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## So Far So Good: Building the Evidence Base to Promote a Successful Future for the Curriculum for Wales

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# So Far So Good: Building the Evidence Base to Promote a Successful Future for the Curriculum for Wales

**October 2020**

The University of Glasgow  
with the University Of Wales Trinity Saint David

**University of Glasgow:** Louise Hayward, Kara Makara, George MacBride, David Morrison-Love and Ernie Spencer

**University of Wales Trinity Saint David:** Jan Barnes, Heddwen Davies, Sioned Hughes, Nanna Ryder, Elaine Sharpling, Dave Stacey and Rachel Wallis



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The researchers would like to thank the teachers, headteachers, Government and Consortia AoLE Leads and Welsh Government policy colleagues who gave so generously of their time to provide the evidence on which this report is based. They continue to play a major part in promoting a Successful Future for the Curriculum for Wales.

The University of Glasgow and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David assert their joint ownership of the intellectual property rights related to this publication.

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## Executive Summary

This Executive Summary presents high level messages which emerge from the analysis and synthesis of the findings of surveys and interviews with members of every Area of Learning Experience Group (Section 1) and interviews with senior policy makers (Section 2).

Section 3 of this report (using evidence to promote a Successful Future for the Curriculum for Wales) provides more detail on ideas that are important for The Curriculum for Wales to be successful in future. In the spirit of co-construction, all readers are invited to consider this Section 3 and to discuss within their own communities possible implications for sustainable long term change:

- what contributions they might make to ensure that currently successful aspects within an existing programme are sustained and
- how participants might work collaboratively to address areas likely to raise the level of risk to programme success.

### Findings

The worldwide COVID pandemic has resulted in unprecedented levels of change in education systems internationally. However, the purposes-led approach that Curriculum for Wales seeks to build has never seemed more relevant. These purposes are relevant not only for learners but for everyone involved in the Curriculum for Wales.

### Building a successful future for a Curriculum for Wales: so far so good

- There is much that is positive in the findings that emerge from this report.
- There remains strong commitment to critical engagement with Curriculum for Wales amongst all communities

### What is it crucial to sustain in the next phase of development?

- A clear focus on the purposes
- The use of evidence from policy, practice and research to inform thinking
- A focus on learning with curriculum, pedagogy and assessment promoting and supporting progression in learning
- All programme participants as learners
- Co-construction and subsidiarity as the modus operandi of Curriculum for Wales.

### What might need further thinking or greater emphasis?

The authors of this report acknowledge that the research focus may have led to a concentration on particular aspects of the programme. However, six themes emerged for either further thinking or greater emphasis

- Shared understanding of key ideas
- Progression
- Assessment
- Co-construction and subsidiarity
- Coherence, policy and systemic integrity
- Professional learning.

Given its potential impact on education in Wales, it can be argued that the Curriculum for Wales represents exceptional value for money.

## Introduction

*So Far So Good: Building the Evidence Base to Promote a Successful Future for the Curriculum for Wales* is the final report from the CAMAU Research Project to the Welsh Government.

The CAMAU project was a collaboration between the University of Glasgow (UofG) and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD), funded by the Welsh Government and UWTSD. The focus of the CAMAU project is progression. It takes its starting point from *Successful Futures* (Donaldson, 2015) and *A Curriculum for Wales – A Curriculum for Life* (Welsh Government, 2015a) and builds on the work of the Progression and Assessment Group (Welsh Government, 2017a). The Project has sought to support the development of the new Welsh curriculum, published as *Curriculum for Wales* (Welsh Government, 2020), by providing evidence to respond to the following research questions:

1. How might curriculum, progression and assessment be conceptualised and developed in this context to promote better alignment between research, policy and practice?
2. In what ways do models of curriculum progression relate to progression in learning derived from empirical evidence within classrooms?
3. To what extent, and in what ways, is it possible to conceptualise assessment as the use of evidence to enable future learning, as ‘progression steps’, rather than as a summary of past achievement?
4. What implications arise from the CAMAU work with Areas of Learning and Experience that will be essential to consider in the next phase of the programme (i.e. implications for professional learning)?
5. What implications arise from this exploratory partnership project for research, policy and practice in Wales and beyond?

The CAMAU Project was strongly informed by the principle of subsidiarity identified in *Successful Futures* (Donaldson 2015) as fundamental to the development and practical enactment of the new Welsh curriculum. The researchers sought to design a project that was consistent with that principle and from initial formulation of ideas about descriptions of progression in each AoLE to on-going practical enactment in schools, attempted to work in ways that remained consistent with subsidiarity. At the heart of the CAMAU project is an extended, dynamic, continuous, iterative process, in which thinking and decision-making have been and will continue to be influenced by all three factors of policy aspirations, research information and practitioners’ experience of their pupils’ learning.

Subsidiarity and co-construction remain key principles in Welsh Governmental plans to inform the further development and enactment of the curriculum. The COVID 19 pandemic has brought new challenges but, we would argue, make the vision of The Curriculum for Wales all the more relevant and the principles of subsidiarity and co-construction all the more important in plans to enact the curriculum in the range of different ways necessary to meet the needs of every child and young person in Wales. Teacher professionalism lies at the heart of the Curriculum for Wales. This has been key to the success of the programme to date and will remain key to its future success. The metaphor of education in Wales being on a journey may be over-used but it is accurate. Transitioning from a

system that many would describe as accountability dominated to one that is professionally led is a major challenge. However, the first phase of the programme has shown what is possible. The findings reported here seek to understand where this first phase of programme development has had success, why that happened and what needs further attention for The Curriculum for Wales to remain 'So far so good'. This report, in particularly section 3, is intended to provide formative information for use by policy makers and practitioners as they carry these processes forward, rather than to report definitive summative findings.

As part of this process of providing formative information, the earlier report of the CAMAU research project, *Learning About Progression* (Hayward et al., 2018), was presented as a suite of resources designed to provide evidence to support the building of learning progression frameworks in Wales. *Learning About Progression* provided much evidence, derived from research and policy across the globe, related to Research Questions 1 and 3 above. Evidence directly related to Research Questions 2, 4 and 5 derives rather from research into the processes in which participants in the curriculum development programme participated as they engaged in the work. This Report seeks to draw together the evidence about these processes of engagement. Its purposes are to:

- give a detailed account of the thinking of those involved in the development process: AoLE Group members, AoLE leads and senior civil servants
- describe and analyse the complex of interacting factors which influenced their thinking
- identify key principles and factors likely to be significant for the effective enactment and continuing development of the curriculum in schools
- make recommendations to the Welsh Government on how this continuing development can be supported
- provide information to the Welsh Government on implications for future policy development and enactment processes.

To achieve these purposes this Report draws on the following sources:

- information gathered from two categories of 'Pioneers' in the later stages of the development process and, therefore, before final publication of Curriculum for Wales Guidance –
  - a) members of each of the Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) groups which developed the new curriculum;
  - b) those who were to contribute to the professional learning of practitioners across Wales as they considered how to enact the curriculum;
  - this information was obtained through
    - an online survey of both types of 'Pioneer'
    - interviews with individual teachers, Welsh Government Leads and Consortia Leads from each of the AoLE groups involved in the development work.
- information gathered in interviews with senior civil servants who had lead roles in the curriculum development process, shortly after publication of Curriculum for Wales Guidance.

The information from the two categories of 'Pioneer' teachers and AoLE Leads is considered in Section 1 of this Report and the information from the policy representatives is considered in Section 2. In each case a summary of key findings and implications is included. Section 3 of the Report summarises high level messages and offers evidence for Welsh Government and others with



leadership roles in Welsh Education to consider as they plan the next phase of The Curriculum for Wales.

The design of the CAMAU project builds on theoretical work on change (Senge & Scharmer, 2001; Senge et al., 2005; Scharmer, 2009; Fullan & Quinn, 2015; Fullan, 2015; Sohmen, 2016); Hubers, 2020) and on the empirically derived Integrity Model of Change (Hayward and Spencer, 2010). This model argues that for change to be meaningful and sustainable, project design must pay attention to three main areas:

- educational integrity (a clear focus on improving learning)
- personal and professional integrity (participants have a significant role in the construction of the programme, rather than being passive recipients of policy directives)
- systemic integrity (coherence in development at all levels of the education system).

The authors recognised that the three aspects of integrity (educational, professional and personal, systemic) are interdependent and each relates to every community involved in the development. Thus, educational integrity is as important to a policy maker or a researcher as to a practitioner although the emphasis may vary depending on the different roles and responsibilities; personal and professional integrity is a concern for all – the design is based on learning for all involved, policy makers, practitioners, members of wider communities and researchers; systemic integrity is far more than just a policy concern – e.g. as the interdependencies impact on what practitioners will focus on in classrooms, on how they will do so and on the kinds of learning experiences learners are likely to have.

We recognise that the understanding of personal integrity must extend to encompass recognition of the rights of learners to have a significant role at all stages of development and enactment of education policies and practice (cf. Charteris & Thomas, 2017; Lundy, 2007; McArthur, 2018). A separate report prepared by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David provides initial consideration of means of doing so.

As a final sense check for the report, a draft of the text was shared with two further colleagues who have been centrally involved in different roles within the programme. They were asked to offer comments on the draft to identify whether, in their view, any key ideas had been omitted or if, inadvertently, as researchers we had misinterpreted findings from the perspectives of policy or practice. Their feedback has been incorporated into the text.

While the focus here remains primarily on the Welsh education system as the country continues to develop and enact Curriculum for Wales in all schools, we believe that its ideas will be valuable to other education systems as they engage with the demands of complex curriculum change. Section 3 of this report is intended to be used as a stimulus for discussion in ways that are consistent with the principles of subsidiarity and co-construction. Readers are invited to consider the findings reported and to discuss within their own communities and contexts possible implications for the development and enactment of policy and practice aimed at improving learning processes and outcomes for all learners. We hope that this report will support participants to consider the contributions they might make both to ensuring that currently successful aspects within an existing programme are sustained and to working collaboratively to address areas or issues which may put at risk successful enactment of a development programme.

### **A note on terminology**

To avoid awkwardly complex grammatical structures we consistently use the word **school** to refer to all educational establishments in Wales for which Curriculum for Wales will be relevant: these include not only *schools* but also *funded non-maintained nursery settings*, *pupil referral units (PRUs)* and *the provision of education other than at school (EOTAS) in other settings*.

We employ the word **practitioner** to refer to all those who work with young people in educational establishments, including in particular teachers, particularly when referring to the future; at times when we describe our research we refer to *teachers* as all our interviewees who were participants in the AoLE groups were in fact employed as teachers.

We usually use the word **learner** to refer to all the children and young people in school; where there are references specifically to schools in Wales, we sometimes employ the word *pupil* in accordance with Welsh practice. We sometimes use *pupil* or other phrases to avoid awkward phrasing.

For clarity of reference, we have used initial capitals for the labels or names of components of Curriculum for Wales as published in January 2020: e.g. the Four Purposes; Area of Learning and Experience; Statement of What Matters; Descriptions of Learning; Progression Step; National Literacy and Numeracy Framework. In contrast we have used lower case initials when less specific reference seems intended or reference to working terms not adopted in the final documentation, reflecting the developing thinking through the programme: e.g. framework of progression; statement of progression; description of progression; achievement outcomes what matters (in a general sense).

We on occasion use the plural personal pronouns **they**, **them** and **their** to refer back to gender neutral nouns, even in the singular, such as *practitioner*, *teacher*, *pupil*, *learner* not only to avoid again the awkward repetition of the more traditionally used *him/her*, *s/he* etc but also to avoid compromising the anonymity of interviewees. Thus we write: 'A Government Lead reflected on differences in their own role'.

## **Section 1: AoLE Groups – survey of participants and interviews with leads**

## **A. Introduction and methodology**

This section of the Report draws on two sources:

- an online survey of two categories of ‘Pioneers’ – a) members of each of the Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) groups which developed the new curriculum; b) those who were going to contribute to the professional learning of teachers across Wales as they considered how to enact the curriculum
- interviews with individual teachers, Welsh Government Leads and Consortia Leads from each of the AoLE groups involved in the development work.

Its purposes are to:

- Describe the complex of interacting factors which influenced the thinking of the AoLE group members during the work.
- Identify key factors likely to be significant for the effective enactment and continuing adaptation/development of the curriculum.

### **A1. Survey process, participants and analysis**

The online survey developed by the CAMAU project was introduced to the Curriculum Pioneers and Professional Learning Pioneers at a regular scheduled workshop for all AoLE Groups on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2019. Before requesting completion of the survey, CAMAU team members introduced its purpose to the six AoLE groups. The survey was provided in both English and Welsh (preferred version selected by each participant) and distributed through the JISC Online Surveys platform, following ethical guidelines from the University of Glasgow and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. The first page contained information about the project and explained the voluntary nature of the survey and how data would be kept confidential (participant information sheet). This was followed by a second page containing a consent form where participants ticked a box to indicate if they consented to proceed with the survey.

Core areas for questioning were derived from the CAMAU project research questions (Appendix 1) to inform understanding of what would be valuable to the on-going development process. Appendix 2 contains a copy of the survey questions in two sub-divisions, one set for those Pioneers involved in the initial development of the curriculum framework, the other for those who would be active leaders of professional learning in the early enactment of the curriculum. The coverage of issues can be summarised as follows.

The curriculum development pioneer teachers were asked to reflect on:

- (i) the process of co-constructing the curriculum and challenges within this process
- (ii) the role and usefulness of research in the development of thinking
- (iii) the role and usefulness of policy in the development of thinking
- (iv) the role and usefulness of practice in the development of thinking
- (v) a comparison of the relative influence of each of these aspects
- (vi) reflection on shifts in their thinking and implications for moving forward to enact the curriculum.

Teachers in the professional development pioneers were asked to reflect on:

- (i) their familiarity with the idea of learning progression and how this has changed over time
- (ii) their understanding of the purpose of learning progression and influences on this understanding
- (iii) the professional learning needed to help teachers understand the implications of progression for assessment.

172 survey responses were received:

- Curriculum Pioneers (i.e. members of the AoLE Groups involved in the development work),  $n = 107$  (17 in Welsh; 90 in English)
- Professional Learning Pioneers,  $n = 65$  (11 in Welsh; 54 in English).

The identification of key points in the survey responses was undertaken through a process of reading and re-reading by experienced researchers, supported by content analysis using the Word 'search' facility.

The report of findings below focuses on those themes that may be particularly relevant for the further development and enactment of the new curriculum. Where numerical data were collected in the survey, these are reported using descriptive statistics relevant to each theme. Where open-ended information was gathered, this is used in the commentary on each theme, along with points from the interviews with participants.

## **A2. Interview process, participants and analysis**

### **A2.1 Interview process and participants**

The CAMAU research team developed two parallel semi-structured interview protocols (Appendix 3), one for AoLE leads and one for practitioners. These were developed iteratively over two main stages. As with the survey, the first stage identified core areas for questioning in relation to the CAMAU research questions (Appendix 1) that would valuably inform the on-going development process. This meant that, in broad terms, the interviews covered the same issues as the survey.

Leads were asked to reflect on:

- (i) their own role as leads in the process of co-construction of the curriculum
- (ii) the role of research in the development of thinking
- (iii) the role of policy in the development of thinking
- (iv) the role of practice in the development of thinking
- (v) a comparison of the relative influence of each of these aspects
- (vi) reflection on shifts in their thinking and implications for moving forward to enact the curriculum.

Teachers were asked to reflect on areas (ii) – (vi).

The second stage of the development of the interview schedules refined question wording to maximise clarity, avoiding leading questions and wording which was unnecessarily complex or raised more than one significant issue in the same question. During both stages, possible prompts were developed for each of the core questions which would enable interviewers to explore participants' responses more deeply. These prompts, however, were optional. Their use, and the use of other

prompts at interviewers' discretion, depended on the researchers' active reflection on the developing conversations. In the case of both teachers and policy leads, interviewees were advised that the in-depth interviews were intended to complement information obtained from the online survey and to provide deeper insights into key factors that influenced the development of the progression frameworks for each AoLE. They were also informed that interviews would seek to draw out insights and issues about the co-construction process that could help inform future phases of development and enactment.

In each AoLE group, interviews were held with (a) Government Lead, (b) Consortia Lead, (c) Primary Teacher and (d) Secondary Teacher; from across AoLE groups one teacher in a special school (e) was interviewed. Primary and secondary teachers were identified for interview through discussions between CAMAU researchers and AoLE Leads on the basis of their maximal engagement with and length of participation in the co-construction process. All of the teachers identified agreed to participate in the interviews. One Consortia Lead declined the interview and one additional secondary teacher was interviewed. There were thus 25 interviews in total. 18 were conducted in English and 7 in Welsh; interviewees chose their preferred language.

A series of briefing meetings and sessions sought to ensure that the researchers shared understanding of the protocol and approaches to interviewing. Most interviews were conducted face to face but, when this was not possible, some were conducted by Skype, Zoom or telephone. Each interview involved one CAMAU team researcher and one interviewee and typically lasted about one hour. Interviewees were invited to read the interview schedule for up to 10 minutes immediately in advance of the interviews. This gave them the opportunity to get a sense of the framing of the interview and to begin to reflect on their experience. They were asked to respond for the most part in ways that they believed reflected the work of the AoLE Group as a whole, though specific questions invited their thoughts on the role they had played themselves or on factors influencing their own thinking.

All interviews were digitally recorded with written permission and were professionally transcribed.

## **A2.2 Analysis of interview data**

The analysis of the interviews was carried out in five stages: (i) data immersion and initial note-making, (ii) development of a categorisation matrix, (iii) coding of the full data set against the categorisation matrix, (iv) axial thematic analysis of coded data and (v) reporting of findings.

### ***Immersion and open note-making ('memoing')***

This first immersive stage allowed the researchers to check the accuracy of transcription against the audio recordings and to become familiar with the data set. The 25 interviews gave rise to just under 200,000 words of data in either English or Welsh. As necessary, minor amendments were made to the interview transcripts. In a small number of instances (n=84) the clarity of recorded speech was insufficient to identify particular words (approximately 0.04% of the total number of words transcribed). In reading through the data the researchers inductively noted features, statements and ideas that stood out or appeared particularly related to the overarching areas used to structure the interview process. As necessary, interviews in Welsh were translated to facilitate this 'memoing' process. The 'memoing' activity was quite extensive and captured insights across all the interview transcripts.

### ***Development of a categorisation matrix***

During the second stage, notes/memos were compared, analysed and grouped to identify particular areas of focus and interest for deeper analysis. The resultant groupings were subject to a separate analytical process from which a categorisation matrix was developed (see next two pages). This process gave primacy to the grouped notes/memos but did so with reference to the areas covered in the semi-structured interviews, which reflected the aims of the CAMAU project and the requirements of the future stages of the Welsh curricular development process. Within this process, the matrix served a primary and a secondary function. In the first instance, it would enable the global data set to be broken up by category to provide descriptive depth in areas of significance or interest. Secondly, it would enhance the manageability of data to maximise analytical integrity and rigour.

The categorisation matrix on the following pages comprised three elements: (i) Main Categories, (ii) Sub-Categories, and (iii) Sub-Category Definitions.

### Categorisation Matrix

Main Category	Sub-Category	Sub-Category Definition
1. Subsidarity and Co-construction	a) The value of co-construction and subsidiarity	This refers to valuing or questioning the collaborative interaction among policy makers, researchers and practitioners (value could be high or low).
	b) Challenges of co-construction and subsidiarity	Challenges or barriers that made co-construction or subsidiarity difficult; can refer either generally to the fact that the process was difficult or to more specific issues.
	c) Effective means of co-construction in groups	Supports that facilitated the collaboration and co-construction involved in developing Progression Steps, e.g. subject expertise, materials or resources, procedures or processes.
	d) Influences and use of Welsh curricular policy in the curricular development process.	How Welsh curricular policy impacted either on the process of co-construction or on the final descriptions of progression, e.g. documentary policy such as <i>Successful Futures</i> , input from policy makers, policy messages within and outwith education.
	e) Influences and use of other policies.	Descriptions of how the development drew on non-curricular policy documentation in Wales or elsewhere.
	f) Ways of using international curricular frameworks.	Descriptions of how the development drew on curriculum frameworks outside of Wales.
3. The Use of Research	g) The value or otherwise of international curricular frameworks.	This refers to valuing or questioning the significance for the curricular development of international curricular frameworks and models relating to progression.
	h) Ways in which research was used in the curricular development process.	How research impacted either on the process of co-construction or on the final descriptions of progression, e.g. CAMAU research review, participants' own reading of research, research findings mediated by experts, including CAMAU team members or visiting academics.
	i) The development of knowledge or skills needed to use research	Refers to knowledge or skills needed in order to engage with or use research effectively for informing progression, e.g. the need for teachers to develop research awareness.
	j) The value of research in curricular development	This refers to valuing or questioning the significance of research in informing progression, e.g. reporting references as helpful.
	k) Ways in which practice was used in the curricular development process.	How practice or professional expertise has impacted either the process of co-construction or the final descriptions of progression.
	4. The Role of Practice	



Main Category	Sub-Category	Sub-Category Definition
	l) The value of practice in the curricular development process.	This refers to valuing or questioning the significance of practice or professional expertise in informing progression.
5. Conceptualising Learning Progression	m) Understanding and conceptualising progression.	How the ideas or principles of progression are articulated by the interviewee. May refer to statements about understanding of broad general descriptions of progression or more detailed descriptions; or how their understanding has changed.
	n) Interdisciplinary and discipline-specific progression.	References to conceptualisation of progression as interdisciplinary and/or discipline-specific.
	o) Progression in tasks vs progression in learning	References to conceptualisation of progression in terms of tasks completed by the learner as against progression in terms of description(s) of learning.
	p) Process of describing learning progression	Refers to the actions taken by participants in the process of describing learning progression, e.g. steps they took to articulate and write out descriptions of progression.
	q) Risks and challenges in describing progression	Refers to risks, challenges, or barriers to the process of describing progression.
6. Future Development and Implementation	r) Co-construction in the future	Refers to the need for co-construction in the future, or mentions of elements that would be useful for future processes of co-construction.
	s) Exemplification	References to exemplification that would be useful in the next phase, e.g. materials, videos, student work.
	t) Professional learning	Recommendations/suggestions for professional learning — content, location, people involved, processes, etc.

### ***Coding of Data Set***

The finalised categorisation matrix was set up as a series of nodes and sub-nodes in NVivo (qualitative data analysis software). Four researchers coded across all of the interview transcripts for selected sub-categories within the matrix. Qualitative measures were employed to ensure consistency in the attribution of different sections of data to particular categories by different researchers. The coding process was structured to include periods of synchronous coding when researchers were co-located in the same room (particularly in the early stages) and periods of asynchronous coding when people coded at different times and in different locations. During synchronous coding, the process was paused for discussion to achieve consensus as required in cases where there was uncertainty as to the attribution of a section of data. As far as possible, the researcher raising the query refrained from disclosing their provisional judgement before hearing colleagues' ideas. This was done for every instance of uncertainty during synchronous coding and, where required, similar discussion was conducted by email during asynchronous coding. The prevalence of references to each of the sub-categories across the entire data set is noted in the table on the following page.

**Reference count by sub-category**

<b>Sub-Category</b>	<b>Reference Count</b>
a) The value of co-construction and subsidiarity	47
b) Challenges of co-construction and subsidiarity	122
c) Effective means of co-construction in groups	122
d) Influences and use of Welsh curricular policy	76
e) Influences and use of other policies	19
f) Ways of using international curricular frameworks	48
g) The value or otherwise of international curricular frameworks	43
h) Ways in which research was used in the curricular development process.	128
i) The development of knowledge or skills needed to use research.	24
j) The value of research in curricular development.	94
k) Ways in which practice was used in the curricular development process.	85
l) The value of practice in curricular development.	37
m) Understanding and conceptualising progression.	87
n) Interdisciplinary and discipline-specific progression.	24
o) Progression in tasks vs progression in learning.	8
p) Process of describing learning progression.	76
q) Risks and Challenges in Describing Progression	60
r) Co-Construction in the Future	89
s) Exemplification	27
t) Professional Learning	93

***Axial thematic analysis of categories***

Thematic analysis of the evidence within each of the sub-categories was then undertaken inductively to identify similarities and differences in emerging ideas, effects, perceptions, beliefs and understandings from interviewees. This identified points of significance and possible interrelationships and influences. During analysis, the developing picture was built up responsively in a range of forms, including diagrams, tables and written notes on emerging themes. These outcomes of the analysis were then reviewed and compared with findings from survey data before being reported on thematically.

## **B. Reporting**

There was considerable consistency between the survey and interview findings.

Findings are reported here thematically in ways which the CAMAU team hopes are relevant to the on-going work to develop the Welsh curriculum further and to enable teachers and schools to enact it effectively in local contexts. There are three groups of key themes:

- Progression – its nature and how the AoLE Group members developed their understanding of progression over the development process; the idea of articulating progression as Descriptions of Learning and thus as a way of enabling orientation to future learning. These themes are reported on in sub-sections B1.1 - B1.3.
- Subsidiarity and co-construction in the development process – use of research, policy, and practice to help draft progression frameworks and Descriptions of Learning; the complexity of the interactions involved. These themes are reported on in sub-sections B2.1- B2.2.
- Future professional learning – what is needed to carry forward the enactment of progression frameworks and Descriptions of Learning and to help teachers understand and develop assessment of progression as a way to enable future learning; further support materials or exemplification needed. These themes are reported on in sub-section B3.

### **B.1 Progression**

#### **B1.1 Understanding and conceptualising progression**

##### ***Survey Data***

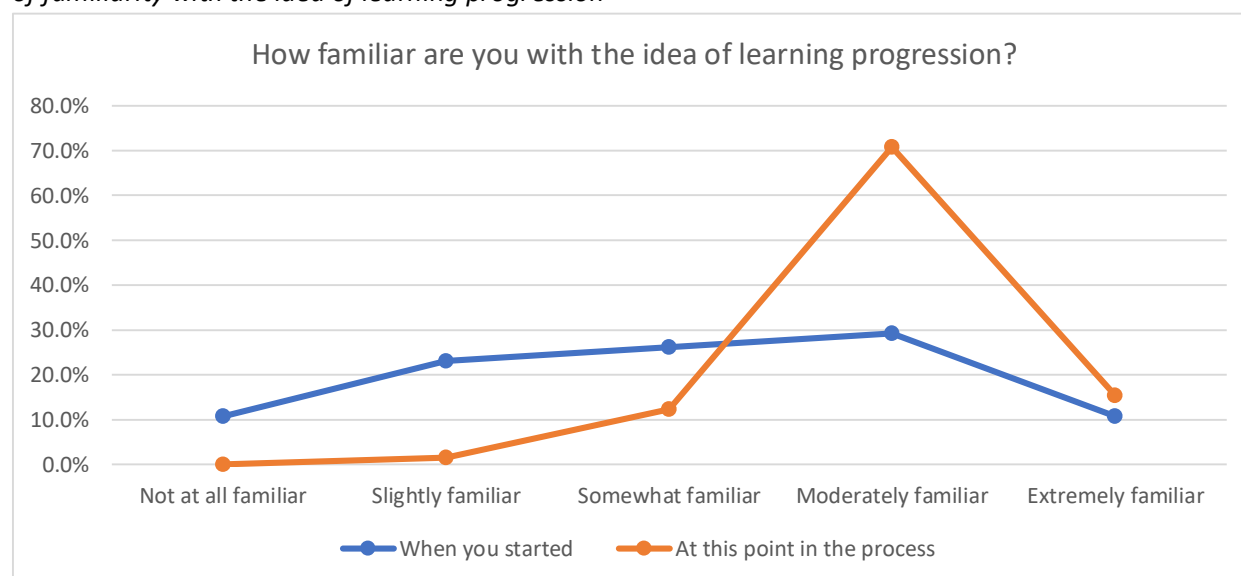
A detailed account of understanding of the term progression by those interviewed is given below after the presentation of data from the online survey. It may be helpful to note here, prior to considering the survey data, a central point emerging from the interview findings: it was clear that the interviewees had developed or were in the process of developing a sophisticated understanding of progression through their individual learning journeys. It is interesting, therefore, to learn from the online survey to what extent the larger group of teachers involved in the AoLE development work felt that they were confident about their understanding of progression and where they were in their own personal learning journey in relation to the concept. In the online survey, the Professional Learning Pioneer teachers were asked to rate their familiarity with the idea of learning progression when they first began to work with the Curriculum Pioneers and at the survey point (February 2019) on a 5-point scale, from not at all familiar (1) to extremely familiar (5) (see Table 1 and Figure 1 which summarise the 65 responses).

Table 1. Percentage of respondents (Professional Learning Pioneers, n = 65) indicating their degree of familiarity with the idea of learning progression

	When you started	At this point in the process
Not at all familiar	10.8%	0.0%
Slightly familiar	23.1%	1.5%
Somewhat familiar	26.2%	12.3%
Moderately familiar	29.2%	70.8%
Extremely familiar	10.8%	15.4%

Note. Rounding may account for totals not being 100.0%

Figure 1. Percentage of respondents (Professional Learning Pioneers, n = 65) indicating their degree of familiarity with the idea of learning progression



### Interview findings

The teachers, Consortia Leads and Government Leads who were interviewed had a positive and transformational understanding and conceptualisation of progression. It was possible to identify six sub-themes:

- the nature of progression as a future-oriented journey
- a focus on the 'big picture' of progression
- inclusivity as a key feature of progression
- progression as a focus on learning
- a change in teachers' understanding over time
- implications of progression for assessment and pedagogy.

### *The nature of progression – what is learning progression?*

Overall, participants' understanding of the nature of progression was aligned with the vision of progression described in *Successful Futures* (Donaldson 2015). One of the most salient messages emerging was that interview participants conceptualised progression as a future-oriented journey. Their understanding suggested a shift in their own thinking, from summarising what had been learned, looking backwards, towards thinking about moving forward in learning. The following quotations from teachers in two different AoLEs exemplify this:

*'...it's about moving the child's learning forwards. Again, I keep saying it, but their journey, the way in which they need to move forward, I feel that has got very lost in schools – my own classroom included. You know you get very driven by end points and actually that awareness of the different journeys that children are going on and actually I am very mindful of now not capping the way in which we are teaching because it is stopping the next part of the journey.'* (Primary Teacher, Humanities AoLE)

*'Well, I think the main thing that we had to take from it was that it was about moving forward and it wasn't going to be about summarising anymore. That it was always going to be written in mind with making progress as in getting from one point and then how you then move the learning forward.'* (Primary Teacher, Mathematics and Numeracy AoLE)

In explaining their understanding of the nature of progression, several participants also mentioned that they viewed progression as linked to the statements of What Matters and to the Four Purposes. Some of the participants noted that progression should be considered as non-linear or spiral. The idea of progression not being linear was mentioned by participants from several AoLEs, including Humanities, Health and Well-being and Science and Technology. Several participants also noted that progression includes experiences alongside understandings and skills. As one primary teacher in the Science and Technology AoLE noted, children's early experiences can shape how they develop knowledge later on.

The participants also discussed progression in terms of the level of 'granularity' (cf. Heritage, 2008) and noted that in the development work they were describing learning progression in broad terms. For example, a Consortia Lead noted that they were advised that these Descriptions of Learning:

*'shouldn't be something that you could achieve in one assessment. It shouldn't be something that you could demonstrate in one piece of work in one lesson.'*

There were mixed views on the level of specificity that was appropriate, with some teachers questioning whether they have 'broken it down enough'. Participants were aware that further professional development, as well as empirical research, may be needed to explore the degree of specificity needed to describe progression, depending on who is using the descriptions of progression and for what purposes.

### *The 'big picture' of progression*

The interview participants viewed progression in terms of providing a 'big picture' of learning, especially for themselves as educators. This included an understanding that progression refers to connected steps of learning, that progression provides an overview of the whole learning journey across ages 3-16, and, for some participants, that progression can be considered interdisciplinary and integrated. In these cases, the work to describe learning progression had broadened their

thinking. The responses suggest that some teachers had not previously considered learning outside the phase of education with which they were familiar. A secondary teacher from the Mathematics and Numeracy AoLE noted:

*'y newid mwyaf i fi ydy cael trosolwg llawer gwell o beth sy'n digwydd o 3-16.'* [translated into English as *'the biggest change for me is having a much better overview of what's happening from 3-16.'*]

Similarly, a special school teacher said:

*'So I had to look at the whole picture from Progression Step 1 to 5 and that is probably how my thinking has changed, in that I can see the whole range, whereas before I would have focussed around the levels that my learners were operating at.'*

All of the AoLE groups included practitioners from the different phases of learning, from early years through secondary, as well as teachers from special schools. Collaborative work to discuss progression was sometimes undertaken in mixed-phase and/or mixed-disciplinary groups. This planning of AoLE membership and activities likely contributed to the participants' developing a 'big picture' understanding of learning progression.

