



Teaching Literatures during the Global Pandemic: Impacts on Secondary Schools in Wales

Research

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- Audience** Those involved and interested in the teaching of literatures in secondary schools in Wales, such as policy-makers, teachers, senior leadership teams, librarians, publishers, lecturers and researchers in literatures and education.
- Overview** This report shares the impacts of the pandemic on the teaching of literatures reported by teachers in secondary schools internationally and in Wales, in terms of authors and texts taught, as well as purposes and visions. It also captures changes to teaching literatures during the same period due to contemporaneous events such as the introduction of Curriculum for Wales and Black Lives Matter protests. Negative impacts were largely reported as temporary, and ameliorating measures were appreciated, while positive impacts are still fostered post-pandemic. The pandemic had not adversely affected purposes and visions for teaching literatures.

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- Action required** The report sets out recommendations to support the teaching of literatures beyond the pandemic. It has been shared with Welsh Government policymakers.

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Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

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Executive Summary

Literature plays a vital part in subjects such as Welsh, English, as well as drama. It also features in the teaching of international languages, so this report refers to the teaching of literatures plural. In terms of Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE) in *Curriculum for Wales* (CfW), literatures feature in Languages, Literature & Communication and Expressive Arts. This project investigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the teaching of literatures in secondary schools in Wales from the perspective of teachers. It additionally explored other factors impacting on the teaching of literatures over the last two years (e.g. the new CfW and the Black Lives Matter movement) and their intersections with pandemic impacts.

An extensive literature review was conducted — spanning publications from the start of the pandemic in the UK in Spring 2020 up until this project's close in July 2022. It confirmed the dearth of existing evidence on the impact of the pandemic on teaching literature in secondary schools. At the time of our research, no extensive study had been conducted on the impact of the pandemic on teaching literatures at secondary schools in Wales or internationally. Rather, existing literature largely takes the form of personal, reflective essays published in teaching journals for literature-rich subjects in England, Australia and America. This project redresses the lack of evidence on experience of teaching literatures during the pandemic. Whereas previous studies focused on the teaching of English literature, this project included the teaching of literatures in Welsh, English and international languages.

We distributed an online survey, in Welsh and English, to those who teach literature in schools across Wales. It asked teachers to reflect on their teaching of literatures – what they taught and their visions for the subject – at secondary school level in Wales before and after the onset of the pandemic in the UK, through closed and open questions. 47 teachers completed the survey.

Most respondents had made some change to authors and texts taught, though it was only at A level that this was dominated by the pandemic. At GCSE and KS3/up to age 14, factors such as curriculum and exam board changes, as well as activism around diversifying texts, were frequently given. Ameliorations of negative pandemic impacts, from exam boards adapting specifications to the Welsh Government funding book purchases for schools, were appreciated. Negatively-framed changes, such as lack of opportunity to teach a text or having to cut-down work on texts for remote learning, tended to be identified as due to the pandemic and as temporary. Other changes, especially around diversity, were described positively and as long-term. Curriculum and exam board changes tended to be expressed neutrally.

All teachers had maintained or increased their sense that literatures are important since the start of the pandemic, which they related to their commitment to Welsh language revitalization, social justice, and CfW. Purposes for teaching literature were largely unchanged, still dominated by well-recognised models of skills and personal development. Several respondents said that their sense of the subject's purpose was renewed by, and in response to, the effects of the pandemic on their students. Only around one-third of respondents had changed their visions for teaching literatures, citing imperatives of diversity, relevance and wide-ranging texts.

1. Introduction

The teaching of literatures is a key concern for the Welsh Government, as one of the aims for the new curriculum AoLE 'Languages, Literacy and Communication' is to help 'build a lifelong love of literature' for learners (Welsh Government, 2019). Beyond school, reading literature for pleasure is beneficial in terms of health and wellbeing, widens perspectives, ensures continuous learning after formal education, and contributes to the vitality of literary and cultural industries in Wales in both Welsh and English languages (Dyer, 2010; Arslan et al., 2022).

Given the importance of literatures, in and beyond the education sector in Wales, it is important to understand how the pandemic has affected its teaching. Literature plays a vital part in core subjects such as Welsh, English, drama. It also features in the teaching of international languages, so this report refers to the teaching of literatures plural. In terms of Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE) in CfW, literatures feature in Languages, Literature & Communication and Expressive Arts. This project investigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the teaching of literatures in secondary schools in Wales from the perspective of teachers. It additionally explored other factors impacting on the teaching of literatures over the last two years (e.g. the new CfW and the Black Lives Matter movement) and their intersections with pandemic impacts.

An extensive literature review was conducted — spanning publications from the start of the pandemic, in the UK, in Spring 2020 up until this project's close in July 2022. Existing literature largely took the form of personal, reflective essays published in teaching journals for literature-rich subjects in England, Australia and America. These studies articulated the following challenges for teaching (English) literature:

- Finding methods for engaging students in interpersonal interaction during remote learning, both with staff and with each other, equivalent to previous levels and types of interaction in the physical classroom. This matters because the teaching of literatures for communication skills is widely foregrounded: it is, at least in part, about how arguments and counter-arguments are made, thoughts and ideas communicated (Elliott 2021).
- Avoiding the dominance of monolithic teachers' voice and views over those of students, and the homogeneity of perspective this resulted in. Also, maintaining opportunities for students to develop confidence in sharing their ideas equivalent to those of the physical classroom. Again, this relates to discussion and multiple perspectives as key aspects of studying literatures.
- Resisting the temptation to teach to the test, since adapting to remote learning in a short space of time, and battling to cover assessed texts and topics, meant some richness and breadth was lost. Some (arguably well-intended) resources aimed at teachers during the pandemic risked exacerbating this. The influence of this approach on students was reported by teachers who noted a resurgence of their concern with 'right' or 'wrong' answers.
- Preventing students struggling with learning literatures from disengaging during class due to remote learning conditions and the physical separation of teachers from students.
- Ensuring parity of provision during remote learning conditions: the teaching of literatures during the pandemic was found to be differently impacted depending on how well-resourced schools were.

Balanced with the challenges outlined above, these existing, small-scale studies – often by teachers or teacher trainers – did find some positives from their pandemic experiences. These include:

- The creativity inherent in literature-based subjects pre-disposed teachers and students to be adaptable.
- The use of techniques and texts that encouraged students to reflect on pandemic impacts on their lives, with an emphasis on maintaining their health and wellbeing, were cultivated. These included using creative writing and choosing texts related to times of social upheaval.
- The approaches that worked well during the pandemic have been incorporated by teachers into their classrooms post-pandemic as ‘Covid keeps’.
- The opportunity presented by pandemic disruption to make changes to existing practices in teaching literatures coincided with further impetus for change created by well-publicised activism during the pandemic period to diversify texts taught.
- The individual success stories sharing a pedagogic approach or activity that worked and examples of students who unexpectedly thrived in pandemic conditions.

Although it offered some insights, the existing literature also spoke to a dearth of evidence on the impact of the pandemic on teaching literature in secondary schools. At the time of our research, no extensive study had been conducted on the impact of the pandemic on teaching literatures at secondary schools in Wales or and no Welsh language research publications were found.

This project redresses some of the limitations of this existing research. We designed an online survey, in Welsh and English, for those who teach literatures in schools across Wales. It included the teaching of literatures in Welsh, English and international languages (mainly Spanish and French). It asked teachers to reflect on their teaching of literatures at secondary school level in Wales before and after the onset of the pandemic in the UK, through closed and open questions. On 1st March 2022, we presented our project design to the Collaborative Research Network: Bilingual Education & Welsh Language and received encouraging feedback about the timeliness and importance of this work for Welsh language and culture in schools. It provided a way of pre-piloting the survey questions, although these had previously been validated in the two recent studies from which they were adapted (Elliott and Olive; Kneen et al). The survey was distributed to those who teach literature in Welsh, English, drama and international languages in secondary schools across Wales. 47 teachers completed the survey. Descriptive statistics about the respondents’ demographics, authors and texts taught, and the importance of teaching literatures were considered alongside qualitative data from the open comments. This was thematically analysed in an iterative process drawing on the review of existing research.

Most respondents had made some change to authors and texts taught, though it was only at A level that this was dominated by the pandemic. At GCSE and KS3/up to age 14, factors such as curriculum and exam board changes, as well as activism around diversifying texts, were frequently given. Ameliorations of negative pandemic impacts, from exam boards adapting specifications to the Welsh Government funding book purchases for schools, were appreciated. Negatively-framed changes, such as lack of opportunity to teach a text or having to cut-down work on texts for remote learning, tended to be identified as due to the pandemic and as temporary. Other changes, especially around diversity, were described positively and as long-term. Curriculum and exam board changed tended to be expressed neutrally.

All teachers had maintained or increased their sense that literatures are important since the start of the pandemic, which they related to their commitment to Welsh language revitalization, social justice, and CfW. Purposes for teaching literature were largely unchanged, still dominated by well-recognised models of skills and personal development, although several respondents expressed a sense that these purposes were renewed to overcome effects of the pandemic on children. Only around one-third of respondents had changed their visions for teaching literatures, citing imperatives of diversity, relevance and wide-ranging texts.

Of course, there was variance in the experiences of teachers of literatures in secondary schools in Wales collected by us. This resonated with the existing literature internationally. As Owen et al. (2021) highlight, 'there is no singular narrative that can capture the experiences of [...] teachers during remote teaching and learning' (p. 15). Some learners and teachers are reported as thriving under lockdown conditions (Evans et al., 2020; Edwards 2021). Other literature highlights negative impacts of the pandemic, particularly for learners with disabilities, learners from low-income families who may not have had access to technology during this time, and learners whose home language was not the dominant one in their national setting (Evans et al., 2020; Howard, Khan and Lockyer, 2021; Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020; Parr et al., 2021). Neither the impacts on, nor recovery process for, teachers and students of literatures should be homogenised. Despite the less-than-optimal situation, the positivity of teachers' attitudes and their fierce commitment to their students – not only for their outcomes in formal education, but also for the success of their future life courses – was striking across the data we collected. We commend the teachers of literatures who responded to our survey for their exemplary professionalism.

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 ('Research aims and methods') details the rationale for our research, our methods and ethics procedures. Chapter 3 ('Reviewing the existing research') digests existing evidence internationally on the impact of the pandemic on teaching literatures in secondary schools. It shows the extent to which the existing literature answers our research questions as well as the limitations and gaps that necessitated our primary research. Chapter 4 ('Results and discussion') shares the findings of our teacher survey, points of similarity and differences within teachers' responses and between those and the existing research. Chapter 5 ('Conclusion') considers limitations of this research and outlines recommended actions for stakeholders in this research.

2. Research aims and methods

2.1 Rationale for the research

Literature is mainly taught in two of the six AoLEs in CFW: Languages, Literature & Communication, and Expressive Arts. Languages, Literature & Communication “addresses fundamental aspects of human communication. It aims to support learning across the whole curriculum and to enable learners to gain knowledge and skills in Welsh, English and *international languages* as well as in *literature*” (2020a). Expressive Arts “spans five disciplines: art, dance, drama, film and digital media and music” (2020b). Literature – written in or translated into a variety of languages – thus features in the study of Welsh, English, and international languages (previously known as Modern Foreign Languages) as well as drama. ‘Literature’ usually describes written works of the imagination, including poetry, drama, and narrative fiction, although historically it referred to a broader range of writing, including non-fiction (such as religious pamphlets and scientific tracts).

The teaching of literary texts and their interpretation forms an important part of core subjects such as Welsh and English. These subjects are of special concern because of their significance as qualifications for higher education admittance and for subsequent career prospects. The teaching of literature strengthens and advances key skills of learners, such as the ability to read, write, and communicate effectively. Literature provides opportunities for students to learn about themselves and the community, but also to discover new cultures and perspectives. Despite its importance, subjects that include the study of literature have witnessed a decline in uptake for A Level, and subsequently at degree level. One explanation that has been mooted is that a narrow range of literary texts studied is turning students off these subjects, also of concern is whether certain methods of teaching literature are failing to inspire learners to continue their studies in these subjects (Elliott 2021). More contextual factors include government, school and parental support for STEM subjects in the UK this century, something recurrently covered in mainstream British press (for example, Weale and Larrson). It is crucial to investigate how the pandemic has impacted the teaching of literatures and to see how teachers have adapted in response to the demands of remote learning.

It is also important to discover how the teaching of literature has been impacted within other key subjects, such as international languages (e.g. French, Spanish, German), and expressive arts, such as Drama. Literature provides an essential gateway into other languages and cultures, so it is important to consider the integral part that literature plays in language learning and development. At university level, the QAA benchmark statement for language courses highlights the importance of critically engaging with and interpreting literary texts as part of many degree programmes, so it is expected that learners begin developing these skills in secondary school (2019). Equally, an important part of Drama courses at GCSE and A Level is the written exam, where students study set texts and provide analysis under timed conditions. While the practical aspect of Drama is highly desirable for students who are interested in performance, there is concern that the theoretical side may not be receiving due attention. Engagement with literature is seen as vital to students’ success in these subjects, to develop their key critical and analytical skills. Expressive Arts, as well as Languages, Literacy and Communication, are among the six AoLEs as part of the new CFW. It is important to study how the teaching of subjects related to these AoLEs have been impacted by the pandemic to provide solid recommendations that will assist with the curriculum rollout beyond September 2022.

