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Successful Futures – Report on the Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales

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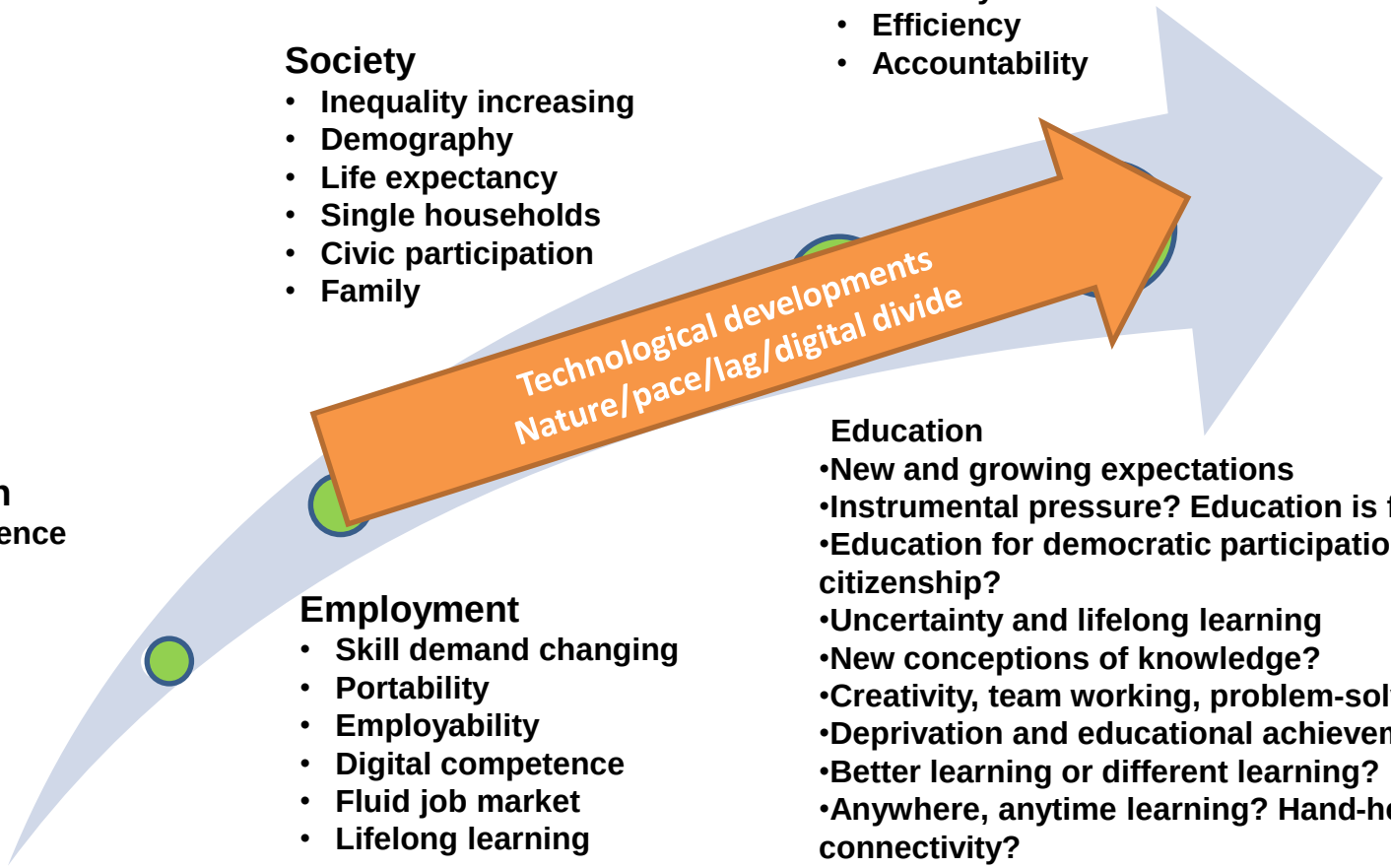
Powerful Drivers

- School education is one of the most important and contested **policy** areas for governments across the world.
- Evidence of **relative performance internationally** has become a key driver of policy.
- **Human capital** in the form of a highly educated population is seen as a key determinant of social justice and economic success.
- The **pace and character of social, economic and technological change** has profound implications for how we conceive education in the future.

