using documents. The majority of documents that supported the findings were macro level produced, predominantly by the WG and WJEC. Alongside these materials some supporting materials from the schools and colleges were included. The types of documents from the micro level included information guides for the students/parents, timetables and teaching resources.

## 8.2. Summary: Contribution to knowledge

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The contribution to knowledge spans 3 disciplines, Sociology of Education, Pedagogy and Political Science. The field of public policy development and implementation has been extensively researched. Less research has considered how devolved nations tackle the complex and unstable nature of policy-making and implementation. In particular, this thesis has identified how the advanced level WBQ developed, during the early years post-devolution. This thesis has included evidence about who was included in policy making and who remained excluded in Wales. Since devolution, Wales has been moving towards a more inclusive style of policy-making with the opportunity for more practitioner involvement and engagement. Although this thesis has provided examples of practitioner engagement in policy making, particularly from the selected pilot schools, teachers are still frustrated that the structures for large scale practitioner involvement are still not in existence.

This thesis has also questioned the capability, resources and experience of Wales in developing and implementing the WBQ. This concern was often used to explain challenges that arose during implementation. Some felt that the WBQ represented a radically different qualification. This level of diversion complicated implementation and would require significant resources and implementation experience. This concern was exasperated by take up being steady and higher than expected. Although the qualification has faced numerous challenges and radical reform, the WBQ has become a national symbol, of the Welsh education system. The WBQ is now playing a huge part in the education landscape and this prominence seems to be likely to remain.

This thesis provided the entire narrative of the policy's history, across the macro, meso and micro level. This has provided a new perspective that combines multiple views, from a wide ranging sample. These multiple viewpoints will help to better understand this phenomenon. Incorporating all three levels was important to trace the policies history and identify when challenges arose and how they were resolved. Understanding the entire system provided important data on policy making in post-devolution Wales and understanding how education policy is enacted at the micro level. An introduction and summary of the top-down approach (first generation) and bottom up approaches (second generation) to policy making and implementation was introduced in Chapter 2. By examining the literature it is clear the design of this thesis has included the incorporation of ideas and methods associated with both approaches and the conclusions locate this research as being third generation. Policy is translated and transformed as it moves through each level and meets each new individual involved in its implementation. It is only by incorporating both approaches and adopting a third generation approach that we can fully understand the process of policy implementation.

This thesis has highlighted the variables that increase the likelihood of successful implementation. These variables will provide an essential list for policy-makers to consider when implementing policy, which could increase the chances of institutionalisation. Institutionalisation is the desired outcome for policy-makers as it ensures the policy will be long standing. The policy has established itself within the school or college and become part of the norm. These variables should be considered by policy-makers, during the design stage to increase the likelihood of institutionalisation. Some of these variables include,

1. The number of organisations/individuals involved in development and implementation
2. The number, breadth and achievability of the objectives
3. Flexibility of the Policy
4. Degree of planning focussed on the implementation.

These variables can impact both positively and negatively on the policy and can cause significant mutation. These variables are discussed in detail in the empirical Chapters

(Chapters 5, 6 and 7). At the micro level the likelihood of implementation success can be increased by considering a further number of variables,

1. Strong management, who attend and disseminated the information obtained via training events effectively amongst staff.
2. Opportunities to share best practice through the development of collaborative partnerships.
3. Ensuring shared ownership amongst staff with all staff having the opportunity to contribute to the delivery and management of the WBQ.
4. A well thought out structure which does not impede on the existing timetable are vital for ensuring the WBQ becomes institutionalised.

The variables that impact on the micro level were discussed in detail, in Chapter 7. This thesis has provided examples of practitioner resistance. It has also provided examples of how policy is often mutated or adapted during the implementation stage. The level of mutation across all three levels was exasperated by the flexible nature of the policy and the ambiguity in intention, caused by broad, multiple goals. Importantly, the thesis has supported research that has highlighted the important role of practitioners in understanding and translating policy, into the classroom. These translations impact on the delivery and assessment of the qualification. The translation impacts on the students perceived value and motivation for completion.

The Advanced Level WBQ is an interesting qualification. Studying the WBQ has provided the opportunity to evaluate a qualification that incorporated this new flexible style of policy making into its design. The WBQ represents a movement over the last decade to develop more flexible qualifications, with embedded key skills and with more opportunities for personalisation. Evaluating these policies will reconfirm their use in the future. This thesis has highlighted the importance of flexible policies for allowing practitioners the opportunity to tailor learning to their individual cohorts and allow for elements of personalisation. This thesis has also raised concerns about variation, which although is expected given the WBQs flexible nature. The findings have suggested that this flexibility has also resulted in a variation in quality, often undetected due to the unique marking criteria and the ethos of the qualification. Opportunities for personalisation was varied with some schools and colleges factoring this into their

design, others providing minimal opportunities for personalisation. Finally, embedding key skills into the curriculum was challenging as students have such a wide range of options. The huge range of choices for their options was even wider in FE Colleges. Embedding the key skills into every optional qualification would have been too difficult. It was also difficult to gauge the consistency and depth of key skills provided, once they were embedded. Therefore, the majority of schools and colleges have continued with standalone key skills sessions, at a level determined by the school rather than the student's ability.

The objectives of the WBQ were far reaching. This thesis was primarily focussed on understanding the process of designing and implementing the WBQ. However, it has also provided empirical findings that have evaluated the WBQ success in tackling some of the more pervasive issues in the Welsh education system. These issues have included the academic/vocational divide, widening access to HE, better preparing students for HE/employment, raising standards in key skills and the continuation of modern language study in post-compulsory education. The thesis has concluded that the WBQ has come a long way in attempting to achieve some of these original objectives. Some of these original objectives have now been adjusted or replaced, as part of the implementation and institutionalisation of the advanced level WBQ.

Key skills development is still high on government agenda and has factored highly in the updated structure. Changes to the structure and assessment since the review has addressed concerns about repetition and that the key skills assessment is merely a tick box exercise. This was achieved by developing new assessment procedures for key skills and by better tailoring the level to the student. Including skills for employment/HE has also remained within the new structure. Anecdotally the skills that the WBQ develops are perceived highly by HEIs and the WBQ is contributing to the widening access agenda, although further research into this area is imperative. The continuation of modern language study was removed from the new structure. The findings from this thesis has suggested that this element was highly varied in terms of quality, prior to the changes and was universally disliked and undervalued by students and practitioners. Finally, although students have the option to combine academic and vocational qualification the majority do not and it has done little to reduce the academic/vocational divide.

### 8.3. The changing landscape

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Since this thesis began, the content, structure and assessment of the WBQ have significantly changed. This period of Welsh history was dominated by managing Wales's newly devolved powers. Understanding the history and context of the time period in which the WBQ was created, helps to explain the structure and content of the WBQ. Now in 2018, Wales has further increased its capacity, resources and powers. Wales has developed an increased knowledge of the realities of implementing policy on a national scale.

Chapter 5, focused on the development of the qualification and the early years. This chapter adopted a historical lens to highlight how policy reforms have demonstrated approaches to broadening the curriculum, within Wales. The chapter outlined the IWA proposal (1993), and discussed the support and resistance for this model. This discussion highlighted debates about divergence, the academic/vocational divide, specialism over breadth and inclusivity. Understanding these debates help to explain the finalised design for the WBQ. The WJEC model that was selected was perceived to be the safe option for Wales, as it showed some divergence and it provided Wales with the opportunity to utilise its new powers. This model included the continuation of the traditional qualifications which are so highly valued by HEIs, and the public. This choice highlighted the relationship that Wales still has with the rest of the UK, particularly across the border with England. Maintaining the relationship relied on the continuation of the traditional and recognisable qualifications within Wales. These ensured welsh citizens could cross the border for Higher Education and employment.

The introduction of the WBQ did dampen those voices that argued for change, and for Wales to exercise their new powers. The public wanted Wales to be creating policy that met the specific needs of Wales. Policy designed exclusively for Wales was perceived by the policy community to be essential for raising standards. The welsh education system, has been subject to negative press over the last few years, particularly after the release of the PISA scores. This was alongside some damning articles questioning the quality and standard of education in Wales. The WBQ aimed to address these concerns and was ideally suited to meet the needs of Wales, without radical overhaul. Introducing

a policy that involved further divergence and the possibility of replacing the well-established courses would have been poorly timed, due to Wales's lack of experience. Even this less radical option was deemed by many critics to be too much for Wales given their limited capacity.

Concerns about the timing of the development were apparent in many of the interviews at the macro and meso level. These individuals were concerned in the Welsh Government and WJEC's ability to implement the WBQ. This concern was exasperated further as uptake of the Advanced Level WBQ was far quicker than the Welsh Government had expected. The expected gradual uptake was replaced with an almost national and geographically spread uptake.

After the initial early years and the growing acceptance of the qualification, it was time for a redevelopment. In 2012, the Review of Qualifications in Wales was published which made additional recommendations for updating the WBQ. The review made suggestions for tackling some of the challenges that had occurred during implementation. The WBQ had already cemented its place in the Welsh Education system but to become a national symbol for Wales the quality assurance and standardisation issues would need to be addressed through marking and structural changes. Once accepted these changes would ensure that the WBQ remained a part of the Welsh education landscape for the future. These suggestions were accepted and have since been implemented.

### 8.3.1 A new welsh baccalaureate for Wales

The original structure developed by the WJEC, was outlined in chapter 3. The fieldwork element of this thesis was completed in 2012, at the same point as the review was conducted and published. Since then the qualification has been significantly reformed, with the majority of the suggestions made in the review factoring into the final design. This chapter will outline the recommendations from the ROQ (2012). After each recommendation the findings of this thesis will be included to highlight any contradictions. Equally, where the research has provided identical or similar findings, these will be highlighted. Although, this thesis did not examine the new structure the implications are considered in light of the findings from this study. This section will



summarise the changes that have been implemented over the last 3 years and present the revised qualification, which started to be implemented in 2015.

### 8.3.1 a Review of qualifications: Support for the new model

The review of qualifications in Wales (ROQ, 2012), reviewed the entire scope of qualifications offered in Wales, but spent a great deal of time on the WBQ. The review included 4 principles and each qualification was evaluated using these principles. Firstly, ensuring all qualifications met the needs of welsh students, including its bilingualism, performance issues and socio/economic challenges. Secondly, any reforms had to be evidenced-based and include research, feedback and stakeholder engagement. Thirdly, there were design considerations including focussing on branded qualifications, focussing on literacy and numeracy and ensuring inclusion, clear progression and coherence. Finally, the ROQ, (2012) called for world class standards and was concerned with issues regarding stakeholder recognition, clarity, robust assessments and portability. The recommendations made by the ROQ (2012), included a focus on coherence and breadth of educational experience and focussed on the strength of trusted qualification brands, whilst allowing divergence in the interests of learners. The ROQ recommended addressing status differences between different pathways and how the academic vocational divide may be reduced in the future. Furthermore, the review recommended developing belief and confidence in the welsh system. This included the establishment of, '*Qualifications Wales*' and developing new models of social partnership and engagement (WG, 2012). The majority of the recommendations published in the ROQ were accepted and work began on developing a new model, which incorporated these changes (WG, 2012).

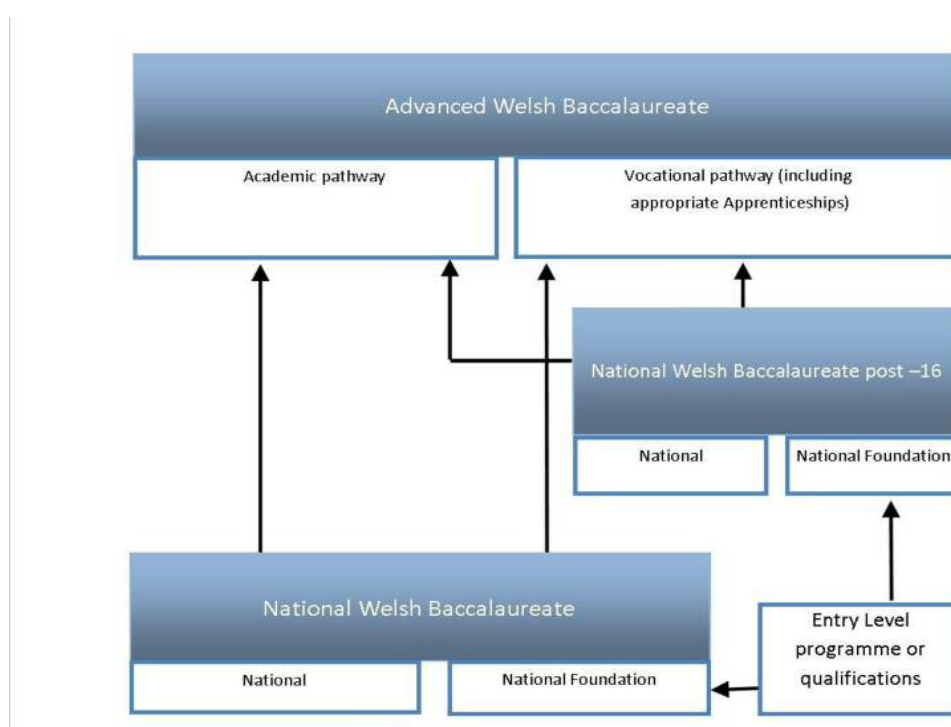
The ROQ dedicated significant time to the development and reform of the WBQ. They highlighted a number of strengths and weaknesses, of the WBQ. The aim of generating this list was too develop or change areas of concern/weakness and continue or expand on the perceived strengths of the WBQ. This section will outline some of the main recommendations made by the ROQ, regarding the WBQ. This chapter will now identify where the recommendations were in line with findings generated from this thesis (WG, 2012).

The main recommendation that came from the ROQ was the introduction from 2015 of a universally adopted core and options, revised Baccalaureate model. The main recommendation of the ROQ (2012), was to introduce a revised more rigorous Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification by 2015, which is universally adopted and is available at National Foundation, National, National post 16 and at Advanced level. The move to universal adoption was natural given the high level of uptake.

Other considerations included,

- Review and change assessment methods for skills elements
- Avoid repetition of learning
- Retain the flexibility of the framework
- Introduce grading: Advanced 2013,
- Implement the new role of Qualification Wales
- Develop ULN to facilitate progression
- Focus on support networks to drive up quality
- Utilise GCSE brand more effectively

Figure 3: WBQ revised structure



The ROQ (2012), published a revised structure, which was accepted. It hoped to provide clarity in terms of progression. It clearly demonstrated that each level can be accessed via either an academic or vocational pathway. The addition of the National WBQ for post 16, was created to prevent replication for students enrolled in FE colleges on qualifications at the same level as they had previously completed (Intermediate level). Previously, students like this were forced to repeat the national level WBQ. The foundation level WBQ students can also enrol on the national level WBQ for post 16 students in college if this model is more aligned with their trajectory. The Post-16 qualification is more focussed on entrance into employment and developing the skills necessary to strengthen CV applications and employability skills.

#### 8.3.1.b Strengths and weakness outlined in the review of qualifications

The review commended the WBQ for providing students with added breadth and for developing literacy and numeracy skills. These skills would raise standards in Wales. The practitioners interviewed for this thesis had mixed opinions about the level of breadth the WBQ actually offered students. Practitioners believed the continuation of key skills development was essential but that this component was complicated and disliked due to repetition, vast quantities of paperwork and un-engaging material.

The ROQ believed that the individual investigation was a positive element of the course. The amount of personalisation that could be achieved for each student completing the individual investigation made it highly valued for HE application. The skills it developed for those students considering HE was clear. The degree of flexibility in the delivery of the Core was commended for allowing individual schools and colleges to implement in their own unique way (WG, 2012). This was another major finding that was replicated in the thesis. The options for personalisation and tailoring the content to students desired academic and career trajectory, were commended. Examples of personalisation had a huge impact on a student's university application as the WBQ provided an additional extra to discuss in interviews.

Even at this stage the ROQ (2012), noted that there were still concerns about the acceptance and perceived value of the WBQ by HEIs. Many universities were still not

accepting the qualification or were accepting it at a much lower value than the value allocated by UCAS. Opinion about the flexible nature of the WBQ were mixed at the micro level. In comparison, the majority of macro and miso level interviewees felt the flexibility was essential and empowering. Practitioners were concerned that this level of flexibility raised questions about standardisation and quality assurance. Critics felt it would inspire some creative teachers to engage with the curriculum and develop innovative practice, whilst some traditional, resistant or newly qualified teachers would find this level of flexibility difficult, or be resistant to its use, resulting in poor classroom delivery (WG, 2012).

