

THE NUFFIELD REVIEW OF

**14-19**

EDUCATION & TRAINING

# **EDUCATION FOR ALL**

## **THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

### **FOR 14-19 YEAR OLDS**

## **WALES SUMMARY**

The following is a summary of the main findings and recommendations of the Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training which embraced both Wales and England. The Review is published by Routledge. It is the largest review of this phase of education since the Crowther Report in 1959. This summary, although covering the Review as a whole, provides a special focus on Wales. Some of the issues which relate particularly to England have therefore been omitted.

The Nuffield Review was an independent review of all aspects of 14-19 education and training, funded by the Nuffield Foundation. Its reports and papers are available on [www.nuffield14-19review.org.uk](http://www.nuffield14-19review.org.uk). The Review was conducted by a directorate of Richard Pring and Geoff. Hayward (University of Oxford Department of Education), Ann Hodgson and Ken Spours (University of London Institute of Education), Jill Johnson (UCAS), Ewart Keep (Cardiff University School of Social Sciences) and Gareth Rees (Cardiff University School of Social Sciences), assisted by research officers Alis Oancea, Stephanie Wilde and Susannah Wright, and administered by Joanne Hazell.

Special thanks are due to Professor David Egan and to Gary Brace of the General Teaching Council of Wales, whose evidence and critical comments over the course of the Review have been extremely helpful.

## Why a Review

First, *why 14-19?* Increasingly we have come to see this as a distinct phase in the education of all young people. People have to make big decisions at the age of 14 that affect the rest of their lives.

Second, *why a Review?* A range of problems need to be addressed: many young people abandon education as soon as they can; teachers (certainly in England, but far less so in Wales than in England) feel constrained by constant interventions from government and by the assessment regime; universities worry about the readiness of young people for higher education; employers complain about lack of preparation for employment in terms of skills, knowledge and attitudes. Despite many commendable initiatives from the respective governments, more needs to be done. In many cases, different policies need to be adopted.

The Review was independent, drawing on the help of teachers, researchers, training providers, youth services, voluntary bodies, employers, professional bodies, teachers' unions, and officials, who participated in seminars and contributed to discussion papers. Much of the evidence has been placed on the Review's website ([nuffield14-19review.org.uk](http://nuffield14-19review.org.uk)), and it is hoped that this will continue to be developed as the debate, initiated by the Review, continues.

## The Key Question

There is a need in educational policy and practice for a clear vision of the overall aim. The Review, therefore, was shaped throughout by the answers to the question:

*What counts as an educated 19 year-old in this day and age?*

Values shape all that we do and decide, not least in education. The values we hold affect our opinions – and ultimately our decisions on such questions as:

- whether or not to select by ability;
- whether to make the arts compulsory or optional in the 14-19 curriculum;
- whether to build on or to ignore the experiences young people bring into school;
- whether to reward academic achievement rather than practical capability.

We could go on. The point is that all such decisions embody values which constitute, in practice and for better or worse, the underlying and implicit aims of education. The Review, therefore, argued for an understanding of education *for all* which would provide:

- knowledge and understanding required for the 'intelligent management of life';
- competence to make decisions about the future in the light of changing economic and social conditions;
- practical capability – including preparation for employment;
- moral seriousness with which to shape future choices and relationships;
- a sense of responsibility for the community.

Such knowledge, capability and qualities are important for, and (in different degrees) accessible to, all young people, irrespective of background. Therefore, what matters, as argued in the Review, is how these essential knowledge, capabilities and qualities are translated into the learning experience of young people, into the curriculum, into the role and training of teachers, into the ‘indicators’ by which schools and colleges are judged, into the qualifications framework, and into further training.

## Overall Conclusions

The Review applauds the considerable achievements in Wales and England. Both governments have faced the problems of expanding education and training opportunities to meet the social and economic aspirations of our respective societies and the personal aspirations of their future citizens. In Wales, *Learning Pathways* challenges traditional conceptions of learning opportunities; the Welsh Bac demonstrates a more holistic and flexible framework for learning; both Wales and England are pursuing the laudable policy of collaborative partnerships between schools and colleges, health and social services, formal and informal learning systems, employers and independent training providers. So much that is praiseworthy is happening.

However, there is not the progress which one might expect from so much investment. Perhaps governments are trying to do too much – bearing in mind that educational ‘failure’ cannot be totally disconnected from wider social and economic contexts. Or perhaps there are things not quite right in both the policies and the implementation of those policies.

