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AMBITION AND CURRICULUM REFORM

Professor Graham Donaldson

EWC Cardiff 2016





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Creating the conditions for all young people in Wales to experience education of the highest quality requires 2 complex challenges to be addressed successfully –

The Curriculum Challenge -

Creating an inclusive, engaging and challenging set of learning experiences in pursuit of ambitious and agreed purposes of education.

*“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**.”*

Successful Futures 2015

The Realisation Challenge –

Bridging the gap between aspiration and the reality of day-to-day classroom life.

“A major, sustained change programme will be required to convert the recommendations of the Review into practice.”

Successful Futures 2015



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THE CURRICULUM CHALLENGE



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Some Interesting Elements of the

**Agreeing and pursuing relentlessly ambitious goals for all our
young people**

**Raising 'standards' across the board – particularly (but certainly
not exclusively) in basic literacy, numeracy and digital
competence**

Defeating destiny – deprivation/expectation/aspiration

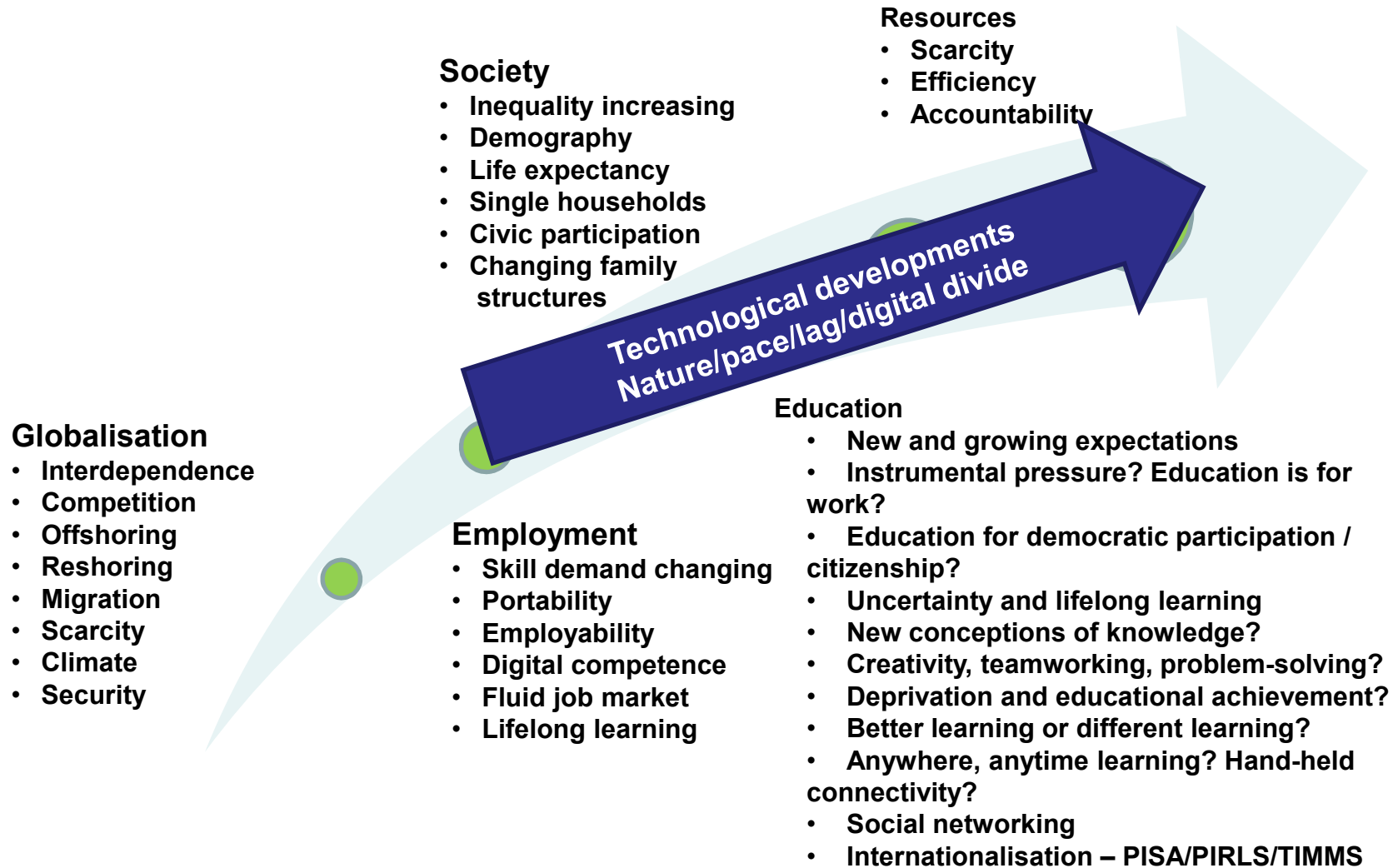
**Establishing a broader, more secure and enduring base of
education before qualifications**

