

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Hynt y gwaith gan Lywodraeth Cymru wrth ddatblygu Cwricwlwm newydd Cymru | Welsh Government's progress in developing the new Curriculum for Wales

CR 19

Ymateb gan: ColegauCymru
Response from: CollegesWales

Introduction

ColegauCymru is pleased to respond to the National Assembly for Wales' Children, Young People and Education Committee's Inquiry into the Welsh Government's progress in developing the new Curriculum for Wales. ColegauCymru is a post-16 education charity, promoting the public benefit of post compulsory education and learning.

Observations

General:

ColegauCymru welcomes the holistic approach to learning outlined in the proposals in the Donaldson Review - 'Successful Futures'. The reforms, if successfully implemented, should result in learners who are better equipped for the Further Education (FE) approach to learning.

On behalf of the Further Education sector in Wales, in autumn 2017, ColegauCymru was commissioned by Welsh Government to conduct an intelligence gathering exercise on the implications of 'Successful Futures'. Specifically, the Welsh Government sought the views of the FE sector on two key aspects:

- The implications of the recommendations outlined in Successful Futures for the FE sector; and
- The role of the FE sector in developing and implementing the new curriculum.

The output from the exercise was a report presented to Welsh Government in March 2018. This contained a series of recommendations to the Welsh Government, Further Education Institutions in Wales, schools and other organisations with an interest.

The main recommendations to Welsh Government included (but were not limited to):

- As a matter of urgency, ensure the involvement of the FE sector in the six working groups established to develop Areas of Learning and Experience;
- Establish systematic and coherent channels of communication with the FE sector about developments in the implementation of Successful Futures;
- Consider the implications of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements for existing 16-19 vocational and academic qualifications;
- Use the experience and expertise of staff in the FE sector to help schools and regional consortia meet the challenges of the new curriculum and assessment proposals.

The first of these recommendations was implemented relatively quickly with one FE representative being identified via ColegauCymru to join each AOLE from May 2018. However, systematic, coherent and consistent channels of communication with the FE sector about developments in the implementation of 'Successful Futures' have not been established and it is important that this are addressed. Plans are in place for Welsh Government officials to update ColegauCymru's Curriculum and Quality Group and Principals' Forum in January 2019.

There does not appear to be any guidance to the FE representatives on the AOLEs about feeding back to the sector more widely or agreed Welsh Government processes for doing so. In the absence of this, ColegauCymru has coordinated short termly updates from each of the six FE representatives that are circulated to our Curriculum and Quality Group. The FE representatives report that the work has been intense but interesting. There has been one change of representative on the Health and Wellbeing AOLE.

Following positive progress and engagement around the information gathering exercise undertaken in late 2017/early 2018, it is disappointing that this has not led to the structured engagement recommended. This would facilitate action on a number of the different recommendations set out in our report to Welsh Government.

The responses to the specific areas of the inquiry below have been informed by feedback from colleges and, where appropriate, the FE representatives on the AOLES.

1. Progress towards producing a draft Curriculum for Wales in time for its publication by the Welsh Government for public feedback in April 2019;

The Further Education representatives noted that overall, good progress has been made in relation to producing the draft Curriculum. They valued the discussion, the input of experts (although messages were occasionally conflicting), and emphasised the need for the FE sector to be engaged and feedback on the proposals when published.

2. The role of Pioneer Schools and any opportunities and challenges in their involvement in curriculum design;

ColegauCymru is not aware of any formal process of connecting Pioneer Schools to FEIs.

3. The latest position regarding the work of the Working Groups which have been established for each of the six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE);

The Further Education representatives on the AOLES reported that as of November 2018 – all AoLEs have sent submissions to the Curriculum & Assessment Group (panel of experts, chaired by Donaldson) for feedback and are currently acting on feedback.

Additional meeting dates have been added in order to for the work to be completed on time. Participation is now expected in Spring 2019 term.

4. The involvement of academic and other external expertise in informing curriculum design;

The FE representatives noted the expert input provided by academics, including University of Glasgow and CAMAU, and that several academic papers relating to the disciplines have been presented and used to shape learning outcomes and priorities. Estyn have also taken a role in guiding the writing of the curriculum with the curriculum pioneers. The area of Additional Learning Needs was identified as needing further consideration.

5. How the 'What Matters?' statements, published in December 2017, are evolving into the design of curriculum content in each of the six AoLEs;

Feedback from the FE representatives on the AoLEs demonstrated the differences in developments across the AoLE groups. An area of concern was raised in relation to wellbeing in the 'What Matters' statements relating to Expressive Arts where wellbeing and mental health problems were felt to be a particular issue for the Creative Industries. More could potentially be included within each of the What Matters statements to address this and build resilience.

However, it is vital to note that from an FE perspective, there needs to be clear understanding that not all learners will leave school at 16 having successfully reached all of the achievement outcomes for Progression Step 5 and that FEIs can and should continue this progressive journey for learners.

