



Common Purposes

The implications of curriculum reform in Wales for further education, higher education, skills and business



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We are grateful to our sponsors, The Learned Society of Wales and WISERD, for their generous support of this project, without which we would not have been able to undertake this research.

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About the authors



Halima Begum

Halima Begum is the Policy and Communications Officer for the Institute of Welsh Affairs (IWA). Halima joined the IWA on secondment from the Civil Service Fast Stream. Halima co-ordinated the Curriculum Reform project, Common Purposes, which aims to identify practical steps to ensure the implementation of curriculum reform in Wales is integrated with and supported by the further education, higher education, skills and business communities.

As part of the Fast Stream, Halima has worked in BEIS on Plutonium Disposition Policy and in DWP on State Pensions Policy. Prior to joining the Civil Service, Halima graduated from UCL in Biotechnology and was elected as the Education and Campaigns Officer at her Students' Union. She is interested in Education policy work and plans to pursue a career in the Department for Education.



Rhea Stevens

Rhea Stevens is Policy, Projects and External Affairs Manager for the IWA. Rhea is responsible for making sure the IWA's research and project portfolio is thought-leading, impactful and contributes to making Wales better. She is the Editor of *click on wales*, and managing editor of *the welsh agenda*.

Previously Rhea has worked in campaigns and policy roles, specialising in children's and social care policy. Rhea has also worked as a Social Work Assistant and for a children's charity in Russia. She is a trustee of the Sheila McKechnie Foundation, which supports individuals, groups and communities to have the skills and confidence to speak up, and take effective action on issues that matter to them.



Foreword – Auriol Miller

It risks becoming a cliché to say in a foreword that the challenges facing Wales are well known and well rehearsed. We have said it before in relation to the increasing demand for already strained public services, significant regional inequalities and ageing infrastructure. We know that in times of pressure, it is tempting to retreat, to batten down the hatches and to try to protect what we know.

Yet the curriculum reform process currently taking place in Wales bucks this trend. With *Qualified for Life: A curriculum for Wales, a curriculum for Life*, Professor Graham Donaldson has set out an ambitious vision for a new future for learners in Wales that is aimed at equipping them for life in a very different world. A world where the ability to continue to learn new skills and apply them will matter as much as what you know. A world none of us can yet predict.

In late 2017, when considering the curriculum reform process, our Education Policy Group spotted the opportunity to play to one of the IWA's strengths – breaking down silos to take a broader view. 'A fo ben, bid bont', after all. If you want to be a leader, be a bridge.

To deliver this project, we applied to the Civil Service Fast Stream and were pleased to secure a secondee on an outside-of-government placement, rare in Wales. It has been a pleasure to have Halima Begum as part of our team for the last six months. As an aside, we advocate many more such learning experiences between Whitehall and policy stakeholders in devolved policy contexts.

We know that, in a changing policy context in Wales, our role as an independent broker and convener of discussions to find new solutions is needed as never before. We will continue to open up new spaces for discussion, both online and offline, for uncomfortable conversations. We will also continue to provide independent critique and commentary.

We have said it before and we will say it again, none of us has the answers on our own to any of the challenges facing Wales. To make the greatest progress, we need to draw on all of Wales' diverse resources. We need to create spaces in which our skills, experiences, ambitions and hopes can collide. Spaces which value the input of citizens and the different communities of interest as much as that of more traditional organisations and institutions.

It is in that spirit that we offer this report.

Auriol Miller

Director, IWA



Foreword – Professor Chris Taylor

The development of a new curriculum for Wales (*Qualified for Life: A curriculum for Wales, a curriculum for Life*) is by far the greatest reform to the education system since devolution in 1999. It will also be the most challenging.

Curriculum reform is something that typically only occurs once every generation, which means there is no simple blueprint to follow or very little expertise in how curriculum reform should be undertaken. However, the current reforms are benefitting from the recommendations set out in *Successful Futures* by Professor Graham Donaldson and his review team and our experiences from the roll-out of the Foundation Phase, which has many parallels with the new curriculum.

We can also benefit from the recent experience of Scotland and the introduction of its *Curriculum for Excellence*, which also has many parallels with the new curriculum in Wales.

Much of the focus in the past few years has been on the work of Pioneer Schools who were tasked with the development of draft curriculum and assessment arrangements in each Area of Learning and Experience.

The development of the new curriculum has been underpinned by the principle of subsidiarity – giving schools and teachers great responsibility for its design since it will be schools and teachers who will have to enact it. It recognises the professional knowledge and expertise that teachers have.

However, there is growing recognition that not only will schools and teachers need to draw upon the knowledge and expertise of others outside the school sector in the more detailed development and delivery of the new curriculum, but that there will also be significant implications of the new curriculum on the post-compulsory education and employers' sectors.

The Institute of Welsh Affairs (IWA) is uniquely placed to provide a forum for these broader discussions and debates. This report presents some initial valuable insights from these other sectors in relation to the new curriculum in Wales, and exclusively draws upon the experiences and perceptions of the post-compulsory education and employers' sectors in Scotland on the recent introduction of their new curriculum.

Professor Chris Taylor

Co-Director, WISERD

1. About Common Purposes

The aim of this project has been to identify practical steps to ensure the implementation of curriculum reform in Wales is integrated with and supported by the further education, higher education, skills and business communities.

In March 2014, Welsh Government asked Professor Graham Donaldson to review the curriculum and assessment arrangements in schools in Wales. Professor Donaldson published *Successful Futures*¹, designed to put literacy, numeracy and digital competence at the heart of the education system. In *Successful Futures*, Professor Donaldson made 68 recommendations, including that a new Curriculum for Wales be based on four purposes and structured around six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE). All of Professor Donaldson's recommendations were accepted by the Welsh Government.

The four purposes are that all children and young people completing their schooling will be:

- **Ambitious, capable learners** who are ready to learn throughout their lives;
- **Enterprising, creative contributors** who are ready to play a full part in life and work;
- **Ethical, informed citizens** who are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world;
- **Healthy, confident individuals** who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

Successful Futures recommended that the AoLE should apply from the age of 3 to 16 and provide for a continuum of learning rather than the separation of schooling into key stages as at present. The six AoLE adopted by Welsh Government are:

- Expressive Arts;
- Health and Well-being;
- Humanities;
- Languages, Literacy and Communication;
- Mathematics and Numeracy;
- Science and Technology.

Alongside curriculum reform, a myriad of other reforms are also underway across education including the new professional standards for teachers, strengthened initial teacher education provision and formative assessment arrangements.

In order to deliver the vision of *Successful Futures*, its practical application is presently being developed. In these initial stages, the development work is largely being undertaken by the education community, including Pioneer Schools, and in the AoLE working groups established by the Welsh Government.

Looking ahead, there is a clear opportunity and rationale to engage with institutions beyond schools to identify steps that ensure the roll-out of the new curriculum is well integrated with other areas of policy, and to encourage a seamless pathway for learners as they progress on from compulsory education.

1 Welsh Government, *Successful Futures*, February 2015

Through this project, we undertook a perception audit between October 2018 and January 2019 with representatives of the further education, higher education, skills and business communities in Wales to understand their engagement with the new curriculum to date, as well as their hopes and fears for the future.