Creating space for engaging teaching and learning

Sustaining high quality and relevant education



'The Velocity is Great'





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Future Opportunities and Challenges?

- New markets and jobs but also volatility, insecurity and migration
- Complexity, diversity and inequality
- Ambiguity and citizenship
- Connectivity, collaboration and cybersecurity
- Personal and collective learning and innovation or obsolescence

“If we teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow.”

John Dewey (1915) *Schools of Tomorrow*



21st Century schooling?

Importance of

- **strong basic skills**
- **deeper conceptual understanding**
- **connected and coherent knowledge**
- **authentic knowledge in context**
- **creativity and problem solving**
- **learning in collaboration and to collaborate**
- **ethics and values**
- **personal agency**

**Move from what students should be learning towards what they should become?
(Priestley and Biesta 2014)**



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CURRICULUM RESPONSES

WALES (2015)

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

SINGAPORE

Confident person;
Self-directed learner;
Active contributor;
Concerned citizen.

SCOTLAND (2004)

Successful learners
Confident individuals
Effective contributors
Responsible citizens

AUSTRALIA

Successful learners
Confident and creative
individuals
Active and informed citizens

FINLAND

Knowledge and skills for life and for further study
Support each pupil's linguistic and cultural identity – passing on the culture
but also create new culture
A tool for developing educational capital and enhancing equality and a
sense of community

ALBERTA

Engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an
entrepreneurial spirit;
Strive for engagement and personal
excellence in their learning journey;
Employ literacy and numeracy to construct
and communicate meaning; and
Discover, develop and apply competencies
across subject and discipline areas for
learning, work

NORTHERN IRELAND

Empower young people to achieve their potential
and to make informed and responsible decisions
throughout their lives;
Develop the young person as an individual, as a
contributor to society, the economy and the
environment

ENGLAND

Provide pupils with an introduction to the essential knowledge they
need to be educated citizens
Introduce pupils to the best that has been thought and said, and help
engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.



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THEMES

- **Ambitious goals**
- **Balance between development of basic skills, subject knowledge, application, creativity and broader preparation for future life**
- **Broader purposes usually relate to lifelong learning, citizenship, creativity/entrepreneurship, personal efficacy**
- **Pervasive tension between purposes and the curriculum as experienced by students**



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THE REALISATION CHALLENGE



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Some Interesting Elements of the Realisation Challenge

**Winning both the hearts and the minds of diverse stakeholders for
ambitious purposes**

**Determining and building on the interaction of non-linear and non-
hierarchical dependencies**

**Sustaining education for all young people that is both high quality
and relevant needs a continuous learning system**

Establishing a dynamic and ambitious leadership culture

**Building the individual and collective capacity of practitioners,
particularly the teaching profession – knowledge creation and
mobilisation**

**Establishing an accountability culture that is constructive and
founded on mutual respect**



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The Reform Conundrum

‘...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

“Cultures do not change by mandate...the process of cultural change depends fundamentally on modeling the new values and behavior that you expect to displace the existing ones.”

