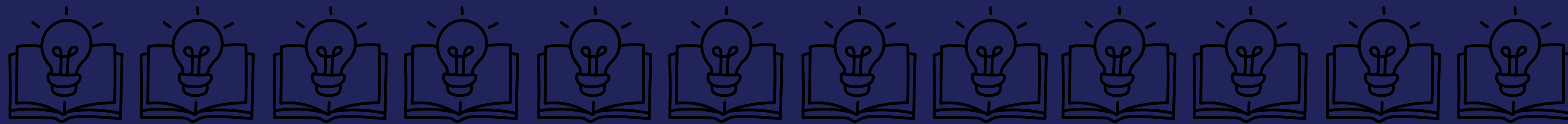


AN ACADEMIC SCRAPBOOK REFLECTING ON 2 KEY CONTESTED ISSUES IN EDUCATION IN WALES OR THE UK SINCE 1840



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MY CHOSEN ISSUES

1

Implementation of the New Curriculum for Wales

I have chosen to talk about this issue as there are a lot of professional opinions as to whether the New Curriculum should've been implemented or not, and I believe it is an interesting topic to discuss.



2

Use of Technology and AI in the Classroom

I have chosen this issue to talk about as technology and AI in our world is becoming a lot more apparent, however it is also causing a lot of controversy as to how and where it should be used.





IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW CURRICULUM FOR WALES



The first issue I have decided to discuss is the implementation of the New Curriculum for Wales. I thought this would be a good subject to talk about as there is so much information regarding the New Curriculum for Wales, including the positives and negatives of it being implemented in schools. By completing research for this assignment, I have learnt a lot more about the curriculum, understanding professional opinions as well.

The New Curriculum for Wales is important as it focuses more on the evolution of children in this day and age, supporting their learning and development. The New Curriculum focuses on 4 different key purposes when it comes to a child's holistic development. They are ambitious, capable learners, enterprising, creative contributors, ethical, informed citizens and healthy, confident individuals. (*Welsh Government, 2022a*)

The New Curriculum for Wales has been deemed as a contested issue as there is arguments over whether or not it is as effective as the old curriculum due to the way it focuses on only 6 key subjects. The New Curriculum grants more freedom in lesson planning and delivering for teachers of which some people have raised concerns as children all over Wales could potentially be learning different things and not being taught some of the basic subjects. (*Evans, 2023b*)