#### *Inclusivity as a key feature of progression*

One aspect of participants' understanding and conceptualisation of progression was their recognition that it should be inclusive. They expressed this idea by referring to the different rates of progress of different learners and to the importance of appropriate challenge and not 'capping' their learning. Teachers expressed a very positive view of this inclusiveness and there was a shared understanding that it was not connected to specific school years or ages. Interestingly, in *Successful Futures* there is a general reference to approximate ages for each of the five Progression Steps. However, among the participants, the Descriptions of Learning were not seen as something all children must achieve at a particular time or age, or even at all. For example, one Government Lead noted:

*'We were constantly mindful of the fact that some learners would progress much faster along the Progression Steps – more some than others – but also others would not necessarily get beyond Progression Step 1.'*

Similarly, a Consortia Lead from a different AoLE noted:

*'It is not tied to an age. It does not have to be everything starts at PS1, and that doesn't mean that you have to reach PS5 in all of them.'*

Importantly, inclusivity extended in both directions and participants strove to have a high level of challenge in the curriculum and to not underestimate learners. For example, a primary teacher in the Humanities AoLE stated:

*'Again questioning things like that – you know things like making assumptions that at 5 year old reference point that they can't ask why – of course they can... perhaps something we have written initially for a 14 year old, you could also do for an 8 year old, a 5 year old, but at a different level. I think that has been quite innovative in how we have worked with that, saying actually, let's not cap the learning.'*

Overall, progression was conceptualised as a way of making schools more inclusive in meeting the needs of all learners with different backgrounds and abilities. This is exemplified by a Lead who noted:

*‘Mae cyd-destun o ran efallai ysgolion sy’n cynrychioli disgyblion lle mae na fwy o anfantais wedi bod yn rhywbeth pwysig o ran ystyried beth yw cynnydd, beth sy’n bosib, peidio rhoi ceiling yna, ein bod ni’n uchelgeisiol ond bod ni hefyd yn ymwybodol bod yna wahanol gyd-destunau a bod pethau yn gallu bod yn fwy herio’ [translated into English as ‘The context of perhaps schools representing pupils who are more disadvantaged has been important in considering what progress is, what is possible, not putting a ceiling there, that we are ambitious but that we are also aware that there are different contexts and that things can be more challenging’].*

#### *Progression as a focus on learning*

Interviewees indicated a new understanding and appreciation of progression as focusing on learning. They viewed the incorporation of progression in the new curriculum as centred on learning and enabling the learner to move forward, rather than on delivering content at certain phases or stages. As noted by a Primary Teacher in the Mathematics and Numeracy AoLE:

*‘...the Progression Step was such a positive thing to be able to plan for future learning, because that is ultimately what schools are about – it is about learning.’*

There were a number of responses in the interviews that referred to this very significant focus on the learner or on the process of learning. Some participants argued that their work on progression took into account theories of learning and how children and young people come to understandings. The focus on learning appeared to be new for many of them. For example, the same Primary Teacher in the Mathematics and Numeracy AoLE mentioned that:

*‘...one of the most important parts of learning anything new for the brain is that it has got to come from something before, that you build a schema by knowing other things. Putting all that together, it is no wonder that a child can’t do a multiplication problem when they can’t add. It seems so simple now, it is almost embarrassing to think that you didn’t know it before but those are some of the really strong things, you know, looking at how the brain learns things.’*

The guidance given to AoLEs was to write the Descriptions of Learning in first-person for pupils. This emphasis may also have encouraged the teachers towards thinking about progression as a focus on learners. This is exemplified in this quotation by one of the Leads:

*‘Un arall o’r pethau oedd mwyaf pwerus oedd pan wnaethon ni ddechrau arbrofi gyda iaith y disgybl a meddwl am bethau o’u safbwynt nhw a defnyddio pethau fel ‘I can and I have’ a wnaethon ni newid yn gyfangwbl y ffordd on ni wedi bod yn edrych ar ein disgrifiadau fyny at y pwynt yna’ [translated into English as ‘Another of the most powerful things was when we started experimenting with the pupil’s language and thinking about things from their point of view and using things like ‘I can’ and ‘I have’. That completely changed the way we have been look at our descriptions up to that point’].*



### *Change in understanding*

This sub-theme is intertwined with the others, but it became clear in the analysis that a significant change had occurred in the teachers', Consortia Leads' and Government Leads' understanding of the nature of progression – a new way of thinking for them. Many participants used words like 'new', 'innovative', 'shift' and 'new way of thinking' to describe progression and the process they went through. For some there was a significant turning point or 'light bulb moment' in their understanding. As one of the Government Leads noted:

*'I can remember the first time I got it...and that first task the pioneers did of saying let's look at two examples of work: try to articulate what has changed. What has changed in the learner? What are they doing differently? What have they had to understand this differently? - and that is what clicked, that is what made sense. And then understanding that you base an entire curriculum on that. It has huge, huge opportunities then; and releasing the value of that and the fact that, actually, if you are basing things on that progression, you are trying to describe that progression, then a) you have got a more developmentally appropriate curriculum; b) you have got something that is actually more coherent - it is more intellectual, it makes sense; and c) it is particularly essential, I think, where you are relying on teacher agency, that they have the fundamentals of progression to rely back on.'*

Participants' understanding about learning progression changed in significant ways over the course of their involvement in the work of the AoLEs. Some interviewees were aware that the challenge moving forward will be to ensure that other teachers across Wales will go through this same transformation. For example, a primary teacher in the Humanities AoLE noted:

*'It was out of our remit, we can talk about assessment, we had never been asked to describe learning; and I think that journey of describing learning is hugely different for teachers and I think that is a massive mindshift change that has to come across to teachers.'*

### *Implications of progression for assessment and pedagogy*

It became clear that participants viewed their understanding of progression as having significant implications for assessment and pedagogy (cf. Black et al., 2011; Wiliam, 2017; Wyse, Hayward & Pandya, 2015). In response to learning more about learning progression, the members of AoLEs changed and broadened their understanding of the implications of progression for pedagogy. Several participants mentioned that descriptions of progression were not meant to be used as a pedagogical 'tick list' but, rather, to be part of the new conceptualisation of a learning journey. For example, a Lead noted:

*'Yn bendant, da ni'n symud fel grŵp, da ni di symud o'r ticio bocsys lefelau i ystyried hyn fel taith dysgu'* [translated into English as 'We're definitely moving as a group, we've moved from ticking level boxes to thinking of this as a learning journey'].

Nevertheless, there still remained some worries that when the new progression frameworks and Descriptions of Learning are used more broadly in practice they could be used in inappropriate ways, as noted by a Humanities AoLE primary teacher: *'I worry it will turn into tick lists – you know, all those things that we have battled through.'* The participants in the AoLE groups seemed to understand that efforts need to be made to continue to communicate to teachers that Descriptions of Learning are not intended to constitute a tick list but rather to be used as a pedagogical tool for facilitating dialogue with learners to help them move forward.

Some interviewees had also modified during the development process their understanding of the different purposes of assessment. In an educational culture where assessments have generally been used as a basis of judgement and accountability, it is not surprising that assessment may previously have been thought of as fulfilling only those purposes. However, the interviews showed that many participants now appreciated more fully the role of assessment in learning and recognised that the word 'assessment' does not just mean 'accountability'. For example, one Primary Teacher from the Health and Well-being AoLE group said:

*'Massively, so is to separate the high stakes accountability from assessment... it is not seeing an assessment as a fear factor. We are held to account for a lot – for high level accountability. But that is the change, looking at what assessment is, making sure that it is focussed on the learner, what the priority of it is. It is central to teaching and learning – I think that is the biggest thing for me - is giving assessing that formative value.'*

Similarly, a Secondary Teacher in the Science and Technology AoLE provided a powerful quotation about the change in the purpose of assessment from summative to formative from when he stated:

*'...the achievement outcomes in progression is all about how we improve learning, not prove it, and that shift, and I think that sums up for me what this is all about. The progression, the assessment, anything you are doing there you are doing it with a view of 'How can I improve it, not prove it?'*

However, it is important to note that there seemed to be some conflicting views or confusion about the relationship between assessment and progression. Whereas some participants understood progression as connected to assessment, others saw it as separate. The following two statements reflect this variation:

*'[Curriculum and assessment] are in partnership – they can't be separated. I know, I do know, that Successful Futures stated that assessment in the curriculum development, that assessment needed to come in parallel and it certainly did. They can't be separated.'*  
(Primary Teacher, Health and Well-being AoLE)

*'So we were very mindful that we didn't want to create an assessment tool and that we were very keen and interested to have this new and innovative way of looking at progression.'*  
(Primary Teacher, Humanities AoLE)

The second teacher may be referring to previous uses of assessment tools, primarily acting as summative checklists, and saw the new curriculum and the idea of progression as contrasting with assessment for summative purposes. This raises issues about the relationship between progression and assessment in future practice and about the meaning of 'assessment' and 'assessment tool' to teachers. Development of a shared understanding of the interconnected nature of progression, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment is likely to be an important concern for future professional development.

#### *Progression in disciplinary and interdisciplinary aspects*

Interviewees noted the tensions and opportunities that emerged when considering discipline-specific and interdisciplinary progression. AoLEs were structured in terms of areas of learning which often brought together specific disciplines. The AoLE development groups faced a challenge in determining how to describe learning at a broad level both within and across disciplines. In our

analysis we arrived at a number of themes in relation to disciplinary and interdisciplinary progression.

– *Tensions between describing disciplinary and interdisciplinary learning progression*

Teachers needed to decide whether, when, how, and to what extent to describe progression within disciplines, across disciplines, or in some mix of the two. As noted by one of the Government Leads:

*'There was that tension and it was difficult to harmonise that tension between showing an overall creative approach to the arts through progression and maybe giving some indication of what you would expect to be doing in a certain discipline at any one time.'*

A number of AoLEs seem to have tried to incorporate both disciplinary and cross-discipline approaches in their Descriptions of Learning but noted that this was sometimes a challenging process. This is exemplified by another Government Lead, who noted:

*'I suppose the biggest conflict(s) was around where we had got evidence from some traditional, a subject specialist I suppose, and how to address those kind(s) of tensions. It was clear from the start that obviously [the teachers] had gone down a very broad approach to humanities and they were then kind of frustrated at some points about this need to think about disciplines and how that would fit in. I think they were kind of started on a vision, brought back a bit, kind of influenced by disciplines, now kind of found, I think, a reasonable balance between the whole kind of vision and the whole tensions around disciplines and how they should be included in the curriculum.'*

– *Specialisation at the secondary level*

Some teachers noted that primary school is naturally more interdisciplinary and secondary school is naturally more discipline-specific, which led to some differences and challenges when considering progression at earlier and later steps. For example, a teacher from the Expressive Arts AoLE noted:

*'I think good primary practitioners teach in an interdisciplinary way... and I think when secondary colleagues, they are very much in their silos: I'm a music teacher, I'm an art teacher.'*

According to the interviewees, it appears that their understanding of how they described learning progression or how they hoped they had described it tended to include more disciplinary-specific knowledge and skills at later stages of progression, typically aligning with the secondary level of schooling. Discipline-specific aspects of learning progression seemed to be influenced by a variety of factors, including teachers' own conceptualisation of how learning progresses and becomes more specialised within each of these areas of learning over time, influenced by feedback from disciplinary experts and from the impact of the subject-specific end-of-school qualifications. It remained a challenge, though, for the groups to know exactly when and where to start incorporating these disciplines within the five Progression Steps structure of the Descriptions of Learning. As noted by one interviewee:

*'When, if and when, or how will you start to split out into separate subjects because people will be thinking about: well if you want to go and study physics at university, you are probably going to need to A level physics as it currently stands – what happens at the age of 16? – So, you know, when would you start to split all those levels of progression and thinking about individual subjects?' (Consortia Lead)*

– *Benefits of incorporating both disciplinary and interdisciplinary learning progression*

Despite the fact that many teachers noted that there were tensions around ensuring discipline-specific progression at the secondary level, there were also some positive reflections regarding the interdisciplinary learning progression that some AoLEs were striving for in their Descriptions of Learning. Some AoLE group members reported that they had created a final model that incorporated both disciplinary and interdisciplinary aspects of learning. Others were optimistic about interdisciplinary approaches within each AoLE. One of the Consortia Leads said:

*'I think probably the biggest shift in my thinking isn't just to do with progression but is sort of the vision really of interdisciplinary work and an integrated curriculum. I think I liked that before but I think I am now more of a strong believer in the power that has got to transform our learners' education.'*

### **B1.2. Ease or difficulty in describing learning across the Progression Steps**

In the survey, teachers involved in the development work were asked to indicate the level of difficulty they had met in describing learning across the Progression Steps when they began and when they completed the development process (up to February 2019). They were asked to rate their response on 7-point scale from very difficult (1) to very easy (7). 106 teachers involved in the development work responded to these two questions.

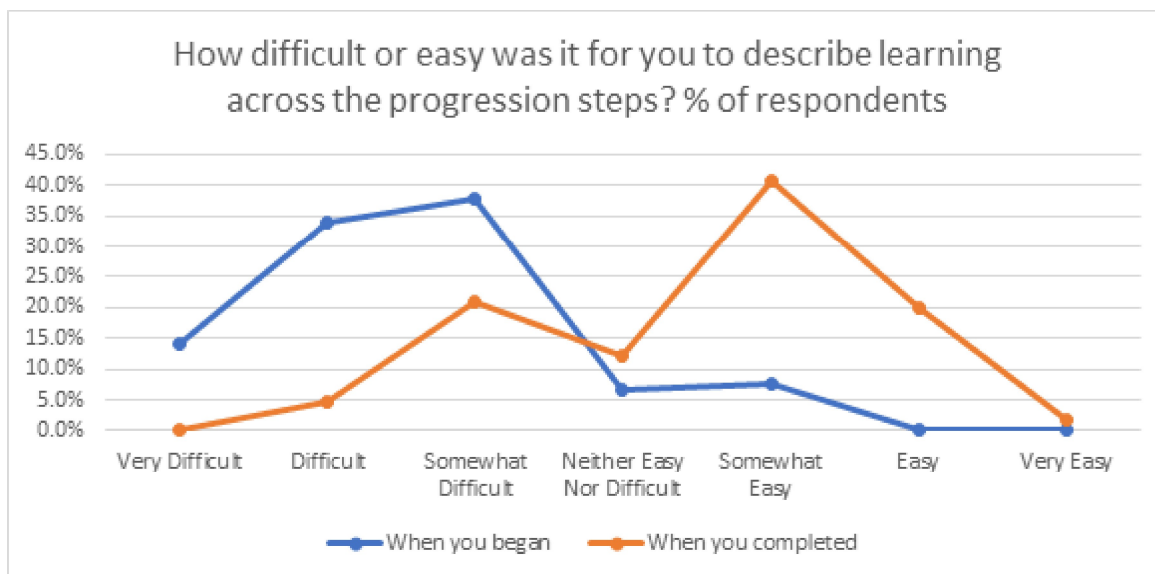
The trend shown in Table 2 and Figure 2 suggests that teachers found it easier to describe learning across the Progression Steps at the end by comparison with at the beginning of the process. At the beginning, 85.8% of teachers found it difficult (somewhat to very difficult); by the end, only 25.5% did so. Nevertheless, despite it becoming easier over time, describing progression is still challenging, as evidenced by only 21.7% of teachers reporting that it was easy or very easy at the end of the process.

*Table 2. Percentage of respondents (n = 106) indicating how difficult or easy it was to describe learning across the Progression Steps*

	<b>When you began the process</b>	<b>When you completed the process</b>
Very Difficult	14.2%	0.0%
Difficult	34.0%	4.7%
Somewhat Difficult	37.7%	20.8%
Neither Easy Nor Difficult	6.6%	12.3%
Somewhat Easy	7.5%	40.6%
Easy	0.0%	19.8%
Very Easy	0.0%	1.9%

*Note.* Rounding may account for totals not being 100.0%

Figure 2. Percentage of respondents (n = 106) indicating how difficult or easy it was to describe learning across the Progression Steps.



Teachers completing the survey also provided open-ended comments to explain their ratings for ease/difficulty in describing progression. The following quotations illustrate the views of some in the largest group of teachers, those who moved from finding it difficult to finding it easier:

*'All agreed progression is not a linear process and the more information we had the more complicated it began to feel! Feel more comfortable with progression now, though it is not a straightforward thing and discussions relating to assessment have raised further implications for discussion even at this stage.'*

*'Initially it was difficult to describe the progress the learners were expected to show. Learners had to be thought of themselves – put them in shoes to understand the true meaning of the specific skill/knowledge where progress needed to be shown. But working on this by creating progress steps within small groups with age experts the process had improved – it was possible to discuss progress statements and question the progress together.'* (translated from Welsh to English)

*'It was difficult, as I hadn't had the opportunity to consider pupils' development beyond the primary phase. I can describe how progression developments differ and the relationship between concrete and abstract.'*

*'Needed to discuss and deepen own understanding of what progression in learning looked like, rather than what I assumed it was. Too grounded in progression as attainment of levels, rather than identifying progression of learning that is taking place for the child.'*

*'The process was difficult at the beginning, as it was at times challenging to use our knowledge of learners to inform our description of learning without being too strongly influenced by current curriculum design. However, as the process continued, it became easier to frame our Descriptions of Learning as other aspects of the curriculum were developed.'*

The following quotations are examples of views from the smaller group of teachers, those who found it difficult throughout (25% of teachers found it at least somewhat difficult at the end):

*'Ensuring the way progression was worded was neither too vague nor too granular but provided the right level of challenge in line with child development.'*

*'As a teacher I have only ever used the progression and assessment tools, as opposed to actually describing and looking at the progression in such detail.'*

*'Difficult to have a clear understanding of what the shift in learning had been to identify the progress than just identifying the next task. This understanding has improved over time but can at times still be hard to articulate.'*

The trend shown in Table 2 and Figure 2 shows clearly that, through engagement in the development of the curriculum for their AoLE, teachers had become more familiar with the idea of learning progression. It is noteworthy however that only 15.4% of those involved in the development work at the current point in the process felt extremely familiar with the process and 12.3% still felt only somewhat familiar. Similarly, Table 2 and Figure 2 show that many teachers found writing Descriptions of Learning as progression easier after working through the development process, but that some continued to find the task difficult. These findings suggest that the process of enabling teachers to think of learning in terms of progression, rather than, for example, pursuit of age-related standards, has not been simple and straightforward. It involved a slow and quite intense process of professional learning in collaboration with fellow teachers and with researchers. This kind of engagement in professional learning is likely to be even more crucial for the general body of Welsh teachers and others interested in the learning of children and young people as the new curriculum is implemented and further refined than it was for those who were very actively engaged in the initial drafting of Descriptions of Learning. The findings from the interviews with teachers and leads help to corroborate and extend our understanding of the challenges involved in describing progression. A number of important themes emerged in relation to the challenges and risks involved in describing learning across the Progression Steps:

- Challenges in relation to teachers' knowledge and skill
- Challenges in determining the 'right' model of progression
- Challenges in determining the appropriate amount of detail
- Challenges in ensuring inclusivity for learners

#### *Challenges in relation to teachers' knowledge and skill*

One factor that emerged relating to why articulating progression was challenging was the knowledge and skill required of teachers to understand and write the progression framework and Descriptions of Learning. The interviews suggested that a teacher's ability to think about progression was challenged because of the status quo. Teachers who were currently working with the previous curriculum and entrenched in a culture of summative assessment were now being asked to think about a completely new concept of progression, which it was therefore challenging to create and articulate. This is exemplified in the following two quotations:

*'It's the remits of being in a school at the moment, because you are not encouraged with the policies that exist to think in that way. You do fall into the trap of, it's an assessment tool, it's endpoint, it's end of a context, end of a module, end of a year.'* (Primary Teacher, Humanities AoLE)

*'...It is hard to break away from your current experience with levels and your current experience with exam board specifications, it was very .... to an extent the influence of your*

*practice did hamper the creation of something new, so it was a negative influence as well as a positive influence.’ (Consortia Lead)*

Some interviewees also suggested that the teachers did not have all of the expertise needed such as the specialised writing skills required to write a national curriculum that can be interpreted clearly. However, the experience of being part of the development group was a form of professional development and collaborative learning among teachers and thus their knowledge and skills changed significantly throughout the process. Framed in a positive way, one Government Lead noted that this was the point of being labelled ‘Pioneers’:

*‘It’s that thing about being genuine pioneers and being creative, it is only with the benefit of hindsight you are able to make those judgements.’*

According to the interviews, teachers’ knowledge and skill around progression will also likely be an issue as the rest of the teaching profession in Wales engages with the new curriculum. The interviewees reported that it was a challenge to ensure that what they produced would be empowering or even comprehensible for other teachers. The AoLE groups found it challenging to ensure that it would be understood by others yet still be at an appropriate level. This is exemplified strongly in this quotation:

*‘Probably ensuring that we could say it in a way that other professionals, who were not party to our discussions, would understand. It was making it accessible to the rest of the profession, so that they could read them and go: ‘Oh, Yes, I know what that means’ or ‘How would they do that?’ or ‘What do they mean here, how am I going to teach that?’ – It’s that sort of thing to make sure.... and also to make sure that we don’t disempower our colleagues who have not been involved in it by dumbing it down. Getting the balance just right I think was the hardest. It is a professional document, so you had to keep the language professional but at the same time we know it is going to be seen by parents and carers.’ (Special School Teacher)*

#### *Challenges in determining the ‘right’ model of progression*

Another challenge or difficulty in articulating progression was in ensuring that the model of progression and Descriptions of Learning as developed accounted appropriately for learning. The interviews suggest that the participants were creating something new that they had not done before and there was not a clear structure in place for how these Progression Steps should be written. As noted by one of the Government Leads:

*‘Ultimately, I think there was also a problem at that time, we couldn’t conceptualise, we couldn’t visualise what the model would look like.’*

Many of the interviewees shared a concern about whether the description of progression that they had produced was consistent across the five steps, whether it was comprehensive, appropriately accounting for disciplinary and interdisciplinary skills, knowledge, and experiences, and ultimately, whether it was accurate in terms of describing learning. As noted by another Government Lead, ‘There is a risk around ‘Have we genuinely articulated progression?’ This concern seemed to be shared across the board, as exemplified in the following quotation:

*'Very simply, getting it right. I was making sure that we had the right milestones in place, again back to child development, making sure that it reflected that accurately, where the children are and where they need to be.'* (Primary Teacher, Health and Wellbeing)

One specific challenge in creating the 'right' descriptions of progression was in determining the extent to which progression was linked to ages and stages. Teachers seemed to struggle to some extent with wanting to describe progression genuinely but also to consider the recommendations in *Successful Futures*, which suggested ages for each Progression Step. For example, one Lead noted:

*'Dwi'n meddwl mai yn anffodus yr un sydd wedi bod yn fwyaf o her ydy'r ffaith bod y llinynnau dilyniant yn gorfod glynu at 5 oed, 8 oed, 11 oed, 14 ac 16.'* [translated into English as *'I think the one that has been most challenging is the fact that the strings of progression have to stick to ages 5, 8, 11, 14 and 16.'*]

A second issue was whether the nature of progression was linear. The interviews suggest engagement with the complex realities of learning and the need for recognising the spiral and multi-dimensional nature of progression. However, it was difficult to capture this in writing because of the limitations of having to describe it on a piece of paper in five linear boxes. This concern is captured in the following quotation:

*'We have talked lots about having these sort of a lot more overlapping, I think we had concentric circles and all sorts at one point, different layers, and perhaps having a 3D model and -- I just worry, have we been, have we lost the creativity because we are trying to fit in with a model that suits the other AoLEs? Are we trying to have something that fits nicely into a piece of paper that can be printed out and people can use, whereas actually a 3D model might work with different layers and again you are revisiting skills?'* (Primary Teacher, Humanities)

#### *Challenges in determining the appropriate amount of detail*

Several of the interviewees raised the issue of the level of specificity of the Progression Steps and how that was challenging for the group members to determine. As stated by a Mathematics and Numeracy Secondary Teacher:

*'dyna un o'r tensiynau oedd yn y grŵp, yn union faint o fanylder i'w rhoi yn y datganiadau'* [translated into English as *'that was one of the tensions within the group, exactly how much detail to put into the statements'*].

To some extent, the responses suggest this challenge was exacerbated by the research evidence describing different levels of specificity. At the time of the interviews, teachers in some AoLEs still had a concern about whether the amount of detail was sufficient and that caused difficulties during the drafting process. For example:

*'To create these really succinct and broad Progression Steps was a constant challenge for the group, because we felt that we were producing something that we were not sure was going to be that helpful, because we felt (it) needed more detail. So it was a constant battle.'* (Primary Teacher, Mathematics and Numeracy AoLE)

The Pioneers' responses reflect a genuine concern with ensuring that the amount of detail in the statements is fit for purpose in schools. The responses suggest that across the AoLEs this issue was given a lot of careful discussion. There is a recognition of the need for broad statements and



flexibility for schools, but at the same time, ensuring the Descriptions of Learning are not so broad that they become ‘woolly’. There was a lot of complexity involved in not only what to write, but how much to write, and at what level, for what purpose, and considering how it may be used. This is exemplified in the following quotation:

*‘...sometimes you have had the bit like: that is too prescriptive, that is not prescriptive enough; or rather, that’s too woolly and that’s too specific. So they are both subtly different but the woolly piece – well, that could be a phrasing piece. but we want that to be open, inclusive and allow people to do something with it; and it’s like we don’t want to have a very prescriptive thing that could be a tick box.’* (Consortia Lead)

#### *Challenges in ensuring inclusivity for learners*

An additional challenge in articulating progression arose from the desire for an inclusive curriculum. This concern was noted not only by the Special School teacher interviewed but across the board. One of the Government Leads said:

*‘We were constantly mindful of the fact that some learners would progress much faster along the Progression Steps – more some than others – but also others would not necessarily get beyond Progression Step 1. They might get to Progression Step 1 by the time they are 16 – it is really quite challenging to present them in a way that is relevant to all learners.’*

Related to this point, several teachers noted that there was tension related to the end points in particular and how ‘simple’ Progression Step 1 would be and how ‘ambitious’ Progression Step 5 would be, to ensure that all pupils are challenged at an appropriate level. This is exemplified here:

*‘Ni’n anelu am cael y disgybl, ni’n edrych ar y disgybl llawn a falle dyn ni ddim yn gallu sicrhau bod y disgybl yna yn mynd i gyrraedd cam cynnydd 5 yn pob un a felly mae cam cynnydd 5 yn uchelgeisiol iawn. A mae cam cynnydd 1 yn syml iawn. A beth sydd gyda ni wedyn ny yn amlwg mae 5 cam cynnydd gyda ni a ni di gorfod gwahaniaethu rhwng y 5 cam cynnydd o fewn pob yr hyn sy’n bwysig o fewn y maes dysgu a phrofiad.’* [translated into English as ‘We’re aiming for the pupil, we’re looking at the full pupil and we can’t make sure that pupil is going to reach stage 5 in each one and so Progression Step 5 is very ambitious. And Progression Step 1 is very simple. And what we have then obviously we have 5 stages of progress and we have had to differentiate between the 5 stages of progress within what is important in the area of learning and experience.’] (Secondary Teacher, Health and Wellbeing AoLE)

### **B1.3. Usefulness of the Descriptions of Learning and Progression Steps as means of focusing on future learning, rather than as summarising past achievement**

The survey invited the participants to comment on the extent to which the Descriptions of Learning and Progression Steps will help teachers and learners to understand assessment as a way of enabling future learning, rather than as a summary of past achievement. (Note: at the time of the survey the term ‘achievement outcomes’ was in use in the curriculum framework; this term was later replaced by ‘Descriptions of Learning’, the term used in this report.)

Responses to this question were quite mixed. Approximately a third of teachers were quite positive that the Descriptions of Learning and Progression Steps will help enable future learning. One argued, for example:

*'Teachers will have a clear view from 3-16 of the whole journey, which will inform them clearly on what has gone before and where pupils need to go next. The outcomes [i.e. Descriptions of Learning] focus on the process, which should help teachers to see assessment as something valuable to inform future planning.'*

Another third or so of the teachers said it will be helpful to learning, but with some conditions. They were hopeful about the potential of what was produced but argued that it depends on professional learning provided for teachers, on pedagogy used, on not treating the Descriptions of Learning in a 'tick box' way, on changing teacher mindsets, or on leadership. As one exemplar quotation noted:

*'It will need to be made very clear to teachers that this is their purpose, as for so long teachers have been asked to make summative judgements on pupils without thinking about what the next steps for pupils need to be.'*

Another teacher noted:

*'It will help teachers look forward and plan for the future if they have a good level of professional understanding of all levels of Maths. A huge amount of professional learning will be required to use them as they are intended. I also think the broadness of them could potentially lead to misinterpretation.'*

A small proportion of teachers were unsure whether the Descriptions of Learning would enable future learning and thought that success would depend on things not yet developed, such as the assessment arrangements in Wales. For example, one teacher noted:

*'Gan nad oes dim cyfarwyddiadau asesu mewn rym eto bydd hi'n ddiddorol gweld beth sydd am ddod. Nid ydym eisiau i athrawon dorri'r camau i lawr fel tick list er mwyn asesu ond bydd anegn rhywfath o restr er mwyn asesu lleoliad y plant ar y continiwm dysgu.'*  
[translated into English as 'As there are no assessment instructions in force yet, it will be interesting to see what is coming. We do not want teachers to break down the steps as a tick list in order to assess, but there will be some sort of list to assess the location of the children on the learning continuum'].

Finally, although this was a less common response, several teachers felt the Descriptions of Learning would not be helpful to enable future learning, suggesting, for example, that they feared many teachers would use them as a tick list, that there was a lack of shared understanding of them, or that the use of the term 'outcomes' was problematic, as they are not intended to be used in that way. Several responses also indicated some possible confusion, with teachers noting that they had been told Descriptions of Learning would not be used as an assessment tool or saying assessment was outside the group's remit and was not the purpose of the Descriptions of Learning. There may have been a limited understanding of the term 'assessment' beneath these responses, with teachers thinking of this only as the means of making achievement judgements rather than as contributing to learning.

At the time of the survey there was a mix of confidence and apprehension among the teachers, and more than half mentioned that success will depend on how teachers understand progression and

Descriptions of Learning. Perhaps allusions to a longer view are the most significant aspect here. The respondents argued that teachers in Wales generally will need to understand the concept, purpose and content of Descriptions of Learning. They suggested a range of factors that professional learning would need to address to enable this to happen (see B3 below).

## **B2. Subsidiarity and co-construction in the development**

In the context of developing progression-based curricula, subsidiarity and co-construction are closely interrelated. Co-construction was identified explicitly as an approach to working and policy development in Wales in the National Model for Regional Working (Welsh Government, 2015b) and was later identified by the OECD (2017) as an emergent characteristic of the approaches taken to Welsh reform more generally. Rather than developments being driven by any one organisation or group, co-construction brings all the stakeholders together (including Welsh Government, practitioners, school leaders, local authorities, regional consortia) to contribute to reform and the collective realisation of the vision for Wales. Whilst *Successful Futures* (Donaldson, 2015) makes no direct reference to co-construction, it very much sits within this context and shapes the nature thereof through the principle of subsidiarity. *Successful Futures* states that ‘*subsidiarity means that power stays as close as possible to the action*’ (p.99) and that, in the context of education reform, this requires that schools and teachers are more directly involved in shaping the curriculum. In this sense, subsidiarity moves decision-making as close to learning and teaching as possible. It places responsibility for important decisions in the hands of practitioners, both in the initial development process and in the actualisation of the curriculum in practice in schools. This idea is closely linked to that of co-construction and influences the roles that people adopt in that process.

In the Welsh educational reform generally and particularly through the involvement of the CAMAU team in the curriculum development process the range of stakeholders engaged in co-construction includes researchers. Co-construction thus enacts the very important notion that, in the development and the actualisation of the curriculum, Government policy, research knowledge and practitioners’ experience should not only be aligned but should actively work together to optimise the quality of education. The Integrity Model of Change identified by Hayward and Spencer (2010) as fundamental to the success of a complex educational initiative has three key elements:

- Educational Integrity – the manifest educational value of the initiative.
- Personal and Professional Integrity – the active commitment and engagement in the development of individual practitioners and collaborative groups of practitioners, drawing on their own professionalism in contributing to planning and carrying through the initiative.
- Systemic Integrity – the clear public commitment of all key players in the whole educational system to the initiative.

Government policy, active engagement with research knowledge and the practical experience and wisdom of teachers are all factors which have significant roles in ensuring that all three of these characteristics of successful and sustainable development are in place.

This sub-section gathers together what participants said about the general process of developing the Progression Steps (see B2.1). It then presents and analyses their views about the interaction in the development work of policy, research and their own practice and experience (see B2.2). Finally, it

analyses their insights on strengths and challenges associated with subsidiarity and co-construction (see B2.3).

It will be noted that this sub-section re-visits from a different angle some findings discussed in earlier parts of this section, for example findings relating to understanding of and the process of producing progression frameworks and Descriptions of Learning.

### **B2.1 The process of developing the Progression Steps**

Responses in both the survey and the interviews identified several elements that were regarded as important in developing Progression Steps, including identifying the key areas, having discussions, looking at international models and getting expert input.

Participants tended to describe the order of the process that they went through, often starting with identifying 'what matters', or skills or areas, then describing progression within these, followed by some sort of feedback and refinement process. A few also talked about the order through which they worked on the Progression Steps, for example, starting with Steps 4 and 5, and then going back to the earlier Steps. They said it was helpful to research international curricular models as part of the process. 'International' or 'International models' received 22 mentions in the survey; 'countries' received 15 mentions; in addition, a number of specific countries were named. The verbs teachers used to describe what they were doing in developing the Progression Steps suggest that they were very actively involved in the process. They included 'discuss' (59 times), 'research' (52), 'look(ing)' (38), 'understand' (10), 'identify' (14), 'edit' (7), 'reflect' (6), 'describe' (4), 'consult' (4). More passive activities such as 'listening' were not referred to often (3). Participants also mentioned experts or expert feedback, the CAMAU team, and specific research papers as important influences on developing Progression Steps. 'What matters' was mentioned often (18 times), and 'big ideas' a few times (4). It should be noted that 'what matters' in this context was not necessarily the formal What Matters statements which became part of the overall curriculum structure. Throughout the process of developing the Descriptions of Learning and Progression Steps, the researchers consistently encouraged the Group members to keep in mind key aspects of learning – 'what matters in learning'. This concept was expanded in some AoLEs when they wrote the formal What Matters statements to include justifications for studying that curricular area, as well as identifying key learning.

