

Barriers and solutions to purpose-driven curriculum implementation in Wales

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ABSTRACT

The new Curriculum for Wales is centred around four purposes, which reflect educational values and aims. Complementing the four purposes is an emphasis on teacher autonomy when it comes to curriculum planning. It is teachers who have been tasked with interpreting and implementing the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales as it has been rolled out in schools from September 2022 onwards. Drawing on seven interviews with teachers in secondary schools in Wales, this paper makes the case that teachers are being asked to perform a complex task that would benefit from specialist support. We suggest three philosophical resources that could address these challenges and allow the Curriculum for Wales to be implemented in a way that prioritises its four purposes.

Key words: curriculum for wales; philosophy of education; four purposes; educational values

Introduction

In this paper we make the case that the Curriculum for Wales, which is being rolled out across the country from September 2022 onwards, requires teachers to carefully consider potentially competing educational values as they implement it. Furthermore, we demonstrate that this consideration of values is a complex task that requires support.

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First, we introduce the Curriculum for Wales and the centrality of the four purposes to it. We explain why a purpose-driven curriculum places a burden on schools and teachers to take an authentically values-led approach to curriculum planning. We then introduce the discipline of philosophy as an important resource for thinking about values, including educational values. Next, we introduce data from seven interviews conducted with teachers in Welsh schools to examine whether teachers are well equipped for discussing values in relation to curriculum planning. We find that teachers (a) have a range of different educational values; (b) regularly come across situations where they have to weigh up trade-offs between educational values; and (c) face a range of barriers to discussing values in their workplace. Finally, three possible philosophical solutions are suggested which combine to create a possible philosophical toolkit to ensure that the Curriculum for Wales is implemented and maintained in a way that honours its intentions and maintains its purpose-led nature.

While this paper is focused on the Curriculum for Wales, its suggestions could equally apply to the Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland or to any other values-led curriculum.

The four purposes

The Curriculum for Wales is built around four purposes:

That children and young people develop as:

1. Ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
2. Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
3. Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
4. Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society

Professor Graham Donaldson, who is responsible for the vision behind the curriculum, writes that these purposes play a range of roles. They 'provide clarity about aspirations for the children and young people of Wales'; they 'emphasise broader outcomes that just knowledge, skills and understanding'; and they 'provide a consistent point of

reference for curriculum development'. They provide a basis for 'determining priorities as pressures on the curriculum continue to grow', and prevent the narrowing of the curriculum. They act as a guide for selecting content, experience and pedagogy and guide accountability and educational improvements (Donaldson, 2015, p. 21).

Donaldson stresses the centrality of these purposes: 'The structure of the curriculum should reflect directly and promote the curriculum purposes' (Donaldson, 2015, p. 35); and 'Good teaching and learning maintains a consistent focus on the overall purposes of the curriculum' (Donaldson, 2015, p. 64). The four purposes are meant to underpin the whole curriculum, which itself is defined as everything that happens in schools. This is reflected in a more recent publication by the Welsh Government, where 'a school's curriculum is everything a learner experiences in pursuit of the four purposes' and that 'the Curriculum for Wales expects a school curriculum to be driven by purpose' (Welsh Government, 2024).

The four purposes reflect commonly held aims of education. The purposes reflect academic aims, where subject knowledge is central to education; vocational aims of education, where economic participation is a key aim; moral and civic educational aims; and wellbeing aims. Together, the four purposes can be interpreted as promoting an education that supports students to live flourishing lives in a holistic way. The purposes make normative claims about what education is for. They make educational values explicit in the Curriculum for Wales.

The importance of the four purposes stands in contrast to the stated aims of the previous curriculum in Wales. In 2002, the National Curriculum in Wales's stated aims were minimal; to: '(a) promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and (b) prepare pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life' (Donaldson, 2015, p. 22). The new curriculum's four purposes place educational values at the centre of what it is to have a functional school curriculum. This is a departure from the more minimal values expressed in previous curriculum.

Educational values

In a discussion of the term 'values' in education, Halstead and Taylor note that some definitions of 'values' have been criticised for failing 'to differentiate quite distinct things like virtues, convictions and commitments' (1996, p. 5). However, for

our purposes we are satisfied to treat all of these as values. It is the convictions, commitments and virtues of practitioners that affect how the Curriculum for Wales is implemented in schools. Greenbank casts the net more broadly, explaining that ‘individuals have a value system consisting of a small cluster of moral, competency, personal and social values that influence a person’s attitudes and behaviour’ (2002, p. 791). Again, our use of the term ‘values’ incorporates this broad definition, we are interested in the many normative commitments it is possible to hold about educational issues and their effect on curriculum implementation.