The WBQ was commended for allowing the inclusion of vocational and academic courses and through the continued use of the well-established and recognised qualifications in Wales (WG, 2012). The majority of the interviewees thought that allowing students to select a combination of academic and vocational qualifications was ideal but that it had done very little to address the academic/vocational divide. With so few students enrolling on a combination of academic and vocational qualifications the challenges facing practitioners regarding delivery, were perceived to be too time consuming, for so few. Combinations complicated implementation further with the structure of the WBQ having to be very different for academic courses compared to vocational course. The WBQ is structured so differently for students on academic routes in comparison with those enrolled on vocational qualifications that arguably they have created two different qualifications.

The concerns outlined in the ROQ were relatively wide ranging and included more general concerns about the portfolio assessment. The review highlighted significant levels of duplication. Concerns about duplication and repetition were apparent in the findings of this thesis and the research conducted by WISERD (Tayler et al, 2013). Concerns were raised about the modern language element. This thesis found that the modern language requirements were obscure. Some schools and FE colleges expanded on this element and created a valuable educational experience. However in comparison, other schools and FE colleges had students merely complete a basic booklet or complete a basic task.

The grading structure was one of the main revisions suggested by the ROQ (2012), which was accepted and roll out commenced in September 2015. This thesis highlighted mixed feelings about grading from all 3 levels, with many recognising that grading was now essential to ensure the quality and standardisation of the qualification, and increase its recognition by universities and employees. However, many were concerned that grading would change the ethos of the qualification and instead of the WBQ being focussed on gaining a wealth of experiences. Critics believed the focus would be on completing the individual investigation and other graded elements, to achieve the necessary grade. The final concern was regarding low levels of acceptance and understanding. Acceptance was expected to increase with the introduction of grading. Grading would make the WBQ similar to qualifications at the same level and grading was a comfortable concept that all students, teachers, stakeholders and the policy community understood.

Many of the suggestions stemmed from reoccurring difficulties experienced in schools and colleges (WG, 2012). There was considerable confusion regarding the key skills component and the workbooks were deemed repetitive, arduous and uninspiring. Therefore, changing the mode of assessment for the key skills would be vital for the qualifications development. This suggestion was also made by the ROQ and the mode of assessment has been updated.

The flexible nature of the WBQ was a key discussion in many interviews. Some critics were concerned about the lack of standardisation and the potential for poor quality delivery. The majority believed that flexibility was essential for integrating the WBQ into the existing structures within schools or colleges. The flexibility was a theme that dominated discussions in the interviews across all 3 levels and caused mixed opinions. The flexible nature also meant that teachers were given more autonomy in the structuring, delivery and content of the WBQ. Many teachers thrived on this additional autonomy and enjoyed being recognised as the experts in their field. These teachers thrived on their ability to create a unique WBQ package that supported the individual needs of the school.

The ROQ and this thesis recognised the importance of developing a better network and collaborative partnerships to allow the sharing of best practice. These were relationships

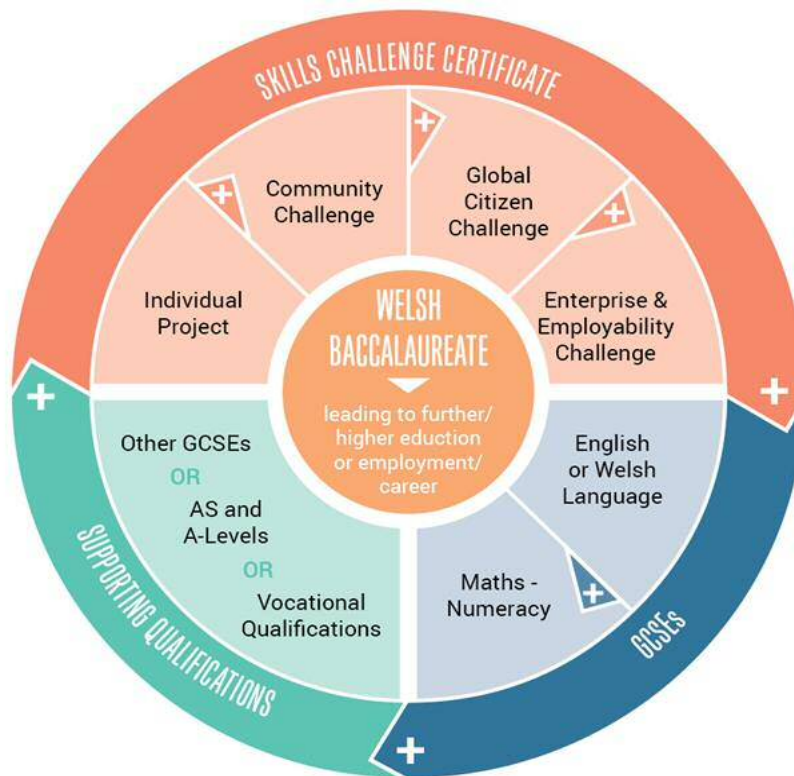
were highly valued by some institutions. Better collaborative partnerships and support networks were perceived to be essential for continued implementation success. The importance of collaborative partnerships to learn from best practice was a repeatedly discussed by interviewees, in this thesis.

The review also included some potential difficulties that may arise if the recommendations were to be implemented. These difficulties included the challenge of enacting these changes in such a short time scale, the impact and reaction of grading and the necessity for effective communication networks and teacher support training for success. These concerns outlined within the ROQ are in line with the empirical findings for this thesis. A severely stretched time scale, concerns about acceptance and possible resistance to change by both students and practitioners were prevalent. Poor communication networks and the lack of collaborative partnerships was one reason suggested by interviewees for explaining the major difficulties during implementation. With the new WBQ becoming compulsory for all students it is even more imperative that these concerns are addressed to ensure the implementation is successful (WG, 2012). The findings of this thesis are just as relevant now as before the reform. Acknowledging and recognising the challenges identified in this thesis, that could increase/impact the likelihood of institutionalisation, will support implementation of the newly reformed model.

### 8.3.1 c The new advanced level WBQ: A new model

The structure of the original WBQ was changed significantly after the ROQ, and is presented in the diagram below (WJEC, 2016). The new revised and more rigorous Welsh Baccalaureate is based on a Skills Challenge Certificate and supporting qualifications. The primary aim is to promote essential skills for employment and to provide opportunities through three Challenges and an Individual Project (WJEC, 2016).

Figure 4: The revised WBQ core



The advanced level WBQ had much higher annual uptake by schools and colleges prior to reform, than its lower level counterparts (Intermediate and Foundation Level). The central focus of the Welsh Baccalaureate at advanced level, is to provide a vehicle for level 3 learners to consolidate and develop their academic and employability skills (WJEC, 2016). Building on their previous achievements, the qualification will help learners develop more complex skills, attributes and behaviours. It will provide experiences which will enable learners to be better prepared for any employment or educational trajectory, they choose. Offering a learning experience relevant to the needs and demands of the workplace will develop learner's confidence and better prepare them to enter the world of work. The supporting qualifications include two mandatory GCSEs of English Language or Welsh Language together with Mathematics-Numeracy at grades A\*-C. Learners require two A levels grade A\*- E, or equivalent level 3 qualifications, totalling at least 600 GLH (WJEC, 2016).

The focus of the Skills Challenge Certificate will be on the essential and employability skills young people need for the future (WJEC, 2016). These skills will be developed

and assessed through an individual project and three Challenges. The Skills Challenge Certificate has been designed to include learning and assessment which will enthuse, engage and motivate learners in the classroom, the workplace and the wider community. Learners will be required to consider how the application of their learning may impact on individuals, employers, society and the environment (WJEC, 2016).

The seven essential and employability skills are:

1. Literacy
2. Numeracy
3. Digital Literacy
4. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
5. Planning and Organisation
6. Creativity and Innovation
7. Personal Effectiveness

A continued focus on developing student's key skills is a clever political move given the surprisingly poor key skills attainment scores across Wales, documented in the PISA report (WJEC, 2016).

These significant changes would for some deem this work irrelevant but the new structure and assessment procedures are still allowing for a great deal of flexibility as well as the continuation of many of the popular elements of the WBQ. Therefore, the empirical findings can still provide guidance for policy makers, schools and colleges on the implementation process. This thesis has the potential to contribute to academic understanding, as well as policy making in practice. The next section of this chapter will explore some of the limitations of this thesis, possible avenues of further enquiry and the practical applications of this research.

#### 8.4. Limitations and applications

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When conducting and publishing this thesis, the researcher has been mindful that the intention was to provide guidance and possible solutions for identified challenges that



arose during the implementation of the WBQ. This guidance included the generation of a list of common challenges that have plagued the implementation of the WBQ and may need further consideration in the future. This thesis references examples of good practice that some schools and FE colleges have developed. These examples could be interwoven into the structure of the WBQ. Dissemination will be carefully considered to ensure that the work is presented at non-academic platforms alongside more traditional academic conferences. Wide ranging dissemination will ensure that the practitioners, Head Teachers and the policy community are aware of the research. This desire to disseminate widely is reflected in the writing, which intends to simplify the data and create transparency in the description of the methodology and analysis.

Research that focuses on the trajectory or “life” of a policy, from initial ideal to worked reality, are uncommon. The majority of public policy research is overly focussed on evaluation, which is quite rightly so, when we further consider the cost, labour and time it takes to develop and implement policy. The objectives assigned to each policy are often extremely important, as these policies are hoping to address huge challenges facing Wales. Therefore, success is important and evaluation essential. However; very few researchers have focussed on implementation as a means of evaluation. This thesis focuses on the case of the WBQ as a means of understanding the development and implementation of all public policy, in post-devolution Wales.

This thesis is a case study. All case studies are concerned with issues about singleness and generalizability. These have been addressed in the Methodology chapter. The adoption of an interview methodology was selected as it provided a quick and simple data collection method. This was highly suited to the number of individuals in the sample, all of whom came from separate organisations and had to be approached individually for access. Access was extremely time consuming and the location and length of the interview was often less than ideal. The researcher had previously considered ethnography for collecting data within the schools and FE colleges but this would have required a smaller sample and the information was easier to acquire through direct open questions. Ethnography would have removed some of the weaknesses of an interview design (discussed in the methods chapter). Ethnography would have provided a more “natural environment”, and lessened the impact of the researcher in the field but the researcher believed that an interview opened up the opportunity to discuss the

WBQ, on an attempted equal footing. Being mindful of the impact a researcher can make was key. To extract specific information under a short time scale meant that semi-structured interviews would be the best type of methodology. It would be naïve for the researcher not to acknowledge that ethnography and large scale quantitative surveys have a role to play in understanding the implementation of the WBQ. However, these methodologies were not suited to this thesis. A large scale quantitative study would have provided generalizable data, across a larger number of schools and FE colleges but it would have failed to produce information that highlighted the individualisation that occurs, in the implementation of the WBQ.

In the methodology chapter the impact of the researcher role is discussed, and the limitations and strengths of being considered an insider in social science research are highlighted.

#### 8.4.1 Areas of further interest/opportunities for future research or enquiry

One of the major challenges was deciding what could/couldn't be included within the thesis. During data collection the researcher generated an extremely rich and interesting data set, which covered a vast array of topics and possible avenues of interest.

Remaining close and referring back to the original objectives ensured only findings relevant, were included. Even so, the objectives and aims were intentionally quite open and important decisions were made about what would be included in the empirical findings and what should not.

It is the intention that the data that was not included will not be lost, but after completion will become published journal articles. In particular, during the interviews, data was generated regarding how the WBQ has contributed to creating more well-rounded citizens, who play a more active role in society. This was not an area of interest for this thesis but given the current policy movement surrounding the importance of citizenship and community, this could be a really interesting angle for further research. Further research could question the WBQs role in constructing our young people into citizens.

There was also a great deal of information generated about widening access which was interesting and very relevant to the discussions and research being generated in the field of post-compulsory education. The researcher felt there is scope for a journal article to be written, which covers the role of the WBQ in widening access to young people in Wales. This is important given the inequitable rates of access to HE in Wales, amongst different social groups. Successive UK governments, over recent decades have placed considerable emphasis on expanding HE opportunities to social groups traditionally under-represented in HE (working class, some ethnic minority groups and mature students). Indeed, the Welsh Government has been preoccupied with widening access to HE over recent years, and the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ), has been considered strategic in this agenda. There are, therefore, pressing questions about the extent to which it has successfully opened up higher educational opportunities to young people who have traditionally been under represented in HE. There is, therefore, a need to explore not only the role the WBQ plays in young people's university choices in general as well as its perceived role in gaining access to particular HE courses and subjects in the context of a highly stratified HE system.

This thesis generated interesting data identifying the challenges of embedding curriculums into a student's optional courses. This could not all be presented within the thesis and will warrant further investigation. With the movement towards more flexible types of policy, that allow for personalization we will witness more examples of embedded curriculums. Understanding the limitations and challenges of embedded curriculums will help us to understand their role in the education system. With Key skills still very high on government agenda and the embedding of key skills being perceived as the ideal, more research on adopting this approach is necessary. Additional evaluations of the WBQ focusing on its success in raising levels of key skills, is necessary.

#### 8.4.2 The bigger picture: Policy applications/recommendations

All research should be mindful of the potential practical applications. It is fair to assume that the findings of this thesis have the potential to provide new knowledge about the implementation of the WBQ and provide guidance for institutions struggling with implementation. With the WBQ now compulsory, this research has the potential to

contribute to understanding the common difficulties that arise during implementation and provide a successful model. The WBQ has been a key driver for the Welsh Government, for over a decade and the continued dedication to ensuring its success has seen it develop and expand more rapidly than many of the policy community had expected. The WBQ aims to change the education landscape in Wales. It will modify the existing framework by adding to the well-established, traditional, academic and vocational qualifications. The WBQ has provided further breadth and has helped students gain a wider variety of skills. The Welsh Government believes the WBQ to be a key ingredient in raising academic standards in Wales, particularly in the area of key skills. The key skills deficiency has been firmly on the political agenda since the publication of the PISA scores. The report ranked welsh students very poorly in their key skills in comparison with other countries. Although, there have been significant changes to the structure of the WBQ and issues about standardisation will be addressed through the introduction of grading, this is still a very flexible policy. Schools and FE colleges will need to make choices about how they structure the WBQ, how they organise and deliver the content, who teaches the WBQ lessons and how they present the qualification to parents and students. The choices they will have a significant impact on the students experiences and their motivations towards completion.

To ensure a continued commitment to the application the research has already began using the findings to develop training and events for practitioners. Developing training for PGCE students was useful for highlighting to teachers their role in the WBQ and the importance of successful implementation. Also a key finding was that many practitioners felt that more prescriptive guidance was needed to support them in their delivery. Therefore, providing more prescriptive guidance would increase the confidence of newly qualified teachers which will impact positively on the delivery, the researcher has also been involved in the development of the WBQ conference run by Cardiff University; the conference provides guidance on elements of the WBQ including the delivery of lessons, research methodology and critical thinking. This free event was developed in partnership between the Welsh Government Officials, senior WJEC staff and Cardiff University research staff, from several academic disciplines. The aim of the event was to engage with Welsh Baccalaureate Coordinators and provide guidance on teaching research methods, to support the teaching of Individual Project Challenge. The key objectives of the day forth conference were,

1. To improve confidence to deliver the Individual Project.
2. To support the delivery of assessed skills within the Individual Project:
  - Critical thinking and problem solving
  - Research methods
  - Planning and organization of a research project
  - Datasets and analysis
3. To share best practice, knowledge and ideas to enable the development of a researcher led school engagement program for University.
4. To develop effective partnership working

This opportunity has been a very positive experience. It is the intention that this thesis will be of interest to macro level policymakers and practitioners alike who, are hoping to uncover the impact of implementation and begin to generate a recipe of activities that can ensure the successful implementation of public policy.

#### 8.5. Concluding statement

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This final chapter is presented in a way that illustrates to the reader the key empirical findings generated from the data collection. It also provides a transparent and honest account of the limitations of the research, as well as suggested applications for the future. This thesis provides specific guidance that could contribute to the development of the WBQ, and will increase the likelihood of institutionalisation. The findings of this thesis, other evaluations and research act as a feedback loop and contribute to the continued development of the qualification. This is an important stage in implementation and ensuring a policies continued existence.