There is no existing national or international overview of how the teaching of literatures has been impacted by the pandemic or what teachers are doing to ameliorate the impact of blended learning, online learning, school closures on teaching literatures – let alone what they find to be un/successful. Rather, there are articles and themed issues detailing individual teacher's, department's and institution's responses in teaching journals published by professional associations for literature, language and drama teachers. Books like Sofia Ahlberg's *Teaching Literature in Times of Crisis* (2021) split attention across the pandemic and other issues (e.g. climate crisis and systemic racism). They take the form of manuals for teachers rather than research. We demonstrate this in detail in Chapter 3 below.

Sharing evidence on the impact of the pandemic on teaching literatures, and suggestions for ameliorating or recovering from its effects, squarely addresses the priority of educational reform in the *Programme for Government* (2016; 2021b), as well as the aspirations stated in the *Renew and Reform Programme* (2021). This research will additionally provide a timely overview of the cross-curricular teaching of literatures – written in and translated into Welsh, English and international languages – in Wales as schools move from developing to delivering their curricula (as per the CfW guidance (2020)), identifying the affordances (“Covid keeps”) and challenges to their visions for teaching literatures posed by the pandemic.

2.2 Research aims

- Summarise evidence on the impact of the pandemic on the teaching of literatures at secondary school level in and beyond Wales.
- Identify gaps in the existing literature on the impact of the pandemic on the teaching of literatures at secondary school.
- Collect data on the impact of the pandemic on the teaching of literatures at secondary school level in Wales.

2.3 Research questions

- What research exists about pandemic impacts on the teaching of literatures at secondary school level in Wales and internationally?
- What gaps exist in this research?
- What do secondary school teachers in Wales report in terms of pandemic impacts on the teaching of literatures?

2.4 Research methods

Our methods in this study involved:

- Undertaking a review of the existing published research concerning the teaching of literatures at secondary level in Wales and internationally.
- Conducting an online survey of teachers of literatures in Wales, at secondary level, gauging their perceptions of pandemic impacts on their work.

In terms of the review of the existing literature, online databases were searched using the keywords ‘teaching’, ‘literature’, ‘pandemic’ and synonyms, for books; articles in peer-reviewed and teaching journals; government policy and educational charity documents, from the early 2020 to July 2022. At first, additional keywords were used to focus search results on Wales and the UK. Once those results had been exhausted, however, the search was

expanded internationally. Relevant citations within the publications identified by the initial literature search enabled us to find yet more relevant literature.

In terms of our own data collection, our mixed methods survey combined quantitative and qualitative, closed and open-ended questions. Previously validated surveys comprehensive enough for our research questions did not exist for us to re-use wholesale. Hence, the survey instrument was based on two, recent, teacher surveys leading to reports and research publications in the field of teaching literature: one auditing the texts teachers use at KS3 level (years 7-9) in south-west England and Wales (Kneen et al, 2019-2020); the other concerning what, how and why Shakespeare's texts are taught in secondary schools across the four nations (Elliott and Olive, 2019). To capture the impact of the pandemic on the teaching of literature, our survey introduced a comparative 'before and after' element to the existing instruments. For example, questions asked: 'What texts did you teach before the pandemic? Do you teach different texts now? If so, what? And why did you make these changes?' Additionally, they provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on whether they perceived the pandemic as a direct or sole reason for change, or whether they perceived a combination of reasons as influencing them.

Bangor School of Educational Sciences (SoES) Collaborative Evidence Network (CEN) projects employed an expert consultant in survey research methods Dr Olena Kaminska, University of Essex, who advised on the draft research instrument. Furthermore, they worked with Fatema Sultana, Research Officer with oversight of survey methods across its CEN projects, to develop a set of closed questions to ascertain demographic data about the schools participating, to assist with representativeness and generalisability of findings. Even so, since participation in the survey was voluntary, it is unlikely to be fully representative. As usual in much qualitative/mixed methods educational research, our project prioritised transferability over generalisability.

The research instrument was developed and administered using JISC online surveys. Data was anonymous at the point of collection. Collection of personal information was kept to a bare minimum as per best practice in data management. The survey requested the following kinds of information from each teacher:

- What subject/s and what year group/s are taught?
- Have the literary texts (drama, prose, poetry) and authors taught at each level (KS3, GCSE, A Level) changed since the beginning of pandemic in early 2020? If so, for what reasons?
- Have the qualities you look for in literary texts at each level changed since the beginning of pandemic in early 2020? If so, for what reasons?
- Has your sense of whether it is important to teach literatures, your sense of its purposes, and your vision for learning about and through literatures in secondary schools changed since the beginning of pandemic in early 2020? If so, for what reasons?

2.5 Ethics and risk

The risks to participants were very low. Data collection was through an online, anonymous survey on non-sensitive issues, undertaken with non-vulnerable adults. Asking for minimal personal data and participants having anonymity at the point of data collection reduced the risk that teachers would be identifiable from the data or be reluctant to complete the survey on these grounds. Ethical approval was granted by Bangor University's School of Educational Science's ethics committee, using its established procedures and forms.

Risks to the project, in terms of falling short in data collection, were minimised by directing emails to the school consortia managing directors, who then sent out an invitation letter, and any reminders, directly to the sampled school headteachers on our behalf. This was led by Fatema Sultana (Bangor University) and Richard Watkins (GwE – the school improvement consortium for North Wales). Heightened difficulty in obtaining participants for projects, due to fatigue in the teaching profession in the aftermath of the pandemic, has been noted by multiple researchers in the post-pandemic context in Wales, including among the Bangor University CEN projects. We aimed to offset the risk of getting few responses by aiming to get rich, qualitative responses as much as possible, using a combination of closed and open questions in the survey. Another step taken to maximise the quality of data was to use survey questions validated in two previous, similar studies across countries in the United Kingdom (Kneen et al. 2019-20, Elliott and Olive, 2019).

2.6 Sampling and analysis of data

2.6.1 Sampling

A multistage, clustered sample design was used for a sample selection in order to be representative. At the first stage of the sampling process, middle and secondary schools were selected from an ordered list by local authority (Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Isle of Anglesey, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Neath Port Talbot, Newport, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Rhondda Cynnon Taf, Swansea, Vale of Glamorgan, Torfaen and Wrexham), and within local authority by language medium (dual stream, English medium, English with significant Welsh, Transitional and Welsh medium) and the percentage of pupils in schools eligible for free school meals (eFSM) (mean percentage scores). At the second stage, all teachers of expressive arts and languages, literacy and communications (i.e., Welsh, English, Drama and Modern Foreign Languages) were selected and invited to complete the survey.

The questionnaires were conducted online with an email invitation letter sent to the schools' headteachers in March 2022, by the regional school consortia in Wales (GwE, EAS, Mid Wales Partnership, CSC, Neath Port Talbot, Partneriaeth), and three follow-up reminders in the form of a Zoom meeting, email and phone call followed. For CEN 7, we invited 164 schools (146 secondary schools and 18 middle schools, since middle schools provide both primary and secondary education). In total, 30 schools accepted the preliminary survey invite. However, staff from only 19 schools ultimately completed a survey. In total, 47 teachers completed the questionnaire. Between March and April 2022 schools were invited to an online Zoom session to encourage engagement with the CEN surveys. A reminder email was sent to schools in mid-May 2022, via the school consortia and mentioned that the CEN research officers would be contacting schools with a courtesy follow-up call. Between May and June 2022, the final follow-up reminder phone calls were made to the schools to encourage schools to engage with the CEN surveys. Once a school accepted the CEN project invite, the link for the survey questionnaire was sent to the school headteacher/nominated member of staff to forward on to all teachers of expressive arts and languages, literacy and communications in the school (i.e., Welsh, English, Drama and Modern Foreign Languages) to complete. The survey could be completed in Welsh or English. The school invitation letters and reminders were undertaken as part of other Bangor University CEN school projects where the headteachers of the selected schools were invited to other CEN projects.

The sample of secondary and middle schools in Wales were invited to participate from end of March until the end of June 2022. Teachers of literatures across multiple relevant subjects were approached. This meant that survey results may include more than one teacher from each school. By collecting school postcodes, however, we were able to check for clustering of participants. A total of 47 participants worked in 19 postcodes (out of a total of 243 postcodes). So, there were an average of 2.5 teachers per participating postcode and clustering of two or more teachers working in the same postcode occurred across 75% of participating postcodes. Only 5 unique postcodes appeared, all in the English language survey results: 2 in different areas of Mid Glamorgan; 1 in Gwent; 1 in Gwynedd; and 1 in Cardiff. Clustering within the same postcode is likely to represent several teachers responding from the same school, since literature is taught across multiple AoLEs. Overall, 5 (out of 7) postcode areas in Wales were represented (CF, LL, NP, SA). Notable gaps were in the two adjacent mid-Wales postcode areas (LD and SY), with no participants working in schools there. We achieved an almost even split of teachers who completed the survey in Welsh (51%, n.24) and those who completed it in English (49%, n.23)

2.6.2 Analysis

Asking for school type enabled us to see whether responses are representative of school types nationally or weighted towards a particular school type. Asking for teachers' experience (number of years' service) and career stage (from Qualified Teacher Status to Head of Department) allowed similar checks for and comment on representativeness and generalisability.

The quantitative data collected took the form of descriptive statistics: they sought to capture some key characteristics of the teachers' participating and their schools. They demonstrate change and continuity in authors and texts are taught, in which curriculum areas, to which groups/levels, and the varying popularity of mechanisms through which texts are chosen. The comparative aspect of the survey, pre-pandemic and in recovery from it, shows how teachers perceive that this has changed, if at all, over the last two years.

Content, thematic and discourse analysis informed our consideration of the qualitative data, such as their views on the importance and purpose(s) of teaching literatures and their visions for it. This data shows perceived change, and stasis, in these perceptions over the last two years. The aim of gathering the qualitative data was to demonstrate the perceptions of teaching literatures, in the times immediately prior to, during and after the pandemic, in the teachers' own words. The qualitative data was coded by two of the researchers. Davies worked on the qualitative data in Welsh and Olive on the qualitative data in English. Davies' bilingualism meant that she was also able to code some data in English and then compare it with Olive's coding of the same data, with ensuing discussion to maximise consistency in their coding across the two data sets. Coding involved an iterative process whereby initial codes were developed from the initial literature review and expanded by additional codes emerging from the data and further literature reviewing.

In terms of writing up the findings, the allocation of working on Welsh-language responses to Mary Davies and the English-language responses to Sarah Olive described in Chapter 2 continued. Also continued was their practice of reading, commenting and giving feedback on each other's work as they wrote and exchanged the sections i.e., writing up was done in a context of continual, mutual discussion. A third investigator, Gwawr Maelor received the full final draft and fed into the writing up at this stage. In particular, she was asked to advise on specific issues relating to Welsh language and literature that the other authors felt deserved a second, highly expert, opinion.

3. Reviewing the existing research

A gap exists in understanding how the teaching of literatures has been impacted by the pandemic in secondary schools in Wales and at an international level. Most of the existing literature found on this topic, when searching in Welsh and English languages, was written in English. Likewise, it focused on the teaching of literatures in English, rather than literatures in other languages or disciplines (drama, for example). Some existing literature explicitly stated its focus to be 'English Literature'. Several publications from America provide examples from the 'English Language Arts' classrooms. Many articles simply state 'English', with their content focusing on teaching English Literature, rather than English Language. Such articles focus on the teaching of literary texts (plays, poems, and novels) during the pandemic, often emphasising innovative pedagogies to improve literary and critical analysis skills. Others highlight the urgency of introducing new texts to their curriculum to diversify the texts taught in schools.

Given its predominance when searching the existing research on the teaching of literatures in and beyond Wales, and its transferability to the study of literatures in other languages in the UK, it is worth defining here English Literature as a subject, particularly in light of the 'knowledge turn' seen in the curriculum in the UK over the last decade (Lambert, 2011). Elliott (2021) explores what 'knowledge' means in English Literature specifically and unpacks significant questions around what kinds of knowledge are relevant to its teaching, and the differing value placed on them by examining bodies and government. She writes:

at least part of what we are teaching when we teach English Literature is the knowledge of how an argument is constructed, and how to propose a point, listen to the ideas of others, and propose counter-arguments; we are teaching some aspect of written communication; and we are teaching the idea of knowledge as a complex construction of language (p. 17).

Elliott's book argues that knowledge in the subject includes both about knowing things (e.g. facts and statistics) and embodied knowledge: the idea of 'knowing' a poem, or a piece of writing. In poetry, for instance, Elliott highlights the relationship between knowledge, 'affective response' and 'aesthetic appreciation' (Elliott, 2021, p. 81). Knowledge of a poem may consist of biographical details about the writer, the use of rhyme scheme, and its form and structure. Yet, memorisation of such information may not necessarily equate to a full understanding of the poem, and an appreciation of its multiple meanings. Elliott elaborates:

To be able to tell me that Keats uses spondees regularly in 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' is not to have valuable knowledge about the poem. To be able to identify them and think about their potential effect, or why they have been placed where they have, would be valuable knowledge. This brings us back to a key question: Is every fact we store 'knowledge' or is there something more to knowing than being able to list attributes?' (p. 86)

English is a subject that deals with complex learning and ambiguity, nuance and interpretation. Elliott's book questions whether certain methods of high-stakes assessment are really enriching the teaching of literatures for students, or whether methods of extraction, identification, and classification produce only shallow learning.

3.1 Pandemic impacts on the teaching of literatures

This study found no extensive research specifically addressing the impact of the pandemic on the teaching of literatures in secondary schools in Wales, in Welsh or English. This section therefore contains existing literature on the impact of the pandemic on the teaching of literatures at secondary school level in the UK, dominated by literature from England, and internationally, dominated by literature from Australia. An overview of the main texts that emerged follows.