Furthermore, we also undertook a programme of engagement in Scotland to learn from their recent experience of introducing *Curriculum for Excellence*², in which Professor Graham Donaldson also played a crucial role. We visited Scotland for three days in early December 2018. We would like to thank Keir Bloomer, Chair of the Education Committee of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, for his advice and support to make arrangements in Scotland, and Mia Rees, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, The Prince's Trust Cymru, for accompanying us on this trip and helping to undertake interviews.

We would like to give a special thank you to The Learned Society of Wales and WISERD for their generous sponsorship of this project, without which we would not have been able to undertake this research.

We would also like to thank the project Advisory Group, which was established to provide expert oversight and support for the project. This group includes representatives from the further education, higher education, skills and business communities. A full list of Advisory Group members is available at appendix 1.

We would also like to thank all members of the IWA Education Policy group for conceiving this project and helping to develop its scope.

Finally, we would like to thank everyone who has shared their views and experiences during the interviews and surveys, both in Scotland and in Wales. We hope this project is only the start of our conversations.

2 Education Scotland, *What is Curriculum for Excellence?*, accessed January 2019

2 Executive Summary

Following a review undertaken by Professor Graham Donaldson in 2015, Wales is implementing a new curriculum for 3-16 year olds, designed to put literacy, numeracy and digital competence at the heart of the education system.

In order to deliver the vision of *Successful Futures*, content to put the vision into practice is presently being developed largely through the education community including Pioneer Schools and in the Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE) working groups established by the Welsh Government.

The aim of this project has been to identify practical steps to ensure the implementation of curriculum reform in Wales is integrated with and supported by the further education, higher education, skills and business communities.

Through this project, we have undertaken a perception audit with representatives of the further education, higher education, skills and business communities in Wales to understand their engagement with the new curriculum to date, and their hopes and fears for the future. We also visited Scotland, to learn from their recent experience of introducing *Curriculum for Excellence*, in which Professor Graham Donaldson also played a crucial role.

Our conversations in Scotland

During our visit to Scotland, we interviewed representatives or individuals from 13 organisations about the the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence. We have not sought through this research to make a judgement on the Scottish curriculum itself, rather to report our key observations from our discussions about the challenges and pinch points inherent in a substantial, complex and long-lasting process of reform, in order to help Wales best prepare for the journey ahead.

We took away three key observations from visit to Scotland:

Creating a shared narrative

There was a significant degree of consensus throughout our conversations in Scotland that during implementation of their new curriculum, the core purpose was sometimes lost or muddled during the logistics of delivery. This occurred within the education community, but also within wider Scottish society. A successful curriculum fit for the fast-paced, modern world cannot be delivered by schools and teachers alone. It was clear from our conversations that schools which engaged beyond the school gates were seen as some of the most effective examples of delivering the core purposes of the Scottish curriculum. It is vital that everyone who has a role in contributing to the success of the new curriculum – including further education, higher education, business, skills, third sector organisations, parents and children and young people – understands the purpose of reform (whilst accepting there will be different viewpoints within different communities) and their own contribution from the outset, and that this narrative is maintained throughout delivery of the new curriculum.

The complexity of change

The Scottish experience has clearly shown that curriculum reform is an ongoing and iterative process. In a fast-paced, ever-changing world, the curriculum will also need to constantly evolve to equip young people with the skills and knowledge they need to continue to learn beyond their compulsory education. Many different bodies will have a role in contributing to the design and delivery of the curriculum – whether locally, regionally or nationally – to equip young people for the future. The scale of this change, the complexity and time involved should not be underestimated and should be clearly articulated to all involved.

A shared plan for the future

Curriculum reform is the biggest reform within education for a generation, however its implications and potential impact go far beyond the school gates. Given the far-reaching consequences and the necessary commitments from other areas of Welsh society beyond education, a clear, unifying long-term plan that includes and reaches beyond the compulsory education community is needed. This plan should make clear the longer term implications of curriculum reform for young people as they leave school and ensure that those organisations who receive them are supported to plan effectively for the future and are part of the early design of the new curriculum.

Our conversations in Wales

In Wales, we interviewed representatives of 22 different organisations. It was evident that there is a lot of shared hope with regard to what the new curriculum can achieve. Overall, we found much support for and agreement with the four purposes of the new curriculum, and recognition of the potential it could have for young learners.

However we found mixed views amongst those we spoke to about whether they felt engaged and informed about curriculum development, across all and also within the four groups we surveyed. Those involved with the AoLE working groups reported feeling engaged and informed, whereas those outside these working groups often felt they had little information. Communication and space for engagement remains a key challenge.

We took away four key observations from our conversations in Wales:

Ambition and potential

We noticed a strong sense of consensus that the aims of the new curriculum are positive. Stakeholders we spoke to welcomed the new curriculum and largely agreed with the intentions set out in the four purposes and AoLE. The potential flexibility of the new curriculum was seen as a route to provide equal opportunities to all young people regardless of their talents and interests. This support and goodwill is an incredibly valuable asset and it is crucial we sustain this beyond the policy intent and into the challenges of implementation.

Engagement with curriculum development

We found mixed views amongst those we spoke to about whether they felt engaged and informed about curriculum development, across all and also within the four groups we surveyed. Those involved with the AoLE working groups reported themselves to be engaged and informed, whereas those outside these working groups often felt they had little information. Within the Regional Skills Partnerships a spectrum of engagement and involvement were reported, with some members feeling very engaged and others very little. This raises questions about how well developments are being strategically communicated

beyond those immediately involved in design work. Overall, careful attention needs to be given to communicating the progress of curriculum reform and the opportunities to get involved, to ensure engagement is not limited to a handful of champions within a much bigger system.

Sharing expertise

Everyone we spoke to agreed they have knowledge, experiences and contacts that could benefit the development and delivery of the new curriculum. However, capacity to act on this was reported to be very limited and many we spoke to were unclear how to feed in and who to speak with. To engage the expertise of the people beyond the compulsory education sector, the ask will have to be specific, clearly understood and time-limited.

Challenges ahead

People we spoke to understand the scale of the potential impact of the new curriculum on their own areas of work. However, they were unsure how to start practically preparing for the new curriculum within their own institutions, as they do not feel they understand the implications fully and they also have their own immediate pressing priorities. There was broad awareness of the pinch points, or big challenges, that will likely arise in the future, for example new qualifications and progression to skills-based learning.

Recommendations

1. The Welsh Government should ensure the next phase of development of the curriculum in Pioneer Schools should require the exploration of links and engagement with local community partners – including further education, higher education, skills and business organisations.

2. The Welsh Government should develop a programme of communication and engagement with each interested sector, communicating a shared narrative in a meaningful and accessible format. This shared narrative should consider how to provide opportunities for different professions and partners to come together and reach an understanding of the implications of the new curriculum, what is expected from each sector and what it will take to make it a success.

3. The Welsh Government and sector representatives need to communicate actively with the further education, higher education, skills and business communities during both the design and implementation of the new curriculum, to ensure the scale and pace of reform is well understood.

4. Further education, higher education, skills and business communities need to be empowered to share the conversations they are having with regard to curriculum development, and this may require additional resource from the Welsh Government.