The World is Changing Fast

Resources
- Scarcity
- Efficiency
- Accountability

Society
- Inequality increasing
- Demography
- Life expectancy
- Single households
- Civic participation
- Family



Globalisation
- Interdependence
- Competition
- Offshoring
- Reshoring
- Migration
- Scarcity
- Climate

Employment
- Skill demand changing
- Portability
- Employability
- Digital competence
- Fluid job market
- Lifelong learning

Education
- New and growing expectations
- Instrumental pressure? Education is for work?
- Education for democratic participation / citizenship?
- Uncertainty and lifelong learning
- New conceptions of knowledge?
- Creativity, team working, problem-solving?
- Deprivation and educational achievement?
- Better learning or different learning?
- Anywhere, anytime learning? Hand-held connectivity?
- Social networking
- Internationalisation – PISA/PIRLS/TIMMS

Average is over

- “This maxim (average is over) will apply to the quality of your job, to your earnings, to where you live, to your education, and to the education of your children…if **you and your skills are a complement to the computer,** your wage and labour market prospects are likely to be cheery…” (pages 4/5)

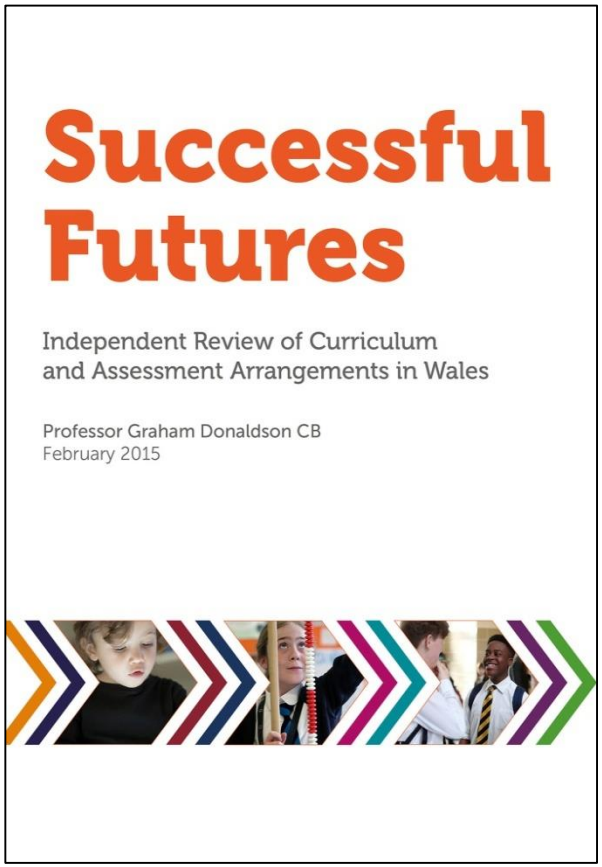
- “…a modern textile mill employs a man and a dog – the man to feed the dog and the dog to keep the man away from the machines.” (page 8)

- “The ability to **mix technical knowledge with solving real-world problems** is the key…” (page 21)

- “It might be called the age of genius machines, and it will be the people that work with them that will rise…we (will have) produced two nations, a fantastically successful nation , working in the technologically dynamic sectors, and **everyone else**.”

Tyler Cowan 2013

The case for change



- Need to create forward-looking curriculum for 21st Century and beyond.
- "There was a recurring view that the curriculum had become unwieldy, overcrowded and atomistic, and that it was inhibiting opportunities to apply learning more holistically in 'real life' situations, or to use that learning creatively to address issues that cross subject boundaries."
- "…the current national curriculum and assessment arrangements no longer meet the needs of the children and young people of Wales. The case for fundamental change is powerful."

The origins of our current curriculum lie in the Education Act 1988 – Its conception took place in a very different world.

- Before the world-wide web
- Before the universal mobile phone
- Before PowerPoint
- Before the fall of the Berlin Wall
- High inflation and high interest rates
- Climate issues only beginning to be raised – ozone layer
- Few coffee shops/majority smoked

