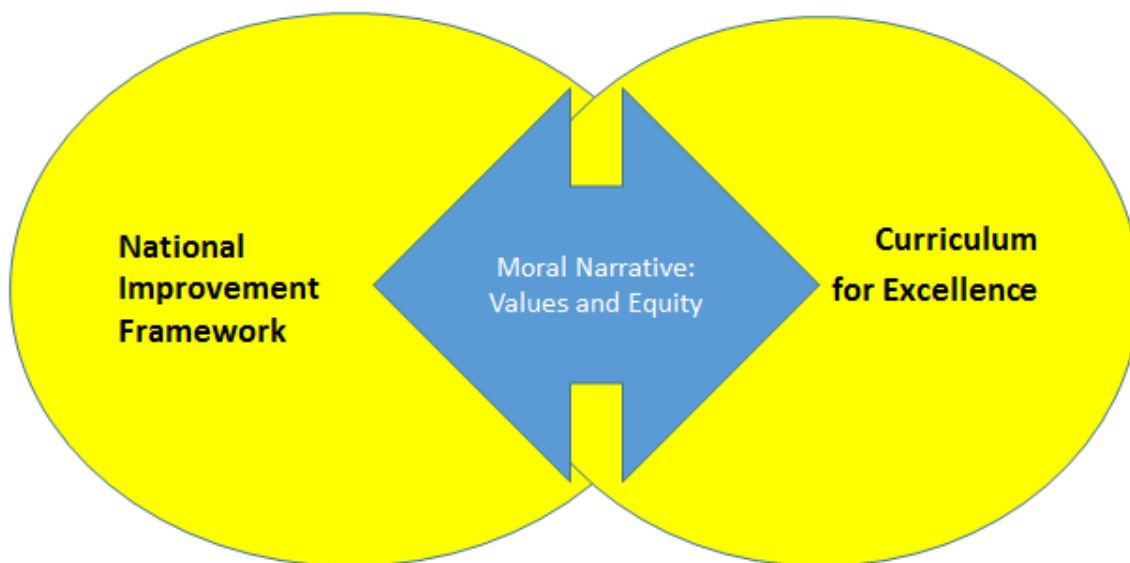


REPORT OF INITIAL FINDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATION ADVISERS MARCH 2017

1. The International Council of Education Advisers (ICEA) was established in 2016 to advise Ministers on how best to achieve excellence and equity in the Scottish education system.
2. At the first meeting on 31 August and 1 September 2016, the ICEA agreed to take forward work examining three key themes:
 - Capacity building in educational leadership and professional learning.
 - Building collaboration and collective responsibility in Scottish education.
 - What works educationally to close the equity gap.
3. The second meeting of the ICEA took place on 27 and 28 February 2017 in Edinburgh, and focussed on those three key themes. Following the conclusion of the meeting, the Council confirmed it would bring forward specific recommendations as to how excellence and equity can be strengthened in Scotland's schools. This report sets out the Council's initial analysis and discussion of the challenges involved, and the action required to make Scotland's education system world class. The Council welcomes this opportunity to share its insights on those areas it has discussed to date.

Key Issues

4. In presenting its thinking to Ministers, the Council has looked at the ethos of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and how that is encapsulated in the vision, the priorities and the drivers of improvement set out in the National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish Education (NIF) published in December 2016.



5. Both CfE and the NIF share a clear and positive narrative of a bold nature which, if applied consistently, will help to raise attainment and close the poverty-related attainment gap. However, the Council was concerned that, in the drive to deliver clarity of purpose for all those involved in Scottish education, there was a risk that education policy was moving away from the “whole child” approach of CfE towards a more specific, measureable approach as required by the NIF. As a result, the Council identified three priority areas where it feels the Scottish Government needs to concentrate its efforts in order to deliver the vision and improvements set out in the NIF, whilst retaining the holistic approach of CfE.