### **B2.2 The use of policy, research and practical experience**

Teachers were asked in the survey to consider the extent to which they used policy, research and practice to help develop their Descriptions of Learning or statements of progression. They were given the categories with some examples to help clarify what was meant by policy, research and practice:

- Policy (e.g. *Successful Futures*, other policies in Wales, international curricular policies or frameworks, input from policy representatives)
- Research (e.g. in the CAMAU Learning about Progression report, in other research writing, including books and articles, in input from specialists in this area)
- Practice (e.g. knowledge and experience as teachers or school leaders, or in other educational roles).

The teachers indicated on a 5-point scale the extent to which they used each of these sources, from not at all (1) to a great deal (5). 106 Curriculum Pioneers responded to the research question, and 107 responded to the policy and practice questions.

As shown in Table 3 and Figure 3 on the following page, a very large proportion of the teachers felt that they had used all three of policy, research and practice to inform their Descriptions of Learning/statements of progression.

- 95.3% used evidence from their own practice quite a bit or a great deal to help inform their statements of progression
- 86.0% used evidence from policy quite a bit or a great deal to help inform their statements of progression
- 77.4% used evidence from research quite a bit or a great deal to help inform their statements of progression.

The survey also sought the teachers' personal evaluation of the three sources of influence in terms of the extent to which they found them useful for their thinking about progression. The results recorded in Table 4 and Figure 4 (page 37) show that the vast majority (over 90%) found each of the sources at least somewhat helpful for this purpose, although they found practice the most useful overall.

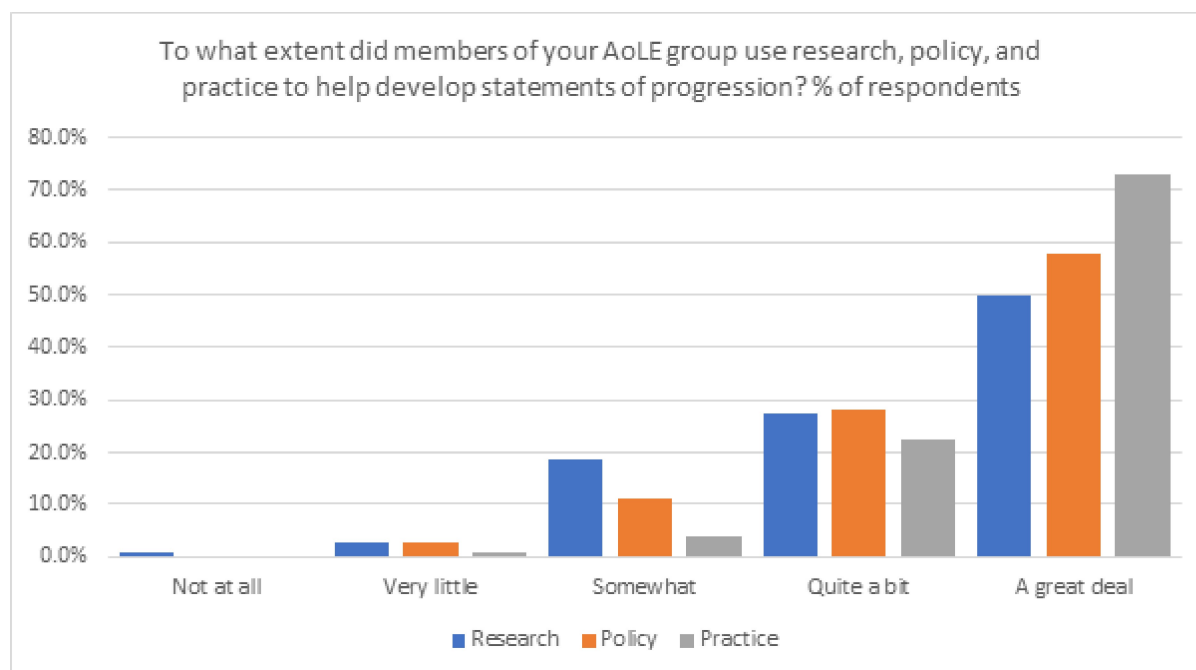
In the context of this survey evidence that the teachers through the development process, including the CAMAU Project, were actively engaged in drawing on all three sources of influence as they developed the progression frameworks for their AoLEs, it is interesting to note some of the more detailed points about each made by those who were interviewed.

*Table 3. Percentage of respondents indicating the extent to which research, policy, and practice were used to inform statements of progression*

	<b>Research</b>	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Practice</b>
Not at all	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Very little	2.8%	2.8%	0.9%
Somewhat	18.9%	11.2%	3.7%
Quite a bit	27.4%	28.0%	22.4%
A great deal	50.0%	57.9%	72.9%

*Note.* Rounding may account for totals not being 100.0%

*Figure 3. Percentage of respondents indicating the extent to which research, policy, and practice were used to inform statements of progression*

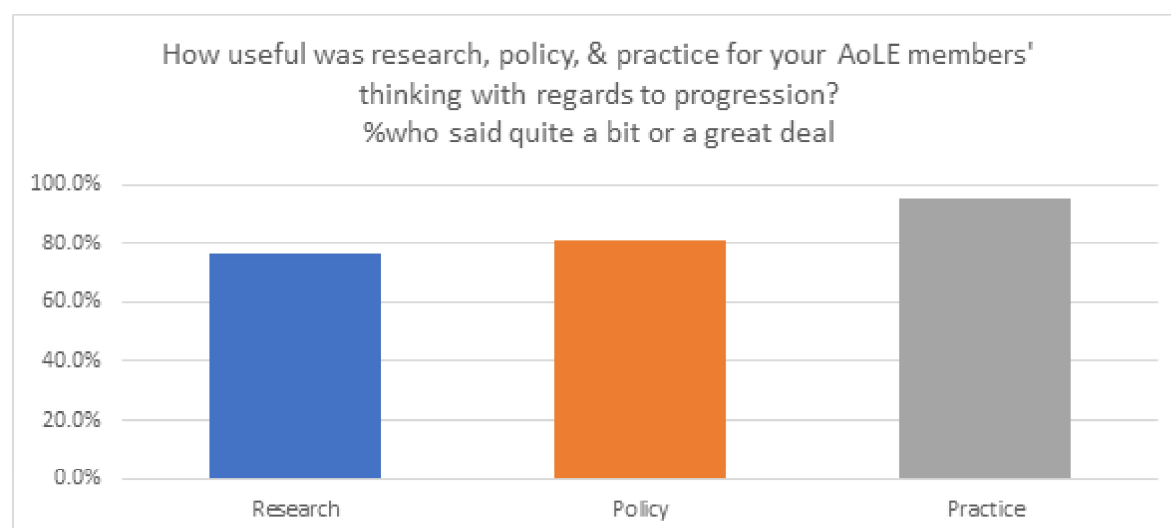


*Table 4. Percentage of respondents indicating the extent to which they found research, policy, and practice useful for informing thinking with regards to progression*

	Research	Policy	Practice
Not at all	0.9%	1.9%	0.0%
Very little	6.6%	2.8%	1.9%
Somewhat	16.0%	14.0%	2.8%
Quite a bit	38.7%	32.7%	19.8%
A great deal	37.7%	48.6%	75.5%

Note. Rounding may account for totals not being 100.0%

*Figure 4. Percentage of respondents indicating each source was either 'quite a bit' or 'a great deal' useful for informing thinking with regards to progression.*



In relation to **policy**, interviewees made comments in two distinct areas. Firstly, they recognised the value of other countries' curricular policies or frameworks as stimuli for thinking about development in Wales or as supportive evidence that an approach they were taking to writing Descriptions of Learning/progression had been used elsewhere. However, interviewees were clear that such policies and frameworks should not be used simply as models to be adopted straightforwardly in Wales. Adaptation to the Welsh context was a theme in several interviews. For example, participants in both the Languages, Literacy and Communication and the Mathematics and Numeracy AoLEs spoke of the need for their group to take account of existing policy in the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework. Some teachers with early education or special schools experience referred to the significance of the existing Foundation Phase policy and guidance in adjusting their group's thinking about Progression Steps in the early stages of the learning journey. The views of two Humanities teachers, one secondary and one primary, are representative of a common position among interviewees in relation to the use of other systems' curricular frameworks:

*'We used British Columbia as an international model. We liked the model and the way in which it was presented. However, we also were mindful that we wanted to look at things like Scotland where there were perhaps known flaws, so we were very mindful to look at what worked with that and what hadn't worked and how we evaluated it. I think it was a lot of unpicking of policies and trying to bring it together. We did also look at current policies that we have got and say, well actually what is in existence now, let's look at our level descriptors and how can we unpick those and how can they be used. So again, lots of looking at what we have got now and using that perhaps in a different way.'* (Primary Teacher, Humanities AoLE)

*'With international studies we looked at, quite critically. It was really quite useful to look at them for the positive and the negatives and not say, oh it's got that - we could use the same. What did we like about it, what didn't we like about it, how useful would we see it as a teacher? It was interesting, because we looked at it cold, so perhaps we made some assumptions that isn't how that curriculum would have been used. So perhaps we got some things wrong, but how we looked at their model, their layout, those sort of things were useful.'* (Secondary Teacher, Humanities AoLE)

Secondly, Welsh Government policy as expressed in formal published documentation impacted on the curriculum development process: this was particularly the case for *Successful Futures*. Although there were varying perceptions of the role played by this report, its core messages were seen as not open to question and served as benchmark principles. Many of those interviewed emphasised the significance of *Successful Futures* in the work of their various AoLE groups. The following are illustrative quotations.

*'Yn amlwg mae popeth ni wedi neud wedi bod yn gysylltiedig gyda Dyfodol Llwyddiannus, mae pob un cam o'r broses ni'n mynd nol at Dyfodol Llwyddiannus, ni'n mynd nol at Pedwar Diben.'* [Translated into English as *'Obviously everything we've done has been linked to Successful Futures, every single step of our process goes back to Successful Futures, we go back to the Four Purposes.'*] (Secondary Teacher, Health and Well-being AoLE)

*'I think the policy was quite straightforward and quite matter of fact. I think Successful Futures was the Bible really. There is no going away from that. I think the other policies we looked at supported, either supported our point of view so there wasn't any conflict there – no.'* (Primary Teacher, Expressive Arts AoLE)

*'Well I think clearly going back to Successful Futures and thinking about the key messages from time to time, always referring back to what were the objectives in terms of the Four Purposes. What does Successful Futures say about progression, in terms of people will need points of reference within the new curriculum. It was clear that we were doing something, not because we were making it up as we were going along, because actually that was what Successful Futures was telling us, that we needed to be able to articulate and demonstrate what it actually looks like, and have points of reference throughout. So, yes, Successful Futures and similar and subsequent policy documents were based on that.'* (Government Lead)

*'There is lack of details, specifics when we start to think more broadly about progression and AOs [achievement outcomes] and KSEs [knowledge, skills and experiences] - then it doesn't*



*tell you what to do, it mentions these things. I suppose it is making sure that you stay true to some of the recommendations from Successful Futures. As you got further and further in, that was more about exploring and understanding what we had to do, not looking back to making sure we were doing it right, because it was not a prescription.'* (Government Lead)

Interviewees spoke of the need to avoid the temptation to impose a common model and ignore diversity. They were aware of potential conflicts because of possible influence on the development of policies from outwith education and of the possibility that government policy might well be more time-limited than the hoped-for lifespan of this curriculum. Another potential concern identified in interviews was the number of policy bodies involved, directly and indirectly, in the development process and the difficulties caused by inconsistency in messages both across bodies and over time within any one organisation.

Specific recommendations made by Government Leads concerning organisation and governance of the curriculum development in the future related to the need for the role of the middle tier of governance (regional consortia, local government) to be fully recognised in the processes of engagement and implementation and to the need to develop and maintain national networks to support the on-going processes of co-construction.

In relation to using **research**, interviewees identified the CAMAU *Learning About Progression* report as a significant factor in influencing the thinking of the AoLE groups about Descriptions of Learning and Progression Steps. Two quotations exemplify how in particular AoLEs – and broadly this was reflected in others – both the *Learning About Progression* Report and the mediation of research knowledge and findings by CAMAU team staff were important:

*'But the most significant thing in terms of phrasing and really genuinely understanding what Progression Steps or achievement outcomes should or shouldn't, could or couldn't, be was the input from CAMAU, without a shadow of a doubt. That really clarified and unified our thoughts. You know the paper, the CAMAU paper on progression in learning, that was spot on in terms of impact.'* (Consortia Lead)

*'Well CAMAU were a continuous presence ... as in experts in the room for when we were drafting the Progression Steps. That was a really useful viewpoint because CAMAU has an overarching picture and it is quite easy to (get) bogged down in the detail when you are writing the Progression Steps. It was useful to have a bigger picture.'* (Primary Teacher, Mathematics and Numeracy AoLE)

In addition to this direct CAMAU influence on the proceedings of the AoLE groups, the interviews show a very significant weight of mediated research input from individual experts, invited by the various groups to contribute their knowledge and experience. Generally this invited expert input provided research-based guidance on such aspects of the development as subject content or coverage, debate about disciplines within AoLEs and, in some cases, aspects of pedagogy, rather than focusing on means of describing *progression* (which was the central concern of the CAMAU *Learning About Progression* report and the interaction of CAMAU team members with AoLE participants). In all the AoLEs, with the possible exception of Expressive Arts, the emphasis which interviewees gave to invited expert research input suggests that the thinking of the group was influenced at least as much by it as by CAMAU-derived input on progression, if not more so.

Interviewees spoke of difficulties in accessing research – some relating to time for doing so, some to the sheer size of the relevant research literature, some to unfamiliarity with the kind of language used in academic publications. However, it was clear from the interviews that, in general, the leaders and members of the AoLE groups recognised the desirability of being research-aware in developing the curriculum and the progression framework. Their responses show that they did in fact engage with it, in relation to both curriculum content or coverage and the process of describing learning and progression. A notable positive feature of this engagement was that it was *critical engagement*: the interview data suggest that AoLE members sought to interpret what they learned from research in terms of their practical experience and were conscious of such issues as the irrelevance of some research because it was too general, or too specific, or too discipline-related to be helpful in the task of developing the Descriptions of Learning and progression. A point related to this critical approach to research which arose in the interviews was the recognition that there is a risk of ‘cherry-picking’ and avoiding research which may offer a challenge to one’s existing position.

Discussion of information and ideas from research in the group was referred to by many of those interviewed. The following quotation is one example of how interaction with the CAMAU team sometimes stimulated such discussion:

*‘Again [the CAMAU team member] was very nicely and very subtly kind of steering them. She would come in and say: well you might want to have a look at, ... ok it might have been the Australian one, that kind of... She was almost deconstructing and getting them to evaluate an idea.’* (Primary Teacher, Mathematics and Numeracy AoLE)

Evidence also emerged in the interviews of AoLE groups checking the action they had taken against research principles, for example the following quotation:

*‘A wedyn on ni’n defnyddio’r ymchwil iddyn nhw fynd nol ac edrych a ydy ein gwaith ni yn adlewyrchu beth sydd yn yr ymchwil yn fanna o ran cynnydd. Oedd hynny’n bwysig iawn i fynd yn ôl ac ymlaen.’* (Translated into English as ‘And then we used the research for them to go back and look at whether our work reflects what is in the research there in terms of progress. Yes, that’s really important, to go back and forth.’) (Lead)

With regard to the future, interviewees spoke of a need to develop practitioners’ research literacy. Although there was little specific detail about how this could or should be effected, suggestions were made about closer working between higher education and schools, with the possibility of a qualification in curriculum design; improving accessibility to research; supporting the synthesis of research findings; commissioning specific research; and addressing the issue of differing availability of research in different curricular areas.

A number of points were made in the interviews relating to the influence of *practice* in the development. Several interviewees referred explicitly to their regular discussion with school colleagues of the developments to date in the AoLE group and to the valuable critical comments thus received. There were also numerous explicit references to the use of practical experience as a checking mechanism in judging the validity for learners, the level of challenge and the manageability of Progression Steps as the AoLE group developed these. Nevertheless, the risks of using current expectations of learning as a reality check in considering the appropriateness of the Progression Steps were explicitly recognised in some interviews. The following quotation from an interview with

a Government Lead is an example of how participants' experience was very significant in the development of Progression Steps in one AoLE group:

*'Very, very excellent teachers in the group, who knew exactly how progression looked. They talked about how it was not linear, goes forward comes back, the ebb and flow of the tide, and that you could be an expert in one field and not in others and how that could be harmonised in the eventual reporting back to learners or to parents.'* (Government Lead)

Some interviewees highlighted the value to the development of the interaction within their AoLE group of colleagues with experience of working at different phases of education.

*'Yes, like I just said, we have a wealth and breadth of experience within the group. I think we have benefitted from having a good blend of different professionals. We have a good secondary representation, a special school representation; geographically we have had a good blend of different people. We have also had consistency in attendance. There hasn't been a high turnover of staff. Time has been used effectively, because we haven't had to keep up-skilling people and where a need has arisen we managed really well by giving sub-sections to sort of talk people through the process to up-skill them. I think that is something we have benefitted from. Of course, we have PE specialists within the group and where there was limited specialism that has been brought into fill that gap. It is always about keeping it child-centred. Everything that we have developed – we have always gone back to: so, ok, this is the theory, but how is that enacted in the classroom? What does that look like for our learner? Of course, I have moved over the last three years from a year 6 teacher to a nursery teacher, so I have that benefit of thinking, so what does that look like? How is that different? – from my personal level, as well as (through) conversations with colleagues.'* (Primary Teacher, Health and Well-being AoLE)

*'Mae hwnna yn sicr wedi bod yn ddylanwad arwyddocaol sydd wedi effeithio ar ein ymarfer ni, a'r gallu wedyn a'r gofynion o'r Llywodraeth i fynd allan i weithio gyda chlystyrau gwahanol, eto i gael trafodaeth, nid gyda un ysgol ond cyfres o ysgolion gyda chyfres o bobl sy'n dod o ddysgu a phrofiadau ystod gwahanol i edrych ar pa fath o gynnydd mae disgyblion yn gallu gwneud.'* [translated into English as *'That has certainly been a significant influence that has affected our practice, and then the ability and demands of Government to go out to work with different clusters, yet to have a discussion, not with one school but a series of schools, with a pool of people who come from different learning and range experiences, to look at what kind of progress pupils can make.'*] (Secondary Teacher, Humanities AoLE)

Some secondary teachers, in particular, spoke of the expansion of their awareness of what young children could do through their interaction with primary and early stage colleagues in the group. The following provides an illustration:

*'Yes absolutely.... about what learners can and can't do. I remember some specific discussions, particularly around computation and digital actually, where we had of course Foundation Phase people and Key Stage 2 people and secondary working together. Secondary were talking about some of the things that they were thinking about on Progression Step 4 and primary guys chipped in and said: well they can do that in Progression Step 2. There was a lot of dragging down and thinking: oh right, ok. And that created space, if you like, in Progression Steps 4 and 5 to do a lot more sort of embedding of concepts but*

*also exploring how that might look. So really strengthening the experiential side in secondary, I think, because they were going to have to cover a lot of the ground that is now much earlier. A lot of our primary guys were saying: no, we do that all the time, you know – it was almost like a revelation to some of the secondary colleagues who felt... you know, that wasn't happening. So yes, it was quite interesting and that was all based on their experience of working with the kids and understanding how the kids will pick up stuff.'* (Secondary Teacher, Science and Technology AoLE)

One aspect of this influence of the experience of different phases of education mentioned by some interviewees was the fact that pedagogical approaches at different phases influenced thinking to some extent. This point was relevant, for example, to debates in Expressive Arts and Humanities about the extent to which the AoLE should focus on constituent disciplines at early and later stages of the learning journey. Some interviewees said they thought it likely that schools will give consideration to how disciplines within AoLEs will be recognised on the basis of practical experience (for example, emerging after the early years of schooling or emerging within the qualifications framework).

In terms of managing the sometimes conflicting messages from research, policy and practice, a number of interviewees referred positively to the value of the Decision Tree tool developed and used by the CAMAU team with all of the AoLE Groups.

*'Challenging [Successful Futures and policy statements] and questioning it where appropriate as well, it wasn't just taking it verbatim – we did actually say: well is this actually fit? – you know. So it wasn't just taken without question by the group... [The decision tree workshops] was one of the main things to frame our thinking I think definitely – that helped.* (Primary Teacher, Health and Well-Being AoLE)

*'I think when we did the decision trees – I think it was perhaps slightly timed wrong but the decision trees were really useful because they helped us to make some – not snap decisions but it sort of forced our hand a little bit, to make that decision – what is it you want to encapsulate.'* (Primary Teacher, Humanities AoLE)

*'... sef y coeden gwestiynau, fel oedd hwnna wedi helpu arwain ni ar y trywydd'* [translated into English as: *'... which is the decision tree – that helped lead us on the path'*] (Secondary Teacher, Humanities AoLE)

Other, relatively disparate, points emerging in the interviews included views that qualifications specifications will probably continue to play a dominant role in secondary schools; that there will be a need to develop language to describe practice; and that good practice requires the development of appropriate pedagogy.

The interviewees were asked to identify which of the three, policy research or practice, had been the strongest influence on the work of the group in developing Progression Steps. It is notable that the interview answers confirm the finding from the online survey, that, while all three had a significant role, practical experience was the most important factor. The following are exemplar quotations:

*'If I had to put them in order, obviously I would refer to policy, but it is always about what does it look like in practice – how does it have an impact on the learner? I think, if they were being put in rank order, the learner's experience and the practical element would be the one that came first if there was any conflict.'* (Primary Teacher, Health and Well-being AoLE)

*'I think their practice would be probably the most influential, because that is the thing that they would have been most assured of, because they (are) largely very confident and capable practitioners, so that would have influenced their thinking and then it would be steered by the research and the policy.'* (Consortia Lead)

### **B2.3. Strengths and challenges associated with subsidiarity and co-construction**

There were strengths and challenges associated with the co-construction process. One teacher saw co-construction as a process of *'trying to accommodate those different approaches, so we have got something meaningful to all those approaches as well and works on different levels.'* (Science and Technology, Secondary Teacher). It was understood to be a highly iterative process. Several interviewees spoke of the significant opportunities this brought for thinking about the progression frameworks to evolve and be refined. However, the evolutionary (and in some ways exploratory) nature of the process meant that priorities, requirements and directions changed over time: this was identified by some participants as a source of frustration. Notably, *Successful Futures* explicitly recognises subsidiarity as capable of promoting empowerment. Although there were instances in which people felt this had not happened, there was evidence that generally participants had felt empowered. One teacher stated:

*'The curriculum doesn't feel like it has been done to us. We have co-facilitated this; we have had ownership and been able to sort of enact our agency through developing the process.'*  
(Primary Teacher, Health and Well-being AoLE)

The following sub-sections describe some of the emerging findings in more detail. Particular attention is paid to: B2.3.1: The evolution and complexity of roles in co-construction; B2.3.2: Shared learning, challenging understandings and changes in confidence; B2.3.3: Developing criticality and working with critical feedback; B2.3.4: Discussion, communication and holding on to the 'bigger picture'; B2.3.5: Challenges in co-construction and subsidiarity. Where relevant, links across these themes are indicated.

#### **B2.3.1 The evolution and complexity of roles in co-construction**

It was clear throughout the interview evidence, that roles were significant in shaping and facilitating co-construction. Overall, the different roles that people brought to the co-construction process were viewed positively and seen to bring value to the process. A Government Lead spoke of the difference between this and previous policy development processes, largely because of the significance of the role of practitioners in moving towards the point of delivery. Value was also seen in working with external partners, including the CAMAU team: a Consortia Lead described the value of working with CAMAU researchers in terms of their being able to offer direction to the activity of the groups.

What was also evident, however, was that roles took time to develop and often involved people discovering and re-conceptualising what their roles were. This was true to varying degrees for teachers and for Consortia and Government Leads. Often, adherence (as far as possible) to the principle of subsidiarity meant that people had to reframe their role in this process. A Consortia Lead observed that in the development teachers were adopting a more strategic role than that which they were used to in schools, and that this meant that they sometimes initiated discussion which

otherwise might not have taken place. There was a sense also that, as they worked together, teachers' roles were extended in relation to their curricular and practical expertise. They were not just considering their own classes and pupils but had now to think about learners throughout the Welsh school system. A primary teacher from the Languages, Literacy and Communication AoLE stated:

*'I think we have all had to realise that in this process we are teachers, not necessarily just teachers of junior children or teachers of foundation phase children. I think that is what we - and I'm trying to put into my school that we have got a whole continuum of learners and we have got to know really where the starting point is and where the end point is.'*

Changes in the roles of policy makers were also quite significant and influenced by subsidiarity. A Government Lead reflected on differences in their own role:

*'...as government, people sometimes look at you as having the answer. With something like this, it was much easier - you were in a safe space, where actually you could say: Well actually we don't know the answer and actually you don't know the answer either, ... the practitioners, they don't know the answer. And we can develop it - you know.'*

A Consortia Lead was aware of instances of discussions, of which they would have taken control in previous roles, becoming over-extended. However, they recognised that this was not part of their role in this context. This can be seen as a shift in the types of responsibilities that were being associated with roles. In looking across all of the interviews, it was possible to identify a number of responsibilities for policy Leads (Government and Consortia) emerging in curricular co-construction. These included:

- Facilitator and mediator of evidence and activities.
- Drawing attention to key documents and evidence at different points in the process.
- Mediator of conflicting positions or views, including external experts.
- Embodying leadership rather than dictating what is to happen.
- Supporting open communication and keeping people up-to-date.
- Establishing a direction of travel and bringing people on board.
- Ensuring alignment of developments with Statements of What Matters.
- Balancing one's role place in the Coherence Group with that in the AoLE when these might conflict. There came with this a sense of tension around subsidiarity that had to be worked with: *'I was very careful never to rely on: 'Well we are government or this is what Coherence Group have said, so we just have to do it.'* For me it was absolutely essential that they were brought through with that decision and that they understood why we were making it...' (Government Lead, Health and Well-being).
- Mediating pressure from external lobbyists for curriculum content in the co-construction process and giving the group members space to think things through.
- Collating and summarising information.

*The Welsh Educational Reform Journey* (OECD, 2017) specifically stated of co-construction that: *'there is scope to further clarify and consolidate the roles and responsibilities of different actors.'* The evidence here would suggest that there is some degree of complexity to this and that roles evolved over time, influenced by the parameters and context. Furthermore, as shown below in B2.3.5, establishing trust in the overall process during the early stages was important for roles. Were this co-

construction process to have taken place without the principle of subsidiarity, the nature of the roles and how they were conceptualised would likely have been different.

### ***B2.3.2 Shared learning, challenging understanding and shifts in confidence***

Several interviewees discussed the value of the learning that co-construction appeared to promote. Central features of this were cross-sector learning between primary and secondary colleagues and the ways in which this can challenge one's own thinking and assumptions. Some Leads also spoke of their own learning as a result of working with teachers and others involved in co-construction. Learning across sectors and phases was seen by many as important for effective co-construction. Moreover, this was often explicitly or implicitly framed in terms of its importance in realising effective progression frameworks. Within the evidence, personal learning was framed as either adding to or challenging people's understanding in different ways. Additionally, there was some evidence that this was associated with developing confidence.

In terms of new knowledge around the development of progression frameworks, one teacher noted that they would not have had the knowledge of Progression Steps 4 and 5 that secondary colleagues brought to the table (Expressive Arts, Primary Teacher). Another stated:

*'I have learnt so much from the secondary schools and I would like to think they have learnt a lot from primary settings as well. We came together originally as separate subjects. Actually working with other subjects has helped us to see it in different ways.'* (Primary Teacher, Humanities AoLE)

There was also a sense of understandings being constructively challenged as part of the process. One teacher described a situation in which a colleague without the immediately relevant knowledge or experience was, as a result, able to act very effectively as a critical friend (Secondary Teacher, Languages, Literacy and Communication AoLE). At a higher level, one teacher saw the co-construction process as *a really good professional development opportunity* that allowed her to question accepted practice. In particular, she spoke of questioning the fitness for purpose of the existing national curriculum, which she had previously simply taken for granted (Primary Teacher, Health and Well-being AoLE).

Another kind of challenge to understanding was identified in different ways by Consortia Leads from two different areas. This challenge was that of thinking beyond one's familiar discipline(s) and not allowing particular subject experience to narrow one's ability to think about the whole of an AoLE.

Whether in terms of challenging or augmenting understanding, several interviewees spoke about shifts in confidence, often in relation to their own learning. Interviews provided evidence about participants' feelings as they moved from uncertainty to confidence. For example, one teacher stated:

*'I think everybody would say that there was a massive learning curve. When we were first asked to do this we were all a little bit shell-shocked: 'Oh my goodness I have never had to think about this before'. And then at the end feeling much more confident in it. It was quite an uncomfortable process to go through at times, you know, not feeling..... and almost questioning: Are we doing this right?'* (Secondary Teacher, Languages, Literacy and Communication AoLE)

It was thought by some that this type of development process should be undertaken by university researchers. Teachers sometimes felt overwhelmed at the start with concerns that they did not have the expertise to undertake this kind of curricular development. A Consortia Lead noted that there was no sense of having a comfort blanket from the experiences of others, because this form of co-construction appeared to be taking place in Wales for this first time. There was also some evidence that confidence in sharing thinking was initially influenced by perceptions of differences. One special school teacher stated quite candidly that:

*‘Three years ago, before this started, I wouldn’t dream of liaising with secondary colleagues, because they would be totally a different level to what I would be doing with my learners, and now, particularly in Health and Well-being, we can have discussions about how we are going to teach certain elements of it and it is really not that different.’*

It may be that a better understanding of different perspectives may have resulted from discussion between sectors as part of the on-going development process. Despite some of these challenges around confidence in the early stages, it was clear that having to move out of one’s comfort zone was important for building confidence. Evidence from several interviewees suggested that confidence developed significantly as the process unfolded.

Something that might be expected to develop with confidence is critical thinking. For some participants this took the form of questioning the extent to which policies, such as those set out in *Successful Futures* (Donaldson 2016), supported the thinking which a group was doing rather than accepting these policies as set in stone. This type of critical thinking was also applied to other sources of evidence through processes of analysing, balancing and synthesising as decisions about progression were made and positions formed on it.

Being able to work with critical feedback was also important but could bring challenges. A Consortia Lead described an instance where teachers had spent a considerable amount of time developing Statements of What Matters and the early stages of progression when feedback (including some from invited experts) significantly challenged and unpicked much of the thinking they had done. This was described by the Consortia Lead as being quite a brutal experience which disheartened the group and knocked their confidence. Similarly, in Science and Technology, a teacher reported that group members who were looking at computational thinking received and responded to feedback throughout the process, but late in the process received additional feedback from the CAMAU team which challenged and unpicked much of their earlier thinking. While the teachers were in agreement with the feedback, they were frustrated because it came so late on in the process and they were unable to respond to it appropriately.

### ***B2.3.3 Discussion, communication and managing complexity***

There was widespread recognition among respondents of the centrality and power of discussion in the co-construction process. Although this process was viewed by Government and Consortia Leads as more time consuming than in other policy development initiatives they had been involved in, deep and extended discussion was the core means of arriving at agreed positions in complex circumstances (e.g. debates about disciplinary or generic Descriptions of Learning and progression in Expressive Arts, Science and Technology and Humanities). Discussion was essentially the engine of co-construction. Points where it broke down were thus quite evident and were themselves



sometimes a feature of discovering difficulties in the co-construction process as it unfolded. For example, a Consortia Lead said that at times conflicting information had been given by members of the CAMAU team; and that there were times when there was a lack of clarity about what was being asked of group members — particularly in relation to elements in the overall curricular model into which descriptions of progression were to fit.

Such difficulties reflect the significant challenge in communicating clearly within the complex and changing landscape where research, policy and practice come together.

In addition to communication issues, some evidence of approaches to managing complexity emerged in the interviews. There was some indication that AoLE Leads developed strategies and approaches for taking the co-construction process forward without dictating to the group. A Consortia Lead, for example, spoke about their joint approach involving a process of flushing out issues, agreeing a direction of travel, confirming intentions and then sticking to an agreed position. Strategies such as breakout groups (that could include anyone involved in co-construction) were used in Health and Well-being and in Languages, Literacy and Communication to address emergent difficulties. More widely, however, interviewees made several references to the metaphor of ‘the bigger picture’, typically in relation to managing complexity and the re-orientation of perspectives. It featured in a grounding or sense checking role. The following quotations from teachers illustrate the contexts and ways in which it featured:

[In reflecting upon expert input] *‘When we have gone through so many iterations and been challenged by experts and they were completely side-tracked by their domain, you know they wanted – you know, when you were discussing about this word had to be used including a certain word and again – really – we need to look at the bigger picture here.’* (Primary Teacher, Science and Technology AoLE).

*‘I think that actually having an academic body doing the bulk of the research is right and presenting findings – that buy-into, it is really important. Understanding the process and the why, I think that really helped us to understand that bigger picture and how things were moving forward.’* (Primary Teacher, Humanities AoLE)

*‘Timing is a big thing. Hopefully, we were a very lovely group, and we were very endearing, but probably we were a bit anti some of the decisions early on because we couldn’t our head round it – we didn’t see the bigger picture maybe, or too much of the bigger picture, and we didn’t know some of the smaller details – a bit of both really.’* (Primary Teacher, Humanities AoLE)

*‘That was a really useful viewpoint, because CAMAU has an overarching picture and it is quite easy to (get) bogged down in the detail when you are writing the Progression Steps. It was useful to have a bigger picture.’* (Primary Teacher, Mathematics and Numeracy)

*‘Yes, and when we have had experts – when we have gone through so many iterations and been challenged by experts and they were completely side-tracked by their domain, you know, they wanted – you know, when you were discussing about this word had to be used, including a certain word and again – really – we need to look at the bigger picture here.’* (Primary Teacher, Science and Technology AoLE)

A final sense in which the bigger picture was implicitly used was in the creation of the progression frameworks themselves (Primary Teacher, Mathematics and Numeracy AoLE) and it shaped the way

in which evidence from practice was used. One position, which was articulated by a Consortia Lead, recognised that the curriculum (which should be realistic and challenging) was for the whole of Wales and the AoLE could not, for example, rely upon anecdotal evidence and experience from one teacher and her/his classes.