5. The Welsh Government should ensure that a refreshed accountability framework is in place for the period of implementation which measures the success of the new curriculum against its four key purposes, whilst taking account of the continued demands of schools to deliver an existing programme. This will support the meaningful measurement of success during this complex process, essential to retain the broad support for reform enjoyed to date.

6. To deliver such a substantive reform whilst protecting the ongoing education of children and young people, Welsh Government should ensure it has the resource and capacity to provide strategic leadership and support communications which allow schools and other partners to deliver the ambitions of the new curriculum in practice.

7. The Welsh Government should ensure that effective, meaningful engagement with children, young people and parents is a continuous feature of both curriculum design and implementation.

8. The Welsh Government should ensure that these proposals are accessible to a broad range of interested parties, including children, young people and parents, and professionals outside the compulsory education sector. This will require accessible documents in clear language which present salient points and substantive changes so as to allow a wide audience to engage effectively with the proposals. Likewise, there is a shared responsibility for all sectors to engage with the new curriculum once it is out for debate and consultation.

3 Methodology

We established a project Advisory Group to provide expert oversight and support to the project. The Advisory Group consisted of representatives from the further education, higher education, skills and business communities. The Advisory Group met twice during the project, in October 2018 and in January 2019, and communicated digitally to offer guidance throughout the duration of the project. Further details on the members of the Advisory Group can be found in appendix 1.

We engaged with carefully selected stakeholders within the further education, higher education, skills and business communities in Wales between October 2018 and January 2019 to:

- map out the work that is being done at present between these communities and the development of curriculum reform
- gather stakeholders' general perspectives on curriculum reform

We undertook a field trip to Scotland in early December 2018 to learn from Scottish equivalents and hear their reflections on their own curriculum reform journey to identify potential lessons for Wales.

We interviewed representatives or individuals from 13 organisations in Scotland and from 22 organisations in Wales. This consisted of a mix of online surveys, telephone and face-to-face interviews.

We also had discussions with respective Government departments in Scotland and in Wales. Further details on the organisations and individuals we spoke to during the interviews can be found in appendix 2.

3.1 Interviews conducted in Scotland

During our interviews in Scotland, we asked the following questions:

1. **From your perspective, which voices were included in the curriculum design in Scotland, and to what effect?**
 - a. What level of involvement did you have with the curriculum reform and at which stage? What form did it take?
 - b. Do you consider that the further education / higher education / skills / business community had a voice and were involved in the process? If yes, please describe how.
 - c. How valuable was their contribution? What did it or could it have offered?
 - d. Did the process work well? Were there any gaps?

2. **How well did Scotland prepare for the effective implementation of the new curriculum and the links with the further education / higher education / skills / business community?**
 - a. What worked well and less well?
 - b. What particular challenges did you face, if any?
 - c. What support was available, and how effective was it? Were there any gaps?

3. **What were the implications of a new curriculum in Scotland for the further education / higher education / skills / business community?**
 - a. What worked well?
 - b. What worked less well?

4. **Are there any specific policies or programmes for the further education / higher education / skills / business community that link with Curriculum for Excellence after it was implemented?**
 - a. If yes, can you describe them?
 - b. Why do you think they were needed and what contribution have they made?

5. **Are there any practical lessons that can be considered in the Welsh context, that will help Wales better prepare for the reform?**

3.2 Interviews conducted in Wales

During our interviews in Wales, we asked the following questions:

1. Are you aware of the curriculum reform that is taking place?
2. How informed and engaged do you feel you are?
3. Have you been involved in any way with the work on developing the new curriculum?
 - a. If yes, please describe.
4. Are you aware of any structures within the further education / higher education / skills / business community that are involved in developing the new curriculum?
 - a. If yes, what is your organisation's involvement, and do you think they are working well?
5. Do you feel that through these groups you have a voice in the development of the new curriculum?
6. Are you aware of any other projects or research work on the development or implementation of the new curriculum?
7. Do you think there are any gaps?
 - a. If yes, what are they?
8. From your perspective, do you think the further education / higher education / skills / business community are engaged with the development of the new curriculum?
9. What are your hopes for the new curriculum? What do you hope it can achieve?
10. What are your fears? What do we need to guard against?
11. Are you actively thinking about the impact of the new curriculum yet?
12. What do you think you will need to do or take account of?
13. What could the consequences be for you and your organisation?
14. (If a membership body) What conversations have you had with your members regarding the reform?
15. What do you think you could offer to the development of the new curriculum?
16. What support, if any, would you find helpful to do this?
17. Is there anything else you'd like to mention or that you think is important to consider?

Throughout this report, where we have received permission from individuals, we have quoted the observations they shared during our interviews.

4 Perception Audit in Scotland

4.1 Introduction

The aim of our visit to Scotland was to meet with a range of stakeholders within the further education, higher education, skills and business sectors, as well as the Scottish Government, to uncover their experiences of Curriculum for Excellence and to draw observations that may help Wales best prepare for the new curriculum.

It is clear that Wales has already implemented much learning from Scotland's experience, such as supporting the education workforce to 'own' the new curriculum through the introduction of Pioneer Schools and developing their skills through Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Our reflections on the conversations we had in Scotland are not, and should not be read as, a comprehensive critique of the implementation process in Scotland, which began in 2010 – a time when devolved public policy making in both nations looked very different. We have not sought through this research to make a judgement on the Scottish curriculum itself, rather to report the key observations we made through our discussions about the challenges and pinch points inherent in a substantial, complex and long-lasting process of reform, in order to help Wales best prepare for the journey ahead.

4.2 Creating a shared narrative

In 2002, the Scottish Executive Education Department launched a national debate on schools for the 21st century (an exercise replicated in Wales in 2015) that engaged a wide cross-section of society in the idea of curriculum reform. Following the national debate, a working group was then set up which produced the original *Curriculum for Excellence* paper in 2004. This paper enjoyed cross-party and wide professional support, and was seen by many we spoke to as an essential ingredient for the reform to take place.

However, many people we interviewed described the process of implementation – which took *Curriculum for Excellence* from a philosophy to a practical, complex change process – as challenging. Curriculum reform was a huge undertaking and took many years to implement in Scotland. Some people we spoke to felt that *Curriculum for Excellence* was not fully embedded, even to this day, and that the core purposes of the new curriculum had been lost in the practical realities of delivery.

This was reported as being particularly apparent when new qualifications were introduced. One of the aims of *Curriculum for Excellence* was to embed skills across all curriculum areas, in interdisciplinary studies and in all the contexts and settings where young people learn: *'the development of skills is essential to learning and education to help young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors'*³.

3 Scottish Government, *Curriculum for excellence building the curriculum 4 skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work*, October 2009

However, stakeholders we spoke to felt that key elements of *Curriculum for Excellence*, such as skills, were pushed aside and forgotten as the mechanics behind the new qualifications took centre stage. We heard reflections that the original reasons why the qualifications were introduced and the role they were intended to play within the bigger picture of reform was forgotten, and hindered *Curriculum for Excellence* from reaching its fullest potential.

‘There was over focus on qualifications which pushed skills aside, the whole essence of this curriculum was moving away from qualifications.’