This thesis has questioned the development and implementation of education policy in post devolution Wales. It has the potential to contribute to the understanding of all public policy development in Wales. The creation of flexible policy which gives

practitioners more autonomy in the decision making process, have been growing in popularity over the last decade. Therefore, this thesis has the potential of contributing to a previously under-researched area. Understanding how flexible policy is created and implemented and what problems arise will be essential if we continue to develop these more flexible types of policy. The inclusion of practitioners in the policy development process demonstrated a shift in the view regarding who are the experts in the field of education. The WBQ is a good example of this type of policy. The development of the WBQ, saw practitioners involved during the design stage. The findings of this thesis contribute to the understanding of multi-disciplinary policy making and practitioner-led policymaking and could be easily transferable to any public policy area.

With regards to implementation understanding how a policy is designed and then translated at every level, is extremely interesting. This third generation implementation research has further highlighted how policy is translated and transformed at each level. These translations can cause misunderstanding which is extremely important to understand. This thesis could illuminate why some policy has failed or changed significantly since its original design. It helps to understand how a policy becomes a worked reality and how the successful implementation of the policy is key, to ensure its success. It has the potential of further contributing to understanding the role of SLBs on policy.

Ultimately, this thesis has concluded that the process of implementation actually shapes policy and contributes to its development. The successful implementation of any public policy is the major contributor to ensuring the policy becomes institutionalised and its continuation in the future. Implementation is a complex and multi-faceted process and involves a wide range of different organisations and individuals, each making decisions about how to make the policy a reality and translating the policy for others (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). Street level Bureaucrats have a definite roll to play in the interpretation and shaping of policy (Lipsky, 1980). Implementation is a vital stage in the creation of policy and should not be perceived as separate. Implementation has the ability to significantly change the finalised form.

These findings have opened up new and interesting ideas in the field of implementation that require further study. By revisiting the field of implementation this thesis has

concluded that there is still a great deal more to understand. Contradictory to recent belief that the field has been saturated and no new data is emerging. Implementation still needs to be taken seriously by researchers and policy makers who need to understand the huge contribution it has on public policy making and policy success. As the political systems change and devolution and independence become reality, researchers are able to revisit implementation in new arenas previously unexplored, which have the ability to tell us a lot more about the creation and implementation of public policy.

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# Appendix 1: Table representing key political movements that led up to the creation of the WBQ

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## **Summary of the key events leading up to the WBQ**

1988 Higginson Committee	Reform academic track to 5 leaner A levels.
1990 “A British Baccalaureate”	Publication of “A British Baccalaureate” (Finegold, 1990).
1991 “Education and training for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century”	Suggestions for improvement of vocational track via a unifies baccalaureate
1993 IWA “Wales 2010:Creating our future”	Publication by the IWA for introduction of a Welsh Baccalaureate.
1994	Initial approach to WJEC
1996 Dearing report	Suggested adoption of a baccalaureate model
1996 IWA conference	Conference open to all stakeholders to discuss proposal
1997 The welsh Bac: Educating Wales in the next century	Publications by IWA “The welsh Bac: Educating Wales in the next century” (Jenkins et al, 1997)
1997	Results of a questionnaire sent to schools and colleges in Wales published in “The Welsh Baccalaureate: Matching international standards” (David and Jenkins, 1997) results showed 61% interested in the development and 86% prepared to take part in pilot in 38 institutions.
1997 “Qualifying for Success”	Suggestion students sit 5 AS levels alongside broader key skills.

1997	ACCAC in response to Welsh Office Document Qualifying for Success devotes a large part of its letter of advice to dismissal of the Welsh Bac.
1998 The Welsh Bac: From Wales to the World"	Publication by IWA, " The Welsh Bac: From Wales to the World"
1999	Welsh Assembly created
2000 "Beyond the border: The acceptability of the Welsh Bac to higher education institutions outside Wales	Consultation paper: "Beyond the border: The acceptability of the Welsh Bac to higher education institutions outside Wales" (Black and David, 2000)
2000	Labour-Liberal coalition commitment to pilot a Welsh Baccalaureate based on the IB
2000 "Curriculum 2000"	Introduction of AS level to encourage more breadth.
2001	Welsh Assembly invites tender for Welsh Baccalaureate pilot scheme only one tender received by WJEC.
2001 "Learning County"	Commitment to the development and pilot of a Welsh Baccalaureate for Wales.
2002	WBQ proposal sent to ACCAC and gain approval, final confirmation of the rejection of IWA proposal

*(Adapted from Phillips and Pound, 2003, p.102-103)*

# Appendix 2: Application for ethical approval.

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Your Application ref: SREC/822

Sara Knight  
PhD Programme  
SOCSI

Dear Sara

**You will shortly receive a letter from the Chair of the School Research Ethics Committee, Professor Tom Horlick-Jones, confirming the following:**

Your project entitled “*A curriculum for all: An analysis of the implementation of the Welsh Baccalarureate Qualification*” has been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University, subject to the following :

- \* *Information Sheet* – Please arrange to change the colouring of this document, as currently this is somewhat difficult to read.

You do not need to respond to the Committee on the above, however, if you need clarification concerning this, please contact me.

If you make any substantial changes with ethical implications to the project as it progresses you need to inform the SREC about the nature of these changes. Such changes could be: 1) changes in the type of participants recruited (e.g. inclusion of a group of potentially vulnerable participants), 2) changes to questionnaires, interview guides etc. (e.g. including new questions on sensitive issues), 3) changes to the way data are handled (e.g. sharing of non-anonymised data with other researchers).

All ongoing projects will be monitored every 12 months and it is a condition of continued approval that you complete the monitoring form.

Please inform the SREC when the project has ended.

Please use the SREC's project reference number above in any future correspondence.

Regards

Deb Watkins

Deborah Watkins  
Research & Graduate Studies Administrator  
Cardiff School of Social Sciences (SOCSI)  
Glamorgan Building  
King Edward VII Avenue  
Cardiff CF10 3WT  
Wales UK  
Tel: +44 (0)29 2087 9051  
Fax: +44 (0)29 2087 4175  
<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi>

## Appendix 3: Access letters and emails

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### Example letter

Cardiff University School of Social Sciences  
PhD offices (3<sup>rd</sup> floor)  
1-3 Museum place  
Cardiff  
CF10 3BD  
Tel: xxxxxxxxxxxx  
Email: xxxxxxxx

To xxxxxx,

I am a PhD student in the Social Science department of Cardiff University, specialising in the reforms in the 14-19 curriculum in Wales. My current research will be focussing on the variations in the implementation of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ). My interest in this topic came from my experiences as a teacher in the sector and from previous research I have conducted on student's experiences and understandings of the WBQ as part of my MSc.

I was hoping that I could include XXXXX in my research. I have already received ethical approval to proceed and am hoping to begin conducting research in Jan/ Feb. The research only involves a short interview with your WBQ Coordinator (or head of sixth form) to discuss the WBQ provision within the school. The interview should not take longer than one hour.

I would be grateful to be able to include xxxxx in my sample. I will be very happy to meet you to discuss any issues or questions you have, and provide you with further information about the project. I look forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely

Sara Knight

MSc PGCE BSc

### **Example email**

Dear xxxx

My name is Sara Knight and I am a PhD student in Cardiff University. I was given your name and email as a point of contact when I contacted xxxxxx with regards to organising access to conduct research in the school.

I am interested in the implementation of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification from the National to the local level. The research would involve a short interview with the Welsh Baccalaureate coordinator. The Interview should not last longer than one hour; I am interested in how the schools and colleges in Wales are implementing the Welsh Baccalaureate not evaluating its progress. My interest in this area stems from my experience as teacher in the post-compulsory sector.

If you would like more information or to arrange a meeting feel free to contact me on this email address or alternatively you can ring me on xxxxxx.

thanks

Sara Knight

BSc MSc PGCE

# Appendix 4: Consent forms

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## **School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University: Consent Form**

### **A curriculum for All: an analysis of the implementation of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification in Schools and Colleges**

I understand that my participation in this project will involve a short interview about the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification and will require approximately 30-45 minutes of my time.

I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. I am free to withdraw my data or discuss any concerns I have at any time during the research process.

I understand that the information provided by me will be held confidentially, such that only the Experimenter and her supervisors can trace this information back to me individually. The information will be retained for a short period of time and then will be deleted/ destroyed. I understand that I can ask for the information I provide to be deleted/destroyed at any time and I can have access to the information at any time.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Sara Knight School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University with the supervision of *Professor Gareth Rees and Professor Alistair Cole*.

Signed:

Date:

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# Appendix 5: Example interview schedules

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## **Interview schedule: Director of a Teaching Union**

1. Could you please tell me about yourself and your relationship with the WBQ?
2. In general what feedback have you been having from centres?
3. Previous interviews have discussed how Wales doesn't lack in vision but in its ability to implement. Is that something you agree or disagree with?
4. The WBQ was intentionally created to be flexible allowing each school or college to adapt in a way that suits them, what do you think about this level of flexibility?
5. The review of 14-19 qualifications is currently underway; the recently published consultation paper confirmed that at the least the advanced level will now be graded. What are your thoughts about grading?
6. The consultation paper also hints at the WBQ becoming a compulsory national framework for all students. What are our thoughts about this?
7. One of the intentions of the WBQ has been to equalize the market and cultural values ascribed to academic and vocational course, how far do you think it has achieved its aim?
8. Do you think the WBQ will contribute to raising standards in Wales in the future?
9. What do you think the future holds for the WBQ?
10. Is there anyone else I should be interviewing you can think of?

## **Interview Schedule: Ex-Minister for Education and Skills**

1. Can you tell me a bit about your involvement and history with the WBQ?
2. You have always been a big advocate of the WBQ and played a key role in its development. What were your main motivations for introducing this type of qualification in Wales?



3. How were the pilot and implementation procedures decided?
4. The WBQ guidelines are intentionally quite flexible to allow for each school or college to implement it in their own unique way that suit their own environment and student body. Can you perceive any advantages or disadvantages to having his level of freedom?
5. Previous interviews have discussed how Wales does not lack in vision but in its ability to implement. How far do you agree or disagree with this?
6. What feedback in general have you received about the WBQ from centres?
7. With the review of 14-19 qualifications currently underway the consultation paper which has recently been published has hinted at some possible changes to the WBQ including grading and making the WBQ a compulsory national framework for all students. What are your thoughts about these proposed changes?
8. The WBQ aimed to try to equalize the market and cultural values ascribed to academic and vocational courses. How far do you think it has come to achieving that aim?
9. How has the profile and status changed since the initial pilot years has this surprised you at all?
10. How does the future of the WBQ in the long term contribute to raising standards in the long term?
11. Is there anyone else you think I should interview regarding this topic?

### **Interview Schedule: Suburbs school**

1. Could on briefly introduce yourself and your role(s) within the school/college?
2. How have students adapted to monitoring their progress on Moodle?
3. What is the history of the WBQ here at ....?
4. How not being one of the schools/colleges involved in the pilot aide/hinder you in your implementation and delivery of the WBQ?
5. Prior to its implementation how did the school prepare its staff for implementing the WBQ?
6. How has the school accommodated the WBQ? (How does the school organize the delivery of the core?)

7. The WBQ guidelines are intentionally flexible to allow for each school to implement the policy in a way that suits them, how has that freedom worked to your advantage and/or disadvantage?
8. One of the main criticisms of national policy design is the failure of the national level to recognize the possible difficulties of implementation in each individual school/college? How successfully do you feel the national level have been in creating a policy that can be adapted to suit a wide range of establishments and learners?
9. How successful do you feel WBQ has been implemented within the school/college?
10. How have the students reacted to the implementation of the WBQ?
11. How do student value the Welsh Baccalaureate and do they understand that it is in an umbrella qualification?
12. The WBQ was created and aims to be an inclusive education package that gives a parity of esteem to both vocational and academic courses. How well do you think it's done in achieving its aim within your school/college?
13. What is the future of the WBQ in your school or college?

## Appendix 6: Profiles of schools and colleges within the sample

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### **English medium Schools**

#### **Suburbs school**

This large secondary school is located on the outskirts of a large city in South Wales. Suburbs school is an English-medium, mixed 11-18 secondary school. It serves a compact geographical area that includes both affluent and relatively non-affluent communities. Seven percent of pupils qualify for free school meals. There are around 300 students enrolled at the sixth form. Around 170 pupils are identified on the school's register of pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Twenty-eight pupils have a statement of special educational need. There is also a Hearing Impaired Unit (HIU) attached to the school. It draws 26 pupils and students from the wider Unitary Authority. Suburbs school was inspected in 2009 and judged as requiring significant improvement. Estyn undertook a re-inspection in 2010 focusing on the key issues identified. Suburbs School is judged to have made good progress in relation to the recommendations for improvement.

Access was made via a phone call to sixth form department prior to data collection. This interview was conducted in an active and loud sixth form staff room surrounded by the common room which was full of sixth formers on their lunch break. Therefore the Dictaphone was used but I also had to rely on notes as disturbances and loud noises often made the voices inaudible. The interview was conducted with three female colleagues in the room all who contributed to answering the questions and could therefore be termed a joint interview. The three individuals included the Head of Sixth Form, the WBQ coordinator and the sixth form administrative staff who merely comment on her role regarding the WBQ. The full time WBQ Coordinator was away on maternity and the current coordinator had been in position for nearly whole academic year but explained why they felt a joint interview with the Head of Sixth Form whom had a close relationship with the WBQ since its inception. The interview lasted approximately 1 hour.

### **Town Pilot School**

Town Pilot School is an English-medium 11 to 18 mixed comprehensive school situated in the Vale of Glamorgan. There are 218 students enrolled in the sixth form. Within the school 14.2% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The school has a diverse pupil intake. Two hundred and twenty-four pupils are categorised as pupils with English as an additional language and 29% of pupils come from a minority ethnic background. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is around 30%, which is much higher than the national average of 18.6%. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs (3%) is very close to the national average of 2.6%. The school has a specialist resource base serving the local authority for 9 pupils with a hearing impairment.

This school was one of the 18 schools and colleges that made up the first year pilot and promote themselves as a flagship WBQ School offering an excellent WBQ delivery. Access to this school was made through a national level interview with previous connections to this school. The interview was conducted with the male WBQ Coordinator who had been in post for a number of years and had previous experience managing and delivering the WBQ in another school. The school prides itself on having an experienced senior team managing the WBQ. The school has an open door policy to its delivery of the WBQ and invites other local schools to learn about their delivery and structure and learn from their success by creating and delivering training opportunities within the schools for neighbouring WBQ coordinators to attend.. The interview was conducted in a small staff room which had a number of colleagues inside and was located within the larger sixth form IT room. Therefore a Dictaphone was used but I also relied on notes made during the interview as interruptions and increasing noise levels were common place. The interview lasted approximately 1 hour.

### **Catholic school**

Catholic High School, is a voluntary-aided, mixed, 11-18 school and within the Catholic Archdiocese of Cardiff. There are 1,480 pupils enrolled, There are 320 students in the sixth form. Around 70% of pupils come from Catholic families and about 30% of pupils come from other Christian denominations and faith groups. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. A total of 15.6% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is slightly below the national average of 17.4% for secondary

schools in Wales. Around 29% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales. Around 2% of pupils have statements of special educational needs compared with 2.7% for Wales as a whole. Fourteen per cent of pupils have a special educational need. Just over 15% of pupils come from BME groups and 200 pupils currently speak English as an additional language. Overall, there are 34 different languages spoken by pupils.

Access to the Catholic School was instigated by an academic colleague who had relationship with the school. A phone interview was deemed the most appropriate as the WBQ coordinator was extremely busy with examinations during the data collection period. Therefore notes were made by myself on the responses made. The interview was conducted on the female WBQ coordinator. Although the WBQ had been previously been offered there at intermediate level the advanced level had only been offered at the school for 1 year and they were still very much in the developmental stages. It is now compulsory for all students who qualify.

### **Specialist School**

Specialist School is located in a coastal town in south Wales. It is maintained by the Vale of Glamorgan Local Authority (LA) and caters for learners who have a very wide range of ability and degree of autism. There are 108 learners on roll and of these 9 learners are in residence from Monday to Thursday. The learners are aged from 4-19, and come from all across South Wales. Twelve learners are from BME groups. A significant proportion of learners come from households with low incomes with the proportion eligible for free school meals being 31%.

