



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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# BEYOND IMPROVEMENT

Professor Graham Donaldson



- **The world is changing fast and expectations of schools are contested and incoherent but continuing to grow**
- **Need to establish and sustain an agreed strategic vision and sense of purpose founded on clear values**
- **Curriculum structure, pedagogy and assessment should reflect vision, values and purpose**
- **Curriculum change must be set in wider context of teacher and leadership capacity and accountability**
- **Top-down change has only a limited record of success - schools appear to be inherently sceptical about external 'solutions' and need to own the quality of learning and teaching**
- **Revitalised strategy for career-long teacher education**
- **Good teachers need to work within an environment that recognises and engages their professionalism**
- **We need to establish and nurture national, local, and school learning communities**
- **Agility, relevance and quality best achieved through strategic exploration rather than faithful implementation**
- **Beyond improvement – pervasive reflection of vision, values and purpose**

## Society

- Inequality increasing
- Demography
- Life expectancy
- Single households
- Civic participation
- Family

## Resources

- Scarcity
- Efficiency
- Accountability

Technological developments  
Nature/pace/lag/digital divide

## Education

- New and growing expectations
- Instrumental pressure? Education is for work?
- Education for democratic participation / citizenship?
- Uncertainty and lifelong learning
- New conceptions of knowledge?
- Creativity, teamworking, problem-solving?
- Deprivation and educational achievement?
- Better learning or different learning?
- Anywhere, anytime learning? Hand-held connectivity?
- Social networking
- Internationalisation – PISA/PIRLS/TIMMS

## Employment

- Skill demand changing
- Portability
- Employability
- Digital competence
- Fluid job market
- Lifelong learning

## Globalisation

- Interdependence
- Competition
- Offshoring
- Reshoring
- Migration
- Scarcity
- Climate

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century schooling?

## Importance of

- deeper conceptual understanding
- connected and coherent knowledge
- authentic knowledge in context
- creativity and problem solving
- learning in collaboration and to collaborate
- ethics and values
- personal agency

**Move from what students should be learning towards what they should become? (Priestley and Biesta 2014)**

## OECD SAID

- “..many of today’s schools have not caught up as they **continue to operate as they did** in the earlier decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.
- “How can learning within and outside schools be reconfigured in environments that foster the **deeper knowledge and skills** so crucial in our new century?”
- “To succeed in this is not only important for a **successful economy**, but also for effective cultural and social **participation** and for citizens to live **fulfilling lives.**”
- *‘INNOVATING TO LEARN, LEARNING TO INNOVATE’* OECD 2008

# Teachers Matter

Students of the **most effective teachers have** learning gains **four times greater** than the learning gains of the least effective teachers

*(Sanders and Rivers 1996).*

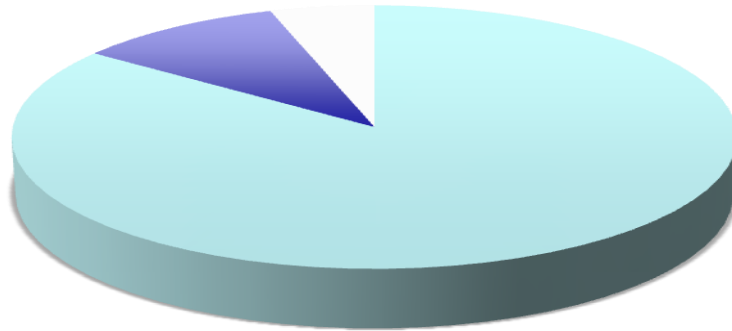
Overall, the research results indicate that **raising teacher quality is vital** for improving student achievement, and is perhaps the policy direction most likely to lead to substantial gains in school performance.

*(OECD 2005)*

Over 3 yrs, learning with a high performing teacher instead of a low performing teacher can make a **53 percentile difference**

*(McKinsey 2007)*

# BUT?



■ 85% resistant to change what works for them

■ 10% willing to change to be more efficient

■ 5% willing to try new innovations

# Leadership Matters

- ***“The importance of the headteacher’s leadership is one of the clearest messages emerging from research. There is no evidence of a school being effective with weak leadership”.***

J Gray (1990), British Journal of Educational Studies

- ***Leadership second only to classroom instruction in affecting what students learn at school and that leadership effect largest in the most challenging schools***

(Leithwood et al 2006)

- ***“Headteachers are perceived as the main source of leadership by key school staff. Their educational values and leadership practices shape the internal processes and pedagogic practice that result in improved pupil outcomes.”***