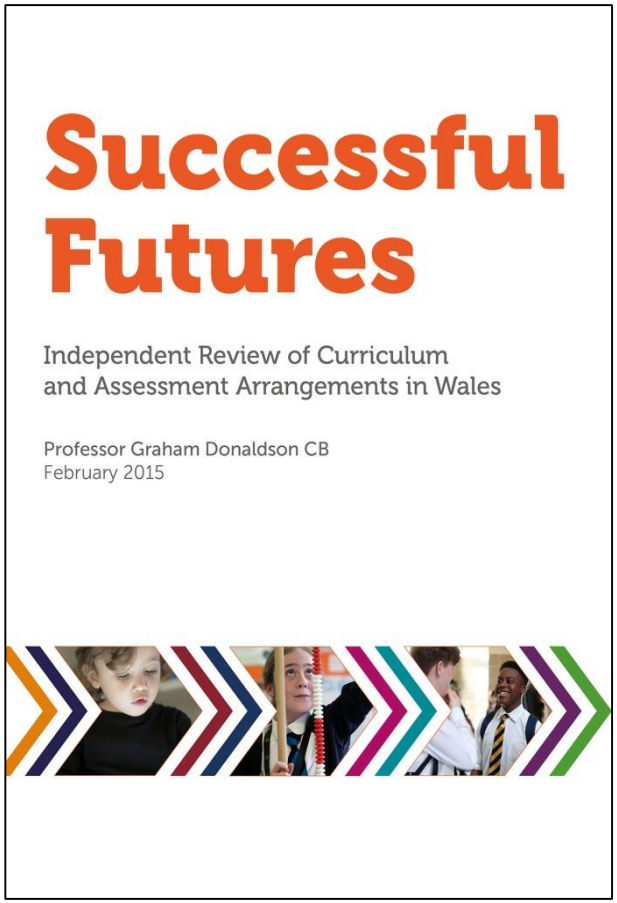
Six Big Messages

- Compelling case for fundamental change
- Mobilise around clear and compelling overall vision – be clear about what matters – structures should follow not lead
- Don’t make the complex complicated – It’s the teaching that counts
- Encourage coherence - clear lines of sight - minimise transitions
- Balance consolidation and pace in learning
- Assessment and accountability are for learning

The challenge

“What our children and young people learn during their time at school has ***never been more important*** *yet, at the same time, the task of determining what that learning should be has* ***never been more challenging****.”*

The report: Successful Futures



- 8 Chapters
  - Overview
  - Processes and Evidence
  - Purposes
  - Structure
  - Pedagogy
  - Assessment
  - Implications
  - Conclusions and Recommendations
- 68 Recommendations

Scope of the curriculum

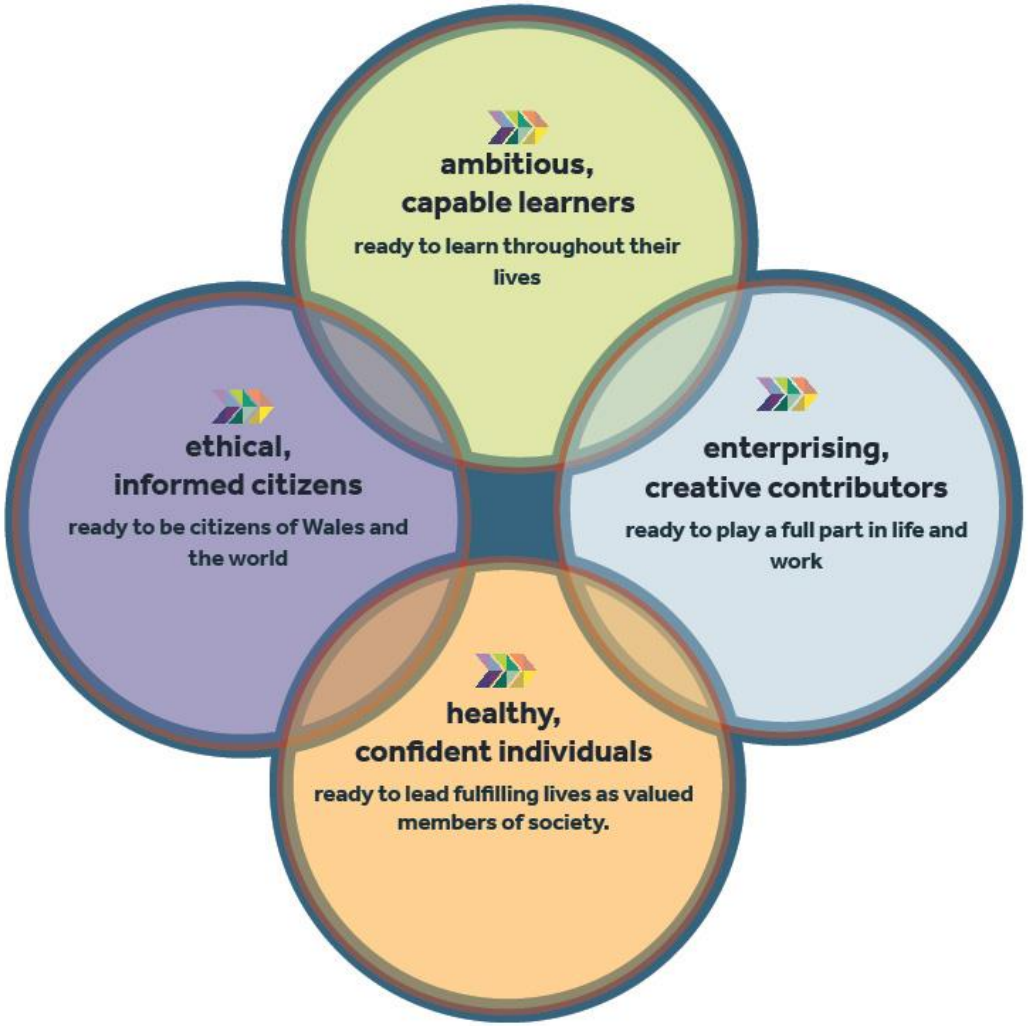
"The school curriculum in Wales should be defined as including <u>all</u> of the <u>learning experiences</u> and <u>assessment</u> activities <u>planned</u> in pursuit of agreed <u>purposes</u> of education."