Brighouse et al. state that

by values we mean whatever is good or right about an action or state of affairs, whatever it is that makes them valuable ... Often there is more than one value that accounts for why some states of affairs are better than others ... Because there are many values, they often conflict, and one needs to make trade-offs among them. (2018, p. 4)

They give an example of ‘the clash between liberty and equality ... that arises mainly as a tension between parents’ freedom to devote their resources to their children’s education and the concern that children born into different families should enjoy something approaching equal opportunities in life’ (2018, p. 4). This is seen in debates about whether to allow parents to pay for a private education for their children. Brighouse et al. continue that ‘other conflicts may be less dramatic, but judgements about how to balance the competing claims of different values are implicit in every decision to allocate scarce resources’ (2018, p. 4). Since educational resources such as funding and time are always scarce, educational values are constantly up for discussion.

Values can be individual, as in what an individual teacher, policy maker, or parent believes is normatively important in education. They can be institutional, often summed up by a school’s statement of its own philosophy. They can be national, as is the case in the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales where four broad sets of values have been mandated by the government. An individual can hold conflicting values, for example they might believe that a students’ future job prospects are just as important as their wellbeing during exam season. Institutional, national and individual values are also often in conflict, with reasonable disagreement about what education should be for, and what should be prioritised where there are limited resources.

In her paper on the tension between the six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs) and the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales, Gatley claims that ‘The New Welsh Curriculum can be described as providing an aims-based education, where the aims of education are to enable people to lead fulfilling personal, civic and professional lives’ (2020, p. 203). Implementing the Curriculum for Wales is going to require at least some discussion of what personal, civic and professional values entail in practice, particularly when individual, institution and national values come into conflict. This is not a failure of curriculum guidance, but rather a necessary feature of a curriculum that is aims or purpose-driven.

Purpose-driven curriculum planning

One result of the introduction and foregrounding of the four purposes in the Curriculum for Wales is that schools cannot rely on delivering prescribed content to show that they have delivered the Curriculum for Wales. Since the Curriculum for Wales is a framework which does not prescribe rigid content, teachers are necessarily involved in deciding how best to meet the four purposes. Even if content was prescribed, a student who makes good progress in the six AoLEs has not necessarily been helped to develop as an ambitious capable learner; enterprising, creative contributor; ethical informed citizen; and healthy, confident individual. Instead, this will depend on the extent to which each AoLE promotes the four purposes, how the AoLEs function in combination, pedagogical practices, whether the school has incorporated structures and activities to promote the purposes in addition to, or outside of the AoLEs, and other contextual factors including the student’s own character, background and circumstances.

A related critique of the Curriculum for Wales is that it does not provide enough guidance about curriculum content to ensure for consistency between schools (see Evans, 2023, p. 4 for a discussion of this). Davies et al. note that

Wales seems to be experiencing a concerning ‘implementation dip’ ... where enthusiastic innovation, aspiration and sincere intent meet the realities of professional capacity and system readiness – largely as some in the profession have expressed uncertainty as to exactly what they are being expected to deliver. (2024, p. 30)

One cause of this uncertainty is the increased responsibility placed on teachers and schools to determine the content of the curriculum. However, it is important to note that this increased autonomy complements the purpose-driven nature of the curriculum. A curriculum driven by purposes is not designed to be imposed wholesale on a country with a variety of different educational settings. This is because what will help a child to meet the four purposes in a school in the Welsh Valleys might be very different from what will help a child in central Cardiff. The four purposes require interpretation into a specific context because helping a child meet the four purposes in the Valleys will be different to helping a child meet the four purposes in Grangetown.

Allowing teachers autonomy is a sensible policy decision because it means that they can create the best curriculum possible for their students in response to their specific contexts (Harris et al., 2020). Without such autonomy, teachers would have few tools to authentically put the purposes into action. As a side effect, it creates disparities between what different schools teach, and de-centres disciplinary content (Crehan, 2024). However, these side effects are necessary if the curriculum is to be authentically purpose-driven.

Returning to values, implementing a purpose-driven curriculum requires teachers to be responsive to their students and attentive to how best to support them to lead fulfilling lives. This is a step change from the previous curriculum which asked schools to teach subjects well. The latter can be done without much consideration of the child's path in life. The former requires constant consideration of the needs of each child being taught. It also requires careful reflection on the array of educational values expressed by the four purposes. Eisner likens this to Aristotle's account of *phronesis*, which 'seeks to prepare practitioners who can use their professional wisdom in local and always unique circumstances' (2005, p. 202). In other words, implementing values in educational practice requires reflectivity.

If the purposes are to play a central role in the Curriculum for Wales, teacher autonomy is important. With this autonomy comes the task of selecting curriculum content that embodies educational values, and the side effect that curriculum content will differ from school to school. Implementing values requires reflectivity and adaptability. In this paper we will work on the assumption that a purpose-driven curriculum is desirable, and focus on how best to centre

educational values in curriculum planning. Teachers are likely to find themselves discussing educational values as they work to develop and implement the Curriculum for Wales, and there are resources and tools that could help with these discussions.