Representative of the skills community in Scotland

‘The original idea was to realise the four capacities in young people by embedding them in the curriculum. That may jar with the long-standing expectations people have about education, that means that it is very important to develop and sustain people’s commitment to and understanding of the why and not just the how. It is important to capture the original intention in a form which is passed through policy generations so that the purposes are at the forefront of discussions rather than something that gets taken for granted and gets lost as time passes. Commitment to long-term purposes needs to be a continuing driver – if not, immediate pressures and the mechanics of delivery take over.’

Professor Graham Donaldson, Chair of the Independent Advisory Group and advisor to the Minister for Education in Wales

For some we interviewed, we heard that changes to qualifications were the point in the process when they realised the implications for their area of interest and it was only at that point that they sought active involvement. For example, there was a strong consensus among those that we spoke to, that parental involvement throughout the design and early implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence* was limited.

‘Criticism has been that parents have been least engaged with curriculum, even though parents are the biggest influencers in children’s lives.’

Professor Lindsay Paterson, Professor of Education Policy, The University of Edinburgh

In 2015, OECD⁴ recommended that the Scottish Government ‘Create a new narrative for “Curriculum for Excellence”’, recognising that there had been a shift from the initially intended focus for the new curriculum. Similarly, many of those we spoke to in Scotland advised us that a clear and accessible narrative that outlined the core purposes of the new curriculum was essential to ensure the reasons why changes are being made holds throughout generations. Importantly, they reflected that this narrative needs to be communicated across all stakeholders to ensure all sectors are aware of what the new curriculum is trying to achieve and to understand their role in it.

4.3 The complexity of change

One of the challenges we experienced during our visit to Scotland was finding individuals who were part of both the design and implementation of the new curriculum. Despite the national conversation taking place in 2002, implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence* in schools began in 2010, highlighting that curriculum reform is a complex process which takes significant time to implement and get right.

During this complex change, which involved many different partners and communities, it was clear that Scotland faced many challenges striking the right balance between providing professionals with freedom to innovate and giving sufficient guidance to direct implementation. For example, throughout our conversations in Scotland, it was reported that it was difficult to find the right balance between providing teachers with enough guidance to support them through the implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence* without being too prescriptive. We were told that initially teachers felt they needed more guidance to help them implement the new curriculum. However, once new guidance was introduced, the system became cluttered quite quickly, becoming a heavy landscape to navigate through, something that *Curriculum for Excellence* was principally trying to avoid in order to allow teachers room to innovate.

‘The old style of curriculum was more prescriptive, and the Curriculum for Excellence had no blueprint which potentially was a bit challenging for teachers – even though this was the right thing to do – but it just took time to get right.’

Finlay Laverty, Senior Head of Partnerships, The Prince’s Trust Scotland

There were also further complexities associated with the introduction of the new qualifications. Some stakeholders we spoke to in Scotland felt that the timing of the new qualifications had a negative impact on the overall implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*, as the focus on skills was overshadowed by the introduction of new qualifications.

Skills were part of the *Building the Curriculum* series of guidance which aimed to provide top level advice on the key building blocks of *Curriculum for Excellence*. However, we heard that *Building the Curriculum 4 skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work*⁵ was perceived as lacking clarity. Throughout our conversations in Scotland, and indeed Wales, we observed mixed understanding of what is meant by the seemingly catch-all term ‘skills’, which included ‘skills for learning’, ‘skills for life’ and attitudes.

The next piece of guidance, *Building the Curriculum 5 a framework for assessment: quality assurance and moderation*⁶, was introduced two months after the skills section was introduced, which some felt did not allow enough time for skills to be fully embedded into curriculum as the conversation shifted almost immediately to the new qualifications. However, many academics we spoke to felt there was too much focus on skills and not enough focus on knowledge. Ultimately, it was clear that different stakeholders wanted different things from the new curriculum, and skills have become a key point of debate that one person described to us as ‘an unresolved issue’.

5 Scottish Government, *Curriculum for excellence building the curriculum 4 skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work*, October 2009

6 Scottish Government, *Curriculum for excellence building the curriculum 5 a framework for assessment: quality assurance and moderation*, January 2010

‘[The] Building Curriculum 4 document was very ambiguous and lacked clarity and therefore there was a real missed opportunity to embed skills within the curriculum even though this was one of the main principles of CfE [Curriculum for Excellence].’

Representative of the skills community in Scotland

‘This has been a curriculum to develop learners around skills and the workplace, it doesn’t do enough around knowledge and citizenship.’

Professor Mark Priestley, Professor of Education, University of Stirling

4.4 A shared plan for the future

Throughout our conversations in Scotland, we were able to learn from and reflect on gaps that became apparent during the implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*. For example, as mentioned earlier, one of the strongest messages that came from our conversations in Scotland was regarding the missed opportunity to embed skills into the new curriculum. Many stakeholders saw the 2014 introduction of *Developing the Young Workforce*⁷, which ‘‘aims to better prepare children and young people aged 3–18 for the world of work’’, as the Scottish Government’s means of addressing the perceived skills gap within *Curriculum for Excellence*.

It also became apparent through our conversations that some areas of business did not feel that they were given enough opportunity to co-develop *Curriculum for Excellence*, particularly small and medium businesses. Business was represented on the Curriculum Implementation Board which oversaw the process of reform, however this high-level strategic engagement did not appear to translate to broader engagement in delivery by the wider business community. Overall, there was consensus amongst the business representatives we spoke with that, whilst there are examples of good practice, many businesses are still not engaging with schools as originally envisioned.

‘No one ever set out or asked what the implications of the new curriculum were for business. It was something schools and teachers were concerned with. There wasn’t a more sophisticated understanding of why it’s important to co-develop.’

Barry McCulloch, Senior Policy Advisor, FSB Scotland

We also heard reports of significant confusion amongst businesses, higher education institutions and parents in particular about what the new qualifications meant for young people. Parents were reportedly concerned about their children being disadvantaged by the new qualifications, whilst university admission tutors and employers were not familiar or comfortable with what the new qualifications meant for them.

‘As with any new qualifications, it was a challenge to ensure the new qualifications were understood by universities’ admission tutors, employers, parents etc.’

Dr Gill Stewart, Director of Qualifications Development, Scottish Qualifications Authority

‘There was confusion around the new qualifications and around what they meant. Scottish universities did not recognise the new exams and there was huge parental concern about children being disadvantaged by taking the new Scottish qualifications. There was a growing perception that the new curriculum could disadvantage Scottish children from getting into Scottish universities.’

Professor Dr Grant Jarvie, Chair and Director Academy of Sport, The University of Edinburgh

These challenges reported to us demonstrate the importance of creating a shared plan that maps out the long term implications that the new curriculum will have on different sectors, including beyond the compulsory education community. A long-term plan will help to ensure different sectors are able to understand their roles within the new curriculum and will help them to prepare and plan effectively for the new changes.

In order for different sectors to prepare, however, guidance and support must be available. In *Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective*⁸, OECD recommended that Scotland should ‘Simplify and clarify core guidance, including in the definitions of what constitutes the Curriculum for Excellence’. OECD recognised that ‘Given the ambition that CfE should be built in schools, local communities and networks of educators [...] strengthening core concepts, clarifying and simplifying system requirements, and making information more readily available’ was required.