The existing literature was characterised by the publication of short, reflective essays, engagingly written in an informal style, such as Evans et al. (2020) reporting the experiences of nine English secondary school teachers in London during the pandemic. Brindley et al. (2021) also share accounts of five English teachers in the UK. The teachers included in this research were all recent graduates of the Masters in English and Education programme at the University of Cambridge, and the schools they work in vary in terms of geographical location, status, and age ranges of learners (p. 67). Instead of sharing teachers' own written accounts, the article's authors analysed and wrote their own responses to the mini narratives presented by the teachers, using direct quotes as evidence. They summarise the key themes emerging across the narratives: definitions of 'English' as a subject, technological access, engagement and motivation amongst learners, and adaptation to new learning contexts. Also in the UK, *Drama & Theatre* corralled numerous pedagogical exercises, news information for the teaching profession and covered wider aspects of drama provision extending beyond the syllabus to encompass school productions, theatre workshops, and advice on drama school auditions. Tips in recent editions of this journal provide insight into the teaching of drama during the move to remote learning. One drama teacher, Keith Burt, recommended 'setting your students tasks they can do without you being physically present' (Smurthwaite, 2019/2020). Burt set tasks such as analysing monologues and encouraged students to film themselves and upload videos on which the teacher can provide feedback. He also set creative writing exercises where students write a scene based on a play they've been taught or to provide advice for actors playing a certain character from a text they've been studying (Burt's excerpt for his class was taken from Suzanne Collin's *The Hunger Games*). Burt's article demonstrates concern with, and some potential workarounds for, the challenges the pandemic has presented to subjects, and popular pedagogies used to deliver them, that usually require live and physically proximate interactions between students.

A raft of articles comes from one special issue of an Australian teaching journal. Owen et al. (2021) similarly present four English teachers' responses to an invitation by the teaching journal, *English in Australia*, to share their experience of the first lockdown period (March-June 2020). This article further provides analysis of, and commentary on, the accounts presented, by the authors. These highlight common themes (such as problem-solving and resilience of learners and teachers) and differences (teacher experience, familiarity with online technology). Parr et al. (2021) similarly used the form of a reflective essay. The focus of their article is on the impact of the pandemic on Initial Teacher Education. It centres on four autobiographical accounts from English initial teacher educators from universities along the east coast of Australia. The teachers were selected in response to an invitation from the Australian Association of the Teaching of English (p. 22). The article highlights the unique experiences of each teacher in responding to the pandemic conditions and champions creative pedagogies for student engagement in uncertain times, understanding such pedagogies to inspire critical thinking, confidence in learners to pursue original ideas and new areas of thought in literature. It includes strategies for remote learning in the secondary school sector. Importantly, it acknowledges that the authors featured in this article

'appeared to be operating within contexts that were better resourced' to cope with remote teaching, so their experiences may differ greatly from teachers who worked in less privileged contexts (p. 30). Gannon et al. (2021) shifts the attention from teachers to pupils, as they examine how a Year 9/10 English class in western Sydney adapted a writing task in a unit on *Macbeth* during the first wave of the pandemic (pp. 38-39). In July 2020, the authors distributed an invitation, via head teachers of secondary schools in New South Wales, to students asking them to share examples of work they had created during the first period of school lockdowns. The essay focuses on one school's response that provided 17 students' responses to the same task: 'a pandemic-inspired soliloquy embedded within an English unit of *Macbeth*' (Gannon et al., 2021, p. 39). Five examples were selected by the authors and are unpacked in detail, before a discussion of the range of responses presented by the students. Given the readership of the journal, although the students' work is the focus of this piece, the article is intended to help teachers planning their teaching and assessment of similar units. Much support for English teachers was thus clustered around two national contexts, England and Australia.

From the existing literature, one key challenge that the pandemic presented was finding methods for engaging students in interpersonal interaction during remote learning, both with staff and with each other, that are equivalent to previous levels and types of interaction in the physical classroom. Many accounts relating to the teaching of English highlight the loss of interactivity and social engagement as a consequence of online teaching (Evans et al., 2020; Yandell, 2020). This is a crucial loss, considering that one of the key aims for the teaching of English in Wales is for learners to be provided with opportunities to 'orally rehearse for writing'; 'respond orally to continuous and non-continuous texts'; 'communicate for a range of purposes'; 'speak and listen individually, in pairs, in groups and as members of class' at Key Stages 3 and 4 (Welsh Government, 2016, p. 17, p. 30). Equally, one of the aims for teaching subject English, as set out by the *National Curriculum* in England, is to 'use discussion in order to learn' (DfE, 2013, p. 13). This central aim for discussion is not found in the aims of other subject disciplines, apart from languages. This impact is of significant concern for core subjects like English and Welsh because of their high status and importance at GCSE level. Although there are no findings in the wider literature on how the teaching of Welsh has been impacted by the pandemic, the 2020 Estyn report in A Level Welsh First Language highlights generalised, ongoing concern for lessons that are too monotonous, and the report encourages networking and student participation in the teaching of Welsh (p. 21).

Elliott (2021) suggests that 'two characteristic pedagogies' essential to the teaching of English Literature are 1) 'communal reading of a text' and 2) 'guided discussion of the text' (p. 12). Elliott's view is supported by other articles which insist on the importance of communication and engagement with others in English classrooms to 'construct knowledge through discursive means, as a community' (p. 13). Accounts from London-based teachers in Evans et al. (2020) show grassroots support for the idea that discussion enables reflection, awareness of other people's views, and the ability to share ideas collectively to come to a sense of meaning and understanding: 'learning happens best in a dialogue, not in a sequence of decontextualised and monological tasks' (p. 247). Although these teachers are London-based, their article might helpfully flag difficulty for teachers in facilitating discussion through which to achieve the *Curriculum for Wales*' aim for learners to become 'ethical and informed citizens of Wales and the world' (Welsh Government, 2022) should there be future school closures and further reliance on remote learning. Another teacher in Evans et al. (2020) reflects that '[g]etting students to talk about the use of language in a text [...] is impossible when students cannot share ideas with one another' (p. 246). This teacher used Google Meets for remote learning. They explained that students were unable to see

each other, or the teacher (potentially to alleviate the ‘safeguarding concerns’ of using the video function), which made conversation much harder (p. 245). Owen et al. reflect on perceived, problematic disparities in contribution to discussion among members of a class as problematic for teachers: one teacher explained that in larger class discussions, ‘some students have asked not to be called on for answers to questions, but without calling on specific students, it tends to be the same few students answering questions all the time’ (p. 10). Another account in Owen et al. shares a similar experience: ‘for those students for whom school is a difficult and challenging place, remote learning seemed to mean that they could, by and large, opt-out of the process’ (p. 13). While the challenge of engaging quieter or reluctant students is not new to teachers, these reports suggest that issues are amplified if the teacher is not present in the same physical space as the learners.

The idea of constructing ‘knowledge through discursive means’ may feel idealistic for some teachers, depending on their teaching style and the level of ability of the learners in their classrooms. However, several accounts highlighted the benefits of student engagement, student-led activities, and active participation in learning which help to develop a deeper understanding of the texts studied. The lockdown periods made this form of teaching, if not impossible, less attainable: ‘teaching via an online platform doesn’t exclude conversations; they are just much harder to do (particularly if you’re engaging a whole class)’ (NATE Spring 21, p.11). One of the risks of remote learning is of lessons that mainly include the voice of the teacher transferring knowledge to the students and instructing the class. This follows a form of pedagogy where ‘[t]he knowledge of the text — the interpretation, the argument that supports it — is already generated’ before it is delivered to the students (Elliott, 2021, p. 14, relatedly see Parr et al. p.28). One danger of this method of teaching is that ‘it denies the multiplicity of interpretation which is one of the characteristics of literary study’; the contestation between multiple, sometimes opposed, viewpoints involved in studying literature; and the opportunity for students to partake in that contestation and problematisation (Elliott, 2021, p. 14). This form of pedagogy also makes it harder to realise the aims for the new CfW in Languages, Literacy and Communication in providing learners ‘with literary experiences that will engage their interest’, if only the voice of the teacher is profiled and there are no opportunities to explore other perspectives (Welsh Government, 2019, p. 7).

Concern about univocal literature lessons during the pandemic is shared by Yandell, a researcher and initial teacher educator at the Institute of Education, London (2020). His focus is on a single Year 10 English lesson that was offered on Oak National Academy website, a repository of online lessons developed as a direct response to the first lockdown period in the UK in 2020. This initiative was supported by the Reach Foundation, a children’s charitable company based in Feltham, and was funded by the Department of Education in England (£2.2 million), and the Mohn Westlake Foundation (£1.8 million; see Reach Foundation, 2020, p. 8). Oak National Academy was initially created by 40 teachers, but this number has since grown to over 550 teachers supporting and contributing lesson plans across 28 subjects to the website from Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4 (see Oak National Academy Annual Report, 2021, p. 7, p. 8). Yandell explores a Year 10 English lesson on ‘Approaching unseen fiction texts’ where the plan includes an introductory quiz, an explanation of a narrative pyramid (the ‘Four conflicts in Literature’, first developed by Gustav Freytag in the nineteenth century), followed by various techniques with which to explore the text, before moving onto the short story itself. While Yandell does not specify the aspect of English as a subject he is referring to in this essay, the unseen fiction exercise is part of the GCSE English Language paper, so, reasonably, it can be assumed that he is discussing teaching English Language.

After critiquing each step of the lesson plan, Yandell summarises this approach to teaching English as being geared towards examination and assessment (widely known as ‘teaching to the test’). He concludes that this way of teaching reduces the subject as follows: ‘the point of English is to prepare students for English exams’, since ‘unseen text’ exercises are a staple component of examinations, rather a feature of the coursework methods of assessment shifted to as a pandemic solution (although it could be argued that, in very broad terms, being able to encounter an unfamiliar text, evaluate and make meaning from it is an important life skill with relevancies that range from spotting fake news i.e., critical literacy, to reading for pleasure). In such sessions as Yandell describes, there are fewer opportunities for learners to develop their own original thoughts about literature and lessons that feature only one authoritative answer can risk student disengagement. Furthermore, the consequences of unidirectional English lessons could put learners off reading for pleasure, which is counter to the aims of the new CfW to develop a ‘lifelong love of literature’ (Welsh Government, 2019, p.7). Yandell’s article raises questions about resources and pedagogies for English lessons rolled out as an immediate response to the first lockdown period in March 2020. It suggests that a first response to the pandemic in teaching literatures, and potentially other similar subjects, was to backslide from pedagogic advances made from the 1960s and 1970s onwards, from preferring pupil- to teacher-centred pedagogies, and framing literature as about how plural interpretations are constructed to a matter of reiterating a singular, authoritative meaning sourced from a teacher. This article unusually provides a critique of an example of online learning in subject English during the pandemic. It is but one example of a single lesson offered by Oak National Academy and cannot be taken as representative of provision in the subject there or elsewhere during the pandemic. Nonetheless, it suggests ways in which long-running concerns about the direction of travel in literature-based subjects, such as ‘teaching to the test’, have not evaporated with the pandemic: they still manifest in the pedagogies and technologies used to adapt teaching in the pandemic context.

One key recommendation from the teachers contributing to these publications. to minimise univocal literature lessons. is to provide opportunities for students to develop confidence in sharing ideas. One anonymous drama teacher reflected on their experience of working with Year 12 students in September 2020 when face-to-face teaching resumed: ‘we needed to work on their confidence. So many of them had a fear of getting things wrong and that fear was stifling their ability to be creative’ (Anonymous, 2020/2021, p.11, see also Renew and Reform p.6 regarding entrants to as well as current post-16 learners). These issues with confidence were also witnessed in other subjects when pupils returned to the classroom. Woozley (2022), who sits on the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE) Secondary working group summarises that ‘many teachers reported a decrease in students’ oral participation during online learning’ (p. 19). Woozley recommends reiterating expectations to each class so that every learner knows what is expected of them in each lesson, and from this ‘the careful scaffolding of oracy skills’ can be developed (Woozley, 2022, p. 20). Woozley also recommends that teachers be mindful of their verbal responses; instead of ‘rephrasing and rewording student responses to get the “right” answer’, leading questions can be used to encourage students to think deeply about their responses. This form of pedagogy can be used to create a constructive learning atmosphere, where students’ ideas can be encouraged and guided in a productive manner. By re-focusing students’ perceptions away from ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers, this allows students to build their confidence in themselves and their thoughts. This pedagogy also chimes with the core epistemological assumption of English in Education scholars, and many teachers of literatures in our review, that studying literatures foregrounds multiple, contested, problematised interpretations of texts. Furthermore, the anonymous drama teacher

mentioned above offered students encouragement around getting things ‘wrong’ and being ‘playful’, to grow and learn (p. 11).

There are other examples of English teachers who avoided the unidirectional mode of teaching, mentioned above, demonstrating that collaborative pedagogies were possible during the lockdown periods. One account in Owen et al. (2021) compares an educator’s teaching practice online to his practice in the physical classroom: online he became ‘less formal, more collaborative, less dictatorial and more flexible around the moods and preferences: [a] focus on collaboration, engagement and connection was used to foreground student voices’ (p. 13). This account suggests that student participation and the inclusion of their voices was crucial when teaching remotely, something which numerous educators have consistently sought to prioritise in their classroom. An account in Parr et al. (2021) similarly shares this concern: ‘[W]e were determined not to succumb to a model of education that sees the teacher’s role as simply transmitting information’ and ‘we planned around opportunities for students to work in small groups, with the Zoom breakout room functioning like a round-table group in class’ (pp. 27-28). This account is underpinned by an understanding of the collaborative nature of pedagogy, the importance of learning as a social experience, and the sharing of ideas within education, though it should be noted that it concerned teacher training and that teacher trainers might be assumed to have a broader knowledge of, and more experience using, available pedagogies and techniques than the average classroom teacher of literature.