Challenges to date

One place to turn for research about the sorts of challenges that the Curriculum for Wales might face is Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence. This was introduced in 2010 and has a very similar set of educational values at its core in the form of the four capacities. External pressures on teachers and schools such as inspection regimes, exams, league tables, teachers' time, financial pressures, and a lack of resources, often trump considerations about values. As a result, it is perhaps unsurprising that a report into the Curriculum for Excellence found a narrowing of the curriculum, and culture of performativity in schools driven by measures of accountability that run counter to the values of the Curriculum for Excellence (Shapira et al., 2023). This demonstrates the difficulties of foregrounding educational values in complex real-world contexts.

There are concerns that the Curriculum for Wales will face similar issues to Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (Sinemma et al., 2020). A lack of resources and government support, combined with a reluctance from some practitioners to refocus their practice on values rather than results, may derail proper implementation (Thomas et al., 2023). Estyn, the education and training inspectorate for Wales, described government support as 'often too generic rather than sufficiently bespoke' (2023), and noted the difficulties for schools implementing a new curriculum while waiting for key announcements about redeveloped qualifications to complement it. Gareth Evans notes that Scotland's CfE 'can be considered a cautionary tale of how not to overwhelm teachers with inordinate amounts of guidance' (2023, p. 10). If teachers are supported to think in terms of educational values, rather than to react to external pressures, the curriculum is more likely to maintain a focus on the four purposes.

Despite the challenges posed by the Curriculum for Wales, teachers and school leaders are broadly supportive of the changes. Duggan et al. found that

98 per cent of senior leaders and 78 per cent of practitioners agreed that they were committed to the aspirations of the Curriculum for Wales; 98 per cent of senior leaders and 87 per cent practitioners agreed that they were committed to making changes to their professional practice to help learners realise the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales [and] 99.6 per cent of senior leader and 91 per cent of practitioners agreed that they were committed to learning more about the Curriculum for Wales. (p. 23)

Their second wave of data (Thomas et al., 2023), indicated that leaders continued to feel they were making progress towards implementing the new curriculum.

This goodwill from practitioners hints at the value of getting the new curriculum right. Rather than providing more guidance about curriculum content, potentially making the same mistakes as in Scotland, government could instead invest in helping teachers to meaningfully think about how to work with a purpose-driven curriculum, and how to make confident, well justified curriculum decisions which take the four purposes into account.

Thinking about values

Planning a curriculum driven by the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales involves thinking about educational values. This is both in terms of how to implement the multiplicity of values mentioned in the four purposes, and in terms of how to deal with the fact that school resources are limited, and some trade-offs between different educational values are going to be necessary.

Putting the four purposes into practice leads to practical problems. Eisner claims that 'practical problems are vexing. They traffic in trade-offs. They are riddled with a variety of possible solutions, each of which is likely to create other problems' (2005, p. 201). In response, he focuses on deliberation, which 'liberate one from a monocular perspective and a single interpretation. In addition, in the process teachers can strengthen their sense of community by joint deliberation' (2005, p. 201). Walker describes curriculum deliberations as a core part of curriculum implementation. Here, 'curriculum deliberations are chaotic and confused. Alternatives are often formulated and defended before the issue has been clearly stated. Feelings run high. Personal preferences are expressed in the same breath with reasoned arguments' (1971, p. 55). At the

same time, this step is key to creating a curriculum: justified decisions need to be made about what matters.

We propose that philosophical resources can optimise curriculum deliberation about putting values into practice. While discussing values is not uniquely philosophical, a case can be made that it is philosophy, as a discipline, that has the most developed resources available for talking about values. When faced with biological, historical, political or sociological questions, it is natural and advisable to turn to the disciplines of biology, history, political sciences, or sociology. One reason for doing this is that a discipline encompasses a protracted period of systematic study of a group of questions. As Collingwood puts it, a disciplinary science 'in its ordinary sense ... means a body of systematic or orderly thinking about a determinate subject-matter' (Collingwood, 1940, p. 4). When we have a question that pertains to that subject matter, it makes sense to turn to a discipline with a long history of systematically studying it.

Philosophy is the discipline that has historically systematically studied values. P. F Strawson argues that what philosophers have a long history of systematically studying is the meaning of concepts including 'ethical notions: good, bad, right, wrong, punishment' (Strawson, 1992, p. 6). Other relevant concepts to education such as 'knowledge', 'justice', flourishing', 'work' and 'confidence' are also within the remit of philosophical study. It makes sense then, to turn to the discipline of philosophy, more specifically the field of ethics, to provide resources to engage in discussions about educational values as this is where questions of value have historically been studied.