4.5 Reflections from Scotland on activity in Wales

During our visit to Scotland, there was much positivity for the actions being taken already in Wales. For example, Pioneer Schools in Wales were praised and were considered to be a positive way of enabling some teachers to fully understand the new curriculum before being expected to deliver it.

We heard reflections that, in Scotland, this space for teachers to explore the implications of a new curriculum was missing, and it was thought there was too little capacity building within the teaching profession. Individuals that we spoke to felt there was a lot of time spent on policy discussions and not enough on change management. We heard from some that teachers were not given enough time to familiarise themselves and reflect on what the new curriculum was trying to achieve before being expected to begin implementation.

‘Developmental time was lost, teachers had very little time to reflect on what Curriculum for Excellence was trying to achieve, [and] instead had to move to implementation.’

Barry McCulloch, Senior Policy Advisor, FSB Scotland

Similarly, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) was considered by some to be an omission during the early stages of implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Some stakeholders believed that unless a new curriculum and CPD are developed in unison, teachers will not have adequate support required to deal with the changes. There was recognition that the work happening in Wales around CPD and teacher training is a positive step and is important that it happens alongside the development of the new curriculum.

8 OECD, *Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective*, December 2015

‘There was a gap with CPD, teachers would have been better prepared to deal with Curriculum for Excellence.’

Professor Lindsay Paterson, Professor of Education Policy, The University of Edinburgh

4.6 Curriculum for Excellence successes

Despite the challenges we heard about the implementation phase of *Curriculum for Excellence*, we noticed almost universal support for the reform’s original intentions and core purposes.

Participants spoke about the positive impacts *Curriculum for Excellence* has had on Scotland’s learners and schools. Stakeholders we spoke to recognised that despite the challenges faced around embedding skills during the implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*, it was still the first reform to acknowledge the importance of skills within curriculum and was the first reform to put it on the agenda. During many of our interviews, skills appeared to dominate the discussions. This is despite skills only being one element of Curriculum for Excellence, and as we mentioned previously in this section, it is a term we perceived to mean many different things including skills for learning, skills for life and attitudes.

Individuals also spoke positively about the opportunities the new curriculum provided for personalised learning to take place in the classrooms. For example, we heard that despite independent schools in Scotland not being required to implement the new curriculum, some had implemented parts of *Curriculum for Excellence* as they felt that the flexibility that came with the new Scottish curriculum was more appropriate for teachers teaching diverse learners in a classroom.

‘Independent schools were not required to implement the curriculum and decided to implement some aspects of Curriculum [for Excellence], because they felt that the flexibility allows them to adjust the curriculum for a more diverse learners.’

Professor Lindsay Paterson, Professor of Education Policy, The University of Edinburgh

4.7 Summary of observations from Scotland

Creating a shared narrative

There was a significant degree of consensus throughout our conversations in Scotland that during implementation of their new curriculum, the core purpose was sometimes lost or muddled during the logistics of delivery. This occurred within the education community, but also within wider Scottish society. A successful curriculum fit for the fast-paced, modern world cannot be delivered by schools and teachers alone. It was clear from our conversations that schools which engaged beyond the school gates were seen as some of the most effective examples of delivering the core purposes of the Scottish curriculum. It is vital that everyone who has a role in contributing to the success of the new curriculum – including further education, higher education, business, skills, third sector organisations, parents and children and young people – understands the purpose of reform (whilst accepting there will be different viewpoints within different communities) and their own contribution from the outset, and that this narrative is maintained throughout delivery of the new curriculum.

The complexity of change

The Scottish experience has clearly shown that curriculum reform is an ongoing and iterative process. In a fast-paced, ever-changing world, the curriculum will also need to constantly evolve to equip young people with the skills and knowledge they need to continue to learn beyond their compulsory education. Many different bodies will have a role in contributing to the design and delivery of the curriculum – whether locally, regionally or nationally – to equip young people for the future. The scale of this change, the complexity and time involved should not be underestimated and should be clearly articulated to all involved.

A shared plan for the future

Curriculum reform is the biggest reform within education for a generation, however its implications and potential impact go far beyond the school gates. Given the far-reaching consequences and the necessary commitments from other areas of Welsh society beyond education, a clear, unifying long-term plan that includes and reaches beyond the compulsory education community is needed. This plan should make clear the longer term implications of curriculum reform for young people as they leave school and ensure that those organisations who receive them are supported to plan effectively for the future and are part of the early design of the new curriculum.

5 Perception Audit in Wales

5.1 Introduction

To form an assessment of how curriculum reform is perceived amongst further education, higher education, skills and business communities in Wales, we interviewed a range of individuals between October 2018 and January 2019 from these sectors to understand and map out their current involvement with curriculum development. We also gathered their perspectives on how they felt the progress of curriculum development was going, and their hopes and fears for the future.

5.2 The ambition and potential

From our conversations in Wales, it was evident that there is a lot of shared hope with regards to what the new curriculum can achieve. The most common wish we heard from those we spoke to was that the new curriculum brings equal opportunities for all learners. The new curriculum is seen as an opportunity to allow schools to deliver the new curriculum flexibly, in a way that is most appropriate to individual school and pupil needs. However no distinction was made of the specific flexibility they thought the new curriculum would offer, and we observed a range of potential meanings including flexibility in pedagogy, flexibility in curriculum content and flexibility in curriculum size.

‘It allows for schools to deliver it in a way that is appropriate to schools and pupils, down to individual school needs. It isn’t dictatorial in any way and that’s what’s exciting – recognising that teachers are the experts, are creative and innovative. It allows them to use their knowledge of their students and recognises that no two children are the same.’

Diane Hebb, Director of Engagement and Participation, Arts Council of Wales

We heard much excitement that the new curriculum will provide time for learners to develop wider transferable skills that will support young people to become well-rounded citizens, something that stakeholders felt there was little opportunity to achieve in the current curriculum. In a similar fashion to what we observed in Scotland, skills appeared to be a central part of our conversations but the distinction between skills for learning, skills for life and attitudes was not always clear. It seems we have some way to go in Wales until we are speaking the same language of curriculum reform.

‘The new curriculum will hopefully provide more opportunities for learners to develop their wider employability skills and resilience.’

Kelly Edwards, Head of Work-based Learning Quality, National Training Federation for Wales

A particular hope we heard from further education representatives was that the new curriculum, with its core focus on numeracy, literacy and digital skills, will create learners that are ready and well-equipped for the next stage in their education.

‘I hope it creates more resilient learners who are more ready for FE study and have the skills to study in FE. At the moment colleges sometimes get learners who aren’t ready for FE level or don’t have GCSE Maths or English. Colleges are hoping the new curriculum will create more independent, inquiring learners. Hoping it will make learners ready for FE, rather than preparing them for the level they should have already been at.’

Dr Rachel Bowen, Director of Policy and Development, ColegauCymru

Overall, we found much support for and agreement with the four purposes of the new curriculum, and recognition of the transformative potential it could have for young learners. The value of this positive understanding and support amongst stakeholders is not to be underestimated: the challenge is to maintain it throughout the curriculum’s journey.