While this review of existing research has largely highlighted negative issues with student engagement, there are positive stories where ‘[t]he rare quieter or less sociable student, found the independent allocation of time and a greater control over work completion a positive’ (Owen et al, 2021, p. 13). Working from home, with a new independence to learning, seemed to work favourably for some learners. This same account in Owen et al, written by Steven Kolber, describes the first three stages of remote learning in Melbourne, Australia (April 15- June 9 2020, July 20- August 1 2020, and August 2- September 18) with various headlines, and it is interesting to note that the first stage was described as follows: ‘[e]njoying the novelty of remote learning, learning new methods and tools with students’. (p. 13). Another account in Owen et al, by Anne Wood, shares this sense of enthusiasm: ‘online learning provided an extraordinary opportunity for teachers to see the possibilities of technology and creativity in the English curriculum’ (p. 14). The new format of learning provided excitement for some teachers and their students, yet it is also important to add that the joy in novelties experienced during the first phase of remote learning waned according to Kolber’s experience mentioned in Owen et al. (p. 13). There seems to be a challenge as to how to sustain engagement and innovative learning online. Perhaps initially this remote learning period was perceived as likely to be fleeting, but with longer term lockdowns in Victoria, for example, the spirit of enjoyment in remote learning became harder to sustain. That said, one account in Parr et al. (2021) suggests the following: ‘COVID highlighted not the prickliness of our teaching area but rather its capacity to be dynamic, adaptable, and, [...] to reach into new territories and ways of doing with confidence born from uncertainty’ (p. 26). This view embraced the opportunities that the pandemic provided in terms of adapting and exploring new ways of teaching literature. This positivity around the sense of the unknown is helpful to teaching literature, as new possibilities of studying, interpreting, and working with texts can be discovered, but is also described as an inherent affordance of literature studies.

Using creative writing activities appeared to be a rewarding experience for teachers and students during the pandemic, as such exercises developed creative thinking and skills of expression that enabled students to reflect on their experiences of the pandemic. For

example, positive experiences of undertaking devised work in drama to create surreal films are described in issue 94 of *Drama & Theatre*. In response to QCAA (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority), in Australia, removing a creative assessment in their Year 12 English curriculum, a decision that was made to help ‘school teachers and students to manage learning and assessment during the evolving COVID-19 pandemic’, one teacher recalls her department’s attempt to counter this prevalent sense of learning loss:

‘[w]e discovered an online environment provided a space where students could write free from judgement in private channels within the platform. Many teachers in my faculty described experiences where students who did not participate in class and felt self-conscious were more than willing to express their creativity in this environment. One particular Year 10 Learning Support student who had not completed one English assignment since enrolling in the school in Year 7 was able to produce a Gothic short story which met the Year 10 achievement standard’ (Owen et al., 2021, p. 14).

The ability of online learning to create a space that was ‘free from judgement’ is a significant outcome and one that is portrayed also in Edwards (2021). Her article evidences teachers’ reflections on how to support learners who may feel shy or self-conscious in the physical classroom space and whether methods used during remote learning (such as writing through ‘private channels’ mentioned above) can be retained when learners return to school. This article highlights how creative exercises provide a way into student engagement in education. Similar experiences are also reflected in Gannon et al. (2021), which includes positive experiences of creative writing exercises inspired by *Macbeth*, and Evans et al. (2020), where one teacher recommends the value of creative writing as a way of getting students to understand and reflect on their experiences of the pandemic (see also Ahberg). It is both informative and therapeutic for learners to be able to express themselves and how they relate to the world around them. Such exercises also demonstrate the affordances of literature and creative subjects in tackling current issues. Gannon et al. is helpful in articulating the importance of creativity during the lockdown period and exemplifies inspiring creative learning under such conditions. Not only can creativity promote new ways of thinking and inspire confidence in learners, but creative pedagogies can also help motivate students and prevent disengagement, something which was of especial concern during remote learning.

Some articles on teaching literature during the pandemic focused less on pedagogies and more on explaining teachers’ reasoning behind the selection of texts during this period, again maintaining an anecdotal or instructional quality, to inspire and inform colleagues in the sector. For example, Frazier and Lewis (2021) describe how their English department in Ohio chose Emily St. John Mandel’s *Station Eleven* (2014), and Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *King Lear* for an online summer school. The author claims that these texts allowed students to think about the role of art in times of crisis, the importance of leadership and governance, and the relationship between humanity and the natural world, all of which resonate broadly during the time of the pandemic. Similarly, Sulzer (2021), also based in Ohio, outlines ways of interpreting Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* through the lenses of climate crisis and the pandemic, connecting canonical literature to current events and issues. Wolfsdorf (2021), in New York, likewise explains why he chose to teach *Hamlet* to his final year class in response to the pandemic. He argues that the play reflects a rapidly changing world, offering powerful reflections on loss, mourning, and grief. Each of these articles highlights ways of teaching literature in relation to present global issues such as the pandemic and climate change. They resonate with Sophia Ahlberg’s *Teaching Literature in Times of Crisis* (2021). Ahlberg relatedly provides practical resources to instruct teachers on how to teach literature during times of ongoing crisis and argues that

literature can empower learners to understand crises and the world around them. Torres (2021) likewise decided to teach new texts during the pandemic. She explains how the move to remote learning provided her with the chance to recommend a new text to teach. This article demonstrated that other factors motivating changes to texts coincided with the pandemic. Furthermore, Torres' article highlights how the pandemic, and the necessity of transforming in-person pedagogy to online learning, offered space to reflect on what was being taught, and provided the chance for changes to be made to the teaching syllabus. Torres' article offers an inspiring counter-narrative to ready assumptions that the pandemic would result in educators teaching well-established, well-resourced, and therefore 'safer' topics; craving familiarity and certainty, rather than changing the syllabus. It suggests that the upheaval caused by the pandemic was instead a liberating opportunity for teachers to experiment, try out new texts and pedagogies.

Some educators demonstrated innovative ways of using a range of technologies to teach literature, as a response to online delivery during lockdown periods, which felt more effective than teaching in the classroom, and have since been incorporated into the physical classroom. Others described how they implemented new ways of teaching literature online during that pandemic, which have subsequently been useful for both online and in-person classes. They are 'Covid keeps'. Murphy (2022) reflects on the success of audiobooks 'in teaching literature virtually' during the lockdown period, and how this choice of pedagogy continues to support learning beyond it. The popularity of audiobooks has grown during the pandemic, as mentioned in the *Annual Literacy Survey Report (2020)*: '[a]udiobooks also appear to offer a way into literacy for boys, with 1 in 2 (51.1%) boys saying that listening to audiobooks has increased their interest in reading, and 2 in 5 (43.2%) saying that it has made them more interested in writing'. It seems appropriate, then, for school educators to take advantage of this growing trend. Murphy describes the reasoning behind the decision to use audiobooks was to provide 'an element of "stretch and challenge"': a model of teaching which seeks to encourage deeper thinking and independent learning from the students (see Light, 2017). Audiobooks provide a way of encountering literature for students that encourages active listening, a valuable skill for learners which strengthens concentration and communication. While audiobooks have been available for decades through older technologies such as cassettes and CDs, they have previously been overwhelmingly associated with pre-literate children or older and visually-impaired people. That some teachers are beginning to 'count' audiobooks as reading has wider implications for boys' reading, since Sellers found that boys' reading was under-estimated because they were not relaying less traditional forms of reading (use of gaming manuals, reading of cartoons, reading of factual books) to their teachers. This unhelpfully compounded a public consciousness of, and boys' self-identification as 'resistant readers' – those who felt that reading was uncool and would make them stand out in a negative way (2019, p. 942). One group identified in Sellers' research was identified as the 'indifferent reader': individuals who were not against reading but stated that they didn't have time to read and that reading appeared at odds with social engagement. Sellers found that such students' perceptions of reading as an isolated, unsocial activity often prevented their engagement with it as an activity outside of school time: if audiobooks and other digital texts make it more possible for multiple readers to engage with a text at a given time, in a social, leisure setting such as 'hanging out' together, this might redress some barriers to engaging with literature for pleasure. This would, however, require some serious thought and investment on the part of schools, libraries and funders of public services about how to provide access to audiobooks equitably, given that the best-known sources charge monthly subscription fees or pay-per-download at a price usually far higher than print copies of the same text (for example, Audible). While both Edwards' and Murphys' accounts provide brief details depicting their individual experiences, further research is needed to understand whether these examples

are representative of or could be scaled up to the teaching of literatures in other parts of the UK, especially Wales. This is particularly important given the Englishisation of the internet and related technologies. 'Englishisation' refers to the 'increasing dispersion of English as a means of communication in non-Anglophone contexts' and is widely used in linguistics and postcolonial studies (Wilkinson and Gabriëls).

In a special issue of the cross-sector magazine for educators *Teaching Shakespeare*, titled *Teaching Shakespeare in Lockdown*, Edwards (2021) provides an account of teaching Shakespeare online to a group of Year 7 students at her school in London and explains how the group effectively shared ideas using the chat function of Google Classroom. Edwards emphasises how aspects of online teaching have made some pedagogies feel more effective than teaching in-person, as it was perceived that the chat function enables everyone to input their ideas in a fair and equal manner, and the teacher can then look through each contribution. In class, there is usually not enough time to discuss everyone's ideas, and so the benefit of the group chat enables the teacher to save the chat log so that they can look through the chat after the lesson and can also share this resource with the students. Edwards also reflects how students felt more confident in speaking the text out loud and offering advice to one another online than if they were in the classroom together. This implies that the virtual classroom felt less intimidating to students in this group and that peer pressure, or anxieties over speaking out, became much less of a factor in this learning environment. It resonates with broader social commentary pre-dating the pandemic on the lowering of inhibitions when people interact online, from discussions around trolling on Twitter to coercive, age-inappropriate, online sexual behaviours. This experience contrasts with the accounts in Evans et al., (2020) where teachers felt that engaged discussion with students became more difficult online. Admittedly, Edwards describes a teacher's view of typed, peer-to-peer interaction, while Evans et al. looks at verbal teacher-class interactions — so these rare accounts give glimpses at somewhat adjacent phenomena. These varying reports demonstrate how the pandemic has impacted similar approaches to the teaching of literature in different ways. Teaching style and methodology, the technological availability of, and familiarity with equipment on the part of staff and students, and the social environment, are but a few different factors which have contributed to learning and teaching efficacy in this period.

Evans et al's example involves sharing the process of adapting pedagogy for teaching literatures and discussing the initial challenges of teaching poetry online (2020). Before the pandemic, Evans et al. describes how the class would collectively annotate a poem together. They were faced with the task of transferring this methodology of teaching literature into a suitable online setting. Evans et al. further mentioned that initially, her department faced the inability of conducting real-time discussions and feedback, making the situation particularly challenging. Videos were created by members of staff where they each unpacked a poem individually, which they recall was an effective way to show how teachers would approach analysing the text — but which seems to further evidence Yandell's concern at the pandemic's centering of unilateral, authoritative teacher voices (even if here, the poems and the teachers are plural). Evans et al. also mentions that recording Zoom sessions of teachers collectively sharing interpretations of poems was an effective choice of pedagogy, as students witnessed how multiple ideas were conveyed and discussed in a productive manner. Although the latter approach might allay some of Yandell's concern about monologic teacher voice, what is missing within these exercises are the voices of, the spontaneous or sought interpolations and input from, the students themselves. These may only be encouraged afterwards, once students have witnessed how the teachers interpret poems in contrasting ways. This may inscribe confidence in the learners for them to develop their own ideas, yet watching teachers provide their interpretations, in the role of authorities

on the texts, may lead to an undue influencing of the students to follow the same ideas. Both articles by Edwards and Evans et al. are useful because they outline the different ways in which the teaching of literature has been impacted by the pandemic and provide contrasting methods of adapting teaching to support learning. Both articles provide examples from schools in London: Edwards with a mixed ability Year 7 group; Evans et al. does not mention the specific class/level in the poetry example, but it can be discerned that it is a GCSE/A Level class because of the anthology mentioned. Of course, these articles are simply outlining the experiences of individual teachers, and generalised conclusions cannot be drawn.

Despite the seemingly unpromising circumstances, given the challenges to interaction described above, there were examples of drama being brought to life online. One account in Parr et al. (2021) explains, '[t]able readings replaced blocked readings, Shakespearean shared lines could be shared across the digital divide and, with careful planning, the "conscience alley" drama strategy still worked albeit without the eponymous alley' (p. 26). The "conscience alley" exercise helps students contemplate multiple perspectives or feelings from a character who is at a decisive moment in a play (e.g., when Macbeth is deciding whether to kill King Duncan). A group forms two lines, with one person in the middle walking between the lines, and as the person walks past other participants, they hear different thoughts in relation to the choice that the character must make. When the person in the middle reaches the end of the line, they then must make a decision based on the contrasting thoughts that they have heard from other participants (see Farmer, n.d). Parr's teacher found a way of adapting already existing methods of active methods learning which were also effective online (good internet connection provided). The teacher continued to explain that '[c]reativity remained central to the teaching and learning. It enlivened the virtual Zoom backgrounds we created as visual representations of Tomas Tranströmer's poem "Blue House" (p. 26). Creative pedagogy was a means of effectively transforming this online teacher-training space and using playful methods provided new ways of interpreting texts, offering these trainee teachers the possibility of adopting these tools in future pedagogy with their own school students.