The school is a specialist school who offer the only the WBQ at intermediate level. I decided to include them as felt their unique circumstances could contribute to the thesis in that their experiences and perceptions of the WBQ would be different. The intermediate WBQ had been offered at the school for 2 years to any students who qualified which at the time of the interview was 6 students but the WBQ activities being open to all students who were capable and interested in being involved. Access was achieved when a teaching union director introduced the Head of the school to the researcher. A 20-30 minute interview between classes was scheduled with the female WBQ coordinator in a classroom therefore responses were noted down by the researcher

as the level of noise was quite high and the Dictaphone was unable to distinguish voices.

### **Welsh and Bilingual Schools**

#### **Welsh City School**

Welsh City School is an 11-18 mixed, designated Welsh-medium school located in a large city in South Wales. There are 179 in the sixth form. About a third of the pupils come from the most socially deprived areas, with a further third coming from the prosperous residential areas of the city. The remaining pupils come from areas that are neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. Pupils who attend the school wish to take advantage of a Welsh-medium education. Within the school 9.4% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. There are 20 pupils with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) and a further 147 have been identified as needing some support. About 22% of the pupils come from homes where the predominant language spoken is Welsh. Around 75% of pupils come from homes where English is the predominant language.

The Welsh City School is a Welsh medium school located in the heart of a South Wales City, it has a close relationship with a neighbouring Welsh medium who at the time of the interview did not offer the WBQ. Access to the male WBQ Coordinator was achieved via emailing the Coordinator directly. The interview was conducted in a small office with the male WBQ Coordinator over a period of approximately 1 hour using a Dictaphone. The school was involved in the original pilot during the second phase and the Advanced level WBQ is compulsory for all students. The WBQ coordinator had only been in the post for 1 year but had previous experience managing and delivering the WBQ in a previous establishment.

#### **Coastal school**

The Coastal school is a Welsh-medium community school for pupils aged 11-18, The school is situated in a village on the South West coast. It serves a large catchment area. The catchment area includes vast industrial and post-industrial areas, along with rural villages. Around 20.7% of pupils live in 20% of the most disadvantaged areas in Wales and 11.9% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The school admits children from

the full range of ability. Only 0.5% of pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Approximately 12% of pupils have additional learning needs. Approximately half of pupils are from homes where at least one parent speaks Welsh, but most can speak Welsh to first language standard.

Coastal school has been offering the WBQ for 4 years and it is compulsory for all students who qualify for the advanced level. The entire WBQ curriculum is delivered during students AS year to prevent overlap with the academic A2 assessments. This is unique and this school was the only establishment that offered the WBQ in this way. Access was achieved via a phone conversation made to the WBQ coordinator prior to data collection. The WBQ coordinator was happy to be involved but felt a phone interview would be the most ideal means of data collection due to the location of the school and the individual circumstances there. Therefore a time slot for the interview was scheduled and the 30 minute interview was recorded by detailed notes made by myself over the course of the interview recording exact terms and phrases used by the coordinator.

### **Rural school**

Rural school is an 11-18 mixed, designated Welsh-medium school. There are currently 169 in the sixth form. The school is situated in a small village which serves a wide catchment area. About three-quarters of the pupils come from rural areas. A quarter of the pupils come from areas that are neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged and three-quarters from economically disadvantaged areas. The main forms of employment in the region are agriculture and tourism. There are 20 pupils with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) and a further 124 have been identified as needing some further support. Seventeen pupils are disciplined from the National Curriculum (NC). About 65% of the pupils come from homes where the predominant language spoken is English, and 35% come from Welsh speaking homes. All of the pupils speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard.

The Rural school have offered the WBQ for 7 years and was in the second phase of the pilot. Contact via email was assisted by a mutual contact at a teaching union who felt the school could contribute to the thesis due to their unique experiences. The interview

was conducted in a public place and therefore a Dictaphone was unable to pick up his responses adequately so I noted down his responses verbatim where possible. The interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes. The interview was conducted on the male Head of the Sixth Form tutor who has a history of teaching the WEW element of the WBQ since its inception and is responsible for assisting students in their UCAS applications. Therefore their long and complex history with the WBQ made them an ideal individual for interviewing.

### **North School**

North school is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive school of 823 pupils located in Conway. The school opened in 1976. The catchment area for the school is diverse, including areas of relative wealth as well as areas of significant deprivation. The school serves rural and urban communities and attracts pupils from outside its traditional catchment area. The linguistic background of the pupils and students is almost exclusively English with a small number of pupils coming from Welsh-medium or other ethnic language backgrounds. In the last three years, North school has been designated as a RAISE school by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). This designation derives from the WAG's measure of deprivation, essentially schools where more than 20% of the population are entitled to free school meals.

Access to North School was made by initially contacting the school via email. Due the location of the school a phone interview was deemed to be the most appropriate and was scheduled soon after initial contact was made. Notes were made during the entire interview and exact quotes were jotted down where possible. The WBQ has been offered at the school for 7 years and was part of the second phase of the pilot. The interview was conducted on the female WBQ coordinator/ Assistant Head who had been in this position since the WBQ inception and also had a significant role in the delivery of key skills. The WBQ is compulsory for all students at advanced level.



## Appendix 7: Example macro level interview transcript: Civil servant

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1. Can you tell me about yourself and your history with the Welsh Baccalaureate?

I'm a career civil servant I've been working in the Welsh Office since 1983, I actually started in the education department and went off to various other places and I came back to education in 1996 and my role then was to finalize what was happening with the Dearing post 16 review you have heard of that one yeh? Really the main part of the job then was creating some legislation that combined ACCAC and the NCVQ Wales which was identical to what happened in England where the the what's it called curriculum council combined with the main NCVQ and became the QCA. But there was also stuff around at that time about the Dearing recommendations about adding breadth to post 16 and there was talk about some sort of overarching certificate in that review but that never really happened as there was a general election and we got a Labour government and the Labour government decided that they would do their own review which was qualifying for success, do you know much about that one? Well that one again was post 16 and they came up with a very similar overall conclusions about increasing the breadth of learning and learning be underpinned by key skills and there as talk about an overarching qualification and the main outcome I suppose was from Curriculum 2000 with the introduction of AS's but it also added fire to calls which had been ongoing anyway for a welsh baccalaureate led by the Institute of Welsh affairs who wanted a welsh bac which was basically the international baccalaureate with a bit of welshness thrown in to it to over simplify it what they were putting forward. Ministers from both the Conservative government and the incoming Labour government were opposed to that they didn't want it but the Institute of Welsh Affairs kept on and they kept saying no thank you very much and then we got the Assembly and ministers continued to say no thank you very much and then we had a coalition government with Labour and the Liberal democrats and part of that deal with the Liberal democrats was the Welsh Baccalaureate and part of the deal involved developing and piloting a Welsh Baccalaureate initially based on the International Baccalaureates which was the initial agreement from that coalition government. Then ministers felt with advice from

officials that limited the completion for any development of a welsh baccalaureate so they decided to drop that requirement and put it out for tender and all the general qualification awarding organizations well only the WJEC did actually submit and the WJEC won that. Then basically my job has been the Welsh Baccalaureate, initially getting the project up and running and then over the years to roll it out to get it to where we are. From 2000 when we had the commitment to pilot it and roll out and basically that has been my job as well as other things well a lot of other things up until 2006 from where ACCAC had merged with the Assembly following that merger I have been more focuses on the Welsh Baccalaureate also the team that were actually doing it had a broader remit and we had a lot of other things to do, that's it basically. Since 1996 I have been working in this general area and working very much on the welsh baccalaureate starting with pilot and then roll out.

## 2. How did you go about creating the pilot procedures?

A lot of it is down to political direction them saying we are going to have a pilot and we are going to have a roll out we then just have to work out what we are going to do and without being able to remember huge amounts of details we had a steering group set up by us, we brought in people like well ACCAC were involved we had representatives from HE Wales, representatives from industry, representatives from UCAS and ESTYN as well plus once WJEC had won they were involved. That made up quite a small core group of key individuals. We had to decide what the welsh bac was going to be and do and obviously we had a lot of political direction and then the commitment came from putting Wales first there was a fairly clear political steer and obviously we had talked to the minister at the time and she was a new minister. So we had those discussions and we decided that it helped frame the tender document and then the WJEC won the tender and there was some towing and froing from some slight adjustments to the model and then the steering group continued throughout the pilot phase with the same people I mentioned earlier as well as then the WJEC who were in attendance as well as well as Fforwm as technical partners which is now CollegesWales you know and they had the university of Bath as internal evaluators as well so that steered the development of the model plus the steering group knew that we needed a reasonably sized group of schools and colleges within the pilot and I think initially we were looking for 20 or something schools and some colleges at one point we were struggling to get there and have

sufficient numbers but we eventually got there and had nineteen but at the last minute one dropped out but we started the pilot anyway at eighteen. There was an initial concern from centres as well it was a bit of a risk , it's a new qualification and well it takes a lot of time to developing how they're going to be teaching it or delivering it. Plus the learners have got this new qualification and need time to accept it. Before we started delivering, just before we started delivering UCAS allocated 120 UCAS points to the welsh baccalaureate core which was very much of a boost and I think the centres that were involved had some nervousness which was dissolved and helped settle them down a lot but it also perked up interest from other centres as well as they could see the risk was slightly less and there was a real positive side to it to and so lots more centres indicated they were interested in the pilot and the discussions with the steering group we agreed that after the first year we would take on another half a dozen centres we could have had considerably more but we decided to keep it relatively controlled and then after the second year we decided to take on another seven centres at the end of the final year. There was much more interest once it was off the *ground* and once some key people such as xxxxxx head of xxxxx began saying really positive things about the welsh baccalaureate plus since UCAS had given it 120 UCAS points it had generated a lot of interest. Really the problem in those latter phases was keeping the numbers down we wanted our own twenty started with 18 which then went up to 24 and we agreed we could go a bit further and pushed it to 31. Then there was an external evaluation conducted by the centre for lifelong learning and that was quite positive although it wasn't universal have you read that? It was pretty good and positive and then based on that and advice from officials as well as ESTYN reports and all this stuff and then the minister decided we would have a roll out from the September so then we decided how we would do that and one of the recommendations was that the funding for all centres when they started was essential and that would need to be continued as delivery went for roll out so we did that we created something called delivery funding which was tapered. It started out at 400 pound per learner, then 300 pound in the second year and then to 200 pound in the final year and then down to zero but by that time you would be getting recognition of the extra costs of delivering the welsh baccalaureate. The specific funding that we offered tapered out but following funding didn't so would be continued. All a long there were calls that there should be a foundation level and if that went well there should be provision at key stage 4 and so we decided to extend the pilot to include foundation level and the key stage 4 provision and that kicked off in 2006 and

although we didn't have a full external evaluation of that we did have a detailed ESTYN report of it and that a pretty positive again and based on that we decided we should roll out at those levels to which we began in 2009 which we did. You have seen yourself the level of participation is huge it is levelling off now of course but there are still some still receiving delivery funding who were some of the last to come on board. The foundation level and key stage 4 and post 16 certificate are still receiving funding as it is earlier on and will do for the next two years. I was absolutely amazed to be honest at the level of uptake overall I remember about two years after the pilot had started the head of the branch well there was a policy document and I'm trying to remember what one well they had a statement in there that by 2010 that we would have 25% of the learners doing the welsh baccalaureate and I remember my colleague looking at me as if well here did that come from and it had come from the ministerial stage not from us and we both looked at each other and said well that's not ever going to happen now is it and my colleague said well we are probably not going to be here so we won't need to defend it, well he is gone but I'm still here but we way exceeded what we expected, so I just didn't think it was going to catch on the way it has you know and I'm surprised at that and that's thanks to key people who just get it and respect it and when you get principles talking so positively about the welsh baccalaureate then.

3. Some of the biggest advocates of the Welsh Bac have discussed how Wales doesn't lack in vision but in its ability to implement, do you agree with that statement?

To some extent yes I mean as we have mentioned early centres need some time to create a new form of provision, my daughters school is one example. If you go to a school, in its first year you might go back and it will be completely different as it changes as it is developing. We have had it from other centres that initially they were concerned and attitude over the first year changes another problem is you get a great deal of turn over as some welsh baccalaureate coordinators get recognized for being good coordinators and then they get promoted and move on to something else and all that great experience gets lost well not lost necessary because if they are still at the same centre they may be there as a source of advice it is one of the problems that we have had with key skills where ay key skills coordinators do a good job and then them get noticed and are promoted to something else and that wealth of experience is lost so there is turn over

issues. Some centres only have a small number of students doing the welsh bac which probably means only a small number of staff as a centre gains experience they often then move to full cohort and then all the staff or a lot more members of staff have to be involved and once they have got more staff involved you get more ideas bouncing around ad you get more commitment you can do more integration rather than standalone this and standalone that and it just gets better and that is one thing we have really found like one of the things you said about should it be compulsory or not well we don't get a huge volume of complaints we just don't but then we don't get huge volumes of praise either but we wouldn't no matter what the subject is you only get letters of complaint so you can get a fairly negative reaction if you only focus on the correspondence you are dealing with as you only get them from those who have had a negative experience but we don't get many we really don't , I mean half a dozen letters a year something like that and nearly all of them centre around why is it compulsory why should I have to do it well our response is as always well we haven't made it compulsory it is up to the individual centres if they want to make it compulsory or not. But we do know from experience and from feedback from centres from evaluators and from the WJEC that where it is compulsory that is where delivery is better because of the factors I have just outlined you get more buy in from staff and more ideas being fed in and commitment from everybody rather than responsibility being left to a small number of individuals who have been left isolated and insufficiently supported a senior team within a school once they are doing something that all the students are involved in the senior team really have to support it, otherwise they are going to be struggling ad it is going to reflect badly on them and it just works better.

#### 4. Have you had any schools who have adopted it only to drop it later on?

No I don't think we have had any, not that I'm aware of. But any school that is struggling really need to contact the WJEC and they can provide support but obviously with the level of expansion their teams resources have been stretched and what thy am to do is get centres helping each other, working in regional sort of teams so they can. We have also been recently out to visit centres and we get feedback from the WJEC, ESTYN, individual centres from conferences we attend but we don't really get to go out to the individual centres as much as I would like so we have been doing that over the last year or so and I was expecting to go out and get all sorts of complaints but we just

haven't been getting it. But one school in mid Wales were talking about the level of support they get from the WJEC and we said well what about you know working with local centres and I know in Wales especially mid Wales local can be a very different term but there are other centres in the vicinity and the reaction that we got from this particular welsh baccalaureate coordinator was quite alarming she said she wouldn't share our ideas with them that is our competition. I can understand there is an element of competition and reorganization going on in well actually in all parts of Wales but the felt their sixth form was in direct competition with the other one, so that added an edge to it. So we said well why don't you try contacting schools within your band that don't have to be local and they said well yeh that's not a bad idea, however what we haven't done is follow through and call back and see if they have actually done that but clearly a light went up with this person when we mentioned that you know and well as I think whatever he WJEC do it won't be better than bouncing ideas off other schools that are in similar situations and the WJEC think that to although it is probably in the WJEC's interest to say that, but with the people working on the welsh bac team I don't think they would they are pretty genuine and pretty committed. I think that they do really feel that collaborative work is the best way.

##### 5. What in general has the reaction to the WBQ been?

We go to schools like xxxx that don't have the money around like some of its local schools within a mile and a half but they are really enthusiastic. We spoke to the kid there and the kids were great apart from one lad who had had to do some Mandarin as part of their welsh bac and they were doing some Tai Chi stuff they were doing as well and he wasn't at all impressed about doing Tai Chi or learning Chinese. His comments were of a sharp contrast to the rest of the students shall we say but even he was enthusiastic about most of the stuff but this particular element he decided was completely and utterly pointless but the rest of them were really enthusiastic about the whole thing but they couldn't afford to do a trip to China or South Africa like some schools can and they are much more limited in what they can achieved but what they were doing worked. They also went down to see the Cardiff bay development and learn about Welsh politics a lot easier than schools in north Wales you just have to be creative. But they all have different problems.

6. The guidelines for the WBQ are intentionally quite flexible how do you think that level of freedom works for schools and colleges?

Well the feedback we get is that it works pretty well for them. I suppose you could say that that flexibility allows for some of the weaker centres to put on a weaker problem but we don't have any hard evidence of that. The sort of feedback is that certain centres deliver the welsh bac better than others but that could happen in Physics or welsh language their going to be variations in those and how they are being delivered but as a wide spread problem well I wouldn't see it as a wide spread problem. I think in general it is seen as quite positive as people can just do things as and tailor them to their own local circumstances. If they have a relatively narrow curriculum they can fir it in to their local curriculum rather than being told they have to do this that and the other. They have got to do certain things but how they choose to do them is a matter from them.