HISTORY OF THE NEW CURRICULUM FOR WALES

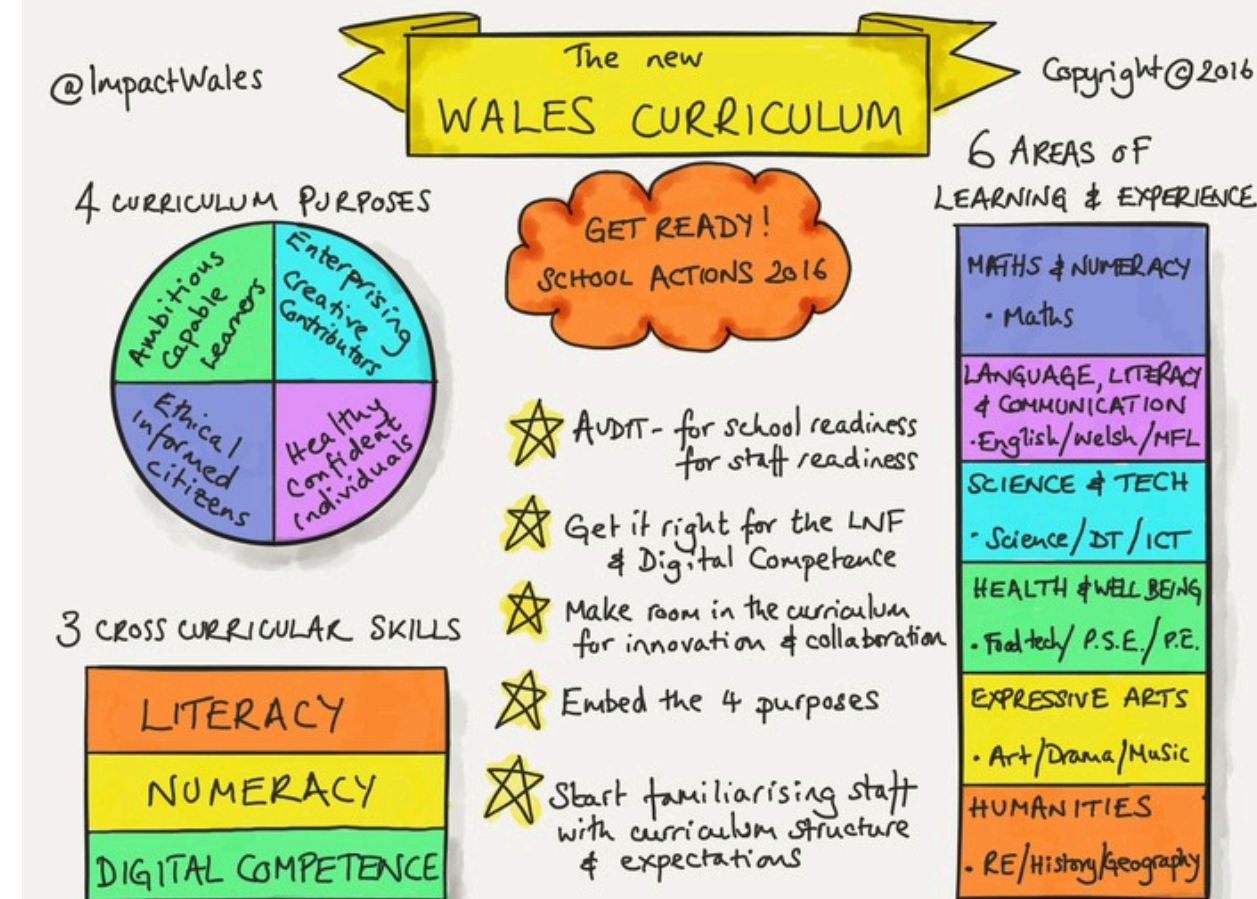
The first ever curriculum to be implemented in Wales was a part of the Education Reform Act 1988. (Wikipedia Contributors, 2022) Since then the curriculum has been changed and updated 4 times, with the most significant changes being between 2008 and 2011, when foundation phase was introduced. (Waters, 2025) The New Curriculum for Wales started rolling out into schools in September 2022, which is the curriculum that is currently being followed in school settings.

According to Myers (2024), The New Curriculum is built around four purposes that aim to develop:

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

The New Curriculum for Wales also enforces the six areas of learning and experience. They are:

- Expressive Arts.
- Health and Well-being.
- Humanities (including RE which is mandatory up to age 16).
- Languages, Literacy, and Communication (including Welsh).
- Mathematics and Numeracy.
- Science and Technology.



(Newbridge-on-Wye Primary School, n.d)

WHY IS THE NEW CURRICULUM FOR WALES DEEMED AS CONTESTED?

According to The Moderator (2024), a contested issue in education refers to a topic that is subject to differing opinions, beliefs, or interpretations, often leading to debates and discussions that can be emotionally charged.” The New Curriculum is deemed as a contested issue due to different groups of people disagreeing on not just how children should be taught but also on what education is for and who should decide. (*mediaofficer, 2025*)

As most things, the New Curriculum for Wales has both positive and negative aspects. For example, the New Curriculum has a more holistic and flexible approach, however it is very vague about what to teach. (*Williams, 2025*) Professor Graham Donaldson was the advocate for the New Curriculum for Wales as he saw the importance of providing a clear guideline for educational staff. He believed children should have a balance of skills based and subject based learning. Donaldson wanted to enhance the curriculum’s relevance so it can focus on real life situations and cross curricular learning. (*Dauncey, 2015*)

An article written for WalesOnline by Wightwick (2022), states that students whose school years were interrupted by COVID-19, believe that the New Curriculum will “better prepare them for life ahead than the old one would have.” Students said they felt more connected and involved in certain subjects as the New Curriculum broadening their understanding. Hannah O’Farrell stated in the article, “the New Curriculum allows you to not say ‘all pupils need to be at this stage at this time.’ You can tailor it more to their needs.” By creating a generalised curriculum, it allows teachers to understand children’s personal needs, strengths and interests, supporting them in planning lessons to help all the children in the class to get the most out of their education. (*OECD, 2025*)

The New Curriculum for Wales wants the pinpoint of a child’s education to be their well-being. Enabling a child to have access to things to support themselves in gaining positive well-being and mindset has been proven to increase a child’s attention, memory and learning in the classroom. (*NSPCC, 2023*) The curriculum allows teachers to provide these opportunities to the children, which is believed to be a positive aspect to the updated curriculum.