Levinson has called for a field of professional ethics for educators, akin to medical ethics (2023). She points to

A 2500+ year history of such work, from Plato's Republic and Confucian Analects and Xueji, Locke, Kant, Rousseau, Wollstonecraft, DuBois, and Oakeshott to Dewey, Noddings, Greene, Kohlberg, Friedman, Freire, Fanon, Gutmann,Sizer, Boal, Elmore, Foucault, Biesta, Ladson-Billings, Curren, Darling-Hammond, Brighouse, Morton, Moses, Ben-Porath, de Ruyter, and thousands more. (2023, p. 199)

She calls for systematic recognition of ethical issues in education, and a profession of educational ethicists to respond to these issues.

One way that philosophy is already inherent in curriculum work is through philosophically informed curriculum design. For example, Phenix (1962) proposes

a curriculum structure and design that covers six realms of meaning. Similarly, Hirst proposes that knowledge could be broken down into logically distinct forms, and all that is needed to provide a full education is to cover each of them (1968). However, the Curriculum for Wales already has a set of purposes and a broad framework. Instead of macro-level curriculum design, what we are interested in here is how teachers can be supported to implement the values at the heart of the existing Curriculum for Wales in their own work. They are being asked to work with four prescribed educational purposes, constantly revisiting and re-evaluating which to prioritise and how to bring them into educational practices. To some extent they are creating their own philosophically informed curriculum, albeit one that has already had its guiding principles set out. The sort of work Hirst and Phenix were engaged in has already been completed by Donaldson, but philosophical tasks remain as ideas are put into practice.

The four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales require teachers to weigh up educational values in their day-to-day practice. Brighouse et al. state that 'as decision makers aim for improvements, they need standards that tell them what counts as an improvement. However, they typically lack a rich and sophisticated language for talking about values and articulating trade-offs' (2018, p. 1). These trade-offs relate to how to distribute educational goods and resources. In this paper, we are interested in curriculum trade-offs such as, for example, how much curriculum time should be spent on wellbeing versus exam results. Brighouse et al. provide a framework to help deliberation, particularly collective deliberation to go well.

In their book *Dilemmas in Educational Ethics*, Levinson and Fay describe discussions about values in education as

both utterly ordinary and immensely challenging. These are not exotic problems; they are every day dilemmas. But educators and policy makers generally receive very little support in thinking them through other than as technocratic challenges ... these cases are treated as challenges of compliance, leadership, communication, data analysis, student support, or instruction. They are rarely treated as ethical challenges of equity, merit, respect, inclusion, fairness of human rights – that is as challenges that require educators and policy makers to think carefully about the values and moral principles at stake. (2016, p. 2)

Levinson and Fay say that decision makers 'lack the tools for and practice in analysing and making collective decisions about these kinds of practical ethical conundrums' (2016, p.2).

If practitioners in Wales are being asked to carefully consider educational values as they implement the Curriculum for Wales, then philosophical resources may help this to go well. In the following section, we turn to interviews with seven teachers in Welsh secondary schools to find out whether they were being faced with problems arising from educational values, and whether they felt well supported in discussing values as they worked to implement the Curriculum for Wales.

Research methods

Between April and July 2023, we conducted seven interviews with teachers in secondary schools in Wales. The aim, or research question behind these interviews was to explore whether the working with a purpose-driven curriculum increased the burden on teachers to think about educational values, and whether teachers felt well supported in doing this. The limited number of interviews prevents anything other than modest conclusions, however we believe that the interviews demonstrate a proof of principle: that a purpose-led curriculum raises issues for those implementing it, and that these values-driven issues require guidance to untangle.

Briefly, the seven interviews were conducted in person or online over Zoom. Participants were teachers in various different secondary schools in South Wales. The participants all volunteered to be interviewed after a call for participants was emailed around schools in Wales, there were too few responses to allow for any selection of participants. Again, this limits the conclusions that can be drawn from the data since it is likely that those who responded were interested in the new curriculum, and interested in discussing educational values.

Two of the interviewees had leadership roles regarding implementing the Curriculum for Wales. The interviewees were specialists in a range of subjects including English, Sociology, History, PE, Physics, Geography and Biology. The schools were all comprehensive schools, and ranged from a large, high performing school in Cardiff, to schools in both deprived and affluent areas of Swansea, to a school in the Welsh Valleys.

The interviews asked participants questions about three different topics. After some preliminary questions about the context and roles of our participants, we first asked for their general thoughts on the new curriculum and to talk through the relative importance of each of the four purposes in their opinion. Second, we asked

them about their own educational values. Third, we asked them about whether educational values were discussed at their school, and what the barriers were in these discussions.

