

**INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATION ADVISERS**

**CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE: COMMUNICATIONS AND CURRICULUM  
SUPPORT**

**JOINT PAPER BY THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT & EDUCATION SCOTLAND**

**Introduction**

1. The ICEA's June 2018 report highlighted the need to ensure clarity in relation to the vision and holistic approach of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), and to maintain its place at the heart of our education system.
2. The ICEA report also recommended the Scottish Government work closely with Education Scotland and Regional Improvement Collaboratives to provide additional capacity, within the system, to support sustainable innovation, to support professional collaboration and trust, and to develop regional pedagogical networks.
3. This paper addresses both issues in turn, and asks the ICEA for views on the steps that are being taken.

**The Narrative on Scotland's Curriculum**

4. In responding to recommendations in the ICEA's formal report (June 2018), Scottish Government recognised the need to ensure clarity in relation to the vision and holistic approach of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), which maintains its place at the heart of our education system. To assist in providing greater clarification, and a consolidation of understanding, in relation to Scotland's curriculum, the Curriculum and Assessment Board (CAB) has tasked a sub-group to look at the narrative on CfE with a view to refreshing and updating it.
5. The sub-group has representation from national and local government, practitioners, academia, the General Teaching Council for Scotland, the National Parent Forum of Scotland and the early years and community learning and development sectors and has convened four times to date.
6. In developing the narrative on our curriculum, key considerations have been to produce a framework that:
  - is aimed at professional practitioners as the principal audience but which is also accessible to children and young people, parents, communities, employers and other relevant partners and the wider public;
  - restates the longstanding aims of CfE (including the four capacities) while also updating it to reflect the current context, showing the alignment with other policy drivers and improving the coherence and understanding of the direction of travel for Scottish education; and

- places a greater emphasis on the processes of curriculum making to assist practitioners in taking on-paper principles and ideas and, through sense making in collaboration with peers, translating them into meaningful practice to improve learners' experiences through more effective learning, teaching and assessment.
7. The approach being pursued is the development of a digital and largely visual/diagrammatic representation framed around a why, what and how structure – Why our curriculum? What matters? How we do it? It will be clear and succinct but will allow for effective sign-posting to more detailed guidance, exemplifications and other materials. The sub-group meets again on 7 February and aims to present a draft refreshed narrative to CAB for consideration at its March meeting.

### **Education Scotland's role and functions**

8. Education Scotland's new enhanced role and remit that was announced in the Governance Review - Next Steps in June 2017 enables the Agency to expand and reshape service delivery to impact more directly on Scotland's children, young people and educators. Education Scotland is undertaking some re-organisation to ensure that we are organised to deliver our enhanced role and remit - with a fit for purpose organisation ready to work through a regional delivery model of direct support to the country.
9. The Next Steps document set out a number of ways in which Education Scotland's role and functions will be developed, including:
- strengthening the inspection function;
  - providing a lead role in national support for professional learning and leadership development;
  - increased support for professional learning across the curriculum and education sectors to improve learners' experiences; and
  - having a significant contribution to the development and implementation of Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RIC).
10. Key principles shaping the thinking for delivering Education Scotland's new functions include:
- Delivery to support improvement at three levels - local, regional and national. Regional working, involving Regional Improvement Collaboratives, working with local authorities, regional colleges, partner providers and others, is the foundation for future work and development
  - Collaboration underpins educational improvement at all levels and Education Scotland needs to model this through all its work. This means increased co-construction, joint delivery and shared work, both with partners but essentially within Education Scotland too.
11. The following section highlights some early improvements that Education Scotland is making to curriculum support, as new recruits begin to take up post, with 27 joining at the end of 2018 and a further 12 starting in January 2019. Further recruitment is underway.

## Curriculum support

### Curriculum Design

12. Education Scotland's capacity building work in recent years has resulted in an increasing interest in, and direct asks for, support with curriculum innovation and design. There is evidence of innovative practice in individual schools widening the curriculum offer for young people. This includes greater work-based learning and pathways alongside traditional (academic) progression routes.
13. For example, work with school leaders in Developing the Young Workforce (DYW - 2014) has placed strong, clear emphasis on the original purposes of Scotland's curriculum. This includes, in particular, the four capacities, the entitlements for children and young people, and the four contexts for learning (as set out in Building the Curriculum 3, 2008).
14. Recommendations in the national STEM strategy (2017) and Learner Journey Review (2018) placed further focus on curriculum design, for example the extent to which the curriculum offer and delivery arrangements clearly support current and future ambitions of all learners. Education Scotland has slightly increased its staff in curriculum design to create and promote a common language and purpose across the variety of partners who need to collaborate and co-design their curriculum offers. This includes taking a service design approach, drawing on the expertise of the Service Design Academy at Dundee & Angus College. Education Scotland staff are developing skills and exploring how service design processes can be applied to promote fresh thinking and ideas with practitioners in curriculum design. This is focused on supporting the 'how' of innovative curriculum change, assisting increasing numbers of individual schools and local authorities to grow their curriculum offer, and learning from them what works. That learning is being used to link up schools and partners, and shape the National DYW Leads Network to do the same through connecting strategically the DYW Local Authority leads, the Regional College leads and the Regional DYW Employer Groups.
15. For example, within one Regional Improvement Collaborative, Education Scotland is working with a local authority in redesigning their 'regional offer' across 8 secondary schools, building on the local authority's initial vision. This initiative links directly with a wider project within its RIC (Tayside) on leading curriculum improvement. It is supporting senior and middle leaders to improve how they approach curriculum design and development. The model reflects a system-leadership approach to improvement by creating space for dialogue and a focus on building on current effective practice within the RIC, rather than delivering a prescribed programme.