On the other hand, a survey which was carried out, found that 8 in 10 teachers in Wales did not believe they had enough support to deliver the new curriculum. (*Sullivan, 2025*) Another issue which was raised when the New Curriculum for Wales came into place was the inconsistent standards. As the curriculum provides a lot of freedom and creativity to teachers when planning lessons, this can also lead to issues that children in different schools aren’t learning the same information. Schools who have better resources are able to provide a better education for those children, whereas children in poorer areas don’t have accessibility to those resources. (*Taylor, Newton and Power, 2020*)

WHY IS THE NEW CURRICULUM FOR WALES IMPORTANT?

Having a curriculum in place for school settings is important as it serves as the backbone of any educational system. It outlines what children need to learn, how to teach the children and the assessment they need to undergo through their time in school. (Nord Anglia, 2025) According to Unesco.org (2025), “a curriculum plays a crucial role in determining whether education is inclusive and equitable.” A curriculum should be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that a child’s education and learning is being kept relevant and up to date with what’s going on in the world.

The New Curriculum for Wales is the most updated version of the curriculum, with aspects of it being currently developed with the goal for it to be rolled out in all schools by September 2026. (Welsh Government, 2020) Ensuring all school in Wales are following the New Curriculum by then, is crucial for children all over Wales to be getting a similar education.

One area of the New Curriculum which caused some controversy was the removal of traditional tests or exams. Instead, these have been replaced by personalised assessments. (Welsh Government, 2022b) By replacing the exams, it puts less pressure on children to excel within a short amount of time and focuses on their work as a whole. This is important to allow children to succeed in their education, supporting them in getting the highest marks possible for them.

NEW CURRICULUM FOR WALES

CONCLUSION

The New Curriculum for Wales puts the child at the forefront of their education, promoting holistic development through the four purposes and six areas of learning. This curriculum not only prepares children academically, but also socially and emotionally, equipping them for life after school. (Evans, 2023a) Evidence has proven that this child-centred and well-being approach can increase engagement, motivation and inclusion, especially for the children whose education had been interrupted by COVID-19.

Despite the positive aspects, there are still some negative areas about the curriculum. Teachers had access to a lack of training and resources when the curriculum was implemented, leaving them unsure as to what and how to teach correctly. As there is an inequality of resources across Wales, depending on how much money the schools have to provide these resources, it leaves some children in poorer areas at a disadvantage, and they aren't having the same access to those children in richer areas.

Overall, the implementation of the New Curriculum for Wales is a significant change to the educational system in Wales. The issue is deemed as contested due to the conversational opinions from students, teachers and professionals about what children should be taught, what is important for them to learn and how the standards can be kept the same across the whole of Wales. While some people believe the new curriculum was a good change, needing in this modern day society, others believe the consistency and clarity of the curriculum is not as well structured as it could be.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND AI IN THE CLASSROOM

The second contested issue I have decided to discuss is the use of technology and AI in the classroom. I picked this topic because technology and AI are becoming so much bigger in our world and day to day life, and it is constantly growing. This topic has a lot of controversy and opinions as some people believe that the world is being taken over too quickly by technology and AI, whereas others disagree. (*warwick.ac.uk, 2023*)

Technology and AI are becoming important in our lives as so much communication and development happen through these forms. There are some things that people cannot do, which is filled by the use of AI and technology. (*Martin, 2024*) When it comes to the use of these methods in the classroom, there can be some benefits as to how it can support a child's development and wellbeing, however, like a lot of things, there is also some downsides to this.

The use of AI and technology in the classroom has been deemed as a contested issues as there are a lot of hidden factors when it comes to using technology. As people, we don't yet fully understand how AI works in some aspects, which can be dangerous if we are trying to teach children in schools. (*Heikkila, 2024*) Technology and AI do also open up a lot of avenues and different ways we can teach children, however, just giving children a tablet and telling them to go and play on it will not support their development.