The interviews were semi-formal and have been transcribed, coded, and analysed using thematic analysis (Miles et al., 2014). In particular, we have taken a deductive approach to analysis. Rather than starting with the interview data and building theory from what we found, we started with the theory that philosophical puzzles arise from the combination of teacher autonomy and a values-led curriculum. We then came up with themes that would illustrate this theory and analysed the data accordingly. As Fereday and Muir-Cochrane put it, 'the template was developed *a priori*, based on the research question and the theoretical framework' (2006, p. 83). The themes we used were: (1) educational values; (2) curriculum conflicts; and (3) barriers to discussing educational values.

In terms of research ethics, given some of our findings about the sensitivity of discussing values in schools, we feel that conducting individual interviews across a range of different schools was fortuitous. Similarly, anonymity and confidentiality were particularly important to help teachers to speak freely about their views. At the same time, interviewees responded that the interviews were a positive experience, reflecting the importance of having discussions about educational values as a practitioner. Future work in this area is going to have to pay particular attention to the barriers teachers faced when talking about their educational values in order to ensure ethical research practices.

Findings and analysis

The data falling into these three themes allows us to build a case that a purpose-driven curriculum does indeed ask teachers to think carefully about educational values, and that schools would benefit from specialist resources to navigate discussions about educational values.

(1) Educational Values

All of the participants spoke with passion about educational values. They were also all able to identify at least aspects of the Curriculum for Wales's four purposes that

encompassed what they cared about. The finding that is of interest to this project is that different teachers had different priorities from one another when it came to educational values. In some cases, they were themselves torn between competing educational values. Consider the following five statements from five different participants:

There are different dimensions to the role of education. On the one hand obviously impart of the knowledge, that you feel so passionate about that made you want to study your degree and become a teacher because you want to be able to experience that, you know, love and passion between subject. On the other hand, teaching them how to be civil, how to be ethical how to be, you know, healthy. For example, you see children coming into school having just a bag of Quavers and that is their breakfast. (Teacher one)

What motivates me definitely is the disadvantage gap. So, yeah, the injustice of that really. And why is that the case? And trying to do everything we can to close up this advantage gap, the sort of way I see, but I first started teaching that as well. I was interested. I'm still interested in now, and I see myself moving forward. (Teacher three)

Oh, my heart says the learners, and what they want to learn, and what will make the world a better place. I, as a teacher, have always tried to make learning as engaging and as fun and as relevant and as close to real life as possible. (Teacher four)

The core of it really is to see how well students can achieve. And being able to see someone in 10 years time and have them come up to me and say, oh, thank you so much, you've led me to this and see how their life has progressed from what I've taught them and or how I've helped them develop as humans, not necessarily in the classroom. (Teacher five)

We're trying to encourage [students] to experiment ... and, just allowing pupils to explore subjects rather than teaching them things. We let them find their own way. (Teacher seven)

While there are overlaps between the teachers' guiding values, there are also important differences. Teacher one is torn between imparting knowledge and addressing ethical and social aspects of a child's life. Teacher three is guided by considerations about educational justice and the distribution of educational goods. Teacher four is guided by creating an authentic connection to children as both people and learners. Teacher five is guided by helping students to achieve in school and in life. Teacher six is guided by letting students experiment with ideas and learn for themselves.

Their values differ. If they were placed in a room together and asked to plan a curriculum, it is likely that they would disagree about at least some key aspects of how a child's education should look.

(2) Curriculum Conflicts

Under the theme of curriculum conflicts, participants identified cases where educational values conflicted with practical issues. Several examples of conflicts that teachers faced when considering their values come up in the interview data:

We are still governed by qualifications of these children are going to sit, and I don't think currently our exam suite necessarily sits with the 4 purposes and I don't see how it could ... For example, and we are losing a number of our qualifications to bring a greater sense of equity to learning in science, but to my mind it makes me feel like we're going to lose our doctors and our vets, because everyone is going to be sitting a double award qualification. And we are going to lose triple science. I don't see how that fits in with the health of our nation, or their mental health, telling them that they're all the same. How are you supposed to be ambitious in science? (Teacher four)

We have a school curriculum built around twelve values. So when you think about tolerance, which is one of the values – how can I petition someone to be tolerant when they don't have that from the house. And you know they come in, and they've done this and that and that. OK so this is our road to role model that tolerance, but that is in conflict with the values that the community holds. (Teacher one)

Estyn drives school so much, and schools will deliver what is Estyn to see which is such a shame, rather than just thinking about their heart and thinking because that is what this curriculum is about. What we think is really great for our own pupils, regardless of what somebody outside comes in. However, you know. We've still, we've got this voice above us going, well, are you doing this now? Are you doing that so? (Teacher three)

There's a lot of focus on the results gained in science, which is great, but I don't think it's in the vision of new curriculum. (Teacher six)

These are all examples where the drive to implement values clashes with other requirements and considerations. External pressures such as exam results and Estyn inspections can thwart the drive to act on educational values, wherever these are not being examined or inspected for. Furthermore, changes associated with the new curriculum are described as in tension with its own purposes by Teacher four. Teacher one also talks about the difficulties teaching students to be tolerant when tolerance is not an important value in their homes; so community values can clash with a teacher's educational values.