FEIs and secondary schools will need to work together locally and regionally for this curriculum to provide successful futures for all pupils, and the implementation phase needs to include a degree of planning for this. This raises the question of whether, as a nation, we should only be developing an innovative curriculum up to age of 16 or if this should be extended?

There needs to be more consistent discussion and involvement of the post-16 phase across the AoLEs, with Health and Wellbeing being raised as a specific concern.

6. Progress in defining achievement outcomes at the various progression steps within the new curriculum;

Reported progress has differed across AoLEs and consistency across all six AoLEs was raised as an issue.

7. How the development of the new Curriculum for Wales is aligning with the development of the new national professional learning offer for teachers;

The Further Education sector must be kept informed about, and engaged with, the new national professional learning offer for teachers and its implications/opportunities for the FE sector. There is a need to consider the impact of PGCE and further teaching qualifications, with PGCE validations potentially needing to be overhauled in light of new teaching methods.

One of the FE representatives noted concerns raised by teachers at KS2 level regarding the training at PGCE level of new teachers in relation to Wellbeing. Previously, this has not been seen as a major focus, yet teachers have indicated that this should be a key area for new *and* existing staff with the introduction of the new curriculum. The experiences and strategies utilised at FE level could be very helpful in this respect if schools and colleges could work collaboratively or share best practice in this area.

8. Communication with schools and teachers of the curriculum development work being undertaken and the engagement of all schools (not only Pioneer Schools);

FEIs should be routinely included in this communication and engagement work. To date, this is inconsistent if it takes place at all.

9. Effectiveness of the governance arrangements, role of the Independent Advisory Group and Change Board, and involvement of the Education Reform Strategic Stakeholder Group;

ColegauCymru has representation on Change Board and the Education Reform Strategic Stakeholder Group.

10. The preparedness of schools and teachers for delivering the new curriculum and to what extent the concepts of Professor Donaldson's Successful Futures review are being tested and carried out already;

An element of nervousness was reported around this, particularly in the Expressive Arts AoLE. Digital Media is an area of concern as this is a form that does not have a tradition of delivery in the compulsory sector. Many representatives from the pioneer schools and from the group of professional learning have voiced doubts that there is sufficient resource or subject specialists in the compulsory sector to sustain this discipline, especially as most seem not to understand the content of Digital Media, other than basic film making. The consensus view seems to be that through subsidiarity, schools will only deliver more traditional elements of Expressive Arts at a local level and as a consequence some of the more innovative elements of Donaldson's vision of the Expressive Arts and learner entitlement within Expressive Arts may not be fulfilled.

11. The role of the Curriculum and Assessment Group in ensuring the development of the curriculum is on track and the outcome of its 'checkpoint' meeting of 13-14 November 2018 to review progress;

No view.

12. Progress in developing new assessment arrangements;

The involvement of Qualifications Wales was highlighted, including in discussions surrounding curricula design. FEIs are keen to know more about what relevant qualifications will look like.

13. The steps being taken to ensure that the new Curriculum for Wales complements other Welsh Government priorities, including (but not restricted to) Cymraeg 2050;

One FE representative noted the embedding of the Welsh dimension and the need for AOLEs to plan a collaborative approach to this issue.

There are significant implications for ongoing work to implement the recommendations from Professor Hazelkorn's 'Towards 2030' report. Any vision for post-compulsory education and training needs to take account of the new types of learners that can be expected from the compulsory system in the years ahead.

Specifically in terms of Expressive Arts, the FE representative noted that the work is impressively focused on the long overdue integration of Expressive Arts throughout the school curriculum. It presents a fantastic opportunity, at a curricular level, to synchronise school pedagogical practice and learner progression with the requirements of FE and HE as well as those of higher apprenticeships and creative employers. In light of this, there are opportunities to consider how the new curriculum aligns with apprenticeships at all levels.

14. Any other issue stakeholders wish to draw to the Committee's attention.

The most significant issue is the transition of learners who have experienced the new curriculum into the post-compulsory system. This cannot be left until the new curriculum is finalised if we want to ensure a smooth transition from learners' compulsory education to their post-compulsory education and training. This transition is multifaceted and includes (but is not limited to) tracking learners, understanding of entry points and CPD.

Training and CPD for Further Education staff will be essential, not least because all AoLEs will include an element of digital knowledge. A significant element of culture change to delivery models will be required in FE and this needs to include a seamless planning period to ensure institutions are ready. CPD for Further Education staff needs to be considered at an early stage.

Following the adoption and progression of learners studying the new curriculum, entry into FE needs to take account of a comprehensive tracking system as learners are likely to be at different progression stages. No decision has been made yet on how learners will be assessed on entry to FE. There is also no decision yet as to what form of assessment will be used for the Donaldson curriculum.

We note the actual delivery to Year 10 in 2025 at schools, with year of entry of 2026 to FE. Transitional funding will be needed and planned before this point. There are different points of progression stages so entry points and entry criteria will be important and impact on annual planning for FEIs.

ColegauCymru and the Further Education sector is keen to continue to support the development, implementation, and importantly integration, of the new curriculum into the wider education system in Wales.