#### **B2.3.4 Tensions in co-construction**

Although co-construction was seen as a valuable and powerful means of realising progression frameworks within the curriculum, tensions were also evident. These were often related to participants' different perspectives. The co-construction process needed to find ways of aligning or reconciling these differing viewpoints. Different perspectives were apparent in relation to (among other things): (i) knowledge, experience and visions or ways of thinking, (ii) policy and practice directions, (iii) the developing understanding of groups, and (iv) research and policy directions.

In moving from their work in school and classrooms into the process of co-construction, many participants were in effect developing new perspectives on knowledge and experience. A Consortia Lead commented that:

*'they were all teachers who were trained to deliver the National Curriculum, with quite an extensive knowledge of levels and of dealing in a performance measures-driven system, so their notion of progression is very different to the notion of descriptors of learning.'*

The Lead described this as a shift from an *entrenched model* to something more open-minded. Notably, the significance of these changing perspectives was echoed by many interviewees, both explicitly and implicitly, when asked to think about future stages of development.

The challenge of moving people forward in the co-construction of the new curriculum whilst, at the same time, they were having to reflect on practice as it was happening in schools (i.e. the existing system) was recognised by participants, including those who were leading the discussions in the AoLE groups.

Within the co-construction process itself, different perspectives were also apparent along lines of subject and curricular identity. This was true, for example, in Science and Technology and Expressive Arts, where important discussions took place about the distinctions and interrelationship among subjects within the AoLE. These essentially reflected different ways of thinking about curriculum, particularly in relation to the idea of learning progression.

Such differences in curricular ways of thinking emerged in other ways also, often in the contributions of external experts. A Consortia Lead spoke very positively about the strength of the contribution made by external experts. However, this Lead also described challenges in reaching a shared understanding of how a progression-based curriculum differs from other curricula in terms of prescription:

*'... a lot of them are very, very subject specific, so they are lobby groups for their disciplines. So that has been the challenge, about reconciling: 'Well this is a different approach to England, certainly, and there is also a different approach to ...' We are not asking them to define a GCSE or A level spec. It is trying to cram as much physics, chemistry and biology into it as possible. Some of that was difficult to articulate at the Successful Futures vision and*

*subsidiarity and the nature of, this isn't a prescriptive program of study – kind of key stage type of thing.'*

One invited expert remained with a group for only a short time. An interviewee said:

*'I think he perhaps did not understand the process we were going through at all. He was really struggling with that...'* (Secondary Teacher, Science and Technology AoLE)

Inputs to the development process by domain experts were sometimes seen by the group members as quite 'granular' (cf. Heritage, 2000) and task-orientated (rather than learning-driven); *'they could be quite protective of their domains'* (Primary Teacher, Science and Technology AoLE)

A Consortia Lead noted a lack of expert input to the different disciplinary areas of the AoLE in the early stages and tensions arising from group discussion about disciplinary versus generic approaches to progression. This Lead argued that, the teachers' practice and experience had a greater influence upon the curriculum that was developed than perhaps policy did. Some groups involved a greater number of invited experts than others. In another group, it was noted that some of the invited experts remained in some disagreement about decisions of the group, but that the teachers adopted a common position.

Other variations in perspective were found related to aspects of policy, feedback to the AoLE groups and the developing thinking and understanding of members. In reflecting on policy, a Government Lead said:

*'I think because all the recommendations of Successful Futures have been agreed, we've had to live with them and I think there are some aspects where we've learned from our processes and maybe things have developed, that there had been evolution, but that we had to go back.'*

Not only was there a sense of tension arising from a difference between policy and developing thinking, but some AoLE group members felt that this may have curtailed the development of the curriculum in some ways. For example, a primary teacher from the Humanities AoLE expressed concern about having to fit thinking into particular models that were perhaps not congruent with the nature of the AoLE:

*'I just worry, have we been, have we lost the creativity because we are trying to fit in with a model that suits the other AoLEs? Are we trying to have something that fits nicely into a piece of paper that can be printed out and people can use, whereas actually a 3D model might work with different layers and again you are revisiting skills? – I don't know.'*

Similarly, tensions sometimes arose at points where feedback or policy decisions were received by the group which could be seen to be at odds with developing thinking. This was seen by some interviewees (for example, in Expressive Arts) to cause both concern and conflict within the groups. A primary teacher in the Science and Technology group commented that there were challenges where feedback was received and the person providing it did not necessarily have an in-depth understanding of why things had been done in particular ways. There was a sense across interviewees who discussed such tensions, that, often, the challenge was in working towards a resolution and bringing together different views in ways that would be effective and, as far as possible, inclusive. As was seen with Mathematics and Numeracy, however, there were some instances in which achieving a resolution was quite challenging. The decision by the Coherence

Group to remove financial literacy as a discrete Statement of What Matters was seen as running counter to the arguments, position and beliefs arrived at by the AoLE Group. It was described by a participant as a *huge disappointment*, with a sense by the group of being under attack, which had the effect of really setting them back.

### **B3. Professional learning and co-construction in on-going programme design and development**

The survey invited the participants to respond to the following question:

*‘Considering the current Progression Steps, what further support materials or exemplification do you think would be helpful for teachers in order to support learners appropriately in this new curriculum?’*

Participants were also asked for ideas about ‘Future programme design and development’.

Those interviewed responded to similar prompts.

It is possible, in reviewing both the survey responses and the interviews, to identify two broad sets of idea which teachers put forward. One relates to support materials and exemplification; the other to more general issues involved in the processes of continuing co-construction of the curriculum and professional learning.

Before considering the various suggestions made by interviewees, one significant point from the interviews is worth highlighting: teachers should be asked what they need from professional learning.

#### ***Support Materials and Exemplification***

The majority of teachers suggested in the survey that exemplification will be important. Some referred to exemplification quite generally, suggesting it would be helpful and necessary and warned that without it teachers new to the process could struggle. Others offered specific ideas, such as examples of pupil work, videos (9 times), examples of good or best practice (9), case studies (6), glossary (5), examples of successful models, or describing how the website should be structured. The survey responses suggested that it is unlikely that one model of exemplification will suit everyone. Teachers recommended a suite of different types of materials to support teaching and learning. They wanted to avoid exemplification becoming a new level of specification that ties teachers into a prescribed list. Some argued that it should be made clear alongside any exemplification or guidance that this represents only one approach. It seems balance is necessary, since several teachers warned against providing exemplification as it could become prescriptive or not allow for differences across schools. Most importantly perhaps, teachers referred to the need for explanations and guidance on the purpose of exemplification and how it should be used. They saw exemplification and professional learning as going together.

Teachers who were interviewed also linked provision of support materials with the idea of professional learning and were also generally positive about the idea of exemplification. Several referred to a range of types of exemplification and support material which they considered important for the future process of co-construction of the curriculum.

Some of the perceived needs for supporting material related to helping teachers understand how learners would move through the progression framework: for example, there were suggestions for descriptions of how a Progression Step would be reflected through 2/3 years' work and for exemplars of learners' work showing progression through the Framework. Some argued that this kind of support should be nationally provided to ensure equity and consistency across Wales. Some interviewees spoke of uncertainty about the level of detail needed in the progression framework and argued that teachers might need more guidance on how to move learners from one point to another in it. The idea that some teachers, including newly qualified ones, would probably need directive, step-by-step guidance was mentioned.

Other kinds of exemplar material mentioned as desirable included models of good practice relevant to this new type of curriculum – many different kinds, including video and web-based role models; accounts of how schools have tried out the curriculum framework; sample assessment materials; sample worksheets; glossaries:

*'... mae angen hyfforddiant, mae angen falle clipiau fideo, mae angen enghreifftau ar y web'*  
[Translated into English as *training is needed, video clips are needed, web role models are needed*]. (Primary Teacher, Mathematics and Numeracy AoLE)

Some interviewees suggested specific issues which support and professional learning should address. These included: the idea that professional learning should make clear the difference between describing progression and planning for learning; and the need for guidance on finding and using research. There were a few explicit references to specific need for exemplification in Health and Well-being and Mathematics and Numeracy, but not in the other AoLEs. One interviewee argued that Estyn can contribute strongly to professional learning by highlighting the relevant approaches and pedagogy in its work. Importantly, a few of the references to exemplification were linked to a strong warning that exemplars risk being used as prescriptive models. Some interviewees argued that what was crucial was provision of exemplars of *how to plan*, but not exemplars of actual courses (to avoid teachers just taking them 'off the shelf').

Manageability of on-going co-construction and enactment of the curriculum and the need to motivate teachers to engage in it were other factors raised in the interviews. Some interviewees mentioned that 'reform fatigue' might well come into play. Motivation was regarded as an important factor, but there was no single, clear idea or set of ideas about how best to ensure it. Nevertheless, there were suggestions about what would probably be needed to support teachers in co-constructing the curriculum. Some interviewees argued that there will be need for a significant infrastructure (initial teacher education and continuing professional development activities) to support professional learning; the approach should be 'pan-Wales' (not just by AoLE), providing clear explanations of all the key elements in the new curriculum and active engagement in professional learning activities. Another set of points related to the importance of collaborative approaches, both within AoLEs (i.e. not separately for component disciplines of AoLEs) and more generally. It was argued that the involvement of those who developed the initial framework in the future professional learning of others would strengthen it. Specific points suggested in interviews included:

- Combination of formal and informal action.
- Engagement in dialogue with colleagues and with those who had the experience of developing the initial framework.
- Short, snappy accounts of what action is needed.

- Key documents only – to avoid overwhelming the profession with documentation.
- Guidance material usable by teachers without expert support.
- Collaboration across stages (foundation, primary, secondary).

Some interviewees argued that support material for the on-going co-construction of the curriculum would need to be different from what teachers are used to; otherwise they are likely to just adapt previous behaviour, rather than addressing the challenge as a completely different kind of thing.

### ***Continuing Co-construction and Professional Learning***

The survey data provided by members of the AoLE Groups suggest that it takes teachers time, as well as a cultural shift, to become familiar with the idea of learning progression and, even after some time, some teachers may still need additional support to feel confident in their understanding. The teachers suggested that it is unlikely that one approach to professional learning will suit everyone, but it is key that participants are engaged in reflective activities (researching, discussing, understanding, reflecting), rather than simply listening. They saw a need to focus both on the concepts of Descriptions of Learning and Progression Steps and on the content of these. There were many indications in interviews of the value of continuing the co-construction process, albeit with recognition of the complexity and difficulty of doing so successfully. Many interviewees argued that the co-construction interactions during the development phase were so valuable that it is very important to carry them on into the enactment phase. Several also argued that continuity and development need to be organic – constantly reviewed and modified. There needed to be recognition that all teachers were going to be curriculum designers. Some argued that practitioners would most likely welcome the opportunities to design their own work and to collaborate with other departments and in team-teaching. There were also, however, references by some interviewees to possible difficulties in achieving co-operation across different subject areas within a particular AoLE (e.g. Science and Technology).

A key factor in making co-construction effective which emerged in many interviews, both for local curriculum development to put the existing framework into action and for modification of it in due course, would be full understanding by all teachers, school leaders, consortia, local authorities and other involved parties, including ‘experts’, of the idea of the curriculum as a progression journey, of how to describe progression and of the new curriculum as a *whole*. This would involve a significant change in mindset for the profession, moving away from seeing the curriculum as a prescription for teachers to follow, away from thinking in terms of levels and away from concern for grades and accountability measures. In the following quotation an interviewee indicates the future need to ensure understanding of and response to the whole complex set of key factors involved in the new curriculum:

*‘Most of the feedback we had ... was on specific achievement outcomes and phrasing of specific things. I don’t think the picture of being a journey of learning, I think that was the hardest thing really for people to see. I think they did, but I think in terms of getting written feedback it was quite granular from the sort of next wave of people that we gave it out to. I think to an extent that was the case for experts as well – there was a tendency to focus overall on specific bits rather than to look holistically at the whole thing’ (Consortia Lead)*

Other interviewees emphasised the idea that the principles of the new curriculum imply that it should be continuously adapted and should evolve through processes of teamwork across the education system.

*‘So it is only a relatively short period of further co-construction that is possible? On the actual documentation yes. We would hope that post that schools can take this anywhere really, so long as they have understood the principles and philosophy behind the curriculum. So there is a lot of local co-construction in making it happen? Yes, I think so, and our teachers think so too. You know, that would be a very good way of making this happen meaningfully, so that you are engaging experts at every level from both secondary and primary, that you do get, whether it is within a cluster and when I say cluster I mean a sort of secondary/primary cluster, or whether it is within clusters that have been put together by consortia, that you really do work together on this. It is not a school issue any more, it is a wider thing.’*  
(Government Lead)

*‘I think it is touching on the point I mentioned earlier about making sure that they don’t just take these statements and build schemes of work and then just keep that in place – you know, it needs to be constantly reviewed and refined and quite organic in nature really – and be susceptible to change.’* (Primary Teacher, Health and Well-being AoLE)

*‘Well, yes, I think that it [future co-construction] would be a good idea. If you are going to propose modifications, I think the whole the co-construction, getting professionals, mixing with experts, people like CAMAU, absolutely it is the way to go, rather than just get experts in. You have experts now and they are talking about ... but we know our learners and I think the blend of the two is what is going to make this successful.’* (Special School Teacher)

It is notable that many of the teachers who were interviewed mentioned the importance of professional learning, of time to develop understanding of the new curriculum and the thinking underpinning it, changes in school culture and in mindset, and guidance to help teachers understand and put into practice the idea that Descriptions of Learning and Progression Steps should be used to support assessment as a way to enable future learning, rather as a summary of past achievement. The interviewees recognised that the professional learning need is huge to achieve the kinds of change described above as part of the on-going co-construction process – in particular, to achieve the necessary shift in mindset and familiarity with and confidence about the concept of progression, the language to describe it and the idea of cyclical learning (rather than pursuit of levels).

There was considerable overlap between the points reported above about the co-construction process in the development and what emerged in the interviews about future professional learning. Interviewees clearly saw the co-construction process as a critical component of the necessary professional learning. One interviewee summed up their position by arguing that the engagement of those involved in the initial development of the framework had made them strategic thinkers: the profession as a whole, including school leaders, needed now to go through the same processes of thinking.

## Section 1 summary of key findings

### Nature of Progression

The teachers, Consortia Leads, and Government Leads who participated in the curriculum development work and the CAMAU project had developed a new, sophisticated and transformational conceptualisation and understanding of progression, which determined the nature of the Descriptions of Learning at the centre of the curriculum. The following were its characteristics:

- Progression is conceived of in relation to the overarching Four Purposes of the curriculum, and also to the Statements of What Matters for each Area of Learning and Experience; its essential nature is that it focuses on *learning*. Articulating progression as Descriptions of Learning is a way of enabling orientation to future learning.
- Progression is a future-oriented individual learning journey. It relates to a continuum of learning. It is non-linear, often spiral.
- The progression framework developed for an AoLE provides a 'big picture' of key learning. There is a need to move away from thinking of progression in terms of tasks to thinking of progression in terms of broader understanding of learning. The framework comprises Descriptions of key Learning which is the essential base for further learning in the domain.
- 'Progression Steps', 'stages of learning', 'milestones' or 'checkpoints' refer to individual learners' progress through the progression framework.
- Inclusivity is a key feature of progression – appropriate challenge for every learner, no capping of learning, avoiding the trap of aiming at an endpoint, the end of a context, end of a module, end of a year. This understanding of progression changes teachers' thinking about purposes of assessment, from summarising what has been learned to moving forward in learning.
- It is recognised that the structure of the AoLEs and their component Statements of What Matters encourage consideration of the possibilities of interdisciplinary progression as well as, or instead of, detailed attention to progression within 'traditional' subject disciplines. Nevertheless, progression may be conceived of differently and developed using different models in different areas of the curriculum.
- At the end of the development process teachers were more familiar with the concept of progression and found it easier to describe learning than they were at the beginning. Despite it becoming easier over time, describing progression is a challenging task, even for those who have been involved intensively in collaborative work to develop the relevant skills.

### Subsidiarity and Co-construction in the Development

Subsidiarity, as defined in *Successful Futures* (Donaldson, 2015), involves keeping decision-making as close as possible to the local context in which the curriculum will be enacted. In the development stage, a crucial aspect of subsidiarity was the active engagement of teachers in collaboration with policy makers (Government Leads and Consortia Leads) and researchers to identify and articulate the key characteristics of the curriculum and of progression. Several characteristics of this co-construction process indicate its success:

- Empowered teachers: *Successful Futures* explicitly recognises subsidiarity as capable of promoting empowerment. There was evidence that, in general, the participants in the co-construction process who developed the progression framework did feel empowered,



although there were instances in which people felt that had not happened to a significant extent.

- Participants collaboratively found ways of reconciling and taking account of the perspectives of the varying roles of group members (teachers, consortia and government leads, researchers, invited experts ...); and, although this sometimes caused tension, the Groups were able to benefit greatly from the richness of experience provided by the range of active participants.
- Deep, extended and active discussion was central to the co-construction process. It was the core means of arriving at agreed positions in complex circumstances.
- Critical thinking was also central in
  - questioning the relationship between policies/feedback/advice and the thinking which the group was doing
  - taking account of views expressed by group members to take thinking forward
  - working with critical feedback to improve the Progression Framework which was being produced.
- Co-construction was understood to be a highly iterative process. Several participants spoke of the significant opportunities this brought for the evolution and refinement of thinking about the Progression frameworks. However, the evolutionary (and in some ways exploratory) nature of the process meant that priorities, requirements and directions changed over time. Such changes were the result sometimes of adjustments to government policy emphases, sometimes of shifts in the thinking of the group, which might have been influenced by input from CAMAU researchers or invited experts or by discussion within the group of participants' experience, reading and ideas. Some participants identified this changing nature of their group's work as a source of frustration.
- Effective management of the co-construction process in the AoLE Groups required clear communication within the complex and changing landscape where research, policy and practice come together. In addition to communicating information and policy positions effectively, the Government and Consortia Leads developed strategies for managing the complexity of the group interactions and for inclusive approaches to ensuring the commitment of participants to agreed positions.

### **Impact of policy, research and practice**

- All three sources of influence – Policy, Research and Practice – received high scores on the 5-point scale used in the survey to obtain information about participants' perceptions of the use and significance of these in the development process. This indicates that all three strongly informed the Descriptions of Learning and Progression Steps. However, the strongest influence identified by the teachers as a group – and the one to which they had felt inclined to give most weight – was their own pooled experience as teachers. These points are significant for current and future planning of the further refinement, development and enactment of the curriculum.
- The co-construction process undertaken in the development and supported by the CAMAU Project thus embodied the very important principle that, in the development and enactment of the curriculum, government policy, research knowledge and the practical experience and wisdom of teachers should not only be aligned but should actively work together to optimise the quality of education.

- The findings from the survey and the interviews suggest strongly that the early development of the Welsh curriculum, in collaboration with the CAMAU Project, has indeed been aligning policy, research and practice in very significant ways: the educational principles and aims of the development (Donaldson, 2015); the active engagement of teachers in co-constructed curriculum development with policy makers and researchers; the commitment of the Welsh Government and national and local agencies to the development and to the enactment of the principle of subsidiarity within it.

### **Professional learning and co-construction in on-going programme design and development**

- Hayward and Spencer (2010) and Hayward et al., (2012) determined clearly that a ‘pilot, then roll out’ development model is not an effective means of ensuring the success of large scale initiatives. Because of this and because it is a key element in Welsh Government policy, it will be very important to continue to keep policy, research and practical experience working closely together throughout the coming years when the new curriculum is being refined and enacted by practitioners across Wales. The responses of the teachers’ and AoLE Leads reported on here provide strong support for continuing to ensure that subsidiarity – the active engagement in the curriculum development process of teachers’ personal and professional experience and wisdom – is both expected and supported by many as the curriculum is put into practice and gradually refined.
- Many of those involved in the survey and interviews highlighted the importance of the following points in professional learning and continuing co-construction as the programme is enacted and gradually refined:
- Very significant commitment to professional learning about the concept of progression, the language to describe it and the idea of cyclical learning (rather than pursuit of levels).
- Time, over an extended period, to develop understanding of the new curriculum and the thinking underpinning it; and to collaborate with colleagues about its nature and about practical steps to develop and enact it at school level.
- Changes in school culture and in ‘mindset’, away from levels and age-related standards and towards the idea of individual continua of learning.
- Guidance to help teachers understand and put into practice the idea that Descriptions of Learning and Progression Steps should be used to support assessment as a way to enable future learning, rather than as a summary of past achievement.
- A range of professional learning activities as no single approach will suit everyone, but it is key that participants are engaged in regularly in reflective activities (researching, discussing, understanding, reflecting), rather than simply listening or implementing ready-made courses. Ensuring critical voices are heard is crucial to promoting critical reflection. Reading and thinking time are essential.
- It is important for leaders to focus on:
  - maintaining the broader vision and core purposes of the curriculum
  - clarifying processes both of planning learning and teaching appropriate for local contexts within the Progression framework and of proposing, where appropriate modifications to the overall framework
  - ensuring safe space and time for discussion
  - facilitating rather than dominating discussion

- mediating between policy and practitioners
- ensuring external information (such as relevant research data and information) is accessible and considered
- Sources and activities to support this focus can include:
  - challenge and support to stimulate participants to explain tacit understanding
  - contributions by ‘experts’ of different types from outwith the group
  - research mediated by projects such as CAMAU
  - signposted, structured or guided reading of research
  - exemplification of ways in which different schools or clusters have taken the curriculum forward, but not providing ‘off the shelf’ courses which schools could adopt without thinking through their own contextual needs
  - members of the group, once established, taking on the role of critical friend
  - supporting parallel small group discussions of a topic or issue
  - working with teachers at other stages and disciplines as a means of challenging one’s own expectations
  - making use of such structures as school clusters to provide critical friends.
- The co-construction interactions during the development phase were so valuable that it is very important to carry them on into the enactment and refinement phases.
- Need to focus both on the *concept* of Descriptions of Learning and Progression Steps and on the *content* of these.
- Effective co-construction to put the developed Framework into action and to modify it in due course will depend on full understanding by all teachers, school leaders, consortia, local authorities and other involved parties, including ‘experts’, of the idea of the curriculum as a progression journey, of how to describe progression and of the new curriculum as a *whole*. This will involve a significant change in mindset for the profession, moving away from seeing the curriculum as set down for practitioners to follow, away from thinking in terms of levels and away from concern for grades and accountability measures.
- Continuity and development need to be constantly reviewed and modified. There needs to be recognition that all teachers are going to be curriculum designers and that appropriate support is provided both for those likely to welcome the opportunities to design their own work and to collaborate with other departments and in team-teaching and for those who might meet difficulties in achieving such co-operation.
- Interviewees emphasised the idea that the principles of the new curriculum imply that it should be continuously adapted and should evolve through processes of teamwork across the education system.
- The engagement of those involved in the initial development of the framework had made them strategic thinkers: the profession as a whole, including school leaders, needs to go through the same processes of developing their thinking.

## **Section 2: Interviews with Members of the Policy Community**

## A. Introduction and Methodology

This section of the Report presents findings on what was perceived as central to the change process from the perspective of policy colleagues who played a central role in developing Curriculum for Wales. These insights are likely to offer important insights as Welsh Government seeks to design and develop approaches to change that will engage increasing numbers of practitioners and schools across Wales whilst remaining true to the aspirations of the new Curriculum.

*‘To understand a complex phenomenon, you must consider the multiple ‘realities’ experienced by the participants themselves—the ‘insider’ perspectives.’ (Suter, 2012)*

Six civil servants were interviewed. Each had a different career path although with some common aspects: some had previously worked in other government departments; some had carried out several different roles within the programme; some had participated in this process from 2015; others had moved into it at later stages. One interviewee had prior experience of school teaching before entering the civil service; another was a teacher originally seconded into the Education Department. The interviewees carried out different roles within the programme: some had responsibilities for the strategic design and development of the programme as a whole whilst others held responsibilities for particular aspects of the programme. To reflect these different roles the interview schedules comprised a common core of questions for all participants and questions tailored to the different responsibilities of groups of interviewees (See Appendix 4). To ensure anonymity the interviewees are referred to as PC1 through to PC6.

All interviews were carried out by the same two researchers: one asked questions and followed up issues with further prompts while the second took notes. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Notes were transcribed and returned to interviewees to check for accuracy. Data were analysed qualitatively to identify *‘rich descriptions and explanations of human processes’* (Huberman, Miles, & Saldana, 2013, p. 4) using both deductive and inductive approaches. The agreed records were then read and re-read by the researchers who coded the data deductively using three broad categories identified as important for meaningful, sustainable change: Educational Integrity, Personal and Professional Integrity and Systemic Integrity (described in the Introduction and below). Within each of the broad categories, sub-categories were built inductively. Categories and sub-categories were constructed independently by each researcher and then compared and discussed. The agreed sub-categories were then used as the framework for the data narrative that follows.

To analyse and reflect on the views of members of the policy community involved in the development processes which have led to Curriculum for Wales we employ as a set of lenses the *‘three clusters of ideas as central to successful, sustained engagement of teachers, schools and local authorities’* in educational development which were identified by Hayward and Spencer (2010 p165). Each of these clusters can be conceived as an aspect of integrity – a commitment to making change integral to the education system within which the innovation sits. The three interconnected aspects of the integrity model are: educational; professional and personal; systemic.

We employ this framework to analyse the interviews conducted with members of the policy community who played strategic roles in the development process which led to the publication of Curriculum for Wales and to identify areas for future action: identifying where progress has been

made; where practices should be sustained; and where there may be a need for further change to avoid key aspects of the programme being put at risk.

As noted in the Introduction, Hayward and Spencer (2010) recognised that the three aspects of integrity (educational, professional and personal, systemic) are interdependent and each relates to every community involved in the development. As a planning or analysis tool, the model offers insights into key areas to which those who are concerned to promote embedded and sustainable change should give attention. The researchers used these three aspects as the first level categories for the analysis of the interviews. In reading and re-reading the data the researchers inductively noted features, statements and ideas that stood out or appeared particularly related to the three categories and, as they did so, developed sub-categories within each of these three categories. These are listed in the Categorisation Matrix below and are used to structure this section of the report.

The inter-related nature of these aspects of the process of change can be perceived in the policy makers' reflections here. Thus professional and personal integrity embodied in the involvement of practitioners centrally at all stages of the development process led to enhanced understanding of, commitment to and engagement with a central aspect of educational integrity:

*'Co-construction: this has resulted in our ending up with a much more rounded policy, alive to challenges and barriers to implementation. It affords real positives in terms of buy-in and excitement at practitioner level. As an example, the move from 'moderation to 'shared understanding of progression' has led to enthusiasm for this, a real game changer. Inspiring to hear and we need to harness this energy and enthusiasm.'* (PC2)

The importance of that inter-relationship among all three aspects of integrity is illustrated in the following reflections from policy makers:

*'Professional learning for everyone in the education system from staff in classrooms through headteachers to Consortia. Estyn, Welsh Government – understanding their role and how this can be developed to promote the same vision -- recognise that we all are learning, following our own learning journeys.'* (PC4)

*'Welsh Government attitudes to how we look at the system will have to embody what we expect of schools; this is true at all levels – Welsh Government, Estyn, Consortia, Local Authorities, school leadership teams all need to take on the values and behave in accordance with these. This will support teacher self-assessment; we need to recognise that it is important for all to feel able to say that we have development needs.'* (PC5)

This analysis, therefore, whilst looking at each of the three aspects of integrity in turn, recognises that each contributes with the others to a coherent system of change. Reflecting this, the same quotation on occasion is used to illustrate more than one of the three aspects of integrity.

### Categorisation Matrix

Main Category		Sub-Category
Educational Integrity	A clear focus on improving learning and evidence that the innovation is perceived to have educational value that will improve the learning experiences of young people in Wales	Why progression matters
		Defining progression
		The challenges faced in developing progressive learning journeys
		Progression: what are the implications for policy and practice?
Personal and Professional Integrity	Alignment with what matters for learning to the individual practitioner, school leader, policy maker at any level, learner and parent or carer: all participants have a significant role in the construction, development, implementation and review of the programme; this active participation and co-construction are crucial if the vision is to result in authentic sustainable enactment	Personal integrity
		Professional integrity: Subsidiarity
		Professional integrity: Co-construction
		Personal and professional integrity: Process – what matters?
		Personal and professional integrity: Implications for future development and policy learning
Systemic Integrity	Coherence in development at all levels of the education system – all policies driving in the same direction; all communities with a shared vision	The policy journey
		The inter-relationship of policy, practice and research
		The changing role of policy colleagues
		Assessment challenges
		Professional learning challenges
		Implications for the Future of Curriculum for Wales
		Implications for wider policy learning

## B. Lens One: Educational integrity

(a clear focus on improving learning and on evidence that the innovation is perceived to have educational value that will improve the learning experiences of young people in Wales)

### B1. Why progression matters

Interviewees provided clear evidence of their understandings of the importance of the concept of progression and its implications for practice as articulated in *Successful Futures* (Donaldson, 2015) and in *Curriculum for Wales Guidance* (Welsh Government, 2020).

*'The Curriculum for Wales guidance has been informed by international evidence of what it means to make progress in learning... The Curriculum for Wales guidance describes principles of progression for the curriculum as a whole and for each individual Area. These articulate the ways in which learners make progress in their learning and contribute to the four purposes. These will be incorporated in a statutory code ... This means that progression must be embedded in learning and teaching and should form the basis of thinking in schools when designing and planning the school curriculum.'* (Welsh Government 2020: 8)

Interviewees identified a number of reasons to explain why they believed progression is central to the Curriculum for Wales. Firstly, discussions about progression had focused attention on the curriculum as a coherent 3-16 structure rather than as a series of discrete structures linked to ages and phases of schooling, e.g. primary, early secondary, certificate courses. One single inclusive structure replaced these separate structures. More than this, the concept of distinct steps and levels within and between these broad phases was replaced by the concept of a continuous learning journey; further, the boundaries between areas of learning would be reduced; implicitly collaboration within and across schools would provide enhanced learning opportunities:

*'progression seen as a learning journey and underpinned by practitioners' understanding of clear principles, leading practitioners to take ownership of whole journey not just sections they are immediately responsible for'* (PC4)

*'In early work of Strand 1 and in early AoLE work, discussion across phases was really important in breaking down boundaries and developing understanding of what guidance to support 3-16 curriculum would look like; moved people from focusing only on their immediate responsibilities (e.g. history at Key Stage 3) to a wider responsibility and understanding (e.g. Humanities 3-16) and to considering such issues as how do we build progression across transitions'* (PC4)

Central to this concept was *'the idea of a journey without key stages'* (PC4) or the idea of *'development along a learning continuum'* (PC2).

Reflecting this, it was argued that the detailed discussions held in AoLE Groups about progression had enabled *'teachers and learners to focus on learning and achievement'* (PC1). The idea of shifting focus to the learner was a consistent theme that was seen as encouraging learner-centred questions: *'how does journey look to them? how do we help them along the journey?'* (PC4).

A framework designed to embody progression would support the capacity of those at all levels of the system, especially of practitioners, to develop:



*'a better understanding of what is implied by the continuum [which] will be accompanied by practitioners' reflection on learners' growing depth of understanding in classroom, on what has been the learner's journey to date' (PC4)*

It was readily acknowledged that, as recognised by Donaldson (2015), the learning journey of each child and young person would in detail be particular to them. As practitioners developed their capacity to reflect on learning and, thus, the capacity to plan to meet the needs of each learner, they would be able, individually and collaboratively, to employ their professional autonomy to plan a school curriculum and classroom experiences which would recognise and respect diversity while maintaining and promoting national expectations:

*'the details will be dependent on the learner; using progression enables teachers and learners to focus on learning and achievement; this curriculum model enables a balance between teacher autonomy and national expectations.'* (PC1)

As the foundation of the bridge between national expectations and local curriculum planning, progression was perceived to be concerned with more than adding superficially to learners' knowledge and understanding but rather with developing deeper and more sophisticated understanding of concepts while simultaneously developing the learner's confidence and well-being:

*'[Progression] represents development along a learning continuum – in terms of greater confidence, developing concepts, greater depth and sophistication. It represents a move away from descriptions of coverage of learning; it focuses on individual development within a local curriculum developed in the context of national expectations.'* (PC2)

Recognition of educational integrity, in terms of the importance of this understanding of progression, is thus seen by the interviewees to be closely linked to recognition of the personal integrity of both practitioners and learners and to recognition of the professional integrity of practitioners.

## **B2. Defining progression**

As indicated above, interviewees referred to a number of characteristics as they sought to define this concept of progression: progression underpins the curriculum framework; progression through the curriculum is expressed through the continuum of learning which replaces coverage of prescribed content and achievement of discrete tasks; progression allows space for individual schools and practitioners to determine the details of provision within the framework of principles. We look further here at the ways in which these members of the policy community described and reflected on the concept of progression.