The Review, therefore, in looking to the future, makes five over-arching demands, some of which are already being implemented in different degrees and in different ways within the Welsh and English systems:

*The re-assertion of a broader vision of education* in which there is a profound respect for the whole person (not just the narrowly conceived ‘intellectual excellence’ or ‘skills for economic prosperity’), irrespective of ability or cultural and social background, in which there is a broader vision of learning and in which the learning contributes to a more just and cohesive society.

*System performance indicators ‘fit for purpose’*, in which the ‘measures of success’ reflect this range of educational aims, not simply those which are easy to measure or which please certain stakeholders only.

*The re-distribution of power and decision-making* such that there can be greater room for the voice of the learner, for the expertise of the teacher and for the concerns of other stakeholders in the response to the learning needs of all young people in their different economic and social settings.

*The creation of strongly collaborative local learning systems* in which schools, colleges, higher education institutions, the youth service, independent training providers, employers and voluntary bodies can work together for the common good – in curriculum development, in provision of opportunities for all learners in a locality and in ensuring appropriate progression into further education, training and employment.

*The development of a more unified system of qualifications* which meets the diverse talents of young people, the different levels and styles of learning, and the varied needs of the wider community, but which avoids the fragmentation, divisiveness and inequalities to which the present system is prone.

Behind such over-arching demands, there is a more detailed story to be told. A summary of that story is given below, together with many recommendations which are listed at the end. However, the divergence between Wales and England is both significant and instructive. And the ‘Overall Conclusions’ outlined above, the suggested ‘Fresh Thinking and New Policies’ outlined below, and the ‘Recommendations’ at the end do not apply in the same way to both systems. First, we give an overview of the distinctively Welsh developments.

## **The Welsh Perspective**

The Review constantly points to the ways in which the newly devolved system of education and training in Wales has been addressing, in different and distinctive ways, the problems facing both countries. The reasons for this can be best summed up by reference to the Webb Report (2005) (1.20) on further education in Wales.

The UK has a poor record for embedding vocational alongside academic learning, comparing unfavourably with European neighbours. Practical and experiential learning seem increasingly to have been curtailed by a variety of obstacles. Wales must break with its UK inheritance in both these respects if it is to make the promise of entitlement real for all.

Indeed, Wales, until 1999, shared with England the same attempts to address the problems, which are by no means new. Nor are many of the proposed solutions. The Newsom Report, forty years ago, spoke of ‘half our future’. That ‘bottom half’ is still a cause of concern. So many young people leave school inadequately prepared for further study or training. A significant proportion is ‘Not in Education, Employment or Training’ before they reach the age of 19 (joining what is referred to as the ‘NEET group’). To meet these problems, there have been, since the publication of the Newsom Report, constant changes to qualifications, a plethora of ‘vocational’ options, reform of apprenticeships, introduction (and continuous revision) of a national curriculum, and repeated attempts to create partnerships with employers. But all this smacks of circular motion rather than progress. One can see why the Webb Review suggested that ‘Wales must break with its UK inheritance’

Since 1999 the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has promoted distinctive programmes (now through the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills - DCELLS), particularly in relation to:

- a broader vision of learning and of ‘well-being’, as set out in its 2002 publication ‘14-19 Learning Pathways and Beyond’, with emphasis on ‘individual learning pathways’ and a ‘learning core’ of wider key skills, personal and social education and work experience. The humanities are part of that ‘core’, through the study of ‘Wales, Europe and the World’;
- a more unified system of qualifications, providing greater choice and flexibility within a coherent framework, reflected in the development of the Welsh Bac;
- greater emphasis on the ‘learner’s voice’ and learning needs, shown in the widespread employment of ‘learning coaches’ and in the Children and Young People’s Assembly for Wales (Funky Dragon);
- the pilot by the General Teaching Council for Wales of a recognised and standardised route for attaining ‘chartered teacher status’ (though not applying to teachers in further education);
- discontinuation of the English approach to assessment for accountability – no longer SATs or league tables;
- the introduction of a skills based curriculum from September 2008.

Perhaps again we might refer to the Webb Review (1.19): ‘Learning opportunities should be as varied as the motivations to learning and the different styles of learning with which learners are most comfortable.’