### STEM

16. Education Scotland's new team of Regional STEM Advisors to support the implementation of Scotland's STEM Education and Training Strategy came into post in early January 2019. This team will play a lead role in the development, coordination and delivery of professional learning within each of the six new Improvement Collaboratives to meet the needs of practitioners. They are

engaging with a wide range of partners to ensure a coherent regional approach to improvement is adopted. This includes partnership working with local authorities, universities, college STEM Hubs, science centres and Developing Young Workforce Regional Employer Groups. This partnership working will build capacity for STEM learning at establishment(s) level, empowering practitioners to introduce engaging STEM contexts that develop a relevant and rich curriculum which equips young people with skills for learning, life and work.

#### Improving Gender Balance and Equalities

17. Education Scotland has also appointed six new Improving Gender Balance and Equalities Officers to work within its new Regional Team structure. They will build on the achievements of our successful three-year pilot project that is challenging the long-standing gender imbalance in STEM subjects and in learner pathways more generally. Work within RICs will develop a gender-based kitemark to promote robust whole-school and community approaches to equality and gender balance.

#### Literacy and numeracy

18. The South West Educational Improvement Collaborative (SWEIC) has a focus on teacher professionalism to improve attainment in literacy and numeracy for all learners through the broad, general education. Education Scotland staff and SWEIC are work in close partnership to enhance teacher confidence in planning learning, teaching and assessment by improving the consistency of teacher professional judgements within CfE levels. As a result, a recent event provided excellent feedback on the success of Quality Assurance and Moderation Officers in enhancing the knowledge and understanding of their peers.

#### Subject-specific support on pedagogy

19. Regional Improvement Collaborative plans submitted to Education Scotland in September 2018 indicate that a subject-specific focus is starting to emerge in all regions. RIC leaders are promoting networks of teachers to develop or extend professional groupings, and this includes peer support in subject areas in the new regional context. This has provided an opportunity for early collaboration with RICs to co-construct support for practitioners on aspects of pedagogy which meet identified needs and reflect practitioners' current contexts. Following a discussion at the Curriculum and Assessment Board (CAB) in October 2018, there is a focus on better progression in learning across subjects from S1 to S3, and into and through the senior phase. Support for the early years and primary stages will follow. Approaches may include: identifying schools willing to share their practice; direct engagement with teachers to agree priorities and co-create materials; and developing statements on good practice in leading progression through learning, teaching and assessment across subject areas.

20. Directors of Education in local authorities have also been contacted with this proposal as it may in some cases be more appropriate for the work to be taken forward at local authority level, rather than across a RIC.

#### Leadership and Professional Learning

21. Education Scotland has continued to prepare and deliver a range of programmes to support key aspects of leadership and professional learning. For example, the

Leading Systems Change programme has been designed collaboratively by the Scottish College for Educational Leadership/Education Scotland, the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland and the Staff College Scotland. This programme supports the delivery of excellence and equity through a whole-systems approach to integrated leadership. The programme is intended for those:

- in senior leadership roles in Scottish Education including those likely to have key roles in RICs, local authorities and national organisations
- committed to deepening their learning about leadership and making behavioural changes that impact positively on the system; and
- committed to sharing learning with colleagues and others.

22. The programme enables small groups of senior leaders to consider and apply alternative approaches to leadership in real, systemic education challenges that they are currently facing. Informed by the latest research and practice into systems leadership in public services, the programme provides an opportunity for participants to use their peers on the programme to determine and work on a specific systems-leadership challenge.

23. Leadership challenges have focused on a number of system issues including:

- a systems approach to improving learning and teaching
- embedding nurture across a local authority
- shifting power from the centre to headteachers through encouraging peer support, improvement planning and evaluation
- building alliances to achieve systems change
- co-construction of a programme of curriculum development
- moving from consultation and engagement to empowerment at a local level
- improving systems through multi-agency working
- developing a sustainable school-led improvement space.

24. A total of 90 people over three cohorts have engaged with the programme to date, including key leaders from Education Scotland and Learning Directorate. Feedback from cohorts 1 and 2 have been very positive

**25. The Council is asked to consider:**

- **the general approach being pursued to refresh the narrative on Scotland's curriculum.**
- **how we can best maximise the impact of a refreshed curriculum narrative and whether there lessons learned from other countries on similar initiatives**
- **whether Education Scotland's early capacity building with Regional Improvement Collaboratives and local authorities reflects the key principles of the new remit and organisation of Education Scotland?**
- **what further approaches would promote and embed collaborative working across a regional delivery model?**

Education Scotland / Scottish Government  
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