One important factor in the teaching of literatures that became disrupted during the pandemic was time. Schools had to change their delivery of education rapidly and had to continually adapt to the changing conditions over the course of the lockdown periods, from March 2020 onwards. While many negative impacts of the pandemic in relation to time have been well aired, there are a couple of examples within these reflective essays that explain how teachers found they had more time for planning and professional development during remote learning (Evans et al., 2021). For instance, one English teacher in Owen et al. shares that '[t]here were aspects of a regular teacher workload which dropped away, such as writing reports. I had time to read and to prepare resources to be uploaded, to focus specifically on delivering content' (p. 12). It is not entirely clear what 'reports' the teacher is referring to (whether for instance, the annual school reports sent to parents were cancelled during the lockdown period, or whether accountability reports for teachers were not required), but this example suggests that some relief from certain previous routine duties and the new format of remote learning freed up time for teachers to spend on planning lessons and to expand their knowledge of different texts, or even to read for pleasure. Another account in Parr et al., (2021), which provides reflections on teacher education during the pandemic, shared that the changes to the timetable meant that a new module could be offered which the department had been intending to pilot: a module on teaching young adult fiction. This module proved to be a popular and rewarding choice for the student teachers enrolled and is an example where the pandemic had initially disrupted the provision of teacher education, but ultimately resulted in a positive outcome.

Related to the perception, conveyed in the existing literature, of issues of time caused or exacerbated by the pandemic, the sense that learning in literature-based lessons became slower online is reflected in English teachers' accounts in Evans et al. (2020) and Owen et al., (2021), as one-to-one online conversation between the teacher and a Year 12 student reportedly felt 'like proper teaching' but it was 'slow slow slow' (p. 10). These teachers felt that less learning was achieved online, in comparison to in-person learning. While these are but two individual accounts, with Owen et al's example just sharing one day's worth of teaching, they flag larger questions around how much learning was achieved online and whether progress was slower, in relation to — and perhaps beyond — teachers' perceptions of teaching literatures. However, one account in Owen et al. (2021) concluded in a way that seeks to allay concerns about getting through material and celebrates 'Covid keeps': '[M]y practice upon returning to school has seen more authentic and live assessment, less busywork, more skills building and a dramatic increase in group and collaborative work'. This educator shares their discovery that 'what my students needed was not content, but connection, collaboration, and most of all engagement' (p. 13). Our own participants additionally demonstrate awareness that concerns about the pace of teaching online had been heeded: as shown in the main findings, they were aware of changes to requirements around the number of texts to be taught for particular qualifications in English literature. The perceived slowness of lessons online was, therefore, sometimes perceived in the existing literature as something that could be ameliorated by teachers' revising their own perspectives and awarding bodies modifying requirements around material to be covered.

To summarise how teachers in the existing literature perceive the pandemic to have impacted the teaching of literatures (so far, exclusively those written in English, and taught in English and Drama), it impacted negatively on interpersonal interaction between teachers and students, and among the students; student engagements and participation, skewing away from current collaborative pedagogies towards older teacher-centered ones; and student confidence in participating. Teachers in the existing literature, admittedly a self-selecting, reflective and dynamic sub-set of the profession, observed these negative impacts, developed ways in which to ameliorate them, and evaluated the effectiveness. Sometimes they are preserving their pandemic-prompted initiatives as 'Covid keeps' having now returned to usual modes of delivery and a period of recovery from the pandemic. Moreover, the pandemic, or concomitant events such as anti-racist and anti-sexist protests in America and the UK, were portrayed as having positive impact on creative writing activities, the diversity of texts taught, the range of technologies used, in spite of pressures on time and a prevailing, at least initial, sense that the speed of covering content was slower. The existing literature reported that teachers who made positive discoveries — of texts, pedagogies and resources — plan to incorporate, or had already incorporated them, into their post-pandemic practice.

3.2 What lessons can be learnt from the existing research?

Although they provide first-hand accounts of the experiences of teachers of literature during the pandemic, many of the articles by teachers featured above have obvious limitations. Concrete examples given by practicing teachers may provide models for other educators e.g., of how teaching poetry was adapted to online learning (Evans et al). They tend to report decisions made, pedagogies and resources used in adapting teaching to the pandemic circumstances with limited criticality, theoretical or educational research underpinnings. Some accounts are especially brief, lacking in vital details e.g., the demographic/context of the school they teach at, the texts being taught, the classes they are teaching, and the specific ways in which the pandemic has impacted their pedagogy. They are also written by a select group of teachers: teachers who felt the impact of the

pandemic and made changes in relation to it that they feel are worth sharing as examples of good practice. The limitations of the available literature highlighted the need for primary research to be conducted on this subject.

One clear take-away message from the existing literature is that calls from activists and students and educators in other sectors, such as higher education internationally (in Anglophone contexts at least, led by former British colonies), to diversify the curriculum and employ anti-racist and intersectional feminist strategies in the teaching of literature is a greater impetus for the changes made to teaching literature in recent years than the pandemic itself, though they were often perceived to have coincided (largely because of the pivotal nature of the widespread Black Lives Matter protests in summer 2020 in raising awareness of systemic racism in many Anglocultural and European societies). The 2021 *Lit in Colour* report by Elliott et al offers vital reasons why change is needed. It posits statistics about the literature being taught in primary and secondary schools in England. For instance, fewer than 1% of candidates for GCSE English Literature in 2019 answered a question on a novel by an author of colour (p. 6). It argues that this is an urgent issue, since it is vital that the widest possible range of students see themselves represented in the literature that is taught. The current lack of representation implies that only white, male, middle-class perspectives are worth reading about and studying. Lack of representation is not only harmful to learners from historically marginalised communities. It also impoverishes students from learning about other perspectives, cultures, religions, and ethnicities. Literature can offer vital lessons in racial and gender justice and be the lens through which students can critique oppression, so classrooms should contain wide-ranging representations and experiences in the literary texts offered to students. Beyond the immediate classroom context, the teaching of literatures in a way that offers a limited worldview adversely affects the subject's appeal and the numbers of students pursuing further study in English Literature. *Lit in Colour* argues that the pandemic has adversely interrupted changes to the curriculum or been used as a reason by leadership to justify why change has not been made (Elliot et al., p. 50). Interestingly, this is in tension with our findings, which suggest that while some policymakers may have stalled, members of the teaching profession have accelerated change-making around diversity, where they have the autonomy to do so. While Elliott et al. concentrate on England, our survey focuses on Wales where teachers should have increased autonomy through the affordances of CfW.

The *Lit in Colour* report chimes with other existing literature about the works of white, middle-class men dominating the texts being taught in schools. These include Elliot's book, *Knowledge in English* (2021, p.67), attending to English nationwide, and a research report by Kneen et al. (2019-2020), from Southwest England and Wales. The latter audited English teachers to find out what literary texts were taught at KS3 level (years 7-9). Their report similarly highlights the lack of authors and characters of colour in texts taught at this level: Malorie Blackman was the only author of colour to feature in the list of prose; John Agard and Maya Angelou were the only poets of colour; there were no plays by writers of colour; and there was a paucity of female writers and protagonists (Kneen et al., 2019-2020). These figures are borne out by other important studies. The campaign End Sexism in Schools carried out an England-wide survey of literary texts studied at KS3 and found that 65% of schools teach no texts by female writers during the three years of KS3 (Fenn, 2022b). The target audience for this campaign is not explicitly stated, but the recommendations at the end of the report suggest that the research is aimed at those involved or influencing decision-making with regards to the content and funding of English curriculum secondary education: Ofsted, examination boards, school staff and local authorities, the UK Government, and Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers (Fenn, 2022a). Fenn describes an audit she conducted when she was Head of Department which asked

her colleagues why literary texts were taught, and what messages (implicit/explicit) these texts were conveying about gender. Fenn's article encourages diversifying the curriculum, which she suggests can be a gradual change to avoid teachers and schools being overloaded with work while ensuring 'that patriarchal values aren't continuing to shape pupils' thinking' (Fenn, 2022b). These publications are relevant to the teaching of English Literature in Wales since similar texts are popular in Welsh schools e.g. *Of Mice and Men*, *A Christmas Carol*) (Kneen et al., 2019-20).

Audiobooks feature in the existing literature as a perceived effective resource during the pandemic. The existing literature, however, shows that the decision to implement audiobooks was driven by teachers', such as Murphy's, desire to offer 'a more diverse and inclusive curriculum' (Murphy, 2022). Murphy taught *Ugly Dogs Don't Cry* (2020). The work is a re-telling of John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937) set in west London by DD Armstrong, a young, black British author. It is unclear whether the pandemic was a direct reason for Murphy's move towards diversifying the curriculum through the medium of audiobooks, or whether this would have happened regardless. After all, digital audiobooks have increased in availability and popularity in recent years and calls to decolonise and diversify curricula existed before the pandemic. Rather, Murphy's article highlights an effective tool used during the pandemic, that may be helpful for the recovery of literature lessons in classrooms in Wales. The article does not mention any particular event as a reason for the teaching of new texts during this time or suggest that the disruption caused by the pandemic presented specific hurdles to teaching previously taught texts. Rather, the changes it necessitated – such as moving online – provided an impetus for a more extensive shake-up by literature teachers. This extended from how to teach literatures, using new and virtual spaces, to what to teach. That is to say, we found that the pandemic upheaval sometimes accelerated longer-held agendas for diversifying teachers' choice of texts. Some teachers saw a potential efficiency to making changes necessitated by the pandemic, and those desired for other reasons, at the same time.

Similarly, Torres (2021) outlines how the pandemic provided a chance to renew the choice of literary texts. An eighth grade (equivalent to Year 9 in England and Wales) English teacher in Hawai'i, she explains how her department was asked to solidify which texts would be taught so that staff could plan collaboratively, materials could be ordered and distributed to ensure accessibility for all students. This gave Torres the chance to recommend Sonia Nazario's *Enrique's Journey (The Young Adult Adaptation): The True Story of a Boy Determined to Reunite with His Mother* (2014) be incorporated into syllabus. Additionally, with the text she continued to teach (Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 1960), she freshly applied a 'critical literacy lens' recommended by #DisruptTexts (see #DisruptTexts, n.d.), so that students could question White Saviour tropes and 'what it means for a Whitewoman author's book about racism to be so commonly taught' in classrooms (Torres, 2021). The article points towards the broader changes — in terms of adopting anti-racist strategies and diversifying texts in the curriculum — that extend before, during, and after the pandemic, but which teachers in some existing literature portray as accelerated by it.

The pandemic has understandably propelled teachers to reflect on their practice, beyond the choice and diversity of literary texts. For instance, one teacher's account in Owen et al. (2021) questioned what was important in their own teaching practice: '[i]s it being able to mark essays on time, or having happy learners in my classroom?' (p. 12, see also Gannon et al. p. 40). Perhaps offering more welfare support and less pressured tasks to students was more conducive to both students and teachers during remote learning, as opposed to prioritising marking. Another account in Owen et al. supports this idea, as a teacher admits that, '[w]ellbeing and students' positive mental health was my primary concern rather than

delivery of an overstuffed curriculum' (p. 13). This declaration implies the teacher's personal view that an over-emphasis on curriculum content may not be particularly conducive and healthy for students, and the premodifier 'overstuffed' suggests work overload, stress, and decreased efficiency, but also, disengagement from students.

Finally, another message from the existing literature seems to be that more thought is needed in terms of the physical space of school, and how the school space facilitates or hinders educational experiences. Gannon et al. (2021) highlights that during the pandemic, 'digital lives and online worlds offered potential spaces for cultivating wellbeing and creativity' and that '[c]reativity was evident in many online spaces during the initial COVID-19 lockdown' (p. 40, see also Jacobs, Finneran and D'Acosta 2020 cit. Gannon p. 40). Online spaces could be set up and proliferated quickly and reasonably inexpensively – compared to, for example, building a new gymnasium or theatre: something attested to by the number of online shows created by students (Waseda Institute Players, Japan) and professionals alike (The Show Must Go Online, Creation). This is not to say that creative spaces cannot exist in schools, but this discovery is noteworthy, perhaps because some might have thought that creative teaching and pedagogy may have been harder to produce online. Gannon et al. continue: '[t]he COVID-19 lockdown provided spaces to relearn, rediscover and reinvigorate. While the potential for demotivation was high among some students and teachers, there also opened a new space for ideation among students and teachers, which is a key factor in creativity' (p. 40). Perhaps the novelty of this new situation for learning opened up, or at least sped up the embrace of, new possibilities. This may not have happened had education continued in schools without the pandemic. It is interesting to consider then how the physical classroom space influences, inspires, or constrains creativity. Liam Semler coined the notion of 'Ardenspace': a space which exists beyond the formal systems of learning, an escapism almost, where deep learning can occur, which then influences students learning when they return to their usual classroom setting (Semler, 2014, pp. 51-53). There is not only the need for physical evaluation of the classroom (e.g. looking at the proxemics of the space, the decoration of the room etc.) but also conceptually, for teachers to look beyond the rigidity of the classroom or exam syllabus and to have learning experiences in place which propel students into deeper learning. This can satisfy the concerns addressed earlier by academics such as Yandell (2020), and the worry that exam practice constrains the development of critical and creative thought and interpretation in literature-based subjects such as English or Welsh.

In summary, this section suggests that the pandemic is not entirely, or even primarily, responsible for the changes seen in the teaching of literatures in the UK and internationally during the past two years – though it may have provided an impetus for speedier change. Nor do teachers in the existing literature view the effects of the pandemic as dominantly negative. In addition to the positives detailed in 3.1, teachers represented in the existing literature call for space in their respective curricula and use of physical space in schools to be reconsidered beyond the pandemic, to benefit the teaching of literatures.