5.3 Engagement levels with curriculum development

We heard there are mixed levels of engagement with curriculum development across all four communities of interest in Wales. Those who tended to report feeling most engaged were members of one of the six AoLE working groups. A few stakeholders we spoke to have also attended workshops and conferences which have helped them gain a better understanding of the latest developments of the new curriculum.

However, we also heard of different levels of engagement within the same communities. For example, within the further education sector, colleges that have representatives on the AoLE groups tended to report they felt more engaged and informed than others within the rest of their sector. Although the further education representatives on the AoLE groups provide updates to CollegesWales, which are then shared with their Curriculum and Quality Group, awareness across the rest of the further education community remains uneven at best. Welsh Government officials attended the mid-January 2019 Curriculum and Quality Group meeting to give an update on the new curriculum, and this was reported to us as a valued opportunity for discussion. This is welcome, and an ongoing coherent communication and engagement plan will be needed to improve awareness across the whole sector.

‘Perhaps it’s time for all the further education AoLE reps to form together and provide an update on what each AoLE group is doing – but that would be up to us to act upon. ColegauCymru have since arranged for AoLEs representatives to attend at a joint meeting of FE Colleges in January 2019. Pembrokeshire College attended this meeting along with their FE AoLE representative.’

Dr Barry Walters, Interim Principal, Pembrokeshire College

Higher education institutions reported that there were increasingly more communications from Welsh Government with regards to the new curriculum. Universities with educational academics on AoLE groups reported feeling more engaged than the rest, however, they acknowledged that beyond looking at developing the new curriculum content, there have been few conversations around how prepared learners will be for post-compulsory education and the impact the new curriculum will have on learners going into universities.

‘We are fairly engaged, we have had meetings with Welsh Government, Estyn, and have been involved in AoLE workshops and teaching standards workshops. However, there have not been conversations about how the curriculum will prepare learners for engaging with post-compulsory education.’

Professor Claire Taylor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Wrexham Glyndŵr University

Within the skills sector, with their focus on traditional skills, some of the Regional Skills Partnerships reported feeling informed and engaged with the new curriculum by working closely with their regional educational consortium. However, this was not the case for all the skills organisations we interviewed, demonstrating there are also pockets of limited engagement throughout the skills community that still need to be reached.

‘At a strategic level, the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership has proactively instigated engagement in this agenda, and the close working partnership we have achieved with GwE [the School Effectiveness and Improvement Service for North Wales] to date via a range of initiatives will feed in and influence new curriculum developments.’

Sasha Davies, Chair, North Wales Regional Skills Partnership

‘I would say that it’s been a challenge to engage with the new curriculum. We were invited to attend an event organised by Welsh Government which looked into one AoLE, and although it was helpful in going through the direction the curriculum was going in, this did not provide the opportunity to provide proper scrutiny. There were a lot of organisations present and we felt that everyone did not have the opportunity to contribute. I also asked to attend other events looking at the other AoLE [groups] but didn’t hear back.’

Mia Rees, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, The Prince’s Trust Cymru

We noticed a broad consensus amongst business representatives that businesses were less engaged and informed with curriculum development. Worryingly, business representatives we spoke to were of the view that it would not be uncommon for businesses to be unaware of the new curriculum reform even taking place. In their report, *A National Ambition: Enterprise Education, Schools and the Welsh Economy*⁹, FSB Wales recommended ‘The embedding of enterprise education into each Area of Learning and Experience in the new curriculum in Wales’.

We heard views that businesses that did want to engage with curriculum development would probably be unsure on how to achieve this. The technical language often used within curriculum reform was seen as a significant barrier to businesses understanding what curriculum reform meant for them and how they could contribute.

‘Businesses are willing to engage but are not always clear how to. Welsh Government would need to work harder to get businesses involved and would need to think how to do that rather than sending emails etc.’

Ian Price, Director, CBI Wales

‘Businesses have strong views about what they want to see but sustaining business engagement is very difficult. The nature of curriculum reform can be quite technical which business people can feel excluded from – the mechanisms can appear unnecessarily complex. Very often sustained engagement comes down to the enthusiasm of individuals, individuals who are prepared to make the effort and, inevitably, that tends to be rather ad hoc and not necessarily representative. The challenge [is] to identify a systematic basis for meaningful and sustained engagement with businesses rather than for ad hoc involvement, welcome though that is.’

Professor Graham Donaldson, Chair of the Independent Advisory Group and advisor to the Minister for Education in Wales

In the National Assembly for Wales’ Children, Young People and Education Committee, during the evidence session on 10th January 2018 on Welsh Government’s progress in developing the new Curriculum for Wales, the Minister for Education Kirsty Williams AM recognised, like our stakeholders, that there are great examples of businesses working with individual schools. She acknowledged that this tended, however, to be on an ad hoc basis, and securing sustained engagement across the business sector had been difficult.¹⁰

‘I’ll be the first to admit that what I’m trying to grapple with is how, strategically, we can get better linkages between the world of work, business and the education system. That’s a challenge that I admit I have not cracked.’

Kirsty Williams AM, Minister for Education, Welsh Government

5.4 What can communities offer?

All stakeholders we spoke to agreed that they have a lot to offer the development of the new curriculum. This ranged from providing experiences on the principles the new curriculum is founded on, contacts with expertise in the world of work or platforms for discussion and debate with wider society.

‘We can offer a vast range of experience and different expertise of working with disadvantaged learners and experience with working with young people and giving them the right skills to live, learn and earn successfully in life through a more flexible system.’

Mia Rees, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, The Prince’s Trust Cymru

‘The skills and business community can provide a useful link to the workplace and to employers, and could provide guidance in developing learners’ employability and entrepreneurial skills.’

Kelly Edwards, Head of Work-based Learning Quality, National Training Federation for Wales

‘We can provide a platform and opportunity for Welsh Government to have discussions with businesses.’

Ian Price, Director, CBI Wales

It is, however, important to highlight that many stakeholders we spoke to recognised they were already overstretched within their organisations, with their own pressing priorities. This was particularly apparent for smaller organisations and businesses. The lack of additional capacity within organisations to engage with curriculum reform is a real concern. To ensure all sectors have a fair chance to input into curriculum development, when input is sought, the ask should be specific, well understood and time-limited.

5.5 Challenges ahead

Despite all stakeholders being aware of the huge reform the Welsh education system is undergoing, we were told they felt unable to prepare practically for the implications of it within their own sectors as they do not have enough understanding of what it will entail. They were, however, aware and concerned by potential challenges that are likely to arise in the future during curriculum implementation.

The most common concerns we heard were regarding qualifications. Stakeholders are aware that if new qualifications are to be introduced, thorough work would need to be done to avoid similar issues that were faced by the introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate. Other concerns include the impact future PISA results could have on political and public support for the new curriculum¹¹. Stakeholders we spoke to recognised that the new curriculum will need to be given enough time to bed in before being able to measure its success, and felt it is important to identify a robust framework to monitor the impact of the new curriculum.

‘As yet we don’t know what the final assessments will look like, in relation to GCSEs in England for example, and how they will be perceived with FE and HE in England. It has taken many years for the WBQ [Welsh Baccalaureate] to be accepted in many Universities and any major curriculum divergence will have to be managed carefully to avoid students in Wales being disadvantaged on a global stage.’