7. What are your thoughts about grading?

Well at advanced level it is going to be graded we did the survey online against the background of growing noise it certainly wasn't all saying we want grading but it was growing in that direction and certainly from the higher education institutions. The noise we were picking up was mostly from the HE side but even that wasn't exclusive as there were variations and differing opinions there. But anyway we did an online survey and it came out in favour of grading certainly at advanced level, I think it was 91% something like that, and that was quite evenly split across the various stakeholders but saying that some of the response numbers were pretty low even though the overall numbers were quite healthy some of the numbers for some stakeholder were low like employers as we only had a handful but even with that limitation there was still a very substantial majority for all stakeholder groups for grading at advanced level. At the intermediate level there was a majority for but it was less pronounced and at foundation there was just a slight majority for but I mean it was like 49 to 51 so basically it was an even split. One response on the other direction would have tipped it back to 50:50 so. It was really pronounced at advanced level less so intermediate and far less slow at foundation level. The review of qualification board discussed this in February and felt yes we should go ahead with grading at advanced level and we should put on hold any decision regarding intermediate and foundation level and see how it goes at advanced

level before we make a final decision and they recommended that to ministers and ministers accepted that recommendation and now we are in the process of working out actually how we will do that grading?

8. In your opinion how will it be graded?

Well we are going to have a meeting towards the end of June about this one. We have to get three key skills a level 3 and 3 at level 2 and you could say that someone who gets 3 at level 3 and 3 at level 2 gets your top grade with various combinations of scores in between depending on how many points they have so you could do it that way or you could add the individual investigation into the mix but you would have to give it a formal grading structure and then you would have 4 variables because three have to be at level 3 and you could work out some sort of grading structure from them. We are also working up another model that gives weightings to different elements which would be part of the consultation but we will have to see how that goes, it might involve beefing up the individual investigation to make it a slightly larger qualification so that it will be a slightly larger part of the core because what will happen then and the feedback we get from the WJEC is that nearly all of the students spend longer than the 20 hours allocated for the individual investigation so we might end up beefing it up as there has been suggestions that if we just look at grading the individual investigation which has 20 guided learning hours that's a bit iffy, but if it is a more substantial thing in itself then we might be able to. So we are working on a more weighted model that with the key skills.

9. Will grading not change the ethos of the qualification?

That's my concern I'm not saying we are finding it hard what I'm saying is that I want to be really careful that we don't do that because that is something which has been widely accepted as being a good thing and I don't want it to interfere with that and that is something that might come into the intermediate and foundation level as well as the review of qualifications will be asking questions about are there things that can be done to strengthen the core of the Welsh baccalaureate and are there some elements which could decrease in importance or are of less importance you can come up with some tricky questions in response to that and because as I said that ethos and that balance is



regarded as a really good thing and I don't want to be upsetting that and we have had calls in the past to make the language model bigger at the expense of what yet the language model is really for students who haven't been studying languages and get them back into the habit of language learning and get something of some value out of it and if it encourages more students to do a bit of language learning that is as much of the aim of that element as learning the actual language. And if you are doing an A level in say French then you don't strictly have to do it, like my daughter did French at AS level and that would be enough however she actually did want to do the language module as she wanted to do a bit of Spanish. There's all sorts of things students get out of the language module without it being that whacking great monster.

10. Have there been any consistent concerns about the WBQ?

One of the issues we are looking at is whether we can introduce an applied math GCSE or something and if we did would that be suitable as a proxy for the application of number because there has been concerns which have arisen fairly consistently when we have been talking to centres that there is some frustration with the assessment and the paper work essentially and I know from personal experience with my daughter that it can turn out the enjoyment that they get from learning can really suffer as they end up filling form after form after form and there's inconsistency between to awarding organizations and that is something are looking at very carefully. You know there are issues with the essential skills. There are also issues with some centres entering students at the wrong level and it can work either way they can be put in too high or low because everyone is doing level 3 well no and similarly if you have decided that all students are doing application of number level 2 then your math's A level students and statisticians will be bored and no that's not appropriate but for other learners who are doing Geography and History and their math's level is pretty poor then level 2 is the right level for them and there are too many centres that say right everyone will do level 2 and that's not right for the learners and so that's another thing that we are looking at.

11. In your opinion how is the WBQ doing in achieving its aim to equalize the market and cultural values of academic and vocational qualifications?

I think the feedback that we are getting from the WJEC suggests that like a third of the options are vocational qualifications. In schools the vast majority will be doing A levels and that's just the way it is but in colleges it can just as likely be the other way round and in some colleges they won't be because they might say that everyone doing A Levels will do the welsh baccalaureate while the vocational qualifications may not be doing the welsh baccalaureate and that could distort the figures but it is changing over time. And what we have found is from learners from some colleges that they have already done the intermediate at key stage 4 in school then they go to college to do a vocational qualification at the same level so they don't qualify for level 3 so colleges are saying can they repeat the intermediate but with vocational options and we have said well no because there's no progression but the WJEC are currently working on a post16 certificate which has a number of differences its half the size to start with as that fits in a lot better with the way level 2 courses are delivered but also the requirement there would be demonstration of progression so that if they got their intermediate level welsh bac and got a level 2 in their 4 key skills then they might have to do the other 2 key skills or the ones that they have got at level 1 get them up to level 2 or even to a level 3 if they are capable, they don't have to do the full range of key skills but what they do have to do is show some progression . So that's quite a useful development I think and they have to do it within one year which is hard alongside their GCSE's or vocational qualifications.

## 12. How will the WBQ contribute to raising standards in the future?

Well you will have heard from head teachers but we have heard from lots of people that it does help raise standards as it gets students into more of a learning culture and it is aiming to develop its own motivation and learning skills. Plus in terms of the PISA agenda and although PISA is really below the age of the welsh baccalaureate really that practical learning style should filter down through the school and hopefully the welsh baccalaureate will help raise our PISA scores and the efforts going into raising our PISA scores are having a positive effect on the welsh baccalaureate achievement and that's the way it will do it. Plus it's got its own value you know UCAS have given it 120 UCAS points and a lot of learners have got into university or possibly not into their first choice without the welsh baccalaureate. We have heard from various schools how their university achievements have increased since they began offering the welsh BAC. That

research done by the university as well as research we are doing on a much wider scale to establish if the welsh bac helps students get better degrees than without it.

### 13. What is the future of the WBQ?

Don't know is the short answer and there are questions being asked in the review of qualifications. I suggest you look out for that, there is talk about whether there should be an overarching qualification for Wales and might the welsh baccalaureate be a basis for that but that is just what is included in the consultation paper and then there's questions around that sort of area and it will inform ministers decisions for the future but at the moment a universal view came back that there should be an overarching framework and it should be the welsh baccalaureate and everyone should do it.

Ministers may not agree with that though and refuse to take it down that road but they have got to take in the views of these people. So I don't know there's a review going on and they will make their decisions at the end of the review As well as the review there is all sorts of things going on with GCSE's and A levels. Even in vocational qualifications things are going on although to a larger extent they have already been decided in the Wolfe review. A levels and GCSE's are changing quite significantly in England and ministers have yet to decide what changes will be made here in Wales. We should be clearer in about February next year because that's when decisions have to be well are supposed to be made. So hopefully January we will know and by February we will be working on implementing whatever it is they have decided following on from the review of qualifications. But if we didn't have a review of qualifications I think the future of the Welsh baccalaureate is reasonably bright there were noise that when we stopped our delivery funding that all the centres would drop it that hasn't happened. I don't see it I mean you might get one or two but I haven't heard of any. If so centres drop out I don't think it will be very many. I've said before I was quite surprised by the level of take up and I would be equally surprised by a large scale drop off you know. We have had centres coming on board since the delivery funding ended and they are still coming on board anyway without the delivery funding impetus. Regardless of the review I think the future is reasonably rosy but we have got the review of qualifications going on and we don't know what the outcome of that maybe, but we will be asking questions in that about whether the welsh baccalaureate will move possibly to compulsory

## Appendix 8

### Example micro level Interview

### transcript: Suburbs school

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Joint Interview with Welsh Baccalaureate Coordinator and WBQ administrator. Also included Head of Sixth form.

1. Could on briefly introduce yourself and your role(s) within the school/college?

C= Welsh bac coordinator for last year covering maternity. Deputy Head of sixth form. In charge of the implementation and delivery of the WBQ as well my other duties as deputy head of sixth form. I'm quite new to this plus I'm having problems with access as I don't have access to the WJEC secure which I need to access now due to a new change.

A= In charge of all the administration and records for the sixth form including the WBQ. My roles include preparing all the students WBQ work for marking and then redistributing the work once it has been marked. I also have to update all the records regularly so students are aware what they have completed and what modules they have left to complete. We are currently doing this in a paper form in the sixth form area as well as Moodle which we have started this year. I'm like the mother figure helping them with their progress and printing off their work they still don't understand that they have to print their own work and can do that by accessing moodle.

3. How have students adapted to monitoring their progress on Moodle?

A= The reaction has been mixed, I think the fact that they have a paper copy right in front of them in the sixth form area they tend not to bother with moodle. However we have only been doing this on moodle for a year so it may be just too new for them.

C= Next year I think that we will be doing it all on moodle.

A= The only problem with that is the lack of computers and the limited access t them around the teaching timetable. This is another thing we need to address in the future

getting more computers and having a better timetable which has clearly scheduled times for welsh baccalaureate work.

4. What is the history of the WBQ here at ....?

We are in our third year and only are second year of completers so we are still very much in the developmental stages of this but it does seem to be getting easier each year we do it as we know what to expect compared to our first year where we didn't know what we were doing\_ We decided to go straight to a full cohort starting with the AS year. We have about one hundred and sixty to one hundred and seventy students in the AS year but that becomes less in A2 as students leave for college or employment etc. But we know we are still quite new at this and have a lot to learn especially with getting all the records right and keeping up with all the changes that keep happening. We do something one way and it is fine and then the year after it has all changed and we need to do it differently then. It is obviously compulsory to do at least 2 A levels to pass your welsh bac but all are students are doing at least some 4. We do also offer the BTEC's.

5. How not being one of the schools/colleges involved in the pilot aided/hindered you in your implementation and delivery of the WBQ?

C= I think it has hindered us by adopting the Welsh bac so much later. I think that the first batch especially had all the support and courses and I feel we get no support from the WJEC. We have had someone who came in liked what we were doing gave us some feedback but no follow up or scheduled revisit. Since I began my post I have only been on two courses one was the compulsory annual welsh baccalaureate training day and the other was in the summer which was tailored towards the individual investigation, but I think we need to hear more about the key skills and have more support in that area as that is the most difficult part.

A= I agree the key skills is one of the most difficult parts and I'd like to have more advice and support about records management and be updated about changes early on not after I have submitted and then I have it returned with a list of amendments.

C= The welsh bac coordinator who I'm covering for now did find support and advice from a neighbouring school who was involved in the pilot and commended for their implementation and delivery of the WBQ. They were offering other schools to come in and learn from them and we have copied their module such as the introduction of boxes for each student to store and manage their welsh baccalaureate work. Its worrying that we have to get the information from them as the WJEC is not offering us any further support. I thought we get more guidance than we did the website is not useful and I thought there would be a lot more training events than there is.

6. Prior to its implementation how did the school prepare its staff for implementing the WBQ?

A= It opened up new roles such as my own role as administrator and the welsh baccalaureate coordinator which both needed support and training in understanding their role and their duties within that role.

C= I'm not entirely sure of all the details as I wasn't involved at that time but I do know some of the basic information .I know that all sixth form tutors were asked if they would like to be involved and if they didn't they could opt out which one tutor did decide to do. There was also some staff training days and an open door policy in our office so teachers can come and ask questions if they are unsure about something. Plus we had had help from the neighbouring school who have successfully implemented it for the last few years.

7. . How has the school accommodated the WBQ? (How does the school organize the delivery of the core?)

A= The hardest part has been timetabling due to the tight constraints we have and especially accessing ICT facilities which the students need for their key skills work but we know this is something we have to address in the future as ultimately we need more ICT resources. We have also have had to schedule in marking time for teachers. The WBQ teachers have extra time for tutorials which is scheduled during registration time.

C= However they may be reducing this next year which I doubt they will be happy about. Plus we are thinking about combining the application of number and the ICT together to make things easier. We schedule are lessons so each students has two welsh bac lessons a week and they have eight lessons on a carousel which includes PSC, politics, economics, culture and IT which will change to social if we do merge the number and JCT. WE have also had to organize that two specialist teacher's mark and teach the ICT as we needed specialists to mark this area. It has also been one of the hardest parts to deliver as there is a huge range in students abilities in ICT and that makes it complicated with some students at level 3 but failing to evidence how they achieved the most basic things at level 2 and others struggling to achieve level 2. I forgot we also have welsh bac week where we host events and help students in their progression and management of their work as well as making them come in on INSET days to catch up or for support. A= I assume colleges have more flexibility with timetabling and more resources than we have and that is why it is done so differently.

8. The WBQ guidelines are intentionally flexible to allow for each school to implement the policy in a way that suits them, how has that freedom worked to your advantage and/or disadvantage?

C= I think there are pros and cons to it being so flexible as nothing is set in stone, there is no right way of doing it. This gives you such a variety of options that can be overwhelming but in time can help you create a way of doing it that suits the school. I think some guidance would be ideal so you could have some idea about what you are doing and what you should be doing.

9. One of the main criticisms of national policy design is the failure of the national level to recognize the possible difficulties of implementation in each individual school/college? How successfully do you feel the national level have been in creating a policy that can be adapted to suit a wide range of establishments and learners?

C= they are not teachers and don't understand how it works in each school and the variations within it. We have to make it work for the entire cohort but also every individual within it and that has been difficult. We have had students who can't afford to

get to work experience and have had to have their parents come home to take them. We have students with special educational needs who struggle with many elements of the welsh bac but there is no support or guidance for how to deal with these problems and I'm sure we are not isolated in this. We have one student who can't cope with the booklets so we have had to change and adapt everything to suit his needs.

A= I don't understand some of the structure of the welsh bac why is it that if a student is already doing a language that can count as their language module and if they have a part time job that can count as their work experience but math, ICT and English don't. Why can't a math A level student be exempt from application of number as they are clearly working above and beyond the level required.

C= A level math is not practical everyday math's though but GCSE math's does have modules on everyday math's. A= I think if they did that then the academic students would buy into it more if they knew they could tick some boxes already and they wouldn't be frustrated by application of number lessons which failed to challenge them resulting in frustration and a negative perception. There is such a variation in mathematical ability but yet all students just get a pass and that's probably why some universities especially the elite universities don't like it because they want only the best and the welsh bac doesn't let them see who those students are. I've got one student whose doing BTEC's and the bac and he has not got the equivalent of 3A's well he would never be able to achieve 3 A's at A level but points wise it's the same and universities know that I wonder if employers do though. Plus it is not really a baccalaureate like the international bac it is more like a BTEC which has a series of ticky boxes.

10. How successful do you feel WBQ has been implemented within the school/college?

C= I think we are doing okay but as I said we are very new at this. But we are constantly assessed by numbers and the head is very fond of statistics every year we have so many fails and we have to explain why and evidence why they failed, for example we have a number giving up once conditional offers come through and they realize they are not offering the welsh bac etc. We're down on last year but there are reasons for that not that the head will care such as the increase in fees making it hard for students to afford



university and a large proportion of our students come from the council estate and just can't afford it as well as the drop rate when they realize their target universities won't accept.

11. How have the students reacted to the implementation of the WBQ?

C= It's been really mixed for example some students love the freedom offered by the individual investigation while others struggle with that as they have never done anything like that before especially the math and science students

A= I think there are three types of students the really academic students who find it boring and unstimulating and are disheartened by the fact that the elite universities they are trying to get in to don't accept it or do but it is not worth an A as promised see it as distracting from their A levels which they do need, which I agree with. They probably don't need it. Then there is the middle students who might need it but are struggling to keep up with their 4AS or 3A2 levels and begin to drop their welsh bac in favour of focusing on their A levels, and then there's the less academic students who need it find it really challenging and enjoyable and need the points value to get into university but maybe shouldn't be the students being pushed for university in the first place but certainly need welsh baccalaureate to get a place.. The academic students see it as a pain in the arse but something they have to do.