The key role of progression was clearly articulated through the different components of the framework structure of Curriculum for Wales:

*'Progression is now articulated through the narratives of progression and the Descriptions of Learning.'* (PC3)

One interviewee identified a key contributing factor to the development of this concept of progression as the use of evidence to inform the way in which progression is articulated:

*'an articulation of abstract principles for which we have evidence of how learners make progress and how this is expressed in the curriculum'* (PC3)

There was a recognition that the realisation of progression can differ between areas of learning and that there are consequent differences in how progression is described in practice:

*'The key issue is how do learners progress through the Statements of What Matters to the Four Purposes? Progression looks different in different curricular areas: e.g. progression through concepts in science, in mathematics progression through subject areas but now described in terms of growth in 'proficiencies' (PC6)*

*'Dimensions of progress may be more distinct in some AoLEs, especially Health and Well-Being'* (PC3)

*'some AoLEs (e.g. Humanities) are closer to this (conceptual progression) than others'* (PC6)

However, as indicated in the first of these quotations, in all cases the prime focus had to remain on the key principle of progress to the Four Purposes; further, there are key characteristics of the structure that are common to all curricular areas, in particular the need to think in terms of a continuum of development in learning rather than through detailed specification of content linked to age and stage:

*'In either case this is progression through big hooks and across thresholds rather than through a list of details broken down according to age.'* (PC6)

*'Learning pathway[s] through the curriculum'* (PC1) would not be prescribed in detail but would be developed through curricular planning in each school and classroom.

Progression described in these ways led to significant changes from previous curricula. Some interviewees suggested that thinking about progression in these ways would represent a major shift for many school teachers, perhaps especially in secondary schools, and would require regular revisiting of the Statements of What Matters:

*'Progression is not progression against rigid exam specs as has been the case until now. There is no universal definition of progression: progression is unique to your curriculum. The key issue is how do learners progress through the Statements of What Matters to the Four Purposes?'* (PC6)

However, there was optimism about the possibilities for change through engagement with the development process and engagement with and enactment of the Curriculum for Wales. Interviewees suggested that their own understandings of progression had changed as the programme developed (cf. Heritage, 2008):

*'My understanding about the two levels of progression has changed. Initially, we would focus more on details of learning progression as a support for practitioners to understand next steps in learning, a granular approach; but we came to realise... that progression is not just moving from one activity to the next but operates at a higher level and needs assessment and curriculum to be closely linked.'* (PC5)

They recognised that understandings were likely to continue to develop (the context makes clear that the word 'our' in the next quotation is used in an inclusive sense), perhaps quite radically:

*'It seems likely that over time our understanding of progression will more and more move from progression through What Matters to progression through basic concepts.'* (PC6)

Elsewhere in this report as we consider co-construction of the curriculum we note further how interviewees recognised the ways in which both research and practitioner experience provided evidence to change thinking and inform the development of the Progression frameworks and the implications of this experience for the further development of the curriculum.

Finally, there was an acknowledgement that further work would be immediately required in developing aspects of progression, in particular in the Early Years and in the relationship between Routes for Learning for young people with complex learning difficulties and the Progression frameworks.

### **B3. The challenges faced in developing progressive learning journeys**

All interviewees made reference to the challenges that had been faced as policy makers, practitioners and researchers worked together to develop evidence informed descriptions of progression. The relationship between the 'old' and new' models of assessment was perceived to be a major challenge in establishing the educational integrity of what was being done.

Although policy makers had been aware of the significant changes between the old systems and the new proposals, they felt that they had underestimated the immense assessment challenges that they had had to face in the context of progression. Initially, it had been challenging to support the transition in thinking from existing curricular models that were embedded in levels of attainment as benchmarks against which learners should be judged. Interviewees' recognition of the value of the central role of progression was reinforced as they articulated the care with which they and colleagues countered the negative inheritance from previous policy and practice.

They recognised that early discussions within AoLE groups were often

*'too mechanical; teachers in schools had lost the idea of progression and it was replaced with the use of levels as a proxy.'* (PC1).

Changing thinking from a model of assessment premised on understanding progression as focused on judgement of past learning to one designed to gather evidence to inform future progress in learning was challenging:

*'It took time to develop thinking as we looked at Successful Futures: the high level of progression expressed in Successful Futures allowed teachers to become re-engaged with progression in the classroom.'* (PC1)

During the early phases of the development programme, as the groups attempted to describe progression, they focused on determining what topics should be taught and at what stage; progression, when described, was referred to in vague general terms:

*'This led to groups: initially developing ever more detailed statements of learning without consideration of principles; or starting by identifying principles and then ignoring these principles as they focus on the task of writing descriptions; or used simple 'incrementalism' ('with support' 'with less support' 'without support' etc); in any case they lost sight of the principles'* (PC3).

It required support to shift the focus to an understanding of progression as the learner's journey; specified topics and tasks were no longer the primary drivers of the curriculum; rather practitioners would plan topics as the means of providing opportunities and contexts for progression in learning. Some key tasks undertaken within the AoLE Groups were identified as helpful in promoting changes in thinking from progression as a series of topics to progression in learning,

*'A useful example from early CAMAU work: take two pieces of work where we know there has been progress; examine; and determine the principles of what it means for a learner to make advances in their learning' (PC3)*

After the groups engaged in these tasks (based on the principles of adaptive comparative tasks, Pollitt, 2012), interviewees suggested that members of the groups:

*'were able to identify where progression was being replaced by tasks; there was considerable re-thinking at that point. Groups took time to realise the need to articulate at a high level rather than through what one would expect to see at the classroom' (PC3).*

Interviewees recognised that this inheritance from the past had led to misunderstanding of aspects of the draft curriculum published in April 2019, even although previous structures inconsistent with the proposed curriculum had been removed and curriculum statements had been redrafted to remove language associated with past policy and practice in order to establish that Descriptions of Learning were not to be understood as checklists:

*'The use of levels and Key Stages will end. Freeing up practitioners and opening up minds to think about progression in the curriculum in the school rather than pushing through levels and, in many cases, sublevels – the removal of these should help shift the culture.'* (PC4)

*'Descriptions of Learning cannot now be directly assessed' (PC3)*

Despite these issues having been recognised as contentious and discussed within the Curriculum and Assessment Group (CAG) (PC1, PC5), the draft documentation published in April 2019:

*'... contrasted formative vs summative purposes; feedback [during the engagement exercise] ... showed that this dichotomy as expressed in the draft policy did not convey clearly the thinking behind the policy; we had underestimated the impact and carry forward from the existing culture...'* (PC2)

The Assessment Advisory Group responded to this feedback in a radical way, developing its own terminology to replace internationally recognised terms which had acquired negative connotations in Wales:

*'a new description of how assessment could be conceptualised and expressed to reflect principles of the curriculum and its documentation... the move from 'moderation' to 'shared understanding of progression' has led to enthusiasm for this, a real game changer. (PC2)*

Some policy interviewees remained concerned about possible assessment-related challenges to the carrying out of an ambitious programme which involved a radical reconceptualisation of assessment, fundamental changes in classroom planning and practice, the development of collaboration, and significant changes in national policy:

*'focus on embedding assessment in learning and teaching: assessment is not an end of unit activity or add on. Feedback to learners is crucial; this includes informed discussion between*

*the teacher and the learner on next steps and what they are working towards. This will be reflected in discussion among practitioners in school and across schools; dialogue becomes natural not an add on. The use of levels and Key Stages will end.'* (PC4)

The autonomy afforded to practitioners as understanding of the value of progression grew was perceived to be key to cultural change in assessment:

*'Freeing up practitioners and opening up minds to think about progression in the curriculum in the school rather than pushing through levels and, in many cases, sublevels – the removal of these should help shift the culture.'* (PC4)

However, change of this significance would require careful scaffolding. Changes in thinking about progression did not happen by chance even with the groups of highly motivated and informed AoLE participants. It was argued that similar processes to encourage thinking and engagement can be employed with other groups as they begin to think through the practical implications of progression in their own contexts:

*'Exercises with examples certainly helped. The need for challenging tasks, space to think about these and iteration, all have implications for the next phase when practitioners will be closer to the starting point of AoLE groups than to their current situation.'* (PC3)

#### **B4. Progression: what are the implications for policy and practice?**

Interviewees considered implications for policy and practice at all levels of the education system which will arise from the adoption of the concept of progression which is fundamental to Curriculum for Wales.

This concept of progression links the Statements of What Matters to the Four Purposes: this involved more than determining the wording of these statements. Interviewees recognised that enactment of Curriculum for Wales requires practitioners to be supported to develop their understanding of progression and to be able to articulate how each learner is progressing, to explain this and to use this to support further learning. The development of these capacities would inform planning at school and classroom level and pedagogy within the classroom:

*'The key issue is how do learners progress through the Statements of What Matters to the Four Purposes?... Day to day some lessons may not change; the key difference would be that teachers and school leaders would be able to explain why and how they teach; to describe where learners are in terms of learning...; to explain what progression looks like and how they can move learners forward; to talk about curriculum design; and to refer to and make use of data.'* (PC6)

There is no expectation that all practice will change but teachers will have developed their capacity to ask critical questions and over time this will lead to changes in pedagogy to align it explicitly with the Four Purposes of the curriculum. It is recognised that this will not always be an easy or comfortable process: promoting educational integrity in this way will be dependent on the promotion of personal and professional integrity:

*'There are equally implications for pedagogy... Teachers need to articulate a discourse about why this content? assessment for what purpose? what pedagogy will support this? We need*

*to ask how do we stop doing what we have traditionally done?... What is not contributing to the four purposes? If not, why are doing this? ... we need to move to a system of trust which asks uncomfortable questions that require real evidence to inform discussion.'* (PC3)

This was accompanied by a recognition that, if practice aligned with these educational aims is to be adopted and supported throughout the country, assessment policy at all levels will differ significantly from previous policy. The close links between educational integrity and systemic integrity are illustrated in the two following statements. There was specific recognition that current accountability procedures based on using data derived from assessment were incompatible with enactment of a curriculum focused on progression rather than on standards and that this will require the removal of current data gathering procedures:

*'standards driven by accountability cannot be used and the system has consequently totally changed (or at least is well on the way to so doing) in terms what information not to collect and not to report.'* (PC5)

Changes have already been made to national policy before implementation of Curriculum for Wales. The previous national literacy and numeracy tests were already being replaced by online adaptive tests which will provide learners and teachers with assessment information to take forward individuals' learning in these two areas but will not provide statistical information to inform target setting or comparisons. The curriculum development process itself has informed this decision and the means of implementing it:

*'This approach has allowed us to take learning from the curriculum development process into developing adaptive assessments and reporting on these... This process totally changed the feel of these assessments – there is consistency in reporting to schools and parents in ways that now provide information of value; hopefully this has changed attitudes.'* (PC1)

The implications for assessment policy and practice run across all levels of the education system and required a very different understanding of the relationship among curriculum, pedagogy and assessment; previous policy and consequent practice had resulted in assessment being often perceived and planned as independent from teaching; now curriculum, pedagogy and assessment require to be planned together. Further, assessment had to move from being primarily a series of judgements of past success and failure to an on-going process which would inform and support further learning. Again the links between different aspects of integrity are visible here:

*'The key is to move away from assessment as an add-on to learning, teaching and assessment! It is important to decouple assessment from accountability... If teachers are to assess for future planning, they have to be able to identify misconceptions; indeed, teachers must be... able to refer to detailed rather than general evidence... If teachers are to know their learners sufficiently well, this may imply structural changes in secondary schools; teachers cannot see 320 learners a week; they need to have more interaction with groups of learners and be able to observe learners in different contexts.'* (PC6)

Interviewees recognised that educational integrity included recognising and indeed respecting differences as policy and practice are developed and implemented: there may be differences between curriculum areas, across sectors, between areas of the country with different demographic structures. The implications for developing capacity and dialogue at and across all levels of the education system were evident:

*'it focuses on individual development within a local curriculum developed in the context of national expectations' (PC2)*

*'communicating and emphasising that practitioners will become curriculum designers and responsible for developing assessment within that designed curriculum. The move from a national curriculum with specified levels to national guidance that will support practitioners in building their own curriculum. The teacher's role is to create not simply deliver... Developing shared understanding of progression to promote equity across the country whatever the locally constructed curriculum will be important and requires balancing flexibility and national expectations' (PC4)*

There was a clear commitment on the part of all interviewees to promote the development because it would impact positively on the learning experiences of children and young people, leading to better learning outcomes and ultimately to a more fulfilling life.

## C. Lens Two: Personal and professional integrity

(alignment with what matters for learning to the individual practitioner, school leader, policy maker at any level, learner and parent or carer: all participants have a significant role in the construction, development, implementation and review of the programme; this active participation and co-construction is crucial if the vision is to result in authentic sustainable enactment)

### C1. Personal integrity

Interviewees were clear that recognition of the importance of personal and professional integrity had been important in ensuring the development of Curriculum for Wales. Personal and professional integrity focuses on the relationship between the person and the programme. Personal integrity focuses on the extent to which what the innovation advocates matters to the individual. Professional integrity is concerned with how the individual and the innovation interact, the professional role that the programme asks of the individual. If we consider the role of the teacher as an example, in more traditional models of innovation, teachers have been asked to implement a curriculum designed by others. In this model of curriculum design the professional role required of the teacher is to co-construct the curriculum.

There was clear evidence of an understanding that the personal is of importance, that the processes of policy development must provide space for practitioners to reflect and support them in articulating and acting on their views:

*'Practitioners must ask why am I doing this?; practitioners must be able to articulate reasons for their choices related to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment... We need to develop teachers' self-confidence in their own decisions: again e.g. why should we know periodic table? what matters is the ability to use the periodic table for purposes X, Y, Z. Teachers need to articulate a discourse about why this content? assessment for what purpose? what pedagogy will support this?' (PC3)*

Interviewees recognised that this was not merely a matter of good intentions, aspirations and warm words; rather it required time and effort to establish and to maintain, especially when practitioners were faced with the demanding task of developing and enacting the new curriculum while continuing to teach according the very different previous curriculum:

*'Risks to process: time – schools (secondary) especially are still delivering current curriculum and qualifications: they must step back rather than carry over current practice to the new context. There must be time to reflect. Support for processes is required to develop ownership – a new way of supporting schools.'* (PC4)

Such integrity requires also that the policy community reflect and take action, radical if necessary, to change its own established ways of working and end activities which are inconsistent with the recognition of personal integrity:

*'We need to ask how do we stop doing what we have traditionally done? How do I make space and time for new practice? What is not contributing to the four purposes? If not, why are doing this? Things can be removed from the current curriculum system: implications for local authorities, Estyn, Consortia e.g. removal of aspects of data collection and bean counting if these do not contribute to the four purposes. In so doing, we have to probe*



*beyond naïve answers... we need to move to a system of trust which asks uncomfortable questions that require real evidence to inform discussion.'* (PC3)

It was also suggested that there must be recognition of and respect for the role that emotions and relationships play in development processes: explanation and statements may be necessary but are not sufficient:

*'The role of emotional intelligence has to be recognised which will support the capacity to mediate; we are dependent on individuals' qualities and enthusiasm; some can do the policy effectively but not the emotion.'* (PC1)

There was acknowledgement that recognition of personal integrity must be sustained. The focus throughout much of the development process on working with select groups of practitioners from Pioneer Schools had led inadvertently to the exclusion of those beyond the Pioneer group with negative consequences for the development. It was simultaneously acknowledged that practical challenges will need to be addressed by the policy community to ensure that all participants are involved meaningfully at all future stages of engagement.

*'strong but in hindsight could be improved e.g. by developing better links with teachers outside the Pioneer network; initially it was difficult for others to understand early drafts as these were fluid; we need to develop our understanding and practice of early involvement. How can we deal with differences in experience as we cannot involve every individual?'* (PC5)

*'the process itself has also evolved with funded non-maintained sector and representatives from post 16 colleges joining the process at a later date and we are now developing further guidance, including for education providers for those educated other than at school.. The relationship between Welsh Government and Consortia had to be worked* (PC4)

While interviewees tended to focus on personal and professional integrity as it relates to practitioners, there was evidence of growing recognition that the same approach must be taken with learners; again it was acknowledged that there will be difficulties in so doing which will take time to address:

*'we learned from experience the need to involve learners as early and as much as possible: workshops and activities were to be developed for learners but this was conceptually difficult; we should not lose this aspiration and should support schools to ensure learner participation; better to take time than impose this as a tick box exercise.'* (PC5)

To sum up:

*'Everyone must be able to see themselves in the product'* (PC6)

## **C2. Professional integrity**

The focus turns to what matters for professional engagement. There was evidence of two major aspects of this.

### **C2.1 Professional integrity: subsidiarity**

*Successful Futures* (Donaldson, 2015) argued strongly for the importance of subsidiarity, defined as:

*‘Subsidiarity means that power stays as close as possible to the action. Rather than relying on a set of rules, which suggest a lack of confidence and can breed corruption, subsidiarity is dependent on mutual trust and confidence which supports positive disagreement and argument. Subsidiarity is about ensuring that power is where it belongs – rather than about empowerment which involves someone in power giving something away’ (p99)*

More specifically, the principles underpinning the curriculum include:

*‘the curriculum should be based on subsidiarity: commanding the confidence of all, while encouraging appropriate ownership and decision making by those closest to the teaching and learning process’ (p14)*

It is not sufficient that subsidiarity be reflected in the outcomes of the curriculum development process; it is equally important in the development process leading up to the outcomes.

Recommendation 62 (Donaldson 2015, p119) reads:

*‘The change strategy associated with the Review should apply the principle of subsidiarity, encouraging local ownership and responsibility within a clear national framework of expectation and support.’*

These proposals have radical implications for curriculum development and engagement. Interviewees had participated in designing and bringing to fruition change processes which embodied subsidiarity; they acknowledged that there had been challenges in so doing but remained committed to the principle; they recognised the importance of subsidiarity for both initial development and ongoing engagement and enactment. There was recognition that, while initially these understandings of subsidiarity had not encompassed learners, this was changing. This process recognised also the importance of personal integrity: schools and practitioners were entitled to support as they undertook unaccustomed roles and carried these out meaningfully:

*‘concept is right, decision must be taken close to impact. Within CAMAU and broadly, we changed tack as we learned from experience the need to involve learners as early and as much as possible: ... we should not lose this aspiration and should support schools to ensure learner participation; better to take time than impose this as a tick box exercise.’ (PC5)*

There was further recognition of the importance of subsidiarity if enactment was to be meaningful; and this applied just as much when aspects of the curriculum which are closely defined in statutory guidance and specifically required by statute were addressed in schools:

*‘Because of the realisation that schools had to enact policy, subsidiarity was important; as schools addressed policies such as Welsh language and Relationships and Sexuality Education.’ (PC1)*

## **C2.2 Professional integrity: co-construction**

Recognition of subsidiarity must go beyond rhetoric to action. Co-construction of the curriculum was one key means of so doing; co-construction has been at the heart of the curriculum development process, involving research, policy and practice in collaborative reflection and planning. While policy aspirations building on and developing the proposals of *Successful Futures* (Donaldson, 2015) were initially articulated largely within policy circles, members of the research community and practitioners were brought into the processes. We focus here on the way in which the practice

community were involved, primarily through the creation of the AoLE Groups in which practitioners, who formed a majority in each, worked together with researchers and policy makers to determine What Matters for each AoLE and to identify and articulate progression through each What Matters aspect.

Interviewees referred extensively and positively to the co-construction of the curriculum during the development phase and the need and feasibility for this approach to continue to be supported during the enactment phase:

*'We can continue with co-construction beyond the initial phase – there is sufficient flexibility within the system; developing mutual support networks as we move into a new phase will be important.'* (PC5)

Interviewees were clear on the value of this approach, not only on grounds of principle but because it improved the outcomes; as noted above, the views of practitioners informed the rejection in Curriculum for Wales Guidance of terms used by both the research community and the policy community to describe assessment practice and the consequent creation of new terminology. Practitioners were aware of the need for this if the proposals were to be understood and accepted:

*'Co-construction: this has resulted in our ending up with a much more rounded policy, alive to challenges and barriers to implementation. It affords real positives in terms of buy-in and excitement at practitioner level.'* (PC2)

Co-construction led also to the development of new skill-sets by policy makers to be employed within the processes of change; skills used in previous development models were seen to be no longer appropriate; it was agreed that this process was not always easy and could move colleagues outside their comfort zone; the privilege of authority was now gone to be replaced by a culture of shared learning.

*'[My] own understanding of [my] role in meetings has changed; including now recognising that it is okay to say, 'I don't have the answer' and to recognise explicitly that there are no privileged owners of expertise.'* (PC4)

*'The process of working with people has been enjoyable though it can be challenging e.g. chairing [named committee] required bringing everyone along and feeling that at the end of each meeting we had really progressed; it sometimes required a series of meetings with changes in rhythm and some hesitations before there was a resolution; we needed to recognise that we may not have predicted outcomes as we would expect in the traditional meeting sense; almost like a spiral curriculum, requires flexibility of response e.g. by chairs.'* (PC2)

As noted by the last, it took time to develop new ways of working, however committed the system and individuals were to embodying personal and professional integrity in their work. The impact of past practice and conventions was felt as strongly by policy-makers as by practitioners; countering the impact of past practice required more than a speedy superficial learning of new skills, it required a deep understanding of and commitment to new concepts of leadership. This speaker is hopeful that this can be achieved:

*'Build outwards from the current critical mass. risk of confusing co-construction with consultation and/or outsourcing. It takes time to develop the skills to build a solution with*

*the group, to balance challenge and support. Leadership is neither dictating nor abdicating; it is bringing people through decision taking. Such approaches will inform the minister's implementation plan.'* (PC3)

### **C3. Personal and professional integrity: process – what matters?**

New ways of working required more than new structures and new skill sets; time and effort had also to be devoted to earning trust where past practices had resulted in feelings of exclusion; the mutual dependence of personal integrity and professional integrity are illustrated here:

*'Important to bear in mind that this was not always smooth sailing; in early days trust had to be gained from practitioners for a variety of reasons: some sectors felt that they had been left behind in the past.'* (PC4)

We proceed to look at perceptions of the implications of this relationship.

Interviewees provided a wealth of information about possible challenges to embodying personal and professional integrity in change processes and, more importantly, a wealth of information about means by which such challenges could be prevented, mitigated and resolved. Perhaps not surprisingly, the resource of time (and the management of that resource) was identified as crucially important. Most obviously, sufficient time should be allocated to match the volume of work but, beyond this, time had to be devoted to matters which might in the past have seemed irrelevant but which were important to building the trust referred to above; at the same time a sense of pace and progress had to be maintained— a difficult but necessary balancing act:

*'There were challenges in terms of the volume of work and activity, this required resourcing and long term commitment; the process remained under resourced. We need to get the right people in at the right time; it took too long to get Pioneers working, leading to loss of commitment in early stages. We also need to manage the initial off-loading by participants of concerns and expectations; this process could have been better managed.'* (PC1)

*'A major challenge of co-construction is that takes a lot longer; there is a need to engage both hearts and minds; achieving equity across the board, working round a table, within a hierarchy; running up against deadlines which take precedence so the final stages hurried and this leads to greater engagement by some, not all, participants.'* (PC6)

As the second of these quotations demonstrates, maintaining this balancing act becomes more difficult as people begin to work in ways which run counter to well-established past practice and relationships as they come to recognise and respect the contribution of all. As the speaker further recognises we cannot ignore the impact of fortuitous factors:

*'Challenges: takes time to get there; not inevitable; two of the groups had mistrust within them between phases, between disciplines, distrust of practitioners outside the group, of experts; took time to break. Realised that they were genuinely part of development, not simply endorsing a curriculum found in the drawer.'* (PC3)

These last three contributions all stress the importance of providing time to building up co-construction effectively and sustainably, a point already noted above. Further, as the last speaker notes, it cannot be assumed that the same process carried out with different groups will require the

same input of time: a whole range of contextual factors are likely to impact on the length of time required to build up trust, without which, whatever the aspirations, subsidiarity and co-construction will fail. As already noted, this requires leaders in the policy community not only to change their ways of working but to be seen to have done so; this process could be uncomfortable:

*'leaders have to model willingness to be challenged; initially there was defence of existing practice but over time people became more comfortable with constructive challenges. Developing trust is not inevitable, depends on modelling; some may think they understand without so doing.'* (PC3)

*'Plans will evolve; need for colleagues to be willing to take risks'* (PC4)

For those accustomed to traditional models of project management, the process of developing the Curriculum for Wales may appear inefficient:

*'Equity, shared power round table with people in different roles, development of relationships over time, allowing messiness, deviations, reversals etc, opportunities to be creative, to solve problems, collaboration across phases and disciplines. Basically, keep the focus always on why.'* (PC3)

However, as noted by interviewees quoted above, as well as by this speaker, the rewards in terms of effectiveness are notable, not simply in ensuring acceptability of the outcome but in ensuring a much higher quality of outcome. There is further evidence of the recognition of the contribution to high quality outcomes which was attributed to the sharing of a range of experience and expertise, including from those who might not always be perceived as contributors to educational debate and development:

*'strengths are shared ownership; recognition of different expertise, including research and practice; encouragement for people to look beyond their immediate classroom context. Example: in considering Route Map (in Routes for Learning) the contribution of terminologists allowed exploration of differences between Welsh and English and helped practitioners and researchers to think about the meaning of the terms used. Meetings with health professionals lead to same processes of reflection. Implies different sorts of meetings and different sorts of input.'* (PC4)

As has already been noted, policy makers had through participation in this programme already extended their understanding of the range of those who should be (or should have been) involved to include the full range of learners and practitioners in schools. While some who might in the past have been regarded as only peripherally or contingently involved in consideration of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, were to some extent involved, there was a recognition that others could and should now be included in the development and engagement process – co-construction extends outside the walls (physical and metaphorical) of the school:

*'It is important that parents, communities, business, politicians understand this development. Misunderstanding will lead to pressure to reverse the line of development. Thus, co-construction extends beyond schools – to parents and wider communities -- so that they understand; co-construction must also extend from school to school and from school to the local authority which has a key role to play.'* (PC6)

#### **C4. Personal and professional integrity: implications for future development and policy learning**

We believe that these interviews afford considerable evidence of the extent to which these ways of working have influenced policy makers' thinking, not only about change processes in education but more widely about the possibility and desirability of extending this model of policy making into other fields. They identify clearly a range of implications for other policy communities.

Firstly, they recognise that this is the case for those branches of government closest to their own. While there had been some sharing of practice, it appeared that collaboration may sometimes have been less than with external partners:

*'In this context I always worked with groups of practitioners – there has been more generally a lack of awareness around this. There was a need to ensure alignment within policy (e.g. National Literacy and Numeracy Framework and AoLE descriptions); groups of practitioners informed this process who drew on research to inform the NLNF; perhaps there was a need to coordinate timing of inputs more effectively.'* (PC5)

*'Within education we have to ensure joining up with curriculum division and with other policy areas: we have all been so busy that we have not invested enough time and effort in this. Now there may be some time to do so – we have worked extensively with externals perhaps time to do so with internals e.g. Professional Learning, evaluation and improvement. the question to be asked all the time: how is your work contributing to the implementation of the four purposes? What needs to be in place to support practitioners in implementation?'* (PC2)

Secondly, several contributors recognise that while the language of partnership had been used in the past this was not the genuine productive engagement which they had recently experienced:

*'Everyone thinks that they work with partners e.g. but this is not really co-construction: there has to be genuine engagement before there are any policy proposals and the capability to really listen and act in response to what one has heard.'* (PC2)

Similarly, the use of evidence in other policy areas lacked the rigour which had been a key characteristic of the curriculum development process; ownership, selection and use of evidence had been in the hands of the policy community. Instead of evidence being openly discussed and critiqued by all partners to inform the development process, policy was selected to support existing policy decisions:

*'In other policy fields we still tend to select evidence supportive of positions: in education we have moved to formative research that informs policy processes. We need to have the confidence to record and learn from this process – traditional commissioning of research is not sufficient.'* (PC1)

There has already been reference made to the hierarchy of staff with different formal levels of authority and responsibility in government decision-making processes. Several implied that the changes to hierarchical working would involve changes in relationships with ministers in policy formation:

*'There is always a risk that any government will regard such recommendations [those of Successful Futures] accepted by a minister as a Bible rather than as something to be carried forward through development work.'* (PC3)

*'Co-construction takes time and needs energy invested to bring people along; makes us as civil servants think about ways of working which are very different from an approach of saying this is what the minister wants how do we achieve it.'* (PC2)

The importance of understanding and holding on to principles was recognised. It was inappropriate to import 'best practice' from one context to another; what was required was to share and understand principles and adopt these in one's own context; these principles related to openness, the development of trust, moving out of one's comfort zone, moving out of the echo chamber of one's own thoughts and ultimately sharing with others recognised and respected as equals:

*'Practice not to be simply exported but principles to inform public policy development and delivery.'* (PC3)

*'Holding on to principles is essential: mutual trust and respect; time and space to listen to each other; no one opinion more valuable than others; hierarchies exist but we must develop an atmosphere which allows people to speak openly in front of those normally regarded as higher in the hierarchy e.g. practitioners openness in front of Estyn or consortia.'* (PC2)

*'Sharing is essential: principles of co-construction and of identifying the key players can be adopted in other contexts; breaking down silos is important as is being willing to look beyond the usual groups with whom one engages; means of taking ownership and working through issues together can be shared.'* (PC4)

But interviewees recognised that aspirations and commitment to principles while a necessary condition were not sufficient: those wishing to adopt this way of working had to commit themselves to deep learning and to reflecting on this. This would presumably include the development of new skills as noted above but also appeared to include an understanding of social structures and of human interaction:

*'There is a need to recognise and record learning along the way.'* (PC4)

*'Understanding of the process and of how structures can work in this way will be important and massively beneficial for Welsh Government policy development.'* (PC6)

One interviewee noted that this was not easy, required long term commitment and was in traditional terms expensive (although compared to investment in other areas comparatively very inexpensive):

*'£100 million has been spent on educational change: this is a drop in ocean compared to what government gives to Tata or Aston Martin; this is a complete change across the whole country at the price of two school buildings... This is a ten year project: we will need to develop longer term thinking and get people's buy-in for the long term.'* (PC6)

The same interviewee made the point that already lessons from this programme were being shared both within the government and with other members of the policy community to promote change across the whole education system. Another interviewee had already been motivated to evangelise and spread the good word across the Welsh Government; in so doing, the speaker summed up the characteristic benefits of co-construction, of acting with personal and professional integrity.

*'We have moved from curriculum reform to reform of the education system across the country: co-construction and equity should remain as central principles.'* (PC6)

*‘Evangelical about this (co-construction): contacts already made with colleagues to showcase this policy development; unique to date in Welsh Government in use of co-construction. Importance of ownership of policy and indeed excitement about policy. Practice not to be simply exported but principles to inform public policy development and delivery. Expertise needed in a complex world: civil servants are generalists so learning for civil servants through bringing together variety of expertise – greater than sum of the parts. Experts, practitioners, system wide expertise brought together; cannot be done genuinely through consultation where government does not see itself as part of the problem; this process allows us to see problem in a much more rounded way.’ (PC3)*



## D. Lens Three: Systemic integrity

(coherence in development at all levels of the education system – all policies driving in the same direction; all communities with a shared vision)

In many ways, policy development was core business for those interviewed. The interviewees were without exception committed to the potential of the new curriculum to improve the quality of education in Wales. They did not underestimate the challenges faced but offered a convincing case to suggest that they valued what they recognised as new and very different ways of working in their own policy environment and in their closer interactions with other communities. They believed that these new approaches were more likely to lead to improvements in Welsh educational policy and practice.

All interviewees identified system coherence as fundamental to the successful future of the new curriculum. Four key themes emerged crucial for system coherence emerged from the Interviews:

- The policy journey: the coherence between the vision for the programme, the associated policy documents and new policy processes;
- The inter-relationship of policy, practice and research and the changing role of policy colleagues
- Two major challenges: assessment and professional learning
- Implications for the future of curriculum for Wales and for wider policy learning

Interviewees recognised that each of these areas was complex and all were inter-related.

### D1. The policy journey

The policy landscape that lay behind the programme was most commonly described as being in three phases, a blueprint followed by a strategy for implementation and then the process of curriculum development:

*‘Successful Futures was the blueprint: Curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life’; CFWACFL was then an interpretation for implementation of Successful Futures and next steps; but this had a limited lifespan and longevity as it was overtaken by the curriculum development process. Curriculum for Wales is the statement of where the practitioners have got to and translates principles into practice.’ (PC5)*

One interviewee added a further dimension

*‘Important to recognise also the strategy set by Welsh Government in Education: Our National Mission [Welsh Government, 2017b]: the principles in that document fed into and led the programme.’ (PC4)*

Interviewees were asked about *Successful Futures* (Donaldson, 2015) being portrayed as ‘The Bible’, a phrase that at the time of the interviews was in common use in Wales. Two interviewees indicated that this was how they had thought about *Successful Futures* when they entered the programme:

*‘I shared this perception at entry to the programme – there was constant reference back to Successful Futures to check whether we were still in line; in at least certain aspects Successful Futures was certainly seen as the gospel’ (PC2)*

Interestingly, the same interviewee suggested that the level of respect in which *Successful Futures* was held had not been previously common:

*'Given previous experience in other policy areas, it was interesting to see something held up in this light so that we could not deviate from it.'* (PC2)

Thinking about the role of *Successful Futures* in the innovation process had changed over time:

*'At point of joining the programme, there was a lot more faith in Successful Futures as a complete blueprint: we would simply bring practitioners together and the curriculum would emerge; it became clear that this would not be the case'* (PC3)

Reflecting on the learning journey, one interviewee suggested that the view of *Successful Futures* as a 'Bible' had had consequences for the ways in which the AoLE Groups worked in the early stages of their development:

*'this was understood by CAG [the Curriculum and Assessment Group] from the beginning but probably not by all civil servants and practitioners; groups in the early stages spent time referring to and decoding single sentences in Successful Futures. Moved from trying to recreate the letter to recreating the spirit of Successful Futures was a process of evolution'* (PC3)

There was an argument put forward by some interviewees that the radical changes proposed by *Successful Futures* required clear direction in the early stages:

*'the massive change in principles and values was somewhat directive and needed a lot of thinking through, unpicking, thinking of policy implications, what was achievable.'* (PC1)

Further, it was recognised that, however strong the argument in *Successful Futures*, little progress would have been made without political support:

*'We were fortunate with the minister; most of the aspirations have been maintained while we needed to explore detailed implications'* (PC1)

*'There was a high level of alignment between Successful Futures and the policy response: Welsh Government intentions were directly based on Successful Futures; the minister accepted all Successful Futures recommendations so initial links very tight. Legislative changes are based on Successful Futures... however, the detail as well as policy principles were closely aligned with Successful Futures'* (PC6)

One interviewee suggested that the development of Curriculum in Wales sat within a more extensive policy context and was thus subject to greater inter-departmental review than previous educational policies:

*'this development focused on policy rather than on delivery. The focus was on how does education policy fit with other government policies e.g. health; environment, Future generations, ALN, Welsh language. Coherence across policy is essential'.* (PC6)

All interviewees made reference to the ways in which the policy process had developed over time:

*'When one looks at the documents in sequence one can see a journey'* (PC4)

Rather than *Successful Futures* being seen as a Bible, the understanding of it as a blueprint was perceived to be a more helpful analogy.