3.3 Summary of the existing research

It was impossible even to glimpse how the pandemic impacted on the teaching of literatures at secondary school level in Wales, since so little published research on this phenomenon is extant. However, notwithstanding Wales' distinctive unique bilingual context, it can reasonably be assumed that the situation will have some similarities with countries such as England, Australia and America featured in the existing research. Such research showed largely individual impacts of the pandemic on what texts are taught, what pedagogies and technological resource embraced. The existing literature is dominated by pockets of practice

in Australia, England and North America, almost always from the perspective of English as a subject. Our survey highlights, from a larger evidence base than most individual articles, the experience of teachers of literatures in secondary schools in Wales. We believe its unique focus on the teaching of literatures in Wales, from across various subjects (not just the subjects English and Drama that dominated above) delivered in Welsh, English and international languages, is its most significant contribution to knowledge.

Our review of the existing research has highlighted other gaps in knowledge that necessitate our investigation of these teachers' perceptions of the impacts that the pandemic and other contexts have had on their teaching. These include a lack of research looking at teacher's perspectives of how intersecting factors are informing the teaching of literatures – like policy change, climate change, feminist, anti-racist and feminist activism to decolonise and diversify the curriculum i.e., the new CfW, climate strikes, End Sexism in Schools, Black Lives Matter. In redressing these ellipses, we believe our report makes a useful contribution to the individual reflections and instructional literature discussed above.

4. Results and discussion

Throughout, we report Welsh language survey results first, follow by their English language counterparts. In writing up these results in English, direct quotations featured in this section have been translated into English by the Mary Davies, the project's bilingual Research Officer. Source-oriented translation has been opted for as far as possible to honour the original meaning of each unique response, but where necessary, syntax and additional words have been added to help improve the flow and clarity of certain responses. Gwawr Maelor Williams provided additional support relating to translation. For each main aspect of the findings, we then bring the two different linguistic sets of data together, exploring similarities and differences and putting them in dialogue with the findings from the existing research in chapter 3, finding points of continuity and divergence.

4.1 Participant and school demographics

Responses came predominantly from south Wales: under-represented regions include the north-east, mid and west Wales. In previous studies, the independent school sector was over-represented in the convenience/snowball sample (Elliott and Olive): this is not the case here. The results represent teachers' experiences at state comprehensive schools, with one coming from a comprehensive in a selective area. Two or more teachers from the same school often participated, so there is some clustering. However, these teachers likely represent different subjects within literatures, languages and drama. This demographic reflects the distribution of the invitation to participate i.e. not to independent schools or sixth form colleges. In terms of school size, most participants worked in more populous schools, with a very few based in medium or small ones. 19 worked in schools with 1,101 pupils or more; 24 in schools with 601-1,100 pupils; 3 in schools with 600 pupils or fewer; 1 in a school with 101-300 pupils. None worked in schools with 301-600 pupils or those with 100 or fewer pupils. Our results, therefore, do not represent smaller schools as well as larger ones.

In terms of the language-category of schools in which participants work, 18 came from English-medium schools, 14 came from Welsh medium schools, 7 from bilingual type B schools, 6 from bilingual type A schools, and 2 from Dual Stream. No participants identified themselves as working in Bilingual type C, English with significant Welsh, or transitional schools. We are aware, as researchers, that the categories have changed. However, this was a commonly-used multiple-choice option for collecting school demographic data that was preferred due to the teachers' familiarity with this set of categories, at the time data was collected. There were almost equal numbers of Welsh- (n.24) and English-language (n.23) respondents, reflecting that these survey results also offer a balance between those who primarily teach Welsh and those who primarily teach English, as well as between those who teach in Welsh-medium and those who teach in English medium schools (with smaller numbers working in other language-category schools, as shown below). Welsh was the subject most taught by Welsh-language participants, with Drama in second place, with Spanish and French just behind. English was the subject most taught by English-language participants, with Welsh and Drama mostly in equal second and third place, and French just behind.

Participants were asked to say which of the following subjects they taught at years 7 through to 13: Welsh, English, Drama, French, Spanish, Other/s. 'Other/s' subjects that participants said they taught include: Welsh Baccalaureate (3 participants); Humanities (1 participant); World of Work Skills; Business; Public Services (all 1 participant); Film Studies (1 participant); Media Studies (1 participant); vocational subjects (1 participant); Health (1

participant); ‘THS Uwch’ (1 participant, possibly Health Studies – ‘Uwch’ suggests teaching a subject qualification to a higher level). A couple of participants put ‘Welsh Second Language’ as their ‘Other/s’ subject, which raises the question as to whether participants presumed that ‘Welsh’ was only referring to Welsh First Language, or whether other participants included both first and second language teaching in their main answer. We also asked about German, but no participants taught it at any level. (The teachers of languages other than Welsh and English had begun to respond to WJEC changes requiring the inclusion of literature in these subjects but, so far, there was only a smattering of evidence relating to teaching literatures in these subjects, exclusively in French and Spanish).

Table 1: subjects taught by year group

Year	Welsh	English	Drama	French	Spanish	Other
Year 7	18	10	7	4	3	2
Year 8	18	10	6	3	2	2
Year 9	18	9	7	4	2	3
Year 10	19	12	6	3	2	7
Year 11	18	13	6	3	2	6
Year 12	10	7	3	2	1	6
Year 13	10	7	3	1	1	4

The responses were dominated by Heads of Department but represent teachers spanning lengths of service (although fewer responses by those at the very start or exceeding four decades in the profession responding: for practical reasons including lack of seniority and rarity of this achievement respectively). Most participants were Heads of Department (n.26), followed by holders of subject responsibility below Head of Department (n.13), post NQT classroom teacher (n.7) and 1 NQT. No participants were currently in teacher training. Heads of Departments are somewhat over-represented here: this may reflect the size of departments for these subjects and/or a sense of responsibility for responding to external enquiries (such as requests to participate in research) as well as a sense that decision-makers in the relevant subjects were better placed to respond to the survey.

In response to the question ‘how many years have you been teaching’, the longest serving participant answered 33 years. The shortest time teaching was 1 year, an answer given by 1 participant. The remaining participants ranged between these poles, from newcomers to the profession to long-serving teachers. Overall, 3 participants had taught for over 30 years; 11 participants had taught for 21-30 years; 19 participants had taught for 11-20 years; 14 participants had taught for fewer than 10 years. Participants represent a reasonably good spread across the possible lengths of service in the teaching profession, with only the very newly-started somewhat underrepresented.

The survey asked two questions to better understand continuing development of participants’ subject specialism and professional expertise. In terms of professional memberships, just under one-fifth of participants named organisations to which they belong. These included one or two teachers, at most, mentioning Theatre Genedlaethol, the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE), Llenyddiaeth Cymru, UK Literacy Association (UKLA), Association for Language Learning (ALL), the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), and the National Theatre of London (n.1), which was mentioned in the ‘other’ category. Only one-tenth of Welsh-language respondents mentioned belonging to a professional association, compared to just under a fifth of English-language peers, suggesting a need to ensure appropriate provision, awareness of, and support to join relevant organisations. 13 out of 47 teachers had a postgraduate degree

(28%): 4 in Welsh; 4 in Education; 1 MSt (Master of Studies) in Advanced Subject Teaching (English); 1 MA in Educational Practice; 1 Folk Studies. One participant had two Masters degrees: one in journalism, one in interpreting and translating. One participant did not specify their qualification or subject. A third of Welsh-language respondents had postgraduate degrees compared to just over one-fifth of their English-language peers. Thus, among participants, further study was limited, arguably emphasising the future relevance of Welsh Government schemes and funding intended to improve this, like the National Masters programme.

4.2 Changes to authors and texts taught

Responding to questions about what had changed since the start of the pandemic and why, in terms of the literary texts they taught – prose, poetry, and plays – participants answered as follows. The survey prompted participants thus: “You might choose to reflect on whether or not the pandemic was a direct or sole reason for change; whether there was a combination of reasons for change e.g. pandemic plus expense or accessibility; whether or not other events since early 2020 (the new CfW, changes to GCSE literature texts, Brexit, Black Lives Matter) have played a role”. The analysis of Welsh- and English-language results was divided between the bilingual and English-speaking researchers. We keep that division in reporting the results but end with a summary section that unites them.

4.2.1 Welsh language respondents’ changes to authors and texts

4.2.1.1 KS3/up to age 14

This question received 15 responses (63% of respondents). 9 respondents (60%) mentioned a change to authors and texts since the pandemic. An additional 2 responses noted a change in texts, specifying that it was due to their moving schools during this time. 4 responses declared no change. Out of those who noted a change in literature taught, several, varied reasons were given. Some responses noted how the pandemic has directly influenced their choices of texts to teach: one teacher taught poems associated with the pandemic and its impact while teaching online, and another decided not to teach *Ar fy mhen fy hun* because of its negative portrayal of starting school, which teachers thought might unsettle pupils who were already anxious about returning to school. Another teacher mentioned that they had changed the short stories studied because their usual collection felt too challenging and the pandemic had impacted pupils’ performance, so the choice of texts had to be simplified for online delivery.

2 participants mentioned changes being made to adapt to the new CfW. For example, one teacher introduced literature in their KS3 Spanish class over the pandemic by conducting tasks on Google Classroom. They have continued to do this since the return to in-person teaching. They added that, with the new curriculum emerging, they were continuing to look for appropriate texts in Spanish for KS3 pupils. Another mentioned that the reason for change was to teach literature that was more relevant to Wales and to teach more ‘diverse’ texts such as *Noughts and Crosses* by Malorie Blackman and *The Boy with two Hearts* by Hamed Amiri. A desire for texts’ relevance to students in texts was also implicit in other responses. 1 participant noted teaching a range of plays to attract the interest of the learners in different fields. 2 teachers explained that they change novels consistently as new ones are published, adding that one positive effect of the pandemic was additional financial support provided which meant that this school could buy sets of new novels. This school also reportedly invested in novels to be read during registration periods to encourage empathy in pupils, which coincides with the aims for the new CfW, these teachers explain.

In terms of the responses which did not mention any change to what was taught, only one elaborated on their response. This teacher stated that they succeeded with teaching literature online, either through Zoom or Google meet, with Key Stages 3, 4, and 5. The only requirement was to adapt a few of the exercises, they explained.

4.2.1.2 GCSE

14 participants out of 24 responded to this question (58%). There was an equal split (n.7, 50%) between responses outlining the changes made during this time and those saying that no change had occurred. Most responses indicating a change said that the main reason was WJEC changes. 3 respondents chose different pieces of literature to study during the pandemic to better reflect the current moment. For instance, 1 respondent mentioned that they changed their novel because it discussed themes that are similar to those which have been experienced during the pandemic: 'the old world and the new world – how characters have to adapt'. Another respondent stated that they decided to study *Llyfr Glas Nebo* by Manon Steffan Ros instead of *Ac yna Clywodd Swm y Môr* by Alun Jones because learners could identify more with the characters and situation in the former text after the lockdown period. Another stated that they had also introduced *Llyfr Glas Nebo*, to their Year 10 class, although they did not explain why. Two respondents mentioned a change in the specification which permitted learners to study either poetry or prose. One teacher said that they welcomed this change because they felt that the Literature course was too heavy and dense and that time to cover the texts was limited, even before the pandemic. Another teacher said that they did not study poetry, as a result of this change.

4.2.1.3 A Level

This question received 13 responses out of 24 (54%). 3 (23%) indicated that change had occurred. 3 respondents identified it as due to the pandemic. For one of these respondents, it meant that they didn't teach the film, *Hedd Wyn* by Alan Llwyd. Another explicitly welcomed this and chose to study *Hedd Wyn* but not the play they usually cover, *Siwan*. Usually the A Level syllabus has students study *Hedd Wyn* and a drama text - either *Siwan* by Saunders Lewis or *Y Twr* by Gwenlyn Parry. One respondent noted their gratitude that two poems were pulled from Unit 5, and a decision was made to provide copies of the poems to pupils on the exam paper. Another participant mentioned that they made no change but added that they could not study the texts in the same level of depth because of time limitations. A related response which stated 'no change' elaborated that they decided to teach the shorter of the play options because of the pandemic and lack of face-to-face learning. However, since 2022-2023, they have resumed their usual practice of letting the learners decide which text they study for A2 Spanish.

4.2.2 English language respondents' changes to authors and texts

4.2.2.1 KS3/up to age 14

16 respondents (70%) answered this question. 69% (n.11) of those answered that there had been a change. Only 1 teacher explicitly mentioned a pandemic impact and that was temporary: '*Of Mice and Men* was removed during lockdown as we did not feel it was suitable for independent study but [sic] has now been reinstated'.

Changes in personnel and practice in individual schools accounted for some alterations to the texts taught. New teachers coming to schools, introducing new schemes of work, was a factor mentioned by one teacher; a change to 'mixed classes' by another, meaning that the

English department no longer teach the play *The History Boys*. Black Lives Matter was mentioned as a reason for change by 2 teachers. One of these explained that their department had 'added new texts for KS3' in response to it but – like most participants – did not detail the authors or texts concerned. 19% (n.3) answered that there had been changes to texts taught 'due to the launch of the new curriculum': 'in year 7, we have adapted texts to suit a whole-school themed approach to learning', 'some texts have been added or removed as we pilot approached to CfW' and 'We are only starting to incorporate literary texts into the MFL curriculum due to the new Curriculum for Wales' (teacher H). 13% (n.2) answered along the lines of there being no change as yet, but said that it was imminent. Additionally, these teachers said that they will 'start to think about diversifying the texts we teach', 'with a focus on the cultural heritage of our students. This has been a particular concern for our CfW planning'. These teachers note that change in relation to CfW has intersected with moves to diversify the texts taught in acknowledgement of their students' diverse cultural heritages. Finally, 1 teacher protested a perceived focus on the teaching of language over literature, which they associated with constraints on time, content and teacher autonomy: 'Fewer poems, plays & novels covered - mainly due to increased demands on time and content being focused on Language by Government. Bring back value of literature! And freedom to teach it, please!'

