

THE NUFFIELD REVIEW OF

14-19

EDUCATION & TRAINING

EDUCATION FOR ALL

THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

FOR 14-19 YEAR OLDS

Summary, Implications and Recommendations

The following is a summary of the main findings and recommendations of the Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training in England and Wales. The Review's final report, **Education for All: The future of education and training for 14-19 year olds**, is published by Routledge (2009). It is the largest review of this phase of education since the Crowther Report in 1959. A separate summary is published for Wales, reflecting the distinctive differences emerging in the newly devolved Welsh system.

The Nuffield Review is an independent review of all aspects of 14-19 education and training: aims; quality of learning; curriculum; assessment; qualifications; progression to employment, training and higher education; provision of education and training; governance and policy. It was funded for six years by the Nuffield Foundation, beginning in October 2003. Its many reports and papers are available on the website 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 until 2006 (SKOPE, University of Warwick Business School) and Gareth Rees from 2006 (Cardiff University School of Social Sciences), assisted by research officers Alis Oancea, Stephanie Wilde and Susannah Wright, and administered by Joanne Hazell.

The Key Question

One criticism of policy, frequently met during the course of the Review, was that there have been too many fragmented and disconnected interventions by government which do not cohere in some overall sense of purpose. There is a need in policy, and in the provision and practice of education, for a clear vision of what all these interventions and investments of money and effort are for. What is the overall purpose?

The Review addressed this concern from the beginning. It was, therefore, shaped throughout by the answers to the following 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,
- whether to encourage young people to progress to higher education rather than to sign up for apprenticeships.

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:

- the 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 potentially important for, and (in different degrees) accessible to, all young people, irrespective of social, religious and cultural background. All learners will have to become more rounded, resilient, creative and social, if they are to help shape an increasingly unpredictable and demanding world.

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, employment or higher education.

Overall Conclusions

The Review applauds the considerable achievements in England and Wales. Both governments have faced the problems of expanding education and training opportunities to meet both the social and economic aspirations of our respective societies and the personal aspirations of their future citizens. *Building Schools for the Future* in England is renewing the resource base for 14-19 education; *Learning Pathways* in Wales is challenging traditional conceptions of learning opportunities; the English Diplomas are showing how the curriculum might incorporate practical and sector-related modes of learning; the Welsh Bac demonstrates a more holistic and flexible framework for learning; both England and Wales 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 effort and investment. Perhaps the government is trying to do too much – bearing in mind that educational failure cannot be totally disconnected from the wider social and economic context. Or perhaps there is something wrong in both the policies and the implementation of those policies.

The Review, in looking to the future and in the light of accumulated evidence, makes five over-arching demands:

- *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.

However, behind such over-arching demands, there is a more detailed story to be told and many recommendations, which are listed at the end of this summary.

The Review

Before, however, the threads of that story are given, it is important to say something about the reason for and the nature of the 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. All are now expected to continue in some form of education and training until the age of 18 or 19.

Second, *why a Review?* A range of problems need to be addressed: many young people abandon education as soon as they can; teachers feel constrained by constant and (what they see as) inappropriate interventions from government and by the assessment regime; universities worry about the readiness of young people for higher education; and employers complain about lack of preparation for employment in terms of skills, knowledge and attitudes. Despite many initiatives from the respective governments – many of them being both commendable and effective – much more needs to be done. And in many cases, different policies need to be adopted.

The Review covered England and Wales. Most issues raised pertain to both countries. But, since democratic devolution in 1999, the Welsh Assembly Government has responded to the problems raised in the Review in somewhat different ways. Such differences have been indicated throughout the book, which was produced in the final year of the Review, and are reflected in this summary. However, a separate and more focused summary is also provided for Wales.

The Review was independent, drawing on the help of teachers in schools and colleges, researchers, independent training providers, youth services, voluntary bodies, employers, professional bodies, teachers' unions, and officials at local, regional and national levels, 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), and it is hoped that this will continue to be developed as the debate, initiated by the Review, continues.