The picture emerging from the data is first, that teachers are guided by a diverse set of educational values and do not necessarily fully agree with one another about

which values are most important. Second, there are cases in their everyday practice where teachers have to balance educational values against external pressures, or competing educational values. If we again imagine our participants sitting in the same room, facing one of the conflicts above, e.g. how to approach an Estyn inspection, it seems likely that they will disagree about the best approach given their different ideas about what matters most.

(3) Barriers to discussing educational values

Finally, the interviews suggest that some teachers are unable to discuss educational values in their schools for a variety of reasons. We explicitly asked them about barriers to discussing values:

Discussing values is a tricky one really because when you have such a big staff and there are so many you know underlying problems running in the school it's a bit dystopian setting – if you have them all together by default we're going to end up talking about all the negative things that are happening in the school because let's face it, the grass is always greener in other places and you know no one has it as hard as you know teachers do and it's you know a challenging profession. (Teacher one)

It's quite difficult to say what your opinions are, because you know you can get ridiculed. So you know, I've always been ethically informed ... Years ago, I tried to get more people to drink water, and I was completely squashed, because it's like, oh, it's only because you want somebody to do this, you know, it was quite difficult. (Teacher two)

I think sometimes when I talk to staff, I think people think 'Oh, that sounds nice, but that's not the reality of what's happening on the ground'. And then I think those barriers are only going to get bigger ... But I do think what's happening on the ground now is it's going to have a real impact on how the vision for curriculum is realised, not as time teachers have, but budget constraints have a massive impact on staffing. (Teacher three)

So we have members of our senior leadership team, who are very much, I don't want to say the old Guard ... There are people who think that they understand the new curriculum, but in reality they either they don't, or they're trying desperately to fit it in with their values from the old curriculum. And there are those that are so concerned by exam results that they are desperately clinging to what they currently know as a framework, and that does include some senior leaders, and that makes for far more difficult discussions. They say 'this is what we're going to do; and it becomes a bit more dictatorial over the way that we're expected to do things. (Teacher four)

My lack of understanding or knowledge was a barrier. There were probably conversations going on around me but I had no input into them because I didn't have a base knowledge of what the curriculum was. (Teacher five)

There are some strong opinions within the department. We have quite a range of experience. So I'm a relatively new teacher. This is only my second year, but we have teachers that have been doing it for over twenty years and have particular values for particular ways. They like to do stuff and don't like to do it different ways. (Teacher six)

Most of the time we look at how we go approach doing it rather than the actual approach doing it rather than the actual values behind it. And yeah, we a little. But I'm not concerned. The majority of the time it's how we can change this. (Teacher seven)

Participants were explicit about the barriers they faced when having conversations about educational values in schools. Different teachers have different opinions about what matters, as seen in teacher two's case where their interest in healthy lifestyles was ridiculed by other members of staff; and teacher's four's case where expressing values had been shut down by senior leaders who are more interested in exam results.

Contextual factors such as the sheer difficulty of day-to-day teaching in a challenging environment are also a barrier, as seen in teacher one and four's comments. They suggest that conversations about values are so far removed from the reality of teaching that they would lapse into negative conversations about all of the day-to-day problems that schools face. Teacher five cited a lack of understanding and knowledge as a barrier to discussing values. Teacher six highlighted the different attitudes between newer and more experienced members of staff. Finally, Teacher seven cited the lack of time as a key factor, particularly when pressing questions about how to implement the curriculum in practice urgently need to be discussed.

Discussing values in schools is a delicate task. It can easily lapse into ridicule, arguments or unproductive conversations reflecting low morale. It requires confidence, knowledge and understanding. In other words, discussing educational values is a specialist task. It is worth noting that despite the barriers encountered, Teacher six and Teacher seven said that their schools did a good job of creating opportunities to talk about values in education.

Together, our interview data suggests that taking a values driven approach to the curriculum is challenging. First, the teachers interviewed have different educational values. Next, they regularly come across situations where they have to weigh up

different educational values. Finally, having conversations about educational values can be difficult; teachers risk ridicule, being shut down, lacking relevant knowledge and understanding, or lapsing into unproductive laments about the challenges they face.

The idea that we were testing was that in foregrounding four purposes, the Curriculum for Wales explicitly raises questions about educational values, and that addressing these would benefit from specialist resources. Our interview data provides grounds for thinking that this is indeed the case in at least some schools in Wales – that having a values-led curriculum creates the need for specialist support.