C= I think that's where the debate about grading comes in though I think academic students would like it better if it was graded and more universities would accept it if it was graded with the fees going up and the FIEFC saying they are not going to accept it as it is not graded but I just don't know how they will do it plus it will undermine the entire aim of the welsh baccalaureate about offering a broader education and more experiences rather than testing their ability to regurgitate highly specialized knowledge. But I don't really understand the difference between a bare and a good at the moment a pass is a pass so why would any student really worry about whether they have a bare or a good, there is no incentive as there is no difference to their final pass so I think grading would be good for that. Some students put in tones of effort while others put the bare minimum in to pass and they both get the same. But I don't know how they will grade it what parts will be assessed I suppose it will be based on individual investigation

etc as many parts of the welsh bac are impossible to measure. For the language module we have language days where they can pick from 4 languages including sign language to cover the hours they need to pass but there is no final assessment.

A: I think you will cause uproar if there are final assessments as it would coincide with their A level revision and other deadlines which they deem more valuable supported by the universities. It's hard enough trying to get them to prioritize now as once May collies the go into revision mode and there is no way they will do welsh bac work then.

C= I think the university acceptance issues are their main concern as the majority of our students go on to university this year we have one hundred out of one hundred and thirty. We work closely with the careers advisor to get up to date information on university acceptance of the welsh bac but usually their web sites just say yes or no not what value they rate it as. We have had complaints from parents who don't want their children doing it sometimes rightly stating that it distracts from them A levels pulling down their grades. I've got a very angry letter on my desk from a parent whose got a lot of evidence and sent their letter to WJEC etc. criticizing the welsh baccalaureate. I don't know what I can do now though the student has already completed.

12. How do student value the Welsh Baccalaureate and do they understand that it is in an umbrella qualification?

C= We start the year with a speech during the open evening which tells them it is an umbrella qualification but that's the last we mention of it, it is still seen as very separate and they value their A levels much higher than welsh bac probably because of its acceptance by universities.

A=We still get students now doing just two A levels and they don't realize if they fail one they cannot pass their welsh bac.

13. The WBQ was created and aims to be an inclusive education package that gives a parity of esteem to both vocational and academic courses. How well do you think it's done in achieving its aim within your school/college?

A= It hasn't but I don't think anything can sort change that you are attempting to change a belief that people have had since their creation.

14. What is the future of the WBQ in your school or college?

A= Actually that's in consideration, we are talking with a number of people about whether or not we can offer it as an option but logistically it would be impossible to timetable and run. It would be difficult but it could mean that the high flyers who can manage it can choose to do it and the less academic students who need the extra points for their university application can do it and the rest can spend their time focusing on their A levels. It is still uncertain but we will probably end up sticking with it. The impact of the introduction of the intermediate level may affect us as the students will be bored by the welsh bac by the time they reach us, especially if they are nicking all our good ideas etc. which means we have to completely make up new ways of teaching it and keep raising our bar. We are encouraging students not to take up a fourth AS and struggle which we have been seeing over the last three years Some schools have done that they still expect their students to do 4 AS's and 3A2's as well as their welsh bac which is ridiculous and they struggle. What the Welsh Baccalaureate has ultimately done though is significantly reduced the uptake of the minority subjects such as modern languages because they just don't want to take that extra fourth AS. Plus if they try to do four AS's they struggle it adds additional stress and their grades begin to drop.

# Appendix 9: Themes generated during Analysis

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## Theme skills

### Sub-themes

1. Breath and balance
2. Various academic skills acquired
3. Social skills
4. Students and parents opinions
5. Teachers opinions
6. Opportunities and experiences
7. Raising standards
8. Transferable skills
9. Opportunities for HE and employment

## Theme value

### Sub-themes

1. Value for employers
2. Value for university
3. Comparison of value against other traditional qualifications
4. Value post diversion from England
5. Points value versus value of key skills
6. Value for all students equally
7. Increasing value
8. Grading
9. Value stems from managers and general school ethos

## Theme rigor

### Sub-themes

1. Flexibility effects on rigor
2. Comparison with traditional qualifications and internationally
3. Grading and rigor
4. Schools/teachers impact on rigor
5. Demonstrating and assessing its rigor
6. Variability in effort

## Theme implementation

### Sub-themes

1. Communication and collaboration
2. Resources

3. Time
4. Institutionalization becomes part of the institution not a bolt on
5. Loose coupling each school has own problems
6. Ambiguity in intention conflicting goals multiple goals
7. Training and leaning from best practice
8. Policy flexibility and personalization
9. Mutual adaption policy and organization change
10. Strategic compliers way policy is manipulated by practitioners and decisions made by them
11. Involvement of cross role groups
12. Variability
13. brand
14. Wales implementation powers
15. Sociology of charisma

### Theme creation

#### Sub-themes

1. Practitioner vs civil servant based policy creation
2. Devolution creating distinctive welsh qualification
3. Legacy building
4. Creating an inclusive qualification and raising standards
5. Creating and comparing bacculaureate style qualification
6. Right time for change
7. Comparison with and diversion from England
8. Support for IWA model

### Theme training

#### Sub-themes

1. Pilot versus non-pilot
2. Training not tailored to their varying needs/limited
3. Collaborative partnerships
4. Learning from best practice
5. Evolving practice
6. In house training

### Theme inclusivity

#### Sub-themes

1. Option for Personalization
2. Academic vocational divide
3. Suitability for all
4. Adding balance

Theme future development

Sub-themes

1. Tackling problems in welsh education system
2. Further advertising and changes to get stakeholders on board
3. Central to national curriculum
4. Impact of review

# Appendix 10: Example transcript: Macro level

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## Transcripts Civil servant

1. Can you tell me about yourself and your history with the Welsh Baccalaureate?

I'm a career civil servant I've been working in the Welsh Office since 1983, I actually started in the education department and went off to various other places and I came back to education in 1996 and my role then was to finalize what was happening with the **Dearing** post 16 review you have heard of that one yeh? Really the main part of the job then was creating some legislation that combined ACCAC and the NCVQ Wales which was identical to what happened in England where they had the what's it called curriculum council combined with the main NCVQ and became the QCA. But there was also stuff around at that time about the **Dearing recommendations about adding breadth to post 16** and there was talk about some sort of **overarching certificate** in that review but that never really happened as there was a general election and we got a Labour government and the Labour government decided that they would do their own review which was **qualifying for success**, do you know much about that one? Well that one again was post 16 and they came up with a very similar overall conclusions about **increasing the breadth of learning and learning be underpinned by key skills** and there was talk about an overarching qualification and the main outcome I suppose was from Curriculum 2000 with the introduction of AS's but it also added fire to calls which had been ongoing anyway for a Welsh baccalaureate led by the **Institute of Welsh affairs who wanted a Welsh bac which was basically the international baccalaureate with a bit of Welshness thrown in** to it to oversimplify it what they were putting forward. Ministers from both the Conservative government and the incoming Labour government were opposed to that they didn't want it but the Institute of Welsh Affairs kept on and they kept saying no thank you very much and then we got the Assembly and ministers continued to say no thank you very much and then we had a coalition government with Labour and the Liberal democrats and part of that deal with the Liberal democrats was the Welsh Baccalaureate and part of the deal involved developing and piloting a Welsh Baccalaureate initially based on the International Baccalaureates which was the initial

agreement from that coalition government. Then ministers felt with advice from officials that limited the completion for any development of a welsh baccalaureate so they decided to drop that requirement and put it out for tender and all the general qualification awarding organizations well only the WJEC did actually submit and the WJEC won that. Then basically my job has been the Welsh Baccalaureate, initially getting the project up and running and then over the years to roll it out to get it to where we are. From 2000 when we had the commitment to pilot it and roll out and basically that has been my job as well as other things well a lot of other things up until 2006 from where ACCAC had merged with the Assembly following that merger I have been more focuses on the Welsh Baccalaureate also the team that were actually doing it had a broader remit and we had a lot of other things to do, that's it basically. Since 1996 I have been working in this general area and working very much on the welsh baccalaureate starting with pilot and then roll out.

## 2. How did you go about creating the pilot procedures?

A lot of it is down to political direction them saying we are going to have a pilot and we are going to have a roll out we then just have to work out what we are going to do and without being able to remember huge amounts of details we had a steering group set up by us, we brought in people like well ACCAC were involved we had representatives from HE Wales, representatives from industry, representatives from UCAS and ESTYN as well plus once WJEC had won they were involved. That made up quite a small core group of key individuals. We had to decide what the welsh bac was going to be and do and obviously we had a lot of political direction and then the commitment came from putting Wales first there was a fairly clear political steer and obviously we had talked to the minister at the time and she was a new minister. So we had those discussions and we decided that it helped frame the tender document and then the WJEC won the tender and there was some towing and froing from some slight adjustments to the model and then the steering group continued throughout the pilot phase with the same people I mentioned earlier as well as then the WJEC who were in attendance as well as well as Fforwm as technical partners which is now CollegesWales you know and they had the university of Bath as internal evaluators as well so that steered the development of the model plus the steering group knew that we needed a reasonably sized group of schools and colleges within the pilot and I think initially we were looking for 20 or something



schools and some colleges at one point we were struggling to get there and have sufficient numbers but we eventually got there and had nineteen but at the last minute one dropped out but we started the pilot anyway at eighteen. There was an initial concern from centers as well it was a bit of a risk, it's a new qualification and well it takes a lot of time to developing how they're going to be teaching it or delivering it. Plus the learners have got this new qualification and need time to accept it. Before we started delivering, just before we started delivering UCAS allocated 120 UCAS points to the welsh baccalaureate core which was very much of a boost and I think the centers that were involved had some nervousness which was dissolved and helped settle them down a lot but it also perked up interest from other centers as well as they could see the risk was slightly less and there was a real positive side to it to and so lots more centers indicated they were interested in the pilot and the discussions with the steering group we agreed that after the first year we would take on another half a dozen centers we could have had considerably more but we decided to keep it relatively controlled and then after the second year we decided to take on another seven centers at the end of the final year. There was much more interest once it was off the ground and once some key people such as xxxxxx head of xxxxxx began saying really positive things about the welsh baccalaureate plus since UCAS had given it 120 UCAS points it had generated a lot of interest. Really the problem in those latter phases was keeping the numbers down we wanted our own twenty started with 18 which then went up to 24 and we agreed we could go a bit further and pushed it to 31. Then there was an external evaluation conducted by the centre for lifelong learning and that was quite positive although it wasn't universal have you read that? It was pretty good and positive and then based on that and advice from officials as well as ESTYN reports and all this stuff and then the minister decided we would have a roll out from the September so then we decided how we would do that and one of the recommendations was that the funding for all centers when they started was essential and that would need to be continued as delivery went for roll out so we did that we created something called delivery funding which was tapered. It started out at 400 pound per learner, then 300 pound in the second year and then to 200 pound in the final year and then down to zero but by that time you would be getting recognition of the extra costs of delivering the welsh baccalaureate. The specific funding that we offered tapered out but following funding didn't so would be continued. All a long there were calls that there should be a foundation level and if that went well there should be provision at key stage 4 and so we decided to extend the pilot to

include foundation level and the key stage 4 provision and that kicked off in 2006 and although we didn't have a full external evaluation of that we did have a detailed ESTYN report of it and that a pretty positive again and based on that we decided we should roll out at those levels to which we began in 2009 which we did. You have seen yourself the **level of participation is huge** it is levelling off now of course but there are still some still receiving delivery funding who were some of the last to come on board. The foundation level and key stage 4 and post 16 certificate are still receiving funding as it is earlier on and will do for the next two years. **I was absolutely amazed to be honest at the level of uptake** overall I remember about two years after the pilot had started the head of the branch well there was a policy document and I'm trying to remember what one well they had a **statement in there that by 2010 that we would have 25% of the learners doing the welsh baccalaureate and I remember my colleague looking at me as if well here did that come from and it had come from the ministerial stage not from us and we both looked at each other and said well that's not ever going to happen now is it and my colleague said well we are probably not going to be here so we won't need to defend it**, well he is gone but I'm still here but we way exceeded what we expected, so **I just didn't think it was going to catch on the way it has** you know and I'm surprised at that and **that's thanks to key people who just get it and respect it and when you get principles talking so positively about the welsh baccalaureate then.**

3. Some of the biggest advocates of the Welsh Bac have discussed how Wales doesn't lack in vision but in its ability to implement, do you agree with that statement?

**To some extent yes I mean as we have mentioned early centers need some time to create a new form of provision**, my daughters school is one example. **If you go to a school, in its first year you might go back and it will be completely different as it changes as it is developing**. We have had it from other centres that **initially they were concerned and attitude over the first year changes** **another problem is you get a great deal of turn over as some welsh baccalaureate coordinators get recognized for being good coordinators and then they get promoted and move on to something else and all that great experience gets lost** well not lost necessary because if they are still at the same center they may be there as a source of advice it is one of the problems that we have had with key skills where ay key skills coordinators do a good job and then them get noticed and are

promoted to something else and that wealth of experience is lost so there is turn over issues. Some centers only have a small number of students doing the welsh bac which probably means only a small number of staff as a center gains experience they often then move to full cohort and then all the staff or a lot more members of staff have to be involved and once they have got more staff involved you get more ideas bouncing around and you get more commitment you can do more integration rather than stand alone this and standalone that and it just gets better and that is one thing we have really found like one of the things you said about should it be compulsory or not well we don't get a huge volume of complaints we just don't but then e don't get huge volumes of praise either but we wouldn't no matter what the subject is you only get letters of complaint so you can get a fairly negative reaction if you only focus on the correspondence you are dealing with as you only get them from those who have had a negative experience but we don't get many we really don't , I mean half a dozen letters a year something like that and nearly all of them centre around why is it compulsory why should I have to do it well our response is as always well we haven't made it compulsory it is up to the individual centers if they want to make it compulsory or not. But we do know from experience and from feedback from centers from evaluators and from the WJEC that where it is compulsory that is where delivery is better because of the factors I have just outlined you get more buy in from staff and more ideas being fed in and commitment from everybody rather than responsibility being left to a small number of individuals who have been left isolated and insufficiently supported a senior team within a school once they are doing something that all the students are involved in the senior team really have to support it, otherwise they are going to be struggling and it is going to reflect badly on them and it just works better

4. Have you had any schools who have adopted it only to drop it later on?

No I don't think we have had any, not that I'm aware of. But any school that is struggling really need to contact the WJEC and they can provide support but obviously with the level of expansion their teams resources have been stretched and what they aim to do is get centers helping each other, working in regional sort of teams so they can. We have also been recently out to visit centers and we get feedback from the WJEC, ESTYN, individual centers from conferences we attend but we don't really get to go out to the individual centres as much as I would like so we have been doing that over the

last year or so and I was expecting to go out and get all sorts of complaints but we just haven't been getting it. But one school in mid Wales were talking about the level of support they get from the WJEC and we said well what about you know working with local centers and I know in Wales especially mid Wales local can be a very different term but there are other centers in the vicinity and the reaction that we got from this particular welsh baccalaureate coordinator was quite alarming she said she wouldn't share our ideas with them that is our competition. I can understand there is an element of competition and reorganization going on in well actually in all parts of Wales but they felt their sixth form was in direct competition with the other one, so that added an edge to it. So we said well why don't you try contacting schools within your band that don't have to be local and they said well yeh that's not a bad idea, however what we haven't done is follow through and call back and see if they have actually done that but clearly a light went up with this person when we mentioned that you know and well as I think whatever the WJEC do it won't be better than bouncing ideas off other schools that are in similar situations and the WJEC think that too although it is probably in the WJEC's interest to say that, but with the people working on the welsh bac team I don't think they would they are pretty genuine and pretty committed. I think that they do really feel that collaborative work is the best way.

##### 5. What in general has the reaction to the WBQ been?

We go to schools like xxxx that don't have the money around like some of its local schools within a mile and a half but they are really really enthusiastic. We spoke to the kid there and the kids were great apart from one lad who had had to do some Mandarin as part of their welsh bac and they were doing some Tai Chi stuff they were doing as well and he wasn't at all impressed about doing Tai Chi or learning Chinese. His comments were of a sharp contrast to the rest of the students shall we say but even he was enthusiastic about most of the stuff but this particular element he decided was completely and utterly pointless but the rest of them were really enthusiastic about the whole thing but they couldn't afford to do a trip to China or South Africa like some schools can and they are much more limited in what they can achieved but what they were doing worked. They also went down to see the Cardiff bay development and learn about Welsh politics a lot easier than schools in north Wales you just have to be creative. But they all have different problems.