*'Successful Futures was seen as the Bible, but this was not an intention..... a blueprint is a better metaphor as it allows for flexibility and modification in detail rather than literal interpretation.'* (PC5)

There was a clear understanding that ideas within *Successful Futures* had been debated and developed extensively. This partnership approach was recognised to have been a crucial part of building ownership:

*'Successful Futures might have been a Bible, but a lot of people have been involved in interpreting and developing this: resulting in ownership within the system. The triangle of teachers, research and policy were working together, shoulder to shoulder instead of teachers perceiving that they were being guided to a destination by those in charge, this system affords credibility; joint working recognises experience of all, including a range of practitioners – early years, community education – as well as external partners – e.g. business.'* (PC1)

The idea of *Successful Futures* as a Bible was perceived to have had advantages at times, for example:

*'This did constrain policy thinking in some areas; but in others (e.g. e-portfolios) going back to Successful Futures and talking with Graham Donaldson on the thinking this represented on this matter has been helpful in providing an assurance to practitioners'* (PC2)

This approach was perceived to have taken more time than more traditional approaches but that this was perceived to have had advantages in building credibility and deepening understanding:

*'Working through this has taken longer than it might have been; however, taking time may be valuable in itself'* (PC2)

In describing what they saw as key points in the policy journey, different interviewees identified different points. These could often be related to the differing policy responsibilities, whether curriculum:

*'...key moments included: the determination of the Statements of What Matters when it became clear that Successful Futures did not provide the details of the curriculum structure; the development of knowledge, skills and experience. The feedback process showed that decisions had been made that worked in spirit of Successful Futures e.g. moving from KSE [knowledge, skills and experiences] to Designing your Curriculum; changes to Descriptions of Learning; moving from Welsh Dimension to national and international context; introducing Relationships and Sexuality Education'* (PC3)

or assessment:

*'...consistent with the ethos of Successful Futures although thinking has evolved; e.g. how we presented and positioned assessment. Early interpretation of the phrases Progression Steps and achievement outcomes in Successful Futures and references there to an 'assessment and evaluation framework' were more literal than now when we have maintained the ethos but moved away from one common assessment and evaluation framework to emphasise assessment as part of curriculum design'* (PC4)

*'...the reform process (pioneers, all systems involved in co-construction) led to changes in detail (e.g. removal of term 'achievement outcomes' and replacement by Descriptions of*

*Learning; determination of What Matters; introduction of a model of progression; introduction of Knowledge, Skills and Experience; subsequent removal of these and replacement by 'Designing curriculum' areas.'* (PC6)

All interviewees expected the policy journey to continue to evolve. No-one interviewed saw policy as a finished product; rather it was a progressive process where, although the vision of the future for the curriculum in Wales remained relatively constant as a blueprint, interactions between policy, research and practice had developed and deepened understandings of how ideas from policy and research might best emerge in practice. Practice influenced policy and research, research influenced policy and practice, and policy influenced research and practice. The blueprint offered the framework and the broad vision, whereas:

*'the reform process (pioneers, all systems involved in co-construction) led to changes in detail (e.g. removal of term 'achievement outcomes' and replacement by Descriptions of Learning; determination of What Matters; introduction of a model of progression; introduction of Knowledge, Skills and Experience; subsequent removal of these and replacement'* (PC6)

One interviewee made reference to Curriculum for Wales still being described as the 'Donaldson Curriculum' but argued that over time this should change.

*'There are still frequent references to Curriculum for Wales as the Donaldson Curriculum; we need to move on from such language and present the curriculum as itself public policy; 'the curriculum says this' is now the appropriate language. It is a process of maturing'* (PC3).

## **D2 The Inter-relationship of policy, practice and research and the changing role of policy colleagues**

### **D2.1 The inter-relationship of policy, practice and research**

One of the strongest themes emerging from the analysis of the interviews was the clear perception amongst all those interviewed that the design and development of Curriculum for Wales had led to very different relationships amongst policy makers, practitioners and researchers.

Subsidiarity and co-construction were fundamental new ideas in developing Curriculum for Wales:

*'Subsidiarity had already been recognised in contrast to co-construction. Early consideration was given to developing the concept of co-construction which led to the Pioneer model. This would replace the previous model in which documents were issued after brief consideration by small select groups. Now co-construction is built in from beginning.'* (PC1)

A new, energised role for practitioners was central to the design

*'Some understood from the beginning that this was to be practitioner led with only limited input from policy .....it was important that the process remained practitioner owned'* (PC5)

The AoLE Groups involving practitioners, policy makers and researchers were the engine of the development process:

*'the value of the practitioner contribution was evident in terms of practicability and of the impact of previous challenges – the value of buy in and ownership is crucial'* (PC2)

However, in the early days of the programme, even before the AoLE Groups were created, there had been concerns to build structure to promote alignment across different aspects of the policy process; for example:

*'On the whole it was possible to keep the different aspects of policy aligned, due to the creation of supportive structures'. (PC5)*

*'The assessment teams were differently structured from the AoLE teams – without Leads: tensions were explored through Coherence Group and through the Curriculum and Assessment Group'. (PC5)*

The involvement of other policy related bodies, e.g. Estyn and Qualifications Wales, were also perceived to have enriched the discussions.

Interviewees welcomed the involvement of researchers in the process. Two routes describing the involvement of research in the process were commonly identified: the CAMAU project, a research project designed to support the development of progression; and the Curriculum and Assessment Group, a group with a number of researchers as members that offered strategic advice to the programme.

When reflecting on the role that the CAMAU project had played in the process, some referred to the role of research evidence in informing thinking:

*'The starting point for developing thinking was the CAMAU initial report, looking at the findings about other curricular models and research. Some models were closer to Welsh practice' (PC6)*

in supporting the direction of travel and *'providing credibility and reassurance'* (PC2) and in encouraging a more comprehensive view of evidence:

*'Policy should always be based on experience and research but often in policy we do things that allow us to reinforce what we had decided we wanted – cherry picking, sometimes pushed by politicians. This project was one that was really amazing to be involved with. CAMAU drove thinking in a low key way, not a series of 'OMG we need to change direction!' moments. CAMAU challenged and supported thinking.' (PC1)*

One interviewee suggested that the relationship among research, policy and practice had become more meaningful:

*'enhanced over time. Not all research is relevant in Welsh context; policy is important but must be capable of movement. Originally practitioners felt that this development was theirs... was their territory; with the contribution of CAMAU, practitioners developed involvement with policy and research which informed their ownership of the process.' (PC5)*

There was a view that the research evidence had to be selected to enhance the level of debate and closely directed to the task in hand:

*'Research has to be pitched at right level, not trite or for its own sake. Should be challenging, raising the bar' (PC3)*

There was a commitment amongst the policy makers to continue the relationship between research and practice as the programme developed:

*'... [Curriculum for Wales] needs more research as we develop practice and local design.... Use external research and support practitioner research.'* (PC3)

An interesting distinction was made between evidence used for purposes of accountability and evidence to inform learning:

*'user research to understand what makes for success and supports it rather than accountability'* (PC3)

The second source of research informed influence was perceived to be the Curriculum and Assessment Group (CAG). As with other elements of the programme, the relationship between the policy makers and AoLE Groups developed over time. Initially, it had been assumed that, as an Advisory Committee, CAG would lead the programme; however, as

*'... practitioners became more familiar with CAG, which was demystified, ... this allowed more honest open conversations. Early CAGs [CAG meetings] had been seen as a sounding board; this developed into the role of a critical friend who challenges and validates but does not make your decisions for you.'* (PC3)

Both sources of research were valued by policy interviewees within the programme:

*'CAG feedback provided reassurance as it demonstrated engagement and respect. We need to put in more induction, better communications, support structures, setting clear expectations. Everyone should have a CAG! Provides a breathing space for all. Definitely have a CAMAU approach!'* (PC1)

Further, these approaches were seen as offering a framework that would be useful in other policy spheres:

*'Value of CAG has to be recognised. A structure like CAG is needed for an equivalent level of challenge and rigour in other aspects of policy development; input like that of CAMAU is important in resolving tensions.'* (PC1)

One interviewee described the relationship amongst research, policy and practice as a *'healthy, constructive relationship'* (PC2) – a relationship where everyone's role was valued and had changed.

Attempts to keep research, policy and practice in alignment brought different kinds of challenge but ways of addressing these challenges were found within the programme structures and the cross-community partnerships. Partnerships with researchers and advisors contributed to addressing these challenges:

*'There have been challenges in carrying through the aspirations of Successful Futures: there were times when Welsh Government was not as strong as might have been, but this was usually righted. Graham's [Donaldson] participation and that of CAMAU allowed for policy and research to be used as an evidence base along with the contributions of practitioners.'* (PC5)

A further challenge to alignment was identified to lie in the perceived inter-dependencies within the policy landscape, e.g.

*'the number of policy drivers in the assessment space; the view of some that we can't do X until we know what accountability will be like; the concern that assessment information will be used for accountability purposes despite government statements; the view that nothing*

*should be done until we know what qualifications will look like; the risk of a year 1-8 curriculum followed by qualifications.’ (PC2)*

## **D2.2 The changing role of policy colleagues**

Policy colleagues interviewed perceived that their roles had changed significantly during their involvement in the development of Curriculum for Wales. Some saw the shift as moving from a policy role that was more inward looking to one based on real collaboration:

*‘We are no longer in the situation of civil servants developing schemes in a back room for the minister. This real collaboration is associated with transparency on how policy has developed through the programme.’ (PC2)*

Interviewees suggested that one key role they played was as mediators:

*‘We played a mediating role between ministers and Successful Futures and the emerging curriculum, and between teachers and others. There was some movement following our activity in this mediating role but nothing went beyond the boundaries of Successful Futures’.* (PC1)

There had been a fundamental shift in the way that policy colleagues thought about policy. In the context of Curriculum for Wales, policy colleagues were part of a learning dynamic:

*‘Policy thinking shifted (this is not the same as policy shifting) around the language of achievement outcomes. Research may not have led to any one fully formed policy but acted rather as an influence in developing policy; there developed a recognition that policy making has a lot to learn.’ (PC5)*

## **D3 Two major challenges: assessment and professional learning**

Two dominant themes emerged consistently as major challenges for the successful enactment of Curriculum for Wales.

### **D3.1 Assessment**

The first theme, assessment, was perceived as a challenge from a range of perspectives. First, there was a challenge of transition as the Welsh system moved from being one driven by external measurement and accountability to a self-regulating system focused on improving learning:

*‘There were some tensions about assessment – judging and accountability – so sometimes we needed to use language one was not comfortable with. Basically, a tension between the current situation and future aspirations. Principled compromises were required to keep consensus moving and in general people have moved into the centre from their own positions.’ (PC1)*

Although there was a perception that progress was being made in shifting the assessment culture, interviewees were conscious of the long history of Welsh education being somewhat in the shadow of developments in England and that this issue was likely to emerge when qualifications were considered:

*'... the Gove inheritance is still with us e.g. as learners move into GCSEs' (PC1)*

Interviewees had welcomed opportunities to work through problems with practitioners, recognising the depth of the challenge being faced:

*'The process has remained consistent with the early principles and aspirations... e.g. unpacking the Successful Futures concept of an assessment and evaluation framework because experience has shown how much baggage accompanied references to such a framework.'* (PC2)

*'There were a couple of times when the volume of content in some AoLEs led to a need to promote alignment across AoLEs, especially in terms of assessment; this was worked through. Challenges like these could have been expected.'* (PC5)

Individual AoLEs had faced particular challenges, e.g. in debating the relationship between what was important in the curriculum and how what was important might be assessed:

*'There were a couple of areas of tension: there were strong views re aspects of Health and Well-being, especially the use of the word 'enjoy'; this was absolutely right in terms of aspirations but led to internal and external concerns about the appropriateness of the term and what sort of assessment criteria could be used – while perhaps minor this was an important matter.'* (PC5)

One interviewee charted the assessment journey that teachers would have to take:

*'If teachers are to assess for future planning, they have to be able to identify misconceptions; indeed, teachers must be more clinical in their use of assessment and able to refer to detailed rather than general evidence. This will support their understanding of the problems and achievements of individuals and groups.'* (PC6)

Policy colleagues also spoke positively of the role of researchers in the process of exploring assessment challenges:

*'CAMAU contributed a lot to thinking about assessment; clarifying understanding of terms and ensuring common understanding with a focus on learning, recognising that terms brought baggage'* (PC1)

As noted above, assessment policy had been altered following feedback from practitioners and researchers:

*'Repositioning of the purpose of assessment shows the influence of research on policy - the April publication contrasted formative vs summative purposes; feedback received from practitioners and inputs from research showed that this dichotomy as expressed in the draft policy did not convey clearly the thinking behind the policy; we had underestimated the impact and carry forward from the existing culture;'* (PC2)

The feedback received had been considered by the Assessment Advisory Group:

*'[the Assessment Advisory Group] developed a new description of how assessment could be conceptualised and expressed to reflect principles of the curriculum and its documentation'.* (PC2)



*'... as an example, the articulation of achievement outcomes in the April 2019 publication led to thinking about these as assessment criteria; so, the move to Descriptions of Learning came about; participants needed space to check back and review and think. The Group was conscious that assessment must not be seen as something separate, a message which came through feedback. The final overarching guidance and structure has addressed this – and assessment is clearly now part of curriculum design' (PC2)*

Feedback had also influenced the design of the recently introduced national online adaptive Personalised Assessments in literacy, numeracy and digital competence:

*'This approach has allowed us to take learning from the curriculum development process into developing adaptive assessments and reporting on these: this was discussed in the Curriculum and Assessment Group. This process totally changed the feel of these Assessments' (PC1)*

### **D3.2 Professional learning challenges**

The theme of professional learning was also seen as involving major challenge. Recognised as essential to the future development of Curriculum for Wales, it was widely acknowledged that traditional models of professional learning would not suffice. Some of the challenges identified were conceptual and fundamental. One interviewee suggested that there was a tension between conceptualising professional learning as capacity building when *'it would be better to conceive of this latter as system change'* (PC1).

In essence many of the issues raised by interviewees focused on a concern around how to offer new participants similar experiences to those that had led colleagues in AoLE Groups to become committed to and confident in their understanding of Curriculum for Wales. It would be crucial to

*'support... subsidiarity, ensuring that schools not so far involved have opportunities to explore understandings of the new curriculum: this requires consistent messaging' (PC4)*

No interviewee questioned the need for sustained professional engagement with participants coming new to the programme. One interviewee who had been a teacher spoke of how challenging it was to move between the currently existing system and the new curriculum:

*'informed by a powerful – but wrong – inherited policy, often teaching ... involved just doing enough to ensure that learners could reiterate a limited body of learning back in the exam – Easter revision was not about learning but exam preparation.'* (PC6)

There was, however, a perception that much could be learned from the experiences of the Pioneers. Two interviewees reported on their recent experience:

*'a reflection exercise with 200 Pioneers in February led to interesting findings including the fact that they replicated the interviewee's journey.'* (PC6)

Interviewees reported that considerable planning was in train for professional learning for all participants:

*'for everyone in education system from staff in classroom through HT to Consortia. Estyn, Welsh Government... recognis(ing) that we all are learning, following our own learning journeys.'* (PC4)

The focus for this professional learning was to enable participants to:

*'understand their role and how this can be developed to promote the same vision.'* (PC4)

In order to achieve a delicate balance between taking risks and implementing statutory responsibilities, professional learning colleagues in Welsh Government in the context of assessment

*'are putting structures in place: developing assessment policy is identifying the needs of classroom staff, HTs and other colleagues; leaders must be brave enough to encourage other to take risks and take responsibilities (note that there are proposed statutory responsibilities)'* (PC4)

A major danger identified by interviewees was the potential for the integration of the new curriculum into old practices, leading to little other than superficial change:

*'How to avoid people taking documentation and fitting it into their existing mindset? How to ensure intended and received messages are the same?'* (PC4)

*'... there are leadership teams that have taken on this in order to be ready for the new curriculum; the worry is those who have looked at Successful Futures and the curriculum and said that there is nothing new, just a tweak or two to current practice is all that is needed. There is a need to understand that this development requires changes in pedagogy; not all will be achieved by day 1; how do we support those at end of career to make changes in their practice, become enthused, look deeply at intentions?'* (PC5)

If professional learning were to be successful, it would lead to fundamental cultural change. One interviewee asked that consideration be given to the question

*How will we know if culture has shifted?* (PC5)

## **D4 Implications for the future of Curriculum for Wales and for wider policy learning**

### **D4.1 Implications for the future of Curriculum for Wales**

- **Professional learning is crucial for a successful future for Curriculum for Wales**

There was a commitment amongst interviewees that the development of the programme to date offered a sound basis from which to build the future programme. The Pioneer experience was key:

*'We need to recognise the learning from the Pioneer experience and draw from this. Is this being done?'* (PC1)

But what were the characteristics of the Pioneer experience that it would be crucial to include?

First, the professional learning experience should reflect the enhanced professional roles that teachers had been invited to play

*'...communicating and emphasising that practitioners will become curriculum designers and responsible for developing assessment within that designed curriculum.'* (PC4)

Curriculum design was a role expected not simply of members of AoLE Groups but was intended to become part of what is to be a teacher in Wales. It was argued that this was a significant shift from the recent past in Wales and offered practitioners a far more creative, educational role:

*'The move from a national curriculum with specified levels to national guidance that will support practitioners in building their own curriculum. The teacher's role is to create not simply deliver. Teachers should not be taking current schemes and simply adding in labels/references to the four purposes.'* (PC4)

However, such a significant shift had implications for the kind of professional learning that would be required. A traditional model where teachers were informed about the new curriculum would not suffice. The process that had led to the depth of understanding that had developed over time within the AoLE Groups would have to be continued to include increasing numbers of new participants. The model for professional learning should include key features of the initial change process to support future participants. It would be important not to revert to previous models where, once the original policy was developed, others were told about it rather than engaged with it:

*'How can this (the key experiences provided for the original pioneers) be provided in the future? people need to go through the process not simply be provided with the final examples. A guided approach needs to be developed. When planning curriculum, there needs people alongside providing these insights. We should draw on the CAMAU model and avoid the tendency in government just to move on.'* (PC1)

*'As next wave of teachers come in, they may be at the point where AoLEs were two years ago. What influenced this development? – working with CAMAU and with Mark Priestley.'* (PC1)

One interviewee was concerned about ensuring that the transition from the model that had underpinned the work of the AoLE Groups to the next phase of development was effective:

*'We cannot recreate the Pioneer process for every teacher: how can we identify the relevant principles? e.g. co-construction, time, voice genuinely valued.'* (PC3)

There was a strong belief in the success of the AoLE development model as a basis for professional learning:

*'Colleagues identified the process as the best Professional Learning ever, reinvigoration, connecting activity with real purpose, risk taking, sharing, resilience, working critically with experts.'* (PC3)

Basing future professional learning on the principles emerging from the AoLE development model was argued to be essential:

*'If you want people to model the change, they have to own it – be evangelists. Frustrations arise from not being utilised, not having a big enough stake in implementation process.'* (PC3)

There would be a need to *'recognise that it has taken time to get to this point'* (PC3), because not taking time to build ownership would be likely to lead to problems with the enactment of the programme that would be more difficult and take longer to deal with than if participants had been engaged in a principled way in the early stages of their involvement:

*'The major bonus is buy-in; this is a really big thing; in contrast to in house development the pioneer process does not simply result in tasks being carried out but in understanding that has changed. With proper planning, we can hold to this; this process leads to taking forward the next stages of the process: a ready-made army of 200 meet 20000! It helps address the feelings of panic that this is too big a task and can't be done, both in terms of time and magnitude of challenge.'* (PC6)

Particular aspects of Curriculum for Wales were perceived to be challenging yet particularly important to the vision, e.g. the inter-relationship of curriculum, progression and assessment. Interviewees shared a clear view that practice would only continue to be well-aligned with the vision of Curriculum for Wales if people were afforded opportunities to explore and to discuss this inter-relationship. For example, it would be important for new participants to understand the thinking that lay behind decisions:

*'... Descriptions of Learning – the change to this name, instead of achievement outcomes is really important. Professional Learning must involve dialogue, practitioners learning from each other and developing shared understandings of progression; this process is supported by proposed statutory requirements for schools to meet to do this on a regular basis so that schools will learn from each other.'*

This was identified by several interviewees as an area of risk and an area that would require particular attention. Just as had happened with the members of the AoLE Groups, new participants to the programme should *'understand the fundamentals'* (PC3). Without that understanding developed through opportunities to participate in co-construction, there was a fear that people would be:

*'driven back to current practice if they draw on Descriptions of Learning without going through the thinking; co-construction is as important for implementation as design; need to better support schools both to develop their curriculum and to do this through collaborative processes.'* (PC3)

Contrasts were drawn between the pedagogies advocated in classrooms (*'We know learners learn through collaboration'*) and those often employed in professional learning:

*'then do not act on this in our own development practice; rather we tell people what has to be done. How can we use Descriptions of Learning to support this thinking and collaboration?'* (PC3)

One interviewee suggested that Welsh Government had a responsibility to think creatively about how this might be done:

*'to help people how to do so; this goes beyond case studies or exemplification, but more mind-set changing and needs ongoing co-construction at all levels (local authority, consortia, school, government).'* (PC3)

A further area of risk was seen to lie in the nature of the change being asked of practitioners. The differences lay in depth of understanding. Superficial features might not look very different from the way they had in the past but there would be significant changes to deeper learning structures:

*'Day to day some lessons may not change; the key difference would be that teachers and school leaders would be able to explain why and how they teach; to describe where learners*

*are in terms of learning .....to explain what progression looks like and how they can move learners forward; to talk about curriculum design; and to refer to and make use of data.'* (PC6)

*'Teachers and learners must be able to articulate together where the learner is in the learning journey, not simply in terms of content. Teachers need to understand conceptual development of learners: changes in the environment and context are necessary but not sufficient.'* (PC6)

These deeper differences would have to be explored as part of professional learning.

- **Professional learning had to be seen as a system wide issue involving every participant in the process, practitioner, policy maker or researcher**

Curriculum for Wales was perceived to be intended to be a democratic model; one that was inclusive: *'... the whole profession must own the curriculum'* (PC1). The challenge was *'how to support this from the start?'* (PC1)

Previous models of professional learning were described as being limited in scope, premised on the idea that people who worked at the level of the system developed policy and supported the learning of those who would implement it. Curriculum for Wales was different.

*'PL as an important aspect but often located with teachers only; need for all communities in the education system to learn and accept challenge, rather than avoid it.'* (PC1)

Interviewees recognised the importance of a systemic approach to change that would involve different relationships amongst the different players in the educational landscape: Welsh Government, Consortia, Estyn, Qualifications Wales, headteachers and teachers would all be involved both as learners and as contributors – *'Self-improvement has to be system-wide'*.

*'All tiers of the system must work together. Those involved in development have valued decisions taken between practitioners, Qualifications Wales, consortia, Estyn: need to build this practice now into the system. Barriers can be overcome over time; helpful to see this on a larger scale. Implications for role of organisations and of their staff, including civil servants.'* (PC4)

Fundamentally, it was argued that this model of professional learning was premised on very different power relationships. Policy makers could lead by example. They

*'... need to recognise that it is important for all to feel able to say that we have development needs: 'I need to improve my competence.'* (PC5)

It was argued that other players with a major role in the Welsh Education system were ready to change, e.g.

*'Estyn is open to change and movement. We need to develop school self-improvement and allow schools to carry this out.'* (PC1)

However, one interviewee cautioned that there remained work to be done before practitioners were convinced that new relationships were being formed:

*'Risks now from practitioners who are not convinced that Estyn, consortia, school leaders will model these approaches (participative, open to challenge)' (PC3)*

Such positions would have to be challenged and it was argued that the most effective challenge would come through teachers experiencing alternative power relationships and structures:

*'Holding on to principles is essential: mutual trust and respect; time and space to listen to each other; no one opinion more valuable than others; hierarchies exist but we must develop an atmosphere which allows people to speak openly in front of those normally regarded as higher in the hierarchy e.g. practitioners' openness in front of Estyn or consortia'.* (PC2)

Third, the context and development processes within which the new curriculum would emerge should shift from judgement to learning, reflecting the changes in the assessment system within Curriculum for Wales:

*'In a similar way to that in which assessment is moving from being judgmental to being supportive of development and change, so also must our school development processes. Culture shift is the hardest: people need confidence that they are not being judged but supported (as with children learning).'*' (PC1)

However, interviewees recognised that the scale of this task was significant. Ownership mattered but making sure that a far greater number of participants developed similar levels of ownership to those who had been involved in the AoLEs was challenging:

*'There are issues about difference of scale and raising awareness of process ... ensuring that ownership extends beyond a small group. How do we ensure that a wider range of people? developing thinking so that there is a wider feeling that they have had input and therefore ownership.'* (PC5)

All interviewees were conscious of how inter-dependent different parts of the Welsh system were. Like the cogs in an old-fashioned watch, all had to be moving in harmony to keep the watch working; if one cog stopped, the watch no longer worked. Thus, designing different ways of thinking about accountability would be crucial:

*'We must be careful to ensure that we were looking at what we demanded of the system, how we collected information about the system that reflected aspirations. So, standards driven by accountability cannot be used, and the system has consequently totally changed (or at least is well on the way to so doing) in terms what information not to collect and not to report.'* (PC5)

Interviewees acknowledged the central role that Government had to play in such a change:

*'In a sense the Government must lead by example. We need to repeat these messages not just to schools but to other stakeholders and ensure that the system works consistently to support the new model.'* (PC5)

As indicated earlier in this section, interviewees argued that practitioners (and others) needed time to engage with the new curriculum and opportunities to work collaboratively to develop and share ideas about how new practices might be developed. However, professional learning opportunities would have to be carefully structured:

*'Time will not be sufficient on its own, time is a necessary but not sufficient condition. Welsh Government Attitudes ... how we look at the system will have to embody what we expect of schools; this is true at all levels – Welsh Government, Estyn, consortia, local authorities, school leadership teams all need to take on the values and behave in accordance with these. This will support teacher self-assessment. (PC5)*

It would also be insufficient to identify what had to be done; consideration would have to be given to what people should stop doing:

*'We need to consider what there is in the current arrangements that we can relax to make this space (without disadvantaging learners in the current curriculum arrangements); what aspects have been introduced over time as a knee jerk response (e.g. some reporting data) that we can dispense with.'* (PC2)

Understanding the relationship between curriculum, progression and assessment was repeatedly argued to be a central aim of professional learning:

*'ensure understanding of what progression means; developing practice in assessment; designing one's own school assessment framework; providing time and space for practitioners to engage with curriculum guidance.'* (PC2)

- **Structural issues need to be addressed**

In planning for the next phase of the development interviewees suggested it would be important to acknowledge the particular challenges faced in different school contexts. One interviewee argued that school to school collaboration, where schools learned with one another, offered a constructive way forward:

*'Different pressures in primary and secondary need to be recognised. e.g. what will happen when young people hit GCSE? Lots of current practice needs to be moved over – what are the drivers for involvement? Some schools have addressed this; others not; so, it is possible.'* (PC1)

There were other structural issues that would require further consideration. For example, one interviewee argued that the new Welsh curriculum would require new secondary school organisational structures and approaches to timetabling:

*'If teachers are to know their learners sufficiently well, this may imply structural changes in secondary schools; teachers cannot see 320 learners a week; they need to have more interaction with groups of learners and be able to observe learners in different contexts.'* (PC6)

Alternative approaches to high stakes examinations that would be consistent with issues raised in the 2018 report *Improving Schools in Wales: An OECD Perspective* needed consideration:

*'There is also a need to examine what Qualifications will look and ensure they assess learning over a longer period. The key is to free up thinking by focusing on a mission; how are you developing learners? (This shift would link with thinking behind the OECD report as the authors posed this question.)'* (PC6)

More traditional relationships between home and school would no longer suffice:

*'There is a need for tighter links with parents – to improve understanding by both parties of future learning.'* (PC6)

- **New constructively critical relationships amongst policy, practice and research are an essential part of a successful future for Curriculum for Wales**

The dynamics established in the first phases of the development of Curriculum for Wales were seen as crucial to the success of the programme to date. However, there was a fear that, as in the past when a programme moved from design and development to implementation, this model would change. In caricature, but only just: policy makers would believe that the job was done; researchers, if involved at all, would retreat to writing papers about the development; and practitioners would carry out their role as implementers whose task was to put policy into practice. The development process in Curriculum for Wales had developed new kinds of partnership, more critical and more democratic. One interviewee described how they saw the new kinds of developing interaction:

*'It is important to make use of research and align policy, practice and research. Policy directions should build on a research base; so, there is a need to build up a research base at government level; it is also possible and important to get schools to work with universities (all are close to at least one university). Schools and policy makers need to be informed about research and realise that research is not gospel – it varies in quality and is a process; the longevity and transfer limitations have to be recognised. There is a need to understand the value and role of practice and local practitioner research.'* (PC6)

All interviewees made reference to the role that research had played in contributing to the dynamic of the development process. Building on the work they had undertaken with CAMAU, Wales is a founder participant in the International Educational Assessment Network (IEAN), a group of researchers and policy makers from 13 small nations and states who work collaboratively to explore some of the more intransigent international educational assessment challenges.

Research was identified as a crucial part of the process to inform and to help to align policy and practice:

*'There is always a role for research: we need to learn; we need to recognise that nothing is static; we need to avoid repetition and make development more natural. Engagement in the CAMAU process has not just supported curriculum development; consequent involvement in IEAN will continue to inform policy making.'* (PC5)

The descriptions of ways in which research might be built into development processes suggested the need for different kinds of research: some would be work carried out by researchers using traditional approaches, e.g. *'looking at relevant research from across the world'* (PC4); other research contributions would involve *'practitioners participating in research (trials of a new approach, reflecting on results')*. In this partnership model, it was suggested that Welsh Government would be *'more likely to commission research rather than being directly involved in conducting research'* (PC4).

As noted above, interviewees had reported the importance of the role of the Curriculum and Assessment Group, a group that included a number of researchers, in the development of their thinking. One interviewee reflected on the how the role of the Curriculum and Assessment Group



might be developed in the next phase of the programme to become a *'body of academic challenge in curriculum design'* (PC3).

One interviewee cogently identified what would be needed as the policy community looked to work with others in the next phase of the development of Curriculum for Wales. It offers such an insightful overview that it deserves to be included in its entirety:

*'As policy makers we need to understand that there is a process which needs both organisation and thinking:*

- *Don't waste energy on supporting structures which are not helpful or divert one from the key aim.*
- *Create space to go OMG, to think, to be challenged*
- *Establish clear expectations of roles and parameters which allow one to organise one's work and perceive progress (missing at the start of Pioneer process).*
- *Avoid temptation to produce quickly*
- *Have confidence to share thinking with wider communities*
- *Support networks*
- *Allow people time to recharge.*
- *Encourage senior people in other agencies to recognise the requirements of the processes*
- *Recognise that the legislative process may find this approach difficult to deal with*
- *Ask questions*
  - *How do we keep on target while exploring alternatives?*
  - *How do we maintain enthusiasm in the face of people wanting to push in other directions (both within and outwith Welsh Government)?*
  - *How do we maintain progression and momentum as people move on to other posts?*
  - *How do we avoid burn out? People have other commitments outwith work. Shut down other activities? Balance life and work when there are inadequate resources?*

*It helps to plan from the start: select the right people; encourage individuals to consider plans as they enter; build in succession planning and hand over to avoid loss of continuity. A single person cannot take responsibility for every detail but can set the pathway: support others to make decisions.'* (PC1)

#### **D4.2 Implications for wider policy learning**

Finally, interviewees were invited to reflect on their own experiences through the policy process and to consider whether or not there were implications for more widely for policy learning.

All interviewees argued that their experience working in the development of Curriculum for Wales had been inspiring. They recognised how different these new ways of working were:

*'In other policy fields we still tend to select evidence supportive of positions: in education we have moved to formative research that informs policy processes. We need to have the confidence to record and learn from this process – traditional commissioning of research is not sufficient.'* (PC1)

These new ways of working were regarded by some as fundamentally different:

*'We have moved from curriculum reform to reform of the education system across the country: co-construction and equity should remain as central principles.'* (PC6)

Co-construction was most commonly cited as the major difference in new ways of policy working.