Philosophical solutions

In this final section, we offer some potential philosophical solutions to implementing a purpose-driven curriculum in schools. As pointed out earlier, talking about values is a central part of discipline of philosophy. Furthermore, philosophers of education have developed resources to help policy makers and practitioners to discuss educational values. We set out three such resources here and consider reasons why these might benefit those implementing the curriculum for Wales.

(a) Educational Goods

Brighouse et al. offer a framework to break down and clarify the different values at stake when it comes to making educational decisions. They call this ‘a clear and manageable framework for combining value considerations with empirical data to make judgments about how well specific policies are likely to realize valued outcomes’ (2018, p. 1).

They describe education as providing students with goods. These are the knowledge, skills, dispositions and attitudes that educational settings can promote. These goods contribute to ‘the capacities for economic productivity, personal autonomy, democratic competence, healthy personal relations, regarding others as equals, and personal fulfilment’ (2016, p. 8) which underpin living a flourishing life. This language accords with that of the four purposes, which also cover economic, personal, democratic, health and fulfilment linked aims.

Brighouse et al. also emphasise three distributive values: ‘adequacy of educational goods, equality of educational goods and the distribution of

educational goods that most benefits those with the worst prospects for flourishing' (2016, p.12). These are relevant to school leaders and teachers who need to make decisions about

how to allocate students to teachers, which teachers to hire, and what kind of instructional leadership to provide. Classroom teachers decide how to allocate their time, energy, and attention within the classroom and to what end. When doing these things, they are often aiming at (although regularly failing to bring about) about one or more of these distributive values. (2016, p. 12)

Finally, there are independent values, those values that contribute to flourishing but are not within the remit of education. These include childhood goods, parents' interests, respect for democratic processes, freedom of residence and of occupation, and numerous other values that need to be considered when making decisions. Those implementing the new curriculum are not doing so in a vacuum, and these independent values are going to need to be considered and respected. This also requires some concern for the context and local community that the school is serving. As a simple example, increasing the homework load on children might contribute to educational goods, but detract from childhood goods such as play or friendship.

Set out in this way, the various factors at stake when implementing a purpose-driven curriculum become clearer. The four purposes can be understood as commitments to provide a full range of educational goods and their associated capacities. These can be distributed in different ways, with different outcomes. As Brighouse et al. point out, it is not always going to be possible to provide all educational goods to all children at all times. Having a framework to explore contextualised real-world decision making is a practical tool that might help the four purposes to play a role in an education system alongside other pressures.

This tool is potentially useful because it gives teachers a language for engaging in discussions about values by clearly identifying the different factors at stake. It could help teachers to avoid arguing at cross-purposes, or straying into unfocused discussions which move away from the issues at stake.

(b) Normative Case Studies

Levinson and Fay claim that decision makers 'lack the tools for and practice in analysing and making collective decisions about these kinds of practical ethical

conundrums' (2016, p. 2). In response, they have developed a series of what they call 'normative case studies'. These are 'richly described, realistic accounts of complex ethical dilemmas that arise within practice or policy contexts, in which protagonists must decide among courses of action, none of which is self-evident as the right one to take' (p. 3–4). These are designed to help professionals to think through the sort of decisions they might themselves face. To help with this, Levinson and Fay also provide a series of commentaries written by different experts from different points of view. These are 'effective means of surfacing the right kinds of question, and at provoking searching, collaborative inquiry into the principles and values that guide ethical policy and practice' (p. 5). They also model the sort of thinking that can help to do with applied ethical dilemmas.

Unlike the case studies already provided in Curriculum for Wales guidance, normative case studies are not examples of good practice for other schools to adopt. They present dilemmas that remain unresolved at the point of presentation. A good normative case study does not have a clear answer, but exposes a tension and prompts debate.

Normative case studies could be developed directly relating to the new curriculum for Wales. This would help teachers to talk about the sorts of issues that they might encounter, and to practice discussing decision making with the four purposes in mind. A promising possibility is using the language of educational goods from Brighouse et al. to give teachers the means to identify for themselves what is at stake in each case, and to become increasingly fluent at thinking and talking about educational decision making. This could allow for schools to begin to discuss their own ethical dilemmas as and when they arise.

Creating a set of normative case studies based on the Curriculum for Wales would help teachers to learn how to discuss values without immediately having to address a pressing issue in their school. This sort of training ground could help to avoid heated discussions which might make teachers feel insecure or mocked by adding a degree of separation between participants and the issues at stake. At the same time, discussing normative case studies could build the skills needed to engage in productive staff discussions about values in relation to their school and real-world issues.