Judith Williams, Vice Principal of Academic Services, NPTC Group of Colleges

‘PISA might kill the curriculum ... [but] we have to keep going – we can’t use that as the only measure for success.’

Lecturer at Cardiff University National Software Academy

‘It needs to be given long enough to see the changes we hope it can make, we have to recognise it will look different in different schools.’

Bethan Millett, Programme Manager, Arts Council of Wales

Other concerns raised by stakeholders included: the risk of missing the opportunity to harness a mutually beneficial relationship between schools and businesses that would teach learners the reality of businesses; not fully embedding skills within the curriculum, which was reported to be considered more important to employers than qualifications; and relying on ad hoc activities to fill the skills gap. Additionally, there were concerns around the new curriculum over-generalising content as a result of it being cross-curricular, potentially causing the loss of detailed knowledge and skills that are required after post-compulsory education.

11 The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a triennial international survey which aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students.

'It seems that the curriculum will be generic and we worry it will lose subject-specific skills.'

Judith Williams, Vice Principal of Academic Services, NPTC Group of Colleges

5.6 Summary of observations from Wales

Ambition and potential

We noticed a strong sense of consensus that the aims of the new curriculum are positive. Stakeholders we spoke to welcomed the new curriculum and largely agreed with the intentions set out in the four purposes and Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE). The potential flexibility of the new curriculum was seen as a route to provide equal opportunities to all young people regardless of their talents and interests. This support and goodwill is an incredibly valuable asset and it is crucial we sustain this beyond the policy intent and into the challenges of implementation.

Engagement with curriculum development

We found mixed views amongst those we spoke to about whether they felt engaged and informed about curriculum development, across all and also within the four groups we surveyed. Those involved with the Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE) working groups reported themselves to be engaged and informed, whereas those outside these working groups often felt they had little information. Within the Regional Skills Partnerships a spectrum of engagement and involvement were reported, with some members feeling very engaged and others very little. This raises questions about how well developments are being strategically communicated beyond those immediately involved in design work. Overall, careful attention needs to be given to communicating the progress of curriculum reform and the opportunities to get involved, to ensure engagement is not limited to a handful of champions within a much bigger system.

Sharing expertise

Everyone we spoke to agreed they have knowledge, experiences and contacts that could benefit the development and delivery of the new curriculum. However, capacity to act on this was reported to be very limited and many we spoke to were unclear how to feed in and who to speak with. To engage the expertise of the people beyond the compulsory education sector, the ask will have to be specific, clearly understood and time-limited.

Challenges ahead

People we spoke to understand the scale of the potential impact of the new curriculum on their own areas of work. However, they were unsure how to start practically preparing for the new curriculum within their own institutions, as they do not feel they understand the implications fully and they also have their own immediate pressing priorities. There was broad awareness of the pinch points, or big challenges, that will likely arise in the future, for example new qualifications and progression to skills-based learning.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Practice

The Welsh Government's approach to developing the new curriculum through Pioneer Schools has provided a valuable opportunity for schools to input into the creative development process of the new curriculum and work through its implications in practice. However, the overarching success of the curriculum will be dependent on the input and support of many partners beyond schools.

The Welsh Government should ensure the next phase of development of the curriculum in Pioneer Schools should require the exploration of links and engagement with local community partners – including further education, higher education, skills and business organisations.

This will provide a key opportunity for community partners to contribute their expertise to the creative development stage, develop a shared local understanding of the new curriculum and support wider recognition of best practice which can be adopted in the future.

6.2 Communication

6.2.1 A shared narrative

The successful implementation of a new curriculum that delivers for young people depends upon a shared understanding of purpose amongst all partners, including but not limited to schools, parents, young people, and local partners including further education, higher education, business and skills bodies. This shared narrative is necessary to underpin a philosophy and approach that sustains the long process of implementation and will help to ensure all partners understand the roles they play.

To create this shared narrative, careful consideration needs to be given to the nature and content of communication with different groups, who each have a unique ambition for what the curriculum will deliver for young people.

The Welsh Government should develop a programme of communication and engagement with each interested sector, communicating a shared narrative in a meaningful and accessible format. This shared narrative should consider how to provide opportunities for different professions and partners to come together and reach an understanding of the implications of the new curriculum, what is expected from each sector and what it will take to make it a success.

This process of involvement will empower and will develop the foundations of successful partnerships amongst those who will have a role to play in implementing the new curriculum.

6.2.2 A shared understanding

The Scottish experience has demonstrated that curriculum reform is a long and iterative process. Amongst the organisations we spoke with in Wales, we also observed that this was not well understood. The scale of change, the complexities and time involved needs to be communicated with all parties to ensure expectations are managed and the timing of changes are made clear.

The Welsh Government and sector representatives need to communicate actively with the further education, higher education, skills and business communities during both the design and implementation of the new curriculum, to ensure the scale and pace of reform is well understood.

6.2.3 A shared responsibility

There are already many good examples of the wider community engaging with curriculum development. However, there appears to be patchy dissemination of these conversations within and between sectors, creating gaps of level in engagement and understanding.

Further education, higher education, skills and business communities need to be empowered to share the conversations they are having with regard to curriculum development, and this may require additional resource from the Welsh Government.

This will help to ensure the wider community within each sector have a better understanding of current developments and discussions that are taking place.

6.3 Accountability

To date, plans for the new curriculum in Wales have enjoyed broad support amongst most partners. Just as the commitment to reform was triggered in part by political concerns about Wales' poor performance in PISA, the relative success of the new curriculum will continue to be scrutinised through the results of accountability mechanisms which at present include mechanisms such as PISA, school inspections, national standardised tests and examinations results. Accountability plays a crucial role in building public confidence in a system.

It could be argued that with greater flexibility in the content and delivery of the new curriculum there would also be a need for greater accountability. However, it is clear that any new framework of accountability would need to be commensurate with the principles of the new curriculum and the four purposes. Furthermore, an effective accountability framework would be one that can also align the needs and purposes of accountability at all levels (e.g. the learners, teachers, schools, local authorities and the sector) as much as possible.

Any new accountability framework will be subject to challenge and critique, and it is vital that it is developed in a transparent, collaborative manner that is accessible to all partners, not just those involved in compulsory education. It needs to build a shared understanding of the nature of the journey that implementation will take and what meaningful progress looks like.

The Welsh Government should ensure that a refreshed accountability framework is in place for the period of implementation which measures the success of the new curriculum against its four key purposes, whilst taking account of the continued demands of schools to deliver an existing programme. This will support the meaningful measurement of success during this complex process, essential to retain the broad support for reform enjoyed to date.

6.4 Resource

A central challenge which arose through our discussions in Scotland and Wales, was the capacity of the current system to undertake and deliver wide-ranging and fundamental reforms, whilst in the meantime continuing to deliver for learners on a day to day basis. Sufficient resource for this change process is critical to its success. Careful and ongoing scrutiny of the resources available to deliver this substantial reform is required.

To deliver such a substantive reform whilst protecting the ongoing education of children and young people, Welsh Government should ensure it has the resource and capacity to provide strategic leadership and support communications which allow schools and other partners to deliver the ambitions of the new curriculum in practice.