This was not an easy option:

*'Co-construction takes time and needs energy invested to bring people along; makes us as civil servants think about ways of working which are very different from an approach of saying this is what the minister wants how do we achieve it.'* (PC2)

But a number of interviewees argued strongly for the benefits of the approach:

*'Understanding of the process understanding and of how structures can work in this way will be important and massively beneficial for Welsh Government policy development.'* (PC6)

Some policy colleagues described co-construction as a natural extension of their traditional ways of working although they recognised that this was not the way in which all policy makers worked:

*'In this context I always worked with groups of practitioners – there has been more generally a lack of awareness around this. There was a need to ensure alignment within policy (e.g. National Literacy and Numeracy Framework and AoLE descriptions); groups of practitioners informed this process who drew on research to inform the NLNF; perhaps there was a need to coordinate timing of inputs more effectively.'* (PC5)

Other colleagues suggested that whilst some elements of co-construction had been part of the policy process, co-construction was the essence of Curriculum for Wales:

*'Sharing is essential: principles of co-construction and of identifying the key players can be adopted in other contexts; breaking down silos is important as is being willing to look beyond the usual groups with whom one engages; means of taking ownership and working through issues together can be shared.'* (PC4)

One interviewee argued that co-construction in Curriculum for Wales was very different from many previous policy practices considered as embodying partnership:

*'Everyone thinks that they work with partners e.g. but this is not really co-construction: there has to be genuine engagement before there are any policy proposals and the capability to really listen and act in response to what one has heard.'* (PC2)

It seems likely that, as is the case in other communities, different policy makers work in different ways. The essential difference in developing and enacting Curriculum for Wales is that co-construction is non-negotiable; it is integral to its design. This was recognised as a learning experience for all involved and it would be important *'to recognise and record learning along the way'* (PC4).

Interviewees recognised the implications for their own work and the need for policy colleagues to be willing to work in less certain, less predictable ways. For example:

*'The process of working with people has been enjoyable though it can be challenging e.g. chairing (named committee) required bringing everyone along and feeling that at the end of each meeting we had really progressed; it sometimes required a series of meetings with*

*changes in rhythm and some hesitations before there was a resolution; we needed to recognise that we may not have predicted outcomes as we would expect in the traditional meeting sense; almost like a spiral curriculum, requires flexibility of response e.g. by chairs.'*  
(PC2)

One interviewee described themselves as 'evangelical' about co-construction and had already sought ways to influence the wider policy communities within their sphere of influence:

*'....contacts already made with colleagues to showcase this policy development; unique to date in Welsh Government in use of co-construction. Importance of ownership of policy and indeed excitement about policy.'* (PC3)

The ways in which co-construction might emerge might be different in different policy contexts but the principles, it was argued, would remain consistent:

*'Practice not to be simply exported but principles to inform public policy development and delivery. Expertise is needed in a complex world: civil servants are generalists so learning for civil servants is through bringing together variety of expertise that would be greater than sum of the parts. Experts, practitioners, system wide expertise brought together'* (PC3)

It was argued that traditional models of consultation were insufficient – co-construction

*'cannot be done genuinely through consultation where government does not see itself as part of the problem; this process allows us to see a problem in a much more rounded way.'*  
(PC3)

A number of interviewees suggested that within Curriculum for Wales work remained to be done within the Welsh Government policy community. As one interviewee suggested:

*'Within education we have to ensure joining up with curriculum division and with other policy areas: we have all been so busy that we have not invested enough time and effort in this. Now there may be some time to do so – we have worked extensively with externals perhaps time to do so with internals e.g. PL, evaluation and improvement. the question to be asked all the time: how is your work contributing to the implementation of the four purposes? What needs to be in place to support practitioners in implementation?'* (PC2)

## Section 2 summary of key findings

This section of the Report has been presenting findings from interviews exploring what six policy colleagues who have been centrally involved in the development of Curriculum for Wales perceived to have been important considerations in the change process, with a particular focus on progression and assessment. These insights are likely to be of particular significance as Welsh Government seeks to design and develop approaches to change that will engage increasing numbers of practitioners and schools across Wales whilst remaining true to the aspirations of the new Curriculum.

There was a clear commitment on the part of all interviewees to the development of Curriculum for Wales. They believed it would impact positively on the learning experiences of children and young people, leading to better learning outcomes and ultimately to more fulfilling lives.

### **Educational integrity: the educational value of the innovation**

Placing progression at the heart of the curriculum will promote learning. It is important that all participants in the further development and enactment of Curriculum for Wales understand why progression is central to the curriculum and understand the implications of this for their practice. This understanding of progression:

- offers a framework designed to develop for each learner deep and sophisticated conceptual development while simultaneously developing their confidence and well-being; through this framework practitioners can bring together national aspirations and pupil learning to identify learner progression through the Statements of What Matters to the Four Purposes and identify and support the means by which they will further progress
- focuses attention on the curriculum as a continuum, a coherent 3-16 structure rather than as a series of discrete structures and steps linked to ages and phases of schooling
- enables teachers and learners to focus on learning, progression and achievement, encouraging teachers to ask learner-centred questions rather than focusing on coverage of prescribed content and achievement of discrete tasks
- allows space for individual schools and practitioners to determine detailed progression within the framework of principles, thus providing opportunities for personalisation as required.

While these key characteristics of the structure are common to all Areas of Learning and Experience, progression pathways will reflect the distinctive nature of each.

It was readily acknowledged that the learning journey of each child or young person would in detail be particular to them:

- learning pathways through the curriculum are not prescribed in detail but will be developed through curricular planning in each school and classroom
- as specified topics and tasks are no longer the primary drivers of the curriculum, practitioners will plan topics to provide opportunities and contexts for progression in learning for all
- as practitioners develop their capacity to reflect on learning and to plan to meet the needs of each learner, they will be able, individually and collaboratively, to plan a school

curriculum and classroom experiences which will recognise and respect diversity while maintaining and promoting national expectations.

There was acknowledgement that further work would be immediately required in developing aspects of progression, in particular in the Early Years and in the relationship between Routes for Learning for young people with complex learning difficulties and the Progression frameworks.

Interviewees recognised the challenges in carrying out an ambitious programme which involved a radical reconceptualisation of assessment, fundamental changes in classroom planning and practice, including more collaborative approaches, and significant changes in national policy:

- in the later stages of the development process steps had been taken, in response to expressed concerns arising from the impact of previous assessment policy, to promote understanding of the new concept of assessment and its relation to progression
- further work and the provision of scaffolding would be required to promote this understanding as the curriculum was further developed and enacted in each school
- the autonomy now afforded to practitioners would be central to this process of development
- promoting educational integrity will be dependent on the recognition and promotion of personal and professional integrity and systemic integrity.

### **Personal and professional integrity: engaging individuals and communities professionally and personally**

Interviewees were clear that recognition of the importance of personal and professional integrity had been important in ensuring the development of Curriculum for Wales and would continue to be as important as the curriculum was developed and enacted in schools and classrooms.

Personal integrity focuses on the extent to which what the innovation advocates matters to the individual. Professional integrity is concerned with how the individual and the innovation interact, professional roles, the rights of the individual and the responsibilities that the programme asks of them.

The processes of policy development must provide space for practitioners to reflect and support them in articulating and acting on their views:

- this is not merely a matter of good intentions, aspirations and warm words; rather it required time and effort to establish and to maintain
- this is especially the case when practitioners are faced with the demanding task of developing and enacting the new curriculum while continuing to teach according to the previous very different curriculum.

There must be recognition of and respect for the role that emotions and relationships play in development processes; explanation and statements may be necessary but are not sufficient.

Such integrity requires also that the policy community reflect and take action, radical if necessary, to change its own established ways of working and end activities which are inconsistent with the recognition of personal integrity.

While select groups of practitioners from Pioneer Schools had been centrally involved in development to date, this had led inadvertently to the exclusion of those beyond the Pioneer group. Practical challenges will need to be addressed by the policy community to ensure that all participants are involved meaningfully at all future stages of engagement.

Interviewees tended to focus on the importance of recognising personal and professional integrity as it relates to practitioners but recognised that the same approach must be taken with learners: it was acknowledged that there will be difficulties in so doing which will take time to address.

Subsidiarity was central to the ensuring personal and professional integrity at all stages of the development process. Interviewees had participated in designing and bringing to fruition change processes which embodied subsidiarity and now recognised the importance of subsidiarity for ongoing engagement and enactment.

Co-construction of the curriculum is one key means of realising subsidiarity:

- co-construction had been at the heart of the curriculum development process, involving research, policy and practice in collaborative reflection and planning
- interviewees referred extensively and positively to the co-construction of the curriculum during the development phase which had resulted in a rounded policy, alive to challenges and barriers to implementation
- interviewees equally recognised the need for this approach to continue to be supported during the enactment phase
- schools and practitioners were considered to be entitled to support as they undertook unaccustomed roles and carrying these out meaningfully
- new ways of working require more than new structures and new skill sets; time and effort had also to be devoted to developing trust
- co-construction may imply the need to consider consequent changes to hierarchical models of policy development.

Policy makers had through their participation in the programme extended their understanding of the range of those who should be involved in co-construction to include the full range of learners and practitioners in schools. Some who might in the past have been regarded as only peripherally or contingently involved in consideration of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment should be included in the development and engagement process. This will include partners external to the formal education system or school.

The importance of understanding and holding on to principles was recognised:

- these principles related to openness, the development of trust, moving out of one's comfort zone, moving out of the echo chamber of one's own thoughts and ultimately sharing with others who are recognised and respected as equals
- it was inappropriate to import 'best practice' from one context to another
- what is required is to share and understand principles and adopt these in one's own context
- lessons from this programme were being shared both within the government and with other members of the policy community to promote change across the whole education system.

### **Systemic Integrity: promoting consistency and coherence across the system**

All interviewees identified system coherence as fundamental to the successful future of the new curriculum. Four key themes emerged crucial for system coherence emerged from the interviews

- *The policy journey: the coherence between the vision for the programme, the associated policy documents and new policy processes*
  - *Successful Futures* was seen as the blueprint for Curriculum for Wales; at the beginning of the development process *Successful Futures* had been seen in a way that had never been intended, as 'The Bible', but over time the focus had shifted to a concern to enact the spirit of the document rather than the letter
  - the reform process had led to changes, e.g. what had been described in *Successful Futures* as achievement outcomes were now Descriptions of Learning, an approach considered to be more consistent with the spirit of *Successful Futures*
  - there was an expectation that both policy and practice would continue to change as an increasing number of people became involved and contributed to the reform
- *The inter-relationship of policy, practice and research and the changing role of policy colleagues*
  - Curriculum for Wales had led to new roles and relationships for all participants in the programme
  - subsidiarity and co-construction were new ideas in Curriculum for Wales and should remain fundamental to its future phases
  - a new, energised role for practitioners was central to Curriculum for Wales
  - the AoLE Groups involving practitioners, policy makers and researchers were the engine of the development process and future developments should continue to build on these partnerships
  - the collaboration across the three communities had strengthened the development: the involvement of researchers through the CAMAU project and in committees (e.g. Curriculum and Assessment Group and Assessment Advisory Group), of practitioners in the AoLE groups and of policy makers in working with researchers and practitioners had all promoted a stronger, deeper evidence base
  - the involvement of other policy-related bodies (e.g. Estyn and Qualifications Wales), was also perceived to have enriched the discussions
  - there were specific areas that would require greater attention in the next phase of Curriculum for Wales, e.g. Early Years, or the risk of gaps emerging in alignment such as between the years 1-8 curriculum and qualifications or between learning and accountability
  - the roles of policy colleagues had changed significantly: they worked as members of teams concerned with the co-construction of Curriculum for Wales; they no longer saw policy as what should be enacted but instead conceptualised it as an iterative process
  - within the context of the recommendations agreed by Ministers, policy was taken forward through a process of co-construction with practitioners and researchers.
- *Two major challenges: assessment and professional learning*
  - the implications for assessment policy and practice run across all levels of the education system

- assessment policy at all levels will differ significantly (and must be perceived to differ significantly) from previous policy
- there is a challenge of transition as the Welsh education system moves from being one driven by external measurement and accountability to a self-regulating system focused on improving learning
- a very different understanding of the relationship among curriculum, pedagogy and assessment is required; past policy and consequent practice had resulted in assessment often being perceived and planned as independent from teaching; now curriculum, pedagogy and assessment require to be planned together
- further, assessment must move from being primarily a series of judgements of past success and failure to an on-going process which will inform and support further learning
- if practitioners are to assess for future planning, they have to be able to refer to detailed evidence of progression and the learning of individuals and groups rather than general evidence
- the theme of professional learning was seen as involving major challenge: it was recognised as essential to the future development of Curriculum for Wales and it was widely acknowledged that traditional models of professional learning would not suffice
- the concept of professional learning should be extended beyond individual capacity building to encompass system change
- successful professional learning would lead to fundamental cultural change
- new participants should be provided similar experiences to those that had led colleagues in AoLE Groups to become committed to and confident in their understanding of Curriculum for Wales
- *Implications for the future of Curriculum for Wales and for wider policy learning*
  - professional learning is crucial for a successful future for Curriculum for Wales
  - curriculum design is a key part of the role expected of practitioners in Wales; this is a significant shift from the recent past in Wales and offers practitioners a far more creative, educational role
  - taking time to build ownership is essential to the enactment of the programme
  - in particular, it will be important for all participants to understand the thinking that lay behind decisions in the development of the curriculum
  - professional learning must involve dialogue, practitioners learning from each other and developing shared understandings of progression
  - professional learning has to be seen as a system wide issue involving every participant in the process, practitioners, policy makers and researchers
  - there is a need to move beyond previous models of professional learning which were described as being limited in scope and premised on the idea that people who worked at the level of the system developed policy and supported the learning of those who would ‘implement’ it
  - the scale of the move from judgement to learning is significant and should not be underestimated
  - understanding the relationship between curriculum, progression and assessment was repeatedly argued as a necessary central aim of professional learning



- structural issues need to be addressed: it will be important to acknowledge the particular challenges faced in different school contexts, including implications for organisation and timetabling in secondary schools; improved links with parents will be necessary
- new constructively critical relationships amongst policy, practice and research are an essential part of a successful future for Curriculum for Wales
- research should continue to contribute to the dynamic of the development process and the alignment of policy and practice: this may require different approaches to research ('traditional', partnership involving government, school-based practitioner research) and improved understandings of the role that research can play.

## **Section 3: So Far So Good: using evidence to promote a Successful Future for the Curriculum for Wales**

# Using Evidence to Promote a Successful Future for the Curriculum for Wales

## Introduction

This paper of conclusions and recommendations is drawn from the full research report and sets its findings in the broader context of the aspirations of The Curriculum for Wales. The CAMAU team in the University of Glasgow and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David were commissioned, as the final stage of their research, to produce a research report for the Welsh Government which has as its purposes to:

- give an account of the thinking of those involved in the development process: Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) group members, AoLE leads and senior civil servants
- describe and analyse the complex of interacting factors which influenced their thinking
- identify key principles and factors likely to be significant for the effective enactment and continuing development of the curriculum in schools
- make recommendations to the Welsh Government on how this continuing development can be supported
- provide information to the Welsh Government on implications for future policy development processes.

To carry out these purposes the CAMAU team developed and drew on three sources:

- an online survey of two categories of 'Pioneers' – members of each of the AoLE groups which developed the curriculum and of the groups which considered implications for professional learning
- interviews with individual teachers, Welsh Government Leads and Consortia Leads from each of the AoLE groups involved in the development work
- interviews with senior civil servants with lead roles in the curriculum development process.

A number of high level messages emerge clearly from the analysis and synthesis of the evidence gathered from policy makers and practitioners. We have not organised our synthesis here by category of respondent, as similar messages came from the different groups who participated. These messages are applicable at all levels of the education system in Wales and to all stakeholders as they think about the design of the future of the Curriculum for Wales.

This brief paper is organised as follows:

1. Building a successful future for the Curriculum for Wales: so far so good
2. What is it crucial to sustain in the next phase of development?
3. What might need further thinking or greater emphasis? Six focus areas
  - 3.1 Shared understanding of key ideas
  - 3.2 Progression
  - 3.3 Assessment
  - 3.4 Co-construction and subsidiarity
  - 3.5 Coherence, policy and systemic integrity
  - 3.6 Professional learning
4. Final reflections

**This summary report is intended to be used as a stimulus for discussion.**

In the spirit of co-construction, we invite all participants to discuss within their own communities possible implications of this summary report for their practice, considering

- what contributions that they might make to ensure that successful aspects within the existing programme are sustained and
- how participants might work collaboratively to address areas likely to raise the level of risk to programme success.

Further, we respectfully suggest that those groups with whole school or system wide responsibilities, e.g. Headteachers, Consortia, Estyn, Qualifications Wales, Local Authorities and Universities, should pay particular attention to the implications for systemic change.

Much has changed since the publication of Curriculum for Wales that could not have been predicted. The worldwide Covid pandemic has resulted in unprecedented levels of change in education systems internationally. However, the purposes-led approach to the Curriculum for Wales that seeks to build:

- ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives
- healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society
- enterprising, creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens who are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world

has never seemed more relevant.

**The underlying implication emerging from participants' contributions to the surveys and interviews was that these purposes were relevant not only for learners but for everyone involved in the Curriculum for Wales. There are no magic bullets, no systems or structures that will automatically make things work. Systems and structures are only as strong as the people who work within them. It is their commitment to and understanding of ideas of what matters, their attitudes to and understanding of what democratic collaboration means and their skills and determination to make it happen that will make the difference between the Curriculum for Wales as merely a worthy aspiration and as a transformation of Welsh Education.**

## 1. Building a successful future for the Curriculum for Wales: so far so good

There is much that is positive in the findings that emerge from this report.

- At the end of a three-year development cycle that had put considerable pressure on those who have been involved in the process, **there remained strong commitment to Curriculum for Wales amongst all communities** interviewed. To have such consistent support for Curriculum for Wales is, in some sense, remarkable and suggests that there are many characteristics of the current approach to development that should be maintained with future programme participants.
- There was **strong evidence of high levels of critical engagement** with the ideas that lay behind the aspirations of *Successful Futures* and its metamorphosis into Curriculum for Wales.
- Six themes emerged as crucial to planning for the future success of the programme that could, if not tackled, put the programme at risk.
  - Shared understanding of key ideas
  - Progression
  - Assessment
  - Co-construction and subsidiarity
  - Coherence, policy and systemic integrity
  - Professional learning.

Of these six, two themes, assessment and professional learning, were identified as those most likely to put the aspirations of Curriculum for Wales at risk, if not appropriately addressed. Conversely, both assessment and professional learning have the potential to act as powerful levers for change, if addressed in ways that remain consistent with the philosophy of Curriculum for Wales and with the evidence base that is emerging from the early stage enactment of Curriculum for Wales.

## 2. What is it crucial to sustain in the next phase of development?

Amongst the characteristics of the programme to date that participants argued should be retained are:

- A clear focus on the purposes
- The use of evidence from policy, practice and research to inform thinking
- A focus on learning with curriculum, pedagogy and assessment promoting and supporting progression in learning
- All programme participants as learners.
- Co-construction and subsidiarity as the modus operandi of Curriculum for Wales.

### A clear focus on the purposes, i.e. educational value of the innovation

- As more people come to take part in the programme it will be important to keep a strong emphasis on the rationale for change and what positive difference Curriculum for Wales will make to the lives of young people in Wales. Genuinely keeping the Four Purposes at the forefront of thinking was perceived to be challenging and there was a risk that, in the

enactment of the curriculum, they would simply be assumed as underpinning principles, rather than having their implications worked through.

### **The use of evidence from policy, practice and research to inform thinking**

- A strength of the educational argument to date has been the grounding of thinking in evidence from different sources, from policy, from practice and from research. The development of educational ideas should emerge from consideration of evidence from all three sources. There was perceived to be a risk that could emerge in the next phase of Curriculum for Wales that rather than different evidence sources contributing to thinking, one evidence source, e.g. policy, might begin to dominate.

### **A focus on learning with curriculum, pedagogy and assessment promoting and supporting progression in young people's learning**

- This was perceived to represent for many a significant shift in thinking and will require both time and focused experiences to allow people to think through the implications of these ideas for their practices (as teachers, as researchers or as members of policy communities). For example, all participants in Curriculum for Wales should have opportunities to think about progression and to discuss the ways in which its potential to act as a bridge between curriculum and learning might be realised within and across different curricular areas and in different school and regional contexts. The programme to date has moved thinking on but learning is at an early stage. Participants new to Curriculum for Wales need to contribute to expanding the learning that is taking place, e.g. to think through the practical implications of ideas such as progression and how they might be made real in different circumstances across Wales.

### **All programme participants as learners**

- Again, this was perceived to represent a major shift in thinking: easy to say and difficult to live. Previous models of innovation in Wales had perceived only teachers to be the focus for professional learning. In Curriculum for Wales, the model is different. All learners, teachers, researchers, policy makers, parents and employers, have particular expertise to offer and all are learning. This model is very different from traditional, more hierarchical models and colleagues in national or school leadership roles may wish to reflect on what these differences in their practices would look like and how they will know if intended changes are successful in practice. What might look different, moving forward, if Wales sustained the idea that everyone is a learner?

### **Co-construction and subsidiarity as the modus operandi of Curriculum for Wales**

- In the first phase of Curriculum for Wales, the framework was developed collaboratively (co-construction). However, this was seen by respondents as a process that was initially challenging and it had taken participants time to think through the implications for their ways of working; there had also been an initial level of scepticism about how authentic co-construction was. However, as the process developed, AoLE participants increased in confidence and built skills as curriculum developers. Co-construction now needs to continue, involving increasing numbers of learners, practitioners, policy makers and researchers working together to continue to develop the curriculum and to tackle challenges that emerge. It is likely that the same issues of scepticism will exist with participants coming new

to the programme; similar opportunities for them as were offered to those in the first phase of the programme will be necessary if co-construction is to remain fundamental to the Curriculum for Wales.

Evidence informed decisions taken as closely as possible to those who will implement them (subsidiarity) offer the best opportunity to identify and address potential problems before they emerge, rather than having to react to them. Respondents recognised the importance of subsidiarity but also the challenge of sustaining that process in a system that in the past has been characterised by models closer to command and control. Strategic planning processes may need to pay attention to how the system might discern the extent to which subsidiarity is being sustained.

### 3. What might need further thinking or greater emphasis?

The authors of this report acknowledge that the survey and interview schedules may have resulted in directing a spotlight to particular parts of the programme, e.g. progression and co-construction. However, six themes emerged where either further thinking or greater emphasis would be helpful. These were:

- 3.1 Shared understanding of key ideas
- 3.2 Progression
- 3.3 Assessment
- 3.4 Co-construction and subsidiarity
- 3.5 Coherence, policy and systemic integrity and
- 3.6 Professional learning.

#### 3.1 Shared understanding of key ideas

##### *Invest in developing shared understandings of key terms*

- The language of *Successful Futures* and Curriculum for Wales was embedded in the responses of those interviewed. It was difficult to be certain, however, that there were always shared understandings of terms used. As more participants come into the programme, **it would seem necessary to invest time in developing shared understandings of key terms**. There was some concern that colleagues coming now into the Curriculum for Wales might simply be given terms already defined. Whilst it is important to have clearly defined terms, it is essential to provide opportunities for people to think through terms in the context of their own practice and to share understanding of what these ideas might look like in practice in different communities, e.g. as teachers and headteachers or as schools and Estyn.

##### *Keep the Four Purposes at the forefront of thinking*

- It is important that key ideas continue to be openly discussed and negotiated and do not become simply assumed. For example, **the Four Purposes have to remain at the forefront of thinking** and not become invisible in discussions about the detail of curriculum enactment. Both matter.

***Plan for every participant to embark on their own learning journey within the broader Curriculum for Wales learning community***

- Those most likely to be deeply involved in the design of the next phase of the programme have been living it for the past three years. They will bring significant experience and insight to the process but they are the first to recognise that they are still learning. However, those coming into the programme are likely to be closer in their thinking to where interviewees were three years ago; thinking and dialogue between existing and new participants and amongst new participants to engage with and to contribute to the development of ideas will be crucial. A little like Russian nested dolls, **every participant has to embark on their own learning journey within the context of schools as learning organisations within the broader Curriculum for Wales learning community**. It will be important to give careful consideration to the balance between the space to engage in reflection and the quality of professional support to provoke and to support thinking.

***Protect the co-construction model***

- As the programme moves into its next phase, new tensions in a democratic model of curriculum design and development are likely to emerge. The participants in the first phase are likely to be seen as ‘experts’ by others, whether or not they themselves feel this. This brings **the danger of the model for change shifting from one of co-construction to a more traditional expert – novice model**. This would pose a risk to the culture of the programme, a culture that has been successful to date.

***Design authentic opportunities for new participants to contribute***

- The Curriculum for Wales has made much progress, but it is still in its early stages of development. The short title of this report, *So far so good* is a phrase often used by Professor Graham Donaldson. It emphasises the progress made but also serves to alert the system to the fragile nature of progress in any large scale innovation such as this one. There remains much to be done. The next tasks offer a real opportunity to maintain the idea of a learning culture that has until now permeated the work of the Curriculum for Wales. New participants in the programme can be involved in tackling the emerging tasks and, as they contribute to the programme, they will learn about it. **This report on the processes involved in contributions to curriculum development so far of the CAMAU project offers one source of evidence that can be used to inform future actions in Curriculum for Wales. The central message that should lie at the heart of future communication strategy is that the active engagement of all new participants in real co-construction is crucial as enactment proceeds.**

### **3.2 Progression**

***Place progression at the heart of professional learning***

- Placing progression at the heart of the curriculum and thus at the heart of professional learning will promote deeper engagement with learning. Progression is complex yet crucial to the truly transformational nature of the Curriculum for Wales. All participants need to engage with the concept of progression, the ways in which it acts as a bridge between



curriculum and learning and its importance for learner engagement and empowerment. They need to have opportunities to explore how it might become embedded in the policies and practices of education in Wales.

***Recognise the potential of progression as a way to view learning holistically (across the Four Purposes)***

- Progression offers a framework designed to develop both deep and sophisticated conceptual development and, simultaneously, the learner's confidence and well-being. Through this framework practitioners can bring together national aspirations and pupil learning to identify how learners progress through the statements of What Matters as they serve the Four Purposes.

***Encourage consideration of progression as a learning journey***

- The progression framework of the Descriptions of Learning provides a 'big picture' of key learning which is the essential base for further learning in that aspect of the curriculum.
- Understanding of progression requires a deep shift in thinking away from delivering content towards a focus on how learning develops over time for different young people in different ways.
- Describing progression is a challenging task that requires time, even for those involved intensively in collaborative work which develops the relevant understanding and skills. There are no shortcuts to understanding. No matter how well intentioned, one group cannot learn for another, but different groups can learn with one another.
- Describing progression requires on-going engagement with research, policy and practice: research on progression, review of international approaches to progression, and critical reflection of learning in the classroom.
- Deepening understandings of progression can be scaffolded, e.g. through using examples from work already undertaken by those involved in the development programme. However, examples should be used to stimulate thinking and critique, not as best practice to imitate.

### **3.3 Assessment**

***Invite all communities to consider how their practices can contribute to new understandings of assessment to promote future learning rather than to judge past learning or people***

- Assessment can no longer be planned as if independent from teaching: curriculum, pedagogy and assessment now require to be planned together at all levels (classroom, school, national) (cf. Black et al., 2011; Wiliam, 2017; Wyse, Hayward & Pandya, 2015).
- Assessment must move from being primarily a series of judgements of past success and failure to an on-going process which informs and supports further learning.
- Enactment of a curriculum focused on progression rather than on standards should lead to significant reconsideration of the nature of assessment data/information usable to inform views about the quality of education in a system or in schools.
- If assessment is used primarily as a means of holding schools accountable in terms of 'traditional' test/examination performance, there is a shared fear that this will undo the

focus on learning and can lead to narrowing of the curriculum and distortion of Descriptions of Learning into a tickbox of objectives that must be met at certain time points.

- The Welsh system must continue to address the challenge of this transition as it moves radically from a culture of external measurement and accountability to a self-regulating system focused on improving learning; this challenge requires to be addressed through consistent messages and by all participants in the policy community promoting systemic consistency.
- If practice is to remain well-aligned with the vision of Curriculum for Wales, the next phase of the programme should include opportunities for informed discussions amongst all policy makers and practitioners to enable them to explore and to discuss the inter-relationship of curriculum, progression and assessment.
- Practitioners must be supported to act as curriculum designers within the context of school and school clusters. This should include being responsible for developing assessment within the curriculum as it is designed and enacted. There may be a need to be as clear about what this would not look like as to identify the characteristics of an approach that is consistent with assessment principles.
- As practitioners assess to plan future learning, they have to be able to refer both to detailed (rather than general) evidence of learning and to principles of progression.
- These new ways of working may have significant wider implications. For example, if practitioners are to know their learners sufficiently well to assess their learning in this way, there is likely to be a need to consider structural changes in the organisation of secondary schools. This might involve, e.g. creating larger blocks of teaching time or increasing interdisciplinary learning. However, it is important that early attention is given to consideration of the implications for these major educational changes for school organisation.

### 3.4 Professional learning

#### ***Ensure that the model of professional learning remains consistent with the model of change in Curriculum for Wales***

The model of change that lies behind the Curriculum for Wales is very different from conventional models of professional learning. It is crucial for a successful future for Curriculum for Wales that the model for professional learning remains consistent with the educational vision, the model of personal and professional engagement and the focus on learning for all, from learner to system.

- Professional learning has to be seen as a system-wide issue involving every participant in the process, learner, practitioner, parent, policy maker, beginning teacher, researcher or employer.
- The engagement of those involved in the initial development of the framework had made them strategic thinkers: the profession as a whole, from beginning teachers to school leaders to national policy makers, has the right to go through the same processes of thinking.
- Engagement and ownership are key concerns for all participants in the process and should be central to the design for the next phase.

- There are key messages that need to be constantly reinforced and supported, e.g. the role of practitioners as professional educators designing rather than simply delivering the curriculum; the role of quality assurance officers and Estyn in promoting learning in and across schools.
- Professional learning should encompass capacity building for individuals at all levels and recognition of system change; consideration should be given to how capacity can be created to support such significant change.
- There should be no expectation that all practice will change immediately, but practitioners will develop their capacity to ask critical questions and, over time, this will lead to changes in pedagogy to align it with the Four Purposes of the curriculum.
- The changes inherent in Curriculum for Wales are significant. It requires significant change of every person and community from learner to government.

### **3.5 Co-construction and subsidiarity**

#### ***Plan strategically for nationwide co-construction and subsidiarity***

Co-construction, subsidiarity and professional learning are crucial for a successful future for Curriculum for Wales. These need to be planned strategically rather than be left to chance, where they are likely to be successful only in areas where there are enthusiasts. There are opportunities for sharing practice, e.g. school clusters which have developed ways of tackling some of the practical challenges.

- Co-construction of the curriculum has demonstrated its strengths as crucial to the success of the first phase of Curriculum for Wales. It is crucial that this approach is maintained and operationalised at all levels as the programme expands: school, school groups, local authority, consortium and national government.
- Co-construction must be recognised as an iterative process which depends on trust being built amongst participating individuals and groups. How trust might be built should be an issue discussed amongst groups.
- Co-construction should at all stages involve all those interested: learners, practitioners, parents and carers, local community. Different groups may play different roles but all need to be part of the process.
- Practitioners and schools should receive practical support. This might include: guided opportunities to explore and discuss policy; opportunities to reflect on their future curriculum, assessment and pedagogical practices; collaboration supported by local authorities, consortia and Estyn acting as critical friends; support to identify and access relevant research and opportunities to collaborate with researchers on targeted areas.
- Co-construction is not easy and requires continuing support of various types if it is to be authentic and promote meaningful change:
  - development groups at all levels (national, local, school) require to be open to input from beyond their membership circle to stimulate and support reflection
  - development groups at all levels (national, local, school) require time (including protected, dedicated time) and the developed group management skills to reflect and refine thinking.

- Deep, extended and active discussion is central to the co-construction process in order to arrive at agreed positions in complex circumstances: this will involve effective use of a range of communication approaches and development of roles to ensure and support active participation of all involved:
  - such processes require new understandings of leadership: these are likely to require radical changes in relationships, which may at times be uncomfortable for some or all participants
  - co-construction requires the development of the group as a safe space in which all participants are respected, feel that they are respected and understand that they are encouraged to contribute evidence and arguments.
- Co-construction and the principle of subsidiarity recognise that there are different pathways (cf. Mosher and Heritage 2017) to achieving the aspirations of The Curriculum for Wales. In the context of further curriculum development and enactment it would be helpful if a limited number of examples of different approaches could be developed and shared.