Purposes of the curriculum

- Mobilise opinion and support
- Encourage clarity and transparency
- Focus on what matters
- Protect against reductionism

Purposes of the curriculum

The purposes of the curriculum in Wales should be that children and young people develop as:



The structure of the curriculum should:

- reflect directly and promote the **curriculum purposes**
- embody the **entitlement** of all children and young people, including those with severe, profound or multiple learning difficulties, to a high-quality, broad and appropriately balanced education throughout the period of statutory education
- promote **progression** in children and young people's learning
- encourage **depth** of learning and provide appropriate **challenge** in ways that will raise overall **standards of achievement**
- promote **coherence** and encourage children and young people to make **connections** across different aspects of their learning

The structure of the curriculum should:

- enable children and young people to ap**ply in unfamiliar contexts** what they have learned
- promote sustained attention to the development and application of knowledge and skills in **literacy, numeracy and digital competence**
- ensure appropriate emphasis on the **Welsh language and culture**
- encourage **stimulating and engaging** teaching and learning
- be as **simple and straightforward** as possible
- be understood by and have the **confidence** of parents, carers and teachers.

Organising learning

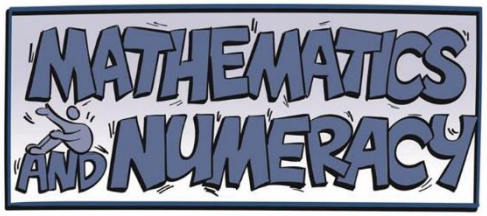
“A curriculum defined largely in terms of discrete subjects can become directly translated into a timetable within which important cross-curricular learning can be marginalised. In addition, separate subject planning, combined with a narrow interpretation of how best to develop literacy and numeracy skills, was sometimes inadvertently resulting in a narrow and repetitive set of experiences.”

Areas of Learning and Experience

make distinct and strong contributions to developing the four purposes of the curriculum.