6. The guidelines for the WBQ are intentionally quite flexible how do you think that level of freedom works for schools and colleges?

Well the feedback we get is that it works pretty well for them. I suppose you could say that that flexibility allows for some of the weaker centers to put on a weaker program but we don't have any hard evidence of that. The sort of feedback is that certain centers deliver the welsh bac better than others but that could happen in Physics or welsh language their going to be variations in those and how they are being delivered but as a wide spread problem well I wouldn't see it as a wide spread problem. I think in general it is seen as quite positive as people can just do things as and tailor them to their own local circumstances. If they have a relatively narrow curriculum they can fit it in to their local curriculum rather than being told they have to do this that and the other. They have got to do certain things but how they choose to do them is a matter from them.

7. What are your thoughts about grading?

Well at advanced level it is going to be graded we did the survey online against the background of growing noise it certainly wasn't all saying we want grading but it was growing in that direction and certainly from the higher education institutions. The noise we were picking up was mostly from the HE side but even that wasn't exclusive as there was variations and differing opinions there. But anyway we did an online survey and it came out in favor of grading certainly at advanced level, I think it was 91% something like that, and that was quite evenly split across the various stakeholders but saying that some of the response numbers were pretty low even though the overall numbers were quite healthy some of the numbers for some stakeholder were low like employers as we only had a handful but even with that limitation there was still a very substantial majority for all stakeholder groups for grading at advanced level. At the intermediate level there was a majority for but it was less pronounced and at foundation there was just a slight majority for but I mean it was like 49 to 51 so basically it was an even split. One response on the other direction would have tipped it back to 50:50 so. It was really really pronounced at advanced level less so intermediate and far less slow at foundation level. The review of qualification board discussed this in February and felt yes we should go ahead with grading at advanced level and we should put on hold any

decision regarding intermediate and foundation level and see how it goes at advanced level before we make a final decision and they recommended that to ministers and ministers accepted that recommendation and now we are in the process of working out actually how we will do that grading?

8. In your opinion how will it be graded?

Well we are going to have a meeting towards the end of June about this one. They have to get three key skills a level 3 and 3 at level 2 and you could say that someone who gets 3 at level 3 and 3 at level 2 gets your top grade with various combinations of scores in between depending on how many points they have so you could do it that way or you could add the individual investigation into the mix but you would have to give it a formal grading structure and the you would have 4 variables because three have to be at level 3 and you could work out some sort of grading structure from them. We are also working up another model that gives weightings to different elements which would be part of the consultation but we will have to see how that goes, it might involve beefing up the individual investigation to make it a slightly larger qualification so that it will be a slightly larger part of the core because what will happen then and the feedback we get from the WJEC is that nearly all of the students spend longer than the 20 hours allocated for the individual investigation so we might end up beefing it up as there has been suggestions that if we just look at grading the individual investigation which has 20 guided learning hours that's a bit iffy, but if it is a more substantial thing in itself then we might be able to. So we are working on a more weighted model that with the key skills.

9. Will grading not change the ethos of the qualification?

That's my concern I'm not saying we are finding it hard what I'm saying is that I want to be really careful that we don't do that because that is something which has been widely accepted as being a good thing and I don't want it to interfere with that and that is something that might come into the intermediate and foundation level as well as the review of qualifications will be asking questions about are there things that can be done to strengthen the core of the Welsh baccalaureate and are there some elements which could decrease in importance or are of less importance you can come up with some

tricky questions in response to that and because as I said that ethos and that balance is regarded as a really good thing and I don't want to be upsetting that and we have had calls in the past to make the language model bigger at the expense of what yet the language model is really for students who haven't been studying languages and get them back into the habit of language learning and get something of some value out of it and if it encourages more students to do a bit of language learning that is as much of the aim of that element as learning the actual language. And if you are doing an A level in say French then you don't strictly have to do it, like my daughter did French at AS level and that would be enough however she actually did want to do the language module as she wanted to do a bit of Spanish. There's all sorts of things students get out of the language module without it being that wacking great monster.

10. Have there been any consistent concerns about the WBQ?

One of the issues we are looking at is whether we can introduce an applied math GCSE or something and if we did would that be suitable as a proxy for the application of number because there has been concerns which have arisen fairly consistently when we have been talking to centers that there is some frustration with the assessment and the paper work essentially and I know from personal experience with my daughter that it can turn out the enjoyment that they get from learning can really suffer as they end up filling form after form after form and there's inconsistency between to awarding organizations and that is something are looking at very very carefully. You know there are issues with the essential skills. There are also issues with some centers entering students at the wrong level and it can work either way they can be put in too high or low because everyone is doing level 3 well no and similarly if you have decided that all students are doing application of number level 2 then your math's A level students and statisticians will be bored and no that's not appropriate but for other learners who are doing Geography and History and their math's level is pretty poor then level 2 is the right level for them and there are too many centers that say right everyone will do level 2 and that's not right for the learners and so that's another thing that we are looking at.

11. In your opinion how is the WBQ doing in achieving its aim to equalize the market and cultural values of academic and vocational qualifications?

I think the feedback that we are getting from the WJEC suggests that like a third of the options are vocational qualifications. In schools the vast majority will be doing A levels and that's just the way it is but in colleges it can just as likely be the other way round and in some colleges they won't be because they might say that everyone doing A levels will do the welsh baccalaureate while the vocational qualifications may not be doing the welsh baccalaureate and that could distort the figures but it is changing over time. And what we have found is from learners from some colleges that they have already done the intermediate at key stage 4 in school then they go to college to do a vocational qualification at the same level so they don't qualify for level 3 so colleges are saying can they repeat the intermediate but with vocational options and we have said well no because there's no progression but the WJEC are currently working on a post16 certificate which has a number of differences its half the size to start with as that fits in a lot better with the way level 2 courses are delivered but also the requirement there would be demonstration of progression so that if they got their intermediate level welsh bac and got a level 2 in their 4 key skills then they might have to do the other 2 key skills or the ones that they have got at level 1 get them up to level 2 or even to a level 3 if they are capable, they don't have to do the full range of key skills but what they do have to do is show some progression. So that's quite a useful development I think and they have to do it within one year which is hard alongside their GCSE's or vocational qualifications.

## 12. How will the WBQ contribute to raising standards in the future?

Well you will have heard from head teachers but we have heard from lots of people that it does help raise standards as it gets students into more of a learning culture and it is aiming to develop its own motivation and learning skills. Plus in terms of the PISA agenda and although PISA is really below the age of the welsh baccalaureate really that practical learning style should filter down through the school and hopefully the welsh baccalaureate will help raise our PISA scores and the efforts going into raising our PISA scores are having a positive effect on the welsh baccalaureate achievement and that's the way it will do it. Plus it's got its own value you know UCAS have given it 120 UCAS points and a lot of learners have got into university or possibly not into their first choice without the welsh baccalaureate. We have heard from various schools how their university achievements have increased since they began offering the welsh bac. That



research done by the university as well as research we are doing on a much wider scale to establish if the welsh bac helps students get better degrees than without it.

### 13. What is the future of the WBQ?

Don't know is the short answer and there are questions being asked in the review of qualifications. I suggest you look out for that, there is talk about whether there should be an overarching qualification for Wales and might the welsh baccalaureate be a basis for that but that is just what is included in the consultation paper and then there's questions around that sort of area and it will inform ministers decisions for the future but at the moment a universal view came back that there should be an overarching framework and it should be the welsh baccalaureate and everyone should do it. Ministers may not agree with that though and refuse to take it down that road but they have got to take in the views of these people. So I don't know theres a review going on and they will make their decisions at the end of the review As well as the review there is all sorts of things going on with GCSE's and A levels. Even in vocational qualifications things are going on although to a larger extent they have already been decided in the Wolfe review. A levels and GCSE's are changing quite significantly in England and ministers have yet to decide what changes will be made here in Wales. We should be clearer in about February next year because that's when decisions have to be well are supposed to be made. So hopefully January we will know and by February we will be working on implementing whatever it is they have decided following on from the review of qualifications. But if we didn't have a review of qualifications I think the future of the welsh baccalaureate is reasonably bright there were noise that when we stopped our delivery funding that all the centres would drop it that hasn't happened. I don't see it I mean you might get one or two but I haven't heard of any. If so centres drop out I don't think it will be very many. I've said before I was quite surprised by the level of take up and I would be equally surprised by a large scale drop off you know. We have had centres coming on board since the delivery funding ended and they are still coming on board anyway without the delivery funding impetus. Regardless of the review I think the future is reasonably rosy but we have got the review of qualifications going on and we don't know what the outcome of that maybe, but we will be asking questions in that about whether the welsh baccalaureate will move possibly to compulsory.

# Appendix 11: Example transcript: Micro level

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## Transcript Local Level: WBQ Coordinator

1. Could you briefly introduce yourself and your role(s) within the school/college?

I'm the Welsh Bac coordinator for the xxxxx college across six cites as we have just gone through a merger with xxxx who also have a welsh bac coordinator. I'm responsible for the three levels across four faculties.

2. What is the history of the WBQ here at ..... ?

We were part of the pilot in 2003 so that's when we started we started it oh gosh I think we had three groups to start with at level two and three and one came along later and we had a pilot group there, and the every year we have just grown . We went through funding phases so we get the funding that is attached to it but every year we have grown and grown. Please don't ask me the actual figures but I can get them for you if you want.

3. How did being one of the schools/colleges involved in the pilot aide/hinder you in your implementation and delivery of the WBQ?

It was a real step in to the unknown it was a bit like the blind leading the blind not just with us but with all the colleges and schools involved in it. But I think in hindsight it was a good thing because I've been involved in this from right in the beginning. I have been involved in the discussions right in the beginning with the key people like xxxxx and what's his name xxxxx, you know the original team that wrote it at the straight, so it was like getting the information straight from the horse's mouth as it were. I would say it took me two years to get my head round it and get the full cohort of level 3 to get their head round what I was doing. But having gone through it the penny dropped and I got it and I'm glad I was there at the start now, because I have been through the whole journey as

long as the welsh bac has been there you know so I feel I have a really solid grasp of it.

4. What is your role in the implementation and delivery of the WBQ?

Obviously yes I'm key to the implementation here at all aspects but yes I also deliver the welsh bac. I teach one level 3 course which is a child care level 3 and I teach a level 1 NEET theatrical makeup course. My own delivery is level 1 and level 3 at the moment but I have taught level 2 in the past. So I have done all three levels and know how to deliver all of it except number and I.T key skills I've never taught that but I have done everything else.

5. A previous interviewee mentioned that the ICT and number are the most difficult to deliver do you agree/disagree with this?

The higher levels of ICT and number have always been the most difficult. I have always suggested delivering it using the model we have designated and having IT and math's specialist tutors to deliver it. I have tried integrating it into the vocational or subject area. See I used to teach Travel and Tourism and one year we decided to integrate it and got a math's teacher to team teach with me and she spent a lot of time designing tasks and activities that incorporated Travel and Tourism stuff and number related to it, and we kind of got it but it was a lot of work a hell of a lot of work for one group over one year and because the students knew they were doing math's they had an aversion to it and they didn't come to us with the skill set needed to work at these higher levels. You get them all through level one, a handful through level two but starting on level 3 was a different kettle of fish altogether.

6. How has the school accommodated the WBQ? (How does the school organize the delivery of the core?)

We have lots of different models which we use. You spoke to xxxxx from advanced studies and I'm sure she would have showed you how she does it and the model she uses, her timetable is very different to the rest of the college

which is vocational. For most of the vocational areas we try to allow or have a designated welsh bac session which is usually two sometimes three hours and in that the tutor will cover elements of the welsh bac that have not been embedded or integrated into other areas of the welsh bac plus a few of the key skills. Most of the vocational courses have a designated welsh bac block, and most of the welsh bac is taught during that time, but some strands are embedded for example with political issues with BTEC sport would look at politics and sport which might be part b of unit 10 that they need to cover, so it is different per course. Travel and Tourism, Sport and Health and Social Care all lend themselves to it, it's there or there about and these course allow for elements of the welsh bac to fit in naturally. However, other courses like hair and beauty which might not have such natural links so they have to work that much harder in their welsh bac lessons.

7. The WBQ guidelines are intentionally flexible to allow for each school to implement the policy in a way that suits them, how has that freedom worked to your advantage and/or disadvantage?

It was a hindrance in the beginning because we felt well I felt nervous about doing stuff that wasn't governed every step of the way so that's why I said took me two years to get my head around it, you see I'm so used to teaching and having to reach this objective and this objective to get an outcome that's the BTEC way. So to then come to the welsh bac and for them and them to say you could possibly to do this way or you might want to look at it from this angle or this and I was like woah I don't really know what I'm doing then as I gained confidence I love it now it's my favorite thing I love it. The fact I can choose what to teach and the fact I can research and how to deliver it um and I can choose or well the students can choose what the outcome is and have their own say in how we venture or how we look into a topic. A good example of that would be the first year was teaching the welsh bac was the same year the tsunami happened in south east Asia around Christmas 2003 or maybe Christmas 2004 and I had got to the end of the term the Autumn term and I had to do something for Wales, Europe and the world which involved something like humanitarian aid and how Wales is seen by the rest of the world and I couldn't

think of anything as it was the first time doing it had a major panic was like oh my god, then over the Christmas holidays that tsunami happened and that was devastating an awful thing, but at the back of my mind I was thinking this is brilliant as I could teach it as it was happening almost and we did. We literally followed the disaster and the aid relief going onto the BBC web page and watching clips and because it was an ever involving issue and day by day there were new reports of what had happened and countries were ending money across and humanitarian aid and I think there was a group of welsh rescuers that had gone over to help dig people out from a local community and so we followed all of that. It wasn't I couldn't plan all of that as I had no idea what was going to happen I had to wait for the news the next day, so it was a learning process for me and the group at the same time by watching the development over time and in the end knowing that Wales's had raised so much money through a pop concert at the Millennium Stadium if you remember. So we looked at the impact of what Wales did to help the people of these countries get over this devastation. As a PGCE tutor I shouldn't say this but I didn't plan it I couldn't as it was happening on a day to day basis. But we looked at the whole issue in depth and the kids got a lot out of it you know, and that is why it's great it's so flexible you couldn't do something like that with a BTEC or a GCSE or A level you could only do that with the welsh bac. You can tailor it to the students needs or interests or you can ask them what they want to cover.

8. One of the main criticisms of national policy design is the failure of the national level to recognize the possible difficulties of implementation in each individual school/college? How successfully do you feel the national level have been in creating a policy that can be adapted to suit a wide range of establishments and learners?

I think the difficulty is the time we don't get enough time and that's down to funding and as you know we are going through a review of the funding at the moment. The biggest difficulty that I and my colleagues have is how to fit into that two hour slot we were talking about, you really have to squeeze every last drop out of those two hours and that's hard particularly if the group have got loads of other things going on at that time sports students have to go off to sports

related things some have work experience scheduled, its tight. Are one biggest difficulty is time. I think though we can be more flexible with our time than say schools keeping them an extra hour or scheduling an extra session. I think that civil servants mind work in a different way to the way that my mind works as a teacher in the FE sector.

9. How successful do you feel WBQ has been implemented within the school/college?

Our outcomes are usually quite good, I would need to check with the actual data but I think we have done okay. We have been in the higher half of the tables and there is quite a few staff that have been involved for a few years like xxxxx and xxxxxx. There is a core number of staff that feel comfortable with it now. I think we have been pretty good we have had the odd discrepancies including key skills, really it has been key skills that has been the problem rather than the welsh bac as students have to pass all of their key skills to pass and we have had incidences where a number have crashed and burned on application and number or fail to get their evidence of working with others and that will cause them to fail the welsh bac. I think we are now pretty comfortable with it but it hasn't been a smooth ride. Plus we continuously face new challenges.

10. How have the students reacted to the implementation of the WBQ?

The first couple of years were hard, the main driver for the level threes were the UCAS points and universities recognizing it and in the first couple of years not many universities recognize it. I even remember one student getting their offer their conditional offer that I can't remember where it was from but I remember the conditional offer being 2 merits or distinction merit for you BTEC excluding welsh bac that's what it said. And I'm there saying you must do the welsh bac it is really good for you but the minute he got that conditional offer I didn't see him again, so there was a lot of that going on in the beginning. A lot of the students were resentful because they had come to the college to do music or do sport and suddenly we are asking them to do entrepreneurial activities or do a community project or some work experience and they can't see the relevance of it at all.

others love it they see it as absolutely life changing. We had a group of travel and tourism students that went to the Gambia last year as part of their community participation project and they worked with orphans children in the school and took books and pens and paper. They did a reading session, read books to them helped them with their English so that life changing you know. So we go from some students that are disgruntled because they have to, to students that have had life changing experiences because of the experiences they have had as part of their welsh bac.