Discussing normative case studies within schools is going to pose challenges. Schools are hierarchical structures, with senior leaders, middle leaders and classroom teachers standing in relations of power to one another. Furthermore, as

our interviews suggest, ethical discussions often raise tensions between firmly held beliefs that are close to teachers' hearts and concern the wellbeing of their students, the reputation of the school, and even their job security. High quality use of normative case studies in schools is going to require a shared commitment within schools to developing a collaborative and caring community of inquiry. It is for this reason that we suggest that approaches for philosophy for children (P4C) which have been developed for use with teachers might provide a fruitful addition to normative case study work for use in schools.

(c) Philosophy for Teachers

One-off courses about educational goods or discussions about normative case studies are not going to be sufficient to help schools to continuously develop their curriculum with the four purposes in mind. P4C, and its counterpart Philosophy for Teachers (P4T), models a means of holding discussions about philosophical and ethical issues that would build a community of inquiry in schools which could support value driven curriculum implementation.

A P4T approach aims to develop schools into collaborative, caring, and creative communities of inquiry. This stems from P4C, where the focus is on inquiry with the aim of developing critical, creative and caring thinking amongst participants through open-ended philosophical dialogue (Lipman, 2003). P4C is committed, in a principled way, to open-ended dialogue and minimal exposition. A community of inquiry values the voices of all its members, is undertaken in the spirit of open inquiry without prejudice towards the sorts of ideas than can be voiced, and reflects democratic principles such as equality of its members, civil interactions, and care to allow all to speak and build on each other's ideas. A community of inquiry works together to reach settled beliefs, whilst recognising disagreements and the reasons for them. This chimes with the four purposes of the new curriculum and the mention of confidence, ethical, creative individuals ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

P4C sessions most commonly start by presenting participants with a stimulus. This could be a picture, object, or in the case of the Curriculum for Wales, a normative case study would be ideal. Participants are then asked to reflect on the stimulus, and sometimes are asked to come up with questions for discussion. These can be listed, and a vote can be held about which to discuss first, or the

conversation can begin more spontaneously. A facilitator guides the discussion and responds to cues in the room, but avoids influencing the discussion or providing answers. An open-ended discussion is kept on topic, but allowed to develop as the participants see fit. P4C takes practice, with communities of inquiry gradually developing. They are not one-time events. Ultimately, an aim in Welsh schools could be to allow teachers to meet and discuss dilemmas they are currently facing as they come up. To develop this ability, normative case studies could be used to create some distance until the community of inquiry was a stable and safe place for discussion.

Orchard, Heilbronn and Winstanley (2016) make a case for P4T, particularly early career, or new teachers. They point out that teaching is a fundamentally normative profession, but that trainee teachers and existing teachers in England lack the time, space and guidance to engage in thinking through ethical issues. They developed a P4T structure involving facilitated discussion after a teacher presented an experience of an ethical issue and a philosopher of education provided a response. The next iteration of their work involved a residential course for teachers using this P4T pedagogy. A distinctive philosophical lens was maintained by involving philosophers of education who helped to highlight philosophical issues. A trained P4C facilitator was used to ensure that sessions were dialogic and open ended with a focus on collaborative inquiry.

They conclude that 'the model created an amenable space for participants to reflect on a series of ethically complex issues that had arisen in a variety of circumstances they had experienced at early stages in their teaching careers' (2016, p. 13). They also add a note of caution:

crucially, the residential nature of the programme, away from regular work and home, the intensity of having six sessions within 24 hours made a considerable difference to the group's experience. Indeed, even with an expert facilitator, P4T sessions for an hour a week in the school staffroom might well yield quite different results, especially when it comes to discussing issues the teachers experience as disturbing and unsettling. (2016, p. 13)

Embedding a P4T approach in Welsh schools to keep the four purposes relevant and support decision making would need sustained work to build authentic and safe communities of inquiry. However, a P4T approach directly addresses the barriers to discussing values that our interviews exposed. If implemented with care, schools could

become deliberative, value-driven environments. P4T, normative case studies, and the educational goods framework are examples of the sorts of tools that would allow this to happen.

Conclusion

The Curriculum for Wales is explicitly purpose-driven, introducing educational values into curriculum planning. Using a small qualitative study, we have made the case that at least in some instances, the purposes of the Curriculum for Wales pose challenges for schools and teachers. First, not all teachers share the same educational values; second, they are likely to come across situations where educational values need to be balanced against each other and against external pressures; and third, schools and teachers are often ill equipped to discuss educational values. Together, this suggests that they may struggle to authentically implement a purpose-driven curriculum.

Finally, we outlined three promising existing philosophical resources that could be tailored to help teachers to make meaningful collaborative progress on how to implement a values-led curriculum in schools in Wales. These all answer to the need to engage in day-to-day decision making about how to enact educational values in practice. They serve as examples of how philosophical resources can help deliberation about values go well. These sorts of resources, alongside the time needed to put them into practice, are going to be important if the Curriculum for Wales is going to stay true to its vision.

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