Should be internally coherent

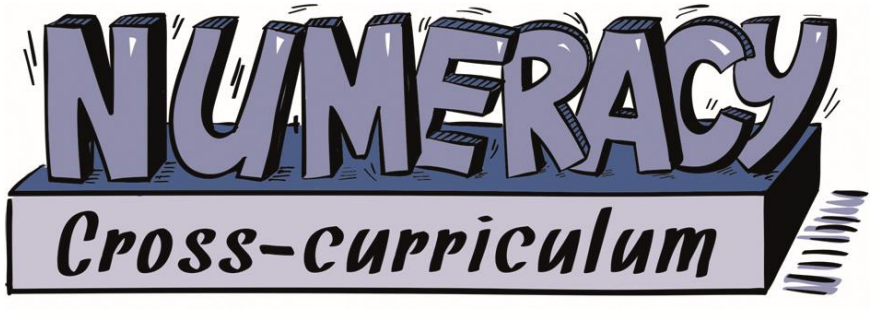
employ distinctive ways of thinking

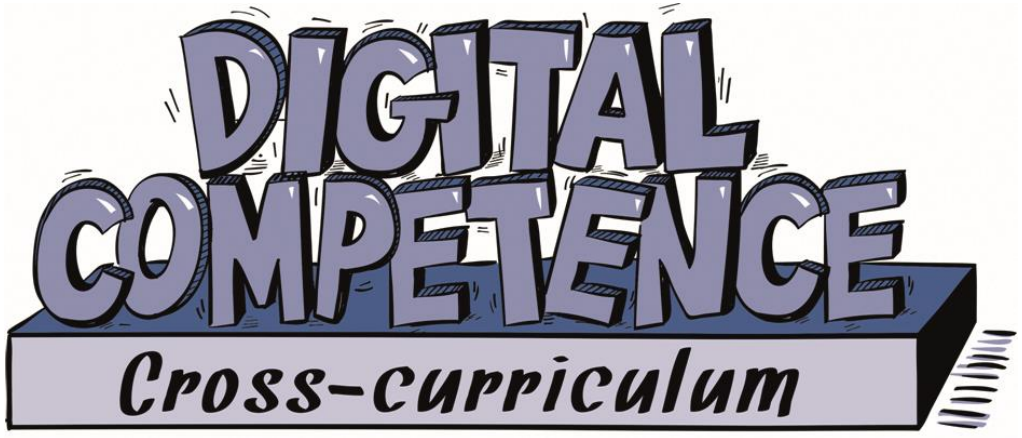


have an identifiable core of disciplinary and instrumental knowledge.

Taken together, they should define the breadth of the curriculum.

Cross-curriculum responsibilities





Progression

- A continuum of learning from 3 to 16, without phases and key stages.
- Progression Steps at five points in the learning continuum.
- Achievement outcomes for each Progression Step contributing to each purpose.

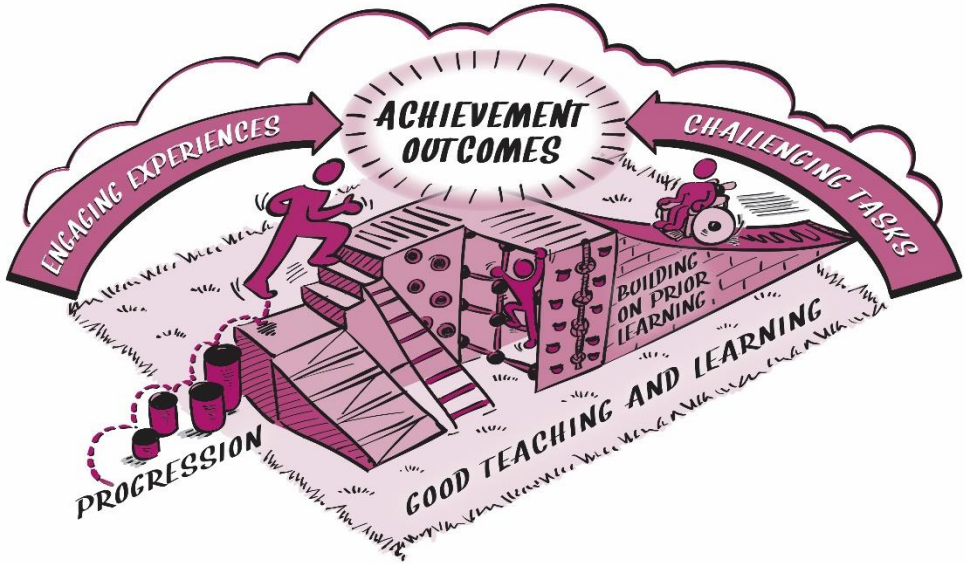
Welsh language

Key recommendations include the following.

- Welsh to be statutory to age 16.
- A focus on communicating in real-life situations.
- Welsh-medium schools to act as hubs to support the language in English-medium schools.
- Qualifications at age 16 to focus on speaking, listening and application in the workplace.

Pedagogy

"The Review's ambitions can only be translated into reality for children and young people through teachers' and other education practitioners' professional skill and judgement in selecting appropriate teaching methods."



Assessment

The following are recommended in relation to assessment.

- Simplification of assessment procedures.
- Stronger role for assessment to support learning.