4.2.2.2 GCSE

12 (52%) respondents answered the question. 50% of those (n.6) said there had been no change. A third of respondents (n.4) identified pandemic 'adaptations to GCSE English Literature Qualification' that had led them to drop individual texts including *An Inspector Calls* by J.B. Priestley (n.2), *Heroes* by Robert Cormier (n.2), *Blood Brothers* by Willy Russell (n.1), and *Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens (n.1). Other respondents identified changes to multiple texts taught, saying they had changed 'some texts' (n.1) or 'the texts on the second paper have been dropped...due to time constraints' (n.1). One describes how, temporarily, 'we took the option to complete the Unit 1 exam and teach *Of Mice and Men* due to the needs of our pupils' but 'we will continue to teach all 3 whole texts from September 2022'. The overall sense is of minimal, temporary changes made to accommodate pressures on teachers and students during the pandemic. Beyond that, two respondents pointed to 'new GCSE texts Sept 2022', presumably for English literature. Another mentioned that they are 'only starting to incorporate literary texts into the MFL curriculum due to the new Curriculum for Wales'. Thus, a quarter of respondents (n.3) invoked changes due to changing education policy that were independent of the pandemic.

4.2.2.3 A-level

8 (35%) respondents using English answered the question. 50% (n.4) of these offered an unqualified 'no change'. One said 'no – but the amount of poems to study in the collection has been reduced', as a temporary, pandemic measure. Another answered 'yes – one short story and poem removed due to covid changes'. Another yet, with a sense of hard-won achievement, that they 'Focused intently on chapters specified by WJEC, but did manage to cover most of novel (*Jane Eyre*)' by Charlotte Bronte. Only one respondent mentioned non-pandemic-related change: 'We have reviewed the texts we will use for the NEA component of the A-Level exam next year – we have moved to introduce more diversity and will be teaching *Brooklyn* by Colm Toibin paired with Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple*', motivated by activism around representation and diversity.

4.2.3 Summary of changes to authors and texts taught

For respondents in both languages, most of those who reported one or more changes in authors and texts taught since before the pandemic did so at KS3/up to age 14 decreasing through GCSE – 50/50 change/no change – to less than 50% change at A-level. At KS3/up to age 14, both groups identified a variety of factors in change including the pandemic, CfV and desire to diversify texts. At A-level, both groups attributed change almost entirely to the pandemic, with one mention of diversity. The two groups differed over factors in changes at GCSE, Welsh-language respondents identifying WJEC most often as the cause, English-language respondents stressing the pandemic. Where change to teaching was reported, it was not always conceived of negatively: some participants embraced the impetus to improve and update their offering. Such positivity corresponded with much international, existing literature (Edwards, Owen et al, Parr et al). It should be noted that many teachers who mentioned a change due to the pandemic highlighted its temporary natures, some specifying that they had already reverted to their usual authors and texts. Negatively-framed changes, such as lack of opportunity to teach a text or having to cut-down work on texts for remote learning, tended to be identified as due to the pandemic and as temporary. Other changes, especially around diversity, were described positively and as long-term. Curriculum and exam board changes tended to be expressed neutrally.

Some useful context for considering these changes came in answer to a question about who is responsible for choosing the texts taught. Decisions were usually individual: predominantly made by the classroom teacher themselves, the Head of Department or other senior figures ('line manager' and 'Leader of Learning at KS3 were specified). Collaborative decision-making was somewhat rarer. It was mostly identified as undertaken by the subject departments in schools but attributed to the GCSE and A-Level specifications and awarding bodies for the subject qualifications. The influence of assessment was indicated by the teacher who mentioned 'play[ing] to strengths at A level' as influencing the selection of texts. One respondent said that pupils normally choose the two titles taught at A Level out of the WJEC list.

4.3 Continuing importance of teaching literatures

Teachers were asked about their perception of the importance of studying literatures before and since the start of the pandemic. They were encouraged to reflect on whether the pandemic was a direct or sole reason for change; whether there was a combination of reasons for change; and whether other events had played a role. There was a 100% response rate to this question from both Welsh- and English-language participants. All but 2 (1 from each group of respondents) agreed it was important. None felt it was less important since the pandemic. This result is perhaps to be expected, and certainly to be hoped for, from teachers of literatures.

In the open comments, 9 respondents explicitly mentioned their belief that literature was always or more important now: 'Literature is important at all times', 'still as important as before', 'it's always been important to me every time', or that literature felt 'even more important' now, in particular because 'learners read so little at home' – possibly referencing a perceived pandemic impact of school closures. One respondent felt that the pandemic 'has highlighted the importance of literature to a greater audience across the globe'. In more detail, these respondents attributed the heightened importance of teaching literatures in the pandemic context to various reasons. These include the perceived need to:

- counter-act perceived negative impacts of school closures on literacy levels, especially;
- 'help students make sense of and put in context their lives over the past few years';

- develop students' sense of connectedness, to living people in their own schools and wider worlds, writers across history, and their characters (something also observed in the research as damaged by the pandemic);
- ameliorate the negative local economic impacts attributed, at least in part, to the pandemic by teaching literatures to all pupils for parity, not only those with economic, social and other privileges in Wales.

It is perhaps unsurprising, but important nonetheless to note, that teachers answering in Welsh gave attention to the importance of teaching literatures for the Welsh language. One teacher felt that teaching Welsh literature has been of continued importance, especially in a Welsh-medium school as a high number of pupils came from 'non-Welsh' homes (presumably the teacher is referring to the language spoken in the home, as opposed to nationality). One teacher also seemed to relate the increased importance of studying Welsh literature to promoting the Welsh language: 'Have not changed my mind – as a Welsh teacher it always has been important but perhaps more so now to show the richness that we have in the Welsh language', although they noted the perceived challenge teachers face in 'discovering literature that's appealing and understandable and you can identify with'.

Not directly related to the pandemic, but occurring in the same time frame, one participant answered that they changed their mind, placing a higher value on literature now 'in order to reflect the new CfW'. So, in addition to the pandemic making teaching literatures as or more important than before, ongoing efforts around Welsh language revitalization, social justice, and the CfW were also invoked by teachers as factors.

4.4 Purposes and visions for teaching literatures

Teachers were asked about the purposes of and their visions for pupils' learning about and through literatures, specifically whether these had changed since the start of the pandemic. This was an open question and the instructions encouraged them to reflect on whether the pandemic was a direct or sole reason for any change; whether other events had played a role; or whether there was a combination of reasons. There was a 100% response rate to these questions from both Welsh- and English-language participants, although a handful from each group answered that there had been no change and or wrote 'n/a' (perhaps to indicate no change or because they were international language teachers who had not taught literature).

In terms of explaining the main purpose of teaching literature/s, a range of answers were recorded. Most respondents invoked multiple purposes. These included benefits to pupils' real and vicarious experience, broadening their horizons, offering enjoyment, increasing their knowledge of and skills with a range of literacies and language/s – notably including the richness and variety of the Welsh language and culture. Literature was generally seen to develop attributes for pupils holistically and for their whole life course, such as criticality, creativity, active citizenship, empathy, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing. This demonstrates that teachers still routinely balance views of the purpose of teaching literatures as for skills *and* personal development. The purposes invoked by these teachers belong to well-established models for teaching literatures (Elliott 2021, Olive 2015), but are individually expressed by each teacher in ways that express different but often over-lapping priorities. Such a flavour of what teachers said about the purposes of teaching literatures since the pandemic follows:

In our school the purposes of teaching literature are to engage the pupils in a stimulus for skill development. We also aim to promote a love of reading across all

year groups by engaging in at least one novel per year. Since the pandemic the need to teach literature has only heightened due to the disengagement of pupils in education. We also need to use literature to enhance the knowledge and experiences of pupils following limited access to these across the pandemic.

I don't think the purpose has changed since the pandemic - I think it is vital that pupils get access to literary texts to appreciate the beauty of the written word, to understand experiences both familiar and unfamiliar to them. If they are not taught literature they miss out on a vast range of artistic wonders. Literature makes them more empathetic, it teaches them about the world and opens doors into so many other subjects.

A few teachers described the purposes of teaching literatures narrowly e.g. to meet exam specifications for literature and language subjects. However, despite such fears for literary education expressed periodically since the inception of subject English in schools and universities in the late 1800s, what these teachers in Wales did not do – even under the duress of a global pandemic – was to reduce objectives for teaching literatures to narrowly functional, transactional, communicative or vocational skills (Olive 2015). Nor did they reduce it to the potentially-fleeting needs of education and society in the current moment: while several mentioned the need for students to be aware of current contexts, they also frequently mention that one purpose of literary study is to help students understand past, present and possible future times, and the relationships between different historical periods.

37% (n.13) identified changes to their vision for literatures since the start of the pandemic. These included that teaching literatures should now:

- Seize the opportunities provided by the new CfW to 'address the provision of literature in our SoW' (Schemes of Work) (two similar responses);
- Offer students an escape from real life and difficult times into imaginary worlds;
- Place more importance on 'instill[ing] a love of reading in our learners and to nurture an independence for reading and an appreciation of how reading at an early age has such a huge impact on future achievement';
- 'Change the way in which we select and teach texts to ensure that all our learners feel connected to and inspired by the literature they read' (2 very similar responses here) – several further responses fell under this vision:
 - Keep changing texts to stay relevant – giving the example that some texts they had introduced for the pandemic situation, now needed removing as they were no longer applicable;
 - Put more focus on Black lives, mental health, and empathy (two very similar responses here); modern literature; UK-based texts; women writers;
 - Loosen the constraint at KS4 and KS5 on what can be taught – this respondent notice it was currently easier to make changes and diversify texts at KS3;
 - Change topics that have been studied for years to new ones;
 - Use literature in educating students about current global issues;
 - Consider the effect of the pandemic on contemporary writing (a comparison was drawn with the way that early modern plague history is applied to studying Shakespeare);
- 'Increase support for students to purchase their own copies/open-source PDF copies for schools to download and print for students'.

The pandemic directly and CfW changes incidentally during that time, meant these respondents envisioned a teaching of literatures with renewed emphasis on reading for

pleasure and as a gateway to wider academic success. Their vision was for students to have better access to more diverse texts, that are better connected to contemporary society and events (international and local), through all key stages.

Out of the 63% (n.34) who did not explicitly identify a change in vision for the teaching of literatures since the start of the pandemic, several nonetheless reinforced points made above about social relevance, including diversity (n.5); greater teacher autonomy over choice of texts, leading to teaching more wide-ranging texts (n.3); reading for pleasure and wider literacy (n.3) in outlining their ongoing visions.

5. Conclusion

As our respondents demonstrated above, literature plays a vital part in developing students' literacy and language skills, as well as personal development, in subjects such as Welsh, English, drama. It also features in the teaching of international languages, so this report has referred throughout to the teaching of literatures plural. In terms of AoLEs in CfW, literatures feature in Languages, Literature & Communication and Expressive Arts. This project investigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the teaching of literatures in secondary schools from the perspective of teachers. This aided comparability with the existing literature, also largely written from these stakeholders' perspectives.

In answer to Research Question 1, 'What research exists about pandemic impacts on the teaching of literatures at secondary school level in Wales and internationally?', we found mostly individual reflections or small case studies detailing teachers' experiences in English Literature and drama in Australia, the UK and the USA. They suggested that the pandemic is not entirely, or even primarily, responsible for the changes seen in the teaching of literatures during the past two years, though it may have necessitated some speedy changes or provided additional impetus for a shake-up of texts and teaching. They described enjoying "space" – usually in the figurative sense of freedom or autonomy – to enact change and experiment. However, that they represent a small, self-selecting, high-performing under pressure group of educators, publishing during the pandemic, needs to be considered in terms of the representativeness of the existing research.

In terms of Research Question 2, 'What gaps exist in this research?' existing accounts were only written about teaching literature written in English. This is the first report on experiences in Wales, across the country's official languages, and spanning multiple subjects and AoLEs where literatures are taught. 47 teachers of these subjects in secondary schools in Wales completed an online survey reflecting on their experiences of teaching literatures before and since the pandemic. This contributes to filling a gap in national knowledge and understanding of the experience in a bilingual education system. Additionally, it usefully extends the existing literature whose authors were self-selecting in that they had responded positively to the pandemic and developed good practice that they were able to share. Furthermore, our study explored other factors on teaching literatures coinciding with the pandemic (e.g. the new CfW and the Black Lives Matter movement), sometimes noting their intersections.

In relation to Research Question 3, 'What do secondary school teachers in Wales report in terms of pandemic impacts on the teaching of literatures?' In terms of changes to authors and texts, more change was reported at lower levels of secondary school than at advanced level, perhaps relating to the high stakes assessments here. Where changes were made here, it was almost exclusively reported as due to the pandemic. At lower levels, CfW and teachers' desire to diversify texts in the wake of popular social activism, like Black Lives Matter, were also common factors. Negative impacts of the pandemic on authors and texts taught were usually described as (having been) temporary. Various impetus to reconsider texts taught from the pandemic, CfW and social movements were widely welcomed by teachers. Teachers of literatures felt either as or more convinced of the importance of literatures for students' skills (subject specific and cross-curricular) and personal development after the pandemic. Change to their visions for teaching literatures since the pandemic clustered around teaching texts that are ideally more diverse (especially in terms of race and gender) through all key stages, more temporally, socially and geographically relevant, and where students have improved access to wide-ranging texts.