6.5 Children, young people and parents

Whilst outside the formal scope of this research, one of the most powerful messages we heard from our discussions in Scotland was the concern of parents at the time when new qualifications were introduced relative to their new curriculum. The introduction of new qualifications and the implications for young people acted as a lightning rod which catalysed greater debate and concern from parents, and wider Scottish society, about the new curriculum.

The new curriculum will require children and young people to make informed decisions on their learning throughout their school career, and parents will play an important role in supporting these decisions. It is unclear at present what systematic engagement children, young people and parents across Wales have currently with the new curriculum. We consider that specific research into this issue to inform intelligence-led plans would be of real value.

The Welsh Government should ensure that effective, meaningful engagement with children, young people and parents is a continuous feature of both curriculum design and implementation.

6.6 A shared opportunity

The Welsh Government launched a white paper on proposals for a new legislative framework in January 2019¹², and a new curriculum will be available for feedback by April 2019. These publications are an opportunity for all communities of interest to engage with curriculum development in its design phase, ahead of full implementation beginning in 2022.

The Welsh Government should ensure that these proposals are accessible to a broad range of interested parties, including children, young people and parents, and professionals outside the compulsory education sector. This will require accessible documents in clear language which present salient points and substantive changes so as to allow a wide audience to engage effectively with the proposals. Likewise, there is a shared responsibility for all sectors to engage with the new curriculum once it is out for debate and consultation.

12 Welsh Government, *Our National Mission: A Transformational Curriculum. Proposals for a new legislative framework*, January 2019

Appendices

Appendix 1: Project Advisory Group Membership

The purpose of the Advisory Group was to provide expert oversight and support for the project. We would like to thank all members of the Advisory Group for their support and guidance throughout the project.

| Name | Organisation |
|--------------------------|---|
| Dr Rachel Bowen | Director of Policy and Development, ColegauCymru |
| Simon Evans | Director of Data and Performance, Merthyr Tydfil College |
| Susan Gwyer-Roberts | Headteacher 2002-2018, Caldicot School |
| David Hagedyk | Director for Wales, Learning and Work Institute |
| Professor Calvin Jones | Deputy Dean for Public Value and External Relations, Cardiff University Business School |
| Professor Caroline Lloyd | School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University |
| Dr Sarah Morse | Senior Executive Officer, The Learned Society of Wales |
| Dr Nigel Newton | Research Associate at WISERD, Cardiff University |
| Mia Rees | Policy and Public Affairs Manager, The Prince's Trust Cymru |
| Professor Chris Taylor | Co-Director, WISERD, Cardiff University |
| Hannah Thomas | Teacher, St John Baptist Church in Wales High School, Aberdare |
| Jeremy Wilcock | Staff Tutor, School of Education, Open University in Wales |

Appendix 2: Contributors

As part of the project research, we sought to engage with individuals within the further education, higher education, skills and business community in Scotland and Wales to understand their experiences of the new curriculum. We spoke to the individuals and organisations listed below, while recognising there are still other voices yet to be heard.

Interviewees and participants in Scotland

| Name | Organisation |
|----------------------------|---|
| Gregor Scotland | Principal Policy Adviser, CBI Scotland |
| Jim Metcalfe | Chief Executive, College Development Network |
| Dr Keir Bloomer | Chair, Education Committee of the Royal Society of Edinburgh |
| Alan Armstrong | Strategic Director, Education Scotland |
| Joan Mackay | Assistant Director, Education Scotland |
| Barry McCulloch | Senior Policy Advisor, FSB Scotland |
| Professor Graham Donaldson | Chair, Independent Advisory Group and advisor to the Minister for Education in Wales |
| Professor Petra Wend | Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Queen Margaret University |
| Craig Flunkert | Team Leader, Curriculum Development, Parental Engagement and Learner Participation, Scottish Government |
| Murray McVicar | Unit Head, Senior Phase Policy, Scottish Government |
| Dr Gill Stewart | Director of Qualifications Development, Scottish Qualifications Authority |
| Sandra Cheyne | National CIAG Policy & Professional Practice Manager, Skills Development Scotland |
| Ken Edwards | Education Programme Lead, Education & Stem, Skills Development Scotland |
| Finlay Laverty | Senior Head of Partnerships, The Prince's Trust Scotland (retired) |
| William Hardie | Policy Advice Manager, The Royal Society of Edinburgh |
| Professor Grant Jarvie | Chair and Director Academy of Sport, University of Edinburgh |
| Professor Lindsay Paterson | Professor of Education Policy, University of Edinburgh |
| Professor Mark Priestley | Professor of Education, University of Stirling |

Interviewees and participants in Wales

| Name | Organisation |
|---------------------|---|
| Diane Hebb | Director of Engagement and Participation, Arts Council of Wales |
| Bethan Millett | Programme Manager, Arts Council of Wales |
| Peter Rogers | Managing Director, Bait Studio |
| Rebecca Falvey | Head of Business Class, Business in the Community Cymru |
| Leigh Hughes | Chair, Cardiff Capital Regional Employment and Skills Board |
| Carl Jones | Lecturer, School of Computer Science & Informatics, Cardiff University |
| Helen Phillips | Lecturer, School of Computer Science & Informatics, Cardiff University |
| Dr Catherine Teehan | Placement Officer, School of Computer Science & Informatics, Cardiff University |
| Matthew Turner | Industry and External Engagement Manager, School of Computer Science & Informatics, Cardiff University |
| Sara Pepper | Director of Creative Economy, Cardiff University |
| Jo Hatch | Careers & World of Work Co-ordinator, Careers Wales |
| Ian Price | Director, CBI Wales |
| Carys Davies | Assistant Principal and Director of Curriculum, Coleg Cambria |
| Rhian Jones | Academic Manager, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol |
| Dr Rachel Bowen | Director of Policy and Development, ColegauCymru |
| Joshua Miles | Policy Manager, FSB Wales |
| Simon Evans | Director of Data and Performance, Merthyr Tydfil College |
| Kelly Edwards | Head of Work-based Learning Quality, National Training Federation for Wales |
| Ffion Jones | Senior Researcher, North Wales Economic Ambition Board |
| Sasha Davies | Chair, North Wales Regional Skills Partnership |
| Tessa Jennings | Deputy Head Sixth Form A Level Academy and member of Humanities AoLE group, NPTC Group |
| Judith Williams | Vice Principal of Academic Services, NPTC Group |
| Jackie Mathias | Assistant Principal Vocational Studies (Interim), Pembrokeshire College |
| Julie Richards | Senior Lecturer and member of Mathematics and Numeracy AoLE group, Pembrokeshire College |
| Dr Barry Walters | Interim Principal, Pembrokeshire College |

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Jane Lewis | Manager, Regional Learning and Skills Partnership South West & Mid Wales |
| Dr Sarah Morse | Senior Executive Officer, The Learned Society of Wales |
| Mia Rees | Policy and Public Affairs Manager, The Prince's Trust Cymru |
| Jamie James | Head of School of Education, Early Years & Social Work, University of South Wales |
| Professor Claire Taylor | Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Wrexham Glyndŵr University |



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WALES
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