Assessment arrangements should:

- align assessment with the purposes of learning: assess what matters
- be clear about the reasons for assessment and plan in advance for the intended uses of assessment results
- promote the use of a wide range of techniques that are appropriate to their purpose
- engage students in their own assessment
- ensure that reports to parents and carers focus on progress
- be as light-touch as possible and avoid unnecessary bureaucracy
- use assessment evidence systematically and in combination with other evidence to inform school self-evaluation
- address the implications of good assessment practice for teacher capacity
- form a coherent, agreed assessment and evaluation framework with a clear vision and strategy based on all of the above.

What it might look like

- A new way of thinking.
- Greater scope to plan and provide a curriculum that builds progressively from ages 3 to 16.
- Fresh opportunities to provide interesting and challenging learning experiences.
- Provide a deeper, more satisfying and relevant educational experience.

Making it happen

- There is **no single, best approach** to effective educational reform. Research evidence paints a fairly unpromising picture of experiences of educational reform in different settings.

- **Change strategies are highly culture and context specific** and there is a danger that a highly complex matter like the reform of education becomes reduced to oversimplified solutions that do not take sufficient account of the nature and complexity of education. What works in one country may well be inappropriate when applied elsewhere.

- The implementation of the Review's recommendations needs to **learn the lessons** from the limitations of past reform and adopt a change strategy that best meets the nature of the Welsh context and its educational culture.

Improvement policies (Schleicher -OECD)

The past	The most effective systems
Student inclusion	
Some students learn at high levels	All students learn at high levels
Curriculum, instruction and assessment	
Routine cognitive skills for lifetime jobs	Learning to learn, complex ways of thinking, ways of working
Teacher quality	
Taught to teach established content	High-level professional knowledge workers
Work organisation	
‘Tayloristic’, hierarchical	Flat, collegial, differentiated and diverse careers
Accountability	
Primarily to authorities	Also to peers and stakeholders

Storming the classroom citadel

- Package and push?
- Direct and demand?
- Manage and measure?
- Promise and punish?
- Hearts and heads?
- Network and nourish?

– Pervasive tension between immediate impact and long-term, sustainable growth

Impact of Reform

'…there is strong evidence from a variety of sources that two decades of reform have not led to anticipated levels of educational improvement, and certainly not commensurate with levels of investment in education, but have led to widespread teacher and headteacher dissatisfaction'

Hoyle and Wallace Educational Leadership: Ambiguity, Professionals and Managerialism 2005, pp. 4-5

The impact of policies has been, at best, mixed.

Neither general nor targeted interventions have, thus far, demonstrated substantial sustained improvements that can be spread widely.

Kerr & West BERA 2010 Insight 2

"We have in education a long history of innovation but it rarely touches but a chosen few."

Hattie, Visible Learning (2009) p254

Principles for implementation

- Sustain the mobilising vision
- Evidence-led, responsive and based on subsidiarity.
- Ambitious and inclusive.
- Manageable, balancing sense-making, pace and consolidation.

Making it happen

Leadership Challenge

Developing a vision and a strategy to engage with a very uncertain future
AND
securing action to make this happen

BEWARE

- **Default positions – practice, leadership, accountability, society**
- **Policy restlessness / Contextual changes**
- **Policy silos and workstreams**
- **Assumptions about system capacity**
- **Ownership / passivity / alienation**
- **Gaming**
- **Pressure for quick wins?**
- **Lack of formative evidence**
- **Lack of levers/ drivers/ alignment**

So What?

“Taken together, the Review recommendations aim to provide curriculum and assessment arrangements that will meet the needs and aspirations of all those with an interest in Welsh education.

For teachers and school leaders they will provide a more straightforward and coherent basis for the exercise of their professional skills.

For children and young people they aim to create a more stimulating and challenging educational experience that will help them to thrive and succeed in an increasingly demanding but exciting world.

For employers it will help to provide well-educated employees with both the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ skills that are integral to the modern workplace.

Parents and carers can engage more directly in their children’s learning, receiving clear information about how they are progressing in relation to easily understood curriculum purposes.”

"***Finally***, *the proposals will require* ***excellent and committed leadership*** *at all levels in the education system. The Welsh Government has signalled its commitment to establishing the kind of collaborative culture that characterises education systems that aspire to excellence. The recommendations of this Review are intended to support that commitment and to shape a* ***successful and exciting future for the young people of Wales****.*"