### 3.6 Coherence, policy and systemic integrity

***Co-construct a national system where each player (individual or organisation) is involved in designing a system consistent with the principles of Curriculum for Wales, and where all understand the contribution that they will make to the success of the programme and are clear about the changes necessary to their current practices. Systemic Integrity is fundamental to the successful future of Curriculum for Wales.***

- While *Successful Futures* remains the blueprint for Curriculum for Wales, the focus should be on enacting the spirit of the document rather than the letter and on exploring how each organisation will develop policies and practices consistent with that vision.
- The inter-relationship of policy, practice and research and the changing role of policy colleagues in Curriculum for Wales as it is locally developed and enacted must be considered; opportunities have to be made available for people to think through implications for their practice. This is key if a national language of learning is to be developed.
- New constructively critical relationships amongst policy, practice and research are an essential part of a successful future for Curriculum for Wales.
- There are significant changes in policy thinking required. Policy is no longer a set of prescriptions to be enacted but is instead an iterative process within the context of the recommendations agreed by Ministers. Policy should be taken forward through processes of co-construction at all levels of the system.
- The change process is still at an early stage of development. Policy, practice and research will continue to develop as increasing numbers of people become involved and contribute to the reform.
- Co-construction of the curriculum will continue to take place within a context partly formed by the legacy of past policy and practice:
  - addressing this legacy will require systemic integrity – a clear and continuing public commitment (in words and deeds) of all key players in the whole educational system to

the concepts of progression and assessment to inform learning as the basis of the curriculum

- addressing this legacy will require changes in school culture and in understandings of progression, moving away from ideas of levels and age-related standards to the concept of a journey through a continuum of learning.
- There are specific areas that will require greater attention in the next phase of Curriculum for Wales: e.g. Early Years; the interdependencies of different parts of the policy landscape; the risk of gaps emerging in alignment between the years 1-8 curriculum and qualifications; possible tensions between learning and accountability. The development of new approaches to accountability can play a major role in building trust across the system.
- New practices should not simply be added on to existing practice: everyone's practice will change. All participants (policy, practice and research) should reflect on their current practices, ending or adapting those that are not clearly consistent with the principles underpinning the curriculum.

#### 4. Final Reflections

It is perhaps appropriate to go back to one of the main findings of this investigation into the perspectives AoLE participants and policy colleagues: no colleague interviewed questioned the potential for Curriculum for Wales to improve the quality of education for all young people in the country and all interviewees advocated the continuation and development of the current strategy based on subsidiarity and co-construction as essential for the continued success of the programme.

This report suggests that there are early, positive shoots of growth that represent the movement from vision to enactment in developing Curriculum for Wales in all schools and centres and in its policies and local and national organisations. Wales has to be in this process for the long haul:

*'This is a ten-year project: we will need to develop longer term thinking and get people to buy-in for the long term.'*

As the programme moves into its next phase, there may be opportunities to support the building of the new collaborative, educational culture that lies at the heart of the Curriculum for Wales, e.g. by inviting those involved in education in Wales to identify the contribution that each (individual or organisation) can make to the realisation of its principles.

There are important questions to ask as the programme develops – how will we know if there is close alignment between intended and received messages and between intended and actual practices? How can such information be gathered and used in ways that remain consistent with the philosophy of subsidiarity and co-construction? How might policy makers, practitioners, learners and researchers collaborate to promote the continuation of Curriculum for Wales as a learning programme?

We end with the powerful words of one of the interviewees. The aspirations of this new curriculum could have a transformational effect on Wales and progress towards that transformation is underway. All of this can be achieved for Wales as a nation for a comparatively small investment:

*'£100 million has been spent on educational change: this is a drop in the ocean compared to what government gives to Tata or Aston Martin; this is a complete change across the whole country at the price of two school buildings.'*

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## **Appendix 1: CAMAU Research Questions**

1. How might curriculum, progression and assessment be conceptualised and developed in this context to promote better alignment between research, policy and practice?
2. In what ways do models of curriculum progression relate to progression in learning derived from empirical evidence within classrooms?
3. To what extent, and in what ways, is it possible to conceptualise assessment as the use of evidence to enable future learning, as ‘progression steps’, rather than as a summary of past achievement?
4. What implications arise from the CAMAU work with AoLEs that will be essential to consider in the next phase of the programme (i.e. implications for professional learning)?
5. What implications arise from this exploratory partnership project for research, policy and practice in Wales and beyond?

## Appendix 2: Survey Questions for AoLE Participants

<b>Curriculum Pioneers - CAMAU Survey</b>	<b>Arloeswyr Cwricwlwm – Arolwg CAMAU</b>
<i>Page 1: Introduction</i>	<i>Tudalen 1: Rhagymadrodd</i>
1. Do you agree to participate?	1. A ydych chi'n cytuno i gymryd rhan?
Yes / No	Ydw / Nac ydw
<i>Page 2: General information</i>	<i>Tudalen 2: Gwybodaeth Gyffredinol</i>
Which Area of Learning and Experience are you affiliated with?	Pa Faes Dysgu a Phrofiad ydych chi'n gysylltiedig ag ef?
How long have you been working with this AoLE?	Pa mor hir ydych chi wedi bod yn gweithio yn y MDPH hwn?
How many years have you been working in education?	Faint o flynyddoedd ydych chi wedi bod yn gweithio ym myd addysg?
What age group/level of pupils do you usually work with?	Pa grŵp oedran / lefel ddisgyblion ydych chi fel arfer yn gweithio â nhw?
<i>Page 3: Feedback about the process</i>	<i>Tudalen 3: Adborth ar y broses</i>
What were the key steps for your AoLE in developing the Progression Steps?	Beth oedd y camau allweddol i'ch MDPH chi wrth ddatblygu'r camau cynnydd?
How difficult or easy was it for you to describe learning across the Progression Steps? When you began the process When you completed the process Very easy Easy Somewhat easy Neither easy nor difficult Somewhat difficult Difficult Very difficult	Pa mor anodd neu hawdd oedd hi i chi ddisgrifio dysgu ar draws y camau cynnydd? Pan ddechreuoch y broses Pan orffenoch y broses Hawdd iawn Hawdd Lled hawdd Heb fod yn hawdd nac yn anodd Lled anodd Anodd Anodd iawn
Please explain your ratings. Why was it easy, or why was it difficult? If your response changed over time, why do you think this was the case?	Esboniwch eich cyfraddiadau. Pam oedd hi'n hawdd, neu yn anodd? Os gwnaeth eich ymateb newid dros gyfnod, pam yn eich barn chi wnaeth hyn ddigwydd?
<i>Page 4: Resources to Support Progression</i>	<i>Tudalen 4: Adnoddau ar gyfer Cynorthwyo Cynnydd</i>
To what extent did members of your AoLE group use each of the following to help develop statements of progression?	I ba raddau gwnaeth eich grŵp MDPH chi ddefnyddio pob un o'r canlynol i helpu datblygu datganiadau cynnydd?

<b>Curriculum Pioneers - CAMAU Survey</b>	<b>Arloeswyr Cwricwllwm – Arolwg CAMAU</b>
<p>Research (e.g. in CAMAU Learning about Progression report, other research articles, specialists in this area)</p> <p>Policy (e.g. <i>Successful Futures</i>, other policies in Wales, international curricular policies or frameworks, policy representatives)</p> <p>Practice (e.g. knowledge and experience as teachers, school leaders, or in other educational roles)</p> <p>Not at all</p> <p>Very little</p> <p>Somewhat</p> <p>Quite a bit</p> <p>A great deal</p>	<p>Ymchwil (e.e. yn CAMAU, Dysgu am yr adroddiad Cynnydd, erthyglau ymchwil eraill, arbenigwyr yn y maes hwn)</p> <p>Polisi (e.e. Dyfodol Llwyddiannus, polisïau eraill yng Nghymru, polisïau neu fframweithiau cwricwlaidd rhyngwladol, cynrychiolwyr polisïau)</p> <p>Arfer (e.e. gwybodaeth a phrofiad fel athrawon, arweinwyr ysgolion, neu mewn rolau addysgol eraill)</p> <p>Dim o gwbl</p> <p>Ychydig bach</p> <p>Rhywfaint</p> <p>Tipyn</p> <p>Llawer iawn</p>
<p>How useful was each of the following for your AoLE members' thinking with regards to progression?</p> <p>Research (e.g. in CAMAU Learning about Progression report, other research articles, specialists in this area)</p> <p>Policy (e.g. <i>Successful Futures</i>, other policies in Wales, international curricular policies or frameworks, policy representatives)</p> <p>Practice (e.g. knowledge and experience as teachers, school leaders, or in other educational roles)</p> <p>Not at all</p> <p>To a small extent</p> <p>To a moderate extent</p> <p>To a great extent</p> <p>To a very large extent</p>	<p>Pa mor ddefnyddiol oedd pob un o'r canlynol parthed sut y gwnaeth eich aelodau MDPH feddwl am gynnydd?</p> <p>Ymchwil (e.e. yn CAMAU, Dysgu am yr adroddiad Cynnydd, erthyglau ymchwil eraill, arbenigwyr yn y maes hwn)</p> <p>Polisi (e.e. Dyfodol Llwyddiannus, polisïau eraill yng Nghymru, polisïau neu fframweithiau cwricwlaidd rhyngwladol, cynrychiolwyr polisïau)</p> <p>Arfer (e.e. gwybodaeth a phrofiad fel athrawon, arweinwyr ysgolion, neu mewn rolau addysgol eraill)</p> <p>Dim o gwbl</p> <p>Ychydig</p> <p>I ran gymedrol</p> <p>I ran helaeth</p> <p>I ran helaeth iawn</p>
<p>Please think back to the workshops when you used the decision trees. To what extent did the decision tree approach help to make the wide variety of evidence manageable in order to inform your discussion about what progression might look like in your AoLE?</p>	<p>Meddylwch yn ôl i'r gweithdai pan wnaethoch ddefnyddio'r coed penderfyniadau. I ba raddau gwnaeth y dull coed penderfyniadau helpu chi i reoli'r amrywiaeth eang o dystiolaeth er mwyn hysbysu eich trafodaeth ynglŷn â sut y gallai cynnydd edrych yn eich MDPH chi?</p>
<p>Where there any specific pieces of evidence from research, policy or practice that had a big impact on your thinking? If so, what were they?</p>	<p>A oedd yna unrhyw ddarnau o dystiolaeth ymchwil, polisi neu arfer a gafodd effaith fawr ar eich ffordd o feddwl? Os oedd, beth oeddent.</p>
<p><i>Page 5: Thinking forward</i></p>	<p><i>Tudalen 5: Meddwl Ymlaen</i></p>
<p>In what ways has working with the CAMAU team impacted your understanding of learning progression, your drafting of the curriculum, or your practice in schools?</p>	<p>Mewn pa ffyrdd y mae gweithio gyda'r tîm CAMAU wedi effeithio ar eich dealltwriaeth o gynnydd dysgu, eich drafftio o'r cwricwllwm, neu eich arfer mewn ysgolion?</p>

<b>Curriculum Pioneers - CAMAU Survey</b>	<b>Arloeswyr Cwricwlwm – Arolwg CAMAU</b>
To what extent do you think the current achievement outcomes will help teachers and learners to understand assessment as a way to enable future learning rather than a summary of past achievement?	I ba raddau ydych chi'n meddwl bydd y deilliannau cyflawniad presennol yn cynorthwyo athrawon a dysgwyr i ddeall asesu fel ffordd o alluogi dysgu yn y dyfodol yn hytrach na chrynhoi cyflawniadau'r gorffennol?
In what ways do you think the current achievement outcomes could help teachers and learners to enable future learning?	Mewn pa ffyrdd ydych chi'n meddwl y gallai'r deilliannau cyflwyniad presennol gynorthwyo athrawon a dysgwyr i alluogi dysgu i'r dyfodol?
Considering the current Progression Steps, what further support materials or exemplification do you think would be helpful for teachers in order to support learners appropriately in this new curriculum?	O ystyried y camau cynnydd presennol, pa ddeunyddiau atodol pellach neu enghreifftio ydych chi'n teimlo y gallai fod o gymorth i athrawon wrth iddynt gynorthwyo dysgwyr mewn ffordd addas o ran y cwricwlwm newydd hwn?
<i>Page 6: Final page Thank you for your participation!</i>	<i>Tudalen 6: Y dudalen olaf. Diolch am gymryd rhan!</i>

<b>Professional Learning Pioneers - CAMAU Survey</b>	<b>Arloeswyr Dysgu Proffesiynol – Arolwg CAMAU</b>
<i>Page 1: Introduction</i>	<i>Tudalen 1: Rhagymadrodd</i>
1. Do you agree to participate?	1. A ydych chi'n cytuno i gymryd rhan?
Yes / No	Ydw / Nac ydw
<i>Page 2: General information</i>	<i>Tudalen 2: Gwybodaeth Gyffredinol</i>
Which Area of Learning and Experience are you affiliated with?	Pa Faes Dysgu a Phrofiad ydych chi'n gysylltiedig ag ef?
How long have you been working with this AoLE?	Pa mor hir ydych chi wedi bod yn gweithio yn y MDPH hwn?
How many years have you been working in education?	Faint o flynyddoedd ydych chi wedi bod yn gweithio ym myd addysg?
What age group/level of pupils do you usually work with?	Pa grŵp oedran / lefel ddisgyblion ydych chi fel arfer yn gweithio â nhw?
<i>Page 3: Progression</i>	<i>Tudalen 3: Cynnydd</i>
How familiar are you with the idea of learning progression?	Pa mor gyfarwydd ydych chi â'r syniad o gynnydd dysgu?
When you started working with the Curriculum Pioneers Not at all familiar Slightly familiar Somewhat familiar Moderately familiar Extremely familiar	Pan wnaethoch chi ddechrau gweithio gyda'r Arloeswyr Cwricwlwm Nid yn gyfarwydd o gwbl Yn lled gyfarwydd Yn gyfarwydd i raddau Yn eithaf cyfarwydd Yn gyfarwydd dros ben
At this point in the process Not at all familiar Slightly familiar Somewhat familiar Moderately familiar Extremely familiar	Yma yn y broses Nid yn gyfarwydd o gwbl Yn lled gyfarwydd Yn gyfarwydd i raddau Yn eithaf cyfarwydd Yn gyfarwydd dros ben
What is your understanding of the purpose of learning progression within an AoLE?	Beth yw eich dealltwriaeth chi o ddiben y cynnydd dysgu o fewn MDPH?
What were the key readings / ideas that helped develop your understanding of a learning progression?	Beth oedd y darlenniadau allweddol / y syniadau a wnaeth helpu eich dealltwriaeth o gynnydd dysgu?
<i>Page 4: Looking Forward</i>	<i>Tudalen 4: Edrych ymlaen</i>
Considering the current Progression Steps, what further support materials or exemplification do you think would be helpful for teachers in order to support learners appropriately in this new curriculum?	O ystyried y camau cynnydd presennol, pa ddeunyddiau atodol pellach neu enghreifftio ydych chi'n teimlo y gallai fod o gymorth i athrawon wrth iddynt gynorthwyo dysgwyr mewn ffordd addas o ran y cwricwlwm newydd hwn?
To what extent, and in what ways, do you think the current achievement outcomes will help teachers and learners to understand assessment as a way to enable future learning, rather than as a summary of past achievement?	I ba raddau ydych chi'n meddwl, ac mewn pa ffyrdd ydych chi'n meddwl bydd y deilliannau cyflawniad presennol yn cynorthwyo athrawon a dysgwyr i ddeall asesu fel ffordd o alluogi dysgu yn y dyfodol yn hytrach na chrynhai cyflawniadau'r gorffennol?

<p>In your opinion, what types of professional learning may be needed to help teachers understand and develop assessment as a way to enable future learning, rather than as a summary of past achievement?</p>	<p>Yn eich barn chi, pa fathau o ddysgu proffesiynol y gallai fod eu hangen i helpu athrawon ddeall a datblygu asesu fel ffordd o alluogi dysgu yn y dyfodol yn hytrach na chrynhoi cyflawniadau'r gorffennol?</p>
<p><i>Page 6: Final page Thank you for your participation!</i></p>	<p><i>Tudalen 6: Y dudalen olaf. Diolch am gymryd rhan!</i></p>



## Appendix 3: Interview Protocols for AoLE Leads and Practitioners

### A. Interview Schedule (Curriculum AoLE Leads)

The interview with AoLE Leads has 5 phases:

- **Opening:** Welcome/introductions, overview of what will happen, ethical points verbally clarified.
- **Schedule Review:** Participant is given interview schedule to review (5 mins)
- **Acclimatisation:** A soft-start question to allow participant to settle into the process.
- **Body of Interview:** Semi-structured in the following sections: (i) Role in the Process; (ii) Research Focus, (iii) Policy Focus, (iv) Practice Focus, (v) Comparative and Cross-Cutting Questions, (vi) Shifts in Thinking & Moving Forward
- **Closing:** Allow a moment for the participant to reflect on the interview, make any final comments or ask questions. Thank them for their participation.

#### Part 1: Opening Statements

The purpose of the in-depth interviews is to complement the information obtained in the online survey of the AoLE Group members by providing more detail about and deeper insights into the key factors which influenced the development of the *progression framework* for each AoLE. We hope to explore and illustrate through the interview how the development of thinking and decisions about *the Descriptions of Learning/achievement outcomes* in the collaboration among the policy-makers, the researchers and the teachers were influenced by:

- research evidence (in the CAMAU *Learning About Progression Report* or provided to the Group in other ways);
- policy (articulated in *Successful Futures*, or conveyed to the AoLE Group through other Welsh Government documentation or through decisions about the structure of the curriculum framework; or illustrated in exemplars of curriculum or progression frameworks from elsewhere);
- practice (drawing on the Group's experience as teachers or school leaders or in other educational roles).

You are asked to give answers mainly about the work of the AoLE Group as a whole, as far as you can, though some questions may refer to your personal role or invite you to comment on factors influencing your own thinking.

The information obtained will be used to inform the continuing process of amendment and further development of the framework as teachers engage with it across Wales.

This interview may last up to 1½ hours. You are free to stop at any time without giving a reason.

To give you a sense of the form the interview will take, the headline questions are given on this sheet. Please take five minutes to familiarise yourself with them before we begin.

#### Part 2: Soft-Start Question

Could you please tell me briefly about your background in education and/or the civil service?

<b>Part 3: Role in the Process</b>	
<b>Core Questions</b>	<b>Possible Probe(s)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How would you describe your role as Lead in the work of the AoLE to develop evidence-based Descriptions of Learning/progression?</li> <li>2. What would you say was the most significant influence of your role on the work of the Group?</li> <li>3. Could you please comment on or give examples of how the development process in which you led the AoLE compared with policy development you have previously been involved in?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Did it change during the development of the progression framework? In what significant way(s)?</i></li> <li>• <i>Could you give examples of key decisions you made to support the co-construction process?</i></li> <li>• <i>What major factors influenced these decisions?</i></li> </ul>

<b>Part 4: Research Focus Questions</b>	
<b>Core Questions</b>	<b>Possible Probe(s)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can you give some examples of where research influenced the development of the progression framework, or particular achievement outcomes, in your AoLE Group?</li> <li>2. Can you give some examples of how the Group used the research evidence on progression summarised in the CAMAU Report <i>Learning About Progression</i>?  (General evidence about progression frameworks? Research specific to the AoLE?)</li> <li>3. How did your Group use evidence from invited experts in developing the progression frameworks?</li> <li>4. What did you find were the most helpful research influences for writing the descriptions of progression?</li> <li>5. Were there challenges to using research evidence? If so, can you give an example?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What changes were made because of research evidence?</i></li> <li>• <i>What was the most significant change made to the progression framework because of research evidence?</i></li> <li>• <i>What made these particular aspects of research helpful for the task of thinking through progression?</i></li> <li>• <i>Did the way in which the Group used research change over the course of developing the progression framework? If so, how?</i></li> </ul>

<b>Part 5: Policy Focus Questions</b>	
<b>Core Questions</b>	<b>Possible Probe(s)</b>
<p>1. How did members of your AoLE group use policy to influence their thinking about progression?</p> <p>2. Can you give examples of where policy influenced the development of the progression frameworks, or a particular statement of progression?</p> <p>3. What were the most significant policy influences?  <i>For example:</i>                      Policy statements from <i>Successful Futures</i>                      Other policies in Wales                      International curricular policies or frameworks                      Policy representatives                      CAMAU Interim Report (in reflecting Welsh Government policy)                      Other?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What was the most challenging aspect of drawing on policy to help develop the descriptions of progression, and why?</i></li> <li>• <i>Can you tell me in more detail about the stages in X?</i></li> <li>• <i>Why was this policy influence particularly valuable to X?</i></li> <li>• <i>What made aspects of policy significant for the task of thinking through progression?</i></li> <li>• <i>How did they change the Group's or your own thinking?</i></li> </ul>

<b>Part 6: Practice Focus Questions</b>	
<b>Core Questions</b>	<b>Possible Probe(s)</b>
<p>1. How did your AoLE group use evidence from their own professional practice/experience to make decisions about writing the descriptions of progression?</p> <p>2. Can you give examples of where evidence from practice/experience influenced the development of the progression frameworks, or a particular statement of progression?</p> <p>3. What were the most significant influences from practice/experience?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What changes did you make because of your own practice?</i></li> <li>• <i>What was the most significant change you made to the progression framework because of practice?</i></li> <li>• <i>Were there particular types of classroom experiences or practice that were drawn upon more than others?</i></li> <li>• <i>What made these aspects of practice significant for the task of thinking through progression?</i></li> </ul>

<b>Part 7: Comparative &amp; Cross-Cutting Questions</b>	
<b>Core Questions</b>	<b>Possible Probe(s)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overall, which offered the most significant influences on the development of the progression frameworks: research, policy, or practice?</li> <li>2. Can you give any examples of where conflicts seemed to arise among the advice/guidance from research, from policy and from practice? How did the Group resolve such conflicts?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Why do you think this was?</i></li> </ul>

<b>Part 8: Shifts in Thinking &amp; Moving Forward</b>	
<b>Core Questions</b>	<b>Possible Probe(s)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If you think back to yourself at the start of the work of the Group, has your thinking about learning progression changed? What have been the biggest shifts in your own thinking?</li> <li>2. What most strongly influenced these changes in your thinking?</li> <li>3. What did you find to be the major challenges in developing a curriculum based on learning progression?</li> <li>4. What do you think will be the main opportunities and challenges arising from the use by teachers across Wales of a curriculum based on Descriptions of Learning in a progression framework?</li> <li>5. What are the implications of your experience in developing the progression framework for future co-construction, when other teachers engage with it and collaborate with researchers and policy-makers to propose modifications to it?</li> <li>6. Are there particular actions you feel need to happen between now and 2022 to ensure thorough understanding and effective use of the progression framework the Group has made?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Actions needed to revise/amend the framework and the Descriptions of Learning?</i></li> </ul>

<b>Part 9: Closing</b>
In taking a moment to think back over this interview, is there anything you would like to add? Do you have any questions?

## B. Interview Schedule (Curriculum AoLE Teachers)

The interview with AoLE Teachers has 5 phases:

- **Opening:** Welcome/introductions, overview of what will happen, ethical points verbally clarified.
- **Schedule Review:** Participant is given interview schedule to review (5 mins)
- **Acclimatisation:** A soft-start question to allow participant to settle into the process.
- **Body of Interview:** Semi-structured in five sections: (i) Research Focus, (ii) Policy Focus, (iii) Practice Focus, (iv) Comparative Question, (v) Shifts in Thinking & Moving Forward
- **Closing:** Allow a moment for the participant to reflect on the interview, make any final comments or ask questions, thank them for their participation.

### Part 1: Opening Statements

The purpose of the in-depth interviews is to complement the information obtained in the online survey of the AoLE Group members by providing more detail about and deeper insights into the key factors which influenced the development of the *progression framework* for each AoLE. We hope to explore and illustrate through the interview how the development of thinking and decisions about *the Descriptions of Learning/achievement outcomes* in the collaboration among the policy-makers, the researchers and you, the teachers, were influenced by:

- research evidence (in the CAMAU *Learning About Progression Report* or provided to the Group in other ways);
- policy (articulated in *Successful Futures*, or conveyed to the AoLE Group through other Welsh Government documentation or through decisions about the structure of the curriculum framework; or illustrated in exemplars of curriculum or progression frameworks from elsewhere);
- and practice (drawing on your experience as teachers or school leaders or in other educational roles).

You are asked to give answers mainly about the work of the AoLE Group as a whole, as far as you can, though some questions may invite you to comment on factors influencing your personal thinking.

The information obtained will be used to inform the continuing process of amendment and further development of the framework as teachers engage with it across Wales.

This interview may last up to 1½ hours. You are free to stop at any time without giving a reason.

To give you a sense of the form the interview will take, the headline questions are given on this sheet. Please take five minutes to familiarise yourself with them before we begin.

### Part 2: Soft-Start Question

Can you tell me briefly about your own background in teaching?

<b>Part 3: Research Focus Questions</b>	
<b>Core Questions</b>	<b>Possible Probe(s)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can you give some examples of where research influenced the development of the progression framework, or particular achievement outcomes, in your AoLE Group?</li> <li>2. Can you give some examples of how the Group used the research evidence on progression summarised in the CAMAU Report <i>Learning About Progression</i>? (General evidence about progression frameworks? Research specific to the AoLE?)</li> <li>3. How did your Group use evidence from invited experts in developing the progression frameworks?</li> <li>4. What did you find were the most helpful research influences for writing the descriptions of progression?</li> <li>5. Were there challenges to using research evidence? If so, can you give an example?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What changes did you make because of research evidence?</i></li> <li>• <i>What was the most significant change you made to the progression framework because of research evidence?</i></li> <li>• <i>What made these helpful for the task of thinking through progression?</i></li> <li>• <i>Did the way in which you used research change over the course of developing the progression framework? If so, how?</i></li> </ul>

<b>Part 4: Policy Focus Questions</b>	
<b>Core Questions</b>	<b>Possible Probe(s)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How did members of your AoLE group use policy to influence their thinking about progression?</li> <li>2. Can you give examples of where policy influenced the development of the progression frameworks, or a particular statement of progression?</li> <li>3. What were the most significant policy influences? <i>For example:</i> Policy statements from <i>Successful Futures</i> Other policies in Wales International curricular policies or frameworks Policy representatives CAMAU Interim Report (in reflecting Welsh Government policy) Other?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What was the most challenging aspect of drawing on policy to help develop the descriptions of progression, and why?</i></li> <li>• <i>Can you tell me in more detail about the stages in X?</i></li> <li>• <i>Why was this policy influence particularly valuable to X?</i></li> <li>• <i>What made aspects of policy significant for the task of thinking through progression?</i></li> <li>• <i>How did they change the Group's or your own thinking?</i></li> </ul>

<b>Part 5: Practice Focus Questions</b>	
<b>Core Questions</b>	<b>Possible Probe(s)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How did your AoLE group use evidence from their own professional practice to make decisions about writing the descriptions of progression?</li> <li>2. Can you give examples of where evidence from practice influenced the development of the progression frameworks, or a particular statement of progression?</li> <li>3. What were the most significant influences from your practice?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What changes did you make because of your own practice?</i></li> <li>• <i>What was the most significant change you made to the progression framework because of practice?</i></li> <li>• <i>Were there particular types of classroom experiences or practice that were drawn upon more than others?</i></li> <li>• <i>What made these aspects of practice significant for the task of thinking through progression?</i></li> </ul>

<b>Part 6: Comparative &amp; Cross-Cutting Questions</b>	
<b>Core Questions</b>	<b>Possible Probe(s)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overall, which offered the most significant influences on the development of the progression frameworks: research, policy, or practice?</li> <li>2. Can you give any examples of where conflicts seemed to arise among the advice/guidance from research, from policy and from practice? How did the Group resolve such conflicts?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Why do you think this was?</i></li> </ul>

<b>Part 7: Shifts in Thinking &amp; Moving Forward</b>	
<b>Core Questions</b>	<b>Possible Probe(s)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If you think back to yourself at the start of the work of the Group, has your thinking about learning progression changed? What have been the biggest shifts in your own thinking?</li> <li>2. What most strongly influenced these changes in your thinking?</li> <li>3. What did you find to be the major challenges in developing a curriculum based on learning progression?</li> <li>4. What do you think will be the main opportunities and challenges arising from the use by teachers across Wales of a curriculum based on Descriptions of Learning in a progression framework?</li> <li>5. What are the implications of your experience in developing the progression framework for future co-construction, when other teachers engage with it and collaborate with researchers and policy-makers to propose modifications to it?</li> <li>6. Are there particular actions you feel need to happen between now and 2022 to ensure thorough understanding and effective use of the progression framework the Group has made?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Actions needed to revise/amend the framework and the Descriptions of Learning?</i></li> </ul>

<b>Part 8: Closing</b>
In taking a moment to think back over this interview, is there anything you would like to add? Do you have any questions?



## Appendix 4: Interview Protocols for Policy Community Members

### Questions for members of the policy community

*Note: This semi-structured interview schedule is organised in terms of three major themes. It is proposed that interviewers, as they introduce each of these three themes, ask interviewees to respond to these in a relatively open-ended way. Interviewees can be prompted to extend their initial comments through such open prompts as ‘Would you like to say a bit more about this?’, ‘Can you give a specific example to illustrate the point you have just made?’ etc. They can also be prompted by the interviewer using relevant numbered questions: relevant both in the sense that they relate to the interviewee’s role and participation in policy making and relevant in that the interviewee has not so far referred clearly to what the question is intended to explore.*

***Theme 1: Policy formation from receipt by Government of Successful Futures through Ministerial response to this, publication of Curriculum for Wales: a Curriculum for Life, co-construction of the curriculum, publication of the White Paper, to publication on 30 April of the curriculum and assessment proposals for engagement. We would value your reflections on the ways in which policy developed, on alignment throughout the policy formation process, on any tensions within this process and on the challenges of developing not only a radically new curricular policy but also on doing so in an innovative way. (In this interview we will refer to this whole process as the Welsh Programme.)***

1. a) As (*role*) could you describe how you have used *Successful Futures* to create *Curriculum for Wales: a curriculum for life*?
- b) Again as (*role*) could you describe the contributions you have made to the processes of taking forward the aspirations of *Curriculum for Wales: a curriculum for life*? Have there been any areas of tension in these processes?
2. a) What would you identify as the one or two most important messages from *Successful Futures* about each of:
  - curriculum?
  - pedagogy?
  - assessment?
  - progression?
- b) What, in your view, is the relationship between these four areas?

Prompt – to expand as appropriate
- c) To what extent do you think that the development process to date has remained consistent with these original ideas of *Successful Futures*? Can you give an example/s? Are there examples of divergence?
3. a) A number of people have described *Successful Futures* as ‘The Bible’. What do you perceive to be advantages and disadvantages of that view?
- b) What challenges face the Welsh system if practice is to remain consistent with the vision of the Welsh Programme?

4. Do you consider that any tensions have emerged between different aspects of the development programme? If so, how were these resolved?

Prompt – e.g. between the curriculum frameworks and the White Paper; or between curriculum frameworks and assessment proposals; or between the progression frameworks which describe progress in learning and statements of experience, knowledge and skills?

5. a) What is your understanding of the relationship between policy, practice and research in the development of the Welsh Programme?  
b) In what ways do you perceive this relationship to have changed over the life of the Welsh Programme?  
c) What are your views on the strengths and challenges of subsidiarity and co-construction as these ideas were developed and enacted in Wales?

**Theme 2: Progression and CAMAU. Progression is fundamental to the Welsh Programme in ways which are highly innovative compared to other national curriculum structures. We would like to hear your views on what you understand by the term ‘progression’, on the role of progression within the curriculum, on the implications of this for assessment, and, generally on how you see this playing out in schools and classroom practice in Wales as teachers engage with the curriculum and plan learning, pedagogy and assessment. We are also interested in your perceptions of the contribution of CAMAU to the development of progression within the Welsh Programme.**

6. a) Could you describe what you understand by the term ‘progression’ as used in the Welsh Programme?

Prompt – What role or roles do you believe that ‘progression’ should serve?

- b) How has your engagement with the process affected/ changed/ supported your personal views on progression?  
7. Could you please look at the description on the card?

Prompt to respond to the question

The CAMAU Research Review reported in *Learning About Progression* identified need for two types of progression framework

- ‘broad’ Descriptions of Learning providing an overview of the whole learning journey;
- and a more detailed framework of such ‘granularity’ as to support assessment for learning and identification of next steps, but without creating an extensive list of ‘tick box’ points.

So far the development process has produced draft versions of the broad overview framework in each Area of Learning and Experience. What do you see as the most effective strategy, as the ‘co-creation of the curriculum’ process continues, for ensuring the development of appropriate more detailed progression frameworks?

8. If progression, as you have described it, were built into school practice as you would wish, what would be happening? What kinds of behaviour would you see and what would you not see?
9. a) In your view, what actions should be taken if the use of 'Progression Steps' is to encourage a focus on activities to inform and support future learning activity, rather than being used only as a means to summarise past achievement?  

Prompt – This may require changes in mindsets which may be well-established: how can these changes be informed and supported?
- b) What, in your view, should be the relationship between 'progression' and 'assessment'?  

Prompt -- What kinds of assessment practice would you expect to see in schools and classrooms?
10. Who should use Progression Steps and for what purposes? Are there purposes for which you would not like to see Progression Steps used?  

Prompt – Learners, teachers, parents, headteachers, Consortia Leads, government .... others?
11. What should be done to promote good use of Progression Steps? What are the biggest risks? How might these be addressed?
12. How do you believe those who have not been involved in the development of the Progression Steps might best be introduced to them?  

Prompt – Teachers, parents, pupils, others?
13. What role or roles do you believe the CAMAU project has played in the progression development process?

**Theme 3: Future Engagement. The current engagement processes will be followed by on-going engagement with the curriculum framework within schools and by teachers as they develop and refine their own curriculum and carry into practice appropriate assessment and pedagogy practices. We are interested in knowing your views on how this on-going engagement, development and refinement can be informed by the processes of development of the Welsh Programme to date. What can we learn from these processes about subsidiarity and co-construction? What are the implications for capacity building and professional learning? How do we make use of research?**

14. a) What important learning from the development process to date might be taken into the next phase of the programme as more participants become involved in thinking about progression?  

b) How do you see ideas of subsidiarity and co-construction being sustained beyond the first phase of the Programme?
15. What do you perceive as the biggest shifts from current practice that will be required?

16. What roles should policy, practice and research play in the next phase of helping to develop and promote good models of progression in practice?
17. What are the major contributions which people in your role can now make to promoting ideas of progression? What, if any, risks might emerge through actions of people in the position that you hold?