But there are other aspects, too, which, as in England, equally show a departure from past policy and practice in the imaginative attempt to address a future which promises very different economic, social and cultural conditions. One might point out here:

- emphasis on a broad entitlement to both the so-called academic and the more vocational or practical range of courses – reflected in the document ‘Extending Entitlement’;
- the ‘Transforming Education’ agenda, requiring collaboration between schools and colleges and Careers Wales - through the ‘14-19 Learning Networks’ (what the Review referred to as ‘strongly collaborative learning systems’);
- the Learning and Skills Measure in schools, requiring schools to introduce vocational subjects.

On the one hand, one might see Wales as providing a more favourable context than England for these developments. There is a less complex institutional structure (no academies or specialist schools with their different forms of governance, funding and admissions; a very small percentage of independent schools; equal funding for post-16 provision whether that be in school or college; a stronger tradition than in England of community based schools).

On the other hand, there are inevitably difficulties to be overcome:

- the geographical context of many schools makes it difficult for the 14-19 Learning Networks, within and across all 22 local education authorities, to provide full entitlement;
- the strong tradition, as in England, of school autonomy militates against collaboration in some cases;
- it is difficult to obtain the employer engagement and the work placements, necessary for the full entitlement and the more practical mode of learning;
- because of academic mobility, new qualifications remain bound to the old; GCSEs and A Levels remain; and the value of the Welsh Bac depends upon recognition by universities throughout the UK – irrespective of its educational merits.

Hence, despite the imaginative and often inspiring vision of the future, the outcomes remain disappointing. The ‘break with its UK inheritance’ still leaves Wales comparing ‘unfavourably with European neighbours’ and even with England in terms of measurable outcomes such as those of the PISA; the NEETs remain about 10% of the 17 year olds – a little worse than in England; the rising levels of attainment as measured by GCSE results is insufficient to close the gap with England – even though attainment at the end of the primary stage is higher in Wales.

We need, of course, to be reminded of Basil Bernstein’s claim that ‘education cannot compensate for society’. The economic disadvantage of certain areas creates enormous problems to be overcome. Moreover, the reforms initiated in 1999 inevitably take time to be implemented and to have an effect. And the WAG has set out new strategies for tackling some of these difficulties through the promotion of more practical learning, through the stronger framework for the networks in its recent Action Plan and through the Employers Concordat which underpins increased vocational opportunities.

## **Fresh Thinking and New Policies**

The following summarises the main arguments of the Review which provided an overarching account of both Wales and England. In many cases, however, they reflect in different degrees and in different ways what is happening in the respective systems or in the practices of schools and colleges.

## ***Aims and Values***

As indicated above, *education and training should be guided and inspired by aims and values which are relevant to all young people, irrespective of background, ability and talent*. Such aims respect the young person as a whole, in need not only of intellectual development, but also of a wider sense of fulfilment, self-esteem and hope. They recognize and nurture ‘moral seriousness’ – a sense of responsibility for their future lives, for others and for the wider community.

*Language matters*. The words we use shape our thinking. The Orwellian language (seeping through government documents in England) of ‘performance management and control’ has come to dominate educational deliberation and planning in that country - the language of measurable ‘inputs’ and ‘outputs’, ‘performance indicators’ and ‘audits’, ‘targets’ and ‘curriculum delivery’, ‘customers’ and ‘deliverers’, ‘efficiency gains’ and ‘bottom lines’. One needs to be constantly on guard to ensure Wales remains free of it.

## ***Reflecting the social and economic conditions of education and training***

*Social and economic conditions* inevitably impact upon the attempts of schools, colleges and work-based training providers to raise standards, to develop citizens and to mitigate the ill-effects of disadvantaged circumstances. And parts of Wales, as the Review points out, have suffered acutely from the decline in heavy industry and mining. History shows, however, the limits of educational reform in attempting to solve problems which have a deeper social and economic source.

Those *social and economic conditions* make many schools, colleges and work-based trainers the main providers of that care for the well-being, resilience and self-esteem of young people. This broader responsibility of school and colleges, pursued by countless teachers, could so easily go unrecognized if narrow ‘performance indicators’ are applied.

## ***Overall performance and its measurement***

*Poor rates of participation, high rates of attrition and low levels of attainment* characterise the Welsh and English systems and are reflected in the relatively large NEET category of young people. Furthermore, there is a continuing divide in attainment between socially advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Successive initiatives to increase participation and progression have not had the hoped-for impact. But two cautionary notes: first, fault lies not so much with the education and training programmes as with other factors within the wider social and economic context; second, performance indicators need to take into account the different social circumstances of schools and colleges – and their different missions within that context.