11. What status are they giving their welsh bac studies in comparison with their options?

Nobody come saying can I do the welsh bac they still want to do their main course but I think there is more of an acceptance now because it's pretty much rolled out across Wales now so they have kind of heard about it or have had siblings that have already done it. Welsh bac is more of a familiar term than it was a few years ago and there is more of an acceptance that well I have to do the welsh bac alongside it, I'm not aware of anyone who has really resented or refused to do it, you might get more in the A levels. But acceptance is reliant on time as I said early the problem is staff attitudes like the example of the travel and tourism group who went to the Gambia which is fantastic and I'm really proud of them and they went as well and they have come back being better people you know, while somebody else teaching the same level will have got their group to organize a coffee morning or a sponsored walk around the lake or made a few biscuits and sold them in the foyer and it comes from how it is driven you have some staff that are loving it and driving it and other staff are thinking right we have got two hours what can we do with those two hours which will hit the criteria, it's all about the attitude and the implementation of the individual implementing it. I know in advance studies some have them have done amazing things I know some of them organized a concert a classical concert sold tickets and held it in the parade hall and they had an opera singer and the raised money for charity, they did lighting, sorted out microphones laid out the whole thing and that was amazing and the other group did a sponsored walk round roath lake and they didn't all turn up, so its how its driven. If the

teacher has the enthusiasm then that rubs off on the students but if they are just trying to do something that's quick easy and requires no effort and takes only two hours on a Tuesday afternoon. It's the inspiration and the delivery and the mind set of everyone involved so those students whose university don't readily accept who were involved in the concert what a lovely and exciting thing to write about in their UCAS form and in your personal achievements and talk about in their interviews.

12. The WBQ aims to create a parity of esteem among vocational and academic courses how well do you think its achieved that aim.

It's difficult isn't it to have parity against things that are so different or equalize the. I find the academic elements of the welsh bac are about refining key skills and the individual investigation. I have just been IVing the level threes and I have found that the A level students individual investigations are a little bit more vigorous in terms of evaluation and analysis and demonstrate better standard of spelling punctuation and grammar and that's because of their study as A levels have more rigor to them than BTEC sport because that's the nature of what their studying anyway. The rigor still does come from the main qualification, It's the experience and the process that you go through during the welsh bac that gives it its value.

13. How do teachers and students understand the umbrella structure of the welsh bac?

I don't think it is separate I think it's part of the same thing and again I think it is easy to think that if you are teaching a subject that allows for natural integration a lot of its to do with timetabling so if it is timetabled on a certain day that h when we do welsh bac and welsh bac is taught in a certain way it then that in their head makes it separate, but I would imagine that is hard in a schools as schools have their set timetables and less flexibility. That's my issue with it because you have to do an enterprise activity and that can be done in a day or an afternoon or 3 days at the end of term has finished and then it is separate then it is standalone they say you are going to have your enterprise day a week next



Thursday and that is it there is no mention of it again. What I would like to see I was thinking about this the other day with key skills for example because even key skills are the same I was thinking like with communication one of the tasks is reading and synthesizing therefore paraphrasing information I have done this activity because I'm the Coms key skills tutor surely within most vocational areas they need to paraphrase they need to read and synthesize information for the research they have within a unit I know they do with travel and Tourism as I used to teach that and business and of course it happens in A levels. So what we should be looking at doing is letting all staff know they have to do reading and synthesizing as a generic part of an activity and that can be embedded in Psychology or in Business studies or in hair and beauty even. So although I'm the Coms tutor and I will have that example in the portfolio at the end of the year the person who is teaching unit 2 will have done some of it the person who is teaching unit five will have done some of it and then the kids are then able to transfer the skills. That's a big problem that we have as they know they do reading and synthesizing with me because I'm the coms tutor but they don't think they have to do it with the person who is teaching unit three. It would stop that separate concept. It's like the entrepreneurial activity entrepreneurial skills are not just about business and becoming the next Alan Sugar it is about confidence, team work learning to work with each other you know and understanding someone else's opinion even if you don't necessary agree with it. It's not all about creating an activity these are skills which can easily be embedded. That's how a holistic approach needs to happen, but all staff need to buy into that, but it hasn't happened yet.

14. What do you think is the future of the welsh bac here at the college.

At the college it's got a good future but I would say that but I know the Welsh Assembly government are looking at new funding which will be based around the welsh bac the core, work experience and entrepreneurial stuff. The welsh bac from the welsh government perspective is here to stay I would say from a college perspective that will follow on but I think there is a lot of work to do in terms of buying in from staff and once we have got that I think we are well on

our way to students who just want to do welsh bac rather than knowing they have to do it.

15. How do staff get selected to teach the welsh bac?

They don't if they are teaching a particular vocational area and the faculty manager or faculty head decides they have to do it. Staff go two ways well three ways staff who are indifferent and do it because they have to some are are angelical about it and really see the benefit of it such as those who organized the trip to the Gambia and the concert and hair and beauty a few years ago their level one group did a hair and beauty make over day for a women's refuge house and domestic violence sufferers. So are hair and beauty level one kids did their hair and makeup and gave them make over's which was brilliant and they had to learn about what the women's refuge was and looked in to what it was all about and that linked in with their modern issues in society. It was just a brilliant brilliant thing So when staff are buying into it it can be absolutely brilliant but then you have other staff who are negative still and a pain and they have been teaching it now for six or seven years and they just poo poo it and they are the ones that walk around the lake which takes half an hour and then they get to go home early.

16. How do you think the welsh bac will contribute to raising standards at the college.

If there are more meaningful activities then I think it will continue to rise standards such as more trips to the Gambia, more women's refuge inks and the music students putting on their thrash metal and heavy metal concerts raising money for charity and all that stuff then great. We need to have more meaningful activities attached to the welsh bac and a better integration of the key skills and the individual investigation. These would ideally raise standards in literacy and numeracy. Plus it gives them the breadth which the welsh bac offers them and the university's want.

## Appendix 12: Example of Sub themes generated and Quotes associated with each theme.

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### Themes creativity

Practitioner vs civil servant based policy creation

Devolution creating distinctive welsh qualification

Legacy building

Creating an inclusive qualification and raising standards

Creating and comparing baccalaureate style qualification

Right time for change

Comparison with and diversion from England

Support for IWA model

### Quotes from transcripts

was a lot of involvement by teachers in its design

they are not teachers and don't understand how it works in each school and the variations within it. We have to make it work for the entire cohort but also every individual within it and that has been difficult. We have had students who can't afford to get to work experience and have had to have their parents come home to take them

Plus it is not really a baccalaureate like the international bac it is more like a BTEC which has a series of ticky boxes.

mood of the membership then was let's do something wholly different it was around the time Tomlinson was going on. So it was a case of let's do something wholly different and let's do a diploma or something.

wanted a bac that looked like other bacs worldwide in counties that have such animals. Then of course it all fell apart rather dramatically and then Jane Davidson decided that she could create something that looked like baccalaureate without drastic changes to the current system, it is still not actually a bac but it's closer to bac than the English baccalaureate.

as it wasn't the model we had wanted and expected and thought would be the most effective.

second real version of the WBQ was a practical and achievable qualification for welsh students.

The WBQ is essential for better preparing students for employment or higher education and would provide a better structure for post 16 students.

The WBQ came at an interesting time for Wales. Jane Davidson was really pushing for a distinctive welsh qualification. The creation of the WBQ created a real sense of ownership of the qualification in welsh schools and colleges. It was very much a bottom up proposal which is unlike most national education policies with schools and colleges having a real say in the creation and development of the qualification. As a pilot school with a really senior and experienced WBQ team we had the opportunity to help in the development of the WBQ with collaborations with the WJEC

I think that civil servants mind work in a different way to the way that my mind works as a teacher in the FE sector.

I was actually a supporter and involved in the submission and motivation towards the Institute of Welsh Affairs bid to introduce the International baccalaureate Wales.

We were pushing for the six subject international baccalaureate which was rejected mostly on the grounds that it would have increased teaching hours to 30+. Ultimately the Welsh baccalaureate was selected as it involved minimal cost but still included all the welsh distinctiveness. It was viewed as a watered down International Baccalaureate, and that is partly why the motivation was lacking at the started down.

I was involved in the original evolution of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification and was involved in shaping the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification.

where education is monitored and judged using percentages and we were teaching for success. However we felt we needed to create a curriculum that suited all students and had the breadth that was missing from the current A levels. Jane Davidson wanted it to be worth an A grade which was politically very clever. Our biggest failure was calling it the Welsh Baccalaureate as no one else will take it up where England may have taken up if it had a different name. But it was at a time when the famous "clear red water" speech was given.

The Learning Country is all about vision.

I remember very distinctly in the early 1990's when the IWA first came up with the idea of a Welsh Baccalaureate that within ACCAC circles the chief executive there at the time was not greatly enamored with the concept whether that was coming from what would have been a welsh office because prior to devolution a welsh office steer against whether it was about the prevailing feeling at the time about A levels being gold standard whether it was political in terms of the England Wales comparison issue I'm not quite sure but I know certainly that when the IWA came out with the idea it wasn't really it wasn't very supported within ACCAC at the time. I don't really think it was given the opportunity as far as I can remember it was not really discussed within the ACCAC within the authority itself

the right wing were pretty dominant

So that was probably the one thing that struck me about this was how um well the role of the individual and how politically useful curriculum, qualification and assessment initiative can sometimes take a long time to find its feet.

Cultural change in education like most things it takes much much longer than governments are prepared to give because they operate in four year timescales and they want to make impact within those times and It doesn't you and I know that it doesn't work like that and so come back to that point the length of time I think sometimes we have good ideas but we do think things through we have concepts like the welsh bac like the foundation phase but then when it comes to implementation we rush it.

Probably part of a much larger problem we have which probably goes back 30 or 40 years in the time of Callaghan's Ruskin college speech a time where the garden the secret garden that was education belonged to practitioners it belonged to teachers and then government said this is too important to be left too them to the profession umm sadly but maybe that was something that needed at the time the trouble is now we have gone over the edge to such a degree now that politicians are into anything an umm that's fuelled by the electoral system that you make promises to do A, B and C. If we could move to a position and there is no sign of it but whereby education was considered to important for politicians then you could get the cultural change that was needed to give time to major new things to embed properly and for the philosophy to be embedded in the way things are done but as it is at the moment we are getting too much policy shift

broker some sort of joint endeavour,

worked as part of the welsh bac development team part time about two days a week for eight or nine years.

contract in 2001 that wasn't launched until September 2003 so that period of eighteen to twenty four months were the developmental stage

small team of us initially like four who did all the brain storming around baccalaureates

we had a tripartite system between the WJEC, CollegesWales and University of Bath.

So the development and the policy rollout really has been incremental you are probably familiar with the fact that Jane Davidson the minister for lifelong learning at the time was a key driver in the inspiration and development of the welsh baccalaureate to be fair, well that is what I think. She then decide in 2006 that we had been going on long enough to see if the welsh baccalaureate was ready for national rollout

growing concern about the over specialization of A levels. This was before even AS levels were introduced. We were offering deep learning not wider learning.

right time for Wales to have a change which was helped by a coalition with the Liberal Democrats who had committed to introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate.

However at this time the Welsh Baccalaureate was unspecified and initially there was talk of introducing the International Baccalaureate. However the International Baccalaureate was inappropriate.

I think the International Baccalaureate is great but it was not fit for purpose

I was also at a time when numeracy and literacy were on the agenda and why I got involved in PISA. We needed to be consolidating skills rather than just straight learner.

We also had to ensure that welsh students could use this to access any university of their choice.

But also we ideally wanted it to tie into the current exams and keep A levels

The modal is more like curricula rather than a curriculum,

hopefully create better learners with the ability to do self

The Welsh Baccalaureate was created by a teacher for a teacher. I got the permission from coalition manifestos but the delivery was mine.

Before these changes the Welsh education system was complacent and inward looking.

The “Learning Country” and “Vision into action” are my go to reads. My education philosophy still hasn’t changed.

Historically civil servants in Wales had just introduced English policies with a bit of welshness tagged on,

The initial funding as part of the pilot was great for staff who could take them on trips etc.

Dearing recommendations about adding breadth to post 16 and there was talk about some sort of overarching certificate in that review but that never really happened as there was a general election and we got a Labour government and the Labour government decided that they would do their own review which was qualifying for success

about increasing the breadth of learning and learning be underpinned by key skills

the Institute of Welsh affairs who wanted a welsh bac which was basically the international baccalaureate with a bit of welshness thrown in

only the WJEC did actually submit and the WJEC won that.

A lot of it is down to political direction them saying we are going to have a pilot and we are going to have a roll out

we had a steering group set up by us, we brought in people like well ACCAC were involved we had representatives from HE Wales, representatives from industry, representatives from UCAS and ESTYN as well plus once WJEC had won they were involved.

a fairly clear political steer

and then the WJEC won the tender and there was some towing and froing from some slight adjustments to the model and then the steering group

WJEC who were in attendance as well as well as Fforwm as technical partners which is now CollegesWales you know and they had the university of Bath as internal evaluators as well

statement in there that by 2010 that we would have 25% of the learners doing the welsh baccalaureate and I remember my colleague looking at me as if well here did that come from and it had come from the ministerial stage not from us and we both looked at each other and said well that's not ever going to happen now is it and my colleague said well we are probably not going to be here so we won't need to defend it,

Jane Davidson was pushing for the first time for a curriculum for Wales due to concern that the current system was too narrow especially for post 14 education.

to include a WELSH element teaching students about the country in which they live in including its language, history and culture

Once Jane Davidson decided the International Baccalaureate was not appropriate then all the examination bodies were invited to make a bid.

The external evaluators agreed with the roll out and reducing it down to 14 year olds

what we have had in the decade well more than a decade of devolution is a lot of good ideas the welsh bac being one of them the foundation phase being another.

Wales's flagship qualification post devolution.

Raising standards.

Increasing breadth.

Offering something different to students.

Offering a valuable course which is not related to performance measures.

Start from the bottom up with the student with the assessment coming later.

Useful but still in the developmental stages and time is the essential component in determining the success of the WBQ.

Identified the need for a larger more wide reaching support team

Other bodies/organisations have become more involved, we now have a careers Wales network who can promote and support the WBQ.

Use of multi-disciplinary teams is essentially vital for sharing good practice.

Everyone has been to school and everyone thinks they know something about education because they have all been to school but that doesn't make them an expert.

# Appendix 13: Information Sheet

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## Information sheet

### **A game of Chinese Whispers: An analysis of the implementation of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification**

**Sara Jones**

#### **About me!**

My name is Sara Knight I am currently a PhD student at Cardiff University's Social Science department. After leaving school I completed my undergraduate degree in Psychology and my teaching qualification (PGCE). After this I have completed my MSc in Social Science Research Methods whereby I completed my dissertation focusing on students experiences of the WBQ.

#### **“What is the Welsh Baccalaureate?”**

The Welsh Baccalaureate is an exciting qualification for students in Wales that adds a valuable new dimension to the subjects and courses already available for students aged 14 to 19 years in Wales. It combines personal development skills with existing qualifications like A Levels, NVQs and GCSEs to make one wider award that is valued by employers and universities. The Welsh Assembly Government introduced the Welsh Baccalaureate to transform learning for young people in Wales. It gives broader experiences than traditional learning programmes, to suit the diverse needs of young people. It can be studied in English or Welsh, or a combination of the two languages”

#### **The Research**

The study aims to explore how the WBQ is being embedded in schools throughout Wales via interviews with staff and those involved in designing the WBQ and a focus group with students. Focus groups can vary in time but I anticipate it should only take 40 minutes of your time.

#### **Your rights**

The research will be conducted in concordance with the BERA ethical guidelines for education research as well as Cardiff Universities guidelines for good practice. All interview transcripts will be stored in concordance with the Data Protection Act and will only be accessible to myself and my supervisors, Professor Gareth Rees and Professor



Alistair Cole. All participants will be anonymous and represented in the research via pseudonyms. At any point during the research process participants may withdraw their data from the study.

### **Contacts**

For further information about the Welsh Baccalaureate go to:

<http://www.wbq.org.uk/home>

For further information about the research contact myself on:

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