Elmore, R (2004) School Reform from the Inside Out Harvard University Press



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Addressing the Conundrum

Agreed, inspiring, ambitious and driving purposes
Curriculum not imprisoned by the past or the context
Embodies principles of exploration & subsidiarity
Confident, expert & empowered teaching profession
Active and extended collegiate culture
Distributive leadership
Constructive accountability/evaluation



**A revitalised and energised teaching and learning
community**



**Broad experiences, better outcomes & higher
standards for our young people**



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KEY FEATURES OF THE WELSH APPROACH TO BOTH CHALLENGES

Strategic and inclusive approach based on agreed purposes

Focus on deep learning, the ability to apply learning creatively and the development of personal qualities

Not top-down but collaborative, all-Wales reform – subsidiarity and the pioneer network

Reflects current evidence about successful reform in pluralistic cultures

Recognises the need to take time to build understanding and ownership

Strong commitment to capacity building and professional learning

Critical importance of leadership at all levels

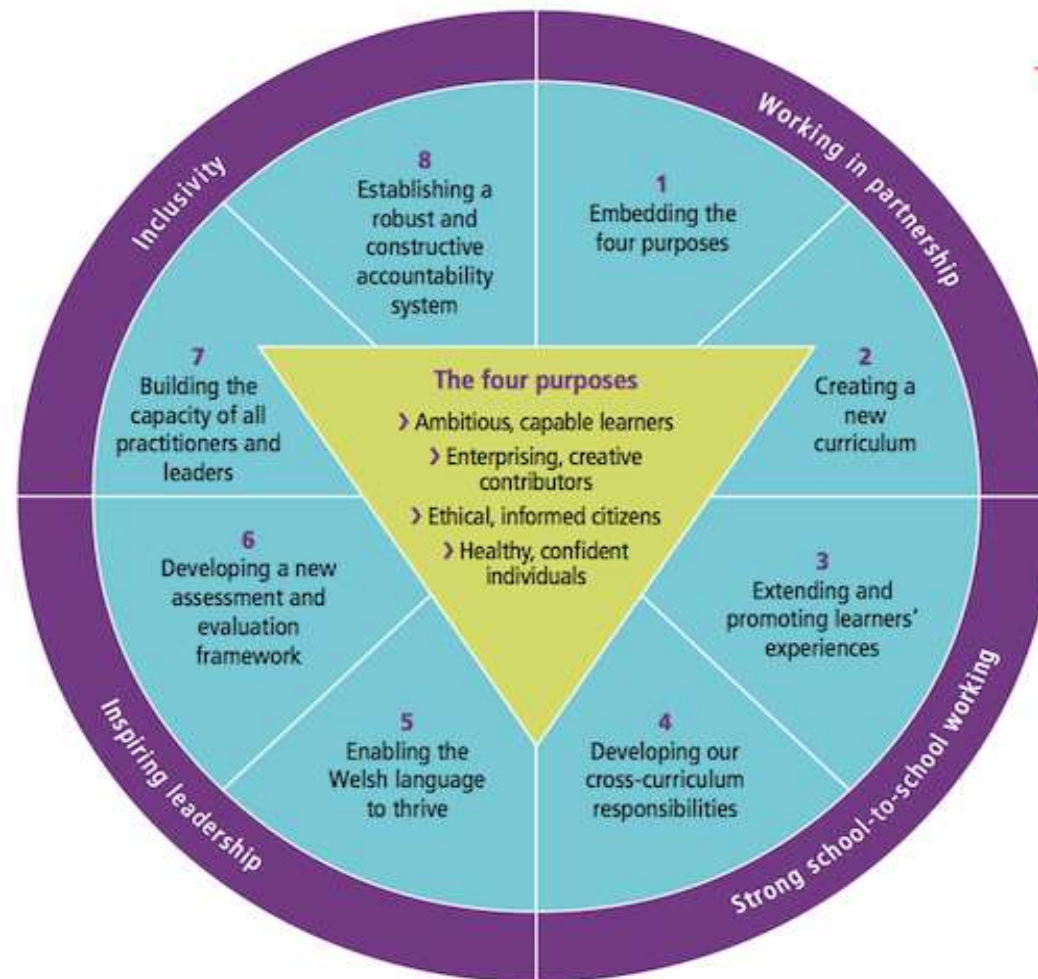
Synergies across development and accountability



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A Curriculum for Wales - A Curriculum for Life

Building our national curriculum together – a curriculum
for Wales, a curriculum for life



Text