

## **PAPER FOR CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE MANAGEMENT BOARD: CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE FOR ALL LEARNERS**

1. This paper provides a broad outline of the main issues, tasks and implications for the current programme strands of Curriculum for Excellence of extending the reference point to all learners as opposed to the current scope of 3-18. It is intended as an introductory paper to scope out our initial thinking.

### **BACKGROUND**

2. Management Board has previously discussed the potential for extending the reference point of Curriculum for Excellence and the Cabinet Secretary has indicated her strong support for such a development. Removing the current age limits from Curriculum for Excellence would certainly be welcomed in many sectors, however, it would also raise significant challenges. We would need to be clear about what we were seeking to extend; how we were defining all learners and the extent to which we should be seeking to proactively promote such an extension or seeking to remove the barriers which currently prevent those interested in engaging with Curriculum for Excellence from doing so.

3. In considering the scope of Curriculum for Excellence it is important that we continue to recognise the breadth of the current programme in delivering for all children and young people 3 – 18 wherever learning is taking place. There is a risk that removing the reference to 3-18 could have the unintended consequence of narrowing people's perception of CfE rather than broadening it and we would need to address this challenge in communications and presentation.

### **ISSUES**

4. In considering the challenges in delivering such a change we need to be clear about what we mean by "**all learners**". By all learners are we meaning those involved in some systematic, organised programme or course of study or training involving the public sector? Such a definition would have implications for the relevance of Curriculum for Excellence in the very early years where children are undoubtedly learners but often not through formal programmes and in other contexts such as some elements of learning within the community, or learning delivered by private training providers. A wider definition would enable these sectors to be drawn in, notably the very early years, but does pose the risk that all learning activity could be seen as being within the scope of Curriculum for Excellence. An alternative would be to refer to an aspiration that **all young people** or indeed **all people** should be successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. Referring to all young people does raise issues about what we mean by 'young people' which risks re-imposing the age restriction in a slightly different form.

5. There are important differences both pre and post 16 and pre and post 18 in terms of legal entitlements and also in how we expect people to approach their learning. As individuals move through their learning there is generally a greater focus on self-direction and the personal responsibility of the individual. It would be important to reflect such a change in both the responsibilities of the individual and of the service providers in language and terminology but also in terms of what elements of Curriculum for Excellence are relevant or appropriate at different stages. In terms of entitlements there are some entitlements which apply to everyone irrespective of age (free health care for example) but in the realm of education the entitlement to free education is limited beyond the age of 18 and there are further caveats within that general entitlement as to what that might mean at different stages.

6. This brings us to the second issue which is what are we talking about extending when we refer to **Curriculum for Excellence** for all learners. Is this about extending the concept of the four capacities so that it can provide a basis for learning across all ages and sectors. The current terminology of the four capacities refers to young people “becoming” successful learners, effective contributors, confident individuals and responsible citizens. Extending the concept to all learners would suggest a greater focus on seeing the four capacities as a driver for continuous improvement. The four capacities already have a wider relevance outwith the education system, given their place in the National Performance Framework, in that all service providers (such as health, social work etc) need to be supporting children and young people to achieve that aspiration and we need to recognise the roles and contributions of other agencies.

7. Some elements of Curriculum for Excellence are already age specific (e.g. entitlement to a broad general education; senior phase) while some are underlying principles which could potentially apply more broadly (e.g. the importance of learning encompassing skills as well as knowledge; importance of assessment supporting learning). However, the detail of these underlying principles will inevitably be different in different sectors.

8. Moving towards a focus on “all learners” (however defined) will certainly impact on a wide range of providers and sectors such as: community learning; youthwork provision; colleges; universities; national training programmes and work-based learning. The current level of enthusiasm for, knowledge and engagement with, Curriculum for Excellence differs across these sectors. The third issue is about the extent to which the focus should be on seeking to remove barriers which may prevent engagement with Curriculum for Excellence for those sectors who are already looking at the applicability of CfE or a more proactive approach. A focus on enabling interested sectors to engage would certainly appear more appropriate given the scale of the issues and range of stakeholders.

9. Further work will be required both within Scottish Government and with stakeholders to identify the impact of extending Curriculum for Excellence to all learners, with regard to existing policies on lifelong learning, skills development, further and higher education and community learning and

development. It is important that any extension of Curriculum for Excellence is not perceived as undermining either the message from the Skills Strategy about the strong economic driver on developing learning and skills or other established policy drivers for lifelong learning.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRENT PROGRAMME STRANDS/KEY TASKS**

10. In thinking about the main tasks and implications for the current programme strands of Curriculum for Excellence I have focused on the 9 programme strands identified in the programme overview presentation from the February Management Board meeting. However, part of the further work which will be required will be to consider whether extending the focus of Curriculum for Excellence highlights any gaps in the current programme or potential to build stronger links with other policy areas.

## **COMMUNICATION, ENGAGEMENT AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

11. This is probably the most significant area in terms of the impact of the change to “all learners”. Our messaging needs to be inclusive, ensuring that our language reflects the breadth of establishments, settings, age and characteristics of learners and providers. It is important that we are mindful of the risk of applying school terminology and principles to adult learning. Indeed the work ‘curriculum’ is often seen as being very associated with a school context.