A Bit of History

The evidence leads inexorably to the conclusion that too little historical awareness enters into policy-making and government intervention. The problems encountered in 14-19 education and training are not new ones – 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. Where have the lessons been learnt from short-lived initiatives, such as the City and Guilds London Institute 365 courses, Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education, Technical and Vocational Education Initiative, Diploma of Vocational Education, Industry Year, General National Vocational Qualifications? Why, in the endless intervention in assessment, have no lessons been learnt from the extensive research-based developments initiated by the Assessment of Performance Unit in the 1970s and 1980s? And how is the creation of so many different kinds of providers – with different forms of funding and governance arrangements, and with selection in some cases – supposed to enhance the opportunities of all, irrespective of background? Should it be necessary to remind policy makers of the well-rehearsed arguments against a divided education and training system?

Despite, therefore, the many achievements of the respective governments, these are several areas of policy where fresh thinking is required and new policies (including those on how to manage the system) need to be pursued. The evidence and arguments for each of these are developed at length in the book. They are briefly summarised as follows.

Fresh Thinking and New Policies

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) of ‘performance management and control’ has come to dominate educational deliberation and planning – the language of measurable ‘inputs’ and ‘outputs’, ‘performance indicators’ and ‘audits’, ‘targets’ and ‘curriculum delivery’, ‘customers’ and ‘deliverers’, ‘efficiency gains’ and ‘bottom lines’. There needs to be a return to an educational language.

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. 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 educational institutions, though recognized in theory and though pursued by countless teachers¹, too often goes unrecognized in the narrow ‘performance indicators’ by which schools, colleges and work-based training providers are made accountable by government.

Overall performance and its measurement

- *Poor rates of participation, high rates of attrition and low levels of attainment* characterise the English and Welsh 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 three cautionary notes: first, fault lies not so much with the education and training programmes (constantly blamed and then ‘reformed’), as with other factors within the wider social and economic context; second, present performance indicators are no longer ‘fit for purpose’ – failing to reflect the broader aims and values; third, performance indicators also 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 has encouraged institutional complexity - comprehensive alongside grammar; local community schools alongside academies, specialist and trust schools; school sixth-forms alongside sixth-form and FE colleges; tertiary alongside 11-18 school systems – all governed and funded differently and often inequitably. In particular, three points stand out. First, the negative effect of this diversification is to be found in the so-called ‘sixth-form presumption’; expansion of post-16 provision in schools through the development of small sixth-forms reduces choice, lowers attainment and raises costs. Second, the most needy learners – the NEETs – and the voluntary and community sector that helps them (e.g. ‘detached youth workers’) receive least money, typically in the form of short-term initiative-led funding. Third, the FE sector, despite its crucial role in giving a ‘second chance’ to those who have not succeeded earlier, rarely gets due recognition or (in England) equitable funding.

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. 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 which prioritises ‘transmission of knowledge’ and attainment of pre-conceived objectives.

¹ We use the word teacher in its broadest sense to refer also to lecturers in further education colleges and instructors/trainers in work-based learning providers.

- *A broader vision of assessment* follows from a broader vision of learning. The system fails to reflect the totality of learning and achievement, and focuses on that which is more easily measurable. It encourages ‘teaching to the test’, thereby impoverishing the quality of learning. There is a failure to utilise the full range of assessment tools that recognise different dimensions of learning. Moreover, the same assessments are used for distinct purposes: finding out what has been learnt, selecting for different progression routes and providers, and accounting for the performance of the school, college or system. These all require different assessment tools.
- *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.
- *An agreed curriculum framework for the 21st 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.
- *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, 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. There is a need to create strongly collaborative local learning systems, building on the experience of the highly successful ones already established. Such re-organisation could include development of 'federations' or re-organisation into tertiary systems, in order to ensure equity and value for money, as well as learner choice.

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.

In the light of the evidence considered, we make the following recommendations.

Recommendations

Aims and values

1. The aims and values outlined above should be a constant focus of deliberation at every level of education.
2. 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. The systems should recognise and respond to the very 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. The variation between school and college providers in funding and governance 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 enable them to 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 effective 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.