*The variety of institutional arrangements sustained in England, though not in Wales, makes serving the needs of all the learners in a locality difficult. Policy in England has encouraged institutional complexity, with different governance arrangements and often inequitable funding. Such variety of institutional arrangements has not been the case in Wales, and positive steps have been taken to ensure equitable funding. Indeed, there is a common planning and funding system being introduced in Wales for post-16 education. The aforementioned Transforming Education and the Learning and Skills Measures show a different approach.*

### ***Learning, teaching and assessment***

*A broader vision of learning is needed. Learning programmes are too often purely ‘academic’, failing to acknowledge practical and experiential learning – a problem addressed in Wales through its ‘Learning Pathways’. The Review discovered many initiatives building on a broader vision of learning and valuing practical and experiential learning – though struggling to reconcile this with an assessment regime in England which prioritises ‘transmission of knowledge’ and attainment of pre-conceived objectives.*

*A broader vision of assessment follows from a broader vision of learning. The system has in the past failed to reflect the totality of learning and achievement, and focused on that which is more easily measurable. There is evidence in England that it continues to encourage ‘teaching to the test’, thereby impoverishing the quality of learning. Where this is the case, there is a failure to utilise the full range of assessment tools that recognise different dimensions of learning. Wales has, in this respect, progressed along a different track, ridding itself of the SATs and promoting teacher assessment.*

*Teaching quality and the relationship between teachers and learners are central to successful education. This requires a respect for the profession of teaching – for the role of teachers as the custodians of what we value and as the experts in communicating that to the learners. Teachers should be central to curriculum development, not the ‘deliverers’ of someone else’s curriculum. Since devolution, the Welsh Assembly Government would appear to show greater respect for the professional judgement of teachers than is the case in England.*

*An agreed curriculum framework for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century should be sufficiently broad as to recognise the expertise of teachers in adapting teaching to the circumstances of the learners – taking account of their experiences and responding to their needs and aspirations. Such a flexible national framework would include: the forms of intellectual enquiry which enable learners to make sense of the physical and social worlds they inhabit; opportunities to gain a sense of achievement; development of practical and economically relevant capabilities; introduction to issues of profound social concern; information, advice and guidance; and relevance to the wider community into which the young people are entering.*

## ***Qualifications and progression***

*The framework of qualifications* should reflect rather than shape what is learnt, build on successful features of existing awards, move towards a more unified approach, and facilitate flexible routes into higher education, further training and employment. The Welsh Bac provides the framework for such an approach and a model, as argued by the Review, for what could be evolved in England. There inevitably will continue to be a close interrelationship of the awarding bodies in the two countries.

*Advanced Apprenticeships* provide excellent pathways into employment, generating wage premiums as large as degrees in some cases. Apprenticeship is a tradition worth much greater promotion as an alternative to higher education.

*Progression from 14-19 into employment.* Level 1 and 2 qualifications are not the passports to employment they are made out to be. And the possibilities of work-based learning are fewer. Lack of opportunities for entry into further training and employment will be exacerbated by the present recession. Clear, well-funded policies, involving further education and public and private employers, are required so that otherwise disengaged young people might be trained for future employment and remunerated during that training.

*Smooth and clear progression from 14 into higher education* has been a priority. But getting that progression right is not easy. Higher education complains that young people are not well prepared for the more independent study of university. Applicants are faced with an increasing number of Entry Tests in English universities, not subject to regulation and quality control. Despite efforts on the part of HE, entrance requirements and procedures for many courses need to be more transparent – particularly where vocational qualifications are concerned.

## ***Institutional collaboration***

*Organisational arrangements for 14-19 in England* are complex and, as a result of competition for learners, collaboration is fragile. Young learners' entitlement to different kinds of course and training requires, as the respective governments recognise, partnership between schools, colleges, training providers, employers, voluntary bodies and social services. The Review argues for strongly collaborative local learning systems, building on the experience of the highly successful ones already established and being promoted in Wales through its '14-19 Learning Networks. But the difficulties should not be underestimated, especially where geographical location makes collaboration particularly difficult.