12. In presenting such a change it would clearly be important to ensure that this was not perceived as interfering in curricula in colleges and universities but about focusing on addressing barriers which prevent interested sectors from embracing the principles of Curriculum for Excellence if they are minded to do so.

## **ASSESSMENT**

13. Assessment can mean different things in different sectors (notably in non-education sectors) and there are strong messages around assessment in relation to Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC). However, in relation to Curriculum for Excellence the focus is on the use of assessment to support learning.

14. The principles and curriculum guidance currently in development relate to the current scope of Curriculum for Excellence. However, there is no reason why those underlying principles could not be extended. The focus of the guidance is on identifying the full array of assessment tools which could be used in a wide range of settings and this would allow for a possible extension beyond the current scope. However, there may be challenges surrounding the reporting of assessment - quality, consistency, interpretation and use of assessment information and potential financial implications of extending assessment tools and models.

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

15. The scope of the qualifications programme stream already extends beyond the current age scope of Curriculum for Excellence with adult learners accessing National Qualification courses and units. While the new literacy and numeracy qualifications are being designed to accredit young people’s literacy and numeracy skills the Cabinet Secretary has stressed the importance of ensuring that the structure and content of these qualifications are sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of both young people and adult learners.

## **SENIOR PHASE**

16. The Senior Phase is defined in Building the Curriculum 3 as encompassing S4 to S6 and there is still a positive case for a specific focus on this age range. However, we may need to think about the nuances around

terminology and to consider the applicability of the principles of delivering the four capacities and skills through the Senior Phase beyond the end of S6. There are real challenges for young people around transition phases, including beyond S6 into higher education and there may be potential to give further consideration to these transition points.

## **RECOGNISING ACHIEVEMENT**

17. In developing the policy around recognising achievement for all learners the applicability of what is being developed beyond 18 and the importance of establishing a single system that follows the learner has been a key factor. However, as young people become older there is likely to be a greater focus on self-direction and management of the process.

## **PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR ALL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

18. This programme strand is at an early stage of development (an initial scoping paper is likely to be presented to the May Management Board meeting) but the focus is on the breadth of the curriculum and ensuring that it does deliver for all children and young people (about delivering an existing commitment/ principle). It will:

- set out the work being taken forward to deliver the commitment in building the Curriculum 3 that every child and young person is entitled to personal support to enable them to gain as much as possible from the opportunities provided by CfE and showing how this will be delivered So that it is consistent with the GIRFEC framework.
- Focus on the importance of establishing shared values and understanding across key agencies working with children and young people which will break down language and cultural barriers between professions while building on work through GIRFEC in supporting children and young people wherever learning takes place and the workforce actions within the early years framework.

As with some other elements of Curriculum for Excellence personal support will look different at different stages and ages given the different legal entitlements to support.

## **SKILLS FOR LEARNING, LIFE AND WORK**

19. The current draft curriculum guidance on skills for learning, life and work has been prepared in line with the current focus of Curriculum for Excellence. However, the principle that learning should deliver skills as well as knowledge extends beyond that current focus although the details will be different in different settings. In relation to skills the focus will be on echoing and support the key messages in the Skills Strategy and making explicit the links between that Strategy and Curriculum for Excellence.

## **CURRICULUM REVIEW**

20. The Experiences and Outcomes were designed for a specific cohort in line with entitlement in Building the Curriculum 3 to a broad general education

but there is potential for applicability outwith that age-range depending on the learning needs of the individual. Similarly existing curriculum guidance documents were clearly drafted on basis of the existing focus of Curriculum for Excellence. In terms of the entitlements set out in Building the Curriculum 3 some of them focused on a specific age range while others have a potentially wider resonance but may look different in different settings.

## **CHANGE MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION**

21. The key element in relation to change management is the importance of building a broader level of understanding across sectors – identifying others (including those outwith education and schools) who have a role in supporting and delivering Curriculum for Excellence and engaging with them in an inclusive and broad approach to change. There is a clear link here with the communications programme strand. Widening the scope may prompt additional demands for support and information which may have cost implications (e.g. on a very basic level access to published documents/information but also if there is a perception amongst some sectors that the government is placing additional requirements on them).

## **ACTION AND NEXT STEPS**

22. This paper seeks to set out some initial thoughts about the implications of the change to encompass 'all learners' and tease out some of the potential issues. Extending the ethos of Curriculum for Excellence could have implications for adult learners, learning providers, practitioners and policy makers (both in policy and funding terms) and there is a need for further work both within Scottish Government and with stakeholders to assess this. Some sectors have already begun to discuss the implications of Curriculum for Excellence and we do need to engage with those sectors to support those discussions and discuss potential barriers.

23. Management Board is invited to:

- Note the emerging thinking on extending the remit of Curriculum for Excellence; and
- Agree that we should identify a small group of key stakeholders, including Colleges, Universities, SDS and local government as well as internal Scottish Government policy colleagues to further develop our thinking on implications, issues and tasks in delivering this change.

QuAS  
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