Priority Areas

6. The three priority areas are:
- Improving pedagogy for specific subjects, using clear evidence to identify what works in the classroom
 - Developing effective leadership at all levels in Scottish education– unleashing untapped potential within the system
 - Ensuring a culture of collaboration exists throughout Scottish education, at classroom, school, regional and national level.
7. In considering these areas, the Council acknowledged that Scotland’s education system had a lot of strengths. However it is clear that if Scotland wants to build a world class system, further improvement is required.
8. In particular, the Council felt that teaching was a well-established and respected profession in Scotland, and that there was clear evidence of collaborative intent throughout the education system. However, the Council felt that collaboration was uneven and was not sufficiently ingrained throughout the education system. They cited the Northern Alliance, which comprises the 7 northern and island councils: Aberdeen

City, Aberdeenshire, Highland, Moray, Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles, as a good example of partnership activity, and suggested that this needed to be developed further, and extended throughout the country.

9. The Council also mentioned the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL) as an excellent resource for developing educational leadership, as well as the Scottish Government's commitment to improvements in teacher education. The Council was keen to establish a way to harness what they saw as the power and performance of school leaders, and make sure they are not being overlooked via the traditional promotion and employment routes. There was a concern about the level of untapped leadership potential within schools, and how that could be utilised more effectively.

10. To that end, the Council made a number of recommendations.

Recommendations

11. In order to improve pedagogy for specific subjects, using clear evidence to identify what works in the classroom, the Scottish Government should:

- Establish and fund a network of proven and well-trained teaching professionals who are highly accredited for their pedagogy but also have a strong knowledge of the community/health and wellbeing aspects of CfE.
- Identify a systematic, sequenced and selective plan for literacy and numeracy that ensures they can both be delivered across the curriculum rather than in isolation.
- Consider expanding the role of universities to work more closely with schools in the spirit of collaborative inquiry.

12. In order to develop effective leadership at all levels in Scottish education— unleashing untapped potential within the system, the Scottish Government should:

- Consider providing a greater financial incentive to encourage teaching professionals to take on greater leadership roles and, in particular, to apply for headships.
- Establish clear, broad and multiple career pathways for teaching professionals, and look at ways for teachers to progress while remaining in the classroom (e.g. as a teacher mentor employing leadership skills within a classroom environment) other than the more administrative route to headteacher.
- Establish a clear structure for bringing together leaders from across the teaching profession, local authorities, business etc, at a regional level in order to share learning.

13. In order to ensure a culture of collaboration exists throughout Scottish education, at classroom, school, regional and national level, the Scottish Government should:

- Consider incentivising collaboration by making it one of the required criteria for any financial programme e.g. future iterations of the pupil equity fund.

- Establish a national training programme on how to collaborate fully i.e. “working together not just talking together”.
- Look at creating federations of schools with similar demographic challenges to provide advice and support to one another – this can be done on a simple collaborative basis or on a more formal standing with shared headteachers or “chief executives” across a number of schools.

14. In addition to the priority areas, at the Deputy First Minister’s request, the Council also made some recommendations around the issue of governance. The Council felt that it was important to consider how to de-clutter the system without damaging it. The Council advised against becoming too focussed on changing the structure of the education system when, arguably, the more important aspects are the culture and capacity within the system. In particular the Scottish Government should:

- Learn from existing attempts to formally share education services between local authorities e.g. the Northern Alliance, and other forms of non-structural regionalisation that have been successful internationally.
- Create learning hubs around the country where education professionals can go to learn about different elements of educational practice.

Future Work Programme

15. Looking forward, the Council will continue to focus on how the talent and capacity of everyone involved in Scotland’s education system can be harnessed to remove the obstacles of disadvantage or poverty, and deliver wider improvement. The Council will report more formally in 2018 (at the end of the current 2 year appointment of the Council) on the action required to make real practical progress in delivering the Scottish Government's vision for Scottish Education.

[] March 2017