## ***Policy development***

*A more integrated and responsive 14-19 education and training system requires a different approach to policy and policy-making.* This would encourage the sustained commitment and involvement of key partners, viz. learners, education professionals, parents, employers and higher education. Decisions should be made as close to the learner as is practically possible, taking into account local conditions and local histories. This will mean a slower pace for national policy development so that all partners can be meaningfully involved at all stages of the policy process.

## Recommendations

In the light of the evidence, we made the following recommendations for both Wales and England. Obviously the significance of each will often be somewhat different for each system.

### *Aims and Values*

1. Aims and values outlined above should be a focus of deliberation at every level of education.
2. Where it occurs, the impoverished language of ‘performance management’ needs to be challenged as we help young people to find value in what is worthwhile, lead fulfilling lives, gain self-esteem, make sense of experience and become responsible members of the community.

### *Reflecting the social and economic conditions of education and training*

3. Each system should recognise and respond to different economic and social conditions which affect learning, while recognising that education cannot compensate for society.

### *Overall performance and its measurement*

4. Performance indicators should be ‘fit for purpose’ – reflecting the broader aims of education and different kinds of learning.
5. These indicators should measure the achievements of learning partnerships as a whole, not solely those of individual providers.
6. The essential contribution of the further education sector should be recognised through performance indicators which reflect further education’s distinctive aims.
7. Performance indicators at every level should encourage the attainment of greater equality between genders, ethnic groups and social classes.

### *Funding*

8. Variation in funding and governance between kinds of providers should be reduced.
9. Predictable and long-term funding should be provided to the voluntary, community agencies and youth service, which are essential partners in the ‘education of all’.

### *Learning and assessment*

10. Greater recognition should be given to practical, active and experiential learning.
11. *Assessment for learning* should be separated from *assessment for accountability*.
12. Teacher judgment, suitability moderated, should be integral to summative assessment.

### ***Teaching***

13. Recruitment, initial training and professional development of teachers need to take into consideration the practical knowledge required for the changing 14-19 phase.
14. Qualifications for school-teaching (QTS) and those for FE (QTLS in England) should be more closely related.
15. Ways should be found for those with much needed practical and work-based knowledge to acquire Qualified Teacher Status.
16. Continuing professional development should be an *entitlement* and located (where appropriate) in professional development centres, run by teachers.

### ***Curriculum***

17. The curriculum framework should introduce all young people to:
  - forms of understanding which make sense of their physical and social worlds;
  - opportunities to excel and to have a sense of achievement;
  - practical and economically relevant capabilities;
  - issues of profound social and personal concern;
  - information, advice and guidance for future career, training and education;
  - knowledge, skills and experience which are relevant to the wider community.
18. Curriculum should be developed co-operatively and locally between schools, colleges and other providers, albeit within a broad national framework.
19. England should learn from the Welsh attempts to incorporate in its “Learning Pathways” a broader and more flexible vision of progression.

### ***Qualifications***

20. England should develop a unified and inclusive qualifications framework that embraces different forms of learning and promotes more choice and greater breadth of study.
21. The Review supports the continued development of the Welsh Bac so that it becomes the organising framework for all 14 - 19 learners in Wales.

### ***Progression – to further training and employment***

22. The apprenticeship brand should be reserved for high quality, employment-based learning.

23. More employers, particularly in the public sector, need to be encouraged to offer apprenticeship opportunities.
24. During the economic downturn, however, it may be necessary for further education colleges to offer more strongly-vocational full-time courses leading to employment.

### ***Progression to higher education***

25. All education and training providers, in conjunction with Connexions, need to develop more effective Information, Advice and Guidance services to ensure an appropriate match between student, provider and course.
26. The growth of independent entrance tests by universities needs to be curbed and the selection needs of higher education institutions reflected, where necessary, in the qualifications framework.

### ***Institutional collaboration***

27. 14-19 education and training should be organised through 'strongly collaborative local learning systems' involving schools, colleges, work-based learning providers, higher education, the youth service, voluntary organisations and employers.
28. Policy levers, such as funding and performance measures, should focus on collective action rather than promoting institutional competition.

### ***Policy development***

29. Initiatives by central government should be scaled down and changes (particularly in curriculum and assessment) made only after full consultation with representative professional bodies and democratically elected representatives at the local level.
30. Agencies responsible for quality assurance in curriculum, assessment and qualifications should be independent of government.
31. More decision-making over curriculum and professional development should be devolved to the local or regional levels of governance.