HISTORY OF THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND AI

The use of technology in schools first became an issue in 1980's when calculators were introduced. Following from that, concerns were raised when the internet was started being used in the early 2000s. Critics believed that the calculators and internet was classed as cheating, dehumanisation of learning environments and lacks critical thinking. *(Haque, 2025)*

With how quickly technology has become engrossed in our world today, it is constantly evolving and children are growing up with phone, tablets, etc. It has become more apparent that the use of tablets in the classroom has skyrocketed, with children getting more and more tech savvy. Using tablet in schools can have a both positive and negative affect on the children. For example, tablets can enhance engagement and collaboration as children work together on projects, it is more accessible for children who may need extra support, allowing teachers to tailor learning to their individual needs. *(EducationalWave, 2025)*

However, tablets can cause a huge disruption and uproar in the classroom, as children focus away from the task they have been set and start playing games, which can lead to negative behaviour. Technology is also very pricey, meaning some schools can only afford a couple, or even no tablets at all. This can cause argument as to who uses it, as some teachers will give tablets to the children who don't necessarily excel academically to keep them quiet whilst they support the children who do well in school. *(Greenfield, 2015)* As well as this, there is so much online that any child can access, so ensuring that safety procedures are on can keep a child safe from any harm from the use of tablets.

WHY IS THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND AI DEEMED AS CONTESTED?

The use of technology and AI in the classroom is deemed as a contested issue as it raises ethical, educational, social and practical concerns. Some people believe that having access to technology and AI can actually enhance a child's learning, whereas a lot of people disagree with this. (*Department for Education, 2025*) Using technology and AI also dismisses traditional teaching methods and the role of the teacher as so much of a child's learning is now done through technology.

The first thing that people debate over when it comes to using technology and AI in the classroom is the impact on learning and thinking skills. People who agree with the use of technology and AI believe that using AI can create a personalised approach in supporting a child's individual learning needs. Technology also supports revision, accessibility and inclusion in the classroom, creating something for everyone. People also believe it sets children up for the future, especially as technology and AI is a huge part of the world we are living in. However, on the contrary, critics of this approach believe children are becoming too dependent on technology and AI, reducing their critical thinking and independence skills. They are also worried that learning is becoming more robotic than active teaching as the teachers just hand the children the tablet and send them off to do their work. (*Miles, 2025*)

Another major area to the use of technology and AI is the use of plagiarism, cheating in exams and lack of individual work. (*Balalle and Pannilage, 2025*) Teachers are finding it harder to assess what children actually know or what they have just found on the internet. As well as this, there is also a major safeguarding concern when it comes to children using technology and no one truly knows what is on the internet. (*Care Learning, 2025*) It allows children to be exposure to inappropriate content and cyberbullying and, parents and teacher raise concerns about who has access to the student's personal information and how safely it is stored.

According to Schools' Embrace of AI Connected to Increased Risks, a report that was carried out shows that 85% of teachers and 86% of student used AI in the 2024–2025 school year. This number is massive and will just keep growing over the coming years. During this report, half of the students said that when the use AI in the class, it makes them feel less connected to their teachers. This just proves that children, and even some teachers, are becoming more and more reliant on technology and AI when it comes to teaching and learning. (*Vilcarino and Lauraine Langreo, 2025*)

WHY IS THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND AI IMPORTANT?

The use of technology and AI in the classroom is important as it is used daily. Without technology, there would be a lot of issues in schools. Teachers wouldn't be able to do their lesson plans or find resources and staff wouldn't have access to the attendance or children's personal files. Although there is a lot of controversy with this topic, technology and AI in the classroom has been proven to be beneficial. *(Curtis, 2025)*

Through using AI in the classroom, it creates personalised learning experience for children, supporting them in getting the most out of their education in ways that helps their individual needs. Technology also allows teachers to be efficient in admin tasks, as technology and AI can help organise lesson plans as well as track attendance.

Technology and AI in schools can also support a child's future employment as there is so many platforms online which children can use to experience what it is like to be in a working environment. A lot of careers rely on employees to have good digital skills so by implementing and teaching these skills when the children are younger, it has more chance of them naturally developing their own skills as technology changes. VR headsets are also a great way for children to experience different environments allowing them to understand how we act and behave in different situations. *(Kognita, 2024)*

USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND AI CONCLUSION



(Medium.com, 2025)

From carrying out this assignment, I have learnt that the use of technology and AI in the classroom has a lot of positives and negatives. As it has become embedded into day to day life, the presence of technology and AI is unmissable. The rapid development of technology and AI means that schools are expected to keep up to date, reflecting the reality of modern day society.

Overall, while technology and AI have the potential to positively transform education, their effectiveness depends on how they are implemented and monitored. Rather than replacing traditional teaching methods, technology should be used as a supportive tool alongside strong teacher guidance. With clear boundaries, appropriate training, and robust safeguarding measures, technology and AI can enhance learning while minimising risks, ensuring they contribute positively to children's educational experiences.

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