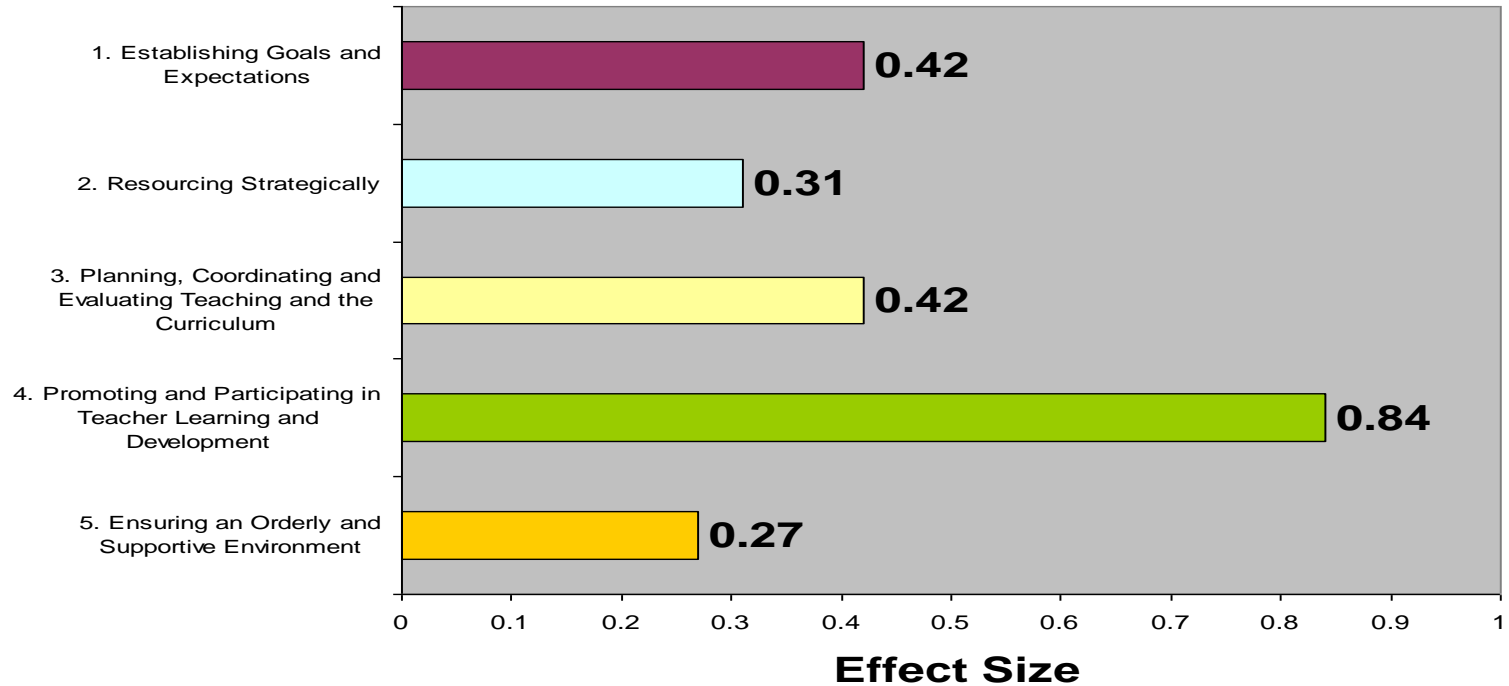
(Day et al., The Impact of School Leadership on Pupil Outcomes, University of Nottingham, 2009)

- ***“A culture of initiative and collegiality within which learning is always the prime focus embodies the kind of distributive leadership which is the hallmark of our most dynamic and effective schools”***

(Donaldson, Teaching Scotland’s Future, 2010)



# Relative impact of leadership activities



Robinson, V., Hohepa, M. and Lloyd, C. (2009), *School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration*, Wellington: New Zealand Ministry of Education.

# **OECD RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WALES**

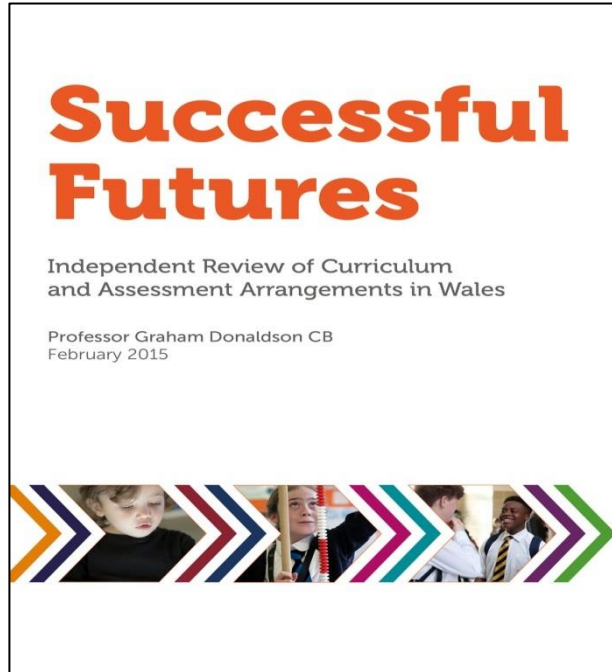
- **Need for powerful and consistent vision – understood and owned by the profession**
- **Build professional capital - the capacity and confidence of the teaching profession – individually and collectively**
- **Strengthen pedagogical leadership**
- **Be clear about the role of evaluation and assessment – focus on improvement**

## The challenge

*“What our children and young people learn during their time at school has **never been more important** yet, at the same time, the task of determining what that learning should be has **never been more challenging.**”*

*Donaldson Successful Futures 2015*

# The report: **Successful Futures**



## > 8 Chapters

Overview

Processes and Evidence

Purposes

Structure

Pedagogy

Assessment

Implications

Conclusions and Recommendations

> 68 Recommendations

# **A Learning Culture**

Not imprisoned by the past or the context

Shared vision/purposes focused on progression in young people's learning

Active and extended collaborative and individual culture of learning

Professional inquiry and exploration

Engages with complexity

Clear professional standards

Leadership not about formal role or length of service

Relentless focus on impact on young people's learning and wellbeing

Accountability mechanisms are evidence-based and constructive

Outward-looking and seeks challenge

Aspiration, reflection and optimism



**A revitalised learning community**



**Better experiences and outcomes for our young people**