5.1 Limitations

Relating to teachers' commitment to their subject, students and schools, it is worth remembering that teachers are highly adaptable and motivated professionals – especially those who complete surveys in the aftermath of a global pandemic, so it is possible that such attributes led them to minimise the negative impacts of the pandemic or did not capture the voices of those experiencing ongoing fatigue in the aftermath of the pandemic.

During summer 2022, when data was collected, the pandemic was still causing illness and disruption, if on a smaller scale than in the previous two years. It was still prevalent across broadcast media, social media, and government communication to the public. It may be that, so close to the temporal epicentre of the pandemic, longer term, subtler, or more complex effects (e.g. intersecting with economic and political crises in Britain and internationally) could not yet be discerned. We suggest some follow-up research at a later stage in pandemic recovery.

In line with our survey design, our participants focused more on how their teaching was affected, than the impact on students' learning, which may not be fully discernible yet. This may become more apparent as young years move onto GCSE and A level, while the A level cohort affected may have completed their schooling and be experiencing impacts in sectors beyond our participants' purview. It also meant that teachers said little about the differential experiences of groups of learners – although they expressed a strong commitment to parity of provision and access.

A related limitation of our survey design is that we focus on what is taught and why, during the pandemic, but only incidentally captured “how” i.e. teaching practices and activities. This was due to practical constraints on the time of the researchers, the teachers, and the infeasibility of going into schools for data collection immediately following the pandemic. Teaching methods presents a worthwhile avenue for future research, although – as our literature review suggests – some examples of teaching practice already exist from generally comparable education systems.

In terms of respondents, Heads of Department were somewhat over-represented in our data – a consequence of recruiting teachers through approaching school leadership teams; south Wales was far better represented than north Wales (especially Carmarthenshire, Swansea and Bridgend); specific under-represented areas were the north-east, mid-, west, and south-east of Wales. All respondents worked in one school type – state comprehensive. Participation in the survey was voluntary. Teachers were still experiencing professional fatigue from adapting to the pandemic, which made recruiting them to research in spring/summer 2022 challenging. So, the findings cannot be fully representative.

5.2 Recommendations

Many teachers were subdued in their reporting of direct, negative effects of the pandemic on their teaching of literatures, or reported to have been temporary, so this list also speaks to wider ways to support the teaching of literatures emerging from our research:

- Support flexibility in specifications should the need arise again – teachers welcomed a temporary reduction in the amount of texts or range to cover.
- Extend financial support that enables schools to buy copies of books. This can be print copies, digital versions, audiobooks (as suggested by the existing research), wherever appropriate licences for sharing and printing can be obtained.

- Enable teachers of literatures to include more female authors, more authors of colour, more modern texts – generally a range of up-to-date and relevant texts – through this financing. Lit in Colour Pioneers scheme offers one model (Elliott et al 2021).
- Boost membership of professional associations for teachers, especially Welsh language teachers, Welsh-language English teachers, and Welsh-language drama teachers. They report lower rates of membership than Anglophone colleagues in Wales.
- Encourage provision of relevant associations that meet these teachers' needs i.e. with a focus on Welsh language, Welsh medium education, and/or Welsh texts and cultures.

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Annex: Questionnaire

Impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic on teaching literatures in Welsh secondary schools

Page 1 of survey

Thank you for taking part in this survey on the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the teaching of literatures in Welsh secondary schools. It is one of a number of Collaborative Evidence Network projects on Covid recovery in Education being funded by the Welsh Government. If you prefer to read and complete the survey in Welsh, please find the Cymraeg version of the survey here [link].

Why have I been invited to take part?

Because you are a teacher of literatures (in Welsh, English, another language, or Drama) in a secondary school in Wales and/or because you are a teacher of languages (Welsh, English, or another language) in a secondary school in Wales and use literature in your classroom. We use the term 'literatures' (plural) throughout to recognise that literary texts are taught across a variety of school subjects and AoLEs.

What are you trying to find out?

There is no existing national or international overview of how the teaching of literatures has been impacted by the pandemic, since its outbreak in early 2020. We aim to redress this in relation to secondary schools in Wales. Sharing evidence on the impact of the pandemic on teaching literatures, and suggestions for ameliorating or recovering from its effects, addresses the priorities of the Welsh government in terms of the education sector's Covid recovery.

How long will it take me?

This shouldn't take you too long – probably less than 30 minutes. There are 20 main questions and a handful more to help us to work out how representative of the Welsh secondary education system as a whole our data is. We hope that you will think it a worthwhile investment of your time as we seek to make evidence-based recommendations to stakeholders in the research (e.g. policy-makers, teachers) to assist the Welsh education sector in its Covid recovery. Additionally, we will give a £200 book token to secondary schools in 4 randomly drawn Welsh postcodes.

What will happen to my data?

All the data will be anonymous. We will report overall results publicly but there will be no way for your answers to be linked to you personally. We are asking you to give us the postcode of your school. This is to enable us to see if there is overlap between people at the same school AND to allocate a £200 book token to secondary schools in 4 randomly drawn Welsh postcodes that have participated in the study. However, no schools or postcodes will be named in the final reporting of the data.

Who are you?

We are three academics with expertise in the teaching of literatures in various languages from CIEREI (Collaborative Institute for Education Research, Evidence and Impact) and the School of Educational Sciences, Bangor University: Dr Sarah Olive; Mrs Gwawr Maelor Williams; and Dr Mary Davies.

How do I go ahead?

By completing the questions below you are giving us permission to use your answers in this research. This study has received ethics clearance via the School of Educational Sciences ethics procedure. If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please feel free to contact the lead researcher Dr Sarah Olive (s.olive@bangor.ac.uk). If you have any concerns or complaints about this study or the conduct of individuals conducting this study, then please contact the College Manager, College of Human Sciences, Bangor University, Dr Huw Roberts (Email: huw.roberts@bangor.ac.uk).

A completion of this survey will indicate agreement that you are happy to participate in this research. If you do not agree, please do not proceed to answer the questions. [tick box to confirm consent of participation in this study and agreement with how data will be managed].

New page, survey questions begin:

PART 1/5: YOUR TEACHING

1. My school postcode is:

2. How many years have you been teaching?

3. I currently teach at a (select only one):

- state comprehensive
- state grammar
- independent
- comprehensive in a selective area
- sixth form college
- other (please specify) [box for open comments here]

4 a. I currently teach students in the following subject/s and level/s (select as many as apply):

	Welsh	English	Drama	French	German	Spanish	Other/s
Year 7							
Year 8							
Year 9							
Year 10							
Year 11							
Year 12							
Year 13							

4.b If you selected other/s in the above question, please tell us which [box for open comments]

5. I am a (select only one):

- current PGCE/ School Direct/ student teacher
- NQT
- post NQT Classroom Teacher
- Holder of subject responsibility below HoD
- Head of Department

6. Are you a member of any of these associations? (select all that apply)

- NATE (National Association of Teachers of English)
- The English Association
- UKLA (UK Literacy Association)
- ALL (Association for Language Learning)
- National Drama
- NATD (National Association of Teachers of Drama)
- STSD (Society of Teachers of Speech and Drama)
- Literature Wales
- other (please specify) [box for open comments here]

7 a. Do you have a masters (or doctoral) degree?

- Yes
- No

7. b If you answered yes to the above, what subject is it in? [box for open comments]

PART 2/5: TEXTS YOU TEACH

8 a. If you teach students in KS3/up to age 14, what literary texts did you typically teach before the pandemic? (If you don't teach at this level, please leave blank)

	Author	Title	Whole text or extracts?
Prose			
Poems			
Plays			

8 b. Has this list changed since the outbreak of the pandemic in early 2020? If so, please tell us what changed and why.

You might choose to reflect on whether or not the pandemic was a direct or sole reason for change; whether there was a combination of reasons for change e.g. pandemic plus expense or accessibility; whether or not other events since early 2020 (the new Curriculum for Wales, changes to GCSE literature texts, Brexit, Black Lives Matter) have played a role. [box for open comments here]

9 a. If you teach students at GCSE, what literary texts did you typically teach before the pandemic? (If you don't teach at this level, please leave blank)

	Author	Title	Whole text or extracts?
Prose			
Poems			
Plays			

9 b. Has this list changed since the outbreak of the pandemic? If so, please tell us what changed and why.

You might choose to reflect on whether or not the pandemic was a direct or sole reason for change; whether there was a combination of reasons for change e.g. pandemic plus expense or accessibility; whether or not other events since early 2020 (the new Curriculum for Wales, changes to GCSE literature texts, Brexit, Black Lives Matter) have played a role. [box for open comments here]

10 a. If you teach students at A-level, what literary texts did you typically teach before the pandemic? (If you don't teach at this level, please leave blank)

	Author	Title	Whole text or extracts?
Prose			
Poems			
Plays			

10 b. Has this list changed since the outbreak of the pandemic? If so, please tell us what changed and why.

You might choose to reflect on whether or not the pandemic was a direct or sole reason for change; whether there was a combination of reasons for change e.g. pandemic plus expense or accessibility; whether or not other events since early 2020 (the new Curriculum for Wales, changes to GCSE literature texts, Brexit, Black Lives Matter) have played a role. [box for open comments here]

PART 3/5: HOW YOU CHOOSE TEXTS

11. Who chooses which literary texts get taught?

- Me
- Head of Department
- Departmental Vote
- Other (please specify) [box for open comments]

12. What qualities do you look for in literary texts to teach to students in KS3/ up to age 14? (If you don't teach at this level, please leave blank)

13. What qualities do you look for in literary texts to teach at GCSE? (If you don't teach at this level, please leave blank) [box for open comments]

14. What qualities do you look for in literary texts to teach at A-level? (If you don't teach at this level, please leave blank) [box for open comments]

15. Are there other factors that affect your choice of texts? If so, please tell us what they are here. [box for open comments here]

PART 4/5: RATIONALES FOR TEACHING LITERATURE

16. Before the pandemic, did you think it was important to study literature/s?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure/I don't know

17. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, do you think it is important to study literature/s?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure/I don't know

18. If you have changed your mind about whether it is important to study literature/s since the pandemic, please explain why/what changed your mind. [box for open comments]

19. What are the main purposes of teaching literature/s in secondary schools? Have they changed since the outbreak of the pandemic? If so, how? [box for open comments]

You might choose to reflect on whether or not the pandemic was a direct or sole reason for change; whether there was a combination of reasons for change; whether or not other events since early 2020 have played a role.

20. What should be our vision for learning about and through literature in secondary schools? Has this changed since the outbreak of the pandemic? If so, how? [box for open comments]

You might choose to reflect on whether or not the pandemic was a direct or sole reason for change; whether there was a combination of reasons for change; whether or not other events since early 2020 have played a role.

PART 5/5: GENERAL QUESTIONS

21. Which county in Wales is your school located in? Please choose one.

- Isle of Anglesey
- Gwynedd
- Conwy
- Denbighshire
- Flintshire
- Wrexham
- Powys
- Ceredigion
- Pembrokeshire
- Carmarthenshire
- Swansea
- Neath Port Talbot
- Bridgend
- The Vale of Glamorgan
- Rhondda Cynon Taff
- Merthyr Tydfil
- Caerphilly
- Blaenau Gwent
- Torfaen
- Monmouthshire
- Newport
- Cardiff

22. What type of school do you work in? Please choose one.

- Middle school
- Secondary school

23. Approximately how many pupils are registered in the school? Please choose one.

- 100 pupils or fewer
- Between 101 and 303 pupils
- More than 300 pupils
- 600 pupils or fewer
- Between 601 and 1,100 pupils
- 1,101 or more pupils

24. Which of the following language categories best applies to your school? (The Welsh Government recently introduced a new set of categories but here we use the categories that were in place at the start of the pandemic).

Bilingual Type A - At least 80% of subjects apart from English and Welsh are taught only through the medium of Welsh to all pupils. One or two subjects are taught to some pupils in English or in both languages.

Bilingual Type B - At least 80% of subjects (excluding Welsh and English) are taught through the medium of Welsh but are also taught through the medium of English.

Bilingual Type C - 50-79% of subjects (excluding Welsh and English) are taught through the medium of Welsh but are also taught through the medium of English.

Dual stream - Both Welsh and English are used in the day-to-day business of the school. The language of communication with the pupils is determined by the nature of the curricular provision, but in some schools high priority is given to creating a Welsh-language ethos throughout the school. The school communicates with parents in both languages.

English Medium - English is the language of the day-to-day business of the school, but some Welsh is also used as a language of communication with the pupils with the aim of improving their capacity to use everyday Welsh. The school communicates with parents either in English or in both languages.

English with significant Welsh - The day-to-day language or languages of the school are determined by the school's linguistic context. Both languages are used as languages of communication with the pupils and for the school's administration. A high priority is given to creating a Welsh ethos. The school communicates with parents in both languages.

Welsh medium - Welsh is the day-to-day language of the school. Welsh is used as the language of communication with the pupils and for the school's administration. The school communicates with parents in both languages.

Transitional - Welsh is the language of the day-to-day business of the school. A high priority is given to creating a Welsh ethos. The school communicates with parents in both languages.

I am not sure

Last page: Thank you!

Thank you for your time and patience in completing this survey.